**Scene 1: Execution Day - January 1649**

*[Cold January day. The scene opens outside an Elizabethan house adjacent to Whitehall Palace. A large square is filled with people. Roughly clad troops hold back the crowds. A platform with an executioner, axe, and block is in place. King Charles I, wearing a hat, cloak, and two shirts, exits the house. Soldiers surround him. The king walks rapidly towards Whitehall, catching the soldiers off guard. He slows in the square, glancing at a man in cavalier regalia on horseback. He nods and enters the palace without breaking stride.]*

**Scene 2: A Last Glimpse**

*[The cavalier near the square entrance is not alone. An elderly woman sits astride a horse beside him. Tears stream down the cavalier's face.]*

**Cavalier:** Did you see that?

**Woman:** I did. You will probably be the last friendly face he sees in this lifetime. Treasure that moment, Jimmy.

**Cavalier:** I shall. And I shall fight on until the cause is won!

**Scene 3: On the Scaffold**

*[Soldiers push crowds back from the platform. Balcony doors open, and King Charles, accompanied by a bishop, steps onto the scaffold. Charles adjusts his hat, surveys the scene, and moves forward.]*

**King Charles I:** My people, understand that I seek your freedom. If I were willing to give way to rule by the sword, I would not be here. I am a martyr for my people. I go from a corruptible to an incorruptible Crown.

*[Charles removes his hat and cloak, dons a cap, and kneels over the block to pray. The crowd falls silent.]*

**Scene 4: The Execution**

*[The camera pans over the silent crowd. The sound of an axe crashing into a block echoes. The crowd lets out a terrible groan.]*

**Scene 5: Colchester as the Siege Ends**

*[The narrow streets of 17th Century Colchester are filled with crowds. The streets are dirty, and a female figure, lower face covered by scarves, moves toward the town gate. She gets jostled, and as she falls, her skirts ride up, revealing cavalry boots. Unnoticed, she gets up, pressing against a wall, ready to defend herself. As she nears the gate, a soldier gropes her, and she continues through the gate.]*

**Scene 6: Parliamentarian Camps**

*[Outside the gates, Parliamentarian troop encampments stretch as far as the eye can see. Smoke from campfires wafts across the track. The woman navigates through crowds. A trooper harasses her, and despite her attempts to avoid him, he drags her aside.]*

**Soldier:** And where might you be going? You’ll have plenty of business when we enter tomorrow.

**Woman:** I’m going to visit my sister. I’ll be back in a day or two.

**Soldier:** Your sister doesn’t have what I have.

*[A dark figure on a white horse approaches.]*

**Horseman:** What the Hell do you think you are doing, trooper?

*[The trooper is reprimanded by the officer, Lord Fairfax.]*

**Fairfax:** You will release this woman now.

*[The trooper lets her go, and Fairfax apologizes to her before dealing with the trooper.]*

**Scene 7: Escape Through the Woodland**

*[The woman moves beyond the military encampments into the woodland. She finds relief, and as she leaves the main road, she reveals herself as a man, James.]*

**Scene 8: Reunion with Moll**

*[James arrives at a rickety shed where an elderly woman, Moll, is seated. She's taken aback by James' appearance.]*

**Elderly Woman (Moll):** James, what in the name of God are you wearing?

**James:** It was the only way I could escape. Soldiers kept trying to hire me along the way – I ended up being released by Lord Fairfax.

**Moll:** Well, you’ll have to find some proper clothes. I have a reputation to uphold.

**James:** I’ll steal some along the way.

**Moll:** Your reputation wouldn't survive being recognized like that either. Where did you get those clothes, from, a brothel?

**James:** Well, yes.

**Moll:** No wonder you were accosted! Let's get moving; we don't want to be near that ragtag army.

*[James and Moll prepare to move on.]*

**Scene 9: A Muddy Road on the Side of a Hill**

*[A small troop of five bedraggled soldiers struggles with a wagon on a muddy road. The rain pours down, limiting visibility. Planks are used to get the wagon out of the mud.]*

**Scene 10: The Copse**

*[James emerges from a thicket, revealing his identity to Moll. They prepare to confront the soldiers.]*

**James:** Moll, we'll never have a better chance!

**Moll:** That first soldier worries me; he’s still armed.

**James:** He's facing the other way, and his weapon is exposed to the rain.

*[James checks his flintlock, mounts his horse, and approaches the soldiers. Moll follows suit.]*

**Scene 11: Confrontation**

*[The soldiers, stuck in the mud, try to free their wagon. James and Moll approach, armed.]*

**Soldier:** What the hell are you all doing?

**James:** If it’s of any help, soldier, I can relieve you of some of your burden.

*[James reveals his pistol, and Moll emerges. The soldiers are outnumbered and wet.]*

**James:** In the interests of your personal survival, may I suggest, sir, that you throw your pistol onto the road.

*[The soldiers reluctantly comply, and James proposes a deal.]*

**James:** Now, if you and your men would care to line up alongside the hedge, it will enable us to conclude our day’s business and be on our way.

*[James inspects the soldiers, recognizes one from Colchester, and has Moll collect their boots.]*

**James:** Farewell, sir. You should feel grateful that it is today we stopped you, for today we are naught but civilians plying our trade. Tomorrow, I ride to rejoin my Regiment in the Kings Army, and had I been in uniform, your fates would have been somewhat different, as would the fate of your cargo.

*[James reveals his identity as Captain James Hind, leaving the soldiers with a partial explanation and departs with Moll.]*

**Scene 12**

**Scene 12: The Tavern**

*[James enters a smoky bar. The landlord wipes his hands, and a barmaid cleans a nearby table. Harlots and patrons fill the air with noise. James spots Moll, seated alone.]*

**Moll:** Ah, Jimmy, Welcome. Thomas said he’ll be here in a while, bringing in a new gang member.

*[James signals for a drink and sits down. Moll puffs on her pipe.]*

**Moll:** Thomas will be here soon. He’s bringing in a new gang member.

*[Thomas and a group of men enter. The bearded leader, Thomas, waves at James and heads their way.]*

**James:** Thomas, welcome. You’ll be needing a drink.

*[James signals for drinks for everyone.]*

**Thomas:** We need to expand the group. The Parliament fat cats have too many bodyguards when they travel.

**James:** Can't argue with that. The last few raids have been tough. I've had to do some solo raids on lesser fish. I'd rather rob the Roundheads!

*[Drinks arrive and are distributed.]*

**Thomas:** You plan our raids, but safety is on my shoulders. This is Zachary; they took his house and lands.

*[Zachary steps forward.]*

**Zachary:** Pleased to meet you. With a gang like this, we can get rid of these Roundhead scum.

*[James looks up sharply.]*

**James:** We're thieves and patriots, not assassins. Only kill if there's no other option.

**Zachary:** Whatever you say, boss.

**James:** Thomas is the boss. We rob, insult, embarrass, but we do not kill. I'll quit if we turn that corner.

*[James turns to Thomas.]*

**James:** I'm not convinced our need is so great, but you're the boss.

**Thomas:** We need more hands.

*[Thomas turns to Zachary.]*

**Thomas:** James's counsel is crucial. We only kill if absolutely necessary.

*[Zachary smirks.]*

**Zachary:** If you say so.

*[James and Zachary exchange glares.]*

**Scene 13: James's Family Cottage**

*[Inside James's cottage, a single room with various areas separated by curtains. James sits by the fire.]*

**Wife:** Why do you do these things, James? Could you not take a lawful profession?

**James:** They know who I am; I oppose them. I cannot stay in one place for long.

**Wife:** There must be professions allowing you to move around.

**James:** Perhaps, but I walk under the protection of a spell.

*[Wife is intrigued.]*

**Wife:** A spell?

**James:** Three years ago, an old woman granted me protection. A charm to keep me safe.

*[James explains the charm and its powers.]*

**Wife:** Be careful, my love.

**James:** I will. But I must leave soon; Bradshaw is to travel, and I want a word with him.

**Wife:** Take care.

*[James stretches and prepares to leave.]*

**Scene 14: Narrow Lane between Sherborne and Shaftesbury**

*[A carriage travels swiftly along a narrow lane. Two guards accompany it. James and his gang ambush the carriage.]*

**Scene 15: Inside the Carriage**

*[James confronts John Bradshaw, a richly dressed man.]*

**James:** Captain James Hind at your service. You brought money for me.

**Bradshaw:** Do you not know who I am? You shall hang for this sir, I shall have you hunted down and, yes, I shall sit in judgement myself and see to it.

