

TEASER

1 **EXT. OCEAN - MORNING**

1

It's a hazy day with a thick marine layer settled over the ocean.

It's calm, quiet. Until the peaceful silence is shattered by the firing of CANNONS, and the WAR CRIES of sailors.

The dense fog is punctured by the bow of SPANISH MERCHANT SHIP.

2 **EXT. MERCHANT SHIP DECK - MORNING**

2

Dozens of PANICKED SAILORS scurry about the deck as it's BLASTED apart piece by piece from the cannon fire, sending SPLINTERS AND LIMBS flying.

Following behind the merchant vessel is THE PRIDE, the flagship of dreaded pirate JEAN LAFITTE.

3 **EXT. THE PRIDE - MORNING**

3

With a hat and coat that would look more at home on the streets of Paris than the deck of a Spanish galleon, CAPTAIN LAFITTE stands in sharp contrast to the others on board.

None more so than his sunburned and scarred FIRST MATE standing nearby, MAURICIO SANTOS. Now this guy is more like it. This guy looks like a fucking pirate.

JEAN

Chambers! Bring her 'round port!
You, secure that rope! Mauricio!
Mauricio!

Mauricio rushes to his side.

MAURICIO

Captain?

JEAN

Stand down the cannons. We're
pulling off.

MAURICIO

Captain, we have them dead to
rights. We can't --

Jean points out to Mauricio a narrow inlet running through a tall cliff side.

JEAN

They're headed for the canyon. That canyon opens into a bay. If we follow them in, they'll have time to turn broadside and have us pinned between the rock faces. Call it off.

MAURICIO

How can you be sure? We can still overtake them before they --

JEAN

I'm sure because it's what I would do.

Sure enough, the Spanish ship turns hard, heads straight for the tight opening.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Call it off.

Jean turns away. As far as he's concerned the order is given. Conversation over. Mauricio has other ideas, he tags along behind the captain.

MAURICIO

Captain, if we can take that ship and its cargo, we can buy our way anywhere.

Jean ignores him, continues walking away.

MAURICIO (CONT'D)

We could go home.

Jean stops briefly, the thought of returning home clearly appeals to him. He shakes it off.

Mauricio's face hardens, time for a different approach.

MAURICIO (CONT'D)

The men have had enough. If we stop now you may lose their support.

JEAN

Better a mutiny than a dead crew. I won't needlessly risk their lives. They understand that.

MAURICIO

Sir, you are Jean Lafitte. *The Jean Lafitte*. These men have followed you into battle against the British navy! And won! There's not a man among us who wouldn't die fighting at your side. But running? Jean Lafitte doesn't run.

This last, desperate appeal to Jean's ego seems to land. Jean softens for a moment as it sinks in, before once again standing tall, the fire renewed.

JEAN

We fight.

Mauricio smiles, turns back toward the deck HOLLERING COMMANDS at the crew.

Jean stands high on the RAISED QUARTER DECK, as the Merchant ship enters the narrow canyon ahead.

The Pride follows at full speed.

4 **EXT. NARROW PASS - MORNING**

4

The Pride is closing the distance on the merchant vessel.

5 **EXT. THE PRIDE - MORNING**

5

The narrow pass opens up into a wider bay, just as Jean said it would.

And just like he said it would, the merchant ship begins a sweeping turn, presenting its broadside and a SHITLOAD OF CANNONS. Far more than a merchant vessel has any business having.

JEAN

Cannon ports are open! Brace!

The ship turns, opening a wider view ahead of The Pride. Jean discovers, to his horror, a SECOND SHIP, already set up in firing position. Fuck.

Jean's surprise is only matched by his anger.

JEAN (CONT'D)

(sotto)

A trap...

He shakes it off. No time for self-pity. Jean does what he does best, he leads.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Raise the main! Steady on!

The men turn to him, confused before following the command. The main sail drops, The Pride accelerated right toward the enemy blockade.

Mauricio again approaches.

MAURICIO

Sir, we --

Jean draws his sword and pistol from his belt.

JEAN

They want a fight, they've got it.
But we do it our way! The
Baratarian way!

The crew CHEER. Most of them, anyway. Mauricio turns away, frustrated.

The Pride blazes ahead toward the two "Merchant ships", full speed.

The first onslaught of cannon fire strikes The Pride, rips sails, splints masts and leaves clouds of RED MIST where pirates used to stand.

Jean is steely eyed, determined as they quickly close the gap.

6 **EXT. MERCHANT SHIP DECK - DAY**

6

As the sailors brace for impact, a DOOR to the ship's hold swings open. A dozen HEAVILY ARMED MERCENARIES emerge from the darkness.

These guys look meaner than hell and ready for a fight.

7 **EXT. THE PRIDE - MORNING**

7

Then again, so does Jean.

The Pride withstands a final barrage of cannon fire before CAREENING into one of the smaller vessels.

The impact rocks sailors on both boats, launches several overboard. The Pride's now wedged between the merchant ships.

Jean charges to the main deck as his crew compose themselves.

JEAN

Up, boys! No quarter given!

War cries and gun fire erupt. Mercenaries hop from their boats to The Pride, engaging the pirates in close quarters.

Jean drops an attacker with his pistol, flips it in his hand and uses it to club another. He throws it at a third, OBLITERATING the man's nose, runs him through with his cutlass.

Thick smoke and ocean mist settle on the ship's deck.

A literal FOG OF WAR.

Jean carries on, cuts down another CHARGING MERCENARY who breaks through the smoke. Chaos surrounds him.

Soon the gun fire slows down.

War cries give way to the PAINED CRIES of the wounded. It seems the fighting has ceased. Jean stands at the center deck, scanning for enemies as the smoke settles.

There, a few feet ahead, is Mauricio, SIDE-BY-SIDE with the bloodied Mercenaries. A handful of surviving pirates join them.

TRAITORS one and all.

Most of the pirates refuse to meet Jean's gaze, ashamed.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Mauricio, what's happening here?

As the picture becomes more clear to Jean, his confusion turns to rage

JEAN (CONT'D)

I gave you everything! You're nothing without me!

Mauricio steps toward the captain, seemingly remorseful...

Until he pulls a dagger and buries it in Jean's rib cage.

MAURICIO

Goodbye, Jean.

Jean stumbles back, in shock and overwhelmed with pain.

He reaches the edge of the deck...and is sent HURLING
OVERBOARD by Mauricio.

First the water swallows Jean.

Then the darkness.

8

EXT. SANDY SHORE - MORNING

8

A hand reaches out on a sandy embankment. Jean, wounded and
bleeding, pulls himself from the water just in time to watch
Mauricio sail away with his ship.

END TEASER

ACT ONE

9 EXT. SHIP DECK - DAY

9

YEARS LATER.

Jean stands on the deck of A rickety SLOOP. He looks sickly, emaciated. His once flawless hair and mustache have grown into a rugged beard and dirty locks.

His face is sunburned and weathered, yet he still carries himself like a man of stature. A determined look in his eye as he gazes toward the nearby SHORELINE.

A fellow sailor, BERNARD, approaches the former captain.

BERNARD

We're close now. How long's it been?

JEAN

Too long.

BERNARD

We'll if you've waited years, the next week'll seem like nothin' but hours, Captain.

Jean's eyes dart around, making sure no one heard that.

JEAN

Bernard, please.

BERNARD

Right, right. Sorry, Cap--

A stern look from Jean shuts him up.

BERNARD (CONT'D)

Sorry's all.

Jean nods his thanks, turns and approaches the boat's CAPTAIN, a heavyset older man, with a wispy gray beard.

JEAN

Captain! A moment of your time, please.

The Captain ignores him, head buried in a map.

JEAN (CONT'D)

I have a suggestion. There's an inlet here, that leads up through the bayou. It's a tight fit, but if we follow it up we can bypass the thickest swamps and save several days on our return --

The Captain slams a hand down, finally looks up.

CAPTAIN

You, the tagalong. You presume to tell me how to navigate my own ship?

JEAN

Merely a suggestion, sir.

The Captain steps up, right into Jean's face. The nerve of this guy. He scoffs.

The crew, sensing the tension, has formed a crowd. The Captain now speaks loud enough for them to hear.

CAPTAIN

This the thanks I get for agreeing to give you passage? You question my command on my own ship?

JEAN

I'm not questioning you, sir, but--

CAPTAIN

You know what would happen if we sailed those waters? The ship'd be ran ashore within the hour. What do ya think boys? How'd you like to carry the cargo on your backs?

The crew laugh. All but Bernard.

JEAN

I know these waters as well as any man alive. I can guide us through safely, I swear it.

CAPTAIN

Who do you think you are, exactly? Jean Lafitte?

The crew laugh harder now. Bernard shoots Jean a worried, knowing look. Jean's face flushes with rage, but he keeps his composure.

JEAN

Jean Lafitte is dead.

