

# THE WITCH & THE WOLF

'Pilot'

Written by

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Inspired by real events

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1

EXT. WOODS - DAY

1

A WHITE-HAIRED CHILD wanders between twisted tree trunks. He grips a long, RED RIBBON that flutters behind him.

He hums, skips, hits things with a stick, oblivious to-

Something following him. It sounds large. Heavy footfalls. Deep panting breaths that could be either man or beast.

Up ahead, the innocent child tops a rise in the ground and disappears down the other side.

We hear the follower let out a grunt, a snarl, as feet scabble away across the ground. And then-

Silence. Just a gentle wind in the trees.

Our view continues forward toward the rise in the ground. And as we climb the rise and peer over the other side, we see-

Nothing. Just an empty forest and a red ribbon fluttering along the ground.

2

EXT. UTRECHT TOWN SQUARE (PYRE MONTAGE) - DAY

2

CLOSE ON: A tiny window, prison bars set in a solid stone wall. Hands latch onto the bars from within and haul a woman's shadowed face into view. Her wild eyes watch in horror at what is taking place outside below.

REVEAL: In the town square below, Dutch peasant workers stack bundles of sticks and timber against a central stake. They are making a pyre to burn a witch.

SUPER: **1591** - Fills the screen with a boom.

3

EXT. SAILOR'S BAR, AMSTERDAM - NIGHT

3

JOHAN VISSER, about 30, dressed in black with the traditional large white lace collar of the merchant class, clacks loudly across the cobblestones. He approaches a twisted, leaning building and the raucous din of a sailor's bar. Although he is not wealthy, Johan stands in stark contrast with the rough DOORMAN, which he pauses beside to scrap mud from his shoes.

DOORMAN

I wouldn't bother, Sir. Floor in there's dirtier than the ground out here. (Chuckles, heartily)

Johan stops what he is doing and eyes the smirking man.

JOHAN  
 Appreciate the forewarning.

He flips the doorman a coin.

DOORMAN  
 They are awfully nice shoes.

Johan takes the jest with a good-humoured grin and enters.

4 INT. SAILOR'S BAR

4

As claustrophobic as a ship's galley, the bar is packed with jostling, ragged drinkers and scarred, bearded faces. Superstition drips from the walls - figureheads of mermaids, she-wolves, sea monsters and bare-chested sirens. Johan glances around for what he is looking for - a table of loud sailors - a task made easier by the fact that most fall silent at the incongruous sight of him walking amongst them.

Johan pulls a chair up to the sailors crowding around their CAPTAIN, who is slightly better dressed but just as drunk. The captain sees Johan and promptly stops talking.

CAPTAIN  
 What the fuck do you want?

JOHAN  
 I want to buy you a drink. I hear you survived one hell of a storm.

All the sailors look to their captain, who eyes Johan suspiciously.

CAPTAIN  
 We have plenty of drink. So you can piss off.

The sailors all cackle and turn their backs on Johan.

JOHAN  
 I was hoping you could tell me the story. You see, I'm fascinated by the adventures of... Brave men.

CAPTAIN  
 And what does a little pony like you know about brave men?

Again, raucous laughs from all the sailors as their captain looks Johan up and down with disdain.

JOHAN

I'm sure you could educate me. I hear those who go to sea are amongst the bravest. I'd be much too scared.

The captain considers Johan for a moment but warms to his admiration and the chance to show off.

CAPTAIN

You'd be stupid not to be. When you go to sea, you take your life in your hands.

JOHAN

Or the hands of the gods?

CAPTAIN

Aye.

JOHAN

The storm came out of nowhere, I hear.

CAPTAIN

The moment we found the woman, the fury of the seas came down upon us.

Wind howls through the bar. We can hear that stormy sea.

JOHAN

The *woman*?

5 EXT. DECK OF MERCHANT SHIP AT SEA - NIGHT

5

Lashing rain. Lightning and thunder. A hat is grabbed away to reveal the face of a WOMAN SAILOR with short cropped hair.

The captain glares at her - part rage, part fear - as a howling storm rocks the deck.

CAPTAIN (V.O.)

Aye. Dressed as a man. It's bad luck to have a woman aboard. She tried to fool us, you see, for the work. But you can't fool the gods. We ran aground. Soon to be dashed against the rocks.

An almighty crunching crack lurches all upon the deck. The captain's face fills with fear as he looks over the side.

6 INT. SAILOR'S BAR, AMSTERDAM - NIGHT

6

The captain jumps to his feet as he sells his story.

CAPTAIN

It was just a matter of time. We had to dump our cargo, so's we could float off the reef. Either that or throw the bitch overboard to appease those we angered.

He slams his fist on the table and Johan bursts out laughing.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

JOHAN

I'm sorry, it's just hard to believe that some poor girl caused all that?

CAPTAIN

A sailor always respects the sea.

JOHAN

No, a sailor always accepts a free drink. Especially when you've just lost so much money. But you seem to be alright. More than alright.

Johan eyes the table full of pitchers and mugs.

CAPTAIN

The cargo was insured.

JOHAN

Precisely. So you unloaded the goods before you came into port, sold it on the black market and made up a little story about a woman and a storm. Then you got paid twice, didn't you?

CAPTAIN

I think it's time you trotted back where you came from, little pony.

JOHAN

Actually, I think it's time I introduced myself. I'm Johan Visser. And I represent your investor, Baron Willem de Vries, the man you are taking for a fool.

Fear flashes across the captain but he quickly composes himself into a calm, sinister grin.

CAPTAIN

He doesn't have to know. People like you disappear from places like this all the time and wake up at sea. If they wake up at all.

A massive hand clamps Johan's shoulder, forcing him back down in his seat. The captain stares him down. Johan's eyes dart about the table, mind racing, searching for...

JOHAN

No. People like me have sworn affidavits, to be opened if I go missing. It details my theory, which you have kindly just confirmed. So unless you want to add kidnapping and murder to your charges, I suggest you allow me to pass.