**James:** I shall not, and you shall not, sir. I do not fear you, or any other king-killing son of a whore still alive. At this moment, I have as much power over you as you recently had over our king, and I would be doing God and my country a service were I to use my power as you did. Nevertheless, I prefer to let you live, villain, to suffer the pangs of your own conscience until justice shall lay her iron hand upon you and demand an answer for your crimes. You are not worthy to die at any other hand but that of the common hangman, or at any place other than Tyburn. But if you do not hand over your money immediately, I shall not hesitate to send you to your maker without benefit of any clergy.

*[Bradshaw reluctantly hands over his purse. James extracts a gold coin and holds it up to the light.]*

**James:** Ah, indeed sir. This metal could win my heart forever. Oh, precious Gold! I admire you as much as Bradshaw, and all the other villainous parliamentarians do; the difference is that whilst they would sell the Lord Jesus for your sake, I would not.

*[James turns again to face Bradshaw.]*

**James:** Do you know, I am sure that this gold is the substance which you Republicans call a wonder potion. It makes justice blind; it removes the deepest treason far more effectively than soap can remove the stains of a poor man’s labours. In a word, it turns fools into wise men and wise men into fools, and both into knaves. The colour of this precious balm is, as you see, bright and dazzling, and if applied quietly into the right hand in the proper dosage can perform all of these wonders and much, much more.

*[James returns the coin to the purse and slips the purse securely into his pocket. Raising his pistols, he looks Bradshaw full in the eyes.]*

James: Until now, you and your infernal friends have run around acting as if you were some sort of messiahs. I believe that the time has now come to stop your careers.”

*[Taking aim at the terrified lawyer, James laughs as a dark stain despoils the man’s breeches, and then spurs his horse to the front of the coach where the two coachmen sit steadfastly staring ahead.]*

**Scene 16: Aftermath**

**Zachary:** Why are we pussyfooting around? We should kill these vermin while we have the chance.

**James:** We have no argument with these men, only with he who they guard.

**Zachary:** So, let’s kill him, then!

**Thomas:** No. If James says no, we don’t do it; it’s how we’ve survived so long, and you are not going to spoil it.

*[James shoots the horses and the gang rides away after taking the money.]*

**Scene 18: Exterior - James's Parents' Courtyard - Day**

[James exits the stable, patting his horse affectionately. He notices his mother at the window, and with a warm smile, he strolls across the yard and enters the small, simple cottage.]

**Scene 19: Interior - James's Parents' Cottage - Day**

[Inside the cozy cottage, James's mother, a portly woman of middle age, beams with joy upon seeing her son. She rushes to hug him warmly.]

**James's Mother:** James! What a delight. I see so little of you these days.

[She hugs her son tightly, conveying her affection for him.]

**James:** Ah, I am very busy. My line of work means that I must travel long distances, but it pays the bills. Margaret rarely wants for anything, and my children seem to have grown every time I return!

**Mother:** Such is the way with children and as they grow, their demands grow with them. However, they do need a father around. Your father was always here for you.

**James:** Indeed he was, but my strongest memories of my father have him holding a strap.

**Mother:** You were so undisciplined, it was needed.

**James:** All children are undisciplined. It is only by pushing the boundaries that a child learns where they are.

**Mother:** Are you hungry? I just finished my baking, there is hot bread waiting there on the table.

**James:** No, mother, I am anxious to spend more time with Maggie and the children. I hope to remain at home for a few weeks over Christmas.

**Mother:** You do not intend to celebrate Christmas, do you? You know that Parliament made it illegal.

**James:** Mother, I have spent the past seven years fighting Parliament and their hideous laws of repression. Do you really think I intend to deprive my children of the joy of celebrating the birth of Christ?

**Mother:** Do be careful. They are getting quite strict now.

**James:** Mother, they will be too busy celebrating Christmas themselves; you surely do not believe that the ban on Christmas celebrations was intended for themselves? It was aimed solely at the poor.

**Mother:** Your perception may be a little biased, my son. But be careful, nevertheless.

**James:** I shall mother. But now I must go home, I have been missing Maggie sorely.

**Mother:** And she you. She visits us regularly. More regularly than do you.

**James:** I have no choice. But I must go. Pass my regards to father.

**Mother:** I shall.

[She blows a kiss to James as he closes the door.]

**Scene 20: Interior - James's Home - Day**

[James returns home to his wife Maggie and their children. Baby Charles giggles happily as James passes him to Maggie.]

**Alice (9 years old):** Father, can I ride your horse?

**James:** You must clean the kitchen first, young lady, just like your mother told you a while ago.

**Alice:** Pleeeease?

**James:** Clean first, ride second.

[Alice shuffles into the kitchen area to find the cleaning rag. Meanwhile, a younger brother reaches for James’s gun.]

**Maggie:** I do wish you would take those off in the house, Jimmy. It only takes a moment of distraction, and we could have a disaster on our hands.

**James:** You’re right, my love, as always. But sadly, I have to leave shortly.

[James removes his weapons, placing them on a high shelf beside the fireplace. He then scoops up the two young boys and starts trotting around the room, making horse-like noises as he does so.]

**Maggie (laughing):** Stop that! you’ll make them sick!

**James:** I finally get time to spend with my family and I’m not allowed to play with them!

*[James reclaims his weapons, then turns to his wife]*

**James:** I must move on now. I was hoping to be able to spend a little time with you, but apparently, it is not to be. I must report to the king across the water, so it may well be a while before I return. I have some money for you.

[James takes a bag from the shelf and hands it to his wife.]

**James:** I suggest you bury it beneath the stone in the garden in case they do decide to search. But now I really must leave. Goodbye my love, I shall be counting the days until my return.

[They kiss, and he takes each child in turn and gives them a hug. Returning the youngest to the floor, he smiles at his wife and then eases out of the door, checking carefully for any watchers.]

