

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

JEAN

That canyon opens into a bay. We follow them in, they'll have time to turn broadside. We'll be pinned between the rock faces.

MAURICIO

How can you be sure? We can 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, tags along behind the captain.

MAURICIO

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

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.

Mauricio is flustered, his wheels spinning. Suddenly, an idea.

MAURICIO

Sir, you are Jean Lafitte. *The Jean Lafitte.*

(MORE)

MAURICIO (CONT'D)

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

Continue the pursuit.

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.

4 **EXT. NARROW PASS - MORNING**

4

The Pride closes the distance on the merchant vessel.

5 **EXT. THE PRIDE - MORNING**

5

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

And just like he predicted, the merchant ship begins a
sweeping turn, presents its broadside and a SHITLOAD OF
CANNONS! Far more than a typical merchant vessel carries.

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 accelerates toward the enemy blockade.

Jean draws his sword and pistol from his belt.

JEAN (CONT'D)

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 shares a knowing glance with another SUSPICIOUS LOOKING SAILOR.

The Pride blazes ahead toward the two "Merchant ships".

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

Jean is steely eyed, determined, as they 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 both boats, launches several sailors overboard. The Pride is wedged between the merchant ships.

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

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, the MERCENARY LEADER stands over the corpses of dispatched pirates. He spots Jean, raises his pistol...

MAURICIO
Stop! Not this one!

Mauricio steps in front of the man, shoves down his pistol.

MAURICIO (CONT'D)
That was the deal.

The Merc Leader nods. Jean can't believe his eyes -- it looks like he's FOLLOWING MAURICIO'S ORDERS!

JEAN
Mauricio, what did you do?

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 HURTLING 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 ONE9 **EXT. SHIP DECK - DAY**

9

YEARS LATER.

Jean stands on the deck of a rickety schooner. 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 DUPONT, approaches the former captain.

BERNARD

We're close. It won't be long now.

JEAN

Too long.

BERNARD

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 scans the horizon. Off in the distance, faint but growing stronger -- GLOWING CITY LIGHTS. Jean lets a faint smile slip.

It's New Orleans. It's home.

EXT. NEW ORLEANS DOCKS - NIGHT

Jean walks along a bustling dock, taking in the sights and looking out of place in his raggedy clothes.

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

DOCK WORKER
Jesus, mister. You look like shit.

Well, maybe pity isn't the right word.

DOCK WORKER (CONT'D)
Damn, you smell even worse!

His friends laugh. Jean's too tired to be mad, smiles instead.

JEAN
Imagine how I feel.

DOCK WORKER
I'd rather not. You need a hand?

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.

10

EXT. FRENCH QUARTER - NIGHT

10

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 VOODOO 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 clothes are in tatters.

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, JUMPS 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...

The Soldiers are out of sight, but probably not for long. Jean frantically looks for an escape route, finds none.

Unless...

He looks up. Overhead is a balcony with a WROUGHT IRON RAILING. He jumps, reaches...but falls pathetically short.

They're close now. Too close.

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

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

11 **EXT. PIRATE'S ALLEY - NIGHT**

11

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. He's home.

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

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

12

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

Hello, big brother.

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

13

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

13

Jean and Pierre stand in the back office of the bar in an awkward silence. Rows of bottles and mugs line the walls. Jean takes in the room.

JEAN

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

Pierre steps towards his brother, who recoils slightly at the movement, and wraps him in a BEAR HUG.

PIERRE

Jean, where the hell have you been?

Jean is uncomfortable at first, but gives in, hugs back.

JEAN

Everywhere, Pierre. Everywhere.

They separate, share a smile before Pierre pulls out a chair and pours his brother a drink.

PIERRE

Sit, sit. I want to hear it, I want to hear everything.

JEAN

You first. Tell me, did the women weep for me? Did the city mourn? Oh! What were my obituaries like?

Pierre awkwardly averts his gaze.

PIERRE

I'm sure they did...the women, 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 puts a reassuring hand on Jean's shoulder.

PIERRE

It doesn't matter anymore. Forget Mauricio, you can move on. We can move --

Jean slams his glass to the floor, shattering it.

JEAN

Move on? Forget him? 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 for the betrayal any more than I will. Elias, Griffen, Denis, they'll listen. 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

Then it's you and me. Just like we started.

PIERRE

We're going to, what? Stroll into Barataria and kill Mauricio in the dead of the night? Look, Jean, you're back now.

