LEGEND OF DARKNESS

by

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CLOSE ON a finely-worked Medieval tapestry. In the background, beyond the intricate foliage, stands a moated castle where a troop of mounted hunters set out for the chase with dogs and lances. In the foreground, a lovely young maiden heads for the forest, carrying an armful of flowers. The forest, stylistically rendered by the weaver's art, has numbers of small animals cunningly worked into the warp and woof. A Green Man, clad only in leaves and vines, hides behind a tree, watching a stately pair of unicorns grazing on the greensward.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST GLADE - DAY

The woven image on the tapestry gives way to a pair of white unicorns browsing in a sun-dappled glade. A male and female, these animals are of surpassing beauty, their tapered, spiraling horns glowing like precious metal. Their movements are so graceful that every other living creature seems clumsy by comparison. The SOUND of a distant hunting horn makes them pause. A second NOTE is heard. The unicorns drift, silent and languid, into the farther reaches of the forest.

EXT. HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING CASTLE - DAY

The hunting horn SOUNDS a third time. A young woman still close to childhood, fifteen at most, turns back to look at the castle in the distance. A troop of armed men rides out hunting, accompanied by braying hounds and the blare of horns. One of the company is masked and dressed all in black.

The girl's name is LILI. She is a princess of the distant castle and dressed in splendid brocades and silk. In her arms, she carries a bouquet of wildflowers wrapped in a lace napkin. Like these blossoms, she herself is young and fresh and innocent. She sings a simple country air as she runs through the waving grass toward the deep woods.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

On an emerald patch of moss in the shade beneath the spreading limbs of chestnuts and oaks, numbers of small animals gambol. Squirrels and rabbits, hedgehogs and
foxes, all manner of creatures leap and frolic about the feet of a curious young man. This is JACK O' THE GREEN. His hair is long and unshorn and he wears a costume woven from ivy leaves, skins and vines. On his feet are bark sandals. His features are tanned berry-brown and woven into his tangled locks is a wreath of flowers. He is a legendary "Green Man" or "Wild Man" who lives the free life of a hermit alone in the deep woods.

Jack, the "Green Man," feeds morsels of bread and fruit to the animals dancing around his feet. He is a friend to all the beasts of the forest and carries food for them in a split-willow basket. Birds fly down and land on his head and shoulders, taking seeds and nuts from his lips.

The musical sound of someone approaching alerts him. His eyes have an animal quickness and his instincts are as finely tuned as any creature of the wild. The birds fly from his shoulders to the treetops. His furred companions dart for cover. In three quick bounds, Jack is himself up a nearby tree, clinging to a high branch like a cat.

The Princess Lili comes singing down the path. She spots the fallen willow basket and looks around for the Green Man.

\[\text{LILI} \]
\[\text{(calling)}\]
\[\text{Jack... Hello, Jack...}\]

There is no answer. Puzzled, Lili sits on the moss, puts aside her flowers, and rummages through the contents of the basket. The dried apples, walnuts and sunflowers don't occupy her for long. She is annoyed. A princess is not someone to trifle with.

\[\text{LILI} \]
\[\text{(calling)}\]
\[\text{Jack-o'-the-Green...? Green Jack?}\]
\[\text{Oh bother, I know you're here. Why are you so cruel?}\]

Unseen, high in his tree, Jack-o'-the-Green watches the young princess. He is amused by her anger but there is nothing malicious about his smile. He climbs quietly to a lower branch, hangs suspended for a moment, then drops.

Jack lands close to the unsuspecting girl. Startled, she screams in surprise. Jack laughs at her unwarranted terror.

\[\text{JACK} \]
\[\text{Greetings, my lady, the green wood is honored.}\]

\[\text{LILI} \]
\[\text{Oh, Jack, you are a wild man to use}\]
me so.

Jack spies the bouquet of wildflowers and reaches for it.

JACK
These for me?

LILI
If you like.

Jack gathers up the bouquet, bowing low as he jumps to his feet. A bluebird flies out of the greenery and lands on his shoulder.

JACK
(to the bird)
She brings a gift as fair as herself.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST - DAY

The Green Man and the Princess wander together down a meandering path. Birds circle about them and numbers of small animals scamper shyly at their heels.

LILI
You promised!

JACK
Never.

LILI
But you did... you did!

JACK
I may have said perhaps...

LILI
Liar!

JACK
Or perchance...

The distant BLARE of a hunting horn interrupts them. The animals freeze, wild-eyed.

LILI
It's my father, gone a-hunting. The Baron Couer de Noir is his guest and must be provided with some sport.

JACK
(bitterly)
Sport, indeed.

LILI
The Baron is a frightful man. They say he's an ogre. He wears a mask so none may see his face.

JACK
Blackheart. Aptly named.

LILI
Oh, fie. What about the unicorn?

JACK
Unicorn?

LILI
A promise is a sacred oath.

JACK
All right. I'll show you something sacred.

EXT. A CLEARING BY A STREAM – DAY

A small meadow: a sun-gilded amphitheater within the darker confines of the forest. At its edge flows a gentle stream. An evil-looking viper moves sinuously along the grassy back as Jack and Lili step from the concealing shrubbery nearby.

LILI
Let's rest a minute. I'm so thirsty.

JACK
Stop complaining.

LILI
A gentleman would offer water.

JACK
Only were he a fool to boot.
(pointing)
See yon viper?

LILI
(shuddering)
I detest serpents.

JACK
That viper has envenomed the water. No animal will drink here now.

LILI
What shall we do?

JACK
Be patient.
They crouch together behind the shrubbery.

LILI
Oh, dear.

JACK
What's the matter?

LILI
I've lost my napkin. It was all elf-work and lace... I must have dropped it when you startled me so.

JACK
(rising)
I'll go search for it.

LILI
Don't leave me now. I fear the unicorn won't show himself without you.

JACK
I'm not its master.

LILI
(touching his arm)
The napkin will keep. I'd rather not be alone.

JACK
(with a smile)
Your command is my wish, Princess Lili.

EXT. DEEP WOODS - DAY

A pair of ferocious hounds bray under the tree in which Jack was hiding. Another sniffs at a few scattered blossoms and Lili's lace napkin lying forgotten on the moss.

The hunting party rides up at a gallop. At the head of the troops are Lili's father, KING GODWIN, pink-cheeked and white-bearded; a kind-hearted, elfish man, though weak and ineffectual; and BARON COUER DE NOIR, a powerful knight on a black charger. His greaves and breastplate are black as midnight as is the heavy cloak which envelops him. His hands are covered with black gauntlets and a horned black hood with a wolf's lupine features masks his face. His voice rumbles with dread authority as the party reins to a stop.

BARON
What spoor have the hounds for us?
A lance-bearer dismounts and takes the lace kerchief from the dog's foaming mouth.

KING GODWIN
My daughter's napkin. That's certain.

The Baron unstraps a crossbow from his saddle leathers.

BARON
We proceed. Have three men restrain the dogs. Don't come until you hear the horns.

The hunters ride on, leaving the dog handlers to control the straining hounds.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

Lili and Jack wait behind the bushes, watching the stream.

LILI
How much longer?

JACK
Shhh!

LILI
(whispering)
I am a princess. You have no right to order me about.

JACK
In these woods you are a commoner. Now be quiet. True royalty approaches.

THE STREAM - LILI AND JACK'S POV

The pair of radiant white unicorns pushes through the undergrowth to the edge of the stream.

LILI (O.S.)
Ohhhh... they're so beautiful...

The male unicorn bends his head and dips his golden horn into the stream. Soon after, the female begins to drink and numbers of small animals, rabbits, mice, and squirrels, creep from under cover to drink as well.

JACK (O.S.)
The alicorn purifies the water, purging it of all poison.

JACK AND LILI
The princess is entranced. A look of utter rapture illuminates her features.

LILI
Such grace... and their smell; it's ambrosia.

JACK
They rival the angels of paradise.

LILI
Oh Jack, mightn't I touch one? It would thrill me so.

JACK
Are you honest?

LILI
Jack!

JACK
Tis a fair question. If you be a virtuous maid the unicorn will lay his head in your lap.

LILI
He'll not flee if I show myself?

JACK
Not if you be chaste. Tis an awesome test of virginity.

LILI
I've no fear of failure. Your implications are most unbecoming.

JACK
I'm not your judge... nor have I any desire to witness the trial.

Jack turns to leave.

LILI
Where are you going?

JACK
To fetch your napkin.

Jack pushes through the underbrush and is lost from sight. For a moment, the princess is confused and nervous at being left alone in such circumstances, but she peers out at the unicorns and the sight of such beauty rekindles her resolve.

Princess Lili steps out of the concealing underbrush and walks slowly to the center of the clearing. Her bearing
is noble and proud, her carriage utterly dignified.

The unicorns lift their heads from the stream and watch the girl's progress. The other smaller animals cease drinking and scatter into hiding.

Lili sits on the grass in the center of the clearing, spreading her gown around her. She smiles at the staring unicorns.

The male unicorn grows agitated. His nostrils flare; the strong neck arches. Sunlight gleams on the shaft of his golden horn as he prances across the stream to the meadow, sending multi-hued clouds of butterflies aloft from the flowers underfoot.

Lili smiles at the nimble dancing of the unicorn, seemingly drawn to her by an invisible lead. He rears up, whinnying in protest, but the lure is too strong, something unspoken compels him toward the smiling girl.

EXT. ANOTHER PART OF THE FOREST - DAY

Jack hurries along the overgrown path, running as numbly as a wild stag. The SOUND of approaching HOOFBEATS brings him up short. With the instincts of an animal, Jack darts into concealment. After a moment, the hunting party rides past, sunlight glinting on the steel lance-tips. The Baron holds his crossbow at the ready, as black and grim as Death himself.

When the hunters are gone from sight, Jack hurries from his hiding-place. He realizes something is terribly wrong and runs back through the woods, leaping rocks and deadfall logs in a desperate attempt to reach the clearing before them.

EXT. CLEARING - DAY

The princess makes no move as the trembling unicorn stands before her, the tip of his rapier-sharp horn pressed against her breast. At this moment, he could kill her in an instant, yet she does not resist or show any fear. Instead, she smiles with joy.

Slowly, the unicorn kneels; first folding his forelegs, then settling his hindquarters onto the grass. His limpid eye meets Lili's adoring gaze. Without a sound, he settles his great head in the virgin's lap, his long white mane spreading over her like a shawl.

CLOSE ON LILI AND THE UNICORN

The girl strokes the unicorn's head, running her hand lovingly down the spiraling horn. The animal seems
totally in her power. He closes his eyes and nuzzles her bodice. Almost without thinking, Princess Lili unbuttons the top of her gown, exposing her pale breasts. The entranced unicorn immediately begins to suckle like a newborn creature. Lili hugs the white head to her bosom, consumed by ecstasy and bliss.

EXT. EDGE OF THE CLEARING - DAY

King Godwin, the Baron and his cohorts ride silently up to the edge of the clearing, screened from view by the surrounding trees. The Baron holds up his gloved hand and hisses a whispered command:

BARON

Hold!

The other riders rein to a stop. The Baron guides his horse closer to the edge of the clearing, parting the branches which conceal him.

BARON'S POV

Through a fringe of leaves the Baron sees the Princess nursing the reclining unicorn, a tableau at once reminiscent of the Madonna and the Infant Jesus.

THE BARON

As he inserts a bolt in his crossbow and cranks back the string until it is taut. Placing the weapon to his shoulder, the Baron takes careful aim.

EXT. CENTER OF THE CLEARING - DAY

Lili croons to the unicorn resting on her breast, a primitive melody born of joy. All at once, the sibilant SOUND of an arrow's slicing passage rends the still air. The crossbow bolt strikes the unicorn in the neck. The startled outcry of the wounded beast is far more scream than whinny.

The unicorn bounds to his feet, spraying the Princess with his bright blood. She is torn from her happy reverie by the violence of the act. Her own outcry merges with the animal's wail of pain.

The wounded unicorn, followed by his mate, gallops for freedom across the clearing.

The black Baron bursts from the far side of the meadow and thunders after the fleeing unicorns. King Godwin is right behind, followed by his retinue of lance-bearing hunters.

LILI
(screaming)
No!  God!  Father, no!

The horsemen gallop out of sight, accompanied by the call
of the hunting horn and much eager shouting.

Jack crashes through the underbrush surrounding the
clearing and rushes to the side of the anguished Lili, who
cowers, replacing her blood-soaked bodice.

    JACK
    (furious)
    What happened?

    LILI
    I don't know.  They've hurt the
    unicorn.

    JACK
    Who?

    LILI
    My father and the Baron.

    JACK
    Damned hunters.  It was a trap, and
    you were the bait!

    LILI
    I didn't know... I didn't...
    (sobbing)
    It was so lovely... he was in my lap
    like... like a baby... and... I...

    JACK
    They tricked you.

    LILI
    My own father...

    JACK
    How bad was the unicorn's wound?

    LILI
    It happened so fast.  He was hurt
    and ran away.

    JACK
    He did run?

    LILI
    Oh, yes, and the mare with him.

    JACK
    Good.  They'll never catch him.
    There's not a mount in the kingdom
    can outrun a unicorn.
Flecked with froth and blood, the male unicorn bursts from a thicket in full flight. Wild-eyed, the female is right behind. They pause for a moment, sides heaving as they gasp for air. In the distance, the sounds of braying hounds and the musical note of the hunting horn start them running again.

Led by the Baron and the red-eyed hounds, the hunting party thunders through the woods in full pursuit of the unicorns.

One of the riders has a hunting horn coiled around his shoulder. He blows a single, sustained note as he gallops past.

The pool is a crystalline jewel, surrounded by moss-covered stones, the tranquil water reflecting the overhanging trees. Lili kneels by the edge, washing the blood from her embroidered dress. Jack watches her, reclining on a gnarled tree-root nearby.

JACK
There are many would pay a king's ransom for a few drops of unicorn blood.

LILI
I don't want it on me.

JACK
Its powers are strong.

LILI
I don't want to be reminded of what happened.

JACK
Do you think memory can be washed away like a few spots of blood?

The war-like sounds of the hunting party grow nearer as the two unicorns pause in their flight to drink from the stream. Tenderly, the mare nuzzles the stallion's neck near where the dart cruelly rends his flesh. The two
animals exchange a look of understanding. The situation is desperate, their pursuers very near. The stallion motions upstream with his head and his mate sadly comprehends. She starts slowly up stream, looking back over her shoulder. The hunting horn BLARES, nearer still. The stallion whinnies at the mare and she replies before plunging up the stream to safety while her mate remains behind awaiting his destiny.

EXT. NEAR FOREST STREAM - DAY

The hounds are frantic now, the scent very strong. They lope ahead of the riders, baying like demons from hell. The Baron is right behind, leading the hunters in a daredevil chase through the woods. In their helmets and chain mail, with steel-tipped lances glinting on high, they are as fearsome as an army of fiends.

HUNTER'S POV

Ahead, through the trees, the wounded male unicorn is glimpsed standing alone by the stream. The dogs' howling grows furious. The hunters SHOUT and BELLOW.

EXT. FOREST STREAM - DAY

The dogs break from the forest and hurl themselves at the unicorn. With a swift jab, the stallion impales the first hound on his horn and sends him flying. Just as the pack of hunters emerges from the woods, the unicorn takes off, leaping over the heads of the snarling hounds, darting away between the trees. The hunters and their dogs are in close pursuit, eager now for the kill.

EXT. POND IN THE FOREST - DAY

Lili and Jack sit among the roots and mossy rocks bordering the still ponds. A shaft of golden light angles down through the cathedral arching of tree limbs above them. Lili's dress is cleansed of blood and she reclines against a tree trunk, sadly singing a simple ballad in a clear, soprano voice. Jack is entranced. His teasing look has transformed into a gaze of utter adoration.

LILI
(singing)
Once there was a lady fair,
Rode out on her milk-white steed;
Roses and dewdrops woven in her hair
And in her heart: the devil's seed.

Sweet William did a-hunting go,
All in the deep wood where faeries dwell.
From dawn til dark roamed he to and fro
Lost, O lost, all under their spell.

Came he at last to where bluebells grow,
And he heard them ring, tis true to tell.
And he lay him down and did not know
The flower's sound was his own death knell.

For while he slept came the lady fair,
And gathered him up behind her saddle.
Now, all ye young hunters, of bluebells beware;
For Sweet William rode straight through
the gates of Hell.

EXT. RIVER ESTUARY - DAY

A broad river flows toward the sea, divided into multi-branched channels across acres and mud flats. The surf curls and crashes in the distance. Shore birds probe the muck with their curved bills.

The wounded unicorn breaks from the green line of trees along the edge of the estuary. The SOUNDS of dogs and hunting horns can be heard close behind. Without pausing, the stallion gallops frantically out onto the mud flats.

The unicorn's sides are streaked with blood and sweat. A bright-red froth bubbles on his nostrils. His eyes are wide with panic.

The thick mud underfoot sucks at the unicorn's galloping hooves. All at once, the unicorn stumbles and falls, cartwheeling in the muck. He struggles to regain his feet, but slips again, floundering.

The hunters ride out of the trees and rein-in at the edge of the estuary. The howling dogs struggle across the mud toward the fallen unicorn.

EXT. POND - DAY

Lili and Jack under the tree. The princess smiles at the adoring boy, toying with her golden ring, which she pulls on and off her finger.

JACK
Not even the birds sing sweet as you.

LILI
(laughing)
Jack... Green Jack, you mustn't flatter me so.

JACK
Tis the truth.
LILI
A maid must beware of flattery...
Methinks you want to kiss me.

JACK
There's no happier thought under heaven.

LILI
If I were your bride, would the kissing ever stop...? Do you wish to marry me, Jack?

JACK
My lady mocks me.

LILI
Nay, Jack, I'm but wary of your intentions.

JACK
My heart intends no more than that you love me as I do you.

LILI
Oh, la...

EXT. ESTUARY - DAY

The unicorn struggles in the mud, hopelessly mired, when the dog packs converges upon it. Baying and snarling, the dogs surround the stallion, nipping and harrying. The unicorn fights back, thrusting his terrible horn, impaling an unwary hound that ventured too close.

The hunters watch from the bank, awaiting their leader's command to close in for the kill. The Baron dismounts, holding his crossbow. He hands his reins to King Godwin.

BARON
The quarry is at bay. Attend me here while I make the kill.

Black cloak whipping in the wind, the masked Baron strides out onto the mud flats, relentless as the specter of Death.

The sky above darkens. Black storm clouds gather and the ominous RUMBLE of thunder troubles the grim landscape.

EXT. POND - DAY

The light has changed. It is darker now. A distant peal of thunder is HEARD.
JACK
I'm afraid it may storm.

LILI
Let it. Haven't you a cozy bower we might hide in?

JACK
Tis not fit for a princess.

LILI
Be it fit for your wife, Green Jack?

JACK
I have no wife.

LILI
Then, perchance you'll me.

JACK
If wishes were horses even beggars would ride.

LILI
Do you wish it, Jack?
   (showing him her ring)
Wish you this our wedding band?

JACK
What if I answer yes? Will my wish come true?

Laughing, Lili throws her ring high over their heads. Tracing a golden arc through the air, the ring lands with a splash in the center of the pond.

LILI
Fetch my ring and you may take me for your wife.

It is obvious from her mocking attitude that Lili is teasing, but Jack is serious. He strips off his leaf-and-fur vestments and dives headlong into the pond.

EXT. ESTUARY - DAY

The Baron's heavy black boots splash across the shallow water of the estuary as he bears down on the harried unicorn. The frantic trapped stallion is within range now and the Baron lifts his crossbow to his shoulder, the wolf mask leering and demonic as he takes aim.

The Baron fires. The bolt strikes the unicorn's flank, piercing his ribs. A froth of lung-blood foams into the
mud. The stallion screams. His frightened eye is bright and staring.

EXT. BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE POND - DAY

Slowly, the golden ring drifts downward, tumbling end-over-end in a lazy spiral to the dark and muddy bottom.

Jack's pale, near-naked form stabs through the crystal water, a trail of silver bubbles streaming in his wake like a comet's tail. He strokes down into the murk, tendrils of water-weed swirling about him. In the distance, the tantalizing glint of the drifting ring lures him on.

The ring settles into the mud on the bottom, concealed by waving weeds and algae. Jack searches blindly for it, groping with his hands as billowing clouds of silt rise about him.

EXT. SKY - DAY

The black clouds boil and crash, thunderheads mounting one upon another in a dark maelstrom. Jagged lightning splits the sky. The heavens are in a tumult.

EXT. ESTUARY - DAY

The Baron's dark figure looms over the fallen unicorn. His gloved hand reaches out and grasps the ivory horn, wrenching back the animal's head. The Baron's glove smolders and burns as if the horn was a white-hot poker. The stallion's shrill whinny is cut short when the Baron lops off his head with a single, brutal stroke of his broadsword.

The ROAR of thunder seems to crack the sky apart. For a long moment, the Baron stands holding his grisly, dripping trophy by the single horn, staring up at the raging dark sky as his black cloak whips about him in the ferocious wind.

EXT. BENEATH THE POND - DAY

His lungs about to burst, Jack can no longer continue the search for the ring. He turns and looks up at the surface which has grown quite dark. With frantic strokes, he races upward only to bump his head into something solid at the top. Terribly frightened, he finds the surface covered by a sheet of ice.

Jack pounds his fist against the obstructing ice and succeeds in punching through it, thrusting his gasping
head out into the air.

