

OVER BLACK

*Aut Pax.....Either Peace
Aut Bellum.....Or War*

- Of the Clan Gunn of Caithness

FADE INTO

EXT. TENEBOUS NIGHT

WIND LASHES like a treed beast, battering the heather an' crag of HIGHLAND CLIFFS. WRATHFUL WAVES CRASH upon the jagged earth below.

GILLEAN, a son of The Highlands, braces the gale neath a stone overhang, companion to a **fragile fire**. His **TEENAGE FORM** wrapped in wool and chained iron.

Then -- THE CALL OF A WAR HORN!

The guttural howl raises Gillean from his hovel, more than a signal; but the mark of fate's hand...

As he tops a soggy bluff, a CRACK OF LIGHTNING reveals a **FOUR-MASTED GALLEON** approaching upon a raging sea...

Eager nerve permeates his sodden face --

EXT. HEADLAND ATOP **SEA CLIFFS**

-- Gillean charges across the narrow bluff -- TORCH CRACKLING in gripped hand -- a hundred feet above a **COASTAL BAY**.

CRAGGY STONE TALONS protrude from ANGRY SURF.

A GREAT PYRE IGNITES atop an escarpment across the wide bay. ANOTHER IGNITES between the first and Gillean.

Ahead, an UNLIT PYRE OF HIS OWN emerges from the misty gale -- shielded inside a LEATHER WRAP. Eagerness steals his concentration; HE TRIPS --

-- Torch SPLATS WITH A HISS. He panics to raise and keep the flame. It SPUTTERS DYING...

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Gillean FOULS WITH GAELIC BLASPHEMES probing his muddied garments -- producing a BLOCK OF PEAT. He levels it over the fading flame, no care paid to his own flesh...

TORCH DIES... But the PEAT SMOLDERS!

Gillean leaps to his feet, sheltering the mass of black earth, and hastens to the pyre.

Desperately crawls under the leather wrap -- DRY HEAP OF WOOD inside; LAMBSKIN BASIN OF INKY RESIN at its center.

He rests the peat upon the fuel... Nothing...

He claws through the dense wood, straining closer, his face low to the peat. Blows at it's base -- over and over... Mercifully, the GLOW OF EMBERS! He has done it --

-- RESIN IGNITES -- Gillean flinches at the INTENSE FLAME, his body pinned under lumber --

ARMS SWING MADLY -- RESIN SPLASHES --

-- BURNING PASTE LATCHES ONTO GILLEAN'S FACE!

HE CLAMORS AND SCREAMS -- dry wood crackles all around; closing in -- he tears himself backwards ablaze!

Tumbles from the torrent, slushing and rolling; SPLASHING MUD UPON HIS FIERY FACE -- RESIN BUBBLES TORTUROUS...

Gillean TEARS AT FLESH -- scratches CAUTERIZED SKIN! Through agony, Gillean marks his duty unfinished -- the fire is trapped within wet leather...

LONG-BLADE DIRK unsheathed, he slices loose the leather ties -- the cover flops to the earth -- CLIFF-TOP FLOODS WITH BRILLIANT FIRELIGHT!

With scalding tamed, he is left with a MARRED HALF-FACE and WHITE-CLOUDED EYE. He stumbles through the pain to gain view of the sea...

THE GALLEON TURNS TOWARD THEIR FLAMES...

Moth tempted to its doom...

Gillean's wounded face glistens with crimson delight.

EXT. THE STARK BRILLIANCE OF **DAYBREAK**

Blood red sky bares sight to the horror of **A SHIPWRECK**.
BLOATED BODIES drift among splintered planks and strakes.
Crimson waves wash ashore; swallowed into sand.

THE GREAT GALLEON CLEFT BY JAGGED PIKES OF SERRATE STONE.

A HUNDRED WRETCHED BRUTES of a **HIGHLAND CLAN** have swarmed
the beach -- ragged wool and mail -- stabbing and
searching THE WOUNDED AND DEAD.

Gillean wanders with SPEAR in hand. CLOTTED FABRIC now
stuck over the maimed half of his face.

With his good eye he spots a FORMAL GOWN sunken in muck --

He strides over and tugs back at torn silk and lace to
reveal a BLOATED **NOBEL WOMAN** adorning it.

He scoops her head from the sand with a SQUELCHING SUCK --
once soft features now a soggy foul of briny flesh. With
effort, Gillean wrenches loose a BEJEWELLED HAND.

