Britain the Dark Ages

The Roman Empire has fallen.
The land lies in ruins, divided among feuding tribes.
To the west, Ireland has flourished untouched by the Romans, protected by the sea.

Led by their powerful and ruthless King, the Irish have subdued the Britons.

Knowing that if Ireland is to prosper, the tribes must never be allowed to unite.

[Scene showing images of mountains. A young boy Tristan hunts with his father for a rabbit]

ARAGON
A year younger than I was for my first.

TRISTAN
When can I have a stag?

ARAGON
a stag?

TRISTAN
Oh come on!

[The two walk home through the mountains. Main title appears]

TRISTAN + ISOLDE

TRISTAN
Why would they join up against the Irish?
ARAGON
Because someone has to stand up to them.

TRISTAN
You?

ARAGON
Me, Marke, all the tribes. We can't resist alone.

TRISTAN
I could.

[Castle Tantallon appears onscreen]

ARAGON
Oh my little warrior. We have to be careful.

[Tristan and his father enter the bustling village]

ARAGON
Come home without something for your Lady there will be hell to pay.

[Tristan goes to a flower and herb seller]

TRISTAN
Can I?

[Aragon continues on into town where he is met by one of his men]

MAN
The Angles have arrives my Lord, as well as the Carrods, our fellow Jutes and the Saxons.

ARAGON
Good. With Marke, all will be here.

MAN
Yeah. It is a great day.

ARAGON
Let us hope so.

[They continue on into town. We see Tristan back at the herb sellers]

TRISTAN
Thanks.

[The boy starts to make a bracelet out of the herbs. Going up to Lady Marke he hands her the finished wreath]

LADY MARKE
We heard the news...

TRISTAN
Mother, I made this for you

[Lady Marke smiles and touches Tristan's face lovingly]

[In the Main Hall of Aragon, the assembled tribe Lords gather in meet]

ARAGON
Friends, look at us.

[A map of Britain is shown]

ARAGON
The tribes of Britain. Divided. Weak. Just as the Irish like us. But if we were one land united, we would outnumber them two to one. We could defeat them once and for all. That is why we are here today, to sign this treaty of unification.

LORD
But who would be King?

ARAGON
The strongest among us: Lord Marke.

[Scene of movement outside of the town]

ARAGON
Look if you are happy sending all of your gold to Ireland, living as slaves then by all means do nothing.

BARON
If we were happy doing that then we would never have risked coming here.

MARKE
Friends. My wife is with child, my heart tells me it is a boy. I want him to grow old in a land where all of us, all the tribes: Pict, Celt, Angle, Jute, Saxon are at peace. This island has
not known unity since the Romans left. That is why I sign this treaty.

WICTRED
And why should we follow you?

MARKE
Perhaps, Wictred, because your last attempt to form an alliance without the knowledge of half the Barons in this room has failed.

[A man bursts into the room]

MAN
My Lord! The Irish are here!

[Scenes of destruction outside the keep. Inside Aragon grabs Marke]

ARAGON
Take all your men. Guard the women!

MARKE
But you...

ARAGON
Go!!!

[More destruction. All the women and children try to find safety]

LADY MARKE
Tristan! Hurry! Come this way.

[More fighting. In the main keep the men await the Irish]

BARON
How did they know?

[The Irish break through and a furious battle begins. Tristan tries to fight]

LADY MARKE
Tristan!

[Aragon manages to hold his son back and puts him in a hold under the floorboards. Aragon is then killed by Morholt. There is destruction and fire breaks out. Tristan reaches up to touch the floorboards above and finds his fathers seeping blood on his hands. Tristan comes out of the hole and surveys the destruction. His father and Lady Marke are dead. Suddenly he is attacked by]
an Irishman but Marke jumps in to save him, losing his hand in
the process]

[Dunluce Castle. The funeral of the Irish Queen" appears
onscreen.

We see a funeral procession. A maid holds the young princess
comfortingly]

BRAGNAE
She's with the Gods now Isolde, you'll
see her again someday.

ISOLDE
Will I?

HENCHMAN
Morholt returns.

[The King leaves the funeral]

KING DONNCHADH
What news of the treaty?

[Morholt hands the King a scroll, which the King tears up]

KING DONNCHADH
Good Morholt, good

[Isolde and Bragnae approach a cairn where Isolde lays an urn
of her mother's ashes within a niche]

BRAGNAE
Your mother loved you so much Isolde

ISOLDE
Why did she die Bragnae? Why?

BRAGNAE
It was an ill fever that took her. Fever.

ISOLDE
No. It was her heart.

["Castle Dor" appears onscreen. A procession of survivors from
Marke's retinue return home. They find Dor in ruins. Marke's
sister runs up to him and cries in his arms]

MARKE
Your husband?
[Edyth shakes her head]

MARKE
Oh sister I am so sorry.

EDYTH: THE EXECUTIONS LASTED A DAY. *

MARKE
A whole generation of men.

EDYTH
Who's this?

MARKE
Tristan. Son of Aragon. We're his family now.

EDYTH
I have a son about your age. Melot! Melot! Melot, this is Tristan.

HENCHMAN
What shall we do, my Lord?

MARKE
Rebuild.

[Rebuilding is taking place. The youth are practicing their swordsmanship. Marke is testing his ability with his sword without his hand]

MARKE
Don't hold back

[Marke loses the fight easily. A boy starts yelling to the other boys]

BOY
Tristan won't fight me! Look he's scared!

MARKE
Still won't fight?

GENERAL
Tristan has the heart of a lion. He just needs some time.

MELOT
Why did you take off your helmet? You going to cry? My father died too, but you don't see me crying!
EDYTH

Melot!

MELOT

Run! Find another trapdoor to hide under. Coward!