A standoff, as the captain stares Johan down. Is he bluffing? The captain's murderous glare finally breaks and with a flick of his head, the sailors allows Johan to stand and leave.

7 EXT. SAILOR'S BAR, AMSTERDAM - NIGHT

7

As Johan steps out into night, his composure falters and he staggers, catching himself on a railing.

DOORMAN

Alright, Sir?

JOHAN

Just lost my footing. You were right about these shoes.

Johan composes himself and walks off.

8 INT. JAILHOUSE - NIGHT

8

The WOMAN SAILOR sits behind bars in a stark prison cell. Her short hair accentuates large, frightened eyes.

WOMAN SAILOR

There was no storm. They got the idea to steal the cargo when they found me out.

JOHAN

That's what I thought. Why'd you do it, why risk it?

WOMAN SAILOR

The sea's all I know. Me pa was a sailor. Only thing he taught me, only thing I got. He took me everywhere. I'd work as ship's boy. Easier to get away with when I was younger.

JOHAN

And your mother?

WOMAN SAILOR

Only ever had me pa.

JOHAN

Was he ever worried about the bad luck, having a woman at sea?

WOMAN SAILOR

(sneering)

He wasn't one for fairytales.

JOHAN

Sounds like a good man.

Johan smiles and the woman is surprised by his warmth.

JOHAN (CONT'D)

And the captain, the crew, they weren't scared you're womanhood would bring the wrath of the sea gods upon them?

WOMAN SAILOR

(laughing, bitterly)

No. They seemed pretty happy with my womanhood when it was discovered.

CUT TO SHIP'S DECK - it's a CALM and SUNNY day as the woman is found out, her hat ripped from her head. The captain grins like a predator as he and the crew close in around her.

WOMAN SAILOR (V.O.)

Every last one of them.

BACK IN THE JAIL CELL - Johan is sickened.

JOHAN

No. They didn't-?

The woman shuts her eyes and her face contorts for a second.

JOHAN (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry.

When she opens her eyes again, her gaze is steely and cold.

WOMAN SAILOR

What will happen to me?

9

INT. DE VRIES RESIDENCE - NIGHT

9

SUPER on BLACK: **AMSTERDAM**

BARON DE VRIES (V.O.)

I expect she'll be charged.

Flickering firelight glints off a gilded interior. Wealth adorns BARON DE VRIES and his residence. Tapestries, portraits, trophies of a trading empire. Old money and new.

JOHAN

For trying to make a living?

BARON DE VRIES

Don't be so naive, Johan. The woman falsified her identity. Infiltrated their superstitious little world. Honestly, she caused all this.

JOHAN

But it was the captain who stole from you.

BARON DE VRIES

It's his word, and that of his whole crew, against one woman. And a criminal, at that.

JOHAN

He *is* the criminal.

BARON DE VRIES

I have to work with these people. Anyway, after the scare you gave him, I don't think he'll try it again with my goods any time soon. So thank you, Johan. A job well done, as always.

JOHAN

But the woman? She's been through enough.



BARON DE VRIES

It's out of my hands. And none of your concern.

Baron De Vries sweeps a crestfallen Johan into the next room-

A long chamber filled with plants.

BARON DE VRIES (CONT'D)

Come now, my wife has requested your assistance. I tell you, every wife needs a hobby, a charity case, but she won't let up about this one. I beg you, hear her out.

At the end of the grand green space, MADAME DE VRIES sits on a raised platform, almost a throne. She beckons Johan to sit by her. The Baron hangs back by the plants. As Johan sits, Madame de Vries does not release his hand. Something is clearly very wrong.

MADAME DE VRIES

Johan. Thank goodness you are here.

JOHAN

Madame, what is it?

MADAME DE VRIES

A terrible thing. A young woman from the village of Meerkerk has been arrested for witchcraft. They wish to burn her at the stake. And a child is missing.

JOHAN

That is terrible indeed. But... Trials like these are happening all across the continent.

MADAME DE VRIES

I am especially fond of Meerkerk. You see, my family has a connection to the village, a hunting estate. I spent every one of my summers there as a girl. I know these people, I grew up with them.

BARON DE VRIES

They are simple people. But she is very fond of them.

Madame de Vries shoots the baron a withering look and he shrinks back to hide behind the plants once more.

## MADAME DE VRIES

When I was just a girl, I remember-

10 EXT. WOODS - DAY

10

In glowing green woods, a woman that we will come to know as MATHILDA, late 20's or 30, strolls along a leafy path, red hair flowing down to her waist. A basket swings from her hand as she stops to pick mushrooms, flowers and herbs.

## MADAME DE VRIES (V.O.)(CONT)

There was a lady who lived in the woods, a beautiful creature who knew about plants and medicines. She was much loved, for she helped the villagers with their ailments, troubles with livestock and crops. And she was a midwife to their children. But then...

Mathilda stops as if hearing something and turns to look.

11 INT. DE VRIES RESIDENCE - NIGHT

11

Madame de Vries slaps a hand upon 'Malleus Maleficarum' (The Witches Hammer) on the table beside her.

## MADAME DE VRIES

A bitter little man wrote this horrid book. And suddenly people are seeing witches everywhere.

12 EXT. MEERKERK VILLAGE - DAY

12

Mathilda steps from the woods into a pasture. There is a small farmhouse nearby with some villagers beside it.

## MADAME DE VRIES (V.O.)

Hysteria. The protestant and catholic churches are trying to win over the population by proving they are the greater punishers of evil. So they must burn more witches than the other.

When the villagers spot Mathilda, she raises a hand in greeting but her smile is not reciprocated. The farmers and villagers turn away, some frightened, others regretful, as they usher their children indoors.

MADAME DE VRIES (V.O.)  
 Some people settle old grievances  
 by accusing others of witchcraft.  
 Some get rid of neighbours then  
 steal their land. But mostly, it's  
 just plain ignorance, mass  
 delusion. Women living alone are  
 particularly vulnerable.

Mathilda hurries on, through the village, with her head down.

