

WHALEMEN

Written by

Tucker Parsons

Adam Kolbrenner  
Madhouse Entertainment  
310.587.2200

FADE IN:

MISTY HILLSIDE - A WILD BOAR

Tough. Shoving dirt with his horned snout.

Not far away, a MAN (35) and a BOY (10) crouch among shrubs, stalking it. Both have spears. The man's hair is long, tied back. They are both shirtless, with woolen kilts and leather boots tied with straps.

The man moves in silently, skilled hunter. The boy starts crawling... his hand SNAPS a twig.

THE BOAR

Hears the sound, runs uphill and into some bushes. Gone.

The boy looks to his father, embarrassed. The man rubs some mud off the boy's face. No judgment. He gestures up.

They follow the boar's path uphill.

Scotland, 1285

CUT TO:

EXT. RUGGED COASTLINE & BAY - AERIAL - DAY

A breathtaking coastal range, misty green mountains, cliffs dropping to the sea.

Camera descends to find...

THE MAN AND BOY

They cross a ridge of green grass and coastal shrubs. Beyond them we see a slope down to the sea.

The man stops to drink from a water skin, he offers some to the boy, then notices him looking down toward the shore at...

A LARGE BLACK MASS on the rocky beach. Like a large flat rock. Except it's moving.

EXT. ROCKY SHORE - DAY

The man and boy crouch, still as statues. Their spears up, the ocean washing against their legs, their eyes fixed on...

A WHALE

Beached and stranded. About 25 feet long, a bowhead. Still alive, barely.

The man gestures for the boy to stay put as he cautiously steps around the beast, giving it a wide circle, like facing an alien.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)  
 (Scottish accent)  
 "Such a monster as they found that day would have scared off most men."

They are startled as the whale lets out a great, final breath from its blowhole.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 "But the McColough knew the face of destiny when they saw it."

WILLIAM McCOULOUGH, the man, watches warily as his son, RONAN, approaches the whale, looking into the great beast's eye.

The strange EYE looks back at young Ronan as the whale goes lifeless.

LATER

Ronan is trying to climb on top of the dead whale, not having an easy time of it. Finally he gets on the beast's back, and stands.

Below him, William takes his spear point and makes a small cut in the whale's side. He struggles, unsuccessfully, to slice open the whale with the spear.

YOUNG RONAN  
 Pa!

The boy points up the coast. His father looks off.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)  
 "Heaven knows why God chose this spot to drop whales on the land like ripe fruit from a tree."

...There's another enormous black mound a hundred yards away. Another whale, and another beyond that.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)  
 "But from the seeds of that fruit a new world was born."

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROCKY SHORE - A DAY LATER

A BALD MAN with missing teeth hands William a long sword. William uses it to SLICE the whale flesh much more easily.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)

"Anyone willing to work was welcomed,  
and McCoulough shared freely with  
them.

THREE MEN use spears to awkwardly lift the wedge of flesh  
off the whale. They are not used to the smell.

SOME TIME LATER

William, Ronan and the three men pull on ropes, trying to  
get a dead whale up onto the shore. Getting nowhere.

Young Ronan looks up the hill, seeing two men on horseback  
who've stopped to watch.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"William's good leadership brought  
out the good in others.

LATER STILL

The two new men are now pulling too, even their horses have  
joined the rope. The whale carcass finally MOVES.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OCEAN/BAY - DAY

William is in a small fishing boat a hundred yards offshore,  
with Young Ronan and two others rowing hard.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)

"And when the whales stopped swimming  
up to his knife...

They are approaching a live WHALE, swimming slowly ahead.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"William brought his knife to them."

William throws a large clumsy hook on a rope at the side of  
the whale... the hook CUTS INTO the whale, which THRASHES  
its tail, nearly capsizing the boat, the line yanks free and  
the whale SWIMS OFF.

A FAST SEQUENCE

Music takes us through William & Young Ronan's early attempts  
at whale hunting, each shot shows William a bit older, his  
son getting bigger and stronger.

- William throws a common spear tied to a rope, it just  
bounces off the whale's tough hide.

- Next try, William throws a heavier spear tied to a line, it SINKS into the flesh, and pulls tight... then YANKS OUT and flies back at him...

- New try, better harpoon design, with BARB. He sinks it deep in a whale, and it holds! The whale THRASHES and TAKES OFF, pulling the line with such force it RIPS the front of the boat off.

- Next time it's a bigger boat, and a bigger harpoon, too heavy to throw. So William LEAPS on the whale, getting a wild watery rodeo ride, he goes under as the whale DIVES...

ON YOUNG RONAN & CREW

Fearing him lost, scanning the water. Finally William surfaces, coughing. His son, now 15, laughs with relief.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"William won his share of the hunt,  
but it was his son Ronan who made an  
art of it.

- TEEN RONAN, more man than boy now, shows his father a new harpoon he's made, sleek and light with a newly barbed tip. The father approves.

- Ronan hooks a whale on a single throw. William manages the rope as the whale YANKS them into a crazy wet ride, they hold on for their lives.

- Ronan, stronger and more confident, makes a longer throw at a bigger whale. William cheers. Then...

- In HEAVY SEAS, Ronan THROWS the harpoon from a skillful low crouch on the bow, William holding on for dear life...

EXT. BEACH AND SHORE - DAY

William and Ronan pull their boat onto the beach, a whale in tow.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)

"The greater Ronan's harvest, the  
more hands it employed, and more  
mouths it fed.

There are now several permanent huts built on shore, a blacksmith mans the fires for tool making.

We pull back to...

EXT. WIDE SHOT OF TILL - TIME PASSING

TIME LAPSE shows the village TRIPLING in size. The buildings become larger, better crafted. More boats in the harbor. Clothes become higher quality as well.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)

"There was rope to make from entrails,  
meat to salt and trade. Traders  
brought gold, and gold brought the  
best builders and artisans from Islay  
to Aberdeen.

CLOSE ON

A large KETTLE, a blazing fire under it, bubbling WHALE OIL in it. Chunks of whale meat are dropped in to be rendered. This is a "try pot".

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"But it was the fine lamp oil rendered  
from the whale's flesh that brought  
the English.

Casks of oil are loaded on a galley, rowed by forty men under an English flag and protected by English soldiers.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"The village of Till became the  
biggest source of oil on the Isles,  
and the Royal Court of London became  
their sole customers.

The soldiers row off.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"No other village could master the  
hunt...

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

A big bowhead THRASHES, the harpoon in its side wagging furiously around, the boat LURCHING, Ronan, William and the crew holding on.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)

"They had no stomach for it when the  
whales fought back."

A second whale RAMS THEIR BOAT. The bow lifts out of the water entirely, the men falling out...

William falls into a loop of rope, which snags around his neck, a sickening SNAP...

CUT TO:

EXT. ROCKY SHORE - DAY

William's corpse, wrapped in linen and wool, lies in a shallow grave. Ronan leads the village in solemnly covering his father with a mound of carefully piled stones.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)

"Young as he was, it was decided by all that Ronan would take his father's place as headman.

TIME LAPSE. Many days turn to night and back as we see the mound of stone grow into a great forty foot TOWER.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"In the years to come the village would grow even more prosperous, a fountain of goodwill and abundance for its neighbors."

Night falls, the sound of the SEA overtakes us as we...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ROCKY SHORE OF TILL - DAWN

The dawn paints a sharp orange arc across the ocean's horizon.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)

"It's what came next that's worthy of passing on. Not because every rise must be followed by a fall..."

Reveal the face of the adult RONAN McCOLOUGH, staring ahead.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"But because the story of one man can tell the story of us all."

Pulling back we now see Ronan is standing on top of...

EXT. STONE TOWER - DAWN

Ronan, now 40 years old, stands atop the tower searching the horizon. He wears a goatskin cloak, his body strong, face rugged, his eyes sharp but wise.

Suddenly he sees it. A plume of pale mist a mile out or more in the ocean, lit against the dawn.

RONAN

SPRAY!

Ronan BANGS the iron bell, people come out of their huts below.

CUT TO:

EXT. GREAT BAY/OCEAN - MORNING

Two whale boats pound against the waves. They are 25 foot SAILBOATS, single mast, five men each. A harpooner at the bow.

The boats lean under sail, closing in FAST on a pod of three bowhead WHALES. Ronan is lead harpooner, takes a sheepskin sheath off the point of a HARPOON.

Ronan makes hand signals to the harpooner on the other boat, ONCHU LACHLAN (35) an orange haired, bearded, bear shaped man. Onchu's boat tacks to the whale's flank, picking up wind and speed.

Ronan rears back and THROWS, but it's not his harpoon. A heavy ROCK hits near the beasts' eye.

The whale turns away from Ronan, toward the flanking boat. Onchu lets fly his harpoon. It hits the whale under the water line AS...

In a flash the men on Onchu's boat scurry to take down the sail as Onchu pulls the line around the mast and wraps his arm in a GOAT SKIN just in time as...

The LINE pulls TIGHT, Onchu sets his position, all hands jump to the stern as the boat LURCHES forward...

ON THE WHALE

Enraged, moving fast. The harpoon strains, the whale thrashes forward and the harpoon PULLS OUT. Onchu's boat is let go.

RONAN

Sees this, calls back to his crew.

RONAN

SET THE COIL!

Ronan grabs up his harpoon. His men look out at the impossible throw Ronan's about to attempt.

RONAN (CONT'D)

SET THE COIL!!

They hop to. Ronan mounts the bow, sighting the whale, pulling rope to his feet.

RONAN (CONT'D)

READY!

With monumental strength and skill, he HEAVES the heavy harpoon into the air...

ONCHU

From his boat, Onchu sees Ronan's harpoon fly far up, arc down toward its mark...

ONCHU

Mother of Christ...

And STAB deep into the whale's back.

RONAN'S CREW

Stunned at this amazing throw even as the line starts to pull tight.

RONAN

MAST!

They jump, pull down sail, like a well rehearsed dance, Ronan wraps his arm in sheepskin as he pulls the line around the mast, just as the line pulls taught and...

RONAN (CONT'D)

She GOES...

THE BOAT TAKES OFF.

Towed by the terrified whale, smashing against the waves.

ONCHU'S BOAT

He sees Ronan's boat being dragged out to open sea by ten tons of muscle running for its life.

ONCHU

To OARS!

He moves to take the tiller as his men pull oars from under benches...

ONCHU (CONT'D)

James, go up!

JAMES, a strong, wiry boy of 12 with bright red hair, expertly climbs atop the mast where he sits on a crossbar as lookout.

## MOVING WITH RONAN'S BOAT

RONAN lets out line from the coil, it spins around the mast... now do we see why there are charred burn marks on it...

AERIAL SHOTS/UNDERWATER - the whale pulling the boat fast through choppy seas, the boat bouncing like a skipping stone, the men exhilarated, terrified, HOLDING ON.

THE BOW of the boat has a BOW GUIDE, a notch holding the line that extends to the whale. Now the line starts pulling DOWN on the bow, the whale diving...

Without being commanded the crew all lean out over the stern as far as possible to counter.

TANNER (45) is a tall thin crewman with one eye missing.

TANNER

She's pulling us under...!

Ronan grabs a hand ax, ready to cut the line to save the boat, but STOPS as he sees the line rise, and RISE...

And up ahead we see the whale BREECH.

## SLOW MOTION

Ronan watches the whale launch her body out of the water. The whale splashes down, the line goes TIGHT again, the boat LURCHES...

Tanner falls backward over the stern, grabbed just in time by GLEN DOUGLAS (37, hunchback). Tanner is dragging in the water, screaming. Glen Douglas heaves him back in.

GLEN DOUGLAS

Learn to swim, will you?

## ONCHU'S BOAT

Four OARSMEN row hard, land barely visible behind them. Onchu at the tiller, he strains to see ahead.

ONCHU

See them James?

JAMES

(Pointing)

Aye!

ONCHU

Put down a spark, Eachan!

EACHAN (pronounced "Ae-kun") is 25, small and quick. He ships his oar, pulls a partially hollowed out wooden block tied to a weighted line from beneath his bench.

He LIGHTS the oil soaked wick inside, dark smoke rises. He places the buoy in the water as a marker.

#### RONAN'S BOAT

Ronan feels the taught line, sensing the whale's mass through it.

#### RONAN

He's got twenty barrels in him if  
he's got one.  
(to all)  
Let's take him.

The men set position and with bare hands on the rope start REELING IN THE LINE, moving the boat closer to the whale with each pull. Ronan starts the song (on every "roe" the men SHOUT and pull on the rope)...

#### RONAN (CONT'D)

(starts singing)  
Oh, roe, soon I see them, oh  
Hee-roe, see them oh see them. Oh,  
roe, soon I see them, oh the  
mist covered mountains of home...

Tanner picks up the next verse.

#### AERIAL SHOT

The men pull their way, yard by yard, closer to their prey.

DISSOLVE TO:

#### EXT. OPEN OCEAN - DAY

The whale is large, ten feet longer than the boat alongside it. It breathes hard through it's blowhole, exhausted.

Ronan takes a long SPEAR, he mounts the bow, looks at the whale with respect, offers a quiet prayer.

#### RONAN

Thank you Lord, Blessed is this blood.  
(then to the whale)  
Beannachd Dia dhuit.  
(Celtic for "blessings  
of God be with you.")

He aims with care, and THRUSTS deep. The whale's next breath blows out dark RED MIST.

LATER

Both boats, Onchu's and Ronan's, tow the dead whale toward the smoking buoy marking the way home.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOP OF STONE TOWER - DAY

A young boy (EWAN, 12) stands atop the tower. He sees the WHALEBOATS in the distance. We will soon find out this is Ronan's youngest son.

Ewan then notices another boat, coming from a different direction. A much larger merchant ship, under sail.

Ewan moves to the edge and starts down the rope.

EXT. BASE OF TOWER - DAY

Ewan descends to the ground, surprised to find his mother (MARGARET, 35) looking at him sternly. She has a noble bearing, long hair and warm, knowing eyes. She wears a long woolen skirt.

EWAN

Father lets me!

MARGARET

Don't compound your wrongs by fibbing.

She can see excitement on his face.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

They got one?

EWAN

Twenty five barrels, I'll guess.  
The Peabody's coming in too.

Margaret turns to look to sea, spotting the sails of the big ship.

EXT. THE PEABODY MERCHANT SHIP - DAY

An medieval merchant ship, 60 feet long, one mast with a large square sail. A single figure stands on the bow.

COMMANDER GARRET (50). Long hair, salty beard, broad frame. He looks to land, to Till. One of his crew approaches with the commander's shore bag.

GARRET

(English accent)

Good to be home.

CREWMAN

Home? But you're English sir.

GARRET

Only on my parents' side.

EXT. TILL SHORELINE - BOATLAUNCH - DAY

Garret and two other men row toward shore in a small boat. The launch is a primitive but well engineered pier that extends from the rocky shore.

ON SHORE

Ronan hands off the whale rope. All available villagers come to help. Old & young, men and women, THIRTY VILLAGERS in all, pull on the ropes. Hoisting the whale onto LOG ROLLERS on the shore. Getting ready for the blades.

ALBAN TAVISH (40) and Onchu approach Ronan. These are Ronan's right and left hands. Alban - thin, tall and scholarly - seems the opposite of the wide Onchu.

ALBAN

This throw of yours, is it true?

RONAN

He embellishes it.

Alban hands Ronan the end of a long coiled twine.

Ronan walks as Alban uncoils the twine, they're measuring the length of the whale. Ronan reaches one end, Alban the other. Ronan looks at the mark, walks back.

RONAN (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Eight lengths.

ONCHU

Smaller every year.

ALBAN

To say nothing of fewer.

ON GARRET'S BOAT

Arriving at the launch. Ronan steps out to greet him. Alban and Onchu follow.

RONAN

My friend!

GARRET

Ronan!

Garret and Ronan shake hands, then hug.

ALBAN  
(greeting Garret)  
I see you've escaped God's judgment  
once again.

GARRET  
He'll catch up to me soon enough.

RONAN  
Tell us, did your silk sell in Lisbon?

Garret shrugs off the loss.

GARRET  
Ah! Portugese aren't quite ready  
for silk, it appears. They took  
well to Onchu's spirits though.  
Drank a dangerous lot of it, actually.

ONCHU  
What'd you tell 'em it was?

GARRET  
Well, they call this the 'Land of  
the Scots', so I called it "Scotch  
Spirits".

ONCHU  
"Scotch".

The men all look at each other, trying out the name. Then  
shaking their heads in disapproval.

GARRET  
Well we can think of a better name  
later.

They step off the boat launch.

ONCHU  
You'll sell more if you call it  
something medicinal.

GARRET  
They didn't seem to need much  
convincing.

The friends head up the sloping shore, which is criss crossed  
with well crafted boardwalk paths.

BEHIND THEM

The whale is hoisted up onto a flat rock stand. A man slices it open with a blubber blade, long sharp knife on a pole. Two more men use hooks to peel the blubber back in a long strip and lay it on the stone, where it's cut up by women...

The whole village cooperates seamlessly, each to a job. This is what they do best.

EXT. APPROACHING RONAN'S HOME - AFTERNOON

Ronan and Garret come up the slope, ANNA (5), Ronan's adorable youngest daughter, runs downhill to meet them.

ANNA

Poppa!

RONAN

(fake approbation)

Anna your manners! Greet our guest properly.

She makes an ornate courtesy-like gesture to Garret, then starts to climb Ronan's leg. With one hand he lifts her onto his back. They walk toward Ronan's house, which is actually two houses joined. For its time, large and lovely.

Margaret is outside on a stool, expertly shearing a RAM with a sharp blade. Eldest daughter ELIZABETH (11) holds the animal. Margaret stands and bows.

MARGARET

Hello Sir Garret.

GARRET

Margaret, even at work you're a queen.

MARGARET

Knowing how you feel about royalty I should be insulted.

He laughs good naturedly. Touche. Margaret gestures to Elizabeth, she leads the ram off.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

(to Anna)

Anna, did you fetch the water?

Anna goes, pulling Garret along with her.

ANNA

Come ON!

They exit. Ronan approaches his wife, they face each other. She gives his chest a touch with her hand, but it's the deepest kind of contact.

She's glad he's home, glad he's safe.

Margaret motions with her eyes. Ewan is sitting on a wood stool, slowly cutting potatoes. Total dejection.

RONAN

He was on the tower?

MARGARET

That's why he's punished, not why he's sad. The boys called him small again.

RONAN

He is small. Nothing wrong with that. I was small too at his age.

MARGARET

Talk to him.

He nods.

RONAN

When his liver cools.  
(looking around)  
Where's Duncan?