[Tristan suddenly fights back and beats all the boys single-handedly]

HENCHMAN

Tristan!

[Tristan starts walking towards the camera. Suddenly he is grown up and the town is mostly rebuilt]

SAMMY

Tristan! Tristan! We've found something! Come on, this way.

MELOT

You will love it.

SIMON

I found a trapdoor!

MELOT

You found a trapdoor? Alright Simon, will you tell us all how you found it?! Look at that!

[The three friends climb down into it]

TRISTAN

Where does this lead?

MELOT

You'll see. I like that vase, I think I'll have that. I always knew the Castle was built on Roman foundations but we didn't think anything was left!

TRISTAN

Must be a burial crypt or something.

[They re-emerge from the tunnel]

MELOT

Here we are: the bottom of the keep.
TRISTAN
Who else knows about this?

SAMMY
Nobody.

TRISTAN
Good.

[They exit the keep]

BODKIN
The savages have rebuilt the castle at Cornwall, only now it's made of stone.

KING DONNCHADH
Of Cornwall's next tribute I want slaves. Young ones. Their future. If Marke resists have Morholt crush him.

MORHOLT
My King.

KING DONNCHADH
Morholt.

MORHOLT
I have led your armies to victory far and near. I've made you rich and powerful.

KING DONNCHADH
Yes you have. You have been most loyal.

MORHOLT
When I return from Cornwall, I was hoping...

KING DONNCHADH
What would please you?

MORHOLT
A wife.

[The cairn appears once again, with a grown up Isolde leaning on it looking out to sea]

BRAGNAE
It's dark in an hour.
ISOLDE
What do you think is really out there?

BRAGNAE
Britannia. The old Roman lands. Full of evil and grief.

ISOLDE
I want to see it. Do you know what the future looks like Bragna?

BRAGNAE
I see the life you were meant for. Your father will speak with you.

[Isolde speaks with her father. She is clearly distraught]

ISOLDE
Am I just a chattel to be traded at your pleasure? Do I have no say in my own life?

KING DONNCHADH
You have a duty to your King.

ISOLDE
You are my father.

KING DONNCHADH
Then obey me, daughter.

[Isolde runs to her apothecary-like room. Morholt comes to her]

MORHOLT
Your father has given you the news?

[Isolde nods]

MORHOLT
And you welcome it?

ISOLDE
I accept it.

MORHOLT
You know, we are more alike than you might guess.

ISOLDE
How so?
MORHOLT
I too dabble in elixirs. Poison from the livers of a puffer fish. Just a taste paralyses all the senses. So if the blade doesn't kill...

ISOLDE
Rendered safe by thistle and bark.

[Morholt holds up a leaf]

MORHOLT
And you know the antidote for this?

ISOLDE
Yohimbine.

MORHOLT
Makes a hard man even harder. The only cure... wild abandon. Till our wedding day. I'm to Cornwall, to deal with rabbles.

[The Irish arrive in Cornwall and enter the town of Castle Dor]

BODKIN
Release them.

[The Irish men spread out and start collecting Cornish men and women as hostages]

CORNISH MAN
Leave her!

[He is grabbed by the Irish thugs]

BODKIN
Take him there. Get a rope. Any man foolish enough to interfere in any way shall suffer the same fate.

[A girl rushes forward]

GIRL
No! No! Please No!

[The man is hung and Tristan rushes forward. He is held back by the Irish men. The Cornish hostages are put in a wagon]
BODKIN
If there are any more attacks we shall put our guests to death and raise this entire land. Take the horses.

[Tristan confronts Marke about the Irish]

MARKE
When would you strike?

TRISTAN
At once. Throw everything we have at them.

MARKE
They are hoping you'll do that. On horse they outnumber us two to one. You would lead the men straight to their deaths.

TRISTAN
So we do nothing?!

MARKE
Donnchadh would like that even more. Me to lose face in front of the other tribes. No, we must act. We must be decisive but we cannot act alone.

[Tristan and Marke enter the hall]

MARKE
So. Have the good men of York come to fight with us? Hm? The Saxons of Wessex?

WICTRED
My men don't want to follow a Pict into battle. Let alone one leading a pack of Angles and Celts.

MARKE
Then why are you here?

WICTRED
I thought Tristan should let me command his men.

TRISTAN
I make it my habit to follow no one.
WICRED
Except Marke.

TRISTAN
Marke delivered me from that place when
I was a boy. You ran. So you can understand
that when I think of Kings I think of
him. When I think of cowards...

MARKE
They are one day from their boats on
the old Roman road. Now who will ride
out with Tristan to fight them?

LORD
What is your plan, Tristan?

TRISTAN
We will need our two fastest runners.

[The Irish and their hostages make their way through a forest. Suddenly two of the British jump up and shoot at the Irish. Half of the convoy follow the two runners]

IRISH MAN
Go around!

[They continue to pursue the runners on foot. Suddenly Tristan and his men spring up from hidden holes under the loam and shoot the Irish with their bows. The Irish are attacked from all sides and defeated. Back at the main part of the Irish convoy, Morholt cleans his blade]

BODKIN
Morholt, they're back!

[Cloaked figures ride in while the camp cheers. Suddenly they attack and more British spring from the ground. A battle ensues. Morholt begins to kill the hostages, but Tristan springs to stop him. Sammy is stabbed. Tristan is stabbed by Morholt's poisoned blade but manages to kill Morholt. Melot and Tristan run to Sammy's side]

MORHOLT
Kill the slaves!
TRISTAN
Simon!

SAMMY
I don't want to die.

[Simon dies and Tristan collapses]

MAN
Tristan!

TRISTAN
I can't feel my legs or my hands.

MAN
Poison.

