

THE PRISONER OF ZENDA (1937)

SCREENPLAY

by

John Balderston

From the NOVEL

by

Anthony Hope

And the STAGE PLAY

by

Edward Rose

ADAPTATION

by

Wells Root

ADDITIONAL DIALOGUE

by

Donald Ogden Stewart

Dramatized transcription from DVD

by

Peter Morwood

<http://www.petermorwood.com>

using

Movie Magic Screenwriter 2000 v.4.73

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FADE IN:

INSERT: A MAP OF 19TH CENTURY EUROPE BEHIND A TEXT CRAWL

Towards the close of the last century, when History still wore a Rose, and Politics had not yet outgrown the waltz, a Great Royal Scandal was whispered in the Anterooms of Europe. However true it was, any resemblance in "THE PRISONER OF ZENDA" to Heroes, Villains or Heroines, living or dead, is a coincidence not intended...

The camera TRACKS a route from Calais across central Europe, until at Hungary...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. FAST-MOVING STEAM TRAIN (STOCK?) -- DAY

INSERT -- TRAIN DESTINATION BOARD

Orient Express -- Calais / Vienna / Strelsau / Bucharest / Constantinople.

EXT. RAILWAY STATION PLATFORM -- DAY

STATIONMASTER (O.S.)

Passengers will please to descend!

Passengers will please to descend!

Various ND TRAVELERS climb from the train onto the crowded platform; the station bustles with activity, PORTERS moving baggage and VENDORS shouting their wares.

ND VENDORS

Papers! Flowers! Wine and beer!

BORDER GUARD

Inside for passport examination,
please.

FEMALE TRAVELER 1

What's all this nonsense about
passports? Passports at the
frontier, indeed!

MALE TRAVELER 1

There's some political unrest here,
my dear.

MALE TRAVELER 2

(reading)

"Special rates for the coronation."

FEMALE TRAVELER 2

Special high rates!

BORDER GUARD (O.S.)
All passports examined inside,
please.

INT. RAILWAY STATION BUILDING -- CONTINUOUS

It's as crowded as the platform outside, and there's a queue at the passport desk. Various travelers have their documents at the ready.

CLOSE UP on one PASSPORT in particular, with the British coat of arms at the top. It belongs to our hero, Rudolf RASSENDYLL.

A PASSPORT OFFICER reads it without looking up.

PASSPORT OFFICER
(reading)
"Rudolf Rassendyll; British subject;
object of visit, pleasure."
(beat)
What hotel in Strelsau, Mr
Rassendyll?

RASSENDYLL (O.S.)
Oh, I hadn't thought of that.

PASSPORT OFFICER
Well, you'd better begin thinking,
if you don't want to sleep in the
park. Report your address to the
police within 24 hours of your
arrival in the capital. That's
regulations.

RASSENDYLL (O.S.)
On second thought, I don't think I
shall go to Strelsau until after
the coronation.

The passport officer looks up for the first time, stares,
and slowly gets to his feet.

REVERSE ANGLE on Rassendyll, now revealed as a dignified
man in his 40s, bearded, wearing travelers' tweeds.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)
I hope that doesn't offend you,
but you see, I was born with a
natural distaste for crowds. I
really only came to your country
to...

(MORE)

He registers the passport officer's stare.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

I beg your pardon. Is something
the matter?

Without answering, the passport officer nudges the BAGGAGE OFFICER, who also stares and then starts to rise. Confused, Rassendyll looks from side to side and sees various ND LOCALS with the same fixed stare. He glances down at his loudly-checked tweed coat. Ah, that's it.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Oh... Of course I know you don't
dress this way in your country,
but you see, we don't dress your
way in England.

The passport officer isn't reassured.

PASSPORT OFFICER

Baggage examination... That way.

RASSENDYLL

Thank you. Thank you for making me
feel so much at home so quickly.

A few seconds later, bag in hand, he makes his way out of the crowded station building, occasionally bumping into people and trailed by a PORTER who's trying to be helpful.

PORTER

Your train, sir! Your train has
gone!

RASSENDYLL

I am not going to the coronation.
The best fishing is said to be
here, and that's -- I beg your
pardon! -- that's what I came for.
Fishing, not coronations. I don't
like coronations and I do like
fishing. Now if you'll be good
enough to tell me where I go to
get a fishing license...