Margaret motions. Ronan turns and sees DUNCAN - his 17 year old son - riding down from the trees. Duncan is strong, passionate, quick witted and quick tempered.

Riding on a second horse is EMMA, the fiery, beautiful tomboy Duncan plans to marry.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Did you give permission for this?

MARGARET

No harm in a ride, is there?

RONAN

Depends how far.

Duncan and Emma ride up, flush from the wind.

EMMA

Good hunting, Master McColough.

DUNCAN

We heard you brought one in. How many lengths?

RONAN

Eight.

(MORE)

RONAN (CONT'D)  
 Emma... please stay for supper.  
 Duncan, we have a house guest. You'll  
 bed with Ewan.

Duncan looks off seeing...

Garret, who's carrying water toward the house with Anna.  
 Duncan doesn't like Garret. Or any other Englishman.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
 Duncan, did you hear me?

DUNCAN  
 Yes father.

RONAN  
 Good, go now. Care for the horses.

Duncan and Emma ride off. Ronan and Margaret are alone.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
 First catch. And the season's half  
 over.

MARGARET  
 The whales don't belong to us Ronan.  
 They are a gift. Their spirits have  
 their own purpose. We have good  
 fields and sheep. We will thrive.

Ronan is nourished by her words. He touches her face gently.

RONAN  
 No talk of 'spirits' around Alban.  
 He'll baptize all of us again.

A shared smile, and back to tasks.

INT. RONAN'S HOUSE - TABLE

A crowded table, two guests squeezed in with the family.  
 Garret, a familiar guest at the table, is telling stories of  
 far away, the audience rapt.

Emma seems especially enthralled, which annoys Duncan.

GARRET  
 ...Now there is only one place in  
 the Magreb of Tangiers you can get  
 this particular snake gland, and  
 when I arrived there I found it was  
 run by the very same vulture I had  
 just escaped!

Oohs and laughter from Emma and Elizabeth. Duncan rolls his eyes, makes no secret of his distaste.

RONAN  
Duncan, do you have something to say?

DUNCAN  
Why is he here? We are at war with England father!

RONAN  
That war hasn't reached us, we should pray it never does.

DUNCAN  
Our countrymen are dying! He should stay with our so-called "Governor", the Captain.  
(to Garret)  
Isn't he family to you?

RONAN  
Respect our guest.

DUNCAN  
He doesn't want respect, he wants our oil!

Ronan stands.

RONAN  
Duncan!

Garret intervenes.

GARRET  
Please... There's no need.  
(to Duncan, warm & respectful)  
Duncan, in your place, I might share your patriotism. I don't love everything my King does, but I will always love everyone in this room.

Duncan is disarmed by Garret's gentle tone.

The moment is broken by the sound of horses outside. Ronan turns to the door.

EXT. OUTSIDE RONAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Three men arrive on horseback, English soldiers. The leader is LIEUTENANT PIKE. A strong willed enforcer, and a man ambitious for promotion.

RONAN

Lieutenant Pike. What brings you out so late?

LT. PIKE

Evening McColough. I carry a message from the Captain Governor to Sir Garret.

Garret comes out. Lt. Pike gives him a sealed envelope.

GARRET

Thank you.

Garret breaks the wax seal and reads.

LT. PIKE

Good catch on the whale McColough. I hear it almost slipped away. We'll be watching it closely, to see none is wasted.

RONAN

You can see that when we count casks.

LT. PIKE

I've been ordered to take residence at bayside. To assist with the processing.

RONAN

No assistance is needed.

LT. PIKE

I'm not asking permission. I'm doing you the courtesy of informing you.

Cold looks between them.

GARRET

(to Ronan)

He wants you to come. He has a guest from London. From the Royal Court.

Ronan doesn't look too enthusiastic about this. Lt. Pike notices.

LT. PIKE

Not just a guest. He is the Viceroy, Earl of Covington. To meet a man of his stature is quite an honor for a fisherman, McColough.

GARRET  
 (sharply at Pike)  
 A *fisherman*? Lieutenant...

Ronan motions Garret to let it go.

RONAN  
 (to Pike)  
 Is there anything else?

Lt. Pike doesn't like to be dismissed by a man he considers his inferior.

LT. PIKE  
 Good night Sir Garret, McColough.

Lt. Pike and his men ride down the hill toward the village. Ronan and Garret turn toward the house.

GARRET  
 He should show respect.

RONAN  
 Pick your battles, not mine.

EXT. TILL TRY WORKS - MORNING

On the wood boardwalk, casks full of whale oil are nailed shut by Glen Douglas, the village blacksmith.

Two of the casks are loaded onto a horse drawn cart by a group of teen boys. James, the young lookout, ties them down expertly. Glen Douglas, James' father, checks the knot. So does Garret.

GARRET  
 Good tight knot.  
 (to Glen Douglas)  
 Your son has learned well.

James smiles to his father, who nods proudly.

Garret gets into the cart's front. Ronan already has the reins. He slaps the horse, the cart moves.

EXT. ROAD TO THE CASTLE - DAY

The cart passes under a canopy of trees. They've been riding and talking for hours.

RONAN  
 ...But what of your wife, doesn't she want you home in London?

GARRET

God no! We have an unspoken understanding. She gets to be rich, I get to be free.

Garret hands Ronan water, Ronan gives Garret the reins and drinks.

GARRET (CONT'D)

You are luckier than you realize my friend. Civilization has a long way to go before it's civilized. Your village is a rare exception.

Ronan falls into thought.

RONAN

All I've ever wanted was to continue what my father started.

GARRET

You've done a lot more than that.

Ronan stares ahead, troubled.

GARRET (CONT'D)

You know the whales will come back in time Ronan. You just got too good at hunting them.

Ronan looks to Garret, claps him on the shoulder with appreciation.

EXT. APPROACH TO DUNNOTAR CASTLE - HOURS LATER

DUNNOTAR CASTLE is built on a rocky peninsula jutting into the sea and is only approachable by a thin land bridge, steep jagged slopes on both sides.

Garret and Ronan ride past a guard, and onto the narrow approach to the castle. Ronan looks toward a NOISE...

In the QUAD, a group of twenty screaming SOLDIERS form a ring around two fighting bulldogs tearing into each other.

INT. DUNNOTAR CASTLE - CAPTAIN'S MEETING ROOM - DAY

Large stone room. Heavy curtains, high ceilings, cavernous.

Ronan and Garret are escorted in by a soldier.

At the far end, the VICEROY sits at a broad table, dressed in a heavy purple robe, reading over a parchment. A PAGE stands next to him, holding more tied scrolls.

Ronan and Garret are led off to join two men waiting at a window, away from the busy Royal representative.

At the window Garret and Ronan bow to...

CAPTAIN ALEXANDER BARRON (36). He is dressed in the uniform of King Edward's army, speaks with the accent of the educated English.

CAPT. BARRON

Cousin! You look well fed as always.  
Your travels have been safe and  
profitable?

GARRET

Well... Your shares have done  
handsomely. Mine on the other hand...

He gestures empty hands.

RONAN

The Portugese didn't think much of  
the silk.

CAPT. BARRON

My regrets Garrett. So McColough.  
You finally had a catch?

RONAN

Yes. And you are all expected at  
First Feast to celebrate.

CAPT. BARRON

The men are looking forward to it.

The Page hits his staff on the floor, the Viceroy's ready to receive a new audience.

Captain Barron leads the way toward the Royal table. The Captain bows.

CAPT. BARRON (CONT'D)

Your Excellency, in honor of your  
most welcome visit to our county,  
may I now present Sir Garret Laws,  
Vice Earl of Sheffield, owner and  
commander of the merchant ship  
Peabody.

Garret bows, the Viceroy acknowledges.

CAPT. BARRON (CONT'D)

May I also present Ronan McColough,  
headman of the village of Till.

VICEROY  
Ah, the great fisherman.

Ronan bows.

GARRET  
He's a whaleman, Excellency.

The Viceroy pauses, not appreciating being corrected. Ronan throws Garret a look, 'back off'.

VICEROY  
Again, Commander?

GARRET  
Nothing Excellency. Forgive me.

INT. DUNNOTAR CASTLE - DINING ROOM

They sit around a large table, being served by a wait staff.

VICEROY  
(to Ronan)  
When the Crown first came to these lands, the Highland elders wore only skins. Commoners wore barely anything at all. See them now?

He points a painted portrait on the wall, a Scottish noble in a fine clan kilt and wools.

VICEROY (CONT'D)  
Wherever England plants a flag, the light of civilization spreads.

The Viceroy stands, walks to a table and picks up an OIL LAMP.

VICEROY (CONT'D)  
Light is what makes us civilized. Day only allows time for the basics of survival. If we want culture, law, education... we must extend that light.

He turns up the oil lamp, it burns bright.

VICEROY (CONT'D)  
To read and study, to invent, to discuss. To see what was once in shadow. Civilization is light, gentlemen. If the fuel of that light dwindles, civilization itself is weakened.

Ronan looks to Garret, wondering what's being said here.  
Capt. Barron clarifies.

CAPT. BARRON

His Excellency has been sent here by the King himself. It is a growing concern at the Royal Court that every year less oil ships to London.

RONAN

There's no mystery to it. The whales have become scarce.

VICEROY

Robert Bruce used incendiary catapult to take Elkhardt Castle, he seems to be getting oil somewhere. It would be natural for a proud man to have sympathies for Scottish independence, wouldn't you say?

Garret tries to intervene for his friend.

GARRET

Your Excellency, Ronan is not political...

With a gesture, the Viceroy silences Garret, waits for Ronan.

RONAN

You English have always treated my village fairly.

CAPT. BARRON

Excellency, for what it's worth, I've known this man since my posting, and I trust his word.

VICEROY

Yes, we know how cordial you've been.  
(to Ronan)  
Leniency causes simple people to take Royal favor for granted.

RONAN

*Leniency* sir?

Ronan's back is going up. The Viceroy approaches Ronan and leans close.

VICEROY

It is of vital importance that more oil flow to London.

RONAN

But if there are no whales...

VICEROY

Of course there are whales. One simply has to find them.

Ronan's anger showing.

RONAN

By my word, Sir, we harvest all that the sea offers!

The Viceroy looks at Ronan a beat, steps back to his place.

VICEROY

And where would the Empire be if we only took what was offered?

The Viceroy turns and leaves. The men at the table all stand. Ronan and Garret share a glance, "what just happened?"

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE - DAY

Onchu marches purposefully down the green misty hillside, carrying a wooden CASK on this thick shoulder. He enters a rock walled, thatched roof BARN.

INT. ONCHU'S DISTILLERY - DAY

Onchu lowers the keg onto a wood table. Seated at the table are three of the crew. Tanner and Glen Douglas we've met, there's also JOHN KEY. Cantankerous, missing teeth and two fingers.

Onchu HAMMERS a spout into the keg, pours a little into a cup. He smells it, then offers it to Tanner. Tanner refuses.

Ronan and Alban enter from outside. The men greet each other.

ONCHU

Ronan, what's your opinion?

He offers Ronan the cup. Ronan takes a small sip, almost gags.

RONAN

God in heaven...

ALBAN

Ronan, the Lord's name...

ONCHU

Bad?

RONAN

Like Satan's flaming piss.

Onchu tries a taste. He winces too.

ONCHU

Few years to go on that.

RONAN

Onchu, something drinkable.

JOHN KEY

Drinkable he saving for hi'self.

Onchu - busted - goes searching for another cask.

RONAN

Your best Onchu! Sir Garret's to do  
the opening toast. Anyone seen him?

They all shake their heads no.

Ronan's son Ewan enters with his best friend ALEC, Onchu's  
son, a 10 year old with shaggy long hair.

ALEC

Father! Can I go down with Ewan?

Onchu comes out, nods to his son. He hoists a new cask over  
his shoulder.

ONCHU

Hate partin' with this.

TANNER

That's a good sign.

EXT. VILLAGE/ShORE - AFTERNOON

A great SPIT over which cooks pig and sheep. Nearby a  
storyteller spins an epic yarn to some entranced listeners.  
Beyond him, a juggler...

All of Till is out, covering the beach and beyond. People  
from neighboring villages travel miles to be here.

Ronan, a local legend, welcomes some visitors. A stranger  
approaches and greets Ronan with great respect, Ronan politely  
gets rid of him, then helps Margaret turn the spit.

RONAN  
 (to Margaret)  
 Have you seen sir Garret?

Margaret hasn't. CHEERS erupt as behind her we see young boys racing up ropes to the top of the tower, a contest...

A SERIES OF SHORT SCENES...

Four men play lively music from pipes, drone organ, and drum. Tanner is showing off his STEP DANCE skills, in a competition with Eachan on a boardwalk.

Tanner, slightly hammered, loses his balance. Eachan comes out and WOWS the crowd doing Riverdance like moves.

An OLD MAN shows little Anna how to carve whalebone.

Onchu passes a mug of scotch to Glen Douglas, whose wife ILAAN, big boned and jolly, unexpectedly takes it and drinks it all down.

The men freeze and watch how she'll react. After a moment of suspense, she coughs, laughs, and pounds Onchu on the shoulder. Onchu and Glen Douglas laugh with relief.

Duncan is sword fighting with a friend, wood swords only. Although this is play, it's vigorous. Duncan is quite skilled, and bests his opponent with a "fatal" strike.

The surrounding crowd applauds. Duncan has a drink.

DUNCAN  
 A red hen to anyone who can take me.

The crowd "oohs", Duncan turns to see Emma taking up the big wood sword.

EMMA  
 Looks like it's up to me.

She swings for practice, the big sword is obviously too heavy for her. People laugh. She puts it down.

DUNCAN  
 Surrendering?

EMMA  
 (seductive)  
 I'm not that easy.

She approaches an older man in the crowd, who hands her two smaller wood swords.

EMMA (CONT'D)

Thank you father.

Emma takes a wide stance, one sword in each hand. Duncan readies. He attacks and she parries expertly. He attacks again, and she sneaks in a strike on his leg. She's a whirlwind, fast and light.

The crowd loves it. So does Duncan.

Elsewhere, Margaret directs the serving of the feast. An enormous amount of food...

An older man stands on a rock, delivering a diatribe for Scottish independence. This is MACKAY. (60).

MACKAY

...Forced conscription has begun in Grandee and Edinburgh! Are you now to send your sons to fight for the usurper, Edward of England against the true king of Scotland, Robert Bruce...!?

Ronan passes MacKay, stopping a fight between two little boys.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VILLAGE/SHORE - NIGHT

It's many hours later. The food is eaten, things are quiet. A group sits around the fire, boys with girls mostly, the SINGER singing a ballad of romance, heroism, and death.

Emma and Duncan are listening, her head on his arm. In her hand she holds a FLOWER carved of whale bone, white as ivory. She gives it to Duncan.

From far off, Ronan watches them for a beat, his son becoming a man. Ronan turns and steps away.

Emma pulls Duncan, they stand and walk up into the darkness.

WITH DUNCAN AND EMMA

As they move up the boardwalk. They find a secluded place near some trees, dimly lit.

Duncan's eyes feast on his beloved, she has never looked more beautiful. He touches her face gently.

She takes his hand, kisses it. Then she moves it... haltingly... down her face and neck to her breast.

This is all new to them, and much anticipated. Their eyes are locked. Breath heavy. Her eyes close, feeling his hands on her.

He moves in, his mouth hovering over hers.

They kiss. As pure and full as a flower that blooms once in its life.

Duncan takes her hand. His eyes ask, "are you sure?"

She pulls him up into the trees...

And a few feet from where they just were, we now see...

SOLDIERS. Several of them, hidden all along the ridge. Camera travels up, revealing DOZENS of them.

ROUNDHATS all over the woods. And leading them is Lieutenant Pike. Looking down on the village, waiting.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT - HOURS LATER

The village sleeps. The feast fires are down to coals.

There is a glow over the village, but it's not the dawn.

INT. RONAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ronan sleeps next to Margaret. The distant glow throwing a dim light in the room, Ronan's eyes open. He sits up.

EXT. OUTSIDE RONAN'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Ronan comes out. He can't see it well, but something is on fire.

RONAN

Duncan!

MARGARET

Duncan's not in his bed!

RONAN

Where's Ewan?

MARGARET

He stayed in the village.

Ronan pulls on his cloak, grabs a bucket.

RONAN

Ride to Alban, tell him to get the men and meet me at Mackay's.

Ronan runs down the hill.

EXT. MACKAY HOUSE - FIRE - NIGHT

Ronan arrives. Onchu has already organized a bucket relay, running water up from the bay.

The main house is totally ablaze, the barn is afire on one side.

RONAN  
Onchu, wet the barn!

MACKAY  
NO! NO!

RONAN  
The house is gone MacKay!  
(to Onchu)  
Save the barn!

Onchu nods, redirects the relay to the barn. Ronan adds his bucket into the relay, joins the line. Other men arrive as well, pulling together.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE ROW - NIGHT

Four simple thatch roof huts built in a group. Two WIVES stand on the hillside watching the burning house which is distantly visible below.

Behind them, SOLDIERS spreading out. A SCREAM of a child, the women turn and run toward the houses, the soldiers make off with two screaming BOYS.

INT. ANOTHER HOUSE - NIGHT

A DARK HAired BOY of 15 is suddenly YANKED from his bed. He CALLS OUT.

His FATHER jumps up, runs out and is SLAMMED with the butt of a sword, he collapses as his wife comes out and sees their son being carried down the hill by soldiers.

A FLASH OF SHOTS show us the SOLDIERS taking the sons of the village, every male in his teens they can find.

One BLONDE BOY of 7 climbs up a tree, a soldier in pursuit reaches up, GRABBING his foot... he loses his grip... falling head first toward a sharp ROCK...

EXT. MACKAY HOUSE - FIRE

Ronan grabs a bucket, runs it to the barn, THROWING it on.

Duncan runs down from the hill, Emma following. Ronan sees the two of them.

RONAN

Where were you?

Duncan hesitates, looks to Emma, the blush of shame...

We hear SCREAMS, someone approaching on the path from the village. A young girl, running with everything she's got to Ronan...

YOUNG GIRL

SOLDIERS! SOLDIERS!

EXT. ROAD - RAIL WAGON - DAWN

A soldier ties a rope around the wrist of a new captured boy, it's ALEC. Another soldier drags Ewan toward the wagon and ties his wrists to it.

LT. PIKE

That's it, let's go.

The wagon now starts moving. Twelve village boys aged 11 to 16 lashed to it, Alec and Ewan among them.

Ronan, Duncan, Onchu, Alban and several other men run up the road. A few have staffs, but they are mostly unarmed.

RONAN sees his son and CALLS OUT.

RONAN

EWAN!!

Ronan runs after him.