TRISTAN
Build a second boat.

MAN
Tristan!

[Tristan seems to die]

MELOT
He shall have a King's service.

[Tristan is lain on a funeral boat and floated out to sea]

MELOT
Farewell, Tristan of Aragon. Death of the Irish.

[The boat is set alight by burning arrows. Melot turns to the captured Irish]

MELOT
When the Irish came to Cornwall and my father surrendered. You spared a dozen out of a hundred. I am even less kind. The leader and 3 shall take this message home. As for the rest...

[The surviving British and the hostages return to Dor. Marke meets them]

MELOT
Victory.

MARKE
Tristan?

MELOT
Simon too.

MARKE
Did I love him like a son or did I misuse him for my own purposes?

EDYTH
He knew. He knew.

[Tristan floats in the sea, the ship no longer burning. Isolde is suddenly woken from sleep and makes her way to the beach with Bragnae]

BRAGNÆ
Where are we going?

ISOLDE
Away.

BRAGNÆ
You're afflicted child. Speak to me! Your father will find us and have my head. You are my charge. Please!

ISOLDE
I am no ones charge!

BRAGNÆ
You are. And you will be Morholt's Lady!

ISOLDE
And live a loveless life like my mam?

BRAGNÆ
What's that?

ISOLDE
Where?

[Isolde runs to the beached boat]

BRAGNÆ
Isolde. Wait! Don't! Isolde. Don't! Isolde!

ISOLDE
It's a man.

BRAGNÆ
Dead?

ISOLDE
Alive! Bragnae help me!

**BRAGNAE**
Isolde?

**ISOLDE**
Help me!

[They drag Tristan to a hut on the beachfront]

**ISOLDE**
Start a fire! Quickly!

[Isolde checks his condition while Bragnae tries to light the fire]

**ISOLDE**
His heart falters.

[Isolde starts to undress]

**BRAGNAE**
What are you doing?

**ISOLDE**
He needs heat. Now! Get your clothes off! Quickly!

[Isolde curls up against Tristan while Bragnae starts to undress]

**ISOLDE**
Hurry! Quickly! Smell that? Smell the poison? When he warms we will need thistle and bark.

**BRAGNAE**
I've not been naked with a man for 15 years!

**ISOLDE**
Hello. You've been sleeping a long time. You're in Ireland. Did you know that? Shh... It's alright. You're safe here. No one knows. Don't be scared. Just sleep... sleep.

[Tristan fades out of consciousness]

[Tristan wakes and grabs a stone to use as a weapon when he hears a noise]
BRAGNAE
Nooo Nooo Noo!

[Isolde runs in]

ISOLDE
It's alright, you don't need that! I forgot to tell him about you...

BRAGNAE
I'll wait outside with the other beasts.

[Bragnae leaves]

TRISTAN
You said no one else knew.

ISOLDE
Sorry... She's... My maid. Sworn to silence. Um... lie down please. Please?

[Tristan lies down]

ISOLDE
It's good you are remembering things.
This might sting. Do you remember anything else? The boat I found you in? How you got this? Too many questions. Here keep it dry. Here I found bread, you have water and fire. The ocean is outside if you wish a bath. You won't know where you are going so please don't try to leave. Just trust me.

TRISTAN
Why are you doing this?

ISOLDE
I'll be back

[Isolde leaves the hut and meets up with Bragnae outside]

BRAGNAE
This is a dangerous game you are playing. He's English, Isolde.

ISOLDE
Then we've got him prisoner.

BRAGNAE
Under no circumstances tell him your name, you hear me? Not if you wish him to escape this place. Do you hear me?
[Back in the Irish town Isolde and Bragnae whisper together. King Donnchadh enters and they fall into silence]

KING DONNCHADH
You've been away.

ISOLDE
I had noticed. Yes I have a bit.

KING DONNCHADH
Where?

ISOLDE
Bragnae and I were spying the convent of Brittes ].

KING DONNCHADH
Seeking sanctuary?

ISOLDE
Some women need it.

KING DONNCHADH
You'll find no refuge in a new religion. Your place is here, with Morholt.

ISOLDE
Any word of my betrothed?

KING DONNCHADH
Overdue. But comforted no doubt that you yearn for him.

[The King leaves]

[Isolde leaves the town to return to the hut on the beach. She sees Tristan bathing in the sea. Isolde tends to Tristan's wounds back in the hut]

TRISTAN
What's your name?

ISOLDE
Oh, I think it's better if we don't bother with names.

TRISTAN
How can I thank you if I don't have your name?
ISOLDE
You just did. If you insist... my name is Bragnae. I'm a lady in waiting at the court. My parents are dead. My mother, she is the source of the kindness you find so puzzling. My father would've left you where you fell.

TRISTAN
Tristan of Aragon.

ISOLDE
Well Tristan of Aragon, I'd guess about you too, but I think I've already seen everything.

BRAGNAE
Sir! I hope you appreciate the risks we are taking, and will honour us by leaving as soon as you are able.

[Bragnae leaves]

TRISTAN
She likes me. She's right though, you do risk.

[Finishes poulticing him]

ISOLDE
There. What of your parents?

TRISTAN
They also died when I was a child.

ISOLDE
Of what?

TRISTAN
A different type of Irish kindness.

ISOLDE
Sorry.

[Bragnae returns and interrupts their moment of tenderness]

ISOLDE
Tomorrow then?