No reply; instead the porter is giving him that same baffled stare he's seen so often in the past few minutes, and Rassendyll is getting tired of it.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Are you dumb?

(MORE)

No answer, just the stare.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Well, I hope your trout take as much interest in me as you seem to take, and I shall get some good fishing.

Rassendyll walks away, unaware that he's attracting several more curious looks. As he goes out of the door, he passes -- but doesn't notice -- a large PORTRAIT POSTER on the wall.

CLOSE ON the portrait: it's entitled "King Rudolf V", but the man it shows, in full uniform, looks like Rassendyll without his beard...

EXT. FOREST RIVERBANK -- LATER

A sign proclaims this to be the PROVINCE OF ZENDA ROYAL GAME PRESERVE. It's sunny, calm and restful, which is why Rassendyll's asleep under a tree. As two men approach, they pause to look at the trespasser.

SAPT (O.S.)

Hah! The devil's in it! Shave him and he'd be the King.

Rassendyll wakes up, looks up, then gets up. The two men studying him are dressed in hunting costume and carrying guns. One is Colonel SAPT, grizzled, stern and 60s; his companion is Fritz von TARLENHEIM, cheerful and late-20s.

SAPT (CONT'D)

May I ask your name, sir?

RASSENDYLL

Well, since you have taken the first step in the acquaintance, gentlemen, suppose you give me a lead in the matter of names?

TARLENHEIM

Well, this is Colonel Sapt, and I am called Fritz von Tarlenheim; both in the service of his Majesty the King.

RASSENDYLL

I am Rudolf Rassendyll, traveling from England; not so long ago in the service of her Majesty the Queen.

SAPT

Rassendyll...?

TARLENHEIM

Then we're all brethren of the sword!

SAPT

Rassendyll! By heaven, your face betrays you! You know the story, Fritz?

TARLENHEIM

Oh yes, I had heard something of it.

RASSENDYLL

So, the skeleton is not confined exclusively to the Rassendyll cupboard, eh?

KING (O.S.)

Fritz! Where are you?

TARLENHEIM

Here, your Majesty!

Another man in hunting clothes emerges from the undergrowth. This is KING Rudolf, the man from the portrait, and yes indeed, he looks just like Rassendyll.

KING

Confound it, I thought I'd lost you!

He eyes Rassendyll dubiously and comes closer for a better look, then stares just as everyone else has done. This time Rassendyll returns the stare, and with good reason.

KING (CONT'D)

Who is this...gentleman?

SAPT

He's by way of being a relative of yours, sire.

KING

Relative? What do you mean, relative?

RASSENDYLL

It is something for which you cannot entirely blame me, your Majesty.

KING

Oh? Who is to blame?

RASSENDYLL

If I may hazard a guess, your Majesty, I would say that the blame might lie equally between your great-great-great grandfather Rudolf and my great-great-great grandmother Amelia.

KING

What?

SAPT

Right, by Heaven! The man's a Rassendyll, from England.

KING

England...? Rassendyll...?

RASSENDYLL

And since Amelia's time, sire, the Elphberg face crops out on one of us every now and then.

The King finally gets the joke and roars with laughter.

KING

Well met, cousin! You must forgive me being unduly surprised. One doesn't expect to see double so early in the day -- eh, Fritz? But what are you doing here, cousin?

RASSENDYLL

I must admit, sire, that I may have been guilty of some of the same offence as our mutual ancestor.

KING

Such as what?

RASSENDYLL

Fishing in forbidden waters.

KING

Oh-ho, that's good; very good! The man has wit! You must come to my coronation tomorrow. I'd give a thousand crowns for a sight of Michael's face when he sees the pair of us. But of course, you don't know my brother Michael, do you?

RASSENDYLL

I'm afraid, sire, I haven't that honor.

KING

We must arrange that he enjoy that...honor, eh Fritz? You shall stay at my hunting lodge, and tonight we shall dine you right royally. Our ancestors laid down some good wine here at the lodge, cousin; they little thought a bottle or two of it was laid down for you! All in the family, all in the family...

INT. HUNTING LODGE -- LATER

The remains of dinner fight for space among far too many BOTTLES. Old JOSEF, 60s, with medals on his jacket, is the only servant. Tarlenheim's already half-asleep, Sapt, frowning disapproval, is stalking about in the background, so only Rassendyll and the King are still drinking.