LT. PIKE

LINE!

Archers with CROSSBOWS take formation, aiming at Ronan and the other approaching men.

LT. PIKE (CONT'D)

STOP OR WE WILL FIRE.

Ronan runs forward with Onchu and other fathers.

LT. PIKE (CONT'D)

FIRE.

The archers let loose, arrows fly, hitting all around them,  
DUNCAN SCREAMS, hit in the leg, he falls.

Ronan goes to Duncan, Alban catches up, getting in front of them to stop them.

ALBAN  
 HOLD BACK! Ronan, for the sake of  
 God...!

ON RONAN

Raging, holding his injured son, looking to Pike.

LT. PIKE  
 SECOND LINE!

A new line of archers steps up while the first reload.

Onchu BARKS defiantly at the English, starts toward them, others follow.

ALBAN  
 Ronan get hold! They will cut us  
 down!

Ronan grabs Onchu.

RONAN  
 Onchu stop --

DUNCAN  
 No...!

ONCHU  
 They must bleed for this!

RONAN  
 Not now.

The archers still have their weapons up, behind them the wagon and the children roll up the road and away.

ON EWAN AND ALEC

Wide eyes, staring back toward their fathers.

ON RONAN AND ONCHU

Sick with anguish, they helplessly watch their sons go out of sight.

Lt. Pike rides his horse in front of the archers, faces Ronan.

LT. PIKE

Your sons will be the Captain's guests until such time as your village brings the whale harvest to its previous abundance. You are all suspected of treachery. Any misdemeanor will carry disproportionate cost.

The Lieutenant turns his horse away.

RONAN

Lieutenant!

Lt. Pike turns back.

RONAN (CONT'D)

(with gravity)

What you are breaking here can never be repaired.

Lt. Pike looks down at Ronan without sympathy, heads back to his men.

The archers turn and march up the road behind the Lieutenant, their backs to Ronan in the ultimate act of disregard.

ONCHU

We can get ahead of them, we can attack...

DUNCAN & OTHERS

YES! Death to them...!

ALBAN

They'll kill you all.

RONAN

He's right, there are too many of them.

ONCHU

They have MY SON!

RONAN

THEY HAVE MINE TOO!

(Beat)

They are fifty Onchu. Fifty armed and trained.

Onchu turns away, venting his fury with a SCREAM. Ronan bends and pulls the arrow out of Duncan's calf.

DUNCAN

What father can stand idle and watch his son be taken?

Duncan's contempt stings. Ronan stands, watching as the last of the English soldiers cross over the peak.

INT. BLACKSMITH'S SHOP - DAY

A RED HOT IRON is lifted from the fire. Ronan holds down Duncan as Glen Douglas SEARS his wound, Duncan SCREAMS, but it's quickly over. Ilaan applies a balm.

We're in Glen Douglas' blacksmith shop, open on all sides, large table in the middle, central fire pit.

Nearly the whole village has converged outside the shop, angry voices, vengeance in the air. "Traacherous bastards!" "How many boys?" The mood grows more violent...

VOICES

Show them our steel... No, get a message to the Bruce... attack!

(cacophony rises)

DRIVE THEM OUT...!

RONAN

They have HOSTAGES...!

Ronan's booming voice silences all.

RONAN (CONT'D)

We will consider this calmly. Who speaks first?

Ronan points to an OLD MAN with a MISSING LEG.

MISSING LEG

They have 200 soldiers garrisoned at Dunnotar. How do we attack that?

Murmurs of agreement.

DUNCAN

With an alliance. If The Bruce hears of this, he will come with his army.

ALBAN

His army is engaged south of Leeds. It could be months.

DUNCAN

Then we attack the castle ourselves!

VOICES

He's right... God is with us! No...

Commotion takes over, many want vengeance. Ronan raises a hand.

RONAN

HOLD!  
 (the room quiets)  
 Alban...

ALBAN

The castle's seaside face is  
 undefended. An attack is possible.

People voice approval, Alban stands.

ALBAN (CONT'D)

But the costs would be high, there  
 would be deaths among us, and likely  
 among the boys. And even if we manage  
 to get our sons out, we can never  
 come back here. The English will  
 follow, they'll burn us to ashes.

This has a deeply sobering effect on the group.

MISSING LEG

Well what of the ransom then? There  
 must be whales out there somewhere.

All eyes turn to Ronan. Ronan takes a breath, stands.

RONAN

We have watched from the tower, we  
 have watched from boats out as far  
 as eyes see. The whales come no  
 longer to the bay.

He steps to a hand drawn map on the table, representing the  
 village, the Great Bay, and some of the ocean beyond.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Vananberg, the Old Norseman, tells  
 of whales in the White Sea. North...

He points a direction, far off the map.

RONAN (CONT'D)

The whaleboats are too small for  
 such a journey.

EACHAN

What about MacCledede's boats?

Ronan turns to a man in the group, MacCledede, who nods. He's  
 clapped on the shoulder, voices are raised in support of the  
 plan. Commotion grows again...

Ronan raises his hand for quiet, people settle down.

RONAN

No Scott has ever ventured half that distance. No one here has ever gone even a short sail from the sight of land. We would be many days beyond that. Out there, navigation is life and death, and none of us is a wayfinder.

GARRET (O.S.)

I am.

People turn, Garret stands at an entrance. People's hostility is immediately voiced...

GLEN DOUGLAS

Keep out of here, English bastard.

Glen Douglas picks up a blacksmith hammer and steps toward Garret.

GLEN DOUGLAS (CONT'D)

Where were you last night?

RONAN

Why weren't you at the feast?

GARRET

Do you want your sons back, or don't you?

Glen Douglas looks to Ronan for a cue, Ronan signals to let Garret in, regarding Garret with suspicion.

GARRET (CONT'D)

Nobody knows these seas like I do. And the White Sea is more that even I have dared. Without me, you've not a hope.

Ronan looks to Onchu and Alban. Then to Garret.

RONAN

Why would you risk this?

GARRET

I've made the offer. Have you a better one?

EXT. VILLAGE - SERIES OF SHOTS

A SERIES OF SHOTS as the larger boats are prepared...

Old fishing equipment is stripped off, oar supports are added to the gunwales, sails re-stitched.

Harpoon tips forged and sharpened, fresh water poured into skins and casks, struan wrapped in cloth, dried meat packed...

INT. RONAN'S HOME - EVENING

Ronan eats with his family. Margaret and Duncan and the two girls, with a place set for Ewan. Duncan silent, angry.

The mood is solemn. Anna doesn't really get what's going on, glancing to all the faces.

LATER

Ronan is outside, coiling a rope. It's near dark, the sky a pale orange.

Margaret approaches him.

MARGARET

Is there no other way?

He coils rope silently.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Offer another ransom, sheep, or gold...

RONAN

They have all that.

She touches his arm, he stops. Fear in her voice.

MARGARET

There's a spirit in the whale Ronan. It must be given to us. To reach out and take it, such a kill is not sacred.

She is genuinely afraid. He holds her tightly.

EXT. VILLAGE SHORE - DOCKSIDE - DAWN

Most of the village has come out to see the men off.

The two re-fitted boats are at the dock's far end, getting loaded up and ready. They are sturdy, considerably longer than the whaleboats but still narrow. They can move by oar or by sail.

Onchu approaches Ronan, who directs the loading.

ONCHU

Aye, a word.

Onchu points to Glen Douglas and son James, standing nearby.

ONCHU (CONT'D)

Glen Douglas thinks the boy shouldn't come.

RONAN

I bloody well agree with him.

ONCHU

The boy doesn't. He's kicking mad. And we could sure use him atop that mast. If you're askin' me.

Ronan thinks about this. He steps to Glen Douglas.

GLEN DOUGLAS

He's my only son, Ronan. I can't.

Ronan nods.

JAMES

Leave me behind, I'll run away, I swear it. I'll join the Bruce.

RONAN

This isn't your fight, James.

JAMES

Who's is it then? I should be in the castle dungeon too!  
(to his father)  
I'll run away father, I swear to Christ and back.

GLEN DOUGLAS

Your mouth son...

JAMES

Hog shite my mouth...  
(to Ronan)  
I'm your eyes! You need me and you know it! I'm a whaleman as much as any of you.

Ronan claps Glen Douglas on the shoulder.

RONAN

It's your decision. Make it fast.

Ronan steps away, pointing Eachan (who carries a crate) to one of the boats.

Alban approaches, carrying rolled parchments. Several of them.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
What's all this?

Alban gestures back. Garret follows, carrying still more charts, and a bulky ASTROLABE.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
So many charts for just one sea?

GARRET  
They are not charts of the sea, they are charts of the sky.

Alban and Garret continue toward the boats. Then Ronan spots Duncan, limping toward the boats with some gear.

RONAN  
Duncan...

DUNCAN  
I'm going with you.

RONAN  
You're needed here, you're staying.

Duncan flares with rage.

DUNCAN  
Don't command me! You brought us to this! Collaborating with the enemy!

RONAN  
You are not on this hunt! You will stay with your mother, and you will obey her.

DUNCAN  
Do not treat me like a CHILD!

RONAN  
Do not ACT like one!

Duncan seethes, red hot. Ronan stands unwavering.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
(gently)  
Your mother needs you. Do this for me, and on my return, you can do as you like.

DUNCAN  
And if you don't return?

Cold as ice, as if wishing it so. Ronan is not provoked.

RONAN

Your anger is your weakness. Be careful with the English.

Ronan turns away. Duncan looking after him.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHORE/DOCKSIDE - MORNING

Alban stands on the dock, before a motionless crowd. During his prayer, we take in the faces of the villagers. Rugged, frightened, determined...

ALBAN

Heavenly Father, who commands over all... Permit us who fear you to pass safely through your untamed reach.

A series of shots -- Onchu silently takes his wife's hand. Margaret wipes a tear from Anna's cheek. Glen Douglas' wife Ilaan puts a necklace on her husband for luck, a Scottish Cross made of hardwood. Then she kneels and hugs little James.

ALBAN (CONT'D)

Forgive our sins, and protect from harm all who bow to your dominion.

We finally take in the whole group of whalers, standing together at the base of the dock, holding their oars, tools and harpoons.

ALBAN (CONT'D)

We beseech you, grant success to this hunt, oh Lord, that we may serve you in peace forever. In the name of The Father...

ALL

AMEN.

Alban turns, walks the length of the dock, and gets in one of the boats.

Ronan climbs onto the dock, carrying a harpoon. He turns to the crowd, surveying them for a long moment.

RONAN

It's in God's power alone to grant us success. But it's in ours alone to deserve it.

He looks among the faces. Then he raises the harpoon over his head.

RONAN (CONT'D)

For our SONS!

The crowd lets out a triumphant YELL. Ronan turns and strides to his boat. The whalemens climb the dock, board their boats. Eight men in each.

The ropes are thrown, the last jump in. They push away, and the boats are off. Rowing, twelve oars in the water. Onchu sings a rhythm...

ONCHU

PULL your tug along.....  
HEAVE OFF your sorrows.....  
You were BORN to the salt sea...  
You'll be DYIN' the 'morrow.

ON THE OARSMEN

Pulling, watching their loved ones growing distant.

TANNER

(to Eachan)

They don't want whales, I say. They want the men gone, to have away with the women.

EACHAN

Your wife will scare them off, Tanner.

ON GARRET

Garret looks to the sun, then to the horizon.

GARRET

We won't reach the White Sea. Not if four days' drinking water is our limit.

RONAN

No one knows his limit until he's well beyond it.

INT. DUNNOTAR CASTLE - THE HOLD - DAY

The boys from the village sit and lie on the floor of a large stone room. At one end is straw for them to sleep on, at the other are crude wood pots for shitting.

Ewan and Alec are next to each other. Alec is panting with fear, Ewan concerned for him.

The heavy wood door opens, admitting two soldiers and a FRIAR in a hooded robe, carrying a switch stick. The Friar steps among the boys, looking them over.

FRIAR

You will call me "Master". You will stand when I enter, and do as I say.

Alec looks to the open door, his panic RISING. Ewan, next to him, hears him hyperventilating.

EWAN

(whispering)

Alec...

Alec BOLTS for the door.

The Friar grabs him, HEAVES him to the floor and WHIPS him with the switch. Ewan leaps to his defense, a soldier throws him into the wall.

The whipping finally stops, Alec is whimpering. The Friar turns to the boys, giving them all a fearsome look.

He leaves, followed by the soldiers. Ewan goes to Alec. The bolt on the door SLAMS home, locking them in.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

Ronan stands looking ahead, hand on the mast. Sail up and full.

Garret lines up the astrolabe, which is a metal plate marked with lines and zodiac symbols, arc segments and degree numbers. In its center is a rotating sighting tube, through which you site an object - the sun, a star - to measure its angle from the horizon.

Garret then unwinds a needle at the end of a thin string and carefully guards it from wind as it acts as a crude COMPASS.

Alban observes this, face troubled. Approaches Ronan.

ALBAN

Are we to be guided by black magic?

Ronan sees the crew, staring with suspicion. He goes to Garret.

GARRET

Point the bow against the current thus.

He points a direction.

RONAN  
Keep that out of sight.

Garret doesn't understand, then notices the crew looking at him and his compass. He puts it away, stepping aft.

COOK (35) an oarsman with a scar over one eye and a crazy stare, speaks in a whisper.

COOK  
(to Tanner)  
Witchcraft. Satan's workings.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - SUNSET - HIGH AERIAL

A great red sunset, a pallet of flat clouds, and the two boats far below us, plowing through water under a good wind.

EXT. OCEAN - ON RONAN'S BOAT - SUNSET

DEAF WILLY, a crewman with a strangely shaped head and no hair, is fishing over the stern. Garret steps back toward him, loading his pipe.

GARRET  
You don't want to create drag, it'll  
separate us from the other boat.

Deaf Willy ignores him. Garret taps his shoulder.

GARRET (CONT'D)  
You're slowing the boat, man.

Glen Douglas has the tiller, sees all this.

GLEN DOUGLAS  
He can't speak.

GARRET  
Tell him he's slowing us down.

GLEN DOUGLAS  
He can't hear either.

Garret picks up the obvious hostility.

Willy's line JERKS. He YANKS it, the line PULLS TIGHT.

GLEN DOUGLAS (CONT'D)  
GOT ONE!

Men rush to help as Willy fights against the mighty pull. Garret is pushed, nearly toppling out of the boat.

Ronan grabs him, pulling him back in.

GARRET

Thank you.

No sign of friendliness from Ronan.

Behind the boat we see a 20 pound SEA BASS leap from the water, trying to shake out the hook. The men YELL excitedly as they pull in the line, hand over hand.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT

A distant shot shows the two boats, still under sail but close to each other, one with a small fire aboard, pillar of smoke rising. Songs being sung...

ON RONAN'S BOAT

There's a small stone fire basin where a section of the fish is cooking.

Garret is holding the astrolabe, sighting it to a star. Ronan joins him.

GARRET

We'll turn due north at dawn, the wind will be against us. Oars only.

RONAN

Must we tire the men?

GARRET

We must follow the meridian, or I have no reference.

He puts the astrolabe into its box, takes up his navigation log.

RONAN

Why did you come with us?

GARRET

(sarcastic)  
For King and Glory.

Ronan stares, not accepting that answer.

GARRET (CONT'D)

Because without me, you had little hope of success. And knowing that, you would have attacked the castle.

RONAN  
So you risk your life?

GARRET  
As I would for anyone in my family.

Garret sits, looks out to sea. Ronan joins him.

GARRET (CONT'D)  
It sickens me what we've done to  
you, but it shouldn't have surprised  
me. You and I both have prospered  
by feeding the empire. And feeding  
it just makes it hungrier.

Ronan takes this in. On the distant horizon we see a dim  
FLASH of lightning.

Garret stares out at it.

RONAN  
Will that storm reach us?

Garret stands, looks down at the water, and up at the stars.

GARRET  
Lash everything down.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - ONCHU'S BOAT - HEAVY WINDS - NIGHT

The winds have turned to GALES, Onchu's men take down and  
lash the sails. The boat heaves up on a swell. Onchu calls  
to his oarsmen...

ONCHU  
Get fore with it...

The OARSMEN pull hard, fighting the swells as Onchu tries to  
pull close to Ronan's stern.

ON RONAN'S BOAT

Ronan comes astern as Onchu's boat gets within ten yards.  
Just as Ronan sees...

POV - AN ENORMOUS SWELL approaching.

RONAN  
ABOUT! PULL A-LEE...

The oarsmen on both boats turn furiously. The boats now  
SEPARATING in the dark heaving seas, the giant wave rolling  
toward them...

RONAN (CONT'D)  
Throw the line!

Onchu THROWS a coiled rope... Ronan LEAPS to catch it, landing half out the boat, Alban grabbing him by his rope belt.

Ronan gets his footing and TIES DOWN the line just as...

RONAN (CONT'D)  
PULL! GET US OVER!

The BOW points up, the OARSMEN pull... and RONAN'S boat gets over the great hump of water. Ronan looks back for Onchu...

POV - Rolling seas, no sign of Onchu's boat.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
The line! BRING IN THE LINE!

Men start pulling in the tow line, but it's slack. Ronan searches,

RONAN (CONT'D)  
ONCHU!!

Finally seeing...

A TORCH waving... fifty yards off.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
HARD OVER!

Turning the boat against a wave, almost SURFING it toward the dim fire... we see Onchu's boat disappear behind a swell, stay invisible for an interminable beat... then reappear closer...

Ronan gets close enough to throw a line, the boats are connected again...

AERIAL SHOT

The two boats pull together... tossed in the high seas like leaves in a raging river.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OCEAN - MORNING - AERIAL

The two boats push on. The seas now calm, the sky clear.

EXT. WHALEBOATS - MORNING

Men at oars. Wet and worn, but able. Ronan on the foredeck, harpoon in hand, watching the seas.

Onchu on his boat's deck, also searching.

Atop the mast of Ronan's boat is young James scanning the horizon for spray.

Alban passes around a goatskin of water. We see, under the oarsmen's benches, eight such skins...

TIME DISSOLVES

To the same shot, with only 5 skins left full.

EXT. WHALEBOATS - AFTERNOON

The oarsmen pull, more slowly. Worn by work. Garret throws a float tethered to a measured line into the water to check speed.

And Ronan stands where we left him, eyes scanning the sea like an owl over a field.

THE SUN

Descends toward the horizon.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - THE WHALEBOATS - NIGHT

It's frigid cold. Only four men at oars on each boat, the rowing happening in shifts for rest.

Food is passed, dried meat. Glen Douglas takes a slab bites.

GLEN DOUGLAS  
It's bloody frozen.

He takes a skin of water, Alban stops him.