**Scene 21: Interior - Inn - Night**

*[The atmosphere is thick with smoke from pipes and the raucous laughter of revelers. James, Thomas, Zachary, and Moll sit around a table, their faces illuminated by flickering candlelight.]*

**Thomas:** Fairfax will be passing through Hounslow Heath next Wednesday. He travels light, without much of a guard.

**Zachary:** Then it's the perfect opportunity to strike. Fairfax deserves retribution for his deeds during the war.

**James:** We're not here to settle scores. Killing Fairfax will only escalate tensions.

**Zachary:** Soft words from a man who's lost his edge.

**James:** I've survived this long by avoiding unnecessary bloodshed.

**Thomas:** Enough! We rob him, but we don't take lives unless absolutely necessary.

*[Zachary glares at James, but James remains steadfast.]*

**Zachary:** If you say so.

*[The conversation falls into a tense silence as they each contemplate their roles in the upcoming heist.]*

**Scene 22: Exterior - Hounslow Heath - Day**

*[The desolate heath is bathed in pale sunlight, with sparse shrubbery and occasional trees dotting the landscape. Fairfax's carriage comes into view, flanked by a small retinue of guards. The gang moves into position to intercept them.]*

**James:** Now's our chance. Remember, we take the money and leave Fairfax unharmed.

*[The gang springs into action, stopping Fairfax's carriage and forcing his guards to surrender. Fairfax calmly steps out of the carriage, unfazed by the ambush.]*

**Fairfax:** Ah, highwaymen. What brings you to Hounslow Heath?

**Zachary:** Justice, Fairfax. For the lives lost at Colchester.

*[Zachary raises his pistol, aiming it at Fairfax with vengeance in his eyes. But before he can pull the trigger, James intervenes, blocking the shot with his hand. Chaos erupts as gunfire rings out and Thomas takes a bullet meant for James. Zachary drops his weapon and flees, while Moll is captured by Fairfax's men.]*

**Fairfax:** Take her into custody. She'll face trial for her crimes.

*[Moll is dragged before Fairfax, who looks down at her with disdain.]*

**Fairfax:** Your fate is sealed, madam. But perhaps there's room for negotiation.

*[Moll meets Fairfax's gaze, her expression steely.]*

**Moll:** Name your price.

*[Fairfax considers for a moment before responding.]*

**Fairfax:** Two thousand pounds. But don't think you'll see freedom until I have it in my hands.

*[Moll nods, determined.]*

**Moll:** Agreed. You'll have your money.

*[Fairfax signals for Moll to be taken away, his expression unreadable as he watches her fate unfold.]*

**Scene 23: Interior - Inn - Night**

**[James sits alone at a table in the dimly lit inn, nursing another ale as the hours pass. His anxiety grows with each minute that Moll fails to appear.]**

**James: Where is she?**

**[His mind races with thoughts of Moll's safety, guilt gnawing at him for escaping without her.]**

**\*\*James:\*\* Have they taken her? Or worse, killed her?**

**\*[He tosses back another gulp of ale, trying to drown his mounting dread. James, deep in thought, is suddenly approached by a grubby urchin, dirt streaking the child's face and hands.]\***

**\*\*Urchin:\*\* Is you the captain?**

**\*\*James:\*\* It rather depends upon who is asking and why.**

**\*\*Urchin:\*\* Oh, Moll asked me to find the captain and ask him to visit her in Newgate. Gave me a penny and said 'e'd give me one too.**

**\*[The boy extends his hand expectantly.]\***

**\*\*James:\*\* Not so fast. Tell me more. The happier I am, the more your penny grows.**

**\*\*Urchin:\*\* Jailer told me to go see this lady in Newgate. She told me to come 'ere and find the captain. Tell 'im to visit 'er in Newgate. She give me a penny, said you would give me another.**

**\*[The hand extends again, awaiting payment.]\***

**\*\*James:\*\* Not so fast. What colour were her eyes?**

**\*\*Urchin:\*\* Easy. Blue.**

**\*\*James:\*\* Very well.**

**\*[James extracts two pennies and drops them into the extended hand. Grinning, the boy closes his fist and makes his way out of the bar. James watches the urchin disappear into the night, his mind racing with newfound urgency.]\***

**\*\*James:\*\* Moll needs me.**

**\*[With renewed determination, he finishes his drink and prepares to embark on his mission to Newgate Prison.]\***

**---**

**\*\*Scene 24: Exterior - Streets of London - Night\*\***

**\*[James emerges from the inn, transformed into a dandy with flamboyant attire and powdered face. He adjusts his wig and checks his purse before setting off towards Newgate Prison.]\***

**\*\*James:\*\* For Moll.**

**\*[He walks with purpose through the bustling streets, his heart heavy with concern for Moll's well-being.]\***

**---**

**\*\*Scene 25: Exterior - Newgate Prison - Night\*\***

**\*[James arrives at the imposing gates of Newgate Prison, steeling himself for the task ahead. He approaches the gatekeeper with an air of confidence.]\***

**\*\*James:\*\* Good sir, I seek an audience with a lady named Moll within these walls. Can you assist me?**

**\*\*Gatekeeper:\*\* Aye, for a price. Two shillings.**

**\*[James begrudgingly hands over the payment, his determination unwavering.]\***

**\*\*James:\*\* Very well. Lead the way.**

**\*[He follows the gatekeeper into the prison, bracing himself for the grim sights and smells that await him inside.]\***

**---**

**\*\*Scene 26: Interior - Newgate Prison - Night\*\***

**\*[James is escorted through the dimly lit corridors of the prison, his senses assaulted by the stench of decay and despair. He keeps his handkerchief pressed to his nose, his resolve unshaken.]\***

**\*\*James:\*\* Ten minutes, remember.**

**\*[The jailer sneers and locks James inside Moll's cell, leaving them alone together.]\***

**\*\*Moll:\*\* Thank you for coming, James.**

**\*\*James:\*\* Anything for you, Moll. How do I get you out of here?**

**\*[Moll whispers her instructions to James, her voice tinged with desperation.]\***

**\*\*Moll:\*\* Go to my place. There’s a loose board under my bed, you’ll find money there, but I’m not completely sure how much. Fairfax demands two thousand, if you can find anything I’m short, I’ll repay you. Take the money to Fairfax and he'll release me. But be cautious, James. Don't let him deceive you.**

**\*\*James:\*\* I won't. I'll make sure you're free.**

**\*[They share a moment of levity amidst the darkness, their laughter echoing off the cold stone walls.]\***

**\*\*James:\*\* I'll deliver the money, then return to my family. I won't be long.**

**\*\*Moll:\*\* Thank you, James. Be careful.**

**\*[As they part ways, James slips a coin to the jailer, ensuring the other prisoners receive a decent meal. With determination in his heart, he sets off to fulfill his promise to Moll and secure her freedom.]\***

Scene 27

EXT. WOODED AREA - DAY\*\*

\*James leans forward to soothe his horse.Weak sunlight filters through the canopy, casting dappled shadows on the forest floor. Suddenly, the clatter of a carriage interrupts his reverie.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\* What's this?

\*He spots a well-appointed coach approaching along the rutted road below. With only one driver visible, James readies himself, drawing his pistols. As the coach draws near, he urges his horse out onto the road, blocking its path.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\* Are you armed, sir?

\*\*DRIVER:\*\* No, sir, I would be a danger to myself and my passengers if I were.

\*\*JAMES:\*\* Very well, then. I mean you no harm. I only wish to speak to your passengers.

\*James approaches the carriage and swings open the door, revealing four startled young women inside.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\* What have we here? I was expecting to find a crotchety old man clutching a worn but full purse, but instead I find myself bedazzled by a vision of outstanding beauty and grace, not just once, but four times. Driver. Did you kill me, have I ascended to Heaven?

\*\*DRIVER:\*\* Why no sir, I told you, I have no weapon.

\*\*JAMES:\*\* This may be why you are charged with conveying such a fragrant cargo.

