

THE WARLOCK OF WICKEDSHIRE WOODS

Written by

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EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF WICKEDSHIRE WOODS - DAY

TEN NEW RECRUITS in the King's Army gather on horseback around CAPTAIN SWIFT, age 42, wears a navy cloak that's a size too small for his stout frame.

CAPTAIN SWIFT

Just past these woods is the southern border of the kingdom. We've had reports of four or five Sydian Warriors making camp a little too close for our liking.

DAN, age 17, a muscular fellow with round blue eyes and cropped brown hair, fidgets with the reins on his horse.

DAN

Captain, is Wickedshire Woods the quickest route? We could go 'round, couldn't we?

Captain Swift chortles.

CAPTAIN SWIFT

I assure you these woods are the quickest way, boy. The path should take us directly to the location the warriors were spotted.

Captain Swift twists his head toward the sky.

CAPTAIN SWIFT (CONT'D)

If it's the Warlock you're worried about then don't fear, we've still an hour before the sun sets, and it should only take us a half to get through the woods.

Captain Swift eyes BRAY, age 17, tall and gangly with green eyes and short black hair. His uniform hangs off him, too big for his slight build.

CAPTAIN SWIFT (CONT'D)

It's crucial that we're all performing at our best on this mission. We may have combat in our future so I want my best fighters toward the front of our group.

Bray glances downward. Captain Swift leads the way and the recruits follow. Bray falls to the back of the line.

EXT. WICKEDSHIRE WOODS - DAY

WILLIAM, age 17, medium build with stocky limbs, slows his horse and rides next to Bray.

WILLIAM  
Don't let the Captain bother you.

Bray smiles tightly and nods.

BRAY  
You shouldn't be back here. You're one of the stronger fighters.

Dan sports a self-satisfied grin and slows his horse to ride on the other side of Bray.

DAN  
Oy, Will. You should be up front with us. Not back here with this clod.

Bray and Will ignore Dan and stare directly ahead. Dan laughs and leans toward Bray.

DAN (CONT'D)  
Don't muck this up, clod.

Dan leaves and joins the front of the group.

WILLIAM  
You're right to ignore him. He's an ass.

BRAY  
I've got to prove myself on this mission, Will. I can't take much more of the Captain's disapproval. And I'd enjoy wiping that smug grin off Dan's face.

WILLIAM  
You will, mate. Don't let 'em get under your skin.

Bray nods and straightens his back with a look of pure determination set on his face.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)  
So this Warlock nonsense, you believe it?

BRAY

Yeah. My brother almost didn't make it past the border before dark once. Came home trembling.

WILLIAM

Border?

BRAY

Yeah, see the Warlock was cursed a couple centuries back by a Wizard. He can't leave the tree line of the woods. My brother said he even saw one of the Warlock's beasts. They're these nasty looking wolves, er, wickedwolves is what they're called. They're under the Warlock's command but they're bound by the border magic as well.

WILLIAM

Hmm.

BRAY

And it's safe to travel the woods by day because part of the curse is that the Warlock can only be out at night. Same goes for the wickedwolves.

William shakes his head.

WILLIAM

Sounds like a scary tale to keep kids from staying out past dark. I'd have to see it to believe it.

BRAY

If we make camp outside the woods tonight we might see a wickedwolf or two roaming the border. Ugly things, they are.

Captain Swift calls out to William from the front of the line.

CAPTAIN SWIFT

William, your place is up here behind Dan.

William shrugs and speeds up to join the front of the group. Bray straightens his wrist cuffs and looks up just as his head slams into a low-hanging branch. He falls off his horse, unconscious.

EXT. WICKEDSHIRE WOODS - DAY

Bray jolts awake and quickly stands. The right side of his face is covered in blood.

He spins around and searches for the sun's position. It's almost disappeared entirely.

He eyes the ditch and grabs handfuls of mud. He wipes it over his face and wound first and then over his uniform and cloak.

He sets off on a fast run. He glances toward the pink sky and runs faster.

A HOWL nearby breaks the silence. Bray stops and grabs a small knife from each boot.

