

Braveheart (1995)

by Randall Wallace.
Final draft.

Fade in:

EXT. The SCOTTISH countryside - day

Epic beauty: cobalt mountains beneath a glowering purple sky fringed with pink, as if the clouds were a lid too small for the earth; a cascading landscape of boulders shrouded in deep green grass; and the blue lochs, reflecting the sky. We hear a voice, husky, Scottish...

Voice over

I will tell you of William Wallace.

Ext. MAcandrews farm - day

A farmhouse and a large barn lie nestled in a Scottish valley. Riding down the roads that lead in from opposite sides are Scottish noblemen in full regalia: eye-popping tartans, sparkling chestplates. Even the horses are draped in scarlet. Behind each nobleman rides a single page boy.

Voice over (cont'd)

Historians from England will say I am a liar. But history is written by those who have hung heroes.

Another noble rides in from the opposite side. Two more appear down the road, converging on the barn.

Voice

The King of Scotland had died without a son, and the king of England, a cruel pagan known as Edward the Longshanks, claimed the throne for himself. Scotland's nobles fought him, and fought each other, over the crown. So Longshanks invited them to talks of truce. No weapons, one page only.

The nobles eye each other cautiously, but the truce holds. They enter the barn, with their pages...

Ext. SCOTTISH farm - day

Nestled in emerald hills are the thatched roof house and barn and outbuildings of a well-run farm. The farmer, MALCOLM WALLACE, and his nineteen-year-old son JOHN, both strong, tough men, are riding away from the farm. They hear hooves behind them and turn to see a boy riding after them.

Voice

Among the farmers of that shire was Malcolm Wallace, a commoner, with his own lands and two sons: John...

We FAVOR JOHN WALLACE, the nineteen-year-old sitting easily on his horse, beside his father...

Voice

...and William.

WILLIAM, a skinny eight-year-old riding bareback, catches up to his father and older brother.

Father

Told ya to stay.

William

I finished my chores. Where we goin'?

Father

MacAndrews. He was supposed to visit when the truce was over.

They ride on, over the lush hills.

EXT. the Macandrews farm - day

The horses are all gone; the place looks deserted. UP ON THE HILL we see the three Wallaces, looking down.

Father

Stay here.

He means William. He and his elder son spur their horses.

at the bard - day

The Wallaces ride up, looking around.

Father

MacAndrews! ...MacAndrews!?

Malcolm finds a pitchfork, John the woodpile axe...

int. the barn

POV from within as the door opens and a widening block of sunlight illuminates the dusty shadows. Malcolm and John Wallace step in, and are shocked to see...

POV THE WALLACES

Hanging from the rafters of the barn are thirty Scottish noblemen and thirty pages, their faces purple and contorted by the strangulation hanging, their tongues protruding.

Malcolm stabs the pitchfork into the ground in useless anger; John still grips the axe as he follows his father through the hanging bodies of the noblemen to the back row, to see the one man in commoner's dress, like theirs...

father

MacAndrews.

A SHUFFLE; John spins; William has entered the back door.

John

William! Get out of here!

William

Why would MacAndrews make so many scarecrows?

Before his father and brother can think of anything to say, William, with a boy's curiosity, touches the spurred foot of the hanged noblemen we first saw riding in. It's too solid; he takes a real look at the face, and suddenly--

William

R-- real!!!...Ahhhhhgggg!...

He turns to run, but knocks back into the feet of the hanged man behind him! In blind panic he darts in another direction, and runs into another corpse, and another; the hanged men begin to swing, making it harder for William's father and older brother to fight their way to him.

Father

William! William!

Then, worst of all, William sees the pages, boys like himself, hanged in a row behind their masters!

Finally his father and brother reach William and hug him tight. There in the barn, among the swinging bodies of the hanged nobles, Malcolm Wallace grips his sons.

Father

Murderin' English bastards.

cut to:

ext. wallace farmhouse - night

The cottage looks peaceful, the windows glowing yellow into the night. From outside the house we see John rise and close the shutters of the kitchen, where men are gathered. We PAN UP to the upper bedroom window...

INSIDE THAT BEDROOM

Young William is in nightmarish sleep. He mumbles in smothered terror; he twitches. We see

HIS NIGHTMARE

In the blue-grays of his dream, William stands at the door of the barn, gazing at the hanged knights. We WHIP PAN to their faces, garish, horrible... Then one of the heads moves and its eyes open! William wants to run, but he can't get his body to respond... and the hanging nobleman, his bloated tongue still bursting through his lips, moans...

GHOUL

Will--iam..!

WILLIAM tears himself from sleep; looking around, swallowing back his tears and panic.

IN THE KITCHEN

A dozen strong, tough farmers have huddled. Red-headed CAMPBELL, scarred and missing fingers, is stirred up, while his friend MacCLANNOUGH is reluctant.

Campbell

Wallace is right! We fight 'em!

MacClannough

Every nobleman who had any will to fight was at that meeting.

malcolm wallace

So it's up to us! We show them we won't lie down to be their slaves!

Macclannough

We can't beat an army, not with the fifty farmers we can raise!

Malcolm wallace

We don't have to beat 'em, just fight 'em. To show 'em we're not dogs, but men.

Young Wallace has snuck down and is eavesdropping from the stairs. He sees his father drip his finger into a jug of whiskey and use the wet finger to draw on the tabletop.

Malcolm wallace

They have a camp here. We attack them at sunset tomorrow. Give us all night to run home.

EXT. wallace farm - day

Malcolm and John have saddled horses; they are checking the short swords they've tucked into grain sacks when William comes out of the barn with his own horse.

MALCOLM

William, you're staying here.

William

I can fight.

These words from his youngest son make Malcolm pause, and kneel, to look into William's eyes.

Malcolm

Aye. But it's our wits that make us men. I love ya, boy. You stay.

Malcolm and John mount their horses and ride away, leaving William looking forlorn. They wave; he waves back.

EXT SCOTTISH HILLS, NEAR THE WALLACE FARM - DAY

It's strangely quiet, until William and his friend HAMISH CAMPBELL, a red-headed like his father, race up the hillside and duck in among a grove of trees. Breathless, gasping, they press their backs to the tree bark. William peers around a tree, then shrinks back and whispers...

William

They're coming!

Hamish

How man?

William

three, maybe more!

Hamish

Armed?

William

They're English soldiers, ain't they?

Hamish

With your father and brother gone, they'll kill us and burn the

farm!

William

It's up to us, Hamish!

Hamish leans forward for a look, but William pulls him back.

William

Not yet! Here he comes, be ready!

They wait; heavy FOOTSTEPS. Then from around the edge of the grove three enormous, ugly hogs appear. The boys hurling rotten eggs. The eggs slap the snouts of the pigs, who scatter as the boys charge, howling. We PULL BACK...as the sun goes down on their play.

EXT. THE WALLACE HOUSE - SUNDOWN

The boys walk toward the house, beneath a lavender sky.

Hamish

Wanna stay with me tonight?

william

I wanna have supper waitin'.

Hamish

We'll get those English pigs tomorrow.

William

Aye, we'll get 'em.

EXT. HOUSE - Night

William's face appears at the window, looking toward

THE DISTANT HILLS

of trees and heather, where there is no sign of life.

INT. the house - night

William has cooked stew in a pot, and now spoons up two steaming

bowls full and sets them out on the table. But he is only hoping. He looks out the window again; he is still all alone. So he leaves a candle burning on the table beside the stew, and moves up the stairs.

Ext. farmhouse - dawn

The house is silent, fog rolling around it in the dawn.

INT. farmhouse - dawn

William has been awake all night, afraid to sleep. He rises, and in QUICK CUTS: he dresses; he moves down the hall, stops at the door of his father's bedroom and sees the undisturbed bed. He moves on, passing the door of his brother's room, also unrumpled.

IN THE KITCHEN

He finds the two cold bowls of stew, beside the exhausted candle. He spoons up his own cold porridge, and eats alone.

EXT. house - day

William is in the barn loft, shoveling corn down to feed the hogs, while he glimpses something coming.

THE BOY'S POV

An ox cart is coming down the curving lane. Its driver is Campbell, with MacClannough walking behind it. The farmers glance up at William, their faces grim...

From his perch in the loft, William sees that the neighbors have brought: the bodies of his father and brother. The cart stops; Campbell, with a bandage around his left hand where more of his fingers are now missing, studies the back of the ox, as if it could tell him how to break such news. The butt of the ox seems to tell him to be matter-of-fact.

Campbell

William... Come down here, lad.

William looks away, he takes quick breaths, he looks back...but the bodies are still there.

EXT. HOUSE - DAY

It's now surrounded by horses, wagons, and neighbors. The

undertaker arrives in his hearse.

Int. the shed - day

On a table the undertaker has laid out the bodies and is preparing them. Cloths around the lower jaw and top of the head bind their mouths shut; pennies cover their eyes.

Softly, William enters the shed, drawn to his father and brother. Campbell follows him in, wanting to stop him--but what can he say now? The undertaker goes on with his work. William approaches the table; the bodies don't look real to him. He sees the wounds. The dried blood. The undertaker pours water from a bowl and scrubs off the blood. But the wounds remain.

Ext. Graveside - day

CLOSE on a grave, with a headstone marked ANNE WALLACE. We INCLUDE the two new graves freshly dug beside it, and see the mourners gathered before them. The sight of the boy, standing alone in front of the graves of his dead mother, as the bodies of his father and brother are lowered with ropes into the ground beside her, has all of the neighbors shaken. The local parish PRIEST drones mechanically in Latin.

The farmers who were secretly gathered in Malcolm Wallace's kitchen the previous night are now glancing at William; but no one is anxious to adopt a grieving, a rebellious boy. Behind MacClannough are his wife and two daughters; his youngest is barely four, not half William's age; she's a beautiful girl with long auburn hair, and she clings to her own mother's hand, as if the open graves are the mouths of death and might suck her parents in too.

PrIEST

...Restare in pacem eternis, Amen.

With the final Amen, the neighbors drift from the graveside, pulling their Children along, to give William a last moment of private grief before the gravediggers cover the bodies.

The boy stands alone over the open graves, his heart so shattered that he can scarcely cry; a single tear makes its way down his face. And the tiny girl feels for William in a way that the adults cannot. From the ground she pulls a Scottish thistle, moves to the softly weeping William and places the beautiful wild blossom in his hand.

William looks up and their young eyes meet; her sad blue eyes hold William's as the gravediggers cover the bodies.

Then a lone, mounted figure appears at the crest of the hill above them. Tall, thin and angular, in black clerical garb, he looks like the grim reaper. The girl hurries back to her mother's side; everyone watches in silence as the figure rides down to them. He is ARGYLE WALLACE. He looks like a human buzzard, his face craggy, permanently furious.

PRIEST

You must be the relative of the deceased. ...William, this is you Uncle Argyle.

Argyle glowers at the man, dismounts, and glares at William. William stares up at this frightening figure. They are interrupted by the ominous sound of approaching horses; a dozen mounted English soldiers, armed with lances, are approaching. Argyle rattles to the priest...

Argyle

You were wise to hurry.

The soldiers ride right in among the mourners and stare down from their saddles, haughty, menacing, their LEADER brusque.

Leader

Someone dead from this household?

Argyle

We just had a funeral, isn't that what it means in England as well?

Leader

What it means in England--and in Scotland too--is that rebels have forfeited their lands. We were ambushed last night. But the Scots dragged their dead away.

argyle

My brother and nephew perished two days ago, when their hay cart turned over.

Leader

Then we'll just have a peek at the wounds.

(to his men)

Dig 'em up!

Argyle

They've been sanctified and buried in the holy rites of God's church, and any hand that disturbs them now takes on eternal damnation. So please--do it.

Outmaneuvered, the leader reins his horse away. Several of the farmers spit on the ground. Argyle glares at them.

Argyle

Funeral's over. Go home.

INT. the kitchen - night

William and Argyle are sitting at the table, eating. Argyle has laid out a proper meal, with exact place settings.

Argyle

Not that spoon, that one's for soup. Dip away from you. And don't slurp.

Argyle sits down and begins to dine with the boy.

Argyle

We'll sleep here tonight. You'll come home with me. We'll let the house, and the lands too; plenty of willing neighbors.

William

I don't want to leave.

argyle

Didn't want your father to die either, did ya? But it happened.

Argyle pushes his food away; he has no appetite now.

Argyle

Did the priest say anything about the Resurrection? Or was it all about Judgment?

William

It was in Latin, sir.

Argyle

Non loquis Latinum? You don't speak Latin? We shall have to fix that, won't we? (beat) (beat)

Argyle (cont'd)

Did he give the poetic benediction? The Lord bless thee and keep thee? Patris Benefactum et--

(beat)

...It was Malcolm's favorite.

INT. William's bedroom - night

Argyle knows nothing about tucking a boy in bed; he stands awkwardly idle as William scrubs his face at the washstand and crawls into bed.

William

Good night, Uncle.

Argyle grunts and starts out. Then he stops, turns back, leans down over William... and with great tenderness the grizzled old uncle kisses his nephew on his hair.

INT. the kitchen - night

Argyle sits by the hearth, staring at the embers. He holds the huge broadsword that belonged to his brother. He looks at the handle, like a cross. He whispers...

Argyle

◆The Lord bless thee and keep thee...◆

Tears of grief spill down the old man's cheeks.

Int. the hanging barn - In William's dream

Once again the boy stands in the doorway of the barn, looking at the garish, hanged faces in his nightmare. Then a mangled hand comes from behind him and grasps his shoulder, William gasps, but the hand holds him gently. He turns to see his father, and his brother! They are wounded, bloody, but they smile at him; they're alive! Weeping in joy, William reaches to hug them, but his father stretches forth a forbidding hand.

William keeps reaching out helplessly. His father and brother move past him to the hanged knights. Two empty nooses are there. Before the boy's weeping eyes they put their heads into the nooses, and hoist themselves up. William's grief explodes; his tears erupt and

HE WAKES IN HIS BEDROOM

tears flooding down his face. A dream! Still upset, still grieving, he gets up and goes looking for his uncle.

INT. HOUSE - NIGHT

William moves down to the room where his uncle would be sleeping. He opens the door. The bed has been slept in--but his uncle is not there. He moves downstairs to

THE KITCHEN

But his uncle is not there either. Then William hears a strange, haunting sound--distant, carried by the wind. He moves to the window and sees only moonlight. He opens the window and hears it more clearly: bagpipes. William lights a candle and throws open the door. Wind rushes in, blowing out his candle. But he hears the pipes, louder in the wind.

EXT. Wallace House - Night

William is barefoot and in only his nightshirt; but the sound of the pipes is growing louder. He moves through the moonlight, drawn toward--the graveyard! He stops as he realizes this, then forces himself on.

EXT. Graveyard - night

William moves to the top of the hill where his ancestors are buried, and discovers a haunting scene: two dozen men, the farmer/warriors of his neighborhood, are gathered in kilts--and among them, a core of bagpipers. The pipes wail an ancient

Scottish dirge, a tune of grief and redemption, a melody known to us as *Amazing Grace*.

Uncle Argyle has heard them and walked out too; he stands at the fringes of the torchlight, still holding the massive broadsword. He glances down, noticing William as the boy moves up beside him. William whispers...

William

What are they doing?

ARGYLE

Saying goodbye in their own way--in outlawed tartans, with outlawed pipes, playing outlawed tunes.

The farmers file by the graveside, crossing themselves, each whispering his own private prayer. Argyle whispers, half to William, and half to himself...

ARGYLE

Your Daddy and I, we saw our own father buried like this, dead from fighting the English.

William takes the sword from his uncle, and tries to lift it. Slowly, Argyle takes the sword back.

Argyle

First learn to use this.

He taps William on the temple with the tip of his finger.

Argyle

Then I will teach you to use this.

With an expert's easy fluidity, he lifts the huge sword. It glistens in the torchlight. The music plays, the notes hanging in the air, swirling in the Scottish breeze as if rising towards the stars...

EXT. wallace farm - day

William and his uncle ride off in a farm wagon. William has a bundle of clothes in his lap, and glances at his uncle as if afraid of his disapproval if he looks back. But he does glance

back just once, to see the deserted farmhouse.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - ROYAL WEDDING - DAY

Amid the scarlet and ermine robes of officiating lords, with gemstones sparkling everywhere, we hear...

Voice over

Twelve years later, Longshanks supervised the wedding of his eldest son, also named Edward, who would succeed him to the throne.

LONGSHANKS, King of England, stands in the jeweled light of the ancient Abbey. Known as Longshanks because of the spindly legs that make him almost seven feet tall, he has a hawk's nose and a snake's eyes, punctuating a face of distinct cruelty. Historians of his day considered him and the line of Plantagenets from which he came to be devil worshipers.

Voice over

As bride for his son, Longshanks had chosen a relative of his rival, the king of France.

GENEVIEVE, a nineteen-year-old virgin of stupendous beauty moves down the aisle, the light in her face outshining her blindingly white wedding gown. As she reaches the altar her hands tremble, but she maintains her poise and control.

She looks toward EDWARD, Prince of Wales. Pampered young men surround him as his retinue. He takes her hand coldly and goes through the ceremony under his father's stare.

VOICE OVER

It was widely whispered that for the Princess to conceive, Longshanks would have to do the honors himself. That may have been what he had in mind all along.