\*Inside the carriage, the four young women giggle. Returning his pistols to their holsters, he dismounts, walks to the carriage door, and peers inside. The coach itself is a sturdy but practical build, not over-endowed with luxuries. The ladies sit upon uncushioned wooden bench-type seats with similar wooden backrests. Satisfied that no dangers lurk within, he turns his attention to the ladies.\*

\*To his left sit two dark-haired ladies, to his right, both girls sported blonde hair one of whom is fluttering her eyelids flirtatiously. He straightens his hat and places a boot onto the carriage step, without attempting to enter.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\* I, however, have no such handicap, ladies, and it is this that brings me to this point. For, you see, I am betrothed to the most wonderful woman in the world, why, she is as pretty as you, beautiful even, and we most earnestly desire to be wed. But a misplaced investment has ruined me, and I have need of funds to enable our marriage to take place; for her father will not permit her to marry a pauper.

\*\*BLONDE:\*\* Would not her dowry replenish your fortunes, sir?

\*\*JAMES:\*\* It would indeed, madam. But he is adamant that I must be able to match the dowry, and I find myself now embarrassed and unable to comply.

\*\*BRUNETTE:\*\* We are ourselves on a journey to convey the dowry to Constance’s fiancé. What a wonderful coincidence! But you certainly have my deepest sympathies, sir, for there is nothing worse than unrequited love.

\*\*BLONDE:\*\* Quite, it is shameful indeed that matters of the heart should be so governed by money.

\*\*JAMES:\*\* My feelings exactly, madam. But this is the world in which we must live, and I do not make the rules, merely comply with them. Well, some of them.

\*\*SECOND BLONDE:\*\* Yes indeed, sir, but why should people in love be kept apart for the lack of something so tedious? Constance here is desperate to marry, but it cannot happen until the three-thousand-pound dowry has been paid. Three thousand pounds, sir. Surely love is sufficient.

\*\*JAMES:\*\* Man cannot live on love alone. But I do my best to help level the field.

\*\*FOURTH BRUNETTE (CONSTANCE):\*\* You have not yet introduced yourself, sir.

\*James pauses a moment to examine his interlocutor. This woman is stunning in her beauty. High cheekbones lie beneath piercing dark eyes and sculpted eyebrows. Her dark hair sweeps down the side of her face to graceful shoulders clad in a beautiful blue gown.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\* I have not? I have not indeed. How remiss of me.

\*He steps back and again sweeps his hat in a graceful arc as he bows.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\* Captain James Hind at your service, ladies.

\*\*CONSTANCE:\*\* Captain Hind. Why sir, your exploits are the talk of the country.

\*\*JAMES:\*\* I am flattered, madam. I simply ply my trade as does any other artisan.

\*\*FIRST BLONDE:\*\* Artisan? Why sir, you are spoken of as a benefactor. Tales abound concerning your generosity.

\*\*JAMES:\*\* I only aid those in need.

\*\*CONSTANCE:\*\* But why do you do it?

\*\*JAMES:\*\* I do it because someone must, else more people will starve. I am ever a king’s man, and I know he would not want his people starving to death whilst greedy Parliamentarians line their pockets at the people’s expense.

\*\*CONSTANCE:\*\* So gallant. Tis indeed a shame that there are not more like you.

\*James doffs his hat and bows.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\* Thank you, madam, for those kind words. But I fear that our time is running short, for whilst it is ever a delight to talk with such beautiful young women, there is the problem of my marriage to resolve. I regret that I shall have to insist that you loan me a thousand pounds from the dowry you carry. I shall, rest assured, do my utmost to repay it to you in due course, but my need is pressing, more pressing than is yours. For surely, your betrothed must love you enough to accept your affections at a lower price.

\*\*CONSTANCE:\*\* Oh, sir, I am not sure about this, my father was most insistent...

\*\*JAMES:\*\* As am I madam, as am I. Loathe as I am to mishandle a woman at any time, I shall, if I must, wrest it from your hands.

\*Constance counts out the demanded one thousand pounds and hands it to James.\*

\*\*CONSTANCE:\*\* I do hope that my marriage does not founder because of this.

\*\*JAMES:\*\* If it does, madam, rest assured you have had a lucky escape. For if he is as avaricious as that, he will certainly be a most unsatisfactory husband.

\*James tucks the money into a saddlebag and bows again to the women.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\* I must take my leave now, ladies. But I wish you well in your endeavours, and perhaps we shall meet again once the king is back in his rightful place.

\*\*JAMES:\*\* Farewell, ladies. May we meet again under happier circumstances.

\*As he disappears into the woods, the women exchange worried glances, unsure of the consequences of their encounter with the infamous Captain Hind.\*

Scene 28

INT. SIR JOHN'S STUDY - DAY

The room is dimly lit, adorned with heavy drapes and antique furnishings. SIR JOHN, a distinguished gentleman with salt-and-pepper hair, sits behind his desk.

A knock echoes through the room, drawing Sir John's attention.

SIR JOHN

(beckoning)

Come.

The doors creak open, revealing HENRY, Sir John's sturdy steward, escorting CONSTANCE, a young woman with cascading brown hair.

SIR JOHN

(rising, with warmth)

Do come in, my dear.

Sir John approaches Constance, kissing her hand graciously.

SIR JOHN

It is a delight that you grace my humble home with your presence.

Constance glances around the somber room, her expression guarded.

CONSTANCE

It is a delight to be here, I am sure, but it is improper for us to be alone together before matrimony. I was told that your mother would act as chaperone.

SIR JOHN

Indeed, she will. I shall send for her, but she lives in the far wing of the house and does not walk easily these days. She will join us momentarily, I am sure.

Sir John turns to Henry.

SIR JOHN

Henry, please advise the lady that her presence is required in the study.

Henry nods and exits, leaving Sir John and Constance alone.

SIR JOHN

I believe that you have something for me.

Constance blushes, hesitant.

CONSTANCE

Why surely sir, it is more important for us to become better acquainted. We will, after all, be spending a lifetime together bringing up our children.

Sir John maintains composure but insists.

SIR JOHN

It is indeed important, but first, we do need to observe the proprieties. We are not yet wed.

Constance gathers courage to speak.

CONSTANCE

I perceive that you are referring to the dowry.

She takes a deep breath, meeting Sir John's gaze.

CONSTANCE

I regret that we were robbed on the way here. We were perhaps fortunate in that he not only made no attempt upon my virginity; he only took one thousand pounds. But I have arrived with my purity intact, which is surely the most important.

Sir John's expression darkens.

SIR JOHN

Surely important indeed, madam, but the dowry must be paid in full.

CONSTANCE

I regret that my father will not be able to raise more; it almost ruined him assembling this much. You set a very high price.

A discreet tapping interrupts the conversation.

SIR JOHN

Enter.

Henry enters and approaches Sir John.

HENRY

Sir, her Ladyship is on her way. But as you instructed, I have counted the money the ladies brought with them. I must report that it is almost a thousand pounds short.

Sir John ponders for a moment.

SIR JOHN

Very well. Place the money in the secure room and await my instructions.

Henry bows and exits, leaving Sir John and Constance alone again.

SIR JOHN

Without the proper dowry, there can be no wedding. I therefore request, madam, that you leave my house and return whence you came. I shall keep the residual money as recompense for my inconvenience.

Constance is taken aback, her eyes welling with tears.

CONSTANCE

But sir, do you not love me?

Sir John's demeanor hardens, his words cutting.

SIR JOHN

Love you? Love you? Why in the name of all that is holy should I love you? You come here with an inadequate dowry, telling a dubious story about a robbery, when I know full well that any highwayman would not only ravage and kill you, but he would also take it all. Although looking at you, I can see why sex did not occur; who would want to lie with you?

Sir John watches Constance flee the room, a sneer crossing his face. He returns to his desk, rubbing his hands together with satisfaction.

