

2014

Knights & Neighves

Laura N. Davenport
University of Vermont

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/hcoltheses>

Recommended Citation

Davenport, Laura N., "Knights & Neighves" (2014). *UVM Honors College Senior Theses*. 22.
<https://scholarworks.uvm.edu/hcoltheses/22>

This Honors College Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Undergraduate Theses at ScholarWorks @ UVM. It has been accepted for inclusion in UVM Honors College Senior Theses by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks @ UVM. For more information, please contact donna.omalley@uvm.edu.

Knights & Neighves
by
Laura Davenport

(2014)

Laura Davenport
136 Fox Hill Road
518-929-4267

FADE IN

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Two sets of horse hooves gallop toward each other, dirt and grass flying. The coat above one set of hooves is white, the other dark gray.

The horses continue to run, snorting through their bobbing muzzles. They are not wearing bridles.

Their two sets of eyes roll back in excitement and anticipation. Their eyes widen further, as they realize that they are about to collide. There is a crash and several squeals.

Two foals are in a tangled heap on the ground, their long legs intertwined. Also in the pile are child-sized dummies which, until their collision had been affixed to the horse's backs. The dummies have long wooden poles attached to their underarms.

One of the foals, TROT, is an appaloosa. He is white, except for the large brown spots that pepper his coat. The other foal, STRIKER is slightly larger than Trot, and has a steel gray coat.

Foals stand by the short track. They erupt into high-pitch braying laughter.

FOAL #1

Nice job!

FOAL #2

You really got 'em.

INSTRUCTOR

(to the jeering foals)

Quiet!

(to Trot and Striker)

This is an embarrassment! How am I supposed to present you to the knights if you can't even finish a run.

Striker tries to look composed as he struggles to free himself from his tangle with Trot.

STRIKER

Sir, I request a re-joust with another foal.

Trot rolls his eyes.

TROT
(aside)
Scared-y horse.

INSTRUCTOR
Recruits must to be able to joust
against any foal, despite any, uh,
distraction they may cause you.

Striker eyes Trot's coat.

STRIKER
Sir, I didn't know which spot to
aim for.

Striker and the rest of the foals break out in roars of
whinnying laughter. Even Instructor smiles for a moment
before sobering.

INSTRUCTOR
Line up!

The foals scurry into line. Striker fights his way up,
upending Trot in his efforts. Trot struggles to his feet and
trips his way into the line.

INSTRUCTOR
This is it, recruits! Tomorrow, if
you're lucky, you'll be chosen to
begin your warhorse training. If
you aren't...

He looks directly at Trot.

INSTRUCTOR
...you'll be stuck pulling carts
for the rest of your miserable
lives.

There is pointed silence.

INSTRUCTOR
You're dismissed.

Immediately, the foals begin to disperse.

When the last of his peers has disappeared from view, Trot
starts down the jousting track. He walks at first but then
gallops out of the field and into the forest.

TROT
Pulling carts. Ha!

Trot's hooves pound the grassy forest floor. His spots are visible.

EXT. CITY - DAY

The market square and the streets of the Royal City are paved with cobblestones. Colorful banners hang between the buildings and colorful tents stand in the market square when business men and women sell their wares.

A full-grown Trot bursts through a tiny gap between two tents, pulling a cart brimming with armor and battle regalia at breakneck speed. Market-goers scatter as he approaches.

Trot rockets around corners, cart wheels lifting off the ground. Trot's owner, MOFFET THE ARMORER, a short, heavy set old man bounces around on the seat. There is another, older horse, CHEW, who is being half led, half dragged behind the cart.

MOFFET

Trot! I swear! Chew's going on the cart for the next tournament!

CHEW

Slow down!

Pieces of hay hang out of the side of Chew's mouth. Trot has slowed down to a hurried jog, still dodging pedestrians. He barely misses a baker carrying a platter loaded with steaming bread loaves.

BAKER

Control that spotty horse!

Moffet waves at the man as they rush past him.

MOFFET

Sorry friend! Got to get to the tournament field!

Trot pulls the cart to a street running perpendicular to his own. He does not slow until a tall, thin Knight, SIR DAYVIN(TOPSY)WINESACK in tattered clothes swaggers into his path. Trot comes to a screeching halt.

MOFFET

(To Topsy)

Staying true your nickname, eh?
You're going to get yourself
killed!

Moffet continues to scold Topsy, their conversation becoming background noise.

Trot looks back at Chew.

TROT

Nickname?

CHEW

They call him Topsy, The Ale-
Knowing Knight.

Moffet stands in the cart, arms crossed across his chest.

TOPSY

(clearly drunk)

No more talking. My horse will
speak with you, Sir. Be kind, he's
a terrible drunk...

Topsy giggles and turns to the right to make a low bow to a
person offstage.

SLOSH, Topsy's horse, clumsily prances to his partner's side.
Slosh's coat looks like it was once white, but now is
yellowish, and it sticks up in tufts along his shoulders. He
too takes a low bow. A moment later, he rises and sidles up
to Trot, who looks on disapprovingly.

SLOSH

(slurring)

Are you a horse? Why do you have
spots?

Trot recoils from his breath. Smiling vaguely, Slosh meanders
off the street and collapses, snoring.

TOPSY

My horse seems to need a nap.

Topsy sways dangerously. He takes out a tankard shaped flask
and puts it to his mouth. There is nothing in it, but a few
drops. He looks concerned.

TOPSY

I may need a nap as well.

He swaggers off and collapses beside his horse.

Moffet shakes his head and sighs, before turning back to
Trot.

MOFFET

It's getting late, we should hur-

Before he can finish Trot gallops off.

INT. GREAT HALL - DAY

Servants in the Great Hall prepare for a feast. On the steps to the Royal Platform at the head of the hall, a lone knight sits, holding a bridle. This is Sir BORIS LONGTON. Sir Longton is medium height and balding, with noticeable dark circles under his eyes.

Two swordsmen spar. One is tall, the other short. The smaller of the two is clearly faster and more talented with the blade. Despite this, the larger of the two manages to get a hit to the other's arm. They fight until the larger of them falls. The smaller swordsman holds his sword to the chest of the larger man as he tries to rise.

The victor throws his helmet off, and a pool of unkempt black hair falls out. This is ANNABELLA, the princess of this Kingdom. She looks regal, until she takes a step forward, trips on a crack in the floor, and goes crashing to the ground.

ANNABELLA

That's four, Grogan. You ought to practice more, instead of napping in the stables.

GROGAN, a tall, pudgy boy pushes himself off of the floor.

GROGAN

The second time didn't count. I slipped on the edge of that banner.

As he speaks, Annabella jumps to her feet, and brushes her armor off.

ANNABELLA

Clumsiness is no excuse.

Annabella reaches down to help Grogan up.

GROGAN

Yes, your highness.

ANNABELLA

Dear Grogan. Best out of t--

A door on the side of the hall bangs open and GEMMA, Annabella's nurse/hand-maiden bustles in. She is a middle-aged woman with large eyes and a tiny nose, face framed by red hair. Her cheeks are red.

GEMMA
 (shouting)
 Your Royal Highness! You were
 supposed to be ready hours ago!

Reaching Annabella and Grogan, she looks them over with disapproval.

GEMMA
 Not that I'm surprised to find you
 here.

ANNABELLA
 Grogan and I were practicing,
 Gemma. He might be able to compete
 in tomorrow's tournament, if I can
 convince Father.

GEMMA
 Well then, I fear for the audience.

Annabella and Grogan look at each other blankly.

GEMMA
 Come now, you must remember what
 happened during last month's
 archery competition...

GROGAN
 That was an accident! Sir Longton,
 you were there, you saw!

Boris looks up, pulled out of his reverie.

BORIS
 (vaguely)
 Right. I'm sure the boy didn't mean
 to hurt anyone.

Gemma looks at the knight, pity readable on her face.

GEMMA
 That may be true, but, Grogan dear,
 you shot an audience member instead
 of the archery target.

ANNABELLA
 That man is healing nicely in the
 best room in the hospital, at
 Father's request!

Gemma turns to go. She grasps Annabella's arm and tries to drag the princess along with her.

GEMMA

King Nevo is a generous king,
indeed. I'd have put the stable boy
in the stocks...

ANNABELLA

Which is precisely why *you* will
never be King.

Gemma rolls her eyes. She has managed to pull Annabella over to the exit doors of the Great Hall, and they exit as Grogan shouts after them:

GROGAN

The arrow slipped!

A flurry of castle staff enter and jostling Grogan as they prepare the Hall for a feast.

INT. ANNABELLA'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Gemma looks on as a team of attendants poke and prod at Annabella, preparing her for the evening's events. One assistant pulls a brush through her knotty black hair, another wrinkles her nose as she hefts a pile of armor and training clothes off of the floor and into a large basket by the door.

Someone brings in a dress and hangs it on the mirror and Annabella sighs.

ANNABELLA

Green and gray again?

GEMMA

(sweetly)

Princess Annabella, unless the Royal colors change, you'll wear it.

ANNABELLA

I don't see why I have to wear s
gown. I won't dance.

GEMMA

Of course not.

Annabella shies away from a person approaching her with an iron rod, which is smoking slightly.

ANNABELLA

(to attendant)

Wait, is branding now in fashion?

GEMMA

He is going to curl your hair.

Annabella jumps up out of her vanity chair. She grabs a walking stick that is leaning by the window and scurries into a corner of the room, brandishing it like a sword.

ANNABELLA

By burning it?

The doors to the chamber are thrown open loudly and a colorfully dressed man enters, followed by an entourage of sorts. This is POTCH.

POTCH

(to curling iron
attendant)

Put that barbaric thing down.

He eyes Annabella. Her hair is askew and she is still dressed in britches and a tunic. He clicks his tongue.

POTCH

Oh dear. We'd better get to work.
Please sit down your highness. This
won't hurt a bit.

Annabella looks at him suspiciously. He looks at her and then turns his attention to the dress hanging nearby, and finally to Gemma.

POTCH

Green and gray again?

Gemma sighs and rolls her eyes.

Annabella smiles. She returns and sits back down in the vanity chair.

Potch winks at her in the mirror.

GEMMA

I'll leave the two of you alone.
The King is waiting.

POTCH

You can't rush perfection, but I'll
work as quickly as I can.

Gemma shakes her head and leaves the room.

POTCH

Alright. Let's get you fixed up.
Don't want to keep Queen Gemma
waiting...

Annabella laughs and then swallows nervously as Potch's brightly dressed attendants close in.

EXT. TOURNAMENT FIELDS - DAY

In a large field outside the city, colorful tents have been erected, banners flying over them. There are arenas for sword-fighting, archery, and jousting.

INT. BLACKSMITH TENT - DAY

A blacksmith hammers a sword into being, his bellows pumping behind him.

EXT. INN-KEEPER'S TENT - DAY

Several inn workers scurry about. One rolls a keg of ale across the grass to a bar. Another sets up tables and chairs under the flags of the tent.

The innkeeper mixes a large cauldron of stew over a blazing outdoor fire.

A tiny boy struggles to turn a large pig on a spit at an adjacent fire.

EXT. TOURNAMENT HEADQUARTERS - DAY

A large gray and green tent stands in the center of all the hustle and bustle. There are several tables set in front of it and long lines of men stand before them.

Royal attendants sit behind the tables, registering competitors for events.

A young squire waits at the archery table. He sweats slightly and continuously rubs his palms up and down his chest. He wears a vest with an excessive amount of pockets.

SQUIRE

But I'm telling you, he won't come.

ARCHERY ATTENDANT

Then I am afraid he can't enter the competition.

SQUIRE

Please... he's got a temper when things don't go his way.

ARCHERY ATTENDANT

Well, I'll need some identification
proving that you are indeed
squiring for Sir Valin.

SQUIRE

I've got...somewhere here.

After rummaging through his many pockets, the boy extracts a scrap of fabric. The young squire hands the attendant the scrap which has suspicious dark splotches marring it. Upon seeing it, the attendant scribbles a name down on his list. He hands the squire a small scroll.

ARCHERY ATTENDANT

Please tell Sir Valin that we are
looking forward to his
participation in the tournament.

SQUIRE

Thank you, sir! You've sure saved
me trouble!

The squire hastens away.

EXT. ARMOR MASTER'S TENT - DAY

Moffet heaves an iron helmet on to a rack outside of his tent.

MOFFET

Trot!

His call goes unanswered so he walks around the corner of his tent. Chew sneaks carrots. Their tents are adjacent to one another.

MOFFET

Chew! I'm not paying for that!

Chew looks at him dumbly and keeps eating.

MOFFET

(mumbling under his
breath)

Horses are going to ruin me.

(Aloud)

Trot!

He rounds the corner of his tent to see that Trot's wagon has been abandoned, harness and all. Trot is nowhere to be seen. Moffet sighs and hefts a large shield out of the cart.

MOFFET

Total ruin...

EXT. JOUSTING FIELD - DAY

SIR TORSTEN VAN HILD astride his massive bay warhorse, DRAGOMIR are mid-joust against a grown up STRIKER and his rider, EGAN VAN HILD. They meet mid-field and there is a resounding crash as their poles connect with metal. Egan unseated, falls unceremoniously from Striker who stops almost immediately, the consummate companion.

Torsten comes to a stop at the end of the field and, passing his broken pole off to a squire on the ground before he returns to the place where he had unseated his son. He jumps down and pats Dragomir on the neck, before facing his son. Torsten towers over most men, but his son appears to be catching up to him. Both have unruly red hair and are covered with freckles.

TORSTEN

You should've used the Regent's Defense on that run.

EGAN

I wanted to try something different, I've practiced the Defense a hundred times.

TORSTEN

Maybe the 101st time it would've succeeded.

The two continue to discuss, but their chatter dissolves into background noise.

Dragomir strides over to Striker.

DRAGOMIR

You lost your footing when we struck. That's why he fell.

STRIKER

I was trying to shift to take the weight of the blow off his chest.

DRAGOMIR

He fell off instead. Do better next time. Don't make young Sir Egan regret his choice.

Striker is quiet. He has grown into a massive horse, retaining his steel gray coat.

He is decked out in the colors of the Van Hild house, Black and Red. He looks over at his partner Egan, who has gotten up.

TORSTEN

Soon you'll be competing against experienced knights who have been jousting for years. I want you to win, as I did and as the King himself did.

EGAN

I will, Father. I swear.

TORSTEN

You'd better.

Torsten whistles and gets Dragomir's attention. Dragomir leaves Striker.

Egan goes to Striker and pats his neck.

EGAN

We have to win.

He turns away.