(MORE)

PIERRE (CONT'D)

How many people get a second chance? A clean start? Don't waste it.

Pierre's warmth is met with a cold gaze.

JEAN

Barataria is *my* island. New Orleans is *my* city. I'm taking them back. With or without you.

Pierre lowers his head, dismayed.

14 **EXT. BARATARIA ISLAND - DAY**

14

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 are scattered around the makeshift town. Teams of men patrol the perimeters, rifles in hand.

It looks less like a pirate enclave and more like a MILITARY ENCAMPMENT.

15 **EXT. BARATARIA BAY - DAY**

15

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. 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...Captain
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
Morgan, Foster...new guy. Good to
see you're still on the account,
but you should know better than to
point a gun at your captain.

FOSTER
Jesus, it is Lafitte.

Jean's commanding voice actually gets Foster to slightly lower his gun. He raises it again when he notices that Morgan hasn't moved.

MORGAN

You ain't our captain anymore,
Lafitte. It ain't right what was
done to ya, but there's nothin' can
change that now.

FOSTER

Besides, Captain Santos'll be keen
to learn you're alive. 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
Pierre. Considering the resemblance
and all.

PIERRE

Very astute. Pleasure to meet you.

16

EXT. BAYOU - DAY

16

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. He stumbles, winces, but keeps moving.

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.

Inside - an IVORY GRIPPED DAGGER and a PISTOL. He inspects the weapon but its barrel is rusted, wood rotten and useless. He pockets the dagger, tosses 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 toward his friend, triggers a STEEL BEAR TRAP that SNAPS around his leg!

FOSTER (CONT'D)
Fuck! Oh god!

Jean steps out from behind a nearby tree, dagger 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 swear, I
didn't want to betray you!
Mauricio, he made us --

Jean says nothing, swiftly buries his dagger in the man's heart. A quick, merciful kill.

17 **EXT. BARATARIA BAY - DAY**

17

Morgan stands 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 blade from behind.

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

JEAN
Let's go home.

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

18

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

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 scoffs, brushes it off. He grabs his cloak, 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.

19

EXT. BAYOU - DAY

19

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

Gone are his ratty sailor's clothes. He now sports a fancy hat and coat similar to Jean's pirate captain look, but is absolutely not pulling it off.

He scans the area, sees Ramsey's limp body is still propped up, skewered by the spike trap. Foster's leg is clamped in the bear trap, corpse limp and soaked in blood.

Mauricio inspects Foster's body, which is relatively unharmed save the mangled leg and single DAGGER wound through the chest.

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 decades old.
None of the crew knew about them.

Mauricio eyes the empty chest and discarded pistol.

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.

23

INT. LOUISE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

23

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.
Jean, why are you here?

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

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. Muttered 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?

JEAN

Everything. You and me, what we had...I can get it all back, I can set things right. I just...need to take care of some things first. There's a man here in town named Mauricio Santos. I need to find him. I've heard he moves in different circles these days. Your circle.

LOUISE

Santos... I'm aware of him. He was on your crew. I've heard the stories, Jean, the things you did out there...

She turns away in disgust.

JEAN

Whatever you've heard about me is wrong. I'm here to set the story straight. Tell me where can I find him.

The tenderness in Jean's voice is gone, replaced with anger, callousness.

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, considers her words silently. He shakes off the idea.

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.

Jean winces, the truth stings worse than his bullet wound.

Louise, feeling guilty, 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?"

JACQUES (CONT'D)

The mad tyrant would order a stake be driven through their abdomens, then raised and driven into the ground. 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. Bernard 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 a CRASH of shattering glass erupts on the opposite side of the room. A PAINED SCREAM echoes through the ballroom.

Jean looks, spots Mauricio with a broken bottle in hand. A pale, scrawny man named REMY is on his 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

And if we were on a filthy galleon
in the Gulf of Mexico, the lesson
would be yours to teach.
Considering our current
surroundings, I'd say that is very
much not the case.

Mauricio is steaming. He steps up into Jacques' face, but
Jacques doesn't flinch, doesn't back down. He meets his gaze.

It's a stalemate. Fire and Ice. Broken only when Jacques
gestures toward a nearby hallway.

JACQUES (CONT'D)

Mister Santos, if you would be so
kind.

Mauricio relents, holsters his pistol. He 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.