FADE OUT.

\*\*Scene 29\*\*

[James pulls out a set of ordinary, but smart clothes. Donning a puritan hat, he checks himself in the mirror. Carefully, he pushes his hair up inside the hat, and then searches around for a bible. Finding it, he tucks it under his arm and departs.]

\*\*Scene 30\*\*

[He maintains a scowl throughout his walk, quietly enjoying the extent to which people look away, and especially amusing, when they spot him heading towards them, many simply cross the street. He turns into a quiet street with elaborately decorated buildings on either side. Keeping to the left side, he reaches the home he seeks and climbs the steps to Sir Thomas Fairfax’s London residence. He raps firmly on the door. The door opens, revealing a manservant.]

\*\*James:\*\* Edward Willoughby to see the General.

[Brusquely, and maintaining his scowl, he enters the building without invitation.]

\*\*Scene 31\*\*

[Inside the entrance hall.]

\*\*Manservant:\*\* I will tell the general you are here, sir. Kindly wait here.

[James nods and watches the man as he enters a room off the entrance hall. A minute later, he is ushered into the room.]

\*\*Scene 32\*\*

[Lord Fairfax is seated on a sofa before the fire, taking tea. A glorious fire crackles in the hearth. The general looks up as James enters.]

\*\*Lord Fairfax:\*\* Would you care to join me, sir?

\*\*James:\*\* Thank you, tea would be most welcome at this time.

[The general looks closely at his visitor as James takes a seat, then visibly starts.]

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* You?

[James grins]

\*\*James:\*\* The same, sir. I am here to take advantage of the parole you offered to whoever delivers Moll’s ransom.

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* I see. So, you have something for me?

\*\*James:\*\* Indeed I do, sir. Moll asked me to deliver this to you here, in person.

[The General takes the parcel and carefully cuts it open. Inside, golden Jacobusses gleam. He glances up at the courier.]

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* I bet you have never seen so much gold at any one time, eh?

\*\*James:\*\* Certainly not often.

[Fairfax stares momentarily at James, and then returns his attention to the parcel.]

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* Hm. Can you wait awhile as I count it?

\*\*James:\*\* Of course, sir.

\*\*Scene 33\*\*

[After five minutes, Fairfax looks up.]

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* It is all here. I shall honour my word.

[Crossing the room to reach into his desk, he extracts a sheet of writing paper. James reads upside down as he writes.]

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* My dear William. I have been persuaded to withdraw all charges against my assailant on Hounslow Heath, and therefore humbly request that you order the release of Miss Moll Cutpurse from Newgate prison forthwith. Your humble servant, Fairfax.

[He looks at James]

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* I have no need of this money; I mistakenly thought it would be beyond her reach. But I shall use it to assist the Army in its disputes with parliament over pay.

\*\*James:\*\* I heard that you opposed the murder of our King.

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* I did, but my voice was not heard. As I recall, you prevented one of your gang from shooting me; why did you do that?

\*\*James:\*\* Killing people is not the answer, and I have long felt, and indeed frequently expressed, that you in particular are the sole voice of reason in this misbegotten coven of a parliament we currently have.

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* An unusual approach, but it is indeed the case that I do not agree with everything that happens; I just don’t have the same influence as others.

\*\*James:\*\* Our leader Thomas used to accede to my demands regarding killing but unfortunately, he died in that attack – all caused by the reckless thirst for blood of the man who tried to kill you. He escaped then and I have no idea where he is now, but should I meet him again, he will answer for Thomas’s death.

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* I shall remember this discussion, and keep it in mind should we meet again. But now it is time to honour my commitments.

[He raises his voice.]

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* Carstairs!

[The servant enters.]

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* Carstairs, I want you to show the gentleman out now, then take this message to the Attorney General’s office and place it in William Steele’s hands and only his hands. I want you to then await his written response and bring it to me. Do you understand all of that?

\*\*Carstairs:\*\* Yes sir. Deliver the message, and then bring his response to you.

\*\*Fairfax:\*\* Good. That will be all.

[Fairfax turns and shakes James’s hand before James is led from the room.]

\*\*Scene 34\*\*

[Zachary Howard enters the Inn. Closing the door, he pauses a moment to take in the scene and decide upon his tactics. Two elderly men sit at a table near the door, each smoking pipes belching out thick, noisome smoke. The half-empty jug on their table tells that they have been in place for some time and will remain in place a considerable time longer. They are arguing about their respective spouses. Groups of men in various states of inebriety take most tables, but his eyes lock upon a lone man seated in a corner with a tankard of ale and a steaming bowl of food. There is a vacant table next to him. Zachary makes his way to the bar.]

\*\*Zachary:\*\* A tankard of ale and a bowl of pottage, if you please, landlord.

\*\*Landlord:\*\* Are you sure you would not prefer a jug, sir? Most people find our ale sufficiently enjoyable that they find themselves in need of more quite rapidly.

\*\*Zachary:\*\* No, I have to get home to Faringdon. My wife will kill me if I fall through the door rather than walk through it!

[A wave of laughter ripples through the inn behind him.]

\*\*Zachary:\*\* I’ll take a seat...

[He scans the room and then points at the table beside his mark]

\*\*Zachary:\*\* Over there.

[The landlord pours his ale and Zachary gathers his tankard, drops coins on the bar and makes his way across the room to sit down, nodding to his mark as he sits. Carefully, he has selected a seat sideways on, and so it falls to his mark, to attract his attention.]

\*\*Thomas:\*\* Sir? Excuse me, but I could not help but overhear. You are going to Faringdon?

[Zachary turns.]

\*\*Zachary:\*\* Indeed I am, sir. I make cheese and am returning from Wallingford. I get a much better price for my cheese there than I can in the local market.

[Their conversation is interrupted by the arrival of Zachary’s food, but after undressing the barmaid with his eyes, then thanking her, he turns back to his mark.]

\*\*Zachary:\*\* And you sir? What brings you to these rural parts? Your accent sets you apart... London?

\*\*Thomas:\*\* Indeed, sir, I do hail from the big city. I just took up employment with a new master, and he has sent me to his wife.

\*\*Zachary:\*\* Sir Robert Pye?

\*\*Thomas:\*\* No, Sir, Lord Fairfax, his wife is staying there for now.

\*\*Zachary:\*\* Ah, Lord Fairfax. A hero indeed, without him, I fear the Royalists would have won the day.

\*\*Thomas:\*\* You may well be right, sir. Although Cromwell did his part.

\*\*Zachary:\*\* Later, yes. But without Fairfax, the war would have been lost well before Cromwell came to prominence.

\*\*Thomas:\*\* Probably so.

[Thomas leans across and extends his hand]

\*\*Thomas:\*\* Thomas Edwards at your service, sir.

\*\*Zachary:\*\* Zachary Roberts.

[Thomas picks up his spoon and continues eating, then after a moment he pauses and turns again to Zachary, who has started eating.]

\*\*Thomas:\*\* Sir, perhaps we can ride to Faringdon together, offer mutual protection as it were against any highwaymen we may meet.

[Zachary considers for a moment, and then nods.]

\*\*Zachary:\*\* I wouldn’t expect to be accosted, indeed never have. But it will make a lonely and uninteresting journey far more pleasant.

\*\*Scene 35\*\*

[Two horses ambled up the gentle slope. As they reach the summit, Faringdon comes into view in the distance silhouetted against the setting sun. Zachary looks behind them, and then rechecks ahead.]

\*\*Zachary:\*\* I regret, sir, that I may have slightly misled you.