STRIKER

We will.

Egan is hoisting himself into the saddle when they hear a massive crash coming from behind the row of tents facing their field. They go to investigate.

EXT. ARMOR MASTER'S TENT - DAY

Behind Moffet's tent, Chew and Trot stand at either end of an expanse of grass, sticks clenched in their teeth, preparing to begin a mock joust. By the dirtiness and general dishevelment of their appearances, it appears that they have been at this for a while.

TROT

(shouting)

Are you ready knave?

Chew lifts his head; he has been sneakily grazing between practice runs. His mouth is full when he speaks.

CHEW

Alright, alright.

He swallows loudly, cough slightly.

CHEW

I'm ready.

Egan and Striker arrive at the side of the clearing in time to see the joust. They glance at each other, both clearly amused.

TROT

Alright you devil, you rogue,
prepare to meet your doom...

CHEW

Right. You're finished? On your
mark, get set, gallop!

Taken by surprise, Trot has a slow start. He hurls himself forward, stick still clenched between his teeth. He is strong and fast. His hooves thunder on the grass as the two horses draw closer and closer to each other. At the last minute, Chew ducks out to his right, narrowly avoiding Trot's stick.

Trot skids to a halt and turns around. Egan and Striker stand before him. He straightens up as Egan approaches him, stick dropping dumbly from his mouth.

EGAN

You're a big one, aren't you?

Egan circles Trot, and Trot eyes Striker who looks on coldly, before glancing at Chew.

TROT

What's he doing?

CHEW

Dunno.

Egan comes back to Trot's head and takes hold of his halter.

EGAN

Yes, quite big and well-muscled,
too. Fast, by the looks of it.
Obviously not trained.

Trot looks at Egan. Egan pulls on his halter.

EGAN

Let's see who you belong to.
They're probably missing you.

He leads a dumbfounded Trot, back through the tents.

Moffet has seen them and jogs to meet the young knight and the three horses. He reaches them, out of breath. He rests for a moment, hands on his knees.

MOFFET

Sir Egan, I'm so sorry if my horse bothered you.

EGAN

No, no Arms Master. I wondered though, what do you use him for?

MOFFET

Sir?

EGAN

He's the right size for a warhorse.

MOFFET

Warhorse?! Trot?

Moffet and Chew both throw their heads back in laughter.

Egan, Striker, and Trot all look at them disdainfully.

Moffet hiccups. He sobers quickly, then clears his throat.

MOFFET

It's his coat, see? Those spots? He sticks out like a sore thumb, none of the young knights wanted him.

EGAN

I see. I was hoping to find a horse for Sir Boris.

MOFFET

Ah, yes. I heard about his horse...

EGAN

Yes. They were at the Northern border and were attacked by a group of Herdonians.

Striker bows his head. Trot does the same and straightens sheepishly after seeing Striker look at him haughtily.

MOFFET

I see him at the castle, carrying around that bridle. Breaks my heart.

Egan looks at Striker.

EGAN

A knight is only as good as his horse and Longton needs a new one.

MOFFET

Sir, if I thought he'd be useful to you, I'd give you Trot--

Trot perks up.

MOFFET

But with his spots...

EGAN

I suppose you're right.

Trot deflates.

EGAN

Thank you. I hope tomorrow isn't too hard on you!

MOFFET

Good luck to you too, Sir. I hear you're the one to beat in the joust this year.

EGAN

You heard right!

Egan swings himself back into Striker's saddle and with a flick of his heels, they thunder away.

Trot looks forlorn. Chew sidles up. The two horses look at each other and then Trot stares off in the direction that Egan and Striker have gone.

EXT. CASTLE ARMORY - NIGHT

Trot, looking exhausted, pulls Moffet and the cart into the yard of the Armory. Moffet unlatches the cart and unbuckles all of Trot's harnessing. He gives him an absent-minded pat, whistles loudly, and walks into the armory to prepare for the feast.

Grogan appears from the doorway of the stables, a bucket in his hands. He rubs his eyes.

GROGAN

Come on boys, let's get you cleaned up.

EXT. STABLEYARD - NIGHT

Grogan leads the horses by their halters to a tying post and fastens them there.

Grogan brushes Trot's coat. Dust billows up as the brush. His spots shine and stand out even more vividly.

Chew stretches to reach a pile of hay as Grogan tries to clean his hooves.

Trot grimaces as Grogan yanks a comb through his mane.

Trot sighs exasperatedly as Grogan repeats the motion to his tail.

Grogan leads the horses to mouth of the stable and lets them go. He turns and retreats from the yard.

Trot watches Grogan go before he turns to Chew.

TROT

Supper?

CHEW

I'm starving.

INT. ROYAL STABLES - NIGHT

Trot and Chew walk into the stables and proceed to their stalls.

Trot hears a crunching noise coming from near his stall. He comes level with it and sees that Slosh, Sir Topsy's horse, is laying there, eating grain from a bucket on the ground. He is clearly drunk.

TROT

Hey! What do you think you're doing?

SLOSH

I'm eating... What are you doing?

TROT

You're in my stall. There are stalls for visiting-uh, warhorses- is in the Knight's Wing.

SLOSH

(grandly)

Knights don't have wings unless we run beneath them.

Trot rolls his eyes. Slosh precariously gets to his feet.

TROT

What are you doing here anyway? The tournament isn't until tomorrow and I thought that Tops-- I mean Sir Dayvin wasn't competing.

SLOSH

(slurring)

Lucky for us, all knights are invited to the opening ceremony. And the feast. And the drinking.

Slosh blinks blearily at Trot.

SLOSH

Have we met? No. I'd remember those spots. I must go. Fair mares to charm.

He belches and totters away, knocking over stable implements and disturbing the sleep of the other workhorses.

Chew is tucked away, ravenously eating his grain.

Trot looks at his grain pail, and the last remnants of grain scattered across the straw bedding of his stall. He sighs and eats a few nibbles of hay. He turns to face the wall.

The wall is covered with tournament banners and paintings of great war-horses and their riders. He touches a green and gray pennant with his hoof and closes his eyes for a moment. Faintly, the sounds of a cheering crowd and breaking jousting pole are heard.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

The sounds of Trot's imaginary tournament morph into the chatter and cacophony of the feast. Dancers, dressed in brightly colored gowns and dress clothes whirl around a large square in the middle of a hall. Young women shriek with laughter. Surrounding the dance floor are long wooden tables, flanked by a mixture of knights and squires, Lords and Ladies. Servants circulate, removing empty platters and replacing them. Other servants carry tankards of ale and trade them for empty glasses.

Atop the Royal Platform, sits KING NEVO, father of Annabella, and leader of the Great Kingdom. He is a tall man. He sits, decked out in the colors of his house, with a heavy metal crown atop his head. His hair is the same black as Annabella's.

Annabella sits beside the King, a look of boredom on her face. She fidgets with the lace sleeve of her gown and shifts in her throne constantly. Her hair is pulled back into an intricate knot on the back of her head.

On either side of the royal pair, a handful of knights sit. These are the King's Knights. Sir Torsten Van Hild sits to the King's left and VALIN KLINT sits to his right.

A HERALD walks to the center of the stage.

HERALD
Lords and ladies! May I have your
attention please? His Majesty, King
Nevo!

At this, King Nevo rises from his throne. As he stands, his leg buckles and he leans against the arm of the throne for a moment, his face ashen.

ANNABELLA
(in a whisper)
Father! Are you alright?

The King sets his face into a wide smile and straightens again, heading toward the center of the platform.

KING NEVO
I should dance, that my feet won't
fall asleep!

The crowd laughs and cheers.

KING NEVO
My friends, my countrymen. Welcome.

The crowd drunkenly cheers.

KING NEVO
Today, we watched the opening
Ceremony of tomorrow's tournament
with hope and excitement.

The crowd cheers again. There is a loud crash; a chubby young squire has knocked over a suit of armor and lies amidst the ruined statue, tankard still held aloft.

KING NEVO
(chuckling)
Tonight, we have a reason to
celebrate!

There is murmuring in the Great Hall.

KING NEVO

For nearly two years, we have been
under siege from Herdonian raiding
parties.

Loud whispers again erupt throughout the Great Hall. The King
raises his arms and instantly there is silence.

KING NEVO

As we grieve for those whose lives
have been lost in the attacks...

Annabella glances at her father briefly before focusing on
her fingers, foldered in her lap.

KING NEVO

...we also celebrate the bravery of
heroes, here tonight!

There is some applause. Annabella quickly looks away from the
audience. Sir Boris Longton, looks down at his lap, caressing
the worn leather of his bridle.

KING NEVO

Heroes like Valin Klint, who
recently defeated the Herdonians'
leader.

He gestures to Klint, who waves enthusiastically. Klint is a
compact man, with a robust build. His hair is chestnut brown
and he has a scar that starts at his left eyebrow, runs down
his neck and disappears into his collar. His smile is wide.

KING NEVO

Now, they scatter!

The crowd erupts in cheers and war cries. Klint smiles
broadly and waves at the crowd.

KING NEVO

Our villages can sleep peacefully
again!

Again, the crowd erupts into screams and shouts of approval.

KING NEVO

Enjoy this tournament and remember
that we are honorable. We are
brave. We are strong!

With this, he returns to his throne, amidst more cheers.

HERALD

Be at the field tomorrow as the sun rises and the games will begin. For now, let us eat, drink, and dance! Music!

He gestures to the musicians who pick up their instruments and begin to play a bouncing tune. The dancers on the floor begin to whirl again and the general merriment of the night resumes.

An attendant comes to Torsten and whispers something to him. He then rises and whispers something to the King.

KING NEVO

Annabella, oversee the feast. I need to meet with the Knights.

ANNABELLA

Please don't leave me here. They won't even notice I've gone.

KING NEVO

Absolutely not.

ANNABELLA

Rolleau went to council meetings.

The King's face turns deadly serious.

KING NEVO

Stay here Annabella. Where you belong.

The King rises and retreats from the Great Hall, his knights trailing behind him.

She watches them exit out through a side door of the hall. She waits a moment, then steals away after her father.

INT. CASTLE HALLWAY - NIGHT

As she exits the door, she runs headlong into Gemma.

GEMMA

And just where do you think you're going your Highness?

ANNABELLA

I, um, I feel sick?

Annabella coughs and tries to push past Gemma. Gemma gently obstructs her way.

GEMMA

I doubt that. I believe your father asked you to stay put.

ANNABELLA

Please Gemma. I want to know what's going on. I want to help.

GEMMA

You can help by providing the feast with a royal presence.

ANNABELLA

No one cares whether I'm there or not. Rolly went to the war room.

Gemma's face softens and she reaches up to clasp Annabella's shoulders gently.

GEMMA

Your brother was going to be king. Your responsibilities are-

Annabella cuts her off.

ANNABELLA

Are what? There's no law saying I can't at least-

GEMMA

You must not argue with him! Represent your family with poise and-

ANNABELLA

I don't have poise! I have brains!

She pushes past Gemma and runs down the hall. Hearing Gemma sigh and start after her, she opens a panel in the wall and enters the servant's passage, closing the door behind her.

INT. WAR ROOM - NIGHT

The King and his knights are seated around a large square shaped table. The King sits in silence, pouring over an unrolled piece of parchment in front of him. There is shouting and discord from many of the knights.

A red faced, thick-necked knight shouts.

ANGRY KNIGHT

How many more letters like that must we get? How many more lives? We strike now! Flatten them!

Valin Klint slams his hand down on the table. There is silence. He rises from his chair, and the other knights take their seats accordingly.

VALIN KLINT
We cannot "strike". The Herdonians are raiding the Northern realms in small groups, two or three men at a time.

He looks at the King, who nods for him to continue.

VALIN KLINT
It would be like catching smoke. Wait for them to gather, then we will attack...

The King rises now as well.

KING NEVO
Valin is right...

INT. HALL OUTSIDE WARROOM - NIGHT

Two guards stand sentry outside the door of the warroom, the knights voices barely audible from inside the room. The guards are slouched against the wall, barely able to stay awake.

Annabelle steals quietly down the hall toward them.

ANNABELLA
You there! You're needed in the Great Hall. Go!

Caught sleeping on the job, they run off in the direction that she points.

After they've gone, Annabella listens at the door.

INT. WAR ROOM - NIGHT

Quiet has come over the room again. King Nevo stands, flanked by Torsten Van Hild and Valin Klint.

KING NEVO
It's settled. Sir Valin will spend the tournament season in the Northern Region, since he knows and can spot the Herdonians' patterns.

TORSTEN
You can ride up with Egan.

The Knights in the room nod in agreement.

KING NEVO

I will remain here, for the time being. It will cause a panic if I suddenly travel north. Torsten, you will stay as well.

Torsten Van Hild nods.

The King looks around the table, taking in the faces of his knights, his friends.

KING NEVO

After tomorrow's tournament, the rest of you will return to your homes and keep the peace, but be vigilant. May your rides be safe and swift my friends.

Chairs are pushed back and goblets are lifted off the tables.

Valin Klint stays seated.

INT. HALL OUTSIDE WARROOM - NIGHT

Annabella hears the knights coming, so she hides behind a valance as they file out of the room and back toward the feast.

INT. GREAT HALL - NIGHT

The newly returned knights take their place at the banquet table, as the feast rages on around them. The feast-goers dance and a group of young, drunken squires sing a garbled love song. No one knows the severity of what has been going on behind closed doors.

INT. WAR ROOM - NIGHT

VALIN KLINT

Sire, can I get anything for that leg? Perhaps I should get a doctor.

The King breathes deeply, in a great deal of pain. Klint puts a hand on the King's shoulder, looks at him, concern in his eyes.

KING NEVO

No, no old friend. I only need a moment. Just an old war wound.

He takes several more deep breaths and stands again. He claps Klint on the shoulder.

KING NEVO
No one can know.

Valin eyes the King's leg disapprovingly.

VALIN KLINT
Nevo, it's getting worse.

KING NEVO
I know, but none of the medicine
are working.

VALIN KLINT
Perhaps you could find someone
with, well, other powers of
healing...

KING NEVO
No. No magic Valin, I need to set
an example.

He gestures at the door.

KING NEVO
On your way. I'll be along in a
minute.

Klint goes to the door. He pulls it open and Annabella
crashes into him.

Klint chuckles and set Annabella back on her feet.

VALIN KLINT
Careful, little princess, you were
about to fall.

Annabella straightens her gown and stands up particularly
straight.

KING NEVO
Annabella!

Valin gives a Annabella a mock terrified look. She grins in
spite of herself before turning to face her father.