ALBAN  
Aye, it's not time.

Glen Douglas drinks anyway. Other men protest.

EACHAN  
My tongue's flat dry too, eh?

Alban relents, passes around the skin. Finally bringing it to Ronan, who turns it down.

ALBAN  
(privately)  
We only have enough water left to get home.

RONAN  
 We cannot turn around. Make the  
 water stretch.

Glen Douglas approaches Ronan.

GLEN DOUGLAS  
 Ronan, my boy won't drink until you  
 do.

Ronan turns to see James, small and stubborn, wrapped in a  
 skin against the cold.

Ronan takes the skin, takes a small sip, hands it to James.

GLEN DOUGLAS (CONT'D)  
 (privately to Ronan)  
 This is no place for him. We should  
 turn back while...

RONAN  
 (interrupting)  
 This journey is to save all our sons,  
 not just one.

Glen Douglas, rebuffed, sits back at the bench next to Cook.

Ronan and Garret stand together to hide that they are  
 consulting the compass again. But Cook can see everything.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OCEAN - FOG - MORNING

Fog. The boats are motionless, no oars or sail moving them  
 forward. Just bobbing in the water, roped together.  
 Visibility next to none.

Garret throws out a line to check the boat's drift. Glen  
 Douglas and Cook watch him, suspicion in their eyes.

ONCHU

Crosses from the other boat onto Ronan's, steps up to meet  
 Ronan on the foredeck.

ONCHU  
 My men think fog a bad omen.

RONAN  
 Omens are for children.

Onchu pulls a small corked bottle from his cloak. He offers  
 it to Ronan.

ONCHU  
Fortifies against the cold.

Ronan takes it, and throws it into the sea.

ONCHU (CONT'D)  
Don't..!

RONAN  
We need our wits about us.

ONCHU  
All of them?

There is a sudden commotion behind them. Ronan heads astern, finding Deaf Willy on top of Tanner with a knife to Tanner's throat.

Ronan pulls Willy off, throws him down. Tanner is enraged, wants to leap on Willy but is held back.

RONAN  
What happened?

TANNER  
He's gone mad!

ALBAN  
Tanner jumped him, Willy got the better...

RONAN  
(to Tanner)  
You will go astern. NOW.

TANNER  
Turn us around, there's nothing but death out here...

RONAN  
Tanner!

TANNER  
We're already LOST! You know we are, we're LOST...

Ronan takes the knife and puts it to Tanner's throat. Tanner freezes.

RONAN  
Mind your place! Now go astern.

Tanner goes astern. Ronan looks among the crew. The faces look thirsty, tired, fearful.

And suddenly, a SOUND no one has ever heard before echoes up from the boats' hull. A deep CLICKING, like the sound of a creaking door amplified a thousand times, vibrates the boats from under their feet. (Whale echolocation.)

GLEN DOUGLAS  
Mother of God!

Commotion from all the men.

OTHERS  
What in hell? Ghosts...!

RONAN  
SET TO PLACES!

The men get up and move to their stations. Ronan steps back to Garret.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
What was that?

Garret shakes his head. Doesn't know. Then the sound bounces off the hull again, deep CLICKING vibrations...

COOK  
It's the Devil rising up...

RONAN  
QUIET!

GLEN DOUGLAS  
Turn us back!

Calls of agreement from the men.

RONAN  
If we move in this fog, we are lost!

TANNER  
I know our course!  
(pointing backwards)  
That's the way. The way we came!  
Turn around to...!

Ronan STRIKES him, Tanner falls.

RONAN  
Have you forgotten why we're here?  
(shouting to ALL)  
Have we forgotten our SONS?

Ronan looks around at the other men, who stare back with hollow eyes.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
 Let the demons in you run and we  
 will never see home again.

From the other boat, Onchu calls over.

ONCHU  
 Ronan!

Ronan turns to him, Onchu gestures ahead.

ONCHU (CONT'D)  
 Listen.

In the distance, muffled by the thick fog but clearly audible,  
 we hear a GREAT SPLASHING sound.

And then... a sudden RELEASE OF AIR, but bigger than any  
 whale's breath. At least any whale they know of.

Ronan jumps on the bow, Garret joins him.

GARRET  
 It came from there.

Garret points, off to port. They look, but in the fog can  
 only see a few yards.

RONAN  
 (privately)  
 If we move now, that direction, will  
 we lose our mark?

GARRET  
 Lose it? It's a miracle if I've  
 still got it.

Ronan looks back at his ragged crew.

RONAN  
 To OARS men!

At first, the men don't move. Even Alban is frozen in place.  
 Onchu shoves his men to their benches.

ONCHU  
 Are you ASLEEP!? OARS!!

Ronan's men raise oars. They start to pull, fear and doubt  
 on every face.

EXT. OCEAN - FOG - DAY

A blanket of gray. The PROW of a boat penetrates the fog  
 toward us...

RONAN emerges from the fog, standing alone on the foredeck. Harpoon in hand, still as a statue.

CLOSE ON RONAN

He takes in sound like a dog taking in smell. He closes his eyes...

And he hears... distantly... the splashing of water. He turns his ear to the sound... and hears - faintly - the great release of air.

RONAN

Garret!

Garret arrives, Ronan points toward the sound. Garret looks out, then notices...

GARRET

Look, the fog...

The fog seems to be clearing. Garret casts his eyes down at the water. He suddenly steps down, addressing one of his charts. Ronan sees this.

RONAN

What is it?

GARRET

The sea changed. We're in the White Sea now.

Ronan looks at the water.

RONAN

It's darker.

GARRET

That's not why they call it white.

EXT. OCEAN - OUT OF FOG - DAY

The two boats exit the curtain of fog into clear air. Ronan gets back up on the foredeck, looks out to sea.

RONAN

Put James up top!

James stands, climbs the mast. Glen Douglas watches him, full of dread.

TANNER

Have we lost our mark?

RONAN  
 QUIET! James, over there!

Points where the sounds came from. James scans ahead.

JAMES' POV

Enormous, frigid, heaving sea. No sign of whale.

Garret steps back toward the stern, when Cook suddenly jumps up with a knife...

COOK  
 WITCH!

He SLASHES at Garret, who falls back.

COOK (CONT'D)  
 It's him who leads us to hell!

Cook LUNGES, knife coming down at Garret's heart...

CAUGHT at the last second by Ronan, who punches Cook...

Glen Douglas grabs Ronan, pulling him back...

GLEN DOUGLAS  
 Let him kill the English...!

James, from above, calls down.

JAMES  
 No Papa!

Alban smashes Glen Douglas in the face. Chaos erupting as Tanner jumps Alban...

Cook grabs a HARPOON and again lunges at Garret, Ronan grabbing him...

Glen Douglas SMASHES Alban's head into the mast, attacks Ronan...

GLEN DOUGLAS  
 He'll KILL US ALL! He...

Suddenly Glen Douglas is HIT in the head with a mallet - thrown by Onchu from the other boat.

Ronan holding back Cook's harpoon, McAdam bashes Cook in the head, Cook falls. Suddenly--

JAMES  
Spray!!

They all look up, James points from the top of the mast.

Ronan hands off Glen Douglas, leaps up to the foredeck, straining to see.

RONAN

How far?

JAMES

A league, nearly...

Ronan looks, seeing... in the far distance, the plume of mist.

RONAN

Aye...

ONCHU

(Calling)

RONAN!

Ronan sees Onchu pointing, Cook is in the water, floating away face down. Ronan, caught between pursuit and rescue, makes his call.

RONAN

ABOUT..!

Men jump to their benches, turning the boat around and pulling up alongside the motionless man. Ronan reaches overboard, lifts Cook aboard with one arm.

Ronan turns him over, Cook's eyes are lifeless. Ronan slaps him, beats his chest, rubs warmth into him...

But Cook is dead, face blue. Ronan stands, looks toward the whale.

RONAN (CONT'D)

(to James)

Do you still see him?

JAMES

No!

Ronan calls to Onchu.

RONAN

ALL SPEED!

Ronan points the direction.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - WHALEMEN AT OARS - DAY

All the whalemens now pull oars, even Ronan. Garret is at the tiller, calling the charge.

GARRET

PULL! We're on him, I see him now..!  
 PULL MEN! You're going to have to  
 make speed, PULL now... reach that  
 wood over! PULL!! ...

CAMERA flies up/over to take in...

Onchu, calling his men from his tiller, his boat slamming against a swell and pushing forward on the thrust of sixteen arms as...

CAMERA LIFTS HIGHER

High over boats, we hear the men's calls as it's overtaken by the cold arctic wind. Empty sea all around.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - RONAN'S WHALEBOAT - AFTERNOON

The men have stopped rowing, James up the mast, searching the sea and horizon. Ronan searching from the foredeck.

They have lost the whale.

JAMES

I need to come down.

Ronan waves the ok. James descends from his perch, looks at his mutinous father with disappointment as he takes a tiny sip of water.

ON FOREDECK

Garret steps to Ronan, who searches ahead.

GARRET

We have to turn back.

Ronan finally, reluctantly, nods. Accepting defeat.

AND THE CAMERA sinks underwater

Down... down... darker... hundreds of feet... thousands...

We hear a series of otherworldly sounds... the CLICKING again... we see a dot, pale gray... growing bigger

Emerging from the black, a WHALE swims up toward us... rising from the deep, something unearthly in his toothed jaws. As he WHOOSHES past us...

CUT TO RONAN

Sensing something. Turning...

RONAN

Oh God...

SLOW MOTION from Ronan's POV...

THE WHALE BREECHES - launching most of his 90 FOOT LENGTH into the air... in his jaws writhes a GIANT SQUID...

RONAN transfixed, everyone staring in awe... Each man... mouth open... the whale's enormous form nearly blotting out the sun, then tipping and SLAMMING down on the water with incredible force, killing the squid like a bug.

The SPLASHDOWN creates a huge wave, Ronan breaks the trance just in time...

RONAN (CONT'D)

HOLD FAST!

Everyone grabs hold of something as the WAVE nearly swamps both boats.

For a moment after the boats settle, there is stunned silence.

JOHN KEY

Sweet MARY... He's a *mountain*!

TANNER

He's fifteen lengths!

OTHERS

More than that! It's a demon! We're to kill that? That's no whale...

Commotion grows...

RONAN

(booming voice)

It IS a whale.

The rabble goes quiet. Both boats are together, both crews equally shocked.

Ronan looks after the whale. It swims away slowly, a jet of SPRAY blows from his head.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Look at the spray, it's forward.  
And the size of his head... that's a  
Bull whale.

It is what we call a SPERM WHALE, it has an enormous block of a head, like a great fist, fully one third of his massive body. He measures almost 90 feet. Well over twice the length of the boats. The flukes of the great tail are nearly twenty feet tip to tip.

He blows another spray and disappears under the wash.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Empty sea we've had, days of it.  
And now we find a beast large enough  
to satisfy - at one stroke - even  
the King's lust.

(pointing toward the  
whale)

Two hundred casks of oil is swimming  
away from us.

There are murmurs and looks among the men, the most they have ever gotten from one whale is 40.

ONCHU

How do we kill something like that?

Ronan pauses a beat.

RONAN

Both boats have to spear him at once  
and hold fast. We cannot be  
separated. This whale may swim half  
a day before he tires. But he will  
tire. And then we take him.

Ronan steps among the men, looking at each of their strained faces.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Maybe no man has seen a beast this  
big, nor ever hunted one. But if  
there are men on this Earth who can  
subdue him, they are here, on these  
boats.

There is doubt all around him, even on the faces of Onchu and Alban.

RONAN (CONT'D)

If we turn away now and make a run  
to safety, then the English own us  
(MORE)

RONAN (CONT'D)  
 all. But if together, we give our  
 full strength to this hunt, we win  
 our sons back, and our honor. And  
 no one will ever forget the whalemens  
 of Till.

The men are stirred and moved.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
 I cannot command this. If there is  
 doubt in any of you, it will too  
 easily kill us all. We must advance  
 together, or retreat.

There's a moment of silence.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
 Onchu? What say?

ONCHU  
 What about drinking water?

RONAN  
 Once we have him, we have his blood.  
 We can live on that for days.

Onchu nods, convinced.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
 What about you Key?

JOHN KEY  
 I'm not turning tail on a fish, no  
 matter how big.

Ronan looks to Garret, who nods.

RONAN  
 Eachan?

EACHAN  
 Agh. I can't go home empty handed.  
 I'll never hear the end of it.

Each man in turn says Aye, all the way down to Glen Douglas  
 and Tanner. Ronan looks at them.

RONAN  
 It's to you.

Tanner and Glen Douglas look at each other.

GLEN DOUGLAS

If we say Aye, will you forget what we did?

RONAN

No, I won't. But I'll leave the matter to God's judgment.

Glen Douglas and Tanner look at each other. Then they nod.

Ronan nods to them. He stands on the foredeck. He looks at them with his burning eyes for a beat, then...

RONAN (CONT'D)

Onchu, take up your rope. Pike, RAISE SAILS!

SERIES OF SHOTS as the two boats separate and get under sail.

AERIAL SHOT

The boats run parallel, mist blowing off choppy seas. Ronan steps back to man the tiller.

CAMERA RISES UP - MOVES FORWARD TOWARD WHALE

The whale is majestic, enormous. Pushing slowly and evenly ahead, ignorant of his pursuers... or indifferent.

The whale's FLUKES are wide, dark and beautifully symmetrical. Waving up and down like a hand held fan.

FLYING CLOSE - OVER AND AROUND WHALE

His dark gray skin pocked, lined and scarred like ancient rock, his blowhole, two feet long and shaped like an "S" jets forth a great plume of ice crystals into the frigid air. His small eye, like a tiny window in the stone face of a great castle. His midsection the texture of a redwood tree's bark.

It is as if this being is as ancient and timeless as the earth. Not just a thing of nature, but holy nature herself.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - RONAN'S BOAT

Eachan finishes a prayer in a melodic Scottish dialect.

ON COOK'S BODY

Wrapped and weighted, it is dropped overboard and sinks. The men watch it disappear.

Ronan steps past the crewmen who each lash down loose items and secure things in place, readying for the battle to come.

EXT. OCEAN - AERIAL

The boats TURNING into the wind, tacking toward the whale... The wind fills their sails again, they pick up speed, pounding against the North Sea's waves, bearing down on the prey.

IN THE BOATS

Men move fast, each to a task... ship oars, lash down supplies, coil the rope, move it to the foredeck... the harpoons come out... the leather caps come off...

RONAN

On the deck, eyes on his massive prey... The WHALE blowing spray, now only 25 yards or so off.

ONCHU'S BOAT

Now CUTTING across the whale's wake behind its great tail and...

ONCHU

ABOUT!

Turning up into the wind to parallel with him...

RONAN

ABOUT! To OARS!

Ronan's boat also turns into the wind, parallel to the whale. The men pull oars out swiftly, and PULL toward the whale at good speed.

ONCHU

Has his harpoon ready, his boat moving past the whale's great fearsome tail.

RONAN

On the other side of the whale, pulling up to the midsection of the enormous beast, it's form rising for breath.

ONCHU THROWS, it HITS FLESH and sinks in.

ONCHU

AWAY!

Onchu's boat veers away as...

RONAN throws, also a deep hit, his boat veers away...

THE WHALE THRASHES... both crews let out line...

RONAN

UNCOIL...!

Line spins around the mast of Ronan's boat, waves crash into the hull... the boats dropping back, giving distance...

The whale picks up speed, the boats reach their rope's limit and are YANKED forward, dangerously close to the mighty tail as the whale corkscrews and tangles line...

ONCHU

RONAN!

Ronan sees Onchu pointing... Onchu's rope has snagged around the whale's tail, and when the great fluke pushes under, the boat is pulled down dangerously near the waterline...

RONAN shouts back to his crew...

RONAN

Set COIL, we're going to DART HIM  
AGAIN!

A flurry of activity on Ronan's boat as...

ONCHU tries to free his line, which now SNAGS on the bow guide... and the thick wooden guide BREAKS from the whale's pull, freeing the rope...

Which DRAGS down the gunwale PULLING the boat off angle... Deaf Willy dives under it just in time, but it hits Eachan and knocks him down as...

The boat is turning sideways, it will capsize and swamp if it goes broadside...

ONCHU

(to Deaf Willy, re:  
the bow guide)

Hammer that back!

Onchu dashes aft to the tiller, pulling it with all his might against the pull of the whale...

ONCHU (CONT'D)

TAKE IT... TAKE THE STICK!

Eachan takes it, pulling... Onchu grabs a hatchet and gets ready to cut the line...

ON RONAN

Standing on his bow, his men PULLING IN the line to get closer to the whale...

THE WHALE is double the length of the boat, and Ronan is awed as its HUGE form rises out of the water, and keeps rising and rising, throwing a SHADOW over Ronan...

RONAN

God help me...

Ronan THROWING the harpoon, sinking it in the whale's side...

RONAN (CONT'D)

AWAY!!

Alban pulls the tiller, veering off

THE WHALE'S TAIL thrashes down... the whale corkscrews again... throwing a mad turbulent wake off... RONAN drops to the deck to avoid getting thrown over by the force of the wave... THE WHALE DIVING back under...

ONCHU

RONAN!!

Onchu's boat TIPS... The tangled tail pulling it down... in one second his boat and men are lost.

RONAN

CUT IT!! CUT THE LINE!!

Onchu fights forward and CUTS the line. His boat rights back up, falling behind FAST as the whale and Ronan pull away...

ON RONAN

Raising another harpoon... this will be the throw to end all throws. He HEAVES THE HARPOON with a great SCREAM...

The flying harpoon's line is connected to the harpoon Ronan just sank in the whale. It sails through the air...

And STICKS IN ONCHU'S MAST! ONCHU cuts the line from it, pulls in the slack and coils it around the mast as fast as he can...

ONCHU

LINE THE GUIDE!

Deaf Willy is just finishing hammering the bow guide back together, runs the line through at the last second as it starts to pull TIGHT, praying it holds...

ONCHU (CONT'D)

HOLD FAST!

The line pulls tight, and the boat is YANKED into motion...  
THE BOW GUIDE HOLDS --- Blind Willy lets out a shout...

EXCEPT Onchu's veering toward Ronan's boat and about to RAM...

ONCHU (CONT'D)

TATUM!

Tatum pulls on the tiller, men leap to, using oars to keep  
the HULLS from ramming into each other... Tatum gets control  
of his tiller back..

And the crazy ride is on - 30 knots in high sub-arctic seas  
pulled by a 60 ton giant. Smashing on waves...

Ronan looks around...

RONAN

We have everyone?