13

INT. DE VRIES RESIDENCE - NIGHT

13

MADAME DE VRIES  
 I mean, heaven forbid a woman might  
 want to keep her own company.

Madame de Vries rolls her eyes and glares at the baron who is  
 childishly fiddling with the leaves of the plants.

MADAME DE VRIES (CONT'D)  
 Now, any woman with the healing  
 gift, or knowledge, or simply her  
 own mind, is seen as having been  
 touched by the devil. Last year, in  
 Meerkerk, an old woman like this, a  
 midwife, was burnt at the stake.

JOHAN  
 It's truly terrible, Madame, but  
 what, may I ask, can I possibly do?

MADAME DE VRIES  
 Please go to the village, Johan.  
 Show them witches don't exist, at  
 least not the ones they're afraid  
 of. Speak reason to this madness  
 before another woman pays the  
 price. And find that child.

JOHAN  
 But a witch hunt is a legal  
 proceeding. If I'm seen to be  
 interfering...

MADAME DE VRIES  
 You won't be. Officially, you'll be  
 assisting the investigation as my  
 family's representative. But *what*  
 you investigate is up to you.

(MORE)

MADAME DE VRIES (CONT'D)

If you expose the fantasy and clear the young lady, you could save a life. Use your skills to shed some light in these dark times.

JOHAN

If the prosecutors suspect me, I'm likely to end up on the pyre myself.

BARON DE VRIES

Come now, Johan, don't tell me you'd pass up an opportunity to humiliate the church.

Johan glares defiantly, but his hand goes to a SILVER LOCKET in the shape of a cross that hangs from his neck.

MADAME DE VRIES

Please, Johan. If just one accusation of witchcraft is shown to be a fraud, then it could inspire others, put a stop to this madness.

(pauses)

The girl is being held near Meerkerk, in the city of Utrecht. They've probably tortured a confession out of her already, dancing with the devil in the moonlight, or whatnot. But the villagers also believe she knows the whereabouts of the missing child. I fear it's the only thing keeping the poor girl alive.

BARON DE VRIES

Wolves probably took the kid. Packs of Grays rule the woodlands between the settlements.

MADAME DE VRIES

Let's hope not. But I haven't even told you the worst part. The villagers have now hired a witch hunter. The infamous Gilles Garnier. He won't stop until he finds a whole coven, such is his reputation. It'll be a massacre.

Clearly expecting Johan to speak now, the de Vries' eye each other uncertainly.

BARON DE VRIES

You'll have the protection of our name, for what it's worth.

MADAME DE VRIES

Why do you hesitate? I pray, do tell.

Johan toys with the locket while he thinks.

JOHAN

My wife was from a village just like this. I have no desire to go back to that world any time soon.

The baron is pleased for some reason.

BARON DE VRIES

Afraid of the wolves, are you? Can't blame you, myself. Forget about it. He doesn't want to go.

MADAME DE VRIES

(to the Baron)

Just because there isn't a profit to be made by *you*, doesn't mean it isn't the right thing to do.

(to Johan)

I'm sorry to ask this of you, Johan. You are the son we couldn't have. But I wouldn't ask, unless I thought it worth the risk.

JOHAN

May I think on it, Madame?

MADAME DE VRIES

I'm sure you will, my dear boy. *Think. Worry.* Bless you, it's what you do best.

14 INT. JOHAN'S ROOM - NIGHT

14

Johan enters a tall leaning building on a canal.

On stepping inside, he takes the silver, cross-shaped locket from around his neck and carefully places it on the sideboard. It is an automatic action, an everyday occurrence, but the long, troubled pause means the next part is not. Johan opens the locket to reveal two images inside:

One of a woman and the other, a child, a girl. His posture sags, humbled before them.

Johan drifts away, however, a moment later he returns, stares at the faces. He cocks his head as if hearing their words.

JOHAN

You are right, as always.

He picks up the locket and gazes at the woman, considering words we cannot hear.

JOHAN (CONT'D)

Alright. Alright, then.

Johan takes a sharp, resolute breath and snaps the locket shut.

15 EXT. OUTSIDE AMSTERDAM - DAY 15

In a cold dawn light, Johan spurs his horse onward down a muddy thoroughfare.

Behind him, thick morning fog obscures the city of Amsterdam, which hides inside its city walls. It's silhouette is prickly with the masts of ships at anchor.

16 MAP - TRAVELLING - TITLE CREDIT SEQUENCE 16

An old-fashioned map of Europe, yellowed parchment and hand-drawn ink illustrations. Sea monsters stalk the oceans. Cupids embrace a compass as they float amongst the clouds.

The frame zooms in slowly, as we descend on Amsterdam - a pictorial representation of the fortified city, complete with canals and a flotilla of ships moored in its harbour.

The frame slides south along the line of the road, through farmland and into the woods. Amongst the illustrated trees, wolves, witches and monsters stalk the map.

And decorative ink lettering on the map spells out the title:

***The Witch and The Wolf***

An intro sequence - inspired by the style of the old map - that continues to follow the road south.

The road line reaches the city of UTRECHT. A wall and canal circles its illustration but the most prominent feature is a great phallus rising at its centre - the Dom Tower.

17 EXT. ROAD OUTSIDE UTRECHT - DAY 17

In the distance, the Dom Tower is clearly recognisable. At more than a hundred metres high, it looms over the city, which is a squat smudge on the horizon.

Johan gazes in awe and anticipation as his horse trots on.

18 EXT. UTRECHT TOWN SQUARE - DAY 18

**SUPER: Utrecht**

The Dom Tower again - but this time much closer and through prison bars.

From the outside now - a woman's face presses against the bars, straining to see out. HENDRIKA VAN DIJK, in her late teens, looks bruised and battered, unwashed and on edge. She wears a shawl wrapped around her head for warmth. Her wild eyes drop to the square below.

The pyre stands ready and waiting. But then movement - and a shock of red hair - as Mathilda marches into view.

Hendrika tracks her progress until Mathilda disappears below.