\*\*Thomas:\*\* Oh, how so?

\*\*Zachary:\*\* My family name is not, in fact, Roberts. It is Howard. Perhaps you have heard of me?

\*\*Thomas:\*\* No. Should I have?

\*\*Zachary:\*\* I would have hoped so, and I am deeply saddened that my infamy is so undeveloped. But my name is indeed Zachary Howard, and if you had heard of me, you would know that I am, in fact, a highwayman of some repute. I only rob the accursed Roundheads, and as your master certainly qualifies, I would ask you to hand over your bags.

[Thomas looks at Zachary ashen-faced.]

\*\*Zachary:\*\* I regret I cannot, sir.

[Zachary’s hand moves to his waistband and Thomas pulls out his pistol, cocks the hammer and fires at Zachary. He hits the horse, which topples over, throwing Zachary clear. Zachary rolls to his feet, gun in hand.]

\*\*Zachary:\*\* I shall either take the bags whilst you stand over by those trees, or alternatively, I can take them whilst you lie bleeding beside them. It is immaterial to me which you choose.

\*\*Thomas:\*\* You would murder me for a few plates?

\*\*Zachary:\*\* I would. Now, make up your mind which, I tire of this game.

\*\*Thomas:\*\* I cannot, I will not allow you to steal his Lordsh...

[Thomas’s exclamation ends as Zachary steps forward, takes careful aim and shoots him in the face. Thomas’s head explodes in a shower of blood, brain, and bone. His horse rears in terror, hurling Thomas’s lifeless body onto the grass at the side of the road. Relieved of his burden, Zachary begins backing away, his eyes wide with fright. Zachary takes the horse’s bridle and calms him, glancing up and down the road. No potential witnesses were visible in the gathering gloom. He glances down at Thomas’s body.]

\*\*Zachary:\*\* I told you so.

[Walking away from the body, he finds a bush on the opposite side and ties the horse, soothing him as he does so. The horse begins grazing, so Zachary backs away and returns to the body, calmly brushing gore from his coat. He hunkers down beside the body of his victim and searches his pockets. He pulls out a letter, which he hastily stuffs into his pocket before grasping one arm of the corpse and dragging it deep into the undergrowth. He returns to the road, and after checking again for other riders, he pulls the letter from his pocket and reads it.]

\*\*Scene 36\*\*

[Zachary approaches Faringdon House and walks the horse sedately around to the tradesman’s entrance. An elderly footman opens the door and approaches him as he dismounts.]

\*\*Footman:\*\* May I help you, sir?

\*\*Zachary:\*\* If this is where Lady Fairfax is in residence, then you may; I come from his Lordship.

Scene 35

[Inside the house, Zachary looks around. The hallway bears soft woollen carpet underfoot, intricately patterned. The walls are sternly panelled in traditional dark oak, with portraits of family ancestors glaring down. He shifts uncomfortably. Zachary jumps as the manservant’s words come from behind him.]

Manservant: Her Ladyship will see you now. Follow me.

[They walk across the soft carpet towards an ornately carved door, which the manservant raps sharply, then enters, with Zachary following behind, hat in hand.]

Scene 36

[Lady Anne Fairfax looks up as they enter. Tall, with glossy dark hair tied in a ponytail behind her, her figure is emphasised rather than concealed by the modest dress she wears. She visibly assesses her visitor.]

Lady Fairfax: I am told you wish to see me.

Zachary: Um...yes, milady. Lord Fairfax bade me bring you this letter.

[The manservant beside him takes the proffered letter and carries it across to Lady Fairfax, who opens it, then sits down to read the content. Zachary looks around the room while he waits. Long drapes frame the windows, and the room is lined with bookshelves. A sofa beside the fire provides her ladyship with a warm and comfortable place to sit beside a younger woman, more of a girl really, who is watching him curiously but silently. Behind the sofa, another manservant stands watching him without blinking. Lady Fairfax looks up.]

Lady Fairfax: Thomas, is that your name?

[Zachary nods.]

Lady Fairfax: This letter says that you were carrying some plate. Where is it?

Zachary: In my saddlebags, your ladyship.

[Lady Fairfax looks at the man behind the sofa.]

Lady Fairfax: Smithers, go and get the bags?

[Smithers hesitates, glances at Zachary, and then leaves the room. As the door closes behind him, Zachary coughs, moves sideways away from the manservant, and pulls his pistol.]

Zachary: I may have misled you, my lady; my name is not Thomas, Thomas lies mouldering in a thicket not ten miles from here. Nor is it my quest to make a delivery, rather a collection – and who knows what other joys I might find here? Now, move over to stand in front of that wall so that I can include Smithers when he returns.

[He looks at the manservant]

Zachary: you too.

[Lady Fairfax studies him for a moment, decides that he is serious, nods at her daughter and complies.]

Lady Fairfax: So, a common thief, eh?

Zachary: Thief, indeed, madam. I am what your husband and his ilk have made me. Now ‘tis time for my vengeance. I am hurting an enemy, and in warfare, that is a conclusion of value. You are married to a villain, and he has now suffered hurt at my hands. You remained with him throughout the conflict, offering him succour and support. You did not kill him, abandon him, or turn him. You are as guilty as he is. But this is irrelevant; I have no need to justify my actions in an act of war.

Lady Fairfax: You shall hang for this!

[Zachary chortles.]

Zachary: Not if I can help it, I won’t!

[Smithers enters carrying the saddlebags, which are heavy. He stops and stares at the scene.]

Zachary: Ah, good, Smithers. We’ve been waiting for you. Now, can you join everyone else over there and put the bags down, there’s a good fellow. Now, open the bags and take out the ropes. Then I want you to tie the ladies’ hands behind them.

[He waits whilst the ropes are tied.]

Zachary: Now you, old man. Tie Smithers’s hands behind him. Make sure it’s nice and tight, no funny stuff. Good. And now turn your back to me and I’ll bind you myself…. Now all of you except her ladyship, onto the sofa, face down.]

[He next ties everyone’s ankles together and to each other, leaving only Lady Fairfax untied.]

Zachary: Now, your ladyship, you are going to take me around the house for me to collect the valuables. If I see any of the rest of you again, she will die and so will you. And maybe we can have a little fun along the way, eh, your ladyship?

[Zachary snickers as he leads Lady Fairfax from the room.]

\*\*Scene 37\*\*

[A street of village cottages. A contingent of soldiers is following the constable, a puritan, and an officer. Behind them, a growing crowd of locals, curious to see what is going on. The constable halts and points to a cottage near the end of the row.]

\*\*Constable\*\*: That be his.

[The officer points to the two soldiers closest to him.]

\*\*Officer\*\*: You and you go down this alley and make your way along the back, keeping yourselves well hidden. Take station the other side of the cottage.

[He points at two men chatting at the back of the column.]

\*\*Officer\*\*: You and you, follow them and take station at the back.

[He waits whilst they rush away and once they have turned the corner, he starts moving forwards. The puritan hangs back, allowing the troops to move in front of him.]

\*\*Officer\*\*: Jenkins, Hallett; go into this garden and take station this side of the cottage. Be ready in case the target bolts. Now, the rest of you follow me to the door. Let none escape.

[The troop advances until the officer stands before the door. The birds stop singing. The sound of chopping and a woman humming can be heard clearly in the silence. At a signal from the captain, two of the soldiers put their shoulders to the door, which opens easily, causing both men to stumble across the threshold. Glaring at his men, the captain marches in after them.]