TRISTAN
Tomorrow.
[Tristan sits outside making a shell bracelet. Isolde shortly arrives. Inside the hut the scene continues]

**ISOLDE**
There she who bore you brought you forth.

Set me as a seal upon your heart,
As a seal upon your arm;
For love is as strong as death,

**TRISTAN**
Ridiculous.

**ISOLDE**
I happen to believe what that says. Don't you think there is more to life?

**TRISTAN**
Than what?

**ISOLDE**
Something more than duty and death! Why are we capable of feelings if not to have them? Why long for things if they are not meant to be ours? Well don't listen to me. You're so sure of things. You're certainty, it's like armour. I wish I had that.

**TRISTAN**
Why would you need it?

**ISOLDE**
The joy of being a lady? Wanting something I can't have. A life of my own.

**BRAGNAE**
Time for sleep now.

**ISOLDE**
I'll follow you later.

**BRAGNAE**
You need to rest. In case your betrothed should want to see you.

[Bragnae and Isolde leave]

[Tristan and Isolde look out to sea]

**TRISTAN**
You're promised?

ISOLDE
Yes.

TRISTAN
What's he like?

ISOLDE

TRISTAN
I thought... earlier when you spoke of wanting something you can't have.

ISOLDE
I didn't know what I was talking about.

[They leave the shore and go inside the hut, Isolde is crying]

ISOLDE
Outside, just past that bluff there is a boat. That's how you should go when you leave. You should go soon.

[Isolde leaves but Tristan goes after her. They kiss. Inside the hut they make love.]

TRISTAN
How do you feel?

ISOLDE
I don't know

ISOLDE
Tristan! They've found your boat. At this very moment the King himself is scouring the coast. He will find you. He finds everyone. The tide is coming. Let's go!

[They drag the boat out to see]

TRISTAN
Come with me. Come with me!

ISOLDE
I can't
TRISTAN
Why not? Please!

ISOLDE
Tristan, we've both known this can't be. We've known this from the start. That doesn't mean it isn't true. It is. It just cannot be. I want to know that you are alive somewhere thinking of me from time to time. I want to know that there is more to this life and I can't know that if they kill you. Please?

[They kiss]

ISOLDE
Go!

[Isolde leaves to shore while Tristan rows away]

[Back at Dunlane]

KING DONNCHADH
A Cornish warrior may be ashore. Beware. We seek him as I speak. Hopefully it is just his rotted corpse we'll find, for he has slain your betrothed. Morholt is dead. Fallen in battle. Isolde? Bragnae, comfort her.

[The two leave, the Irish henchman, Bodkin enters]

BODKIN
She's stunned.

KING DONNCHADH
As am I by her grief.

BODKIN
We should assualt the British straight away. Crush them with maximum force.

KING DONNCHADH
Maximum force. Like that of Marke's tribe with the maximum force you speak of? I will not confront them again until our numbers are refreshed. Until then, we'll have cunning divide them.

BODKIN
Of what nature?
KING DONNCHADH
A prize, perhaps.

[Isolde looks out to sea while Tristan sails back to Cornwall. Meanwhile all the British Lords receive a message from Ireland]

MELOT
What's this about a tournament?

MARKE
Donnchadh. He has offered his daughter and the lands of Lyonesse as dowry to whichever English tribe wins. It is a clever way of setting us against each other.

MELOT
Well, the other barons will see through that.

[There is a meeting of the Lords in Dor]

WICTRED
As baron of Wessex it is my duty to fight in this tournament for my people.

MARKE
For yourself you mean.

MELOT
And what of the support you promised Tristan?

WICTRED
Tristan is dead. My people have suffered enough. They see the wealth of Lyonesse as more real than any alliance. My mind is set.

BARON
And ours as well.

MARKE
So be it.

[Tristan rides back into town]

MELOT
You're weary, let me rally your friends.  
I'll lead them against D...

**MARKE**
Ah, Melot, Melot, Melot. You are my 
blood and you are a noble presence but......

[They hear the sounds of the townspeople calling welcome to outside. Everyone rushes to Tristan]

**GUARD**
Lord Marke! He's back! It's Tristan!

**MAN**
It cannot be!

**EDYTH**
Tristan!

**MELOT**
I saw you dead.

**TRISTAN**
I am delivered.

**MARKE**
How? How?

[There is a celebration for Tristan's return that night]

**MARKE**
A toast! Tristan! Back from the dead.

**MAN**
Tristan. The Irish King offers his daughter 
in tournament to divide the tribes. 
For the power and the wealth half the 
tribes have sent champions to fight at the... Tristan!

**MAN**
God knows what happened to him.

[Tristan stares out into the night. The voice of Isolde haunts him]

**ISOLDE**
"My face in thine eyes, thine in mine appears,
And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;
Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;
If our two loves be one, or thou and I.
Love so alike, that none can slacken, none can die."

[Tristan confronts Marke in the keep with a plan]

MARKE
What?

TRISTAN
It is the only way to keep the alliance alive.

MARKE
I fail to see how fighting with our partners keeps us allies.

TRISTAN
Well they are all going to the tournament anyway. By announcing you will share the dowry with every Baron that remains loyal and in turn offering to support whomever prevails, the others would be compelled to follow you when you win.

MARKE
If we win. If we lose we could end up following Wictred. I'd need an infallible champion!

TRISTAN
Me.

MARKE
You are not yet healed.

TRISTAN
Then this trip will be my tonic. I will be ready. I know I will.

MARKE
What is the source of this fervour?