KING NEVO
You weren't...

Annabella looks sheepish for a moment. The notice the King
had received is still on the table.

KING NEVO

You were eavesdropping on a secret war council?

She ignores him and sits down at the table. She speaks in a measured, hushed tone.

ANNABELLA

What does that parchment say?

There is a pause as Nevo tries to form words, still disbelieving.

ANNABELLA

They attacked again, didn't they?

KING NEVO

Annabella... This isn't your concern!

ANNABELLA

(shouting)

It's MY kingdom! You keep telling our people that they are safe! It's not true!

The King is silent. Annabella slams her hands on the table and stands up.

KING NEVO

It's *my* kindgom Annabella, and my concern.

ANNABELLA

It's my concern too, Father. Only one of your children died! Don't pretend I'm not here.

Now, the King slams his hand down on the table. Annabella jumps at the sound.

KING NEVO

This isn't your affair! You have duties you must--

Annabella stands angrily and begins to pace back and forth.

ANNABELLA

My duties are to look nice pretty and smell nice and smile at young knights that still have their spots!

KING NEVO

You're a princess Annabella. That means there are expectations on you to--

ANNABELLA

I know, I know! Get married, have children, bla bla bla.

She stops. She crosses her arms and stares at her father.

King Nevo's face has gone stony. When he speaks, it is in a monotone, low voice.

KING NEVO

You can get married and *then* help your husband rule.

ANNABELLA

But--

Nevo holds up his hand, cutting her off.

KING NEVO

Tomorrow, you will dress as a lady for the tournament. You will smell nice and smile at the Knight's because that is your duty to this country at this moment.

ANNABELLA

Not any more it isn't.

Annabella turns on her heel and runs out of the room.

Nevo collapses back into his chair and puts his forehead into his palm.

VALIN KLINT

So she doesn't believe the whole "marriage as a great adventure" story.

KING NEVO

At this rate, Egan, nor anyone else has a chance.

INT. ANNABELLA'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Annabella goes through her wardrobe, hastily pulling gowns out, immediately discarding them onto a growing pile on the floor. There is a crude knapsack sitting empty on the bed.

She lets out a sigh of frustration as she pulls the last gown out of her closet and rejects it.

She hears someone knock.

INT. CORRIDOR - NIGHT

Gemma is on the other side of the door in the barely lit corridor. Her hair is slightly askew. She is breathing hard.

GEMMA

Your highness, please let me in.

ANNABELLA (O.S)

I'm already in bed Gemma. Go. I don't need you.

GEMMA

You shouldn't go to bed upset like this, my lady.

Annabella is silent on the other side of the door.

GEMMA

Alright then. Goodnight, Princess.

She turns and recedes into the darkness of the corridor.

INT. ANNABELLA'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Annabella rummages through the pile of clothing on the floor of her chamber again. Finding nothing, she straightens. Something on the mantle of the fireplace catches her eye and she goes to it.

She pulls back heavy drapes above the fireplace and stares at the portrait of a young man, with black hair. This is Rolleau, Annabella's deceased brother.

She stares at its entirety for a moment and then notices what her brother is wearing: tunic, vest, britches.

ANNABELLA

(softly)

Not a bad idea, Rolly.

She exits the room through a door against the outer wall of the room and of the castle.

INT. ROLLEAU'S CHAMBERS - NIGHT

Annabella enters a room. She lights a torch which is attached to the wall and the room is illuminated, though still rather gloomy.

The one torch casts long shadows across the walls and floor of the chamber. A large four poster bed lays untouched and somewhat dusty. The furniture is covered in white sheets.

Annabella moves about the room, pausing to look at drawings that are stuck to the wall.

One of these is a drawing of a younger Annabella, half garbed in combat armor, holding a sword above her head. As she brushes her fingers over the papers, she hears voices.

ROLLEAU (V.O)

Hold it up Annie! Like a knight!

The voice of young Annabella giggles.

Present day Annabella smiles slightly.

YOUNG ANNABELLA (V.O)

I'm trying! It's heavy!

Annabella sets the drawing back down and continues through the room. She reaches a large piece of furniture.

She pulls the sheet off and opens the doors of the cabinet underneath. In it, are all of her brother's old clothes. She begins to go through them, pulling out shirts and britches.

Arms full, Annabella leaves the room, extinguishing the torch on her way out. She pauses before she closes the heavy wooden door.

ANNABELLA

Goodbye, brother.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Battle trumpets sound. A high tempo instrumental score plays.

Trot, garbed in full battle regalia, thunders toward a line of black-garbed troops. They scatter as he approaches and Egan Van Hild, his rider, dispatches the soldiers, his sword flashing.

They are in sync; Trot spins at the right moment so that Egan can meet swords with an enemy rider who has ridden up on their flank. Egan pulls Trot's reins, forcing him to back up so that an arrow doesn't catch him in the head when an enemy archer looses it.

There is a metallic crash.

INT. ROYAL STABLES - NIGHT

Trot's eyes fly open and he jumps to his feet. He spins around quickly to face the stall door.

The other horses stir, but do not wake from their slumbers. Chew talks in his sleep.

CHEW
(Groggily)
Carrots and oats? For me? Oh,
that's lovely.

Trot squints into the dark aisle between the rows of stalls. The only discernible shapes are buckets, scattered on the floor of the stable, a trail of them disappearing into darkness.

TROT
(to himself)
Stupid cats.

He turns to go back to sleep, but stops when he hears another small scrape, as if one of the pails had been nudged by a foot.

He squints and sees the shape of a boy making his way down the aisle. The boy peers into each of the stalls.

Trot watches the boy get closer and closer, until finally, his stall is next. The boy holds a tiny lantern up to the opening in the stall. Its light illuminates his face. The boy is actually Annabella dressed in her brother's clothes.

ANNABELLA
Well, hello. You look too young to
be a work horse.

TROT
(snottily)
You look like a girl.

Annabella reaches her hand out to touch him, but Trot bares his teeth at her.

ANNABELLA
You don't scare me--

She looks down at his stall door and sees his name written there.

ANNABELLA
--Trot.

Annabella chuckles. Trot snorts.

ANNABELLA

What?! It's a nice name.

Trot snorts again and goes to turn around. Annabella reaches out her hand to touch him again and he lunges at her, baring his teeth. She stumbles backward and goes crashing to the ground.

She hits the floor hard and her cap falls off. Her black hair spills out, partially covering her face.

Trot pauses, looking at her surprised.

TROT

Princess Annabella!

Trot hastily faces her and lowers his head in a bow.

ANNABELLA

Are you bowing? Please, don't.

TROT

What are you doing here?

ANNABELLA

You're probably wondering what I'm doing here.

Trot snort exasperatedly and bobs his head.

ANNABELLA

I'm leaving the castle. I'm going to joust in the northern tournaments.

Trot cocks his head, silently questioning her.

ANNABELLA

My brother, he was champion before he...

She stops and shakes her head, ridding herself of those thoughts.

She walks into the dark part of the aisle and Trot squints after her. She returns, dragging a large knapsack behind her.

ANNABELLA

I have most of what I need, except a horse.

Trot snorts at her.

ANNABELLA

And I think *you* would be perfect.

TROT

Until you get caught.

ANNABELLA

Please Trot? You're the only horse here who could hope to compete.

Trot shakes his head. He faces the wall of his stall again. He hears Annabella's voice from behind him.

ANNABELLA (O.S)

Haven't you ever wanted a different life? Different than the one that you were given?

As she says this, Trot looks his tournament banners hanging and the sounds of the dream battle are heard again faintly.

Trot turns around and gives Annabella a measured look. He takes a few strides forward so his coat is illuminated by her lantern. He touches his nose to his shoulder, pointing at one of his spots.

He looks back at her.

TROT

But what about these?

Annabella guesses what he means. She walks over to him and gently puts her hand on his shoulder.

ANNABELLA

We'll work around those.

They look at each other for a moment. Trot looks down the long aisle into the darkness. After a moment, he nudges the door open and strides out of the stall.

Annabella smiles, but stifles the expression as Trot marches past.

Trot and Annabella walk down the aisle together.

EXT. STABLE YARD - NIGHT

An almost-full moon illuminates the yard as Annabella and Trot step out. Bits of hay and old oats are strewn all around the yard.

ANNABELLA

Wait here for a minute.

She leaves him and disappears around the corner of the stables.

Trot takes a deep breath of the fresh night air. He goes over to his cart and waits there. He hears a voice from behind him.

ANNABELLA (O.S)

No, I thought we'd use these.

He turns to see Annabella's arms laden with bridle and saddle.

TROT

Riding?!

Trot snorts and prances around. He rushes up to Annabella and stands straight next to her, head help regally.

ANNABELLA

You're excited? I'm sorry all this energy has been wasted on the cart.

As she speaks, she throws the tack onto him. She hefts her rucksack onto his back and attaches it to the back of the saddle.

EXT. STABLE YARD - NIGHT

Annabella leads Trot out of the stable and into the yard. Distantly, lights from the castle blaze, the feast continuing uninterrupted.

She attempts to put her foot in to stirrup on the left side of his body, but finds he is too tall to do so.

ANNABELLA

You're even taller than you look.
Here.

She leads him to a log lying by the doors to the stable. She clambers onto it, and Trot's eyes widen as she sits down hard on his back.

TROT

Well this is... different.

Trot shifts a little, adjusting to the new weight on his back.

ANNABELLA

Easy Trot. I'm not that heavy.
Imagine carrying one of the Van Hilds.

Trot snorts and shifts again, before holding still and bobbing his head.

ANNABELLA

Ready? Let's go!

She squeezes her legs quickly. Trot jumps forward a few steps, before halting and looking back at her.

Annabella, who has grabbed onto the front of the saddle, looks at him sheepishly.

ANNABELLA

Sorry! Sorry!

Trot snorts and shakes his head.

ANNABELLA

Okay. Nice and easy.

She squeezes his sides, more gently this time. Trot eases into a walk. He cautiously steps forth.

ANNABELLA

Let's go a little faster, Trot.

She nudges him with her heels. He breaks into a slow trot. They have cleared the stable grounds and are on a path which is winding its way through the Royal Wood.

The path stretches out before Trot, lit by the moonlight. He trots faster, before breaking into a canter, and then a gallop.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The two fly through the woods. Trot runs with abandon and without awareness of his surroundings. Annabella ducks as branches threaten to decapitate her. She laughs.

ANNABELLA

We're free!

Trot whinnies loudly, galloping ever faster.

TROT

Free!

INT. CASTLE - NIGHT

A shadow creeps along the wall.

It ducks into a dark corner as two ladies walk past. The shadow's face peers out of the shadows. It is Valin Klint's squire.

The squire reaches a heavy oak door.

He jimmys the lock with a pin. No one is coming, so he slides into the room.

INT. VALIN KLINT'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

The squire lights a candle. Its light reveals a chamber.

He goes to a small desk and opens a drawer, pulling from it a locked wooden box. Again, he picks the lock. He pulls out a scroll (the same one that Valin Klint had received at the meeting earlier). He begins to open it, but tucks it into his pocket instead.

He puts the box back, re-locks the door, blows out the candle, and exits the room.

EXT. CITY WALL - NIGHT

The squire pushes open a small door in the city gates, peering out. Quickly, he flattens himself against its exterior. He creeps along the wall. An arrow is shot past his head and lodges in the stones of the wall.

The hoofbeats of several horses approach. Three riders are visible encircling the squire. The middle rider is DUMRAKER, a Herdonian Commander. He is massive, tall and broad, with a thick black beard and equally thick eyebrows, despite his bald pate.

Upon being surrounded, the squire gulps.

SQUIRE
(shakely)
Du-Dumraker? S-sir?

DUMRAKER
Who do you think, fool?

The squire whimpers.

SQUIRE
I brought my master's orders.

He moves away from the wall, tunic ripping a little as it catches on the arrow. He holds up the parchment and Dumraker snatches it away. He reads it carefully, holding it under the light of one of his fellow's small torch with one hand and stroking his unwieldy beard with the other.

Finished, Dumraker tucks the parchment into the front of his coat, smiling triumphantly. He picks up his reins and kicks the still nearby squire in the chest, hurling him backward into the mud.

DUMRAKER

North, to Gremata! Now!

Dumraker and his companions wheel their mounts around and take off, spraying mud on the squire.

INT. ANNABELLA'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Gemma hurriedly folds discarded gowns and garments that she pulls from the floor. She mutters inaudibly under her breath as she works.

GEMMA

Temper of an angry bees nest.

Gemma freezes as she hears FOOTSTEPS behind her.

The King stands in the doorway, looking haggard, but not worried.

Gemma jumps to her feet, a particularly gaudy gown in hand.

KING NEVO

Gemma, where is Annabella? I need to speak to her.

Gemma swallows audibly.

GEMMA

Your majesty... I'm afraid she's not here.

The King nods, absentmindedly, looking around the room.

KING NEVO

I'll find her later then.

GEMMA

Begging your pardon, but Sir, *she's not here*. I came here early this morning to wake her and...

Gemma fiddles with the gown. She still doesn't meet the King's eye.

GEMMA

When I couldn't find her, I went to the stables and Grogan...

The King looks confused.

GEMMA

The stable boy, sire? The armor
master's cart horse is missing as
well.

Comprehension dawns on the King.

KING NEVO

You're not suggesting... She
wouldn't...

Gemma takes a cautious step backward.

GEMMA

I'm afraid the Princess has run
away. I waited until I was sure...

Nevo's face stony, he leaves the room, slamming the door.

Gemma continues to fold the clothing. She hears the King's
thunderous YELL, which causes a chandelier above to shake.

EXT. PATH - DAY

Annabella walks beside Trot down a wooded path. Her clothes
are muddy and she gingerly rubs her posterior.

ANNABELLA

We don't need to work on stopping,
I guess.

Trot looks bashful.

ANNABELLA

We're both new to this.

Trot's stomach grumbles and he stops short, putting his nose
between his front legs to stare bewildered at the source.

ANNABELLA

We should find something to eat.

TROT

I'm starving.

Trot follows Annabella.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

In a small clearing, a campfire burns. Around it, sit Topsy,
Slosh, and another man, TURVY.

Turvy is a tiny man, whose small frame is made to appear even smaller by the large majenta robes that he wears.

Topsy sits on a log, his upper body slumped forward with his head between his knees.

Slosh lies on the ground, one hoof pressed to his temple.

Turvy swirls coffee in a little tin cup.

TURVY

My dear Topsy, perhaps if you had drunk less.

Slosh and Topsy simultaneously make sounds of nausea at the word "drunk".