CAPTAIN

Well, then maybe you do know the waters well as any man *alive*. It still ain't enough. What's your hurry, boy? What's a miserable wretch like you got waiting, can't wait another week?

JEAN

A meeting with an old friend.

Again Captain and crew laugh.

CAPTAIN

If it's so important to you, you best get swimming, boy.

Jean turns his back to the laughing Captain. He drops his heavy jacket and hat. The Captain stops laughing -- he can't be serious...

Jean shares a final nod of respect with Bernard before he LEAPS OVERBOARD, swims for the shore.

10 **EXT. BAYOU - MORNING, DAY, NIGHT**

10

Jean trudges through thick bayou mud from dawn to dusk.

He finds a small PADDLE BOAT outside a run-down SHACK of a house. The coast is clear. He takes it.

As night falls he spots lights on the horizon. It's New Orleans. It's home.

11 **EXT. NEW ORLEANS DOCKS - NIGHT**

11

Jean walks along a bustling dock, drips mud and sweat. Passerby take a wide birth, avoiding his grimey trail.

A group of DOCK WORKERS stand nearby. One of the men takes pity on the clearly exhausted Jean.

DOCK WORKER

You alright, mister?

But Jean doesn't hear it. His eyes are locked on something large, fast, off in the distance.

It's a STEAM TRAIN. Gas lanterns illuminate the plumes of steam rising from its chimney. Jean is transfixed. The young Dock Worker follows his gaze to the train.

DOCK WORKER (CONT'D)

What, you've never seen a train before?

He laughs and his friends follow suit. Jean snaps out of it.

JEAN

No...yes, of course I have. Just...just not here.

DOCK WORKER

You must be new in town.

Jean continues on.

12

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - NIGHT

12

Jean treads down the cobblestone roads. He notices the towering SMOKESTACKS billowing in the distance. Another new addition.

Even at this hour, the streets are alive.

Patrons stumble in and out of bars. Music flows. Women of ill repute beckon to men of lower repute.

The sound of RHYTHMIC drumming catches Jean's ear, draws him in. He rounds a corner, finds himself mere feet away from a VODOO CEREMONY.

Voodoo practitioners dance around a make-shift altar, adorned with paintings of the skull-faced deity BARON SAMEDI alongside a statue of THE VIRGIN MARY.

Jean raises an eyebrow at the odd mixture. He locks eyes with the group's DRUM PLAYER who eyes him up and down curiously... Jean looks down, remembers that his legs are coated with swamp refuse.

JEAN

Right...

He approaches a street-side clothing VENDOR, pretends to peruse the garments until the Vendor turns his back. Jean snags a DARK HOODED CLOAK off a rack and throws it on.

Smooth.

VENDOR

Thief! Stop right there! Thief!

Maybe not. Two nearby SOLDIERS hear the man's cries. Jean books it down a nearby alley.

SOLIDER

Stop! Stop now!

Jean puts some space between them, JUMPING over a small wall and PILE OF DEBRIS. He turns back just in time to watch the Soldiers trip over that same debris.

Jean laughs, home free. He zips down another alley -- BAM! Runs right into a FRESHLY PAINTED BRICK WALL.

JEAN

No... This shouldn't be here...

SOLIDER

Stop, thief! You've nowhere to go!

The Soldiers are out of sight, but closing fast. And they're right, there really is nowhere to go.

Unless...

Jean looks up. Over his head is a balcony with a WROUGHT IRON RAILING. He jumps, reaches...but falls pathetically short.

SOLIDER (CONT'D)

Stop, now!

They're close now. Too close.

Thinking quick, Jean removes his cloak, throws it up at the balcony -- success! It catches on the metal railing.

Jean jumps, pulls himself up his cloak and onto the balcony. He slips into the building as the befuddled Soldiers round the corner, find no one.

13

EXT. PIRATE'S ALLEY - NIGHT

13

Jean emerges onto Pirate's Alley. The seediest part of town. Scoundrels and brigands abound.

And there, directly across the street from him, waits an old brick structure. A wooden sign hangs above the door "LAFITTE'S BLACKSMITH SHOP".

Jean cracks a smile for the first time. He's home.

His smile fades when the door swings open and a DRUNKARD staggers into the street, vomits.

14 **INT. LAFITTE'S BLACKSMITH SHOP - NIGHT**

14

The bar is cramped, rowdy and filled with scoundrels of all types. "Over served" isn't in the vocabulary here.

PIERRE LAFITTE, 40s, tends bar, pours a stiff drink for a CRUSTY SAILOR.

CRUSTY SAILOR

Why don't ya go 'head and pour
'nother one.

He slams his drink, gags, barely holds it down. Pierre pours another.

PIERRE

You keep paying, I'll keep pouring.

Pierre turns his back to the bar, grabs another bottle. When he turns back he is face to face with Jean.

JEAN

Pierre, we need to talk.

Pierre drops the bottle, skin turns a pale white. He looks like he's seen a ghost, and in a sense, he has.

15 **INT. LAFITTE'S BLACKSMITH SHOP, BACK ROOM - NIGHT**

15

Jean and Pierre sit in the back office of the bar. Pierre pours his brother a drink, which Jean gratefully snatches. He leans back in his chair, rests his muddy boots on the table.

Pierre sighs, wipes some mud off the table with a cloth. Some things never change.

JEAN

So, you've turned my safehouse into
a bar? I can't say I love what
you've done to the place.

PIERRE

Where have you been?

JEAN

That's how you greet me? After all
this time? No "I missed you
brother, I mourned for months, I--"

PIERRE

Jean, please. Of course I missed you. Of course I mourned. When word first came back that you were gone... I couldn't believe it.

Jean smiles, clearly he enjoys giving his brother shit.

JEAN

I missed you, Pierre. Tell me, did the women miss me as well? Were the obituaries beautiful?

Pierre awkwardly averts his gaze.

PIERRE

I'm sure they did...but... There were no obituaries. When Mauricio came back without you...the stories he told...

Jean sits up, spits in disgust.

JEAN

Mauricio. That cowardly, back stabbing... Wait, what stories?

PIERRE

That you started attacking ships. American ships. That he demanded you stop, challenged you for leadership. He...he said that you were killed trying to run.

Jean paces, furious. He slams his glass down, shattering it.

JEAN

Son of a bitch! I've been chasing him across the whole god-forsaken sea, and he accuses *me* of running?! He sold me out, betrayed me, left me for dead!

PIERRE

But you're home now.

JEAN

And I'll never have a better shot at him. Nobody knows the land like me. This is my city, my home! It's time I take it back.

PIERRE

Jean, we have nothing. Mauricio took it all. The whole operation. The weapons, the ships, the men.

JEAN

The men will come back when they hear the truth. They won't stand the betrayal any more than I will. Elias, Griffen, Denis, they'll join me. They're loyal.

PIERRE

Sure they are. That's why they're dead.

JEAN

Hammond, Roberts and Enoch?

PIERRE

Dead, dead and...actually, Enoch's still alive.

Jean perks up. Hope?

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Scheduled to be hanged at dawn.

Nope.

JEAN

I'll do it myself.

PIERRE

You're going to, what? Stroll into Baratania and kill Mauricio in the dead of the night?

JEAN

And why not? Baratania is *my* island!

Pierre stands, grabs his brother by his shoulder and leads him to the bed across the room.

PIERRE

Rest tonight. But there's something you need to see.

Jean's not happy about it, but begrudgingly sits on the bed.

16 **EXT. BARATARIA ISLAND - DAY**

16

A small island situated in a bay south of New Orleans. Barataria is the former home base of Jean's criminal enterprise.

Mauricio and his men now have control of the territory which is surrounded by a high STONE WALL protecting the WOODEN COTTAGES at the center of the island. Hundreds of pirates call the small city home.

17 **INT. CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - BARATARIA - DAY**

17

Mauricio Santos sits at a large oak table. He's dressed similarly to Jean's Pirate Captain look, but absolutely NOT pulling it off.

Another man sits across from him. REMY, 30s, pale and proper, looks much more comfortable in his high-class attire.

REMY

So they'll be ready? My master is growing impatient.

MAURICIO

They'll be ready. It's not easy, you know. Findin' outsiders can do the job you need doin'. If your *master* is so impatient, let me handle it. My way. I'll see it gets done right.

REMY

You must understand, it is of paramount importance that no part of this be traced back to my master. That means no part of this can be traced back to you, either.

Mauricio springs to his feet, knocks his chair over in the process.

MAURICIO

Do you take me for a fool, boy? Do you think me stupid?

His hand lowers to his pistol. Remy remains almost unnervingly calm.

REMY

Of course not.

Remy stands too, gently pushes his chair back into the table.

REMY (CONT'D)

It's been a pleasure.

He offers a graceful nod before exiting the room, leaving Mauricio alone, red-faced and angry.

