

FADE IN:

EXT. THE ENGLISH CHANNEL - EVENING

ESTABLISHING SHOT of a relatively small but elegant medieval SAILING SHIP plowing through the water of the English Channel beneath a bright moon.

INT. MAIN CABIN - CONTINUOUS

In a large, richly appointed cabin at the rear of the ship the beautiful PRINCESS AYLON is brushing the hair of her perhaps more beautiful eight-year-old daughter PRINCESS AYLIN, both of them SINGING in voices that are more exquisite than can almost be imagined. They finish the song and Aylon hugs her daughter, Aylin hugging her back, a simple RING on one of her fingers, her night-clothes laid out on a bed.

AYLON

Aylin, your voice is gaining such richness. You're singing like an angel.

AYLIN

I'll never sing as well as you, mother.

AYLON

You already sound lovelier, darling.  
(sadly)  
I wish your father could hear you.

AYLIN

He hears me in heaven, mother.

Aylon smiles.

AYLON

You're right, of course. I'm sure he does.  
(beat)  
When your grandfather hears you, you'll be singing for the court in place of me. If you weren't already a princess, he would surely make you one.

AYLIN

I'd like to be a knight.

AYLON

My tomboy. When you're the Queen, you'll be head of all the knights. But not for awhile. Too many responsibilities and I want you to enjoy your life first.

AYLIN

I don't want you to be queen too soon either. I hope grandfather is better.

Aylon strokes her daughter's hair.

AYLON

I'm sure he's fine. He's very strong.

The ship SHUDDERS from something bumping it, Aylon wondering what it was.

AYLON (CONT'D)

Surely no whales in the channel.

She goes to one of the cabin's ports and pulls back the curtain to peer out.

P.O.V. AYLON - CONTINUOUS

Against the side of their vessel is a much larger ship.

BACK TO SCENE

Aylon is alarmed.

AYLON

What is this?

Suddenly, from above them they can hear the tread of many heavy footsteps and then SCREAMING. Aylon immediately directs Aylin to the closet.

AYLON (CONT'D)

Get in and keep quiet, Aylin.

AYLIN

No, I don't want to leave you.

AYLON

Do as I say. And make no noise.

AYLIN

What about you?

AYLON

Get in, now. And stay quiet no matter what happens.

Aylin reluctantly gets in the closet and hides in one end.

INT. CABIN CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

She crouches and looks upset as her mother shuts the door.

AYLIN  
 (to herself)  
 I wish I were a knight.

INT. MAIN CABIN - CONTINUOUS

As Aylon heads for the cabin door, it is thrown open and two soldiers, swords in hand, enter followed by an evil looking man, LORD THROOP, in fine battle dress. The screaming from above continues and he closes the door behind him and gives a horrible looking smile at Aylon.

AYLON  
 Lord Throop, what is the meaning of this?

THROOP  
 Good evening, Princess Aylon. You're looking particularly lovely.

His insolence confirms to Aylon that something very bad is happening.

AYLON  
 I command you to leave these quarters immediately, Lord Throop.

THROOP  
 Ahh, at one time you would have been obeyed.

INT. CABIN CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Aylin listens in the darkness, scared.

THROOP (O.S.)  
 But those times passed with the last breath of your dear father.

Aylin hears her mother gasp and puts her fist to her mouth, not wanting to cry.

THROOP (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 The king is dead, long live the king.

INT. MAIN CABIN - CONTINUOUS

Aylon forces herself to stay in control.

AYLON  
 Then I am now the queen.

THROOP  
 Did you not hear me say "long live the king?" Where is Princess Aylin?

AYLON

At Castle Blaine. She didn't need  
to see her grandfather in his illness.

THROOP

(cynical smile)

Ah yes, his illness. What a  
misfortune.

AYLON

(stares at Throop)

It wasn't just an illness, was it  
Lord Throop?

THROOP

Lord Mordant too great pains to make  
it appear King Alek died a natural  
death, my lady. A very subtle poison,  
I assure you. Mourning has already  
begun. And when we're finished here,  
how much more grief there will be.

AYLON

(to the soldiers)

I command you take Lord Throop into  
custody.

One SOLDIER laughs while the other looks on seriously.

Throop picks up Aylin's night-clothes from the bed.

THROOP

Musn't leave loose ends, I fear.

(to the serious soldier)

Find our young princess.

The serious soldier puts his sword in his scabbard and begins  
to search the cabin.

INT. CABIN CLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Aylin shrinks back as far as she can in the closet, hearing  
the soldier tearing at things.

AYLON (O.S.)

Stop at once. I command you! Lord  
Throop, this will mean your head.

The door is pulled open and Aylin can see:

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

The grinning soldier is holding her mother who is fighting  
to stop the other from opening the closet door.

As the soldier fights to control Aylon, he rips her bodice and on her chest above her breast there is a BIRTHMARK in the shape of a small heart.

AYLON

Stop! Stop, I command you!

BACK TO SCENE

INT. MAIN CABIN - CONTINUOUS

The soldier sees Aylin in the closet and reaches down to pull her out. Aylin grabs his hand and bites him, the soldier YELPING and yanking his hand away.

AYLIN

You leave my mother alone!

The soldier feints and grabs her, Aylin fighting him but no match as he drags her from the closet and holds her tightly.

AYLON

Do as you will with me, Throop, but leave my daughter.

THROOP

This world is harsh, my lady.  
(to the soldiers)  
Bring them.

He turns and heads out, the grinning soldier forcing Aylon out as she looks helplessly at the soldier carrying her squirming daughter.

EXT. MAIN DECK - MOMENTS LATER

Throop leads the way onto the main deck which is a massacre, bodies lying among the soldiers with bloodied swords, others picking up the dead and throwing them into the ocean on the side away from the other ship. Aylon is appalled.

AYLON

You will burn in Hades for eternity for this, Throop.

THROOP

We shall see but not for a long time to come, god willing.  
(to the soldiers)  
Kill them.

AYLON

No! Take me but spare my child. She is but eight. You can't be so heartless.

THROOP

Kill them both -- the king commands  
it.

Aylon breaks from the soldier's grasp and flies at the soldier holding Aylin, but the grinning soldier thrusts his sword into her back, seeming to enjoy his dirty work. Aylon gasps but doesn't cry out as she reaches helplessly for her daughter.

AYLIN

(in anguish)

Mommy!

The soldier pulls his sword from Aylon's body and she falls to her knees, still holding out her arms for her daughter. The soldier stabs her again, and her body collapses lifeless.

Aylin stares with a blank look on her face, unmoving.

Throop looks to the soldier holding Aylin.

THROOP

Kill her.

The soldier looks down at the child and is hesitant, but he has no choice.

Aylin comes to herself again and fights for her life, almost wrenching free, forcing them both to the railing.

ANGLE ON

Throop looks at Aylon's body.

THROOP (CONT'D)

(to the soldier who  
killed her)

Put her in the sea.

The soldier with Aylin has his sword out and raised, but can't stab her with it as she's too close. He brings the handle down on her head hard and she staggers, blood flowing from her head wound. He hits her again, and as the other soldier drops Aylon over the railing into the water, Aylin's attacker is distracted a moment and Aylin throws herself over the railing into the water next to her mother.

Throop looks over the railing along with the soldier.

P.O.V. THROOP - CONTINUOUS

Aylin appears lifeless next to her mother in the water, sharks gathering drawn by the blood of the dead.

BACK TO SCENE

THROOP  
 (to the soldier)  
 She is dead?

SOLDIER  
 Yes, my lord. She's dead. They're  
 both dead. Long live the king.

THROOP  
 You will be rewarded handsomely.  
 Make certain none are living then  
 burn the ship.

Throop heads for the boarding ramp to the ship on the other side.

The soldier who attacked Aylin looks down into the water.

P.O.V. SOLDIER - CONTINUOUS

Aylin's body floats in the rough water next to her mother's, sharks beginning to tear at other bodies.

BACK TO SCENE

SOLDIER  
 (to himself)  
 She's dead -- or soon will be.

He turns to complete his dirty work.

EXT. OCEAN - LATER

Aylin is groggy as she holds onto her mother's body as they drift in the water, the burning ship lighting up the water a distance away.

AYLIN  
 Mother, mother, mother!

But her mother is dead and her body begins to sink, Aylin holding onto it to be pulled under with her.

EXT. UNDERWATER - CONTINUOUS

In the filtered light from the moon and the burning ship, Aylin holds onto her mother as they sink, sharks swirling near them. Finally, Aylin lets go and watches as her mother sinks away from her.

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

Aylin's hair spreads gently, her ripped bodice flowing in the current revealing the heart-shaped birthmark on her chest.

She looks peaceful in death.

BACK TO SCENE

As her mother sinks away, Aylin puts out her arms, imploring her mother to come back to her. A SHARK passes close to Aylin, but she's intent on her mother.

From her mother, an undulating GOLDEN WAVE rises towards Aylin, and when it reaches her, Aylin hears her mother SINGING something beautiful in an unknown tongue. Bubbles escape from Aylin's mouth as she begins to sing out along with her mother, her breath escaping, drowning imminent.

The shark comes to Aylin and with no menace pushes her towards the surface.

Aylin looks back down the golden wave to her mother.

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

Her mother slowly disappears with the golden wave still undulating up to Aylin, her beautiful singing continuing.

EXT. OCEAN - CONTINUOUS

The shark pushes Aylin into the air and disappears. The SINGING ENDS though Aylin's world is now glowing golden. She is crying and suddenly a dolphin appears, other fish around it, the burning ship farther away, the moon shining on the water.

The dolphin stops against Aylin and she clings to it. The dolphin sets off, not too fast so she can hold on, the other fish all around traveling with them. They move off surrounded by the golden glow that gradually fades into the distance.

EXT. SHORELINE - MORNING

An elderly SCAVENGER is looking for anything useful among what the surf has washed up, a bag over his shoulder holding his surf booty. He peers down the shoreline at a figure, Aylin, lying unconscious on the shore.

SCAVENGER

What manner of sea-beast might that  
be?

He looks interested and heads for it.

EXT. FARTHER UP SHORELINE - MOMENTS LATER

Aylin lies unconscious on the shoreline in the morning light, the wound on her head caked with dried blood, her ripped clothing revealing on her chest the same heart-shaped birthmark that her mother had.



SCAVENGER

A young one, injured it appears.  
Alive?

He pokes her and Aylin stirs.

SCAVENGER (CONT'D)

Oh yes, still living. And fine living  
by her dress.

He looks around to make sure he's alone then eases off her  
finger the ring she's wearing.

Aylin moves a bit then suddenly sits up and the scavenger  
jumps back, stuffing the ring in his bag.

She looks at him then around her then stares at the scavenger.

AYLIN

I am alive?

SCAVENGER

I would say yes.

Points to the spot on his head where her wound is on her  
head.

SCAVENGER (CONT'D)

You have a wound in this place, but  
the blood no longer flows from it.  
How do you come to be here?

Aylin looks out into the water.

FLASHBACK

Aylin sees herself being held up and carried by the dolphin  
in the golden darkness, the other fish with them.

BACK TO SCENE

She shakes her head.

SCAVENGER (CONT'D)

Where did you come from? What be  
your name?

Aylin stares puzzled.

AYLIN

I don't know. You don't know me?

SCAVENGER

No.

(MORE)

SCAVENGER (CONT'D)  
 (a sudden gleam in  
 his eye)  
 But I helped you. Do you have any  
 money? Let's look.

He begins pawing at the pocket on her dress and she slides  
 away from him.

SCAVENGER (CONT'D)  
 Come now, it's only right as I helped  
 you live.

She jumps up, stares at him a moment, then turns and runs  
 for the woods back from the shoreline.

He glares.

SCAVENGER (CONT'D)  
 (calling)  
 A fine thank you!

P.O.V. SCAVENGER - CONTINUOUS

He watches as she disappears into the woods.

SCAVENGER  
 Wretched ingrate.

Then he smiles and fetches from his bag the ring, no great  
 treasure but pleasing to him.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Aylin slows to a walk and looks back to make sure the creepy  
 old man isn't following her. She grimaces and touches the  
 wound on her head which is bleeding again. She looks at the  
 blood on her fingers then at her ripped clothing. She stops  
 and tears a piece from the hem of her dress and gently wraps  
 it around her head over the wound, tying it off then looks  
 around in anguish.

AYLIN  
 (to herself)  
 Oh, what is this? Where am I, and  
 who may I be?

She has no answer and continues walking.

EXT. WOODS - LATE AFTERNOON

The sun is sinking and Aylin is asleep on a mossy bank above  
 a small stream. She's having an unpleasant dream and tosses  
 slightly.

ANGLE ON

Off to one side in the brush, a WOLF watches her, looking mean and hungry. It begins creeping towards her.

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK

In a DREAM, Aylin watches her mother drift downward and she hears the beautiful singing in the strange tongue and she begins singing, the sounds coming out of her as golden strands drifting away in the underwater currents.

BACK TO SCENE

In her sleep, Aylin is SOFTLY SINGING the unknown tongue and the wolf stops, looks at her then sits, no longer appearing mean and hungry. It stares at Aylin and waits.

Her eyes flicker and she sits up looking right at the wolf as if she knew it was there. She continues to sing and the world glows golden, the wolf quiet and waiting. As Aylin sings, we hear her thoughts:

AYLIN (V.O.)

I don't know where I am or who I am.  
I'm lost and hungry. Please help  
me.

She stops singing, the golden glow lingering. The wolf stands and HOWLS, and in a moment the wolf pack appears, coming down to Aylin who knows they are friendly and isn't scared as the wolves come up and nuzzle against her, urging her to follow them. She gets up and with wolves all around her, she's led off into the forest.

FADE OUT:

FADE IN:

EXT. POND IN WOODS - MORNING

Aylin is five years older, a young woman now at thirteen, asleep in her camp by a pond in the woods fed from a wide but gentle waterfall falling from the small river on the jutting rocky bluff some fifteen feet above. She is dressed in rough garb she's filched from isolated clotheslines.

Two ragged men, POACHER ONE and POACHER TWO, peer from the brush and converse in low whispers.

POACHER ONE

Can it truly be her?

POACHER TWO

What other young girl could it be?  
It's the sorceress of the woods.

POACHER ONE

But those stories are ridiculous.

POACHER TWO

True stories. There she lies, living  
proof.

POACHER ONE

It's just a young girl even if she  
is in the woods alone.

POACHER TWO

Go and wake her then. See what spell  
she casts on you.

Poacher One may be skeptical, but he's still hesitant.

POACHER ONE

There's no one else here. We take  
her and she could be of value.

POACHER TWO

Take the sorceress? You're mad.

POACHER ONE

It's her voice that casts the spells  
they say. We bind her and gag her.  
If she can't be heard, she can't  
summon the dark even if she is the  
sorceress.

POACHER TWO

I say we flee and leave her.

POACHER ONE

If we capture the sorceress, we'll  
be known far and wide. It will be  
worth money. And if she's just some  
waif, we can sell her. Either way,  
she's worth the risk.

POACHER TWO

Or we end up the victims of her spell.

POACHER ONE

I'll hold her, you put the gag in  
her mouth before she can wake then  
bind it tightly. She'll be able to  
do nothing.

Poacher Two is terrified, but he goes along. From their  
bags, they get cloths ready and then creep up on Aylin.

She moves restlessly and Poacher Two almost turns to run, the other stopping him. Then they pounce, Poacher Two whimpering as he thrusts the cloth into Aylin's mouth while the other holds her down.

Aylin awakens instantly and begins to struggle, terrified. She yells through the gag and tries to spit it out.

POACHER TWO

She'll turn us to toads!

He thrusts the rag deeper into her mouth then quickly wraps another rag around her head to hold the gag in place and ties it tightly. The other one lies on her to hold her down while holding her arms.

POACHER ONE

Hold one of her arms while I take the other. We bind them behind her.

They each take an arm and force her onto her stomach, Poacher One wrapping a rag around her wrists and tying it off. Aylin is thrashing her legs and when her arms are secure they move to grab her legs, Aylin getting in a few good kicks until Poacher One grabs one of her ankles and twists it violently, Aylin grunting in pain through the gag. They hold her legs and finally get them bound. Helpless, Aylin stops struggling and stares at the men.

POACHER ONE (CONT'D)

The say a sorceress inhabits these woods. Are you this sorceress?

Aylin shakes her head no.

POACHER TWO

She'll never admit that. They'd burn her at the stake.

He looks around in fear, waiting for something supernatural to happen.

POACHER TWO (CONT'D)

Let's leave this accursed place. Maybe she needs the wilds to work her evil magic.

POACHER ONE

Not as good bounty as a deer, maybe. But not a bad day's work. Let us hope you justify our risk, young wench.

(to the other poacher)

Bring her.

## POACHER TWO

Me? I'm not having the sorceress  
about my shoulders.

Poacher One glares at him then reaches down and lifts her, slinging her over his shoulders, the other poacher gladly taking both their bags and keeping his distance behind as they head out of the woods.

CLOSE UP of Aylin's face, her eyes wide as she wonders how she's going to escape without being able to summon her wild friends.

BACK TO SCENE

The poachers move off with Aylin through the woods.

EXT. MENKWOOD ORPHANAGE - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of a small, two-story rough stone building, MENKWOOD ORPHANAGE, on the edge of the village of Menkwood.

EXT. ORPHANAGE FIELD - CONTINUOUS

At the far edge of the orphanage's vegetable garden against the woods, two teenage children of Aylin's age, JACK and BETH, are neglecting their garden work to shoot featherless stick-arrows from Jack's homemade bow into a hillock against the woods. Jack shoots a wobbling arrow that nearly manages to reach the hillock he was aiming at.

JACK

That was close.

BETH

Let me try.

JACK

You can't do this.