TURVY

Try to eat. Tournament travel is exhausting.

Suddenly, Turvy whips around on the log to stare at the surrounding forest.

Turvy gets up and throws several more logs on the fire. He cracks eggs onto a flat stone at the edge of the flames. He then goes to a metal bucket full of hot water beside the fire. He pours oats from a burlap sack into it.

TOPSY

I don't want food and neither does Slosh.

Slosh makes another retching noise.

TURVY

Well, dear, it isn't *for* you.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Annabella and Trot peer through the treeline at the Topsy and Turvy's makeshift camp.

ANNABELLA

They might share! I could pay them, even.

Trot snorts. He puts his nose in her hair and snorts. He then touches his spots with this nose.

ANNABELLA

We'll wear our disguises.

Trot looks at her, not convinced.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Turvy look up as Annabella and Trot approach.

Annabella's hair is tucked into her cap and Trot has been covered head to toe in mud.

Turvy calls to the pair as they approach.

TURVY
Friends! Please, join us for
breakfast.

Annabella and Trot reach the fire, but remain standing.

ANNABELLA
(in a deep voice)
We will pay you for some of your
food.

TURVY
Nonsense. You'll have it for free.
We have plenty and these two...

He gestures at Topsy and Slosh.

TURVY
(pausing)
...aren't eating.

Trot sniffs at the bucket of oats, before inhaling the steam deeply, eyes closed.

Annabella kneels beside the fire and reaches for the eggs, snatching a fork up from a small basket. Unceremoniously, she shovels them into her mouth, snatching the cup of coffee that Turvy hands to her. She gulps down the scalding hot liquid, coughing a little.

Trot is scarfing down the oats from the bucket, spilling as many as he eats.

TURVY
It isn't castle food, but it'll do.

Annabella freezes, another forkful of eggs halfway to her mouth. She lowers it to the plate in her lap.

ANNABELLA
I wouldn't know about that.

TURVY

Princess, you may be able to fool
some people, but not me.

Trot stops eating. He pauses, mouth half open and dripping
oats. He looks from Annabella to Turvy and back.

Topsy and Slosh both seem to have fallen asleep.

ANNABELLA

I'm not Anna- I'm Derbin Mackelin,
a knight from the Eastern Realm.

Turvy laughs.

TURVY

Your secret is safe with me
Princess. I know better than anyone
that sometimes to be who you are,
you must pretend to be someone
else.

Annabella sputters. She rises from her seat.

Trot too backs away from the bucket, but not before taking
one more large bite.

ANNABELLA

I have no idea what you're talking
about, but it's time that we get
going.

Turvy looks at her squarely. He too rises, pushing back his
sleeves to reveal thin forearms, covered inch-by-inch in
tattooed symbols.

TURVY

Allow me to help you, Princess. I
have talents that you may find
useful.

He flicks his wrists and Annabella's cap blows off, revealing
a cascade of long, dark hair.

Panicked, she looks at Trot. All of the mud has been
instantaneously raked out of his coat and he stands, white
coat and brown spots gleaming in the morning sun.

ANNABELLA

Sorcery! Get away from us, freak!

TURVY

I prefer magic, but you're not
wrong.

ANNABELLA

Whatever you call it. It's illegal!

Annabella trips her way over to Trot and tries to climb atop him, but is too panicked to succeed.

Turvy flicks his hands again and Annabella is vaulted up and into the saddle, she shouts.

TURVY

I can help you disguise yourself,
and Topsy here can teach you to
joust.

Trot looks interested now. He turns his head to look at Annabella.

ANNABELLA

Trot! Come on!

TROT

He can help us!

Trot knickers but Annabella keeps yanking at the reins and squeezing his sides.

Trot looks at Turvy, pleadingly.

TURVY

Take this, Princess.

He holds up a small pendant, pulled from one of many folds of his magenta robes.

TURVY

It will allow you to contact me, if
you wish to accept my help.

He looks meaningfully at Trot.

TURVY

Its a conversation starter, see.

ANNABELLA

We don't need your help!

She gives Trot a sharp jab with her heels.

Trot grimaces but dutifully turns from the fire and bounds away.

Turvy closes his eyes for a brief moment, when there is a small whooshing sound. When he opens them, the pendant is gone from his hand.

Topsy rouses from his nap.

TOPSY
What happened?

TURVY
Just the beginning of another
adventure, my friend.

EXT. STABLE YARD - DAY

King Nevo stands with Valin Klint as Egan Van Hild prepares to depart with his father Torsten nearby.

VALIN KLINT
You have no idea where she went?

Nevo shakes his head.

VALIN KLINT
She'll be fine sir. One day out on
her own, and she'll be back in the
comfort of the castle.

KING NEVO
You underestimate her stubbornness.

The King looks over at Egan, who fastens a bedroll to his saddle.

KING NEVO
Keep an eye out, on your travels.

VALIN KLINT
I imagine she'll try to disguise
herself.

KING NEVO
Maybe, but I spoke to Moffet and
his spotted cart horse is missing.

VALIN KLINT
That will be hard to miss.

KING NEVO
Keep me informed of what you find,
but tell no one else. I don't know
who I can trust.

Valin claps the King on the back and picks up the sack he has next to him.

VALIN KLINT
As you wish, sire.

He yells to Egan.

VALIN KLINT
Are you ready?

Egan nods.

EGAN
Goodbye father, until the
Championship.

TORSTEN
Don't let me down Egan.

Egan grunts affirmatively as he vaults himself into the saddle atop Striker's back.

TORSTEN
And listen to Sir Valin.

Nodding again, Egan steers Striker toward Valin.

Sir Valin's squire stumbles out of the stable and toward his master, pulling a large, chestnut colored horse. This is Sir Valin's horse, Deathdagger. The squire is still covered in caked mud and has straw sticking haphazardly out of his hair and clothes.

VALIN KLINT
Where have you been? I had to
prepare everything myself!

SQUIRE
I'm sorry sir, I- I slept late.

Valin shakes his head disgusted.

Egan reaches the King and Valin. He bows his head at the King.

KING NEVO
You must ride. It'll be sunset
before long, and you'll want to get
a start before then.

Valin hoists himself easily into Deathdagger's saddle.

VALIN KLINT
Not to worry, sir. I'll find what
you're looking for.

Egan and Valin trot away, Valin's squire at the reins of a mule who pulls a cart full of the knights' supplies.

EXT. VILLAGE WALL - NIGHT

Night has fallen on the small merchant village of Gremata. A guard stands watch at the doors of the wall. He dozes swaying lightly.

He opens his eyes. He sees Dumraker and a group of Herdonians suddenly before him.

He opens his mouth to yell, but before he can, he is felled by an arrow.

Dumraker strides over the guard's prone body and pushes open the gate.

He smiles coldly before striding through the gates, followed by his men.

EXT. NORTHERN FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Annabella and Trot are asleep in a small forest clearing, next to the smoking remnants of a fire.

A squirrel jumps from branch to branch on a tree above Trot. He jumps onto a branch that looks withered and sick. It begins to crack and as the squirrel jumps to safety, the branch detaches and falls to the ground, landing heavily on Trot.

Trot leaps up, as does Annabella.

ANNABELLA

Are you alright?

Trot shakes his head

Annabella goes to him and reaches for his head.

He turns away from her, angry.

ANNABELLA

It's not my fault, you know.

She returns to where she slept and begins angrily gathering her hair up to put under her cap.

Trot kicks the offending branch into the hedges and takes a huge mouthful of grass.

TROT
 (chewing)
 We could've stayed with Topsy and
 Turvy...

ANNABELLA
 Well we didn't! Okay?!

Both freeze and turn to look at each other.

ANNABELLA
 Did you just... speak?

TROT
 Did you just hear me?!

Both are silent for a moment and then simultaneously burst
 out laughing.

ANNABELLA
 Say something else.

TROT
 How did this happen?!

Annabella laughs with glee. She runs to Trot. As she
 approaches him, she kicks over her satchel, a bowl and
 Turvy's pendant spills out.

ANNABELLA
 I have no idea! Keep talking!

TROT
 (impersonating Grogan)
 But I swear I wasn't sleeping,
 Sir...

Annabella laughs loudly.

TROT
 (impersonating Moffet)
 A dull sword is a death sentence.

Annabella is in stitches.

Trot too chuckles but quiets when he sees the pendant on the
 ground. He pulls away gently from Annabella and walks to it.
 He nudges it with his nose.

TROT
 How did this get here?

Annabella takes a step back from the pendant, scared.

TROT

What's the matter?

ANNABELLA

I don't trust... Magic is dangerous! *And* it's illegal.

TROT

This is good magic! It's not dangerous!

ANNABELLA

My brother tried to use "good" magic.

She pauses for a moment, biting her lip.

Trot looks at her expectantly.

ANNABELLA

Magic, of any kind, takes enormous strength. The last time the Herdonians attacked a village, my brother tried to use magic he had learned to stop them... It was too much and... he never got better.

TROT

I'm so sorry.

Annabella shrugs.

TROT

But this is Turvy's magic and he looks like a pro! The minute we notice side effects, we'll destroy it.

Annabella looks unsure.

TROT

Please Annabella? I've never had anyone to really talk to.

Annabella walks up beside him. She picks up the pendant and tucks it in her pocket.

ANNABELLA

Okay. But the second either of us feels unwell, we get rid of it.

EXT. GREMATA - DAY

Valin Klint, Egan Van Hild, and Klint's Squire approach the distant walls of Gremata. Egan and the Squire look worn from a night spent in the woods, but Valin is animated, gesticulating wildly.

VALIN KLINT

And he came off his horse in about
a half-second. HA!

Valin looks at Egan for a reaction. Egan nods off on the back of Striker, who notices and give a little hop to wake him.

EGAN

Wha..? Oh, yes! Very impressive,
sir.

Valin just chuckles. From atop his horse, he slaps Egan on the back.

VALIN KLINT

You'll get used to tournament
travel soon enough, son.

Egan nods vaguely.

VALIN KLINT

The way I hear it, though, you may
be in line for a more, uh, regal
life.

Egan fiddles with the front of his saddle.

EGAN

If you're talking about my marriage
to the Princess... She'd rather
fall into a pile of horse.

Valin laughs again.

VALIN KLINT

She is hard-headed, but see her try
to resist you after you've won
tournament champion.

He winks mischievously at Egan.

VALIN KLINT

One of the perks.

Egan squints off into the distance.

A thick plume of smoke rises from the heart of Gremata village.

EGAN
What is that?!

VALIN KLINT
It's when you win the tournament...

EGAN
No, that!

Egan points to the smoking village.

Klint squints and then his eyes widen. He gallops off.

Egan and Striker follow quickly.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

Klint gallops into the square on Deathdagger, Striker and Egan right behind him.

The plume of smoke that they had seen from the road that rises from a massive pile of rubbish that sits in the middle of the square.

Valin jumps down off Deathdagger.

VALIN KLINT
Who is the leader here? Let him come forward.

A small, swarthy man, the TOWN LEADER, steps from one of the structures still standing.

TOWN LEADER
Who are you?

A little affronted, Valin pauses.

VALIN KLINT
I'm Sir Valin Klint, of the King's Council. I am riding North to Enka, for the tournaments.

He looks around.

VALIN KLINT
What has happened here?

TOWN LEADER
It was the Herdonians. They... they forced us to burn everything.
(MORE)

They didn't steal anything, just
forced us to watch it burn.

Egan steps forward so that he is beside Valin.

EGAN
(quietly)
We must write to the King.

Klint looks at the rubble surrounding him.

VALIN KLINT
I'm afraid the time is coming when
we must do more than that.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Trot and Annabella lie in a meadow near the city of Enka.
Annabella has her back propped against Trot. She picks grass
and strips it as Trot grazes.

ANNABELLA
What about Nightmareknife?

Trot shakes his head rapidly.

TROT
Too dark...

Annabella sighs.

ANNABELLA
Well, we have to decide something!
We can't go into competition as
Derbin Mackelin and "Trot".

Trot grunts and continues grazing.

There is a small POP, so quiet, that neither of them notices.

TURVY
What about Stormseeker?

Trot and Annabella jump at the sound of his voice. Turvy sits
on the opposite side of Trot, casually knitting a long scarf.

Annabella jumps up and Trot gingerly does the same.

TROT
Turvy! How did you get here?

Turvy continues knitting.

TURVY

A perk of being, what is it? A
"freak".

He looks the two of them over quickly before rising and dusting off his robes, which are periwinkle today.

TURVY

Ready to train for the joust? I
brought a former champion with me.

He turns to the outskirts of the meadow, where there is a patch of trees and whistles loudly.

Topsy and Slosh come tearing out of the trees. They are in full armor, a jousting lance tucked tightly under Topsy's arm. They gallop furiously toward Turvy.

Topsy's lance begins to slip and angle down.

TURVY

Oh dear.

Topsy's lance catches on the ground, catapulting Topsy off Slosh's back and into a parabolic fall toward Annabella, Trot, and Turvy.

Slosh looks up to see Topsy hurtling through the air. He puts on a burst of speed and reaches the others. He prances around a little, trying to position himself correctly and...

Topsy lands hard on his back. He catches his breath and throws his hands up.

TOPSY

Ta-da!

Slosh bows. Topsy tumbles off.

ANNABELLA

When that champion arrives, you let
me know.

Trot snickers but sobers quickly.

TROT

Annabella, maybe we should give
them a chance. It would help.

Annabella takes a few steps away from the group and Trot follows her.

ANNABELLA

Trot. I don't want help. Magic or not.

TROT

Even the best knights had to learn from someone... We won't use magic, but...

Annabella finally nods, and the pair turns around to face Topsy, Turvy, and Slosh.

ANNABELLA

You have to promise me that this is safe.

Annabella pulls Turvy's pendant from her pocket.

TURVY

I swear on all existence that it will do you no harm.

ANNABELLA

Okay. We need your help, but I want to train *without* magic.

TROT

(hastily)

But we want to talk to each other!

ANNABELLA

Except that! And we'll need help disguising Trot, the mud doesn't work for more than a couple of minutes.

Turvy smiles broadly. He bounces up and down on the balls of his feet.

TURVY

Wonderful! I accept!

Topsy straightens up. He has lost a shoe in the process and stands with one foot an inch or so above the ground.

TOPSY

Tomorrow is Enka's tournament. We're going to watch. They say that Egan Van Hild be the one to beat.

Annabella groans.

He marches away toward Enka, limping a little.

Turvy sighs and waves his hand.

Topsy stumbles a little as a boot materializes on his foot.

TURVY

You really can't take him anywhere.