19 INT. UTRECHT PRISON TOWER - DAY 19

Mathilda stands before the tower guards who lounge behind a table of scraps and tankards. They leer disgustingly, looking her up and down, oozing menace. The kind only men can inflict upon a lone woman. But Mathilda stares back. Defiant.

Mathilda breaks the stalemate by dropping her eyes and placing her basket of food on the table as a bribe.

20 INT. PRISON CELL - DAY 20

The rattle of keys and clang of heavy metal, as Mathilda steps into the cell.

Hendrika rushes forward and throws her arms around her.

HENDRIKA  
Did you bring it?

MATHILDA  
Sorry.

HENDRIKA  
What about food?

Hendrika searches Mathilda's pockets. Despite her dishevelled state, she bounces like a teen, full of desperate energy.

MATHILDA  
They took it all.

HENDRIKA  
(yelling at men)  
Fucking pigs. I'll bewitch your  
cocks and turn them all into slugs.  
Might be an improvement.

Hendrika spits and makes lewd gestures.

MATHILDA  
Shush, will ya. You shouldn't  
provoke them. It'll only make  
things worse. And don't talk like  
that, you'll incriminate yourself.

HENDRIKA  
I already confessed.

MATHILDA  
No. Hennie, you didn't?

HENDRIKA  
Yes, *Maddie*, I did.  
(pauses)  
They tortured me. Only way to make  
it stop.

Mathilda rushes Hendrika with a hug. At the sound of the guards returning, Hendrika becomes frantic.

HENDRIKA (CONT'D)  
I need my things.

MATHILDA  
I'll try, next time.

HENDRIKA  
What if there isn't a next time?  
What if this's the last time I see  
you?

As the guard grips Mathilda's arm and starts to drag her away, a thought blooms across her face.

MATHILDA  
Next time, you shouldn't wear that  
on your head. You have such  
beautiful hair.  
(MORE)



MATHILDA (CONT'D)

And I wasted so much good, strong  
thread to make it.

Hendrika's confused expression fades slightly as she realises Mathilda is trying to tell her something in code.

MATHILDA (CONT'D)

Next time, you should let your hair  
down. Let it all the way down.

Mathilda glances quickly at the window and winks. Hendrika nods quickly and smothers her grin.

21 EXT. UTRECHT TOWN SQUARE - DAY 21

Johan rides across the square, horse hooves clopping on the cobblestones. As he passes the pyre he slows and examines the structure in absolute horror.

As if detecting his mood, the horse whinnies and skitters sideways. Johan soothes the animal, pats its neck and leans forward to whisper in its ear.

Johan spots a signpost to Meerkerk and heads off that way.

22 MAP TRAVELLING 22

Back on the old map, our frame moves away from Utrecht. Soon the winding road line enters the woods. Illustrations of sinister looking wolves haunt the shadows amongst the trees.

The frame keeps zooming in on the dotted path until...

FADE TO:

23 EXT. ROAD THROUGH THE WOODS - DUSK 23

Dense forest crowds either side of the road. Johan stares uneasily into the impenetrable dark growing under the trees. He looks up to the sky and realises the sun is setting.

Leaning forward in the saddle, Johan pats his horse.

JOHAN

You've done marvelously, my friend.  
But if we could go a little faster,  
I'd be truly grateful.

24 EXT. ROAD THROUGH THE WOODS - DUSK 24

Mathilda rides her horse along a similar road. She is not bothered by the woods or the darkness at all.

But something bothers her. Mathilda reigns in her horse and stops to listen. She lights a lantern.

Is there something behind her? She peers back down the road, then turns her horse and spurs it that way for a better look.

Coming around the bend toward her is another horse with two RIDERS. The moment the men see her they stop, looking guilty as sin. But then a sickly confidence creeps through them as they wait. The rear man can barely hide his grin.

Mathilda turns her horse around and continues on. But her whole attention is focused on what follows. Finally she glances back and, sure enough, her fears are warranted. The men are following. Stalking her into the thickening gloom.

25 EXT. ROAD THROUGH THE WOODS - NIGHT 25

Johan is more than a little worried. He glances left and right into the dark woods. Are things moving out there? An owl hoots loudly. He tries to spur his horse forward but this only causes it to neigh and resist him.

And then he hears a strange sound - what is that? He strains, turns his head to the left and right. Is that whispering? Surely not. With unease creeping over him, Johan grips the reigns and wills his horse forward.

Then there is movement. Something big and fast in the dark between the trees. There's more than one. On both sides now. Wolves, slipping through the shadows. The horse can smell them. It's getting panicked.

Then a wolf's howl rings out across the night. The horse rears up, screaming, and Johan holds on for dear life.

26 EXT. ROAD THROUGH THE WOODS - NIGHT 26

The two men close in on Mathilda. She slaps the reigns and speeds up. But how long can she keep this up?

RIDERS

Come on sweetheart, slow down.

The men whip their horse and speed up. The rear man positions himself to attack. Mathilda glances and realises they are now much closer. She spurs her horse but it is too late-

The men are upon her.

But suddenly, something loud rushes out of the dark road ahead to meet them. It is Johan, barely holding onto his mount, which gallops, frothing in terror.

As they are all about to collide, Johan's horse rears up and lets out a shriek. He is thrown off the horse into the mud. Mathilda's horse skitters out of the way. But the horse ridden by the bad men is turned right around in the mayhem.

Johan's beast tears after it, chasing the men into the night.

Mathilda's terror and confusion soon turns to a relieved hysteria as she looks down at Johan in the mud.

JOHAN

What are you laughing at?

MATHILDA

Do I really need to answer that question?

Johan gets to his feet and bows.

JOHAN

Johan Visser.

Mathilda makes a mock flurry with an outstretched arm.

MATHILDA

Mathilda.

JOHAN

I'm heading to Meerkerk on assignment for Baron de Vries.

MATHILDA

You'd better hop up here then.

JOHAN

But my horse?

MATHILDA

It was a nice horse.

JOHAN

*Was?*

MATHILDA

If it ever stops, those men will most likely sell it, or eat it.