Alban nods. Ronan moves to Garret, not easy with the boat  
crashing along... Garret grips his bench tight, having never  
been on one of these rides. Ronan LAUGHS, Garret smiles  
with it, then his face goes dark...

GARRET

Look!

RONAN'S POV

The whale is pulling us toward an enormous pair of ICEBERGS.  
Ronan hoists himself to the foredeck for a better look, Alban  
and Garret joining him.

GARRET (CONT'D)

That's why they call it the White  
Sea.

HIS POV - THE ICEBERGS

Two mountains of ice, burning red in the low sun. Multiple  
smaller ice SHARDS poke up from the water between the two  
main peaks. Like he's being dragged into a jaw of monstrous  
JAGGED teeth, already spattered with blood.

No question, the whale is heading right toward it.

EXT. AERIAL SHOT - BOATS, WHALE, ICEBERGS

High over the boats and whale we FLY FORWARD to study the  
icebergs... DROPPING between the peaks, getting a good look  
at how treacherous this gauntlet is, we DIVE...

UNDERWATER

To see the vast mountain of ice beneath, and the shards pushing up, leaving only one path with no room for error.

BACK ON RONAN

Already making preparations... tying a rope around his waist, the other end to the mast, a lifeline to hold him to the boat...

ON ONCHU'S BOAT

Onchu also tethering himself, Tatum as spotter moving onto the foredeck, Onchu and Deaf Willy with oars behind him to fend off ice shards... and the other boat.

ON RONAN

Stepping on the foredeck, when young James approaches.

JAMES

Let me.

RONAN

No, sit with your father.

JAMES

No one has a better eye, or quicker call. You're needed at the side.

Ronan looks to Glen Douglas, so does James.

Glen Douglas nods.

Ronan puts a line around James' waist and helps him to the foredeck, ready to be the spotter.

Ronan grabs an oar, the whale pulls them toward the ice, closer and closer the jaws of fate close. The sun dipping under the horizon, sky darkening quickly.

Glen Douglas watching the looming towers of ice approach. Tanner mumbling prayers, a genuflection. On the other boat, Onchu sets himself, pulls from his belt the STRAW MAN his wife gave him as keepsake and kisses it, puts it away.

TATUM CALLS OUT, POINTING

TATUM

LEEWARD!

Onchu jams the oar down, pushing off the tongue of ice hiding just under the water...

## A SERIES OF SHOTS

Both spotters calling out, Ronan pushing off the passing walls of ice, Alban at the helm suddenly steering us off as James calls a hazard dead ahead.

The WHALE looming up high out of the water, then diving back under in a seeming attempt to create turbulence... the boats bashing into each other, men belaying off to avoid cracking the hulls...

JAMES  
THERE! THERE!

Ronan's boat scrapes over an ice peak underwater, a CRACK in the hull, water sprays in, the boat JERKING to one side, JAMES TUMBLING OVERBOARD, his lifeline pulls tight...

Ronan sees James go over, drops his oar and leaps to grab James' line as...

RONAN  
God NO...!

The boat mercilessly SLAMS ice on James' side, a sickening crunch... James wedged... a weak scream snuffs quickly.

The ice passes, Ronan pulls James up, limp and crushed.

## ON GLEN DOUGLAS

Seeing his son's body crushed lifeless... he SCREAMS in agony and rushes to him.

Ronan looks ahead, another jagged ice ledge about to hit, he grabs an oar...

RONAN (CONT'D)  
GET THEM AFT...

Ronan leaps to the foredeck, no lifeline, spotting and fending off ice in the spray...

## AERIAL SHOT

The whale pulls all the way through the gauntlet, leaving the ice behind. Soon the boats are also clear, but still crashing against waves at high speed.

Ronan jumps to the deck, looks at the water leaking from the crack in the hull.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
(shouting to Alban)  
Do we have any pitch?

ALBAN  
We can't heat it. Not moving like  
this.

Ronan looks to Onchu's boat. They are battered, but still  
in one piece.

Then he looks down at James, dead on the deck in a pool of  
bloody water. Glen Douglas stares down at his son.

GARRET  
He's turning!

RONAN looks, the whale is swimming a leeward arc. Sperm  
whales don't turn sharply when swimming flat out, but it's  
soon clear...

RONAN  
He's taking us back through the ice.

GARRET  
One more hit, we're done.

Ronan looks to the hand ax... considering the unthinkable.

ON GLEN DOUGLAS

He looks toward the whale, face white. Removing his Scottish  
cross necklace, placing it in his son's dead hands.

ON AX

Ronan removes the ax, approaches the mast where the whale  
line is tied down. All eyes on him. About to cut...

TANNER  
Douglas!!

Tanner points to the bow where GLEN DOUGLAS has climbed onto  
the rope and is pulling himself toward the whale.

ON GLEN DOUGLAS

As he's dunked under the frigid water, holding on to the  
rope. He emerges, SCREAMING out his breath, and pulls another  
few feet before being dunked again.

TANNER (CONT'D)  
(calling)  
Come back man, you're just killing  
yourself.

GLEN DOUGLAS  
My boy's blood -- on ME! His BLOOD!!

Foot after tortured foot he pulls, powered by rage and revenge and guilt. Rising full out of the water, pulling hand over hand even as his hands become too numb to use...

He passes the great tail, thrice his size, which nearly hits him as it pushes water and they all GO UNDER...

ON RONAN and all hands... both boats watching in horror as this vengeful father summons strength no man could possibly muster unless blinded by primal rage...

Glen Douglas reaches the harpoon's end, pulls a knife from his belt and STABS into the whale's back, SCREAMING...

RONAN AND GARRET

Watching from the pitching deck as Glen Douglas and the whale go under water again...

GARRET

God help him...

But the whale surfaces, and Glen Douglas still clings to his back, using a knife in each hand to climb his side like a mountaineer with two ice axes.

He reaches the abandoned harpoon... the one with the line Onchu had to cut. Glen Douglas kneels and grips it as the whale starts to go under again, he pushes with all his might... screaming... crying...

GLEN DOUGLAS

DEATH TAKE US BOTH!

And PLUNGES the harpoon deep into the whale's body as the WATER hits him and he FLAILS backward down the whale's back...

The whale DIVES, his huge tail flipping out of the water and FLINGING Glen Douglas in the air like a doll...

He FLIES BACKWARD with enormous force... TOWARD THE BOAT..

And CRASHES INTO Garret, SLAMMING him into the gunwale and pitching him overboard as Glen Douglas's cracks his head on the mast and spins and splatters overboard himself.

Ronan GRABS THE lifeline and LEAPS into the water, GRABBING Garret by his collar.

RONAN

Pull! PULL!

The men pull him in, lifting him and Garret into the boat... Garret SCREAMING... his leg covered in blood... a JAGGED BONE sticking out of the skin of his thigh.

Ronan gets to his feet, freezing...

Glen Douglas's body face down in the water, Tanner arrives at the stern with a lifeline and inflated sheep bladder float, throws it out to him.

ON GLEN DOUGLAS

The rope falls across his arm, the bladder just after. But he's motionless.

TANNER  
TAKE IT!! TAKE IT MAN!!

As the whaleboat is still being pulled away, the rope pulls off Glen Douglas's arm, the bladder float passes over him. Glen Douglas is dead.

ON TANNER

Watching the body disappear in the dark.

ON GARRET

On the deck, unconscious. Losing blood in gushes. Alban tying a tourniquet.

Ronan looks at the bone, his left femur is punched through the skin, like a broken pencil.

RONAN  
Can you set that?

Alban shakes his head.

ALBAN  
It's tied off. That will hold it.

They hear a shout from Onchu's boat...

ONCHU  
He SLOWS...

Ronan looks ahead. In all the commotion he hadn't noticed that the whale has slowed, nearly to a stop. Rivers of blood bubble down his back.

Ronan, still out of breath and shivering.

RONAN  
Let's take him.

EXT. OCEAN ALONGSIDE WHALE - DUSK

The whale is now nearly motionless. His own great breath fast, shallow, labored...

Ronan pulls his boat up alongside him.

The sea is lit by a nearly full moon, the icebergs reflect light like an unearthly Everest, the sky spread with stars by the thousands, the horizon a Northern glow.

ON WHALE

As Ronan pulls up. Still cautious.

Alban approaches, hands Ronan a lance... different than a harpoon, it's tip is small and sharp, to go deep.

ON WHALE EYE

Near the waterline, Ronan sees the whale's eye, which looks back at him. They seem to regard each other for a long moment.

Ronan looks into the whale's eye. Getting lost in it.

ALBAN

Why do you wait?

Ronan comes out of his trance.

RONAN

Ready...

Simultaneously they THRUST their lances...

DISSOLVE TO:

CLOSE ON - LUMINOUS WHITE ICE - CRACKED BY AN AX

EXT. ICEBERG - NIGHT

Onchu and Tatum are on one of the icebergs, using the ax to chip off big chunks of ice.

BEHIND THEM

Ronan's boat has a fire going, pitch boiling in a bucket, the crack in the hull being repaired.

ON THE ICEBERG

Another fire. Tanner melting ice down into water, Deaf Willy re-filling their skins.

Everyone works in silence. Whether it's the cold, their exhaustion, or the shock of their ordeal, no one speaks.

ON THE WHALE

Its small side flippers hooked with metal hoops, lashed with rope, the other end tied to the boats.

LIGHT

Starts to flicker across the whole scene, colors of orange and blue... reflecting especially off the white ice.

Ronan stands in the boat, notices light all round...

POV - AURORA BOREALIS

The sky is alive with spectrographic color. Flaring out like a cosmic wildfire over the horizon.

ON THE WHALEMEN

Staring, transfixed. Awe-struck. Tanner drops to his knees.

TANNER

It's the Lord Host himself!

ONCHU

We've gone far, but we haven't gone *that* far.

RONAN

It's his spirit. Entering heaven.

ONCHU

Whose?

Ronan gestures to the whale.

ALBAN

(Righteous)  
Only Man has a soul.

RONAN

So he likes to believe.

GARRET (O.S.)

(weakly)  
Ronan...

EXT. ICEBERG FLAT - ON GARRET

Garret is lying on a flat area of ice, a roll under his head, his broken leg exposed.

Ronan kneels, lifts his head holding a steaming cup of hot water.

RONAN  
Here, drink.

Garret drinks, obviously in great pain.

GARRET  
We must take a bearing.

Garret swallows more water, wincing as he sits up and looks around.

GARRET (CONT'D)  
The point star, in the constellation  
of the bear... the brightest one.

RONAN  
I see it, yes.

Ronan and Onchu look, spot it.

GARRET  
Keep it over your back thus.

He uses his hand to show the angle.

GARRET (CONT'D)  
Where the sun rises should be lee  
and rear. When the sea changes,  
you'll need me again.

Ronan nods to Garret.

RONAN  
Good. Now rest.

But Garret looks down at his leg.

GARRET  
The ax... you have to use it.

It takes a beat for Ronan to understand.

RONAN  
I can't...

GARRET  
A clean cut, through the bone. Then  
tie it off.

RONAN  
NO!

GARRET  
I'll die if you don't!

Ronan looks to his men, they look to him.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ICEBERG - NIGHT

Out of the fire comes the red hot AX. Tatum carries it over, hands it to Ronan.

RONAN  
Put the block under.

Onchu places a plank under Garret's leg. Garret SCREAMS as it's moved. Onchu gives Garret a stick to bite.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
Ready?

Garret nods. The men hold down Garret's arms and shoulders and legs. Ronan preys, raises the hatchet...

And chops down hard... Garret SCREAMS, biting down on the stick. We hear THREE CHOPS of the hatchet... Garret's screams swallowed by the cold wind.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OUTDOOR OVEN OUTSIDE ALBAN'S HOUSE - DAWN

Margaret and Emma are removing "struan" from a free standing brick oven behind Alban's house. Struan is a Scottish bread, dense and made to be a full meal.

Margaret places three loaves in a woven basket, covers them with cloth. Emma picks it up and heads off.

EXT. HILLSIDE APPROACHING RONAN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Emma is walking up the hill, she doesn't notice a soldier by the tree line, watching her. This is SGT. QUINN, a bull of a man. He follows.

EXT. BEHIND RONAN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Emma reaches the kitchen area, puts down the basket. Only now does she notice Quinn, blocking her exit.

EMMA  
Food will come presently.

QUINN  
Not hungry.

Emma tries to slip past him, he blocks her way. He tries to grab her, she ducks it and SLAMS his face with her elbow, Quinn staggers back a step but GRABS again. She lets out a scream, he stifles it with his thick hand.

Quinn is suddenly STRUCK FROM BEHIND.

It's Duncan, stick in hand. Emma slips out of Quinn's grip, she SCREAMS --

EXT. OUTDOOR OVEN OUTSIDE ALBAN'S HOUSE - MORNING

Margaret hears the scream, starts running up the hill.

BACK TO SCENE

Quinn draws his broadsword, advancing on the two of them fast.

Duncan and Emma run around to the front of the house, Duncan still limping, FALLS.

Quinn steps closer, getting ready to strike.

LT. PIKE

Sergeant!

Sgt. Quinn stops, seeing Lt. Pike arrive on horseback, dismounting.

QUINN

He attacked me sir!

DUNCAN

Your pig hands were all over her!

Duncan swings the short staff at Quinn.

IN A FLASH Lt. Pike draws his sword, blocks Duncan's attack.

LT. PIKE

(To Duncan)

You forget your place!

DUNCAN

It's you that's out of place English!

Margaret jumps between them.

MARGARET

Duncan, drop your staff!

DUNCAN

I will NOT!

She turns on him with a fury we haven't seen from her.

MARGARET  
YOU WILL BEG HIS FORGIVENESS!

Duncan shocked by her anger.

MARGARET (CONT'D)  
You have not born suffering enough  
to risk your life for anything as  
petty as your *pride*!

She stares at him, the love behind her rage clear to him.  
Duncan hears his father's last words .

Duncan drops his stick. Bows his head.

DUNCAN  
I must ask for mercy. I came upon  
him *taking*...

Lt. Pike hushes him. Then slowly sheathes his sword.

LT. PIKE  
For striking a soldier, ten lashes.

QUINN  
(protest)  
With respect, sir! Execution is...

LT. PIKE  
(to Quinn)  
Touch the girl again, you'll get the  
whip too. Follow me.

Lt. Pike gives Margaret an admiring look as he leaves. Quinn follows, staring death at Duncan.

EXT. OUTSIDE BLACKSMITH - LATER

Duncan grimaces as the LASH hits his shirtless back.

Three soldiers administer the punishment, villagers watching.  
Margaret wincing with the next CRACK.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OCEAN - DAY

AERIAL shot shows the two boats, sails up, oars rowing, towing the huge whale behind them.

ON RONAN

Looking ahead, the vast featureless ocean and horizon staring at him.

Then behind, at his men rowing, his friend Garret propped up against a bench, and the great whale in tow behind.

Garret stirs, Ronan goes to him, offering water from one of the full skins.

RONAN

Drink...

Garret sips, his eyes focus on Ronan.

GARRET

How long?

RONAN

Half the daylight.

Garret is gaunt. He coughs, changes his position, a painful process. Then he looks to the sky.

GARRET

Bring the sun to descend along this aspect.

Points an arc from the sun, downward to a spot on the horizon off the port bow. Ronan offers another drink, he refuses.

GARRET (CONT'D)

You know why I hate them calling you 'fisherman'?

RONAN

Why?

GARRET

Because fish is this...  
 (he gestures putting  
 food in his mouth)  
 Whale is *this*...  
 (he points to his  
 heart)

He coughs, the cough sounds bad.

RONAN

Rest now.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. OCEAN - AFTERNOON

The boats pull, sails now down. A cold RAIN falling.

Ronan is now on one of the oars, soaked to the skin through his cloak. Pulling... pulling...

Alban at the tiller, facing a gray featureless horizon.

ALBAN

Ronan!

Ronan passes the oar to John Key, who had been resting.

ALBAN (CONT'D)

I can't see the sun.

Ronan looks out. Everything is uniform, monochromatic.

ALBAN (CONT'D)

Should we stop?

RONAN

We can't stop.

MUSIC UP -- A SEQUENCE OF SCENES

Takes us through the night and following day.

NIGHT -- Garret in a delirious half consciousness, Ronan giving him water, looking up... The great dome of STARS overhead turn in time lapse, dizzying. DAWN coming...

EXT. OCEAN - DAWN - MUSIC SEQUENCE

Deaf Willy throws his fishing hook off the side, as - on the other boat - A fatigued Ronan wakes and takes the oars.

Tanner looking at his hands, seeing bloody blisters. He wraps them in cloth, keeps rowing.

Onchu breaking up a fight between exhausted McAdam and Tatum.

Deaf Willy hooks a big fish in Onchu's boat... which the crews have to eat raw, having burned all the wood & oil.

The ICY blood on their mouths and beards make them look like stone age savages. Like animals.

MUSIC ENDS.

EXT. OCEAN - DUSK

Sun low. The men rowing. Even with sails full it's slow.

At the tiller, Ronan notices it first... the CLICKING.

He looks to the whale, making sure it has not magically come to life.

The CLICKING comes again. Same clicking we've heard before, only more of it.

Alban and the men have stopped rowing and are watching him.

RONAN

Keep rowing.

Ronan moves forward, spotting...

The SPRAY of a whale, twenty yards off. Then another... and another.

It's a pod of sperm whales, five or so. Considerably smaller than our catch, but still massive.

The CLICKING echoes from below. The men are spooked.

RONAN

Scanning with a wary eye. They may be smaller, but they could easily destroy these boats if they chose to.

Ronan takes up his harpoon, holding it ready in case of attack. Onchu doing the same on his boat...

RONAN'S POV

The whales seem to be curious, gliding parallel with the boats, observing.

On all sides now, a shot of spray is joined by two, three, four more. There are ten whales, then twenty, all around the two boats. The CLICKING resonating through the whole ocean.

The men feel surrounded. Ronan readies his weapon as a pair of whales comes closer. A JET of spray close by startles the men and they cling to the gunwales preparing to be rammed.

One comes near. Ronan and the whale make EYE CONTACT.

THE WHALE'S EYE

Ancient, other worldly, calm, curious. Not threatening.

RONAN

In his wet cloak and bloody, partially frozen beard, gripping his barbed weapon.

The whale swims slowly off. Ronan lowers the harpoon.

He looks back at his frightened, exhausted men. Wild-eyed and ragged.

He stares at them for a beat, their humanity stripped away.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Keep rowing.

The men pick up their oars, pulling against the sea.

Ronan returns to the tiller, sitting next to Alban.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Look what's been taken from us.  
Look what we've become.

Alban and Ronan look out to the pod of whales.

