

WILLIAM TELL

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FADE IN:

INT. KING RUDOLPH'S BEDCHAMBERS-NIGHT

Moonlight streams through the windows like spotlights upon ALBRECHT. He sits at RUDOLPH'S bedside, holding his hand. Seeing his father pale and weak causes a wolfish grin to slowly emerge on his face.

RUDOLPH  
(barely above a whisper)  
Why did you do it?

A long silence.

ALBRECHT  
(toys with him)  
Why did I do "what?"

RUDOLPH  
Poison me.

ALBRECHT  
...because, dear Father, you're an  
obstacle, a stumbling block in my  
path.

These words greatly disturb Rudolph.

ALBRECHT  
Oh, come now, Father. Don't act so  
surprised.

RUDOLPH  
(at a loss)  
...you, you're nothing but a power  
hungry fiend!

ALBRECHT  
That tendency comes from Mother's  
side of the family...or haven't you  
noticed?

RUDOLPH  
Yes...your mother's family had an  
incredible thirst for power. But  
that thirst was eventually  
quenched.  
(After a pause)  
When will your's be?

ALBRECHT  
When I am king.

Rudolph shakes his head sadly.

RUDOLPH

...no  
 (after a pause)  
 your mania is insatiable, it knows  
 no bounds.

Albrecht stands up abruptly, giving his father a cold, hard stare.

Still holding his father's hand, Albrecht tightens his grip. Rudolph winces in pain.

Albrecht allows himself a slight smile of delight, until--

The king's free hand shoots out and grabs his son's wrist, squeezing it just as hard. Albrecht yanks his hand away, wincing in pain himself.

RUDOLPH

I may be getting weaker with each passing moment, but I still have some strength left in me.

ALBRECHT

Soon, very soon, you will be dead, old man, and your throne shall be mine!

Rudolph shakes his head and looks up at his son with a look of pity in his eyes.

RUDOLPH

Why?...I ask you...why?

ALBRECHT

(bitter)  
 You were so preoccupied with being king that you forgot to be a father. I barely even know you...that's why doing this was so simple, as if killing a stranger.

(Beat)  
 A mistake I made sure not to repeat with my son, Johann. I only hope he follows my example when the time comes to raise his own.

RUDOLPH

...my fault...

ALBRECHT

What? That I grew to be the fine man I am today?...hardly...Mother had much to do with that.

(Beat)

(MORE)

ALBRECHT (cont'd)  
 ...while you were off playing king,  
 Mother taught me the true nature of  
 power.  
 (After a pause)  
 Even after becoming your queen her  
 lust for it never diminished...

Rudolph is visibly shocked to hear that.

ALBRECHT (CONT'D)  
 She merely hid it, subdued it in  
 your presence.

RUDOLPH  
 (regretfully)  
 She did it so very well...

The king's voice sounds weaker than ever. He's fading fast.  
 He and Albrecht hold a look.

RUDOLPH  
 ...I should have been there...for  
 you...for both of you.

It's harder than ever for him to breathe or talk.

RUDOLPH (CONT'D)  
 ...with proper guidance...things  
 would be different...

ALBRECHT  
 A little late, aren't you?

With one last agonizing breath, Rudolph's body goes limp and  
 his head falls to one side. The king is dead. Albrecht looks  
 down at the lifeless body, unblinking. He walks to the desk  
 where his father's crown sits. Picking it up, he rests it on  
 his own head.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN: EXT. TOWN OF ALTDORF-DAY

SUPER: TOWN OF ALTDORF - 8 YEARS LATER

We see over the heads of a huge crowd gathered around the  
 town square.

They roar in outrage. A farmer is perched on a wooden stool  
 beneath a tree. A noose is fastened around his neck, hanging  
 from a branch. There's a soldier on horseback on either side  
 of the farmer.

A few soldiers clear a path through the crowd for GOVERNOR  
 HERMAN GESSLER, mid forties, hard features, long black hair  
 with streaks of gray and dressed as a noble.

The farmer's wife followed by her two young daughters approach Gessler. The wife grabs onto the governor's leg and pleads with him.

FARMER'S WIFE

Please, Governor...please don't take my husband and the father of my children away...please!

GESSLER

(shakes his leg free)

Your husband is a rebel and a traitor. He shall die a traitor's death.

With a cry of desperation, the farmer's wife tries to reach her husband, but is forced back at spear point by a soldier.

Gessler gives the farmer a sinister smile.

GESSLER

I've decided to give you a chance at redemption.

(Beat)

Help me flush out the rebel leaders...and I will let you live.

There's a moment of silence before the farmer answers.

FARMER

Never. I'll never betray my fellow countrymen.

(Spits on Gessler's boot)

Go to the devil, you bastard, and do your worst!

A flash of rage quickly passes over Gessler's face, before dissolving as he nods to the soldier on the farmer's left.

He draws his sword and CUTS THROUGH THE STOOL LEGS. Some spectators turn away in shock. The farmer's wife, wracked with sobs, buries her face in the chest of WALTER FURST. He puts an arm around her for comfort.

The now limp, lifeless body of the farmer sways back and forth.

One of the soldiers on horseback pulls out a knife and cuts the body down. He reaches down and grabs the end of the rope, then makes a wide half-circle, dragging the CORPSE in tow. He halts in front of the weeping wife and her two sobbing children. With an evil grin he lets the rope slide through his fingers.

The wife slowly looks down at her dead husband sprawled before her. She lets out a mournful scream and faints into the arms of a man behind her.

The soldier followed by a second soldier on horseback let loose with a peal of perverted laughter as they ride away. Furst slowly walks away from the scene and out of shot with a saddened expression on his face.

FADE TO BLACK:

FADE IN: EXT. OPEN FIELD-ALPINE MOUNTAINS-DAY

A young, Swiss noblewoman, BERTA, runs for her life as a knight, SCHILLER and a group of soldiers pursue her on horseback.

EXT. FOREST PATH-DAY

WILLIAM TELL, early thirties, dark brown hair and beard, muscular build and medium height and ARNOLD WINKELREID, early thirties, blond hair and beard, burlier than William and few inches taller ride side by side.

ARNOLD

What do you think he'll say?

WILLIAM

I think he'll say what he's said many times before.

(Beat)

But, it never hurts to ask.

ARNOLD

Only if he says yes...as well as to another question.

WILLIAM

How many times is it now he's denied you Berta's hand?

ARNOLD

I lost count after ten...but, as you say "It never hurts to ask."

They stop and listen as screams echo through the forest.

They see Schiller and his men gain on BERTA through the trees.

ARNOLD

Come on!

He digs his heels into the sides of his horse and is about to cut through the forest.

William keeps to the path.

WILLIAM  
This way!

Arnold stares at William and points at Berta through the trees.

ARNOLD  
What?! But--!

WILLIAM  
(over his shoulder)  
Shortcut!

EXT. OPEN FIELD-ALPINE MOUNTAINS-DAY

Berta trips over a rock. She looks up in terror as her pursuers get closer.

EXT. FOREST PATH-DAY

They ride along when suddenly William veers into the forest. Arnold follows and many branches brush against them. He shields his face with one arm. The last branches part to reveal a trail. Arnold ducks just short of whacking his head on a heavy low hanging branch.

EXT. OPEN FIELD-ALPINE MOUNTAINS-DAY

Berta stumbles and falls over the slope of a great hill. Schiller smiles and gallops up it followed by his men.

As they rise over the hill--

Berta breathes hard and sprawls between William and Arnold's horses. Their crossbows are aimed and ready. They squeeze their triggers and two arrows fly--

Two soldiers fall dead to the ground, each with an arrow stuck in their throats.

Arnold reaches down and helps Berta to her feet.

ARNOLD  
Run, Berta! Run!

Berta races up another rolling hill. Over the crest of it, her father's great mansion comes into view. She dashes down the hill toward it.

Schiller gestures to four of his men--

SCHILLER  
 You four, with me.  
 (Beat)  
 The rest of you...deal with these  
 rebels.

One soldier gallops ahead and points his sword at William--

SOLDIER  
 A pleasure, my lord!

William blocks his thrust and bashes him across the face with his crossbow. The soldier tumbles to the ground.

WILLIAM  
 The pleasure's all mine!

Schiller and the four ride around William and Arnold and proceed down the hill after Berta.

Arnold fits another arrow onto his crossbow as a soldier comes at him. Arnold ducks as the soldier's sword sweeps over his head. He rams his crossbow into the soldier's stomach and pulls the trigger.

We hear William combatting soldiers off-screen. Arnold turns in the saddle to see Schiller and the four dismount and storm up the mansion walkway. Schiller kicks open the door and he and the four rush inside.

Arnold gallops full tilt down the hill towards the mansion. A remaining soldier rides after him, sword raised.

William draws a knife from his boot, spurs his horse and makes chase.

With an expert throw, the knife sinks into the back of the soldier's neck.

WILLIAM  
 Arnold! Wait!

Arnold rides up the mansion walkway. He dismounts at the steps, leaps up them and through the doorway.

Berta's screams reach William's ears. He flies over the crest of the hill. His horse's hooves tear up clumps of earth.

Horses graze around the bodies of dead soldiers.

INT-ATTINGHAUSEN'S MANSION

William steps silently through the doorway--

Furniture is damaged and overturned. The walls and the paintings on them are torn up. BARON ATTINGHAUSEN lies unconscious in the midst of the wreckage.

Berta's shrieks, Schiller's angry words and sounds of Arnold being pummeled drift down from upstairs.

William steps over Attinghausen's body towards the wide stairway--

A hand seizes William's ankle. Attinghausen is still alive, barely.

ATTINGHAUSEN  
(barely audible)  
My daughter...you must save her.

William nods. Attinghausen tilts his head so he can look up the stairway.

ATTINGHAUSEN  
(barely audible)  
Winkelreid...

WILLIAM  
(harsh whisper)  
Yes...now he suffers because all he dared to want was to make Berta happy...something that Austrian bastard up there can never do!  
(Beat)  
I'll save her...them.

William moves to the foot of the steps.

ATTINGHAUSEN  
(dying breath)  
I know you will...tell the nobles...you have my support...tell Winkelreid he has my consent...tell Berta, I love her...always have...

With those words, he dies.

William creeps silently up the steps--

INT. ATTINGHAUSEN'S MANSION-UPSTAIRS

Arnold sags between two soldiers who hold him up. His face is battered and bruised as Schiller stands before him and wipes a bloody fist with a cloth napkin. Arnold spits blood onto Schiller's boot. Schiller snarls and backhands him across the face.

With his back to Arnold--

SCHILLER

Still think you're the better man,  
Winkelreid? Where's your friend,  
Tell? You Swiss made him a  
legend...according to that, he  
should've bested my men by now.

ARNOLD

You'll know when you're dead.

Schiller laughs. A soldier who restrains Berta, shoves her towards Schiller who grabs her by the throat with one hand and by the front of the dress with the other.

SCHILLER

Those of noble birth should join  
together...not with peasant swine!  
I'll give you wealth, power...  
anything you could possibly want!

(Beat)

What will he give you?

BERTA

His love...a thing you know nothing  
about!

He glares at her, but then his expression becomes a wolfish smile.

SCHILLER

Perhaps Winkelreid is in need of a  
demonstration of what we can  
accomplish together!

She flushes and spits in his face. She closes her eyes and braces herself as the fabric of her dress starts to rip--

Arnold's entire body trembles with rage. He struggles--

ARNOLD

I'll kill you!! You--!!

SCHILLER

Not from where I stand!

A knife pierces his hand and pins it to the table.

William stands at the top of the steps. He aims his crossbow at one of the soldiers holding Arnold and shoots him in the face.

WILLIAM

But, from where I stand--

Arnold draws the dead soldier's sword and sends the hilt into the groin of the soldier still holding him.

The two remaining soldiers advance upon William. The first to lunge is bashed in the gut with the butt of William's crossbow and hurled down the steps. William hurriedly fits an arrow onto his crossbow. The other rushes forward his sword high.

William fires and hits the soldier in the chest. He falls back and CRACKS his head on the edge of the table.

The soldier who got hit in the groin is doubled over. Arnold knees him in the face.

With a roar, Schiller pulls the knife free of his hand. He makes for Berta who shrieks and scurries around to the other side of the table.

Arnold rams into Schiller with the blade of his sword held out and pins him to the wall.

ARNOLD  
(breathes hard)  
How's that for a demonstration?!

Schiller's eyes widen and he dies.

Arnold and Berta embrace as William looks on.

EXT. FOREST ROAD-DAY

Berta rides between William and Arnold as they trot along. Attinghausen's body is draped across William's lap.

ARNOLD  
(to Berta)  
I'm so sorry.

She stares ahead, teary eyed, in silence.

WILLIAM  
He wanted you to know...how much he  
loved you.

Tears run down her face.

BERTA  
...I've always known...even though  
he could never say the words...  
(beat)  
I just hope that I'm strong enough  
to lead the nobles as he did...

ARNOLD  
Now with his consent, we can do it  
together.

BERTA  
How can you even think of  
that...now!

ARNOLD  
We can do far greater good together  
than we can apart! I just know it!

WILLIAM  
So do I.

BERTA  
(grateful)  
Thank you, William, you've always  
been like an older brother to me.

They ride on in silence until, Berta gives Arnold a ringing slap. Arnold stares at her, shocked.

William rides on ahead and tries to keep a straight face.

BERTA  
That was for charging in like a  
brazen idiot and almost getting  
yourself killed!

ARNOLD  
What else was I to do?! The thing I  
love most was being threatened!

BERTA  
You could think before you  
act...like William--

William stifles a laugh. Berta narrows her eyes at Arnold.

BERTA  
Oh, so now I'm a thing to you, am  
I?!

ARNOLD  
That's not what I meant--

They glare at each other for few seconds before their expressions soften.

Berta squeezes his hand affectionately.

William watches out of the corner of his eye and laughs.

Arnold and Berta both glare at him--

William looks straight ahead.

WILLIAM

Oh, you and Berta remind me of  
Hedwig and I when we started  
courting.

ARNOLD

Berta, the stories I could tell you  
about William and Hedwig--

WILLIAM

You better leave the telling of  
those stories to me.

ARNOLD

If it was left to you those stories  
would never be told.

WILLIAM

(smiles)  
How right you are.

Arnold and Berta laugh.

There's a distant rumble. The sound of horses' hooves pound  
the ground.

WILLIAM

(to Berta and Arnold)  
Now, would be a good time to make  
ourselves scarce.

They lose themselves amongst the bushes and trees.

Gessler, his aides (WERNER and RUDENZ) and a patrol of  
soldiers ride past.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST-DAY

William, Arnold and Berta watch until Gessler and his men  
ride out of sight.

EXT. WALKWAY-ATTINGHAUSEN'S MANSION-DAY

Gessler dismounts and moves through the doorway. Werner and  
Rudenz dismount and follow.

INT. ATTINGHAUSEN'S MANSION

Gessler gives no more than a passing glimpse to the wreckage.

Gessler stops at the foot of the steps and looks down at the  
dead soldier there. He looks up the steps.

Werner and Rudenz stand at the doorway.

Gessler starts up the steps. He turns and nods for Werner and Rudenz to follow.

INT. ATTINGHAUSEN'S MANSION-UPSTAIRS

Gessler scans the room.

GESSLER

(mutters)

This is his doing...it must be...

WERNER

Whose, my lord?

GESSLER

(disdain)

William Tell...surely you must have noticed how his name is spoken like gospel among the people?

(Beat)

They speak of him not as a man, but as some divine savior...a man thought of in such a light is dangerous...too dangerous.

WERNER

He is not what the people make him out to be, I assure you. He is merely a hunter, farmer...good husband...good father. The last thing he wants is trouble!

GESSLER

The canvas painted by the people makes that quite hard to believe...as you well know in the short weeks since I have been named principal governor of these regions, my plans have been disrupted and my men harassed...he must be the one.

(Beat)

For my goals to be fully realized, one of us must fall...

His eyes rest on Schiller's body, pinned to the wall. Gessler shakes his head.

GESSLER

Schiller, Schiller, you're such a fool...I warned you.

(MORE)

GESSLER (cont'd)

I told you to forget about this Berta Attinghausen, but no, it was too much for your pride that she of noble blood preferred a commoner named Winkelreid.

(beat)

Didn't I say it would lead to nothing but misfortune?

Gessler strides towards the steps, pauses and briefly looks back.

GESSLER

(to dead Schiller)

--should have trusted my instincts...they've never been wrong.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD-NIGHT

The sun is setting and early evening is approaching.

William rides warily up a narrow, winding mountain road.

He rounds the bend to see Furst coming towards him. He waves to Furst who returns the gesture. Williams brings his horse to a halt.

FURST

(at length)

...every time I see that look in your eye...reminds me how much closer it is to the new year...when we will throw off the yoke of our oppressors--!

WILLIAM

How are Hedwig and the boys?

FURST

She was putting them to bed when I left...Hedwig is worried sick considering how late home you are...

WILLIAM

Late isn't the word...that's a good woman you raised, Furst.

FURST

...her mother had much to do with that. I only wish she were here to see our Hedwig fully grown.

A moment of silence.

William looks at Furst expectantly.

FURST

...today Gessler hung Werni in the square of Altdorf before the eyes of his poor wife and children!

WILLIAM

My God! It never ends!

The cool night breeze whips through Furst's hair. He shivers slightly.

WILLIAM

(starts to dismount)

Here, Furst, take my horse home.

Furst shrugs off the offer.

WILLIAM

You're an old man. I'm still young, I'll walk.

FURST

Don't worry about me, William. I haven't too far to walk...and besides...I don't have anyone to go home to...

William watches Furst until he disappears around the bend.

INT. TELL'S HUT-NIGHT

HEDWIG TELL leans forward and kisses her sleeping son WALTER (11) good night on the forehead. She looks down on him and his younger brother RUDI (8), who's also sound asleep, with a reminiscing smile. After a few seconds, she closes the bed curtains.

EXT. TELL'S HUT-NIGHT

Horse's hooves plod through the snow.

The Tells' dog, PRINZ, barks and runs over.

A man seen from the waist down dismounts and pats Prinz on the head.

Hedwig stands in the doorway and smiles.

HEDWIG

Back before dark, eh?

INT. TELL'S HUT

Awakened by the noise, Walter peers through a crack in the bed curtains--

William enters with Hedwig in his arms. She wraps her arms around his neck and they kiss.

Walter abruptly closes the bed curtains. He reopens them a few seconds later.

Hedwig rests her head on William's shoulder as he holds her tight.

WILLIAM  
Did I say that?

She looks up at him with a light-hearted expression on her face and nods.

William opens his mouth to say something, but doesn't.

HEDWIG  
(worried)  
You had another encounter with Gessler's men today, didn't you? That's why you've come back so late, isn't it?

WILLIAM  
(sighs)  
I can't lie to you...

Her face falls--

HEDWIG  
William...you promised me...

WILLIAM  
I know, but if Arnold and I hadn't come to Berta's rescue, Schiller would've raped...

William takes in Hedwig's hurt look.

WILLIAM  
Hedwig, I cannot stand idly by while our brethren suffer. If my death is what it will take to ensure that we can be free...then, I'm willing to take that risk.

HEDWIG  
Perhaps you are...but I'm not! And what about our children?!

WILLIAM  
I'll discuss it with them.

HEDWIG  
No! I don't want you discussing  
anything of that nature with them.

WILLIAM  
I know it's not easy for you to  
hear, but ever since that day  
in...when I met him...I've felt  
that I was meant to do this...

HEDWIG  
(frustrated)  
I'll never understand it...never!

She calms down.

HEDWIG  
I'll bring you your supper.

William nods warily and sinks down onto the bench in front of  
a crackling fire.

Hushed whispers draw William to his sons' bed. He pulls open  
the bed curtains and Walter and Rudi fall into his arms.

WILLIAM  
(grins)  
Hello, boys.

Rudi gives his father a strange look.

RUDI  
Are you really going to die and  
leave us alone, Father?

Walter shares the same look.

William pulls them both into a big hug.

WILLIAM  
I don't plan on it.

Hedwig walks over with a plate of food for William.

HEDWIG  
Go back to bed, boys, you have to  
find fresh pasture for the goats  
tomorrow, remember?

WALTER AND RUDI  
Yes, Mother.

WILLIAM  
I'll put them back to bed, Hedwig.

She nods and puts the plate down on the bench.

HEDWIG  
I'll pour your cider.

The boys climb into bed and William pulls the covers over them. He ruffles their hair.

WILLIAM  
Good night, boys.