\*\*Scene 38\*\*

[A domestic scene. A fire burns low in the grate whilst a woman stares at the soldiers wide-eyed from the kitchen area, a large knife held in her trembling fist. Children stand with their mouths ajar around the fireplace.]

\*\*Officer\*\*: Kindly place the knife on the table, madam. We want no accidents.

[Visibly terrified, the woman drops the knife to the floor and backs away.]

\*\*Woman (Margaret)\*\*: Who are you and what do you want? There is nothing here to steal.

\*\*Officer\*\*: Steal? Madam, we are Parliament’s army. ‘Tis your husband who is the thief.

[He beckons to the two men standing before the fire. The puritan moves into the doorway.]

\*\*Officer\*\*: Search the place.

\*\*Margaret\*\*: If it is my husband you seek, he is not here, nor has he been here for a few weeks now.

\*\*Officer\*\*: We know where he was, but I admit that we did hope he would have returned home after his escape. But no matter; you can tell me where we can find him.

\*\*Margaret\*\*: I have no idea where he might be. He never tells me for just this reason.

\*\*The puritan (Lunt)\*\*: I am afraid, madam, that we are unable to believe you. Now, in your own best interests just tell us where we can find him and there will be no further unpleasantness.

\*\*Margaret\*\*: I know not for he never tells me.

\*\*Lunt\*\*: I see. You intend to be stubborn. Perhaps your children can help you out.

[He turns, bends over, and leers at the four young children cowering in the corner.]

\*\*Lunt\*\*: Now children, who is going to be a good child and help your mother? Where is your father?

[All four children retreat as far as they can. The oldest daughter (Alice) pipes up.]

\*\*Alice\*\*: We do not know, sir. Father tells us nothing of his work.

[The man nods and stands erect.]

\*\*Lunt\*\*: Very well. Captain, take all of them.

\*\*Officer\*\*: Mr Lunt, are you sure? It is not usual to take chil-

\*\*Lunt\*\*: You will do as I say. Take all of them. We shall find a way to extract the information.

[The captain walks across and takes the woman by the shoulder.]

\*\*Captain\*\*: I am sorry madam, but I must do as ordered.

[At his nod, the troopers take hold of the struggling children. Alice starts to scream, and the soldier puts his hand across her mouth as she writhes and tries in vain to toss her head from side-to-side. One child wriggles free of his captor and runs out of the door. A shot rings out.]

\*\*Scene 39\*\*

[The captain drags the woman outside, passes control of her to one of his troopers and rushes to the corner. Two of the soldiers from the front have pulled up sharply at the side of the house, and stand looking down. The captain pushes them aside but then he too pulls up short. The five-year-old child is lying on the ground whimpering in a pool of blood. The child will not survive. The officer takes a deep breath and wipes his hand down his now-haggard face.]

\*\*Officer\*\*: Who did this?

[A figure stands from the undergrowth at the back of the house.]

\*\*Soldier\*\*: I did, sir. I did not realise it was a child, I just saw a figure running.

\*\*Officer\*\*: Well, there is little we can do about it now. But you and I shall have a discussion on the subject later.

[With a desperate wrench, the woman breaks free of her captor and runs to join the captain. Her hand claps over her mouth as she begins to wail. Shaking uncontrollably, she stares wild-eyed at the child, then faces the captain.]

\*\*Margaret\*\*: What kind of monsters are you? Shooting a child of five years? Is Cromwell so fearful of overthrow?

[A clamour began from outside on the street, where villagers had begun to gather. The captain looks up sharply, and then turns to the soldier who had killed the child.]

\*\*Officer\*\*: Collect this child and take him to the church. You shall pay for him to be properly buried, and indeed for a headstone. Then return to the constable’s home. Take one trooper with you.

[He turns back to the woman.]

\*\*Officer\*\*: This is deeply regretted, madam, but you should blame your husband - were he not such a thorn in the side of Parliament, we would not be here.

\*\*Margaret\*\*: My husband does not even injure your masters. But you, you break into my home, abduct us, and casually kill a child? I have known little of these things, but my husband does hold your parliament men in disdain, and now I can see why. What kind of monsters could DO something like this?

\*\*Officer\*\*: Mrs Hind, it was not our intention to kill, merely to apprehend. Now you must come with me.

\*\*Scene 40\*\*

[He leads her to the street, where three soldiers are holding tightly to her remaining children. As the captain reaches them with the woman, she calls out.]

\*\*Margaret\*\*: The soldiers have killed little Jamie.

[The villagers have formed a straggling ring around the soldiers, and at her words, an angry gasp arises, followed by angry muttering whilst the children begin to cry, and the captain studies his feet. The captain looks up and frowns, and then calls out.]

\*\*Officer\*\*: Men. I want all of you here at the front of the house immediately.

[The soldiers emerge from all sides of the house and form up around the captain and the troopers holding the children. The officer stands waiting impatiently. He addresses the puritan exiting a house.]

\*\*OFFICER:\*\* Mister Lunt. Where are you? We need to be moving.

[The PURITAN strolls out, casually holding a piece of pie. He notices the CAPTAIN's disapproving gaze.]

\*\*LUNT:\*\* It's very good.

[The CAPTAIN signals for the troops to advance. LUNT hurries to catch up, wary of facing the angry villagers alone. As the soldiers approach, the villagers hesitate.]

\*\*OFFICER:\*\* Proceed!

[Reluctantly, the villagers allow them passage but follow closely behind, murmuring angrily. Stones are thrown, prompting LUNT to seek safety near the front. The CONSTABLE walks alongside the CAPTAIN.]

\*\*CONSTABLE:\*\* Captain, I don’t like the look of that crowd. What’s going on?

\*\*CAPTAIN:\*\* They want Hind.

\*\*CONSTABLE:\*\* But Hind has been around for years. Why the sudden interest?

\*\*CAPTAIN:\*\* I don’t know. But someone's determined to get him.

[They reach the CONSTABLE'S house, soldiers stationed outside.]

Scene 41

[Inside, tensions rise. The Constable angrily addresses the puritan]]

\*\*CONSTABLE:\*\* Damn Cromwell! Who are you?

\*\*LUNT:\*\* Alyn Lunt. I work for Thomas Scot. Mind your manners or I'll have you arrested!

\*\*CAPTAIN:\*\* Not by me. My orders are for Hind or his wife, not the whole village.

[Voices outside interrupt, an elderly couple bursts in.]

\*\*JAMES'S FATHER:\*\* Where's my family?

\*\*JAMES'S MOTHER:\*\* Where's Jamie?

\*\*LUNT:\*\* They're lawfully detained. Interfering will get you in trouble.

[The CONSTABLE steps forward.]

\*\*CONSTABLE:\*\* I regret to inform you that Jamie has been killed. This man has orders to question Margaret.

[The situation escalates.]

\*\*JAMES'S FATHER:\*\* Release them now!

\*\*LUNT:\*\* No. Leave or face consequences.

James’s Father: It seems sir, that I have no choice. But I have noted your name, Lunt, and this shall not be the last you hear of this matter. No indeed, not by a long way. You may also inform the garrison at Oxford that they may look elsewhere for their saddles from this point forth, I shall not soil my saddlery with work for Parliament any longer.

[The elderly couple exits, followed by the officer and Lunt.]

Scene 42

\*\*EXT. VILLAGE STREET – DAY\*\*

[The officer confronts LUNT.]

\*\*OFFICER:\*\* Your arrogance has cost us a skilled craftsman. Let's get out of here before you make this any worse.

[The CAPTAIN addresses the crowd.]

\*\*OFFICER:\*\* What happened was regrettable but necessary.