She goes over and takes the bow from him.

BETH

Give me an arrow.

JACK

Don't break it. They're hard to  
make.

BETH

(sarcastically)

Yes. You have to find a branch and  
shave it and make a notch. I don't  
know how you do it.

She puts the arrow on the string and pulls back with two fingers holding the arrow on the string, aiming at the hillock. When she lets go, the arrow falls off the string and onto the ground. Jack laughs.

JACK

Good shot.

BETH

(picking up the arrow)

You should put feathers on these things.

JACK

As soon as I shoot a bird I'll have feathers.

BETH

Don't shoot any birds.

Beth puts the arrow on the string, holding it the same way as before.

JACK

You don't hold it that way. Like this.

He shows her how to hold the string properly. She changes and pulls back and this time the arrow flies wobbling into the hillock.

BETH

I hit it!

JACK

Lucky shot.

Suddenly, the two poachers carrying Aylin come out of the woods and onto the path that goes past the garden.

JACK (CONT'D)

What is this? Poachers, I think.

BETH

Is that a deer he's carrying?

The two poachers get near Jack and Beth. Jack calls:

JACK

Hello, there.

POACHER ONE

(grumpily)

Good day, orphans.

Both Jack and Beth hate being addressed as orphans.

JACK

Good day yourself. What do you steal from my lord's forest this time?

POACHER TWO

We steal nothing. Be gone.

They can see the poacher is carrying a girl, not a deer, both of them alarmed.

BETH

Why do you have that girl bound?

JACK

That's not right.

He and Beth approach the poachers.

POACHER ONE

Leave us.

JACK

I think not. Why are you carrying that girl?

BETH

Who is she?

POACHER ONE

It's not your concern. Go back to your orphan charity house.

Aylin implores their help with her eyes, making muffled sounds through her gag.

Beth suddenly dashes up and pulls the rag off Aylin's head and as the poacher twists to try to stop her, Beth just manages to pull the gag from Aylin's mouth.

AYLIN

Help me! I'm being kidnapped! Stop them!

Jack notches an arrow and pulls back the string, but it's not necessary. As soon as the two poachers hear Aylin's voice, they're in a panic.

POACHER TWO

Witchcraft!

He begins running away covering his head as if something is about to attack him.

Poacher One roughly drops Aylin to the ground and backs up a few steps, staring at her in fright until he turns and runs



as fast as he can after the other, both disappearing up into the woods.

Jack relaxes the bow and looks proud.

JACK

There. They didn't want to get an arrow through them.

Beth looks puzzled, wondering at the kidnapper's fright, but then turns to Aylin who's also watching the poachers flee and feeling very relieved.

AYLIN

Oh, thank you, thank you.

Beth bends down to untie her hands, Jack setting down his bow and helping, shyer around Aylin than Beth is as he finds her very pretty.

BETH

Are you all right? They were horrible.

Aylin sits up, rubbing her wrists. Beth begins to untie Aylin's ankles.

AYLIN

Thank you so much. I'm fine. They just had me a short while. I was in the woods and they surprised me.

BETH

They had some nerve coming by with you like that. Did they think no one would notice?

JACK

Fools and scoundrels. Lucky I had my bow.

BETH

Lucky they didn't know what kind of shot you are.

(to Aylin)

I'm Beth, and this is Jack.

Aylin just nods, not knowing her name.

BETH (CONT'D)

Where is your home? We should contact your parents.

Aylin has bent to help Beth with her ankle binding, and when it's off Aylin rubs her ankles, the ankle the poacher twisted red and swollen.

She keeps her eyes averted from Jack and Beth.

AYLIN

No, it's fine. I can get home.

BETH

We should go to the sheriff's and report this. He may know those men. They were criminals without a doubt.

AYLIN

No, we don't need to do that. I'm all right.

She gets to her feet and it's obvious she's not fine, making a little CRY and nearly falling as she tries to put weight on her swollen ankle, Jack taking her arm to support her.

JACK

I've got you.

Aylin looks at him and smiles.

AYLIN

Thank you both for what you've done. I was in real trouble and you saved me.

BETH

You can't walk. Your ankle is all swollen. Come inside with us and we'll bathe it.

AYLIN

Oh, I...

She looks into the woods where she's been alone for such a long time. People, almost friends, are something she's never known in the life she can remember. She finds it almost painfully different, tears coming to her eyes.

BETH

Look, you're crying from the pain. You have to come with us. Does your family have a cart? We can go and fetch them for you.

Aylin looks between them with an anguished expression that has nothing to do with her ankle. She finally makes up her mind.

AYLIN

I have to be honest. I don't have a family. I don't have a home. I've been living in the woods by myself.

(MORE)

AYLIN (CONT'D)

There's something wrong with my memory. I can't remember anything of my life -- my name, where I'm from, my family. I have no one.

BETH

Oh, I'm so sorry for you. We don't have family either. We're orphans from the Menkwood Orphanage there.

JACK

You've been living in the woods? Is that what those wretches meant by witchcraft? You're the fabled sorceress of the woods I'll bet.

BETH

Jack!

Aylin understands what the poachers were talking about and is alarmed at the reputation she didn't know she had, thinking to cover it up.

AYLIN

I wish I was a sorceress. That would have made things easier.

BETH

That settles it. You're coming with us. You're not going back to live alone in the woods. You probably have a family that loves you and misses you. We'll find them. But you'll stay with us until that happens.

JACK

(joking)

Can you turn people into bugs? Wood into money?

BETH

Maybe she can turn you into a decent archer. That would be a feat.

(to Aylin)

C'mon.

Beth puts Aylin's arm over her shoulders and an arm around her, starting towards the orphanage. Jack picks up his bow and arrows then hurries to put Aylin's other arm over his shoulders. Aylin smiles as she hobbles with them, glad to leave behind her lonely existence.

AYLIN  
 This is so nice of you. So  
 different...

Both Beth and Jack smile at her.

EXT. WOODS - CONTINUOUS

From a tree branch in the woods, a majestic OWL watches Aylin go towards the orphanage. It makes a SHRIEKING CRY.

EXT. ORPHANAGE FIELD - CONTINUOUS

Jack looks back at the woods but sees nothing.

INT. ORPHANAGE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Jack and Beth bring Aylin into the orphanage. To one side is a common room with rough furniture and a large fireplace, other children playing games, mostly younger though two older girls, LEANNA and MAUDE, look at them as they go past.

BETH  
 Let us go to the dining hall so we  
 can soak your ankle.

They go down the hallway and turn into a room.

INT. ORPHANAGE DINING HALL - CONTINUOUS

The dining hall (not really grand enough to be called a hall, but...) holds a couple of large tables with benches for seats. They seat Aylin on one of the benches.

BETH  
 Jack, go and fetch a bucket with  
 cold water.

Jack smiles at Aylin then heads for the kitchen off the dining hall.

Leanna and Maude come in to see what's going on.

LEANNA  
 Who do you have there, Beth?

BETH  
 (to Aylin, pointing)  
 That's Leanna and Maude.  
 (to Leanna and Maude)  
 Jack and I rescued her from kidnapers  
 by the vegetable garden. They had  
 her bound and gagged and were carrying  
 her away. She's had some injury.  
 She can't remember who she is or  
 where she's from.

LEANNA

Oh, my goodness.

MAUDE

Kidnapped you? That's frightening.

AYLIN

They saved me. I have no idea what those men would have done with me.

BETH

They hurt her ankle. Jack's getting water to soak it. You should fetch Friar Furst.

MAUDE

We will.

The two girls hurry out and three teenage boys come in: ERIK, FRANCIS and WILLIAM.

BETH

(to Aylin)

This is Erik and Francis and William.

(to the boys)

Some poachers from the woods were trying to kidnap her. Jack and I stopped them.

ERIK

(to Beth)

How did you stop them? Was it Jack with his bow?

BETH

I think they were afraid we'd fetch the sheriff.

WILLIAM

(to Aylin)

Thank god you got away.

Jack comes back with bucket filled with water and sets it in front of Aylin. He moves as if to help her lift her foot, but is too shy to touch her.

JACK

Can you raise your foot?

Beth takes Aylin's foot and gently places it in the water.

BETH

There. How does that feel?

AYLIN

Cold.

BETH  
That's good. It will keep it from  
swelling more.

AYLIN  
(to Beth)  
You're so kind.

Maude and Leanna come in with FRIAR FURST, a pleasant looking  
fat man.

LEANNA  
There she is.

Furst comes over and smiles at Aylin.

FURST  
Well, I've heard some story. I'm  
told you were being kidnapped.

AYLIN  
Some men surprised me in the forest.  
They gagged and bound me and were  
carrying me somewhere. Jack and  
Beth rescued me. I don't know what  
would have happened to me.

BETH  
She's had an injury. She can't  
remember who she is or where her  
home is.

FURST  
(to Aylin)  
Is this so?

Aylin nods.

FURST (CONT'D)  
These men injured you in their attack?

BETH  
They twisted her ankle. We got cold  
water to soak it.

FURST  
(to Aylin)  
But your loss of memory?

Aylin looks down and speaks softly.

AYLIN  
That's older. I had a wound on my  
head.

Furst looks concerned.

FURST

Children, would you go outside until  
I summon you. I'd like to speak  
with our guest in private for a  
moment.

The children reluctantly leave them, Beth waving to Aylin  
from the doorway, Jack looking back and bumping into the  
doorway which embarrasses him slightly. Beth looks at him,  
then they're gone.

FURST (CONT'D)

You don't need to be afraid to speak.  
You say you have no memory of who  
you are or where you're from?

Aylin nods.

FURST (CONT'D)

And this is the truth?

AYLIN

Yes, I swear. I don't know what  
happened to make me lose it.

FURST

How long has this gone on?

AYLIN

A long time.

FURST

Where have you been living?

AYLIN

In the woods.

FURST

You've been living in the woods on  
your own?

Aylin nods.

FURST (CONT'D)

For a month or...?

AYLIN

For five winters.

Furst is shocked.

FURST

Five winters? Are you sure? You  
would have been just a child.

AYLIN

Yes.

FURST

Grown men would have a hard time existing on their own in the forest for five years. How is it possible you did this?

Aylin shrugs.

AYLIN

I knew no other life. I was afraid to show myself or approach anyone. I don't know why. Sometimes I found an unoccupied hut.

(beat, ashamed)

I stole some things.

FURST

I would hope so. There was talk of a young girl in the forest. I think you are the legend of the sorceress of the woods. I'm so glad you survived. Can you remember any of your life before? It might help find your family.

AYLIN

The first thing I remember is being on the shore. I awoke and an old man was there. He frightened me and I ran into the woods. I knew things, speaking and what to eat. There were berries and nuts. And I found food in the empty dwellings now and then. Sometimes there were fires in the forest, but it was often cold in the winter. I made shelters.

She looks off.

FLASHBACK

In the darkness lit by the GOLDEN GLOW, snow is falling and Aylin is sleeping under a lean-to she's built from branches and around her the pack of wolves lie up against her, keeping her warm and safe. She wakes and looks at them, smiles, then goes back to sleep.

BACK TO SCENE

She looks at Furst.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

Actually, it was often lovely.



FURST

My lord, you are a miracle. I haven't heard of any family looking for a young girl, but we'll see if anyone knows of this. But you don't remember anything of your life before being in the woods that would give a clue where to search?

She looks at Furst seriously.

AYLIN

I think... I have a feeling -- I don't want to know. Something happened that I don't want to remember.

FURST

Such things can come to us in this life.

He takes her hand.

FURST (CONT'D)

But don't concern yourself about it. Just take all the time you need. Nothing bad happens.

Aylin looks at him with some puzzlement.

FURST (CONT'D)

It's god's hand. He watches over us and guides us. We can't see all of his plan. This life is just one instant in our eternity.

He smiles at Aylin and pats her hand before letting go.

FURST (CONT'D)

In any case, you're safe with us now. I'll visit the sheriff to start him looking for your family and those men who assaulted you. He'll want to speak with you I'm sure. But for however long you may need us, you have a home here.

AYLIN

I'm so grateful. When I met Beth and Jack, I felt such a longing for something different. I think I need this now.

FURST

I have no idea how you lived on your own for such a time. But that's past. You won't have to endure that again.

ANGLE ON

Beth pretends to be passing in the hallway, walking slowly and looking in.

Furst gestures to her to come in.

She gestures down the hallway and everyone comes in.

FURST (CONT'D)

Well, children, we have a new member in our home.

BETH

Oh, that's wonderful.

The others are also enthusiastic.

FURST

(to Aylin)

We'll have to give you a name until you remember what your actual name is. Do you have something you'd like to be called?

Aylin shrugs.

AYLIN

I don't know.

Suddenly, a robin lands on the windowsill, CHIRPING. Aylin looks at the bird.

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

The bird chirps again and seems to look at her.

BACK TO SCENE

Animals have been her friends and protectors for all the life she's known and she nods to it.

AYLIN

I know those are called birds, though I don't know how I know. Do you know what this one might be called?

WILLIAM

That's a robin, I think.

AYLIN  
 Might I be called Robin?

JACK  
 It's lovely. It fits you perfectly.

Beth looks at Jack again and he has to look away.

FURST  
 Then that will be your name -- Robyn.  
 (spelling it for her)  
 R-O-B-Y-N. Do you know the alphabet,  
 the letters that make up the words  
 when you write them? Can you write?

Aylin shakes her head.

FURST (CONT'D)  
 You'll have a lot of schooling to  
 catch up on. But that's how your  
 name Robyn will be spelled. You'll  
 learn the letters in time.

FRANCIS  
 You must be hungry. Are you hungry?  
 We should get you something to eat.

Francis is a large boy and food is always on his mind. He  
 and Furst, also large, get along well.

FURST  
 A wonderful idea. We'll keep her  
 company in a meal then show her her  
 new lodgings.  
 (to Robyn)  
 Robyn, welcome to our humble abode.  
 We're very glad you're here.

Aylin almost has tears.

AYLIN  
 Thank you all so much. This is better  
 than anything I've ever dreamed could  
 happen.

FURST  
 Francis, Erik, William, let's us get  
 our feast set up.

Leanna and Maude are good pals.

LEANNA  
 We'll help. Let's go, Maude.

They all go into the kitchen and Beth sits next to Aylin,  
 Jack standing looking on shyly.

BETH

(to Aylin)

I hope they find your family -- but none of us have real relatives so we're each other's family.

JACK

We're the older ones who will never find adoption so we stick together.

BETH

If they don't find your family, you'll always have us.

AYLIN

I don't think any family could do more for me than you have already.

Beth is touched and leans over and hugs her, Aylin hugging her back. Jack waits until they break apart then awkwardly bends and hugs Aylin briefly.

BETH

(to Aylin)

He likes you.

AYLIN

I like him, too.

BETH

But maybe not the same way exactly.

Jack is embarrassed, but Aylin doesn't know what Beth means.

JACK

Beth, stop. We're her friends.

The others come in carrying food and tableware, setting down things and arranging them. Beth takes Aylin's foot and Jack repositions the bucket under the table, Aylin carefully turning on the bench to face the table, Beth putting her foot back in the bucket. Everyone sits.

Friar Furst puts his hands in prayer and bows his head, the others following, Aylin looking on in puzzlement then following their lead.

FURST

Dear Father, bless this meal that we partake of from your bounty, in your name. Cleanse our souls that we may do your work on this earth. And we thank you for bringing us this new soul, Robyn, that she may learn and praise your works forever and ever. Amen.

The others say Amen, Aylin coming in slightly behind the others.

AYLIN

Friar Furst, you said nothing bad happens. Those kidnappers didn't know or mean to do it, but they did me a great service.

FURST

Bless you, child. That's very wise. And I'm thinking that alone in the woods, you've maybe never had sweets. You're not supposed to start a meal with them, but I want you to try this.

He cuts a small piece of the cake and puts it on her plate.

FURST (CONT'D)

I made it myself and if I say so myself, I did a wonderful job.

Aylin looks at Jack who's already using a fork to eat some of the food, and she follows his lead, picking up the fork and holding it a moment.

AYLIN

I've never used one of these, but I seem to remember it.

BETH

Yes. I think quickly you'll remember lots.

Aylin doesn't look like she particularly wants that to happen.

AYLIN

Let's hope I remember the good things.

She cuts a bit of the cake and eats it, a smile lighting up on her face.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

Well, there's one good thing.

Furst is pleased, all the others smiling and loading up their plates.

Aylin looks up at the windowsill.

P.O.V. ROBYN - CONTINUOUS

The robin is back again looking down at Aylin.

BACK TO SCENE

She smiles at it and the bird CHIRPS.

Jack looks at her smiling up at the bird.

JACK  
 (to himself)  
 I'm never going to get to shoot a  
 bird now.

DISSOLVE TO:

A MONTAGE OF SCENES:

Aylin being shown her bed in the girl's room, Aylin sitting and feeling it, amazed how soft it is.

All the children enjoying dinner in the dining hall.

Friar Furst holding Sunday services for the children.

The children working in the garden gathering the crops.

The first snow on the ground, the children outside making snowmen. Jack hits Aylin with a snowball and she makes one and throws it at him, not very well. Beth hits Jack from the side with a big snowball.

Aylin with a blackboard on her lap in the orphanage classroom, writing 'Robyn' on the board with her chalkpiece.

A rainy day, the children playing in the common room, a fire burning in the fireplace.

The children in swimming clothes on a sunny day, splashing in a stream.

Aylin in her bed, Beth, Leanna and Maude in their's, Aylin smiling as Maude blows out the lantern and the room goes dark except for the moonlight through the window. Aylin looks out the window.

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

The moon is bright in the sky.

BACK TO SCENE

Aylin looks serious, remembering something.

FLASHBACK

Aylin clinging to the dolphin in the golden glow, the moon glistening on the water, the ship burning in the distance.