They smile up at him.

WALTER AND RUDI  
Good night, Father.

William shuts the bed curtains. He sits back on the bench and pulls off his boots. Hedwig brings over the cider and sits down beside him.

HEDWIG  
Did you see my father?

He nods.

HEDWIG  
...poor Werni...I feel so sorry for his wife and children...

WILLIAM  
So do I.

There's silence between them until--

WILLIAM  
...I'll be going to Altdorf in the morning.

HEDWIG  
Altdorf? William, Altdorf is where Gessler was today! He'll be there tomorrow! He's there everyday.

WILLIAM  
We've never even met.

HEDWIG  
But, he knows of you...of your reputation. His new aides, Werner and that nephew of his, they know you by sight. Father told me Gessler suspects that you're behind the assaults on his men...

William stares into the fire.

WILLIAM  
(wry smile)  
He's right.

HEDWIG  
William! It's nothing to make light  
of!

She gives William a hard stare.

HEDWIG  
The governor knows how influential  
you are among the people, and he  
also knows that if he can bend you  
to his will others will follow.

WILLIAM  
I will simply avoid him.

HEDWIG  
He has soldiers and others loyal to  
him all over Altdorf.  
(Beat)  
Besides you know how you often  
raise your voice whenever you get  
excited.

William is taken aback by these words.

WILLIAM  
Do you think I'm going to talk too  
loudly and give away my fellow  
countrymen like a damn fool?!

HEDWIG  
No!...of course not!

WILLIAM  
Perhaps I should bring Walter along  
to make sure I keep my voice down.

Hedwig looks at the floor and takes a deep breath--

HEDWIG  
Go if you must...but, please don't  
take Walter with you.

WILLIAM  
It will be good for him, Hedwig, to  
play with other children his own  
age.

(Beat)  
(MORE)

WILLIAM (cont'd)  
 Besides, he's eager to learn more  
 about the revolt...Walter's growing  
 fast, you can't shelter him  
 forever.

HEDWIG  
 (very quietly)  
 I know.

INT. TELL'S HUT-NEXT DAY

Hedwig and Rudi stand in the doorway watching Walter and William climb onto the horse's back.

William has goat skins rolled up under his arm. His crossbow is slung over his shoulder. He and Walter wave goodbye as they start down the forest road.

HEDWIG leans against the door frame and utters so low that Rudi doesn't hear-

HEDWIG  
 God help me...I don't know  
 why...but I feel like I'm never  
 going see him again.

EXT. WINDING MOUNTAIN ROAD-DAY

Heavy rain clouds loom above. It could rain any time now. Father and son take in the view of vast mountains, some more covered with thick pine forests than others; we take it all in right along with them.

WALTER  
 Father...will you tell me more of  
 the revolt?

WILLIAM  
 Certainly, Walter, what would you  
 like to know?

WALTER  
 Everything.

WILLIAM  
 Everything? Well, I'll do my best.  
 Long ago before Albrecht was king,  
 his father, Rudolph, ruled over  
 us...the first of the Habsburg  
 family to sit on the throne. But  
 unlike the rest, he treated us with  
 a fair and just hand.

Off Walter's enthralled look.

WILLIAM

He sent collectors and other officials only once a year to collect taxes and judge disputes among us...

(Beat)

He even went to war to win back lands that were taken from us by a foreign ruler, Ottokar. How many times is it that I've told you the story of how I met him? You know that one by heart, anyway. You want to hear about the revolt.

Walter listens intently.

WILLIAM

When King Rudolph passed on suddenly, Albrecht took his place--

WALTER

How did he die, Father?

WILLIAM

Rumor has it that Albrecht was responsible...

WALTER

Was he, Father?

WILLIAM

It's only a rumor, son...but judging from what I know of Albrecht...it would come as little surprise.

(Beat)

After Albrecht became king, he began ruling over our people with an iron fist!

WALTER

(wonder in his eyes)  
Why?

WILLIAM

To rob us blind! Only recently has he decreed that anyone who travels or even crosses the Saint Gothard Road, Walter - the road to Italy - must pay...in gold!

WALTER

But, what of the revolt?

WILLIAM

Oh yes, the revolt. I was just coming to that...shortly after Albrecht was officially recognized as King, we began to feel the effects of his absurd and offensive decrees.

(Beat)

My father took me to a secret meeting between several men from Uri, Schwyz and Unterwalden. Grandpa Furst and Arnold were there too. We all made a pact stating that if ever one region fell under threat of invasion, the other two would come to its aid. That was the beginning of the revolt...and the last time I saw my father alive...

William's attention sadly drifts to the scenery. Walter looks up at him, waiting for the rest of the story.

William continues to gaze off into the distance--

WILLIAM

The meeting ended and everyone went their separate ways. My father and I stopped at the tavern on our journey home. We talked and drank...until some soldiers came in looking to drink there fill without paying. They were refused and began to harass the customers. The barmaid stood up to them and one grabbed her by the hair and threw her out into the street.

William looks back down at Walter.

WILLIAM

My father and I drove them from the tavern and were besting them quickly...

Tears start to well up in the corners of his eyes.

WILLIAM

The last thing my father heard was my cry of caution before a savage blow to the head ended his existence...I killed the rest of them swiftly...I cradled my father in my arms. The rain was beating down upon us...with tears in my eyes, I swore I would never stop fighting the good fight until we could live in freedom.

(MORE)

WILLIAM (cont'd)

(Beat)

It has been agreed that on the dawn  
of the new year we will strike  
united against our oppressors!

William trades a fond smile with Walter and ruffles his hair.

EXT. MOUNTAIN ROAD TO ALTDORF-DAY

William and Walter ride down a vast mountain road that leads  
into Altdorf, which is surrounded by high peaks.

William and Walter descend a hill through town, past well-  
built log houses. Everyone they pass looks up from their  
chores and activities to wave to William and Walter as they  
trot past. From the expressions of these people, we can tell  
that they admire and respect William Tell.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

As they near the town square, William and Walter notice  
something - a feathered hat perched atop a pole - behind it  
sits a soldier on either side of a well in the middle of the  
square.

WILLIAM

(at a loss)

...of all the  
arrogant!...outrageous...!

He guides the horse to the left towards the Bear Inn.

William and Walter watch as most people avoid passing the  
pole. a beggar, Ulrich, emerges from a bunch of people and  
kneels before the hat.

WILLIAM

(mutters)

Traitor.

Walter sees Furst standing in the doorway of the inn. William  
helps him dismount.

Walter runs towards Furst, excited.

WALTER

Grandpa!

Furst kneels on one knee and Walter runs into his  
outstretched arms. Furst pats him on the back.

WALTER

Come on, Father!

William stays where he is for another few seconds. He  
dismounts, ties up the horse, then follows Walter and Furst.

INT. BEAR INN-DAY

William follows Walter and Furst to a booth where Arnold and another man, PETERMANN, sit sipping hot cider from clay mugs and talking low so as not to be overheard. William shakes Arnold's hand, then Petermann's.

WILLIAM  
Good to see you, Petermann.

PETERMANN  
The same, William.

William sits down with Walter on his lap. Furst slides in next to them. The barmaid comes over.

FURST  
Bring two more mugs of cider for William and Walter.

She nods and moves out of shot.

PETERMANN  
(to William)  
Arnold was telling me of the little adventure you two had yesterday.

WILLIAM  
The important thing is that Schiller will never trouble Berta again.

William blows on the hot cider, then takes a sip.

WILLIAM  
(to Arnold)  
How are you and Berta getting along?

Arnold grins without answering.

WILLIAM  
That good, eh?

ARNOLD  
(laughs)  
I have good news for you, my friends, wonderful news actually...Berta has arranged a meeting with the nobles.

PETERMANN  
That is wonderful news!

WILLIAM  
Not necessarily.

FURST

You always feel the need to put a damper on things, don't you?

WILLIAM

One thing I simply cannot help is to be realistic.

PETERMANN

And here I was having such high hopes.

WILLIAM

Something you shouldn't have so the nobles can dash them to pieces with their refusal.

FURST

Always the eternal optimist...

WILLIAM

The way I see it is that the nobles have agreed to meet with us merely to give Berta their sympathies. We all know that without Attinghausen's influence they have little regard for commoners and even less interest in aiding our cause!

Walter fidgets on his lap.

WILLIAM

If you're getting restless, why don't you go outside and play with the other children? But, remember, not a word of this to anyone!

WALTER

Yes, Father.

He gets down from William's lap and runs out of the inn.

PETERMANN

Are you sure your boy won't give us away?

(Off william's glare)

A slip of the tongue...you know what I mean!

WILLIAM

(grins)

Not that boy. At heart...he's a wiser man than any of us.

He takes another sip of cider.

As Walter exits Ulrich enters. As he passes William, Furst, Arnold and Petermann, he thumbs his nose to them. He slides into a booth at the back of the inn. a few seconds pass and Werner enters. At once all eyes are riveted upon him, save for William, Arnold, Furst and Petermann. Werner gets looks of curiosity combined with hateful leers as he strides toward William.

William sees Werner's reflection in his cider mug as Arnold looks up and snarls--

ARNOLD  
Get out of here, Traitor!

He leaps for Werner, but William thrusts a leg across his path. Arnold bounces back into Petermann.

WILLIAM  
I suggest you say what you've come to say and say it quickly, Werner.  
(Glances around the inn)  
You're not well liked around here.

WERNER  
I intend to do just that.  
(Beat)  
Is it true, William? Is it?  
Remember when we used to talk...you and I. All we wanted was to settle down, raise families. We didn't want trouble and we didn't go looking for any.

WILLIAM  
Times have changed...there's only so much a man can take before he's forced to act.

Werner glances uncomfortably around the inn. A few people half rise from their seats.

WERNER  
I should go...

William also glances around.

WILLIAM  
Yes, you should.

Werner moves quickly to the door and as he opens it, a mug of hot cider is hurled at him. He covers his face with an arm as cider splashes on it. He yells and ducks outside. He yanks the door shut as another mug of cider splashes against it with a HISS.

People laugh and go back about their business.

ARNOLD  
He almost didn't make it.

WILLIAM  
You look disappointed.

ARNOLD  
You don't.

They study each other in silence until--

ARNOLD  
That kind of traitor turns my  
stomach! Why'd you stop me?!

WILLIAM  
He's a misguided man, but still a  
good one.

Arnold watches over William's shoulder as Ulrich shouts obscenities at the barmaid from his booth at the back of the inn.

ARNOLD  
He's not.

William turns and follows Arnold's gaze.

WILLIAM  
you should've seen how he bowed to  
that hat out there!

FURST  
His kind only does what it has to  
in order to survive...nothing more.

ARNOLD  
Gessler's been using as many as he  
can find to serve as his eyes and  
ears!  
(Beat)  
Do not doubt it! I needn't tell you  
that since Gessler came they've had  
plenty of money to spare!

PETERMANN  
And with the increase in hangings,  
they're damn well doing their job!

William picks up his cider mug and moves to the window which looks out upon a vast lake and beyond that a practically completed stone prison. Taskmasters with whips stand over prisoners who are hard at work.

Furst gets up and stands beside William.

WILLIAM

I feel nothing but pity for those poor souls...only those who don't become the mercenaries and spies of a ruthless tyrant.

FURST

A pity...but more prefer that then to remain in that hellhole of misery.

William claps Furst on the shoulder and walks back to the others.

WILLIAM

I'm afraid I must be on my way. Promised Hedwig I'd have Walter back in time to help Rudi find new pasture for the goats.

Furst, Arnold and Petermann bid him farewell and he and exits the inn.

EXT. BEAR INN-DAY

William finds Walter with other children. They poke sticks through apples and feed them to a black bear in a cage. Walter notices William waving him over and runs after him.

WILLIAM

I want to trade in these goat skins and get something for your mother.

(Beat)

Besides it's been awhile since I've seen Kunz.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

KUNZ can be seen through the tanner shop window. He waves to William and Walter.

They come to the hat on the pole. A group of people bow to the hat at spear point.

WALTER

Should we bow to the hat, Father?

WILLIAM

(harsh tone)

No, we should not!

Holding Walter firmly by the hand, they march right past the hat. One of the soldiers bars their path, holding them at spear point.

SOLDIER  
 You there, halt!  
 (Beat)  
 Respect your betters and bow to the  
 hat!

WILLIAM  
 If you believe so much in what the  
 hat signifies, then you bow to it!  
 I refuse to prostrate myself before  
 that symbol of Austrian  
 tyranny!...I am a freeman!

SOLDIER  
 You'll be a *dead* man if you don't  
 bow to that hat...you and your  
 filthy brat!

WILLIAM  
 (steps in front of Walter)  
 Leave my son out of this!

This outburst draws a large crowd.

EXT. ALTDORF-NOT FAR AWAY-DAY

GESSLER inspects town folks' dwellings. He comes to one made  
 of stone. So far this is the first that hasn't been made of  
 wood.

GESSLER  
 (to aide Werner)  
 This dwelling will make a fine  
 barracks for my men, to better keep  
 an eye on these lowly peasants.

The husband and wife who live there plead in vain.

HUSBAND  
 Governor, please, this is our home.  
 You cannot do this!

GESSLER  
 You can either leave quietly or  
 face the consequences. It's up to  
 you.

HUSBAND  
 At least let us take our personal  
 belongings...I beg you--

Gessler nods, then hearing a commotion close by, trots off  
 with Werner and Rudenz bringing up the rear.

GESSLER  
 (over his shoulder to  
 Werner)  
 Who was that old friend you went  
 off to meet at the tavern, Werner?  
 Someone I've heard of, perhaps?

Werner grimaces.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

Soldiers force their way through the crowd yelling, "Make way  
 for the governor! Make way!"

William and the two soldiers fall silent as Gessler and his  
 aides approach. Werner looks at the ground due to a look of  
 contempt from William.

GESSLER  
 What the devil's going on here?

SOLDIER  
 (points to William)  
 This man refuses to bow before the  
 Ducal hat, my Lord.

GESSLER  
 (turns to William)  
 A rebel, eh? What is your name?

WILLIAM  
 William Tell.

GESSLER  
 William Tell?  
 (After a pause)  
 I've heard much about you. Rumors  
 mostly, rumors that you're the one  
 who has been harassing my men in  
 carrying out their duty. The one  
 who has become a great irritation  
 to me, personally...

William glares at Gessler and his men, but remains silent.

GESSLER  
 Heed me well: if you continue to be  
 defiant I will have both you and  
 the boy strung up as a public  
 example.

WILLIAM  
 If I've done what you accuse me of,  
 then I've done it for the good of  
 the people, which you seem to care  
 so little about!

Practically everyone in the crowd yells in agreement.

GESSLER

Silence! You speak treason!

(Addresses crowd)

So, you peasants think you'd be better off without us, do you?

(Beat)

Do you witless fools really think you could govern yourselves without our authority? The very idea is laughable!

These words really get the crowd into an uproar. "Go to the devil, you braggarts!" "Go back to Austria where you belong!" They shout.

Soldiers hold the crowd at bay with crossbows, swords and spears, shouting over people's angry words, "Silence!" "Silence there, you dumb brutes!"

An old man with a cane at the head of the crowd, shouts at Gessler.

OLD MAN

William Tell is a name you should never forget, Gessler, a name that will be your downfall!

SOLDIER

Shut up, you old fool!

The old man swings his cane at the soldier. The soldier deflects the blow with his shoulder and drives the spear into the old man's stomach.

The spear head goes through his stomach and out his back. As the soldier pulls his spear free, the old man falls to his knees and collapses. Everyone in the crowd looks appalled.

GESSLER

(to crowd)

The next person to so much as whisper an insolent word will get the same.

Gessler watches as his words take effect and the people fall silent.

WILLIAM

...I knew you were a bloodthirsty butcher, but this is the first time I've had the displeasure of witnessing one of your monstrosities with my own eyes!

Gessler ignores him.

GESSLER

...so, I've heard that you are the most skillful bowman in these regions. Is that true?

WILLIAM

I know not if it is true, but some have said so.

The crowd stays silent.

GESSLER

If so many have said so...  
 (looks at silent crowd)  
 How can so many be wrong? You're too modest, Tell. You should take more pride in your skill.

Gessler addresses one of his men closest to him and points at Walter.

GESSLER

Tie the boy to that tree yonder.

WILLIAM

What are you--?

Two soldiers grab William by the arms, restraining him as the soldier leads Walter by the arm toward the tree.

WILLIAM

What are you doing?!

The soldier pulls Walter's arms behind his back and around the tree. He winds rope tightly around Walters' wrists.

GESSLER

(to another soldier)  
 Fetch an apple and place it on that boy's head.

William continues to struggle against the soldiers holding him.

WILLIAM

Let go of me, you bastards!

The crowd is confused.

The soldier takes an apple from a vender's basket and places it on Walter's head.

William struggles in vain with a tortured look on his face.

WILLIAM

I'll take whatever punishment you wish to give me, but please, don't harm my son.

GESSLER

I'm not going to lay a hand on him. If you can hit the apple on your son's head from eighty paces with your crossbow...I'll let you go. If not, you both shall pay dearly for such defiance as you've displayed here today.

The crowd gasps in horror. Mother's clutch their own children to them fiercely.

WILLIAM

Governor, please don't make me do this thing.

GESSLER

Perhaps you aren't such a good bowman after all.

WALTER

Don't listen to Gessler, Father! Shoot! I am not afraid!

WILLIAM

Skill has nothing to do with it...my son could still be harmed...Governor, he's innocent! It was I who showed disrespect, leave him out of it!

GESSLER

Whether or not your son is harmed won't be on my conscience, Tell.

WILLIAM

You don't have one! You inhuman--!

GESSLER

Enough!! You will do as I say!

Suddenly a monk, his head lowered, slowly approaches Gessler. Gessler eyes him with a look of annoyance. The monk raises his head and pleads--

MONK

Governor, this is a simple man of the mountains. He knows not what he does. He means no harm.

(MORE)

## MONK (cont'd)

He loves his son, as all good men  
love their sons. I beg of you, do  
not put him to this test of skill.

## GESSLER

Father, I must do this. I must  
prick this windbag. These people  
must obey their earthly masters as  
they do their heavenly one.

The monk retreats in silent defeat, fingering his rosary and  
praying.

The soldiers release William. He looks around. He's  
completely surrounded.

William's facial expression is one of anguish as he locks  
eyes with Walter.

He's shaking so much that he drops the first arrow he tries  
to fit onto his crossbow. William sinks to his knees.

## WILLIAM

(choked with emotion)

I cannot do this to an innocent,  
trusting child...I cannot...I  
cannot!

## GESSLER

The famous William Tell, cowering  
like a frightened woman. What a  
pathetic sight.

These words are an outrage to Walter and cause him to shout--

## WALTER

Shoot, Father, shoot! I am not  
afraid! God is watching over us!  
Don't lose faith!

William slowly rises with renewed confidence. He calmly draws  
a second arrow, sticks it in his belt, then picks up the  
first arrow and fits it onto his crossbow.

Gessler is uncomfortable. He shifts and fidgets in the  
saddle.

We see over William's shoulder as he sights in the apple on  
Walter's head.

Everyone holds their breath, waiting in anticipation. It  
seems like an eternity, but slowly and surely William  
squeezes the trigger.

Onlookers close their eyes and turn their heads. THE ARROW  
FLIES through the air and SLAMS into the apple, blowing it  
apart into chunks.

People exhale with relieved sighs. William swallows hard and smiles in exhausted relief.

Gessler stares in wide-eyed surprise. As a soldier is about to free Walter, Gessler holds up his hand to stop him. Turning to the worn out William--

GESSLER  
Before I release your boy, answer  
me one question first...

William waits for the question.

GESSLER (CONT'D)  
...tell me the purpose of that  
second arrow, which you thrust so  
quickly into your belt?

WILLIAM  
It is a custom of bowmen, Governor.

GESSLER  
Don't give me that--!. I want the  
truth.

William looks Gessler straight in the face and answers truthfully--

WILLIAM  
It was meant for you if I had  
injured my son.

This enrages Gessler.

William turns toward Walter.

WILLIAM  
(to soldiers)  
Now, release my boy.

William walks forward as a soldier moves to free Walter.

With a snarl of fury, Gessler grabs a loaded crossbow from a soldier and spurs his horse toward Walter. He aims and fires.

William runs forward with arm outstretched.

WILLIAM  
Nooo!

The arrow strikes Walter in the chest. It pins him to the tree and kills him instantly.

Everyone, including Gessler's men, are too shocked to move.

