

FADE IN:

EXT. VILLAGE HINTERLANDS - MORNING

EARL walks carefully through a copse of trees following deer tracks. He scans the snowy ground in the early quiet.

LIZA is young, a villager who we would call a child, but the villagers would call a man. He carries a bow and looks bundled up in furs.

EARL

The only thing good about the snow is that it makes the tracks easy. It's too damn cold out for this early after harvest.

Earl continues up a hill toward a ridge. He looks up suddenly as the wind carries a laugh from far away. His pace quickens as he rushes up the ridge to where the tree line ends. As he reaches the top the source of the voices is revealed - a huge encampment of soldiers with bright banners fills the snowy field below. Earl looks on trying to make out the banners, when he notices a pair of horsed knights on the outskirts of the camp, about a kilometer away, but the glint of their armor in the sun makes them easy to make out.

EARL

The crusaders... They weren't supposed to be here. Why here?

Earl moves up closer to the edge of the steep ridge, peering further into the horizon until he loses his foothold and starts tumbling down the other side of the ridge, blowing up puffs of snow as he drops precipitously. He regains himself after the fall, and looks back at the camp in fear. Both of the knights appear to look in his direction.

CUT TO:

INT. CRUSADER ENCAMPMENT - MORNING

The knights look at each other, their horses begin to wheel. One of them, SIR HEINRICH, nods to the other.

SIR HEINRICH is a towering man, covered in a mail surcoat with a black cross covering his chest, stern and righteous.

SIR HEINRICH

(Putting on winged helm)
I'll take him. He won't give us away.

CUT TO:

EXT. VILLAGE HINTERLANDS - MORNING

Earl looks on as one of the knights in the distance begins thundering toward his position, quickly making ground. Earl starts to scabble up the hill, desperation sinking in as he fails to make any kind of speed up the hill. After a moment, Earl comes to the top of the ridge and begins sliding down the opposite side into the lightly wooded tree line.

CUT TO:

EXT. CAMP OUTSKIRTS - MORNING

Sir Heinrich and his horse both breath visibly in the cold and make speed up the hill. The horse's hooves slip a few times, but he's still faster than Earl was. Soon, they make it past the indentation where Earl stopped sliding, then to the top of the ridge. Sir Heinrich stops for a moment at the top, then looks down at the heavy footprints of Earl. Sir Heinrich begins thundering down the hill alongside the tracks.

CUT TO:

EXT. ICE FLAT - MORNING

Earl is running for his life, breathing heavily as he races across the open field. More than once, he slips and falls. He looks behind himself to see Sir Heinrich emerging from the trees and onto the flat, less than half a kilometer away. Sir Heinrich's sword is drawn. The horse, a light courser, has speed, and now it's on flat ground, closing the distance. Earl falls again onto the ice, but we see him stab a knife into the ground and rise up again to continue his slowed run. Finally, it seems as though the jig is up. Sir Heinrich is only about 300 meters away and closing.

SIR HEINRICH

Come on, you bastard. Come on.

EARL

Come, y'bastard.

As Sir Heinrich reaches the spot where the knife is planted, a loud crack resonates. The ice gives way, and Sir Heinrich and horse are dumped into the water. Quick as a stone they fall in, and Sir Heinrich's head and gauntlets are all that stick out of the new hole in the ice flat. Earl takes aim with his bow and fires, the arrow hitting the knight's helm.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE VILLAGE - NOON

Earl jogs into the square. A woman tends to geese outside her house. Earl looks to her beseechingly.

EARL
(Out of breath)
Where is Ludmilla?

LUDMILLA (O.S)
Gods, Earl, what are you on about?

LUDMILLA is a stout woman, middle aged. She's one of the most trusted villagers, although widowed and ornery.

Ludmilla walks toward Earl from an open doorway.

EARL
They're here. The order is here. Just outside of the fallow fields and across the lake.

Ludmilla knits her brow, not understanding.

EARL
I know what I saw. The black cross. One of them chased me across the lake but I hit 'em with my bow, right in the head. But they're coming.

Ludmilla gathers herself.

LUDMILLA
They'll be here. Not today but they'll be here for food on the road to Riga. We can't sit idle, boy.

EARL
We've got to put stakes in the ground around -

LUDMILLA
I know what we need to do, boy - but go inside. There's stew. Warm yourself. There's work to do soon.

Earl walks toward the house Ludmilla came out of and enters.

FADE OUT