EXT. POND - DAY

Bewildered, Jack crashes through the ice towards shore. The woods have changed utterly. In place of the bountiful foliage of midsummer, the trees are stripped bare. The wind howls, driving a fine stinging snow through the naked branches. Overhead, the sky is dark and ominous. Jack stands, confused and shivering, realizing in his bewilderment that the girl is gone.

JACK
(calling out)
Lili...! Princess Lili... Where are you...?

There is no answer other than the hollow echo of his words lost on the wind. It is bitterly cold. Jack's wet hair freezes into strands of icicles. He finds his clothing, wrapping himself in his fur vest. His leafy cloak is inadequate for this weather and he hurries off, calling for the girl as he searches for shelter.

JACK
Lili... answer me... Lili...

EXT. DEEPER IN THE FOREST - EVENING

The snowstorm has built-up into a full-scale blizzard. Jack staggers into the wind. A large rock overhang provides shelter and Jack scrambles underneath.

Jack scrapes together a small pile of twigs and leaves. Taking a flint and steel from his shoulder pouch, he starts busily striking sparks.

A small fire burns vigorously under the overhang. Jack warms himself and feeds sticks into the flames. It grows darker.

EXT. A TREE NOT FAR AWAY - EVENING

Princess Lili hides shivering behind the tree, watching Jack and his fire. Her hands are out of sight, tucked in the folds of her gown for warmth. Although she is cold and frightened she makes no move to expose herself or to join the Green Man under the overhand.

CLOSE ON LILI

Lili's lovely face contorts with sorrow. A single tear starts in her eye and drops to her cheek, where it freezes like a diamond beauty-spot. Lili reaches up to wipe away
the frozen tear. Her hand is horribly transformed. Coarse black hairs sprout along her wrist and down her slender fingers. In place of delicately tapered nails grow wickedly curved claws. It is a hand more animal than human. Lili regards it with disgust.

EXT. FOREST - EVENING

With Jack's small fire flickering faintly in the distance, Princess Lili slinks away into the deep forest, eager to hide herself and her shame.

EXT. OVERHANG - NIGHT

Jack is sleeping. He leans back against the rock wall, wrapped in his cloak. The fire crackles brightly before him, casting animated shadows in all directions.

A high-pitched, cackling LAUGH causes Jack to sit bolt-upright; wide-eyed and completely awake.

JACK

What...? Who's there?

JACK'S POV

Glowing like foxfire in the darkness, a semi-circle of luminous green eyes surrounds Jack's campfire.

JACK (O.S.)

Who is it? Speak up.

A second odd LAUGH is his only answer.

JACK

is afraid. He reaches into the folds of his cloak for his knife, a small practical affair, hardly a weapon at all.

JACK

Who are you...? Answer me!

Laughing still, a small man, an elf no more than knee-high steps into the firelight. He carries a tiny harp and a pair of pointed ears sprout from the wild tangle of his hair. His bright clothing is everywhere tasseled and embroidered with flowers. At first glance, it is hard to tell whether his face resembles a new-born babe or a wizened old man. His name is HONEYTHORN GUMP.

GUMP

So, Jack... think you be a Green Man and not know Gump.

JACK
Gump, is it?

GUMP
Aye, Honeythorn Gump, come to serenade you, Jack... come to make you dance.

JACK
I'm in no mood for dancing.

GUMP
Oh, but you will be, Jack... Think you to sleep in a faerie ring and not spend the night a-dancing?

JACK
Faerie ring?

GUMP
To be sure.

Gump steps back and sweeps away the snow with his cap like an over-zealous house porter. A ring of red toadstools is revealed.

GUMP
A lively reel twill warm your bones.

Gump throws a handful of herbs onto the fire and the flames leap high, revealing the watchers whose eyes glowed in the dark. Sitting in a semi-circle just outside the faerie ring are a number of foxes, wild goats, hares, weasels and badgers.

GUMP
Here be your partners, Jack.

Gump begins to strum a wild, haunting melody on his harp. The animals leap into the faerie ring, and linking paws, start a frantic circular dance around the bewildered Jack.

JACK
No! Tis not the time! I want no part of your frolic.

GUMP
Dance, Jack! The night's but begun.

Jack cannot resist. He is drawn into the wild dance. Grabbing hold of a fox's paw, he joins the circle, leaping and cavorting to the maddening music.

The tempo increases; the music growing ever-more manic as the crazed dancers whirl and caper. Jack seems in a panic, dancing against his will, a prisoner of the frenzied harp-strumming.
JACK
(screaming)
Stop it...! No more...

Gump pays no attention to his pleas, jumping wildly up and down as he flails at his harp.

GUMP
Round and round and round and round,
Before you're lost ye most be found...

Jack's face is a mask of agony; the dance pure hell. With a supreme effort of will, he wrenches free from the fox's grasp and hurls himself to the ground by the fire. The rhythm disrupted, the other animal dancers continue awkwardly as the music stops. Gump is furious.

JACK
Enough!

GUMP
And how is it a mortal dare dictate to the faerie folk? Is me music not to your liking? Mayhap the dance of death by more your pleasure.

JACK
No... I... I need to rest.

GUMP
You'll have a long, long rest in the tomb, me lad.

JACK
(gasping)
I meant no disrespect.

GUMP
Didn't you now? Well then, answer me this riddle and all be forgiven.

JACK
And if I cannot?

GUMP
Why, Jack, then tis your death song I'll be strumming.

The animal dancers have stopped their frolic and stand solemnly watching the bewildered Green Man.

JACK
Ask away, and pray God my answer pleases thee.

Gump grins maliciously and strums a melancholy chord on
his harp.

GUMP
What is a bell that does not ring,
Yet, its knell makes the angels
sing?

Gump laughs, knowing full-well Jack can't solve his
riddle. Jack frowns in concentration, then breaks into a
broad grin as the memory of Lili's song rushes back to
him.

JACK
It's bluebells!

GUMP
What!

JACK
The flower. Bluebells. To hear
them ringing means your life's at an
end.

Gump hurled his harp to the ground and stomps on it.

GUMP
Damnation! Codfish and cockles!
Gammon and trotters! You've bested
me, Jack.

JACK
A riddle without an answer is but an
empty cup when you're thirsty for
wine.

GUMP
(pleased with this)
Well spoke. True to the mark. And
if it's wine you're wanting, it's
wine we shall have.

Honeythorn Gump strides to the rear of the overhang, and
brushing away the concealing cobwebs, ferns and moss,
reveals a small wooden door built into the rock itself.
Gump throws open the door and bows low for Jack to enter.

GUMP
You be our guest, Jack.

JACK
(returning the bow)
I'm honored, Honeythorn Gump... but
no more tricks.

GUMP
You have me word, lad. To answer a
faerie riddle deserves as much.
JACK
Twas the Princess Lili gave me the answer... have you seen her, by chance?

GUMP
I've laid eyes on no mortal but you this day, Jack.

JACK
I fear she's lost.

GUMP
Mayhap you be the one what's lost, and she safe by the castle hearth... but, come Jack, we'll warm your bones.

Gump moves to the fire and pulls a burning brand from the flames. As he does so, the animal dancers subtly shift and change, their forms dissolving like mist in the morning sun, transforming into faerie creatures. The fox becomes a lithe, winged female wood nymph; the badger a squat goblin. The other animals change into a variety of pixies, gnomes and brownies, all chattering and singing in an ancient, musical tongue.

Gump leads the way through the door in the rock, followed by Jack and the teasing faeries.

GUMP
(singing)
There was a wee faerie lived under the hill,
Hey, riddle-diddle and nickety-noo;
And if he's nae gone he's living there still,
Nickety, nackety, noo-noo-noo-noo...

INT. TUNNEL - NIGHT
A narrow tunnel winds under the hill, twisting down between gnarled tree-roots and projecting splinters of ancient bone. A rickety set of wooden steps has been built in this tunnel and Gump leads the precarious way down into the earth, holding his torch on high and singing for all his worth. The other faeries tease Jack, jabbering and twitting and they pull his hair and tug at his clothing. Jack does his best to ignore them, and at the same time, maintain a brave demeanor as he struggles for balance on the creaking stairs.

GUMP
(singing)
The name of this faerie was Honeythorn Gump,
Hey, riddle-diddle and nickety-noo;
The sound of his harp made the mortals all jump,
Nickety, nackety, noo-noo-noo.

At the stroke of midnight, in the light of the moon,
Hey, riddle-diddle and nickety-noo;
All the faeries dance to Honeythorn's tune,
Nickety-nackety, noo-noo-noo...

INT. SUBTERRANEAN HALL - NIGHT

Gump guides the procession in to a vast underground hall, hung with fine tapestries and filled with all manner of odd and ancient wonders: Roman armor, bits of mosaics and marble statuary, etc. A long wooden trestle table stretches down the center of the hall, set with burning candles, bowls of fruit and nuts, golden goblets of every shape and size.

Gump tosses his torch into an open, glowing fire-pit, the smoke drifting up to the shrouded tree-roots above.

GUMP
Here we be. And fit for a king if I say so meself.

Jack is properly awed.

JACK
Tis splendid. I feel I must be dreaming.

This delights the faeries, who twitter with laughter as they buzz around Jack, guiding him to the carved High Seat at the head of the table.

GUMP
Indeed, me lad. And if life is a dream, better you dread the waking.

Several rows of wine casks are ranked against one wall. Gump seizes a large flagon from the table and fills it with sparkling elderberry wine.

Jack sits somewhat uncomfortably in the High Seat with its ornately carved dragons and basilisks entwined about him. The beautiful wood nymph hovers by his side, smiling and whispering in his ear.

Gump fills Jack's goblet from the flagon and sets about filling the others in turn down the table. Jack is embarrassed by the wood nymph's obvious attentions.

JACK
Make her stop it, will you Gump... please!
Gump snorts.

GUMP
Why, Jack-lad, she likes you, is all. And what hot-blooded hero wouldn't welcome the affections of a fair nymph like Oona here...? If your blood runs so cold, boy, you be a corpse before your time.

JACK
What does she want from me?

OONA, the wood-nymph giggles wildly and covers Jack's cheek with kisses as she hovers at his side.

GUMP
Fool question, lad. Drink up and warm your blood. You'll find the answer at the bottom of your cup.

Gump motions with his flagon for Jack to drink, but the Green Man merely lifts his goblet and stares dolefully at the contents.

GUMP
Elderberry wine. No finer drink under heaven.

JACK
It looks... er, delicious...
(sniffing his cup)
Such a fine bouquet... very aromatic...

GUMP
Are ye afraid of me wine? Did your momma tell ye never to take food nor drink from the Wee Folk? Think if ye sup with the faeries you'll be enchanted?

JACK
Well... I... I don't want to be rude, but... it's generally known that --

GUMP
Generally known! What general ever knew more than to lace up his boots?

JACK
Please don't misunderstand. I am grateful for your hospitality and --

GUMP
He is afraid of enchantment! Will
you listen to the fool prattle on.

All the faeries and goblins burst into raucous laughter.

GUMP
Here the world is turned upside-down; precious summertime frozen into a wintry memory; the underworld unleashed and all spirits walk the earth at will... this be the state of things and the blamed fool won't take a sip of wine for fear of enchantment!

Jack swallows his fear. He stares heard into his cup and in a single decisive moment, drains it to the bottom. The faeries all clap and cheer. Oona gives him a big hug.

JACK
But... but, why?

GUMP
Big question that, lad. Why what?

JACK
Why has this happened to the world? Why is it winter now, and dark?

GUMP
Aye. Honeythorn Gump'd be a powerful wizard indeed could he answer.

JACK
Don't you know?

GUMP
If you're looking for enchantment, Jack, that I can give thee...

Gump screws up his face with concentration and gestures with his emerald ring. All at once, the carved dragons and serpents on Jack's chair seem to come alive. They writhe out of the woodwork, sinuous and evil. Jack is terrified as they wrap about him, pinning his arms and chest to the chair as Oona and the other faeries laugh with malicious glee.

JACK
No...! Stop it now... please!

Gump snaps his fingers and the chair is but a chair again, the carved snakes mere decorations.

GUMP
That much magic I can offer ye, a small measure of entertainment at
best. Making the world a frozen hell is beyond me modest powers.

JACK
Then, what's gone wrong? Why did it happen?

GUMP
If ye want more tricks, I'm your man, but for big questions ye must go elsewhere.

JACK
Don't you care about what's happened?

GUMP
Course we care. What good's the world locked in a season of death. Frozen up, no folks to scare out of their wits on a summer's night; no babies to tickle; no more spells to cast... Think that's an enjoyable prospect?

JACK
There must be an answer somewhere.

GUMP
True... But it won't come easy or free. If ye want to ask, ask Jenny Greenteeth.

JACK
Jenny Greenteeth? Who's she?

At the mention of the feared name, all the faeries jabber and chatter frantically.

GUMP
Someone worthy of respect, lad. She be a water spirit, lives in a bog down at sea-side. Hideous creature to look at, even by my doubtful standards; devours little children, she does, when she can catch them.

JACK
How is it this hag knows the truth?

GUMP
Think there be truth only in beauty, lad? If you've the courage to ask and take care to avoid her terrible claws, Jenny Greenteeth has the answers you seek.
JACK
Will you lead me to her?

GUMP
Aye. On the morrow we go, but tonight...
    (he lifts his flagon high)
... tonight is for making merry.

Gump drinks the flagon down. The other faeries and Jack join in the festivities, lifting their goblets in a single, raucous toast.

EXT. FROZEN STREAM - DAY

It is shortly after dawn, but the feeble winter sun provides little warmth or light. The gray day has the appearance of perpetual twilight. From the rear, we easily recognize Princess Lili as she moves toward the frozen stream. Her fine embroidered dress is soiled and torn, her long, unbound hair matted and stuck with burrs and twigs. She's had a rough night in the open. At the stream's edge she kneels, her back still to the CAMERA.

CLOSE ON THE FROZEN STREAM

Lili's furred, claw-like hand reaches out and wipes a covering of snow from the ice. The frozen surface of the stream provides an uneven mirror which makes the reflection of Lili's face appear even more monstrous.

LILI

The distant SOUND of LAUGHTER and SINGING, causes Lili to look up from the ice. Her face is hideously transformed. Sharp fangs jut out over her lower lip. Her nostrils are wide and flaring. Patches of hair sprout on her cheeks. Her ears are pointed.

She reacts to the strange sound like an animal, sniffing the air. And, like an animal, she stealthily creeps off, ducking between the frozen trees like a carnivore stalking her prey.

EXT. WOODS BY ESTUARY - DAY

The SOUNDS of SINGING grow nearer as Lili creeps through the woods, hiding herself behind the trees.

LILI'S POV

Out of the marsh, the troop of elves and faeries is led by Gump and Jack. The procession shimmers and sparkles, and Lili shrinks back from the joyous proceedings, hiding
herself in shame.

EXT.  ESTUARY - DAY (C.U. UNICORN'S HEAD)

The severed head of the stallion unicorn lies, half-buried, in the muck. A croaking raven perches on the small stump of horn remaining, probing his beak into the hollow eye-socket. At the sound of the faeries' MUSICAL approach, the bird spreads his wings and flies off.

THE FAERIES

Jack and the faeries hurry to the spot where the dead unicorn lies. They body is stretched out several yards away from the severed head. No one speaks. The awesome spectacle silences the procession's glad singing. Even some of the magic sparkle seems to have left the faeries as they stand, grouped like mourners, around the dead unicorn.

GUMP

(sadly)
Mortals at their foolish pleasure,
Rob the Earth of all her treasure...

Jack kneels beside the dead unicorn, dumb with sorrow. He runs has hand along the hollow flank of the fallen animal. One of the evil Baron's barbed bolts stands straight out of the unicorn's neck and Jack yanks it free with a sudden pull. He is about to hurl the weapon far out into the swamp when he thinks better of it and pushes the bolt into his belt.

Gump silently motions with his head and starts away from the unicorn's body. The other faeries follow dejectedly. Jack is the last to leave, staring down at the mutilated animal as the anger inside builds to a fury.

EXT.  JENNY GREENTEETH'S BOG HOLE - DAY

A fearful slimy place. The roots of a rotted oak twist down into the murky water like dead men's fingers. A foul green slime floats on the surface. Several splintered bones protrude from the mud at the water's edge.

Gump and the faeries stop a good ways off. They can feel the potent evil of the spot and dread it. Any semblance of joy has left them. Gump's demeanor is as dour and severe as a schoolmaster's.

JACK
Are we here?

GUMP
Aye.
That foul wallow be where Jenny Greenteeth dwells. Oona... lure her out. Play the part of a girl-child.

JACK
What do I do?

GUMP
Don't get caught, that's what! She'll suck your bones like honey-comb.

Gump reaches into his jerkin and produces a small ivory-mounted hand-mirror. He gives this to Jack.

GUMP
Here now. Toss her this when you've the chance. Jenny Greenteeth can't resist the sight of herself in a glass. She's terribly vain. Praise her beauty and you'll lull her sweet as a babe in a cradle.

JACK
(not so sure)
And if she thinks me a liar?

GUMP
Fie on what she thinks! You mind her claws and teeth... Cast your spell, Oona.

At Gump's command, the faerie Oona begins to spin. She twirls into an iridescent blur, surrounding herself with a cocoon of light, and when she slows, she has metamorphosed into the image of a four-year old girl with pink cheeks and golden ringlets.

Skipping and singing, the transformed Oona makes her way around the edge of the bog. Jack follows, somewhat unsurely, at a safe distance.

The apparition of the little girl kneels by the bank. There is a slight disturbance on the scummy surface of the water, as if a sudden, localized wind had sprung up. All at once, like a serpent rising from the depths, a bony, mottled-green arm thrusts up through the slime, the clawed fingers clutching for the child.

Even as the fierce talons close on their prey, the "child" is gone in a dazzle of light and the winged, laughing Oona hovers high above the bog, looking down on the fearsome and outraged JENNY GREENTEETH.

The water hag is the color of a decomposing corpse. And like a corpse, her ragged flesh and hair seem to be
peeling in tatters from the emaciated body. Her nose has caved in, and her rotted lips betray a mouthful of fearsome fangs. She is furious at having been tricked and rails at Oona.

JENNY
(raging)
Rat-spittle and toad-breath!
Damned, accursed cross twixt a she-bat and a bullfrog! How dare you use Jenny Greenteeth so?

Jack takes advantage of the hag's distracted fury to rush up and toss the hand mirror in front of her.

JACK
Forgive us... er, fair one, we wanted only to bring a gift.

Jenny seizes the mirror as eagerly as if it were food.

JENNY
What's this now?

JACK
I bring you the only treasure worthy of your loveliness... for naught else in the universe rivals the reflected glory of your beauty.

JENNY
Well spoke, boy. You have discerning taste for one so young... Just who might you be?

JACK
They call me Green Jack, ma'am.

JENNY
Come closer then, Jack, that I might give you proper thanks.

JACK
Your fair smile be thanks enough. Better I stand afar to admire your beauty complete.

Jenny Greenteeth cannot resist the mirror and preens before it in a hideous parody of a young woman at her toilette.

JENNY
Think me fair, do you, Jack?

JACK
The moon herself would hide behind a cloud rather than dare comparison
Jenny... with you...

Jenny
The moon is too round of face,
methinks.

Jack
The sight of you makes flowers seem like dross. All the heavenly angels must envy your grace.

Jenny
I like well your conceit, Jack. Tis rare to find an honest lad in this troubled world.

Jack
Aye. And it is the trouble befallen us that brings me here. I entreat you to tell me the cause of our surrounding sorrow, most lovely of the lovely.

Jack
Dear lad, what does winter bespeak but death? It is a time of mourning. This calamity is a curse. Something wondrous and beautiful has been taken from the world.

Jack
A unicorn's been slain. The last stallion in all the country.

Jenny
Why then, there thou hast. We be lucky worse has not befallen us.

Jack pulls the Baron's crossbow bolt from his belt to show to Jenny.

Jack
Here be the death weapon; the unicorn's blood dry upon it.

Jenny
Couer de Noir! A demon if the Devil ever made one.

Jack
He chopped off the horn and left the rest to rot.

Jenny
That would be the Baron's way. There'll be no light or life in the world until the alicorn is taken
from him and he vanquished.

JACK
How do I get the horn back?

JENNY
You'll need the fastest steed alive, for Couer de Noir's castle rests at the very edge of the earth. Only the sharpest sword and the golden armor of Achilles will protect you from his fury.

JACK
Where do I find the Baron's castle?

JENNY
Follow the raven in her flight, Follow old black wing to the edge of night...

JACK
Not very precise directions.

JENNY
Come sit beside me, sweet boy, and I'll draw you a map.

JACK
Nay. Tempting as your invitation be. Tell me one thing more.

JENNY
Ask away, sweet man.

JACK
What became of the princess?

JENNY
(miffed)
Princess? I know of no princess.

JACK
Princess Lili, Godwin's daughter. She was with me when calamity struck, but after I could find no trace of her.

JENNY
Is she fair, this princess?

JACK
Exceeding fair.

JENNY
(angry and jealous)
As fair as me?
JACK
Twould be to compare one star with another in the summer sky.

JENNY
She's dead!

JACK
No!

JENNY
Dead, dead, dead.

JACK
I don't believe you.

JENNY
Far as you're concerned she's dead, believe it or not.

Jack is deeply struck by this disclosure even though he doubts it.

JACK
This is sad news, be it true.

JENNY
Don't be sad, Jack, not with me here to give you cheer.

JACK
Tis not the time to speak of cheer.

JENNY
You'll visit again?

JACK
(sadly)
As a hummingbird returns to the fairest blossom.