The ceremony concluding, attendants lift back the bride's veil. Her wedding day, the ultimate moment--and Prince Edward ignores her, to turn back to his friends. But prompted by one of the sour lords, he leans over and pecks his new Princess on the cheek. For an instant, we see in her eyes that her heart is dying. But she keeps her poise.

VOICE OVER

Having seen to his obligations to provide for a successor,
Longshanks set about his fondest business--to crush Scotland, and
turn his power against France...

CLOSE - A MAP OF THE BRITISH ISLES

Longshanks ♦ narrow finger jabs Scotland.

Longshanks

Scotland! Scot-land!

We are INT. ROYAL ENGLISH PALACE - DAY. Longshanks is being
listened to by his advisors, all in the outrageous splendor of
royal military dress, and all deathly afraid of him.

Longshanks

The French will grovel to anyone with strength! But how will
they credit our strength when we cannot rule the whole of our own
island?!

He punches the map, then sees the Princess enter softly.

Longshanks

Where is my son?

Princess

your pardon, M ♦ lord, he asked me to come in his stead.

Longshanks ♦ eyes expand in fury; it is frightening to see.

Longshanks

I sent for him--and the little coward send you?!

Princess

shall I leave, M ♦ lord?

Longshanks

If he wants his queen to rule, then you stay and learn how! I
will deal with him.

He spins back toward his generals. Ignored, the princess settles silently onto the cushions of the window seat.

Longshanks

Nobles are the key to the Scottish door. Grant their nobles land here in England. Give our own nobles estates in the north. Make them too greedy to oppose us.

One OLD ADVISOR speaks up hesitantly.

OLD ADVISOR

Sire... Our nobles will be reluctant to relocate. New lands mean new taxes, and they are taxed already for our war in France.

Longshanks glares at him, but takes the point. The wheels grind in his brain; his dark eyes falling on the Princess, he is inspired.

Lonshanks

Perhaps it's time to reinstitute an old custom. Grant them prima noctes, First night. When any common girl inhabiting their lands is married, our lords shall have sexual rights to her on the night of her wedding. That should fetch just the kind of lords we want in Scotland.

Int. prince edward's royal apartments - day

The prince and a muscular young friend, PHILLIP, are stripped to the waist and fencing. They pay no attention to the KNOCK, or to the Princess as she enters. She watches them--they are dancing more than fencing. Edward loses his sword; it clatters to the polished floor. He looks up at his wife, as if angry at her for having seen his clumsiness.

Edward

What is it?!

PRINCESS

you directed me to report to you the moment the king's conference was ended.

edward

So I did! And what was so important about it?

Princess

Scotland. He intends--

But Edward and his friend are fencing again, the clanging of their blunted swords so loud that she can't hear herself.

Princess

He intends to grant--

Edward loses his weapon again, and whirls on her.

Edward

Shut up, would you! How can I concentrate?!

Princess

...His majesty was quite keen that you should understand--

Edward

All so very boring! He wants me to learn to fight too, so let me do it!

For an instant, anger flares into her eyes. She glances at Edward, and at the young man with him, then lowers her eyes and starts to back out. But Edward has noticed.

Edward

Stop there.

She stops, but does not raise her eyes.

EDWARD

Do you disapprove of Phillip?

He lifts his hand and draws his friend Phillip to his side. Still the Princess does not lift her eyes.

Princess

(barely audible)

No, Mylord.

Edward

Look at me. I said LOOK AT ME!

She lifts her eyes. But she could not brace herself enough for what she sees: Edward nuzzling Phillip, the prince's bare chest to his muscular friend's bare back, both men glistening with sweat and sexual excitement.

The Princess's eyes quiver...but she does not look away.

Edward

Now, my flower, do you understand?

Princess

Yes. I had thought that...I was loathsome to you. Perhaps I am. If I may be excused, M^lord.

edward

you may.

She starts to leave, as quietly as she came. But her husband calls after her.

Edward

Don't worry, m^lady, it is my royal responsibility to breed. And I assure you, when the time comes, I shall...manage.

She closes the door softly, on her husband and his lover.

V.O.

Now in Edinburgh were gathered the council of Scottish nobles...

ESTablishing council - day

The picturesque heart of Scotland, with its CASTLE on a fairytale plateau above the Firth of Forth.

INT. edinburgh castle - day

The nobles are gathered around a huge table. They rise at the entrance of young ROBERT THE BRUCE, a handsome young man, full of intelligence and power.

V.O. (CONT'D)

Among these was Robert, the 17th Earl of Bruce, a leading contender for the crown of Scotland.

Robert strides to his seat in the center of the table, and the others settle in respectfully. MORNAY, another young warrior, gives him a bow, as does CRAIG, a grizzled noble.

CRAIG

Young Robert, we are honored--

Robert

My father hears that Longshanks has granted prima noctes.

craig

Clearly meant to draw more of his supporters here.

MORnay

The Balliol clan has endorsed the right, licking Longshanks' boots so he will support their claim to the throne. If we make a show of opposition, the commoners will favor us.

robert

It is too soon to step out alone. My father believes we must lull Longshanks into confidence, by neither supporting his decree nor opposing it.

craig

A wise plan. And how is your father? We have missed him at the council.

Robert

He strained his leg so that it pains him to ride. But he sends his greetings--and says that I speak for all the Bruces. And for Scotland.

Ext. Scottish Village, At the edge of town - day

Flutes and dancing; laughter and garlands; village families have gathered for a wedding celebration--we see the happy bride and

groom. Farmers cart in fresh bread and hoops of cheese; villagers arrive with casks of beer or strings of smoked fish.

And watching the people are ubiquitous English soldiers, battlescarred veterans with missing eyes and ears.

Riding along the road comes William Wallace. Grown now, a man. He sits his horse as if born there, his back straight, his hands relaxed on the reins. He has a look of lean, rippled power. He looks dangerous.

And the soldiers notice him, nudging each other as he passes. He carries a dead wild goose hanging across his saddle; he stops his horse at the edge of the clearing and surveys the scene. Farmers are roasting a pig; women are comparing handiwork; young men are tossing huge stones in the traditional Highland games--and everyone is noticing William's arrival, especially the farm women with daughters of marriageable age.

Among those watching William arrive is Campbell, grown older now; and with his old rebel friend, MacClannough. William dismounts and ties his horse to a willow. One of the English SOLDIERS shoves William from behind.

Soldier

Hey boy! You hunt this bird?

William's eyes fix themselves on the soldier.

soldier

It's against the law for Scots to own bows. You shot this bird?

His buddies, enjoying their role as intimidators, grab the bird and begin to search it for evidence.

William

I hit it in the head. With a rock.

They don't believe that--but they can't find any puncture wound on the bird. William reaches his hand out for the return of the bird. The soldiers drop it onto the ground. Slowly, William picks it up, and heads into the clearing. The farmers watch him come.

Among those noticing William's arrival, but pretending not to, is MARION MacCLANNOUGH, grown now into a stunning young woman; her

long auburn hair reminds us of those years long ago; she wears it the same way, straight and full down her back. Her dress is plain, like the grass that surrounds a wildflower. She's the most beautiful girl in the village, maybe in all of Scotland, and the soldiers how hassled William notice her too.

William reaches the food table and contributes his goose to the feast. FARM WOMEN eye him; he nodes to one.

william

Miz MacDougal. You look well.

Farm Woman

...William? It's William Wallace, back home! --Have you met my daughter?

The daughter mentioned is missing teeth. William nods to her. It's impossible for him to giver her a smile as bright as her hopes, and she lowers her head in disappointment. But then raises her face in surprise as William takes her hand and gives her a respectful bow.

He moves away from the table, passing through the crowd like a stranger. Then he glances toward the knot of girls. He sees Marion. She sees him, then looks away. Do they remember each other? He moves toward her; she is shy, her eyes downcast, but then she raises them and looks at him.

They move closer and closer together. Just as they are about to reach each other, a huge round stone THUMPS to the earth at Williams' feet.

He looks up to see on of Marion's suitors--the broad, muscled young man who has just tossed the stone in William's way. Now everybody's looking to see how William will handle the challenge. He tries to move around, but the guy cuts him off. Then William thinks he recognizes the big red-head.

William

Hamish?

It is his old friend, but Hamish won't admit it, or be put off from the challenge. He points to the huge stone.

Hamish

Test of manhood.

William

you win.

Hamish

(blocks him)

Call it a test of soldiery, then. The English won't let us train with weapons, so we train with stones.

william

The test of a soldier is not in his arm. It's here.

He taps his temple. Hamish stretches out his hand, as if to show William something in his palm.

Hamish

No. It's here.

With a sudden movement, he slams his fist into William's jaw, dropping him. A few men move to interfere, but Campbell, MacClannough, and the other farmers who are the true leaders here, stop their neighbors from interrupting. Hamish stands over William, waiting for him to get up.

william

A contest, then.

William stands and hoists the huge stone, eighteen inches in diameter. Straining with the effort, he lugs the stone to the line scratched in the rocky field. Beyond the line are the muddy dents from previous tosses. William takes a run and heaves the stone. It flies past the other marks in the field; people are impressed. William looks at Hamish.

William

I still say this is no test. A catapult can throw a stone farther than a man can.

Hamish

That depends on the man.

Hamish walks out, lifts the stone, and lugs it back to the line. He takes a run and heaves with a great groan! The stone flies, passing William's mark by a couple of feet. People laugh and whistle. William nods, impressed.

William

Can you do it when it matters? As it matters in battle? Could you crush a man with that throw?

Hamish

I could crush you like a roach.

William walks to the dent made by Hamish's throw.

William

Then do it. Come, do it.

Hamish scowls at William, at everybody watching. He lifts the stone and carries it back to the line. William stands calmly. Hamish backs up for his run. William yawns.

Hamish

You'll move

william

I will not.

Hamish backs up a few more feet, for a longer run.

Farmer Stewart

That's not fair!

Campbell

He's tired, he should get a longer run.

William seems completely unafraid. He leans down, picks up a small smooth stone and tosses it up in the air casually. Stung by this show of calm, Hamish takes furious run, and heaves! The stone flies through the air, just misses William's head, and

buries itself halfway into the earth behind him. William never flinches. The people cheer.

Campbell

Brave show!

Hamish is miffed; it's like William won.

Hamish

I threw longer than last time!

Campbell

An ox is strong, but not clever.

Hamish

An ox is stupid enough to just stand in one place.

William

That's not the point.

William turns, walks double the distance Hamish threw, and turns and hurls the rock he holds! It whistles through the air, hits Hamish in the forehead, and drops him like a shot.

William

that is.

Everybody cheers and laughs! They surround William.

Campbell

A fine display, young Wallace!

William takes a tankard of ale from a farmer, walks over and tosses the cold liquid into Hamish's face; he wakes, and, his eyes uncrossing, accepts William's hand, pulling him up.

William

Good to see you again.

Hamish

I should have remembered the eggs.

Grinning, they embrace. MUSIC plays, the dancing begins. William walks to the knot of young ladies...but passes Marion, and moves to the girl with the missing teeth.

William

Would you honor me with a dance?

She's thrilled to accept; they begin to dance.

girl

You've taken over your father's farm?

(beat)

They say he died long ago. Fighting the English.

William

He died in an accident, with my brother. Their cart turned over.

The musicians interrupt their playing; a group of heavily armed horsemen, with banners and flying colors, ride up, reining their horses into the middle of the celebration. In the middle of the group is an English NOBLEMAN; he is gray, in his fifties, and stops in front of the BRIDE and groom.

NOBLEMAN

I have come to claim the right of prima noctes. As the lord of these lands, I will bless this marriage by taking the bride into my bed on the first night of her union.

Stewart, father of the BRIDE, lunges forward.

Stewart

No, by God!

The horsemen point their lances at the unarmed Scots--who see that the English soldiers from the village have moved to the edge of the gathering, as if to dare any resistance.

Nobleman

It is my noble right.

Even unarmed, Stewart is about to attack--but the bride intervenes. She grabs her father and whispers to him. She moves to her husband and does the same. Holding back tears, she allows herself to be pulled up behind one of the horsemen. Marion MacClannough is looking on, sobered by her friend's courage and sickened by her fate--and Marion is even more unsettled as she notices that one of the soldiers, a particularly nasty looking brute with a scarred face, is leering at her. William Wallace sees this too.

The noble and his escorts ride away, and as they do it begins to rain. The celebration destroyed, the Scots gather the food and disperse to their homes. But Wallace remains, standing in the downpour, keeping his thoughts to himself.

Ext. The wallace farmhouse - Magic Hour

The farmhouse looks lonely and forlorn. William stands at the open door, and gazes out at the rain; it leaks on him, through his roof; he doesn't seem to notice.

ext. the Macclannough house - magic hour

A thatched cottage, lit with a cozy fire, beneath the rain. A hand KNOCKS on the door, and MacClannough opens it to find William, on a horse! MacClannough frowns.

William

Good evening, sir. May I speak with your daughter?

Mrs. MacClannough shoulders up beside her husband, and Marion appears behind her scowling parents.

William

Marion... Would you like to go for a ride on this fine evening?

Mother

The boy's insane!

William

It's good Scottish weather, Madam, the rain is fallin' straight down.

mother

She absolutely may not, she'll--Marion!

Marion has grabbed a cloak off the back of the door; she runs out to hop up behind William, and they gallop away.

The Ride - Magic Hour

William and Marion race along the heather, up and down hills, through swollen streams. The rain stops, as the sun sets; the Scottish mists lift, revealing stunning natural beauty. William stops the horse and they look out over it all together. He speaks, without turning to face her.

William

Your father doesn't like me, does he?

MARION

It's not you. He dislikes that you're a Wallace. He just says...the Wallaces don't seem to live for very long.

William

thank you for accepting.

Marion

Thank you for inviting.

William

I'll invite you again, but your mother thinks I'm crazy.

Marion

You are. And I'll come again.

He lingers; he wants to say something, or maybe he just doesn't want the moment to end. Finally he spurs the horse.

Ext. The MacClannough house - night

They reach the door. William hops off the horse and reaches up to help her down.

the moment she touches the ground, they look into each other's

eyes... but the door is snatched open so quickly by her mother that there is not time for a kiss.

Mother

Marion, come in!

He walks her closer to the door. They turn and look at each other again. She waits for him to kiss her...

Mother

Marion, come in!

She still hesitates; he isn't going to kiss her. She starts in, but he grabs her hand. And into it he puts something he has taken from his pocket; it is wrapped in flannel. He hops on his horse, glances at her, and gallops away.

She stands in the open doorway; she looks down at what he left her. She unwraps the flannel; it is a dried thistle, the one she gave him years before.

Ext. Wallace farm - day

William is rethatching the roof of his barn, when he hears riders approaching, and looks down to see that it is MacClannough, backed by Campbell and Hamish. Uh-oh.

Macclannough

Young Wallace--

William

sir, I know it was strange of me to invite Marion to ride last night. I assure you, I--

Campbell

MacClannough's daughter is another matter. We come to fetch you to a meeting.

William

What kind of meeting?

Campbell

The secret kind.

William goes back to repairing his roof.

Campbell

Your father was a fighter. And a patriot.

William

I know who my father was. I came back home to raise crops. And, God willing, a family. If I can live in peace, I will.

Campbell shakes his head and reins his horse away, with Hamish. MacClannough lingers.

Macclannough

If you can keep your intention to stay out of the troubles, you may court my daughter. If you break your intention, I'll kill you.

MacClannough rides away. William sits down on the roof, and looks out at the graves of his father and brother.

EXT. Macclannough house - night

Outside the half-timbered house, William stands in the shadows of moonlight and tosses a pebble against the wooden upper window. Marion opens the shutters and slips out onto the vines, dropping into William's arms.

Giggling, suppressing laughter, they run to the trees...

SCOTTISH highlands - night

Hand in hand through the heather they run, silhouettes along a ridge, their breath blowing silver clouds in the moonlight, the Scottish wind whipping through their hair.

They stop at a grove at the edge of a precipice, overlooking a loch gleaming in the moonlight. So beautiful it's sacred.

Marion

You've been here before?

William

Some nights. I have dreams. Mostly dreams I don't want. I started riding at night to fill up my mind so that when I did sleep I'd dream only of the ride and the adventure.

Marion

Did it work?

William

No. You don't choose your dreams. Your dreams choose you.

He looks at her. They kiss suddenly, so long and hard that they tumble into the heather, rolling, devouring each other. Through their passion...

William

I want...to marry you!

marion

I...accept your proposal!

William

I'm not just saying it!

Marion

Nor I!

William

But I won't give you up to any nobleman.

Marion

(stopping)

You scare me.

William

I don't want to scare you. I want to be yours, and you mine. Every night like this one.

Marion

This night is too beautiful to have again.

William

I will be with you, like this. Forever.

They kiss again...

Ext. Lanark village - day

Marion moves through the market. English soldiers admire her as she walks. She stops, looking at white lace and cloth. William casually passes, poking a note in her basket. Subtly she withdraws his note, and reads:

INSERT - HIS NOTE

Tonight. By the trees.

Ext. Marion's house - night

Marion slips out of the house and runs to the trees, where William waits with horses. She fetches a bundle she's stashed in the crook of a tree, and they mount and ride off.

Ext. ruins of an ancient church - night

The church is at the base of the precipice, beside the loch.

Int. the church - night

This ancient Gaelic place of worship has been destroyed by the occupying army, and yet it looks devoutly holy this way, lit only by candles and moonlight through the open roof. The village PRIEST whom we saw at the wedding celebration is waiting at the altar. Marion steps into the confessional, as William moves to the altar and kneels in prayer.