TRISTAN
Let me go and win you a wife. She can make peace without spilling one drop of blood, and maybe heal a wound from which you still lack.
[The British arrive in Ireland. A henchman approaches Tristan]

**BODKIN**
Truce. You have safe passage.

[The warriors enter the tournament arena]

**TRISTAN**
How do I look?

**HENCHMAN**
How do you look?

**MELOT**
Where is this Princess? What's her name? Isolde? I want to see what she looks like.

[Maids attend to Isolde as the King enters]

**BRAGNAE**
There. Almost done.

**ISOLDE**
No, not quite. If I am to be a present I should be fully wrapped.

[The King takes his seat on the podium overlooking the arena]

**KING DONNCHADH**
See how the bees come to the honey.

**TRISTAN**
Tristan of Aragon.

[He is given a specially prepared tablet]

**KING DONNCHADH**
So he lives.

**BODKIN**
For the moment.

**WICTRED**
Wictred of Glastonbury.

[He is also given a prepared stone]

**WICTRED**
I fight with no champion in my stead.
Know that.

BODKIN
Why Wictred?

KING DONNCHADH
Because the Barons will never unite behind him.

[Isolde takes her seat]

MELOT
Do you think she's got the pox?

[The combatants take their positions]

HERALD
Since the dawn of time...

[Isolde sees Tristan among the group to be fighting]

HERALD
... Begin!

[The battles start]

WICTRED'S OPPONENT
Make it for real!

WICTRED
What?

WICTRED'S OPPONENT
I yield!

MAN
You were great!

[Tristan's enemy is given a new sword after losing his weapon]

KING DONNCHADH
Allow it!

[Tristan wins the battle]

MELOT
It was too easy for you Tristan. Not much for a third draw.

[Wictred and Tristan work through their opponents until they face each other]

WICTRED
Mace.

MELOT
One more fight Tristan. Take deep breaths.

HERALD

[Tristan and Wictred fight. Wictred is booed by the crowd. Tristan defeats Wictred.]

TRISTAN
Yield!

[Tristan goes before the King]

KING DONNCHADH
An impressive victory. Of course the man who defeats Morholt might be expected to triumph here.

TRISTAN
On behalf of Cornwall, I offer your daughter a place on our throne. The throne of England, united behind one leader.

KING DONNCHADH
Isolde! Perhaps it is just that he who took a husband provides one.

[Isolde comes forward]

ISOLDE
I'm yours.

KING DONNCHADH
No. Tristan of Aragon has won you on behalf of Lord Marke of Cornwall.

MELOT
Let's go.

[Everyone disperses]

KING DONNCHADH
Let them take her across the sea. After the wedding I'll disavow Isolde, the alliance will crumble.

[The English sail back to Britain with Isolde and Bragnae]

HENCHMAN
Tristan. Princess wants to speak to you.

[Tristan goes to meet Isolde inside the ship]

ISOLDE
You risked your life to give me to another man.

TRISTAN
You said your name was Bragnae. Why did you do that?

ISOLDE
Oh what have I done? Stop this thing. Say something.

TRISTAN
I can't. I won you in my King's name.

ISOLDE
But I am yours. You touched me and I yielded...

TRISTAN
It doesn't matter.

ISOLDE
It is the only thing that matters Tristan. Leave with me, I will go anywhere.

TRISTAN
Your marriage will end a hundred years of bloodshed.

ISOLDE
My marriage to another man!

TRISTAN
Isolde. You will live with this. We must.

ISOLDE
Don't do this to me.

[Melot enters]

MELOT
Tristan, we've made shore.

[The party enter Dor, Marke waits for them]

MARKE
What if she's a hag? Or maybe she won't have me!

EDYTH
She will brother. You're the prize.

[Isolde steps out of the carriage]

ISOLDE
My Lord.

MARKE
Isolde? Welcome.

[He takes her hand and everyone claps]

[Isolde's wedding gown is prepared. Marke puts on his metal hand for the ceremony. Isolde - fully dressed- floats down the river to the wedding ceremony about a decorated ship. She and Marke go forward to be wed. There is a celebration after the wedding. As Isolde and Marke leave the party, Isolde approaches Tristan]

ISOLDE
If things were different. If we lived in a place without duty... would you be with me?

TRISTAN
That place does not exist.

ISOLDE
I'll pretend it's you.

[Isolde and Marke retire to their bedroom. Tristan watches their window from outside]

MARKE
You're trembling. You are far from home and I am a stranger still. But you mustn't fear me. My wish is to make you happy, as a wife.. as a women and hopefully one day, the fact that I am not whole will not offend you.

[Marke kisses Isolde and makes love to her]
[Marke and Isolde stand outside the keep surveying the town. Mark fingers her shell bracelet]

**MARKE**
That's pretty. Did you make it?

**ISOLDE**
It was a present.

[Tristan goes to Edyth's home and knocks on the door]

**MAN**
Tristan?

**TRISTAN**
Might I stay here a while?

**MAN**
Of course.

[There is a montage of Tristan and Isolde's lives while in Dor.]

Finally in the marketplace Isolde is fed food by Mark and they laugh together. Edyth sees Tristan watching]

**EDYTH**
Tristan!

[Tristan walks off]

**MARKE**
I've never seen him like this before.

**ISOLDE**
Perhaps someone his own age should speak with him.

[Marke lets her go. She finds Tristan]

**ISOLDE**
They believe you are distant. They are worried about you. So am I.

**TRISTAN**
I can tell. Laughing at the market, holding hands, a caress on the neck when he pours you wine.

**ISOLDE**
He is my husband. I remember his Kingdom
comes before my life.

TRISTAN
Yes well, I must confess I thought you might find more difficulties in performing your duty.

ISOLDE
Am I not permitted a single moment without mourning? Living with this Tristan as you said we must.

TRISTAN
I live in torture thinking of these moments. With every look he gives you I get sicker and sicker. There is a burning in me, I feel on fire and guilt and I can't get rid of either. Does it make you happy to know that?

ISOLDE
The Roman Bridge. I can get to it without being seen. And I will go there anytime to be there with you.

[All the Leaders meet in Castle Dor to sign a treaty]

MARKE
Welcome bands of Anglia, Rothgar and Orick. Wessex: Kaye and Wictred.