Brushes GEMMED RINGS clean; discovering a HERALDIC RING
cutting into her swollen little finger: **A ROYAL CREST**.

GILLEAN

Och... Ye bonnie cunte.

He jumps to his feet and calls down the beach.

GILLEAN

R'YAL CREST! R'YAL CREST!

Call echoes from MAN to SAVAGE MAN along the shore --
reaching the attention of a **CHIEFTAIN** ON HORSEBACK.

Gillean WAVES MAD to signal... The horse pivots and
charges toward him briskly. OTHER BRUTES stand attentive,
heedful to their Chieftain's appearance.

Chieftain slows his approach; HIS HULKING FRAME battle-
hardened as though wrought from stone. He gawks at
Gillean's bandaged face.

CHIEFTAIN

Wha man be ye?

GILLEAN

MacCorcadail, m'laird. Gillean, o'
Kildonan.

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CHIEFTAIN

Ceithern folk, t' hell or horn
fair. Glory t' ye brethren.

Gilleean nods his appreciation, then trudges back to the body. He lifts the hand to showcase the ring.

GILLEAN

Crest o' King Christian, m'laird.
I mind it laced upon their banner-
men. Ye think it could be her?

The sturdy lord observes the corpse.

CHIEFTAIN

Could be so, aye. Best take th'
head to be sure.

Gilleean UNSHEATHES HIS BLADE --

CHIEFTAIN

Cleave me th' hand first.

GILLEAN

Aye, m'laird.

YELLING DOWN THE BEACH distracts the Chieftain.

CHOP! Gilleean CLEAVES THE HAND -- leans away from the stench and **takes hold of it** -- pink fluid squishes from the lacerated wrist --

A **HORN BLASTS** FROM BEACHES END! Gilleean turns until his good eye sights a fracas -- MEN retreat from a sea cave as though for their lives, SHRIEKING.

CHIEFTAIN KICKS TO ACTION -- gallops for the cave.

Gilleean beholds the gallantry, gripping the hewn hand -- hastens to follow! SAVAGE BRETHREN spur on with him!

EXT. THE CAVE

A CLANSMAN staggers from the jagged maw of tepid darkness. Around the entrance lay **THE LIFELESS BODIES OF HIS KIN**, scattered in a grim circle.

Chieftain rides to his aide -- dismounts with vital ferocity, CLAYMORE UNSHEATHED.

CHIEFTAIN

Whit's happened here? Hoo many are
they?

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Clansman looks to his Chieftain -- both hands grasp the hilt of a MORNING STAR MACE.

CLANSMAN
...cursed...slaugh...

-- Clansman twitches... SWINGS HIS MACE --

CAVING IN HIS OWN FACE WITH A MEATY POP!

His body crumples next to his kin in swift death -- Chieftain HOWLS! Staggers, aghast! Catching his breath, he scans the OTHER DEAD -- all have succumb to SELF-INFLICTED DEATH STROKES.

CHIEFTAIN
Whit sorcery be this...

Rage fills the proud man, overwhelming his better judgement... He lifts his claymore with both hands...

-- GILLEAN DASHES AT A RUTHLESS PACE -- his CLANSMAN rushing behind. They witness afar as their Chieftain step into the mouth of doom...

GILLEAN
M'LAIRD, STAY YOUR HAND! WE ARE AT
YOUR AID!

But the abyss swallows him...

Gillean GROWLS WITH EFFORT; hell for leather -- HIS BLADE steady in one grip, bejeweled hand in the other.

Without hesitation, he splashes headlong into --

INT. CHOKING DARKNESS

Swallowed by the murk of fate, Gillean hazards forward unyielding -- an advancing cyclops of highland warfare.

BODIES LINE THE PERIMETER like Ogham Stones routing a path to judgement...

GILLEAN
M'LAIRD! WE STAN' WI' YE!

FIRELIGHT DANCES AHEAD outlining a bend in the cave. Duty commands Gillean forth, blade gripped at the ready --

INT. INNER CHAMBER

Gillean LEAPS OVER DEAD into the arched cavern -- torches litter the perimeter; SOME MEN BURN OUTRIGHT.

The Chieftain stands rigid, facing a GNARLED BURROW OF DARKNESS ACROSS A POND OF SEAWATER -- BOTH HANDS GRIP HIS CLAYMORE -- he twitches --

GILLEAN

NAY!