JENNY
(with a sigh)
What a fine meal you'd make, be the rest of you sweet as your tongue.

Jenny Greenteeth slips abruptly under the foul surface of her bog hole. Jack returns to Gump and the other faeries.

JACK
The princess is dead.

GUMP
Lamentable news, Jack... but tis the fate of the living concerns us now.
JACK
Did you hear? Twas the killing of
the unicorn caused it.

GUMP
Aye. Black Baron's mischief.

JACK
If the horn be restored the curse is
ended.

GUMP
Time for a champion. Can you do
more than pick acorns and rob bird's
nests, Jack?

JACK
I'll do what I have to do, for
Princess Lili's sake!

GUMP
(clapping Jack on
the back)
Bravely spoke. You've the heart of
a champion, true enough.

JACK
Twill take more than heart. Where
do we find the armor of Achilles,
for a start?

GUMP
I know where to find it. Taking
possession be another matter.

EXT. LINDFARNE MOUND - DAY

The Lindfarne Mound, an ancient tumulus, covers almost an
acre and rises, domed and treeless under a sullen sky.
Wispy smoke curls from the top of the mound. A pair of
black ravens circles overhead.

The rag-tag procession of elves and faeries appears
cautiously from out of the frozen forest and stands
gazing, somewhat apprehensively, at the distant tumulus.

GUMP
There it be, lad. The Lindfarne
Mound. Kings long forgotten lie
there, lost in their final sleep.

JACK
Have we turned grave-robber, then?

GUMP
A tomb it once was, boy, and a tomb
it may yet be... There's another in residence at Lindfarne now.

JACK
And who might that be?

GUMP
No less a creature than the Lindfarne Worm.

At the mention of the dread name, Oona and the other faeries cringe and chatter fearfully.

JACK
So I'm to be a dragon-slayer, is that it?

GUMP
Now, Jack-lad, no one's asking ye to skewer the worm. Even St. Michael'd have a job on his hands for all that. But the serpent hoards a pile of booty, Achilles' armor among his treasures... if we find our way within the mound and him asleep...

JACK
Knaves and robbers...

EXT. TOP OF MOUND - DAY

The faeries gather around a circular opening atop the tumulus. Quantities of smoke issue from the interior. Gump ties one end of a coiled rope to a large stone. The other end is lowered into the mound.

GUMP
Better pray the worm's a sound sleeper, Jack.

JACK
You do the praying. I've work ahead.

GUMP
There's the spirit, lad. If ye run into trouble, give a yank here and we'll haul ye up.

JACK
What's left of me... How do I recognize the armor of Achilles?

GUMP
You'll know it when you see it... tis a splendid sight, all covered
with gold... Don't fear making
noise. Dragons be deaf as tree
stumps.

Jack takes hold of the rope and lowers himself into the
smoking hole. Oona flutters over and kisses him on the
cheek.

OONA
Courage, Jack.

JACK
(blushing)
I pray God grants it me.

GUMP
No need. There be no more potent
charm than a faerie's love.

Embarrassed, Jack slides from sight into the hole.

INT. MOUND - DAY

The tomb is vast, like the arched dome of a cathedral.
The curving sides are built from exquisitely fitted blocks
of stone, moss-covered and dripping moisture.

Suspended like a dangling spider on his filament, Jack
slides down the rope into the drifting smoke.

JACK'S POV

Far below, the floor of the tomb is everywhere heaped with
treasure. Great stacks of gold plate gleam in the half-
light; mounds of gem-stones sparkle. The treasure of the
faeries is a trash-pile compared with this hoard.

In the midst of the splendor, the DRAGON lies sleeping,
surrounded by clouds of smoke. With its horned, whiskered
head and reversed, golden scales, the beast greatly
resembles the symbol used in the Chinese zodiac.

INT. MOUND FLOOR - DAY

Jack comes to the end of his rope and drops into the
treasure with a loud CRASH. The CLATTER is alarming and
Jack dives for cover behind a chest brimming with rubies.

The dragon has not heard a thing and continues to snore,
belching smoke like a miniature volcano.

Cautiously, Jack begins his search. It's a bit
bewildering as there is such a quantity of wealth.
Everywhere he looks more remarkable treasure is revealed.
Casks of jewels, weapons worked in gold and silver, golden
plates and goblets, ropes of pearls in snake-like coils. There is armor of all description, from the breastplates of ancient Rome to the winged helmets of Viking marauders. Jack is puzzled by mysterious Japanese samurai armor and amazed by the heft and weight of a huge Arabian scimitar.

Search as he will, Jack can find no sign of the armor of Achilles. He burrows under mounds of gems and opens a sequence of treasure chests, discovering only more gems and yet again more treasure.

The dragon MOANS unexpectedly in his sleep, causing Jack to make a terrifying discovery.

JACK'S POV

The sleeping dragon looms larger than a house. Smoke coils above his massive head. One scaled forelimb is extended, gleaming talons hooked like scythe blades. Gripped in the evil claw something extraordinary glitters. Wrought from pure gold and embossed with ancient and beautiful designs: it is the breastplate of Achilles.

JACK

approaches the sleeping monster, like a mouse creeping up on a snoring cat. But, the beauty of the golden breastplate calms him. The legendary armor is so wondrously made that Jack can only gaze upon it with awe.

A fiery snort from the dragon brings him back to his senses. There's work to be done. With all the delicacy he can muster, Jack takes hold of the breastplate and tries to pry it from the dragon's grip. It's not easy. The giant serpent is fitful and groans in his sleep, grasping the armor all the tighter.

Jack tugs at the breastplate with all his might and suddenly, it comes free, sending Jack tumbling over backwards. The NOISE is deafening, but it is not the sound that wakes the dragon.

The mighty talons clench, disturbed by the missing armor. A single green eye, large as a dinner-plate, slides open. The whiskered mouth widens, belching fire and smoke.

Enraged, the dragon rears up, venting its spleen in a torrent of unrecognizable words. The mysterious language sounds somehow Oriental, perhaps Japanese or Chinese.

Jack cowers in terror, trying to dig himself into the heap of jewels like a mole scratching for cover. The dragon spots him instantly. Addressing Jack in English, he sounds like a sing-song Confucius, a Grade-B Fu Manchu.

DRAGON

What you do, boy? You be velly
solly, come here intellupt my sleep.

JACK
(terrified)
I didn't know... I --

DRAGON
What? Speakee loud! No hear velly
good.

JACK
(yelling)
I said, I mean no harm... I thought
this as empty tomb.

DRAGON
You come stealee tleasoo?

JACK
Oh, no, never... nothing like
that... never crossed my mind.

DRAGON
No need lie, boy. I no hurt you.
Do I look like I wanna hurt you?

JACK
Well, er... no. I mean, you don't
look like dragons I've heard of.

DRAGON
Course not. I no flum here. I come
flum Cathay.

JACK
Cathay?

DRAGON
Country fa' fa' away. To the East,
beyond the lising sun...

JACK
East of Mercia?

DRAGON
You got no idee. People there
lookee diffelent; speakee diffelent.
Nothing the same. In my countlee I
bling good luck. Makee lain and
thunder.

JACK
You don't ravage the countryside,
devouring maidens and burning the
crops?

DRAGON
Dlagon not like that. Dlagon is spilit of life... spilit of stength and goodness.

JACK
Then you'll understand my quest. An ogre named Blackheart has killed the last stag unicorn and stolen his horn. The world outside is cursed, plunged into eternal winter. Unless I return the alicorn, the earth will be frozen forever.

DRAGON
Flozen foleva not good.

JACK
It's terrible.

DRAGON
An' how you do it? How you rift cuss?

JACK
I need your help. In order to fight Blackheart, I must wear the armor of Achilles. I --

DRAGON
(roaring)
You come stealee tleasoo?

JACK
Oh no... Don't you understand?

The dragon roars and swells. Flames issue from his gaping mouth and an iridescent light shimmers along his scales as his form suddenly alters and shifts, transforming from the benevolent Eastern dragon to the more familiar winged monster of Western folklore. When he speaks now, all trace of accent is gone.

DRAGON
Stupid, puny mortal! Do you think I suffer pilfering gladly?

The dragon belches a sheet of flame straight at Jack, who rolls aside just in time, but not quickly enough to keep his clothing from being singed.

JACK
No, wait... please... listen...

DRAGON
No more listening! Your time is at an end, insignificant whelp!
The dragon slashes at Jack with his fearsome claws, batting away the breastplate held before him as protection. Jack jumps back, hurling a helmet at the dragon. It bounces harmlessly off the gleaming scales.

**DRAGON**
Pray to whatever worthless god you revere! You're no more than meat to me now.

Jack scrambles frantically through the piles of loot, ducking behind chests of gold as the dragon stalks him in the shadows. In his frenzied flight, his groping hand chances upon an ivory bow and a quiver of silver arrows. The dragon rears up on his hind-quarters, lashing his terrible tail, towering above Jack.

Quickly, the Green Man notches an arrow and lets it fly at the dragon's throat. It bounces harmlessly off the glistening scales. Jack fires a second, and a third. Both arrows are easily deflected and fall clattering back into the treasure.

**DRAGON**
Are those gnats come to trouble me? Methinks this pesky gadfly needs swatting.

The dragon leaps for Jack like a tiger pouncing on his prey, but somehow the nimble boy eludes his pursuer, diving headlong under a golden chariot. Furious, the dragon crashes about, flipping over anything in his path as he searches for Jack.

**THE ROPE FROM ABOVE**

Honeythorn Gump hangs from the dangling rope like a monkey, observing the mayhem below. Oona hovers at his side, her transparent dragonfly wings a-blur.

**GUMP**
(calling)
Mind them claws, Jack. Stay out of his way.

**OONA**
Oh dear... oh dear...

**GUMP'S POV**

From above, the dragon's search for Jack resembles a raccoon flipping over rocks in a streambed hunt for crayfish. A large pile of silver and gold shields is stacked like roof-tiles and the dragon tosses them aside looking for Jack.

**GUMP** (O.S.)
(calling)
Keep one jump ahead, lad. Don't waste time looking back.

JACK AND THE DRAGON

The dragon wrenches away a suit of jeweled armor and discovers Jack cowering underneath. A lungful of fire sets Jack's clothing aflame as he scurries out of the way. There is no other place to hide. Jack is trapped, his back up against a massive shield. Enraged, the dragon rears above him, poised for the kill.

The dark shadow of doom falls across Jack as he cowers helplessly.

GUMP

Running with the rope, Gump pendulums into the air, swinging back and forth across the interior of the mound. Snatching up a jeweled war-club, he swings past the dragon's head, belaboring him with the mace as he passes.

GUMP
Filthy worm! Have a taste o' that!

Furious and distracted, the raging dragon turns his attentions to this new annoyance, swatting out with his talons as Gump swings by him. Oona buzzes round and round his smoking, fearsome head, staying just out of reach as the dragon slashes at her.

GUMP
Leg it, Jack! Move lad, while there's time.

JACK

As his companions occupy the dragon's attention, Jack crawls away on his hands and knees, searching for a new hiding place. Sticking straight out of the heaped treasure before him, a splendid sword-hilt catches his eye. It seems to glow with some inner force. The golden pommel gleams.

Jack grasps the sword with both hands, rising to his feet as he draws it from the pile of jewels. The blade is nearly long as he is, awesome and shining with its own special light. Jack holds it in front of him like a crucifier in a religious procession. The light from the blade shines on his face, imbuing his spirit with courage and resolution.

Gump and Oona continue to annoy the dragon, swinging around his head and taunting him with the insignificant blows. The dragon lashes out at them, ignoring Jack.
Jack swings the mighty, shining sword back over his shoulder and rushes forward, a fierce WAR-CRY issuing from his snarling mouth. With one mighty swing, like a woodsman chopping an oak, he strikes at the dragon's hind leg, severing it at the joint.

The dragon's WAIL of pain is abrupt and piercing. Blood fountains from the amputated limb as the giant serpent sways for balance.

The dragon falls forward, toppling like a felled tree directly toward Jack. The Green Man stands his ground, holding his gleaming sword above his head with both hands. The dragon impales himself on the tip, driving the keen blade deep into his breast as he crashes to the ground. The sword is wrenched from Jack's hand and he jumps clear, the dragon writhing on his back in his death throes.

The mighty tail continues to lash about, wreaking havoc among the treasure. Jack nimbly avoids the random slashing and leaps up onto the dragon's scaled stomach. With a mighty tug, he draws his sword from the beast's chest. A geyser of steaming blood follows the blade.

The talons on the dragon's forelegs grasp and clench spasmodically but Jack ducks between them, avoiding the terrible claws. With a single backhand swing, he lops the dragon's snarling head from his neck. Copious quantities of boiling blood flush across the spread jewels.

Jack lifts his sword above his head and lets out an exultant victory CRY. Above him, Gump and Oona CHEER, shouting "Bravo" and "hooray!"

The dragon's head lies in a pool of blood, the forked tongue still probing the air. The great green eye slides closed.

EXT. FROZEN FOREST (C.U. RABBIT)

A young hare sits timidly in the sear grass, ears twitching, his large frightened eyes blink.

LILI

Several yards from the crouching rabbit, the Princess Lili stalks through the tall grass. We do not SEE her face, but her embroidered gown hangs in tattered rags about her. She moves with great stealth, like an animal, drawing ever-closer to the rabbit. Her limbs are completely covered by a shaggy fleece of dark hair.

The rabbit is very close now. Lili's movements are like a cat's as she creeps closer and closer. All at once, in a sudden, wild movement, the girl leaps from the concealing grass and pounces on the unsuspecting hare, killing it in
C.U. LILI

We SEE the Princess's face for the first time now as she tears at the dead rabbit with her teeth. Fangs actually, for Lili's features are now far more animal than human. Her eyes gleam ferociously and blood smears her whiskered mouth as she eagerly devours her kill.

PULL BACK

to SEE Lili's hunkering form, totally bestial in its spread-leg attitude. The tattered dress seems merely a ludicrous refinement on so savage a creature. Her nails have lengthened into claws and she makes small animal noises as she tears at the rabbit's flesh.

The SHADOW of a mounted rider falls across her form and she looks up, cat eyes widening in terror at what she sees.

BARON

The Black Baron sits on his dark charger, staring down at the cowering girl. He laughs dryly under his horned wolf mask, the black cloak whipping about him in the wind. At his side is a deadly rapier fashioned from the long twisting ivory length of the alicorn.

BARON

A child of nature... How delightful.

LILI'S FLIGHT

Terrified, Lili drops what's left of the rabbit and sprints for the woods. She is very agile, running freely like a feral cat. The Baron watches for a moment, then digs his spurs into his horse's flank and is after her.

Lili runs for all she's worth, darting and zig-zagging in a frantic effort to avoid capture. For all her speed and agility she can't outrun a horse, and in moments the Baron bears down upon her, reaching low to catch the back of her torn dress and swing her up in front of him on the saddle.

BARON AND LILI

Lili claws and scratches, ripping at the Baron as she fights to be free. Her efforts only elicit laughter from her captor as he easily pins her struggling arms.

BARON

I like your spirit. I like things wild and free. More of a challenge... Don't worry, my pet, I'll soon have you housebroke.
Laughing his evil laugh, the Baron clutches the struggling animal/girl tightly to his chest and gallops away into the frozen woods.

INT. LINDFARNE MOUND - DAY

All the faeries have gathered for a great feast. The dragon's severed head is set upright on a pike. Haunches of spitted dragon meat turn slowly over a bed of coals. Much of the treasure has been gathered into sacks and stands by the rope like harvest grain awaiting transport. Several gnomes and elves are busy hoisting the sacks up out of the mound. Jack and the other faeries sit on the dragon's carcass, feasting and swilling wine from golden goblets. Jack wears the armor of Achilles and in it he is transformed from a wild hermit to a valiant knight. The others wear bits and pieces of bejeweled armor plucked from the treasure hoard. Gump has on a horned Viking helmet which fits him badly. Another imp, a monkey-faced elf named SCREWBALL, wears the helm of a Roman legionnaire. Everyone is singing.

FAERIES (ALL TOGETHER)

(singing)
The dragon's breath is made of fire,
His heart be black with sin, sin, sin.
But, his meat's as sweet as any desire,
After you've lifted his skin, skin, skin...

The faeries laugh and cavort. Gump waves a sizzling lump of dragon meat in the air.

GUMP
There be no finer victuals than worm flesh, lad.

JACK
Better we eat him than the other way round.

SCREWBALL
Keep me belly full, Jack. Kill us another worm.

GUMP
Hush up, Screwball. Do your own worm-sticking if you like the taste so well.

SCREWBALL
Nay. Jack's the dragon-slayer, ain't you, Jack.

JACK
By the grace of God.
GUMP
No false modesty, lad. You're a proper champion. Achilles' armor sits on you like it was forged to fit.

OONA
And the sword... surely that was providence.

SCREWBALL
They don't come no sharper.

Jack lifts the incredible sword, studying its length before laying it against the fallen dragon.

JACK
I believe this is a sword such as the archangels wield. Surely St. Michael had so fine a blade when he drove the serpent from heaven.

GUMP
Well then, you've got the sword and you've got the armor; all's lacking is the steed.

SCREWBALL
The fastest in the world.

JACK
I know where to find him... He lies out on the marsh, raven-fodder; his horn torn from his head.

GUMP
True, lad, the stallion's gone, but the mare still lives.

Jack smiles: this is a happy truth.

SCREWBALL
She be fastest now.

OONA
Can you find her, Jack?

JACK
I know where to look.

EXT. GLADE IN FOREST - DAY

An isolated glade deep in the frozen forest. Icicles hang like frozen daggers from the surrounding trees. A light dusting of snow powders the ground. No birds sing. All
is silent and still.

Jack, Gump, Screwball and Oona creep through the ice-coated underbrush. Screwball is clumsy and crashes over several gelid ferns which break like shattering crystal.

JACK
Shhhh!

GUMP
Screwball! You dolt! I've a mind to change you into a toad.

SCREWBALL
Sorry.

OONA
He's already half toad, if you ask me.

JACK
This is not the time for squabbling.

OONA
Sorry.

The foursome, all clad in armor, continue silently to the edge of the glade. They conceal themselves behind the trunk of a huge, gnarled oak. The glade is empty.

SCREWBALL
What do we do now?

JACK
We wait.

Disgruntled, the faeries settle down to wait. Jack removes his helmet and rests against the treetrunk. Oona nestles by his side, tittering softly and tickling his neck. Jack does his best to ignore her. Oona grows more playful, whispering and giggling at Jack's annoyance.

GUMP
Shhhh!

OONA
You shush.

JACK
What is it?

GUMP
Something's coming.

Indeed, an animal can clearly be heard approaching the glade; a crunch of footfalls on the frozen ground and the icy crack of branches snapping. Jack and his companions
peer around the tree trunk.

JACK'S POV

A shaft of pale sunlight pierces through the cloud-cover and angles down into the glade at the moment the mare unicorn steps out of the underbrush. The light glows on her milk-white hide and her rounded, swollen flanks. Slowly, with modesty and a certain dignified stride, the mare moves to the center of the glade and settles herself down, drawing her legs beneath her.

SCREWBALL (O.S.)
What's she doing?

JACK (O.S.)
I think she's about to foal.

JACK AND THE FAERIES

as they stare in awe at the resting unicorn. Even the demented Screwball has a silly smile on his face.

GUMP
Pregnant, is she?

JACK
It would appear so.

OONA
How wonderful.

They are suddenly interrupted by the LOUD HOWLING of wolves. The plaintive WAIL stabs through the cold air like a cry from Hell.

GUMP
Wolves!

OONA
No!

SCREWBALL
They want the mare.

Jack draws his gleaming sword.

JACK
Damn them!

GUMP
Careful, lad.

The wolves' HOWLING grows LOUDER.

JACK
Evil brutes. Shant work their
GLADE

Sword in hand, Jack steps out into the clearing. The mare unicorn is startled by his sudden appearance but makes no effort to rise.

JACK

It's all right, girl. I won't hurt you.

The unicorn is soothed by Jack's words and seems to recognize him.

Jack places the tip of his sword on the ground and stands waiting, hands folded on the pommel, patient as a statue. Ghostlike in their silent stealth, the wolves materialize along the edge of the glade. Large and gray, their amber eyes glowing, the wolves begin to circle, moving closer to their prey. Jack readies himself, holding his sword in both hands.

With his tail curled high, the leader of the pack snarls and rushes for the mare. Jack cuts him off, sending him flying with a swift sword stroke.

The leader's charge provokes an all-out attack. The wolves close in HOWLING from all sides. Jack wields his great sword like a berserk, chopping and slashing, driving the furious wolves away from the mare. Busy fighting three of the brutes, he doesn't notice the wounded leader creeping behind him.

The leader springs, jumping on Jack's back, tearing at his neck with his fangs.

SCREWBALL IN TREETOP

Screwball has climbed one of the surrounding trees, bringing his bow and arrows with him. He SEES the wolf attacking Jack.

SCREWBALL

(calling out)
Steady, Jack.

Screwball draws his bow, aims quickly, and shoots.

JACK

is powerless against the huge wolf mauling him from behind. Only the golden armor he wears protects him from the terrible claws. Screwball's arrow finds its mark, straight between the animal's shoulder blades. The wolf cries out once and drops lifeless from Jack's back.
Jack waves gratefully at the faerie.

JACK
(calling)
I'm in your debt, Screwball.

SCREWBALL (O.S.)
calling back
Watch behind or I'll never collect on it!