Marion emerges; she's changed into the wedding dress she made from the cloth she bought. William stands and watches her float down the aisle; his whole life was worth this moment. Together, the two lovers turn to the priest.

Priest

You have come to pledge, each to the other, before Almighty God.

From within his shirt, William withdraws a strip of cloth woven in his family tartan. He and Marion each lift a hand to the priest, and he binds their wrists with the cloth.

William

I will love you my whole life. You and no other.

From her dress she takes a handmade handkerchief, embroidered with a thistle to look like the one she first gave him those years ago.

Marion

And I you. You and no other. Forever.

The Priest waits for them to go on, but neither can; they're too taken with emotion, looking at each other. The Priest intones holy phrases...

Priest

Agus bhayd lauch... The Lord bless and keep thy love, now and forever.

The lovers kiss. As they break their embrace, a figure carrying something dark and spiky appears at the broken door of the church, and William spins as if to attack, but the Priest catches his arm; they see the man carries bagpipes.

Priest

I trust him--or I'd a killed him me self. A weddin' needs pipes.

The piper begins to play, and the tune from his primitive chanter is wispy, ethereal, beautiful. The lovers look into each other's eyes, as the single melody of the pipes merges into a swell of music, UNDERSCORING

MONTAGE

William and Marion ride the path to the top of the precipice, where, in the shelter of the grove, they spend their honeymoon. The MUSIC CONTINUES as, still sweaty from their love-making, he returns her to her house just before dawn. She waves from her window, as William rides away, as we

DISSOLVE TO:

ext. Village of Lanark - Day

It's Market Day in the village, busy with Highlanders, merchants of all kinds, and a few special attractions like jugglers and fortune tellers. Marion moves along a table full of flowers and fruit... William, concealed behind hanging baskets, watches her unseen, savoring the beauty of his beloved, bathing his soul in the sight of her. Then she looks up and spots him, her smile sudden and luminous, before she remembers to conceal it. He moves up beside her.

william

I've missed you.

Marion

Shush. It's only been a day.

beat)

And it's seemed like forever.

william

Tonight then.

Marion

My parents are growing suspicious! I can't keep meeting you every night!

Playfully he pokes his finger under the collar of her dress, pulling up the strip of checked cloth he gave her at their wedding, which she now wears hidden around her neck.

William

Then when?

Marion

...Tonight!

Tucking in the cloth strip, she hurries away, smiling.

Angle - drunken english soldiers - by an ale cask - day

They spot Marion moving through the fair, glowing, beautiful. The soldiers smirk at each other; as Marion passes, one of them grabs her wrist. It's the soldier with the scar, the one who's been staring at her.

Soldier

Where are you going...lass?

Marion

Let go.

A second drunken SOLDIER pipes up.

Soldier #2

Why don't you marry my friend here? Then I'll take the first night!

The scarred soldier pulls Marion into his big arms; she shoves him away with surprising strength, and he staggers back, to the laughter of his friends. Then he snatches her again and kisses her hard on the lips.

She breaks free and SLAPS him fiercely, hard enough to draw blood from his mouth. Tasting the trickle, he slings her down against sacks of grain, and the soldiers are all over her, pinning her down, ripping her clothes, a full scale public gang rape. As the townspeople try to move in the three soldiers waiting their turn at Marion pull their knives, keep them townspeople back.

Soldier #1

Bitch, who do you think you are?

He slams his mouth down against hers for a long, awful time, comes up clawing at her dress to rip it from her body...and is hit in the face by a rock thrown at great speed!

It takes a moment for the other soldiers to realize what just happened, and in that instant William is on them. He wrenches one soldier's arm in a direction it was never meant to go, breaking the elbow, separating the shoulder, and slinging the howling soldier into his comrades.

Two of the soldiers leap at William, swinging their short swords; William ducks, knocking their ale cask into their knees; William lifts the whole table where they were sitting and slams it into

the faces of two more attackers.

Marion

William!

She shouts to warn him that the scarred soldier, now bloody-faced, has recovered from the rock and is behind William with a knife. William sidesteps the first thrust, snatches a leg from the shattered table and crushes the man's skull.

Market Women

Wallace Wallace! William Wallace!

But there's no time for celebration. There's blood and ale everywhere, and the fallen soldiers are yelling...

Fallen soldier

Rebels! Help!

MORE SOLDIERS hear the call and come running, reinforcements converging from all over the village.

Village folks

Run, William! Run!

Will sees the horse that pulled the flower cart and throws Marion up onto its back. He slaps the horse's rump and it plunges with Marion into the twisting village lanes. William darts off through the crowd, as the MAGISTRATE and more of his soldiers arrive--dozens of them!

William pauses out in the central street of the village, just long enough to be sure they've spotted him, and darts into a side lane in the opposite direction Marion went; William weaves through the narrow streets of the medieval town, knocking over baskets, jumping carts.

As the soldiers stumble after him, the Magistrate looks down at his mangled soldiers. the one with the ruptured arm is lying in agony.

Magistrate

What happened?

soldier

...girl.

magistrate

What girl?!

soldier

...on horse.

Magistrate

the girl on the horse! Stop her!

The shout rings through the village; Marion hears it, and when she sees more soldiers at the far end of the lane she's trying to take out of town, she urges the horse into an even narrower back alley. She sees a clear route to freedom...

But the flock of pigeons pecking on the scraps thrown there behind the shops rise into the horse's face with a sudden thrashing of wings, and the horse shies against a wall. Marion controls him, but a flap of her ripped dress has caught on a crude nail, and as the frightened horse lunges forward again, she is pulled off its bare back, her dress catching and ripping at the same time, dropping her hard.

WILLIAM

reaches the edge of the town and slips into the trees by the river; the soldiers are running every which way, but they've lost him. Thinking Marion's made it too, William heads deeper into the trees.

IN THE TOWN, MARION

recovers; her dress has torn free! She starts to get up; but the soldiers' pikes appear over her, and the magistrate leers.

Magistrate

So this is the little whore he was fighting for.

EXT. The grove at the precipice - day

William moves into the shelters of the trees, expecting to see

Marion. He doesn't. He listens; only the rustling of the wind through the treetops.

William

Marion!

Nothing, except the wind.

INT. Royal magistrate's headquarters - day

Marion is thrown into a chair and her arms are bound with an oak staff behind her elbows. She and two dozen soldiers are in the tavern the English have commandeered.

The Magistrate is a battlescarred veteran, a brutal pragmatist angry with his CORPORAL.

MAGISTRATE

One Scot buggers six of us? Hell to pay when that gets round.

corporal

burn the village.

magistrate

But he is free. You never catch 'em in the Highlands.

He studies Marion, her mouth now stuffed with burlap. He notices the strip of cloth around her neck, and touches the weave curiously.

corporal

Clans weave that cloth in their own patterns.

magistrate

So why is this strip concealed?

(beat)

He fought for you, eh?

ext. town square - day

The Magistrate and his men bring Marion into the village center,

and tie her to a post of the well. The townspeople don't want to be near the soldiers, but they hang on the fringes of the square, too curious to pull away.

magistrate

An assault on the king's soldiers is the same as assaulting the king!

He looks down at Marion, her mouth bound, her eyes defiant. He jerks out his dagger and slices Marion's throat!

Her eyes spring open like a doe's; then she sags, dead. The townspeople are speechless; even some of the soldiers are shocked. The Magistrate turns calmly to his men.

Magistrate

Now. Let this scrapper come to me.

LONG SHOT - Ext. The grove at the precipice - day

From a distance, we see Hamish approaching the grove, the same one where he and William played as boys. Hamish moves reluctantly, forcing himself forward; as he reaches the grove, William appears, hurrying out to him.

We STAY IN THE LONG SHOT, seeing William asking anxiously for any news, and seeing Hamish's great shoulders as he tells him something that makes William step backwards...

EXT. Lanark village - day

At a barrier across the main road into the center of the village are twenty professional soldiers, entrenched, fully armed--bows, pikes, swords. They hear A HORSE'S SNORT...

THE ENGLISH SOLDIERS' POV - WALLACE, ON HIS HORSE

He has stopped, rock still. The soldiers hush; there is something unsettling about this man alone, staring at the twenty of them, as if to steel himself for the butchery. Wallace raises his sword, screams...and charges!

Ext. various angles - lanark village - day - the fight

We FAVOR WALLACE'S SUBJECTIVE POV: the barrier as his horse pounds toward it, the faces of the enemy soldiers with their eyes

white with fear... They stand to shoot at him with their bows; the arrows WHISH toward the lens, fly past...

The arrows tear through Wallace's clothes, but don't catch his flesh. He charges on; his horse LEAPS the barrier as Wallace simultaneously swings the broadsword--and he's more than an expert: the tip, at the end of a huge arc, nearly breaks the sound barrier and the blade bites through the corporal's helmet, taking off the upper half of his head!

The soldiers try to rally, to shoot him in the back as his horse leaps over them. One of them has sighted William's back...But Hamish and his father crash into them! It's a wild fight; old Campbell takes an arrow through the shoulder but keeps hacking with his sword; Hamish batters down two men--and more Scots arrive! They overwhelm the soldiers.

WALLACE RACES THROUGH THE VILLAGE - FAVORING HIS POV

He dodges obstacles in the narrow streets--chickens, carts, barrels. Soldiers pop up; the first he gallops straight over; the next he whacks forehand, like a polo player; the next chops down on his left side; every time he swings the broadsword, a man dies.

Wallace gallops on; his farmer neighbors, and people from the village, follow in his wake.

EXT. - in the village - day

The Magistrate hears the APPROACHING SHOUTS. He and thirty more of his men are barricaded around the village square.

MAGISTRATE

Don't look surprised! We knew he'd bring friends!

They see Wallace gallop into sight; but he stops, then heads down a side street.

The Magistrate and his men don't like this; where did he go? Which way will he come from? And then they hear the horses, and see the other Scots, at the head of the main street. The soldiers unleash a volley of arrows at them.

They are loading to fire again when Wallace runs in--on foot!--and cuts down two soldiers! The other Scots charge! The startled soldiers break and run in every direction.

The Magistrate, abandoned, runs too. Wallace pursues.

Not far along a twisting lane, the bulky Magistrate falters. He turns to fight, and Wallace slashes away his sword.

Magistrate

No! I beg you...mercy!

IN THE TOWN SQUARE

As the Scots see Wallace, they break off pursuing the English soldiers and stop to watch; dragging the Magistrate by his hair, Wallace hauls him back into the village square, slams him against the well, and stands over him with heaving lungs and wild eyes, staring at Marion's murderer.

Magistrate

Please. Mercy!

Wallace's eyes shift, falling on

THE STAIN OF BLOOD

Marion's blood, in a dark dry splash by the wall of the well, the stain dripping down onto the dirt of the street. Wallace spins, jerks back the Magistrate's head, and cuts his throat with the sword.

ON THE OTHER SCOTS

Silenced by what they've just seen and done. On old Campbell's face is a look of reverence, and awe.

Campbell

Say Grace to God, lads. We've just seen the coming of the Messiah.

William staggers a few steps, and collapses to his knees. And then not just the Scottish farmers but the townspeople too begin a strange, Hi-Lo chant.

Crowd

AHHHHHHH-UHHHHHH! AHHHHHHH-UHHHHHH!

William's wild eyes slowly regain their focus. And there in the dirt beside the well, he sees the severed cloth strip he gave to Marion, now stained with her blood. He lifts it, crushes it in his hand, as the Highlanders chant for war.

Ext. LANARK VILLAGE - NIGHT

The villagers are still excited by what just happened; at the blacksmith's forge, men tend to Campbell's wound...

Campbell

Pour it straight into the wound. I know it seems a waste of good whiskey, but indulge me.

They obey, then take a glowing poker from the fire and run it through Campbell's shoulder, where the arrow went. There is a terrible SIZZLE, and Campbell reacts to the pain.

Campbell

Ah. Now that'll clear your sinuses, lads.

Campbell looks down at his left hand. His thumb is missing!

Campbell

Well bloody Hell, look at this! Now it's nothing but a fly swatter.

Wallace is sitting alone nearby, staring at nothing. Hamish moves over and puts a hand on his shoulder. Wallace looks at his friend, and looks away; killing the Magistrate did not bring Marion back.

SHOUTS of alarm: ARMED MEN are coming! The farmers scramble for their weapons, ready to fight; even Campbell jumps up; but what they see coming out of the darkness are twenty more farmers, with hayhooks, knives, axes, anything they could find for weapons. Their leader is MacGREGOR.

Campbell

MacGregor--from the next valley!

MacGregor leads his men into the circle of rebels.

MACGREGOR

We heard about what was happenin'. And we don't want ya thinkin' ya can have your fun without us.

Wallace

Go home. Some of us are in this, I can't help that now. But you can help yourselves. Go home.

Macgregor

We'll have no homes left when the English garrison at the castle comes through to burn us out.

They all look at Wallace.

EXT. English Military stronghold - night

Furious preparations: armorers pound breastplates, hone spears, grind swords in a shower of sparks. The garrison is led by BOTTOMS, the English lord who claimed the right of prima noctes. Now he shouts to his scurrying soldiers.

Lord Bottoms

Gather the horses! Align the infantry!

(grabs a man)

Ride to the Lord Governor in Stirling. Tell him that I will hang five rebels for every good Englishman killed! FORM FOR MARCH!

The troops begin to scramble into the courtyard. At the same time, the messenger gallops to the gate and nods for the keepers to open it. They pull up the chains and the heavy gate rises. The messenger spurs his horse to gallop through--and is hit in the chest with an axe!

The Scots, hidden just outside the gate, come pouring through, led by Wallace! Arrows pick soldiers from their perches, Scots drop over the wall; the surprise is so complete that it's over almost without a fight. Lord Bottoms looks around in confusion...

Lord BOTTOMS

Stop them... Don't let... Align...

Scots drag Lord Bottoms off his horse; an arrow in a flexed bow

jabs right up to his eye, the archer ready to drive the shaft through Bottom's eye socket and into his brain; but Wallace's hand closes on the archer's fingers--and Bottoms sees that the archer at the other end of the arrow shaft is none other than the Highland farmgirl he forced into his bed on her wedding night. Beside her is her husband, holding a scythe, red with English blood.

Wallace

On your way somewhere, M'lord?

Lord bottoms

Murdering bloody bandit!

The point of Wallace's sword jumps beneath the Lord's chin.

Wallace

My name is William Wallace. I am no bandit who hides his face. ...Find this man a horse.

The green eyes of the defiled highland bride flash fire. William takes his hand from her bow and looks at her, grief for Marion in his eyes; for the sake of that she does not release the string.

Wallace

Give him a horse.

Hamish extends the reins of the Lord's thoroughbred.

Wallace

Not this horse. That one.

He nods to a bony nag hitched next to a glue pot.

Wallace

Today we will spare you, and every man who has yielded. Go back to England. Tell them Scotland's daughters and her sons are yours no more. Tell them Scotland is free.

As the Scots cheer, Wallace throws Lord Bottoms onto the nag's back and slaps the horse's rear. IT shambles away, followed by the English survivors, as the Scots chant...

Scots

Wal-lace, Wal-lace, Wal-lace!...

Clost - A gravestone - ext. highlands - day

The marker is carved with the name MARION MacCLANNOUGH, and beneath her name A THISTLE is chiseled into the stone.

Bagpipes wail like banshees and the Priest who married Marion and William now mutters ancient prayers as her body, wrapped in burial canvas, is lowered into the earth, under the sad eyes of those who just fought in the battle.

Opposite William stands old MacClannough; he stares across the open hole that accepts the body of his daughter, his eyes full of pain, and then staggers away.

Wallace kneels at the graveside in unspeakable grief. From within his shirt he withdraws the embroidered handkerchief she gave him, and the bloodstained strip of cloth he gave her. He places the strip over her heart, and as the gravediggers fill the hole her returns the handkerchief to its spot over his own heart.

ext. london palace - day

Prince Edward is in his garden, playing the medieval version of croquet with his friend. The Princess, ignored, sits watching. Longshanks marches through the game, furious.

Longshanks

Scottish rebels have routed Lord Bottoms!

edward

I hear. This Wallace is a bandit, nothing more.

Longshanks slaps his son, knocking him down among the colored balls and wickets. Everyone gasps, stunned.

longshanks

You weak little coward! Stand up!

Longshanks jerks him to his feet.

Longshanks

I go to France to press our rights there! I leave you to handle this little rebellion, do you understand? DO YOU?!

Longshanks grabs his son by the throat.

Longshanks

And turn yourself into a man.

The king leaves. The friends of the humiliated Prince hurry to him and lift him; as the Princess moves to him too...

Edward

Get away from me!

He slaps her! Her personal guards, Frenchmen in distinctive uniforms, jump from their seats at the edge of the garden, but the Princess raises a hand to show she needs no assistance, and curtseys to Edward, who shouts--

Edward

Convene my military council!

As Edward marches off with his entourage, NICOLETTE, a beautiful raven-haired Handmaiden, rushes to the Princess, who is wobbly, hurt more than she let show. Nicolette whispers to her in French, with subtitles...