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 we will come to know as MARIE LAVEAU sits across from her, masked in shadow. Marie draws a TAROT CARD from a deck, places it on the table in front of Louise.

The card has an image of a naked man and woman holding hands. Underneath, it reads "THE LOVERS." Louise looks away, embarrassed.

MARIE

A lost love. Or is it a...secret
love?

INTERCUT BETWEEN JEAN AND LOUISE:

ON JEAN - 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.

ON LOUISE - Louise watches as Marie places a second card. This one is ominous, featuring an image of a BURNING GRAY STRUCTURE. It reads " THE TOWER".

MARIE (CONT'D)

Danger.

ON JEAN - 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.

ON LOUISE - Louise watches a third card come down, absolutely transfixed.

This one is upside down and reads "THE FOOL", with a jester-like character painted on its face.

MARIE

Interesting.

ON JEAN - 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.

ON LOUISE - The fourth card, adorned with the image of an angelic figure and a LION, reads "STRENGTH".

MARIE (CONT'D)

Hope.

ON JEAN - Jean 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 a guard lashes out, his blade catches Jean's upper arm, CUTS HIM DEEP. Jean winces, groans in pain. Blood pours down his white sleeves. The sudden shock causes him to drop his sword.

Two of the Guards press their advantage. Jean locks blades with one, who takes advantage of the stalemate and SQUEEZES Jean's freshly injured arm with his free hand.

Jean cries out, shoves the guard back in an enraged bull rush and **THROWS HIM OUT THE WINDOW!**

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

27

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

ON LOUISE - Louise watches, horrified as the final card comes down. "DEATH". Marie leans forward, her face finally illuminated by soft candlelight.

MARIE

These are dangerous times, Louise.
Beware.

Louise nods solemnly.

ON JEAN - 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. His 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.

He crumples to the floor, unconscious.

28 **INT. JACQUES' STUDY - NIGHT**

28

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 his arm is an issue.

JACQUES

Thank you, Remy.

Sure enough, the GASH on Jean's arm 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. Bernard Dupont.

JACQUES

Mister Lafitte, I am not a fool and do not appreciate being treated as such. 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 the real BERNARD DUPONT - the sailor that Jean arrived to New Orleans with. Jean flinches at the sight of him, but holds his tongue.

JACQUES (CONT'D)

Mister Dupont, meet Mister Dupont. 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. Tell me, where did you hear these stories?

JACQUES
From Mauricio, of course. Is it
true you attacked American ships?

Jean seethes, spits his words through his teeth.

JEAN
No.

JACQUES
Ah, so I take it you didn't flee
from Mauricio's 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, I too have
had falsehoods told about me and
understand your desire to set the
record straight.

Jacques gestures to Remy, who steps up, cuts Jean free.

JACQUES (CONT'D)
I believe I have a proposition that
may serve us both.

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, 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. 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 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 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. Or perhaps a more personal trip to Baratavia 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 ARM. He grimaces.

JACQUES (CONT'D)

And see to that wound. It smells...infected.

Jean cocks an eyebrow. Weird...

29

EXT. NEW ORLEANS ALLEY - NIGHT

29

Jean is shoved out of Jacques' mansion, into a dark side-alley. He heads toward the street, but a light emanating from a door further down the alley grabs his attention.

Jean blinks, eyes adjusting -- and is shocked to see BERNARD stumbling down the alley ahead of him.

JEAN

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, covered in Bernard's blood exits the alley, stumbles into the street. He scans his surroundings, looking for help or possibly for potential 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

30 **EXT. LAFITTE'S BLACKSMITH SHOP - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT** 30

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 sound 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.

31 **INT. LAFITTE'S BLACKSMITH SHOP, BACK ROOM - NIGHT** 31

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. 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? He'll understand
 if we're open and honest right from
 the start. Hell, knowing him he'll
 be flattered that losing him pushed
 us together.

PIERRE

Pushed?

Louise smiles.

LOUISE

You know what I mean. 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. What path it could lead us down.

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

LOUISE

I love you because I know you're strong enough to resist that path. You've left that life behind, we both have. Together. Besides, 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 and Louise look at each other in a panic. Louise thinks quickly, hops 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 arm. The wound is red, inflamed and looking 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 might 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.

32 **EXT. DOCKS - NIGHT**

32

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.

33 **EXT. SCHOONER DECK - NIGHT**

33

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...it's risky.