The pod drifts alongside, graceful, calm. Simply witnessing.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RONAN'S HOME - NIGHT

A fire outside Ronan's home, Duncan sharpens a sword. A real one this time.

Margaret and Emma approach from down the hill, carrying baskets of wool. Duncan barely notices them. He stares into the fire, his mind in a dark place.

Margaret goes inside.

EMMA

Duncan...

He looks up, but doesn't speak to her.

EMMA (CONT'D)

This is consuming you.

Margaret comes back out, puts her hand on Emma, bidding her to leave. Emma slowly moves off, looking back at her beloved.

Margaret sits by the fire. Duncan sharpens the blade.

MARGARET

At the new moon, if your father is not back, I will not hold you.

DUNCAN

He is dead. I know it.

MARGARET

You fear it. And your fear is becoming anger and hurt pride is now vengeance.

(MORE)

MARGARET (CONT'D)

And vengeance will next become war,  
and then more fear and more vengeance  
and on and on.

He stops sharpening.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Your fathers built a place outside  
all that. It's in you too, somewhere.

She puts something on the ground in front of Duncan. The  
COAT OF ARMS mold.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

It was to be the McColough coat of  
arms. Your grandfather passed it to  
Ronan before the sea took him. Now,  
it goes to you.

Duncan looks up at her, tears running down her face.

MARGARET (CONT'D)

Be worthy of it.

She slowly stands and exits, leaving him with the Coat of  
Arms, its shapes seeming alive in the flickering light.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN -- RAIN - NIGHT

A cold heavy rain, seas are turbulent. It's not a violent  
storm, just your average bitch of a squall. But to them,  
it's a curse. The sails are down, and the men fight at the  
oars.

Ronan is on the tiller. LIGHTNING flashes, a sharp clap of  
THUNDER.

Tanner's blisters are so bad he now has both hands wrapped  
in bloody cloth. We see most others have this too.

RONAN

Alban!

Alban puts down the oar, climbs over benches to reach Ronan.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Take a man, bail the boat.

Alban nods, grabs Key, handing him a bucket.

Alban bails water next to Garret, who lies propped against  
the hull. Alban lifts his hand, looks at it.

It's bloody.

CUT TO:

MOMENTS LATER - NIGHT

Ronan has a TORCH in his hand, hissing with the rain. He looks at the severed leg, wrapped and tied, but bleeding out. Garret is white as a ghost, unconscious.

Ronan ties a leather cord around the low thigh and ties a stick through the knot, twisting it to choke off the blood. He ties down the stick.

ALBAN

If he dies, do we have any chance of finding our way?

Ronan doesn't answer, he looks to the sky, the sea.

EXT. OCEAN - NIGHT/ PREDAWN

The squall has passed, though the clouds are still thick. The glow of dawn just visible over the bow.

Thin crew rowing, four per boat. The rest of the men asleep. Including Ronan. He is shaken awake.

JOHN KEY

Ay Ronan.

Ronan sits up, Key points. Ronan looks to the glow of the horizon. We don't know what he sees, but it's bad.

Ronan shakes Alban, who wakes up.

RONAN

Up man. The storm turned us around.

Alban stands, looks to sky and sea.

ALBAN

That's not all.

He points at the ocean itself, which is now green instead of black as it has been since before they hooked the whale.

ALBAN (CONT'D)

(re: Garret)

It's time.

Ronan and Alban kneel to Garret. Ronan puts water on his hand, wipes it on Garret's lips. No response.

RONAN

Garret...

He wipes his whole face with water, gives him a drink. Garret opens his eyes, says something in a parched mumble.

Ronan gives him another drink.

RONAN (CONT'D)

What did you say man?

GARRET

I've been watching...

Ronan and Alban look at each other.

RONAN

Garret, the sea. It's changed.

Garret motions to have a look. Ronan and Alban each take a shoulder, lift him to sit on the foredeck.

Garret sees the sun starting to peak up over the horizon.

GARRET

How long have we been going this way?

RONAN

I don't know, less than a half night.

He looks at the sky. He can see the dim quarter moon, a few stars.

GARRET

(gathering strength)  
Get me my charts.

Garret seems to come back to life, a SERIES OF SHOTS show the crew looking on as Garret sights with the astrolabe, looks through charts, has Alban check the depth of the water with a sink line...

CUT TO:

FULL SHOT -- ANCIENT SEA CHART - DAY

Latin script, zodiac symbols. Curved lines for currents and winds, presumed mythic beasts, star positions and moon phases.

Garret's finger points.

GARRET

We are there. By best reckonings.  
This is our course.

He brings the finger up off the map and points off the stern.

GARRET (CONT'D)

We come about. The sun travels in this arc, keep it to lee, let it set there, thirty degrees off lee. That's how you run her days. Nights are easier if it's clear. I'll show you...

He now gestures to be put back down on the deck, to rest. Ronan gives him a drink of water. The effort is draining.

RONAN

You rest...

GARRET

I'm alright,  
(private)  
Ronan, we are far from land. Still three days.

RONAN

Three days?

GARRET

Maybe four.

ALBAN

We have water for one!

GARRET

And you could make it in one - if you cut free the whale.

ON TANNER & KEY

On the other boat, Tanner looks toward the whale.

TANNER

See that?

JOHN KEY

Oy?

Tanner points. The whale's back end is getting pushed over to one side. Key's too exhausted to care.

Then Tanner sees the fins.

SHARK FINS. Four of them, swimming around the whale's rear half. Tanner stands.

TANNER

Shark!

Onchu comes to Tanner, who points.

TATUM  
See there! We are cursed...

Onchu pushes him to the bench.

ONCHU  
Shut your hole and row.

Onchu calls to Ronan, pointing

ONCHU (CONT'D)  
Ronan!

RONAN

Sees the back of the whale pushed askew, then sees a shark swimming toward the whale from behind, and behind him...

A dozen more FINS

A school of TIGER SHARKS, drawn by the scent, coming at the whale from behind. A total of fifteen or so.

The sharks swirl and circle, attacking the carcass, tearing into it viciously, then swimming off with flesh waving from their jaws like gift ribbon.

One swims off, another attacks. Primitive, efficient, an assembly line of teeth, slowly picking apart the prize.

ON RONAN

He's joined by Alban.

ALBAN  
More will come. They'll pick us clean.

Ronan sees the men have stopped rowing to look, helpless to stop the decimation.

ON GARRET

Pulling himself up onto the foredeck to look over the stern.

RONAN  
We have to drive them off.  
(to the other boat)  
Onchu! Take our rope.

Ronan pulls the tether line, drawing the two boats together, he unhooks the whale line from the mast and passes it to Onchu, freeing his boat.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Right, ABOUT!

They turn their boat around and head to the whale's back half.

As they approach the sharks, Alban and Ronan thrust harpoons at them.

The sharks evade easily, swimming to another part of the whale, and going to work on that.

RONAN shouts orders, the boat maneuvers toward them, the sharks just disperse, staying out of reach.

ON GARRET

He sees the sharks evade Ronan, watches Ronan try to drive them away, to no avail. The sharks are winning.

Garret removes a necklace from his neck, a ring from his finger, placing them carefully down on the foredeck. He picks up the hand ax.

He takes a deep breath. Looking at the sky, the sun, as if for the last time. Then Garret falls out of frame.

ON RONAN

Still trying to drive off sharks, the futility of his effort clear to all, even to him...

TANNER

Ay! The wayfinder!

Ronan looks back... Garret has gone over the side.

RONAN

The sheet, give the sheet!

Ronan rushes over, grabs the line and JUMPS IN THE WATER. He swims toward Garret.

GARRET

Stay away...

Garret pushes him off.

RONAN

What are you doing?

Ronan tries to grab him, Garret SWINGS the ax at him.

GARRET  
Keep your bow pointed into the paw  
of the Great Bear at night.

Ronan tosses the line to him.

RONAN  
Take the rope!

GARRET  
Dawn is as it was this morning, you  
remember?

RONAN  
Grab the rope!

GARRET  
DO YOU REMEMBER?

RONAN  
YES!

A shark passes just a few yards away.

GARRET  
Don't waste this chance, my friend.  
I'm dead anyway.

Garret starts to swim off. Now Ronan realizes what Garret  
has in mind.

RONAN  
Don't man! God don't. Please...

Ronan tries to grab him, but Garret wheels the ax, keeping  
Ronan off.

GARRET  
Save your sons. Redeem this sin, or  
my soul will never rest. Say you  
understand.

Ronan can't say it.

GARRET (CONT'D)  
My cross goes to Duncan.

And Garret swims off.

RONAN  
Garret!

Garret keeps swimming, mind made up.

RONAN (CONT'D)

GARRET!!

Ronan SCREAMS AT THE SKY, then turns back to the boat.

Ronan is pulled back aboard, looking at...

THE SHARKS pulling chunks out of the whale, oblivious to Garret for now.

Ronan faces a dilemma like none he has ever faced. Shivering, he gives the hardest order of his life.

GARRET

To the front.

The rowers, their own faces haunted, turn the boat, rowing along the whale, back alongside Onchu's boat.

ONCHU

Hands Ronan his tow line.

Ronan looks to Garret visible forty yards off. Garret turns to us, waves the hatchet in the air.

RONAN

AHEAD ALL OARS.

He points the direction.

CUT TO:

EXT. IN OCEAN - WITH GARRET

Garret looks to the sharks.

UNDERWATER SHOT

As he LOOSENS THE tourniquet. His blood flowing into the water.

EXT. OCEAN - WHALEBOATS

The boats pull against the mass of the whale, slowly getting him moving... the sharks still feeding on his back half.

Then one shark separates from the pack, swimming in a circle.

RONAN

Sees the lone shark. It swims slowly toward Garret.

ON GARRET

As he watches the shark approach. Far from fear, he watches like a cat. As the shark comes in to investigate, Garret holds still...

GARRET

Smell good eh?

The shark circles again, closer. When he gets a clear, close shot, Garret SLASHES the shark's gills with the hatchet... more blood leaks into the water.

ON RONAN

The whale barely moving forward, he urges the men on, grabbing an oar, looking off to Garret. Seeing a new pair of sharks approaching him.

ON GARRET

As more sharks approach Garret's getting weaker with the loss of blood. The first shark is swimming in confused circles, the other sharks circle Garret...

And behind them more sharks are turning off from the whale.

GARRET (CONT'D)

Don't keep me waiting...

Another attack, Garret slashes again, hitting the shark. But another shark comes at him, his jaws GRABBING...

ON RONAN

As he hears Garret SCREAM, Ronan PULLS fiercely on the oar SCREAMING along with his friend.

ON GARRET

Pulled down, then coming up for air, SLASHING at an attacking shark with the hatchet, he's got many around him now...

One shark, bleeding from the gills, is ATTACKED by another shark, the blood making them indiscriminate...

Garret's attacked and GRABBED, he SLASHES down again...

A full FEEDING FRENZY begins... the sharks attacking each other as much as Garret...

The ocean BUBBLES RED around thrashing fins. Garret barely able to fight any more... a tiger shark zeroes in on him, open jaws...

ON RONAN

As he hears the awful screams. They go on for a seemingly endless time, Garret's final moments unimaginable.

Ronan pulls his oars, staring blankly ahead in agony, tears running down his face. As tortured as his friend.

Finally, mercifully, the screams STOP.

Alban looks back, seeing the raging waters where the frenzy continues, looking to see if the sharks - after finishing Garret - come back for the whale.

ON THE SHARKS

The water boils with bloody fury, the sharks now crazed, attacking blindly, feeding on each other.

ON THE BOATS

As they pull slowly away with the whale, the sharks not following.

ON RONAN

Staring... rowing... eyes fixed on an unknowable spot...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VILLAGE/SHORE - DAY

The Lieutenant walks down the boardwalk with one of his men. In contrast to the village we left, there is no bustle. A cloud hangs over all the villagers.

The Lieutenant looks up at the tower, making sure one of his men is up there on lookout.

EXT. TOP OF STONE TOWER - DAY

HARRIS, an English corporal, is at the top of the tower, the wind up, the chill deep. He rubs his hands, turning his back to the gust coming from the sea.

Camera arcs so that we see... behind him, a shape coming into sight on the horizon...

EXT. RONAN'S BOAT - DAY

The crew, rowing. Alban on the foredeck.

Ronan steps up, sees his village, the surrounding mountains, as if for the first time.

They stand together, taking it in. Alban then hands the scottish cross necklace of Glen Douglas to Ronan.

Alban looks back toward shore, toward home.

ALBAN

You should lead the men in prayer of thanks. God has blessed us.

But Ronan still looks at the cross in his hand.

RONAN

If that was God's blessing, I would hate to know His punishment.

EXT. STONE TOWER - DAY

Harris, shivering, rubbing his hands, stomping his feet, glancing at the sea...

And he double takes. He strains to see clearly... HE SPOTS THEM...

EXT. VILLAGE SHORE - DOCKSIDE

The BELL at the tower RINGS. Villagers come down to the shore. Already several are launching boats to row out to meet the men and marvel at their catch.

EXT. RONAN'S HOME - DAY

Margaret is replacing thatching on the roof when she hears the BELL.

Elizabeth and Anna run out of the house, look at her... do they dare hope?

EXT. HILLSIDE/VILLAGE - DAY

Margaret and the girls come down the hill. Margaret stops, looking in amazement at...

POV - The two boats pulling the massive whale into the harbor. And on the bow of one boat, she sees the figure that can only be her husband.

ON MARGARET

Filling with emotion, her hands go to her mouth, she drops to her knees, weeping. The girls PULL with excitement to go down.

MARGARET

Go... go...

The girls run ahead, Margaret can't help herself. She cries, releasing all her fear and anguish in a flood.

HER POV - ON THE BOATS

Village boats have gone out to meet them, taking over towing the whale as Ronan's boats release it and come toward shore.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE SHORE - DOCKSIDE

Ronan's men debark onto the dock, stepping on solid land for the first time in eleven days.

John Key is met by his wife, holding their baby.

Tanner's five year old son runs to him, he picks him up, hugging him for life itself.

Tatum is met by his brothers and mother, he kneels and kisses the ground.

Onchu... McAdam... Deaf Willy all reunited with joy, cheers and tears with their families.

Ronan steps off last. Over the crowd, he sees Margaret looking at him. He looks back at her. The silent love between them louder than all the noise.

Then he turns toward a lone woman who scans the boats, scans the group. It's Glen Douglas' wife, and James' mother, Ilaan.

Ronan goes to her first.

MARGARET'S POV

Ronan speaks privately to Ilaan, handing her the wooden cross that she gave her husband. She breaks down, crying inconsolably.

She becomes hysterical, shouting denials, running off from Ronan, shouting at the sky before collapsing on the boardwalk and sobbing.

ON RONAN

Watching as the village women take over care for Ilaan.

Ronan's two daughters pull at his cloak. He looks down. Their perfect young faces in contrast to his savage appearance. He kneels down, and gives them a great, thankful hug.

He picks them both up, kissing them as he walks toward his wife.

He comes to Margaret, puts down the two girls. Margaret looks at him, touching his chest in her powerful, gentle way.

She wraps her arms around him and holds him as tight as life itself. No words necessary here.

DUNCAN

Father...

Ronan turns, seeing his eldest son, Emma at his side, tears in her eyes. Duncan and Ronan embrace, all anger forgotten.

Duncan points to the whale.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Couldn't you find a bigger one?

The joke is appreciated.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

Where's Sir Garret?

Ronan's smile dies on his face. He slowly reaches into his cloak, removing Garret's cross. He hands it to Duncan.

DUNCAN (CONT'D)

He's lost?

RONAN

Him. Cook. Glen Douglas. And the boy James.

They react to the shocking news. Duncan looks down to Ilaan with pity. Her family gone.

MARGARET

What of you?

RONAN

We need a fire, and food.

INT. BLACKSMITH'S SHOP - DAY

The fire in the pit warms the whole shop. Food has been laid out on the table, cooked lamb, struan, apples...

Ronan, Onchu, Alban, are washed and in fresh clothes. Tanner, Deaf Willy, and all the remaining crew sit around the large table, eating hungrily. Villagers come through, offering welcomes, congratulations, gifts of food and drink.

Margaret ushers the villagers out, leaving the men in peace.

Onchu and Ronan look at each other. Their chewing slowly stops. Alban too.

Slowly, silently, all the whalemens at the table are brought into the same realization as they look at themselves at each other.

It's over. They survived. They're home.

And it's overwhelming. McAdam's eyes fill with tears, Onchu's too. Tanner starts to LAUGH, the laughter spreads to others, and then transforms into SOBS of joy and pain and deliverance.

Ronan stands and raises his cup. The men all stand, sobs subsiding. They grow quiet.

They all raise their goblets. Ronan doesn't need to say who they are honoring... their fallen brothers.

The moment of reverence is interrupted when Ronan's youngest daughter runs in...

ANNA

English!

EXT. HILLSIDE/VILLAGE

Lt. Pike and his eight soldiers, all armed, on horseback and in formation, trot down the hill toward the shore. A showy entrance, meant to impress.

Ronan, Onchu and the crew come out from the blacksmith shop. Villagers gather on the shore, Margaret and Duncan among them.

All watch this show of hubris from the English with hostility.

Ronan sees this, realizes it's a bad mix.

RONAN

(to Onchu and Alban)

Have the men unload our boats.

Onchu and Alban nod and are off. Ronan steps to Margaret.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Get the people to tasks.

She agrees. Ronan steps forward to meet the English.

LT. PIKE

McColough! You look uninjured.

RONAN

I was more fortunate than some.

LT. PIKE  
 (pointing to the whale)  
 Good hunting I see.

The English dismount. The Lieutenant stands with Ronan, admiring the whale.

THEIR POV

Fishing boats have pulled the whale as close to shore as its great size will allow, tying it down.

LT. PIKE (CONT'D)  
 He's missing a flank.

RONAN  
 He will give up much oil,  
 nevertheless. Now, Lieutenant, to  
 our sons. We would like them released  
 and returned.

Without even looking at him.

LT. PIKE  
 (dismissive)  
 For one whale?

Shock enters Ronan, Duncan and others in earshot.

DUNCAN  
 (loud and angry)  
 That one whale is the size of four!

Ronan's crew heard this, a crowd is forming.

The Lieutenant walks to his horse, removes a scroll from a saddlebag. He walks it to Ronan.

LT. PIKE  
 The order states your sons' return  
 is conditioned on oil production  
 reaching it's previous level. Four  
 hundred casks.

RONAN  
 We haven't had a year like that in  
 five!

LT. PIKE  
 That's what the Captain has promised  
 the Viceroy himself.

Calls of outrage from the gathering crowd, Duncan especially. Pike shouts over them all.