Nicolette

They say this Wallace killed thirty men to avenge the death of his woman. I hope your husband goes to Scotland. Then you'll be a widow.

int. Bruce's castle - bedchamber - night

Robert the Bruce is in bed with a young Nordic beauty with vacant blue eyes. She drowns; but the lovemaking has not defused the restlessness of Robert's spirit. He lies on his stomach, turned away from her on the bed. Stirring, she kisses his neck; but he doesn't respond.

Woman

I wanted to please you.

Robert

You did.

But he is numb as she nuzzles him again. She sags back, and he still stares away, lost in thought. Realizing her hurt, he explains...

Robert

In Lanark village, the king's soldiers killed a girl. Her lover fought his way through the soldiers and killed the magistrate.

She looks at him blankly.

Robert

He rebelled. He rebelled. He acted. He fought! Was it rage? Pride? Love? Whatever it was, he has more of it than I.

woman

(hurt)

You might have lied.

Robert

I'm too arrogant to lie.

Close - Robert the bruce

On his FACE as he moves grimly up a dark castle staircase. He follows a servant who carries a candle against the gloom. They reach a door, which the servant unlocks. Young Robert takes the candle, and enters--

A DARKENED ROOM

Robert wills himself forward, and places the candle on a table in the center of the room. A SHUFFLE in the dark; then moving into the light is a LEPER whose once-noble features are decaying with the disease. Isolated in his disfiguration, he looks at his visitor--his son--with the eyes of the condemned. Young Robert forces himself not to look away.

Robert the bruce

Father. A rebellion has begun.

the leper

Under whom?

robert

A commoner named William Wallace.

the leper

A commoner? So no one leads Scotland?

the old man thinks, and points a half finger at his son.

The leper

You will embrace this rebellion. Support it, from our lands in the north. I will gain English favor by condemning it and ordering it opposed from our lands in the south. Whichever way the tide runs, we will rise.

robert

This Wallace. He doesn't even have a knighthood. But he fights with passion, and he is clever. He inspires men.

the leper

You admire him. Uncompromising men are easy to admire. He has courage. So does a dog. But you must understand this: Edward Longshanks is the most ruthless king ever to sit on the throne of England, and none of us, and nothing of Scotland, will survive unless we are as ruthless, more ruthless, than he.

Young Bruce rises heavily, and moves to the door.

The leper

Press your case to the nobles. They will choose who rules Scotland.

With a last long look at his father, Robert leaves.

Ext. Scotland - montage - day

--Troops ride through the countryside, intimidating and questioning civilians; all refuse to talk.

--Wallace's house burns, as soldiers dig up the graves of his father and brother, and scatter their bones to dogs.

--The English search through the woods, finding nothing.

Ext. wallace lands - night

William and Hamish ride, to see the damage. They find the smoking ruins, and the defiled family graves.

Hamish

Ah, William... I am so sorry.

William is struck by an awful, urgent thought...

Ext. Underbrush near marion's grave - dusk

We open on Marion's grave, with the thistle-carved marker, looking peaceful; but up the hill in the underbrush, English soldiers wait in ambush. Edgy, they perk up at the sound of muffled hoofbeats--then their eyes bug as a cloaked figure--Wallace--suddenly looms up behind them, galloping and swirling fire! He hurls burning torches into the clustered soldiers, setting some of them on fire!

MEANWHILE, HAMISH has crawled to Marion's grave and is digging frantically. The new dirt parts easily and he pulls the shrouded body out, cringing with the effort.

MORE SOLDIERS rush from behind the rocks at the far side of the graveyard. Wallace charges them, driving them back. He grabs the reins of Hamish's horse, hidden among trees, and gallops to him.

Hamish hands the shrouded body up to William and bounds into the saddle of his own horse. They spur the horses and ride away, William clutching Marion's shrouded body to his chest.

Ext. Secret grove on the precipice - night

William dismounts, stretching the body gently on the ground. Hamish dismounts too, with the spade he used to dig up the old grave. He sees the emotion on William's face.

Hamish

I'll wait...back there.

wallace

Hamish, I...thank...

Hamish puts a hand on his friend's shoulder, then quietly leads the horses away. William starts to dig...

LATER IN THE GROVE

William sits looking at the new grave, covered with leaves-- completely hidden. He touches his hand to the earth.

Ext. woods - by the stream - night

Hamish is waiting as William comes out of the grove. There is nothing to say. They mount their horses and ride away, as the MUSIC of William and Marion's love haunts us...

EXT. woods - encampment - night

Wallace and his inner circle huddle around a small fire. Other highlanders guard the perimeters. Old Campbell is lovingly honing the broadswords to razor edges and sharing a whiskey jug with Hamish, who stares at the fire. Wallace is using a stick to draw diagrams in the dirt.

Campbell

What're ya doin'?

Wallace

Thinking.

Campbell

Does it hurt?

wallace

What do we do when Longshanks sends his whole northern army against us? They have heavy cavalry. Armored horses, that shake the very ground. They'll ride right over us.

At a loss, Wallace looks up at the sky. HE SEES: the trees stretching into the night like spikes to skewer the stars.

Wallace

We make spears. A hundred spears. Fourteen feet long.

hamish

Fourteen?--

sentry (O.S.)

Volunteers coming in!

They look to see a half dozen new volunteers being led in, blindfolded. When the guides remove the blindfolds, the new recruits see Wallace and rush to him, bowing.

recruit (FAUDRON)

William Wallace? We have come to fight and die for you!

Wallace

Stand up, man, I'm not the Pope.

Faudron

I am Faudron! My sword is yours! And I brought you this tarta--

As he reaches into his cloak, both Hamish and Campbell instantly draw their swords and put the points to his neck.

Sentry

We checked them for arms.

Carefully, Faudron pulls out a beautiful tartan scarf, and replaces Wallace's tattered old one.

Faudron

It's your family tartan! My wife wove it with her own hands.

Wallace

Thank her for me.

A loud voice interrupts...

voice

Him? That can't be William Wallace! I'm prettier than this man!

they all look at a slender, handsome young man, STEPHEN, who is talking to himself--or more accurately, seems to listen to some unheard voice, then answer it...

stephen

All right, Father, I'll ask him!

(to William)

If I risk my neck for you, will I get a chance to kill Englishmen?

HAMISH

Is your Poppa a ghost--or do you converse with God Almighty?

stephen

In order to find his equal, and Irishman is forced to talk to God.

(quickly)

Yes, Father!...

(to Wallace)

The Almighty says don't change the subject, just answer the fookin' question.

campbell

Insane Irish--

Stephen whips a dagger from his sleeve and puts it at Campbell's throat.

Stephen

Smart enough to get a dagger past your guards, old man.

Wallace jerks his sword to the Irishman's throat, and grins.

Wallace

that's my friend, Irishman. And the answer's yes. You fight for me, you kill the English.

Stephen grins, and happily tucks away the dagger.

stephen

Excellent! Stephen is my name. I'm the most wanted man on the Emerald Isle. Except I'm not on the Emerald Isle of course, more's the pity.

Hamish

A common thief.

Stephen

A patriot!

Wallace shakes his head and moves back to the fire, as the sentries take the newcomers to find their own spaces.

ext. scottish countryside - day

A column of English light cavalry--a hundred riders--moves through the picturesque beauty of the Highlands. English LORD DOLECROFT is in command, wearing a hat with a pompous white plume. UP AHEAD, the English SCOUT sees five Scots, including Hamish, walking out of the forest. The Scots run; the Scout rides back to Dolecroft.

Scout

Scotsmen, Sire! Headed west!

DOLECROFT

They've blundered at last! After them!

The English force charges off. Hamish and his men changed direction but the English spot them crossing a hilltop and ride after them. The Scots run for their lives; the English horses gallop. The Scots run down one slope, up another; the English follow, find their horses stumbling, and see...

Scout

We're in a bog!

dolecroft

here, it's firm this way--

But as they move toward the firm ground, fifty Scots appear on the crest of the hill. Hamish leads them, smiling. Dolecroft wheels and looks to his rear; Wallace appears there, with fifty more, and more Scots appear to the left and right of the English, who are surrounded in the bog. Too late, Dolecroft realizes his blunder. Wallace lifts his broadsword, screams, and leads the charge...

Ext. scottish woods - day

The Scots are moving through deep woods; they are laden with the booty they took from the English cavalry: extra weapons, clothing, food--and one man even wears the late Dolecroft's plumed hat. Wallace is leading them, traveling with his heavy sheathed broadsword across his shoulders.

Wallace

Stop here and rest.

The collapse to the leaves and loam, greedily squeezing water from sheep belly canteens.

Int. stirling castle - day

LORD PICKERING, English commander, is handed news of the disaster. He reads the message, and pales.

PICKERING

Another ambush! My God! ...What about our infiltrator?

ASSISTANT

He has already joined them, My lord.

ext. Scottish woods - night

The moon is high above the Scots, encamped for the night. Most everyone is sleeping, but William sits leaning against a tree, lost in lonely thoughts. Suddenly William freezes; a shaft of moonlight illuminates a cloaked woman standing twenty feet ahead of him. Something about her is familiar--and then she pulls off the hood, revealing her auburn hair, cascading in the

moonlight... It is Marion!

Wallace

Marion! Is...is it you?

Joy explodes on his face, and he runs to her, but stops before he touches her, as if she might evaporate.

wallace

I'm dreaming.

Marion

yes, you are. And you must wake.

wallace

I don't want to wake. I want to stay with you.

marion

And I with you. But you must wake.

Wallace

I need you so much! I love you!

Marion

Wake up, William. Wake up!

Hamish's voice

Wake up, William!...

Marion/Hamish

Wake up!...

William clutches at Marion, but his arms can't enclose her.

HE WAKES

lying on his new tartan, in camp, with Hamish shaking him, William's arms clutched empty to his chest.

Hamish

William! Hounds!

Wallace jumps up, hearing the DISTANT BARKING that alarmed Hamish. Stephen, the new Irish recruit, races up.

STEPHEN

We must run in different directions!

hamish

We don't split up!

stephen

They used hounds on us in Ireland, it's the only way!

Wallace

He's right, Hamish! Campbell! Divide them and run!

Shoving groups of men in different directions, Wallace then takes off. His group is about a dozen; they race through the woods, dodging trees, running aimlessly. They stop and listen. The BARKS are getting closer.

Wallace

Split again!

Again they divide, and race in different directions.

But no matter how they run and dodge, the BARKS grow nearer. We INTERCUT with the approaching of the dogs--a large PACK OF HOUNDS, with keepers like on a fox hunt, and behind the dogs, Lord Pickering, with his soldiers, prepared for a long chase, cloaked against the wet darkness, carrying torches.

Wallace and others pause, hear the dogs, and run again, in a new direction. The hounds are relentless. Wallace's group is down to Hamish, Stephen, and Faudron.

Wallace

No matter how we go, they follow. They have our scent. My scent.

Faudron

Run! You must not be caught!

Faster now, faster. The barks are getting very close. Wallace and his friends are starting to panic. The blood beats in their ears, their breath scalds their lungs. And we MOVE IN on Wallace's eyes. He stops, gasping.

Stephen

We can't stop!

Wallace

They've tricked us.

STEPHEN

What's the crazy man saying, Lord?

Wallace

The dogs have a scent. My scent. Someone must have given it to them.

stephen

Who would do such a thing?

Wallace

Exactly.

Wallace pulls out his dagger...

THE DOGS

bark frantically now; they smell a kill; they tug so hard at their leashes that the handlers are almost dragged along.

handler

Be ready! We have them!

The soldiers grip their weapons, ready to take their prisoners. They burst into the little clearing; the dogs find a body, stabbed, his throat cut; the dogs plunge their snouts into the gore, yipping wildly. The handlers must fight furiously to tear the dogs from the body.

Lord Pickering approaches the body and looks down. It is Faudron, mangled now but clearly identifiable--with the scarf he gave William, in place of William's own, tucked into his shirt.

Lord Pickering

Damnation! Damnation!

As Pickering rants, his men look at the darkness all around.

lord pickering

After him! Get them going again!

Handler

Their noses are drowned in new blood, they'll follow nothing now!

And just as the realization hits Pickering that he can't pursue Wallace any further, a cloaked figure mixed in among his men leans in from behind him to whisper...

Stephen of ireland

The Almighty says for you to give His regards to the Devil.

Pickering's eyes go wide, then roll back as Stephen's dagger slides expertly through his back ribs and into his heart. As Pickering falls and his men realize what has happened, Stephen has already run back into the trees.

Pickering's men freeze at this sudden turn of events. Even the dogs whimper, picking up the rising fear of the men around them. Then from the darkness all around them comes a chorus of demonic, bloodcurdling yells--

Wallace/hamish/stephen

ARRRRRGGGGGGGHHHH!

Three wild men tear out of the darkness from different directions, their swords slashing. Pickering's men panic and run, their dogs yelping, and the other soldiers, evident by their torches, fell with them in all directions.

Wallace, Hamish and Stephen are left alone in the heart of the woods, howling, barking like dogs, snarling like wolves--and then

laughing like hyenas!

stephen

I thought I was dead when ya pulled that dagger!

wallace

No English lord would trust an Irishman!

hamish

Let's kill him anyway.

They laugh again; then Wallace's laughter leaks away, and he stares into the trees, where he saw Marion in his dream.

VARIOUS SHOTS - THE STORY SPREADS THROUGH SCOTLAND...

Two men are talking in A VILLAGE...

Villager

...and William Wallace killed fifty men! Fifty, if it was one!

The same tale is exchanged by two farmers AT A CROSSROADS...

farmer

A hundred men! With his own sword! He cut a through the English like--

The tale is repeated IN A TAVERN...

drinker

--Moses through the Red Sea! Hacked off two hundred heads!

Drinker #2

Two hundred?!

drinker

Saw it with my own eyes.

And the rumors are discussed even INSIDE THE PALACE GROUNDS IN LONDON, where the Prince and his friends are trying on elaborate attire presented them by fawning tailors, and the Princess,

ignored by her husband, strolls and chats with her Handmaiden, Nicolette (in subtitled French).

Nicolette

When the king returns he will bury them in those new clothes. Scotland is in chaos. Your husband is secretly sending an army north.

Princess

How do you know this?

nicolette

Last night I slept with a member of the War Council.

Princess

He shouldn't be telling secrets in bed.

Nicolette

Ah, Oui! Englishmen don't know what a tongue is for.

The Princess blushes, whacks her with her fan, and smiles.

Princess

This Scottish rebel...Wallace? He fights to avenge a woman?

nicolette

A magistrate wished to capture him, and found he had a secret lover, so he cut the girl's throat to tempt Wallace to fight--and fight he did.

The Princess is pained at such cruelty; Nicolette warms to share the juicy gossip...

Nicolette

Knowing his passion for his lost love, they next plotted to take him by desecrating the graves of his father and brother and setting an ambush at the grave of his wife. He fought his way through the trap and carried her body to a secret place! Now that is romance, Oui?

Princess

...I wouldn't know.

Ext. Scottish Highlands - day

A Highlander, a RUNNER, slips like a shadow up the hillside, to a circle of ancient monoliths. There, hidden among the stone pillars, he finds Wallace and his band resting.

Runner

The English are advancing an army toward Stirling!

wallace

Do the nobles rally?

runner

Robert the Bruce and most of the others will not commit to war! But war has spread and Highlanders are coming down on their own, by the hundreds--by the thousands!

Ext. road - day

Wallace rides down the road, followed by his band. As they pass people on the road, the women, the children, all cheer.

People

Wallace! It's William Wallace! God bless Wallace and Scotland!

At a crossroads, more of Wallace's men join them, in clusters. One group carries something long, encased in wool covers. Farmers in the field, blacksmiths at their forges, leave their work and uncover their inevitable weapons and run after the riders. They put on their forbidden tartans, kiss their wives and head off to fight.

Ext. Stirling field - day

Stirling Castle perches on a hill high above a grassy field, cut in half by a river, spanned by an old wooden bridge.

SCOTTISH NOBLES have gathered on a smaller hill overlooking the field; they wear gleaming armor, with plumes, sashes and banners, and are attended by squires and grooms.

The mists of morning shroud most of the field. But from the

opposite side of the bridge they hear the CLATTERING of a huge army moving forward. LOCHLAN, a noble, gallops to Mornay.

Lochlan

It sounds like twenty thousand!

Mornay

The scouts say it is ten.

Lochlan

And we have but two!

THE COMMON SCOTTISH SOLDIERS

are wearing padded leather shirts, and carry pikes and daggers. As through the mists they see the numbers arrayed against them, a YOUNG SOLDIER tugs at a grizzled VETERAN.

young soldier

So many!

scottish veteran

the nobles will negotiate. If they deal, they send us home. If not, we charge. When we are all dead and they can call themselves brave, they withdraw.

young soldier

I didn't come to fight so they could own more lands that I could work for them!

veteran

Nor did I. Not against these odds!

He lowers his pike and starts to desert. At first one-by-one and then in clumps, more highlanders follow.

THE NOBLES see the desertion.

lochlan

Stop! Men! Do not flee! Not now! Wait until we have negotiated!

Mornay

They won't stop--and how could blame them?

Then, riding into the mob of me, comes Wallace, followed by his friends. He's striking, charismatic, his powerful arms bare, his chest covered not in armor but a commoner's leather shirt, and unlike the heavy knights on their armored horses, Wallace rides a swift horse, like he was born on it.

The entire Scottish army watches in fascination as Wallace and his men ride through them, toward the command hill. The soldiers whisper among themselves...

Young soldier

William Wallace?

veteran

Couldn't be.