18

EXT. BARATARIA BAY - DAY

18

Jean and Pierre lay face down, hidden by foliage on the outskirts of the bayou surrounding Barataria island. Pierre scouts the fortifications through the lens of a SPYGLASS. He hands it to Jean who does the same.

PIERRE

They've sealed all the smuggling routes. All the escape routes. Patrols every hour. It was never like this before. It's a fortress.

Jean, peering through the spyglass, scoffs.

JEAN

He's scared. He should be. When I held Barataria we didn't need a fortress. We had respect. I had respect. No one would dare so much as point a pistol in our direct--

Jean stops. Interrupted by the cold metal of a PISTOL pressed against his head.

MORGAN

On your feet.

Jean and Pierre stand, find themselves face to face with three formidable looking PIRATES, MORGAN, FOSTER AND RAMSEY.

The trio are heavily armed, pistols drawn and leveled at the brothers.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

As I live and breathe...Jean Lafitte.

Foster lowers his gun, turns to Morgan.

FOSTER

No, no. That's not Jean Lafitte. I watched Jean Lafitte die. I saw it with my own eyes.

MORGAN

And what, pray tell, are you seeing with your own eyes right this second? THAT is Jean Lafitte!

FOSTER

I told you, it can't be! I was there! I saw him --

Ramsey, the youngest of the trio butts in.

RAMSEY

Who the hell is Jean Lafitte?

Jean winces, pride wounded.

JEAN

I'd like to know myself, sounds like an interesting character. Anyway, if you'd do us the kindness of stowing those pistols, we'll be on our way.

MORGAN

Not so fast. Captain Santos'll be keen to know you're alive.

FOSTER

Reckon he'll pay a fine prize for your head.

Jean takes a chance, BOLTS off into the thick bayou foliage.

MORGAN

Shit! After him! Now!

They listen, take off in pursuit of their fleeing prey. Morgan turns back to Pierre.

MORGAN (CONT'D)

If that's Jean, that'd make you his brother. Considering the resemblance and all.

PIERRE

Very astute. Pleasure to meet you.

19

EXT. BAYOU - DAY

19

Jean dashes through the bayou, leaping between the driest sections of land. He stays quick, nimble. Behind him, Foster and Ramsey plow ahead on the most direct route, find themselves bogged down in swamp mud.

Jean scans the trees. He's looking for something...

His eyes light up when he sees it. A BLUE RAG tied to a branch of a tree. Jean dashes toward the tree, putting more distance in between him and his pursuers.

He reaches the base of the tree, takes a moment to orient himself. In the distance another RAG hangs from a tree branch. This one a faded YELLOW. Jean runs toward it.

BEHIND - Foster and Ramsey watch as Jean dashes from tree to tree. They're losing him.

FOSTER

Enough!

Foster draws his pistol, aims... BANG!

ON JEAN - Mid-leap over a mud patch when the bullet GRAZES his shoulder. The shock causes Jean to lose his footing.

He slams into the bayou muck, grabs the bloody wound.

In the distance - a tree with a RED RAG wrapped in the branches. He stands, sprints toward it, but STOPS SUDDENLY, directly in line with the red rag. He takes a large, deliberate step.

Another large step to the left. Now a series of smaller steps forward. He counts his paces as he steps.

JEAN

(sotto)

One, two, three, four.

Another big step, followed by more short paces.

JEAN (CONT'D)

One, two.

He's reached the base of the tree. He kneels in front of a tangled knot of roots, begins clawing away.

FOSTER (OS)

Lafitte! Come back here and face us
like a man!

Jean can't see his would-be captures, but they're closing the distance. He digs faster, hits pay dirt, pulls out a small wooden CHEST and digs through its contents.

Inside - an IVORY GRIPPED DAGGER and a PISTOL, complete with powder and shot. He pockets the dagger, loads the pistol.

ON THE PIRATES - Foster and Ramsey approach the RED RAG TREE.

RAMSEY

Look!

He spots the chest at the base of the tree. No sight of Jean.

He steps forward to investigate -- WHAM! And is IMPALED by a SPRING LOADED TRAP. Three wooden spikes now firmly imbedded in his chest.

FOSTER

Christ, Ramsey!

Foster steps forward toward his friend, triggers a STEEL BEAR TRAP to SNAP around his leg!

FOSTER (CONT'D)

Fuck! Oh god!

Jean steps out from behind a nearby tree, pistol in hand. He's bloody, covered in muck, and FURIOUS. Like some fucked up bayou Angel of Death.

FOSTER (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, Captain! I can help --

Jean silences him with a pistol shot between the eyes.

20

EXT. BARATARIA BAY - DAY

20

Morgan stand guard above Pierre, turns his back briefly, trying to catch a glimpse of his compatriots.

MORGAN

Where are those half-wit --

He turns back -- just in time to see PIERRE'S FIST as it connects with his jaw. Morgan drops. Pierre pounces on top of him, delivers blow after blow.

But Morgan is bigger, stronger and more ruthless. He grips Pierre's head and delivers a HEADBUTT that lands with a sickening CRUNCH and knocks Pierre to the mud.

Morgan stands, draws his sword from his hip, prepared to deliver the final blow to poor Pierre -- but is RUN THROUGH with a cutlass from behind.

Morgan's corpse slides off the blade, revealing Jean standing behind him. He extends a bloody hand to his brother.

JEAN

Let's go home.

21

INT. LAFITTE'S BLACKSMITH SHOP, BACK ROOM - DAY

21

Pierre is slumped in a chair, a wet cloth pressed against his bruised face. Jean inspects his bullet wound.

He scoops SWAMP SLUDGE out of the wound. It's not particularly deep, but absolutely filthy, red and INFLAMED.

Jean ignores it, wraps the wound.

JEAN

You were right.

PIERRE

I'm sorry it took getting shot for you to realize it.

JEAN

I can't do it alone. Not there anyway. I'd need support. Men, a ship. All things I don't have. There must be somewhere else I can reach him, somewhere his guard will be down.

PIERRE

Jean, I told you. Things have changed and people --

JEAN

Louise! Louise can help.

The mention of her name elicits a surprisingly stern reaction from Pierre.

PIERRE

No! No, Jean! Leave her out of this. Her father isn't the governor anymore, and even if he was he wouldn't stick his neck out for you. Not after you put a bounty on his head!

JEAN

He put one on mine first!

PIERRE

He was the governor! You are a pirate!

Jean scuffs, brushes it off. He grabs his hooded cloak and throws it over his shoulders.

JEAN

I have to try. Besides, she must miss me.

Jean shoots Pierre a cheeky smile, but he's not having it.

PIERRE

I said leave her out of it, Jean!
She's free of this life! Free of you!

Now that really hurt.

JEAN

I suppose you'd like to be free of me as well?

With that Jean exits, leaving Pierre alone and guilt ridden.

22

EXT. BAYOU - DAY

22

Mauricio stands near the base of the RED RAG tree, flanked by a crew of PIRATES.

Ramsey's limp body is still propped up, skewered by the spike trap. Foster's leg is clamped in the bear trap, head blown to shit. A PIRATE approaches Mauricio.

PIRATE

They found Morgan.

He solemnly shakes his head.

MAURICIO

Who's responsible?

PIRATE

Thieves, maybe. There's no telling.

MAURICIO

The traps?

PIRATE

They're old, maybe years old. None of the crew knew about them.

Mauricio eyes the empty chest. Next, the RED RAG tied to the branches. A brief look of recognition flashes on his face.

END ACT ONE

AGWE (CONT'D)

There've been sightings of some newcomers in town. Rough types to be sure, but no way to know if they're involved.

They come to a stop in front of a bedroom door.

LOUISE

Place a man at the docks. I'll do my best to dig up leads. We *will* get to the truth of the matter. Keep the faith, Agwe.

AGWE

Of course.

LOUISE

Be safe.

AGWE

Always.

Agwe smiles, nods his goodbye. Louise enters the bedroom.

26

INT. LOUISE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

26

She exhales deeply, leaving the stress of the day behind. Finally, some peace, quiet and alone time --

Which is interrupted when a FIGURE appears behind her, wraps his hand around over her mouth.

JEAN

Don't scream. Please.

Louise's eyes light up at the sound of the voice. She stops struggling and Jean releases her. She calmly steps across the room before turning back to face him.

LOUISE

Jean...I... I thought you were dead.

Jean cocks an eyebrow. Not the warm welcome he was expecting.

JEAN

A common misconception it seems.

LOUISE

I...I don't know what to say.

Jean saunters over to her, tenderly reaches for her hands.

JEAN

That you missed me. That you waited
for me.

He's half joking, but still shocked when Louise rips her
hands from his.

LOUISE

How did you get in here?

JEAN

Through the slave's quarters.
Wasn't easy to find.

LOUISE

There's no further need for it,
I've freed my father's slaves.