JOHAN

Eat it?

Mathilda holds the lantern up to study Johan in the light.

MATHILDA

When was the last time you got out  
of the city?

JOHAN

Is it that obvious?

MATHILDA

Nice shoes.

JOHAN

What's wrong with my shoes?

27 EXT. DE VRIES COUNTRY ESTATE - NIGHT

27

Johan holds out the lantern as he sits behind Mathilda on her horse. Barely visible in the spill of light is a gatehouse and stone wall, marking the entrance to the estate.

As they pass, the CAMERA PANS with them to reveal the ghostly white De Vries mansion, glowing amongst the dark forest.

JOHAN

It's empty?

MATHILDA

Yes. There are people live off  
scraps in the woods while this big  
old thing just sits here. Only the  
Baron still comes, usually to hunt.  
I'm the caretaker the rest of the  
year, but even I don't live here.

28 INT. DE VRIES MANSION - NIGHT

28

A great oak door creaks open. Footsteps echo through the darkness of the deserted mansion.

Mathilda lights a candle from the lantern and as they go she lights more candles on sideboards and wall mounts.

Ghostly shapes leap out of the infinite darkness in the new light - furniture draped in sheets. Pale sentinels standing guard. As Mathilda and Johan pass further in, the light spreads and we see the grandeur of the abandoned estate.

MATHILDA  
 We might be able to spare a room  
 for you...

Johan's chuckle is stifled by a wince, a painful rib. And he seems to be limping. Mathilda holds a candle up to him.

MATHILDA (CONT'D)  
 What is it?

JOHAN  
 I may have done myself some  
 mischief when I came off that  
 horse.

29 INT. JOHAN'S MANSION ROOM - NIGHT

29

In a small bedroom, Johan prepares for bed. He eases his pants down to inspect a graze on his thigh but quickly covers himself as Mathilda comes into the room carrying a tray.

MATHILDA  
 You sure you don't want one of the  
 big rooms?

JOHAN  
 This is perfectly adequate.

MATHILDA  
 Now, lets see what you've done to  
 yourself and get you fixed up.

Johan hesitates while Mathilda grinds a natural remedy in a mortar and pestle.

MATHILDA (CONT'D)  
 I've been around all manner of  
 beasts in my lifetime. Don't think  
 you've got any surprises down there  
 I haven't seen before.

Johan takes his pants off and Mathilda cleans the graze on his thigh with a cloth, then takes some paste from the mortar and applies it to the wound.

Johan fingers the poultice, then sniffs his finger.

JOHAN  
 This is an interesting remedy. I  
 don't think I've seen it before.

MATHILDA  
 No, I don't suppose you would have.

JOHAN

Where did you learn it?

MATHILDA

From a lady who lived in the woods. Sadly, I only learnt a fraction of what she knew.

JOHAN

Incredible. I'm a bit of an enthusiast when it comes to medicine. Do you think I could speak with her?

MATHILDA

She's dead.

Johan's shock turns into concern for Mathilda.

JOHAN

Do the villagers know about your knowledge?

MATHILDA

Unfortunately. They used to come to me for help, but now they call it witchcraft. The ignorance infecting people's minds these days is almost as bitter and dark as our winters have grown.

JOHAN

I'm a man of science. I don't believe in monsters.

MATHILDA

Be careful, Mister Visser. There are still plenty of monsters here, whether you believe in them or not.

JOHAN

I hope to bring reason to Meerkerk, and shed some light.

MATHILDA

(laughs)

The churches claim to bring the light too. Now your science? It's the *light* that casts all the shadows, don't ya know.

Mathilda picks the candle up, causing shadows to leap across the walls.

MATHILDA (CONT'D)

Maybe you're different. But tell me, by the time this darkness lifts, how much old knowledge will have been forgotten forever?

Mathilda marches out, taking the candlelight with her.

30

EXT. ROAD INTO MEERKERK VILLAGE - DAY

30

**SUPER: Meerkerk**

In bright morning sun, the farm houses, windmill and fields of Meerkerk are innocent and picturesque. However, looking a little further, we see the village is surrounded by a forbidding wall of dense, dark woods.

Johan, his fine city clothes looking a bit worse for wear, follows Mathilda along a dirt road into the village.

MATHILDA

There are only two families in Meerkerk. The Van Dijks, the family of the accused girl, Hendrika. And the De Boers. They don't like each other, but there aren't too many other people to marry round here so they have to get along. It's all a bit...

JOHAN

Incestuous?

Mathilda is about to scold him, even though she is grinning, but some kids run past, giggling, and she is distracted.

The next face they see is not so friendly. A farmer's wife, hard and frightened, makes the sign of the cross and quickly disappears. Johan notices that it hurts Mathilda.

JOHAN (CONT'D)

You know you could get yourself weighed to prove you're not a witch.

Mathilda laughs bitterly at him.

JOHAN (CONT'D)

No, it's true. In Oudewater they have these massive scales. They weigh women and issue certificates declaring you are of normal weight.

MATHILDA

I'm aware of the practice. But,  
tell me, what's a *normal* weight?

JOHAN

Well, a witch is apparently much  
too light, that's how she is able  
to fly. You know, on her  
broomstick.

MATHILDA

Is that right? And here I thought  
you were a man of reason. Maybe it  
would save us all a lot of bother  
if men could just weigh their  
penises in the same fashion?

Johan is shocked by her words. For he was genuinely concerned  
for Mathilda's safety. Mathilda hides a smile, amused by  
Johan's uptight reaction.

31 EXT. FARMER'S FIELD - DAY

31

A great carcass - a cow torn apart.

Johan and Mathilda grimace at the sight while a FARMER  
stands, arms crossed, nearby.

Johan is troubled, puzzled, as he examines the wounds.

JOHAN

Could be wolves?

FARMER

Wolves usually eat what they kill.  
Folkert lost two sheep the same  
way. If it's a wolf, must be sick  
or crazy to behave like this.