INT. TENT - DAY

Egan fastens forearm guards to his arms.

VALIN KLINT

Have you received notice from the King?

SQUIRE

No, sir. I only sent the message this morning.

Valin hands him a scroll of parchment and shoves him toward the door.

VALIN KLINT

Send this to His Majesty. We have to move on, and he'll need to reach us.

Egan looks a little green. His hands are shaking slightly and he grimaces when trumpets call from outside the tent.

VALIN KLINT

That's your cue!

EGAN

It sounds like there are a million people out there!

Valin chuckles.

VALIN KLINT

A million! Ha! There are only a few thousand at the most...

Paling further, Egan leaves the tent.

EXT. STADIUM - DAY

The jousting stadium is a huge oval. The track lies in the middle, surrounded by seating for the writhing crowd. The noise is tumultuous, cheering, jeering, and wild laughter fills the air.

Egan sits atop Striker, bedecked in red and black, and in full armor.

At the other end of the field sits Sir Bale Barr. He is an older knight whose gut threatens to emerge from beneath his armor.

CROWD
BALE! BALE! MAY YOUR ENEMY FAIL!

Egan gulps audibly and strokes Striker's neck.

Annabella, Trot, Topsy, Turvy, and Slosh sit behind him in the ground-level standing space. Annabella's hair is tucked into her cap and Trot is an even brown color.

TOPSY
It's good to have a rhyming name.

A herald enters the field and waves his arms. The crowd quiets somewhat.

HERALD
I give you Sir Bale Barr, of Enka.
Son of Bane Barr, the sword of
Enka!

The crowd cheers loudly and resumes their chant.

ANNABELLA
(gleefully)
Egan looks like he might be sick.

The Enka Herald waves his arms.

HERALD
I give you Egan Van Hild, of the
Royal City. Son of Torsten Van
Hild!

There is some half-hearted booing.

HERALD
I give you... THE JOUST.

Annabella bounces up and down, trying to see the track.

Valin Klint comes to stand beside her, eyes fixed on Egan.

Annabella jumps when she notices him, and pulls her cap down.

VALIN KLINT
Impressive isn't he? His father
trained him and trained him well.

ANNABELLA
(in a deep voice)
I'm sure, but he won't beat me.

Valin chuckles and he glances at Annabella.

VALIN KLINT
And who are you, that will beat
Egan, likely our future king?

Annabella pauses, an angry look on her face. She takes a deep breath before answering

ANNABELLA
My name is Derbin Mackelin, from
the Eastern Realm.

Valin looks long and hard at Annabella.

VALIN KLINT
Have we met? You look very
familiar.

ANNABELLA
No, Sir Valin, but I have heard
stories of your great deeds.

Valin looks back at the field.

VALIN KLINT
That was long ago. Good luck, young
Master Derbin.

Valin leaves, but glances back over his shoulder at Annabella, whose eyes are fixed on Egan.

A horn is blow and both Egan and Sir Bale gallop down the field. Their lances pointed at one another, they approach the center of the field.

Egan's lance strikes first, squarely at the center of Bale's chest.

Bale's lance glances off Egan's shoulder.

The impact of the blow to forces Bale off his horse and onto the ground.

The Enka Herald holds up the black and red banner of Egan's house.

HERALD
Egan Van Hild! Winner!

The crowd is silent for a moment, looking at each other, and then they begin to cheer loudly.

CROWD

Egan! Egan! Leaves 'em bleedin'!

TOPSY

Three more wins and he'll have a place at the championship.

INT. THRONE ROOM - NIGHT

King Nevo sits atop his throne in the Great Hall of the castle. Torsten stands to his right, right hand resting on the hilt of a broadsword.

The castle's Herald comes to kneel in front of the King.

The King nods at him to rise.

HERALD

Another message from Sir Valin, your majesty. He and Egan-

HERALD

-are making their way from Enka to Hoyne, for the next joust.

KING NEVO

Thank you Herald. I'll send his orders to Hoyne.

The King walks down the steps of the royal platform and begins to fill a plate from the table beleaguered with piles of food and drink.

Torsten watches him.

KING NEVO

You must be proud, my friend. I hear that Egan's performance in Enka was flawless.

TORSTEN

Thank you, sir. He has potential.

The King returns to his throne.

KING NEVO

(to himself)
And imagine! Obedience in a child.

Gemma enters the room and she curtsies before the King, rises, and straightens her skirts.

KING NEVO
What is it Gemma?

GEMMA
I merely wondered if you had any
news about...

She eyes Torsten.

KING NEVO
Nothing yet.

Gemma nods and curtsying again, leaves the room.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Annabella and Trot, both in full jousting regalia, stand beside one another, facing Topsy and Slosh, who, in a rare moment of sobriety, are march back and forth in front of them.

TOPSY
Turvy's gone to register you for
next week's joust. We have until
then to turn you two ninnies into
champions.

Annabella raises an eyebrow and glances sideways at Trot.

TOPSY
Let's hope talent is genetic.

He looks meaningfully at Annabella.

TOPSY
If nothing else remember this: to
win a joust, you must have these
three principles: Balance, Brute,
and Bravery.

Mid-lecture, he looks at them.

TOPSY
Turvy has given you balance-your
ability to hear one another.

He looks at Trot.

TOPSY
You must provide the Brute,
Stormseeker, since the Sprite
Knight here is hardly a hefty young
man.

Trot straightens up and brazenly sticks out his chest.
Annabella rolls her eyes.

TOPSY
You Annabella. You are brave, I
think. But I'm going to test just
how brave.

Annabella looks at him unflinchingly.

TOPSY
Now, let's get to it!

MONTAGE - TROT & ANNABELLA TRAIN

-- Annabella stands on Trot's back as he walks slowly
forward. When he stumbles a bit, she falls.

TOPSY (O.S.)
If you can joust standing, then you
can joust sitting.

-- Annabella and a blind-folded Trot weave their way through
a series of poles dug into the ground.

ANNABELLA
Left... right...left again...MORE
LEFT! Trot!

Trot crashes into a final pole.

TOPSY
(condescendingly)
Balance!

-- Slosh sits on a makeshift wooden sled and Trot pulls him
easily around the meadow.

-- Topsy sits on a similar sled and a sweaty, heavy-breathing
Annabella pulls him forward, inch-by-inch.

TOPSY
Brute!

--Trot and Annabella sit by a campfire, nursing their various
bumps and bruises. Slosh and Topsy sit nearby, drinking and
singing incoherently.

--Trot and Annabella stand, petrified in front of a large
tree as Topsy hurls knives at them, barely missing.

TROT
Thank goodness we ran out of ale.

TOPSY

Bravery!

-- Topsy swaggers past a watching Trot and Slosh. Annabella attempts to mimic him, puffing out her chest and swinging her arms.

-- Annabella attempts to hold her lance up, but cannot fit it under her arm.

-- Topsy takes an ax to the lance.

-- Annabella fits the now tapered lance under arm. She and Trot charge at a dummy jousting.

ANNABELLA

Right... right... There!

TROT

Shift forward now!

They strike the dummy at the center of its chest. Their lance breaks. The force pushes Annabella back so she sits on Trot's unsaddled rump.

From a distance, Topsy shouts to them.

TOPSY

You almost had it!

-- Annabella stands on Trot's back as he trots forward. She laughs, but the action causes her to teeter and she once again falls to the ground.

-- Annabella tightens her left-handed grip on the reins and the lance in her right hand.

TROT

Ready?

ANNABELLA

Always.

They gallop forward.

ANNABELLA

A little faster.

TROT

Shift left!

Annabella shifts her position.

ANNABELLA

Strike!

At her word, several things happen. Trot takes a particularly hearty leap, and Annabella carries that momentum through, driving the lance into the heart of the dummy. The lance breaks again, but this time, Annabella stays seated.

TOPSY

PERFECT!

Trot and Annabella slow to a trot and then a walk.

ANNABELLA

We did it Trot!

She throws her arms around Trot's neck.

Trot snorts happily.

TROT

Yeah, we did!

-- Annabella stands up, arms wide as her hair blows back. She is standing on Trot's back, as he gallops forward.

ANNABELLA

Faster!

Trot surges forward, thundering across the broad meadow.

END MONTAGE.

EXT. MEADOW - DAY

Valin Klint watches the girl streak across the field on her spotted horse.

He starts to enter the meadow but pauses when he hears Annabella's laughter.

He smiles softly and turns back toward the forest, where in the distance, Egan and his Squire water the horses.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

EGAN

What was that noise?

VALIN KLINT

Just some children. We must push on. We have a full day's ride to Hoyne.

They mount their horses and start down a dirt path.
 Valin's squire lingers and glances toward the meadow.

VALIN KLINT (O.S.)

Boy!

The squire snaps the reigns on the mule's back and the mule plods on.

EXT. HOYNE TOURNAMENT FIELDS - DAY

In full disguise Trot and Annabella wait in line beside Topsy. Knights of all shapes and sizes crane their necks to see ahead.

ANNABELLA

Are all these knights competing?

TOPSY

Yes, but not in the same events.
 Jousting is too expensive for many.

TROT

How are we paying for it?

TOPSY

What did he say?

ANNABELLA

"How are we paying for it?"

Topsy smiles mischievously.

TOPSY

Magic.

An incredibly tall, thin knight, SIR JOBO FLOP looks at a tapestry on which brackets of competitors are listed.

JOBO FLOP

Who's Derbin Mackelin?

INT. TENT - DAY

Turvy sits on an oriental rug, in an otherwise bare tent, muttering to himself, eyes closed, knitting the scarf, which now circles around him several times.

TURVY

Skilogorum...Mailorakam.

He opens his eyes and the tent has filled with many luxuries, including a horse-sized bathtub and globe lanterns that throw warm light over Turvy's now-plush surroundings.

Topsy, Trot, and Annabella enter the tent.

TROT & ANNABELLA

Whoa.

Turvy rises and goes to a table filled with food, both human and equine.

TURVY

So who will it be?

TOPSY

Jobo Flop. They shouldn't have any trouble.

Trot goes to inspect the bathtub.

ANNABELLA

We agreed not to use more magic.

TURVY

My dear, this is part of your disguise.

ANNABELLA

But...

Topsy holds up a hand. In it, a goblet from the table.

TOPSY

No time! You've got to be at the field in ten minutes.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Egan slides into a seat in the Lord's Box. LADY OLA LAFI, the ruler of Hoyne, looks at him.

OLA LAFI

Sir Egan, shouldn't you be getting ready?

Egan bows in her direction.

EGAN

I don't joust for another hour, my lady. Who is riding now?

OLA LAFI
 Jobo Flop, though his greatest
 skill has always been archery.

Egan nods, peering into the field.

OLA LAFI
 I hear that his opposition is a
 tiny little man. The height
 difference alone will worth
 watching.

Egan chuckles.

A herald, dressed in flowing Hoyne robes.

HOYNE HERALD
 Lords and Ladies! Please welcome to
 the field Sir Jobo Flop!

Jobo enters. His massive height is exacerbated slightly by
 the disproportionately sized horse.

He raises his lance high above his head, threatening to rip
 the towering banners down.

HOYNE HERALD
 ...who will ride against, uh,
 Derbin Mackelin, from the Eastern
 Realms!

Annabella and Trot enter the field, diminutive compared to
 their opponent.

EGAN
 This doesn't even seem fair.

OLA LAFI
 Dangerous to make assumptions.

Egan, chided, sits back in his seat.

Annabella breathes short, nervous breaths.

TROT
 You're making me nervous.

She grasps the reins tightly, leather creaking.

ANNABELLA
 What if someone recognizes us?

Trot turns his head around to look sideways up at her.

TROT

Turvy is making sure that they won't.

He nods up at Turvy, who sits in the bleachers beside a group of young squires. Turvy rocks back and forth slightly.

HOYNE HERALD

Let the joust... BEGIN.

A horn is blown and Trot bursts forward.

Annabella moves her lance into position.

Jobo Flop gallops at them, lance already positioned, about a foot higher than Annabella's

ANNABELLA

Trot, his lance is too high! My head!

TROT

Hold on when I say!

The two riders are almost upon one another.

TROT

Now!

Annabella grips the reins tighter and leans forward. This forces her lance to come across her body even more.

All that can be heard is the HOOFBEATS of the horses.

At the same moment, Trot jumps slightly, so that Annabella's lance is at the same level as Jobo's. It catches him, sideways in the chest, clothes-lining him.

Jobo's lance smashes into Annabella's shoulder, hard, but the damage has been done.

Jobo flies backward off his horse and lands on the ground.

Annabella, winded, is pushed back onto Trot's back, nearly out of the saddle.

ANNABELLA

(weezing)

Trot...

Trot, looking back at her, kicks his back feet up, and pushes her back upright, so that she can cling to his neck.

They make it to end of the track and stop.

HOYNE HERALD
The winner is... Derbin Mackelin!

The cheers grow in intensity. Soon they are deafening.

HOYNE HERALD
The Sprite Knight!

Annabella reaches down to pat Trot's neck and Trot dances side to side.

TROT
We won!

Annabella laughs, wheezily.

ANNABELLA
The first of many.

Egan sits, dejected-looking in the stands.

OLA LAFI
That was a surprise...

Egan gets up and bows to Ola.

EGAN
I must go prepare for my joust,
your ladyship. Thank you for the
seat.

On his way to his tent, he runs into Valin Klint.

VALIN KLINT
Did you see that joust?! Wow!

EGAN
Very unusual technique, Mackelin
has.

Egan leaves and Valin Klint turns to follow him, but not before looking back over his shoulder at Annabella and Trot, who are now being swarmed by Topsy, Turvy, and Slosh.

Slosh gives Trot a shove with his head, sending himself stumbling a little.

SLOSH
That was one heck of a move.

Topsy and Turvy support Annabella, now dismounted, as she rubs her shoulder.

TURVY

You were magnificent! Stupendous!
Perfection!

Several purple sparks shoot from the top of his head. He pats his flyaway hair down and clears his throat.

ANNABELLA

My lance slipped, I almost lost my balance.

TOPSY

But you didn't! Four more wins, and we'll make it to the finals!

Annabella smiles broadly.

ANNABELLA

Did you see Egan's face? Ha.

Trot moves beside her so that she can throw her good arm over his neck and walk along.

TROT

He didn't see us coming.

TOPSY

I see the Winner's Festival coming.

Turvy rolls his eyes.

TURVY

You see food and drink coming.

INT. HALL - NIGHT

Inside the cavernous Hoyne Hall, tapestries, tents, and lanterns have been set up. Music is played loudly throughout the hall.