Jack spins about in time to see the leader's mate charge savagely. The wolf leaps, a high, acrobatic arc whose trajectory moves from a blur of gray fur to the precise delineation of cold yellow eyes, loolling tongue and wicked, gleaming fangs.

Jack lifts his sword as the wolf lands on his shoulders and chest. Falling backwards, Jack thrusts up and the tip on his blade impales the wolf as they drop to the ground.

Tossing the squirming animal as a farmer would a fork-load of hay, Jack flips the wolf over his head. Scrambling to his knees, he delivers the death-stroke with swift efficiency.

Standing over the dead wolves, sword in hand, his breastplate drenched in their blood, Jack is terrible to behold. The others in the pack sense they have been beaten and slink whimpering back into the woods, tails abjectly hooked between their legs.

Gump, Screwball and Oona dart from their hiding places. They jump and leap about Jack, chattering happily.

GUMP
Well done, lad. Stout heart.

SCREWBALL
Wolf-slayer, worm-sticker... give a cheer for the champion!

OONA
Were I a mortal girl, Jack, methinks I'd be in love with you.

JACK
Then I'd kiss you without turning my garments inside-out and sewing bells all over.

OONA
No need for bells, Jack. I'll nay enchant ye.

Oona stops her teasing and points to the unicorn, a look of utter wonder replacing the mischief on her face.
OONA

Oh, look!

THE UNICORN - OONA'S POV

A baby unicorn has been born; coal black with the first stump of a horn showing on his forehead. The foal lies beside his mother, who licks the blood from his shining, moist coat.

OONA (O.S.)
Isn't he beautiful.

FAERIES AND UNICORN

Jack and the faeries move closer to the unicorn. There is something holy about the scene, like an Adoration.

GUMP
A wee stallion.

Jack drops to his knees before the mare.

JACK
Praise be to God.

SCREWBALL
Small miracles better than no miracles...

OONA
Such a sad world, be there no unicorns to brighten it.

JACK
No fear of that now.

GUMP
Aye. This wee stud'll beget a line of champions.

The faeries kneel with Jack before the unicorn and her foal. The mare regards them without fear, recognizing friends. Stretching out her neck to Jack, she allows him to pet her and scratch behind her ears.

JACK
You're shy and pretty, little mother... You deserve a pretty name... I'll call you Sapphire, for your eyes shine so...

EXT. FAERIES' CAMP - DAY

The SOUND of swords clashing and the SHOUTING of tiny
voices CARRIES OVER to the faeries' make-shift military camp. Colorful tents stand under frozen trees, pennants snapping in the icy wind. A small army of elves, imps, goblins, gnomes and faeries has gathered, all decked out in various odd bits of armor recovered from the dragon's lair. Groups of these tiny folk are engaged in martial training, practicing with swords, lances and bows.

As we MOVE through the camp amid this mock mayhem, certain isolated incidents attract our attention:

Two goblins duel furiously, sweating and panting under the weight of their ill-matched armor. They are clearly exhausted. As the other elves continue slashing at one another, these two take time out; one leaning against a tree trunk while the other folds his arms in repose. But, their swords CONTINUE to duel, alone in mid-air, the blades crashing together MAGICALLY like iron birds.

Another group practices archery, aiming their tiny arrows at a straw scarecrow some distance away. They are extremely accurate, puncturing the dummy in a dozen vital spots. When the last arrow strikes, instead of retrieving them, the faeries stand their ground. One-by-one, the arrows PULL FREE from the scarecrow and FLY back unaided through the air to land safely in their owner's quivers.

Two huge knights, each over seven feet, slug it out in full armor with battle axes. They bash away at one another, until a fearsome blow literally cuts one in half. The upper portion of the bisected knight topples to the ground with a LOUD CLANG. The two armored legs remain erect, swaying slightly like trees in the wind. Suddenly, a tiny head appears above the left cuisse. It is an elf. He is LAUGHING. Another elf pops his head out of the right-hand cuisse and the two "legs" hop off in opposite directions.

The fallen armor also comes apart: one gnome in the breastplate; another lifting the helm from the gorget.

The victorious "knight" likewise begins to disassemble, revealing a number of LAUGHING elves within, like clowns performing a carnival prank.

EXT. HILL ABOVE CAMP - DAY

Jack surveys his elfin army from the crest of the hill. He is mounted bareback on Sapphire, the mare unicorn, and rides easily without reins or bridle. The tiny black foal trots alongside his mother, and beside it pants an angry Gump.

GUMP
Don't see why I can't ride, too!
I'm second in command, damn it!
JACK
The colt's still too small.

GUMP
I'm small... and I can make myself smaller still... Small as a bee!
Small as dust...! Want to see me do it?

JACK
We've no time for tricks this day, Honeythorn Gump.

GUMP
Tricks, is it? Why I'll trick ye!
Ungrateful whelp! I'll sour your milk and bird droppings'll fall from the sky wherever ye walk.

JACK
Save your mischief for the Black Baron.

GUMP
Aye! That too.

JACK
You'll need more than bird droppings for Blackheart.

GUMP
I'll drop a cow on the knave!

JACK
Drop a mountain on him and we won't need our troops.

They laugh together, feeling confident.

GUMP
Fine-looking army.

JACK
We march on Castle Couer de Noir within the hour.

GUMP
How do you plan on finding this here castle, if ye don't mind me asking?

JACK
A true and troubling question, Gump... We'll start from where the unicorn was killed. The Baron must have left a trail.
GUMP
Track the demon to his lair.

JACK
Aye. And hang his foul hide up like dirty laundry for the drying.

EXT. THE FROZEN WOODS - DAY

The rag-tag army of faeries on the march. Jack rides at the head of the column on Sapphire. Gump has had his way and is mounted on the colt, who trots obediently by his mother's side. The other elves and faeries are either on foot or mounted on an odd array of wild animals. Deer, foxes, rabbits, each serves as a steed for a tiny warrior. Bright banners undulate from numbers of lance tips. A variety of armor glistens in the pale wintry sun.

Overhead, Oona and several other small nymphs ride on flying songbirds.

As they march and ride, all the faerie folk are singing, their voices high and clear, shimmering like wind over a moonlit lake; precise as birdsong; haunting as an echo.

FAERIE TROOP (ALL TOGETHER)
(singing)
The sky is high, the world is wide,
Beneath the flowers faeries hide.
The ocean's deep, the moon's asleep;
In Oberon's care our souls will keep.

The stars are cold, the Gods are old,
Our heroes all be brave and bold.
The Devil's sly, the end is nigh,
Wicked ogres too must die.

EXT. ESTUARY - DAY

The SINGING CARRIES OVER as the faeries move out of the woods onto the frozen estuary. Jack urges the mare unicorn ahead of the procession.

FAERIE TROOP (ALL TOGETHER)
(singing)
The trees are green; spirits unseen,
The world we know is but a dream...

THE DEAD UNICORN

Jack rides Sapphire near where the body of her mate lies decomposing. As before, a black raven perches on the stallion's skull. The bird emits a vile CROAK as Jack approaches.
Alarmed by the raven and the sight of her dead mate, the unicorn rears on her hind legs. Jack clings to the animal's mane. The raven CROAKS.

C.U. RAVEN

The large bird spreads his wings, RASPING and CROAKING at the rearing unicorn and rider. For a single, horrifying moment, the raven appears to alter and change, transmuting into a HARPY. In place of the bird's head and bill is a visage resembling both skull and snake. Talons appear to be gnarled feet and a pair of distinctly human breasts sprout from between the sooty feathers.

    HARPY
    Beware... beware...

The harpy takes wing, CROAKING.

JACK

struggles to control the frantic unicorn. Gump and the other faeries ride up as Jack quiets the animal.

    GUMP
    Trouble, Jack?

Jack points at the raven flying high over the treetops.

    JACK
    We must follow that bird.

    GUMP
    Whatever for?

    JACK
    Jenny Greenteeth said: "Follow the raven in her flight..."

    GUMP
    Aye. Said to follow it to the edge of night. But is this the right bird?

    JACK
    I'm sure. It spoke to me.

    GUMP
    Birds speak to me all the time. What did it say?

    JACK
    Beware.

    GUMP
    Sounds like the bird we want.
    (calling to troops)
All right lads, follow yon raven!

The troop of faeries shout and laugh, eagerly pursing the raven.

EXT. EDGE OF THE FOREST - DAY

The faerie troop rides to the edge of the wintry forest. Their spirits are still high, but something about the mood of the place takes hold. The singing stops. Bright laughter fades.

Screwball, a WORRIED ELF and a NERVOUS GOBLIN ride side-by-side into the frightening forest. They make an odd trio, mounted as they are upon a fox, a hare and a badger. Arthritic tree branches twist grotesquely above them in the gloom.

WORRIED ELF
Something I don't like about this place.

SCREWBALL
Me too. No babies to pinch. Haven't pinched a baby in so long, probably lost my touch.

NERVOUS GOBLIN
Everything's a joke, Screwball? Laugh your life away.

SCREWBALL
Laugh's better'n stubbing your toe.

NERVOUS GOBLIN
Go on. Joke it up while evil magic weaves a spell about you.

SCREWBALL
What's the matter? Fraid of the big, dark woods?

WORRIED ELF
(pointing)
Look!

The elf points to a gnarled tree trunk. At a second glance, it appears to be the body of a man, twisted in petrified pain, his mouth open and howling a silent scream.

The three riders draw up short, staring in amazement at the curious shapes of the trees surrounding them.

NERVOUS GOBLIN
Over there! Another!
All the trees bear an uncanny resemblance to human figures contorted by severe pain. These are not the curious deformities of nature but actual, living beings transformed into trees.

Terrified, Screwball gallops his fox frantically back to the rear of the column.

SCREWBALL
Help! Jack! Gump! Preserve poor me!

The other two faeries are quick to follow.

NERVOUS GOBLIN
Wait!

REAR OF COLUMN

Jack and Gump ride at the rear of the column, threading single-file along the narrow trail through the dark, forbidding woods.

GUMP
How do we follow a raven we can't even see?

JACK
Send Oona up above the tree tops. She be our eyes.

GUMP
Good plan that.

All at once. Screwball and his two frightened companions come charging down the trail, causing the other faeries to scramble out of their way. This precipitates a certain grumbling: "Watch out! Be careful! Mind where you're going, etc."

SCREWBALL
Master Jack! Master Jack! These woods are alive! They're alive!

JACK
Of course they're alive. All nature is living.

GUMP
Barely living, from the looks of it.

SCREWBALL
No, no, no... this is different!
NERVOUS GOBLIN
This is evil!  Black magic!

WORRIED ELF
Sorcery!

JACK
Where?

SCREWBALL
Up ahead!

JACK
Come on, Gump, let's have a look at this witchcraft.

Jack nudges the mare unicorn and she sprints ahead in a gallop.  Gump is right behind, trotting on the colt. The other three follow, less enthusiastically, on their animal mounts.

Once again, the other faeries have to make way on the trail. This time there is fist shaking and outright epithets as they charge through.

OTHER FAERIES
Swine...!  Toad eaters...!
Maggots...!  Vermin...!  etc.  etc...

EXT.  DEFORMED TREES - DAY

Jack pulls the mare to a stop in the grove of malformed trees. He jumps to the ground and has a closer look at these curiosities. Gump and the others ride up behind.

SCREWBALL
You see!  You see!

GUMP
These chaps'll need a woodpecker to pick their teeth.

Jack pauses before a familiar tree, studying the grieved features molded into the bark.

JACK
Why, this is King Godwin, Princess Lili's father.  King Godwin and all his mounting party... even the hounds.  See the lymers and alaunts!

Jack points to several tree stumps shaped like frantic hounds.

SCREWBALL
Never cared much for dogs. Always chasing the wee folk, they are... Think I'll lift my leg on one; see how he likes the tables turned.

Screwball saunters over to a dog-shaped root, untying his cod-piece as threatened.

Jack draws his gleaming sword.

JACK
This is ogre's magic.

GUMP
Blackheart?

JACK
Aye. He's enchanted the lot of them. His reward for delivering the unicorn.

GUMP
Foul fellow, this Couer de Noir.

JACK
The foulest. Mayhap I can cut them free.

GUMP
(shouting)
Jack, don't!

Gump's warning comes too late. Jack swings his mighty sword, driving the blade deep into a tree trunk resembling one of the hunters. The air is rent by a piercing SCREAM. Bright red blood gushes from where the sword cut the bark, flowing in a crimson stream down the trunk.

JACK
Dear God, forgive me.

The sight of the rushing blood unnerves even the boldest faerie. Screwball fumbles with his cod-piece, full of embarrassment and fear.

SCREWBALL
Oh dear... oh dear... I hope dogs have shorter memories than trees.

Jack scrambles on the ground, grabbing up handfuls of moss and mud.

JACK
Hurry! Gump, lend a hand.

Gump rushes to assist him and they press gobs of moss into the flowing wound. At first it is like attempting to stem
the flood of a leaking dam, the blood continues to ooze through their fingers and pour down the tree. The contorted expression of the hunter imprisoned within the bark looks evermore tormented.

GUMP
(grunting)
Worse than the battlefield.

JACK
What know you of fields of war?

GUMP
Ofttimes, the wee folk come out to tend the wounded... staunch bleeding with cobwebs... give a parched mouth a sip of dew... cool a fevered brow...

The applications of mud and moss begin to work. The bleeding from the bark abates.

JACK
There... it seems to quit... I'll wager that war held other attractions quite apart from nursing.

GUMP
Well... if the knight be already dead; what harm is there in... borrowing a thing or two?

JACK
Stealing his arms?

SCREWBALL
What can you steal from a man already lost his life?

JACK
His honor, I suppose... seeing he no longer can defend it.

Jack is disgusted with the faeries. He picks up his sword and stalks away, leaving Gump and Screwball perplexed by his piety.

EXT. SKY - EVENING

The feeble sun is setting, like the pale-yellow yolk of a diseased egg. A small, swift bird, perhaps a swallow, clips along erratically through the cloudless, pearl-gray sky.

C.U. BIRD
Oona clings to the back of the darting bird. Her own gossamer wings, still and half-folded now, resemble those of an exotic butterfly. She rides the bird as one would a flying horse, hanging on to the neck feathers and shading her eyes with her free hand as she strains to observe something moving in the distance.

**OONA'S POV**

She is watching the raven, which no longer resembles a harpy, but is now simply a large, black bird. It flies with determined wing-beats, straight for a sharply pointed stone pinnacle rising above the treetops. The raven circles this monument once, then lands on the uppermost crag, folding his wings for the night.

**OONA AND THE BIRD**

Holding tight with both hands, Oona urges the bird into a sharp dive. It swoops like a falling arrow straight into the tangle of tree branches below.

**EXT. FOREST TRAIL - EVENING**

Jack rides silently at the head of the procession. He seems locked deep within himself. Gump and Screwball trot alongside, obviously uncomfortable with Jack's somber brooding. Neither of the faeries has the heart to break the oppressive silence.

All at once, the bird darts down out of the trees above, circles twittering, and glides in for a perfect landing on Jack's shoulder. Oona dismounts; rather, she herself flutters delicately into the air and flies over to Jack's other shoulder. She caresses his cheek and whispers softly into his ear.

**GUMP**

(impatiently)

What's she say...? What's she say?

Oona makes a disagreeable face at Gump. Jack reaches up and she hops into his hand with a smile.

**JACK**

Oona tells me the raven has roosted for the night on a sharp stone spire some half a mile distance.

**GUMP**

That would be Devil's Needle. Last landmark I know in these woods.

**SCREWBALL**

Ogg lives there...! And Thurgis!
GUMP
Screwball! Be quiet...! We have friends live 'neath the Needle. They'll no doubt provide safe refuge for the night.

JACK
Good.

GUMP
Beyond Devil's Needle, all is unknown.

EXT. CAVE MOUTH AT BASE OF NEEDLE - EVENING

The Needle towers up above the trees straight and smooth, a curiosity of nature resembling a man-made structure. At the base of the rock is the opening to a cave. With its yawning shape and sharp overhanging row of teeth-like stalactites, it has the appearance of a gigantic, devouring mouth.

The faerie troop rides up and dismounts. A number of human skulls litter the ground, grinning through the curved spokes of several bleached ribcages.

JACK
Twould appear other travelers precede us.

GUMP
Nay, Jack, tis not what you're thinking.

JACK
I trust our own welcome will be more hospitable.

GUMP
Jack, Jack, it's dwarves live here. Hard-working chaps. Hammering in the forge all the live-long day. Make the most wondrous things, they do.

Jack stoops, picking a skull off the ground.

JACK
And this? Some of their handiwork?

GUMP
Nay. That's but to distract the casual visitor. A dwarf is too busy to suffer fools gladly.
JACK
Better to kill than be disturbed.

GUMP
Your imagination runs away with you, Jack... Those bones be but battlefield gleanings, like I mentioned. A wee bit of carrion to frighten off the uninvited.

JACK
Here is a bold champion's reward; to serve as a dwarf's doorstop.

Jack tosses the skull back to the ground, his face flushed with anger.

SCREWBALL
What care the bones when the soul is free?

JACK
(scornfully)
Bah! You faeries have the morals of ferrets.

GUMP
You do the ferrets grave injustice, Jack.
(staring into the cave)
But come... best settled 'fore dark. This is inhospitable country at night. All manner of spriggen and banshee and bogies walk these woods after sunset.

Gump leads the way into the cave. Jack and the others follow.

INT. CAVE - EVENING

Stalactites twist down like fangs from above as Gump leads the way through the underground labyrinth. Screwball walks at his side, a flaming candle-stub stuck to the top of his outlandish Roman helmet. Jack is right behind and the other faeries are strung out in the rear, some carrying torches, some candle-lanterns, others merely lighting the way with their own mysterious foxfire glow.

Turning a final corner, the procession comes to a huge golden gong hanging on the cave wall, a wooden mallet beside it.

GUMP
We wait here. Those that come this
far be considered guests. The others... well, many false twists and turns lure them astray.

Gump delivers the gong a smart mallet blow. A surprisingly musical note echoes and re-echoes down maze-like passages.

JACK
Nice piece of work.

GUMP
Pure gold it is... plays a different note every time.

Gump strikes the gong again. The pure, musical sound is indeed different as it reverberates among the stalactites.

GUMP
See?

Gump strikes it a third time. Another note, even more beautiful, echoes with the sound, forming a melodic chord within the cave.

From around the bend a dwarf suddenly appears. This is OGG. He is short, muscular fellow with a gray, waist-length beard covering his naked chest. His leather blacksmith's apron reaches all the way to the ground, concealing his feet.

OGG
Enough... enough... Do you mean to deafen us with your infernal hammering?

Gump steps forward and takes the dwarf fondly by the hand.

GUMP
Friend Ogg. Excuse our enthusiasm, occasioned as it was by a fondness for you.

OGG
Honeythorn Gump, is it? I've not seen your ugly face since you sold me a jug of cow piss claiming it was dragon's tears.

GUMP
Well, bygones're bygones, I always say.

OGG
Or was it the time you and Jimmy Squarefoot stole the golden apples I'd forged.
GUMP
Twas Jimmy done that, I merely stood for the blame unfairly... but, here now, Ogg, this be no time to rehash old differences, I've friends along in need of safe haven for the night.

OGG
Who might these friends be?

GUMP
Screwball you know, and many other of the wee folk. We serve as escort for our grand champion, Jack o' the Green.

Gump nods at Jack who bows politely.

JACK
Honored to make your acquaintance.

OGG
Grand champion, is it? And what great cause leads you to me?

JACK
We seek the ogre, Baron Couer de Noir. He slew a unicorn and plunged the world into eternal winter.

OGG
Thought the weather terrible of late.

GUMP
We seek to undo the curse.

SCREWBALL
Gonna make ogre-stew!

OGG
Any enemy of Blackheart's a friend of mine... Come on then, there's a bit of soup left and clean straw to lie in.

Ogg vanishes, abruptly as he came. Gump motions for the others to follow, leading them around the corner.

INT. FURTHER ALONG THE CAVE - NIGHT

Ogg is far in the distance. Although his looks are deceptive, he is very agile and makes much better time underground than the other faeries.
Suddenly, Jack stops short. He grabs Gump's arm and points to the sandy cave floor.

JACK
My God! Look!

GUMP
Something the matter?

JACK
(pointing)
Ogg's footprints!

C.U. FOOTPRINTS

Etched cleanly in the sand are Ogg's peculiar footprints, leading forward into the depths of the cave. They are quite obviously the three-pronged prints of a large bird, such as a goose.

GUMP (O.S.)
Shhh! Not so loud, mayhap he'll hear ye.

JACK AND GUMP

GUMP
Dwarves be very sensitive about their feet.

JACK
Certainly understandable.

GUMP
Very secretive, they are. Keep their feet covered up. Best if you don't mention it.

Far down the passage, Ogg waves his arm impatiently.

OGG
(calling)
Step lively now!

JACK
His feet shall never cross my lips.

GUMP
I should hope not!

JACK
Gump, you're putting words in my mouth.

The two hurry along the passageway to catch up with Ogg and the others.


GUMP
Words be a far sight better than a dwarf's foot.

INT. DWARVES WORKSHOP - NIGHT

An underground Medieval factory. A row of glowing open hearth furnaces cast a vivid molten light across a dozen forges. Everywhere, dwarves are at work, hammering on anvils, heating metal with tongs, pumping bellows and trip-hammers; all wearing beards and floor-length leather aprons. The ROAR and CLANG of industry fills the air.

The faerie troops recline in shadowy niches along the back wall, eating and getting ready for sleep. Candles flicker, contrasting with the occasional will-o-the-wisp dazzle of faerie light.