WICTRED
As you will be King and his daughter Queen, does that mean Donnchadh will be coming to the coronation.

MARKE
It does. On the next full moon, all will attend.

WICTRED
A lot can happen in a month

MARKE
Bearing that in mind, and given the instabilities of our new land I shall be naming a second. My sister has raised one, capable of guiding you if the need should arise. He is a man of passion, fierce in battle who has learnt to tame his heart with his head. I give you Tristan of Aragon.

[Melot is very upset]
MARKE
For the first time since the Romans, this country stands united.

[After leaving the signing, Tristan chases down Marke]

TRISTAN
I can't be your second. Melot must be. He is blood. Besides, I wish to journey north.

MARKE
You no longer sleep at Dor, and now you don't want to be my second. Do you find no comfort in your home? These stone walls that you helped build?

TRISTAN
I find these walls a prison.

MARKE
Why?

TRISTAN
Everything I want seems misplaced.

MARKE
Ever since you were a boy you sacrificed everything for me. All for one dream. Now that you reached that dream, it is natural that you would feel some loss. It doesn't matter if you want to be second. You are. I will only be king if you are my second. I'd put it more gently if I could.

TRISTAN
Then I am your second.

MARKE
Perhaps it is time that you took a wife!

TRISTAN
No!

MARKE
Can't live alone forever.

TRISTAN
I can!

[Isolde passes]
MARKE
Isolde. I was trying to explain to Tristan the importance of loving. It seems he might live without it.

ISOLDE
Why?

TRISTAN
There are other things to live for. Duty. Honour.

ISOLDE
But they are not life Tristan. They are the shells of life. And empty ones and in the end all they hold is days and days without love. Love is made by God. Ignore it and you can suffer as you cannot imagine.

TRISTAN
Then I will no longer live without it.

MARKE
Good. Very good! Come, we will be late!

ISOLDE
Late?

MARKE
The warriors ride out on the full moon. It is an old ritual. I shall miss you tonight.

[That night Isolde sneaks out into the forest. Marke and his warriors ride together. Tristan leaves the party to find Isolde. They make love together]

ISOLDE
How many did you love before me?

TRISTAN
None.

ISOLDE
And after me?

TRISTAN
None.
[While hunting the boar Marke falls off his horse]

MAN
Lord Marke! Are you hurt?

MARKE
Nothing but for my pride.

[Tristan and Isolde bid each other farewell. Back in the keep there is much dancing]

MELOT
Tristan, I need to speak with you.

TRISTAN
Go ahead.

MELOT
We haven't even had a coronation yet to mark tradition. But now he breaks tradition and scares all the barons by naming you as second.

TRISTAN
I tried to convince him you would be better.

MELOT
Yes well, peace can be just as treacherous as war and I feel that Marke doesn't really...Listen to me!!! Our attention must be on Cornwall now more than ever.

TRISTAN
I am sorry he didn't choose you. I am.

[Melot approaches Marke]

MELOT
Can I speak to you?

[Marke leaves Isolde's side, Tristan leaves and Isolde follows. They hide in a room where they begin to kiss each other passionately. Finishing his conversation with Melot, Marke seeks Isolde. Later that night, Marke makes love to Isolde]
ISOLDE
What do you think became of them?

TRISTAN
They were lives... just lived.

ISOLDE
I find myself imaging things in this place. I decorate it. Books, a harp there... a child.

TRISTAN
Would it be his or mine?

ISOLDE
I would have no way to tell, would I? He is a kind man Tristan, I cannot hate him. Yesterday at the market I saw a couple holding hands, and I realised we would never do that. Never anything like it. No picnics or unguarded smiles. No rings. Just stolen moments that leave too quickly.

In the marketplace Isolde and Marke shop. Tristan steals some herbs and makes a wreath for Isolde. He surreptitiously slips it onto Isolde's wrist as Merlot and Wictred look on.

Later, Marke goes to his bedroom but finds Bragnae waiting.

MARKE
Where is Isolde?

BRAGNAE
I don't know for sure, she was having a walk in the garden before and I'm afraid I got tired so I returned. It's my fault.

[Bragnae goes to find Tristan and Isolde who are meeting in secret]

BRAGNAE
You're going to get caught! Both of you! He's looking for you right now, he'll see you! I told you this would
happen!

TRISTAN
There is another door here, forgotten. This comes up in the bottom chamber of the keep.

ISOLDE
I hate this.

TRISTAN
Hurry! Go on.

[Isolde and Bragnae go down]

BRAGNAE
I'm tired of this. I'm tired of lying for you. I'm sick of it.

ISOLDE
Then don't.

[Isolde goes to bed with Marke]

ISOLDE
There is a servings child, quite ill. Doing better now.

MARKE
I didn't ask you were you were. Your heart is beating so fast.

ISOLDE
Is it?

MARKE
Isolde. Is there anything I can do to make you happier. I want to make you happy.

ISOLDE
I'm fine.

[Wictred speaks to King Donnchadh in secret]

WICTRED
She's in love with Tristan. They're intimates. If I expose them it will break Marke's heart and his hold on the other Barons.

KING DONNCHADH
How?
WICTRED
With Marke's champion in chains, we'll take Castle Dor. You can man your armies unopposed. There will be no one defending you in the waters.

KING DONNCHADH
And your price?

WICTRED
I want Marke's throne.

[As the King leaves he talks to Bodkin]

KING DONNCHADH
When his throne falls apart, we'll go over and pick up the pieces.

[Marke approaches Tristan as he looks over the town]

MARKE
Tristan? Can I speak with you? Is it possible... do you think a man blinded by love... Is it possible that that man might not see treachery right in front of him?