The common soldiers, already having broken ranks, cluster up the hill to see the confrontation. As Wallace and his captains reach the nobles, Stephen laughs.

stephen

The Almighty says this must be a fashionable fight, it's drawn the finest people.

Lochlan

Where is thy salute?

Wallace

For presenting yourselves on this battlefield, I give you thanks.

Lochlan

This is our army. To join it, you give homage.

Wallace

I give homage to Scotland. And if this is your army, why does it go?

Wallace reins his horse around to face the mob of sullen men, now frightened, ready to desert. We play this picture, Wallace sitting his horse, looking down in awe at this thing that has grown beyond anyone's imagination.

He glances at his friends: Campbell, Hamish, Stephen. They've got no suggestions, they're just as awed as he is.

Scottish veteran

We didn't come to fight for them!

shouts from mob

Home! The English are too many!

Wallace raises his hand, and the army falls silent.

wallace

Sons of Scotland!... I am William Wallace!

soldier

William Wallace is seven feet tall!

wallace

Yes, I have heard! He kills men by the hundreds! And if he were here, he would consume the English with fireballs from his eyes, and bolts of lightning from his ass!

Many laugh--all get the point.

wallace

I am William Wallace. And my enemies do not go away. I saw out good nobles hanged. My wife... I am William Wallace. And I see a whole army of my countrymen, here in defiance of tyranny. You have come to fight as free men. And free men you are! What will you do with freedom? Will you fight?

veteran

Two thousand, against ten? We will run--and live!

wallace

Yes. Fight and you may die. Run and you will live, at least

awhile. And dying in your bed many years from now, would you be willing to trade all the days from this day to that, for one change to come back here as young men, and tell our enemies that they make take our lives, but they will never take our freedom?

Down on the plain, English emissaries in all their regal finery gallop over the bridge, under a banner of truce.

veteran

Look! The English comes to barter with our nobles for castles and titles. And our nobles will not be in the front of the battle!

wallace

No! They will not!

He dismounts, and draws his sword.

Wallace

And I will.

Slowly, the chant begins, and builds...

Scots

Wal-lace! Wal-lace! WAL-LACE!

BAGPIPERS play, pulling the mob back into companies. But through the lifting mists they see the overwhelming enemy army. Hamish, Campbell and Stephen move up beside William.

stephen

Fine speech. Now what do we do?

Wallace

Bring out our spearmen and set them in the field.

Campbell, Hamish and Stephen ride off. Mornay reins his horse over, lifts the reins of Wallace's horse, and extends them to him: an invitation to join the pre-battle talks.

Wallace mounts up and rides out with the Scottish nobles to meet the English contingent.

OUT ON THE FIELD, THE TWO GROUPS OF RIDERS

meet like the captains of football teams before the kickoff.
CHELTHAM, head of the English contingent, glares at Wallace.

cheltham

Mornay. Lochlan. Inverness.

mornay

Cheltham. This is William Wallace

cheltham

Here are the King's terms. Lead this army off the field, and he will give you each estates in Yorkshire, including hereditary title, from which you will pay him an annual--

Wallace

I have an offer for you.

cheltham

...From which you will pay the King an annual duty...

Wallace pulls his broadsword and snaps it at Cheltham, whose eyes flash in disbelief at the bad manners.

Lochlan

You disrespect a banner of truce?!

wallace

From his king? Absolutely. Here are Scotland's terms. Lower your flags and march straight to England, stopping at every Scottish home you pass to beg forgiveness for a hundred years of theft, rape, and murder. Do that, and your men shall live. Do it not, and every one of you will die today.

Cheltham barks at the Scottish nobles...

Cheltham

You are outmatched! You haven't even any cavalry! In two centuries no army has won without it!

wallace

I'm not finished. Before we let you leave, your commander must cross that bridge, stand before this army, put his head between his legs, and kiss his own ass.

The outraged Englishman gallops back to his lines.

mornay

I'd say that was rather less cordial than he was used to.

wallace

Be ready, and do exactly as I say.

They return to the Scottish lines. Wallace dismounts where his men are breaking out new 14-foot spears. Hamish, eyebrows raised, looks expectantly at Wallace; Wallace nods.

hamish

Wish I could see the noble lord's face when he tells him.

LORD TALMADGE, AT HIS COMMAND POST

The husky English commander's blood boils from Cheltham's report. Before he can respond, they see WALLACE'S SPEARMEN taking up a position on the far side of the bridge. Suddenly the Scots turn and lift their kilts and moon the English!

talmadge

Insolent bastard! Full attack! Give no quarter! And I want this Wallace's heart brought to me on a plate!

Cheltham spurs his horse to form up the attack...

EXT. the field below stirling castle - day

The English army moves forward toward the bridge. It's so narrow that only a single file of riders can move across it at any one time. The English heavy cavalry, two hundred knights, cross uncontested, and form up on the other side.

WITH WALLACE AND THE SCOTS

Things look terrible. Stephen turns to William.

Stephen

The Lord tell me He can get me out of this mess. But He's pretty sure you're fooked.

ON THE ENGLISH SIDE

Talmadge sees the Scots doing nothing.

Talmadge

Amateurs! They do not even contest us! Send across the infantry.

General

My lord, the bridge is so narrow--

talmadge

The Scots just stand in their formations! Our cavalry will ride them down like grass. Get the infantry across so they can finish the slaughter!

The English leaders shout orders and keep their men moving across the bridge. Talmadge gestures for the attack flag.

THE CAVALRY ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE BRIDGE

The English knights see the signal banners, telling them to attack. They take the lances from their squires, and lower the visors of their helmets. Proud, plumed, glimmering; they look invincible. Their huge horses, themselves draped in scarlet and purple, look like tanks. The knights charge!

Their hooves THUNDER; the horses are so heavy the ground literally shakes with the charge.

The Scots stand and watch them come on. It's difficult to imagine the courage this takes; from the POV OF THE SCOTTISH LINES we see the massive horses boring in...we feel the RISING THUNDER of the charge, closer, closer...

Wallace moves to the front of the lead group of Scots.

WALLACE

Steady! Hold...hold... NOW!

The Scots snap their 14-foot spears straight up in unison.

Wallace

FORM!

Now the spearmen snap the spears forward in ranks, the first line of men bracing their spears at an angle three feet above the ground, the men behind them bracing theirs at a five foot level, the men behind that bracing at seven feet.

The English knights have never seen such a formation. Their lances are useless and it's too late to stop! The momentum that was to carry the horses smashing through the men on foot now becomes suicidal force; knights and horses impale themselves on the long spears like beef on skewers.

TALMADGE

can see it; but worse is the SOUND, the SCREAMS OF DYING MEN AND HORSES, carried to him across the battlefield.

WALLACE AND HIS MEN

are protected, behind a literal wall of fallen chargers and knights. Wallace draws his broadsword and leads his swordsmen out onto the field, attacking the knights that are still alive. Most are off their horses; a few have managed to pull up their mounts. Wallace and his men are so much more mobile than the knights; the field runs with blood. Wallace faces Talmadge in the distance.

wallace

Here I am, English coward! Come get me!!

TALMADGE is even more enraged--and his judgment is gone.

TALMADGE

Press the men across!

cheltham

But M[?]lord!

Talmadge himself gallops forward.

talmadge

PRESS THEM!

WALLACE smiles. He grabs Hamish.

wallace

Tell Mornay to ride to the flank and cross upstream. Wait! Tell him to be sure the English see him ride away!

Hamish hurries off with the message.

The English infantry keeps moving across the little bridge.

The Scottish nobles watch from their positions on horseback. They have a few dozen mounted riders, none heavily armored.

Lochlan

If he waits much longer--

Hamish hurries up.

hamish

Ride around and ford behind them!

mornay

We should not divide our forces!

Hamish

Wallace says do it! And he says for you to let the English see you!

Mornay

(understanding)

They shall think we run away.

Mornay leads his riders away.

LORD TALMADGE

sees the Scottish nobles ride off, and shouts to Cheltham...

TALMADGE

See! Every Scot with a horse is fleeing! Hurry! Hurry!

He drives half his army across the river.

WALLACE

lifts his sword.

wallace

For Scotland!

He charges down the hill...

THE FIGHT AT STIRLING BRIDGE - VARIOUS SHOTS

The Scots follow Wallace on foot, charging into the English.

The English leaders are stunned by the ferocious attack.

Talmadge

Press reinforcements across!

The English leaders try to herd more of their footsoldiers onto the bridge, which only hams them up. Meanwhile, on the other side of the bridge, Wallace and his charging men slam into the English infantry with wild fury. The English fall back on each other, further blocking the bridge.

UP ON THE HILLTOP

The nobles look back with grudging admiration.

mornay

He's taking the bloody bridge! The English can't get across!
He's evened the odds at one stroke!

With rising desire to join the bandwagon, the nobles spur...

DOWN ON THE PLAIN, Wallace and the attacking men drive the English back, killing as they go. The Scots reach the bridge itself. The waters below it run red with blood.

Talmadge has begun to panic.

talmadge

Use the archers!

general

They're too close, we'll shoot our own men!

ON THE BRIDGE

the Scots are carving their way through the English soldiers; nothing can stop them. Wallace is relentless; each time he swings, a head flies, or an arm. Hamish and Stephen fight beside him, swinging the broadsword with both hands. Old Campbell loses his shield in the grappling; an English swordsman whacks at him and takes off his left hand, but Campbell batters him to the ground with his right, and stabs him. Reaching the English side of the bridge, the Scots begin to build a barrier with the dead bodies.

The English are not without courage. Cheltham leads a desperate counterattack. The Scots make an impenetrable barrier of slashing blades. Still Cheltham keeps coming; Wallace hits him with a vertical slash that parts his helmet, his hair, and his brain.

TALMADGE has seen enough; he gallops away. The remaining English General tries to save the army.

GENERAL

We are still five thousand! Rally!

The English try to form up; but the Scottish horsemen, fording the river high upstream, come crashing into the English flank and ride over the surprised English infantry.

AT THE BRIDGE, WALLACE

sees the Scottish nobles attacking. The English soldiers are in utter panic, running and being cut down on all sides.

And the Scottish soldiers taste something Scots have not tasted for a hundred years: victory. Even while finishing off the last of the English soldiers, they begin their high-low chant...Even the noblemen take up the chant!

Wallace looks around at the aftermath of the battle: bodies on the field; soldiers lying impaled; stacks of bodies on the bridge; the bridge slick with blood.

Before it can all sink in, William is lifted on the shoulders of his men.

SCOTTISH SOLDIERS

Wal-lace! Wal-lace! Wal-lace!

INT. CASTLE - GREAT HALL - DAY

William kneels before one of Scotland's ancient elders, who lifts a silver sword and dubs William's shoulders.

elder

I knight thee Sir William Wallace.

William rises and faces the Great Hall, crowded with hundreds of new admirers, as well as his old friends in their new clothes and armor. The crowd chants--

crowd

Wal-lace, Wal-lace!!

Wallace lifts his eyes, taking it all in. At the rear of the hall is a balcony, backed by a magnificent sunlit stained glass window, and in the center of its rainbow corona he sees a familiar form: Marion, so real to him in this moment of triumph that he can see her, glowing like an angel, in a gown worthy of the occasion. But the illusion won't last; in the blink of an eye she is gone, and Wallace hears the chant, and fingers the cloth she gave him.

Int. scottish council - day

The nobles of Scotland are gathered in the huge chamber; a massive table runs across the far end of the room, and aligned on either side are the two rival factions of nobles, glaring at each other. Old Craig is in the center, with young Robert the Bruce on his right. There is a general MURMUR along the nobles, and Robert whispers to Craig...

robert

Does anyone know his politics?

craig

No. But his weight with the commoners could unbalance everything. The Balliols will kill his ass, so we must.

A court STEWARDS steps in and formally announces...

steward

Lords of Scotland: Sir William Wallace!

The nobles on each side of the table try to outdo each other in their acclamation as Wallace strides in, flanked by Hamish, Campbell, and Stephen, splendid in their tartans. Old Craig rises.

craig

Sir William. In the name of God, we declare and appoint thee High Protector of Scotland! And thy captains as aides-de-camp!

The nobles rise; court attendants hurry to Wallace and drape a golden chain of office around his neck. Wallace takes the three smaller chains they bring and drapes them around the necks of his friends, as once again the nobles applaud. Almost before the applause dies, a member of the BALLIOL clan, who has kept an open seat beside him, speaks up...

BALLIOL

Sir William!! Inasmuch as you and your captains hail from a region long known to support the Balliol clan, may we invite you to join us?

But Wallace's gaze has locked onto Robert the Bruce, who stares back, the two young lions instantly recognizing the leadership power of each other.

wallace

You are Robert the Bruce.

robert the bruce

I am.

Wallace

My father fought in support of yours.

The Balliols shrivel. The nobles on the Bruce side can barely keep from grinning. Suddenly the men on the other end of the table change their attack.

Balliol

With this new success, the result of all of Scotland's efforts, now is the time to declare a king!

mornay

then you are prepared to recognize our legitimate succession!

balliol

you're the ones who won't support the true claim! I demand consideration of these documents!

Wallace glances again at the Bruce, who suddenly feels ashamed of the bickering.

mornay

Those were lies when they were written! Our documents prove absolutely that--

Suddenly Wallace turns his back and walks toward the door.

craig

Sir William! Where are you going?

william

We have beaten the English! But they'll come back, because you won't stand together. There is one clan in this country-- Scotsmen. One class--free. One price--courage.

He turns again and strides toward the door.

craig

But...what will you do?

wallace

I will invade England. And defeat the English on their own

ground.

craig

Invade?! That's impossible, it--

Wallace slings out his broadsword and moves down the length of the table, bashing the succession documents into the laps of the nobles.

wallace

LISTEN TO ME! Longshanks understands this! This!

He brandishes the broadsword.

wallace

There is a difference between us. You think the people of this country exist to provide you with position. I think your position exists to provide the people with freedom. And I go to make sure they have it.

Wallace bangs through the door. Suppressing smiles, his friends file out behind him.

Int. edinburgh corridor - day

Wallace and his men are marching away, as Robert the Bruce runs out after them.

robert

Wait! ...I respect what you said. But remember, these men have lands, castles. Much to risk.

wallace

And the common man who bleeds on the battlefield, does he risk less?

robert

No. But from top to bottom this country has no sense of itself. Its nobles share allegiance with England and its clans war with each other. If you make enemies on both sides of the border, you'll end up dead.

wallace

We all end up dead. It's only a question of how. And why.

Wallace walks; Robert catches up and speaks to him in an urgent half whisper, so that no one else can hear.

robert

I'm no coward! I want what you want! But we need the nobles.

wallace

Nobles? What does that mean--to be noble? Your title gives you claim to the throne of our country. But men don't follow titles, they follow courage! Your arm speaks louder than your tongue. Our people know you. Noble and common, they respect you. If you would lead them toward freedom, they would follow you. And so would I.

Wallace walks away, leaving Robert the Bruce alone.

THE SCOTTISH ARMY - DAY

Wallace rides at the head of his army, moving through the countryside of northern England. It is autumn, the foliage is beautiful, the wheat fields gold with harvest.

Ext. establishing york city - day

A medieval city guarded by a fortress.

int. the fortress - map room - day

The ROYAL GOVERNOR is a spoiled young man, Longshanks' nephew. He is studying maps and written appeals for help; his CAPTAIN of defenses strides in with another note.

captain

Message from your cousin, the Prince. He says London has no more troops to send.

governor

Every town in Northern England is begging for help! Where will Wallace strike first?

captain

I should think these smaller settlements along the border...

They hear shouts as a rider arrives and dismounts. They look out to see a panicked RIDER, who shouts up...

rider

He advances!

governor

To what town?

rider

He comes here!

Smash to:

CARTS, RUMBLING IN PANIC DOWN A ROAD

as civilians flee the walled city in the distance.

THE SCOTTISH ARMY

has cut a huge tree and placed it on wheels. It rumbles ominously TOWARD CAMERA...

THE CIVILIAN PANIC CONTINUES as more people join the swell of those leaving York.

THE SCOTTISH ARMY keeps coming on.

INSIDE THE WALLS OF THE CITY - DAY

The governor is furious and confused.

governor

We will not allow a bandit to panic the greatest city in Northern England! Close off the escapes! Let no one leave!

captain

The city has emptied already, Sire. Only the Scottish civilians remain.

The Governor turns to his captain with a look worthy of his uncle, Longshanks the King.

ON THE BATTERING RAM

as it picks up speed and SLAMS into the wooden gate of the city. With the collision, THE BATTLE IS ON. It's a night battle: torches, flaming arrows, pots of boiling oil being splashed down at the attackers, who swarm the gate.

The oil beats the first wave of Scots back, but Wallace rushes forward, grabbing the ram cart with his own hands; the attackers rally to him, helping him slam the gate again and again. It breaks; but behind it is an awful tangle of carts, broken sheds, impenetrable rubbish. Wallace grabs a torch, throws it into the wooden tangle, and shouts--

wallace

Back! Wait for it to burn!

INSIDE THE CITY

The Captain hurries into the tower room.

Captain

They've breached the wall!

governor

Then do as I ordered.

OUTSIDE THE WALLS

The Scots wait, biding their time as the barrier burns. Suddenly they look up in horror; the English are throwing the bodies of hanged Scots over the wall.