William staggers forward with a look of deep anguish. Tears well up, break and roll down his face. Breathing hard, he falls to his knees.

Furst, Arnold and Petermann force their way through the crowd. They reach the front of the crowd, but soldiers bar their way.

FURST  
That's my grandson, murderers!

They hesitate briefly, then make way for Furst, not for Arnold and Petermann who try to follow.

Teary-eyed, Furst slowly moves to Walter's body.

The crowd wants blood, but the soldiers hold them at bay.

Werner and Rudenz hang their heads in shame.

A soldier unties Walter.

GESSLER  
(to William)  
You won't die by my hand. I gave you my word. But, I promise you this, because you dare to threaten me, you will spend the rest of your days in darkness. You'll never see the sun rise again!

He points across the lake at the prison.

GESSLER (CONT'D)  
There, you will rot in one of my cells!  
(To soldiers)  
Take him away.

As two soldiers move in from behind, William elbows one in the face and punches another. He grabs a spear and with a ferocious growl, charges at Gessler.

GESSLER  
Men, prepare to fire into the crowd on my command!

The spear head stops less than an inch from Gessler's throat.

William looks around as soldiers aim at the crowd.

GESSLER  
You don't want any more innocent blood spilled on your account...do you, Tell?  
(MORE)

GESSLER (cont'd)  
 (No answer from William)  
 Do you?!

William looks around again to see the soldiers tighten their fingers on the triggers.

He stabs the spear into the ground and hangs his head.

GESSLER  
 (to soldiers)  
 Take him!

Gessler watches as William is lead away to a longboat at the edge of the lake.

William looks over his shoulder at Gessler and they lock eyes.

WILLIAM  
 (snarls)  
 You think you'll be rid of me by  
 locking me away?  
 (Beat)  
 I'll escape...and your head will be  
 my trophy!

GESSLER  
 (eyes burn with fury)  
 Hold up there! Halt!

The soldiers who lead William stop as Gessler trots up beside them.

GESSLER  
 Clap him in irons.

He glances around and spots a supply wagon in front of a vender's stand.

GESSLER  
 Bring that wagon here.

Soldiers force their way through the crowd and commandeer the wagon over--

GESSLER  
 (points to William, now in  
 chains)  
 Fasten the chains to the wagon's  
 underbelly.

William is forced down on his back. Gessler leers down at him.

GESSLER  
 You'll have my head as your trophy,  
 will you?!  
 (MORE)

GESSLER (cont'd)

(beat)

Well, now you're my trophy, Tell!

Gessler feels eyes on him and turns in the saddle.

Furst stands firm with Walter's body in his arms.

FURST

(his voice cracks)

Governor...I beg you...have the  
decency to let me claim the body to  
give him a decent burial!

GESSLER

Why not?

Friesshardt, a soldier, rather tall, well built with curly blond hair and beard and another soldier drag a struggling man with a knife up to Gessler. The man tries to wrestle his knife arm free, but they have a firm grip on him.

FRIESSHARDT

This man sought your life, my Lord.

The man is ITEL REDING of medium height, black hair and beard stubble.

ITEL

Bastard! You'll pay for my father,  
I swear it!

GESSLER

...Reding, isn't it?

(Pause)

I see you felt you deserved an  
early release...don't you like my  
prison?

ITEL

So much, in fact, that I simply had  
to leave it!

SOLDIER

What should be done with him, my  
Lord?

GESSLER

Send him back where he  
belongs...tell The jailer not to  
let it happen again...or next time  
it will be his head.

Itel shouts at Gessler as they drag him away--

ITEL

You'll pay for what you did,  
Gessler! Somehow you'll pay, even  
if it takes my life!

EXT. FOREST ROAD-DAY

Horses hooves trod over rough ground. We hear the rustling and crunching of leaves and twigs. These sounds are followed by William's grunts and groans as he's dragged along.

Tears run down Furst's face as he cradles Walter's body in the back of the wagon.

William's body fishtails behind the wagon. He is half conscious and covered with cuts and scrapes.

EXT. TELL'S HUT-DAY

Prinz lays in front of the door, chewing on a large bone. He rises immediately and barks at the oncoming entourage.

INT. TELL'S HUT-DAY

Hedwig drags a deep, heavy, black pot filled to the brim with meat and vegetables over to the fireplace.

Rudi sits under the window playing with his wooden horse.

Rudi and Hedwig turn toward the window as both hear Prinz's bark, horses' hooves and men's voices.

Rudi jumps up and looks out. He is so horrified by what he sees that his wooden horse clatters to the floor.

Hedwig lets go of the pot. It spills over on its side. Meat and vegetables pour out.

Through the window she sees Walter's corpse with an arrowhead protruding through his back being dragged by Friesshardt toward a tree. Furst crawls after them and grabs Walter's hand. Another soldier stomps on Furst's hand, laughs and kicks dirt in his face. Gessler directs all this from his horse. Hedwig's eyes widen, her expression becomes contorted, her lips tremble.

EXT. TELL'S HUT-DAY

Furst tries to get up, but a soldier pushes him back into the dirt with his foot.

Prinz growls at the soldiers and lunges. One reaches for his sword, but the dog leaps up and bites his hand. He cries out in pain, as the other soldier beheads Prinz with his sword.

William groans and tries to stay conscious.

Furst lies on his back and looks up at Gessler--

FURST  
Liar! You told me I could claim the  
body!

Before Gessler can respond, Hedwig charges out of the hut, screaming, followed by Rudi.

HEDWIG  
Walter!! NOOOO!!

She runs toward Friesshardt and grabs at Walter. He backhands her across the face. She collapses next to Furst.

Friesshardt releases Walter and starts toward Hedwig with an ugly smile on his face.

Werner blocks Friesshardt's way with his horse. He gives Friesshardt a cold stare. He reaches down and offers Hedwig a hand. She cries hysterically and bats it away.

Furst holds Hedwig in his arms as she cries into his chest. Rudi stands nearby, watching in teary-eyed horror.

Gessler dismounts and shoulders past Friesshardt.

GESSLER  
Friesshardt, you may be a good  
soldier, but you are a brute!

He gestures for Werner to move aside. Werner complies and Gessler looks upon Hedwig with almost a note of sadness on his face. Almost.

WERNER  
Is that guilt you're feeling,  
Governor?

Gessler ignores him.

A soldier hops down from the wagon with a coil of rope. He tosses it to Friesshardt, who loops it around Walter's legs and proceeds to hang him upside down from the tree.

Hedwig springs to her feet and toward Friesshardt with clenched fists--

HEDWIG  
(shrieks)  
Murderers!! Bastards!!

Gessler grabs her and restrains her arms. She shrieks and fights like a beast as he drags her over to William, unfocused and barely able to move.

GESSLER  
There lies the man to whom your  
hostility should be directed: the  
slayer of your son!

WILLIAM  
Don't listen...don't...

Furst uses the wagon wheel to pull himself up.

FURST  
You lying bastard--!

A soldier knocks Furst to the ground with a savage blow.

GESSLER  
True, I commanded him to shoot the  
apple off your son's head as  
punishment for his disobedience.  
(Beat)  
A father who cared truly for the  
safety of his own would've  
preferred to die rather than submit  
to such a harsh order...but he did  
submit...that pride, that  
unshakable pride kept him from  
doing anything but!

Hedwig's body becomes rigid. She glowers down at William with hate filled eyes.

HEDWIG  
How could you! How could you shoot  
arrows at your own son?! How could  
you!!

WILLIAM  
Don't listen...didn't happen that  
way...don't listen...

She hurls herself upon him. She scratches and strikes with clenched fists and screams in his face.

WILLIAM  
Don't listen...lies...

William loses consciousness. Seconds tick by and Hedwig's rage dies down. She presses her face into William's chest and sobs.

Gessler watches in uncomfortable silence.

Rudi looks from the headless Prinz to William and Hedwig to Walter's body and lastly to Gessler and his men.

RUDI  
(softly)  
Austrian pigs.

A soldier begins to draw his sword--

Gessler steps up behind the soldier and pushes the sword back into it's sheath.

GESSLER  
Hold.

INT. PRISON-MAIN DINING HALL

William awakens on a stone slab. Light filters in through barred windows.

Itel sits with his back to a stone pillar a few feet away. He tries to eat a stale piece of bread. He sees William awake and his face brightens. He tosses the bread away.

ITEL  
I must tell you...it's an honor to  
finally meet you, William Tell...  
(gestures around the  
prison)  
If only it were under better  
circumstances...

A prisoner passes and bears his yellowed teeth at them.

ITEL  
Quite a place this is.  
(Beat)  
I'm sorry about your son.

His only response in silence.

ITEL  
...he seemed like a good lad, your  
son...and brave too, never have I  
seen a boy braver...I only wish I  
could say the same of myself...

William looks interested but still remains silent.

ITEL  
One night I was in Altdorf with a  
lady friend when we were waylaid by  
Gessler's men...they tried to drag  
her off to have their way with  
her...but, by God, I fought them...  
(MORE)

ITEL (cont'd)

(beat)

The next morning, Gessler came seeking my arrest and two of my best oxen as compensation for any injuries to his men. But, like a hotheaded fool I resisted and started a fight with Gessler's men...I ended up killing one of them...

William swings his legs over the opposite side of the slab with his back to Itel. He listens intently.

ITEL

I fled to the hills. They hunted me all the harder. Now, the bastard wanted my head in a noose...he took my father, a poor, old man, to his dungeon and tortured him without mercy! No matter what the butchers did, my father never uttered a word...I heard about what was happening. I couldn't bear the thought of what else that swine would do to my father if I didn't give myself up, so I did.

(Beat)

I was taken here...to this lovely place! My surrender wasn't enough for Gessler...he wanted me to suffer for my defiance, so my father was brought to this living hell and I was forced to watch while Gessler put out his eyes!

Itel squeezes his eyes shut at the memory.

ITEL

Oh Lord, his eyes!

William watches a rat scurry across the stone floor and squeeze through a crack in the rock wall.

ITEL

You think that's the worst of it? Well, it's not! Gessler had him put outside to wander, sightless! He stumbled on a root...over the edge...

(chokes up)

Dashed his head against solid rock on the way down...

WILLIAM

...I'm sorry.

Itel looks at William, surprised that he spoke.

INT. PRISON-MAIN DINING HALL

Morning sunlight filters in through barred windows. All prisoners are lined up at the door. A guard on either side ushers them through at spear point. When William gets to front of the line the soldier on the right holds his spear across his path.

RIGHT GUARD

Not you.

William glares at him with questioning eyes.

RIGHT GUARD

You're William Tell.

(Beat)

That's why.

The guard on the left shoves him aside with his spear.

LEFT SOLDIER

Now, out of the line!

In a flash William grabs onto the spear and knees the left guard in the gut.

Right guard strikes William on the side of the head with the butt of his spear. William staggers away.

Right guard draws a horn and blows into it. More guards emerge through two entry-ways on either side of the room. They create a semi-circle around William. A huge broad shouldered, bald headed guard with a bristly mustache and beard moves through an entry-way.

He steps between two guards and walks to William. He looks down at William and grins evilly. He starts to crack his huge knuckles.

William darts forward and kicks him in the groin. There's a metallic thud as William's foot connects. He yelps in pain and clutches his foot. The huge guard backhands William to the floor.

HUGE GUARD

Think you're the first to try that trick?

William slams his heels into the huge guards shins. He growls in pain, yanks William off the floor by his legs and hurls him across the room.

HUGE GUARD

One must always be prepared. Agree?

The huge guard lumbers towards William. William snatches a half full water bucket. He heaves the water into the huge guards face than WHACKS him across the jaw with bucket.

The huge guard bats bucket away. With one hand he seizes William by the throat and by the ankle with the other. He lifts William over his head and hurls him onto a long table, cluttered with half-empty wooden bowls of mush. Table splinters and cracks on impact and collapses an instant later.

The huge guard overturns a bench and reaches for William--

William plunges a sharp piece of wood into the huge guard's foot. He roars in pain and lifts William off the floor with a two handed grip on his throat. He shakes William and shouts curses at him. William paws at the huge guard's arms with his left arm. William's right arm comes around in an arc, clutching a table leg. With a guttural roar he shoves the jagged end into the side of huge guard's neck.

WILLIAM

Agree!

Huge guard chokes and spits blood. His eyes glaze over and he stumbles to one knee. William brings down flat end of table leg on huge guard's head again and again. His arms slowly slip from William's throat and he collapses in a heap.

The guards close the circle around William and begin to pummel him with the butts of their spears.

William still clutches the table leg and rams it into a guard's groin. A blow to William's forehead with a spear butt stuns him.

INT. PRISON-CORRIDOR

A guard on either side drag William down cracked stone steps. Weeds sprout from between the cracks. The only light source comes from lighted torches on the walls. The jailer follows, his massive key ring jingles.

The jailer pulls open a heavy wood door to a dingy windowless cell. Guards toss William inside and jailer slams door shut.

INT. PRISON-CELL

Light shines in from underneath the door. The lock clicks into place.

William tries to stand but stumbles to his knees. He pounds the floor in teary eyed frustration.

WILLIAM

(low)  
Hedwig...

EXT. GESSLER'S COURTYEARD-DAY

Hedwig kneels on one knee and tends to wild flowers which span the perimeter of the courtyard.

Rudi descends stone steps, but stops as he sees Gessler approach Hedwig from behind.

Rudi's eyes narrow and his lower lips curls. He glares at Gessler.

A sudden gust of wind whips across the courtyard. His cloak swishes around. He slowly turns, but Rudi is gone.

Gessler gently reaches for Hedwig's shoulder. She shudders at his touch and he draws back his hand.

GESSLER

You've been thinking about him.  
Haven't you?

HEDWIG

(lies)  
No.

GESSLER

(sees through it)  
I suppose I can't fault you...after  
all, it's only been nearly a month  
since--

HEDWIG

Do you think I could so quickly  
forget the man who fathered my  
children?!

GESSLER

No...but, I want you to warm to me  
on your own terms...not out of  
spite for Tell!

HEDWIG

Don't say his name!  
(Softly)  
Please...

She whirls away from him and stares out across the courtyard.

GESSLER

It's your name too...but, it  
doesn't have to be.

(MORE)

GESSLER (cont'd)

That is, as we become better acquainted.

(Beat)

If that's what you want...only if it's what you want...

Gessler's eyes follow Hedwig as she returns to the flowers.

GESSLER

I had a wife once...she was very dear to me...reminds me of you, actually...

HEDWIG

(without turning)

You remind me of someone too.

Gessler cringes ever so slightly as Hedwig turns back to him.

Werner comes into view at the top of the castle steps--

WERNER

Governor! The nobles are outside and seek an audience with your lordship!

GESSLER

Bid them enter! Took them long enough.

He starts up the steps, stops, pivots back to Hedwig and bows--

GESSLER

Duty calls...

INT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-PRIVATE CHAMBER

Gessler sits at his table and takes a swig of red wine from a goblet.

Gessler looks up as Werner opens the double wooden doors and makes way for the nobles.

Gessler takes another swig and puts down the goblet as the nobles enter. He rises--

A noble, BURKHARDT, steps forward. He speaks for the rest.

BURKHARDT

This is completely unacceptable! Baron Attinghausen was our spokesman and you stood by and did nothing while he was murdered, his daughter attacked and his home ravaged!

GESSLER

Burkhardt, gentlemen, I assure you that I knew nothing at the time...if I had I would've done what I could to prevent it.

BURKHARDT

Governor, we can't continue to support a man who isn't aware of the actions of his own men...and allows such things to happen!

Gessler looks hard at Burkhardt then at the rest of the nobles.

GESSLER

If by that you mean to shift your support to the growing rebel element...I must warn you...that is most unwise.

Fear begins to register on the faces of the nobles.

GESSLER

Most unwise indeed...

BURKHARDT

You couldn't mistreat us. We're of noble blood, not peasants!

GESSLER

Ally yourselves with rabble and you shall be treated as rabble. It's as simple as that.

INT. PRISON-CELL

William is on his knees. He pounds his head against the door. We hear the creak of the prison gates as they open. He presses his ear to the door and listens.

INT. PRISON-MAIN DINING HALL

A guard on either side of the tall double oak doors pull them open. A handful of soldiers enter first proceeded by Gessler with Hedwig on his arm followed by Werner, Rudenz and more soldiers.

Soldiers form a wall between the prisoners and Gessler. Gessler holds his hands high as if accepting cheers from his adoring public when in fact they are jeers and curses. Itel tries to squeeze past two guards who shove him back.

Two soldiers pull and two push a wooden cart carrying a wooden crate.

Gessler gestures to the prison yard--

GESSLER  
out there.

They wheel in out into the prison yard. Gessler faces the mob of prisoners--

He points to a short, stocky prisoner with a balding head and bad teeth.

GESSLER  
You.

Next he points to a broad shouldered prisoner of medium height with curly dark hair and beard.

GESSLER  
You.

Lastly he points to a lean, muscular prisoner with gangly, long blond hair.

GESSLER  
You.  
(To soldiers)  
Escort these gentlemen outside.

Some of the prisoners give Hedwig looks that make her cringe and move behind Gessler.

Gessler turns to Werner--

GESSLER  
Find the jailer...

Prisoners strain against the soldiers and guards to reach Gessler. Their eyes burn with hate.

Werner walks behind the jailer who steps awkwardly up to Gessler and bows.

GESSLER  
(to jailer)  
Bring me Tell.

Hedwig shivers slightly at his tone.

GESSLER  
Perhaps you should wait by the  
boat...

Hedwig shakes her head.

HEDWIG

No...no, I'll be alright...

The jailer approaches. His key ring jingles. Hedwig gasps as he steps aside. a guard on either side drag William across the floor and halt before Gessler. William is grungy and grimy. He squints and keeps his head lowered

Hedwig covers her nose and briefly turns her head away.

GESSLER

No need to be polite, my dear. I know, the stench is ghastly.

William's head snaps upward and he wrenches himself free of the guards and lunges at Gessler with a roar.

William's hands clench around Gessler's throat. He sputters and gags.

The guards kick William behind the knees and pound on his back with clenched fists. They force him to his knees, twist his arms behind his back and hold him tight.

Gessler lifts William's chin with the palm of his hand--

GESSLER

(harsh whisper)

I know how badly you want to kill me...but, you must exhibit self restraint.

WILLIAM

(narrows his eyes)

I want to kill you. More than anything else in this world...mark my words on that score I will not fail.

GESSLER

And that is why you shall remain in your current state of confinement for the rest of your natural life!

William grits his teeth and struggles to stand, but the guards keep him down.

GESSLER

Remember, Tell, self restraint. Especially in the company of a such a fine lady...

WILLIAM

Her presence here now is the only reason why I don't spit in your face!

Gessler gestures to the guards to take William into the prison yard.

They drag William out. Gessler follows trailed by Hedwig Werner and Rudenz.

EXT. PRISONYARD-DAY

William is tied to a stone slab by a chain. He watches as soldiers unload the crate and pry it open with iron bars. Others prod the three prisoners Gessler selected to the center of the prison yard at spear-point.

The last of the wooden crate falls away to reveal a cannon. Soldiers gather to assemble it.

Gessler strides over to Hedwig and lays a hand on her shoulder.

GESSLER

This time I must really insist that you wait by the boat.

HEDWIG

Why?

William cranes his neck to look at Hedwig. She turns and holds his look--

She slowly approaches the stone slab that he's chained to.

HEDWIG

What do you want?

(Beat)

I don't talk to murderers.

WILLIAM

Somehow, I don't believe you.

(Beat)

So, now you've become what, Gessler's plaything?! why only settle for a governor, you could've tried for the bigger prize, the King himself!

Tears well up in the corners of Hedwig's eyes, break, and roll down her cheeks.

HEDWIG

How-how dare you! How dare you!

She runs from the prison yard. Gessler watches her, but remains where he is. Werner and Rudenz follow Hedwig.

Gessler strides toward William.

GESSLER

On the one hand I should thank you  
for getting her to leave...on the  
other--

He slaps William across the face--

GESSLER

Never speak to her that way again!  
She's no longer your  
responsibility! She's mine!

He slaps William again--

GESSLER

Heaven knows she needed someone to  
console her after you killed  
Walter...

William violently strains against his chains and spits at  
Gessler--

WILLIAM

You killed Walter, you verminous  
scum! When I kill you I'm going to  
cut out your heart!

(Beat)

If you have one!

GESSLER

(sarcastic)

Oh, I have one and it bleeds for  
you, Tell, it really does.

He steps back towards the cannon.