BACK TO SCENE

Aylin turns over in the bed, wondering what the memory is.

EXT. ORPHANAGE FIELD - DAY

Aylin and the other older orphans are working in the vegetable garden full with ripening crops. Jack is shooting arrows at the hillock, having improved in the eight months since they rescued Aylin who's now fourteen, his arrows finally fitted with feathers he's taken from feather pillows.

AYLIN

(to Jack)

You're pretty good with that.

JACK

Come and try it.

Aylin goes over to Jack who gives her the bow and then shows her how to stand and hold the bow, closer against her than necessary perhaps.

AYLIN

Like this?

She draws back the bowstring with no arrow.

JACK

That looks good. I think you're a natural.

He gives her an arrow and she puts it on the bowstring and pulls it back, taking aim and letting it fly, hitting just in front of the hillock. Beth comes over.

JACK (CONT'D)

You see, the arrow falls from gravity so you have to aim higher the farther you're shooting. You have to do it awhile before you can judge correctly. But that was a great shot for your first time. You should have seen Beth.

BETH

I hit it the second time.

AYLIN

Let me try another.

Jack gives her an arrow and she shoots it into the hillock.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

I did it!

JACK  
You tied Beth.

BETH  
Your arrows have feathers now.

JACK  
Good thing for feather pillows.

Suddenly, there's a rabbit at the top of the hillock.

JACK (CONT'D)  
(whispering to Aylin)  
Give me the bow.

He takes it and notches an arrow.

BETH  
You're not going to shoot the rabbit,  
are you?

JACK  
Quiet. It's food. We kill animals  
to eat. I'm not shooting it just  
for fun.

As he aims, Aylin begins SINGING her animal song very softly  
and the world begins to glow golden though Jack and Beth  
can't see the golden glow.

The rabbit looks at Aylin who keeps singing.

AYLIN (V.O.)  
Run, rabbit friend. Run away fast.

The rabbit takes off as Jack shoots, the arrow disappearing  
over the hillock where the rabbit was.

Aylin stops singing and the golden glow slowly fades.

JACK  
I would have hit it.  
(to Aylin)  
I think your singing scared it.

BETH  
It didn't hear her.  
(to Aylin)  
I could hardly hear you, but that  
was beautiful. You have a lovely  
voice. Eight months with us and I  
didn't know you could sing like that.

AYLIN  
Yes, I love singing.



FLASHBACK

Aylin and her mother singing in the ship's cabin, the image coming and going very fast, her mother's face indistinct.

BACK TO SCENE

Aylin looks down, a serious expression on her face.

BETH

What?

Aylin shakes her head.

AYLIN

I saw myself singing with someone.  
A woman.

(beat, anguished  
expression as she  
tries to remember)

Someone important.

(beat, gives up)

I can't remember.

BETH

What language was that?

Aylin shakes her head.

AYLIN

Just sounds.

BETH

Do you know songs?

AYLIN

Some, yes. It must be from my earlier  
life.

BETH

Maybe if you sing, you'll remember  
more. I like to sing, too, and so  
does Leanna. We should start a choir.

(calls to Leanna)

Robyn sings beautifully. I want to  
start a choir.

Leanna starts to SING a song and Beth joins in, then Robyn with her extraordinary voice, the others amazed, listening as the girls finish.

JACK

That's really pretty.

(to Aylin)

You have the most beautiful voice  
I've ever heard.

BETH

It is. We're going to have a wonderful choir. Maybe we'll be famous.

Jack begins SINGING off-key.

BETH (CONT'D)

Or maybe not.

The others laugh which encourages Jack to sing even louder and more awfully.

EXT. TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the forbidding Tower of London.

EXT. TOWER COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

A buzzing, excited crowd is assembled to watch the execution taking place, the hooded executioner with his large axe on the execution platform waiting, the hooded prisoner next to the chopping block with a couple of attendants. The OFFICIAL in fine robes holds the judgement he is to announce.

OFFICIAL

Hear ye, hear ye!

The crowd quiets.

OFFICIAL (CONT'D)

Know ye by this judgement, having been adjudicated a traitor to the crown, the prisoner, Lord Brantwell of Fens and Menkwood, has forfeited his life and lands. Know that from this day forward, all family of the traitor is forever banished from Fens and Menkwood and all titles extinguished. This being the order of the court, King Mordant orders the sentence to be carried out forthwith. Long live the king!

The crowd mumbles "long live the king" then gets excited again anticipating the entertainment to come.

The attendants bend the bound Lord Brantwell so his head is on the chopping block.

The executioner gets set, raises the axe, and brings it down swiftly.

ANGLE ON

The crowd which exclaims at the SOUND OF THE AXE CHOPPING into the wood of the block. They all begin to applaud, laughing and clapping.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - DAY

KING MORDANT and Lord Throop are in a small, richly appointed room in the royal palace, enjoying a snack, ripping at meat with their fingers as they converse.

MORDANT

I expect you to bring those peasants of Fens and Menkwood into line quickly. I want those tax monies Brantwell complained were too high.

THROOP

He was a fool, your highness. They must pay their share.

MORDANT

More than their share. I want them taught a lesson so others may see what misfortune opposing their king brings to them. The lords of the north country must be next.

THROOP

I will tour their wretched lands after Fens and Menkwood so they may see what awaits them.

MORDANT

Such rabble will be recalcitrant. Take many men.

THROOP

Always, my king. They will know firsthand your might and they will obey.

MORDANT

If they don't, they will not live. That is the way, Lord Throop.

THROOP

You are wise, your highness.

They tear off some more meat and stuff it in their mouths.

INT. ORPHANAGE COMMON ROOM - DAY

The choir of the older group of friends is SINGING, some of the other younger children gathered to listen.

They sing beautifully.

BETH  
 We're getting better.  
 (to Jack)  
 Even you sound almost all right.

JACK  
 Robyn, would you do your song now?

Aylin steps to the front and even the younger children appear excited to hear her sing. The others back her as she SINGS a solo song, her voice even more exquisite than before.

As she sings, Furst comes in and listens spellbound.

She finishes the song and everyone is pleased.

BETH  
 Robyn, it's hard to believe, but I think you're improving.

WILLIAM  
 And you already have the voice of the angels.

FURST  
 Truly, nothing more beautiful has ever been heard.

Aylin is shyly pleased.

AYLIN  
 I'm glad to have one talent to contribute.

FURST  
 Well children, I have news, good and bad. Our Lord Brantwell of Fens and Menkwood has passed on to our father's house in heaven. He was called a traitor to his majesty and has been executed. Our lands have been given over to the king's man, Lord Throop.

ANGLE ON

Aylin looks down,

AYLIN  
 (to herself)  
 Throop.

The name echoes in her memory, but she can't remember why or when.

BACK TO SCENE

FURST

Lord Brantwell was a good man and we will pray for his soul. Lord Throop is coming to the castle to take possession of our lands.

JACK

What's the good news?

FURST

Yes, I might agree with you on that. You're all too young to remember, but things were far more pleasant when good King Alek ruled us.

ANGLE ON

Another echo stirs in Aylin.

AYLIN

(to herself)

King Alek. Throop and King Alek.

It frustrates her to not be able to remember clearly.

BACK TO SCENE

FURST

The good news is that since you sang in the village and impressed our mayor so, he's asked that we go to the castle to sing at the banquet for Lord Throop.

The children are pleased.

FRANCIS

Maybe we'll have a feast there.

FURST

Yes, it will be interesting. But I must warn you, children. King Mordant has ears everywhere it seems, and tolerates no dissent. I want nothing bad to come to any of you, so hold your tongues in the castle. We will sing and then be gone.

AYLIN

Nothing bad happens, but sometimes it's hard to see His plan.

FURST

Wise, Robyn. But remember, it does not mean you ignore evil. Any fight that arises in you is also part of His plan. And while evil may appear to triumph at times, we will act in kindness and generosity. Such goodness always will prevail.

(beat)

But enough of these dark thoughts. Aylin, your singing brings such beauty to our hearts that I would ask you grace us again with it, if you'd be so kind.

AYLIN

I'd love to.

Aylin takes a breath and begins to SING another song, the others enchanted by her singing.

EXT. CASTLE GATEWAY - AFTERNOON

Aylin's SINGING carries over as a wagon with a driver and Furst in the seat, the children gathered in the back, comes up to the gate of the castle, crossing the moat and being admitted through the imposing gate. Aylin's SINGING ENDS.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

A guard directs the wagon towards the stables, the children in their best clothes which are not very good look in wonder at the imposing castle they've never been to before.

The wagon stops and Furst gets down, the children climbing out excitedly.

WILLIAM

A little more imposing than our orphanage.

MAUDE

I'll take our home any day.

One of the guards gestures to Furst for them to follow him, heading for a doorway. They follow the guard and go inside.

INT. CASTLE DINING HALL - EVENING

LORD THROOP and the assembled vassals from the area have just finished their feast attended by numerous servants in the hall. Around the walls of the feast hall stand a number of knights with swords and pikes to assure Lord Throop's safety.

Standing behind Throop is his aide, EMDAR, who addresses the throng.

EMDAR

Lord Throop, Duke of Umbria  
and Forecastle, Fens and Menkwood,  
trusts you enjoyed his humble  
offering.

The drunken assemblage cheer and applaud their new master, Lord Throop, he and Emdar dressed in much finer clothing than the locals. Lord Throop GESTURES to acknowledge the locals' appreciation of his generosity.

EMDAR (CONT'D)

His lordship now would like for you  
to partake of entertainment for your  
enjoyment.

Lord Throop arises and heads for a private doorway at the rear, several of the knights guarding him then turning and securing the doorway.

EMDAR (CONT'D)

If you all will kindly retire to the  
assembly hall, the entertainment  
will begin.

The crowd stands and straggles out of the feast hall.

Emdar follows Throop into the anteroom.

INT. CASTLE ANTEROOM - CONTINUOUS

Several attractive women retainers are removing Lord Throop's outer garments to replace them with different fine robes.

LORD THROOP

(to Emdar)

Have you ever seen a more motley  
group in your life than these locals?

EMDAR

Disgusting, my lord.

LORD THROOP

I don't want us to dally here any  
longer than necessary. Arrange for  
our departure first thing in the  
morning, Emdar.

EMDAR

It will be done, sire.

LORD THROOP

Brantwell should be glad King Mordant  
deposed him. Death must be a more  
pleasing residence than this  
godforsaken backwater.

EMDAR

The king is generous, my lord.

LORD THROOP

Let us suffer this 'entertainment'  
and be done with this charade.

The women have finished dressing him and he and Emdar go out  
through a different doorway.

INT. CASTLE ASSEMBLY HALL - MOMENTS LATER

The locals are seated in the assembly hall facing the stage  
area with a throne behind them. A group of musicians are at  
one end of the stage area.

Knights ring a doorway to one side where Lord Throop emerges  
followed by Emdar, the locals bowing as he makes his way to  
the throne and sits, Emdar standing to one side and slightly  
behind.

EMDAR

For your pleasure this evening, Lord  
Throop, Duke of Umbria and Forecastle,  
Fens and Menkwood, presents the  
musical offering of the Menkwood  
Orphanage, a charitable enterprise  
in your lands that King Mordant and  
Lord Throop generously support.

The crowd applauds their generosity.

The door to the side of the stage area opens and the children  
march out in a line, Aylin leading them. They line up with  
the girls in front, the boys behind above on a slight  
platform.

The musicians look to Lord Throop who gestures that they may  
begin.

The music starts and the children begin SINGING, sounding  
very lovely.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. CASTLE ASSEMBLY HALL - LATER

The children conclude a different song and the crowd applauds  
them. Lord Throop and Emdar don't lower themselves to clap  
and look bored.



Aylin steps to the front and the musicians begin playing. Aylin begins SINGING a solo number with her absolutely incredible voice, the other children a chorus behind her.

The crowd is instantly captivated and amazed.

Lord Throop stares with intensity, a serious expression on his face. Emdar, in contrast, smiles as he watches and listens.

Robyn finishes and the crowd erupts in sincere applause, Emdar applauding as well.

Lord Throop abruptly rises and turns to Emdar.

LORD THROOP  
(to Emdar, privately)  
Have the singing maiden brought to  
my quarters immediately. The  
entertainment is finished. Clear  
the castle of this rabble.

He strides towards the doorway out, the knights moving to guard him, one of them opening the door for him and he disappears.

Emdar is surprised and alarmed as his lord's sudden change of plans. He addresses the crowd.

EMDAR  
Lord Throop, Duke of Umbria and  
Forecastle, Fens and Menkwood, thanks  
you for your presence this evening  
and trusts you enjoyed his  
hospitality. You will be shown out.  
Long live the King!

The crowd is surprised at their hasty eviction, mumbling back "long live the king" without enthusiasm. Emdar gestures to the head knight to get the crowd out, the head knight directing the other knights to move out the crowd.

The children look at one another then Jack heads for the doorway to the back with the others following as the musicians gather their instruments and sheet music.

INT. STAGE ANTEROOM - CONTINUOUS

Furst gets up from a chair as the children come back in.

FURST  
You're finished?

JACK  
He just ended it. Everyone's leaving.

FRANCIS  
No feast for us, I guess.

Emdar enters and speaks to Furst, pointing at Aylin.

EMDAR  
This one will come with me. You may  
leave now.

Furst looks alarmed.

FURST  
Sire, if she did something to not  
please his lordship...

EMDAR  
Be gone.  
(to Aylin)  
Come this way.

He starts out the back door, Aylin not moving.

EMDAR (CONT'D)  
I said come! Hurry.

AYLIN  
Where are we going?

JACK  
Why is she not coming with us?

FURST  
(to Emdar)  
We shall wait for her, your lordship.

EMDAR  
No. She'll be brought. Go now.

Emdar holds the door for her and she looks at Furst who is concerned but can't do anything.

EMDAR (CONT'D)  
(to Aylin)  
Come, quickly now.

Reluctantly she goes, looking back at the others who aren't pleased to lose her.

INT. CASTLE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Emdar leads the way deeper into the castle, reassuring Aylin.

EMDAR  
Don't be alarmed. Lord Throop wants  
to speak with you.  
(MORE)

EMDAR (CONT'D)

Your singing was absolutely exquisite.  
I've never heard anything like it.  
I'm sure he wants to commend you.

AYLIN

Thank you, my lord.

EMDAR

Beautiful. Just beautiful. What is  
your name?

AYLIN

I am called Robyn.

EMDAR

I think many will know that name  
someday.

They reach a doorway and Emdar knocks.

LORD THROOP (O.S.)

Enter.

Emdar opens the door and holds it for Aylin to enter,  
following her in.

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

EMDAR

(to Throop)

The maiden Robyn, your lordship.

LORD THROOP

Leave us. Be gone.

Emdar is slightly miffed at Throop's attitude, so abrupt,  
and he wonders what Throop's going to do with Aylin.

EMDAR

As you wish, my lord.

He frowns as he goes out.

Throop locks the door behind him and turns to Aylin.

LORD THROOP

That is your name, Robyn?

She nods.

LORD THROOP (CONT'D)

Robyn what?

AYLIN

Just Robyn, sire. I am not called by a last name. I am an orphan.

LORD THROOP

Your parents weren't known?

AYLIN

No, sire.

LORD THROOP

How did you come to be in the orphanage?

AYLIN

Sire?

LORD THROOP

Who put you there? What were the circumstances?

AYLIN

I was lost and they took me in.

LORD THROOP

Lost? From where? From whom?

AYLIN

In the woods, sire. I don't know my family. They've searched, but none has been found.

LORD THROOP

How did you come to be lost in the woods without knowing your parents?

AYLIN

I think I had an accident, sire. There was an injury to my head. I cannot remember my earlier life.

LORD THROOP

(beat)

This accident -- what age were you?

AYLIN

I don't really know, sire. But I was alone for five winters.

LORD THROOP

And how long were you in the orphanage?

AYLIN

Just under a year now, sire.

LORD THROOP  
 (almost to himself)  
 So just about six years ago. It  
 could be then.

AYLIN  
 Could be what, my lord?

LORD THROOP  
 (beat)  
 That voice -- your singing. It's  
 remarkable. I've heard nothing like  
 it except once -- many years ago at  
 the court in London.  
 (beat)  
 Does the name Princess Aylon mean  
 anything to you?

Aylin looks shocked.

FLASHBACK

The memory of her singing with her mother in the ship's cabin  
 reappears to her, but this time she clearly sees her mother's  
 face smiling down at her.

BACK TO SCENE

Throop stares at her as the shock of the memory registers on  
 her face.

THROOP  
 What is it?

Aylin forces herself to look unconcerned.

AYLIN  
 Nothing, my lord. It means nothing  
 to me.

Throop mutters to himself.

LORD THROOP  
 Can this be?

Aylin still doesn't know what he's talking about, but she's  
 concerned.

AYLIN  
 I should be returning to the  
 orphanage, my lord.

LORD THROOP  
 Disrobe.

Aylin stares at him in disbelief, suddenly afraid.

ROBYN

Sire?

LORD THROOP

I said disrobe. Take off those clothes.

ROBYN

My lord, I... I'm not of age.

Throop steps up to her and grabs the top of her robe, Aylin grasping his hands. He pulls apart the top of her robe, Aylin trying to stop him and get away. Throop stops and stares at her chest.

P.O.V. THROOP - CONTINUOUS

On Robyn's chest the small heart-shaped birthmark is visible.

BACK TO SCENE

Throop is horrified and scared.

Aylin twists and gets away, backing up to the wall by the bed, terrified at the assault.

Throop stares at her.

LORD THROOP

(to himself)

My life will be forfeit.

He makes up his mind and rushes her, grabbing her around the throat and squeezing.