They stare at this in mute shock. Wallace is frozen, his eyes reflecting his boyhood reaction. His men rush forward.

Wallace

STOP! NOT YET! LISTEN TO ME!

(beat)

They wish to frighten us! Or goad us into attacking too soon! Don't look away! LOOK!

The Scots look at the hanging bodies.

wallace

Behold the enemy we fight! We will be more merciful than they have been. We will spare women, children, and priests. For all else, no mercy.

Wallace draws his broadsword. The burning debris inside the gate collapses, leaving a tunnel through the fire. Wallace screams, and leads the charge through the burning barrier.

Int. the palace in london - day

Prince Edward and Phillip, his fencing friend and lover, hear a contingent of horsemen clatter into the courtyard below; they look out the window and see the arrival of Longshanks. They lean back into the room and Edward begins to pace nervously.

Phillip

It is not your fault! Stand up to him.

Edward shows Phillip the dagger he has concealed in his belt behind his back.

Edward

I will stand up to him, and more.

Longshanks bangs the door open and stalks in angrily. First he glares at Phillip with obvious loathing, then turns his piercing stare to his own son.

longshanks

What news of the north?

Edward

Nothing new, Majesty. We have sent riders to speed any word.

longshanks

While I am in France fighting to expand your future kingdom I learn that Stirling castle is lost, our entire northern army wiped out! And you have done nothing?!

edward

I have ordered conscriptions...

A messenger enters and hands the prince a message. Edward reads it and nearly loses his balance.

edward

Wallace has sacked York!

longshanks

Impossible.

(to messenger)

How dare you bring a panicky lie.

The messenger has also brought a basket. He approaches the central table with great dread and places the basket on it, uncovering its contents. Prince Edward is closest; he looks in, then staggers back, stunned. Longshanks moves to the sack coldly, looks in, and withdraws the severed head of his nephew, York's (former) Governor.

Phillip

Sire! Thy own nephew! What beast could do such a thing?!

The king drops the head back into the sack, unmoved.

longshanks

If he can sack York, he can invade lower England.

Phillip

We would stop him!

Longshanks

Edward, who is this shitpoker who speaks to me as if I needed his advice?

Edward

I have declared Phillip my High Counselor.

Longshanks nods as if impressed. He moves to Phillip and

examines the gold chain of office that the young man wears. Then Longshanks grabs him and throws him out the window, the same one Edward and Phillip were looking out, six stories above the courtyard. We hear Phillip's SCREAM as he falls.

Edward rushes toward the window in horror. He looks out at the result, turns back toward his father in shock and hatred, and only then remembers the dagger and goes for it.

He stabs at Longshanks; the old king smiles at the attack, parrying, letting his arms be cut.

Longshanks

You fight back at last!

Then Longshanks unleashes his own hateful fury; he grapples with Edward, knocking the dagger away and hurling him to the floor; then Longshanks kicks his son, again and again. He exhausts his fury on him.

Edward is a bloody mess; Longshanks coughs up a bit of blood. He ignores it and his son's wreckage, and goes back to the discussion, as if this fight was normal business.

Longshanks

We must sue for a truce, and buy him off. But who will go to him? Not I. If I came under the sword of this murderer, I would end up like my nephew. And not you, the sight of my faggot son would only encourage an enemy to take over this country. So whom do I send?

Longshanks calculates.

Ext. Wallace army camp - day

A full encampment, across an English field; campfires chase the dawn chill. Soldiers sharpen swords and spear points. Wallace is huddled with his inner circle, all except Campbell, who receives a report from a scout.

Campbell

A royal entourage comes, flying banners of truce, and the standards of Longshanks himself!

Wallace buckles on his sword.

AN ENGLISH PAVILION TENT - YORKSHIRE - DAY

Set up for a meeting in a sunny meadow. Wallace and his men ride in, wary, ready for ambush. They surround the tent. There are two dozen royal soldiers there, but they make no threatening moves.

No sound from the tent. Wallace rests his hand on the handle of his broadsword, ready.

wallace

Longshanks! I have come.

Servants pull back the sides of the tent door, and a tall, slender, shapely female figure appears there. There in the shadows, she looks just like Marion! William is not the only one who notices the resemblance; he glances at Hamish and Campbell and sees them haunted by it too. Is this another dream? He pales, as she steps into the morning sun. She moves toward him, her face lowered. It is Marion!

She reaches him, lifts her face...and he sees the Princess! William is relieved--and yet as he sees the Princess more closely he is still shaken by the resemblance in the way she carries herself, her shape, the fall of her hair.

The Princess is struck with Wallace, too--tall, powerful, and commanding. Wallace dismounts, and moves to face her. Their eyes hang on each other. She sees something that she has not seen in the face of a man in her whole life.

She surprises him by bending at the knee, in a half-submissive yet proud curtsy.

Princess

I am the Princess of Wales.

wallace

Wife of Edward, the king's son?

She nods; somehow she is already ashamed.

Princess

I come as the king's servant, and with his authority.

Wallace

It's battle I want, not talk.

princess

But now that I am here, will you speak with a woman?

She leads him under the pavilion, a purple canopy shading rich carpets laid on the bare ground. Watching the gorgeous walk, Stephen lies back on his saddle and twitches his leg like a horny dog. Hamish backhands him; Campbell, Hamish and Stephen quickly dismount and follow the procession, shouldering their way in beside the Princess's French guards, so they can watch Wallace's back. The rest of the Scots surround the tent, ready for ambush.

Nicolette is among the royal attendants there; seeing Wallace, she shoots a glance at the Princess that says Ooo-La-La! The servants have brought a throne for the Princess, a lower chair for Wallace. She sits; he refuses the chair. She studies him, taking in his anger and his pride.

princess

I understand that you have recently been given the rank of knight.

wallace

I have been given nothing. God makes men what they are.

princess

Did God make you the sacker of peaceful cities? The executioner of the king's nephew, my husband's own cousin?

wallace

York was the staging point for every invasion of my country. And that royal cousin hanged a hundred Scots, even women and children, from the city walls.

princess

That is not possible.

But knowing Longshanks's family, she glances at a richly-dressed Advisor, a CRONY of the king, who averts his eyes.

wallace

Longshanks did far worse, the last time he took a Scottish city.

The Crony mumbles to her in LATIN, WITH SUBTITLES...

crony

(Latin)

He is a murdering bandit, he lies.

Wallace

(Latin!)

I am no bandit. And I do not lie.

They are startled at Wallace's fluency in Latin.

Wallace

Or in French if you prefer that: Certainmous et ver! Ask your king to his face, and see if his eyes can convince you of the truth.

She stares for a long moment at Wallace's eyes.

princess

Hamilton, leave us.

Crony (HAMILTON)

M'lady--

princess

Leave us now.

He reluctantly obeys. Seeing that she wants the exchange to be private, Wallace turns and nods for his men to leave. Stephen, who has been admiring the lady's beauty non-stop, leans in and whispers to William...

stephen

Her husband's more of a queen than she is. Did you know that?

Stephen moves off with Hamish and Campbell. Wallace and the princess are left alone.

Princess

Let us talk plainly. You invade England. But you cannot complete the conquest, so far from your shelter and supply. The King proposes that you withdraw your attack. In return he grants you title, estates, and this chest with a thousand pounds of gold, which am to pay to you personally.

wallace

A Lordship. And gold. That I should become Judas.

Princess

Peace is made is such ways.

wallace

SLAVES ARE MADE IN SUCH WAYS!

The outburst startles even those watching from a distance. The Princess is mesmerized by Wallace's passion.

Princess

I understand you have suffered. I know...about your woman.

wallace

She was my wife. We married in secret because I would not share her with an English lord. they killed her to get to me. And she was pregnant.

The Princess is stunned; Wallace is dead still.

Wallace

I've never told anyone. I don't know why I tell you--except because you look...much like her. And someday you will be a queen, and you must open your eyes!

(beat)

Tell your king that William Wallace will not be ruled. Nor will any Scot, while I live.

The Princess rises slowly from her chair, moves in front of him, and lowers herself to her knees. The Crony and her other attendants, seeing this from a distance, are shocked.

princess

Sir. I leave this money, as a gift. Not from the king, but from myself. And not to you, but to the orphans of your country.

She lifts her face. Their eyes hold a moment too long.

LATER, Ext. field - day

Wallace and his captains sit on horseback at the head of their company and watch as the Princess's procession leaves. Hamish studies Wallace's face; Wallace notices and gives him a non-committal shrug. As the carriage rolls away, its window curtains lift back slightly. All they see are the Princess's fingers, but they know she looked back. Wallace reins his horse away, to ride back to camp.

Int. Edward's palace - day

The doors open; the Princess enters Longshank's war council; Prince Edward is there, among a dozen others.

Longshanks

My son's loyal wife returns, unkilld by the heathen. So he accepted our bribe.

princess

No. He did not.

longshanks

Then why does he stay? My scouts say he has not advanced.

Princess

He waits. For you. He says he will attack no more towns--if you are man enough to come fight him.

longshanks

You spoke with this Wallace in private. What kind of man is he?

princess

...A mindless barbarian. Not a king like you, M[?]lord.

longshanks

The Scottish nobles have sent him no support. His army starves. Our stall has worked, he must withdraw. You may return to your embroidery.

princess

Humbly, M[?]lord.

She barely curtseys, and starts out.

Edward

you brought back the money, of course?

He already know she didn[?]t; Hamilton is standing near him.

princess

No. I have it to ease the suffering of the children of this war.

Longshanks

(glances at son)

This is what happens when you must send a woman. And a fool.

princess

Forgive me, Sire. I thought that generosity might demonstrate your greatness to those you mean to rule.

Longshanks

My greatness is better demonstrated with this.

From a box at his feet the king withdraws a crossbow and throws it onto the table. Most of those there are shocked.

edward

The weapon has been outlawed by the Pope himself!

longshanks

So the Scots will have none of them, will they? My armorers have already made a thousand.

Longshanks smiles. No one notices that the Princess is deadly pale.

Ext. Wallace army camp - day

The Scots are lining up to leave their encampment. Wallace is about to give the signal to start the march when Hamish, beside him, comes alert; a small group of riders in distinctive attire are coming toward them; what can this be?

hamish

William--French guards?

The riders stop at a distance, and out from their ranks comes a single rider, sitting sidesaddle. It is Nicolette. Wallace and Hamish recognize her from the Princess's visit. She trots her horse the rest of the way, while the French guards stay back. Hamish helps her from her horse. She moves to Wallace, and opens the heavy folds of her heavy riding cape.

Secreted there, hung from a rope at her neck, is a crossbow.

ext. a field in scotland - day

Wallace has gathered the nobles, among them Robert the Bruce, Mornay, and old Craig, for a demonstration. Hamish and Stephen have placed a spearman's chestplate against a bale of hay. As William cranks the crossbow to its full cocked position and places a bolt in its slot, Stephen tucks a melon behind the armor.

William aims...and fires. The bolt slashes through the air and punches through the armor and the melon, leaving no doubt what it would do to a man's heart. The nobles pale.

craig

That is why the Pope outlawed the weapon! It makes war too terrible.

mornay

How many does Longshanks have?

wallace

A thousand.

(beat)

You have made me Guardian of Scotland. So I tell you this is what we face.

craig

We must sue for peace.

wallace

Peace?!

Craig

we cannot defeat this--

WALLACE

With cavalry--not heavy, like the English, but light, fast horsemen, like you nobles employ--we could outmaneuver their bowmen!

craig

It is suicide.

robert

Sir William--

The Bruce sees Wallace about to explode, and tries to intervene-- but Wallace's anger is too great.

wallace

We won at Stirling and still you quibbled! We won at York and you would not support us! Then I said nothing! Now I say you are cowards!

The nobles grip their weapons; Wallace, Hamish and Stephen are ready to finish this quarrel right here. Robert the Bruce, backed by Mornay, steps between the two sides.

Robert

Please, Sir William! Speak with me alone! I beg you!

The nobles stalk away, and Robert draws Wallace away, to the target Wallace shot, so they are alone.

robert

You have achieved more than anyone dreamed. But fighting these odds looks like rage, not courage. Peace offers its rewards! Has war become a habit you cannot break?

The question strikes deep.

wallace

War finds me willing. I know it won't bring back all I have lost. But it can bring what none of us have ever had--a country of our own. For that we need a king. We need you.

robert

I am trying.

wallace

Then tell me what a king is! Is he a man who believes only what others believe? Is he one who calculates the numbers for and against him but never weighs the strength in your own heart? There is strength in you. I see it. I know it.

robert

I must...consult with my father.

wallace

And I will consult with mine.

Robert the Bruce walks off the field, heading the way the other nobles went. Wallace rejoins Hamish and Stephen. They look to him; what do we do now?

wallace

Remember when the English turned their hounds on us? Maybe we should introduce them to our dogs.

Int. the darkened room of bruce the elder, the leper

In the faint nimbus of the single candle, young Robert sits across from his leper father. The son grips his own head, as if stunned by a blow.

robert

This...cannot be the way.

the leper

You have said yourself that the nobles will not support Wallace, so how does it help us to join the side that is slaughtered?

Heartsick, the father reaches across the table, then stays his arm, unwilling to touch his son with his leprous hand.

the leper

My son. Look at me. I cannot be king. You, and you alone, can rule Scotland. What I tell you, you must do--for yourself, and for your country.

Young Robert holds his father with his eyes, and does not look away.

Ext. the battle of falkirk - day

The Scottish army moves out onto the hilly plain, covered in the gray mists. They see glimpses of the enemy in the distance. Wallace deploys the Scots: Campbell with the schiltrons (spear formations), Stephen with the infantry, the noble Mornay leading the cavalry, and with Wallace and Hamish on horseback, looking over the field. Hamish sees gazing up at an empty hill above the field.

Hamish

The Bruce is not coming, William.

wallace

Mornay has come. So will the Bruce.

He'd better, the odds look long. And it's nasty ground; one side of the field is ankle deep in water, and the English are covering it with a layer of burning oil, releasing thick smoke to hide their movements.

wallace

Stephen ready?

Hamish

Aye.

The Priest from their home village is moving through the Scottish ranks, dispensing absolution. He reaches the two friends, who accept the Host, say their own last prayers, and give each other a look of goodbye. Hamish rides off to join the schiltrons.

LONGSHANKS AND HIS GENERALS

on the opposite side of the field, send their army forward.

WALLACE AND THE SCOTS

see them through the smoke; Wallace spots what he's looking for: there they are, the ranks of crossbowmen!

And as they draw nearer, Wallace hears a haunting noise. He sees the bowmen more clearly, and the English infantry. Some are wearing kilts and marching to bagpipes.

wallace

Irish troops!

STEPHEN OF IRELAND, WITH THE SCOTTISH INFANTRY

He stares at the approach of his countrymen. Wallace appears beside him. Stephen sees him, and is ashamed.

stephen

So that's where Longshanks got his soldiers. Irishmen, willing to kill Scottish cousins for the English.

William

Their families are starving, they'll feed them however they can. If you don't want to fight them--

stephen

No. I'll stand with you.

Loyal to the end. Wallace signals to Hamish and Campbell, among the schiltrons. The formations, bristling with spears, move forward. Hamish looks back at Wallace; both men know the spearmen are the bait here. Wallace and Stephen see the English heavy cavalry advancing.

stephen

They can't be that stupid to attack the schiltrons again.

Wallace is scanning the battlefield. He sees the English cavalry charge, but before they reach the bristling spears, they pull up, and crossbowmen, moving up behind the knights.

wallace

It's only a faint to shield the crossbows!

the crossbowmen fire a volley, too hurriedly. We see the hailstorm of bolts slash through the air in unison--you can actually see them coming. The bows fall short of the front ranks of the schiltrons.

wallace

Now! Give 'em the dogs!

Stephen signals, and up the slope behind them come handlers with ten war dogs. Huge mastiffs, they wear steel collars, with razor sharp protrusions. Their handlers hold them at the end of long catch poles. The crossbowmen are distracted from their reloading by the appearance of the mastiffs; now, as the Scottish handlers run toward the English ranks and unleash the dogs, fear races through the English line.

The dogs tear into them. It is chaos; the bowmen can't flee, and as the dogs mix among them, the bowmen fire frantically, mostly hitting each other. The dogs' collars slash legs; their jaws crush bones; even when their back legs are hacked off, the frenzied dogs keep killing.

Wallace signals to Mornay with the Scottish cavalry. Mornay does nothing. The crossbowmen, though taking great punishment, are beginning to overwhelm the dogs by sheer numbers, and are regrouping.

wallace

Now! Charge! Charge them!

Mornay tugs his reins and leads his cavalry away.

AT THE ENGLISH COMMAND

Longshanks and his officers see Mornay and his cavalry melt away. The English general looks knowingly at Longshanks.

general

Mornay?

longshanks

For double his lands in Scotland, and matching estates in England.

WALLACE, WITH STEPHEN

They see the Scottish army abandoned.

stephen

Betrayed!

Wallace glances to the other hilltop; still no sign of Bruce. He looks on in agony as the crossbowmen unleash another volley. The Scottish spearmen, bunched in a tight group, are helpless. The bolts fall, cutting through their helmets and breastplates like paper. Wallace has no cavalry--and his men are being slaughtered! He spurs his horse, and Stephen and the infantrymen race behind him.

The English heavy cavalry surge to meet them, but Wallace weaves through them, dodging with his horse, slashing with the broadsword, cutting down on knight, another, another... The Scottish infantry claws in, dragging down the horses, hacking the knights as they run by.