JEAN

You freed your slaves?

LOUISE

I freed my *father's* slaves.

Louise does not sound happy to see him. Jean's posture
changes, defensive.

JEAN

How progressive...

LOUISE

Jean, why are you here?

JEAN

Why shouldn't I be? This city is my
home! I saved this god-forsaken
town. Without me the British
would've --

Jean scoffs. Mutters under his breath.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Ungrateful...

LOUISE

No, Jean. Why are you *here*? In my
bedroom. Right now.

Jean takes a seat on the edge of Louise's bed.

JEAN

Louise, I... I need your help. I've
got nothing. Nothing left. Just
you.

The vulnerability in his voice softens Louise, though she tries to hide it from him.

LOUISE

What do you want from me? How can I possibly help you?

JEAN

Mauricio Santos. My first mate. He betrayed me. Left me for dead. It's time I return the favor, take back what I've earned. But Baratavia is locked down. I can't get to him, not without an army. If I could get him away from Baratavia, away from his men, maybe I'd have a chance. I've heard he moves in different circles these days. Your circle.

LOUISE

Santos... I'm aware of him. I've seen him, even. Once or twice.

Jean perks up. Finally, some good news.

JEAN

Where? Where can I find him?

Louise sighs, can't believe she's even humoring this.

LOUISE

He stays here in town, mostly. At Jacques Saint Germain's manor.

JEAN

Jacques Saint Germain?

LOUISE

A newcomer in town. He's a foreigner with money and connections. He works with Mauricio in the...trade business.

JEAN

Typical Mauricio. Outsourcing to a fence. Me? I controlled the whole operation, acquisitions to distribution. 100% of the profits, nothing going to --

Louise's look of disdain stops Jean's trip down memory lane.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Right, this Saint Germain. Where can I find him?

LOUISE

His estate is on Saint Charles Avenue, but he's heavily guarded. You won't be able to sneak in there like you did here.

JEAN

Any ideas?

LOUISE

Yes, here's one - let it go. You're lucky to be alive. Count your blessings and step away while you can. Start anew.

Jean turns his back to her.

JEAN

I can't. He took everything from me. My ship, my crew. He took you from me.

LOUISE

You don't own me, Jean. You never did.

Louise sighs, walks to a dresser and pulls a card out of a drawer, hands it to Jean. It's an INVITATION.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

He throws a ball every weekend. There's one tonight and Mauricio may be there, but you can't get in without this.

JEAN

Thank you, Louise.

He accepts it, humbled. Nods his thanks, turns to exit.

LOUISE

Jean! You can't go looking like that.

Jean hold his arms out, looks down at his mud stained boots, bloody shirt. His face says - "what's wrong with this?"

Louise opens a closet door, drags a large wooden trunk out and into the bedroom. She opens it.

LOUISE (CONT'D)
You left this here.

Jean smiles as he looks into the trunk.

27 EXT. JACQUES SAINT GERMAIN ESTATE - NIGHT

27

The newest, nicest manor we've seen so far is in the throes of a party, and the party is banging. Dozens of New Orleanians fraternize on the grounds, drinks in hand.

28 INT. JACQUES SAINT GERMAIN ESTATE BALLROOM - NIGHT

28

Two SERVANTS open a large set of doors - and in struts Jean.

Beard trimmed, hair slicked, sporting a colorful, showy jacket and a wide-brimmed hat adorned with a peacock feather. His FRILLED SLEEVES AND COLLAR pop out from under the coat.

He enters with confidence, swagger. Looks every bit the pirate king from the teaser. His confidence fades as the sounds of GIGGLES and WHISPERS emanate from the party guests.

Jean looks around the room, horrified to find that fashion has left him in the dust. Every other man in the room is wearing slim black suits, heads covered with tall TOP HATS.

Jean looks woefully out of style and place.

Embarrassed, he tucks his frilled shirt collar and cuffs up into his coat, removes the peacock feather from his hat and places it in a nearby houseplant.

He shakes it off, game face back on, grabs a drink off a passing waiter's tray and heads further into the party. He sidesteps dancing revelers and drunks, notices a crowd gathered around a MAN at the far end of the room.

The man we will come to know as JACQUES SAINT GERMAIN is tall, pale, with slick white hair that seems at odds with his youthful face. Jacques is holding court, a small group of party guests hang on his every word.

JACQUES

And the enemies who survived the battle? Well, Vlad the Impaler was not given the nickname in jest. No, his prisoners faced the most grim fate of all. The mad tyrant would order a stake be driven through their abdomens, then raised and driven into the ground.

(MORE)

JACQUES (CONT'D)

The victim would often survive the impalement for days, sometimes a week or more. All the while, slowly sliding down the stake.

The crowd is enraptured by the tale and the man delivering it. Jean breaks the spell when he speaks up.

JEAN

Actually, that's not...not entirely accurate.

Jacques takes notice of Jean, cocks an eyebrow at the pirate.

JACQUES

Ah, a fellow history buff then? Please, mister...?

JEAN

Oh, uh...Dupont. Henri Dupont.

JACQUES

Mr. Dupot, please, enlighten us.

All eyes turn to Jean. He winces, regretting the attention and wishing he'd kept his big mouth shut.

JEAN

You're correct, of course, about how Vlad The Impaler earned his nickname. There's no disputing that. I do, however, take issue with your recounting of his methods.

JACQUES

(intrigued)

Fascinating. Do go on.

JEAN

The stakes weren't driven through the abdomen. They were, in actuality, inserted into the... Well, I'll spare the more sensitive among us further details.

The faces of the nearby party guests turn from interest to repulsion before he can even finish.

Tired of embarrassment, Jean decides to own it. He WINKS at a nearby WOMAN who is unable to hide her disgust.

JEAN (CONT'D)

But you may use your imagination.

WOMAN

You sir, are a degenerate.

Jacques looks amused by Jean's crudeness, but nevertheless, decides to defuse the situation.

JACQUES

Very interesting, Mr. Dupont, thank you for sharing. I do believe that is enough story telling for one evening. Please, drink, dance, enjoy yourselves!

The crowd disperses, leaving Jean alone. He scans the room, focused on finding Mauricio once more.

His work is made easier when the CRASH of shattering glass erupts on the opposite side of the room. A PAINED SCREAM echoes in the ballroom.

Jean looks, spots Mauricio with a broken bottle in hand. Remy on his hands and knees by his feet.

ON MAURICIO - Mauricio kicks the downed man hard in the ribs, sending him sprawling. Blood drips from Remy's head.

MAURICIO

You dare speak to me like that? Do you know who the fuck I am, boy?

He grabs Remy by the hair, looks into his face as he yells.

REMY

I meant, no offense. Please --

MAURICIO

I asked you, do you know who the fuck I am?!

REMY

Yes, of course. I --

Mauricio slaps him across the face. Draws a pistol from a brace on his chest.

MAURICIO

No! No, I don't think you do. But you're about to find out!

He presses the pistol to Remy's head, cocks the hammer --

But stops when his shoulder is gripped by a pale hand.

JACQUES

Mister Santos, that's enough. I'd thank you to let him be.

MAURICIO

The boy needs to be taught some manners!

Jacques grins a stiff, disturbing smile.

JACQUES

I'll see to it. Please.

He gestures toward a nearby hallway. Mauricio holsters his pistol, turns one last time to SPIT on Remy before leaving the ballroom.

ON JEAN - Jean's eyes are locked in Mauricio. His focus singular. He strides across the room, shoves a DRUNKEN REVELER out of his way.

Jean's pace quickens as his DAGGER slides from sleeve to hand.

Nearby, Jacques notices Jean moving with purpose. The glimmer of the dagger's blade catches his eye.

29

INT. MARIE LAVEAU'S OFFICE - NIGHT

29

A dim, candle lit room. Trinkets of all kinds hang off of shelves. Paintings on every wall. An ALTAR, similar to the one we saw on the streets sits in a corner.

Louise is seated at a small wooden table. A FIGURE sits across from her, masked in shadow. The figure, MARIE LAVEAU, draws a TAROT CARD from a deck, places it on the table in front of Louise.

MARIE

Danger is coming. The threat is growing. It is good you came to me.

LOUISE

But how can we stop it? I've done everything I can, but if I get found out... If my father were to know... And now he is back, and I just...

Marie leans forward into the light, her kind face illuminated. She places a gentle hand on Louise's.

MARIE

Growth comes in our most trying times. From facing challenges, from fighting for the truth. We must remain patient, stay the course.

She pulls another card from the deck - an image of a naked man and woman holding hands. Underneath, it reads "THE LOVERS."

Louise looks away, embarrassed by the card.

MARIE (CONT'D)

Always remember, eventually the truth must come to light. It must. Only truth can keep the darkness at bay.

Louise faces the card, determined.

