

EXT. SCRUBBY HILLS - DAY

Wiry knight WOLVERLY (Early 40s) and his spirited squire BRECCA (late teens) trudge away from a dilapidated farm and into the hills overlooking an abandoned town claimed by a magical illness called "Curse". Their eyes claw the landscape looking for signs of trouble.

BRECCA

(Gesturing back over her
shoulder)

Can you imagine living like this?

WOLVERLY

I can't. But then, we spend most
nights in shelter halves and most
mornings shaking spiders out of
our boots. So ... difficult to
judge, eh?

BRECCA

How many more of these are there,
you think?

WOLVERLY

(Checking cracked
compass)

There's a lumber camp past the
scree pile east of us. And another
farmhouse south of that. We
shouldn't travel too much farther
on our own, though. Once Aodhnait
and the Salt-Walker arrive, we can
push into the forest a bit.

BRECCA

(nervous)

Salt-walker? You didn't say a
Salter Knight was coming.

WOLVERLY

(good-natured chuckle)

You're surprised? It's a Curse
survey, ya scamp. Learned how to
manage that sort of thing on your
own, have you? If so, I don't know
why you're wasting your time
flitting about with me.

BRECCA

I just- You know, that means it's
serious, right?

WOLVERLY
As a barrister's funeral.

A long moment passes as the two march quietly along.

BRECCA
Have you ever worked with a
Salt-Walker before?

WOLVERLY
Twice. A few years back, in
Folstov, and one other time as a
squire. Outside Verensia.

BRECCA
How was it?

WOLVERLY

Bloody horrible! It rained buckets
both times, and you can never find
anything worth eating outside
Callumar.

BRECCA
(grumbling)
You know what I mean! How was it
working with a Salter Knight?

WOLVERLY
Ah. It's sort of like- Queen's
sake, watch that loose stone
there. Its sort of like ...
imagine writing with a quill.
Dipped in ink, smooth lines and
that. For the purpose of this
analogy, you and I are quill pens.

BRECCA
Abstract, but all right.

WOLVERLY
Now, Salt-Walkers ... Salt-Walkers
are like chalk. Hard, rugged
lines. Little room for style or
subtlety, but clear. Elemental,
even. That make sense?

BRECCA
(light laughter)
Not a bit, sir.

WOLVERLY
(playfully pushes

BRECCA's cap over her
eyes.)

Bloody cheek. I guess we should
both be glad I gave up poetry, eh?
Look, Salter Knights are cheerless
hermits, all right? Dirges that
walk about like people. But
they're good at what they do, and
what they do is essential.

BRECCA

I heard they don't take squires.

WOLVERLY

Can't imagine why. Everyone should
keep a scrappy youth around to
poke fun at their analogies.

BRECCA

But they don't, right? Take
squires?

WOLVERLY

No, the don't. They typically drag
a Blacktongue around with them,
though. Someone who can shout the
Curse back into the ground. Now,
Blacktongues are a hoot.

BRECCA

Really?

WOLVERLY

(shrugs)

Well, compared to Salt-Walkers,
gouty gravediggers are like
Lurvally dancing girls, so it's
tough to say. But I've met six or
seven of them and they were all
lovely.

BRECCA leaps onto a mossy rock.

BRECCA

Mine!

WOLVERLY

... You can have it?

BRECCA

(Snort-laugh)

No, sir! A mine! Like for digging!
It's just there, on the other side
of the hillock.

WOLVERLY
(narrows his eyes and
gazes in the direction
BRECCA is pointing.)
Damn fine spotting, Olander. Let's
go have a look.

BRECCA and WOLVERLY approach the mine. WOLVERLY, previously relaxed, appears cautious. He draws his flintlock pistol as he approaches the mine. BRECCA, taking the hint, does the same. Both look into the pitch black mouth of the mine, then down into the mud in front of the entrance.

WOLVERLY
Have a look, eh? What do you see?

BRECCA

Wheel marks. Footprints?

WOLVERLY
Right. What else?

BRECCA
(narrows her eyes and
looks harder.)
Animal prints. Deer, maybe? Or a
pack of boars?

WOLVERLY
(slides his pistol back
into its holster.)
Pig tracks. No boars around here.
The Bellbreakers hunted them out
decades ago. What do you wager a
pack of pigs are doing in a coal
mine?

BRECCA
I don't know sir.

WOLVERLY
(Long beat as he
continues to gaze into
the mine.)
Me neither. Eyes sharp. You know
I've got no taste for mysteries.