[The crowd protests.]

\*\*DISGUISED VOICE:\*\* Killing children? Is Cromwell the new Herod?

\*\*OFFICER:\*\* It was a mistake, and the trooper will be punished. Cromwell is likely unaware.

[The officer turns to LUNT.]

\*\*OFFICER:\*\* Stay or come. We're leaving.

[LUNT hesitates, then joins the departing soldiers.

Scene 43

\*\*INT. INN - MORNING\*\*

\*The inn is unusually quiet at ten in the morning. The LANDLORD bustles in the back room, while the aroma of cooking wafts into the room. JAMES and MOLL sit huddled in a corner, deep in conversation.\*

\*\*MOLL:\*\*

I can’t afford to be caught again, James.

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

I understand. I was surprised by the amount of money you had tucked away!

\*\*MOLL:\*\*

Well, it's gone now. That was my nest egg. I’ll stick to fencing from now on.

\*James pats her hand reassuringly.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Between us, we've hit the Roundheads hard. They're scared to travel, except Cromwell. I'll lay low for a while. No more Parliamentarian targets, but I won't pass up opportunities either.

\*Moll takes a sip from her tankard.\*

\*\*MOLL:\*\*

We've made quite a statement since the king's death, haven't we?

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

We have. Time to relax. There aren't many leaders left to rob anyway!

\*They burst into laughter, drawing curious glances from others in the inn.\*

\*\*MOLL:\*\*

And we're not alone. Many from the king's ranks are in similar straits.

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

And many of them target Parliamentarians, just like us.

\*Their conversation halts as ZACHARY HOWARD enters the inn, drawing attention.\*

\*\*ZACHARY:\*\*

Landlord, a pint.

\*People move away from Zachary as he approaches Moll.\*

\*\*MOLL:\*\*

Zachary Howard. Tried to pawn off some stolen goods on me last week. I refused.

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Odd for you, but I can't stand him either. Why refuse?

\*\*MOLL:\*\*

He stole silver plate meant for Fairfax's wife, raped her. She's a king's woman, off limits.

\*Zachary interrupts their conversation.\*

\*\*ZACHARY:\*\*

Mistress Moll, mingling with thieves now?

\*\*MOLL:\*\*

Thieves, yes. Rapists, no.

\*Zachary draws his sword, James stands.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Not here. Leave.

\*Moll intervenes.\*

\*\*MOLL:\*\*

No fighting in my inn. Finish your drink and go.

\*Zachary sheathes his sword, finishes his drink, and leaves.\*

\*\*MOLL:\*\*

Fairfax put up a five-hundred-pound reward for him.

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Can't betray another thief, even him. But the temptation is strong.

\*Zachary calls out from the doorway.\*

\*\*ZACHARY:\*\*

You'll regret this, Hind!

\*End scene.\*

\*\*EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY\*\*

\*A gentle breeze rustles the leaves as a MAN sits on a log, adjusting his hat. Weak sunlight filters through the trees, dappling the forest floor. He hears the approach of a horse and readies himself, remounting and blocking the road.\*

\*\*MAN:\*\*

Stand and deliver.

\*Another horseman (JAMES) approaches, raising his hands but keeping his horse moving.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

As one professional to another, wouldn't this be more effective if your guns were cocked?

\*James reaches to slap the man's horse, causing it to rear and throw the man to the ground. The man's hat falls off, revealing a woman (CONSTANCE) with dark hair and striking features.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

You really need to work on your skills.

\*He uncocks his guns and dismounts, taking Constance's horse's reins.\*

\*\*CONSTANCE:\*\*

You don’t recognize me, do you?

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

I do, but it's been a while. You were to be married.

\*\*CONSTANCE:\*\*

He took my dowry and left me. You were right; I can't imagine being married to him.

\*James offers his hand to help Constance up, then retrieves money from his saddlebag.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

It was a loan. I can return it now.

\*He places the money in Constance's saddlebag.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Let me escort you home. Do you live far?

\*\*CONSTANCE:\*\*

Not too far. I'm Constance. And I know who you are.

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Forget about robbing. It's a dangerous life. I'll see if I can retrieve your dowry. For now, stay safe at home.

\*End scene.\*

\*\*Scene 45\*\*

\*James ties his horse to a tree and approaches his cottage cautiously. He exchanges pleasantries with an elderly woman, then enters his empty home. Toys litter the floor, indicating it's been deserted for some time. He leaves.\*

\*\*Scene 46\*\*

\*James sneaks to his father’s saddlery, hiding in the shadows of a stable. He sees movement inside the house and knocks softly. His father greets him warmly, lowering his pistol. James enters.\*

\*\*FATHER:\*\*

James.

\*James's mother rushes over, dropping a ladle in her excitement.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

I visited home. Where are they?

\*\*FATHER:\*\*

Sit, eat, and I'll explain.

\*\*Scene 47\*\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

So, soldiers took Margaret and the children. Where?

\*\*FATHER:\*\*

We don’t know. Acting under orders from Lunt.

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

I met him. I'll make him regret it.

\*\*FATHER:\*\*

There's more. They killed Jamie.

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Why kill a child?

\*\*FATHER:\*\*

They said it was an accident. Captain paid for his burial.

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

I must visit his grave.

\*\*Scene 48\*\*

\*As dusk falls, James approaches the graveyard, hiding in the bushes. He quietly retrieves guns left unattended by the guards. Then, he confronts them.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Gentlemen, I need to see my son’s grave.

\*\*SOLDIERS:\*\*

No problem.

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Take off your boots.

\*The soldiers comply.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Lead me to his grave.

\*James directs them to positions, tying them up.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

You should have little discomfort. Farewell.

\*He knocks out one soldier.\*

\*\*JAMES:\*\*

Tell him to pass it on to the trooper who shot my boy.

\*He bids his son farewell.\*

\*\*Scene 49\*\*

\*James Hind quietly observes his cottage from the cover of the trees. Satisfied, he moves closer, using the overgrown vegetation of what was once his wife's garden to conceal his approach.\*

\*\*Scene 50\*\*

\*Reaching the back of the house, James carefully paces out steps, locating a large stone. He lifts it, revealing a hidden hole underneath. With some effort, he retrieves an oiled burlap sack containing coins. Checking its contents, he hoists it onto his shoulder and returns to his horse, pushing the sack into one of the leather bags on the horse's back before mounting and riding off.\*

\*\*Scene 51\*\*

\*In the courtyard of Newgate Prison, the gatekeeper leads JOHN BRADSHAW through to a mouldy doorway. They descend a staircase.\*

\*\*Scene 52\*\*

\*They reach a door slightly ajar, leading to a dimly lit room.\*

\*\*Scene 53\*\*

\*Inside, BRADSHAW'S SPECIALISTS stand beside the naked body of a blood-streaked woman. Three children huddle in terror next to a semi-clothed skeleton. Bradshaw surveys the scene.\*

\*\*BRADSHAW:\*\*

Well?

\*\*SPECIALIST #1:\*\*

She died, Sir.

\*\*BRADSHAW:\*\*

Not important if she gave up her husband.

\*\*SPECIALIST #1:\*\*

She didn't, Sir. She maintained she didn't know his whereabouts.

\*\*BRADSHAW:\*\*

Fools. Incompetents.

\*He storms out, leaving the specialists with the children.\*

\*\*SPECIALIST #2:\*\*

What do we do with the children, sir?

\*\*BRADSHAW:\*\*

Do whatever you want. Eat them if you want.

\*Bradshaw exits, his footsteps echoing as he hurries up the staircase.\*