Aylin knows she's fighting for her life, not just her honor. As Throop squeezes so she can't breath, a horrible grimace on his face, Aylin's hands search for a weapon. She feels the pitcher on the stand by the bed and finds the handle. She clutches it and smashes the pitcher into Throop's head, the vessel shattering and Throop staggering backwards then falling to the floor unconscious.

Aylin rubs her neck as she stares at Throop, bleeding from a gash on his head.

ROBYN

(to herself)

My life is forfeit.

She looks around for escape. She goes to the door, but there is NOISE outside it. She goes to the window and opens it, looking down from the upper floor.

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

A quiet courtyard, no one visible.

BACK TO SCENE

She looks around the room and begins pulling covers from the bed, tying together several to make a rope. She makes certain no one is outside, then lowers it.

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

The end of her makeshift rope is on the ground.

BACK TO SCENE

She has enough left over to tie it in the room and knots it around the post of the canopied bed, pulls it tight, then goes out the window.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

She holds the covers tightly and lowers herself in jerks, almost falling but finally reaching the ground.

She adjusts her robes and begins walking quickly then forcing herself to slow and walk naturally.

EXT. CASTLE GATEWAY - MOMENTS LATER

With her head down, looking demure as she holds her robes closed, she approaches the gate guarded by the GATE KNIGHT and another. She smiles at the Gate Knight as she comes up, the knight smiling back at the pretty young girl while the other knight looks a bit puzzled.

AYLIN

If you would, dear sir. I am late  
to my home.

GATE KNIGHT

Someone will be missing you.

He opens the door and bows as she goes out.

EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE CASTLE - CONTINUOUS

She forces herself to walk normally away from the castle until she rounds a bend and then runs for her life.

EXT. ORPHANAGE - LATER

She runs up to the orphanage and goes around it to the back.

EXT. BACK OF ORPHANAGE - MOMENTS LATER

She takes pebbles and throws them at an upper window then repeats the act. The window opens and Beth looks out.

AYLIN  
(whispering loudly)  
Come open the door.

BETH  
What happened? Why are you...

AYLIN  
Please come open the door quickly.  
I don't have much time.

Beth disappears and Aylin heads around the orphanage.

INT. ORPHANAGE HALLWAY - MOMENTS LATER

Aylin rushes into the hallway of the orphanage and Beth closes the door, Leanna and Maude with her.

BETH  
What happened to you?

AYLIN  
Lord Throop tried to assault me.  
Look!

She shows them the ripped robes.

LEANNA  
That lech!

MAUDE  
And your neck is bruised.

AYLIN  
He was choking me like he was trying  
to kill me. I had to knock him  
unconscious. I must flee. They'll  
be here soon.

Together, they head upstairs.

INT. ORPHANAGE GIRL'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

They come into the girls' bedroom and Aylin begins gathering her few things into a bundle.

AYLIN  
I'm scared for you. You must tell  
them I broke in and you couldn't  
stop me.



BETH  
I'll tell them no such thing. I'm  
coming with you.

Beth begins getting her things.

AYLIN  
No, this is not your trouble. I  
have to go on my own.

MAUDE  
I'm coming, too.

LEANNA  
I'm not staying here alone.

Aylin stops and looks at her friends.

AYLIN  
I can't let you do that. You'd be  
risking your lives. I will go alone.

BETH  
No, you won't.

LEANNA  
No, you won't.

MAUDE  
None of us will go alone. We go  
together into our new life.

BETH  
That's right. We're nearly grown.  
It's time.

LEANNA  
It was meant to be. Nothing bad  
happens.

The other girls begin gathering their things and the door  
opens and Jack peeks in.

JACK  
What's all that whispering? What  
are you all up to?

The girls just look at him and he comes in.

AYLIN  
Go back to your room. You never saw  
us.

JACK  
And why am I to lie?

BETH

Lord Throop assaulted Robyn and she  
had to knock him unconscious.

Maude reaches over and shows him Aylin's ripped robe.

MAUDE

Look at her neck. He choked her.

Jack looks furious.

JACK

(to Aylin)

He assaulted you? Then we will go  
and kill him.

Erik appears in the doorway.

ERIK

Kill who?

JACK

That rapist Lord Throop, that's who  
we'll kill.

Erik comes in followed by William and Francis.

JACK (CONT'D)

He assaulted Robyn! We'll kill him.

WILLIAM

I think he has a few knights  
protecting him.

FRANCIS

And a castle. It might be quite a  
task.

AYLIN

All of you go back to bed. They  
never need know you knew anything of  
this. You'll be safe.

ERIK

But all of you are going?

The girls nod.

BETH

We will not leave Robyn.

MAUDE

We're going to make our own lives.

JACK

If you are going, I am going.

ERIK

Then I go, too.

WILLIAM

And me.

FRANCIS

Oh, I hope we don't starve.

AYLIN

No. I can't let you all do this.

BETH

No, you can't stop us all from doing this. Our new life begins.

JACK

Together, always for each other.

Jack heads back to the boy's room to gather his things, the other boys grinning as they follow.

The girls look at one another, shrug, and begin gathering what they can take with them. Aylin would stop them if she could but is moved by their loyalty. She hurries to get her things together, all of them tying up their things in the blankets from their beds.

EXT. ORPHANAGE FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

The group is passing the vegetable garden for the woods when Francis stops them, going to gather what foodstuffs he can.

FRANCIS

If we're going into the forest, we'd better bring all the food we can.

They begin pulling up the vegetables ready for harvest, stuffing them in the tied sacks they're carrying. When they have all they can carry they hurry off, disappearing into the darkness of the woods.

EXT. ORPHANAGE - LATER

Throop, his head bandaged, Emdar and lots of mounted soldiers ride up to the orphanage and dismount, going into the orphanage.

INT. ORPHANAGE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Furst is coming out of his room arranging his sleeping clothes, startled to have troops seize him by the arms, Throop and Emdar coming up to him.

FURST

My lords, what...

THROOP  
Where is the girl?

FURST  
Who?

THROOP  
Robyn. Where is she?

FURST  
She was with you, my lord.

EMDAR  
She assaulted Lord Throop, stole from him and ran.

FURST  
Stole from you? Robyn? I don't believe it.

Emdar slaps him.

EMDAR  
You accuse his highness of lying?

FURST  
No, of course not. It's just... I would never expect it of Robyn.

THROOP  
Take us to her.

Furst doesn't want to do it but has no choice.

FURST  
This way.

He moves slowly and Emdar gives him a push to hurry up.

INT. ORPHANAGE GIRL'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

They burst into the girl's room to find it in disarray. Furst is pleased to find the girls gone but contains his delight.

THROOP  
Where is she?

FURST  
I don't know. They must have all fled.

EMDAR  
How many were in here?

FURST  
 Four, my lord. The older girls.  
 The others are but children.

EMDAR  
 The choir that was at the castle.

FURST  
 Yes, my lord.

THROOP  
 The boys -- they may know something.

Furst hopes the boys are all asleep.

FURST  
 This way. They're sleeping.

They all head out.

INT. ORPHANAGE BOY'S ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The empty boy's room looks worse than the girl's. Furst is relieved but covers it again.

FURST  
 They're gone as well.

EMDAR  
 The four boys from the choir and the girls.

FURST  
 It appears so.

EMDAR  
 They're all guilty.

FURST  
 Of what, my lord? They were here.  
 They did nothing.

EMDAR  
 They fled with the thief. They're helping her. They will all hang.

FURST  
 They're just children, my lord.

EMDAR  
 Thieves and attempted murderers.

THROOP  
 (to Emdar)  
 They must have fled for the woods.  
 (MORE)

THROOP (CONT'D)  
 Get their names and descriptions.  
 We will pursue them.

He turns to go out, most of the soldiers following him, some staying with Emdar.

Emdar stares after Throop, wondering what is going on as he knows Throop is hiding something.

Furst wipes his brow, and gives a fake smile at Emdar while hoping the children have gotten far away and stay away.

FURST  
 I will help all I can, my lord.

EMDAR  
 (skeptically)  
 Yes, I'm sure you will.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The children push through the dense woods.

FRANCIS  
 It would have been easier if we stayed  
 on the road.

JACK  
 Easier still if we just went to the  
 castle and gave up.

BETH  
 (whispering)  
 Sssh. Don't make any more noise  
 than you have to.

She looks around cautiously.

BETH (CONT'D)  
 They'll be after us.

They move on as quietly as they can.

EXT. CASTLE - LATER

Throop and his troops pull up and dismount at the entrance to the castle quarters. Emdar comes out to meet him.

EMDAR  
 Any luck, my lord?

THROOP  
 They'll be found.  
 (MORE)

THROOP (CONT'D)

You'll stay and conduct the search until you locate them. I must get on to the north country as the king expects.

He takes Emdar to one side to speak privately.

THROOP (CONT'D)

(softly)

This one, Robyn. I don't want her brought back alive. In fact, see that none of them come back alive. But this time I want to see her body so bring it to me. The others, I care not.

EMDAR

This time, my lord?

THROOP

(irritated)

Just do as I instruct.

EMDAR

Of course, my lord. I will have her body brought to you.

THROOP

No, not to me. Bring it here and preserve it. Get word to me only. Do not broadcast the news. Me only. I will come here to view it.

Emdar is disgusted with the order and would love to ask what it is all about but knows better than to appear too curious.

EMDAR

It will be done as you wish, my lord.

Throop heads inside, Emdar looking after him with suspicion.

EXT. WOODS - NIGHT

The children are straggling, getting tired. They are in an area with some fallen, rotting trees.

FRANCIS

How much further?

BETH

To where?

FRANCIS

Wherever we're going.

JACK

We're not going anywhere. Just away.

FRANCIS

Well how much further to away?

Aylin stops and surveys where they are.

AYLIN

We can stop here. We can make our bed in these fallen trees with moss for extra warmth. We'll be almost invisible. We'll be safe for a time.

JACK

(joking)

It's good we're with the sorceress of the woods. She knows all the tricks.

FRANCIS

Can we really survive out here?

BETH

Robyn did it for five years as a child. If we can't do it, we should be ashamed.

AYLIN

I feel bad you all had to do this.

ERIK

I feel wonderful we had to do this. I love Friar Furst, but the orphanage was getting to feel like a prison. I finally feel free.

WILLIAM

I agree.

The others all feel the same way.

AYLIN

I love you all.

JACK

Together, always for each other.

They all hug.

AYLIN

We need to clear the trunks and gather moss.

JACK

Let the sorceress command us.



BETH

Good there's someone to command you.

They begin getting their beds ready.

EXT. TREE TRUNK CAMP IN WOODS - LATER

They are all sleeping covered in the tree trunks when Aylin gets up quietly and sneaks away from the group, heading off into the forest.

Beth is awake in a tree trunk opposite and a bit away from Aylin's, watching as Aylin sneaks off.

Careful not to disturb anyone else, Beth quietly gets up and follows, wondering where Aylin is going in the middle of the night.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

When Aylin thinks she's far enough away, she begins singing the unknown language very softly and her world glows golden.

Slowly, animals gather, bugs from the ground and the air, birds, the small beasts then deer, foxes, wolves, and finally two large bears, all waiting in harmony for Aylin to address them.

From her hiding place behind, Beth sees what is happening and is amazed. She can't see the golden glow, but the animals gathered stagger her.

As Aylin sings:

AYLIN (V.O.)

Friends in the forest, we need your help. Watch over myself and those with me. We have many enemies searching for us. Be alert to strangers in your lands. Come to me and make me aware if they are ever near. Try to keep them from finding us. I and the others will help protect you. We need food but will never willingly harm any of you. But if one has fallen and gone beyond, please help that we may make use of the body left behind. You are my companions and I am yours. Thank you for my life as you kept me safe all those years. Be well and know my thanks. I love you all.

She concludes her song and the golden glow lingers a moment as the animals move off. Aylin turns to head back.

Beth crouches and hurries ahead of Aylin.

EXT. TREE TRUNK CAMP IN WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Beth gets back in her trunk and arranges the moss and pretends to be asleep.

Aylin quietly comes in and gets back in her bed.

Beth looks across at her.

BETH  
 (very softly to herself)  
 You truly are the sorceress of the  
 woods.

Jack stirs near her and she looks at him but he's asleep.  
 Beth turns to look at Aylin again

BETH (CONT'D)  
 I know your heart, Robyn. Your magic  
 must be good.

EXT. CASTLE CARN - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of CASTLE CARN, above the village of LIZVALE, home of the MacSanvale clan of the northern barons. Camped outside the castle walls are the numerous troops of Lord Throop.

INT. CASTLE CARN - CONTINUOUS

At a long table in the banquet room, the northern barons are meeting with Throop. At the head of the table is Throop, his own guards behind him. LORD MACSANVALE is at Throop's right hand and around the table are three other northern barons: LORD EASTON, LORD MACANTISOIR and LORD CRUCHAN.

MACSANVALE  
 He went to the court on his own to  
 plead for his people and had his  
 life taken.

THROOP  
 Lord MacSanvale, Brantwell was a  
 traitor and he paid for it with his  
 head. It was a just verdict.

MACANTISOIR  
 It would, however, make one think  
 twice before venturing into the king's  
 court.

THROOP

You're not saying you might be a traitor to his majesty, are you Lord MacAntisoir? I trust not.

MACSANVALE

There are no traitors in these lands, Lord Throop. You may assure King Mordant of our loyalty. But these taxes you would impose are a hard burden on our people. These are not wealthy lands, my lord. The people must work hard and long to keep together body and soul.

THROOP

The king protects all our lands. We have many enemies in this world, those who would like nothing better than to see us all dead, our lands in their hands. We must all do our share to support the forces that keep us safe. Brantwell's refusal to bow to his king's commands was treachery and it could not be abided.

EASTON

Yet there are monies for all those troops you brought to travel far just to meet with us. I would think them better used to guard our shores.

THROOP

Lord Easton, would you tell the king how best to protect his kingdom?

Lord Easton thinks to reply, but considers it best to hold his tongue.

THROOP (CONT'D)

I thought not.

CRUCHAN

We are loyal to King Mordant, Lord Throop. But for my lands, the people must have more time to meet these demands. Planting is but newly done, the first harvest must sustain our people.

THROOP

These considerations should have been made last year, the taxes put aside as the wise would do, Lord Cruchan.

(MORE)

THROOP (CONT'D)

Next we will hear that the weather has not cooperated, the crops too few, the people too hard pressed. The excuses are endless. The reality is but one -- support the crown as is your duty, or lose your lands to someone who can meet the obligation. It's a lesson Brantwell learned too late. Do not let it be your fate.

None of the barons are happy, but none so foolish as to say what they feel to this minion of the king with all his troops just outside the gates.

THROOP (CONT'D)

(to MacSanvale)

I would eat now, if you have anything to serve.

MACSANVALE

Of course, my lord.

He gestures to the servants who hurry to get things ready.

EXT. WOODS - AFTERNOON

The children are walking through the woods.

AYLIN

The pond is just a bit further.  
We'll be there soon.

FRANCIS

Thank goodness. Then we can have our gruel.  
(sarcastically)  
Yummm.

JACK

This will be good for you -- lose some of that blubber.

FRANCIS

I love my blubber. I'm going to miss it.

ERIK

Maybe we can shoot a deer, have some meat.

Aylin stops and turns to them.

AYLIN

I have to tell you all something.  
(MORE)

AYLIN (CONT'D)

We can't shoot any animals. If we find one not too long dead, we can eat that. But no animals can be harmed by our hand -- none.

WILLIAM

Eat only dead animals? Why?

AYLIN

This is their home. We are their guests.

ERIK

They were put here for us, not the other way round.

AYLIN

No, that's not true. They have souls. It is not our right to kill them.

WILLIAM

But they kill each other for food. Why should we not do the same?

AYLIN

Because it's not just. We can exist without killing them. There are berries and nuts more than enough for us to survive. We can beg food in the villages as well. But in this forest we are guests, and the animals living here are our friends. We cannot kill our friends.

JACK

That sounds kind of crazy.

BETH

No, Aylin's right. If she says we must not harm the animals, then we won't. She knows these things.

Aylin looks at Beth who looks at her and nods.

BETH (CONT'D)

Aylin survived here as a child for five years. She knows better than we. She's our leader and we'll do what she says.

Beth looks at Maude and Leanna who look at one another and shrug.

LEANNA

I'll go along.

MAUDE

And I.

BETH

That's four votes, but votes are not necessary. We are going to do what Aylin says.

The boys might not agree, but Jack goes along with the girls.

JACK

I still think it's crazy, but okay.

FRANCIS

As long as we aren't starving.

ERIK

Easy for you to say. You'll last longer than any of us.

WILLIAM

Berries and nuts -- and dead animals. Wonderful.

AYLIN

Thank you, all of you. It will be right, you'll see.

BETH

The animals are our friends.

She looks knowingly at Aylin who wonders what Beth knows.

FRANCIS

Let's get going so we can get there and eat anything but what I want -- meat.

They all laugh and start off again.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

Emdar is disgusted as he pushes through the forest with a number of soldiers.

EMDAR

(to one of the soldiers)  
This is a waste of time. Chasing some children.  
(to himself)  
Why does he care?

The soldier looks at him and Emdar starts off again.

ANGLE ON

Nearby, a WOLF watches the troops moving through the woods then turns and hurries off.

EXT. POND IN WOODS - DUSK

Evening is coming on and the children are camped by the pond where the poachers took Aylin years before. A fire is going by the shore, their packs laid out around it for their campsite.

JACK

This really is a lovely spot, Robyn.

AYLIN

I lived here quite often. It was one of my favorite places. It was where the poachers found me.

JACK

It's like you said once -- it was good they did or we wouldn't know you.

WILLIAM

I don't understand why you stayed in the woods as long as you did. You might have had a family -- you still might.