The three prisoners still stand together.

GESSLER

(to prisoners)

Do you really want to spend your  
last few seconds of life standing  
still...waiting to die?

A soldier lugs a heavy ball of stone over to the cannon and  
loads it inside.

INT. PRISON-MAIN DINING HALL

IteI and the other prisoners watch through the windows.  
IteI's eyes lock onto Gessler with set teeth.

EXT. PRISONYARD-DAY

Gessler gestures to a soldier crouching behind the cannon. The soldier nods and lights the fuse. Two other soldiers turn the cannon and aim its barrel at the three prisoners.

They panic and run in different directions.

The soldier on either side of the cannon barrel help Gessler track the prisoners. The barrel comes to bear between two of the prisoners. The fuse burns down.

The cannon fires with a thunderous roar. Gessler and the three soldiers near the cannon are thrown back by the jolt.

The cannon rolls backward a few inches.

The stone ball explodes between the two prisoners as they run. Pieces of stone cut into them and they collapse to the ground.

Gessler sits up and shakes a fist in the air--

GESSLER  
(looks at William)  
Ingenious! Is it not?

WILLIAM  
(through clenched teeth)  
Stunning.

The two soldiers resume their places on either side of the cannon barrel and help Gessler set his sights on the third prisoner who climbs the prison yard fence.

Another fuse is lighted and another stone ball loaded as the prisoner nears the top of the fence.

William watches in horror, eyers revetted to the scene.

The cannon thunders as it fires and the stone ball whistles through the air.

It tears through the prisoner like shredded wheat. He falls to the ground with a gaping hole in his middle.

Gessler claps his hands together and grins at William.

GESSLER  
It is always to one's benefit to  
have powerful friends, eh, Tell?

Gessler clasps his hands behind his back and admires his cannon.

GESSLER

In my case, the King himself. While I was commanding his armies in Austria, he asked me to be his escort on journeys to the Orient and the British Isles. It was in those locals that the substance used to fire this magnificent weapon here came into my possession.

Gessler is lost in thought for a few seconds then snaps his fingers.

GESSLER

Black powder I believe they called it. Can't remember the Chinese word...

Gessler throws up his hands--

GESSLER

Oh, Well! They never could decide who discovered it first anyway!

Soldiers drag the corpses from the yard while other dismantle the cannon.

GESSLER

(to two guards)

Take him back to his cell. The demonstration is over. Against weapons like these...your rebels, especially scattered and in hiding as they now are, stand little chance, Tell. Little chance at all.

INT. PRISON-CORRIDOR

A steady chorus of dull THUDS sound from inside William's cell.

The jailer and a soldier approach William's cell with Itel between them. He carries a bowl of glop.

The jailer pulls open a wooden panel in the door and Itel crouches down and is about to slide the bowl through at spear point. The sounds of men fighting catch their ears.

EXT. PRISONYARD-DAY

Two prisoners grapple in the mud. Other prisoners with picks, shovels and masonry tools stand around and watch. Neglected is the framework for an extension of the prison.

Guards rush over and try to prod the prisoners apart with their spears. A light rain begins to beat down on them followed by a gentle roll of thunder.

INT. PRISON-CORRIDOR

The jailer and guard continue to stare in the direction of the sounds of the fight, listening. Itel hurls the bowl of glop into the jailer's face. The guard pivots towards Itel. He swiftly rises and draws a knife from his ragged clothes. The blade slashes across the guard's throat. Blood spatters on the stone wall. His spear head gets wedged between the cracks in the wall. The guard spins into the wall and slides down it. Another roll of thunder sounds, but a little louder.

The jailer, pale as a sheet barges past Itel down the corridor. He's about to call for help when Itel knifes him in the back.

INT. PRISON-CELL

William raises his head as we hear keys jingle and then one inserted into the lock.

William squints and blocks his eyes with an arm. Light streams in as the door is pulled open. Itel stands in the doorway, a hand outstretched.

INT. PRISON-CORRIDOR

Itel half drags William along, who still shields his eyes from the light. Now the sounds of a full out brawl echoes throughout the whole prison.

INT. MAIN DINING HALL

Itel and William move down the steps from the corridor. A fierce battle rages between the guards and the prisoners. A prisoner with a pick in each hand edges his way around the room toward Itel and William.

William still squints and starts to back away, his shins hit the edge of the bottom step and he falls on his backside.

The prisoner tosses a pick to Itel who turns and helps William up.

He thrusts the pick into William's hands and turns back in time to catch the other pick. He leads William to the wall facing Altdorf, which we see through the windows. The rain comes down in torrents plus a flash of lightning.

They pass a prisoner who impales a guard to a table with a pick axe.

William watches the havoc before them, transfixed for a few seconds then tears is eyes away.

Itel chips away at hardened cement around a medium size hunk of rock.

ITEL  
(to himself)  
Hmm. Never thought I'd be escaping  
the same way again, so soon!

Itel stops for a second and eyes William.

ITEL  
Well?

WILLIAM  
(wry grin)  
Well what?

He swings his pick at the hardened cement and chips off a big chunk.

A guard runs a prisoner through with his sword and approaches William and Itel.

The guard's shadow fall over William. William pivots and catches the guard in the gut with his pick.

Four more guards with swords push through the ruckus toward William and Itel.

There's a thunderous CRACK of lightning and then an explosion of debris, dust and pieces of rock and cement.

Rain and wind blow in upon William's face from a gaping hole in the wall.

William blinks and crawls to his feet.

EXT. PRISON-DAY

Itel crawls through the gaping hole on his hands and knees. He rolls out onto the wet, slick grass. William climbs over rubble after him. Another gust of wind and rain hits him in the face. He drops down beside Itel and helps him up.

William leads Itel toward the cliff edge that over looks the lake.

Guards with spears hop down from the gaping hole in pursuit.

William and Itel reach the cliff edge. Below waves CRASH against rocks. The entire lake looks like one great whirlpool.

William and Itel glance over the edge than exchange looks. Itel takes a step back from the edge only to have a spear imbed itself into the ground less than a foot behind him.

William moves so close to the edge that he teeters on it. Itel stares at him like he's crazy. William reaches for Itel who backs away. Another spear sinks into the ground between Itel's spread legs.

He looks down and his eyes go wide. At that precise instant, William grabs Itel by the shirt front and over the edge they go. Another spear buries itself into the ground right where they were standing.

They cry out as they plummet one hundred feet to the lake below.

They enter the water feet first with a terrific SPLASH.

The guards rush to the cliff edge and peer down. One removes his helmet and wipes sweat from his brow.

GUARD

No one could have survived that...

They turn and walk back to the prison.

EXT. LAKE-DAY

William and Itel surface at the same time and gasp for breath.

The fierce waters pull William and Itel toward jagged rocks.

William thrusts his head under water and swims for an inlet of pine trees. Itel grabs onto a rock as he is yanked into it and then around it by the harsh waters.

William reaches the inlet and latches onto a low hanging branch. He pulls himself hand over hand to shore. He rolls over onto his back and breathes hard.

Itel yells for help as he's swept past half submerged in a wave.

William rises shakily to his feet and takes hold of the branch. He bends it, twists it and stomps it with his heel until it breaks free.

He runs along the water's edge and extends it to Itel, who snatches it.

William pulls Itel ashore. William helps him up as a gust of wind and rain blows on them. They stagger into the dense forest.

EXT. DENSE FOREST-DAY

William and Itel come to a clearing. No longer shielded by thick patches of trees, rain pours down on them. They look up at the sky, which is shrouded with dark rain clouds. There's another roar of thunder and a flash of lightning.

They look at each other and share a tired laugh. They sink down heavily upon a boulder.

ITEL

It appears for me the running never ends.

WILLIAM

You're not alone...

ITEL

Any plans?

WILLIAM

Revenge.  
(Beat)  
You?

Itel stands up.

ITEL

When Gessler gets his hands on those cannons, the rebellion will be crushed!

WILLIAM

The rebellion may already be shattered--

ITEL

What makes you say that? Did Gessler tell you this?

WILLIAM

Come with me...you have as much reason to hate him as I. We can do it together.

ITEL

We would be dead before we were even within an inch of him! Why don't you come with me!

(MORE)

ITEL (cont'd)

With those weapons, there will be  
no other recourse but for us to  
submit to Gessler fully!

William jumps up and snaps--

WILLIAM

I've had enough of these damn  
crusades! I have my own motives!  
(Beat)  
My own plans!

ITEL

Yes, plans that revolve around you  
getting killed for nothing!

William clenches his fists. His eyes blaze in fury--

WILLIAM

You call Walter's life nothing?!

He seizes Itel by the shirt front.

ITEL

Everything has a time and a place!  
Now, is not the time for revenge!

William shoves Itel away from him.

WILLIAM

Revenge is the only time I have  
left!

ITEL

This is it then?

WILLIAM

I guess it is.

Itel walks away. William watches after him briefly then does  
the same.

ITEL (O.S.)

Where ever your journey takes  
you...God be with you, William  
Tell!

William's face tightens. His eyes narrow. His teeth clench.

EXT. DENSE FOREST-DAY

Branches and thorns scratch William as he runs. A horse laugh  
rises from his throat.

WILLIAM

God be with me?!

Tear well up in the corners of his eyes.

WILLIAM  
God be with me?!

His heel skids in mud and he tumbles down a hill. He claws at the ground and hurls handfuls of mud heavenward.

WILLIAM  
WHY DIDN'T YOU SAVE HIM?!!

Breathing hard, he slips in the mud and rams into a tree, shoulder first.

He sinks to his knees and rests his forehead against the tree trunk. He rests his back against the tree and slowly slides down it. He takes his face in his hands and sobs quietly.

Suddenly not far away, the rustling and crunching of leaves is heard. These sounds are followed by horses hooves and human voices. William's hands slowly slide down his face. His eyes become alert and focused.

He looks around desperately. He spies a young pine tree snapped in two. William twists half of it off and hurriedly sharpens it into a spear point on a sharp rock.

He moves quietly in the direction of the voices.

Armed with his wooden spear William watches through the trees. a soldier on horseback ride on either side of a horse drawn wagon. It's occupants are ELSBET, her younger sister, MECHTHILD who drive the wagon and her husband, Petermann, bound with rope hand and foot in the back. He curses and shouts at the soldiers, who ignore him. Their attention is riveted on Elsbet and Mechthild.

The storm has simmered down to a light rain.

William's eyes narrow to slits. He moves stealth like up the hill. Through the trees his hut comes into view. A soldier stands in the doorway, a grin on his face and hands on his hips. He eyes Elsbet and Mechthild.

SOLDIER #1  
Well, well, well. What have we here?

The two soldiers dismount and drag Elsbet and Mechthild down from the wagon.

SOLDIER  
We've come to relieve you...we thought you would enjoy a little entertainment.

SOLDIER #1  
Indeed, we would.

He looks over his shoulder into the hut at soldier #2 who eats a leg of roasted mutton.

SOLDIER #1  
Wouldn't we?

Soldier #2 takes another bite of his mutton. The juice drips down his chin. He wipes his mouth on his sleeve and steps outside.

Replacement soldiers #1 and #2 who hold Elsbet and Mechthild push them toward the other soldiers #1 and #2.

Soldier #2 snatches Mechthild around the waist and forces her inside. He tosses the mutton to replacement soldier #1. Replacement soldier #2 drags Petermann down from the wagon and through the dirt. He deposits him in front of the hut.

REPLACEMENT SOLDIER #2  
The Governor's been having a field day...traveling from town to town, rooting out rebels...hanging them

The soldiers laugh.

Soldier #1 shoves Elsbet against the side of the hut.

PETERMANN  
Don't you touch her, you filthy--

replacement soldier #1 eats the mutton over Petermann. The juice drips on his head. The soldier kicks dust in Petermann's face. He chokes and coughs.

Soldier #1 grabs Elsbet and tries to kiss her. She bites his lip. He growls in pain and punches her on the jaw. She slides down the side of the hut and collapses on her side.

Soldier #1 shakes his head and laughs.

SOLDIER  
Peasant women! Always doing things the hard way!

Petermann cries out and strains against his bonds as soldier #1 kneels beside Elsbet. He pulls her halfway up by her dress front and kisses her.

Sounds of Mechthild and soldier #2 struggling in the hut reach the ears of the others.

The other soldier moves past the one eating the mutton.

REPLACEMENT SOLDIER #2  
Sounds like he could use some help  
in there.

With a wry smile he walks into the hut.

Leaves rustle as William steps from the forest.

Soldier #1 drops Elsbet, rises and turns. He begins to draw his sword.

William hurls his spear. It impales soldier #1 with his sword half-drawn and pins him to the side of the hut.

Replacement soldier #1 stands agape with the mutton an inch away from his open mouth. Petermann stares at William in complete surprise.

William rushes to the impaled soldier #1.

Replacement soldier #1 tosses the mutton away and charges at William, sword drawn.

William draws impaled soldier #1's knife and rolls sideways just as the replacement soldier #1's sword hacks into the side of the hut.

William rises to one knee and springs into a forward roll as replacement soldier #1's next swing sweeps over him. He rolls over onto his back and drives the knife up into replacement soldier 1's gut. He gives it a sharp twist, withdraws the knife, and pushes the body away with his foot.

He moves to Petermann and cuts him free. Petermann dashes over to his wife as William snatches up the rope.

Replacement soldier #2 steps from the hut, without his helmet on. He draws his sword. Before he can raise it, his face goes blank and he falls over sideways with a knife imbedded in the side of his head.

INT. WILLIAM'S HUT

soldier #2 shoves Mechthild into the wall. She clutches the torn front of her dress together and trembles, but her eyes then become transfixed on--

William framed in the doorway, the rope clutched in hand. Soldier #2 draws his sword.

WILLIAM  
(low)  
You're in my house.

SOLDIER #2  
I helped hang three today. I think  
you'll be the fourth, Rebel.

Soldier #2 lunges at William. He ducks under soldier 2's  
sword.

WILLIAM  
No.

William steps around him and snakes the rope around his neck.

WILLIAM  
You are.

William kicks soldier 2's legs out from under him. His sword  
hand strikes the edge of the table and the weapon clatters to  
the floor.

William ties a knot in the rope and pulls it taught. Soldier  
#2 struggles like a madman. William rams soldier 2's head  
into the edge of the table, once, twice, then tosses the end  
of the rope over a ceiling beam.

He pulls hard on the rope. Soldier #2 thrashes and claws at  
the rope as he's slowly lifted off the floor.

William turns to Mechthild--

WILLIAM  
Outside.

She is frozen in place for a moment, but then slowly moves  
past him and outside.

William gives a fierce yank and puts his weight into it as he  
leans back--

Soldier #2 trashes wildly. His arm and legs flail. He claws  
at the rope. A sickening CRUNCH ends it all. He hangs,  
lifeless.

William stands there for a moment then lets the rope slip  
through his fingers. The body CRASHES to the floor..

EXT. WILLIAM'S HUT-DAY

William slowly emerges from the darkened doorway. He watches  
Petermann help Elsbet and Mechthild into the wagon.

He turns to face William--

PETERMANN  
How can I ever thank you?

WILLIAM  
 Just tell me where my son  
 is...buried.

Petermann points to a thin patch of trees where a field lies on the other side.

William walks through the thin patch of trees. Thorn branches catch and pull on his clothes.

The sounds of horses and wagon wheels moving across the ground fade into the distance.

Footsteps sound behind him. A hand touches his shoulder. William sends a back-fist to the nose of the person behind him.

The person seizes William in a choke hold. William grabs onto the person's arm and hurls him over his shoulder.

William catches a glimpse of someone else reaching for him. He pivots and hits that person with a haymaker. William lifts a leg to stomp the person, but stops--

WILLIAM  
 Furst?

Berta bashes William over the head with Furst's cane. William staggers forward. She hits him again. He collapses to his hands and knees. Berta winds up for a third time. Arnold catches the cane on the downward swing.

ARNOLD  
 Berta, no.

BERTA  
 He's gone mad! He was trying to  
 kill you!

William holds his head and crawls to his feet.

WILLIAM  
 (to Berta)  
 You did a pretty good job of it,  
 yourself.

Arnold helps Furst up. He frowns at William--

FURST  
 Next time I approach you, I'll  
 remember to shout first!

ARNOLD  
 God, it's good to see you--

WILLIAM  
 (barely above a whisper)  
 Walter...where is he?

Arnold points over a hill. William walks away from them and up the hill without another word.

EXT. OPEN FIELD-DAY

William stands before a wooden cross. A light drizzle combined with a rising wind whip through his hair and tattered clothes. Tears well up in William's eyes. He stumbles to his knees. He pounds the ground with a fist.

WILLIAM  
 (to Walter's grave)  
 You shall be avenged! I swear it!

A thunderclap sounds overhead.

EXT. WILLIAM'S HUT-DAY

Arnold, Furst and Berta gather round William now on horseback and dressed as a soldier. He pulls the helmet down over his head. He keeps his eyes fixed on the dirt road ahead.

FURST  
 Burkhardt and some others met  
 Berta, Arnold and I somewhere  
 behind his estate...in the  
 forest...a place of his  
 choosing...that was when it  
 happened--

ARNOLD  
 He knew, somehow Gessler knew...had  
 his men waiting--

FURST  
 They came at us from all  
 sides...many died, those who fled  
 were pursued--

BERTA  
 We barely escaped ourselves.

William continues to look straight ahead, without response.

ARNOLD  
 We now all have bounties on our  
 heads...

BERTA  
 The days that followed were full of  
 stories, passed from one mouth to  
 another...

She takes a deep breath, then goes on with a sad note in her voice.

BERTA (CONT'D)  
 stories which depicted nobles,  
 whose only crime was to listen to  
 the words of those less fortunate  
 than themselves, were made to watch  
 while their property was sacked and  
 burned...

She trails off, stifles a sob then continues--

BERTA (CONT'D)  
 He hung them, *Gessler* hung them one  
 by one.

William's entire body tenses at the sound of that name.

BERTA (CONT'D)  
 All nobles wide and far were forced  
 to attend and bare witness to what  
 would happen to anyone else who so  
 much as associates with the *rebel*  
*element!*

FURST  
 Put the fear of God into them is  
 what he did!  
 (Smiles at William)  
 But, at least we still have *you*.

ARNOLD  
 The people are still counting on  
 you, William...to lead them to...  
 (spreads his hands)  
 To...well, save them.

WILLIAM  
 (bursts out)  
 The devil with the revolt!

They all stare at him in surprise with the exception of Furst.

WILLIAM  
 How do you expect me to lead  
 anything?!...save anyone?! I  
 couldn't even save my own son!

Furst regards William with knowing look.

WILLIAM  
 Gessler's in Altdorf today, isn't  
 he?

His question is met with silence.

WILLIAM

One of the soldiers spoke of hangings. Gessler's seeing to them personally, isn't he?

More silence from the others.

William is about to urge his horse onward--

FURST

You're not honoring Walter's memory with this decision. You owe it to him not to divert from your true course...you owe it yourself! Don't you know how much that boy believed in you?!

William heads down the road.

Furst cups his hands to his mouth--

FURST

William, listen to me...regardless of the path you have let guilt, regret and *hatred* take you, I have faith that you will finally come to terms with what you were meant to do! I believe in you, and...

(tilts his head  
heavenward)

So does *He*!

William stops and whirls on his horse to face them.

WILLIAM

Where was *He* that day when I needed Him most?! When...why didn't He save my son?!

(teary eyed)

I don't know what to believe anymore...don't even know if I want to believe anymore...

(looks up at Furst)

All I want is to be left alone.

William nudges his horse onward again.

Arnold runs after him and catches up. He walks alongside William and unslings his crossbow from his shoulder. He holds it out to William.

ARNOLD

If your going to commit suicide...

(smiles)

(MORE)

## ARNOLD (cont'd)

You'll need this. It'll at least  
give you a fighting chance.

William smiles and takes the crossbow.

Arnold crosses his arms and watches William continue down the road. Furst ambles up to Arnold followed by Berta.

## FURST

Eventually there will be no other  
choice but to face your destiny!

William and his horse half-turn--

## WILLIAM

Perhaps this is my destiny!

He spurs the horse and gallops down the road, kicking up a cloud of dust behind him.

Arnold, Furst and Berta watch him go with solemn expressions on their faces.

## EXT. FOREST ROAD-DAY

Thunderclap after thunder clap sound. Each slightly louder than the one before. William gallops along, his face set in grim determination.