The WARLOCK, looks to be 40 but actually is three centuries old, stands behind Bray, heavily shrouded beneath his dark cloak.

WARLOCK

Not heavily armed, are we?

Bray turns sharply and stumbles back a few steps.

About fifty wickedwolves emerge from the darkness and gather behind the Warlock. They're larger than normal wolves and completely hairless. Their fangs are too long for their mouths and protrude out in odd angles.

Bray grips the knives tighter and holds them out in defense. The Warlock laughs darkly.

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

No, I don't think two knives will do you much good, er, Bray, is it?

Bray takes another step back.

BRAY

How do you know my name?

WARLOCK

Bray, your mind is an open book to me. But to be honest, I heard your friends talking about you.

The Warlock gives a wide smile that reveals perfect teeth.

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

Oh, I apologize, I don't think they're what you call friends.

Bray's jaw tightens and he glares at the Warlock.

BRAY

Spare me your words, Warlock. Kill me. That is what you intend to do, yes? I am obviously outnumbered.

The Warlock gives a throaty laugh.

WARLOCK

Your spark entertains me, Bray. You're nothing like I thought you would be. The way your companions talk about you I expected you to tremble and cry for mercy.

The Warlock reaches out a gloved hand and pets a wickedwolf as if it's a prized pup. The beast foams at the mouth and the yellow ooze drips from between it's fangs.

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

But you're right that this isn't a fair fight. How 'bout I give you a couple of options?

Bray lowers his knives.

BRAY

Options?

WARLOCK

Yes, yes. With a flick of my wrist you can be back at the entrance to the woods, just a step away from safety.

The Warlock raises his hand and flicks his wrist toward the path behind them.

BRAY

The entrance? But I need to be near the southern border with the other recruits.

The Warlock shrugs.

WARLOCK

The entrance is all I can do for you. The other option is that I give you a small head start on my wickedwolves and see if you can outrun them to the border line.

The Warlock looks back at his beasts.

WARLOCK (CONT'D)  
My bets on them by the way.

Bray shakes his head.

BRAY  
If I'm at the entrance it will look  
like I abandoned the mission.

WARLOCK  
Will it?

BRAY  
That's what you want, isn't it?  
I'll be suspended, possibly exiled  
from the King's Army.

WARLOCK  
But you'll be alive.

Bray looks at the ground for a beat and then straightens  
himself.

BRAY  
No, I'll take the second option.  
I'm a fast runner.

WARLOCK  
Really? According to one of your  
companions you're a clod.

BRAY  
Dan's an ass.

The Warlock smiles. He breathes in deep and lets out an  
exaggerated sigh.

WARLOCK  
Truth is, I didn't want to have to  
tell you this. Your mission was to  
confront a few Sydian brutes, but  
in all actuality, it's more than a  
simple few of them. If my math is  
correct, I counted thirty.

Bray shakes his head.

BRAY  
You lie.

The Warlock places a gloved hand on his chest.

WARLOCK  
Lie? Me? Never.

BRAY

Even if it is true, that's all the more reason I need to get to them. I have to fight alongside them.

WARLOCK

Fight? With what? Those steak knives?

BRAY

I'll get to my horse and retrieve my sword.

The Warlock shakes his head and throws out his arms.

WARLOCK

Why are you so desperate to return to them, to fight for a kingdom that will never know your name? They didn't even look for you, you know?

Bray swallows hard and looks at the ground.

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

Yes, yes. It was too close to sunset when they even bothered to notice you were missing. Your captain said it was too much of a risk to the other recruits to try and find you.

The Warlock tilts his head and holds up his index finger.

WARLOCK (CONT'D)

If I were you, I would take option number one. Let 'em assume you're dead. Start over. A fresh life. Away from all of this.

Bray adjusts the knives in his hands and scowls at the Warlock.

BRAY

No. I'm not you. The second option please.

The Warlock shrugs and gives another pat on the wickedwolf's head. The creature looks up at it's master.

WARLOCK

They will catch up to you, and they will rip you limb from limb.

(MORE)



WARLOCK (CONT'D)

You'll cry out, begging for the first option, and I'll watch with pleasure as you are devoured. I'll give you a ten second lead... starting now.

