

BLOOD ROYAL

by

Joe Fordham & Mark Ellis

extract: Harold meets William

Senlac Productions

® WGAw #9000358

® Library of Congress #1-175402382

www.1066screenplay.com

BLACK SCREEN

A woman's VOICE:

SWAN-NECK (V.O.)

Eleven years after the Norman conqueror took the crown of England, the Bishop of Bayeux presented his king with a prize. An embroidered linen banner, 80 yards long and 20 inches high, celebrating the fall of Anglo-Saxon England...

FADE UP:

INT. CATHEDRAL - DAY

An embroidered frieze framed by Latin text depicts a wizened King dispatching Anglo-Saxon noblemen on a mission. Further images reveal vibrant, colorful characters woven into an intricately detailed story.

SWAN-NECK (V.O.)

This banner told the story of the conqueror of England. It showed the defeat of the English king, from the Norman point of view...

A woman in a hooded cloak stands looking up at the tapestry in the mostly empty cathedral. This is Edith Svanneshals -- 'SWAN-NECK' (mid-30s) her elegant, aquiline features hardened with age. Staring up at the frieze, she is overcome with emotion, but cannot show it here. A sob escapes her.

A few people praying look around. A TEENAGE BOY, standing just behind Swan-Neck, looks nervously about him and then whispers in French, anxious to leave:

TEENAGE BOY

(in French, subtitled)

Mama, let's go!

Swan-Neck is transfixed, almost trembling, as her eyes fill with tears.

SWAN-NECK (V.O.)

I was married to that man, Harold Godwinson, the last Anglo-Saxon king. He gave me five children and a promise of hope that has been replaced by a reign of terror. This is Harold's story.

Swan-Neck allows her son to lead her out of the cathedral, passing a suspicious clergyman. As they exit, Swan-Neck looks up one last time, full of longing and regret:

An embroidered frame depicts a longboat full of men sailing out to sea and the SOUND OF THE OCEAN begins. On a CRASH OF THUNDER.

CUT TO:

EXT. STORM - NIGHT

Lightning flashes, illuminating a wooden LONGSHIP caught in the storm.

EXT. SHORELINE - DAWN

Drenched by freezing rain, a banner depicting a red dragon on a white background flutters on the longship's mast. Under a leaden sky, the longship rows towards a broad deserted beach.

SUBTITLE: Normandy, France, October, 1064.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Crewmen leap into the surf bare-legged and haul the longship up onto a beach backed by steep dunes.

HAROLD GODWINSON -- longhaired, steel-eyed, early 40s, with a drooping mustache -- wades ashore and takes stock of the bleak surroundings. GYRTH -- a burly man, a few years Harold's junior -- awaits orders. The shrill WHINNY of a horse draws everyone's attention.

OVER THE DUNES

Six MEN ON HORSEBACK swoop down to surround the survivors of the storm.

Gyrth and his men draw their swords.

The horsemen -- beardless, the backs of their heads shaved in the local fashion -- ride around the men on the beach.

Harold stands unmoving, his own sword undrawn, then addresses his crew.

HAROLD

Hold!

The lead horseman -- a stern young NORMAN BARON, wearing an embroidered cape -- rides forward and gives a predatory smile.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The spires of a stone cathedral are just visible beyond a giant swath of forest.

SUBTITLE: Estate of Duke William of Normandy, Rouen.

ANGLE ON A WILD BOAR

Darting through the trees, terrified, pursued by hunting dogs.

Leading the hunt on horseback, WILLIAM OF NORMANDY -- powerful, close-cropped, in his middle 30s -- closes in for the kill.

The dogs corner the boar. William reigns his horse to a stop, pulls out a bow, but can't get a clean shot. He leaps off his mount, draws his sword, steps in, and skewers the boar in the back of its neck. The boar SQUEALS.

WIDE ON FOREST

A lone MESSENGER rides toward the trees.

THE HUNTING PARTY

Servants finish tying the dead boar by its feet to a pikestaff, while William and his hunting companions drink wine. ODO -- a boisterous nobleman, the top of his head shaved bald in the manner of a monk -- regales the group with an exuberant tale IN FRENCH.

The Messenger rides up. Armed guards block his path until he presents a sealed parchment, then they allow him to approach William.

William breaks away to read the parchment just as Odo delivers his punch line. Everybody laughs, except William.

WILLIAM
(in French, subtitled)
Bishop Odo!