Ogg guides Jack and Gump on a tour of the workshop, past bellows and furnaces without a word. Jack has a bowl of gruel and a wooden spoon. He eats with relish. Gump slurps at a dripping honeycomb.

INT. THURGIS' FORGE - NIGHT

Ogg leads Jack and Gump to a forge set somewhat apart from the others. THURGIS is a hunch-backed dwarf busy shaping a white-hot sword blade on his anvil. A barely perceptible nod is his only greeting to the visitors.

Rows of impeccably finished weapons, spears, swords and axes, stand stacked along the wall. Hanging above are magnificent golden shields and helmets. Jack puts down his bowl and examines the weapons as Thurgis plunges his glowing blade into a vat of blood. The HISS of steam is like a cry of pain.

OGG
(to Jack)
Can't beat dragon's blood for curing a blade... Cousin Thurgis be co-master here.

Thurgis studies the newly-tempered sword-blade, then arches an eyebrow as he regards Jack inspecting the finished goods.

THURGIS
Each fit for a hero... My uncle fashioned a hammer for Thor. Twas he named it Mjolnir. Grandfather forged Excalibur... You won't ever see finer craftsmanship.

JACK
Oh, but I have.

Smiling, Jack draws his sword and hands it, pommel first, to Thurgis. The dwarf examines the weapon, admiring the keen edge.

THURGIS
How came you by this blade?

JACK
I slew the Lindfarne Worm with it.

GUMP
Jack's a grand champion.

THURGIS
He wields a champion's sword, true. I know the work... fine work... Stagnar's work. This is the sword called "The Avatar."

Thurgis hands Jack back the sword. He regards it with wonder.

JACK
The Avatar. I like the sound of it.

THURGIS
Sigurd the Volsung slew Fafnir with that blade... See the line where Regin welded the break?

Jack runs his thumb over the weld.

JACK
(in awe)
Sigurd's sword...

OGGG
Another hero's hand-me-down...
Thurgis, note the armor; tis Greek work.

Thurgis runs his hands over the decorative bas-relief hammered into Jack's breastplate.

THURGIS
Uhm... fine work.

JACK
Achilles wore it before the gates of Troy.

THURGIS
You're well equipped, I'd say. Legendary arms...
OGG
Takes more than a good sword to make a hero.

Jack slides the sword back in its scabbard.

JACK
I pray always to be worthy of it.

GUMP
Stoutly spoke, lad. These dwarves be sore grouches... Pay no heed to their spiteful grumbling.

Gump grabs Jack by the arm and leads him away from the forge.

JACK
(calling back)
I do thank you for your hospitality.

The dwarves make no reply, but stand solemnly watching as Gump and Jack leave the workshop.

INT. JACK'S SLEEPING NICHE - NIGHT

Jack sits on the straw-pile unbuckling his breastplate. Gump helps him to remove his greaves. The fabled sword leans an arm-length away.

GUMP
Don't let this talk of heroes upset you, Jack. Sigurd's sword is no great thing. The Volsung killed Fafnir. You killed Lindfarne. That's one worm apiece... I'd say you and Sigurd were neck-and-neck.

JACK
We're not in a tournament, Gump.
(lying back in the straw)
Ah, but a sword twice tempered in the blood of living dragons...

GUMP
Tis not the sword that counts, but the man what swings it.
(Gump rises to leave)
Rest easy, Jack.

JACK
God protect you, Honeythorn Gump.

GUMP
Your strong right arm's all the
protection I'll need this night.

Gump wonders off. Jack arranges his bedding so it suits him. He places his sword close by the pillow and turns to blow out the candle. He is distracted by the glow of faerie light and a musical presence. This is Oona.

**OONA**

Do you always sleep with your sword, Jack?

Oona kneels beside his bedside.

**JACK**

Never even had a sword in my hand until yesterday.

**OONA**

Then, tis not for chastity? Methought you kept a naked blade twixt you and any maiden chanced spend the night.

**JACK**

I live in an abandoned fox den neath the roots of a thousand-year-old oak. My bed is pine boughs and rabbit skins. There's no need of weaponry to keep the maids away.

**OONA**

I'm partial to oaks, as are all faerie folk. Mayn't I come visit sometime?

**JACK**

I'd be honored.

**OONA**

Only that?

**JACK**

And charmed, of course.

**OONA**

Fie! Don't speak of charms. I should charm you for being so dull-witted.

**JACK**

I had no thought of offending you, Oona.

**OONA**

Do I not please you, Jack?

**JACK**
In every way.

OONA
And am I not fair?

JACK
Wondrously so.

OONA
Then why do you speak sweeter words to Jenny Greenteeth?

JACK
That was in jest.

OONA
Jest with me then.

JACK
How so?

OONA
Tell me I'm fair, as you did the hag.

JACK
You are fair as the first new flower of spring...

OONA
And sweet?

JACK
Sweeter than bee pollen on a summer wind.

OONA
Pray you be sweet as your words, dear Jack.

Oona moves close to Jack, kissing his lips as a soft cocoon of faerie light engulfs them. Nearly enchanted, Jack pushes away.

JACK
Nay, Oona, tis not possible.

OONA
A faerie's love makes anything possible.

JACK
I'm promised to another!

OONA
What shape I take matters not. Long you for another? I'll give you your
heart's desire.

The faerie light burns brightly around Oona, surrounding her like a chrysalis as she alters and shifts, transforming into a grown woman. When she steps forward, parting the curtain of light like a niade stepping through a waterfall, it is the Princess Lili who appears.

JACK
Lili!

OONA/LILI
Come then, Green Jack, you've promises to keep...

Oona/Lili moves closer to Jack, running her hand behind his neck, embracing him.

JACK
No... this isn't real...

OONA/LILI
Oh, but it is... I'm warm and alive and happy to be in your arms.

Furiously, Jack thrusts her aside.

JACK
I'll not be enchanted! This is foul magic...! What an abhorrent creature would I be to dally with faeries guised as my beloved when the Princess herself has suffered God knows what fate.

C.U. OONA/LILI

OONA/LILI (harsh and spiteful)
I wish I could show you that fate...
Your precious princess! I wish you could see her now!

CUT TO:

INT. BARON'S CASTLE - NIGHT (C.U. LILI)

Lili has completely transformed into a savage beast. Fur covers her face, her ears are pointed. Sharp fangs punctuate her lips. Only her eyes still seem human and afraid.

LILI (very frightened)
Please... kill me if you must... It would be a gift.
PULL BACK to show the dark room, windows shrouded by heavy black drapes. Thousands of candles drip and sputter, casting a flickering light across the clammy stone walls. The Baron stands before the cowering Lili, wearing his mask and wrapped in his cloak. In his gloved right hand he holds a whip.

BARON
My generosity is not so large as that.

LILI
What do you want with me?

BARON
Your love.

LILI
Your words sting more sharply than your whip.

BARON
I speak of love, and you think only of the lash.

LILI
You are cruel! Your heartless jesting worse than torture! How can you speak of love when you see what I am!

BARON
I like well what I see. It pleases me.

LILI
But I'm hideous!

BARON
You're magnificent.

LILI
Grotesque... monstrous...

BARON
On the contrary! The pulting, pallid creature you were before was truly something disgusting. Now you are splendid... a fierce goddess... the embodiment of all that is strong and beautiful.

LILI
You lie! You wish to humiliate me, as if the form I'm forced to bear were not punishment enough!
BARON
You should glory in your animal
nature. It is your triumph! None
know that better than I!

The Baron rips off his mask. Beneath is a savage face,
half-wolf, half-goat, with a pair of curling horns poised
above. Lili SCREAMS.

LILI
God protect me.

BARON
Not from me, surely...

LILI
You... you're a beast!

BARON
We're all of us beasts, my dear.
Only most are afraid to show it.

LILI
And you... are you not also afraid?

BARON
I am afraid of nothing.

LILI
Then why hide behind a mask? You
are ashamed!

BARON
(laughing)
I know no more of shame than I do of
fear. I wear this mask not for
concealment but protection.

LILI
Protection?

BARON
I am a creature of darkness. I
require the shadow's solace and the
black of night... Sunlight is
abhorrent to me... I cover myself
completely whenever I venture forth
in daylight... Sunshine is my
destroyer.

LILI
Like some vile toadstool.

BARON
I prefer to think, more like the
sagacious owl.
LILI
Do you feed on mice and rats?

BARON
I prefer a plump capon, but will happily serve you rats if they're to your liking.

LILI
Why have you brought me here?

BARON
To be my bride, of course.

LILI
I'd soon die.

The Baron uncoils his sinister whip.

BARON
That is your choice, my dear. A wedding will be far more swift, I assure you.

The Baron strikes out at Lili with his whip. It cracks in the air close by her and she leaps back.

LILI
Damn you!

BARON
We're both of us damned, my beauty.

Lili rushes to the window and pulls apart the heavy black drapes. A shaft of sunlight knifes across the shadowy room and strikes the Baron like a bolt from Heaven. He reels from the force, grimacing in pain. There is a note of triumph in Lili's shrill laughter.

LILI
(laughing)
Toadstool!

The Baron cringes in the light. He lifts his thick cloak to shield himself and quickly pulls on his mask. This done, he retrieves his whip and advances on the cowering princess.

BARON
Bold and plucky. I admire your spirit, Princess, almost as much as I lust for your savage, feline beauty.

Princess Lili jumps up onto the window ledge, glancing down at the rocks far below.
LILI
I'm not afraid to jump. I'd prefer that to being with you!

The Baron makes no reply, but strikes unexpectedly with his whip. The lash coils around Lili's neck and pulls her off balance, yanking her back into the room. She falls on her knees at the Baron's feet.

BARON
When the time's come, you won't need to jump, I'll throw you out myself!

LILI
Do it now!

BARON
No. Now is the time for discipline. Some lessons in obedience for the future Baroness.

The Baron slashes Lili cruelly with the whip. She CRIES OUT in pain.

BARON
Not as sweet as my caress.

The Baron strikes her again.

LILI
Jack... Oh, Jack... Help me...

BARON
Too bad your precious Jack can't hear you... the damsel in distress... A rescue attempt would be most amusing... We could flay sweet Jack alive as an after-dinner entertainment...

The Baron punctuates each bitter phrase with a stroke of the lash. Lili lies bleeding on the floor, WEEPING helplessly.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. JACK'S SLEEPING NICHE - NIGHT

The SOUND of Lili's weeping CARRIES OVER as we SEE Oona, huddled in the corner of Jack's niche, crying softly to herself. She has resumed her faerie shape and the light which emanates from her fragile wings and body is of a tender, delicate hue. Jack kneels solicitously before her.

JACK
Oona... don't cry... please, you mustn't...

OONA
(weeping)
You... you... you mortal you!

JACK

Please...

OONA
(sobbing)
Why should I feel such pain? Should be the other way round... I could vex you... make you dance your life away...

JACK
Threats won't make me love you. Tis not the way of the human heart.

Oona rises in a rage.

OONA
What care I for the human heart!
Such a soft, spiritless thing it is. I prefer the hearts of hawks and wolves; fierce and free and keen as steel!

JACK
And as barren of love as stone.

OONA
I would build a wall around me with such stone, so the likes of you might never enter.

JACK
Be fair, Oona.

OONA
You beware, Jack! You and your porridge-pot heart!

There is a bright whirlwind of faerie light, and in a brilliant, pyrotechnic moment, Oona is gone.

JACK
Oona...? Oona, are you still here? Blast!

Jack arranges his cloak as a bed-cover and settles down for the night, drawing his sword and resting it beside him.

JACK
Hard enough to fathom a women's mind, what chance has one with a faerie?

Jack blows out his candle. Blackness.

INT. CAVE MOUTH - DAY

It is the next morning. The faerie army is preparing for the march, donning armor and putting a keen edge on this weapons. Jack is mounted on Sapphire, resplendent in Achilles' armor. Gump brushes the coat of the foal. Ogg, Thurgis and several other dwarves have assembled to see them off.

JACK
(calling out)
Make haste! We've a hard day's march ahead.

GUMP
Be gentle with them, Jack. They only march to please you. Were this a faerie journey, we'd ride the wind on thistledown and ragwort stems.

Thurgis and Ogg approach. Thurgis carries a large, round golden shield. Ogg has something concealed behind his back.

THURGIS
(clearing his throat)
Ahem...! I'm naught for fancy words, work as I do with my hands. The world needs champions and I favor that...

Thurgis hands the gleaming shield up to Jack.

THURGIS
I wrought this shield for noble Tristan ere fate o'ertook him... No blade nor axe can dent it. I believe it will serve you well.

Jack straps the shield over his back.

JACK
I pray always to be worthy of it and thank you well, Thurgis.

Ogg steps forward and hands two glittering objects to Gump.

OGG
Baron Couer de Noir is a blight
'gainst all nature. We dwarves be not fighters; still we are with you in this battle. Some of our handiwork may be of assistance.

GUMP
We be honored, friend Ogg.

OGG
There's a coil of golden thread fine as spider web yet naught can break it... and a silver key no lock can resist.

JACK
You're with us in battle.

THURGIS
May God protect you.

OGG
Aye, and valor select you.

Oona flies down abruptly from above the trees. Without looking directly at Jack, she addresses the assembled faerie warriors.

OONA
The raven has taken to wing and flies due north!

Jack waves his arm at the assembled troop of faeries and urges the unicorn to the head of the column.

JACK
Onward to victory!

The entire troop gives out with a rousing CHEER as it sets forward on the final trek through the forbidding forest.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FOREST - DAY

The trees are twisted and grotesque. A dense undergrowth of tangled vines studded with six-inch thorns block the troop's progress like over-sized concertina wire. Jack rides at the head of the column, hacking a pathway through the vines with his enchanted sword. Gump rides just behind, doing his best with his tiny battleaxe to clean up the excess.

GUMP
... this rate... we'll all be in our graves... 'fore we reach the Baron's fortress...

JACK
We'll surely be in our graves if we don't.

GUMP
Going grows slower... we've not made... half a mile in two hours...

Jack continues slashing at the serpentine vines. A final, vigorous sword-stroke reveals a frozen meadow; broad, open, and inviting.

JACK
Gump, look!

Jack urges the unicorn forward into the meadow. Gump and the remainder of the troop follow. At the far end of the clearing a row of cliffs stand like the ramparts of a city. Sheer and impassable, save for a narrow defile across which something very like a vast silver curtain hangs.

GUMP
God's blessing.

JACK
(pointing)
There's the way, mates.

Jack gallops forward across the meadow, followed close behind by the cheering faeries.

EXT. DEFILE IN CLIFFS - DAY

The faerie troops rein in a hundred yards from the opening. The silver curtain is now quite clearly seen as a gigantic spider web, the gossamer strands inches thick.

GUMP
What make ye of that, Jack?

JACK
It bodes evil.

Oona swoops down from above, hovering in the air before the faerie column.

OONA
(scolding)
Is this a May Day pageant? Are you all off on a lark...? The raven passed this way hours ago!

JACK
Heading north still?

OONA
True north...
   (she points)
Straight up that pass, through the
   net.

GUMP
Is it a net, then?

OONA
Some sort of net... I'll see.

Oona flies rapidly away, straight towards the web.

JACK
   (alarmed)
Wait!

GUMP
Willful creature, that one...

OONA'S FLIGHT - JACK POV

Oona makes a bee-line for the web. She drives fearlessly ahead, without caution, flying straight into the center of the weave. Landing on the strands, she is immediately stuck.

OONA IN WEB

The more Oona struggles, the more entangled she becomes. Like a trapped fly, her frenzied attempts set the entire web trembling.

OONA
   (calling out)
Help! I'm stuck...! Oh please help!

A giant spider the size of a man makes his way along the web towards the helpless Oona. There is something especially repulsive about the creature's monstrous shape. His movements are a coordinated ballet of evil.

OONA
   (screaming)
Please...! Jack! Help me...!
Don't let it touch me...!

JACK AND THE FAERIES

Jack draws his sword, calling to his troops.

JACK
   Hurry! Save her!

Suddenly, a staghorn beetle large as a rhinoceros lumbers out of the concealing bushes at the base of the cliff.
Its black, armored wing-plates gleam like polished steel. The forked, six-foot horn towers above its head.

JACK
Lance!

A young goblin lance-bearer hurries forward with Jack's lance, handing it up to him.

JACK
Archers! Bring down that spider! I'll deal with this other creature...

GUMP
Stay on your guard, Jack. The bug is enchanted surely.

Jack sheathes his sword, lowers his lance, and spurring the unicorn with a kick of his heels, charges straight at the giant beetle.

The goblin archers rush forward shouting towards the cliff.

Jack rides straight at the big beetle. His lance strikes the hard carapace of the thorax and glances off, doing no harm.

Jack wheels the unicorn around and charges a second time. The lance hits the wing-casing and shatters. Jack is thrown from his mount. The evil beetle closes on him, pincers opening and closing like some grotesque engine of war.

THE WEB

The spider is nearly upon Oona as the archers line up below. A hail of arrows hit the mark. The spider reacts with spasms of pain as they stud into him.

OONA
... Kill it... Kill it!

The arrows don't stop the spider and it reaches Oona, biting her in the leg. She screams into unconsciousness. The spider sets to work spinning filament and wrapping the stunned faerie up like a cocoon.

JACK AND THE BEETLE

Jack scrambles to his feet, drawing his sword just as the beetle is upon him. A furious backhand slash lops off one of the insect's antennae. This doesn't slow it down; it continues to pursue the back-pedaling Jack, pincers clicking together like twin scythes. Jack parries and stabs, slashing at the beetle with his sword.
A well-aimed thrust takes off half the beetle's foreleg. Quantities of foul, black blood gush forth onto the ground.

THE ARCHERS

The goblin marksmen continue to pour a steady rain of arrows into the spider. The swollen abdomen bristles with dozens of accurate hits.

Two oversized wasps, each with a six-foot wingspan, dive down on the archers. They scatter much as soldiers of a later age will react to a strafing by aircraft.

One unfortunate pixie bowman is seized by a wasp and borne aloft. The wasp curls his abdomen beneath him. The barbed stinger emerges like a harpoon. The helpless, screaming pixie is stung through. The wasp releases the lifeless body and it drops back to earth.

JACK AND THE BEETLE

Jack continues to retreat before the beetle's advance, slashing with his sword. The second antennae is neatly amputated, without any effect on the giant insect.

Stepping backwards, Jack's foot goes into a hole and he is twisted off-balance and falls. The big bug's shadow darkens over him. The wicked pincers CLINK.

THE MARE UNICORN

as she lowers her horned head and charges the beetle. Running straight and true as a fighting bull, the unicorn drives into the side of the bug. The long, spiraling horn catches the joint between abdomen and thorax, sliding easily into the creature's side. The massive insect whips about in agony, snapping at the unicorn. Sapphire dances adroitly back out of harm's way.

The interlude gives Jack the time to regain his feet. Rushing forward, he stabs his sword into the space between the insect's head and thorax. The pincers open and close helplessly. It is all over. Jack stabs the sword in a second time. The big bug collapses.

Jack runs to Sapphire and vaults onto her back. With a victorious WAR CRY he charges forward to help the beleaguered archers.

ARCHERS AND WASPS

Jack is attacked from above by one of the wasps. It hovers above, seeking either to sting him or pluck him from his mount. Jack wheels the unicorn about in a tight circle. The wasp circles overhead. With a sudden, overhand slash, Jack strikes the wasp's basketball-sized
head from his droning body. The head drops like a stone. The body continues to fly in erratic circles, like a pilot-less aircraft, until it crashes, BUZZING, to earth.

The disorganized faeries CHEER loudly as Jack rides up to assist them. The surviving wasp harasses them from above.

JACK
(shouting)
Don't aim for the body, the armor is too strong... aim for the chinks... shoot at the spaces between...

The archers rally and aim as Jack instructed. Although the first arrows miss the mark, a second round is more accurate. The wasp is hit repeatedly between its body sections. Mortally wounded, it falls thrashing to the ground.

JACK AT THE WEB

Jack urges Sapphire to the base of the cliff as the goblin archers dispatch the wounded wasp. Sword high, he leaps down and rushes to where several of the web's anchor strands are fastened. From his life in the wild, Jack knows certain strands are not sticky so the spider won't get caught in his own contrivance. Jack checks a strand but gets stuck and only pulls free with difficulty. He tries another and finds it clean.

Sheathing his sword, Jack climbs the web, hauling himself up the uncoated strand like a sailor ascending the ratlines of a ship.

The spider, though wounded, spins a shroud for the hapless Oona and does not notice Jack's approach. Jack draws his sword and thrusts up into the arachnid's arrow-studded belly. The huge spider whips about in pain. Jack strikes him again, slicing off one of his eight legs. Frantic, the spider charges. The Green Man stands his ground and splits the spider's head in two with a mighty stroke.

The spider drops, falling past Jack, hanging-up in his own web below. Jack climbs to where Oona is bound, cutting her cocoon free from the web.

Jack carriers the silken-wrapped Oona back down.

JACK AND FAERIES

Jack lays Oona's shrouded form on the ground and is immediately surrounded by the faeries.

GUMP
Well done, lad.

SCREWBALL
Three cheers for our champion.

The faeries give out with a hearty HOORAY as Jack works deftly with his sheath-knife, slicing the gossamer webbing from around the unconscious Oona. He severs the last strand and lifts her from the confining cocoon.

GUMP
Is she... dead?

JACK
No, thank the Lord, but she be sore envenomed by the spider's bite.