AYLIN

I didn't know any other life.

ERIK

It must have been hard, especially for a young girl as you were.

AYLIN

Not as hard as you might think. I enjoyed most of it.

WILLIAM

Why did you come out then?

AYLIN

(beat)

When Beth and Jack rescued me from those men, I felt for the first time how lonely I was -- or how alone at least. Maybe it was getting older. It was time for a change.

LEANNA

And now you end up back in the woods.

BETH

But not alone.

Suddenly, at the top of the waterfall on the bluff there is a RUSTLING and they all look to see a WOLF standing there looking down at them, the one that saw the troops. Everyone but Aylin, and to a lesser extent Beth, are afraid.

JACK

If it attacks, I'm going to shoot it, Robyn.

He picks up the bow he's brought.

AYLIN

No. Leave it.

She walks closer to the waterfall and begins to sing the tongue softly, her world glowing golden, the others watching her in wonder except for Beth.

BETH

It will be all right, you'll see.

Jack gets out an arrow and notches it just in case.

AYLIN (V.O.)

What is it?

WOLF (V.O.)

Armed men come this way. Hide yourselves.

AYLIN (V.O.)

Thank you. Keep yourself and the others safe.

The wolf turns and disappears, Aylin stopping her singing and turning to the others.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

Armed men are coming.

She moves to gather her pack.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

Knock the fire into the pond and hide our things in the brush. Hurry!

Beth moves right away, the others following wondering what's going on.

MAUDE

(to Aylin)

How do you know someone's coming?



AYLIN

I can hear them. I've learned the sounds of the woods. The wolf must have been fleeing from them.

JACK

I can't hear anything.

AYLIN

Just hurry.

The boys knock the fire into the pond and cover over the burned spot, the girls gathering the packs and hiding them under the brush back in the woods, smoothing it to look natural.

WILLIAM

Which way are they coming? Where should we run?

AYLIN

Follow me.

She goes down to the edge of the pond and wades in towards the waterfall, the others suprised but following. She leads them through the waterfall.

EXT. BEHIND WATERFALL - CONTINUOUS

There's a cavity behind the waterfall where they can stand shielded from sight by the falling water.

JACK

You knew this was here.

AYLIN

I've lived here before. No one will find us.

ERIK

You are the leader.

AYLIN

Sssh.

They are quiet standing together.

EXT. POND IN WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

Emdar and his men straggle up to the pond across from where the children were camped, some of the men clearing the water to drink greedily.

EMDAR

(calling out)  
Make camp!

The soldiers are glad to rest. One GRIMEY SOLDIER begins stripping down to his briefs.

GRIMEY SOLDIER

I need water on me.

He splashes into the pond, heading for the waterfall, others beginning to strip to follow him.

EXT. BEHIND WATERFALL - CONTINUOUS

The children look at one another, afraid they're about to be discovered.

Aylin looks at them and puts her finger to her lips to caution them to keep quiet. Very softly, she begins SINGING in her tongue, the golden glow coming to her that the others can't see, all except Beth looking at her in surprise and alarm. Beth puts her finger to her lips and gestures to caution the others not to do anything.

EXT. POND IN WOODS - CONTINUOUS

A watersnake suddenly appears before the soldier, its head sticking out of the water flicking its tongue as it undulates towards him.

The soldier is scared and begins backing up, splashing water at the snake. Suddenly, two more snakes appear and the soldier turns and tries to run, falling and getting up quickly, fear on his face.

He gets out on the shore and looks at the pond where even more snakes are moving about.

GRIMEY SOLDIER

Cursed water.

Some of the other soldiers are laughing then one suddenly slaps at something biting him.

P.O.V. SOLDIER - CONTINUOUS

His legs are covered in ants.

BACK TO SCENE

Other soldiers begin brushing away the ants crawling on them. EMDAR'S AIDE slaps his neck, Emdar jumping up brushing himself off.

EMDAR'S AIDE

Ants are everywhere!

EMDAR

Enough of this. Back to the road  
and the horses and our beds in the  
castle. We leave this cursed  
wilderness.

The soldiers love the thought, grabbing their things, brushing  
off ants as they hurry away through the woods, the grimey  
soldier and the others stripped down just carrying their  
clothes as they flee still brushing off ants.

Soon it's quiet and the children come out cautiously from  
behind the waterfall, everyone but Aylin and Beth watching  
for the snakes which are gone. They wade onto the shore.

WILLIAM

(to Aylin)

Why did you sing like that? They  
might have heard you.

AYLIN

I don't know. I guess I was scared.

WILLIAM

Good way to make your fears come  
true.

FRANCIS

We should go. Snakes in the water  
and ants up here.

Jack looks down at the clean ground.

JACK

I don't see any ants.

FRANCIS

They'll be here, too. I don't want  
to get bitten.

BETH

There's no ants here. We'll be fine.

The others look and see no ants or bugs of any kind.

ERIK

We were lucky the snakes scared off  
that soldier or ants would be the  
least of our troubles.

WILLIAM

(to Aylin)

Even luckier you heard them coming.  
You were right though I don't know  
how you heard them.

JACK

(joking)

I guess you are the sorceress of the woods. Great for us.

AYLIN

Any of you get out of line, I'll turn you into a toad just remember.

They all laugh while Beth glances at her knowingly. Aylin is getting the idea Beth knows her secret. Aylin goes to get her pack in the brush, the others following.

EXT. TOWER OF LONDON - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the Tower of London.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - DAY

Emdar is brought into the King's anteroom by the king's soldiers.

EMDAR

Your highness.

MORDANT

Emdar. Why have you come back without Lord Throop?

EMDAR

I thought he would have returned by this time, your highness.

MORDANT

But you didn't accompany him to the northern barons.

EMDAR

No, my lord. I was on a special task he assigned me. But the troops needed to rest and reprovision.

MORDANT

What sort of special task?

EMDAR

It was unusual, sire. A young maiden from the Menkwood orphanage choir sang for us, and Lord Throop asked to speak with her privately. She assaulted Lord Throop and evidently tried to steal from him. She escaped with some orphan friends to the forest and Lord Throop tasked me with... I was to find her, my lord.

MORDANT

Assaulted and tried to steal from  
Lord Throop.

EMDAR

He was unconscious for a time from a  
blow to the head and she'd gone out  
a window to escape. We searched the  
woods diligently, my lord, but found  
no trace of her and her accomplices.  
We will return to search though I am  
requesting some fresh troops.

MORDANT

Lord Throop sent no mention of this.

Emdar realizes he's probably screwed up telling the king.

EMDAR

I'm sure he intended to inform you  
personally upon his return, my lord.  
It was not serious.

MORDANT

If it's not serious why am I having  
my troops search woods for a maiden  
thief? The sheriff of Menkwood could  
do that.

EMDAR

Yes, my lord.

MORDANT

Why was Lord Throop alone with this  
maiden?

The answer to both of them is obvious and not complimentary  
to Lord Throop. Emdar does his best to deflect the  
conclusion.

EMDAR

I believe he was taken by her singing  
and wanted to commend her, your  
highness. She had the most beautiful  
singing voice I have ever heard. It  
was extraordinary.

MORDANT

The most beautiful singing voice  
you've ever heard.

EMDAR

Truly, I didn't know a person could  
sound so lovely, my lord.

MORDANT

(beat)

What was this maiden's name?

EMDAR

Robyn, sire. She had no last name. She was an orphan found in the woods and had no memory of her life I was told by the friar in charge of the orphanage.

MORDANT

What age was this maiden?

EMDAR

Young, my lord. Somewhere around fourteen I would guess. I was told she had lived on her own in the woods for five years before being found. She'd been in the orphanage less than a year, sire.

The king puts all the information together in his mind.

MORDANT

And Lord Throop tasked you with finding her and bringing her to justice.

Emdar hesitates, not wanting to lie to the king or reveal what Throop told him to do -- kill the girl and inform only him. He's getting the idea he may be involved in something bigger than he thought.

MORDANT (CONT'D)

Emdar...

EMDAR

Yes, your highness?

MORDANT

What were your instructions?

Emdar licks his dry lips, quaking inside.

MORDANT (CONT'D)

I'm sure you heard my question, Emdar. When I ask a question, I expect an answer -- a truthful one.

EMDAR

Yes, of course, your highness.

(beat)

Lord Throop wanted me to find the maiden and her accomplices and have them executed.

MORDANT  
Executed without trial.

EMDAR  
Evidently, your highness. He asked me to do this and...inform only him.

MORDANT  
Only him. And you have no idea why he wanted this done.

EMDAR  
No, your highness. I was just following my orders, sire.

MORDANT  
And you found these just orders, Emdar.

EMDAR  
I feel it is not mine to question Lord Throop's orders, your highness.

MORDANT  
So you will keep secrets for Lord Throop.

Emdar realizes his mistake.

EMDAR  
Not from you, your highness. I would never keep secrets from you.

MORDANT  
That's wise, Emdar. Believe me, I uncover all secrets.

EMDAR  
Yes, your highness.

The king turns to his aide.

MORDANT  
Take him away and lock him up.

EMDAR  
My lord?

The aide gestures to some soldiers who roughly take Emdar's arms and begin taking him out.

EMDAR (CONT'D)  
I am loyal, your highness. I was just following Lord Throop's orders. I meant no disloyalty. Your majesty...

The soldiers force him out of the room.

MORDANT

(to himself)

A singing maiden you must kill in  
secret, Throop. What have you done --  
or not done.

Mordant gets up and heads out a different door than where they took Emdar, the soldier aide hurrying to open the door for him.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

At a different camp in the woods, the children are watching a show being put on by Francis and Leanna who are hidden behind a fallen tree acting as a stage, raising up puppet dolls made from cloth with crude drawings from burnt wood on them.

The others are watching delighted, clapping when they finish, Francis and Leanna getting up from behind the log and bowing to their audience

WILLIAM

That's better than they ever did in  
Menkwood.

JACK

You two are naturals.

BETH

You know, with this and our singing,  
we could put on shows. We could  
make money.

FRANCIS

Leave the woods? Oh, thank god.

ERIK

They might still be looking for us.

BETH

We'll get away from here first, go  
north, change our names, say we're a  
traveling show from the south. No  
one will know us.

WILLIAM

We can claim to be gypsies.

BETH

(to Aylin)

What do you think, Robyn?

Aylin looks around at the forest.



AYLIN

I think it might be good to get away. They know we're in here and I don't think they're going to stop looking.

FRANCIS

As sick as I am of nuts and berries, they're still better than no food. If we leave the woods, how are we going to survive?

WILLIAM

Francis makes a point. We have to get some ways off before we show ourselves in the villages.

ERIK

We could take things from fields at night.

WILLIAM

Then there are reports of roving thieves. That could lead them to us.

LEANNA

And if we're going to make money with a show, we need some things to make proper puppets, maybe some kind of showbooth, too.

JACK

We need help. And we know only one person on this earth who ever cared about us.

BETH

Friar Furst.

JACK

Friar Furst -- even if it means going back to Menkwood.

EXT. WOODS - EVENING

The children are at the edge of the woods by the vegetable garden looking towards the orphanage, the sun just having set, the lanterns lit inside.

WILLIAM

(to Jack)

Looks safe enough, but if you don't come out in a few minutes I'm coming to get you.

ERIK

With us.

BETH

Friar Furst would never do anything like that.

MAUDE

Not the slightest chance.

JACK

Just don't let anyone get Robyn.  
(to Aylin)  
You keep yourself safe.

Aylin smiles at him.

AYLIN

I will. And you be safe.

Jack takes one more look around and then heads through the trees to come out of the woods in a different spot than where they're concealed.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

I feel bad that you all have to go through this because of what happened to me.

MAUDE

It wasn't your fault. That maniac Lord Throop caused it.

ERIK

I'd like to get my hands on him some day.

FRANCIS

I just hope he never gets his hands on us.

P.O.V. OTHERS - CONTINUOUS

Jack approaches the side of the orphanage and turns the corner out of sight.

BACK TO SCENE

FRANCIS

We should get more food from the garden.

BETH

Not yet. We don't want to show ourselves.

They all keep watch on the orphanage and in a moment Jack reappears with Friar Furst.

LEANNA

He's coming!

BETH

Of course. He's a wonderful man.  
We were lucky to have him.

MAUDE

I miss him.

The others nod in agreement.

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

They all greet Furst quietly but happily as he and Jack come into the woods.

FURST

Children, I can't tell you how happy I am to find you safe. I've been so worried.

BETH

I'm so sorry we had to run away like that. Lord Throop attacked Robyn!

FURST

Yes, I know, Jack told me it all.  
(to Aylin)  
They claimed you assaulted and stole from him. Nonsense. I'm so sorry you had to go through that. If I'd had any idea, we would never have gone near that man. Who would have guessed.

MAUDE

He tried to kill her!

FURST

It makes no sense. I was terrified they'd catch you. Thank god you stayed safe. And now I hear you want to get further away. I think that's a good idea. So what can I do to help? Anything -- everything.

INT. ROYAL PALACE - DAY

King Mordant is on a kingly chair with a huge, fierce looking man, VINGARON, to one side behind when Lord Throop is dragged in by soldiers. Throop looks much the worse for his arrest.

MORDANT

Ah, there is the fool I wanted to see.

THROOP

My lord...

Throop stares at Mordant, Throop unable in his fear to speak.

MORDANT

Yes?

Throop forces himself to be not so terrified.

THROOP

I don't know how it happened. I was told she was dead.

MORDANT

You were told. But you didn't make certain.

Mordant shakes his head.

MORDANT (CONT'D)

I give you the simple task of dispatching the heirs to the throne far at sea, away from prying eyes where you could use any means at hand, while I do the difficult of removing the king with no one the wiser. So careless, so careless.

THROOP

I saw her in the ocean myself with the sharks gathering, your highness. She appeared dead. But even if alive, the strongest swimmer in the kingdom could not have reached land that night. And she was but a child.

MORDANT

A miracle! It's a miracle -- one not to your benefit, Lord Throop.

THROOP

There is time, your majesty. She remembers nothing of who she really is. She thinks she is an orphan with no family. I will make it right.

MORDANT

Oh, it will be made right, but not by you. Leaving her alive the first time was one careless error.

(MORE)

MORDANT (CONT'D)

Then you assault her, leave her alive to escape, a second careless error. And you send that fool Emdar to flail about searching uselessly while you galivant in the north, a third careless error.

THROOP

But the barons, my lord. Your taxes.

MORDANT

Tax monies will be the least of my problems should it be learned that Princess Aylin, heir to the throne, lives!

(beat)

All of that was bad enough, Lord Throop. But when you knew the truth, you thought to keep it from me. That goes far beyond carelessness. That was your fatal error.

THROOP

No, my lord, please! Give me one more chance. I will not fail you.

MORDANT

You've already failed me, Lord Throop. And you've failed yourself.

He flicks a finger at the guards.

MORDANT (CONT'D)

Take him from my sight.

The guards drag him out, Throop sobbing.

Mordant gestures to Vingaron who comes up to him.

MORDANT (CONT'D)

Vingaron, take your best horsemen, a small band that can move fast and quietly, get to this Menkwood and find our singing princess. Bring her to me and let no one talk with her. These others with her -- they mean nothing, do as you will with them. But I must have Princess Aylin here. Just let no one know what you're truly about or anything of her.

VINGARON

It will be, your highness.

MORDANT

You I can trust. And when you return,  
you will have Lord Throop's titles.

VINGARON

I only want to serve you, my lord.

MORDANT

Vingaron, my Viking -- a proud and  
noble race.

Vingaron claps his hand to his breast, fierce and proud  
looking.

MORDANT (CONT'D)

Go, god be with you.

Vingaron bows and heads out.

MORDANT (CONT'D)

(to himself)

Young one, you are the queen. But  
no one will ever know, including  
you.

EXT. ROLLING COUNTRY - DAY

The children have a little cart pulled by a small horse,  
Tick, carrying their things, Willian leading Tick while the  
others walk alongside. Francis looks over the side of the  
cart and pulls out a piece of fruit, eating it happily.

FRANCIS

Better than any nut or berry I've  
ever eaten.

LEANNA

You don't miss the woods?

FRANCIS

Bless Friar Furst.

BETH

I agree, but don't ever mention his  
name again. No one must ever know  
he helped us. If we're ever caught,  
we stole everything.

ERIK

No one's catching me. I'll go down  
first. You all run.

JACK

No running. We don't know what  
they're talking about.

(MORE)

JACK (CONT'D)

We're from the south, no idea who these people they're looking for might be.

(looks at Erik)

Right Robert?

ERIK

Right you are, Michael.

JACK

(to William)

And you, Bryan?

WILLIAM

Bryan Wright thinks that's right.

MAUDE

Brenda agrees.

LEANNA

I think my name should have always been Suzanne. I love it.

BETH

And Madeline suits me so much more.

(looks at Aylin)

You made up Robyn so Aileen is just as good.

Aylin looks pensive.

AYLIN

Aileen.

(to herself)

Princess Aylon.

LEANNA

Who's Princess Aylon?

Aylin shakes her head.

Francis looks in the wagon for another snack.

BETH

James! You're going to eat us out of house and home.

FRANCIS

James thinks Madeline is a kill joy.

BETH

Madeline will kill James if he doesn't leave something for the rest of us.

Francis comes up with another thing to eat.

FRANCIS

James is so happy we have this food,  
more than enough for everyone. Bless  
him who's name never shall be spoken.

BETH

Yes, he is wonderful. I hope I see  
him again someday.

MAUDE

You know, when I was younger, before  
I knew all of you, I thought I was  
cursed for what happened to me. Now  
I feel it was the luckiest thing  
ever.

JACK

Together, always for each other.

They all agree.