KING

I propose a toast, cousin Rudolf.

RASSENDYLL

Hear hear!

TARLENHEIM

(drunk)

Toasht...

KING

A toast to our ancestor, that scandalous rogue Rudolf the Second, God bless him!

RASSENDYLL

Hear hear!

The King FLINGS HIS GLASS into the fireplace.

TARLENHEIM

Toasht...

RASSENDYLL

With your permission, sire, I propose that we also pay honor to my great-great-great-grandmother Amelia.

KING

Splendid!

TARLENHEIM

Toasht...

RASSENDYLL/KING

To great-great-great grandmother
Amelia!

TARLENHEIM

...toasht...

RASSENDYLL

With your permission, sire...?

He indicates the fireplace.

KING

Permission granted.

Rassendyll's GLASS goes into the fireplace too.

KING (CONT'D)

Another toast, by Heaven!

TARLENHEIM

...toasht...

KING

Now, let's see: who shall it be?

RASSENDYLL

Your brother Michael, perhaps?

KING

Michael? Why waste good wine? No.
I'll tell you a secret about my
brother Michael. He doesn't love
me.

RASSENDYLL

No?

KING

No. Michael thinks the world's all
wrong. He thinks he ought to be
me, and I ought to be he. But let's
not waste time about Michael! Let's
drink a toast to... To cousin
Flavia, soon to be my bride and
queen!

RASSENDYLL

Hear hear!

KING

Oh, it's a shame you can't meet the princess. At least, they tell me it's a shame: I haven't seen her for years. She and I didn't get on very well then. Perhaps we shall now.

RASSENDYLL

I certainly hope so, sire, if you're going to marry her!

KING

They say she's much too good for me. She probably is. You know what they say about me, don't you? I drink too much.

RASSENDYLL

Oh, I imagine you're well able to take care of yourself on that score, your Majesty.

KING

Oh, I've done a lot of drinking in my time, I won't say I haven't. But tomorrow, in the cathedral, when they put the crown on my head and proclaim me their King, I shall be their King -- for the rest of my life.

(beat)

Tonight; tonight I drink with my friends...

Except that Tarlenheim is fast asleep, and Sapt looks anything but friendly. Only Rassendyll remains both awake and amiable, and he's fading fast.

KING (CONT'D)

My friend. You know, I like you, Rassendyll. You're a good fellow. Oh, you're English, but you're a good fellow. I want to drink a toast to you!

Too late: Rassendyll's asleep, and the last bottle's empty.

KING (CONT'D)

Devil take it! Why is there no more wine? Josef? Josef!

Colonel Sapt steps in; he's seen and heard enough.

SAPT

It's my duty to remind you once more of tomorrow.

KING

What, again?

SAPT

Again.

KING

Well, so be it. You've reminded me. Now sit down and have a drink!

SAPT

You have a duty, sire.

KING

Duty? Duty, on my last night of freedom?

SAPT

I question your freedom, sire, to drink yourself into a condition in which you will not be fit to be crowned tomorrow.

KING

I question your right to say that to me!

SAPT

I served your father during his life, sire--

KING

I question your right to bring my father into this!

SAPT

Your father knew his obligations to the crown!

KING

And I don't? Is that what you mean?

SAPT

He never thought of himself, or of his own pleasure. He never forgot that he was King.

(MORE)

That's going too far. The King slaps him across the face. There's a moment of shock, neither quite believing what's just happened, then Sapt pulls his dignity around him like a cloak.

SAPT (CONT'D)

By your leave, your Majesty...

He strides from the room, leaving the King as ashamed as his drunken state allows.

KING

Sapt...?

Sapt is gone; but Josef appears, carrying a BOTTLE of wine.

KING (CONT'D)

What do you want?

JOSEF

The 1868, your Majesty. You sent for it.

KING

Did I?

(beat)

Josef...

JOSEF

Your Majesty?

KING

I've had too much to drink. Better take it away.

JOSEF

Yes, your Majesty.

KING

No, wait. Wait! We have a guest. Marvelous fellow. English.

The King glances at the marvelous fellow Rassendyll, fast asleep in his chair.

KING (CONT'D)

Marvelous fellow, Josef, but can't drink. I can drink. I'm the King.