Bray turns on his heels and runs. His legs pump like a machine.

Ten seconds later HOWLS ring through the woods.

Bray looks back. Two wickedwolves are on the path behind him. More race through the woods on either side of him.

Bray adjusts the knives in his hands and looks back again. The two wickedwolves close in on him.

One of the wickedwolves leaps for Bray. He throws the knife and it lands in the beast's neck. The wickedwolf falls to the ground with a YELP.

Bray strikes just as the other beast lunges for him. He shoves the knife into it's chest and pulls out the blade. The wickedwolf YELPS as it falls to the ground.

Another wickedwolf jumps out of the darkness, foam oozes between it's exposed teeth. It closes in on Bray, just a few feet from him. The beast strikes at Bray's legs and rips the baggy fabric.

Bray glances toward the path ahead of him. The border line isn't much farther.

Bray blindly throws the knife toward the creature, it lands into it's hind leg. The wickedwolf isn't fazed by the knife in it's flesh and keeps up with Bray.

The path opens up ahead and reveals the border line.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS OF WICKEDSHIRE WOODS - NIGHT

Bray collapses as he crosses the border and pants wildly.

The wickedwolf dives for him but is thrown back by the border magic. More wickedwolves gather at the border line and GROWL in frustration.

Bray lets out a breathy laugh.

BRAY

Didn't get to rip me limb from limb, did you?

The wickedwolf with the knife in it's leg responds with a low GROWL.

Bray stands and looks out onto the field below.

The Captain and the recruits are huddled together outnumbered by about THIRTY SYDIAN WARRIORS.

BRAY (CONT'D)  
 (whispers)  
 So he was telling the truth.

Bray crouches down and looks back at the wickedwolves that still gather at the border.

He looks down at his muddy attire and lifts his hands to touch the dry mud on his face. He stares at the ground for a beat and takes a deep breath. He stands and pulls his hood up over his head.

BRAY (CONT'D)  
 (bellows)  
 You Sydian filth!

The Sydian Warriors look up and see Bray, backed by nearly a hundred beasts.

BRAY (CONT'D)  
 I am the Warlock of Wickedshire  
 Woods. How dare you invade my  
 kingdom? Leave now, or I'll have my  
 beasts tear you apart, limb from  
 limb!

The wickedwolves prance and HOWL in frustration.

The Sydian Warriors scramble to mount their horses and abandon half of their weaponry on the field. They gallop away frantically.

The wickedwolves thin out and slowly make their way back into the blackness of the woods.

Captain Swift and the recruits cheer. Bray meets them on the field below and they all assemble around him.

Captain Swift slaps Bray on the shoulders and caked mud flies everywhere.

CAPTAIN SWIFT  
 I for sure knew you were a goner,  
 boy. For our sakes I'm glad you  
 made it out alive. Good work, Bray.

BRAY

Thank you, Captain.

Captain Swift pulls Bray's muddy cloak off and throws it to Dan who stands outside the circle.

CAPTAIN SWIFT

Oy, Dan. Give Bray your cloak, that one's filthy.

Dan drops Bray's cloak on the ground and pulls his own off his shoulders. He shoves it at Bray.

DAN

Here, take it.

William pushes Dan away and slaps Bray on the back cheerfully.

WILLIAM

I guess it's not all scary tales after all then, ay?

Bray laughs and pulls Dan's cloak over his shoulders.

BRAY

No, I assure you the stories are true.

WILLIAM

And pretending to be the Warlock was bloody brilliant. We really thought we were done for and you show up, wolves at your back, looking like you'd had a mud bath.

William pulls his hood over his head and imitates Bray.

WILLIAM (CONT'D)

You Sydian filth!

The recruits laugh and Bray joins in.

Dan steps forward again.

DAN

Yeah. Thought I'd finally lost you back there in the woods. Good thing you made it out alive. I owe you.

Dan hands Bray a rag. Bray nods and wipes the mud off his face.

Captain Swift pulls his sword out and points it to the night sky.

CAPTAIN SWIFT  
To Bray, the Warlock of Wickedshire  
Woods!

The recruits lift their swords to the sky and cheer.