Tables are set and people mill through them. A winner from the day's tournament sits at each, accompanied by their squires, friends, and sometimes, like in the case of Annabella, their horses.

Annabella and Trot sit, disguised, at a table draped in Derbin Mackelin's colors: blue and gold. Annabella has her hair tucked into a jaunty feathered cap and she wears a tunic of blue and gold. Trot stands beside her, brown all over, blue and gold ribbons weaved into his mane.

People walk by, waving at Annabella and sometimes asking questions.

One passerby points at the table and nudges his friend.

FESTIVAL GOER
It's the Sprite Knight and Storm
Seeker. Nice jump, Storm!

Trot nods his head graciously, but Annabella pouts.

ANNABELLA
"The Sprite Knight" I hoped that
wouldn't catch on...

TROT
It could be worse!

ANNABELLA
Could it, "Stormseeker"?

Trot snorts.

TROT
They're just amazed that so much
"brute" could come from such a
little person...

Annabella grins.

ANNABELLA
Well it's because we're so
"balanced"

TROT
And "brave".

The two look at each other and burst into laughter

They sober quickly as Egan Van Hild and Striker approach the
table.

Annabella looks around nervously for Topsy or Turvy.

Trot refuses to meet Stiker's eyes.

Annabella rises to her full height from her chair. She speaks
in a deep voice.

EGAN
You know who I am?

ANNABELLA
I do. Shouldn't you be at your
table, Sir Egan? I'm sure you have
number of adoring fans waiting for
you.

EGAN

They aren't going anywhere.

He looks at Trot, who looks conspicuously elsewhere.

Annabella comes around to the front of the table, so that she is standing between Trot and Egan & Striker.

ANNABELLA

Can I help you with something?

EGAN

How'd you beat Jobo today?

ANNABELLA

Talent. Any other questions?

Egan puts a hand on Striker's neck and looks down at Annabella doubtfully.

EGAN

No. See you at the Championships.

ANNABELLA

Yes. You will. But then you'll be looking up at me.

Valin Klint walks by as the pair of humans stare each other down.

VALIN KLINT

Ah! Egan I see you've met Mackelin!

Valin slaps both of them on the back.

VALIN KLINT

Let's play nice, there are miles to go before the finals.

He steers Egan away and watches as the young man and Striker stride away.

Valin lingers for a moment. He looks Annabella over squarely.

VALIN KLINT

Don't mind him... He's from the Royal City. Overconfidence is natural.

Annabella looks stonily back at him.

VALIN KLINT

Quite a connection between you and
your horse. Magical, when that
happens.

He turns on his heel and departs, leaving Annabella and Trot
looking nervously at each other.

Valin passes Topsy, Turvy, and Slosh as he moves away. The
three of them are bedecked in ostentatious party favors,
hats, masks, and holding steins.

TURVY

Did we miss anything?

INT. HALL FOYER - NIGHT

Valin Klint watches Egan Van Hild storm away through the rain
toward their tent.

VALIN KLINT

Pity, I never had children.

He looks around him and sighs.

VALIN KLINT

You, quit lurking in the shadows.

His squire emerges from a small nook in the entryway.

SQUIRE

Sir, everything is packed. Are you
sure you want to move on tonight?
Marsh is barely a day's ride away.
If we stayed here, we could sleep..

VALIN KLINT

I don't remember asking you.

He gives the squire a sharp shove.

VALIN KLINT

The sooner we get to Marsh, the
better I can keep Egan out of
trouble. Go!

The squire leaves the hall.

Valin shouts after him.

VALIN KLINT

Don't forget the grain!

INT. GRAIN STORES - NIGHT

The Squire moves about the grain store, hovering over bags and pulling out small sacks of oats.

SQUIRE
Traveling at all hours of the day
and night...

A hand grabs his shoulder. He jumps and turns.

Dumraker, dripping from the storm outside, stands before him, flanked by two other men, who tower over them both.

DUMRAKER
Getting provisions for your
journey?

The squire's pale hands tighten around the sacks of oats he holds.

DUMRAKER
I was so looking forward to meeting
your master and the rest of the
King's Knights.

SQUIRE
He... he decided to move on. But
we're going to Marsh next...

Dumraker laughs coldly.

DUMRAKER
My business is here in Hoyne, since
you so graciously gave us access to
it. I see you don't want to witness
the fruits of your labor.

The squire shrugs dumbly.

DUMRAKER
You can watch Hoyne burn from a
distance.

A burst of wind blows through the narrow windows of the Grainery and the Squire's lantern is extinguished. He whimpers and rustles around in his vest for matches.

When he relights the lantern, Dumraker and his men are gone.

INT. STABLES - NIGHT

Annabella sits propped up against Trot in a generously-sized stall, bedded with straw.

She is wrapped in a Derbin Mackelin banner for warmth. Her hair is up under a cap, but a loose tendril has escaped from behind her ear.

TROT

...and I really thought someone would want me for a warhorse. I was kidding myself.

Annabella is quiet for a moment. She scratched behind Trot's ear.

ANNABELLA

We're both more than we seem.

There is a loud crash which makes them both jump.

Trot rolls his eyes.

TROT

Topsy must be back...

They rise and peer out of the stall.

Turvy lies on the floor of the stable, half inside, half in the rain. He shakes uncontrollably.

Trot and Annabella run to him.

ANNABELLA

What is it? Turvy?!

TURVY

So much darkness. Too much fire.

Trot looks at Annabella quizzically.

TROT

What?

Turvy raises a hand weakly and points out of the door to the hill in the center of Hoyne where the Great Hall stands.

The Hall is now a mountain of flames. Distantly, they hear screaming and shouting.

Annabella pulls Turvy the rest of the way into the stable and drapes the banner over him. She then swings onto Trot's back.

ANNABELLA

Let's go!

EXT. HOYNE STREET - NIGHT

They start off in the direction of the flames, but a tankard comes hurtling out of the darkness at Annabella. She loses her balance and lands in the mud.

Topsy and Slosh gallop toward them.

TOPSY
Oh no, you don't.

ANNABELLA
We can get people out!

Topsy slides off Slosh when he reaches the stables and goes to Turvy.

INT. STABLES - NIGHT

He cradles Turvy's head in his hands and turns to address Annabella.

TOPSY
It's not just a fire. It's the Herdonians.

Annabella stills immediately.

TOPSY
Gather your things. We leave in ten minutes.

Annabella comes back inside the stable and wordlessly begins shoving her things into a sack.

Trot follows her but looks confused.

TROT
What are you doing? We can still help them!

ANNABELLA
We need to get word to my father. The Herdonians, this is bold, even for them.

Annabella throws a cloak on over her shoulders.

She turns to Topsy and Turvy.

ANNABELLA
Are you alright?

Turvy nods and gets to his feet.

TURVY

I tried to stop it, but it was too hot for me.

TOPSY

We're headed to Marsh next. We'll leave tonight, now.

EXT. KING'S PRIVATE STABLE - DAY

King Nevo stands by the fence of a pasture and watches his giant black warhorse, Hammerheart, grazing.

Torsten Van Hild approaches him and looks out on the horses as well.

KING NEVO

Does Hammerheart seem a little chubby to you?

TORSTEN

I'm sure he doesn't, Sire.

The King nods absently. He turns toward the castle and Torsten follows, a step behind.

TORSTEN

What are we going to do?

KING NEVO

Things are coming apart, old friend. Gremata destroyed, now Hoyne.

Torsten bows his head somberly.

TORSTEN

Ola's letter said that she and many others were able to find safety in the cellars.

KING NEVO

(shouting)
I will not have my people hiding underground!

The pair strides out of the stable yard and into the royal gardens.

EXT. GARDENS - DAY

KING NEVO

They're following the tournaments. I know it.

Torsten nods.

TORSTEN

What do you plan to do?

The King sits on a bench beside a bubbling fountain. He rubs his bad leg absentmindedly.

KING NEVO

I must ride to the championship. I'll take several battalions with me, and from there, we'll go after the Herdonians. They won't be far...

TORSTEN

May I accompany you sire? I'd like to see Egan joust.

The King smiles weakly.

KING NEVO

Of course, Torsten.

The King rises and walks toward the castle. He turns and speaks over his shoulder.

KING NEVO

Besides, he may ride against this "Sprite Knight". I'd like to see that.

INT. TENT - DAY

Trot and Annabella sit around a small cook-fire. Bleary-eyed. Annabella holds a cup of steaming coffee. Trot's head nods every few seconds as he tries to stay awake.

Topsy bursts through the tent flaps.

TOPSY

Wake up, you two! The road to the finals begins today!

Turvy calmly enters the tent. He is wears gold robes. He waves his arms and Trot becomes solid brown.

Annabella gets up and stretches, turning to Turvy.

ANNABELLA

Are you alright?

Turvy smiles kindly as he stokes the fire.

TURVY

Fine dear. Nothing a little sleep
and a change of scenery couldn't
cure.

TOPSY

I heard back from the King. Valin
Klint had already reached him and
His Majesty will be at the finals.

Annabella gulps.

TOPSY

Let's think jousting! Won't matter
that the King is there, if we
aren't!

EXT. STADIUM - DAY

Brightly colored tents are raised and cooking smoke rises
from a filling tournament field.

The sand of the stadium is raked by donkeys pulling carts. A
stadium box fills with the elite.

Egan and Valin Klint stand by the railing of the arena.

Trot and Annabella wait at the end of the track. A horn is
blow and they take off.

Using their jump-method, they easily unhorse their opponent.

EXT. STADIUM - NIGHT

Annabella and Trot are awarded their winner's medals, as is
Egan. They exchange unfriendly looks with one another.

INT. ROCKY CAVE - NIGHT

Dumraker stands over a map of the kingdom and throws a dagger
into it.

EXT. TOWN CENTER - DAY

King Nevo helps his men to raise one wall of Gremata's newly
built structure into place. The guard who was shot by
Dumraker's men watches, his arm in a sling.

The King rubs his bad leg while no one is watching.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Holding up Annabella and Trot's medal, Topsy sings loudly on their wagon as they travel through the forest to their next event.

Trot and Annabella chuckle.

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

Egan, Valin, and the squire are stopped on the road to the north. A wagon wheel has fallen off. The squire kneels by it and Valin Klint gestures violently at him to fix it. The horses stand nearby, snorting impatiently.

EXT. TOURNAMENT FIELD - DAY

More tents go up in a new tournament city.

EXT. STADIUM - DAY

Trot breathes deeply at the starting line of their next joust. A horn sounds and he takes off.

Annabella's lance breaks against their opponent's breastplate.

TOURNAMENT HERALD (O.S.)
Winner! Derbin Mackelin and
Stormseeker!

CROWD (O.S.)
Sprite Knight! Sprite Knight!

Egan beats his opponent.

TOURNAMENT HERALD (O.S.)
Winner! Egan Van Hild!

A banner is hung with winner's brackets, showing two more tournaments until the final. Annabella and Trot hold the same position as Egan and Striker, in opposing brackets.

EXT. TOURNAMENT FIELDS - DAY

Outside the stadium, Trot and Annabella (in disguise), sign autographs. They pose for "pictures", which are really pencil sketches done by an artist for fans. Turvy's pendant hangs around her neck.

EXT. NEW TOURNAMENT FIELDS - DAY

At semi-finals, Turvy erects the tent.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Valin sits around a large table, drinking and shouting with other nights.

Annabella and Trot walk by the mouth of the tent and Valin nods at them, in greeting. They nod back but hasten away.

EXT. CITY CENTER - DAY

In Hoyne, King Nevo bows to Ola Lafi, in front of the grainery which shows massive fire damage. Ola looks tired but determined.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

King approaches wall of the city and looks behind him at his army before heading out onto the road.

EXT. STADIUM - DAY

Trot and Annabella stand, in disguise, at one end of the jousting field. Both look nervous and drawn.

Topsy stands on one side with Slosh, while Turvy absentmindedly pats Trot's other side.

TURVY

Good luck.

TOPSY

You're ready.

Slosh nods vigorously, weaving a little.

The three coaches walk away to their seats in the stands.

TROT

I'm glad you picked me.

Under her visor, Annabella smiles.

The horn-blower steps up to the arena and raises his horn.

EXT. TENT - NIGHT

There is raucous singing and clapping coming from inside Trot and Annabella's tent as they celebrate their victory.

Egan, a winner's medal around his neck, stands outside the tent, seemingly unable to decide whether or not to go in.

Valin Klint approaches him from the direction of the other tents.

VALIN KLINT
Better save it for the finals,
young Master Egan.

EGAN
I don't know what you...

VALIN KLINT
No use going in there and starting
trouble.

EGAN
No one has ever even heard of him!
I just think, with all the attacks
on our kingdom, that we'd be more
careful with strangers!

VALIN KLINT
Focus on your ride, Egan. Nothing
else matters now.

Egan nods eventually and pulling Striker's reins, walks away from their tent.

Valin lingers, a concerned look on his face as he surveys the tent.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A parade processes through Gilamere. Black and red, blue and gold, and green and gray banners hang from buildings.

Spectators throw flower petals and streamers on the parade participants. At the beginning of the parade is the leader of the city and his family.

Next comes Annabella and Trot, in disguise. Annabella's armor gleams as she waves timidly at the crowd, Turvy's pendant bouncing up and down in time with Trot's jaunty gait. She glances behind her regularly, nervously. Trot, fully brown, is bedecked in long silks of gold and blue. Topsy and Turvy follow, Topsy riding a sober Slosh and Turvy astride a donkey, blue and gold robes flowing out behind him. Stewards carry banners and supplies for them.

Egan Van Hild and Striker come next, with Torsten. Stewards carry their house colors behind them. Egan waves distractedly.

Finally, comes the largest group of all. The King has arrived, with his army in tow. He sits astride Hammerheart and waves at the spectators as he goes by. Valin Klint rides beside him, flashing a smile at the crowd while intermittently chatting with the King.

Valin's squire hoists a huge royal banner in the air and struggles to keep up with the group as he wrestles with it.

INT. KING'S TENT - DAY

The King's knights sit around a table in the King's plush tent.

KING NEVO
From here, we will chase down the Herdonians.

TORSTEN
How do we find them?

The King nods at Valin.

VALIN KLINT
They're headed east, toward our port cities, according to my scouts.

KING NEVO
Torsten, you must take the army after them. You'll have to miss Egan's ride.

Torsten shakes his head.

TORSTEN
Kingdom first.

KING NEVO
You will depart immediately. The rest of you...

He looks around at the worn men.

KING NEVO
Try and enjoy tomorrow's festivities. Dismissed.