32 INT. VAN DIJK HOME - DAY

32

Mathilda knocks on the front door of a house in the village.  
The door opens to reveal HEDWIG VAN DIJK. The woman stares  
bitterly at Mathilda until she notices Johan. Immediately her  
head bows fearfully and she allows them to enter.

Inside the farmhouse, Johan sits opposite Hedwig, Hendrika's  
mother. The woman is in her 40's but her face is so lined it  
resembles the tilled earth of the fields outside. Hedwig is  
wary of Johan and his official attire.



MATHILDA

Please, Hedwig, do not be afraid.  
This is Johan Visser. He is here to  
help Hendrika. But first he needs  
to hear the whole story.

HEDWIG

(laughs bitterly)  
He'll have to speak to Jens for  
that.

Hedwig disappears out a doorway leaving them alone. A small  
dog appears and sits beside Johan, staring up at him.

MATHILDA

Hedwig's daughter, Hendrika, has  
been taken to Utrecht.

JOHAN

Who accused her-?

Hedwig returns with a boy of about 12, JENS VAN DIJK,  
Hendrika's younger brother. His mother seats him at the table  
but then takes a couple of steps back, as if afraid of him.

HEDWIG

Don't be bittin' ya tongue now,  
Jens. Tell the man what ya saw.

JENS

I saw *her*.

JOHAN

Your sister, Hendrika?

Jens nods furiously, encouraged by Johan's kind tone.

JOHAN (CONT'D)

You can tell me.

JENS

I followed her, one night. She went  
to the woods, to the clearing. She  
was dancing. All naked.

JOHAN

Was she alone?

Johan glances up as a man, Jen's father, steps into the door  
way. Jens stops too. Even the dog looks up. The man nods to  
Jens, as if allowing him to continue.

JENS

No. There were other women. And men too. All naked. But I could not see who. Had to hide...

Jens is hit by a wave of fear. Johan is intrigued by the boy's performance. Jens seems to believe. He is trembling.

JOHAN

Why did you have to hide?

JENS

The devil. The devil was there.

JOHAN

What did the devil look like?

JENS

All covered in fur. Black fur. And yellow eyes. And big horns.

JOHAN

And what was he doing?

JENS

The devil had pelts. Great wolf pelts. He gave them to Hendrika. And she threw them over the men. And they drank a potion, became werewolves.

JOHAN

Werewolves? (pauses) Who were the men?

JENS

Don't know. Didn't see.

JOHAN

Is all this the truth, what you're telling me? You must swear to me, Jens van Dijk.

JENS

Yes, Sir. I seen it with me own eyes, Sir.

Johan doesn't know what to think. Is Jens evil, lying to hurt his own sister? Or did he really seen something in the woods? But Johan's troubled thoughts are soon interrupted by-

The sound of horses' hooves, drumming through the earth, catching everyones attention. The dog pricks up its ears. The ominous sound grows louder until it's a thunderous roar.

The dog runs out into the middle of the muddy road to bark at whatever is coming. Johan jumps to his feet just in time to stop Jens who is about to chase after the dog.

Framed in the open door, the defiant little dog disappears under a stampede of galloping horses.

33

EXT. MEERKERK VILLAGE - DAY

33

As Johan and Mathilda step out into the street the Van Dijk's front door is shut firmly behind them.

Down the road, before a big barn, in Meerkerk's equivalent of a town square, the riders are rallying. Their clothes are a riot of flamboyant ruffles, garish colours and feathered hats. Massive double-handed swords, arquebuses (long guns), pikes and steel armour glint off their mounts.

Villagers emerge from their homes to welcome the riders, overjoyed, as if their saviours have arrived.

MATHILDA

Who are they?

JOHAN

They are called Landsknechte.  
Mercenaries.

MATHILDA

You know them?

JOHAN

I know *of* them.

MATHILDA

But there is no war here.

JOHAN

Indeed. They go where the money is.

The riders part to reveal a very different man amongst them-

The witch hunter, GILLES GARNIER. A little older than Johan but dressed similarly in black with a white collar. His posturing is effeminate, yet there's something sinister about him. He suddenly turns and looks down the barrel at us.

JOHAN (CONT'D)

And that must be Gilles Garnier.

MATHILDA

The famous witch hunter?

JOHAN

Infamous. And that begs the question... How can a village like Meerkerk afford to hire such a thing?

(pause)

And more baffling... Why would a boy accuse his own sister?

MATHILDA

Maybe he wishes her ill?

JOHAN

Or he actually saw something?

MATHILDA

Devils and witches-?

JOHAN

-Are not real. We must discover what people think of young Jens.

Johan marches toward a villager but as soon as she sees Johan approaching she retreats inside and slams the door.

Resolute, Johan turns toward a couple, also on their doorstep. They, too, flee inside and shut the door.

MATHILDA

There's someone who might talk. But we'll need to hurry, this way.

34

INT. DE BOER BARN - DAY

34

A man and woman in their 40s, ANNA and JAN DE BOER, stand inside their barn, a cow behind them. Their heads are bowed before Johan's authority, as if children before an adult.

MATHILDA

Mister and Missus De Boer are Margriet's parents.

MARGRIET, a girl in her 20s, sits listlessly in the corner, staring into nothing. She does not even notice a golden-haired boy of about 3, DANIEL, playing by her feet.

JAN DE BOER

One day, Margriet's eldest, Hans, did not come home from the woods.

JOHAN

How old is Hans?

ANNA DE BOER

Hans is six. And Danel, here... Is three.

JOHAN

Was there anything unusual in the days leading up to the disappearance.

ANNA DE BOER

There was something...

The couple look at each other. Jan nods gravely and Anna disappears. In her absence, Johan's attention is drawn to the boy playing at the catatonic Margriet's feet.

JAN DE BOER

She hasn't said a word since it happened.

Anna returns and very timidly offers something to Johan. He holds out his hand and receives a -

SWEET (candy) - shaped like a miniature red apple.

ANNA DE BOER

I found this in Hans's pocket.