30

INT. JACQUES MANSION - HALLWAY - NIGHT

30

Jean, dagger in hand, walks down the hallway. Mauricio is at the far end of the hall. Jean looks around -- no one to be seen. Now's the time. His pace quickens.

Suddenly, Mauricio stops. He opens and enters a bedroom halfway down the hall, slams the door behind him.

Jean goes to follow, but stops when two LARGE GUARDS appear at the end of the hall. Both wear a SWORD on their hip. Both reaching for said swords. Shit.

Jean turns back, trying to look inconspicuous, but finds himself face-to-face with two more GUARDS.

HEAD GUARD

Mister Dupont, if you would please come with us.

JEAN

Sorry boys, you must have the wrong man. Excuse me I'll be --

He tries to squeeze past. It ain't happening.

HEAD GUARD

Mister Dupont, you are coming with us.

The guards at the end of the hall are approaching, soon Jean will be completely pinned between the four men. Jean lowers his head, seemingly beaten.

JEAN

Oh yes, just a misunderstanding.
Let me just --

Jean lashes out with a HARD RIGHT HAND that connects on the Head Guard's jaw. The big man stumbles. Jean takes advantage and nails the other with a shoving kick that slams him into the wall.

Jean takes off his jacket, drops it to the floor -- causing his shirt's FRILLED COLLAR AND CUFFS to POP back out. The sight pauses the Guards, who can't help but laugh.

Even Jean smiles, shrugs, before THRUSTING FORWARD with his dagger. The blade finds it's mark and the first Guard drops. 3 Guards left.

He dodges another SLASH, grabs the wrist of his attacker and SMASHES him with a headbutt. The man stumbles back, loses his grip on the sword. Jean scoops it up and engages the other two guards with a blade in each hand.

Jean is fast, skilled, and even with a numbers disadvantage he more than holds his own. He pushes back his attackers, finally creating some space between them.

Suddenly, Jean winces, groans in pain. The BULLET WOUND on his shoulder has reopened. Blood leaks through his white shirt. The sudden shock of pain causes him to drop his sword.

Two of the Guards eye each other, spotting a chink in Jean's armor. They reengage, one locks blades with Jean while the other PUNCHES HIS WOUNDED SHOULDER!

Jean cries out, shoves one of the guards back in an enraged bull rush -- and THROWS HIM OUT THE WINDOW.

31 **EXT. JACQUES' YARD - NIGHT**

31

A group of drunken party goers CHEER as the Guard flies through the window, SLAMS on the grass in front of them.

32 **INT. JACQUES' MANSION - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

32

Two Guards down, two to go.

The fight continues, with Jean giving as good as he gets, but he's slowing down. He sweats, gasps for breath. The wound is bleeding profusely now and it's taking its toll.

The Guards take advantage, push the pace. Jean can't hold them off any longer -- one Guard raises his SABER'S HILT, brings it down on Jean's head.

The lights go out.

33

INT. JACQUES' STUDY - NIGHT

33

Jean's eyes flutter. He comes to in a dark room, arms and legs tied to a sturdy chair. A man's face drifts only inches away from his own. It's REMY, who steps back when he sees Jean's eyes open.

JEAN

What...who are you?

Remy doesn't answer him, instead speaks to an unseen party.

REMY

The head injury doesn't appear to be serious, but the shoulder is an issue.

JACQUES

Thank you, Remy.

Sure enough, Jean's bullet wound has taken on a sickly hue. Jacques steps out of the shadows.

JEAN

Did I offend you with the impaling thing? It's true, look it up. He went right up through --

Jacques smiles his fake, reptilian smile.

JACQUES

No, Mister Lafitte. I'm not quite so petty as that.

JEAN

You could've fooled me. I --

He stops, realizes what Jacques just called him.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Sorry, it's Dupont.

JACQUES

Mister Lafitte, I am not a fool and do not appreciate being treated as such.

(MORE)

JACQUES (CONT'D)

In fact, I'm quite honored to be in the presence of the great Jean Lafitte. I've heard so much about you. The hero of the Battle of New Orleans. Dreaded pirate captain --

JEAN

Jean Lafitte is dead.

Jacques shakes his head, disappointed. He gestures to Remy.

JACQUES

Please see our guest in.

Remy opens a door and in walks BERNARD - the sailor that Jean arrived to New Orleans with. Jean flinches at the sight of him, but holds his tongue.

JACQUES (CONT'D)

Don't be shy. I want you to get a good look. I need to be sure. Completely sure.

Bernard nods, does as told. He stands in front of Jean, barely able to meet his gaze.

BERNARD

Yeah. It's him.

Jean struggles against his bonds, enraged.

JEAN

You miserable piece of shit! When I get my hands on you --

JACQUES

Enough! Please continue, Bernard. His name?

BERNARD

Jean Lafitte. I sailed with him as a privateer in Galveston and again on the way back. I... I'm sorry Captain.

JACQUES

Thank you, Bernard. Remy, would you please see him paid.

Remy nods, begins to usher Bernard out of the room.

JEAN

No force on heaven or earth will
stop me from putting a blade
through your heart.

Bernard looks back, ashamed, before being hurried out.

JACQUES

So, now that we have the truth of
it, why exactly did you come here?

JEAN

A man was here tonight. A man I'd
like very much to kill.

JACQUES

Mauricio Santos?

The look of rage on Jean's face is answer enough.

JACQUES (CONT'D)

I imagine the story he told of your
death was...exaggerated.

JEAN

Obviously.

JACQUES

You didn't flee from his challenge?

JEAN

Would I be here now if I had? Let
me go and I'll give him a
challenge, right here, right now.

Jacques smiles, impressed by his spirit.

JACQUES

You must understand that I can't
allow that to happen here. That
level of scrutiny is something I've
tried hard to avoid. But I
understand your desire, and I
believe I have a proposition that
may serve us both.

Jacques gestures to Remy, who steps up, cuts Jean free. Jean
stands, takes in the room.

A series of ARCANES ARTIFACTS and GROTESQUE PAINTINGS line the
walls. DEFORMED ANIMAL SAMPLES float in APOTHECARY JARS atop
a large desk. HEAVY CURTAINS block every window but one.

The entire room carries an ominous vibe.

Jacques grabs a wine bottle, pours Jean a glass and offers it to him. Jacques places the wine down, grabs another, more ORNATE BOTTLE from his shelf.

He pours himself a glass of wine -- if you can call it that. Whatever it is pours in thick, coagulated clumps. Jean eyes it curiously.

JEAN

Saving the good stuff for yourself?

JACQUES

My tastes are rather...unique. You would find it quite unpalatable, believe me.

JEAN

Sure. And this proposition?

JACQUES

Ah, right. In my short time here, I've managed to carve out quite a bit of success for myself. It hasn't been easy, but it has been rewarding, and I would very much like to see it continue.

JEAN

Naturally.

JACQUES

There has arisen...an issue, in that regard. A woman they call the Voodoo Queen, Marie Laveau. Are you familiar?

JEAN

No, should I be?

JACQUES

I'd say so. She, too, has quickly risen to prominence. She trades in information...secrets. And she's good. So good, in fact, that I require her services.

JEAN

Then hire her.

JACQUES

It's not that simple. You see, Madame Laveau is something of a spiritual leader.

(MORE)

JACQUES (CONT'D)

The head of an occult society that practices a barbaric religion. For whatever reason, she and her followers have decided that I am a figure to be feared. Not to be trusted.

JEAN

Are you? Trustworthy, I mean.

Jacques just smiles in reply.

JACQUES

I'd very much like to meet this Voodoo Queen. So much so that I've assembled a team of mercenaries to see that it happens.

JEAN

You're kidnapping her? Not the most elegant solution.

JACQUES

No, but they only solution available to me. Now, these mercenaries are foreigners, outsiders. A necessary step to maintain my own distance from the matter. The plan is to take to the bayous, strike at the most lightly defended section of Laveau's compound. Take her quickly and minimize resistance. However, these men don't know the land. Naturally making this undertaking more difficult than it need be. But, from what I understand, no one knows the bayou better than the legendary Jean Lafitte.

JEAN

You want me to guide your mercenaries. What's in it for me?

JACQUES

In service of the mission, I've purchased a schooner, as well as the loyalty of these men. Upon successful return of the Voodoo Queen, both shall be yours to use as you see fit. You can return to the high seas, make the world fear your name once more.

(MORE)

JACQUES (CONT'D)
 Or perhaps a more personal trip to
 Barataria is in store? Either way,
 it will be your ship, your crew.

Jean remains silent, considers his options for a moment.

JEAN
 I'll do it.

JACQUES
 Midnight tonight. At the docks. Be
 there.

Remy returns Jean's dagger while Jacques glares at his
 wounded shoulder. He grimaces.

JACQUES (CONT'D)
 And see to that wound. It
 smells...infected.

Jean cocks an eyebrow. Weird...