EXT. ORPHANAGE - EVENING

Vingaron and his men ride up to the orphanage followed by a  
caged wagon holding three bloodhounds. The men dismount.

VINGARON

(to his aide)

I will speak to this friar alone.

He goes and politely knocks on the door of the orphanage and  
in a moment a frightened Friar Furst opens the door.

VINGARON (CONT'D)

Good evening. You are the friar of  
this orphanage I've been told.

FURST

Yes. Friar Furst. How may I assist  
you?

VINGARON

May I come in and speak with you in  
private, Friar?

Furst steps back and Vingaron enters.

INT. ORPHANAGE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

They're alone.

VINGARON

It has been a long, hard ride, Friar.  
Might you have a drink of some sort  
for me? I would be most grateful.



FURST

Yes, of course. This way.

He leads the way towards the dining hall and kitchen.

INT. ORPHANAGE DINING HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Vingaron waits in the dining hall and Furst comes out carrying two mugs, setting them down on one of the tables.

VINGARON

I am in your debt, Friar.

They both sit and Vingaron takes a long draft. Furst sips and waits apprehensively.

VINGARON (CONT'D)

You should know that I have been sent by the king. He has learned of the treachery of Lord Throop in assaulting a young girl and then having his men beat the woods to kill her to cover his foul deed. Lord Throop has paid for his crime with his head.

FURST

Oh my.

VINGARON

It was just. Our king was mortified that any young one in his kingdom should have this done to her. He has tasked me with finding this young maiden and those with her that I may bring them to the king's court so they may be made whole in recompense. Their lot in this world was already hard enough as orphans without this injustice being done to them. They should not suffer any further tribulations.

FURST

Yes, I think that would be just.

VINGARON

I am hoping that you may help me in finding them.

Furst, however, is no fool and is not convinced by Vingaron's words no matter how nice he tries to appear.

FURST

Of course, of course.

(MORE)

FURST (CONT'D)

It's just that I don't know much. After Lord Throop assaulted Robyn, she returned here without my knowledge and she and her friends fled for the forest. I have not seen them since.

VINGARON

Emdar, Lord Throop's vassal, searched the woods I've been told.

FURST

Yes, I believe that's the case. I don't know if he found anything or not.

VINGARON

He did not. He, too, has paid for these crimes with his life.

FURST

Goodness. The king takes this seriously, I see.

VINGARON

Assaulting a young girl and trying to kill her to hide the deed -- there are not many more heinous crimes.

FURST

No.

(beat)

I wish I could help you further. It would be wonderful for these children to be helped. If I should learn anything, how might I get you word?

VINGARON

I will inform the sheriff and you may go to him.

FURST

I will do that.

Vingaron looks at him, wondering if the friar is lying.

VINGARON

You're sure you know nothing?

Furst nows knows that Vingaron's words have been lies.

FURST

I only wish I knew something that could lead you to the children.

(MORE)

FURST (CONT'D)

I tried to take care of them as best as possible, but they were not very grateful. I think they were happy to flee and make their own lives in the woods. They may be stealing right this moment. Still... It is good of the king to wish to help them. I will go to the sheriff should I learn anything.

VINGARON

Good. Now there is something I need from you, Friar.

FURST

Anything, my lord.

Vingaron stands up.

VINGARON

Take me to where the children lived in the orphanage, their bedroom.

FURST

There's little there, sire. The rooms have been left empty.

VINGARON

If you'd lead the way.

He gestures and Furst gets up and heads out reluctantly.

INT. ORPHANAGE GIRL'S ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Furst followed by Vingaron come into the girl's bedroom.

FURST

This is where the girls slept, my lord.

Vingaron walks around a bit.

VINGARON

Did they leave any personal garments?

FURST

No, sire. They had but few and they took what they had.

He looks at the stripped beds, the blankets gone.

VINGARON

They used these pillows?

FURST  
 (reluctantly)  
 Yes.

VINGARON'S AIDE  
 Which bed was this maiden Robyn's,  
 Friar?

Furst shows him the wrong bed and Vingaron picks up the pillow and sniffs it. He then takes the pillows from the other beds.

VINGARON  
 Show me where the boys slept.

FURST  
 This way.

Furst leads the way out, glancing at the pillows and worrying about Vingaron taking them.

EXT. ORPHANAGE - MOMENTS LATER

Vingaron walks towards his horse carrying the pillows as Furst closes the door to the orphanage. VINGARON'S AIDE is holding the bridle of Vingaron's horse and his own as Vingaron comes up, looking back to make sure Furst is gone.

VINGARON  
 (to his aide)  
 Useless. He'd cover for her even if  
 he was tortured I believe.

VINGARON'S AIDE  
 We could test that theory, my lord.

VINGARON  
 Not worth the time. He would know  
 little at any rate.

He holds up the pillow he thinks was Robyn's.

VINGARON (CONT'D)  
 This is the pillow from the girl's  
 bed. The others used these. Let  
 the dogs get the scent of her's.

VINGARON'S AIDE  
 Excellent, my lord.

Vingaron gives him the pillows.

VINGARON  
 Let's go to this wretched village  
 and see what sort of amusements we  
 (MORE)

VINGARON (CONT'D)  
 can find this evening. We'll start  
 the search in the morning.

The aide nods and heads for the wagon with the dogs in it to let them get the scent, Vingaron mounting up and wheeling his horse around and starting off.

INT. ORPHANAGE - CONTINUOUS

Through a window at the end of the darkened hallway, Furst watches them go.

P.O.V. FURST - CONTINUOUS

The mounted troops and the wagon head for the village.

BACK TO SCENE

FURST  
 (to himself)  
 I'm so glad you're away, children.  
 God be with you and keep you safe.

He sighs and heads back for his room.

EXT. STREET IN LIZVALE - DAY

The children have set up a surprisingly well-made and bright little stage for their puppet show in the village of Lizvale, Castle Carn above and beyond the town. Francis and Leanna are getting even better at it, a puppet on each hand, Francis being the husband and the dog, Faro, Leanna the wife and baby girl -- the forerunner of the sitcom.

A crowd of spectators watch the show with delight, the other children circulating among them with bowls for donations, gathering quite a few coins.

When the show concludes and Francis and Leanna have taken their bows to the clapping and whistling, Beth steps to the front.

BETH  
 And now for the pleasure of the  
 inhabitants of this lovely village  
 of Lizvale, the Southland Players  
 would like to entertain you with the  
 songs of Aileen Evans, the voice of  
 heaven itself.

Aylin somewhat shyly steps in front of the stage and begins singing, the crowd almost instantly captivated by her wondrous voice. When she finishes, she receives an enthusiastic response, the others moving quickly to get even more coins.

Jack looks in his flowing bowl and makes a face at Beth who tries not to look overly happy.

Aylin begins another song, the crowd going quiet to watch and listen.

EXT. POND IN WOODS - AFTERNOON

Vingaron and his men follow the bloodhounds down to where the children camped by the pond in the woods, the dogs sniffing about.

Vingaron and the soldiers examine the camping spot, the TRACKER looking closely at the ground where the children had their fire though they tried to clear the ground when they left.

TRACKER

There was a fire built here, but not very recently. They tried to hide it but didn't do very well.

VINGARON

How recently?

TRACKER

It's hard to say but several weeks I'd guess.

VINGARON

I commend their taste. This is a lovely spot. They seem to be on the move though. I hope they know Emdar is no longer after them. It could make them complacent.

TRACKER

Even if they keep moving camp, the dogs should find them.

VINGARON

If they're still here at all. We shall see.

EXT. LIZVALE INN - EVENING

ESTABLISHING SHOT of the Lizvale village INN with sleeping quarters above it.

INT. LIZVALE INN DINING HALL - EVENING

The children are at a table in the crowded dining room of the inn, their table overflowing with consumed food and drink. Only Francis picks at the remnants, the others sitting back satiated.

JACK

Now this is the life. A full belly,  
tonight a soft bed.

WILLIAM

This was an inspired idea. Our choir  
to draw them in, James and Suzanne  
to amuse them, and then Aileen with  
that magical voice. Here's to our  
bright future.

They all raise their cups in toast and drink.

LEANNA

It's so much fun.

Francis raises his hand with a cloth napkin over it to  
Leanna's face and uses his stage voice:

FRANCIS

Sure, you think it's fun, wenchie.  
What do you have to do but putter  
around the house all day while I...

LEANNA

(in her stage voice)  
...drink yourself silly in the tavern,  
useless man!

FRANCIS

Faro! Nip her, nip her.

He barks like Faro the dog and the others laugh.

A couple at another table who were at the show clap for them,  
Francis and Leanna giving them a bow.

Another SHOW-GOER comes over to their table.

SHOW-GOER

I want to tell you all how good you  
were.

They all thank him. He turns to Aylin.

SHOW-GOER (CONT'D)

And your voice -- it was... I don't  
think there are words for it.

AYLIN

Thank you. You're very kind.

SHOW-GOER

No, it's just the truth. I've never  
heard anything like it.

(MORE)

SHOW-GOER (CONT'D)

You have a huge future in front of you, young miss. You should be in London.

JACK

Well, we're from the south and came through there, but we're just putting the show together, practicing a bit up here. We'll get back there soon.

SHOW-GOER

The Southland Players and Aileen Evans are going to be known all over someday. I'm glad to have been here before it costs a fortune to see you in the theater.

(to Aylin)

Good luck. I hope I get to see you again Aileen Evans -- Princess Aileen.

He's clearly infatuated with Aylin who smiles at him as they all thank him again and he moves off.

BETH

(to Aylin)

You're getting crazy fans already, Princess Aileen.

Aylin looks down in thought.

FLASHBACK

Aylin sees Lord Throop asking her, "Does the name Princess Aylon mean anything to you?" Instantly she again sees her mother singing with her in the cabin of the ship.

BACK TO SCENE

AYLIN

(concerned)

I'm not sure it's such a good thing people know of my singing. He heard me sing. If word should reach him...

JACK

No, that's silly. Up here in the north country he'll never find us.

AYLIN

(to herself)

Princess Aileen -- Princess Aylon.

LEANNA

Changing names?



Aylin shakes her head and decides to tell them.

AYLIN

Just before...you-know-who...did what he did to me, he said he heard singing like mine only once before and asked me if the name Princess Aylon meant anything to me. It did.

WILLIAM

Who's Princess Aylon?

AYLIN

I don't know, but when he asked me, I had a vision of a woman singing with me -- when I was younger. It would have been before the woods.

Tears come to Aylin's eyes.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

I wish I could remember. I think she was dear to me.

LEANNA

Princess Aileen and Princess Aylon. They do go together.

MAUDE

Maybe you really are a princess.

The others find it kind of amusing, but Aylin is consumed by trying uselessly to remember. She's frustrated, and scared for some reason she doesn't know.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

Vingaron and his men follow the dogs out of the woods to the orphanage vegetable garden. They stop.

VINGARON

And home again, home again, hippity hop. So much fun.

VINGARON'S AIDE

What now, my lord?

He looks back into the forest and considers.

VINGARON

The forest is a dead end. They've gone.

VINGARON'S AIDE

But where, sire?

VINGARON

There's the question we must answer.  
 Methinks it will be a grand tour.  
 That way lies the sea, and since  
 they don't have a ship, we head  
 inland, scour the villages.  
 (to the dog handler)  
 Put the dogs in the wagon. They'll  
 be of no use for a time.

The dog handler begins gathering the dogs as Vingaron and the others set off towards the village at a fast clip.

EXT. STREET IN LIZVALE - DAY

Aylin concludes her solo in front of their stage and the audience applauds enthusiastically. Beth steps to the front.

BETH

The Southland Players!

The whole group takes a bow and the audience applauds them.

BETH (CONT'D)

You've been a wonderful audience and we so much appreciate the generosity this village of Lizvale has shown us. We'll be here for the next two days offering our show at the same time, so we hope you'll revisit us and tell all your friends. Thank you all so very much.

The audience applauds again and then starts to depart as the children go to take down their stage.

When the children get behind the stage, Castle Carn is visible behind them. Francis is eager to judge their take.

FRANCIS

How much did we get?

BETH

I think we should buy some new clothes.

LEANNA

Oh, I like that idea.

AYLIN

I want Tick to have a really good meal.

William rubs the horse's nose.

WILLIAM

See Tick? You have good friends.

MAUDE

I like this village. I wouldn't mind staying here awhile.

ERIK

We could make our headquarters here and go out to the other villages and come back.

The others consider it.

AYLIN

I don't know if we should remain in any one place too long.

MAUDE

We're far away. They wouldn't look for us way out here. They're probably not looking at all anymore.

WILLIAM

It would be nice to rest for a time. Tick could have his own stall in the stables.

FRANCIS

And we could build a better stage, new puppets.

JACK

Let's go to the inn and have a meal and think about it.

They all turn to tearing down the stage.

Aylin looks up at the castle.

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

Castle Carn is a stronghold.

BACK TO SCENE

She gives a small shake of her head and turns to help the others.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Vingaron and his men are on a street in front of the local sheriff's building in a village, talking with the SHERIFF.

SHERIFF

No, my lord. Eight children traveling on their own. I've had no word of such a thing, but I'll ask in my rounds.

VINGARON

Four boys and four girls. One of the girls sings quite well I've been told.

SHERIFF

I will include that information.

VINGARON

They suffered a miscarriage of justice and the king wants to help them. We'll be traveling north and west and enquiring in each village. If you should find them, please hold them and get word. I will see that it's worth your while.

SHERIFF

Be assured I will, my lord.

VINGARON

Thank you, sheriff.

He and his men mount their horses and ride off, the wagon with the dogs bringing up the rear. The sheriff looks at the dogs with apprehension and watches the group head off.

SHERIFF

(to himself)

King Mordant wants to help someone?  
That would be a first.

He turns and heads inside.

EXT. LIZVALE VILLAGE SHOP - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of a village shop selling women's clothing.

INT. LIZVALE VILLAGE SHOP - CONTINUOUS

The girls are looking through the dresses for sale. Aylin comes out of a dressing area in a beautiful dress.

BETH

Robyn, that's beautiful. You look like a princess now.

AYLIN

It's awfully expensive.

MAUDE

We all get to buy one thing we shouldn't. I think you should get that.

LEANNA

That's a must for you. I'm getting this which costs even more!

BETH

Caution to the winds. We're rich!

The girls are having a wonderful time.

EXT. STREET IN LIZVALE - LATER

The boys have set up the stage as the girls come up wearing their new outfits, carrying their old ones. The boys are also dressed in new outfits of a strange variety. Erik looks like a soldier sort of, Francis in a foppish outfit, Jack in some sort of woodsman/archer thing, Willian the only one in a semi-normal nice new suit. They all exclaim over what the others are wearing.

JACK

(to Aylin)

I can't believe how beautiful you look.

AYLIN

(shyly to Jack)

Thank you. You look nice, too.

Jack just stares at her with love in his eyes and Aylin smiles and has to look away. Beth notices and shakes her head with a smile.

A crowd is already gathering, anticipating the show and the children notice.

WILLIAM

Look at this. We're already getting a crowd.

LEANNA

We keep doing this well I'm getting more new dresses.

The Show-goer is back in the crowd and begins clapping to get the show started, staring at Aylin as others join in clapping.

JACK

(to Aylin)

There's your most devoted fan.

BETH

I think she already had her most devoted fan.

She looks at Jack amused then says to Aylin:

BETH (CONT'D)

You two will have lovely children some day.

AYLIN

Oh, stop.

Jack moves off scowling, Beth laughing.

WILLIAM

Showtime, fellow players.

They all head towards the front of the stage to sing as a choir, the crowd clapping enthusiastically.

EXT. ADJOINING STREET IN LIZVALE - MOMENTS LATER

As the children sing, an expensive carriage pulled by four well-groomed white horses stops a ways off where whoever is in it can watch the show. Four mounted horsemen take up positions around it to guard the occupant. Up next to the driver is a well-dressed FOOTMAN.

EXT. STREET IN LIZVALE - LATER

The crowd is applauding wildly as Aylin waves at everyone having sung her final song, the others returning to the showbooth with the overflowing bowls of coins.

ANGLE ON

Among the crowd is the footman from the carriage who waits while various people tell the children how much they liked the show. Finally, the footman approaches the children.

FOOTMAN

Excuse me. Lady MacSanvale would love to meet you all.

(gestures towards the carriage)

Could you come with me for just a moment?

The children look at the carriage and then one another.

WILLIAM

We'd love to.

MAUDE

It would be an honor.

EXT. ADJOINING STREET IN LIZVALE - MOMENTS LATER

They follow the footman up to the carriage. The footman opens the door and assists the beautiful LADY MACSANVALE out, the children standing shyly to meet the royal woman.

LADY MACSANVALE

I wanted to tell you all how much I enjoyed your show.

They all quietly thank my-lady.

LADY MACSANVALE (CONT'D)

Your singing is just lovely and the puppet show was so amusing.

(to Francis and Leanna)

You've very talented.

The two of them are pleased.

LADY MACSANVALE (CONT'D)

(to Aylin)

Your singing is exquisite. Lovelier than anything I've ever heard.

AYLIN

Oh, thank you so much, Lady MacSanvale. It's an honor to meet you.

LADY MACSANVALE

I'm wondering -- Lord MacSanvale is away until this evening. But I would like him to see your offering. Do you think it would be possible that you all could visit us at Castle Carn tomorrow? Perhaps around five in the afternoon? We can have a meal and then, if you'd be so kind, you could present your show for my husband.

WILLIAM

Lady MacSanvale, nothing would please us more.

JACK

Yes, you can be assured we'd think it the highest of honors.

LADY MACSANVALE

Oh, that's lovely. Thank you so much. Just present yourselves at the gate, I'll leave word you're coming. Is there anything particular you'd like for the meal?

FRANCIS

We enjoy steak.