The men rise to leave.

KING NEVO
Valin... A moment.

VALIN KLINT
What is it, Sire?

KING NEVO
Any news of Annabella?

VALIN KLINT

Nothing concrete, but a jousting enthusiast like her can't be far away.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Annabella and Trot sit beside a campfire, their usual tent erected nearby.

TROT

Explain again why we can't be in the tournament grounds.

ANNABELLA

Because my father's staying there.

She flicks a piece of dirt off her pants, not looking at him.

Trot nudges her to look up.

TROT

He might be proud of you.

ANNABELLA

Maybe... I don't know. We had a lot of help. A lot of magic...

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Trot and Annabella sit by a campfire in the distance. The sound of ragged breathing is heard, as well as the settling of sticks and leaves on the ground. Someone is watching them.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - NIGHT

TROT

Why do you think Turvy helped us?

ANNABELLA

I think because we were going to do it with or without his help.

She pats Trot's neck. They sit and watch the fire.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The sound of footsteps is heard as the lurker turns and walks away.

EXT. STADIUM - DAY

The finals stadium is full of noise. Trumpets sound, bookies call for bets, people shout and chant.

The King calmly sits in his own box, which is full, except one seat beside him.

Egan leans down and pats Striker's neck as they wait at their end of the field.

EGAN

One more ride, Striker.

Annabella stands beside Trot at their end of the field. She looks to her right where Topsy and Turvy stand.

Topsy has his arm slung around Turvy's shoulders, his other arm waving enthusiastically. Turvy smiles weakly.

Annabella stands directly in front of Trot, holding his head between her hands.

ANNABELLA

Whatever happens, I am so proud to be here with you.

She hugs his head tightly.

CROWD

Aw.

Trot shakes his head a little, dislodging Annabella.

TROT

Get on. We have a tournament to win.

Annabella flings herself easily into the saddle.

HERALD

Your Majesty, King Nevo, Lords and Ladies of the Great Kingdom, I present Egan Van Hild, son of Torsten Van Hild.

Cheering, though lackluster, echoes around the stadium.

HERALD

And for your pleasure, the light of the East, Derbin Mackelin, the Sprite Knight!

The crowd erupts into huge cheers.

CROWD

Sprite Knight! Sprite Knight!

The Herald raises his hands, for quiet.

HERALD
With your permission, my King.

The herald bows low to the King.

The King stands and raises his arms.

KING NEVO
Begin!

A horn blows.

Annabella and Trot take off and all noise disappears, except
HOOFBEATS.

ANNABELLA
Steady, Trot! He's fast.

Annabella locks her lance under her arm.

TROT
Now!

Annabella stands in her stirrups and Trot jumps.

Before he can even get his lance to Annabella's breastplate,
Egan is knocked sideways, and off Striker.

The crowd erupts in cheers.

FINALS HERALD
Derbin Mackelin, Tournament
Champion!

Annabella and Trot gallop around the field. When they run
past Topsy, he holds up a banner of gold and blue. Annabella
grabs it and continues on, colors streaming behind her.

Egan hobbles off the field, Striker supporting him.

Annabella and Trot canter past the King's box. Through her
visor, she meets the King's eyes before quickly looking away.

Topsy and Turvy clap, but Turvy suddenly sits back on the
bleachers, forehead in hand.

TOPSY
What's wrong?

TURVY
Nothing, dear, just tired.

EXT. PLATFORM - DAY

Trot and Annabella, still in armor, approach the medal platform, which has been erected in the middle of the stadium. The crowd murmurs excitedly.

Annabella and Trot are followed by Topsy and Slosh.

The King, several of his knights, and Egan stand atop the platform.

The King sees Topsy.

KING NEVO

Sir Davin! I'd heard you'd wandered off months ago. I didn't think you still trained.

TOPSY

Only the best students, your majesty.

The King nods and gestures that both he and Turvy should stand to his right.

Annabella and Trot stand at the foot of the platform steps.

Annabella lays her hand on Trot's neck, gently, before ascending the platform.

She bows before the king, her visor still down.

KING NEVO

Rise, brave knight.

He addresses the audience.

KING NEVO

Bravery, lords and ladies, is what we celebrate today.

Trot mutters under his breath.

TROT

And brute and balance..

Annabella grins.

KING NEVO

I give you the this year's tournament champion... Derbin Mackelin!

The crowd cheers as the King places a large gold medallion over Annabella's helmet. It lays on her breastplate on top of Turvy's medallion, which appears tarnished.

KING NEVO

Now, Derbin, let them see you.

Annabella rises and bows, but backs away.

ANNABELLA

Sir, I'd rather not.

Egan explodes forward.

EGAN

Of course not. Because there is no Mackelin family in the Eastern realm. He lied!

The King looks at him before looking back at Annabella.

KING NEVO

I'm afraid, I must insist.

The crowd grows silent.

Annabella takes a small step back, glancing over her shoulder at Trot.

Egan steps forward.

EGAN

He is a liar and a cheat!

Annabella attempts to leave the stage, but Egan grabs her and throws her to the floor.

Trot snorts angrily and bares his teeth at Egan, who backs away nervously.

The King kneels beside Annabella, takes her arm, and pulls her to her feet.

KING NEVO

Sir Mackelin, I order you to remove your helmet

Annabella looks at Trot once again. He looks back sadly, but shrugs, defeated.

Annabella lifts her helmet over her head and her hair tumbles out.

KING NEVO

Annabella...

Egan looks on, dumbfounded.

Everyone on the field bows.

Topsy looks at Egan disapprovingly and elbows him hard in the ribs.

TOPSY

Bow to the Princess you nosy brat.

Annabella stares nervously at her father, frozen, looking at her.

ANNABELLA

Father...

The King grabs Annabella's arms. Her armor creaks as he shakes her slightly.

KING NEVO

What were you thinking?!

ANNABELLA

I wanted to show you...

She pauses, nervously looking at Trot, who nods reassuringly.

ANNABELLA

I wanted to show you I was strong.

The King looks at her for a brief moment before wheeling around to face Topsy.

KING NEVO

And you! Are you completely out of your mind?!

Topsy straightens a little.

TOPSY

Completely! Except in this...

KING NEVO

Where is Valin Klint? Did he know about this? You've been right under his nose!

Egan gingerly taps the King's arm and points out into the crowd, whispering something in the King's ear.

KING NEVO

You, boy in the vest, where is your
master?!

Valin Klint's squire, formerly obscured in the crowd, smiles coldly at the King's address.

Saying nothing, he points over his shoulder.

Valin Klint, flanked by Dumraker and several other Herdonians, strides to the entrance at the other end of the tournament field.

Klint smiles grotesquely.

VALIN KLINT

Looking for me, Nevo?

The King merely stares.

VALIN KLINT

Would have been hard to manage my
army from the castle."Searching for
Annabella" made it so much easier
to coordinate with my commanders.

He gestures to Dumraker to bring him a bow with a flaming arrow.

VALIN KLINT

One child dies, one child betrays
you. How terrible for you.

Klint aims the arrow upward. It arcs up and the sound of fifty or so arrows being loosed is heard. A multitude of lights appear in the sky.

VALIN KLINT

The Herdonians have not gone east,
after all.

The King surveys the sea of lights that now fall to the ground.

VALIN KLINT

I'll give you an hour to ready
whatever troops are left, or a
minute to surrender. With your army
gone, you can't win.

He eyes Topsy, Egan, and the small battalion of guards.

KING NEVO

You've known me long enough to know
that I won't back down.

VALIN KLINT

I've known you long enough to know
that you are no longer fit to be
King.

Valin looks directly at Annabella, and then at Turvy, who is pale.

VALIN KLINT

I can't have your *warriors*...

He sneers at Annabella and Trot.

VALIN KLINT

...cheating though, so I'll level
the playing field.

Valin lifts his bow and arrow again. He aims and fires.

The arrow strikes Turvy. Topsy stumbles forward, tries to reach him, but all he grasps are Turvy's robes, the man disappearing completely.

Annabella starts forward and stops when Turvy's pendant starts to shimmer. It blackens completely, the chain breaks, and it falls to the ground.

Trot's brown coloring fades and he is left fully spotted.

VALIN KLINT

One hour...

Many Herdonians appear behind them, on horseback and holding Dumraker and Valin Klint's horses. The two men mount up and gallop toward the wood.

The King, Annabella, and the others watch as they disappear from sight.

The King snaps to attention.

KING NEVO

Egan! Bring Annabella back to her
camp! Tell whoever can fight on the
way: come to the arena!

Egan whistles and Striker comes to the platform.

ANNABELLA

I can fight.

The King turns to Topsy, who sits on the platform, with Turvy's robe in his lap.

KING NEVO

Will you protect Annabella?

Topsy rises.

TOPSY

Ravensbane!

Trot and Annabella look confused, but Slosh strides proudly forward.

TOPSY

With my life, your majesty.

King Nevo addresses the audience.

KING NEVO

I need all those who are able to fight. However and with whatever they can!

The crowd murmurs in ascension.

KING NEVO

One of our own had betrayed us... Has hurt us. We may be few, but we will fight back!

The King turns away from them, hustling away to arm and prepare himself.

ANNABELLA

Father! I can fight!

KING NEVO

Jousting and fighting are two different things...

Annabella begins to speak but King Nevo cuts her off.

KING NEVO

I won't lose both of my children.

Annabella shakes her head.

ANNABELLA

You won't lose me! I can take care of myself.

She looks at Trot.

ANNABELLA

Right?

TROT

Of course! And I'll protect you too.

Annabella suddenly looks horrified. She grabs at her neck and her eyes widen in fear.

ANNABELLA

Trot...

King Nevo looks at her, concerned.

KING NEVO

What is the matter with you?!

ANNABELLA

Say something!

She pushes past her father and yanks her arm away when Egan tries to grab her. She jumps down beside Trot and holds his face in her hands.

ANNABELLA

Say something.

TROT

Where is the pendant?

Annabella yells in frustration.

KING NEVO

Go!

Egan jumps down and pulls Annabella onto Striker's back behind him. She struggles.

ANNABELLA

Let me ride Trot, at least. This is ridiculous!

Trot starts toward her.

KING NEVO

No! Boris Longton needs a horse. This one will do.

Boris Longton emerges and grasps Trots reins.

Egan wheels Striker around, pointing him toward the woods. Topsy, now atop Slosh, does the same. The group gallops off toward the camp, leaving Trot behind with Boris.

TROT
Annabella!

She hears only whinnying.

MONTAGE - Preparing for Battle

-- King's armor is put in place by attendants.

-- Swords are sharpened on a millstone.

-- Egan, Annabella, and Topsy ride through the streets, shouting:

EGAN
Herdonians attacking! Arm
yourselves!

-- Annabella tries to dismount but stops at a severe look from Topsy, who gallops beside her on Slosh.

-- Boris slings his saddle onto Trot's back. Trot flinches.

-- Men line up at the entrance of a small armory.

-- A young woman stands in line, her hair bundled under a cap, a lot of dirt smeared on her face. This is LOU.

-- Klint moves among the Herdonians, prepped for battle. His squire trails behind him.

-- Dumraker shoves a young Herdonian aside as he tries to keep up with Klint. Klint looks up at the sky, which darkens quickly as clouds roll in.

VALIN KLINT
It's time.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Egan, Striker, Annabella, Topsy, and Slosh ride into Annabella's camp clearing. Annabella hurls herself off his back.

ANNABELLA
Egan, take me back.

EGAN
Your highness, I can't.

Topsy dismounts and puts a hand on Annabella's shoulder.

ANNABELLA

My father is there! And Trot. I order you.

EGAN

I follow the King's orders.

He gallops back to the arena.

TOPSY

Without...

He pauses.

TOPSY

Turvy's magic, you're not safe.

ANNABELLA

We don't need it! My father... his leg is hurt and I...

She pauses, trying to gain composure.

ANNABELLA

I have to help him!

TOPSY

He knows you're safe, and that will help him.

Annabella swings her sword into a tree trunk and yells in frustration.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Silence as the Royal troops face the Herdonian horde across from them.

King Nevo looks at his troops. It is a motley crew, composed of several fully-armed knights, but mostly of haphazardly armed townspeople. Lou waits atop a small palomino horse. Egan and Striker are in line as well.

Boris Longton sits astride a sober-looking Trot.

BORIS

There's a good boy, no need to worry.

Trot snorts.

Valin Klint strides to his front line on Deathdagger.

VALIN KLINT

Surrender to me and you can save
these lives. They'll die for your
pride Nevo, just like your son did,
and just like you will.

King Nevo motions to Sir Jobo, who pulls a long bow and arrow
from his side and looses one bolt. It whizzes past Klint's
ear and plants itself in his guard's shield.

Looking from the arrow to the King Klint smiles coldly.

VALIN KLINT

So be it.

He turns Deathdagger back through his troops. He draws his
swords and thrusts it upward. The Herdonians let out wild
cries and rush forward.

The King shouts, gallops forward and his army follows.

Boris kicks and Trot surges forward, but struggles slightly
to keep up, sagging with Boris's considerable weight.

TROT

You're no sprite knight are you?

Egan and Striker, close the distance first. Egan unhorses his
first opponent easily with an outstretched arm, but then
draws his sword.

The armies clash.

Lou draws a rusty broadsword and wallops a Herdonian foot
soldier on the back of his head.

The King sits astride Hammerheart, sword flashing, unhorsing
opponents.

Valin Klint watches the action from a distance.

His squire stands beside him on the ground next to
Deathdagger.

SQUIRE

Are you going to fight the King, my
lord?

VALIN KLINT

Not yet.

Valin Klint watches the king fight.

The battle rages on.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

The faint sounds of the battle are heard as Annabella paces back and forth angrily. She stomps past Topsy, who sits by a small fire, a tin mug grasped in his hands.

ANNABELLA

Take me back!

Topsy looks at her mournfully.

ANNABELLA

How can you sit there?! After what
Klint did to Turvy?!

Topsy leaps to his feet angrily, spilling his cup onto the fire which erupts upward.

Slosh jumps slightly.

TOPSY

I am *doing* this for him. He wanted
you to be safe!

Annabella looks at him, her expression softens as Topsy sits back hard.

ANNABELLA

I'm sorry, Topsy. He was so good to
Trot and me.

TOPSY

He was good to everyone.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The battle rages on.

Lou, now unhorsed, fights a short, dirty Herdonian. She ducks his blow and body-checks him, but they both fall to the ground, where they continue to tussle.

Egan and Striker stand in the middle of a veritable horde of Herdonians. They are surrounded, but none of the enemy soldiers want to make the first move.