GUMP
We're blind now. Oona was our eyes and ears. How do we find the Castle Couer de Noir without her?

JACK
We'll find it.

GUMP
Easily said... the raven passed this way hours ago.

JACK
Heading true north. We continue in that direction.

GUMP
Never knowing when it takes a turn or changes course.

JACK
We'll trust in faith, Gump.

GUMP
Aye, lad... we've little else to go by.

The goblins and faeries have prepared a small litter from two lances and a woolen cloak. Three faeries lift Oona and place her on the litter. Her face is serene, as if she were sleeping.

JACK
Gently, boys... go easy with her.

Jack draws his sword and chops through the bottom of the web, opening a passage into the defile.

GUMP
(barking)
All right, men! Let's bury our dead and be on our way!
EXT. DEFILE - DAY

The column of armed faeries marches steadily up the defile. Jack rides at the head; Gump beside him on the colt. Four faeries bear the litter, carrying Oona on their shoulders. In the distance behind them are four small, flower-decked mounds: the freshly dug graves in which their fallen comrades lie buried.

EXT. BARON'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Like some deformed and dying organism, the towers and twisted turrets of the Baron's castle are silhouetted against the night sky. Utterly sinister in its malformed splendor, the building's shape suggests the embodiment of pure evil. High in the uppermost tower, a single light gleams through a slitted window.

Winging silently towards the castle, the coal-black raven glides through the night like an angel from Hell.

INT. TOWER ALCHEMICAL LABORATORY - BARON'S CASTLE - NIGHT

Dripping tallow candles cast flickering shadows across the mossy walls of the Baron's lab. All manner of arcane instruments; astrolabs, crucibles, retorts and furnaces, are crammed into the narrow room. Stuffed owls and crocodiles hang from the ceiling. The Baron, unmasked and wearing the flowing black robes of a master magician, is busy with an experiment. The table he works on crawls with toads and lizards; a large crucible drips blood. Several IMPS and DEMONS serve as the Baron's assistants, scurrying about the lab like characters from a Bosch painting. All are deformed, mutant creatures. They crackle and snigger like the inhabitants of a zoological madhouse.

The Baron takes up a glass container filled with eyeballs and pours them into his bloody cauldron, muttering to himself, his horned, lupine head fierce as Lucifer.

BARON

(muttering)

Blind eyes, blind eyes, what do you see...? The future's secrets belong to me...

A deformed imp with the head and goggling eyes of a fish, fidgets at the Baron's side. His evil master cuffs him and barks an order:

BARON

Batwing...! Bring me batwing, oaf. Be quick about it!
The imp scampers off, searching among the musty jars and canisters.

BARON

And leper's thumb...! Be swift, before the mixture cools!

All at once, the raven flies into the room, flapping in circles around the lab before coming to rest on the Baron's shoulder.

The raven rasps into the Baron's ear like a back-fence gossip. The Baron listens and nods, completely familiar with the language of birds. His reaction is one of vast amusement.

BARON

(laughing)

An army of faeries...! How very droll... Do they carry flowers stead of spears?

(the raven croaks)
Oh, real spears, they mean to be taken seriously...

(the raven croaks again)
A boy riding a unicorn...? Things are getting serious indeed.

The Baron paces his laboratory, the raven riding on his shoulder. He pauses by a shelf where a bouquet of black roses stands in a vase crafted from a human skull. The Baron selects a single ebony blossom and sniffs it pensively.

BARON

So... the faeries are marching... if by some miracle they get past the insects... we'll have a surprise ready...

The Baron crushes the black rose in his fist. When he opens his hand, the blossom has been magically transformed into a hideously deformed bat. The bat unfolds its wings, revealing toad-like gargoyle's features and a long, forked reptilian tail. The grinning mouth is studded with tiny, needle-sharp teeth.

BARON

Yes... you'll do nicely... very nicely. Just the sort of creature to rip a faerie to shreds...

The bat-demon takes wing and circles the lab, diving suddenly at the fish-headed imp, who SCREAMS in terror. The bat fastens himself on the shrieking imp, tearing with
his tiny teeth. The imp waves his arms frantically in a futile effort to dislodge the creature. Blood flows. The Baron's cruel LAUGHTER ECHOES in the vaulted room.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

A heavy mist shrouds the twisted trees, blunting their agonized shapes as if in pity. The Baron's demonic LAUGHTER CARRIES OVER and merges with the raucous CALLING of crows. A flight of the black birds passes through the fog, appearing suddenly, then fading just as abruptly into the gray.

The SOUND of marching men is HEARD. A moment later, the faerie troop is glimpsed, trudging forward out of the mist. Jack and Gump ride at the head of the dispirited column.

JACK
Why not admit it, Honeythorn Gump. We've lost our way entirely.

GUMP
Long as we don't lose heart, Jack...

JACK
We'll never find the Baron's castle.

GUMP
Once you thought we'd never find the Greek's armor and look at ye now, decked out like a proper hero.

JACK'S POV

The wind parts the mist ahead on the trail and for just a moment a hideous form is glimpsed. Shaped like a hunchback with overlong arms, the creature has the head of a boar, with a long, flattened snout and curved tusks. This is JIMMY SQUAREFOOT.

JACK (O.S.)
Hold! What manner of demon be this?

JACK AND GUMP

Jack draws his gleaming sword.

GUMP
Wait, Jack.

JACK
Nay. This time we strike first!

Jack kicks the unicorn's flanks and gallops ahead down the
trail, brandishing his sword.

GUMP
(shouting)
Jack, no!

Gump urges the colt into a fast run and hurries after Jack.

The pig-headed creature darts off the trail and sprints into the woods. Jack is right behind, the unicorn swift as the wind. Which-\ever way the creature turns in his frantic effort to escape, the unicorn leaps ahead, cutting him off.

A projecting tree-root catches the creature's foot and sends him sprawling. Jack leaps down, sword in hand and rushes up for the kill.

The creature snuffles and grunts with fear as Jack stands over him, poised for the killing thrust.

JIMMY
No hurt Jimmy, sir... oh no, please, sir...

JACK
I'm sending you back to Hell!

Gump gallops up breathlessly on the colt.

GUMP
Hold, Jack! Don't strike!

JACK
Nay. I show no pity to imps and fiends.

GUMP
I know the rogue, Jack. Tis Jimmy Squarefoot.

JIMMY
Yes, poor Jimmy... never hurt no one...

GUMP
He be a frightful-looking sod, tis true, but harmless for all that.

JACK
Is he a friend, then?

JIMMY
Yes, yes... Jimmy Squarefoot good friend to one and all...
GUMP
He's no enemy, that's sure.

Jack relents and sheathes his terrible sword.

JACK
Forgive my blood haste, Jimmy Squarefoot, but I want no more surprises from Couer de Noir.

JIMMY
The Black Baron, you say?

GUMP
Aye. We be on a quest to set the world aright --

JACK
But seem to have gotten lost on the way.

JIMMY
Lost?

JACK
Much good we do the world, for all our noble quest...

JIMMY
Jimmy Squarefoot no lost.

GUMP
Well, clap yourself on the back then, mate, and point the way to Castle Couer de Noir.

Jimmy Squarefoot gets to his feet, dusts himself off with dignity, and with exaggerated formality, extends his arms and points into the distance.

JACK
(laughing)
Simple as that, eh?

JIMMY
Castle Couer de Noir built with magic... simple as death... strong as hate...

JACK
(bewildered)
You do know where it is?

GUMP
Hear him out, Jack.

JIMMY
Many time Jimmy Squarefoot try find a way inside... many, many time... Plenty treasure there, oh plenty, plenty... It a bad place... blacker than the Baron's heart...

JACK
Can you show us the way?

JIMMY
To Castle Couer de Noir?

JACK
There'll be spoils aplenty if you guide us there. Once we breach the walls, help yourself to all you can carry.

JIMMY
That very nice.

GUMP
Will you do it, Jimmy?

JIMMY
No way over walls... too much magic...

JACK
Let that be our problem, just get us there.

JIMMY
You follow.

Jimmy Squarefoot starts off in the direction he pointed, his odd, loping gait more animal than human. Jack looks doubtfully at Gump.

JACK
Can we trust him?

GUMP
No... but what choice have we?

JIMMY
Follow Jimmy Squarefoot.

Jack waves his arms, signaling the troops to advance.

JACK
On to Castle Couer de Noir!

The troop follows Jack and Gump as they ride after Jimmy Squarefoot into the fog-shrouded woods.
INT. DUNGEON - BARON’S CASTLE - NIGHT

The SNAP of a whip is as abrupt as the change of scene.

A vile stone cellar, walls dripping with moss and slime. Human bones litter the earthen floor. Chains and shackles hang between the instruments of torture: there is an Iron Maiden, a rack and a charcoal brazier heating various tongs and pincers.

The whip CRACKS again as the SHADOW of the Baron moves across the wall.

Princess Lili is chained to a stone pillar. Clothed only in tatters, her glossy pelt striped with bloody welts from the lash, she huddles helplessly before the fury of the Baron.

The Baron strikes again with the whip. Semi-conscious, Lili can do little more than whimper when she is hit.

BARON
Your moans seem almost pleasurable, my dear... developing a taste for the lash?

LILI
(groaning)
Kill me... I want... so nice...

BARON
Why should I kill you?
(strikes her again)
A simple course in etiquette... something your parents sadly overlooked.

The Baron slashes at her with the whip.

LILI
No more... please...

BARON
I can keep a victim alive for weeks... months, if I desire it... it's an art. They beg for death... I keep it just out of their reach.
(he strikes her with the whip)
The pain remains constant.

LILI
Don't please... I'll do what you desire...

The Baron coils his whip.
BARON
Sweet Princess, you begin to sound most reasonable.

LILI
What do you want from me?

BARON
At the moment, very little. Your company at my table...

The Baron beckons and a squat imp with the features of a bullfrog scurries out of the shadows and unfastens the shackles binding Lili.

BARON
We'll get you cleaned up, find a suitable gown... I imagine you'll enjoy a good meal?

LILI
Oh, yes...

BARON
A few day's nourishment will see your strength returning.

LILI
And then?

BARON
Yes?

LILI
What will become of me then?

BARON
When you are ripe for my pleasure, I will enjoy the harvest.

LILI
I see...

BARON
I'm pleased you're not troubled by the prospect...

LILI
Do as you wish with my body, you'll never possess my soul!

BARON
Your soul...? Why should I bother with such a paltry trifle?

LILI
I don't expect you'd understand.
BARON
My dear Princess, the human soul is a highly elusive commodity. I suggest you spend some hours before the glass. Contemplate your intriguing reflection and consider whether such a creature as yourself could possibly possess something as fine and beautiful as a soul.

The Baron pulls a hand-mirror from beneath his robe and hands it to Lili. She refuses to look at herself, casting the glass aside in a rage.

LILI
You're a beast!

BARON
Indeed I am, my dear... that makes us a pair!

The Baron's lupine features appear even more demonic as he LAUGHS.

EXT. CAMP IN THE FOREST - NIGHT

A small fire blazes under an ice-coated tree. The faerie troop huddles about it in their robes for warmth. Deformed like a torture victim, Castle Couer de Noir is silhouetted against the frozen sky.

Gump and Jimmy Squarefoot sit on a fallen log next to Jack, who stares gloomily at the hideous fortress beyond the trees.

GUMP
(shivering)
Never felt so cold in all me born days...

JACK
The chill is worse this night.

JIMMY
It be the castle... we feel the castle... it be that close...

JACK
A castle's but stone and mortar --

JIMMY
Nay. Castle Couer de Noir is Devil's work... built with sorrow and grief...
GUMP
Don't like the feel of it, Jack.

JACK
It's your own fear troubles you...
We're here, aren't we? For all the
dark magic protecting it.

JIMMY
The walls be glued together with
blood and tears... the wind in the
basement cries with pain...

GUMP
Mayhap the Baron wanted us to find
him. What good is magic if you
don't make use of it.

JACK
Give in to despair and all is lost.

GUMP
It feels wrong, Jack... like a trap.

JACK
There's more than one way to spring
a trap.

GUMP
Aye, so long as you're not too
greedy for the bait.

JIMMY
Plenty treasure inside... Jimmy seen
it once.

JACK
You've been inside?

JIMMY
In a dream.

JACK
Don't speak to me of dreams! I feel
I've been dreaming since the unicorn
was killed.

GUMP
That be so, better you pinch
yourself now, Jack.

JACK
On the morrow I'll be awake enough
to see if dreams come true.

GUMP
Pray they don't turn out to be
nightmares.

Jack ponders this morbid thought as he and his companions stare silently into the dwindling fire.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FOREST CAMP - MORNING

The dying embers of the campfire carry over and blend into the blood-red blaze of the rising sun. Swathed in mist and fog, the day star gleams dully, like the glowing eye of some half-mad creature.

VARIOUS ANGLES

The faerie warriors prepare for battle. Moving like ghosts in the mist, they gather weapons and carefully hone their swords and spear-tips.

SOUNDS OF HAMMERING and CHOPPING, as the elves and goblins work at building ladders and siege equipment.

A pair of faeries fits together a catapult, the parts of which were painfully transported all this distance.

Jack and Gump stand on a small rise overseeing the activity. As the sun's warmth dispels the mist, the massive walls of Castle Couer de Noir materialize before them.

CASTLE - JACK AND GUMP'S POV

Shreds of mist are stripped away by the wind, like dead flesh peeling from a corpse, as the true nature of Castle Couer de Noir is revealed for the first time. The massive walls of the deformed fortress are constructed not of blocks of stone but with human bones. Like the catacombs of Paris, the skulls and bones, millions and millions of them, are arranged in geometric and decorative patterns, stacked one upon the other, an ossuary reaching to the sky.

JACK (O.S.)

The battlements of Hell...

GUMP AND JACK

The Green Man and the faerie stare in mute horror at the walls of the castle. The monstrosity of the evil dwarfs them.

GUMP

Tells you something 'bout him what lives there...

JACK
We'll need more siege machinery and longer scaling ladders.

GUMP
Why not mine the damned walls?

JACK
We do both. Our frontal attack a diversion whilst we drive a tunnel under...

Gump is cheered by Jack's decisiveness and the boldness of his plan.

GUMP
I'll set the dwarves to digging.

Gump hurries off down the hill, muttering and chuckling to himself.

GUMP
Together unto the breach... storming the bastions of darkness...

EXT. CASTLE TOWER - DAY

His black cloak whipping in the wind, masked and gloved, the unicorn horn mounted as a sword and strapped at his side, the Baron stands gazing down from his tower at the frenzied faerie activity below. At his side are two FISH-HEADED DEMONS, made more hideous by the deformed armor they wear.

BARON (laughing)
An army of mites... see them scurry...

THE FAERIES - BARON'S POV

From the height of the tower, the faeries indeed seem to be mites, frenzied in their tiny activity. A battery of catapults is aligned, scaling ladders laid out in even rows. Gump barks orders as the faerie soldiers form ranks.

BARON (O.S.)
Even a wolf has fleas...

BARON AND DEMONS

The Baron leans against the parapet, the armored demons at his side.

1ST DEMON
Why so few?
BARON

Faith.

2ND DEMON

What?

BARON

Delusion... a kind of magic which works against the magician.

1ST DEMON

Fool's magic.

BARON

Precisely. Faith has persuaded them a pygmie with a sling can kill an armed giant.

2ND DEMON

Dumb magic. Giant smash peewee.

Always.

2ND DEMON

We go out, smash 'em now?

BARON

No. Smashing is not required. I have a surprise for our tiny invaders... Raise that hatch!

The Baron points to an iron grill covering a skylight. The demons scuttle over and lift it off. Immediately, the DRONE of thousands of tiny wings is HEARD within.

1ST DEMON

I love surprises.

The DRONING grows LOUDER and LOUDER until a dark swarm of fanged frog/bats rushes from the keep like a dark whirlwind.

2ND DEMON

Birdies... pretty...

BARON

I doubt the faeries will admire their beauty... Come, this will be fun to watch.

The demons lurch back to the parapet, peering over with the Baron as the black cloud of SCREAMING frog/bats descends like an angry tempest on the faeries gathered below.
EXT. FOREST CAMP - DAY

A FANFARE of trumpets as the faerie soldiers form ranks on the plain before Castle Cour de Noir. Rows of catapults, siege towers and scaling ladders are arranged along the edge of the icy forest. Gump strides up and down in his armor before the assembling troops, barking orders like a sergeant-major.

GUMP

Step lively now...! Pick up the pace, lads... This is war, not baby-pinching or curdling milk...

Splendid in his armor, Jack rides the unicorn in review as the faerie soldiers stand in proud formation before him.

JACK

Well done, Gump. A braver-looking host I can't imagine...

JACK

Men, I'm not much on pretty speeches. In a short while, the heat of battle will test us all, and I know that each of you will prove true and --

Jack is interrupted by the DRONE of thousands of wings growing EVER-LOUDER. A shadow falls across the assembled soldiers. Jack looks up to see the cause.

THE SKY - JACK'S POV

Like a tornado of utter evil, the dark storm cloud of frog/bats swirls down from the castle tower, their high, falsetto SCREECHING rising above the DRONE of wings.

JACK (O.S.)

What calamity be this?

THE FAERIE TROOP

The cloud of fluttering frog/bats envelops the ranks of faerie soldiers. Fluttering, screaming, the tiny winged creatures swarm into the ranks biting and scratching. The faeries strike futilely at them with swords and spears. It is like fighting gnats with a teaspoon. There is no way to keep order. In a moment, it's every man for himself. The formation is broken.

VARIOUS ANGLES

Screwball has a frog/bat attached to his face, the tiny teeth ripping. He tears at the creature and falls to the ground, rolling over and over and SCREAMING in pain.
A frog/bat zooms down on Gump. SEEN C.U., the gaping frog-mouth with its row of needle-sharp teeth is genuinely terrifying.

Gump is already having problems with a half-dozen clinging frog/bats. They bite and tear through his clothing as he swats at them.

The entire formation of faerie soldiers is in disarray. They mill about in frantic confusion, helplessly fighting the swirling myriads of frog/bats surrounding them.

In his armor, Jack is relatively well-protected from the infuriating creatures. Sword in hand, he hacks flying frog/bats from the air as skillfully as a tennis player returning a serve. Several of the evil winged creatures land on the unicorn's rump, biting and drawing blood. Sapphire rears and whinnies in fear and pain. Jack swats them off with his free hand, doing his best to soothe his mount at the same time.

JACK
Easy girl... easy now, Sapphire... calm yourself, they're no worse than horse-flies in summer...
(calling out)
Men! Defend yourselves...! Form a shield wall... hurry! Form a shield wall!

THE FAERIE TROOP

Struggling in panic against the aerial onslaught of the frog/bats, the faerie soldiers take heart from Jack's command. They rally with encouraging cries of: "Come on lads, hop to it." "Get your shields up." And "All together now, form the wall."

The savage flying cloud continues its torment as the beleaguered faeries must together and form a large shield wall. The troops in the center lift their shields above their heads, forming an armored ceiling against the dive-bombing frog/bats. The outer perimeters are also ranked with over-lapping shields. The entire phalanx closes itself in behind a solid wall of iron shields.

Jack and Gump, among the last to join the formation, hurry to its protection as the fury of the frog/bats swirls about them. Jack jumps down from the unicorn and pulls his mount with him under the protection of the shield wall.

INT. UNDER THE SHIELD WALL - DAY

Jack urges Sapphire to kneel among the troops. He wipes
the blood from her flanks and calms her.

JACK
Down girl... kneel, my darling...
it's all right now... you're safe in
here.

A steady, gong-like CLANGING resounds under the shield wall. It is the SOUND of hundreds and hundreds of
frog/bats diving into the uplifted shields.

Gump, his clothing torn and face bloodied, crawls over to
Jack between the stalwart shield-holders.

GUMP
A fine mess this is... horrid,
nipping creatures... What do we now,
Jack?

JACK
Defend ourselves. We've bested far
worse already.

GUMP
Easily spoken...

JACK
Don't loose heart... Assemble the
archers. Have everyone not holding
a shield man a bow. Shoot the
damned things as they fly.

GUMP
There aren't enough arrows.

JACK
Never mind. Just do it! Retrieve
the arrows somehow.

Gump thinks it's helpless but nevertheless musters up a
determined expression and begins barking commands in his
most military manner.

GUMP
Here we go then, lads. You heard
Jack. Every man with a bow, front
and center... Aim up through the
shields. Send these damn gad-flies
to hell...

The archers scramble into position, kneeling between the
shield holders and aiming up through the intervening
spaces at the frog/bat tempest fluttering above them.

EXT. CASTLE TOWER - DAY
The Baron and the demons watch the frenzied commotion below. The Baron enjoys the spectacle immensely.

BARON
(laughing)
Fight's over before it's begun... soon the survivors will be in full retreat.

1ST DEMON
Then we smash 'em?

BARON
Anything left for smashing you may happily smash.

2ND DEMON
We watch... good fun...

BARON
Indeed, the best of fun... Enjoy yourselves.

The Baron wraps his cloak about him and starts for the stairs.

1ST DEMON
You go? Not watch fun?

BARON
I have something far more pleasant awaiting me.

2ND DEMON
More fun win battle?

BARON
This is another victory, my friends. What began with the lash shall be concluded with a caress.

2ND DEMON
(leering)
You go to lady now?

BARON
To finish last evening's delightful work.

1ST DEMON
We come watch... we come watch...

BARON
Nay. This is a private affair, no audience welcome... Better you watch the dismantling of our enemies... and, look you, see the moat is set
1ST DEMON
Fire moat... why do that?