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 I'll order the attack. With any luck, the cannons will make quick work of their defenses.

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.

34

EXT. SCHOONER QUARTERDECK - NIGHT

34

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 shoves him back.

Marchand falls to the ground, shuts his eyes, braces for impact -- 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.

35

EXT. BAYOU - NIGHT

35

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. Go.

36

EXT. PLANTATION PERIMETER - NIGHT

36

A small row boat approaches the Plantation's perimeter wall. Jean sits at the front of the boat, with three of MARCHAND'S MEN paddling behind him.

The boat runs around near the base of the wall and Jean hops out. He's surprised when the other stay put.

JEAN

Come on! We need to move!

The largest of the three, a heavily scared and tattooed man named CREEDY speaks for them.

CREEDY

Scout the entrance and signal to us
when you've found it. Then we'll
join you. Captain's orders.

A LIGHT from a passing OVERHEAD GUARD briefly illuminates the ground around Jean, but he ducks low, stays hidden. No time to argue.

He continues away from the boat on foot. He's sweating bad, taking shallow, pained breaths. He grabs at his bloody arm. Frankly, he looks like shit.

Another pair of GUARDS pass along the wall overhead. When the coast is clear, Jean 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 pushes 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.

Suddenly an interesting NOISE piques his interest.

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

JEAN (CONT'D)

Christ, of course.

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

He dunks himself underwater --

MARIE

Here, here and here. If we can reach these men, if they listen to us, hear our story, I have no doubt they'll join us.

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've it. All we need do is give them a chance. A chance to fight. A chance to be free.

47

INT. MARIE'S LIBRARY - SECOND FLOOR - NIGHT

47

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.

Jean perches on the second story guard rail, leaps down to the floor below.

48

INT. MARIE'S LIBRARY - FIRST FLOOR - NIGHT

48

A dazed Jean lands behind, Marie, puts his DAGGER to her neck and covers her mouth with his free hand.

JEAN

Please keep your mouth shut if your prefer your neck remain closed.

Marie doesn't even flinch, let alone scream. She does however, say something in a calm, measured way. With Jean's hand blocking her mouth it comes out as a garbled mess.

Curious, he removes his hand.

JEAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry?

MARIE

I said, you're early.

Jean cocks his head, puzzled.

JEAN

What do you mean ear--

He's cut off by the CRACK of CANNON FIRE!

Jean looks toward the source of the noise, just in time to see a CANNON BALL blast its way through the library.

The iron ball shatters a nearby shelf and sends splinters and debris blasting into Marie and Jean, knocking the pair off their feet.

Jean is dazed from the impact, his vision blurred. The sounds of a RAGING BATTLE echo from the courtyard.

He tries to get his bearings, sees that Marie is being helped to her feet by Agwe.

AGWE

Madame Laveau, are you alright?
They came from the back. I don't
know how they could have --

MARIE

It's fine. Rally the defenses, we
are prepared for this.

Agwe and a team of GUARDS escort the voodoo queen from the room. Jean staggers to his feet and pursues them.

49

EXT. COURTYARD

49

Jean follows Marie out into the courtyard. Marchand's men have scaled the wall and engaged Marie's defensive forces.

The level of violence is astounding. Rifles and pistols fire before becoming clubs and throwing weapons.

Blade meets blade. Axes and hammers have their place too. It's a fucking slaughterhouse, but neither side has earned a clear advantage yet.

Jean pauses as he takes in the scene.

JEAN
(sotto)
Marchand, you fool.

Another CANNON VOLLEY snaps him out of it. Chunks of STONE DEBRIS explode around him, taking out Mercenaries and Defenders alike.

Jean spots Agwe as he defends Marie from a charging Merc.

He works his way through the chaos of the battle, dodging gunfire and sword blades. He draws a pistol, BLASTS a Guard that gets too close.

His dagger makes quick work of another that gets in his way. Jean focuses on Marie as he wades through the carnage.

Up ahead, Agwe, Marie and three Guards have entered another building. Jean hurries after them.

50

INT. MARIE'S FOYER - NIGHT

50

Agwe ushers Marie and the Guards past him and into the relative safety of the building. He turns back to the door, ready to lock it with a HEAVY LATCH -- but is SLAMMED into the wall as the door explodes inward.

Jean stands at the door, having just kicked it open. He spots Marie standing at the center of the room, looking more intrigued than scared.