He fills a glass with the 1868 wine, then drains it.

KING (CONT'D)

Better go to bed, Josef.

JOSEF

Good night, your Majesty.

KING

Good night. Sleep well, Josef.

(MORE)

The King pours and drains another glassful.

KING (CONT'D)
Everybody sleep well. Everybody
sleeps but the King.

He sways a little. Then he sways a lot. He looks suspiciously at the wine-glass, but it drops from his fingers. The King staggers, collapses to the floor and rolls over, not just asleep but unconscious.

INT. HUNTING LODGE -- MORNING

A JUG is carried in. Sapt takes it, then tosses water all over Rassendyll, still asleep in his chair. He wakes suddenly, angry and wet.

RASSENDYLL
I don't care much for your joke,
sir!

SAPT
You think it's a joke, eh?

He indicates where the King lies unconscious on a couch.

SAPT (CONT'D)
This is no joke, Englishman.

RASSENDYLL
That was quite an evening, wasn't
it? But what happened?

TARLENHEIM
Josef found him on the floor this
morning.

SAPT
You didn't drink any of this last
bottle, did you?

RASSENDYLL
No, not that I remember.

SAPT
I think you'd know if you had.

RASSENDYLL
Why...? What? Was it drugged?

TARLENHEIM
It was.

RASSENDYLL
Well, have you had a doctor...?

SAPT

There's none within ten miles, and a thousand doctors wouldn't take him to Strelsau today. I know the look of it. He won't move for seven or eight hours yet.

RASSENDYLL

But how? Why? Who...?

SAPT

Who else but Michael?

TARLENHEIM

Who else?

RASSENDYLL

Michael? His brother?

TARLENHEIM

Half-brother. Michael's mother was not exactly acceptable in court circles.

RASSENDYLL

But this is fantastic -- impossible! What could be in Michael's mind?

TARLENHEIM

He wants the throne to be offered to him by the people. He wants to pose as their savior from the excesses of an incompetent King.

SAPT

If he's not crowned today, he'll never be crowned.

(beat)

Englishman, I am much older than you. As a man grows old, he begins to believe in Fate. Fate sent you here. Fate sends you now to Strelsau.

Rassendyll digests this; the proposal is so crazy that he doesn't believe his ears.

RASSENDYLL

What?

SAPT

Sounds mad, doesn't it? But without your beard I'll wager you could deceive your own brother.

RASSENDYLL

You must be out of your mind!

SAPT

It's a risk. Against a certainty.

RASSENDYLL

My dear Colonel, I came here on a fishing trip. I like to fish. I'm a simple Englishman. I couldn't begin to act like a king even if I tried. I wouldn't deceive anybody.

But he shakes his head and smiles as he considers the consequences of any attempt.

SAPT

What are you smiling at?

RASSENDYLL

It would be a scene, wouldn't it? The cathedral crowded to the doors, the organ booming, I kneel to be crowned...

(beat)

Then your friend Michael steps forward and shouts "This isn't the King, this is an Englishman named Rudolf Rassendyll!" No, I'm afraid not, gentlemen.

SAPT

Then Michael sits on the throne tonight, and the King lies in prison -- or his grave.

That's a consequence Rassendyll hasn't considered, and it makes him thoughtful. He stares at the unconscious King and starts to reconsider.

RASSENDYLL

After all, it would only be for a day, wouldn't it?

SAPT

By tonight you'd be safely across the border.

RASSENDYLL

King for a day...

(beat)

What would it mean if I fail?

SAPT
Your life; and mine, and Fritz's
here.

Rassendyll thinks about that, too, and finally reaches his decision.

RASSENDYLL
Confound it, I'd grown awfully
fond of this beard!

SAPT
Hah!

He takes the SIGNET RING from the King's finger and gives it to Rassendyll. The ring is hard to remove, harder still to put on, and Rassendyll succeeds only after some effort.

RASSENDYLL
Well, I hope the crown's a better
fit!

Tarlenheim looks at the King.

TARLENHEIM
What are we going to do, sir?

SAPT
Hide him. We can't chance Michael's
men finding him. The cellar will
be best. Pick him up.

TARLENHEIM
But what if they search?

SAPT
Oh, Josef will put them off.