The group immediately falls silent. Odo joins his Duke to view the message. Both men show great interest.

EXT. BEAURAIN CASTLE - DAY

ARMED HORSEMEN crest a hill, flying a banner depicting two gold lions against a red background.

A young WATCHMAN on the battlements of the castle reacts to the sight of the banner and runs to warn an elder officer. They both peer down, afraid.

The riders enter the castle, unimpeded.

INT. BEAURAIN CASTLE - DUNGEONS

Keys jangle in the lock, the door is thrown open and the young Baron from the beach, now grim-faced, steps into the cell. He quickly points to Harold, without meeting his gaze. The leader of the horsemen shoves past and seizes Harold by the arm.

BARON
(in French, subtitled)
But what of my reward? I went to
great expense to feed Duke
William's guests!

ARMED GUARD
(in French, subtitled)
Your reward is that Duke William
lets you live.

Harold and his men are marched out of their cell.

EXT. BEAURAIN CASTLE - DAY

HIGH ANGLE

The armed men ride away from the castle, flanking Harold and his men who occupy additional horses.

The Baron watches from the battlements.

BARON
(in French)
Merde.

CLOSE ON HAROLD

Gyrth rides up to Harold and speaks under his breath.

GYRTH
William the Bastard has influence.

HAROLD
Have faith, my young brother. I
will use that influence to get us
back to England soon.

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

Storm clouds are gathering over a rolling pastoral landscape, where a large, thatched-roofed wooden building -- an Anglo-

Saxon manor house -- dominates one hill.

SUBTITLE: Bosham, Wessex, England.

SWAN-NECK -- early 20s, Scandinavian features, with bright intelligent eyes -- sees the impending storm. She calls her children in from where they are playing with an older woman -- GYTHA (60). Gytha herds the children inside as it starts to rain. She sees Swan-Neck looking troubled, then pats the younger woman's arm. THUNDER rumbles.

EXT. ROUEN - DAY

The armed riders lead Harold and his men toward a stone castle that overlooks a seaport and cathedral.

EXT. ROUEN CASTLE - COURTYARD - CONTINUOUS

Harold's men gaze around as they are escorted in through an impressive vaulted archway. Gyrth speaks to his FIRST-IN-COMMAND, who is gaping like a fish.

GYRTH
Close your mouth.

Harold's eyes are on an entourage ahead, which is gathering to meet them. William appears from a doorway, Odo close behind.

The armed riders bring the group to a halt. Harold and his men dismount.

William approaches. He pauses before Gyrth, then continues to Harold. Harold and William survey each other without a word, and then William embraces Harold, kissing him on each cheek, surprising everyone. William addresses Harold in an obviously rehearsed statement.

WILLIAM
(heavily accented)
Earl Godwin, permit me to
apologize for the inhospitality of
my neighbor, the Baron of
Beaurain.

HAROLD
With respect, Duke William: My
father was Earl Godwin. I am
Godwinson.

William looks to Odo, who quietly translates, then smiles and nods at Harold.

ODO

I am Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, Duke William's half-brother. We have planned a feast to celebrate this unexpected visit. The Baron tells us you were blown off course. A fishing expedition?

HAROLD

The Baron was mistaken. We are here on a diplomatic mission from King Edward of England. But a feast is not necessary, we have already eaten. If you have rooms for my men...

William interrupts, speaking to Odo in French.

ODO

(to Harold)

No man refuses Duke William's hospitality and lives.

Harold is momentarily taken aback, until Odo LAUGHS with William and other courtiers.

ODO (CONT'D)

Forgive the Duke for his morbid sense of humor. You shall all be our guests, and you, Earl Godwinson, our guest of honor.

William offers the way ahead. Harold smiles uneasily and nods to Odo, who steps back to watch them pass.

EXT. ROUEN CASTLE - NIGHT

MUSIC can be heard coming from the castle.

INT. ROUEN CASTLE - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

The boar from William's hunting party roasts on a spit, smoke filling the torch-lit hall. A small army of servants attend members of William's COURT gathered around a group of tables. Harold is seated with William's family at the main table, Odo and William on either side. Harold's men occupy a lower table, Gyrth suspiciously eyeing a plate of Norman cheeses.

PERFORMERS re-enact the saga of Saint George and the Dragon. Courtiers cheer as the actor portraying the Dragon receives a pikestaff to the ribs.