BETH

Anything would be fine, your Ladyship.  
We'll leave that up to you.

LADY MACSANVALE

(smiling at Francis)

If you enjoy steak, that's what we  
shall have.

(to the others)

Is that all right with everyone?

They all find it fine.

LADY MACSANVALE (CONT'D)

Wonderful. We look forward to having  
you in Castle Carn.

WILLIAM

We look forward to being there, my  
lady.

William bows and the others follow his lead. Lady MacSanvale is helped back in the carriage by the footman who climbs aboard and the carriage and the mounted soldiers move off.

EXT. STREET IN LIZVALE - CONTINUOUS

The children head back for the stage, watching the carriage go, a crowd still milling about.

JACK

How about that?

WILLIAM

We get to perform for royalty.

MAUDE

I'm so glad we had our new clothes.

LEANNA

We'll have to get something else new  
to wear at the castle.

FRANCIS

For our meal of royal steak.

They begin taking down the stage, many people still about.

EXT. ADJOINING STREET IN LIZVALE - CONTINUOUS

Vingaron and his mounted men appear, stopping where the carriage was, looking towards the children, a smile on Vingaron's face.



VINGARON

Well that wasn't so difficult after all. Right out in the open like that.

Vingaron watches the children and the crowd still milling about around them.

VINGARON'S AIDE

Quite a following they seem to have.

Vingaron considers.

VINGARON

No sense stirring up the town. We'll take them tonight in private when it's quiet.

(to his aide)

Stay with them, find where they're staying, we'll put up the horses and be at the inn.

VINGARON'S AIDE

Yes, sire.

Vingaron leads the others away, the caged dog wagon at the rear.

The aide dismounts and leads his horse to a spot to keep watch on the children who are packing up their cart with their things.

INT. MAIN CABIN - EVENING

FLASHBACK to Aylin singing with her mother in the cabin of the ship when suddenly it shakes and Aylon looks alarmed.

AYLON

Hide and stay quiet Aylin. Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid.

Aylin is very frightened and everything in the cabin goes dark.

INT. INN BEDROOM OF THE GIRLS - CONTINUOUS

Aylin opens her eyes to see a soldier hovering over her in the darkness. She starts to sit up and the soldier clamps his hand over her mouth and picks her up.

She sees other soldiers carrying the other girls, all of them squirming uselessly. The soldiers head out of the room with them.

EXT. STREET NEAR THE INN - MOMENTS LATER

On a dark and quiet street, Vingaron is waiting by the caged dog wagon, the boys inside it sitting as far from the door as possible looking terrified, some soldiers guarding them. The other soldiers bring the girls up, hands over their mouths.

VINGARON

(to the girls)

I've told your friends -- any trouble, any sounds, and heads will be sliced off instantly. All of you understand?

The girls nod.

VINGARON (CONT'D)

Do exactly as I say if you want to live.

He nods to the soldiers who stuff them in the wagon with the boys, the girls keeping quiet, scurrying to sit in a group next to the boys, Aylin next to Jack.

Vingaron and the soldiers stare at them all a moment.

VINGARON (CONT'D)

You're doing well. Keep on that way and you'll stay alive.

He and the soldiers mount their horses while the WAGON DRIVER puts the padlock on the door and makes the three dogs get up in the driver's seat with him.

WAGON DRIVER

(to the dogs)

Lie down. Lie down!

He bats at the dogs who obey and plunk on the floor, one getting up in the seat next to the driver. The group move off into the darkness.

In the wagon, the children look at one another in fright, Jack taking Aylin's hand.

Beth taps Aylin on the shoulder and when Aylin looks at her, Beth gestures with her fingers moving out from her mouth, silently mouthing the words, "Sing to the animals."

Aylin looks at her in surprise, now knowing that Beth knows her secret. She shakes her head and says silently, "Not yet." She puts her finger to her lips for Beth to say no more and Beth nods though they look at one another knowingly.

Jack wonders what that was all about, but none of the children want to do anything to have their head sliced off.

EXT. CAMP IN THICK WOODS - NIGHT

Vingaron and the soldiers have made camp in a woods thicker than the one by the orphanage and are getting ready for sleep. Vingaron comes to the wagon, the children stretched out though far from comfortable.

VINGARON

You've done well, my little ones. I know you are frightened and it's well that you are. But you just keep on doing what I say and you will live to see another day. Sleep well, if you are able.

He smiles at them which is not at all reassuring and heads for his camp bed.

The children all look at one another, relieved he's gone.

EXT. CAMP IN THICK WOODS - LATER

It's the middle of the night, the campfire having gone out, all quiet. The children are lying down but no one's asleep. Aylin slowly sits up followed by Beth and then the others. Aylin puts her finger to her lips again to caution them to keep quiet. She COUGHS LOUDLY once. They all watch, but none of the soldiers stir, one of the dogs sleeping near the wagon tied to a tree looking up at them, the dog handler by the dogs sound asleep.

Aylin and Beth look at one another and then Aylin begins very quietly singing in the magical tongue. All except Beth look in wonder and fright, Beth shaking her head and holding her finger to her lips to caution them to keep silent.

The campsite begins to glow golden and Aylin sees the forest animals in the night stopping and coming closer to watch and listen. The dog that was awake sits up staring and then the other two wake and join him in watching Aylin.

AYLIN (V.O.)

Hello, my friends. Again, we need your help. We are in danger and need to leave this place and these men and not have them follow us.

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

A ground squirrel, one among others, is watching intently.

BACK TO SCENE

AYLIN (V.O.)

Ground squirrel, you must carefully get the key to this padlock from the man sleeping by the dogs. It is in his front pocket. You must bring it to me and not alert anyone.

The ground squirrel begins creeping towards the wagon driver.

AYLIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

(to the dogs)

When the men awaken and find us gone, you must lead them that way...

She points in a direction into the woods.

The children are staring in amazement at Aylin, looking where she's pointing and seeing nothing.

AYLIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

They must search for us that way. Act as if you are about to come upon us. Lead them that way as long as they will follow.

The ground squirrel is cautiously sticking its head into the driver's pocket and comes out with the key that rattles slightly on its chain. The squirrel stops, but the man doesn't stir and the squirrel drags it away and gets a good grip on it then climbs up the wagon wheel and through the bars inside.

The children watch in amazement but make no move, looking from it to Aylin, Beth again cautioning them to keep quiet.

Aylin takes the key from the squirrel, petting its head with one finger.

AYLIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You did well. Thank you. You are saving us.

She looks back out.

AYLIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

You are all saving us. I will repay you someday if I can. Thank you all again, and know that my heart bursts with love for you all.

She stops singing and the golden glow fades, the animals moving off, the dogs turning and lying back down. The squirrel gives her one last look before scampering away.

The children are going out of their minds with wonder, but they keep quiet.

Aylin takes the key and quietly goes to the door, reaching around to open the lock. She takes it off the hasp and quietly pushes open the door. The others line up to follow her out, all of them quietly getting down to the ground. Aylin leads them off cautiously avoiding any of the men. They move off into the forest, glancing back to make sure they're getting away.

They disappear in the darkness, the camp unaware they've escaped, one dog looking at them leave before going back to sleep.

EXT. THICK WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

The children are moving faster having gotten some distance off from the soldiers. It's so dark, it's difficult for them to move without catching on jutting limbs and fallen branches. Francis runs into a limb with his head.

FRANCIS

Oooww.

BETH

Ssshhh.

They push on a bit and then Aylin stops.

JACK

(whispering)

What is it?

Aylin begins singing softly and in a moment fireflies begin to gather ahead of them close to the ground, soon so many their pathway ahead is lit up. The other children look at one another.

WILLIAM

Some time we're going to have to  
hear what this is all about.

JACK

She is the sorceress of the woods --  
a good one.

Aylin stops singing and smiles at them and they set off following the fireflies' path, the going much easier.

EXT. WOODS NEAR LIZVALE - MORNING

The children are hidden in the woods looking across the fields towards Lizvale.

MAUDE

We're crazy for circling back to here.

ERIK

Everything we have is there -- our money, our clothes.

WILLIAM

Tick.

JACK

(to Aylin)

You're sure the dogs will be leading the soldiers the wrong way?

Aylin nods.

JACK (CONT'D)

Well it's early yet. They'll be far away still. We have time.

ERIK

Aylin, couldn't you make the animals kill the men if you wanted?

AYLIN

I don't know -- I've never tried. I don't use it for that. I never will.

BETH

Aylin is a good sorceress.

AYLIN

I'm not a sorceress. I don't know how it works or why I have it. But I'm not a sorceress.

LEANNA

But many would think this magic evil and punish her. We will never speak of it to anyone. Understand?

They all agree.

AYLIN

I wonder if Lord and Lady MacSanvale would help us. Surely in their own lands they wouldn't just let a group of children be taken by soldiers.

ERIK

That man will just repeat the lies that Lord Throop told everyone.

WILLIAM

It seems incredible that Lord Throop would go to all this trouble over what happened.

AYLIN

I think there is more to it than we know. When he saw my birthmark, he started choking me. It was as if it meant something to him.

JACK

Can I see it?

BETH

You would ask that.

JACK

No, nothing like that.

(to Aylin)

I'm sorry. Would it be too immodest?

Aylin hesitates, then pulls aside her dress to show them the birthmark above her breast.

JACK (CONT'D)

It's nice looking.

WILLIAM

Why would that make him want to kill you?

No one knows and Aylin covers up again.

AYLIN

I'm sorry I've gotten you all into this.

JACK

You keep forgetting -- together, always for each other.

MAUDE

That's right. We're a family now.

WILLIAM

We stick together for better or worse.

LEANNA

(to Aylin)

And we get to be family with you, the you-know-who of the woods. That's better than if you were a princess.

AYLIN

Thank you all so much. I love you.

They all appreciate one another.

ERIK

Well, if we're going, let's go.

They all take a breath then leave the trees heading for the town, all of them looking around cautiously as they move.

EXT. STREET NEAR THE INN - MOMENTS LATER

There are no people about and they watch cautiously as they approach the inn. But suddenly from a sidestreet Vingaron and his men ride out and head towards them. They try to flee, but the soldiers surround them, herding them into a group.

Vingaron smiles down at them.

VINGARON

That was quite the trick, getting out of the wagon. And some time you'll have to tell me how you left that scent for the dogs to follow when you went the other way.

ERIK

(defiantly)

Why do you have dogs if you don't follow them?

TRACKER

No broken trail, while the other way...

VINGARON

(to the Tracker)

Oh, don't be giving away our secrets.

Erik suddenly flies at one of the soldiers, pulling him from his horse to crash on the ground, Erik snatching his sword from his scabbard.

The other soldiers draw their swords and circle, Erik turning, but he obviously will be cut down quickly, the soldier pulled from his horse rising and drawing a dagger though wary of the sword Erik is wielding.

Suddenly, Aylin grabs the sword from Erik and stands between him and the soldier with the dagger and puts the blade against her own neck.

AYLIN

(to Vingaron)

Leave them or I'll kill myself.

It's me you want, I'll go with you.

(MORE)



AYLIN (CONT'D)

They did nothing. Let them be, or  
you'll never have me alive.

She raises her head with the blade against her throat.

BETH

Robyn, don't!

JACK

No!

VINGARON

Everyone stop!

Vingaron gestures for his men to back off and for the soldier  
on foot to remount his horse.

The soldier glares at Erik but does as he's told.

VINGARON (CONT'D)

(to Aylin)

Fair maiden you are right and brave.  
They mean nothing to us. Drop the  
sword and they may go.

AYLIN

Of course I trust your word. But  
they go then I'll drop the sword.

Vingaron smiles and gestures for his men to move aside.

VINGARON

(to the other children)

Run now and be thankful your friend  
is so generous.

JACK

I'm not going anywhere.

AYLIN

(emphatically)

Go, run! Lady MacSanvale is waiting  
for you. I'll be all right.

She sings a few words of the magical tongue, Vingaron's horses  
instantly noting it though it appears to the soldiers the  
horses have just gotten spooked a bit. The children get it.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

Go to the castle and be safe. I  
will face my fate.

The children look at one another then move out between the  
soldiers cautiously, watching for a trick. When they get  
away they look back at Aylin.

AYLIN (CONT'D)  
(calling to them)  
Run now!

They do as she says, fleeing down the street and around the corner.

Robyn takes a breath and, handle first, offers the sword to the soldier Erik took it from, the soldier taking it and admiring her courage.

Vingaron the Viking rides next to her, reaches down and easily pulls her onto his saddle in front of him.

VINGARON  
You are admirable, fair one. I take  
little pleasure in this.  
(to the soldiers)  
We ride!

They all turn and ride fast out of the town.

Aylin looks back and sighs. Her adventure is just beginning and even with her powers she doesn't know how she will fare.

EXT. STREET IN LIZVALE - MOMENTS LATER

The children straggle to a stop and Jack peeks around a corner.

P.O.V. JACK - CONTINUOUS

The soldiers and Aylin are moving fast across the open fields beyond the town.

BACK TO SCENE

He steps out and the others join him.

P.O.V. CHILDREN - CONTINUOUS

The soldiers ride away fast.

BACK TO SCENE

JACK  
Will we see her again?

BETH  
We will. She'll use her powers.

ERIK  
I wish she'd use them to kill them.

LEANNA

She won't do that, but she will return and they'll be chasing us again. We need allies.

WILLIAM

Robyn was right. They kidnapped us in the night because they couldn't let anyone here know what they were doing.

MAUDE

Lady MacSanvale knows and likes us. We must go to the castle and tell her what's happened.

JACK

That's right. She'll help us.

ERIK

Or have us arrested if Lord Throop's story is believed.

JACK

We don't tell it. We'll be just the Southland Players with these criminals pursuing us.

FRANCIS

Maybe we should just run for the woods again.

BETH

Robyn told us to go to the castle. That's where she'll go. We have to be there for her.

WILLIAM

Then let's go while there's time. Robyn won't wait long to work her magic.

JACK

Be safe, Robyn. Come back to us.

P.O.V. CHILDREN - CONTINUOUS

The soldiers are mere specks in the distance.

BACK TO SCENE

The children turn and hurry off for the castle.

EXT. ROAD IN WOODS - LATER

The soldiers ride more slowly in a line on a road through the woods, Vingaron in the middle of the line to be protected by those ahead and behind.

VINGARON

(to Aylin)

Do you have any idea why this is happening to you?

AYLIN

Lies have been told. Lord Throop claimed I assaulted him when it was the other way round. This is unjust.

VINGARON

(beat)

I admire you. Perhaps you should be queen.

Aylin looks up at Vingaron in puzzlement.

VINGARON (CONT'D)

(smiling)

I must keep my tongue to keep my head. But you are admirable.

AYLIN

Thank you for letting the others go. They played no part in this.

VINGARON

It might not have been wise, but Vingaron does not kill children needlessly.

AYLIN

Let's hope that includes me.

VINGARON

I will not kill you.

(quietly)

But I cannot speak for others.

Aylin takes a breath begins to sing softly and her world glows golden.

VINGARON (CONT'D)

That is very pretty, but what is the tongue?

Aylin leans and grasps the horse's neck.

AYLIN (V.O.)

Oh horses who ride with me. I need you to dismount the men who are on you, all at once when I give the word. They would hurt me and I must escape. When you throw them from you, run down this road and don't stop until you must. But mighty steed who I cling to, stay with me that I might ride to freedom the other way, back from where we came. I thank you all for doing this and saving my life. As always, I will try to repay you if I can. Know that I love you all very much.

VINGARON

(to Aylin)

I would have you stop singing, fair one. We need our ears to hear anything that we might need to hear.

AYLIN (V.O.)

Oh horses, this is the moment. Throw the men and let me ride to freedom!

Suddenly, all the horses rear up and spin, Vingaron's horse careful not to dislodge Aylin who clings to its neck. The surprised soldiers are thrown to the ground save for one whose foot catches in a stirrup and is dragged for a time as his horse gallops down the road along with the other riderless horses, the soldier finally falling free.

Aylin turns and pushes Vingaron who's held on just a bit longer as his horse wants to keep Aylin on him, Vingaron thrown and landing with a thud. His horse moves off the road a bit to keep Aylin safe as she rights herself and gets set in the saddle, The horse then moves quickly back through the trees and onto the road up from where the shocked soldiers are getting up, their horses galloping away from them down the road.

Vingaron runs towards his horse, but the animal sprints away, Aylin looking back once at Vingaron.

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

Vingaron is straggling to a halt, shock on his face and those of his men.

BACK TO SCENE

Aylin turns and bends down like a jockey to stay on the galloping horse, the wind blowing back her hair. She pets the animal on its neck and smiles as she races up the road.

INT. CASTLE CARN - LATER

The children are being listened to by Lord and Lady MacSanvale who are stunned by what they're hearing.

BETH

We were just fortunate this caged wagon's lock was not set right so we could escape. But then to be surprised right in the town and have Aileen kidnapped that way!

MAUDE

If she hadn't been so brave to threaten to kill herself to set us free, they would have killed us, I think.

MACSANVALE

Can this possibly be true? What manner of criminal would attempt such a thing here in Lizvale? This is outrageous.

JACK

It's true, my lord. I just hope Aileen's escapes. She's very clever.

LADY MACSANVALE

We must set troops to pursue these men.

MacSanvale gets up to start the chase.

MACSANVALE

We will get to the bottom of this.

Before MacSanvale can get to the door, it opens and a RETAINER comes into the room, shutting the door behind him.

RETAINER

Excuse me, my lord.

MACSANVALE

(distracted)  
What is it?

RETAINER

A young woman has ridden in. She says she is with these Southland Players.

JACK

Aileen!

BETH

Oh, thank god.

MACSANVALE

Bring her in at once.

RETAINER

She is here, my lord.