TARLENHEIM
I know, sir, but if they--

SAPT
We're not playing! Do you think I
don't know the risk? If they do
find him, he's no worse off than
if he's not crowned in Strelsau
today. Pick him up!

Sapt goes to the door and opens it. Right outside is a middle-aged woman in a servant's dress, FRAU HOLF the caretaker. She's just straightening up as if she's been watching or listening at the keyhole.

FRAU HOLF
I, I beg your pardon, sir, I--

SAPT

One moment! How long have you been caretaker here?

FRAU HOLF

Ten years.

SAPT

Have you the keys of the wine-cellar?

FRAU HOLF

Yes, sir.

SAPT

Open it.

She goes off to open the cellar. As Tarlenheim goes out with the King in a fireman's carry, Sapt goes back to the table and collects the bottle of drugged wine.

INT. CELLAR STAIRS -- CONTINUOUS

The cellar is open and Tarlenheim takes the King inside. Sapt comes downstairs after him. As Frau Holf tries to leave, he blocks her exit, then picks up a convenient CUP, pours wine into it and holds it out. She shrinks away.

FRAU HOLF

No, no! No!

SAPT

Drink it!

FRAU HOLF

No!

SAPT

Drink!

Reluctantly Frau Holf does as she's told, then drops the cup and sits down nervously. Tarlenheim comes out of the cellar and looks at her.

SAPT (CONT'D)

Tie her up. Better gag her, too.

INT. WINE CELLAR -- CONTINUOUS

Sapt comes in and examines the King, now stretched out on a table. He removes his tunic, folds it as a makeshift pillow and puts it under the King's head.

SAPT

The night before your coronation,
you must have wine, and wine, and
more wine.

(beat)

But you're my King, the son of
your father, and may I rot in my
grave before Black Michael sits in
your place.

INT. CELLAR STAIRS -- CONTINUOUS

Sapt goes back outside, where Frau Holf is already
unconscious. He lifts her head and lets it drop back.

SAPT

Remarkable vintage, that '68. Lock
the door.

Tarlenheim locks it, then gives an ironic SALUTE.

TARLENHEIM

Sleep well, sire. We go to see you
crowned.

INT. HUNTING LODGE -- MOMENTS LATER

Rassendyll, now beardless, is in full uniform. He has a
PORTRAIT of the King in one hand, a MIRROR in the other,
and looks pleased with the comparison.

RASSENDYLL

It's not bad, you know. Not bad at
all.

INSERT -- A PROCLAMATION

*Proclamation: In response to public demand, and taking
cognizance of the lamentable public disorders occasioned
by the unexplained non-appearance of His Majesty, King
Rudolf the Fifth, at the solemnities of his coronation.
Now therefore I, Michael, Duke of Strelsau, do hereby assume
the Regency of this kingdom and ordain and proclaim a state
of martial law.*

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- LATER

Duke MICHAEL, 40s, lean, dark and intense, signs the
document, then seals it with ribbon and wax and hands it
to his henchman DETCHARD. Two other henchmen, DE GAUTET
and LAUENGRAM are also present. The trio are tough-looking
military men of Michael's own age. All wear hussar uniform
of the same regiment, with Michael the most senior officer.

MICHAEL

There. The last detail. Now remember, that is to be released twenty minutes after Hentzau brings you word that the coronation ceremonies have been canceled. Twenty minutes; not before.

DETCARD

Yes, your Highness. And now may I offer congratulations?

He holds out his hand. Michael rises and shakes it.

MICHAEL

A shade premature, but thank you, Detcard.

ANTOINETTE De Mauban, Michael's mistress, comes into the room. She's a darkly beautiful woman in her mid-30s, but she watches uneasily as he accepts what looks like Royal homage from his supporters. They notice her, and bow.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Gentlemen, you will now go to your respective posts. The time grows near.

DETCARD

We go to serve our country -- and our future sovereign.

Antoinette doesn't like the sound of that, and Michael registers her concern with a sidelong glance. The henchmen bow again and leave.

ANTOINETTE

Michael, you said I would be your wife. I want to be your wife. I want to serve you and make you happy. But I know that dream is ended if your plan succeeds. Take the happiness I can give you. Let your brother have the power--

MICHAEL

No! All my life I've played second fiddle to that weakling and why? Because his mother was a princess and mine was not. I'm the eldest son, but he was the Crown Prince. He lived in the Royal Palace. He dined with Kings. Well, today the table is set for Rudolf, but it's Michael who's going to the feast!