Altdorf comes into view over a sloping hill. Clumps of dirt and pebbles fly as William's horse's hooves pound heavily upon the ground. There's the loudest crash of thunder yet and the rain comes down again in full force.

## EXT. ALTDORF-DAY

William hunches over his horse as rain beats down on him.

The town square can be seen from between two dwellings.

William nears the Bear Inn. A roofer scampers down a ladder with a bundle of shingles tied to his back. He tosses the shingles under a tarp covering supplies in his wagon and dashes inside the inn.

William dismounts next to the wagon. He watches as across the way--

## EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

Kunz is dragged from his shop with a noose around his neck by a horse drawn soldier over to a tree. Gessler and two other soldiers on horseback wait by it.

EXT. BEAR INN-DAY

William climbs the ladder to the roof. He makes his way up one of the pitched sides.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

The soldier dragging Kunz halts and dismounts. The one soldier on either side of Gessler dismount and raise Kunz to his feet.

EXT. BEAR INN-ROOF-DAY

William gets into a comfortable position and rests the crossbow on the roof's peak. He struggles to sight in Gessler in the pouring rain.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

The two soldiers hoist Kunz up onto the other soldier's horse.

They toss the end of the rope over a thick tree branch and pull it taught.

Kunz winces and groans.

EXT. BEAR INN-ROOF-DAY

William has Gessler in his sights and tightens his finger on the trigger.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

Gessler glares at Kunz with stone cold eyes.

GESSLER

You've been found guilty of  
associating with rebels.

(Beat)

You know what the penalty for that  
is...

A soldier pushes Kunz off the horse. He grunts in pain as he sways back and fourth. He claws at the rope. His legs kick.

EXT. BEAR INN-ROOF-DAY

William sweats and his aim wavers between Gessler and Kunz. With a growl of frustration, William once again fixes his aim on Gessler. His finger squeezes the trigger--

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

Kunz's eyes glaze over and his arms and legs flail.

EXT. BEAR INN-ROOF-DAY

Sweat continues to roll down William's face. He jerks his arm away from Gessler at the last second and aims at the rope as the crossbow fires

INT. BEAR INN-DAY

Everyone crowds behind the roofer around a window as Kunz is cut down by the arrow. A great roar of thunder sounds at the same instant.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE-DAY

The arrow imbeds itself deep into the tree. Gessler gazes up at the sky, then notices the arrow. He wrenches it free and studies it for a second before scanning his surroundings. He squints and shields his eyes on account of the rain.

EXT. BEAR INN-ROOF-DAY

With the crossbow clenched firmly in one hand, William looks over his shoulder as he inches toward the ladder on his belly.

William's foot slips on a loose shingle. Another shingle comes loose in his hand. He yells as he slides down the pitched side. The constantly growing rumble of thunder above drowns William out.

As he slides off the roof, his arm catches the ladder and knocks it down with him.

William lands in the tarp. It envelops him and leaves exposed some of the supplies in the back of the wagon. The crossbow strikes the side of the wagon--

The crossbows drops into a mud puddle.

The roofer charges out of the inn, hops up into the front of the wagon and seizes the reins. He yells at the horses to go.

A sword point presses against his cheek. He breaks into a sweat. Gessler and his men surround the wagon.

GESSLER

Whoa there. Where do you go in such a hurry, may I ask?

ROOFER

Governor, I...I am nothing but a simple seller of wares.

Gessler spies the exposed supplies.

GESSLER

Something you forgot, no one buys wet goods.

He motions a couple of soldiers to check the tarp.

They plunge their swords through. Water gushes from the holes.

ROOFER

Look what they've done--

GESSLER

Hold your tongue if you wish to keep it.

BENEATH THE TARP

William lies barely conscious wedged in between supplies on the far end of the wagon.

Gessler whips out the arrow and thrusts it at the roofer.

GESSLER

(acid tone)

This wouldn't happen to belong to you by any chance?

The roofer shakes his head violently no.

Gessler doesn't believe him for an instant and motions to his men.

He eyes the crossbow. He leans down and swipes it up off the ground.

GESSLER

Take him.

(Beat)

You know what to do.

Soldiers drag the roofer from the wagon. He kicks and screams in wild eyed terror.

The innkeeper and all the patrons pour out into the street and surround Gessler and his men.

GESSLER  
Back about your business, all of  
you!

INNKEEPER  
No, Governor, we will not! We bare  
witness to this man's innocence,  
every last one of us!

Gessler fixes the innkeeper and patrons with an impassive stare.

A soldier, CAPTAIN HARRAS leans in close to Gessler.

CAPTAIN HARRAS  
(hushed voice)  
Governor, these people can't be  
trusted! They protect each other!

GESSLER  
(harsh whisper)  
Captain, the last thing we need at  
this moment is a riot!

He addresses the soldiers holding the roofer.

GESSLER  
Let him go.

The soldiers release him and the innkeeper and patrons breathe sighs of relief.

Gessler moves away from everyone and motions Captain Harras to join him. He does.

GESSLER  
I have an important task for you,  
Captain...

Captain Harras merely nods.

GESSLER  
Head for the border and make these  
orders plain: anyone crossing is to  
be searched...down to their  
undergarments if necessary. The  
same goes for transportation of any  
kind.

He nods over his shoulder at the wagon.

GESSLER

Such as that wagon there. These rebels must be uprooted. Mark my words, there's an uprising brewing and we'd best be prepared to contend with it when the time comes.

CAPTAIN HARRAS

Yes, my Lord!

He gallops off.

A random soldier steps toward Gessler--

RANDOM SOLDIER

(hushed voice)

Governor, the tanner has vanished...

GESSLER

(low)

Find him. Hang him again...and this time, make sure he dies.

EXT. DIRT ROAD-DAY

WAGON-BENEATH THE TARP

William begins to stir.

The roofer hunches over the rains in the front of the wagon. The rain beats down. The wagon approaches the border. The soldiers who patrol it look like blurry outlines.

William's head rises up through one of the holes in the tarp as they near the boarder.

He ducks back beneath the tarp. William is jostled around by bumps in the road. He pokes his head back up through the hole. An increasingly heavier rainfall makes everything harder to see.

William surges through the hole and jumps over the side. He rolls down a hill along the side of the road. He crouches behind a boulder and watches.

The wagon stops at the border and soldiers move along either side to inspect it.

Captain Harris observes from the background. The soldiers roll back the tarp and search every nook and cranny. They hop down and report to Captain Harris.

The roofer leans forward in the front of the wagon and strains to hear them.

A cold stare from Captain Harris causes him to jerk back upright.

He makes the roofer sweat a little before waving him through.

Captain Harris and the soldiers watch the roofer pass through and continue down the road on the other side of the boarder.

They turn away and resume their posts.

William leaves his hiding place and moves along the side of the road in a crouch.

He runs after the wagon, climbs into the back and disappears under the tarp.

EXT. ROCKY ROAD--SCHWYZ--DAY

The wagon bumps along the road. An early morning sun shines down on a rain slicked road and landscape. They pass a faded wooden sign planted in the ground: it reads --SCHWYZ. Rain drips from the edge of the sign.

They pass a vast field of wheat.

The wagon goes down a steep hill, past a river and towards a small cluster of farmhouses with towering cornfields.

EXT. HANS MAUER'S VILLAGE--DAY

HANS MAUER emerges from between two cornstalks and wipes dirt stained hands on his shirt.

His wife, GERTRUD, descends the steps of their farmhouse and waves to the roofer who waves back.

Hans walks toward the wagon followed by two village men, CONRAD HUNN and JOST VON WEILER.

Hans greets the roofer with a smile.

HANS  
Hello, Jorg...

JORG brings the wagon to a halt.

Gertrud circles round the wagon and reaches for the tarp--

WAGON--BENEATH THE TARP

William is jerked forward and his hand shoots through a hole in the tarp--

His hand seizes Gertrud's wrist and she screams.

In a panic, Hans rushes around the wagon, Hunn and Weiler behind him.

Gertrud continues to scream as Hunn and Weiler pound with their fists on William, unknown to them under the tarp. Hans joins in with his cane.

William, wrapped in the tarp is yanked from the wagon and rolls across the ground.

The tarp unravels and William plops over onto his back.

HANS  
William Tell?

WILLIAM  
Hans Mauer?

Gertrud breathes a sigh of relief.

Hans offers William a hand up, but William shrugs it off and crawls to his feet himself.

HANS  
Gertrud, you remember William Tell--

GERTRUD  
Of course! Who could forget a man larger than life itself!

William gives her a disgusted look.

WILLIAM  
I'm not larger than anything! I'm just one puny, insignificant man!

HUNN  
If you really believe that than you're the only one who does.

WEILER  
Last I heard, you were in prison...

WILLIAM  
It didn't agree with me.

A slight smile forms on Hans's face.

HANS  
 It's a miracle you still obtain  
 your wit after all you've been made  
 to endure.

William sighs and turns toward the cloudy sky that's just starting to clear. The sun protrudes just slightly.

JORG  
 (blurts out)  
 You're the one Gessler was after!  
 He was all set to hang me!

Jorg glances around in a panic. He rushes for his wagon.

JORG  
 I dare not stay a second longer!  
 Gessler has spies everywhere!

HANS  
 Not here. We have made it perfectly  
 clear to the Governor that we don't  
 present a threat, in return he  
 leaves us alone.

JORG  
 I can't risk it.  
 (Looks at William)  
 Gessler learns you spent the night  
 in my wagon, he'll hunt me down and  
 hang me for sure!

William watches him climb up into the wagon with a steady gaze.

JORG  
 I have mouths to feed too, you  
 know! I have a fine reputation in  
 my trade to provide food to fill  
 those mouths!

William smirks and leans back against a tree.

WILLIAM  
 With such quality workmanship as  
 you undoubtedly possess, I'm not  
 surprised!

Jorg jumps down from the wagon and gets in William's face.

JORG  
 I don't have to take that from you!

WILLIAM  
 No, you don't have to take that,  
 but you can take this!

William belts him across the jaw. Jorg sprawls face first in the dust.

WILLIAM  
 Those shingles weren't even  
 fastened down properly! I almost  
 broke my neck falling off that damn  
 roof!

William moves in as Jorg crawls to his feet. Hunn and Weiler grab William and restrain him.

Hans and Gertrud help Jorg to his feet.

HUNN  
 (to William)  
 Our society here is a non violent  
 one. Anyone who comes and disrupts  
 the principles it was founded upon  
 is not welcome.

WILLIAM  
 I'll leave it then.

He turns on his heel and strides down the road that leads out of the village.

Hans hobbles after him.

HANS  
 That would apply to anyone else,  
 but you, William Tell! ...You who  
 saved me from that wild boar long  
 before I set off to find this  
 sanctuary of peace!

William slows to a halt and turns--

WILLIAM  
 Alright! Alright...I'll stay, but  
 only for a little while.

Hans' face lights up and he puts an arm around William's shoulders.

HANS  
 Excellent! Allow me to show you  
 around our humble village...

William gestures for him to lead the way.

EXT. FEAST-VILLAGE SQUARE-NIGHT

The whole village sits at long tables piled high with food.

William sits beside Hans and Gertrud.

Everyone around William eats and makes merry. William eats a bowl of meat and vegetable stew in silence.

Hans rests a hand on William's shoulder.

HANS

I just want you to know that I understand...

WILLIAM

You say that...but you can't really understand until you've experienced it yourself.

Gertrud tries to lighten the mood.

GERTRUD

William...how long will you be with us?

WILLIAM

...I honestly don't know...perhaps another day or so.

GERTRUD

I'm so glad... You will be joining us in the morning then, when Father Rosselmann will be saying a prayer--

WILLIAM

(with disdain)  
A prayer?

GERTRUD

(taken back)  
Why, yes. To thank the Lord for sending you to us in your time of need...and ask he protect you on your journey after you leave us...

William looks down at his stew.

GERTRUD

You will be joining us?

William takes a deep breath and blows it out.

WILLIAM

I'd rather not.  
(Beat)  
My only prayer he could answer is another chance to sink an arrow deep into Gessler's black heart!

He SLAMS a fist on the table and his bowl bounces slightly. Stew splashes down around it.

William rises from his chair. All eyes are on him.

WILLIAM

God played me a dirty trick in my  
time of need! He abandoned me!

He sweeps his stew off the table with back of his hand. The bowl breaks and the stew splatters on the ground.

WILLIAM

I've always trusted and  
believed...and He lets my son die!!

William plants both hands firmly on the table leans forward--

WILLIAM

Answer me that! Answer me that!

Everyone only stares at him in response. William turns his back to them and stalks away from the table.

He stops at the bottom steps of a farmhouse and hangs his head. He vents his frustration and gives the railing a vicious kick. He moves from the light of the torches into the darkness.

INT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-HEGWIG AND RUDI'S QUARTERS

Rudi sleeps beside Hedwig. Their door is open a crack and passing candlelight filters in followed by light footsteps out in the hall.

Hedwig sleeps soundly, but Rudi's eyelids flutter open. He slowly sits up bed. Casts a quick glance at Hedwig. She remains asleep.

He edges his way off the bed and tiptoes to the door.

He peers out the cracked open door as the candlelight fades around the corner at the end of the corridor.

Rudi squeezes through the door and moves to the end of the corridor.

He peeks around the corner as the candle holder, a heavy set, bearded soldier, HORST enters Gessler's quarters at the end of the adjoining corridor.

Rudi presses himself against the wall and slides along it until he reaches Gessler's door. He puts his ear to the door--

INT. GESSLER'S QUARTERS

Gessler sits with his feet propped up on the table. He sips from a goblet of wine.

Horst bows slightly.

GESSLER  
What news have you this night?

HORST  
Good news, my Lord. Reinhardt, in Schwyz has reported a Tell sighting.

GESSLER  
You don't say. Do Tell.

He chuckles at his own joke.

HORST  
It came from our eyes and ears in the pacifist village of one Hans Mauer...

GESSLER  
Ah, yes, I remember...

Gessler takes a swig of wine and gazes out the window at the moon.

GESSLER  
Not that I don't put stock in Reinhardt's words...actually I don't, which is why I want you to take a man of your choice and go yourself incognito.

He swings his legs off the table and rises to his feet. He paces around the table.

GESSLER  
Once you have confirmed what Reinhardt says, then and only then will I take action.

He holds up a finger to emphasize his words.

GESSLER  
I cannot afford to spare a single man when the possibility remains--

He stops at the window and looks out over the landscape.

GESSLER (CONT'D)  
 That Tell's still out there  
 somewhere...nearby, lurking in  
 wait.

EXT. DIRT ROAD-NIGHT

Horst and LEUTHOLD, slim and with blond hair drive a wagon  
 dressed as peddlers.

Rudi hides among supplies in the back of the wagon.

EXT. HANS MAUER'S VILLAGE-DAY

William sits on a tree stump and carves a stock for a  
 crossbow with his hunting knife. The curved bow which goes  
 across the end of the stock lies on the ground beside him.

Hans walks up behind him and puts a hand on his shoulder.

HANS  
 Father Rosselmann will be saying  
 the prayer in a few moments...if  
 you change your mind...

WILLIAM  
 (without turning)  
 I won't.

HANS  
 William, you were a man of faith,  
 strong convictions...how can you  
 blame God?

WILLIAM  
 That's precisely it! I had faith,  
 but where did it get me?!

HANS  
 What did you expect? God to come  
 down from the heavens in a flaming  
 chariot?!

WILLIAM  
 I expected protection!  
 (Beat)  
 Protection comes with faith! Isn't  
 that right?!

HANS  
 It is. But, you forget one thing,  
 my friend, that God gave us free  
 will.

(MORE)

## HANS (cont'd)

He tries to point us in the right direction if we listen, but the choice to follow him is ours to make.

William looks at the ground, speechless.

Hans turns at the sound of an approaching horse and wagon.

Hans turns back to--

--William walks through the village, his new crossbow slung over his shoulder.

He comes to a vast cornfield on the village outskirts.

Horst and Leuthold pull up beside Hans and bring the wagon to a halt.

Horst has a swollen eye and piece of cloth wrapped around one hand. Leuthold has two black eyes and split lip.

Horst steps down from the wagon.

## EXT. CORNFIELD-DAY

He fits an arrow onto the bowstring and cocks the weapon.

He looks around for a target. He spies a scarecrow about fifty paces away, takes careful aim and fires. The arrow tears right through the scarecrow's left eye.

William feels eyes upon him and turns--

A bunch of boys watch him.

BOY

Can I try?

OTHER BOYS

(in unison)

Can I try?

William hesitates momentarily then offers the crossbow to the boy.

William helps him steady and aim the weapon.

WILLIAM

Steady now...steady...

Fire!

The boy squeezes the trigger and the crossbow jerks, throwing off his aim. The arrow strikes the ground.

Disappointed and due to the giggles of the other boys, he hangs his head.

William gives the other boys a stern look, silencing them, then puts a hand on the boy's shoulder.

WILLIAM  
That was a good try...son. You'll  
do better next time...

EXT. HANS MAUER'S VILLAGE-DAY

Horst and Leuthold follow Hans over to Hunn. He churns butter in front of the stable where the cows are kept.

HANS  
We've been searching the entire  
village for you! Our innkeeper  
friend, Reinhardt has been bragging  
that you make the best butter in  
the region!

Hunn takes in Horst's and Leuthold's appearance.

HANS  
(chuckles)  
They say they were waylaid by a  
wild eyed old man and a young boy!

Hunn laughs along with Hans. Horst and Leuthold do not, which makes them laugh all the harder.

HANS  
The wild eyes old man sounds like  
Father Klause.  
(Beat)  
Can't imagine who the boy was,  
though.

Hans smiles and walks off.

HUNN  
Well, I don't like to gloat, but  
he's right!

Horst and Leuthold watch him with blank looks.

HUNN  
About the butter, I mean.  
(Beat)  
Care for a  
taste?

Horst sits followed by Leuthold onto a tree stump.

Hunn ushers them over--

They scoop out a little on their fingers and taste it.

HORST  
Delicious!

LEUTHOLD  
Quite good!

HUNN  
If you like how it tastes off your  
finger then wait till you taste it  
on bread!

Horst and Leuthold both nod in anticipation.

HUNN  
Wait here. I'll be right back.

Hunn walks toward his farm house at a fast clip.

Hunn's wife rushes toward him as he exits the farmhouse with  
a loaf of bread.

HUNN'S WIFE  
(winded)  
Konrad...come...see--

She points to the cornfield.

HUNN  
Come see...what?!

He thrusts the bread into her arms and heads for the  
cornfield.

EXT. CORNFIELD-DAY

William helps Hunn's son, Albert to steady his aim.

Hunn CRASHES through the cornfield. William looks over his  
shoulder as Hunn shoulders him aside.

He snatches William's crossbow from Albert's hands and throws  
it to the ground like a poisonous thing.

HUNN  
Albert! What the devil do you think  
you're doing?!

ALBERT  
But, father, it was fun!

HUNN  
 Fun?! You were raised to abide by  
 our rules!

ALBERT  
 But, Father what's so wrong about--

Hunn trembles with rage.

HUNN  
 (glares at William)  
 See what he's done?! Twisted your  
 mind!

He raises a hand to slap Albert.

William steps in and catches Hunn's hand--

WILLIAM  
 I can't stand here and let you  
 punish Albert for something that  
 isn't his fault!

Hunn wrenches his hand free--

Hans, JORG HOFE, JOST VON WEILER join the scene.

They look at the scarecrow with several arrows protruding  
 from it.

Hunn thrusts a finger into William's chest.

HUNN  
 If I were not a man of peace I'd  
 break you in two!

William and Hunn lock eyes for a tense moment and it looks as  
 if they might attack each other.

WILLIAM  
 You claim to be against violence in  
 any form, yet you would resort to  
 violence as a means of discipline?  
 (Shakes head)  
 You are a hypocrite. Nothing more,  
 nothing less...

He backs up a step, picks up his crossbow and tucks it under  
 his arm. He turns and walks away.

Furious, Hunn charges William from behind--

William rams the butt of his crossbow into Hunn's stomach.  
 Hunn's coughs and stumbles to his knees.

William strides out of the cornfield toward the dense forest.

EXT. HANS MAUER'S VILLAGE-DAY

Horst and Leuthold munch on chunks of buttered bread as Hunn approaches, clutching his stomach.

HORST  
Run into trouble, did you?

Hunn grunts an affirmative.

HORST  
Now, I think would be a good time  
to discuss our true purpose for  
being here.

Hunn nods.

LEUTHOLD  
We are here to make a conformation--

Horst pulls a piece of folded paper from his clothes. He hands it to Hunn. Hunn unfolds it to reveal--

A sketch of William's face.