As Johan peers at the sweet, Danel leaps up and rushes forward overwhelmed with excitement.

DANEL

Sweeties. Sweeties. Hans-sweeties.

Jan catches Danel and lifts him up before he gets to Johan.

ANNA DE BOER

You have seen this before, Danel?

DANEL

Hans brings them. Is that where he went, to get more sweeties?

JOHAN

Where did your brother get them?

DANEL

From woods. Woods. From da witch's house dat swallows you up.

The ominous words have the De Boers flustered and scared.

JAN DE BOER

It's just a game the young ones play. Just make-believe.

JOHAN

I think I heard that one too. Is that the story about the gingerbread house you can eat?

DANEL

No. (pauses) It eats you.

JOHAN

Is that where Hans played? Can you tell me where it is?

DANEL

Follow the path.

JOHAN

What path?

DANEL

Only kids can see the path. It's for kids only.

JAN DE BOER

There are no paths in that part of the woods.

JOHAN

Which part of the woods?

The De Boers share a fearful look. They don't want to talk.

DANEL

(whispers, scandalously)  
It's a secret.

ANNA DE BOER

Pay him no mind. He's just a boy.

Danel wriggles from Jan's arms and flees.

JAN DE BOER

Please don't tell the witch hunter.

MATHILDA

Don't worry, Johan is not with the witch hunter.

ANNA DE BOER

You are not? Then you must leave at once.

JOHAN

Please. I only want to help. If Hans went into the woods, he could simply be lost. Quite often kids get turned around. If he got scared, by a wolf say, he could've run deeper, lost his bearing. At least tell me where they played?

JAN DE BOER

We searched the woods. There was nothing to be found.

JOHAN

Children are small, their tracks tiny. Where was he-?

ANNA DE BOER

You must leave.

Offended, Anna tries to usher them outside. Mathilda gestures to Johan to leave, in the direction Danel has just run.

MATHILDA

(to the De Boers)

You still having trouble with your cow? Want me to look at her?

Mathilda occupies the De Boers by the cow. She is pleased to see Johan disappear after the boy.

35

EXT. DE BOER FIELD - DAY

35

Mathilda steps from the De Boer barn, wiping her hands on the smock. Across the field, the Landsknechte make camp by the forest. But that is not what she is looking for. Mathilda rounds the corner of the barn and pauses as she sees-

Johan playing with Danel.

Johan, on all fours, pretends to be a bull as he chases the giggling boy. Danel climbs onto Johan's back. Johan bucks and neighs, causing the boy to find new heights of hysteria. Danel is loving it. Johan clearly is too, as if the game is something he dearly misses... As if he has done this before.

The SILVER LOCKET falls from his shirt and hangs, sparkling in the sunlight.

Is this what catches Mathilda's eye so powerfully? Or is she feeling something for this man and the tenderness he freely gives in such a cold world? As she watches, fascinated-

Danel leans forward and whispers something in Johan's ear. The boy then points toward a dark, twisted part of the woods.

36 INT. PRISON CELL - DAY

36

Hendrika sits, hunched over her knitted shawl. She is working at it with a furious concentration. Her fingers pick at the thread, teasing it from the garment. It piles up beside her.

Standing, she reels the thread around hand and elbow so that it resembles a coil of rope. Hendrika peers out the window as she does so, an excited confidence building in her.

There is a squeaky floorboard outside her door. She pauses, alert. As the footsteps drift away, she returns to her task.

37 EXT. THE WOODS - DAY

37

With the brilliant green fields of Meerkerk behind him, Johan steps through the tree line and into a dark, twisted forest. He feels a change in the air - foreboding.

In the silence, Johan's feet crunch loudly on the leaf litter as he weaves between the trunks. Occasional creaks and moans issue from the trees swaying in a breeze stirring above.

He marches on through similar forest, nothing to be found. After some way, the trees become thick, the bushes a dense wall. There does not seem to be a way through.

Johan spots a little tunnel through the thicket and bobs down to look. Possibly it's an animal path, but also the type of route a child would take. But it's far too small for Johan.

Determined, Johan fights his way through, breaking branches and pushing forward until the undergrowth swallows him up.

Finally, Johan breaks free and bursts out the other side. He manages to keep his feet but in doing so, has stumbled into knee-deep mud. Disgusted, he stomps his way free and stares down at his caked shoes.

Johan looks about, a sudden feeling that he is not alone. He composes himself, a thoughtful demeanour taking hold of him. He bends to the height of child, looks to the tunnel through the thicket and follows its path out into the forest.

On finding nothing, Johan sits, puzzled. Then amazement blooms on his face. He crawls forward to examine-

SMALL FLECKS



Sprinkled in a line along the ground. He inspects the material between thumb and forefinger. Could it be breadcrumbs?

Johan chuckles as he spots the trail continuing into the forest. He jumps to his feet and - still hunched over to examine the ground - follows the path.

Johan goes deeper. And the woods grow ever darker.

Until he sees something up ahead.

REVEAL: Johan steps into a small clearing, a bowl made by a dip in the land, where there stands a brightly coloured CHILDREN'S PLAYHOUSE. It's small, not even as tall as Johan.

As he gets closer he ducks down onto all fours to enter the front door, which resembles a gaping mouth, and disappears inside a *house that swallows him whole*.

ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE PLAYHOUSE: a tiny door swings open and Johan's head and shoulders emerge. Halfway out, he notices something and picks it up-

It is another one of the red apple sweets. He places it in his pocket. When he looks ahead, he freezes, locking eyes with something before him, electric with the discovery.

A child's face stares directly at us over a rise in the land. Only its head is visible, ghostly white-hair and pale blue eyes that watch us intensely. Johan hurries to his feet.

JOHAN

Hans? You're safe now. Hans...

Nauseating horror sweeps over Johan.

JOHAN'S POV: Moving forward, we see over the rise and the rest of the child is revealed. Bloody, shredded, eaten away. Only the head and face are untouched, watching us in death.

Johan falls to his knees.