He raises an eyebrow, intrigued himself, but draws his sword in a hurry as he's rushed by the three remaining Guards.

The fight is fast, intense. Jean is the most skilled of the combatants, but three on one is a death sentence for most men.

Jean is not most men. He cuts down the first Guard.

Marie runs for the door -- Jean cuts her off, shoves her down.

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 come quicker, his arm bleeds heavily.

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

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 FOYER 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.

Jean shoves Marie along from behind, knife to her throat. He coughs, sweats profusely as he walks her out for the foyer and into the courtyard --

51

EXT. PLANTATION COURTYARD - NIGHT

51

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.

What's left of the ship attempts to flee -- but runs aground on the shallow bayou water. Another VOLLEY finishes it off.

JEAN (CONT'D)

No.

The dagger slips from Jean's hands as he watches his dreams burn in front of him. Marie scurries away as Guards close in on the broken pirate.

He drops to his knees, defeated. A Guard walks up behind him, draws a pistol --

MARIE

No! I want him alive! Take him to my study.

Jean finally succumbs to the infection, collapses.

52 **INT. MARIE'S MANOR - NIGHT**

52

Jean is tied to a make-shift stretcher, being carried through Marie's house. His vision fades in and out as the FEVER takes hold.

53 **INT. MARIE'S STUDY - NIGHT**

53

Jean's eyes flutter open. He's in a dark room, tied to a table. His shirt has been removed, exposing his wounded arm. The gash has turned a dark shade of purple, well on its way to a NECROTIC BLACK.

A fire erupts from a CAULDRON at the center of the room. Jean turns away from the bright light, looks back to find Marie standing over him.

The dancing fire light makes the once graceful-looking woman take on an air of menace. She leans toward Jean, wraps a ROPE NECKLACE with a small CANVAS BAG around his neck.

JEAN

Wha...what is this? What are you doing to me?

MARIE

You will see.

54

INT. MARIE'S STUDY - NIGHT

54

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.

END ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE55 **INT. MARIE'S STUDY - DAY**

55

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 sword 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

Please sit.

Her calm, commanding demeanor disarms him. He listens.

MARIE (CONT'D)

You were not betrayed by your employer. 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. 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.

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

56

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

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

57

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.

LOUISE

Of course. Thank you, Madame Laveau.

Louise heads for the exit.

MARIE

Oh, Louise?

She stops, not sure she wants to hear what's coming.

MARIE (CONT'D)

If he crosses me again I'll kill him. There will be no third chance.

Louise silently nods her understanding, exits.

58

INT. JACQUES' STUDY - DAY

58

Jacques stands in front of a DISTURBING MURAL. Mutilated bodies stacked in the foreground, CORPSES impaled high on STAKES in the background.

He seems transfixed, eyes locked on a PARTICULARLY GRUESOME IMPALEMENT. He's perfectly still -- until he raises his ornate, ceremonial wine glass and takes a sip.

SHOUTS echo outside his door. Then a THUMPING and GRUNTS.

The sounds of a scuffle breaking out. Jacques doesn't even flinch.

MAURICIO (O.S.)

Where is he?!

REMY (O.S.)

He's not to be disturbed, if you come back tonight --

CRASH! Remy flies through the door, tumbles to the ground. Mauricio charges in after him, sword drawn. Still, Jacques doesn't move.

MAURICIO

Is it true?! Tell me now, is it true?!

JACQUES

Is what true?

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

You had Lafitte and you let him go?!

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

JACQUES

I didn't just let him go. I hired him to undertake a particularly sensitive job for me.

Mauricio can hardly believe this shit.

MAURICIO

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 mutually beneficial. 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... 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 wager he failed. Either way, his usefulness to me has expired. You may do with him as you see fit, assuming he survived.

MAURICIO

Lafitte is mine. If I get word of you working with him again, it'll mean war. I'll tear this fucking city apart before I let him slip away again.

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

JACQUES

I believe you.

59

EXT. DOCK - DAY

59

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

So...you got her?

JEAN

No.

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 going to finish what I started.
Take back my city, set the story
straight. I'm going to mean
something to this city again.

PIERRE
Mean what?

Jean can't answer, not even sure he knows how.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
And Mauricio?

JEAN
His time will come, one way or
another. I've got a lot of work to
do.

Pierre places a hand on Jean's shoulder.

PIERRE
You won't have to do it alone.

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