EGAN

Come on, then!

Elsewhere on the field, Trot kicks at an assailant as Boris Longton clings to his back.

STRIKER

TROT!

Trot looks up from the Herdonian whom he menacingly pins to the ground with one hoof.

Striker and Egan are attacked by the circle of Herdonians.

Trot starts toward them, but Boris yanks on his reins.

BORIS

There's too many, nothing we can do.

Trot waits a moment, before he charges at the cornered pair.

Trot reaches the group, Boris Longton barely holding on.

Trot bites and kicks his way to the center. When one Herdonian reaches to grab his reins, Trot grabs ahold of the man's arm and flings him aside. Another man jabs at Trot's unguarded flank with a spear, but Trot kicks him squarely in the helmet.

STRIKER

Behind you!

Trot wheels around and wallops the remaining pair of Herdonians with his head, knocking them out.

The two horses stand face to face, panting.

Boris Longton dismounts, shaky and slightly green. His arm hangs broken.

BORIS

I think I'll take my chances on the ground for now...

Egan, Trot, and Striker watch him go.

STRIKER

You fight...well. Thank you.

Trot vibrates with energy and adrenaline.

TROT

So do you!

Striker bows his head slightly, Trot follows suit.

Egan looks at the two horses, clearly confused.

EGAN

Stormseeker? That's your name right?

Trot looks at Egan directly, unblinking.

EGAN

Uh. You'd better go get your rider.

Snorting, Trot glances over his shoulder at the boulder behind with Boris has disappeared. He looks at back at Egan, disparagingly.

EGAN

No, not Sir Boris! It's time the Sprite Knight joins the fight.

Trot looks at him for a moment. He looks from Striker to Egan, and back again.

Striker nods reassuringly.

Trot wheels around and gallops through the battle.

Valin Klint's squire hides behind a partially fallen tent and cringes as Trot leaps over him and the tent.

Valin Klint watches Trot streak across the field in the distance.

VALIN KLINT

(under his breath)

Good. The Princess should see this.

He kicks Deathdagger's sides and they start toward the King and Hammerheart in the distance.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

Annabella stares into the small fire. Topsy strokes Slosh's neck with a rag.

They both start as they hear thunderous HOOFBEATS approaching.

Topsy jumps up and stumbles in front of Annabella, sword outstretched.

The humans stare dumbfounded as a riderless Trot gallops in.

Trot slides to a stop and his eyes meet Annabella's.

They look at each other for a full moment before Annabella steps out from behind Topsy and runs to Trot, picking up her discarded helmet as she goes. She swings herself into the saddle.

Trot turns back the way he had come.

Annabella raises her sword above her head.

ANNABELLA
(shouting)
For Turvy!

Trot rears, whinnying loudly.

Slosh approaches Topsy and nudges him slightly, snapping the weary knight out of his reverie.

TOPSY
For Turvy!

Annabella, yelling too, gallops off with Trot as Topsy rushes around, gathering up his armor.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

Valin Klint approaches the King from behind. The King, atop Hammerheart, shouts orders at a group of distant soldiers.

KING NEVO
Cut off the left flank!

VALIN KLINT
Worry less about your men and more
about yourself, Nevo.

Valin Klint throws a dagger toward the King, who turns to look at Valin.

The King throws himself sideways to avoid the blade, and tumbles to the ground.

He struggles to his feet, wheezing.

KING NEVO
I wondered how long when you would
gather the courage to face me.

VALIN KLINT
I'm here now and this kingdom will
finally have a worthy ruler.

He dismounts and pulls out his sword.

KING NEVO
I'll never surrender.

Valin Klint bellows as he lunges at the king.

Elsewhere, Trot and Annabella fight their way effortlessly across the field. Their opponents fall before them.

Egan, separated from Striker, and covered in dirt, fights three men at once and is losing. One knocks him off balance, he falls to the ground.

His assailant raises his sword high above his head to deliver the fatal blow.

Trot and Annabella hit the man at a full gallop and trample him down.

As Egan rises to his feet, Annabella bonks another Herdonian on the head with the butt of her sword.

EGAN

Thank you!

Topsy and Slosh fight Dumraker with Lou.

TOPSY

On your left, boy!

Lou jolts forward, hit by another soldier. Her helmet comes off and frizzy blond curls erupt from beneath it.

TOPSY

(sighing)

Of course...

Egan brushes himself and whistles for Striker as Annabella and Trot scout the battlefield. They see the King and Valin Klint.

VALIN KLINT

You're tired, old man. Leg hurting you?

The King pants heavily, his hand clutching at his leg.

KING NEVO

You'll have to kill me Klint, otherwise, my men won't stop fighting.

Valin Klint laughs derisively.

VALIN KLINT

Look around Nevo, your men are losing.

He knocks the King's sword out of his hand. The King, left with only a shield, tries to deflect the oncoming barrage of blows.

Annabella sees her father being attacked by Klint.

ANNABELLA

Father!

Without a word from Annabella, Trot charges off toward where the King and Klint fight.

Klint's sword strikes the shield heavily knocking him to one knee.

Annabella and Trot hurtle across the field, dodging clusters of peasants battling Herdonians.

One very burly woman uses a shovel to knock out a Herdonian.

Valin kicks the King in the chest, so he falls backward.

Annabella and Trot close in, galloping with abandon at Klint and the King.

ANNABELLA

Faster, Trot! Please!

Trot surges forward, breathing heavily.

A banner on a wooden pole waves slightly. As they tear past it, Annabella grabs the pole and yanks it up.

Trot glances back. He snorts and then surges forward again.

Valin Klint raises his sword above his head.

The King blinks blearily up at Klint, but his eyes wander past the villain to the field beyond.

KING NEVO

Annabella...

Klint pauses a moment.

VALIN KLINT

Yes, she'll be all alone. A brother
destroyed by magic, a father
destroyed by me. Don't worry,
she'll join you soon enough.

The King laughs hoarsely.

KING NEVO

No... Annabella!

He feebly raises a finger and points past Klint.

Klint turns to see Annabella and Trot charging toward him.

At the perfect moment, Annabella locks the pole under her arm and Trot takes a flying leap at Klint.

The makeshift lance hits Klint squarely in the chest and he flies backward, out cold.

Annabella and Trot slide to a stop, breathing heavily.

Annabella leaps off Trot and rushes to the fallen Klint. She draws her sword and holds the point of it at his throat. His eyes open and widen. He tries to push himself away from the blade, but Trots front legs block his way.

Trot glares down at the man, snorting angrily.

ANNABELLA

I would stay where you are. Trot cared a lot for Turvy.

Egan and Striker gallop up to the group.

EGAN

Your majesty! Look!

The whole group looks to where he gestures.

Torsten Van Hild and the rest of the Royal Army, surge onto the battlefield.

Torsten Van Hild gallops through the crowd on Dragomir. He swings an axe wildly, felling opponent after opponent.

Another Royal Knight and his horse jump over a kneeling Herdonian, kicking him in the head.

Lou, now with two swords, battles two opponents at once. In a flash, she defeats each of them.

Egan and Striker gallop toward the action.

Annabella hangs back with Trot and her father. She still holds her sword to Klint's throat.

KING NEVO

Go, Annabella. Battles are won by warriors like you and Trot.

ANNABELLA

I won't leave you alone with him.

She nudges Klint's foot with her own.

They all turn when they hear HOOFBEATS approach.

Topsy dismounts from a still moving Slosh.

TOPSY
I'll take care of him. You go
Annabella. Win your kingdom back.

Topsy pokes at Valin Klint's chestplate with his sword, a disgusted look on his face.

Annabella grins and jumps onto Trot's back. They gallop toward the fight.

INT. KING'S CHAMBERS - DAY

Annabella sits beside King Nevo, who rests his bandaged leg on a cushion.

KING NEVO
Do you want Egan to go with you?

ANNABELLA
I'll need to have knights, if I am
to be queen.

The King smiles.

ANNABELLA
Anyway, he can't be all bad.

She looks down at her hands, folded in her lap.

ANNABELLA
You're sure about this.

KING NEVO
Annabella, you'll make a wonderful
ruler. And as for traditions... I'm
the King. I get to decide.

Annabella hugs her father tightly.

KING NEVO
Gently, my dear.

Annabella jumps off the sofa.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

On a platform erected in front of a throng of villagers, banners of green and gray intersperse with those of blue and gold.

Egan and Torsten Van Hild stand beside Topsy. All three wear shiny medals around their necks, next to a small podium behind which the King stands.

Annabella stands to his right. She wears britches with a thigh length tunic dress over them. Her unruly hair is pulled back tightly into a knot at the base of her neck and her face is without makeup.

Gemma, Boris Longton, and Lou stand in the crowd. Gemma beams up at Annabella. Boris Longton no longer grasps his old horse's bridle, as his arm is a sling around his neck. Lou stands straight, wearing an outfit similar to Annabella's only less fine.

KING NEVO

...and we thank them for their
bravery!

The crowd cheers. Torsten nods his head in acknowledgement, while Topsy takes a low, elaborate bow. Egan twitches a little, but otherwise awkwardly stands still.

Annabella claps as well, but glances off distractedly in the direction of the stables.

KING NEVO

In the coming months, Princess
Annabella will learn to lead, and
when the time comes, it is *she* that
will take the throne.

Excited whispers erupt from the crowd.

KING NEVO

Her bravery, intelligence, and
well...stubbornness

There are quiet titters of laughter from the audience.

KING NEVO

...will make her a strong ruler.

LOU

Long live Annabella!

At the lady warrior's shout, the crowd joins in.

CROWD

Long live Annabella!

Annabella's cheeks redden, but she bows at the crowd.

INT. ROYAL STABLES - DAY

CROWD
(in the distance)
Long live Annabella!

Trot, in his spacious new stall, smiles to himself, before growing somber again.

TROT
I wish I could have seen it.

STRIKER
We can't always be with them.

INT. CASTLE DUNGEON - DAY

Valin Klint sits on a pile of straw in the corner of a dingy cell.

CROWD (O.S.)
Long live, Annabella!

Klint grimaces.

The door of the cell opens and a guard shoves Klint's squire, a hood over his head, into the cell.

GUARD
Brought you some company.

The guard pulls off the hood. The squire waves awkwardly at Klint.

Klint, eyes closed, pinches the bridge of his nose. He sighs.

EXT. Castle Courtyard - day

Annabella shakes hands and accepts praise from a thinning crowd. The ceremony is over and the sun has begun to set.

Lou approaches Annabella, who stands with Egan as the last of the townspeople disperse.

LOU
Your highness.

She bows low.

ANNABELLA
Lou, right? I saw you fight at Gilamere. You were great!

LOU
Thank you, Princess. I want to ask
you...

She pauses for a moment, clearing her throat.

LOU
I want to join you and your
knights.

Annabella looks her over and glances at her father, who is leaning on Torsten Van Hild and speaking with another knight. He nods at her encouragingly.

ANNABELLA
Sir Egan and I leave tomorrow
morning to visit the Southern
Realm. Do you have a horse?

Lou nods eagerly.

ANNABELLA
Gather your things and meet me and
my men at the stables at sunrise.

Lou bows again, beaming.

LOU
Yes, your highness!

Annabella walks toward the courtyard's exit with Egan, but pauses for a moment to speak over her shoulder.

ANNABELLA
Oh, and it's Annabella.

EXT. STABLE YARD - DAY

Annabella and Egan walk into the stable yard.

EGAN
Princess...

Annabella interrupts.

ANNABELLA
Annabella, Sir Egan.

EGAN
Uh... Annabella. I'm sorry for how
I've behaved.

ANNABELLA

All in the past, Egan. What matters is that we work together from now on.

Egan nods.

EGAN

You don't have to be kind to me, or keep me in your company.

ANNABELLA

You're a good fighter, Egan, and a good man. It would be a mistake to let you go.

She claps him hard on the shoulder.

ANNABELLA

Now, get some rest! I'll see you in the morning!

Egan heads back toward the castle as Annabella goes to the stables.

INT. ROYAL STABLES - EVENING

Annabella sits on the door of Trot's stall, stroking his neck absently as she tells him about the ceremony.

ANNABELLA

...not until I turn 25, but until then, I'll do the best I can to help father.

Trot cocks his head.

ANNABELLA

I'm nervous.

Trot just looks at her, a little sadly.

ANNABELLA

You probably have some inspiring thing to say, don't you?

Trot bobs his head again and Annabella laughs sadly.

There is a loud clattering sound that causes Annabella and Trot to turn toward its source.

Topsy comes down the aisle, a banner caught around his foot. His medal is on backwards, so that its cord circles his neck like a collar.

TOPSY

I thought you might be here.

Annabella hops off the stall to help a swaying Topsy release himself from the banner. Trot follows her out of the open stall door.

ANNABELLA

Did you need something?

Topsy blinks at her for a moment before seeming to remember his purpose.

TOPSY

Ah, yes. You see, my dear, I am leaving, but I have something for you.

From his pocket, he pulls a cuff style bracelet. Inlaid in silver are the remains of Turvy's locket.

TOPSY

I wanted you to have something to remember us both by.

Annabella holds out her wrist so that Topsy can attach the bracelet.

ANNABELLA

Where are you going? We need you here.

She gestures backward toward Trot as she says this.

TOPSY

You do not. You have each other, and the rest of the kingdom behind you.

ANNABELLA

But...

TOPSY

It has been a joy to know you both.

Annabella turns around to look pleadingly at Trot for support.

Trot's eyes widen at something over her shoulder.

Annabella faces Topsy again, but he is gone. All that's left is a pile of clothes. Annabella throws up her hands.

ANNABELLA
Are you kidding me?

Trot is still staring dumbfounded at the pile of clothes.

ANNABELLA
How do they do that?

She runs down to the end of the aisle, checking left and right for any sign of Topsy.

TROT
Magic, I guess.

Annabella pauses, before she turns to look at Trot. She looks at him, then down at her wrist, where the bracelet shimmers lightly.

She runs at him and hugs him tightly around the neck before flinging herself onto Trot's back.

ANNABELLA
Free, right?

TROT
Free.

They gallop down the aisle toward the stable doors.

EXT. STABLE YARD - DAY

In the light of the setting sun, the ground is lit orange.

Trot and Annabella burst through the swinging stable doors and through the yard.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Trot and Annabella gallop through a field, Annabella's arms outstretched.

EXT. STABLE YARD - DAY

Topsy, dressed only in heart-covered underpants, riding Slosh, bursts through the stables doors and across the yard, cackling madly.

FADE OUT.

THE END