[Takes out wreath]

I found this hidden amoung Isolde's things. Do you think she has a lover? Has she said anything to you?

TRISTAN
No.

MARKE
Perhaps you could follow her. I can't ask anyone else. I know. I know what you think - I'm acting like a child. Normally I can read faces, but with hers I feel like... I can't be objective. She's so delicate.

TRISTAN
You really love her.

MARKE
Oh... I do...terribly. I didn't know how empty I was. She sustains me, she thrills me. And when I see this ring, it is a ring of thorns.

TRISTAN
The ring is nothing. She's loyal to
you. I am sure of it.

MARKE
... If you say so.

[Tristan is tortured by Marke's proclamation and burns his and Isolde's meeting place. Isolde finds it in ruins. The Irish arrive on ships for the coronation ceremony]

MAN
I count nine

TRISTAN
If they move they will warn us with a black flag

[The King of Ireland arrives and shakes hands with a waiting Marke]

MARKE
You bring an entourage?

KING DONNCHADH
I can let myself be alone in my position Lord Marke. But don't worry, they will stay offshore. I miss you.

MARKE
My nephew, Merlot of Cornwall

KING DONNCHADH
And Tristan, slayer of my best general, winner of Isolde, defender of the alliance. You are a fortunate man.

MARKE
Indeed.

[Inside the castle the coronation is held in Latin. Marke and Isolde are crowned and take their seats on their thrones. Back at the lookout point the flag bearers are stabbed by the Irish. Dancing happens at the coronation celebrations]

MARKE
Tristan! Seems I worried for nothing.

WICTRED
May I dance with the Queen, or does Tristan have the next one?
That's right, you have never danced with Isolde before!

[Tristan is pushed forward to dance with Isolde]

A new song for Tristan. Slow.

Why did you burn it?

You know.

Meet me there in an hour or I'll die.

[The dance ends]

I could still teach you a thing or two, dancing being one of them.

Accuse him now.

No, no, no. We'll have more than accusations.

[Tristan leaves]

Is something the matter?

I'm just feeling a little weary that's all. I might just go and have a lie down.

Of course.

[Isolde leaves]

Friends, friends hear me! We've forgotten the full moon isn't it time to ride out?

No. Tonight it cause for exception.
But the coronation should uphold tradition, surely it is not to be neglected already?

**MARKE**
We honour it. In half a night. Ride out! Where's Tristan?

[Everyone leaves to hunt while Tristan and Isolde race to be with each other]

**ISOLDE**
I miss Ireland

**TRISTAN**
Isolde, this must end.

**ISOLDE**
That's like asking me to stop breathing.

**TRISTAN**
It cannot be.

[Elsewhere Wictred leads the hunt to where Tristan and Isolde are]

**ISOLDE**
Please don't leave me. Please!

[They kiss only to have the hunting party come upon them]

**MARKE**
Isolde? There is someone... No.

**KING DONNCHADH**
I see how it is in Cornwall. My money is good enough, my alliance is good enough, but my daughter you pass amoung your lieutenants like a whore!

**ISOLDE**
It's not like that.

**KING DONNCHADH**
I see no relation to me here! I will see this peace end.

**WICTRED**
You have brought the allegiance to shame. Who would fight for this?

[Wictred and King Donnchadh ride off]

**MARKE**
Seize him. Seize him.

MELOT
Behold your hero uncle I would have no heroes now.

[Further away the Irish march towards Dor. Bodkin speaks to King Donnchadh]

BODKIN
They're ashore.

KING DONNCHADH
Prove your worth.

BARON
If a man can't rule his woman, how can he govern an entire Kingdom?

MELOT
He can't.

LORD
We have suffered peace.

BARON
It's all been coming apart. I can feel it

LORD
You're right.

[Wictred rides up]

WICTRED
There is very little time. Fortunately, Donnchadh has no quarrel with anybody here. He's asked me to give you a message.

BARON
What's this?

WICTRED
It is compensation for the men you will lose attacking Castle Dor with Donnchadh tomorrow. Let's be honest, our people need a stronger leader.

BARON
And who might that be, Wictred?

WICTRED
Melot. Too long the ablest among us has been denied his rightful place. I pledge you my allegiance and offer him
my services as his second.

MELOT
I like this plan.

[Tristan is in chains in the keep. Marke comes down to see him]

MARKE
I came to apologise. I've been selfish arrogantly thinking that perhaps I'd given enough. At least enough to merit if not your love then at least your respect. You have a home. A kingdom. Why was it not enough? Tell me. Tell me! You do not know what you have done! Everything is destroyed, everything! All because you did not have enough. She's loyal to you I am sure of it. You bloodsucker. What could it have been had I not stretched out my hand to save your life. How I curse that day, how I curse it. And so be with your defence. Then I will go complete your punishment, Donnchadh marches on us as we speak.

[Marke strides away. Bragnae catches up to him in a corridor. She bars entrance to his bedroom]

BRAGNAE
She's young. I will not let you harm her!

[Marke moves Bragnae out of the way and enters the room]

MARKE
How long?

ISOLDE
Since you thought he was dead. I found him wounded on the beach in Ireland. I hid him from my father and I told him my name was Bragnae. So when he came to the tournament at Dunluce to win Donnchadh's daughter he didn't realise it was me. All this time my heart has been his, and I am sorry. He tried harder than you can possibly imagine because he loves you.