The retainer opens the door and two soldiers accompany Aylin into the room. The children run and hug her, Lord and Lady MacSanvale coming to her.

BETH

They're going to help us...  
 (emphasizing her name)  
 ...Aileen. You're safe.

Aylin gives a slight bow.

AYLIN

Your lordship, your ladyship.

MACSANVALE

We were told you were taken by mounted men.

AYLIN

I escaped, my lord. The horse I was being carried on was frightened by something and when he reared, the man was thrown to the ground and I rode away.

The others smile knowing what happened.

LADY MACSANVALE

They didn't pursue you?

AYLIN

No, my lady. I come alone. But I fear we need your help. The others have told you what these men have done?

MACSANVALE

I can scarcely credit these stories.

AYLIN

They are true, my lord.

LADY MACSANVALE

But why would these men do this to your troop of players?

Aylin looks at the others, all of them worried she'll start telling the truth, William shaking his head slightly.

AYLIN  
(to her friends)  
We must. It's time.

LADY MACSANVALE  
(gently)  
Time for the truth?

Aylin looks at her and then her friends.

BETH  
(to Aylin)  
Yes.

Aylin turns to Lord and Lady MacSanvale.

AYLIN  
They are pursuing us because I was unjustly accused of assaulting Lord Throop.

MACSANVALE  
(surprised)  
Lord Throop?

AYLIN  
Yes sire. We are orphans from the orphanage in Menkwood. The names we are using now are not our own. They were to keep us safe.

The others shuffle guiltily.

AYLIN (CONT'D)  
It's me they are pursuing. The others did nothing. They're protecting me.

ERIK  
(defiantly, as usual)  
We all go together.

LADY MACSANVALE  
(to Aylin)  
What did you do?

AYLIN  
Our choir sang for Lord Throop in Menkwood castle and he had me brought alone to his quarters. He assaulted me then lied about my defending myself. He said I assaulted him and stole from him. I did no such thing.

(MORE)



AYLIN (CONT'D)

I was defending my own virtue. He hadn't the right, my lady.

LADY MACSANVALE

Certainly not.

WILLIAM

And he's been chasing us and set these men to kidnap us in the night.

FRANCIS

And then right in the town.

MAUDE

And If Robyn hadn't been so brave...

LADY MACSANVALE

(to Aylin)

Your name is Robyn?

AYLIN

The one I took when I joined the orphanage, my lady.

(to Lord MacSanvale)

I will defend myself from Lord Throop's accusations before any lawful tribunal, sire.

MACSANVALE

Lord Throop is not doing this. He's been executed at court as a traitor to the crown.

The children are surprised but not unhappy to hear it.

ERIK

He got what he deserved.

LADY MACSANVALE

You said Robyn is the name you took when you joined the orphanage. What is your given name?

AYLIN

I don't know, my lady. I've suffered some injury that's robbed me of my memory. I was alone for five years before they took me in at the orphanage. I can't remember who I truly am or where my home might be.

MACSANVALE

You've had amnesia for five years?

AYLIN

It's been difficult, my lord.

MACSANVALE

(looking at Aylin)

So why do these unknown men sneak into our lands to pursue you so brazenly? Not for some petty accusation by a traitor. Something odd goes on here. Someone else wants you. Tell me everything. Be not ashamed. Leave nothing out. Why did Lord Throop take interest in you to begin with?

AYLIN

(beat)

I thought he wanted my honor, your lordship. But there were oddities. He asked about my singing and if the name Princess Aylon meant anything to me.

MacSanvale is shocked.

MACSANVALE

Princess Aylon?

AYLIN

When he said her name, I saw a woman. I see her singing with me when I was much younger.

LORD MACSANVALE

But you don't know her?

AYLIN

I remember only bits and pieces. Visions of her have come to me again. I think she was someone dear to me.

LORD MACSANVALE

(astonished)

Princess Aylon.

AYLIN

I was shocked when Lord Throop spoke her name and I saw her, my lord.

MACSANVALE

What did he do after asking you about Princess Aylon?

AYLIN

It was awful, my lord.

(MORE)

AYLIN (CONT'D)

He told me to disrobe. I protested  
that I wasn't of age...

LADY MACSANVALE

Certainly not.

AYLIN

He attacked me and tore at my clothes.

LADY MACSANVALE

This is terrible. He hadn't...

Lord MacSanvale gestures for her to wait.

LORD MACSANVALE

(to Aylin)

Go on.

AYLIN

He saw my birthmark and stared and  
said "my life will be forfeit."  
That's when he began to choke me. I  
fought for my life and hit him with  
a pitcher. This is true, my lord.  
I did not assault him except to save  
my life. And I did not steal from  
him. These were lies.

MacSanvale stares at Aylin with a disbelieving expression.

MACSANVALE

It can't be. Surely, it cannot be.

LADY MACSANVALE

What, my lord? What is it?

MACSANVALE

(to Aylin)

Young lady, I would see this  
birthmark, if you would be so kind.

Aylin doesn't know what's going on, but shyly she parts her  
dress and reveals the heart-shaped birthmark. Everyone looks  
at it. MacSanvale looks at her.

MACSANVALE (CONT'D)

May I have leave to touch it?

Aylin is surprised, but nods and steps towards him. Gently,  
he runs his finger across it. He looks at Aylin with an  
awed expression then drops to one knee and bends his head.

MACSANVALE (CONT'D)

Your majesty. You are my queen.

(MORE)

MACSANVALE (CONT'D)

I pledge to you my life and lands.  
All hail the queen!

Everyone else is utterly shocked.

WILLIAM

The queen?

LADY MACSANVALE

Lord MacSanvale...

MACSANVALE

(to Aylin)

I would have your permission to rise,  
your majesty.

AYLIN

Who? Me?

MACSANVALE

May I rise, your majesty?

AYLIN

Of course, yes.

MacSanvale gets up and still looks in awe.

LADY MACSANVALE

I think we should have some  
explanation, my lord.

MACSANVALE

(to Aylin)

Your majesty, there is no doubt.  
You bear the royal birthmark. You  
are the daughter of Princess Aylon,  
granddaughter of King Alek. You are  
lawful heir to the throne held by  
King Mordant. He is not the king.  
You are our queen.

BETH

(to Aylin)

I knew it! Robyn, you really are a  
princess -- a queen!

The other children are amazed and happy. Aylin is stunned.

AYLIN

Princess Aylon. She was my mother.

MACSANVALE

There can be no doubt, your highness.

Aylin is almost frantic, turning and holding her head as she remembers, glad and having her heart torn open at the same time.

AYLIN

The woman on the ship who sang with me -- she was my mother. She sank in the waters with the... It was my mother.

MACSANVALE

I knew her at court, your highness. She had the voice of the angels, just as I'm told you do. But the royal heart marks you as her daughter. Princess Aylon was the daughter of King Alek. The day the king passed on from his illness, Princess Aylon and Princess Aylin were lost at sea. There were no other legitimate heirs and in the interregal Mordant seized the throne.

Aylin stares off and grows weak. She looks for a seat, Jack noticing and helping her to one.

JACK

What's wrong, Robyn? I mean Queen...  
(to MacSanvale)  
What's her name?

MACSANVALE

Queen Aylin.

LEANNA

It was like Aileen.

MAUDE

This is so incredible.

Aylin looks at them all then Lord MacSanvale.

AYLIN

My mother wasn't lost at sea and my grandfather didn't die of illness. They were murdered. We were in our cabin -- Lord Throop and soldiers came in. He told my mother Lord Mordant had poisoned my grandfather. He had us brought on deck and told the soldiers, "Kill them, the king commands it." They stabbed my mother right in front of me.

She looks down and cries. Lady MacSanvale puts her arms around her to comfort her, everyone growing quiet.

Aylin forces herself to stop crying.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

I remember. I remember it all. My mother...

Aylin bites her lip to not cry again. Everyone is quiet for a moment.

MACSANVALE

But you survived. Against all, you have returned to us. That is the miracle. And we will put this right. You will have your kingdom returned to you. You will have your crown -- or we will perish in the fight.

AYLIN

I would not have you do this.

MACSANVALE

Forgive me, your majesty, but for justice to prevail in the world, those who value it must sometimes fight for it. And this is one of those times.

MacSanvale is resolute and grim looking, lost in his thoughts of the turmoil bound to come.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of an open meadow with woods on three sides, the mass of troops of King Mordant ready for battle, Mordant looking kingly in a jeweled crown with rubies, diamonds and emeralds sparkling from it. He's going to command from the rear, not go into battle. Vingaron is next to him looking glum as he is going to the fight.

Opposite Mordant's troops with open country behind are the forces of the northern barons sitting on their horses: MacSanvale, Easton, Macantisoir and Cruchan, backed by far fewer and more poorly equipped troops than Mordant has.

EXT. WOODS NEXT TO BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Dressed in clothes that attempt to blend with the forest are the children, everyone except Aylin carrying swords. They creep slowly and quietly up to where they can see Mordant's troops in the meadow.

FRANCIS

Robyn, if we don't get killed, can we have a really grand feast?

ERIK

If you don't shut up, the feast may  
have to be in heaven.

Aylin takes a breath and begins to sing quietly, the others watching in gleeful anticipation.

Aylin's world glows golden.

AYLIN (V.O.)

Oh my friends of the woods and meadows, the ground and the air. This is the most important time of all. The men with the sun at their backs and the woods around them have evil in their hearts. The men opposite them with the open country behind are opposing their evil. I would ask your help in driving off the evil men. I do not wish you to come to harm. I do not wish the evil men harm, only that they be scattered one from another so they may not fight as a group. Drive them from this ground away from the men of goodness and from us. Horses, throw the men who ride you from your backs and run for your homes, run and don't stop until you must. Animals of the air and soil, harass them so that they cannot think of anything but escaping you. Haunt their thoughts so that they may flee from this country and never gather again. This I ask of you, that you may help me in this hour of my need. I can feel your love in my heart and I know that you can feel my love in your's. We share this magical world forever and forever and I ask that only goodness shall ever be out companion. Go now. Help the light.

Aylin stops singing and almost instantly Mordant's troops are assaulted. The horses rear and spin, throwing the soldiers from them then turning and galloping for the woods. The foot soldiers begin to swat at the insects, bees and mosquitoes swarming. Ants crawl up their legs. Snakes slither and coil and hiss while keeping away from the men. Eagles and hawks and other birds fly out of the woods to dive and swoop among the troops who are quickly driven from any thought of battle except to escape the attack of the natural world. Wolves and foxes and a few bears appear at the edge of the woods, many in front of the children to keep any of Mordant's men from coming their way. Aylin begins singing again.

AYLIN (V.O.) (CONT'D)

Oh wolves and foxes and bears, you are too vulnerable to the men's weapons. Scare the men but keep away lest you be harmed. Place yourselves between the good men and the evil men to keep them from battle. Let the evil men flee further into the forest away from here. Thank you all for your help. You are succeeding. Know that goodness will win this day.

She stops again and the wolves and foxes and bears on the opposite side of the meadow move out to put themselves between Mordant's troops and the northern forces, the ones in front of the children staying put to protect Aylin and the others. But Mordant's men have no intention of going into battle against man or beast, running every other direction to escape in the woods.

The children watch in wonder at what's being done by their magical queen, their orphan friend Robyn.

EXT. BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Among the troops of the northern barons, complete disbelief reigns as they watch Mordant's troops flee in disarray, the larger animals down in front of their lines all turned towards Mordant's lines, clouds of bees and insects swarming over his men, the mounted troops clanking off clumsily after their horses disappearing in the woods, a formidable fighting force inexplicably routed by wild animals.

CRUCHAN

(to MacSanvale)

Are you seeing this, my lord?

MACSANVALE

I am seeing it, but I can't credit it.

EASTON

How can this be? Perhaps there is some scent they carry that drives the animals mad.

MACANTISOIR

There are things in this world we cannot know.

MACSANVALE

God wanted this young woman to reign. It will be good.



MACANTISOIR

All hail the queen.

THE OTHER BARONS

All hail the queen!

EXT. WOODS NEXT TO BATTLEFIELD - CONTINUOUS

Aylin watches Mordant's men race away into the woods.

P.O.V. AYLIN - CONTINUOUS

Mordant, clutching his jeweled crown to keep it on his head, scurries away into the trees.

BACK TO SCENE

Aylin sings once more.

AYLIN (V.O.)

Oh wolves and bears. There is one I would have you subdue, but do not risk harm to yourselves. He wears a crown of jewels, glittering stones of red and white and green. He is the cause of this evil and must be held. Cut him off alone and surround him. Hold him if you can without danger to yourselves. Let the men of goodness take him and you depart quickly. Do this for me and for the light. Thank you from my heart.

She stops singing and turns to the others.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

Time to go. Be careful in case any have come this way behind us.

ERIK

I don't think they'd care about us now. That was something to see.

BETH

And something none of us will ever talk about to others.

WILLIAM

Never.

JACK

Queen Aylin!

He bows to her.

THE OTHER CHILDREN  
Queen Aylin!

They all bow.

AYLIN  
Oh, stop it. You know who I am.

They all rise and hug her.

BETH  
We'll always love you, Robyn.

AYLIN  
And this Robyn will always love all  
of you. C'mon.

Happily, they move off through the trees.

EXT. WOODS - LATER

MacSanvale and the northern barons on their horses accompanied  
by ground troops move carefully through the woods.

MACANTISOIR  
(pointing)  
There!

P.O.V. NORTHERN BARONS - CONTINUOUS

A large bear is sitting on the back of a sobbing man, Mordant,  
his jeweled crown askew.

BACK TO SCENE

As the barons ride towards Mordant, the bear calmly gets up  
and ambles off, Mordant not moving as he keeps crying. The  
barons and the troops come up to him and look at their pitiful  
foe.

MACSANVALE  
Lord Mordant, I arrest you in the  
name of Queen Aylin for the murder  
of Princess Aylon and good King Alek,  
and the attempted murder of Queen  
Aylin which, praise god, didn't  
succeed. May god have mercy on your  
dark soul, for we shall not.

The troops move in and yank him to his feet, Mordant unable  
to support himself as he cries more heavily, the crown falling  
to the ground from his head. One of the troops picks it up  
and hands it up to Lord MacSanvale.

MACSANVALE (CONT'D)  
Bring him. It's over.

They start back the way they came.

EXT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - DAY

ESTABLISHING SHOT of Westminster Abbey where Queen Aylin is being crowned.

INT. WESTMINSTER ABBEY - CONTINUOUS

Aylin is giving the coronation oath in the crowded abbey, her throne behind her, her friends and the northern barons prominently at the front. A smiling Friar Furst stands to one side behind her, Jack and Beth further back. A small orchestra with a conductor waits to play.

AYLIN

I vow that I will preserve the peace  
of our lands and people and all living  
things that share existence.

It's a bit different than any oath they've heard before and some of them look at one another quizzically, but it's nice.

AYLIN (CONT'D)

Know that justice will prevail in  
our lands and that just laws must  
shape the behavior of all. I vow to  
maintain this justice and mercy for  
all, as long as I shall reign.

Friar Furst in splendid robes, smiling, comes to the front and calls to the assembled.

FURST

Oh citizens of our kingdom, would  
you have such a ruler?

THE ASSEMBLED

(happily and loudly)  
We wish it, and grant it!

Friar Furst turns to Aylin and anoints her with the oil.

Jack then comes forward with a pillow holding a ring, a sceptre and a rod. Furst places the ring on Aylin's finger and gives her the sceptre and rod.

Beth then comes forward with an ornate pillow holding the crown, the one that Mordant wore. On Beth's head is a simple gold tiara. Friar Furst picks up the jeweled crown to place on Aylin's head, but she stops him.

AYLIN

(to the assembled)  
I would not wear this crown.

(MORE)

AYLIN (CONT'D)

I wish it to be disassembled and its  
wealth used for the good of our  
people.

The assembled cheer their new queen's generosity.

THE ASSEMBLED

Queen Aylin! Queen Aylin!

Beth removes her simple gold tiara and offers it to Aylin.

BETH

(to Aylin)

Would your highness accept this simple  
crown?

Aylin smiles and nods. Furst takes it from Beth and Aylin  
bends and Furst places it on her head and the crowd cheers  
even louder.

Aylin waits a moment, smiling, then gestures for the assembled  
to quiet, all instantly stopping to listen.

AYLIN

It is a new day in our realm and new  
and better ways have begun. And I  
would like for all to know the love  
I feel in my heart for you, and the  
best way I know to show that is this.

She smiles at the conductor and the musicians begin to PLAY.  
Aylin SINGS in her beautiful voice, the assembled loving  
their new queen even more if possible.

INT. ROOM IN ROYAL PALACE - LATER

Aylin is dressed in more normal though still regal clothes  
when her friends in their own new clothes are escorted in by  
a SERVANT, Aylin getting up but everyone acting stiffly.

AYLIN

(to the servant)

You may leave us now, thank you.

SERVANT

As you wish, your majesty.

When the servant is gone, Jack looks at her with awe and  
bows.

JACK

You're Majesty, Queen Aylin.

The others bow.

AYLIN  
(laughing)  
Come on, you know who I am.

They all stand up and seeing Aylin's amused look relax.

AYLIN (CONT'D)  
(to Francis)  
Did you enjoy the feast?

FRANCIS  
I never thought I'd say this -- but  
I couldn't eat another bite.

They all laugh.

AYLIN  
(to everyone)  
And how are your quarters?

BETH  
Too rich. I don't know how I'm going  
to live here.

AYLIN  
We'll just have to make the best of  
it. None of you can go. I need  
your help to do this.

JACK  
Together, always for each other --  
forever.

ALL OF THEM  
Forever.

Aylin kisses Jack on the cheek, Jack thrilled, and then they  
all embrace.

FADE OUT:

THE END