HORST  
You've seen this man? He's here in  
this village?

HUNN  
Well...he was.

HORST  
What? Is he coming back?!

Hunn shrugs.

HUNN  
Ask Hans. He knows Tell's ways  
better than anyone.

Horst looks over Hunn's shoulder.

HORST  
I suggest you ask him then.

He and Leuthold walk off as Hans moves up to Hunn.

HANS  
Have you anything to say for  
yourself?

HUNN  
Such as?

HANS  
Such as?! Your conduct was  
disgraceful...that of a buffoon!

HUNN  
Your friendship with Tell has made  
you soft!

Hans is taken aback.

HUNN  
If it were anyone else, you'd be  
the first to toss him out on his  
ear!

HANS  
He's unfamiliar with our ways! And  
your behavior not at all represents  
what we've been striving to  
accomplish here!

Hunn throws up his hands and turns his back to Hans.

Hans sighs and lays a hand on Hunn's shoulder.

HANS  
He'll become accustomed to us in  
time.  
(Beat)  
One thing you must realize about  
the man is that he is a survivor.

Hunn, hands on his hips faces Hans.

HUNN  
So, are you trying to tell me in  
some offhanded way that he'll be  
back?

HANS  
I'm telling you he wants to belong  
to something...he'll learn to live  
by our rules...eventually.

Hans smiles and spreads his hands.

HANS (CONT'D)  
I promise you...beneath that rough  
exterior is a peace loving man.

EXT. FOREST-DAY

A Whitish, gray rabbit pauses in front of tree to nibble on  
grass.

An arrow whistles through the air and pins the rabbit to the tree.

EXT. FOREST-CLEARING-DAY

William huddles around a camp fire and roasts the rabbit on a stick.

INT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-DINING HALL

Gessler sits alone in darkness. The only light comes from torches mounted in each corner of the room. He leans forward and rests his chin on the edge of his sword handle. He grips the weapon firmly with both hands.

Hedwig wanders in. She squints due to the darkness. She spots Gessler and walks around the long dining room table toward him.

She reaches the end of the table and stops.

Seconds pass before Gessler turns his head and looks at her.

HEDWIG

He's been missing two days now...

Gessler says nothing and looks at the floor.

Hedwig trembles. She rushes to Gessler, grabs him by the shoulders and shakes him--

HEDWIG

Do not pretend with me!! Don't pretend you have no idea where Rudi has gone!!

Gessler wrenches himself free and jumps to his feet. He walks away from her.

Hedwig hurries after him. Gessler stands with his back to her.

GESSLER

At this particular moment I have more pressing matters on my mind than the whereabouts of your son!

HEDWIG

I thought I saw the slightest glimmer of decency in you.

Gessler stiffens and moves to the table. He picks up a half full goblet of wine and studies it.

HEDWIG (CONT'D)  
 Something you haven't let anyone  
 see...for a long time.

Gessler swishes the wine around in the goblet.

HEDWIG (CONT'D)  
 I was wrong...

GESSLER  
 Want to know how my meeting with  
 the governors went?

HEDWIG  
 Not really.

A grim smile appears on his face.

GESSLER  
 They're envious of me, you know.  
 Why? Because I was appointed  
 principal governor of this and the  
 surrounding regions. A position  
 many of them had been waiting years  
 to obtain.

Gessler signs for effect.

GESSLER  
 They didn't take kindly to the King  
 simply placing it in my hands.

He turns to face Hedwig.

GESSLER  
 They'll turn against me. When the  
 commoners turn against us, they'll  
 turn against me.

HEDWIG  
 Whatever you had has been driven  
 from you fully. You're empty,  
 vacant!

With a growl, Gessler hurls the goblet across the room.

Hedwig turns away and walks from the room.

GESSLER  
 You were right...you saw something  
 within me I thought I no longer  
 possessed.

She pauses in the doorway. She nods at him to follow her.

He follows her out into the hall.

## GESSLER'S CASTLE-CORRIDOR

They walk side by side in silence.

GESSLER

You were correct in assuming that I have an idea where Rudi has gone.

Hedwig eyes him expectantly.

GESSLER

He must have been listening outside my quarters while one of my men informed me of the possible location of...your husband.

Hedwig flinches. Her expression shows her desire for an answer.

GESSLER

Schwyz. The Pacifist village there, founded by a man named Hans Maur.

Hedwig nods.

HEDWIG

You think that's where William is?. You'll send soldiers there after him, won't you?

GESSLER

I await confirmation...after I have that then I'll be certain.

HEDWIG

Why must you kill him?! Why can't you just arrest him?!

GESSLER

I prefer it, but if he resists, as I know he will...my men will have no other choice. He cannot be allowed to escape again.

They walk on quietly.

Horst and Leuthold round the corner and pause as Gessler and Hedwig approach.

They bow slightly to Gessler. He frowns due to their disheveled appearance. Horst casts a wary glance at Hedwig.

GESSLER

You may speak in her presence.

HORST  
Reinhardt's words have been  
confirmed.

GESSLER  
You've done well.  
(Beat)  
Inform Friesshardt he's wanted.

Horst and Leuthold bow and head back the way they came.

INT. GESSLER'S QUARTERS-GESSLER'S QUARTERS

Friesshardt enters as Gessler pours wine into three goblets.  
He takes one at Gessler's invitation.

Gessler offers one to Hedwig. She takes it, but doesn't  
drink. He takes the last one and moves toward the window. He  
takes a sip.

GESSLER  
I suppose you know why you've been  
summoned.

Friesshardt nods and takes a swig of wine.

FRIESSHARDT  
You've found out where Tell is and  
you want me to go kill him.

Hedwig glowers at him and turns away.

Gessler glares at Friesshardt.

GESSLER  
There's a little thing called tact  
and you simply haven't any!

He puts a hand on Friesshardt's shoulder and directs him to  
the far corner of the room.

GESSLER  
Take a regiment of our best men.  
You know what to do.

Friesshardt nods, puts down the goblet and heads for the  
door. He pauses in the doorway as Gessler calls out after him-

-

GESSLER  
Remember, Friesshardt, alive! Only  
dead if unavoidable.

Friesshardt nods again and turns to leave.

HEDWIG  
I'm going with you.

Gessler stares at her.

GESSLER  
I can't allow that. I won't.

HEDWIG  
The decision is mine to make, not yours!

Gessler smirks and turns back to Friesshardt.

GESSLER  
Ready your men and be on your way.

Friesshardt bows and backs out the doorway.

Gessler rubs his chin. He tilts his head to one side.

GESSLER  
I can feel your eyes boring into me from across the room.

Gessler takes a swig of wine.

GESSLER  
Why must you be so adamant? You're not going and that's final!

HEDWIG  
I am going and you can't stop me!

Gessler, fed up, tosses his hands in the air.

HEDWIG  
I am not your prisoner! Even though you try to make one of me!

GESSLER  
Oh, come now, you're overreacting!

HEDWIG  
Am I? Then why am I watched every instant of the day? Why am I not allowed to leave the castle? What the devil does that sound like to you?!

GESSLER  
I've done all this to keep you safe.

HEDWIG

To keep me safe from what, the truth?!

Gessler kneels on one knee before her and takes her hand. She resists at first, but slowly relaxes.

GESSLER

Listen to me. If you go, all it will bring you is greater pain. And that's the last thing I want to cause you.

Hedwig breaks away from him and crosses her arms.

HEDWIG

Why not? You've already caused me more pain than I could ever possibly imagine...when you murdered my son.

Gessler doesn't know what to say. He looks away.

GESSLER'S CASTLE-COURTYARD-DAY

Friesshardt and the regiment all on horseback move out.

Hedwig rides out of the stables on horseback as Gessler walks up.

He puts a hand on her leg. He looks directly into her eyes.

GESSLER

I have but one request...stay safe.

He motions Friesshardt over. Friesshardt waves the regiment to go ahead. Hedwig rides past Friesshardt and joins the regiment.

He watches her with a lustful leer. Gessler loudly clears his throat. Friesshardt looks back to Gessler.

GESSLER

Know this, Friesshardt...anything happens to her and you alone shall be held responsible, by me.

Gessler and Friesshardt regard each other for a brief moment.

GESSLER

Do we have an understanding?

Friesshardt grunts an affirmative and starts to move away. In a flash, Gessler has his sword drawn and pressed against Friesshardt's throat.

GESSLER

You have to be a bit clearer than that.

A hint of fear registers on Friesshardt's face.

FRIESSHARDT

Yes.

Gessler lowers his sword. Friesshardt returns to front of the regiment. Gessler watches them pass through the courtyard gates.

Gessler ascends the steps to the castle ramparts and watches them ride across the landscape.

EXT. FOREST-DAY

William moves slowly through the forest making as little noise as possible. He kneels down to examine fresh animal tracks. Suddenly a hauntingly familiar voice echoes from deep within the forest. It is so distant that William strains to hear it.

VOICE

Father...you must have faith.

William steps back in shock for he knows this voice.

He scans the forest for any sign of life. His eyes shift to and fro. He whirls around in a circle, crossbow ready.

He crunches a twig underfoot. Startled, he backs into an overturned tree. He falls backwards. His finger squeezes the trigger and an arrow sinks into a thick branch above.

William topples over and hits his head on a tree stump. He lies there out cold.

EXT. HANS MAUER'S VILLAGE-DAY

Gertrud sits in a rocking chair and knits outside her and Hans's farmhouse. She nearly jumps out of her skin as a hand touches her shoulder.

HANS

(smiles)

Today is that day...

GERTRUD

When you and the men play that silly game of yours--

HANS

To you kicking around chamois skins filled with grass may sound like a "Silly game" but, to us men, it's a sport! If we emerge victorious from our "Silly game" we remain undefeated.

GERTRUD

Well, good for you.

Hans starts toward the wagons in a huff.

Gertrud bursts out in laughter. Hans stops in his tracks and turns, confused.

All the men in the village, including Hunn wait for him.

GERTRUD

Have a good time!

He runs to her and kisses her on the cheek. They share a laugh together. He waves goodbye and hurries to the wagons.

EXT. OPEN FIELD-SCHWYWZ-DAY

The regiment with Friesshardt in the lead flatten grass and tear up chunks of dirt as they ride. Hedwig trails behind them.

EXT. FOREST-DAY

Behind a fallen tree kneels Rudi and beside him kneels FATHER KLAUSE, walking staff in hand.

The regiment gallops past followed by Hedwig an instant later.

Rudi's face brightens, but becomes sullen a second later.

He turns to Father Klause, who's already running deeper into the woods.

Rudi rushes after him.

EXT. VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS-DAY

Hedwig hangs back while Friesshardt gives orders for some of the regiment to spread out around outer perimeter of the village.

She sidles up next to Friesshardt.

HEDWIG

Let me go in first and fetch my son.

FRIESSHARDT

The Governor's not here to show you favor, so keep out of my way!

(Beat)

Personally I don't give a damn what happens to the little bastard!

He laughs and gallops toward the village followed by the rest of the regiment.

Hedwig spurs her horse and takes off after them.

EXT. HANS MAUER'S VILLAGE-DAY

Gertrud and the other women and children are out in the fields. Some till the ground and others pick vegetables.

Gertrud digs up potatoes with a pitchfork.

There's a faint rumble in the distance. As the rumble becomes louder, Gertrud looks up. She freezes in terror.

Gertrud snaps out of it as everyone begins to panic and run.

A woman runs back for her toddler who crawls after them.

Gertrud tackles the woman to ground as Schiller rides past and sweeps his sword low to cut them down. His blade misses Gertrud by mere centimeters.

Friesshardt circles Gertrud and the woman who cradles her child.

Hedwig grabs his sword arm. Friesshardt wrenches his arm free and knocks Hedwig off her horse.

Friesshardt hacks Gertrud and the woman to death. The toddler crawls away.

Hedwig snatches a shovel and with all her strength, swings it and bashes Friesshardt off his horse.

EXT. FOREST-DAY

Rudi tries to keep up with Father Klause. Through the trees he sees Hedwig taking swings at Friesshardt with the shovel. Friesshardt stays just beyond her reach.

Rudi cuts through the trees toward them. Father Klause stops and runs after Rudi.

FATHER KLAUSE

Rudi!

EXT. HANS MAUER'S VILLAGE-DAY

Hedwig turns as Rudi draws nearer. Friesshardt uses the opening to ram Hedwig in the face with his sword hilt.

Hedwig looks up in a daze. Friesshardt stomps down on her stomach with his heel.

RUDI

Mother!

He latches onto Friesshardt's leg and bites as hard as he can.

Friesshardt roars in pain, pries Rudi off and kicks him away.

Father Klause rams Friesshardt in the gut with his staff.

Two horse-drawn soldiers gallop toward them, swords raised. Behind them in the village is a scene of chaos. Houses and crops burn. Soldiers attack and carry off woman and children.

Father Klause reaches for Hedwig--

HEDWIG

No! Save my son!

He looks from Hedwig to the soldiers and back to Hedwig again. She gives him a pleading look.

He turns, tucks a squirming Rudi under his arm and rushes into the forest.

EXT. FOREST-DAY

Father Klause slings Rudi over his shoulder. Rudi continues to struggle.

RUDI

We can't leave her! We must go back!

FATHER KLAUSE

We will! But we need help!

EXT. HANS MAUER'S VILLAGE-DAY

Friesshardt grabs one of Hedwig's legs and drags her toward a farm house. He kicks open the door and hurls Hedwig inside.

EXT. FOREST-DAY

William groggily awakens with Rudi and Father Klause looking down at him.

Rudi leaps into William's arms. They embrace. Rudi returns to Father Klause's side who gives William a hand up.

William holds his head and studies Father Klause.

WILLIAM  
Do I know you?

Before Father Klause can answer--

WILLIAM  
(looks at tree stump)  
Lucky thing I didn't split my head  
wide open!

FATHER KLAUSE  
You always had the hardest head  
amongst all my students. I told you  
then it was so dense, nothing could  
crack it!

Recognition floods William's face.

WILLIAM  
Father Klause! Still teaching  
school?

William clasps Father Klause's hand.

FATHER KLAUSE  
William...the village and all those  
in it are in grave danger--

William turns away from them. He leans on a tree in the direction of the village. Smoke rises over the treetops.

Rudi looks at Father Klause, who nods, and runs to William. Rudi tugs on the back of William's shirt.

RUDI  
You must go, Father! You must save  
Mother!

William whirls around and clasps Rudi firmly by the shoulders.

WILLIAM  
What does your mother have to do  
with it?!

RUDI  
She's in the village!

Williams directs Rudi toward Father Klause.

WILLIAM  
Don't let him out of your sight!

William swipes his crossbow and darts through the forest at break-neck speed.

Rudi starts after him, but Father Klause holds him back.

FATHER KLAUSE  
Didn't you hear your father?

Rudi stomps on his foot and elbows him in the stomach. He runs after William.

RUDI  
Don't let me out of your sight,  
then!

Father Klause groans and rushes after him.

William ducks under branches, sidesteps roots and vaults over fallen trees.

As William reaches the clearing, sounds of a struggle drift toward him.

His foot catches on a root and he tumbles downhill. His arrows slip from thier quiver. He snatches one as he rolls into the open. At the edge of the cornfield a soldier attacks a woman.

The soldier looks up.

William is in a crouch, crossbow armed and ready. He squeezes the trigger.

The arrow pierces the soldier right between the eyes. He collapses dead on top of the woman. She screams.

William pulls the body off and helps her to her feet. He pushes her toward the forest.

WILLIAM  
Go!

She loses herself amongst the trees. William collects his arrows.

Some soldiers spot William and move through the cornfield toward him. They spread out and leave a wide gap between them.

William runs toward the cornfield and fits an arrow onto his crossbow.

William bounds into the gap in the cornfield between the soldiers. He disappears among the corn stalks.

William moves stealth-like while the soldiers thrash about around him.

Cornstalks rustle as a soldier passes William. He aims and fires. The soldier cries out as an arrow sticks in his side.

The soldiers rush to their fallen comrade. William moves to a new position and reloads.

He fires and a soldier gets it in the back. The soldiers fan out and hack the cornstalks.

William silently moves up behind a soldier. He flips his helmet off and bashes him over the head with his crossbow.

William snatches the soldier's sword and slings his crossbow over his shoulder.

William sneaks up behind a soldier slashing cornstalks. With a swift motion, William slits his throat.

Two soldiers hack their way toward the village. William comes out of nowhere and cuts them down without much effort.

EXT. FOREST ROAD-DAY

The wagons lift up off the ground as they go over bumps in the road.

Hans keeps his eyes fixed on the road as he drives the lead wagon.

In the back, Hunn massages his neck. He looks skyward and what he sees terrifies him. He jumps up and moves to the front.

Thick black smoke rises over the treetops.

Others begin to look. Eventually so does Hans who goes into shock.

Hunn climbs into the front and snatches the reins away from him.

Hunn gets the horses going at full throttle.

The other wagon follows Hunn's lead.

They fly over the bumps and make wide turns around the corners of the windy road. The wagons scrape against the trees. Everyone holds on for dear life.

EXT. HANS MAUER'S VILLAGE-DAY

The cornfields, other crops and every house is engulfed in flames. Bodies of women and children lay scattered everywhere.

In the midst of it all, William holds his own against four soldiers.

At the village outskirts, Hans jumps down from the wagon and rushes to Gertrud's body.

The village men leap down from the wagons and run amidst the carnage. They search for and call out the names of loved ones.

Hunn stands rooted. Guilt and rage contort his face. He focuses his hateful leer on William.

Hans kneels beside Gertrud's battered body. Her hair is all tangled and her clothes torn. He averts his eyes, but then forces himself to look. Tears stream down his face. He takes hold of Gertrud's hand and squeezes his eyes shut.

William hauls a soldier over his shoulder into the fiery cornstalks.

Hunn kneels by the body of his wife, pale, and in shock. His house burns in the background.

Hans snaps, he rises, snatches up a shovel. He moves fast.

Hans wades into a soldier with the shovel and hits him with it over and over again.

William scours the village. He calls her name--

WILLIAM  
HEDWIG!!

Friesshardt strides out from behind a burning house. a woman's arm reaches out and hits the ground.

William breaks into a run. He and Friesshardt lock eyes. Friesshardt moves with haste to his horse. He springs up into the saddle and gallops toward a section of the corn field that hasn't yet caught fire.

William rushes behind the burning house. He freezes in horror.

Hedwig lies on her stomach. She struggles to rise. She slowly raises her head. William and Hedwig hold a look for a second then she collapses.

Friesshardt rides through the cornfield. He looks back

William watches. He slips his crossbow over his shoulder, takes aim and fires.

The arrow streaks through the air. It pierces Friesshardt's side.

He pitches sideways out of the saddle.

William waits for what seems like an eternity. Friesshardt does not emerge from the cornfield.

Frustrated, William snatches an arrow and shoves it into the flames--

He shouts out to the cornfield--

WILLIAM  
Come out or I burn you out! It  
matters little to me!

He fits an arrow onto crossbow.

Friesshardt doesn't show.

WILLIAM  
No? So be it!

He fires into cornfield and sets it ablaze.

Friesshardt coughs and stands up.

William drops his crossbow. He draws a sword from his belt and charges at Friesshardt.

EXT. CORNFIELD-DAY

Their swords clash amidst blazing cornstalks. They trade strikes back and forth. Most they block, a few they do not.

Friesshardt sweeps Williams' legs out from under him with his sword. He is ready lop William's head off.

FRIESSHARDT  
Any last words?

WILLIAM  
I remember you.  
(Beat)  
You're the bastard who hung my son  
from a tree!

FRIESSHARDT  
(laughs)  
Made good food for the crows too!

William cuts down a flaming cornstalk onto Friesshardt.  
William drives him to his knees with a barrage of savage  
blows.

Friesshardt uses his sword as a crutch, with both hands on  
the handle, he tries to right himself.

WILLIAM  
Any last words?

FRIESSHARDT  
Your wife...she made most excellent  
company!

With a roar, William swings downward and cuts off  
Friesshardt's hands.

Friesshardt screams and William severs his head from his  
shoulders.

William drops the sword and moves from the cornfield in a  
daze.

He picks up Hedwig and carries her off into the forest.

Rudi runs through the village. Father Klause runs after him.  
They pass a well.

A girl's voice travels up from the bottom of the well.

Rudi stops short. Father Klause doesn't. They collapse in a  
tangle to the ground.