LT. PIKE (CONT'D)  
Sergeant Quinn! Take two men and  
guard the catch, see that no oil  
goes missing during the boil.

Sgt. Quinn salutes the Lieutenant.

DUNCAN  
You've no right...

LT. PIKE  
As of now, it is the King's property.

Shouts of protest from the crowd. Duncan leading it...

DUNCAN  
You PIGS will be driven from Scotland,  
I swear!

Lt. Pike now turns on Duncan.

LT. PIKE  
You don't learn.  
(to a soldier)  
Corporal Harris, arrest this boy.  
For this treason he will join the  
other hostages.

ON RONAN

His last son, about to be taken.

RONAN  
NO!

All goes silent. The Lieutenant turns to Ronan.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
I will take him with me to see the  
Captain. We will appeal for the  
release of our sons.

LT. PIKE  
Do you really think the Captain  
Governor is going to break a promise  
to the Royal Court in London... at  
the request of a *fisherman*?

A beat. Ronan stares, eyes of steel.

RONAN  
We're not fishermen. We're whalemen.

Ronan is flanked by Onchu and Alban and the rest of his crew  
carrying implements from the boats. A battle tested unit.

But Lt. Pike doesn't back down.

LT. PIKE  
(ordering)  
Take the boy.

Harris approaches Duncan, grabs his arm.

*IN SLOW MOTION*

Ronan wheels around, grabbing the blubber blade from Tanner's hands, swings it over everyone's heads, bringing it across...

AND SLICES HARRIS IN HALF AT THE WAIST...

...Missing his own son by inches. Harris drops to the ground.

The Lieutenant looks from the corpse to Ronan, who has murder in his eyes.

RONAN  
(to his men)  
To HELL with them!

THE WHALEMEN ATTACK.

Unleashing all their fury. Onchu breaks an oar across a soldier's back, John Key leaps on a soldier and stabs a fish blade deep in his neck...

The Lieutenant pulls his sword and lunges at Duncan, Ronan blocks it, Pike then lunges at Ronan...

Emma runs down the hill with two short swords, leaping up, blocking an attack and running a soldier through.

Tatum comes at Sgt. Quinn with a sword, Quinn parries and KILLS Tatum, running him through.

Deaf Willy throws a rock the size of a cannonball at a soldier KNOCKING him to the ground. Villagers descend on him...

Duncan grabs a sword from a dead soldier and runs at the retreating Sgt. Quinn. Quinn turns on him, a CLANG of swords...

Ronan sees Duncan, runs to help. The Lieutenant sees his men are overwhelmed... he RUNS FOR HIS HORSE...

Quinn knocks Duncan's sword away, about to kill him -- then sees Ronan coming and RUNS OFF...

Ronan suddenly has to duck the swipe of a sword from a soldier... Duncan jumps up and tackles the soldier, grabbing up a rock and smashing it down on him.

Ronan looks around, all the soldiers are down... then he sees...

UP THE HILL

The Lieutenant mounts his horse, riding away. Ronan on fire...

Onchu appears at Ronan's side, with Ronan's harpoon.

ONCHU

Long shot.

Ronan takes the harpoon, sights the target, and puts every pound of his rage into this throw...

THE HARPOON

Sails through the air, high up...

HARPOON'S POV

As it arcs down toward a lone tree stump, heading directly for it... and a fraction of a second before it hits the stump...

The Lieutenant rides into its path --

WIDE SHOT

The Lieutenant is knocked off the horse like he was hit by lightning.

ON RONAN

Motionless as his men run toward the Lieutenant.

He walks uphill slowly.

NEAR TREE STUMP

Ronan approaches, his men standing around the body...

TANNER

(from ahead)

He breathes!

Ronan steps closer...

ON LT. PIKE

The harpoon entered his left side, went clean through him. He's pinned to the tree stump. Blood soaks the ground.

Ronan kneels down. The Lieutenant shifts his stare to Ronan. They look at each other.

With his last breath...

LT. PIKE  
Nothing will remain.

Ronan watches as Lieutenant Pike's breathing halts, and he dies.

ONCHU  
Ronan!

Onchu points urgently...

ON TRAIL

Sgt. Quinn, the last surviving soldier, has come out of a hiding place and taken hold of the Lieutenant's riderless horse. He mounts and rides off.

Ronan jumps up.

RONAN  
A horse! Bring a HORSE!

Suddenly DUNCAN comes riding up the hill on horseback, not to his father, Duncan's heading after the soldier.

Ronan runs into his path, waving.

DUNCAN  
Get out of the way!

RONAN  
No! Duncan!

Duncan rears back, stopping the horse.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
Get off, I go.

DUNCAN  
I can catch him! You can't, you know it.

RONAN  
(fearing for his son)  
He is their strongest sword!

DUNCAN  
If he reaches the castle, our boys are finished.

Ronan torn. Emma runs up, with her two short swords in their scabbards, throws them to Duncan.

EMMA

Speed against strength. Remember?

Duncan nods to her, looks to Ronan... who lets go the horse.

RONAN

Go!

YA! Duncan kicks, the horse is off at a gallop. Ronan watches his son ride away.

RONAN (CONT'D)

A HORSE! Damn it A HORSE!!

Ronan runs off to find one.

CUT TO:

EXT. TRAIL - DAY

Duncan rides full out, slipping his arms through the straps of Emma's scabbard. Then crouching like a jockey and slapping the horse, fire in his eye.

ON QUINN

Far ahead, riding fast, armor rattling. Looking behind to see...

DUNCAN

Coming into view, racing for him...

QUINN

Kicking his horse, trying to out run him.

The race is on, both riders going all out. Horses kicking dirt, splashing through a stream, hopping a fallen log...

DUNCAN

Comes over a rise, scans ahead as the path forks... which road did Quinn go on? He looks ahead, both paths are empty.

Duncan stops the horse, looking for tracks on the ground. Then from out of nowhere...

QUINN ATTACKS

He comes out swinging his sword right for Duncan, Duncan has to lean all back, the horse REARS and Duncan FALLS...

Quinn tries to trample him, Duncan rolls out of the way.  
Quinn CHARGES on the horse, Duncan dashes into the trees.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

In here, Quinn's horse is no advantage. He has to pull up short, move slow. He maneuvers clumsily, no visibility, looking... listening...

Duncan leaps out, takes a swing with a short sword, but Quinn is fast and his sword is longer. Duncan disappears in shrubs.

Quinn dismounts, steps away from the horse. He sees Duncan, standing tall, swords in hand. Waiting.

Quinn attacks, powerful and heavy swings of his long sword. Duncan deflecting, evading, ducking his deadly swings.

QUINN  
Coward, attack me!

Duncan's fiery eyes just stare, a smile forms on his lips. Quinn attacks again, a fierce lunge, a deadly swing. Duncan light, wheeling away, blocking the sword in the crook of his two...

But he misjudges... on Quinn's attack Duncan loses one of his swords. Quinn presses his advantage.

Duncan's in trouble, stumbling, he gets SLASHED. Duncan's one sword no match for Quinn's broadsword.

Quinn attacks and attacks, Duncan barely evading, stumbling again... Now Quinn's over him, about to deal a death blow to Duncan crawling feebly on the ground... down comes Quinn's sword...

CLANG. Duncan turns and catches it in the crook of his two swords. He found his second. And he SWINGS it...

Quinn jumps away. He is on the defensive now, Duncan wheels, Quinn is tired, spent from his attack, Duncan light, fast, he blocks a lunge and SLASHES Quinn's leg... just like Emma showed him.

Quinn swings in a rage, Duncan ducks under and LUNGES... Stabbing fast but deep into Quinn's stomach. Quinn wavers, tries to walk... CRUMBLES.

Duncan steps forward, stands over Quinn, looking down.

QUINN (CONT'D)  
Mercy...

Duncan SCREAMS as he buries both his swords in Quinn's chest.

EXT. FOREST TRAILS - DAY

Hearing Duncan's SCREAM, Ronan and Emma ride up to the fork. Stopping when they see the riderless horse.

RONAN  
(calling)  
Duncan!

Duncan emerges from the woods, dragging Quinn's enormous sword. Emma hops off her horse runs to him.

Ronan and his son look at each other, a new respect.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. DUNNOTAR CASTLE - EVENING

Night falling on the great castle near the sea.

INT. DUNNOTAR CASTLE - THE HOLD

One of the boys comes back from the shit pales. Ewan is disgusted.

EWAN  
That stench...

But Alec doesn't respond, he's lying down, eyes open, fetal position, traumatized.

Suddenly NOISES out the door. The great latch is thrown, door opens.

The Friar enters with a soldier. He looks down at Alec.

FRIAR  
This one.

The soldier takes Alec's arm.

EWAN  
Where are you taking him?

The Friar turns his dark eye at Ewan.

FRIAR  
Prayer and instruction, of course.

INT. CASTLE STAIRS - EVENING

The Friar leads Alec down the stairs, soldier behind him.

## INT. CASTLE HALLWAY/STAIRS - EVENING

They approach a chamber doorway... inside sits the Viceroy, his cloak off. He looks up at Alec, looking him up and down.

VICEROY

Don't be afraid, my son. Sit by the fire.

(to the Friar)

That's all.

The Friar and soldier exit.

## EXT. CASTLE GATEHOUSE - NIGHT

The gatehouse stands over the thin landbridge connecting the castle peninsula to the mainland. A TOWER GUARD watches from the top. A ROAD GUARD below.

It's quiet, only the sound of the surf and wind. Although standing, the Tower Guard has dozed off.

Below him, the Road Guard patrols the gate entrance. He steps out onto the land bridge, turns around...

And sees Emma climbing up from the rocks on the side.

EMMA

Help me, I fell...

The guard comes, sees she's dressed like a boy, with two swords in her harness. Something's not right, he lowers his spear at her as...

Tanner leaps on him from behind, knife into the neck...

## IN TOWER

A sound wakes the Tower Guard, he looks around. Eyes drawn to...

At the far end of the land bridge, someone is waving a TORCH, like a signal.

The guard leans over the edge of the guard tower, looking out to sea... where he sees a light waving offshore as well.

## EXT. OFFSHORE FROM CASTLE - NIGHT

Two whaleboats are bobbing in the sea off shore, in the first are Onchu, his men at the oars. In Alban's boat, Tatum has an oil lamp on the end of a pole, waving it side to side.

EXT. BACK TO GUARD

He calls down to the Ground Guard.

TOWER GUARD

Aye, look...

No reply. The guard looks down for him, finding RONAN, he THROWS A HARPOON upward...

Running the guard through the chest. Ronan PULLS on the harpoon's line, YANKING the guard out of the tower.

INT. BARRACKS - NIGHT

Dozens of soldiers sleep on straw and wool mats in a long barracks that opens onto the castle courtyard, lit by two fires outside. Snores and surf are the only sounds.

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Ronan, Duncan, Emma, Tanner, Eachan sneak into the castle courtyard, hugging the shadows. Eachan and Duncan both have large coils of rope slung over one shoulder. Ronan now carries the guards' sword.

At the far side of the courtyard, the two basket fires burn, a soldier walks past, toward the latrine. He's the only one in sight.

They wait for him to pass. Then crouch and run across the courtyard.

Suddenly Ronan motions them to hide as...

The Friar and his soldier exit the castle Forebuilding, heading across the courtyard.

ON RONAN & OTHERS

Hiding as the Friar passes. Ronan noticing they're right in front of...

OFFICERS QUARTERS

Four sleeping officers, close enough to spit on.

Tanner holds up his blade, motioning "should we kill them?" Ronan shakes his head 'no'.

They move forward, slipping into the Forebuilding entrance.

INT. FOREBUILDING STAIRS - NIGHT

Utterly dark. The window openings, few and small, offering the only light. They climb the stairs.

CUT TO:

EXT. OFFSHORE FROM CASTLE - NIGHT

Onchu and his men row quietly toward the castle's sea side face.

The rocks at the castle base are treacherous, the seas choppy. Two men on each boat use poles to fend off rocks.

EXT. WALKWAY TO CASTLE KEEP - NIGHT

A long stone walkway connects the forebuilding and the keep, guard armed with a long lance, at the far end.

Ronan and the team are on the forebuilding side, they need to cross the long open walkway without alerting soldiers.

Eachan motions for them to wait. He drops his coil of rope, runs back down the stairs...

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Eachan checks around, coast is clear. He runs out, selects two baseball sized rocks from the ground, runs back in.

EXT./INT. FOREBUILDING & WALKWAY - NIGHT

Eachan rejoins his comrades. He motions for them to give him room. He picks his moment, and heaves one of the rocks, ducking back into hiding.

ON GUARD

The rock lands on the other side from him, he turns toward the sound, giving Eachan his chance.

Eachan RUNS full out toward the Guard, closing on him fast.

THE GUARD

Hears the steps, turns. Sees Eachan running at him full steam. He readies his lance to meet him...

At full run, Eachan winds up like a cricket pitcher and THROWS the rock, hitting the guard square in the face.

ON RONAN & OTHERS

Crossing the walkway, entering the tower. This is the heart of the castle, the KEEP.

INT. CASTLE TOWER STAIRS - NIGHT

Ronan, Eachan and Tanner lead the way up the steep stairs with swords drawn.

They pass a window opening, facing the ocean, Ronan looks out, sees...

EXT. OCEAN/ROCKS AT CASTLE BASE - NIGHT

Onchu trying not to get smashed on the rocks as he lands the boats below.

INT. DUNNOTAR CASTLE TOWER - OUTSIDE THE HOLD

Ronan and Tanner arrive at the landing, they crawl silently on the stone approach leading to the HOLD.

THEIR POV - GUARDS

Two guards are posted, an oil lamp is the only light. One guard stands with a spear, the other dozes on a stool, between them is an iron door, leading to the hold (and the hostages).

ON STANDING GUARD

As he hears whispers coming from the stairs. A *woman's* whispers. A flirtatious giggle, quickly hushed.

He approaches the stairs, stepping out to find...

Emma - who STABS through his neck with her sword.

The other guard jumps up. Ronan THROWS the spear, hitting through his chest.

INT. HOLD - NIGHT

Ewan hears the commotion, comes to the door. He sees a face in the door's opening.

It's his father.

EWAN

Pa!

RONAN

Quietly... quietly...

Ronan gestures for him to wake the others. Ewan steps among the boys, shaking them awake, motioning them to be quiet.

INT. OUTSIDE THE HOLD - NIGHT

Eachan finds the keys. They open the heavy door.

The boys have to be hushed, confused and excited. Tanner and Eachan lead them out, hurry them UPSTAIRS.

Ronan hugs Ewan in relief.

EWAN

Alec!

Ronan looks for Alec, then back to Ewan.

EWAN (CONT'D)

They took him.

RONAN

Where?

EWAN

The Friar.

Ronan and Duncan look at each other.

DUNCAN

I'll find him.

RONAN

We both go.

Ronan slings the coil of rope off his shoulder, gives it to Emma.

RONAN (CONT'D)

(to Emma)

Get them out.

Emma nods. She moves with the last of the boys up the stairs, a last look to Duncan.

Ronan and Duncan head back down the stairs.

EXT. TOWER ROOF - NIGHT

Eachan secures one end of his rope, and throws the coil of rope over the side.

The rope falls toward...

EXT. BASE OF CASTLE WALL - NIGHT

ONCHU stands on the rocks below, looking up as the rope coil comes down at him...

And stops, fully extended, about ten feet over his head.

ONCHU  
Hell's dogs...

EXT. TOWER ROOF - NIGHT

Tanner helps the first boy over the side.

TANNER  
Hold tight, now go.

The boy goes over, the next one gets ready...

INT. TOWER STAIRS - NIGHT

Ronan and Duncan descend the dark stairs, passing a landing and continuing down toward the courtyard.

EXT. BASE OF CASTLE WALL - NIGHT

Onchu watches the first boy descend, reaching the end of the rope.

ONCHU  
Let go! I've got you.

The boy SCREAMS as he leaps, Onchu catches him, points him to Alban and the boats.

ONCHU (CONT'D)  
Go now, and be quiet about it.

Onchu looks up, two more boys are on their way down the rope.

EXT. TOWER ROOF - NIGHT

Eachan has secured the second rope, throws the coil over the side.

EXT. BASE OF CASTLE WALL - NIGHT

This rope makes it all the way to the ground.

ONCHU  
Thank you Jesus.

INT. / EXT. WALKWAY & BASE OF TOWER - NIGHT

Ronan and Duncan make it back to the walkway, suddenly stopping as they see...

At the far end of the walkway, talking to an officer, is Captain Barron.

And on Ronan's side, only barely out of the Captain's view, is the body of the guard they killed.

ON CAPTAIN BARRON

The Captain and soldier talk briefly, then head back into the Forebuilding and away.

ON DUNCAN AND RONAN

Waiting a beat before moving, about to cross when they hear behind them...

The distant echo of Alec's voice. Ronan and Duncan both recognize it.

INT. VICEROY'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

The Viceroy, now on his knees in front of Alec, offering him a goblet to drink. Alec, seated on a chair, shirt off, is refusing.

ALEC

No! Please...

The Viceroy drinks it himself.

VICEROY

See? You can trust me. I'm trying to help you.

He stands, and drains the goblet. He's growing frustrated with the boy.

VICEROY (CONT'D)

Stand up boy.

RONAN (O.S.)

Alec...

RONAN stands near the entrance, Duncan behind him, both with swords. Alec jumps up, the Viceroy grabs the boy, and produces a dagger...

Duncan, seeing the shirtless boy, becomes enraged beyond reason, charges the Viceroy.

DUNCAN

That dagger won't SAVE YOU!

The Viceroy jumps to get his sword, letting go of Alec...

RONAN

Duncan stop!

Duncan and the Viceroy face each other, their swords touching.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
DUNCAN! Take Alec up. Now.

Duncan, with difficulty, backs off. He lifts Alec into his arms, heads out.

Ronan stands with his sword up. The Viceroy and Ronan maneuver for position, preparing to fight.

VICEROY  
 So very foolish.

The Viceroy FEINTS a lunge, Ronan ready.

VICEROY (CONT'D)  
 Why would you destroy your whole world?

RONAN  
 You've already done that.

The Viceroy suddenly SHOUTS OUT a window opening...

VICEROY  
 GUARDS... INTRUDERS!

Ronan LUNGES at him, the Viceroy parries, swords CLANG...

EXT. COURTYARD - ON GUARDS

Two GUARDS suddenly alerted, raising the alarm...

EXT. COURTYARD - NIGHT

Captain Barron hears the cry, rushes into the stairs...

INT. VICEROY'S CHAMBER - NIGHT

The Viceroy swings his sword catching Ronan on the arm, but Ronan punches him with his free hand, the Viceroy tumbles backward.