BARON
Purely a precaution...

The Demons bow low.

DEMONS
As you command, sire...

The Baron stalks off, sweeping down the circular stairs into the keep.

INT. CASTLE PASSAGEWAY - DAY

The passage is dark and windowless, lighted by occasional flaming torches. The Baron strides the length of the hall. He strips off his protective black garments, casting them aside in his impatient lust. First, the heavy gloves, then the wolf-mask, last, with a flourish, the floor-length midnight cloak.

Stripped to a simple under-gown, the Baron pauses before a thick iron-bound door. He is panting now, his nostrils dilated, flecks of spittle frothing his whiskers. His eyes narrow as he flings open the unbolted door and steps forward into darkness.

INT. UNDER THE SHIELD WALL - DAY

Beneath the shield wall is a world of shadows, the shield-bearers dark and solid as tree trunks; the archers moving between them like silhouettes of Sagittarius. Beams of light stab down through the openings. The archers kneel, aim and fire upwards into the light. The DRUMMING of dive-bombing frog/bats rumbles like thunder.

The archers encourage one another with boasts and compliments. "Good shot." "Right between the eyes!" "Bullseye!" etc. etc.

Screwball kneels and fires next to Jack and Gump.

SCREWBALL
(muttering)
Steady... steady...

(he fires)
There! Straight on... straight...

(his eyes widen with delight)

Bloody marvelous shot!
Something CLANGS on the shields above. Screwball's arrow drops at his feet. Three frog/bats are impaled upon the shaft like shishkabob.

Screwball grabs up the arrow and waves his trophy in front of Jack and Gump.

SCREWBALL
Look at that shot! Three at once! I can't miss!

GUMP
Very thrifty. Even got your arrow back.

All at once, a bright BLAZE of orange LIGHT brightens the interior of the shield wall.

SCREWBALL
Sweet slippers of Oisin!

GUMP
They've fired the moat!

JACK
Water doesn't burn...

GUMP
And frog don't fly and bite like tomcats. It be magic, Jack... powerful ogre's magic.

JACK
There isn't much time!

GUMP
Been telling you that all along, lad.

JACK
What magic have we on our side?

GUMP
Faerie magic's no match for a sorcerer's power... We have Ogg's gifts, the key and the --

JACK
That's it! The unbreakable line! We'll tie it to an arrow and fire it up into the timbers above the portcullis... then, I'll climb up and chop down the drawbridge.

GUMP
Will you chance a miss?
JACK
There must be some way to get it up there.

Gump eyes Screwball, aiming through the shield-wall, and a sly smile spreads across his elfin features.

GUMP
Now, Jack, methinks I have the perfect solution...

EXT. PLAIN IN FRONT OF CASTLE - DAY

A wall of bright flames surrounds the macabre walls of the Baron's castle, the black smoke blending with the swirling cloud of frog/bats. Cowering beneath all this fury, the faeries' shield wall seems a meager fortress at best.

INT. BARON'S BEDROOM IN CASTLE - DAY

It is very dark. A small fire on the hearth provides the only light, casting bold, flickering shadows across the spartan chamber.

Something moves in the shadows. Something sleek and swift. There is another movement, sensual and predatory; a hunting animal.

The shadows dance; animal forms glide through the flickering light. They are not hunting, but mating. Their fur shines in the firelight. Tails SWISH in erotic sinuosity. The low, growling MOAN of their love language is the SOUND of pure, primal pleasure.

Glimpsed through the shadows, the sensuous sliding animal movement of the Baron and Lili becomes a passionate ballet. Their dark bodies writhe and merge, a collision of clouds -- the mating of shadows.

Lili is no victim here, but a willing and eager participant. She seems utterly feminine and feline, her back arched, a vibrant MOAN purring from her throat.

The Baron mounts her, proud as a stallion, and their rhythmic coupling casts lyric shadows across the bare stone walls.

EXT. SHIELD WALL - DAY

Drifting smoke swirls over the uplifted shields as Jack, Gump and Screwball break from the cover and protection of the phalanx. They sprint across the open plain. The smoke covers them. Their escape goes unnoticed by the furious frog/bats.
EXT. EDGE OF FOREST - DAY

At the crest of the hill where the plain meets the wooded forest, the faeries' siege machinery stands in martial ranks facing Castle Couer de Noir. A row of catapults is front and foremost. Jack and Gump run up the hill towards the engines of war. Screwball lags behind, complaining.

SCREWBALL
Why me, that's all I ask...? Why not Gunner or Floki...? Someone who doesn't bruise so easy...

Screwball reluctantly joins the others at the first of the catapults.

SCREWBALL
Someone like Floki... or Squarefoot... or --

GUMP
(full with authority)
You'll do it because I am you liege and I command you to do it!

Screwball gulps back a complaint and kneels before Gump.

SCREWBALL
Aye... my Lord...

GUMP
Rise, Screwball, and into the basket with you.

Screwball gets slowly to his feet, and just as slowly climbs into the launching basket of the catapult.

SCREWBALL
Maybe there's a better idea... What about birds... get a lift from some friendly bird...

JACK
Haven't heard a bird sing in days...

SCREWBALL
Or a kite...! We could make a kite... Let the wind do the work --

GUMP
Shut up!

Screwball is instantly silent. Gump hands him the dwarves' golden rope.
GUMP
Start acting like you're worthy of this mission... Here. Whatever you do, don't dare drop it.

SCREWBALL
Nay, Sire, I'll cling to it as to life itself...

GUMP
Good, lad... Here, Jack, give me a hand with the windlass... There's a good fellow...

Together, Jack and Gump labor at winding back the windlass on the catapult. As they turn, the launching arm is drawn slowly back, a cowering Screwball fearfully clutching the golden line in the woven-leather basket.

JACK
One more turn...

GUMP
That's it!

The launching arm is bent back into a taut arch. Screwball clenches his eyes shut. Jack stands by the release lever.

JACK
Have the engineers corrected for alignment and trajectory?

GUMP
Aye. Before the wee pesties attacked.

JACK
Then it's Godspeed, Screwball.

GUMP
(loudly)
Fire away!

SCREWBALL
Oberon's hump protect me-eeeee!

Jack pulls the lever releasing the windlass and the arm whips forward, catapulting Screwball high into the air over the castle. His cry is lost on the wind as his form diminishes into a tiny dot arcing over the walls above the flaming moat.

EXT. CASTLE COURTYARD - DAY

A lean-to roofed with thatch is build along the inside
wall, sheltering a stable. The courtyard is deserted as Screwball comes hurtling like a meteor. He lands in the thatch and sinks from sight.

After a moment, Screwball's pixie face appears out of the straw.

**SCREWBALL**

Someone what doesn't bruise, says I... glorious mission, says they...

A CLATTER of armored FOOTFALLS alerts Screwball to the approach of the Baron's demonic troops. A squad of hideous Heironymous Bosch imps, fearful combinations of reptiles and swine, long-beaked birds with insect wings, feathered rodents, deformed jackals, trots NOISILY across the cobbles below.

Screwball ducks into the thatch.

**SCREWBALL**

Dear... oh, dear... straight from Hell by the looks of 'em...

The grotesque armor the imps wear adds to their sinister appearance. They JABBER LOUDLY at one-another in a fearful GOBBLEDYGOOK. The wicked points of their partisans glitter, passing at eye-level as Screwball burrows deeper into the thatch.

After a moment, the echoes of the imps passage fades. Screwball pops up out of the straw and has a look around, the coiled golden line clutched tightly in his grasp.

**SCREWBALL**

Bet they eat elves for breakfast...

Screwball clambers to the top of the lean-to roof and climbs up the protruding bones and skulls to the top of the wall.

**EXT. TOP OF WALL - DAY**

Screwball stares down the dizzying abyss into the flaming moat. He waves at his beleaguered companions, but is hidden from view by drifting smoke. This is a good thing, for another squad of imp-goons troops across the courtyard below.

**SCREWBALL**

Get moving, Screwball, 'fore they serves you up on a piece of toast!

Screwball scampers along the ridge of the wall, hopping over the crenelations like a squirrel.
EXT. LEDGE - DAY

The wall abuts into the curving battlements of the central keep, towering above. A narrow ledge leads away from the top of the wall, arcing around the keep to the portcullis.

Screwball begins the traverse like a mountaineer, edging one sliding foot at a time along the ledge, trying not to look down into the flame and smoke, nor across at his comrades huddling under the shield wall.

EXT. EDGE OF FOREST - DAY

Jack and Gump wait by the catapult, straining to see through the smoke shrouding the facade of the ghastly castle.

GUMP
(pointing)
There he is... out on the keep!

THE CASTLE - GUMP'S POV

At the distance, Screwball seems quite helpless, inching along the outer wall of the keep like a mouse on the back of a sleeping lion.

JACK (O.S.)
I see him.

JACK
as he stares, hawklike, at Screwball.

JACK
He'll be atop the portcullis ere long.

GUMP
Best get down close to the moat, lad.

JACK
Aye. We're good as inside.

GUMP
It's what we'll find there worries me.

Using the drifting smoke for cover, Jack runs down the open hillside towards the flaming moat.

EXT. LEDGE - DAY
Screwball continues his cautious progress across the curving facade of the keep.

SCREWBALL
I should be out sippin' fresh cow's milk straight from the udder... that's what I should be doing...

Screwball's progress takes him under a sealed iron shutter. The SOUND of GROWLS and MOANING brings him up short.

SCREWBALL
What's this now?

Hooking his fingers into the eye-sockets of a convenient skull, Screwball gets a good grip and clambers up the wall to the window sill. Hanging like a bat, he peers through the tiny slit between the bottom of the shutter and the sill.

INT. BARON'S BEDCHAMBER - DAY (SCREWBALL'S POV)

The SOUNDS of MOANING are LOW and VIBRANT. The room is masked in shadows. Items of torn, discarded clothing lie in contorted positions about the flagstone floor. The coals on the hearth glow like the eyes of a demonic beast. Not far away, the unicorn horn leans against the wall, bathed in the ember's glow. Lili and the Baron lie together amidst a tangle of quilts and featherbeds. They MOAN softly, bodies wrapped in sinuous ease. Their dark fur gleams. Very tenderly, they lick one-another, like cats.

EXT. LEDGE - DAY

Screwball carefully lowers himself back to the ledge, grinning like a pixie.

SCREWBALL
Found the alicorn, I did, I did... Found the Baron, too... hee, hee...

Screwball tip-toes away on the ledge, more sure of himself now.

SCREWBALL
Won't be the first caught on love's horns.

EXT. ROOF OVER PORTCULIS - DAY

A copper-sheathed arch rising over the entranceway. The
drawbridge is drawn-up tight underneath and serves as a massive gate.

Screwball hops off the ledge onto the roof. A gargoyle rivaling the Baron's impish cohorts juts out of the wall just beneath. Screwball ties one end of the golden line around it.

EXT. EDGE OF MOAT - DAY

Jack hurries along the moat-edge, flames licking past him. He looks up and spots Screwball tying the line to the gargoyle above.

   JACK
   Screwball, down here!

Screwball waves at Jack.

   SCREWBALL
   (calling down)
   Hello, Jack.

   JACK
   Done like a champion. Can you reach me with the line?

EXT. ROOF OVER PORTCULIS - DAY

Screwball ties his sheath-knife to the other end of the line.

   SCREWBALL
   Easy as eating pancakes.

Screwball tosses the weighted line out over the moat. It clears the flames and lands at Jack's feet.

EXT. CASTLE WALL - DAY

Jack jumps with the line and pendulums across the moat through the leaping flames. He lands with his feet against the bones of the wall and proceeds to haul himself up, hand over hand.

EXT. DRAWBRIDGE WINCH - DAY

Jack reaches the top of the drawbridge. He walks the rope like a man on a leash and gets a leg over the top. On a small platform under the open roof stands a large wooden winch. The thick cable securing the drawbridge is wound around it.
Jack climbs onto the platform and draws his sword. In three swift strokes he hacks through the cable. The winch spins wildly as the chain holding the drawbridge rattle out through embrasures.

Amid the clatter, the drawbridge slowly descends.

EXT. CASTLE - DAY

The drawbridge gathers speed and lands with a LOUD CRASH across the flaming moat.

EXT. SHIELD WALL - DAY

Batting away bombarding frog/bats, Gump rushes up to the shield wall, shouting for joy.

GUMP
(shouting)
Lads... Look...! The drawbridge is down... The walls be breached...

The faeries under their shields give out with a single, exultant victory CHEER, breaking ranks and running pell-mell down the hill towards the lowered drawbridge. The frog/bats fly after them like a swarm of pursuing bees.

High above the portculis, Jack waves his sword in the air, cheering them on.

EXT. DRAWBRIDGE - DAY

SHOUTING and YELLING like invading Vikings, the faerie soldiers swarm across the drawbridge, swords and spears on high. They are met by an alarmed contingent of the Baron's household guard. A nightmare battle is joined, faeries against fiends. The CLASH of steel on steel RINGS through the stone courtyard. Sapphire gallops into the thick of the fray, impaling a mole-faced imp on her long, spiraling horn.

The frog/bats, swarming in under the open portculis, make no distinction between friend and for, biting and harassing the Baron's troops as indiscriminately as the faerie soldiers. This adds an additional element of confusion to the conflict. The faeries gain ground, hacking and stabbing into the inner reaches of the castle.

EXT. ROOF OVER PORTCULIS - DAY

The ROAR and HOWL of battle drowns Jack's enthusiastic CHEERS as he urges his men on from atop the roof over the portculis.
We SEE Screwball eagerly telling what he observed in the keep, but the SOUNDS of the conflict below COVER his actual words. It is obvious from Screwball's enthusiastic gestures that he describes the location of the unicorn horn. Screwball points along the ledge to the shuttered window in the keep.

A tremendous CRY OF VICTORY rises from below as the faeries break through the ranks of imps and surge forward into the castle.

INT. BARON'S BEDROOM - DAY

The room is dark. Lili lies in the Baron's arms surrounded by tangled bedclothing. He strokes her soft fur gently. A muffled CRY is HEARD outside and Lili, alarmed, sits up abruptly.

LILI
What was that? Did you hear that?

BARON
It's nothing. My men take great delight in routing the enemy. Don't trouble yourself, beauty.

LILI
It sounded like it came from the courtyard.

BARON
From the parapets most likely. The men are amused by a battlefield entertainment of my own contriving.

LILI
Might we watch, too?

BARON
Later, beloved... Now I wish only to be with you...

Lili snuggles against the Baron's chest, running her fingers through the silky hair covering him.

LILI
And I with you... I never dreamed life held such pleasures...

BARON
Pleasure is for those who seize it! Do you think those insipid, pale-skinned mortals will ever know such rapture?
LILI
It's odd... when I first found myself... changing... I was sick with loathing and disgust. I thought I was so ugly I wanted to die...

BARON
And, now?

LILI
Now I want to live forever. I've never felt so strong or happy.

BARON
Or looked so beautiful...

LILI
Yes. I feel that, too. Weakness is what is ugly.

BARON
Precisely, my darling. Your animal strength, your primitive power has surfaced... you are what you desire.

LILI
To be strong and free... that is all I desire.

BARON
So you shall be... Like our brothers, the hawk and the wolf, our spirits know no master... we are created in the pure image of the savage God that set our turbulent universe in motion.

Lili stretches languidly, rubbing against the Baron.

LILI
And what savagery would please you most, my Lord?

The Baron's talons rake Lili's fur as he hauls her into a rough embrace.

BARON
Mating with you, beloved... to share that exquisite pain once more.

The Baron bites her shoulder. Lili YIPS with animal delight.

The iron shutters are thrown open with a loud CRASH. A swath of sunlight stabs into the darkened chamber. Sword in hand, Jack stands on the window sill, silhouetted
against the brightness outside.

The Baron SHRIEKS and falls off the bed, GROANING with pain on the floor.

BARON
The light...! The light...!

JACK
Yield, Couer de Noir, or I grant no quarter!

The Baron scrambles on all fours across the floor, seeking to avoid the light. He snatches up the unicorn horn leaning against the wall and ducks into the shadows.

BARON
Protect me, beloved...! I need your help!

LILI
as she reacts to the Baron's plight. Her eyes narrow; her ears tuck back; a low GROWL rumbles from her throat as she bears her fangs.

BARON (O.S.)
Defend me...! My darling, you must defend me!

With the ROAR of a savage jungle cat, Lili leaps down off the bed as Jack jumps into the room.

JACK
Afraid to fight, Baron?

Claws hooked and gleaming, Lili stalks GROWLING between Jack and the cowering Baron. Jack doesn't recognize her, so monstrous in her savage appearance. He backs away a step, holding his sword in front of him.

JACK
Any closer and I'll cut you down.

Lili GROWLS. With a sudden leap, she is upon Jack, raking his face with her claws as she sinks her fangs into his neck where the bare flesh shows above his breastplate. Jack SCREAMS in surprise and pain, falling back under Lili's attack.

Jack and Lili fall to the floor, rolling over and over in a fierce struggle.

In the shadows, the Baron takes advantage of this distraction. He creeps to the side of the fireplace and pulls a hidden switch. A secret panel swings away from the wall. Quickly, the Baron scurries inside the dark
passageway beyond. The panel slides closed behind him. Jack pulls free from the wild creature assaulting him. He struggles to his feet, grabbing up his sword where he dropped it in the attack.

Lili crouches, SNARLING as Jack backs away. With a wild CRY, she springs at him again. Jack thrusts defensively with his sword. Lili is impaled, the gleaming bladeRun completely through her body. MOANING, she sags into Jack's arms, his golden armor drenched in her blood.

JACK AND LILI

as she trembles in Jack's unwilling embrace, Lili's features alter and transform. The fangs and claws disappear. Her fur is gone. She is just a naked girl again, dying in her lover's arms.

      JACK
      (shocked)
      Lili! No!

      LILI
      Jack... Forgive me...

As gently as possible, Jack pulls the sword from Lili's body. He drops the weapon to the floor and lifts the gravely injured Princess in his arms.

      JACK
      What have I done?

      LILI
      Only what's right...

Jack carries Lili over to the bed and lays her gently down.

      JACK
      I thought you were dead... I --

      LILI
      I was bewitched... it's better this way...

      JACK
      They told me you were dead.

Lili is weakening.

      LILI
      I wish I were... will be soon...
      Don't be troubled, Jack, tis a great gift you've given me...

Jack buries his face in the bed-clothes, sobbing.
JACK
No! I won't let it happen...

LILI
You've freed me, Jack...

JACK
It's the Baron's damnable work! Too cowardly to stand and fight... he used you to save himself.

LILI
No... it's not you he's afraid of, it's... light...

What?

LILI
Sunlight... It destroys him.

JACK
Sunlight?

LILI
That's why he goes masked during the day...

JACK
So, he's hiding in the dark...

LILI
In the dark... where I join him...

JACK
No! Don't let go... you mustn't! I love you!

LILI
And I... love you...

The door to the bedroom crashes open and Gump, along with Screwball and several other armed faeries, enter excitedly.

GUMP
Jack! The courtyard's been taken... The Baron's forces are besieged in the south tower. No sign of... Jack? Do you hear what I'm saying? We've won, lad.

JACK
It doesn't matter.
Nonsense! Course it matters.

JACK
... the Princess Lili... I've killed her.

Gump approaches the bed and examines the wounded Princess.

GUMP
She's sore hurt, Jack, tis true, but not dead yet.

JACK
The wound is mortal.

GUMP
Nay. You've not reckoned with the powers of faerie medicine.

JACK
Can you save her?

GUMP
Easily... The question is, can we save ourselves? Be a shame to win the battle only to lose the war.

JACK
I don't... understand.

GUMP
The alicorn, lad. Come to your senses! Unless we find Baron Couer de Noir and bring back the horn the world is doomed.

Jack is himself again, eager for action. He grabs up his fallen sword and starts for the sealed secret passage.

JACK
The Baron hides in the dark in a passage under the Castle... Quick, give me the dwarf's key... the one which opens any lock...

GUMP
In the dark, lad? Why should he do that?

JACK
Because sunlight will kill him. Quickly now, give me the key.

GUMP
Sunlight, you say?

JACK
Aye. Hurry now, Gump, the key!

GUMP
Mean you to seek him out below?

JACK
I'm not afraid of the dark.

GUMP
I admire your valor, Jack. By all means, seek him out... But first, we needs visit the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

On stout shelves along the masonry walls are rows and rows of brightly polished plates and pots. All sizes and shapes; gold, silver and copper kitchen utensils shine and sparkle.

JACK (O.S.)
The kitchen?

JACK AND GUMP
They stand by the huge hearth, staring up at the cookware shining all around them.

GUMP
The kitchen be the most important room in a palace, for if the victuals ain't right, little else is likely to be so.

JACK
Did you bring me here to sup?

GUMP
Nay, lad, we're here to collect a weapon you'll need fighting the Baron.

JACK
What weapon?

GUMP
Sunlight.

JACK
Plan on carrying some away in a kettle?

GUMP
Easier than that, Jack.
(to Screwball)
Screwball! Fetch me down a couple
Screwball scurries up to a nearby shelf and brings down two large golden plates.

SCREWBALL
How're these?

GUMP
They'll do nicely.

Gump takes a plate and polishes it on his sleeve. He points to the far side of the room.

GUMP
Stand over there and hold your plate... like this.

Gump demonstrates how he wants the plate held. Screwball grips it with both hands, holding it up before Jack like a mirror.

JACK
Will you explain what's going on?

GUMP
Patience, lad.