Rudi crawls out from under Father Klause. He rushes over to  
the well and looks down into it.

A girl, his age, MARIE, treads water and looks up at him with  
pleading eyes.

Rudi turns back to Father Klause who bends over with his  
hands on his knees and breathes hard.

RUDI  
You gonna help me or not?

Father Klause warily holds up a finger.

EXT. MOUNTAINS-DAY

A rocky, grassy trail leads into a system of caves. The sun rises over the forest that surrounds them.

INT. CAVE

Sunlight floods in on William and Hedwig. She lays on a bed of hay. William sleeps sitting up. He holds Hedwig's hand.

She stirs and William's eyes flutter open.

HEDWIG  
(faint)  
William?

WILLIAM  
Don't talk. Rest. You must rest now.

HEDWIG  
I haven't much time.

WILLIAM  
Don't say that! You'll be well again. You must be well again!

HEDWIG  
William, you must listen...there's not much time.

He tries to move away but she pulls him closer.

HEDWIG  
A great deal has happened to pull us apart rather than draw us together... when we needed each other most.

Tears fill William's eyes. He holds his head in his hands.

Hedwig pulls his face close to hers.

HEDWIG  
If this is the last time we are to see each other. I want there to be peace between us.

WILLIAM

You were justified in blaming me for what happened. It was because of my short-sightedness that he died.

(Beat)

Berta once said Arnold should be like be me and think before he acts. She was wrong. I act first and think later. It was only a matter of time before the consequences caught up with me.

HEDWIG

We both are at fault. I was angry and paranoid about you taking Walter with you. I should have discussed my concerns with you, but I didn't...

WILLIAM

That doesn't matter, now.

HEDWIG (CONT'D)

and when I saw Walter's...my worst fears were confirmed. I felt so hurt and betrayed, all I wanted was to get back at you! That's why I wouldn't listen to reason! That's why I just excepted what Herman said even after he killed our son!

WILLIAM

You don't blame me, but you're on a first name basis with that filth!

HEDWIG

William, you must let go of your hate. It will do nothing but consume you! You'll never be at peace until you learn to forgive.

WILLIAM

You ask too much!

William tries to get up, but Hedwig holds him down.

WILLIAM

How can I forgive an inhuman monster?

HEDWIG

By peering beneath the mask he has created. You'll come to realize that you two are cut from similar cloth.

WILLIAM  
That's impossible!

Hedwig props herself up on an elbow and raises her voice.

HEDWIG  
He was a caring and decent man,  
once! He allowed himself to be  
corrupted, twisted! Twisted by  
hate, William! I see you teetering  
on the same cliff! Don't let it  
pull you over the edge!

WILLIAM  
I don't care about any of that,  
because you're going to be well  
again! I can see it! No one close  
to death would be so full of life!

HEDWIG  
(sadly)  
I asked God to give me the strength  
to tell you all this...and he did.

She sinks back into the hay. Her eyes slide shut.

HEDWIG  
I love you, William Tell. That has  
never changed.

William clutches her hand.

She lies still. She's gone.

William lets go of her hand.

WILLIAM  
Hedwig, don't go. Don't go.

He stumbles away. He sinks to his knees, his head in his hands.

WILLIAM  
Lord, help me...

EXT. CAVE-DAY

William moves slowly from the cave. He looks around. He's surrounded by the villagers. They look upon him with hateful glares as they tighten the circle around him. Hunn steps forward and points at William.

HUNN  
None of this would've happened if  
not for him!!

Hans steps forward.

HANS  
I'm sorry.

Hunn yanks a rope around William's neck.

Hunn turns back to the others--

HUNN  
I say we hang him!

The others echo their agreement.

Hofe shoves Hans to his knees beside William.

HOFE  
Mauer is the one who let Tell stay  
here, which makes him just as  
guilty!

WEILER  
I say we hang them both!

Hunn drags William and Weiler drags Hans through the mud  
toward a tree.

The others roar their approval.

They loop ropes around William and Hans's necks and toss them  
over a thick branch. They start to pull the ropes taught.

William and Hans begin to cough and gag as they are lifted  
off the ground.

Rudi steps from the forest with a rock clutched in each hand.

RUDI  
Father!

He hurls one as hard as he can.

It flies past William's ear and BASHES Hunn in the nose.

Hunn staggers back. William drops to the ground. He kicks  
Weiler away and Hans drops down beside him. William punches  
Hunn in face. Hunn falls to the ground.

Rudi drops the other rock and races toward William.

William turns and catches him in his arms.

Hunn draws a knife as he lies on the ground. Father Klause  
steps up behind Hunn and knocks away the knife with his  
staff.

The other villagers move forward.

Father Klause steps in front of William, Rudi and Hans.

FATHER KLAUSE  
 Enough of this! I have something to  
 tell you and you'd be well advised  
 to listen! William Tell is not  
 responsible for what has happened!

He points to Hunn with his staff.

FATHER KLAUSE  
 He is!

HOFE  
 You're insane!

Hunn crawls to his feet and picks up his knife. He backs away  
 from the group.

HUNN  
 You know better then to listen to  
 this madman!

FATHER KLAUSE  
 Am I mad? The two men who came to  
 the village were spies from  
 Gessler.  
 (To Hunn)  
 They came to see you...

Father Klause faces the villagers.

FATHER KLAUSE (CONT'D)  
 ...to confirm that William Tell was  
 among you.

HOFE  
 How would you know? You've never  
 even laid eyes upon them!

FATHER KLAUSE  
 How do you account for my knowing  
 of their injuries, then? One has a  
 swollen eye and a bitten hand.

Father Klause puts a hand on Rudi's head.

FATHER KLAUSE  
 Rudi gave that to him after they  
 dragged him from their wagon. The  
 other scoundrel has two black eyes  
 and a split lip, which I dealt him  
 with my staff!

All heads turn to Hunn.

WEILER

He hasn't any reason to lie. He's a man of the cloth!

He points to Hunn.

WERNER

He might!

Hunn backs up to the edge of the cliff as the others converge on him.

Hunn waves his knife in front of him.

HUNN

Stay back!

HANS

How could you do it? Betray your own people!

Hunn backs up further. A chunk of rock comes loose under his feet. He teeters on the edge.

He slashes at the villagers as they grab at him. The knife cuts some of their hands and arms.

Hunn grabs Hofe's sleeve. The arm of his shirt is torn off as Hunn falls over the edge with a roar.

It's a long way down. Hunn gets impaled on a sharp rock.

The villagers gather at the edge and look down. Hans lingers longer than the others but eventually turns away.

EXT. FIELD-DAY

William throws the last shovel full of dirt onto a mound. Branches tied together make a cross which marks Hedwig's grave.

William stabs the shovel into the ground. He falls to one knee.

Tears roll down his cheeks.

Rudi and Father Klause stand behind him. Rudi sobs. Father Klause holds him close.

Scattered around them, the villagers bury their dead.

EXT. MOUNTAINTOP-NIGHT

William, Father Klause, Rudi and Marie sit around a fire near the edge.

The villagers gather around fires further away.

Father Klause puts an arm around Rudi and one around Marie.

FATHER KLAUSE  
Had Marie not cried for help we  
wouldn't have found and rescued  
her.

RUDI  
I rescued her, remember?

Marie smiles.

FATHER KLAUSE  
You did have a little help.

Rudi loudly clears his throat.

FATHER KLAUSE  
No, you're right you saved her all  
by yourself.

Rudi grins and nods his head.

Father Klause shakes his head at William.

FATHER KLAUSE  
He's your son alright!

William laughs.

Not far away there's a rustling in the bushes.

Everyone looks toward the bushes. William nods to Father Klause and together they creep toward the bushes.

William reaches into the bushes and drags out Albert.

WILLIAM  
Albert! How long have you been  
hiding in there?

Albert doesn't answer. He starts to cry.

ALBERT  
Why? Why was my father a traitor?

WILLIAM  
I don't know how to answer that,  
Son. All I can do is assume that a  
great amount of money was involved.

Albert clings to William.

WILLIAM  
What of your mother?

ALBERT  
I don't have any family.

William hugs him tight.

WILLIAM  
You do now.

He puts an arm around Albert's shoulders and brings him over  
to the campfire.

Albert sits down beside Rudi who welcomes him with a smile.

Hans stands at the edge and looks out over the vast  
landscape.

William steps up behind him.

HANS  
You said until I experienced it  
myself, I wouldn't understand.

He locks eyes with William.

HANS  
You were right. If you're going  
back to join the revolt, I want to  
go with you.

WILLIAM  
For what purpose, vengeance?

HANS  
Justice.

They feel eyes upon them and turn. Everyone else listens  
intently.

William studies the other villagers.

WILLIAM  
Does he speak for all of you?

They nod yes.

EXT. ALTDORF-DAY

Men are carted in longboats across the lake toward the stone prison.

Woman and children are forced into wagons.

Gessler Werner and Rudenz watch the proceedings on horseback.

GESSLER

Everything is going as planned. As soon as the commoners are cleared from the streets...my men will hide in the dwellings and ambush the rebels as they pass through.

(Beat)

This resistance shall be squashed underfoot before it can grow into a greater cancer and infect the entire country!

He faces the others.

GESSLER

A sound strategy, is it not?

WERNER

(not happy about it)  
If it succeeds...

GESSLER

It will succeed.

(Beat)

Having second thoughts?

WERNER

I AM.

In a flash, Gessler has a knife pressed to Rudenz's throat.

GESSLER

Werner, you simpering fool! I gave you wealth, power, a position of influence! Do you really want to throw it all away?

WERNER

What good is it, when we use it to lose the respect of those we are supposed to represent. The people!

GESSLER

I fear your change of heart has come just a little too late.

(MORE)

GESSLER (cont'd)

In case you've forgotten your  
precious people plan to attack us  
this very New Year's Day while they  
believe us to be in celebration!  
The only thing I shall be  
celebrating is their defeat!

Werner moves closer. Gessler presses the blade harder against Rudenz' throat. He draws blood. Werner backs off.

GESSLER

Choose a side, Werner. There is no  
middle ground!

Werner hesitates too long for Rudenz's taste--

RUDENZ

Uncle, we must do in our hearts  
what we know to be right...not what  
keeps us alive! I see that now.

The words affect Werner and he draws his sword--

GESSLER

So be it.

He slits Rudenz's throat and pushes him to the ground.

With a bellow of rage Werner spurs his horse and charges at Gessler.

A soldier with a bow shoots Werner in the chest. He falls backward off his horse into the mud.

Werner rolls onto his side, head half covered in mud and eyes unfocused.

The soldier shoulders his bow, draws a knife and moves in--

GESSLER

(to soldier)  
Leave him! He will die soon enough.  
(Beat)  
...pity he learned to stand his  
ground so late in life.

Captain Harras canters up to Gessler followed by a caravan of wagons carrying cannons.

Captain Harras clutches his shoulder. Blood trickles through his fingers.

Some of the soldiers guarding the cannons nurse various injuries.

Gessler gives Captain Harras a stern look.

CAPTAIN HARRAS  
We were ambushed.

GESSLER  
Apparently.

CAPTAIN HARRAS  
No need to be disturbed, Governor.  
We overcame the rebels and the  
cannons are still intact.

GESSLER  
Yes, you overcame the rebels. But,  
by the look of it, just barely.  
That is reason enough for my being  
disturbed, Captain, very greatly!

Gessler gallops off towards the castle. Captain Harras and the wagons full of cannons follow him.

Itel clings to the underside of the last wagon.

#### MOUNTAIN STREAM-DAY

Rudi sits on a rock near the stream skipping stones.

Behind Rudi we see William slowly approach. Twigs and leaves crunch under his feet. Rudi's ears perk up, but he doesn't turn. He continues to skip stones. William stops and studies the ground for a long moment.

He moves up behind Rudi and kneels on one knee. William gently pulls Rudi around to face him.

WILLIAM  
I must leave now, Rudi.  
(Beat)  
Won't you at least say goodbye?

Rudi only looks away.

William takes Rudi's chin in his hand and--

We only see William's hand as he turns Rudi's face back towards him.

RUDI  
Why can't I go with you?

WILLIAM  
It's far too dangerous.  
Much tragedy has befallen our family  
and I cannot put at risk what  
family I have left...you and now  
Albert.

Rudi turns away and breaks into tears.

RUDI  
 I don't know what to do, Father.  
 (Between sobs)  
 I wish Walter was here. He would've  
 known what to do! Walter always  
 knew!

William swallows hard.

WILLIAM  
 Yes, he did...right till the very  
 end.

William embraces Rudi who cries into his shoulder.

William kisses the top of Rudi's head.

WILLIAM  
 You'll be in good hands. Father  
 Klause will look after you and  
 Marie too. You like her don't you?

Rudi nods.

William holds Rudi at arms length and smiles. He turns and  
 walks away.

After he gets about a dozen feet, rudi calls after him--

RUDI  
 Goodbye, Father!

William turns--

WILLIAM  
 Goodbye, Son!

RUDI  
 Promise you'll come back.

WILLIAM  
 You have my word.

RUDI  
 I'll hold you to it!

WILLIAM  
 You better!

EXT. OPEN FIELD-DAY

A grassy peak overlooks the rough and windy road to Altdorf.

Arnold, Furst and Berta stand apart from about one hundred armed men. The faces of many hold looks of nervousness and uncertainty.

Arnold faces the hundred.

ARNOLD

Those of you who wish to turn back will not be frowned upon. But, take your leave now! Anyone who deserts us on the battlefield will be cut down by my own sword!

Some stay, but many leave.

Arnold watches them go in silence. He turns to those who remain.

ARNOLD

We most likely march to our deaths, but we do so for the future prosperity of our country. That is all we must remember.

Berta keeps pace with Arnold as he leads the others down the steep incline towards the road below.

Arnold stops and faces Berta.

ARNOLD

You're not coming with us.

BERTA

The devil I'm not!

ARNOLD

Berta--

BERTA

I'm coming and that's all there is to it!

EXT. ROAD TO ALTDORF-DAY

Like condemned men they proceed silently and slowly, all except Arnold and Furst.

Berta is tied to a tree and screams at--

BERTA

Arnold!! Don't you dare leave me like this!!

(MORE)

## BERTA (cont'd)

(beat)  
Arnold!!!

They reach the outskirts of Altdorf and it is completely deserted.

Arnold and Furst exchange suspicious glances. Arnold motions to the rest of the men to proceed with caution. They move in slowly.

## EXT. ALTDORF-DAY

Without warning, soldiers pour from the dwellings. More come into view on the rooftops with longbows armed and ready.

A multitude of arrows assault the Swiss from all sides. Several fall. The remnants are forced to fight in small groups among the overbearing number of Austrians.

A Swiss next to Furst gets an arrow imbedded in his throat. Furst dives through the doorway of a dwelling as an arrow strikes the ground where he was just standing.

A soldier SMASHES a lantern into a hay wagon. The hay catches fire quickly. More soldiers move in and dip their arrows into the flames and fire them at the Swiss.

A fiery arrow hits a Swiss beside Arnold in the chest. Arnold brings his crossbow to bear and fires--

His arrow puts a soldier into the fiery hay.

Soldiers converge on Arnold from all sides. He deflects sword swipes with his crossbow. One slips past his guard and slashes him in the side. He growls and bashes the soldier in the face with his crossbow.

Two soldiers lunge at Arnold at the same time. He deflects their sword tips into the mud with a downward stroke of his crossbow. He then uses it to hit them both with a roundhouse swing. A soldier behind Arnold is about to run him through, but is impaled by a spear-wielding Swiss.

## INT. DWELLING

Furst lays a few feet back from the doorway, his crossbow cocked and ready. a shadow falls over him--

A Swiss staggers in and collapses to the floor with two arrows in his back.

Furst lays down his crossbow, hefts a keg of ale and heaves it through the window with a CRASH!

EXT. ALTDORF-DAY

The soldier on the roof puts an arrow into the keg. Furst leaps out the doorway and puts an arrow through the soldier's eye. He topples from the roof into the fiery hay.

Arnold fends off soldiers with a sword clutched in each hand. He forces their swords down in a defensive maneuver, then quickly plunges his swords into their stomachs. They stumble to their knees and Arnold pulls his swords free.

More soldiers advance upon him.

Furst fights his way to Arnold's side and they fight back to back.

A sword tip passes Furst's guard and pierces his shoulder. He grunts in pain and takes off the soldier's sword hand with a downward stroke.

ARNOLD

If this be our last fight...let's  
make it one they never forget!

Furst and the other remaining Swiss roar in agreement.

They make a gallant last stand, but are quickly overcome.

Overtaken by his wounds, Arnold sinks to his knees.

A soldier stands over Arnold and prepares to lop his head off.

SOLDIER

So, you're the leader. The Governor  
will be pleased to add your head to  
his collection.

Thick smoke from the dwellings, now in flames fogs the street.

Arnold squints as the faint hint of a human outline can be seen through the smoke. He squints harder. No, not one but several.

The soldier notices Arnold staring at something behind him. He turns to look--

A sharp click followed by a TWANG and an arrow whizzes through the smoke. It sticks between the soldier's eyes.

William on horseback steps through the smoke.

WILLIAM  
Gessler has enough trophies.

He raises his hand as if a signal. a small army surges through the smoke and around Arnold and Furst.

The Swiss plow into the soldiers in full, brutal force. The soldiers retreat.

Arnold holds Furst upright.

Hans is at the rains of a wagon being loaded with wounded Swiss.

Arnold carries Furst to the wagon and lays him in the back.

William trots towards them.

FURST  
Don't let them move me from the field--

ARNOLD  
You've done your part, Furst...more than your part.

Furst looks up at William and smiles.

FURST  
I knew you'd come back.

WILLIAM  
I always come back.  
(Looks heavenward)  
I had help.

FURST  
You needed help. Tell me...how are Hedwig and Rudi?

WILLIAM  
Rudi will come to terms with all that has happened...in time.

FURST  
And Hedwig?

William looks away and remains silent.

Furst understands and tears well up in his eyes.

He jumps down from the wagon and grabs a sword off the ground.

FURST  
Austrian bastards! I'll kill them  
all!

EXT. BATTLEFIELD-DAY

The Swiss have stopped at the top of a hill and watch the soldiers retreat.

Furst runs over the hill past the Swiss. He roars and waves his sword.

The Swiss look at each other then follow suite.

EXT. ALTDORF-DAY

William and Arnold share a look.

ARNOLD  
The old fool! He'll kill himself!

WILLIAM  
Not this day!

William is about to gallop off--

WERNER (O.S.)  
(Faint)  
William...

William and Arnold turn--

Werner sits propped up against a tree.

WERNER  
William...I had to hold on long  
enough to see you again...to tell  
you...I die a free man.

He falls over dead.

William spurs his horse.

ARNOLD  
Hey! Wait for me!

Arnold runs after them and climbs on behind William.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD-DAY

William and Arnold ride between the Swiss lines and over the hill.

The Swiss hack into the still retreating soldiers. The soldiers fight back as best they can but have lost the advantage.

William and Arnold canter to a halt in front of Furst.

WILLIAM  
We can't let you do it, Furst!

FURST  
Get out of my way!

An army of soldiers, three hundred strong wait in front of the castle. The front line consists of archers and directly before them servants stoke fires to keep them going full blast. In front of the archers soldiers crouch before piles of brush and shrubbery. Captain Harras stands beside them.

Furst tries to move around them, but William keeps blocking his path. William turns to Arnold--

WILLIAM  
I've been meaning to tell  
you...Gessler has a new weapon he's  
planning on using against us.

The soldiers pull away the brush and shrubbery to reveal cannons.

William wears a sheepish grin--

WILLIAM  
In fact, there it is!

Captain Harras gives the order to fire.

Smoke and flames shoot from the barrels of the cannons. The cannons roll back a few feet from the vibrations.

Cannonballs rocket through the air.

William pulls Arnold off the horse. They fall on top of Furst.

Multiple cannonball blasts hit the Swiss all at once.

A cannonball explodes into the ground right in front of the horse.

Cannonball fragments cut into the horse. It tips over.

William, Arnold and Furst's eyes widen. They roll out of the way just in time.

The line of archers open fire.

William, Arnold and Furst take cover behind the dead horse.

A hail of fiery arrows covers the landscape. Several arrows stick into the dead horse. Many Swiss drop to the ground. Those who don't move fast enough get caught in the crossfire.

William lays his crossbow across the horse and sights in Captain Harras.

ARNOLD

What do you think one shot will do?

WILLIAM

Even the odds.

He fires.