34

EXT. NEW ORLEANS STREETS - NIGHT

34

Jean crosses the road in front of Jacques' mansion.

He ducks down a dark alley, stops as a door opens ahead of
 him. Jean shades his eyes from the bright light emanating
 from behind the door.

A figure exits, the door shuts behind him. Jean blinks, eyes
 adjusting -- and is shocked to see BERNARD stumbling down the
 alley ahead of him.

JEAN
 (sotto)
 Son of a bitch.

Jean grabs his dagger, enraged. He increases his pace,
 gaining on Bernard from behind.

He's close now, almost close enough to bury his dagger in the
 traitor's back -- but Bernard stumbles, slumps against the
 alley wall. His body goes limp.

Jean's humanity wins out, he drops the dagger, catches
 Bernard before he slams to the floor. They fall together,
 with Jean saving Bernard from the brunt of it.

Jean finally gets a good look at the traitor, is horrified to
 find HIS ARMS CUT FROM ELBOW TO WRIST. Bernard's face is a
 PALE BLUE, sunken and frozen in a terrified expression.

Jean scans the alley, looking for help or possible witnesses.

Something in the distance catches his eye -- JACQUES STANDING BEHIND HIS OFFICE WINDOW. Jacques watches Jean with his disturbing smile, takes a sip of his strange wine.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

35 **EXT. LAFITTE'S BLACKSMITH SHOP - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT** 35

Pierre Lafitte is emptying a bucket of foul water (at least we hope it's water) in the dark back alley of the Blacksmith Shop. The sounds of rowdy drunks roaring in the bar behind him.

He turns back toward the bar -- stops when he hears the sound of approaching horse. A CLOAKED FIGURE rides atop the animal.

 PIERRE
 You shouldn't be here.

The hood drops. It's Louise.

 LOUISE
 We need to talk.

Pierre helps her off the horse before the two share a PASSIONATE KISS.

 PIERRE
 Inside.

He ushers her into the bar's back room.

36 **INT. LAFITTE'S BLACKSMITH SHOP, BACK ROOM - NIGHT** 36

Louise sits across from Pierre who pours a drink, offers it to her. She doesn't accept it.

 LOUISE
 We need to tell him, Pierre. We
 can't live our lives sneaking
 around behind his back. It's not
 fair to him or us.

She reaches for Pierre's hand, but he stands, nervously paces the room.

 PIERRE
 I know, I know. We will tell
 him...just...not now. Not yet.

 LOUISE
 If not now, when? Isn't it best to
 say it now, be open and honest
 right from the start? The longer we
 hide it the more it will seem a
 betrayal.

PIERRE

He's not ready yet. He's enraged, obsessed...not thinking clearly. He needs time to calm down and settle in. If we tell him about us now, I fear the path it may lead him down.

Louise stands, gently grabs Pierre's hands, calming him.

LOUISE

We won't be able to hide it from him much longer.

PIERRE

What do you mean?

LOUISE

Pierre, I'm --

She's interrupted by a booming voice coming from the bar.

JEAN (O.S.)

Pierre! Pierre!

Pierre panics at the sound, SHOVES Louise into a small closet where she is hidden by hanging garments.

Jean charges in moments later.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Guns, swords! Please tell me you kept them.

Pierre points to a wooden trunk in the corner.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Thank Christ.

Before Jean can reach the trunk, he stumbles, catches himself on the table. He's sweating, breathing heavily. Pierre helps stabilize his brother.

PIERRE

Jesus, Jean. You need to rest.

Pierre gets a look at Jean's shoulder. It's pretty nasty.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

We need to get you to a doctor.

Jean brushes him off, continues to the trunk and starts digging.

JEAN

I can't. Not now. I've come to an arrangement with a local power player. If I help him he'll give me a ship and crew. Pierre, it may be enough to take Barataria.

PIERRE

One ship won't be able to take Barataria. Jean, you need to stop, you're not thinking clear--

JEAN

Maybe it isn't enough for Barataria, but Mauricio can leave at any time. After tonight, I'll have the means to follow him. Chase him to the ends of the earth if that's what it takes.

PIERRE

What exactly is this arrangement?

JEAN

A kidnapping. Simple enough.

PIERRE

Kidnapping whom?

Jean stands, having found a pistol and cutlass that he straps to a bandolier and throws over his shoulder.

JEAN

Some local religious leader...Marie...something or other.

In the closet - Louise's eyes light up. She covers her own mouth, lest she make a noise.

PIERRE

Marie Laveau? Jean, you don't know what you're getting yourself into. Laveau is a Voodoo Queen, a sorceress. You're not just risking your life here, but your soul!

JEAN

My soul hasn't been my own for decades. There's nothing that can be taken I haven't already traded away.

PIERRE

Fine, then how about being practical? She has guards, dozens of them. They're fanatics, zealots. You know what happens when mercenaries run across true believers? They lose. Every time.

Jean finishes affixing his weapons, turns to his brother and offers a sincere smile. Places a hand on his shoulder.

JEAN

I have to do this. For you, for me. For our name and our futures. One day you'll understand.

He wraps Pierre in a tight embrace, then dashes away.

The second the door shuts behind him, Louise emerges from the closet. Pierre JUMPS, startled, after seemingly forgetting she was there.

Louise hurries toward the alleyway door.

PIERRE

Louise, wait! I'm sorry, I just --

LOUISE

It's okay. I have to go, I --

Pierre grabs her by the wrist.

PIERRE

What? Where are you going, we still need to --

Louise silences him with a kiss.

LOUISE

I'll be back. I swear it. But I need to go. Now.

His grip on her wrist loosens.

LOUISE (CONT'D)

I love you.

PIERRE

I love you, too.

She rushes out, leaving Pierre alone and confused once more.

37 **EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT**

37

The docks are quiet this time of night, save the SCHOONER that is currently being loaded with guns and munitions by a rough and tumble crew of CUTTHROATS.

Jean eyes the ship. *His ship* - should things go well. It's no "The Pride", but it will do. His hopeful grin is erased when a large ROUGHNECK carrying a crate of pistols slams into his shoulder.

ROUGHNECK

Out of the way.

Jean winces, follows him up the ship's ramp.

38 **EXT. SCHOONER DECK - NIGHT**

38

Jean joins two dozen MERCENARIES on the deck. A tall broad shouldered man, MARCHAND, barks commands.

MARCHAND

Hurry it up boys? We don't want to keep our lady waiting, do we?

The men laugh, quicken the loading. Marchand spots Jean.

MARCHAND (CONT'D)

So you're the navigator I was warned about?

JEAN

Don't know that I warrant a warning, but yes. I've been tasked with guiding the ship through the bayou.

Marchand turns from Jean, addresses his men loudly.

MARCHAND

And what do ye think of this? Sneaking through the swamp like filthy animals in the night?! We want the fight! We seek the fight! Were it my way we'd take 'em head on, man to man, blood for blood!

The men CHEER the thought of action and bloodshed. Marchand turns to Jean, still loud enough to be heard by all.

MARCHAND (CONT'D)

But no, you'd have us sneak, quiet like. The cowards way, says I!

The men BOO their disapproval. Jean's face burns with rage.

JEAN

The plan isn't mine. You want
blood, go take it! I'm here to --

MARCHAND

Enough! Men, get back to work!
We're under way shortly!

Again the men ROAR their approval. Marchand leads Jean to the quarterdeck.

Now in private, Marchand's demeanor, even voice changes. He softens, sounds timid, apologetic.

MARCHAND (CONT'D)

I'm sorry for the show, old boy.
These hired guns respect only one
thing. Strength. And the only
strength they understand is
violence and degradation. A
shameful thing, really.

JEAN

Men respect what their Captain
tells them to. Their failures are
your failures, the shame yours
alone. And if you call me a coward
again, I'll give you a show of
strength those men will understand.

Marchand lowers his head, he knows Jean is right.

MARCHAND

Understood. Upward and onward, old
boy.

Marchand produces a map, splays it out on a table, points.

MARCHAND (CONT'D)

This is our target. Do you know it?

JEAN

Of course. Wouldn't be fit for this
job if I didn't. It's an old
plantation, out of use years ago.
Back then we used it for smuggling.
The Voodoo Queen and her cult are
there?

Marchand scoffs.

MARCHAND

Cult? Is that what they told you? Militia is more like it. Their positions are fortified, dozens of armed guards, gun emplacements. Taking them head on would be suicide.

JEAN

Then we don't take them head on.

Jean draws his finger down the map.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Like I said, we used the ground for smuggling. I know a route, a hidden one not likely to have been discovered, even now. Give me a small team, three or four men, and I'll lead them into the house. From there, we grab Laveau and her men will lay down their arms. Avoid unnecessary bloodshed.

Marchand peers out on the deck, where two burly mercenaries SLAM THEIR FOREHEADS TOGETHER in some kind of fucked up pre-battle ritual.