Gump moves to where a beam of sunlight angles through the high kitchen window. He holds his plate in the light, trying different angles, until at last he manages to reflect the sunlight, beaming it straight at the plate Screwball holds. Instantly, it is reflected off Screwball's plate and strikes Jack straight in the eye, blinding him.

JACK
Hey! Stop it! I can't see.

GUMP
Ah, but you will. And so will the Baron, when we bring a little light to his dark hideaway.

Gump aims his platter at Jack. A BLAZE of reflected sunlight FILLS THE SCREEN with dazzling whiteness.

INT. SECRET PASSAGE - DAY

A DAZZLE OF SUNLIGHT FILLING THE SCREEN.

GUMP (O.S.)
Very nice, Goldenrod.

A very young elf struggles to hold a giant golden salver, sending a beam of sunlight scintillating down the
meandering tunnel.

Gump and Jack hold torches at the next bend. Gump positions a lovely niade with a copper pot lid, stealing a kiss on her fair shoulder in the process.

    GUMP
    Stand here, my dear... that's right...

Gump stands behind the niade, guiding her arms so that the pot lid catches the sun-beam properly.

    GUMP
    Turn it just a wee bit...

The beam bounces on down the tunnel.

PASSAGEWAY

zig-zags up through the interior of the castle, steep stone stairs leading from level to level. Faeries stand at every bend, passing the sunlight one to another like an astral bucket brigade. Standing in a long soup-kitchen line in the darkness alongside, is a file of elves, faeries and gnomes, each holding a platter, bowl or pot lid.

JACK AND GUMP

Drawn sword in hand, torch up-lifted, Jack stands at the head of the procession, impatiently stepping forward into darkness.

    JACK
    Can't we move any faster?

    GUMP
    Tis a delicate operation, lad. Requires a bit of engineering... Next!

A hunched, long-bearded GNOME hurries forward, clutching a copper frying pan polished to a mirror-finish.

    GNOME
    Brown Tom o' Kirkdale reporting for duty, sir.

    GUMP
    Stand easy, Brown Tom... Right here is good...

JACK - FURTHER DOWN THE TUNNEL

Jack moves quite a good way down the tunnel, a corona of torchlight surrounding him in the darkness.
JACK  
(calling back)  
Seems to be some sort of vaulted 
chamber up ahead...  

GUMP  
(yelling back)  
Don't get too far!  

JACK  
Hurry up!  

INT. VAULTED CHAMBER - DAY  

Torch in hand, Jack moves cautiously out of the passageway 
into a vast underground room spacious as the nave of a 
cathedral. Stone columns thick as tree-trunks rise into 
the shadows above. Jack never relaxes his guard. He 
turns to check behind him every third step.  

From a distance, Jack shines like a multi-faceted jewel. 
His every surface winks with reflected light: 
breastplate, shield, helmet, even the long, tapered sword 
held before him.  

Gump's voice ECHOES from FAR AWAY:  

GUMP (O.S.)  
Ja-ack...  

Jack is mid-way into the chamber. He moves like a canny 
warrior, pivoting, checking his rear, light on his toes.  

ANGLE  

The sibilant HISS of a sword-blade rending the air. The 
CLANG of contact as the torch is knocked from Jack's grasp 
and sent tumbling to the floor.  

Jack whirls to face the challenge. It is the Baron. 
Enormous in the flickering light of the fallen torch, like 
some horned bear on his hind legs, the Baron advances, the 
unicorn horn gripped in his sword hand.  

Jack hauls his shield off his back, stepping forward to 
meet the challenge. The Baron swings with both hands 
gripping the horn hilt. Jack parries with the "Avatar." 
When steel hits the alicorn it is as if lightning strikes. 
Sparks fly. A second exchange has Jack in retreat.  

The Baron lunges with the alicorn. Jack receives the 
thrust on his shield. The curling point of the horn 
punctures the dwarf's handiwork like an arrow through a 
target. For a moment, the two combatants are locked 
together, face-to-face. Secure in his armor, Jack swings
his sword at the unclad Baron. He leaps back with the
agility of a wild beast, wrenching the shield from Jack's
grip and flinging it clattering aside into darkness.

Jack backs away as the Baron renews the attack. Again,
the lightning CLASH of swordplay. Jack strives valiantly
to withstand the onslaught but the Baron is too powerful.
The swordplay comes faster. Jack stumbles to one knee.
The Baron disarms him with a mighty blow. The "Avatar"
RINGS musically as it tumbles out of reach into the
shadows.

The Baron's leering face is made more demonic by the
unsteady torchlight.

BARON
So, boy... Pray while there's still
breath in you...

The Baron draws back his arm for the death stroke. The
torch flickers out.

The Baron's CRY RESOUNDS in the BLACKNESS.

BARON (O.S.)
Die...!

ANGLE

A blinding FLASH of LIGHT. The Baron SCREAMS, a wail of
utter pain as the beam of sunlight hits him.

SCREWBALL

stands by a pillar holding a silver plate. He directs the
sunlight at the Baron, following him as he twists and
writhes in agony.

JACK

scrambles across the floor, seizing his fallen sword. He
leaps to his feet and rushes at the cringing Baron, caught
in the light like a hapless moth.

It is Jack's turn to wield a death-blow. He draws back to
strike and the LIGHT WOBBLIES. The BEAM STRIKES Jack in
the eyes. He is momentarily blinded. He swings and
misses, his sword carving the empty air.

JACK

Damn!

GUMP

rushes up to Screwball, cuffing him sharply on the back of
the head.
Dolt!

Sorry.

The CLATTER of HOOF-FALLS is HEARD galloping in the distance.

Jack rushes up, sword in hand.

JACK
He's getting away! He was at my mercy!

GUMP
Never show mercy!

JACK
I could have struck off his head just now!

SCREWBALL
Sorry, Jack.

JACK
It's done... we'll never catch him.

GUMP
Ever wondered why Jenny Greenteeth said you needed the fastest steed on earth?

JACK
Sapphire!

Gump turns brusquely to Screwball, grabbing his tunic.

GUMP
Fetch the unicorn... pass it along...

Screwball runs up the vast chamber to an elf standing at the entrance to the passageway.

SCREWBALL
(panting)
... Fetch the unicorn... pass it along...

The elf turns abruptly and runs up the tunnel.

INT. SECRET PASSAGEWAY - DAY

From elf to dwarf to goblin the word is passed. The wee folk scurry like moles in the dark tunnel, their PIPING
VOICES taking up the cry:

VARIOUS FAERIES
... fetch the unicorn... pass it
along... fetch the unicorn... pass
it along... fetch the unicorn...
pass it along...

The tiny VOICES MERGE and BLEND as the message is
transmitted more and more rapidly. The words are lost in
the steady rhythm. It is like the CHIRPING of crickets on
a summer evening.

INT. VAULTED CHAMBER - DAY

The CHIRPING VOICES CARRY OVER and become the CLIP-CLOP of
hooves. A graceful elf leads Sapphire, the mare unicorn,
out of the darkness to where Gump, Screwball and several
other faeries stand waiting.

GUMP
Swift as thistledown on the wind,
that's the faerie way...

Jack has recovered his shield, now slung across his back.
He vaults effortlessly aboard the unicorn, clutching the
long mane.

JACK
Easy, Sapphire...

Gump hands him up a blazing torch.

GUMP
Ride like wild fire, Jack.

JACK
He'll not escape me.

GUMP
You're on your own... like a true
champion.

Jack stabs his heels into the unicorn's flank and is lost
from sight as a single leap carries him into darkness.
Gump and the others stand watching as the SOUND of hoof-
clatter FADES.

GUMP
... champion...

INT. CAVE - DAY

Jack gallops out of the vaulted chamber through a tall
portal leading into a winding cave. Torch held high, Jack
races between the tapered spines of stalagmites. The shadows of the stalactites, hanging like daggers, shift on the stone walls as the unicorn thunders past.

Up ahead, a distant gleam of natural light beckons.

EXT. CAVE MOUTH - DAY

Jack and Sapphire burst from the mouth of the cave in a spray of dust. Jack wheels the mare around to a halt as he studies the barren ground. A distinct set of hoof-prints leads off into the distance. Jack urges Sapphire into a gallop along this track.

EXT. DEMONIC LANDSCAPE - DAY

VARIOUS ANGLES

It is a landscape of Death, like some Breughel vision of Hell. Ravaged by war and pestilence, all of the trees are stripped bare. The houses are in ruins, broken walls and tumbled towers stand like rotten stumps. Bones protrude from the muck. Corpse lie bloated and moldering.

Wagon wheels are set atop naked trees, skeletons tied spread-eagled across them. Like hooded inquisitors, vultures perch hunched along the rims.

Villages smolder in ruins in the distance. Smoke drifts like fog between the blasted trees. Resolutely, Jack keeps up the chase. The unicorn flies like a specter across the moribund landscape. Jack is riding towards the very gates of Hell itself.

EXT. EDGE OF THE WORLD - DAY

The landscape is barren now even of destruction. Mud volcanoes belch steam and fire. Grotesque buttes hunch under an unforgiving sky.

A wall of sulfurous flames leap like a vast curtain behind the sudden precipice cleaving abruptly from the edge of the earth.

The Baron stands alone like a Titan at the edge of this cliff, his mount dead at his feet. His silhouette is terrible against the flames. He holds the alicorn like Zeus gripping a thunderbolt.

Jack trots forward on Sapphire to meet him. At twenty paces distance, he dismounts and draws his sword.

The Baron smiles.
BARON
Welcome, Jack... I knew you'd be along.

Holding his shield before him, Jack closes on the Baron.

BARON
You are Jack, are you not...? The Princess has told me so much about you...

Jack grimaces at the mention of Lili.

JACK
You cursed her!

BARON
I gave her a taste of such joy as her wildest dreams never provided... even now my seed takes hold in the fiery furnace of her womb.

Jack rushes at him in anger.

JACK
You lie!

Jack swings wildly. The Baron parries with the alicorn. Sparks FLASH on contact. Jack is driven back.

BARON
Foolish boy! I take what I want and so I took your Princess!

JACK
Damn you!

Jack leaps to the attack but the Baron holds him back, SPARKS FLYING.

BARON
Yes... exactly... damnation! Don't you know me, Jack? Don't you know from whence I come?

The Baron's form alters hideously. Huge leathery wings sprout behind him. His eye glow like coals. Talons form on his hairy hands. Lizard scales armor his chest. He truly appears to be a demon from Hell.

BARON
I bring your head as a gift to my Lord Lucifer.

Alicorn gripped in both hands, the Baron rushes forward. He swings with all his might. Jack parries with the "Avatar." There is an EXPLOSION of LIGHT. Jack's sword
is broken in two. The force of the blow knocks him to his knees. He is helpless.

The Baron raises the alicorn to strike.

BARON
For you, oh my master, Satan!

ANGLE

As the Baron stands, sword/horn uplifted like a sacrificial priest, the storm-darkened heavens suddenly part. The clouds open and a ray of sunlight strikes the Baron like a bolt from God.

The Baron contorts with pain in the bright light. The unicorn horn glows white-hot. The fur on his hand smokes and he drops the alicorn, SCREAMING with pain.

Without warning, Sapphire gallops up behind the Baron and spears him through the middle. The unicorn lifts his writhing form high in the air, impaled like some kicking insect. With a toss of her horn, she hurls him to the ground.

The Baron hunches on his knees, gripping his mid-section in a futile attempt to keep the foul black bile from spilling out of him like a discharge of sewer water. He rears back his fanged head and SHOUTS in pain:

BARON
(crying out)
Lord Satan... protect me!

JACK

jumps to his feet. In three swift strides he has snatched-up the alicorn. It is no longer incandescent with heat.

Without pausing, Jack delivers a round-house swing, lopping the Baron's head from his shoulders. A fountain of black filth spews from his truncated neck as the body topples.

The severed head bounces off the edge of the cliff, tumbling out of sight past circling buzzards into the haze of smoke.

Jack looks over and grins at Sapphire, who rears and whinnies in triumph.

The Baron's body sags like a deliquescent pumpkin, leaking rottenness. Smoke swirls around the cliff edge. Jack wipes the alicorn clean of the Baron's black blood.

JACK
He's dead, Lili... he can't hurt you any more...

The Baron's body continues to melt away, seeping into the dry dust like bubbling tar.

Sapphire sidles over and rubs against Jack. The Green Man wraps his arm around the unicorn's neck. The two companions stand at the edge of earth, staring out into the swirling flames.

EXT. HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING CASTLE COUER DE NOIR - DAY

The world is lush and green once again. The trees billow like deciduous cumuli. Bold spring flowers polka-dot the emerald meadow. In the distance, the Castle Couer de Noir is in flames, thick, black smoke staining the azure sky.

The faerie army marches across the meadow, singing jubilantly. They carry their wounded away on litters. Foremost of these are the biers bearing Oona and Lili. The Princess' litter is festooned with blossom; heaps of wild-flowers blanket the unconscious girl.

FAERIES (ALL TOGETHER)
(singing)
They sky is high, the world is wide,
Beneath the flowers faeries hide...

Mounted on Sapphire and her foal, Jack and Gump pause on the crest of the hill to look back on the faerie procession and the burning castle. Jack carries the alicorn like a marshall's baton. The SOUND of the faeries' SINGING drifts musically up across the meadow. Jimmy Squarefoot staggers along under an armload of booty.

JACK
A good day for singing...

GUMP
I've not heard a note out of you.

JACK
Not in the mood, I'm afraid.

GUMP
Listen to him. Not in the mood...

GUMP
On a day like none other the blessed earth has ever seen... A day so fair as forty springtimes --

JACK
I'm not denying it's a joyous day --
GUMP
Where's your joy if you cannot sing?

JACK
Were the Princess Lili to join me I would sing till my lungs burst!

GUMP
She lives... isn't that worth singing about?

JACK
She lives like all the world before the Baron's curse lifted. Now the world's reborn, yet still she sleeps...

Across the way, the castle Couer de Noir collapses in upon itself in a spasm of sparks and fire. Only the outer walls and the keep remain. Cracks appear as the final ramparts begin to crumble.

GUMP
You're too impatient... See how long the castle burns. Think you evil be purged in an instant...? And remember: the quest is not concluded.

Jack runs his hands along the spiraling length of the alicorn.

JACK
Aye... We'll fetch it back, praise God.

EXT. MARSHSIDE MEADOW - DAY (C.U. UNICORN SKULL)

The skull of the slain unicorn has been reunited with his horn. A band of silver filigree conceals the repair-work. Bedecked with flowers, the skull rests on a velvet pillow. It is being carried in a procession.

FUNERAL PROCESSION

There is nothing somber or sorrowful about the ceremony. Screwball, dressed in flowers, carries the pillow bearing the unicorn's skull. Behind him, beautiful winged faerie maidens in gossamer gowns carry long, serpentine festoons of flowers. Other elves and goblins toss handfuls of petals and pollen into the air. They all sing happily as Sapphire and her colt prance along with them.

FAERIES (ALL TOGETHER)
(singing)
The trees are green, spirits unseen,
The world we know is but a dream.  
The flowers sing; all birds take wing,  
Life and Death are an endless ring.

The procession approaches an underground faerie tomb,  
beautifully constructed of fieldstone. The opening is  
like a well, leading down to the beehive chamber beneath  
the earth. At the bottom, on a blanket of blossoms, the  
unicorn's bleached alabaster bones are precisely arranged.

Two winged faeries take the pillow from Screwball and fly  
with it down into the tomb, placing it at the head of the  
skeleton. A shaft of sunlight makes the skull and horn  
gleam like polished ivory. All the elves and faeries,  
laughing and singing, cast the flowers they carry down  
into the tomb.

JACK AND GUMP

With the happy SOUND of the funeral as a counterpoint,  
neither Jack nor Gump appear particularly overjoyed. They  
stand beside Princess Lili's litter. Her still, pale form  
and the surrounding profusion of flowers bear too close a  
resemblance to the ceremony in the BACKGROUND. Jack and  
Gump mourn the living.

JACK

The quest's at an end and where's  
the good of it? A faerie festival  
over a pile of bones?

GUMP

Tis not the wound, that's sure. Not  
a scar remains... we're talking  
about a spell; harder to repair than  
sword-work.

JACK

I'll do anything... face any  
challenge!

GUMP

Might not need a gesture quite so  
grand. What were you doing the very  
moment the Baron's curse fell on the  
world?

JACK

I was with the Princess.

GUMP

Where?

JACK

By the pond. She was teasing me.
Go on... go on...

JACK
She tossed her ring in the pond and bid me fetch it. Said she'd marry me if I did.

GUMP
And did you?

JACK
Nay. It was lost. When I came up for air the pond was frozen over.

GUMP
That's it then... the ring!

EXT. POND - DAY

As beautiful and serene as when first we SAW it. The Princess is laid out under a tree, cushioned by thousands of flowers. All the faeries stand about the edge of the water watching Jack remove his armor.

Jack unbuckles the golden breastplate of Achilles and stacks it next to his gleaming shield and helmet. Gump helps him unfasten the greaves.

GUMP
You must find the ring... It completes the cycle; answers the riddle...

JACK
I'll try.

GUMP
You're good at riddles... Find the ring and the spell is broken.

Jack stripes down completely. He steps to the edge of the pond, pausing for a moment to look fondly at his faerie friends gathered around him.

JACK
Your fond wishes give me strength, dear friends.

SCREWBALL
(hooting)
No speeches! What's a little swim after sticking worms and ogres?

The faeries applaud and CHEER. Blushing, Jack dives into the water.
EXT. UNDERWATER - DAY

The cheering is silenced by the rush of water as Jack streaks down, streams of air-bubbles in his wake.

Jack strokes deeper and deeper, past undulating weeds and curious fish.

At the bottom, he moves carefully, trying not to stir up the muck. He gently parts the drifting tendrils, searching among the weeds.

A winking gleam catches his eye. He reaches out an eager hand to seize whatever it is.

A cloud of silt issues from his grasp as he opens his fingers. Centered on his palm, golden and perfect, is the ring.

Jack turns and strokes for the surface, a shining ceiling of light far above him.

EXT. POND - DAY

Jack breaks the still surface with a happy SHOUT. He holds the ring triumphantly above his head.

JACK
(exultant)
I did it! I found it!

LAUGHING joyously, Jack swims for the shore. The banks are deserted. Not a single faerie remains. But Jack seems not to notice. He takes hold of a tree-root and hauls himself back on land. The golden armor of Achilles is gone. In its place are Jack's old fur and leaf vestments.

JACK
And will my lady honor her word in exchange for this bauble?

Jack stops short when he sees the Princess asleep under the tree. There is no trace of the heaps of flowers upon which she rested. Nor of the jeweled gown she wore on the litter. She looks just as before. Only asleep.

JACK
Well, I see what an exciting spectacle I've provided...

Tossing the ring abstractly up and down, Jack pulls on his fur trousers and approaches the sleeping Princess. He kneels before her, lifting her hand to his lips.
JACK
Beggars on horseback come courting
the crown...

Jack slips the ring on Lili's finger. Her eye-lashes
flutter. She is awake, looking him straight in the face.

LILI
Oh! Green Jack! What a dream I've
had... proper nightmare.

JACK
Whilst you were sleeping, I fetched
your ring.

Lili looks at her ring and smiles.

LILI
Sweet Jack. I'm so sorry you found
me asleep. Don't know what came
over me.

JACK
I can't have been under much more
than a minute.

LILI
Seemed like weeks and weeks. Such a
terrible dream... I could never tell
you...

JACK
Is what you said about the ring but
another dream?

LILI
Oh no, dearest Jack... I meant every
word.

JACK
You're teasing still.

Lili wraps her arms around his neck, kissing him.

LILI
Nay, dearest Jack... you are to be
my husband. I want none other.

JACK
But... I am a Green Man. I have no
title, nor lands... scarce even a
few vines and threads to keep the
cold from my body.

LILI
You wear your weeds as well as
golden armor, Jack. Like a true
Prince... a champion!

JACK
Lili... I love you!

LILI
And I love you, my husband.

They fall eagerly into each other's arms. Their long, passionate embrace is interrupted by an unseen pest.

JACK
Ow!

Jack swats at his legs.

LILI
What's the matter?

JACK
Ouch! Something's biting me.

LILI
Biting you?

JACK
Pinching me!

LILI
Pinching? Where?

JACK
Everywhere! Ow!

LILI
I can't see a thing.

JACK
Nor can I. Damn! It's buzzing all around me. Ouch! I can hear it like a fly trapped inside my ear... Says its name is Oona!

LILI
Oona? Do you suppose it's a faerie?

JACK
Ow! Whatever it is, it hurts.

Princess Lili takes Jack by the hand and starts running, pulling him along with her.

LILI
Hurry up then, Jack o' the Green... You'll be safe in the castle... We'll hand out bells and crosses... strew the floors with flax and
EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

Lili and Jack run together holding hands down a sunlit forest path. The DIALOGUE is CONTINUOUS:

LILI

No faeries in the palace... We have our own magician, knows lots of spells... First, we'll tell my father the news... you'll like my father, Jack. He's not like most kings...

Watching from a high bank, unseen by Lili and Jack, the mare unicorn and her black colt stand in sun-dappled silence. The colt rubs against his mother's flank as she gently blows on his mane with her delicate sea-shell nostrils.

Below, Jack and Lili run together up the path into a BLAZE of sunlight.

LILI

... and we won't have to stay in some stuffy manor all the time. When the weather's fair we can live in the woods... I'll wear homespun like shepherdess...

They disappear into the GLARE and the screen goes WHITE.

THE END