38

EXT. PLAYHOUSE IN THE WOODS - DAY

38

The Witch Hunter, Gilles Garnier, sits on the tiny stoop of the playhouse with his knees about his ears. It would be comical, except an unsettling menace hangs over the man.

Right beside Gilles, a landsknecht crawls out of the gaping mouth, the front door, of the playhouse. Now things are comical. The mercenary, in his clown-like clothing, offers a tiny red apple to Gilles who stares at him blankly.

The landsknecht shrugs and is about to put the sweet in his mouth when Gilles slaps it from his hand. Gilles glares until the mercenary hurries to his feet and disappears.

Gilles stares down the barrel and our skin crawls.

REVERSE: Johan waits, looking disturbed, partly by the body he has just found but also by this man staring him down.

Gilles takes a handkerchief and polishes his shoes, which are remarkably similar to Johan's, then gets to his feet.

GILLES

Who are you?

JOHAN

My name is Johan Visser and I am a representative of Baron De Vries.

Johan takes out his official documentation as he steps forward. Gilles just fixes him with his blank stare.

JOHAN (CONT'D)

It authorizes me too investigate-

GILLES

I have a piece of paper too. But mine is by order of the crown, the church and god himself. Mine authorizes me to kill whoever I please. (pauses)  
What I meant was... What are you doing here?

JOHAN

I am here to help. To uncover the truth.

GILLES

Who's truth? Your truth? Or my truth, god's truth.

JOHAN

Aren't they the same thing?

Gilles steps closer to Johan, invading his space.

GILLES

Careful, Mister Visser. Are you telling me you know the mind of god? Do you hear him talking to you? (pauses)  
No? He does not talk to people like you.

(MORE)

GILLES (CONT'D)

You are not a man of the cloth. But maybe you do hear something. A voice in your ear, perhaps? Do you?

Gilles gives Johan time to answer but Johan is distracted by the fact the witch hunter is getting closer and closer.

GILLES (CONT'D)

Careful, Mister Visser. Because if you did hear a voice, I'd be more inclined to think it was the devil.

Now barely an inch from Johan's face, Gilles sniffs. A deep, intimate breath, smelling him. His face is unreadable. A mixture of excitement and suspicion, or is it longing, love? Gilles's gaze drops to Johan's feet. Their shoes are very similar. Gilles makes a satisfied sound at this discovery.

GILLES (CONT'D)

Come now, you are clearly a man of some standing, tell me what secrets this body may spill.

Gilles marches away and Johan follows.

The horrifying sight of the body still gives Johan pause. But he pushes through it, notebook in hand, and drops to his knees. Johan produces a magnifying glass, which he uses to examine the wounds much to Gilles's amusement.

JOHAN

You can see by the shape of the wounds that they are bite marks, tearing, most probably a wolf.

Johan uses calipers to measure the wounds and makes notes on the page to record his findings.

JOHAN (CONT'D)

And by the size, a big wolf at that.

GILLES

A werewolf.

JOHAN

I didn't say...

Gilles holds up a hand silencing Johan. He circles the body until, finally, he stops and bends over to sniff the top of the dead boy's head.

GILLES

Witchcraft. It reeks of it.

JOHAN

But the evidence suggests...

It is now Johan's turn to be amused but Gilles cuts him off, by thrusting a hand into the corpse's abdominal cavity. He pulls out a bloody tube (a blood vessel to a missing organ).

GILLES

Here. Look. These are clearly cuts.  
A knife. Organs have been removed  
with care. An intellect is at work,  
not an animal.

Johan uses his magnifying glass and cannot deny this fact.

GILLES (CONT'D)

Don't be so hasty, Mister Visser.  
Just because I already know  
something in my soul, does not mean  
I cannot also use your science to  
prove it. Witches butcher children  
as sacrifices. The wolves could  
have come past afterwards.

Gilles smiles at Johan, having won this round. However, Johan looks back to the corpse, mind racing to find something else.

JOHAN

You make sound observations. But  
may I direct your attention to the  
bite marks at the neck. They appear  
to be the killing wounds. If the  
child was already dead, the beasts  
would simply go straight for the  
meat. So the child was killed by  
wolves.

Gilles tilts his head in recognition and even smiles slightly as they get to their feet.

GILLES

You are not familiar with the  
werewolf, now are you?

Johan does not know how to answer this - each way he loses.

GILLES (CONT'D)

You know, I like you, Mister  
Visser.

JOHAN

You don't know me.

GILLES

(laughs)

True. That's probably why I like you. Once I get to know people, I never like what I find. Everyone has sins hidden in their hearts. It's just a matter of time before I smell the stench.

In the near distance, a man cries out and a horn is blown. Landsknechte charge off from the crime scene into the forest.

GILLES (CONT'D)

Give chase. They have made a discovery.

Johan is caught by surprise as Gilles springs into action and runs off with his landsknechte. It takes him a moment to realise it could be important to follow these rash, violent men closely, and starts after them. After securing his notebook and magnifying glass in a pocket, he sprints.

Johan finds himself running alone, the others have disappeared ahead.

He is puffing hard when he comes over a rise and sees-

A shanty shack, a hermit's dwelling, surrounded by a ring of landsknechte. Gilles steps toward a HERMIT MAN and BOY who cower before the shack. The man brandishes a rusty axe.

GILLES (CONT'D)

Evidence of a blood trail leads to your abode from a body back there.

HERMIT MAN

We was hungry, that's all. I just took some meat. Was dead when I founds it. My boy's innocent. He knew nuffin. But he woulda starved if I hadn't fed him.

GILLES

Throw down your weapon immediately. God alone will be your judge. You have nothing to fear.

The hermit man steps toward Gilles, but he seems to be surrendering, offering over his weapon. A pike flashes forward and skewers the man.

Landsknechte rush in and grab the hermit boy before he can get to his father.

Gilles stands over the gasping man and watches him die. When the body becomes still, he swings around and finds Johan watching in horror.

Gilles is crying, tears streaming down his face.

END OF SAMPLE

Pilot script totals 60 pages.

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