The English bowmen are about to fire again, but they see the Scottish charge bearing down on them and adjust their aim; the bolts cut into the infantrymen; one bolt tears off the armor of Wallace's left shoulder. He wobbles on his horse, regains his balance, and keeps up the charge.

AT THE ENGLISH COMMAND

Longshanks and his generals are watching the action.

general

My God, and still they come!

longshanks

Use the reinforcements! But take Wallace alive!

The General signals and the English reinforcements surge into the battle.

IN THE THICK OF THE BATTLE

On horseback, Wallace fights his way into the watery edge of the field, where English infantry is now overrunning the schiltrons. He hacks men down left and right, reaches the Scottish center, and finds Hamish bending over another soldier. Wallace dismounts.

wallace

Hamish! Ham--

And Wallace sees that Hamish is holding his father, fallen in battle. Wallace has no time to react; he cuts down an English swordsman moving in to hack Hamish's back. Wallace lifts Campbell across the saddle, and shouts at Hamish...

wallace

Get him away!

Hamish obeys, jumping onto the horse and galloping back toward the rear. Wallace fights with new vengeance, swinging the double-edged broadsword with deadly accuracy.

Rallied by Wallace's presence, the Scots surge back. Then Wallace sees the English reinforcement cavalry coming.

wallace

A charge! Form up! Form up!

The Scots pull up spears and hastily form another schiltrons. The spears bristle out, ready...the English horsemen thunder in. But before the spears impale the horses, another flight of crossbow bolts cuts down half the Scots still fighting.

Hamish reaches the rear of the battle and lowers the limp body of

his father to the Scottish monks who are attending to the wounded and giving absolution to the dying...

still Wallace fights back, meeting the English charge. The Scots hold their own. An English knight tries to ride over William; he knocks the lance aside, and though the horse slams into him, William also unseats the rider.

The rider rolls to his feet. William struggles up to meet him-- and comes face to face with Robert the Bruce.

The shock and recognition stun Wallace; in that moment, looking at Robert the Bruce's guilt-ridden face, he understands everything: the betrayal, the hopelessness of Scotland. As he stands there frozen, a bolt punches into the muscle of his neck, and Wallace doesn't react to it.

Bruce is horrified at the sight of Wallace this way. He batters at Wallace's sword, as if its use would give him absolution.

robert

Fight me! Fight me!

But Wallace can only stagger back. Bruce's voice grows ragged as he screams.

robert

FIGHT ME!

all around, the battle has decayed; the Scots are being slaughtered. Another bolt glances off Wallace's helmet; a third rips into his thigh plate, making his legs collapse.

Suddenly Stephen comes through the melee, on Robert's horse! He hits Robert from behind, knocking him down, and jumps to the ground to try and lift William onto the horse!

Robert sees a knot of crossbowmen moving up, sighting out Wallace, taking careful aim! Bruce leaps up and helps Stephen sling Wallace onto the back of the horse, even covers him with his shield, deflecting another bolt fired at Wallace, as Stephen mounts too.

As the horse plunges away into the smoke, Robert falls to the water. His own troops reach him, realize who he is, see the horrible expression on his face, and race on after the Scots.

Robert is left alone, on his knees in the water, the fire and noise of battle now dim to him, as if his senses have died along with his heart.

LONGSHANKS

looks over the battlefield, strewn with the bodies of the Scottish dead. For now, he is satisfied.

Ext. road - sunset

Remnants of the defeated army straggle past. Wallace and Stephen are trying to help Hamish carry his father, but now old Campbell says...

campbell

Son... I want to die on the ground.

But as they tilt old Campbell onto the ground, he grabs at something that starts to fall from the wound in his stomach.

campbell

Whew. That'll clear your sinuses. Goodbye, boys.

hamish

No. You're going to live.

campbell

I don't think I can do without one of those...whatever it is...

Hamish is too grief-stricken to speak.

wallace

You...were like my father...

Old Campbell rallies one more time for this.

campbell

...And glad to die, like him... So you could be the men you are. All of ya.

The last three words to Hamish, telling him he's a hero too.

campbell

I'm a happy man.

Hamish is weeping. When he looks up again, his father has died. We PULL BACK from them in tableaux, with the army, the people of Scotland, the whole gray world in defeat.

Int. edinburgh castle - day

Wallace, still bloody and in his battered armor, removes the chain of office from beneath his breastplate, lays it onto the table in front of Craig and the other nobles, and walks from the room. Hamish and Stephen see the satisfaction on the nobles' face, and follow William out.

Int. castle corridor - day

Hamish and Stephen move out into the hallway after Wallace--but he is gone.

Ext. woods - night

Wallace is in the woods, in the grove of trees, looking at Marion's hidden grave. The rain falls on his face, like tears. But he has no tears of his own. The cold, the icy rain, the wounds, nothing seems to touch him.

With his fingertips he carefully draws her embroidered cloth from beneath his breastplate; hanging in his trembling hands, filthy with the grime and gore of battle, it looks impossibly white, something from a better, purer world.

dissolve to

Int. palace in london - night

Thunder, the sound of driving rain. Snug by a massive fire are Longshanks, his son Edward, and other advisors. On the far side of the room, away from the fire, the Princess stands at the window and watches the rain against the panes.

advisor

Their nobles have sworn allegiance, My lord. Every last one.

Longshanks savors the victory--and gloats to his son.

longshanks

Now we kill two birds at one stroke. We recruit from Scotland for our armies in France.

edward

The Scots will fight for us?

longshanks

What choice do they have? Now they must serve us or starve.

edward

But if we have not caught Wallace--

Longshanks

(exploding)

He is gone! Finished! Dead! If he has not yet bled to death or had his throat cut for him, he will not survive the winter. It is very cold--is it not, our flower?

From the other side of the window, we see the Princess as she hears him, but doesn't turn around. She looks at the window, we snow swirling among the raindrops outside. Her eyes glisten, and her breath fogs the glass.

Int. bruce's darkened chamber

The elder Bruce, his decaying features sagging from his face, stares across the table at his son.

Leper

I am the one who is rotting. But I think your face looks graver than mine.

robert

He was so brave. With courage alone he nearly won.

leper

So more men were slaughtered uselessly!

Robert

He broke because of me. I saw it. He lost all will to fight.

leper

We must have alliance with England to prevail here. You achieved that! You saved your family, increased your lands! In time you will have all the power in Scotland! ..Yet you grieve.

robert

In my heart I had begun to hope that he would never break.

leper

All me lose heart. All betray. It is exactly why we must make the choices we make.

Int. mornay's castle - night

Mornay, in an opulent bedchamber hung with tapestries and carpeted with eastern rugs, lies in bed, tossing in the restless sleep of a tortured soul.

He thinks he hears galloping. In SUBLIMINAL FLASHES he DREAMS of Wallace riding toward him.

He wakes, and listens to a strange noise. It is hoofbeats! Coming closer. He hears shouts too, screams from below--and those strange, approaching hoofbeats...

WALLACE, ON HORSEBACK

rides up the circular stairs inside Mornay's castle! His horse bounds up the stone--Mornay's guards are behind him, on foot, pursuing.

At a landing, Wallace cuts down a guard, and gallops higher.

IN HIS BED, MORNAY

sits up gawking as the door explodes inward and Wallace rides through! Mornay is frozen. Wallace slashes him down.

Out in the corridor, the guards gather; they have Wallace trapped. He covers the horse's eyes with a cloth and spurs his flanks. the blind animal runs through the window!

Ext. castle - night - slow motion

The horse and rider plunge past the sheer walls of the castle...and into the loch! Mornay's guards and the castle servants cluster at the windows to see Wallace and the horse surface, and swim to the shore, escaping!

Ext. scottish village - day

The news has spread through the countryside. In the town square, drunken Scotsmen chant...

people

Wal-lace! Wal-lace! Wal-lace!

Old Craig rides past them, heading toward he Bruce's castle on the hill above the town.

int. bruce castle - day

Robert is in his central room; he hears the chanting from far below. Old Craig enters.

robert

Is it true about Mornay?

Craig hands him the bloody nightshirt Mornay was wearing.

robert

And he rode through the window? My God.

He can't hide his admiration. From below, he still hears the people CHANTING...

Ext. london - gardens - day

Longshanks and Edward are in the royal gardens, resplendent with spring. Longshanks pulls a new flower, and crushes it.

longshanks

His legend grows! It will be worse than before!

edward

You let Wallace escape your whole army. You cannot blame me for this.

Longshanks glowers at his son; the Princess arrives.

princess

Good day to you, My Lords.

edward

You mock us with a smile?

princess

I am cheerful with a plan to soothe your miseries. All of England shudders with the news of renewed rebellion.

edward

Wallace's followers.

princess

Wallace himself. If you wish to pretend a ghost rallies new volunteers in every Scottish town, I leave you to your hauntings. If you wish to take him, I know a way.

Edward snickers in derision--but his wife is steel.

princess

I have faced him. Have you?

longshanks

Let her speak.

princess

He will fight you forever. But what does he fight for? Freedom first, and peace. So grant them.

edward

The little cow is insane--

princess

Grant, as you do everything else, with treachery. Offer him a truce to discuss terms, and send me to my castle at Locharmbie as your emissary. He trusts me. Pick thirty of your finest

assassins for me to take along. And I will set the meeting, and the ambush.

longshanks

you see, my delicate son? I have picked you a Queen.

Ext. the princess's scottish castle - day

Locharmbie is a small, picturesque castle on a hillside. As the queen's entourage moves through the gates, they close behind her. She steps out of the carriage and moves into

Int. castle - the great hall - day

Inside the great hall are thirty killers, led by their CHIEF ASSASSIN, a cutthroat with a mangled eye.

chief assassin

We came in small groups, so the rebels would not suspect.

princess

And you have reached Wallace's men?

chief assassin

We tell the villagers, and the traitors pass it on. All that's left is for you to say where.

Ext. marion's grove - night

Wallace is in the grove of trees where Marion is buried. Drinking in the silence, his own isolation. He hears a RUSTLE behind him, and spins, drawing the broadsword. Then his face registers...it's Hamish and Stephen.

Hamish is unsure if he did the right thing in coming here-- unsure, until Wallace moves to them, and hugs them.

Int. cave - night

They are in the old secret cave; rain is falling, but it's dry inside, with a campfire smoldering at the entrance.

wallace

Thanks for the food and drink. And for bringing them yourselves.

hamish

We're here to stay. We don't care to live, if we can't fight beside ya.

Stephen pulls a jug of whiskey from his pocket. He swigs, hands it to Hamish for a chug, then to Wallace, who declines, but smiles for the first time in many weeks.

Hamish

There is...one thing, William. Longshanks is offering a truce. He has dispatched his daughter-in-law as his emissary, and she has sent word that she wishes to meet you--in a barn.

Wallace frowns; a barn?

ext. a barn in the scottish countryside - day

Hauntingly similar to the one in Wallace's childhood. As he sits on his horse and looks at the place, surmounted by a white flag of truce, it gives him a chill. But in full view of the barn, he hands Hamish his sword and rides forward.

INSIDE THE BARN

are the assassins, killing knives ready.

Chief assassin

It's William Wallace, sure! And...he's given up his sword! Be ready!

They position themselves at every entrance.

OUTSIDE THE BARN

Wallace reaches the barn, dismounts, and moves toward the door. But suddenly, instead of entering, he grabs the heavy bar and seals the door! At this motion, Scots spring from the woods in all directions. The assassins inside realize the ambush is being turned on them, but it's too late; they hear the entrance being sealed from the outside.

More Scots, led by Stephen, scramble up from hiding, place tinder-dry brush and pitch against the barn, and set it on fire. In moments the entire barn is blazing. The Scots stand back and

watch the barn burn, their faces lit by the flames. After awhile, there are no more screams from inside.

Ext. castle - night

The Princess sees the burning off in the distance, like a bonfire. She stands on the wall, looking out at it. And then she sees, on a hillside, silhouetted against the night and the fire, a rider, just sitting there on his horse, looking at the castle. She runs into the castle, up the stairs, and stands on the pinnacle of the castle, so that she too is silhouetted, and he can see her.

The lone rider is William Wallace.

CLOSE - A CANDLE

being placed in a window of the stable cottage, built into the outer wall of the castle. AT A DISTANCE, the candle burns like a tiny beacon. And William sees it.

INSIDE THE STABLE COTTAGE, THE PRINCESS

sits alone, wondering if her signal is going to work.

OUTSIDE THE CASTLE

Wallace climbs the castle wall, hand over hand up the mortared stones, to the window twenty feet above the ground. He reaches the safety of the window cove and kneels on the ledge. He looks through the window, and sees her inside.

INSIDE THE ROOM, she looks up, and sees him there. The first glance frightens her, and yet she expected him, prayed for him to come. Now, for a long, long moment the two of them look at each other through the glass, each realizing the implications of this moment.

She moves to the window and opens it. The wind rushing through extinguishes the candle, and he slips inside. They face each other in the darkness. Then she strikes a match and relights the candle, and they look at each other.

wallace

A meeting in a barn. It had to be a trap. And only you would know I would be aware of it.

princess

It does me good to see you.

william

I am much diminished since we met.

She wants to say something--but instead she says something else.

princess

There will be a new shipment of supplies coming north next month.
Food and weapons. They will trav--

william

No. Stop. I didn't come here for that.

PRINCESS

Then why did you come?

wallace

Why did you?

princess

Because of the way you're looking at me now. The same way...as
when we met.

He turns his face away. Gently, she pulls it back.

princess

I know. You looked at me... and saw her.

He twists back toward the window.

Princess

You must forgive me what I feel. No man has ever looked at me as
you did.

Surprised, he looks at her now.

wallace

you have...you have a husband.

princess

I have taken vows. More than one. I've vowed faithfulness to my husband, and sworn to give him a son. And I cannot keep both promises.

Slowly, it starts to dawn on him what she's asking, and an unexpected smile plays at his lips. Her smile lights too.

princess

You understand. Consider, before you laugh and say now. You will never own a throne, though you deserve one. But just as the sun will rise tomorrow, some man will rule England. And what if his veins ran not with the blood of Longshanks, but with that of a true king?

wallace

I cannot love you for the sake of revenge.

princess

No. But can you love me for the sake of all you loved and lost? Or simply love me...because I love you?

Slowly, he reaches to the candle flame, and pinches it out.

IN THE SHADOWS OF THE COTTAGE BED

we see the surging, pent-up passion...and

dissolve to

THE LOVERS

Their bodies limp, they lie asleep, entwined. The first rays of morning spread yellow light through the room and across their faces.

Wallace wakes suddenly; sunlight! He grabs for his clothes, as she wakes, covers herself in the blanket and jumps out of bed, rushing to the window to look out.

princess

No one! Hurry!

He reaches her, throws the window open, and sees a clear path down the wall to safety. He stops and looks at her, and touches her face in gratitude. She has to ask...

princess

When we... did you think of her?

Pausing to look straight into her eyes, he kisses her--her, not Marion--and climbs out. She watches him go.

Ext. grove of trees - night

Wallace stands alone in the grove where Marion lies.

MONTAGE

--Wallace and fifty men gallop through a village on the way to an English fortress; the villagers drop what they're doing and run to follow them; we see Wallace's face, relentless, as he hacks men down in the attack; with the fortress sacked and smoking in the background, we see Wallace lead his men away, the people cheering him...

ext. forest encampment - night

Once again, Wallace stares at the fire, beside his friends.

Hamish

Rest, William.

wallace

I rest.

hamish

Your rest is making me exhausted.

Stephen offers the jug; Wallace declines.

stephen

Come, it'll help you sleep.

wallace

Aye. Bit it won't let me dream.

Pulling a tattered tartan around himself, he lies down.

LONGSHANKS, INT. HIS PALACE - NIGHT

He sits by a palace hearth, where a huge blaze burns; still he's huddled beneath a blanket, and coughing blood. But he ignores the ice in his lungs; his mind is plotting.

The princess, ext. the walls of her castle - night

she walks the parapets alone, lost in her own thoughts.

Robert the Bruce, in a stone room of his castle

sits staring at...the stone coffin of his father. The coffin is closed; on its top is a lifesize stone carving of his father as a knight in final repose. Ranks of candles light the scene, and Robert's face, cold as the stone. A SHUFFLE...Robert looks up to see old Craig.

craig

May her rest in peace. ...You have already sealed the coffin?

robert

He was a modest man.

craig

It will not be long before Longshanks too is encased in stone, and his crowns divided for others to wear.

Craig sits next to Robert, and keeps his voice low.

craig

Our nobles are frightened and confused...Wallace has the commoners stirred up again, from the Highland clans to the lowland villages. In another six months Christ and the Apostles could not govern this country.

Robert only stares at his father's stone coffin.

craig

Longshanks knows his son will scarcely be able to rule England, much less half of France. He needs Scotland settled, and he

trusts you, after Falkirk. If you pay him homage, he will recognize you as king of Scotland. Our nobles have agreed to this as well.

He shows Robert a parchment bearing the noblest names in Scotland. The Bruce barely glances at it.

robert

If I pay homage to another's throne, then how am I a king?

craig

Homage is nothing. It is the crown that matters!

robert

The crown is that of Scotland. And Scotland is William Wallace.

craig

That is another matter. There is a price to all this, required both by Longshanks and our nobles. Pay it, and you will be our king. And we will have peace.