The arrow pierces Captain Harras' throat. He falls over dead, his eyes wide.

The Austrians are in temporary disarray. They look round, at each other. They don't know what to do.

William bounds over the horse with a battle cry. Arnold follows him. Furst sighs and steps around the horse.

The Swiss charge the Austrians.

EXT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-RAMPART-DAY

Gessler watches through a spyglass.

Gessler's whole body tenses. His knuckles turn white as his grip on the spyglass tightens. His lower lip curls into a snarl. In a rage, he SMASHES the spyglass.

Cannons line the rampart. Gunners stand by, awaiting orders.

Gessler marches over to the nearest cannon.

GESSLER

(points)

The rebel leading the charge. I want all weapons on him. Fire when ready!

GUNNER

Isn't that a lot of firepower for one man?

Gessler shoulders him aside.

GESSLER

One side, imbecile! If you want something done right--!

EXT. BATTLEFIELD-DAY

Horst and Leuthold hurry to reload a cannon.

William fits an arrow onto his crossbow as he runs. Arnold is right behind him followed by Furst and the Swiss.

Cannonball blasts erupt all around William. Some Swiss are caught in the blasts. Some are wounded, some are killed.

ARNOLD  
Someone really has it in for you!

WILLIAM  
You noticed that, did you?

William aims toward the castle rampart and fires.

GESSLER'S CASTLE-RAMPART-DAY

The gunner beside Gessler gets an arrow in the chest. He falls dead over the cannon. Gessler pulls him off and shouts to the other gunners.

GESSLER  
Reload and keep firing!

EXT. BATTLEFIELD-DAY

William slings his crossbow over his shoulder and draws a sword from his belt.

William is in mid stride when a hail of arrows fly from the surrounding forest and drop several soldiers.

A small army of Swiss charge from the forest.

The Swiss reach the soldiers and clash with brutal force.

William and Arnold keep running and hack soldiers they pass.

Horst and Leuthold have William in their sights and are about to fire--

Hans drives the wagon now empty right in front of them. He grips the reins in one hand and a pick-axe in the other. He leaps from the wagon as a cannonball tears through it like nothing.

Hans bowls into Horst and Leuthold and impales them against each other to the ground.

A wagon wheel whips toward William and Arnold. William tackles Arnold to the ground as the wheel flies over them and hits a Swiss and a soldier locked in combat.

Hans looks Horst and Leuthold in the eye--

HANS  
Remember me?

Their faces say they do.

HANS  
Good!

He punches Horst on the jaw. His heads snaps back into Leuthold.

HANS  
Because I remember you!

William and Arnold study the cannon as they fight off soldiers.

ARNOLD  
So, you knew about these weapons,  
yet you failed to mention it  
before!

WILLIAM  
I had a lot on my mind.

Arnold frowns.

William slashes two soldiers at once.

WILLIAM  
I suppose I'll have to make it up  
to you!

Arnold hacks a soldier.

ARNOLD  
If we make it through this alive,  
you will!

William and Arnold dispatch soldiers simultaneously.

Arnold's face lights up--

ARNOLD  
I have just the thing!

William groans.

They wheel the cannon towards the castle gates.

EXT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-RAMPART-DAY

Gessler has William in his sights.

GESSLER  
Goodbye, Tell.

Gessler sees Itel's reflection on the cannon and ducks.

Itel's sword strikes the cannon. The cannon roars and rolls back as it fires.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD-DAY

Arnold pulls William out of the way as the cannonball explodes next to the cannon, overturning it.

William claps Arnold on the shoulder.

WILLIAM  
Now I owe you!

ARNOLD  
Believe it!

EXT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-RAMPART-DAY

Itel and Gessler duel past the gunners who watch the swordplay.

GESSLER  
(growls)  
Keep firing, you buffoons!

They resume firing the cannons.

ITEL  
It's over, Governor! You're finished!

GESSLER  
Am I now?

Itel looks down into the courtyard. a fuse hisses as it burns down toward a great stack of powder kegs.

Gessler follows Itel's gaze. His eyes widen.

Soldiers rush up the steps on both ends of the rampart.

GESSLER  
(to soldiers)  
Kill him!

He moves past them and down the steps toward the fuse.

The soldiers move in on Itel from both sides.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD-DAY

William and Arnold wheel the cannon toward the castle gates.  
Furst trails them carrying a powder keg.

EXT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-RAMPART-DAY

Itel frantically fights off soldiers on both sides of him.

EXT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-COURTYARD-DAY

Gessler raises a foot to stomp the fuse--

Itel leaps from the rampart and tackles Gessler before he  
brings his foot down.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD-DAY

William, Arnold and Furst prepare the cannon for firing.

EXT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-COURTYARD-DAY

Gessler kicks Itel off of him and stamps out the fuse.

GESSLER  
Ha! You lose.

Itel runs past the powder kegs and into a corridor. He steps  
back out a second later with a torch in hand. He lights the  
fuse and grins at Gessler.

ITEL  
Ha! I win.

GESSLER  
(roars)  
Take cover!

Itel dives back into the corridor.

Gessler ducks behind a well as the powder kegs explode.

The explosion rips through the courtyard.

The impact blows the soldiers and cannons right off the rampart.

Dark gray smoke envelopes the entire area.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD-DAY

The smoke rises over the castle walls. Everyone looks up at it.

The field is littered with the dead and wounded of both sides.

Some soldiers drop their weapons and surrender. Others flee into the forest. Some Swiss pursue them while others tend to the wounded.

Furst is about to light the fuse for the cannon, but stops as a loud eerie CREEK comes from the castle gates.

William, Arnold and Furst all look at each other. William shrugs.

The castle gates fall forward and CRASH down on top of the cannon as William, Arnold and Furst dive out of the way.

William sits up and smirks at Arnold--

WILLIAM

It seems we didn't need that cannon  
after all!

Arnold stares at him. William laughs. Arnold shakes his head.

EXT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-COURTYARD-DAY

William leads the way. Behind him are Arnold, Furst and a handful of Swiss.

Bodies and debris are scattered everywhere.

They pass the well which is now demolished.

William sifts through rubble.

The sound of coughing comes from the corridor. Itel staggers out coughing.

ITEL

(smiles)

Glad you could make it! Do you like what I've done with place?

WILLIAM

I like it very much! You've made our job all the easier! But, I must know, where is he? I searched through the rubble. I didn't find a body.

Gessler steps out from behind an overturned wagon behind Itel. He runs Itel through with his sword.

GESSLER

Looking for me?

Itel looks down at the sword point protruding from his stomach. He looks at William and collapse to his knees.

Gessler withdraws his sword and retreats into the corridor.

William catches Itel in his arms.

ITEL

It has been an honor knowing you...

WILLIAM

No, the honor has been all mine. It was personal for you as well, but, you didn't give up. I did.

Itel's eyes close. He's gone.

William lays him down.

Arnold moves toward the corridor.

William rises to his feet.

WILLIAM

(to Arnold)

He's mine.

William heads into the corridor.

Arnold stands at the corridor entrance and watches William descend into the darkness.

A door creaks open. Arnold turns.

Ulrich pokes his head out. Arnold SLAMS the door. He catches Ulrich's head in the door. Arnold grabs Ulrich by the hair and throws the door back open.

ARNOLD  
Why, Ulrich! We meet again!

Arnold looks through the doorway at a winding stairwell.

ARNOLD  
I can assure you, this will be the  
last time!

He hurls Ulrich down the steps. Ulrich screams and rolls out of sight.

ARNOLD  
That's what happens to traitors!

He SLAMS the door shut.

INT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-CORRIDOR

William walks through puddles. He squints his eyes. At the end there is a stairwell winding upward.

WILLIAM  
I know you're here.

No response. William gets closer to the stairwell.

WILLIAM  
You have much to answer for. You  
killed Itel, you killed  
Walter...you killed...Hedwig.

William reaches for a torch on the wall.

WILLIAM  
Before this day is out, I'm going  
to kill you!

William grabs the torch and swings it as Gessler lunges at him.

GESSLER  
She can't be dead!

Gessler slices the torch in two. William and Gessler carry their swordplay up the stairwell.

GESSLER  
I know who did it. I'll dismember  
him limb from limb!

WILLIAM  
I've already beaten you to it!

GESSLER  
I owe you a debt of gratitude,  
then.

WILLIAM  
You owe me nothing, but I'll take  
your life!

GESSLER  
You will try!

INT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-DAY

They dual along the hallway. They overturn suits of armor and trash anything else in their path.

WILLIAM  
Hedwig told me you and I were cut  
from similar cloth. I don't see it!

GESSLER  
She was right. More right than  
either of us wants to believe!

William snatches a spear from a suit of armor. He heaves it at Gessler who side steps.

WILLIAM  
Explain it to me!

Gessler picks up the spear and jabs it at William. William hacks it in two. With half the spear still in hand, Gessler knocks William into a suit of armor.

GESSLER  
We have more than one common  
thread, you and I. Both of us were  
born commoners.

WILLIAM  
You obviously advanced in stature!

William hurls a helmet at Gessler. Gessler hits it with his sword.

Gessler lunges at William. William leaps aside and slashes Gessler as he passes by.

Gessler groans and sags against the wall.

GESSLER  
I used to be like you. In Austria,  
I led an insurrection against the  
king who was literally taxing the  
life from the people!

They resume their duel down the hall toward a doorway which leads outside.

WILLIAM  
Something happened to blacken your heart!

GESSLER  
My army and I kept our families in hiding, until one of my own betrayed me! One day we returned to our families only to find them slaughtered. The king and his army were waiting for us. That was our last stand!

WILLIAM  
And this shall be your last stand!

William forces Gessler through the doorway.

EXT. GESSLER'S CASTLE-RAMPART-DAY

They hack at each other along the rampart.

GESSLER  
We finally surrendered. Only a handful of us remained. The king gave me a choice; join him and watch my men die or perish along with them. I chose to live.

WILLIAM  
You would, you cowardly bastard!

William backs Gessler into steps. Gessler trips and stumbles.

Gessler kicks William away and rushes up the steps. He reaches the top and pushes a stone gargoyle over at William.

William rolls aside as the gargoyle SMASHES into the ground.

William charges up the steps at Gessler. They barrage each other with various attack combinations.

William tackles Gessler and they topple down another set of steps that connect to the rampart.

The rampart wraps around the entire castle. William and Gessler continue to battle. They make their way back to the section of rampart that overlooks the courtyard, now filled with Swiss.

GESSLER

Isn't it funny how irony plays  
itself out, eh, Tell? It has us  
trapped in a vicious cycle of guilt  
and regret that plagues us over and  
over again!

WILLIAM

I almost let you drag me over the  
precipice with you, but something  
pulled me back!

Gessler lunges. William parries and takes a swipe at Gessler who ducks under it and draws blood. William rams his elbow into Gessler's nose.

Gessler staggers back. Blood trickles from his nose. He wipes it away.

GESSLER

And what might that be?.

They hack savagely at each other.

WILLIAM

Hedwig. Guided by words from above  
she told me I must learn to forgive  
those who have wronged me or walk  
their dark path.

William's and Gessler's blades are pressed together, each try to throw the other off balance.

WILLIAM

I almost did.

William stomps on Gessler's foot and shoves them both against the wall.

Gessler whips out a knife and slashes William across the forearm.

GESSLER

I turned my back on him a long time  
ago.

William sags against the wall and switches sword hands. He deflects an overhead blow. He quickly lunges forward and slashes Gessler in the side.

WILLIAM

Maybe it's time to turn back.

William and Gessler continue to trade vicious blows back and fourth.

GESSLER

It's far too late for that. As you  
well know the people will never let  
me leave here alive!

William raises his sword just in time to meet Gessler's. He  
kicks Gessler away and rolls to his feet.

WILLIAM

I had to try.

Gessler keeps William on the defensive. Gessler darts in with  
knife hand and slices William across the knee then backs  
away. He darts in again and slashes William's sword arm.  
William's sword falls from his hand.

GESSLER

Though we seem to now be kindred  
spirits of a sort, I won't go down  
with nothing to show for it!

Gessler launches himself into William. They collapse in a  
heap, Gessler on top. Gessler tries to press his sword into  
William's throat.

WILLIAM

Your hearts not in this! I can see  
it in your eyes!

William grasps Gessler's knife hand as it descends towards  
his chest. He clutches Gessler's sword with his other hand.  
The blade cuts into William's flesh.

GESSLER

Perhaps. But, my pride is! Tell me.  
It intrigues me. You said you must  
learn to forgive those who wronged  
you. Have you?

William shoves the blade against Gessler's throat and head  
butts him.

WILLIAM

I'm a work in progress!

William turns on hands and knees and crawls for his sword.

Gessler lies on his stomach and slowly reaches his sword--

Behind William, Gessler slowly rises, using the wall for  
support. William's hand closes around sword handle--

Gessler slashes him across the back--

William spins and falls halfway down the steps--

Crossbow slips off his shoulder and bounces a few steps away. All the arrows spill out, except for one which he grabs--

Arnold and the Swiss start to move forward--

William holds up his hand for them to stop. They don't like it, but they listen.

Gessler holds a hand to his badly bleeding throat and moves forward--

William tilts his head up and keeps his eyes on Gessler. He reaches for his crossbow. His fingers graze it--

Gessler stands beside William--

GESSLER

It's a pity that it has to end this way.

Gessler raises his sword over his head--

William snatches his crossbow and shoves the arrow onto it. He doesn't have time to aim. He jerks crossbow upward at Gessler and pulls the trigger--

Arrow strikes Gessler in the forehead. His eyes widen in surprise--

WILLIAM

Yes, it is!

Sword slips from Gessler's fingers. He staggers back and topples down the steps.

Elated, the Swiss raise their weapons above their heads and cheer.

William lies still and watches the Swiss celebrate. Arnold, Furst and Hans gather around William.

ARNOLD

You look terrible!

WILLIAM

I've seen better days.

GESSLER'S CASTLE- COURTYARD-DAY

A man on horseback dressed in raggedy clothes canters into the courtyard. The Swiss make way for him.

Arnold walks up to him.

ARNOLD

Who are you?

BAUMGARTEN

Baumgarten from Unterwalden. I bring good news. Revolts there and in Schwyz have succeeded.

The Swiss cheer.

ARNOLD

That's the best news I've heard all day!

Something makes William turn his head. The spirit like figure of Walter stands at the top of the steps and smiles down on him. William smiles back. His eyes slowly close and his head sinks back against the steps. Arnold rushes up the steps toward William.

EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS-DAY

SUPER: Fifteen years have passed since the fall of Gessler... many of the governors have been driven out or killed and more provinces have joined the fight for freedom. Such events have led to an invasion of the provinces by Duke Leopold of Habsburg. His aim is to maintain his family's authority over the rebelling Swiss...

DUKE LEOPOLD, a dashing arrogant young man, and his army pursue Swiss soldiers.

On either side of the mountain pass, Swiss hide behind bushes, boulders and trees.

Duke Leopold and his men close in on the Swiss.

DUKE LEOPOLD

All too easy.  
(To his men)  
Finish them. Now!

On either side of mountain pass, the Swiss push over boulders which roll down toward the Austrians and create rock slides.

Duke Leopold and his men are in disarray. Swiss archers on both sides of the pass pop out from behind trees and up from behind bushes.

Vollies of arrows hail down on Duke Leopold and his men.

Duke Leopold is at a loss. An aide on either side of him are on the verge of hysteria.

AIDE #1  
 We must withdraw! Our men are  
 dropping like flies!

An arrow pierces his throat.

AIDE #2  
 Yes, we must! They're certainly  
 more organized than we expected!

An arrow imbeds in his chest.

Duke Leopold still looks straight ahead.

DUKE LEOPOLD  
 I have eyes, you idiots!

He looks right then left and lastly at the ground where his  
 two aides lie dead. In panic he heads away from the battle at  
 a gallop.

Far away up in the hills, Rudi (23) and Albert (24) rest  
 their crossbows on rocks to steady their aim. STRUTH (15)  
 kneels beside him.

STRUTH  
 Rudi, Albert, he's getting away!

RUDI  
 Shhh!

ALBERT  
 I see him!

A ways down the mountain, Arnold leads a regiment, and  
 William, on the other side of the mountain pass, leads  
 another regiment down into the heart of Duke Leopold's army.

Rudi and Albert sight in their target and squeeze the  
 triggers.

Duke Leopold glances over his shoulder as two arrows speed  
 towards his head. He screams.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL-DAY

Rudi and Albert ride behind William. They argue over whose  
 arrow struck first. Struth rides beside Arnold.

STRUTH  
 (to Arnold)  
 That was the greatest thing I've  
 ever seen!

ARNOLD  
 No doubt! After all They're two of  
 the best crack shots we have.  
 (To William)  
 Maybe even better than you.

William looks over his shoulder at Rudi and Albert as they  
 continue to argue and shakes his head.

WILLIAM  
 There's always that possibility.

EXT. TOWN OF BURGLIN-DAY

SUPER: TOWN OF BURGLIN

A small cluster of houses reside on the outskirts. Smoke  
 rises from the chimneys.

Two young boys with handfuls of grain reach their arms  
 through a fence and feed goats on the other side. Furst  
 hunches forward on his cane and watches over them.

Furst turns and waves to the approaching William, Rudi,  
 Albert, Struth and Arnold. The boys' eyes light up and they  
 run towards them. Panicked, Furst hurries after them--

FURST  
 (at boys)  
 Walter, William, stop!

William, Rudi, Albert, Struth and Arnold bring their horses  
 to a halt.

Rudi jumps down and kneels on one knee with arms  
 outstretched. WALTER and WILLIAM leap into Rudi's arms.

RUDI  
 Did you miss me, boys?

WALTER  
 We always miss you when you go off  
 to fight the Austrians, Father!

WILLIAM  
 Mother was worried you might not  
 come back this time, Father!

William puts a hand on Rudi's shoulder.

WILLIAM  
 (sly smile)  
 Marie should know better than that.  
 We always come back.

BERTA: O.S.

So far.

They all turn to see Berta and MARIE. Marie rushes into Rudi's arms and they embrace.

Berta hugs Struth, then Arnold.

MARIE

I was so worried!

RUDI

You shouldn't worry so much...like my--

BERTA

(cuts in)

Yes, she should.

(To William and Arnold)

And you two, aren't you getting too old for this?

ARNOLD

Who me?

WILLIAM

Never, I'm still as spry as I ever was.

William then holds his back and grimaces as he gets a twinge.

BERTA

Is that so?

Everyone heads indoors.

William hangs back with Rudi and drapes an arm over his shoulder.

Behind them the spirit like figures of Walter and Hedwig appear.

WILLIAM

(light-hearted)

Son, just be thankful you don't have a wife that you have to restrain by force from following you onto the battlefield.

Arnold stops in the doorway--

ARNOLD

The only way that story will ever be told...is if it leaves my lips first.

WILLIAM

That's why it will never be told.

They laugh and go inside. The door shuts behind them.

The spirit like figures smile. They fade away as they walk off into the distance.

SUPER: The defeat of Duke Leopold led to three wars of independence between the Swiss and Austria, spanning from 1315 to 1388. The Swiss emerged victorious from all three. These victories encouraged other provinces to rise up against the Habsburgs. Their hold on the regions began to weaken and eventually they were driven out. All the land and power they had obtained was returned to the cities and towns. In 1499, Austria once again sought to occupy the Swiss regions, but their troops were ultimately squashed. Such a defeat caused the Habsburgs to grant the Swiss complete independence, but it was not officially recognized.

In 1648 Switzerland was finally recognized as a free country. The name Switzerland was derived from the (canton) state of Schwyz in recognition of its role in the battle of Morgarten in 1315.

Text fades.

EXT. CAPITAL CITY-AUSTRIA-DAY

Albrecht rides down a crowded street accompanied by a royal procession. They move toward the river where a ferry boat waits.

Three masked men on horseback come out of nowhere and zigzag through the royal guards and sideswipe Albrecht. The first one stabs him in the side. The second stabs him in the stomach and the third in the back. Albrecht's eyes glaze over. He reaches out and pulls off third assassin's mask to reveal--

ALBRECHT

(wide-eyed disbelief)

Johann?!

Johann and Albrecht hold a look for a few seconds.

Royal guards pursue the killers as they gallop away at full speed.

Albrecht slumps to the ground. He still clutches the mask.

ALBRECHT

(to mask)

Why?

(MORE)

ALBRECHT (cont'd)

(Beat)  
I ask why?

The mask slips through his fingers and with a gasp he dies,  
his eyes wide open.

FADE OUT.