[Marke leaves the room in silence]
[Merlot and Wictred walk through the forest discussing plans]

**MERLOT**
I will coax him out, make sure Donnchadh knows this.

**WICTRED**
Of course, of course. You know as things moved along I suspected them for some time.

**MERLOT**
Tristan and Isolde?

**WICTRED**
You know what I could never work out? How it was conducted. How she got in and out of Dor unseen.

**MERLOT**
The tunnel.

**WICTRED**
What?

**MERLOT**
The Roman Tunnel!

**WICTRED**
Show me.

[A henchman released Tristan from the prison and takes him to the riverside where Isolde and Bragnae are waiting with a boat]

**TRISTAN**
What is this?

**HENCHMAN**
The will of the King. Farwell.

**ISOLDE**
I told him about Ireland. He's given us our freedom. Why does loving you feel so wrong?

**TRISTAN**
Get in.

**ISOLDE**
Tristan, if I do this.
For all time, they will say it was our love that brought down a kingdom. Remember us.

[Tristan pushes the boat away]

Tristan, don't! Tristan! Tristan! Tristan! Why?! Tristan!

[Tristan runs back to Dor]

[At Dor they bring everyone into the castle and close the gates. The armies close in on Dor]

Get the livestock and fuel undercover. Put some archers on the ramparts.

All the archers have deserted us as has half the household.

And you stay?

If you are surprised then they have won already.

Come on, hurry!

[The armies gather outside the keep]

Burn it. Their will is as strong as milk. The seas will unravel us. Where is Wictred with his key?

[At the tunnel entrance]

It comes up to the Roman foundations at the lowest level.

This is a godsend!
They both enter it and Wictred gestures for his men to follow.

There is much fighting as the forces of the Irish and traitorous barons besiege Castle Dor. In the tunnel, Wictred and Melot move towards the keep.

WICTRED
What will you say to him?

MELOT
That he will not make any more mistakes and that it is time for him to move ba - what's that?!

The two turn to see Wictred's men following them down the tunnel. Melot fights to stop them going down the tunnel but is stabbed.

The enemy forces break through the outer gates and are attempting to get into the keep.

MAN
Aim for the front of the line

MARKE
They are waiting.

As Wictred and his men enter the keep from the tunnel below, Tristan enters the tunnel from the forest entrance.

MAN
The Irish are inside!

MARKE
Follow me!

WICTRED
Bar the door make sure no one gets in!

In the tunnel, Tristan comes upon a wounded Melot.
MELOT

You.

TRISTAN

What happened here?

MELOT

A reward for idiocy. A dozen Irish have blazed your way.

TRISTAN

Melot, I came to aid Marke.

MELOT

Everyone lies.

TRISTAN

I didn't lead them here.

MELOT

No, I did.

TRISTAN

Why?

MELOT

I thought someone believed in me.

TRISTAN

It will be undone.

MELOT

Tristan—I'm for the worms—swear to me that you are true.

TRISTAN

As we were brothers.

MELOT

Build my boat.

[Melot dies]

[Tristan makes his way to the keep while Marke and his men do battle with Wictreds]

WICTREDS MAN

They're here!

WICTRED

Keep them back.

MARKE'S MAN

Wictred.
MARKE
He's trying to lower the bridge

MARKE'S MAN
Traitor!

MARKE
Give me your shield, we're pinned down!

[Tristan attacks Wictred and his men]

MARKE
Tristan!

MARKE'S MAN
Him too?

MARKE
No, he's with us!

[Marke and his men jump into battle, but not before Tristan is stabbed. Tristan manages to stop the drawbridge falling with his sword. He is again stabbed by Wictred]

MARKE
Tristan!

[Tristan stabs Wictred and kills him. Tristan pulls the sword from his body as the battle subsides]

MARKE
Tristan! How did you get here?

TRISTAN
Secret. Secrets, in the bowls of the keep.

MARKE
In the bowls of the keep.

MAN
They have reached the palisades.

GENERAL
Then we must keep hope.

[Tristan cuts the head off Wictred's body and slowly stands. Marke nods]

[As the drawbridge of the keep is lowered, King Donnchadh makes his way to the front]
KING DONNCHADH
Get back! Ha ha ha! Ha ha ha!

[Tristan slowly steps out with the head of Wictred in his hands]

TRISTAN
Behold! The head of a traitor!

[Marke and his generals step out]

MARKE
Will you always be little men, who cannot see what was and could be again? There is no middle ground! So slay us or slay him!

KING DONNCHADH
Oblide them. Oblide them!

[He attacks people around him, but is shot in the back by an arrow. Suddenly the Irish and the British start to fight. Tristan falls to the ground and Marke runs to his side]

TRISTAN
Take me out of here. Take me to the river.

[Isolde comes to the battle and is grabbed by General who drags her to the riverside]

GENERAL
Hurry!

MARKE
Bring her.

GENERAL
Marke, you must come, the battle needs you. We'll lose everything.

MARKE
I must heed their call, I am the King.

GENERAL
We've driven them back as far as we can but they are holding us at the throat.

GENERAL
Goodbye my friend.
[Marke and his generals leave and Isolde goes to Tristan's side]

**ISOLDE**

Know that I love you Tristan. And wherever you go, whatever you see, I will always be with you.

**TRISTAN**

You were right. I do not know if life is greater than death, but love was more than either.

[Tristan dies and Isolde weeps. We see Tristan and Isolde back in the hut in Ireland as she reads to him]

**ISOLDE**

"My face in thine eyes, thine in mine appears,

And true plain hearts do in the faces rest;

Where can we find two better hemispheres,

Without sharp north, without declining west?

Whatever dies, was not mixed equally;

If our two loves be one, or thou and I.

Love so alike, that none can slacken, none can die."

[They kiss]

Their love did not bring down a kingdom. Legend says that Marke defeated the Irish, rebuilt Castle Dor and reigned in peace until the end of his days.

Isolde laid Tristan beneath the ashes of the Roman ruin, planted his grave with two willows that grew forever intertwined... then disappeared.

**END**