Ronan could deal the death blow but...

Voices are coming upstairs, the clatter of soldiers. Ronan grabs the TORCH off the wall and runs out.

EXT. TOWER ROOF - NIGHT

Tatum and Eachan, hoisting something up from below, hear behind them...

Duncan and Alec come out from the stairs onto the roof.

EMMA  
Where's your father?

DUNCAN  
He'll be here.

Emma helps the next child over the side as...

Tanner and Eachan pull up a CASK from below, unslashing it from the rope, throwing the rope back over.

BEHIND THEM

Ronan arrives on the roof, out of breath, handing the torch to Tanner.

Ewan throws himself into Ronan's arms first.

RONAN  
(to Emma)  
They're coming. Get over the side.

Emma nods.

RONAN (CONT'D)  
(to Ewan)  
Go now, go.

Emma helps him onto the rope. Ronan looks over the side, whistles to Onchu.

ON ONCHU

He has a harpoon, and HEAVES it STRAIGHT UP. It flies like a rocket...

Ronan CATCHES IT perfectly. Tosses it to Duncan at the stairs, he hears the soldiers coming.

DUNCAN  
Hurry...

Ronan rolls the CASK to Duncan, who uses the harpoon to CRACK the cask open. They TIP IT OVER...

WHALE OIL flows down the stairs. STRAW is also in the cask, drenched with oil. They pull that out and throw it into the stairs too.

INT. STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Captain Barron reaches the Viceroy, who's putting on more clothes.

Captain Barron sees Alec's shirt on the floor near the fire, he turns to the Viceroy, who looks back, guilt in his eye.

Armed Guards arrive.

CAPT. BARRON  
The TOWER! GO!

EXT. ROOF - NIGHT

Tanner goes over the side. Eachan whistles to Duncan, throws him the TORCH.

EACHAN  
See you at home.

Eachan goes over. ON THE OTHER ROPE Alec is helped over by Emma. Last of the boys over, Emma goes to the other rope and gives Duncan a last look.

EMMA  
Don't wait too long.

Duncan nods, she goes over.

RONAN  
Here they come.

Duncan looks down toward...

INT. STAIRWAY/ROOF - NIGHT

Soldiers rush up the narrow stairs, look up and see Ronan and Duncan standing at the opening, torch in hand...

Soldiers rush up, before noticing the oil and straw under their feet...

SOLDIERS  
BACK! BACK!!!

Ronan tosses the torch...

The stairway catches fire, the fire grows quickly...

INT. STAIRWAY - BELOW

FIRE spreads down, soldiers stomp furiously, trying to put it out, slipping and falling into it...

Ronan holds them back with the harpoon.

RONAN  
(to Duncan)  
Go!

DUNCAN  
I won't leave you.

EXT. WIDE AERIAL OF CASTLE & TOWER

Flames erupt from the stairs as the boys climb down the sheer wall to the awaiting boats...

INSIDE CASTLE STAIRS -

The oil fire burns down.

VICEROY  
UP, NOW!

RONAN AND DUNCAN

Jab and slash with their weapons, holding the soldiers in the stairs while their people climb down.

ON THE ROPES

Emma descends quickly, still a long way to go. She passes Alec on the other rope, going slow.

EXT. ROOF/STAIRWAY - NIGHT

Soldiers thrust spears, Ronan and Duncan try to hold the line but finally...

The soldiers break from the stairs. Ronan and Duncan are driven back. Duncan heads for the ropes, but Ronan grabs him.

RONAN  
This way.

They run for the far edge as soldiers pour out of the stairs and chase them.

An OFFICER sees the ropes, steps over and looks over the side, seeing Alec looking up. He takes out his sword, hacks at the rope...

ON THE ROPES

Emma is across from Alec as his rope starts to shake.

EMMA  
Hurry Alec, go!

But Alec is frozen with fear. Emma climbs up her rope to his level, starts SWINGING over to him

BELOW HER the rope moves, Onchu looks up.

ONCHU

Alec!

Emma's swinging almost reaches Alec.

EMMA

You have to grab hold!

ALEC

I can't!

EMMA

You can, grab 'round my neck!

She reaches him.

EMMA (CONT'D)

NOW!

Alec lets go the rope and grabs Emma, who swings back along the wall as...

The Officer HACKS the rope and CUTS it. Alec's rope falls away.

TOWER ROOF

The Officer now hacks at the other rope.

ON EMMA

Feeling the blow on the rope, still far to go. Burning her hands as she lets the rope slip.

THE OFFICER

Hits the rope, deep cut...

EMMA

Looking down.

EMMA (CONT'D)

You have to jump.  
(shouting)  
Onchu!

Onchu moves under.

ONCHU

I've got him.

Alec lets go. Falling to his father...

The force knocks Onchu down. Both of them hit the ground, but Alec is OK, Onchu points him to the boats.

ONCHU (CONT'D)

Quickly...

Alec runs off, Onchu gets up, seeing.

THE ROPE CUT

Emma falls...

ONCHU (CONT'D)

Give me STRENGTH--

Onchu gets under her, she hits him like a ton of rock, they both land in heaps.

But Emma, panting, seems unhurt. She crawls to him...

EMMA

Onchu! God, I've killed him!

Onchu groans.

ONCHU

(coughing)

I'm still here... Go!

Emma kisses his cheek, gets up, runs to the boats.

ON RONAN

He and Duncan run for the far edge, an open cannon port where the wall is low. Ronan looks over. It's a long drop, and they have to clear a lot of jagged rock.

DUNCAN

Can we clear those rocks?

RONAN

We have to.

The English closing in on them. It's now or never.

RONAN (CONT'D)

Keep your legs under you...

They take a few steps back, run for the ledge, and they LEAP OFF...

EXT. SHORE UNDER CASTLE - NIGHT

As Ewan notices his father's voice SCREAM, looking up...

EWAN

THERE!

Everyone watches as Duncan and Ronan fall flailing into the rolling sea.

ONCHU

OARS!

The oars come out, Onchu runs into his boat and pushes off.

EXT. CASTLE ROOF - NIGHT

Soldiers come to the edge, looking over.

VICEROY

ARCHERS...

A row of longbowmen approach the ledge as...

IN THE SEA

Ronan's head splashes out. He looks around.

RONAN

Duncan!

No sign of him. Duncan is still under.

RONAN (CONT'D)

DUNCAN!!

Duncan surfaces, gasping.

CASTLE ROOF

The archers have formed a line, aiming.

VICEROY

Fire.

Arrows fly.

ON RONAN AND DUNCAN

Arrows hit the water near them.

EXT. WITH THE BOATS - ON ONCHU

Both boats pull toward Ronan, and toward the line of fire. Onchu calls to Alban in the other boat.

ONCHU

Take on my boys!

The boats pull together, the boys cross to Alban's boat.

ON RONAN and DUNCAN

Swimming together, the seas rough...

ABOVE - ON ROOF

The archers ready.

VICEROY

Fire.

Another rain of arrows, Duncan HIT in the shoulder, he goes UNDER.

Ronan swims over, pulls him up, Duncan gasps for air in the heaving water, he PULLS OUT THE ARROW.

DUNCAN

I'm all right... Go!

They swim on.

ON ONCHU

The last of the boys gets off his boat.

ONCHU

Row! Come ON!

The oarsmen pull for Ronan.

ABOVE - ON ROOF

Viceroy and Captain Barron look down.

VICEROY

Quickly quickly, FIRE.

ON RONAN

Another rain of arrows. Onchu almost there...

Emma in the bow reaches an oar out, Ronan grabs it, pulling in, climbing aboard. Duncan swimming up behind him...

ABOVE - ON VICEROY

The Viceroy grabs a longbow from one of the archers.

VICEROY (CONT'D)

Are your men trying to miss?

ON RONAN

Taking his son's hands, pulling him out of the water as...

THE VICEROY aims and FIRES...

THE ARROW flies straight... sinking deep into DUNCAN'S BACK.

Duncan SCREAMS. Emma screams as she sees it. Ronan pulls Duncan the rest of the way into the boat.

ONCHU

AWAY!

The oarsmen push. The boat moves.

Ronan pulls Duncan onto flat deck. He grips the arrow to pull it out.

ONCHU (CONT'D)

No!! No wait...

Onchu checks the arrow.

ONCHU (CONT'D)

(to Ronan)

It's too deep.

RONAN

We can't pull it out?

ONCHU

(gravely)

He'll last longer if you don't.

Ronan's realization dawns, his son is mortally wounded.

Emma takes Duncan's head in her hands, kisses him, crying.

Ronan looks up at the Viceroy, rage building...

RONAN

Harpoon!

A harpoon is passed to Ronan. He plants his feet and sights, all his focus on the Viceroy.

And with a cry of primal rage he HEAVES the great spear. It arcs a high arc. The men all look on in awe.

ON VICEROY

Who's smug grin falls into FEAR as he sees the harpoon defiantly rise, and rise toward him.

But as incredible as the throw is, it is short. It slams harmlessly into the castle wall below the Viceroy.

ON RONAN

Seething as their boat pulls away. He turns back to his son.

ON VICEROY AND CAPT. BARRON

VICEROY

What a fool.

Capt. Barron looks at the Viceroy, despising him but hiding it.

CAPT. BARRON

He's many things, but no fool.

He turns to an officer.

CAPT. BARRON (CONT'D)

Sergeant, mounted pursuit. Thirty horses.

SERGEANT

Yes Captain.

CAPT. BARRON

(to Viceroy)

With luck we will be in their village before they are.

EXT. BOAT - NIGHT

Ronan lifts Duncan's head. Duncan looks at him.

DUNCAN

Forgive me. I did not understand...

RONAN

No... no. It is I who did not understand.

Duncan holds up his hand to him.

DUNCAN

You're a great father.

Ronan grips it.

RONAN

And you are a great man.

Ronan hugs his son. The oarsmen look on with deep sadness, rowing the boat off into the darkness.

EXT. CASTLE GATEHOUSE - LATER

Led by a SERGEANT on horseback, two columns of mounted soldiers pass onto the narrow land bridge out of the castle.

On the other side, a woman with a torch emerges from the woods.

It's Glen Douglas' wife, Ilaan.

The SERGEANT sees her, it worries him. He looks around, finally noticing, hidden in the bushes...

CASKS. And STRAW...

He kicks his horse, drawing his sword. Bearing down on Ilaan.

ON ILAAN

She throws the torch forward, it lands in a bush... the bush ERUPTS in flames...

The flames GROW and spread quickly.

The Sergeant STOPS. The flames moving toward him.

The Sergeant tries to turn, but the horse REARS, throwing him...

He tumbles down the side of the hill, which is covered in WHALE OIL. His fall is stopped by a CASK. He gets up, sees a wall of fire racing toward his men, toward him...

He fights his way up the hill, uselessly against the slippery oil, shouting commands as...

The flames reach them. Men and horses scream... PANIC...

ON ILAAN

STARING AT THE MAYHEM, a revenge trance. Other village women run to her and pull her away from the flames to a waiting wagon.

ON LAND BRIDGE

Flames licking high, soldiers on fire. Other soldiers arrive to help.

ON CAPTAIN BARRON

On his horse. Seeing the hillside in flames, his men burned.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. VILLAGE / SHORE - NIGHT

Flickering lights move in the dark. The villagers of Till, heading out with everything they can carry. An evacuation.

Margaret carries a torch, directing people, hurrying them along. Suddenly she hears the voices of children...

IN THE BAY

The BOATS approach, carrying the sons of the village, who call out with excitement.

The villagers erupt in CHEERS as the boats pull to the dock. The boys dash off the boats and toward the shore.

Parents come forward, relief and joy everywhere as one by one the boys are re-united with loved ones.

The crews come off the boats too, receiving congratulations.

Margaret is guiding a young boy to his mother when suddenly the jubilant crowd goes QUIET. Margaret looks up to see...

RONAN

Standing on the dock, the body of Duncan in his arms. Emma next to him with a torch. Ewan holding her hand.

MARGARET

Goes dead still.

Ronan steps along the dock, Emma following. The silent crowd makes room for them as he steps off the rock and approaches his wife.

She hasn't moved. He kneels before her, gently laying the limp body of Duncan at her feet.

Margaret kneels over her son. Crying silently. Ewan, Anna, and Elizabeth all go to their mother, joining with her.

Emma, standing over them with the torch, is joined by her father. He leads her away.

And the crowd silently moves away with utmost respect, leaving Ronan and his family to its grief. The only sound the sea.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

SOUNDS of the sea, FADE UP as the horizon glows, the sunrise burns its first blister of orange...

EXT. VILLAGE SHORE - DAWN

Ronan stands alone in the dim glow, a lit torch in one hand. He stares out to sea, and at the great whale in the harbor.

We see the village behind, totally deserted. Alban and Onchu approach slowly on horses, leading one for Ronan. They stop.

Ronan doesn't say anything, just stares. Onchu gets off his horse, puts the rein in Ronan's hand.

ONCHU

Your family is on the north road to Dundee. I'm to Aberdeen for the Winter, my cousin there has land bought with our gold. Maybe in the Spring, you can come. We can put a whale crew together, and hunt again.

After a beat, Ronan slowly shakes his head 'no'.

RONAN

They've given us enough.

ONCHU

Who?

Ronan nods to the great beast, lying in the bay like a statue.

Onchu thinks a beat.

ONCHU (CONT'D)

Aye. I suppose they have.

He returns to his horse, remounts.

ALBAN

It's time, Ronan.

Ronan looks at them, nods. Looks back to sea.

RONAN

I have loved this. All of this. Even our sins.

ONCHU

Especially our sins.

Alban gives Onchu a disapproving look. Ronan turns to them. Nods warmly.

RONAN

We will find each other in the Spring.

The men nod, an unbreakable, unspoken connection between them.

And that's where they leave it.

Alban kicks, his horse goes. Onchu lingers for a last look at Ronan, then rides off too.

Ronan watches them disappear.

INT. RONAN'S HOME - LATER

A candle flame is one of many surrounding the body of Duncan.

He lies on the family table, covered in cloth up to his chest.

Under the table is a pile of dry wood. Ronan pours oil from a wood pitcher, then tosses in the pitcher.

He stands back from his son's funeral pyre, looks at the body, the face, of his oldest son.

EXT. RONAN'S HOME - DAY

Ronan steps out of his house, behind him we see it's on FIRE.

ON RONAN

He turns and watches his house go up in flames.

CAMERA LIFTS

And beyond we see the whole village is burning.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE FOREST TRAIL - DAY

Horses step through the woods. Lots of horses.

We focus on a horse's eye, which bears a striking resemblance to a whale's eye. The great nostrils flare and blow mist.

And on top is a soldier, heavy with armor and weapons.

Next to him is Captain Barron and the Viceroy. Captain Barron smells something in the air. Everyone does.

EXT. HILLSIDE OVERLOOKING VILLAGE - DAY

They come out of the forest onto a treeless hillside with a view of the village of Till, which is in the final stages of burning to the ground.

They kick horses and hurry.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

The ruins of the blacksmith house, where the village would gather.

The try pots have been knocked down to rubble, destroyed.

Every structure is a ruin. Even the boardwalk has been methodically torn up and used for kindling to burn houses.

Only the STONE TOWER remains.

ON CAPTAIN BARRON

Looking up at it. Then around at the village. Can't hide the feeling. What a damned stupid waste.

The Captain gets off his horse and walks around. Viceroy stays on his.

VICEROY

Can your men get the oil out?

Captain Barron doesn't know what he means at first, until the Viceroy points...

In the bay lies the great dead whale, all that oil ready to be harvested. No one to get it out.

The Captain looks at the Viceroy unblinking, not answering him. It makes the Viceroy uncomfortable.

VICEROY (CONT'D)

We will send a squad on the east road, another the south road.

CAPT. BARRON

No.

VICEROY

We must pursue!

CAPT. BARRON

We will pursue in the Spring. If we can.

VICEROY

(indignant)

The Spring?

The Viceroy stares at him, firm.

VICEROY (CONT'D)

You allow this terror to go  
unpunished, I will see the King hears  
of it.

CAPT. BARRON

Then he will hear everything.

They look at each other, the Viceroy pondering what the  
Captain is threatening.

CAPT. BARRON (CONT'D)

We drove them to this. For what?  
For that?

He points to the dead whale. The Viceroy stares at him.

They are interrupted, a SOLDIER approaches in a hurry from  
up the hill.

SOLDIER

Captain... Excellency... the Bruce  
approaches, leading 500. They crossed  
Tally river at the moon.

Captain Barron heads to his horse.

CAPT. BARRON

When will they reach the castle?

SOLDIER

Tonight sir.

Tonight! He barely has time to get back. And with his forces  
weakened, this is bad, very bad. He mounts his horse.

CAPT. BARRON

(to the soldier)  
Back to Dunnotar, tell the Sergeant.

He gives the Viceroy a hateful look, and gallops up the hill  
without him. The Viceroy tries to follow, but pushes the  
horse too hard and it rebels, rearing up. He FALLS OFF.

He climbs back to his feet, his horse trotting off. He calls  
for a soldier's help, but they're all riding up the hill.

He runs uphill after his horse, calling for help.

CAMERA LIFTS over the smoldering village, drifting over the  
sad ruins Till, over the TOWER, and away...

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)

"The time of Till will never come again. But there is always another village, another empire, another whale to hunt..."

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST TRAILS ALONG RIVER - EVENING

The sound of rushing water, the call of birds. A wagon drawn by a horse, the horse led by Ewan. We take in the family one by one.

In the wagon, Anna and Elizabeth sit among their worldly goods. Margaret walks in the rear with the dogs.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)

"Fortune will smile again somewhere, then awaken greed and turn on us. An ancient play, acted out on ever greater stages.

Margaret hears something and turns. Wide eyes as she sees...

Ronan on a horse. Alive and well. Waving.

Margaret smiles, waves back.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.) (CONT'D)

"And even as Mankind's mischief grows faster than his wisdom, even though we are probably destined - with our own hands - to set the fire that burns all we know to ash..."

WIDE SHOT - DAY

As the girls leap off their perch, Ewan drops the lead and runs to his father. Margaret runs, even the dogs run back to Ronan.

OLDER SCOT (V.O.)

"It is when we are most broken that God's light can find a way in."

Ronan drops from the horse and embraces his family.

They are wounded, they are wiser. Most important, they are together.

And it's good.

CAMERA LIFTS

Leaving them below, lifting above the trees.

The great green Scottish landscape drifts away below us.

We fly over a dramatic rocky cliff, and high over the mighty North Sea, with all its life surging from within.

And far below us we see a small pod of whales swimming toward the sun.

- END -