William lets out an appreciative dragon-like roar, embarrassing his beautiful teenage daughter, EVELYN, who is seated beside her mother. Odo smiles. MATHILDE -- late 30s, petite, but imposing redhead -- pulls a scolding face, speaking better English than her husband:

MATHILDE

William! Don't frighten your child!

William roars again, close to Evelyn's face.

EVELYN

No man frightens me, mother. Not even my father.

Evelyn smiles coyly at Harold. Odo laughs.

The performers end their play and receive applause from all around, including Harold. Odo pours him wine.

ODO

Let us drink to the English Earl who sliced off the head of the Welsh dragon.

MATHILDE

Oh, please, let's not.

ODO

Is it not true, Earl Godwinson, you presented your King with the head of his enemy, the rebel leader Griffith?

MATHILDE

Must we, while we are eating?

WILLIAM

Drink then to King Edward of England! To his health. May it improve.

Hemmed in from all sides, Harold raises his goblet.

HAROLD

As your honored guest, perhaps I should offer the toast?

Odo bangs the table, halting the music, and beckons Harold to stand. Harold does so and raises his glass.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
To King Philip of France, who
surely must be in fear of his
position in light of Duke
William's rise to power in
Normandy.

There is an awkward silence. Evelyn puts a hand to her mouth, suppressing a gasp of surprise. Odo translates Harold's speech for William, who loses his smile until Odo laughs even louder than before. Mathilde smiles and encourages William to do the same.

As festivities continue, Odo leans forward and seizes Harold's hand.

ODO
(intently)
Earl Godwinson, you are still
fishing in dangerous waters. Do
not mock the Duke. He is more
powerful than you imagine.

HAROLD
I would never underestimate Duke
William.

William boisterously interrupts.

WILLIAM
Earl Godwinson, you want to see my
'kingdom'? Tomorrow you shall!

EXT. HILLS ABOVE ROUEN - DAY

A peregrine FALCON glides through the sky, then tucks its wings and dives.

The bird swoops and plucks a morsel of meat from William's gloved hand. William is seated on his horse alongside Harold, the forest of Rouen stretching beneath them. William gestures at the landscape and struggles to express himself in English.

WILLIAM
(in French)
C'est impressive, non?
(faltering English)
Now you understand why your King,
he loves my home? He spent many
years in this land.

HAROLD

King Edward is still very fond of Normandy. I know he was a favorite of your father's.

WILLIAM

I know nothing of my father.

William becomes introspective, looks away. Harold notices Odo grazing his horse at a discreet distance, Gyrth guarded by a small group of armed Norman horsemen nearby.

HAROLD

Duke William, Edward sends me to ask you to release the hostages he surrendered to you.

WILLIAM

I was guest of King Edward. Your people, they insulted me.

HAROLD

A regrettable incident, but that was a long time ago. Twelve years.

(pause)

One of the hostages, Earl Wulfnoth, he is my brother.

WILLIAM

Another brother? How many do you have?

HAROLD

Four brothers. One sister.

WILLIAM

King Edward, he has your sister as wife, but no children? What is it they call him?

HAROLD

The Confessor.

William laughs. Pats his own chest.

WILLIAM

Two sons. One daughter. You?

HAROLD

No wife. Five children.

Both men smile and nod, eyeing each other competitively.

WILLIAM

You like to ride? Come!

William takes off down the hill. Harold spurs his own horse after William's, leaving the attendants dumbstruck.

ODO
(in French)
Allez, allez! Vite!

Odo leads the others racing after William and Harold.

MOVING ANGLE

William's horse gallops at high speed. He glances back as Harold overtakes him. William spurs his own horse faster.

Odo and the others struggle to catch up.

Harold's horse leaps a fallen tree. William's follows.

William closes on Harold's horse. The two ride neck and neck. William spies a stone wall up ahead, steers towards it, leaving Harold behind.

The horses' hooves thunder on the soil. William and Harold approach the wall and leap, almost simultaneously, sailing high.

William's mount lands hard, he almost falls. Harold lands firmly and pulls his horse to a halt. He sees William recovering, laughing uproariously.

Odo and the others ride up to the wall behind them, but their horses refuse the jump.

WILLIAM
Godwinson, you must join me on my
next hunt!

William catches his breath, then suddenly stops laughing, peering off at the horizon. Harold turns to see where William is staring.

ANGLE ON COUNTRYSIDE

A plume of black smoke coils above a distant town.

[END OF EXTRACT]

for more details contact www.1066screenplay.com