Marchand shakes his head.

MARCHAND

No. To these men, no bloodshed is deemed unnecessary. They've been promised they may keep whatever, or whomever, they can carry out of the battle. No battle, no prize.

JEAN

Plans change. You're the captain, give the order.

Marchand looks at his men prepping their guns, sharpening blades.

MARCHAND

No. No. Guide us into an advantageous position and the men will handle it from there.

JEAN

If what you said about their fortifications is accurate --

MARCHAND

I'm the Captain. The order is given.

Marchand leaves to join his men.

39 **EXT. SCHOONER QUARTERDECK - NIGHT**

39

Jean is at the helm of the ship which is now winding its way down the narrow waters of the bayou. Only the full moon illuminates his path.

Marchand stands alongside him. The other mercenaries duck down, low and out of sight on the main deck.

Jean steers the schooner toward a FORKED PATH in the bayou. One is WIDE and open. The other is precariously NARROW and surrounded by twisting tree roots on both sides.

Jean aims for the narrow path. Marchand sees where he's headed, quietly objects.

MARCHAND

What are you doing? Go that way!
You'll run us aground.

Jean doesn't respond. He's in the zone, fully focused.

MARCHAND (CONT'D)

Do you hear me? We can't fit!

They're reaching the point of no return. Marchand panics, grabs at the wheel. Jean fights to retain control, SMACKS Marchand with a hard right hand that backs him off.

Marchand falls to the ground, shuts his eyes tight as the schooner BARELY FITS through the narrow gap.

JEAN

There's a sand bar on the other pass. Impossible to see from the surface. I've lost ships that way before.

Jean continues, eyes on the prize.

40 **EXT. BAYOU - NIGHT**

40

The schooner glides to a stop behind a THICKET OF TREES. In the distance, MARIE'S PLANTATION MANOR. No, not a manor, it's a fucking FORTRESS.

10 foot high stone walls surround the perimeter. Armed guards walk the second story balcony scouting the area. SMALL CANONS are mounted around the house and walls.

Marchand takes it all in, can hardly believe his eyes.

MARCHAND

Christ. It's worse than I imagined.

JEAN

Those guns are gonna be a problem.

MARCHAND

The guns, the men, the wall. It's all one big fucking problem.

JEAN

Then let me solve it. Give me three men. We'll get in, undetected. I swear to you. No one needs to die tonight.

Marchand considers it, but he looks to his men who are growing restless, ITCHING FOR A FIGHT.

MARCHAND

Fine. You go, but you go alone.

JEAN

Alone? How do you expect me to get her out --

MARCHAND

I can't spare the men. If you want it done your way, fine. But it is on you to see it done. You have one hour.

Jean shakes his head, disgusted, but knows it's the better option.

JEAN

Coward.

41

EXT. PLANTATION PERIMETER - NIGHT

41

Jean creeps around the Plantation's perimeter wall. A LIGHT from a passing OVERHEAD GUARD briefly illuminates the ground around him, but he ducks low, stays hidden.

He's sweating bad, taking shallow, pained breaths. He grabs at his bloody shoulder. Frankly, he looks like shit.

When the coast is clear, he proceeds.

Eventually Jean reaches the back of the Plantation Manor. The darkest, most remote stretch of wall. He hits a section where the BAYOU MUD pushed up against the BRICK WALL.

He kneels, digs through the mud, feeling for something.

His pace quickens, faster and faster. His expression becoming increasingly desperate.

JEAN

No, no. It's here...It has to be here.

He throws a handful of mud in frustration.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Fuck!

There he is, the former Pirate King in all his glory.

On his hands and knees, covered in mud with no path forward.

END ACT THREE

ACT FOUR42 **EXT. SCHOONER QUARTERDECK - NIGHT**

42

Marchand stands alone on the quarterdeck, scouting Marie's Plantation with a spyglass.

A particularly intimidating, heavily scarred and tattooed character, CREEDY, Marchand's first mate, approaches.

CREEDY

Captain, we're in position. The time is now.

MARCHAND

Hold fast. Soon we will begin and you may take your reward.

CREEDY

Soon? What are we waiting for? We're ready. The men are growing restless.

MARCHAND

Patience. When the time is right I will order the attack. Standby.

Creedy snarls, frustrated.

43 **EXT. PLANTATION PERIMETER - NIGHT**

43

Jean kneels in the mud, dejected, feeling sorry for himself when an interesting NOISE piques his interest.

BUBBLING -- coming from the swamp water. The bubbles are large, persistent. Jean stands, curious.

JEAN

Christ, of course.

His faith renewed, he plunges into the swamp water and wades toward the bubbles.

He dunks himself underwater --

44 **EXT. UNDERWATER - NIGHT**

44

A FAINT LIGHT under the water. Jean swims for it and finds it to be THE SOURCE OF THE BUBBLES.

AGWE

We'd be asking them to take a great risk. There's no guarantee they would join us, no matter the offer.

Marie smiles a confident, commanding smile.

MARIE

They will. I have seen it. All we need do is give them a chance. A chance to fight. A chance to be free.

49 **INT. MARIE'S LIBRARY - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT**

49

Jean creeps along a balcony that surrounds the library. He watches Marie and Agwe bellow.

AGWE

I want to believe that is so.

MARIE

Believe it, Awge. Keep the faith.

Agwe smiles.

AGWE

So, that's where she got it from. Thank you, Madame Laveau.

Jean watches Agwe exit, leaving Marie alone. He draws his pistol, can barely believe his luck. He's in the perfect place at the perfect time.

50 **EXT. SCHOONER QUARTERDECK - NIGHT**

50

Marchand stands next to Creedy looking anxious as all hell.

CREEDY

Your time is up, Captain.

His hand slips to the sword on his hip. His meaning is not lost on Marchand.

MARCHAND

Commence the attack.

Creedy lets his hand off his sword, turns and WHISTLES to the men on the main deck.

One of his attackers takes advantage, draws his pistol and FIRES! But Jean sees it coming, manages to grab another guard and use him as a HUMAN SHIELD.

It's Jean's turn. He draws, FIRES. His SHOT finds its mark.

The guards are dead, but Jean is fucking worn out. Sweat pours, breaths coming quicker.

He wobbles on his feet, vision fading. He heads to collect Marie -- NARROWLY DODGES a swipe from Awge's blade.

Agwe fights hard to protect Marie and Jean can barely keep his feet at this point. His movements are slow, sloppy.

Agwe parries a telegraphed attack from Jean, sending Jean's sword CLATTERING to the floor. A CRACKING RIGHT HAND sends Jean sprawling.

AGWE (CONT'D)

Madame, are you okay?

MARIE

Yes, I'm... I'm alright.

He turns back to Jean, who has barely pulled himself up on his knees. Agwe approaches, blade pointed squarely at Jean's heart.

This is it. This is how Jean's legend ends...

MARIE (CONT'D)

Agwe, wait!

Agwe, pauses just for a moment... but in that moment comes another VOLLEY OF CANNON FIRE from the schooner. A stray cannon ball BLASTS THROUGH THE LIBRARY AND SHEARS AGWE'S TORSO FROM HIS LEGS!

Jean is sprayed with blood. Marie, frozen in disbelief.

Jean wipes his face, gathers his strength and grabs Marie and puts his DAGGER to her throat.

JEAN

I suppose I should thank you. Now,
if you'd please come with me.

Marchand stands behind the gunning crew.

MARCHAND

Fire!

This last volley does the trick, completely CRUMBLES the Plantation's perimeter wall.

Marchand face drops when he sees what's waiting for him on the other side.

MARCHAND (CONT'D)

Oh, fuck.

A ROW OF CANNONS FACING RIGHT AT HIM.

59 **INT. MARIE'S FOYER - NIGHT**

59

Jean shoves Marie along from behind, knife to her throat. Every Guard they pass lowers their guns, afraid to fire or risk her life.

Jean coughs, sweats profusely as he walks her out.

JEAN

That's it. Guns down boys. Battle's over. Well fought. We wouldn't want to hurt the Madame would we?

He leans into Marie's ear.

JEAN (CONT'D)

Or is it, "your highness?"

Jean walks her out of the foyer and into the courtyard --

60 **EXT. PLANTATION COURTYARD - NIGHT**

60

Only to find it littered with the bodies of his comrades. Only Creedy still stands, fighting valiantly.

He takes a RIFLE SHOT, then a PISTOL. He stumbles and is finally overwhelmed, stabbed to death by a group of defenders.

And worse yet, the ROW OF CANNONS aimed directly at the schooner. Jean's schooner.

JEAN

No.

The cannons FIRE. The schooner is hit bad, fire spreading on its deck -- BOOM! The gunpowder stores ignite, taking half the deck along with them.