-- CLAYMORE SWINGS FOR THE CHIEFTAINS HEAD -- GILLEAN DIVES -- PARRIES THE STRIKE WITH HIS LONG-BLADE DIRK -- CLAYMORE VEERS -- LODGES INTO THE CHIEFTAINS SHOULDER -- DIRK KNOCKED LOOSE from gillean's grip --

-- Gillean careers into stone WITH A CRACK -- HE HOWLS -- BEJEWELED HAND HURLS INTO THE POND BY THE BURROW --

Slow to get up, Gillean's RIGHT ARM is near useless...

With barely a pang of agony, the Chieftain DISLODGES HIS CLAYMORE FROM HIS FLESH and makes ready a second strike... HIS CLANSMAN FUNNEL INTO THE CHAMBER BEHIND.

GILLEAN

Chieftain... Awaken...

His eyes flicker at gillean --

Gillean LUNGES -- takes hold of the claymore blade with HIS ONLY WORKING BARE HAND -- CHIEFTAIN WRENCHES THE BLADE TOWARD HIMSELF -- CUTTING INTO GILLEAN'S OBSTINATE HAND STALLING THE BLADES TRAVEL --

CLANSMAN RUSH TO AID -- PULLING AT THE CHIEFTAIN AND PUSHING AT THE BLADE -- his unbending strength is formidable -- GILLEAN'S BLOOD GUSHES TO THE SAND.

From within the inky blackness of the burrow THERE IS MOVEMENT -- A CLAMMY, PALE ARM reaches with CROOKED FINGER AND VITREOUS NAIL, lowering into the pond...

Gillean HOWLS WITH AGONY, heels dug into earth, hand pulling -- BLADE NOW CUTTING BONE -- THEN THE CHIEFTAIN RELENTS -- SENDING GILLEAN SPLASHING BACKWARD INTO THE POND -- FABRIC GETS LOST FROM HIS MANGLED FACE, gnarled skin and clouded eye on display...

CHIEFTAIN COLLAPSES into the arms of his Clansman.

Gillean allows a moment of relief -- until his CLANSMAN LOOK BEYOND HIM IN FEAR. His senses return --

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He rolls over swift, TAKING HOLD OF THE NEAREST BROADSWORD AND THRUSTING IT FORTH IN DEFENSE -- now facing the **darksome void of the burrow...**

TWO EYES GLINT BACK FROM THE SHADOWS -- **THE HEIGHT OF A CHILD**. Gillean stands firm; steeled with one eye and one arm, leaking the blood of a warrior...

The Chieftain BEGINS TO WEEP behind him...

GILLEAN
Stan' braw, m'laird!

THE SHADOW brings THE BEJEWELLED HAND into the light -- it's claw somehow paler than the bloodless limb -- IT TEARS INTO FLESH, SCRAPING LOOSE A SINGLE RING.

DISCARDS THE SKINNED HAND back into the pool.

The Chieftain's WEEPS TURN HOPEFUL -- as a chuckle of good fortune. Gillean hazards a glance to witness as the Chieftain retrieve his claymore and STABS IT INTO THE EARTH -- HILT AS A CROSS BEFORE HIM...

HE THEN KNEELS TO THE SHADOW WITH HIS HEAD BOWED.

Gillean, stunned, turns back to the burrow -- **THE CREATURE STEPS INTO THE LIGHT**: shrouded in delicate fur and wool cloak -- **ALBINO WHITE** of clammy skin; **CHILD-LIKE IN STATURE** with the leaf-green eyes of AN ELDER. It could be of youth age, or as ancient as the Briton Isle itself... *Mayhap not of this known world...*

THE CREATURE'S SINEWED LIMB stretches out in offering -- **HOLDING A POLISHED STONE RING INLAID WITH A BLACK JET GEMSTONE** -- still wet with fleshy detritus.

Gillean discards the broadsword and steps forward -- ACCEPTING THE RING with his bloodied hand. The weight uneasy in his grasp; his fate, more fretful still...

-- AS THE CREATURE BOWS BEFORE HIM...

Confounded senseless, Gillean slowly turns to his BRETHREN BEHIND THEIR CHIEFTAIN...

-- ALL KNEEL TO THE RING BEARER IN TURN...

A kinsman, clansman, ceithern warrior; a prophet of men. Gillean stands sentry as subject in a baroque painting...

ONSCREEN: **I AM THY SCOURGE O' GOD**