Robert turns from his father's coffin, to look at Craig.

Ext. forest encampment - night

A commotion; the nobles, their heads hooded, are led in on horseback by guerrillas from the village. The nobles stop, feel their hoods pulled off, and see Wallace.

craig

Sir William. We come to seek a meeting.

wallace

You've all sworn to Longshanks.

craig

An oath to a liar is no oath at all. An oath to a patriot is a vow indeed. Every man of us is ready to swear loyalty to you.

wallace

So let the council swear publicly.

craig

We cannot. Some scarcely believe you are alive. Other think you'll pay them Mornay's wages. We bid you to Edinburgh. Meet us at the city gates, two days from now, at sunset. Pledge us your pardon and we will unite behind you. Scotland will be one.

Wallace glances at Hamish and Stephen, who can barely hide their contempt. Wallace looks at the nobles.

wallace

I will meet you, but only one way--if Robert the Bruce is there, and puts his hand on my Bible, and swears his loyalty to Scotland.

craig

He has already agreed to come.

Ext. Forest - night

Wallace stands alone, looking at the moon and stars. Hamish moves up and sits down beside him.

Hamish

You know it's a trap.

wallace

Probably. But we can't win alone. We know that. This is the only way.

Hamish

I don't want to be a martyr.

wallace

Nor I! I want to live! I want a home and children and peace. I've asked god for those things. But He's brought me this sword. And if He wills that I must lay it down to have what He wants for my country, then I'll do that too.

Hamish

That's just a dream, William!

wallace

We've lived a dream together. A dream of freedom!

hamish

your dreams aren't about freedom! They're about Marion! You have to be a hero, because you think she sees you! Is that it?

wallace

My dreams of Marion are gone. I killed them myself. If I knew I could live with her on the other side of death, I'd welcome it.

ext. road into EDINBURGH - sunset

William, Hamish, and Stephen are on their horses, looking down at the road leading into the city. Wallace hands his dagger to Stephen, and unbuckles his broadsword and gives it to Hamish.

hamish

Keep these. We're going too.

wallace

No. One of us is enough.

Wallace hugs them, first Stephen, then Hamish. Tears roll down Hamish's cheeks. With one last look at his friends, Wallace rides away.

Ext. Large estate house - sunset

The house looks quiet as Wallace rides toward it.

Int. estate house - day

Robert the Bruce and Craig stand at the hearth, tense.

craig

He won't come.

robert

He will. I know he will.

They hear the approach of a single horse. The Bruce looks out to see Wallace arriving.

robert

Here. And unarmed. My God, he has a brave heart.

OUTSIDE THE HOUSE

Wallace dismounts and enters.

Int. the house

Wallace appears at the doorway into the main room, and stops. Bruce faces him. The eyes of BOTH MEN meet, saying everything. Wallace steps into the room. He sees something flicker onto Bruce's face--shame--just as henchmen in the rafters drop a weighted net and it envelopes Wallace. English soldiers spring from the closets, run down the stairs, and tumble over him, ripping at his clothes, searching as if broadswords might spring from his boots.

They bind Wallace hand and foot. He stares at Robert the Bruce, who averts his eyes. The soldiers hurry Wallace out the back, where others are bringing up horses. Robert grabs the English Captain of the soldiers.

robert

He is not to be harmed. I have your king's absolute promise that he will be imprisoned only!

The Captain looks at Bruce the way the High Priest must have looked at Judas, and leaves.

craig

Now we will have peace.

Robert the Bruce spots something on the floor that must have fallen from Wallace's clothes as they grabbed him; Bruce lifts the white handkerchief, and sees the familiar thistle embroidered on it.

ext. road - northern england - day

A procession of heavily armed English soldiers winds its way

toward London, Wallace strapped to an unsaddled horse, his head bare to the sun. Country people come out to jeer...

people

Don't look so fearsome, does he?!

A thrown rock careens off Wallace's check; rotten fruit slaps his shirt. His lips are so parched they bleed.

Int. royal palace - Longshanks' bedroom - day

Edward inspects his father, who lies semiconscious in bed, breath rattling ominously in his chest. Edward approves.

int. the palace hallway - day

The Princess hurries up to her husband as he leaves the king's bedroom, and follows him down the hall to his own.

Princess

Is it true? Wallace is captured?

edward

Simply because he eluded your trap, do you think he is more than a man? My father is dying. Perhaps you should think of our coronation.

princess

When will his trial be?

edward

Wallace's? For treason there I no trial. Tomorrow he will be charged, then executed.

With a faint smile, he shuts his bedroom door in her face.

Int. robert the bruce's castle - day

The Bruce is incredulous, yelling at Craig.

robert

Longshanks promised!

craig

You are surprised he would lie? Balliol was murdered in a church yesterday. You are Longshanks's new designate. You will be king.

INT. tower dungeon

Wallace stands in medieval restraints worthy of Hannibal Lecter. Before him are six scarlet-robed royal magistrates.

royal magistrate

William Wallace! You stand in taint of high treason.

We PUSH IN on the iron mask that binds his face. We can only see his eyes--but they are bright.

wallace

Treason. Against whom?

Magistrate

Against thy king, thou vile fool! Hast thou anything to say?

wallace

Never, in my whole life, did I swear allegiance to your king--

magistrate

It matter not, he is thy king!

wallace

--while many who serve him have taken and broken his oath many times. I cannot commit treason, if I have never been his subject!

magistrate

Confess, and you may receive a quick death. Deny, and you must be purified by pain. Do you confess? ...DO YOU CONFESS?!

wallace

I do not confess.

magistrate

Then on the morrow, thou shalt receive they purification. ...And in the end, I promise you I'll beg for the axe.

ext. establishing - the tower

The stone prison, and the wretched stone section known to this day as the Wallace Tower.

int. prison - night

Wallace is alone in his cell, still in the garish restraints. We can only see his eyes, as he prays.

Wallace

I am so afraid... Give me strength.

OUTSIDE THE CELL DOOR

The jailers jump to their feet as the Princess enters.

JAILER

Your Highness!

Princess

I will see the prisoner.

JAILER

We've orders from the king--

princess

the king will be dead in a month! And his son is a weakling! Who do you think will rule this kingdom? Now OPEN THIS DOOR!

The jailer obeys. The Princess can barely contain her shock at the sight of Wallace; the jailers snatch him upright.

JAILER

On your feet, you filth!

princess

Stop! Leave me!

(they hesitate)

There is no way out of this hell! Leave me with him!

Reluctantly the jailers shuffle out of the cell, but they can still see her back and hear her. Looking at Wallace's eyes through the mask, she can't quite hold back her tears--dangerous tears, that threaten to say too much. Wallace tries to distract her.

wallace

M'lady...what kindness of you to visit a stranger.

princess

sir, I...come to beg you to confess all, and swear allegiance to the king, that he might show you mercy.

wallace

Will he show mercy to my country? Will he take back his soldiers, and let us rule ourselves?

princess

Mercy...is to die quickly. Perhaps even live in the Tower. In time, who knows what can happen, if you can only live.

wallace

If I swear to him, then everything I am is dead already.

She wants to plead, she wants to scream. She can't stop the tears. And the jailers are watching.

wallace

your people are lucky to have a princess so kind that she can grieve at the death of a stranger.

she almost goes too far now, pulling closer to him--but she doesn't care. She whispers, pleading...

princess

You will die! It will be awful!

wallace

Every man dies. Not every man really lives.

She pulls out a hidden vial, and whispers...

princess

Drink this! It will dull your pain.

wallace

It will numb my wits, and I must have them all. If I'm senseless, or if I wail, then Longshanks will have broken me.

princess

I can't bear the thought of your torture. Take it!

On the verge of hysteria, she presses the vial to the air hole at his mouth and pours in the drug. The jailers, seeing suspicious movement, shift inside the cell; she backs up, her eyes wide, full of love and goodbye. From inside the mask, he watches her go. When the door CLANGS shut, he spits the purple drug out through the mouth hole.

Int. longshanks' bedchamber - night

Longshanks lies helpless, his body racked with consumption. Edward sits against the wall, watching him die, glee in his eyes. The Princess enters, and marches to the bedside.

princess

I have come to beg for the life of William Wallace.

edward

You fancy him.

princess

I respect him. At worst he was a worthy enemy. Show mercy...Oh thou great king...and win the respect of your own people.

Longshanks shakes his head.

princess

Even now, you are incapable of mercy?

The king can't speak. But hatred still glows in his eyes. The princess looks at her husband.

princess

Nor you. To you that word is as unfamiliar as love.

edward

Before he lost his powers of speech, he told me his one comfort was that he would live to know Wallace was dead.

She leans down and grabs the dying king by the hair. The guards flanking the door start forward but the Princess's eyes flare at them with more fire than even Longshanks once showed--and the guards back off. She leans down and hisses to Longshanks, so softly that even Edward can't hear...

princess

you see? Death comes to us all. And it comes to William Wallace. But before death comes to you, know this: your blood dies with you. A child who is not of your line grows in my belly. Your son will not sit long on the throne. I swear it.

She lets go of the old king. He sags like an empty sack back onto his satin pillows. Without even a look at her husband she strides out of the room, with the rattling breath of the dying king rasping the air like a saw.

ext. london town square - execution day

The crowd is festive; hawkers sell roast chickens, and beer from barrels. Royal horsemen arrive, dragging Wallace strapped to a wooden litter. As they cut him loose and lead him through the crowd, the people begin to jeer and throw things at him: chicken bones, rocks, empty tankards.

We see a former English soldier, one of those who fled in terror at the battle of Stirling, lift a stone from the street and hurl it; it cracks against Wallace's cheek. Wallace's eyes capture the soldier, and hold him, piercing his soul. The soldier looks away in shame, even as the rest of the crowd jeers more.

Grim magistrates prod Wallace and he climbs the execution platform. On the platform are a noose, a dissection table with

knives in plain view, and a chopping block with an enormous axe. Wallace sees it all.

magistrate

We will use it all before this is over. Or fall to your knees now, declare yourself the king's loyal subject, and beg his mercy, and you shall have it.

He emphasizes mercy by pointing to the axe. Wallace is pale, and trembles--but he shakes his head. The CROWD grows noisier as they put the noose around Wallace's neck...

We INTERCUT:

--THE PRINCESS, in helpless agony, hearing the DISTANT NOISE from her room in the palace...

--Hamish and Stephen, disguised as peasants among the crowd, helpless too, but there, as if to shoulder some of the pain.

--Longshanks, rattling, coughing blood, as Edward watches.

--Robert the Bruce paces along the walls of his castle in Scotland. His eyes are haunted; he grips the embroidered handkerchief that belonged to Wallace.

ON THE EXECUTION STAND

a trio of burly hooded executioners cinch a rope around Wallace's neck and hoist him up a pole.

crowd

That's it! Stretch him!

In the SCORE, AMAZING GRACE, wailed on bagpipes, carries through all that happens now... Ties hand and foot, Wallace is strangling. The Magistrate watches coldly; even when the executioner gives him a look that says they're about to go too far, he prolongs the moment; then the Magistrate nods and the executioner cuts the rope. Wallace slams to the platform; the Magistrate leans to him.

magistrate

Pleasant, yes? Rise to your knees, kiss the royal emblem on my cloak, and you will feel no more.

With great effort, Wallace rises to his knees. The Magistrate assumes a formal posture and offers the cloak. Wallace struggles all the way to his feet.

Magistrate

Very well then. Rack him.

The executioners slam Wallace onto his back on the table, spread his arms and legs, and tie each to a crank. Goaded by the crowd, they pull the ropes taut. The crowd grows quiet enough to hear the groaning of Wallace's limbs. Hamish and Stephen feel it in their own bodies.

Magistrate

Wonderful, isn't it, that a man remains conscious through such pain. Enough?

Wallace shakes his head. The executioners cut off his clothes, take hot irons from a fire box. The crowd grows silent; we see them, not Wallace, as the irons are touched to his body, but we hear the burning of flesh. Then the Magistrate signals; Wallace wants to say something.

wallace

That...will..clear your sinuses.

Everyone hears; Hamish smiles, even through his tears. Rebuffed, the Magistrate nods to the executioners, who lift the terrible instruments of dissection.

We are spared seeing the cutting: we are ON WALLACE'S FACE as the disembowelment begins. The Magistrate leans in beside him.

magistrate

It can all end. Right now! Bliss. Peace. Just say it. Cry out. Mercy! yes? ...Yes?

The crowd can't hear the magistrate but they know the procedure, and they goad Wallace, chanting...

crowd

Mer-cy! Mer-cy! Mer-cy!

Wallace's eyes roll to the magistrate, who signals QUIET!

Magistrate

(booming)

The prisoner wishes to say a word!

SILENCE. Hamish and Stephen weep, whisper, pray...

Hamish, and Stephen

Mercy, William... Say Mercy...

Wallace's eyes flutter, and clear. He fights through the pain, struggles for one last deep breath, and screams...

wallace

FREEEEE-DOMMMMM!

The shout RINGS through the town. Hamish hears it. The Princess hears it, at her open window, and touches her tummy, just showing the first signs of her pregnancy. Longshanks and his son seem to hear; the cry STILL ECHOES as if the wind could carry it through the ends of Scotland; and Robert the Bruce, on the walls of his castle, looks up sharply, as if he has heard...

IN THE LONDON SQUARE

the crowd has never seen courage like this; even English strangers begin to weep. The angry, defeated magistrate gives a signal. They cut the ropes, drag Wallace over and put his head on the block. The executioner lifts his huge axe--and Wallace looks toward the crowd.

THE CROWD, WALLACE'S POV

He sees Hamish, eyes brimming, face glowing...

SLOW MOTION - THE AXE

begins to drop.

WALLACE'S POV

In the last half-moment of his life, when he has already stepped into the world beyond this one, he glimpses someone standing at Hamish's shoulder. She is beautiful, smiling, serene.

She is Marion.

CUT TO BLACK

Robert the Bruce

His face has changed. He is standing AT THE OPEN GRAVE WHERE MARION LAY, the headstone carved with the thistle still there. He holds the handkerchief. As he tucks it into his own pocket, and we MOVE IN on his eyes, we realize the VOICE OVER belongs to him.

robert (V.O.)

After the beheading, William Wallace's body was torn to pieces. His head was set on London bridge, where passerby were invited to jeer at the man who had caused so much fear in England.

(beat)

His arms and legs were sent to the four corners of Britain as warning.

Ext. Scottish towns - carious shots - day

We see the people, as the remains of William Wallace are displayed in a box. The faces of the young men are fiery.

robert (v.o.)

It did not have the effect that Longshanks planned.

More young men put on tartans, take up their weapons, and gather into fighting units. Among them is Hamish, carrying a shield emblazoned with a cocked arm holding a broadsword, and the words "For Freedom."

Ext. scottish highlands - day

Robert the Bruce, flanked by the noblemen and the banners of the Scottish throne, and backed by a ragtag army of Scots, sits on his horse and looks down at the English generals in their martial finery. The English are haughty, victorious, at the head of their colorful, polished army, awaiting the ceremony of submission from Scotland's new king.

robert (V.o.)

And I, Robert the Bruce, backed by a body of Scottish veterans, rode out to pay homage to the armies of the English king, and accept his endorsement of my crown.

FROM BELOW, ON THE OPEN PLANE - day

The Scots--the remains of William Wallace's army--look so ragged and defeated that it hardly seems worth the wait. One ENGLISH COMMANDER turns and jokes with another...

english commander

I hope you washed your ass this mornin--it's never been kissed by a king before.

UP ON THE HILL, Robert the Bruce sits on his horse, and waits. He looks down at the English generals, at their banners, their army. He looks down the ranks at his own.

He sees Hamish. Stephen. Old MacClannough is there, his eyes watery, his weapon sharp. The Scottish bride Lord Bottoms took is there, among the ragtag archers, her husband beside her. Robert knows none of them--yet he knows them all.

Old Craig, among the other Scottish nobles mounted beside the Bruce, grows impatient.

craig

Come, let's get it over with.

But Robert holds something--uncurling his fist, he looks at the thistle handkerchief that belonged to Wallace. The nobles start to rein their horses toward the English.

robert

Stop.

Robert the Bruce tucks the handkerchief safely behind his breastplate, and turns to the Highlanders who line the hilltop with him. He takes a long breath, and shouts--

robert the bruce

You have bled with Wallace! Now bleed with me!

Bruce's broadsword slides from its scabbard. A cry rises from Highlanders, as from a tomb, rising--

scots

Wal-lace! Wal-lace! Wal-lace!

The chant builds to a frenzy; it shakes the earth. The Scottish nobles can scarcely believe it; the English are shocked even more. Robert the Bruce, king of Scotland, spurs his horse into full gallop toward the English, and the spurs his horse into full gallop toward the English, and the Highlanders hurl their bodies down the hill, ready to run through hell itself. In SLOW MOTION we see their faces...

And OVER THIS,, we hear the voice of William Wallace...

Wallace's voice

In the year of our Lord 1314, patriots of Scotland, starving and outnumbered, charged the fields of Bannockburn. They fought like warrior poets. They fought like Scotsmen. And won their freedom. Forever.

On Wallace's army behind Robert the Bruce, charging down the hill to victory and glory, we slow to FREEZE FRAME and hear their chant, huge, echoing...

scots

Wal-lace! Wal-lace! Wal-lace!

FADE OUT.

THE END

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