ACT FIVE63 **INT. MARIE'S STUDY - NIGHT**

63

Jean fights to retain consciousness. Marie stands around the flaming cauldron at the center of the room, a yellow and white SNAKE draped over her shoulders.

Marie chants in HAITIAN CREOLE. She snatches up a bottle of RUM, takes in a mouthful and SPRAYS it over the fire.

The fire burns higher and hotter.

Jean watches as the shadows around the room dance with the flames. The longer he watches, the more the SHADOWS SEEM TO TAKE FORM around him.

They're not shadows...at least not in Jean's fevered mind, but DEMONS.

Jean struggles against his bonds, cries out in TERROR. It's no use.

The demons point, laugh at his pathetic effort. They grow taller, more menacing.

Marie approaches Jean, and now she too has the FACE OF A DEMON.

She interrupts her chanting, dancing, to take another swig of rum, this time SPRAYS IT ON JEAN'S WOUND. Jean recoils in pain as the alcohol burns deep.

Marie grabs a strange herb from a tray, her chants turning to SONG. She dances, chews on the herbs, then packs the chewed herbs into Jean's shoulder.

He SCREAMS. This time the pain is too much to bear. Jean faints.

64 **INT. MARIE'S STUDY - DAY**

64

Bright sunlight beams through open windows.

Jean awakens, still laid out on the table from the night before. He's shirtless, the HEMP ROPE and SMALL BAG still tied to his neck.

He rubs his face, realizes he is free of his bonds.

He sits up -- maybe too fast. Wobbles, unsteady.

MARIE

Relax, you're still healing.

Jean spots her, sitting quietly and bathed in sunlight. The fever-induced monstrous image long gone.

JEAN

What did you do to me? Last night,
I saw...things. Demons.

MARIE

You were very ill. Any
hallucinations you suffered were
surely the result of your fever. I
treated you as best I could. You're
lucky to be alive.

JEAN

Right, lucky. That's me.

Marie walks over to Jean, who shies away at first. She places a tender hand on his wound...not the infected bullet wound, but rather the OLD SCAR left from Mauricio's betrayal.

MARIE

Lucky to have survived last night.
Lucky to have survived this.

Jean swats her hand away, rubs the scar himself, lost in the awful memory.

MARIE (CONT'D)

You know, Jean --

JEAN

How do you know my name?

He stands, enraged -- but is still weak, unsteady.

JEAN (CONT'D)

That bastard set me up! He sent me
here to die!

Marie points to the table.

MARIE

Please sit.

Her calm, commanding demeanor disarms him. He listens.

MARIE (CONT'D)

You were not betrayed by your
employer.

(MORE)

MARIE (CONT'D)

You might have heard about me.
About things I can do, things I
know. Things I can see.

JEAN

I don't believe in magic, *your*
highness.

Marie simply smiles in reply.

MARIE

Jean, a quest for revenge can be
noble, or it can corrupt. Does it
feel to you that your path has been
noble? Would killing me
or...capturing me set you on a
righteous course?

Jean raises an eyebrow. How the fuck does she know this
stuff? Jean stands, Marie offers her help to stabilize him,
but he brushes her off.

He turns his back to her, walks to a shelf filled with VOODOO
RITUAL supplies -- herbs, candles, rum. A SMALL KNIFE.

Jean discreetly pockets the weapon.

JEAN

Fuck righteousness. It's my journey
and I'll see it through. Now you
answer *my* question -- what do you
intend to do with me?

Marie looks confused by the query.

JEAN (CONT'D)

You say you know things, then must
know that I'm not the type to give
up my employer. Beat me, torture
me, it makes no difference.

MARIE

Ah, of course. I already know all
about your employer, and you are
free to leave as soon as you're
feeling well enough to walk out.

Jean looks skeptical.

MARIE (CONT'D)

I promise you, no harm will befall
you on these premises.

(MORE)

MARIE (CONT'D)

As for Jacques Saint Germain, well,
there's no telling how he will
react when you return empty-handed.

She's right. Jean has a choice to make. He reaches for the KNIFE in his pocket. Marie's back is turned. It's his last shot.

MARIE (CONT'D)

There's no need, Mister Lafitte.
Please, drop the knife. Tell your
benefactor that your mission is
accomplished, just not in the way
you intended. I will agree to meet
Jacques Saint Germain, provided an
impartial third party arranges it.
Provided you arrange it.

She turns to face him. He wilts under her gaze, the knife
lowers back into his pocket.

JEAN

Why...why would you trust me?

MARIE

I don't trust you, but for years
I've heard your story. Dreaded
pirate, American hero. Both feared
and respected. Despicable and noble
all at once. How can one man be all
those things? You have a two paths
ahead of you now, and I would like
to know -- who is the *real* Jean
Lafitte?

Jean considers her words.

JEAN

I'd like to know myself.

MARIE

Then go back to your employer,
arrange the meeting, and we will
begin to find out. Together.

She hits him again with that winning smile. This has all been
so much for Jean to absorb that he struggles taking it all
in.

He turns for the open door before he notices the ROPE TRINKET
around his neck.

JEAN

What is this?

MARIE

It's called a Gris-Gris bag. Keep it. It will bring you luck.

Jean takes a final look at the mysterious woman before stepping out into the bright sunlight.

Back toward New Orleans.

65 **INT. MARIE'S STUDY - DAY**

65

Marie watches Jean step out into the light, turns and heads into an adjoining room.

66 **INT. MARIE'S MANOR - DAY**

66

This room stands in stark contrast to the last. Where the study was bright, open, this is cramped, dark.

With the change of scenery comes a change in Marie's demeanor. A slipping of the façade. Gone is the gentle, forgiving woman, replaced with a colder, exhausted one.

LOUISE

Is he okay?

Louise steps out of the shadows.

MARIE

He's alive. If he remains that way is up to him.

Louise tears up, hugs Marie who offers a half-hearted embrace in return.

LOUISE

Thank you...thank you.

MARIE

Without your warning we would have been caught unprepared. We would have been overrun.

LOUISE

I'm just happy I could help. I'll always try to --

MARIE

Consider us even.

Marie's tone has grown even darker, more ominous. Louise notices and backs off.

Finally, Jacques turns to face him. He raises a hand, shields his face from the SUNLIGHT beaming in through the open door.

JACQUES (CONT'D)
Remy, the door please.

Remy pulls himself up, shuts the door in a hurry.

MAURICIO
Does Jean Lafitte live?!

Mauricio raises his sword, threatening. Jacques is unfazed, sips his wine coldly.

JACQUES
He does. To the best of my knowledge.

MAURICIO
And he was here? You had him? You had him and you let him go?

JACQUES
Had him, yes. In fact, I hired him to undertake a particularly sensitive job for me.

Mauricio can hardly believe this shit.

MAURICIO
He works for you now, does he? You can't even begin to imagine what you've just brought down upon yourself. I'll have the whole of Baratavia here --

JACQUES
Calm, my friend. There's no need for war. Our partnership has been extremely beneficial for all involved parties. There's no need to see it end over such a trivial matter.

MAURICIO
Trivial? You call this trivial? You don't know what the man's capable of, the things I've seen him do...

Mauricio starts to put some pieces together.

MAURICIO (CONT'D)
You sent him after the Voodoo Woman didn't you?

JACQUES

I did, yes. And considering she is not included in the present company, I would say he failed. Either way, his usefulness to me has expired. You may do with him as you see fit, assuming he survived.

Mauricio scoffs, placated. He returns his sword to its scabbard.

MAURICIO

If you wanted it done right, you should've let me handle it.

JACQUES

Perhaps.

MAURICIO

What's so special about this Voodoo woman anyway?

JACQUES

Voodoo Queen.

MAURICIO

What?

JACQUES

Voodoo Queen. The matter is...quite personal. I'm sure you can relate.

Jacques smiles that awful smile, chills even Mauricio to the bone.

68

EXT. DOCK - DAY

68

Jean stands at the edge of the dock, peers out over the bay and the bayou beyond.

Pierre approaches him from behind.

PIERRE

Thought I might find you here. Dock still doesn't look right without The Pride anchored here.

Jean doesn't break his gaze.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

I'm glad you decided not to go through with it.

JEAN
I did.

PIERRE
Did what?

JEAN
Go through with it.

PIERRE
So...you got her?

JEAN
No.

Pierre looks confused.

PIERRE
So...you failed?

Jean tilts his head, considering.

JEAN
Not exactly.

PIERRE
The ship and crew?

Jean shakes his head.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Then what comes next?

Jean lifts the Gris-Gris bag dangling around his neck, inspects it. He finally turns to face his brother.

JEAN
I'm not sure, but I know I can't
face it alone.

Pierre places a hand on Jean's shoulder.

PIERRE
You're not alone, Jean. You never
have been.

Together, the brothers turn to face the horizon. The bright red sun hangs low.

It's dawn, the start of something new.

END ACT FIVE