(MORE)

Antoinette goes to embrace him, but is interrupted by a KNOCK at the door.

MICHAEL (CONT'D)

Come in!

Rupert of HENTZAU enters; in his early 20s, handsome and dashing, he looks like a hero -- but he's even more a villain than Michael.

HENTZAU

Oh! I'm sorry to interrupt you...
your Majesty.

MICHAEL

Hentzau!

HENTZAU

Your Highness!

MICHAEL

Why aren't you at the cathedral?

HENTZAU

Is there such a hurry to go to the coronation of a King who's not even going to be there to be crowned?

MICHAEL

Do we want to make it obvious we knew he wouldn't be coming? We must be there.

Hentzau gives Antoinette a thoughtful look, wondering what she knows, then dismisses concern in favor of impudence.

HENTZAU

By the way, the Burgomaster of Zenda is outside to pay his respects. And a deputation of loyal peasants. I told them you were too busy. They didn't seem to like that very much.

MICHAEL

There may come a time, Hentzau, when your services no longer excuse your impertinence.

Michael stalks irritably from the room. Hentzau gives the closed door a cheeky BOW, then turns his attention to Antoinette.

HENTZAU

I called at your hotel this morning
and they told me you were out.

(beat)

Curiously enough, you were out,
too. I'm glad you didn't lie to
me. I don't like women who lie to
me. They don't usually do it, as a
matter of fact. I usually lie to
them.

Antoinette puts some distance between them.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

Somebody once called fidelity a
fading woman's greatest weapon,
and a charming woman's greatest
hypocrisy. And you're very charming.
Michael's very busy, and likely to
be more so--

ANTOINETTE

I thought I heard his Highness
order you to your place in the
cathedral!

HENTZAU

So now you're trying to put me in
my place! You know, I like arrogance
in a woman -- at first. It's always
amusing to find that the arrogance
is only a defense. But you don't
need a defense against me: I'm on
your side. I think Michael's
treating you wretchedly.

Once again Antoinette moves away from him.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

What's he getting out of this
marriage of state?

That makes Antoinette look sharply at him. Is he just being
provocative -- or does he know something?

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

An insipid flaxen-haired doll.
Poor Michael!

ANTOINETTE

The idea that his Highness is
considering marrying Princess Flavia
is not up to your standard, Count
Rupert. I'd heard you were more
amusing.

HENTZAU

How else can he get the crown?

ANTOINETTE

He doesn't want the crown, as those in his confidence know. He wants only to be Regent.

HENTZAU

Of course. But when Rudolf abdicates and Flavia becomes Queen... You can't put that off forever, you know.

ANTOINETTE

A young, inexperienced queen would naturally lean on her cousin the Duke for guidance.

It sounds like a familiar party line, but Antoinette looks as if she's starting to wonder if that line is true.

HENTZAU

So he's made you believe he wants to be the man behind the throne! Oh no. No, he wants to sit on it, and sit on it he can not until he marries the rightful queen.

That's the last straw. Antoinette makes for the door, but Hentzau overtakes her.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

You know, I think it's shameful of him to keep you in the dark like this. But what's a marriage of convenience to a woman of the world like you? You want to hold him? Make him jealous. But you'll have to fall back on me for that. I'm the only man in the kingdom who's not afraid of Michael...

Antoinette glares at him, even when he opens the door for her with mocking courtesy. Once she's gone, he smugly admires himself in a MIRROR, jauntily adjusting his helmet and WHISTLING a waltz. Rupert of Hentzau thinks a great deal of himself...

EXT. THE ROYAL TRAIN (STOCK?) -- LATER

Drawn by a steam locomotive, the train speeds through the countryside.

CLOSE UP of the Royal Crest on a carriage door.

INT. THE ROYAL CARRIAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Rassendyll is practicing his coronation oath, watched by Sapt and Tarlenheim.

RASSENDYLL

"I, Rudolf, with justice and mercy
to deal sovereignty, to guard with
vigilance and honor the welfare of
my peoples, from all enemies..."
Er...

He fumbles for the next words, floundering until at last Tarlenheim leans forward, ready to prompt.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

No, no. No, don't tell me! Er...
"From all enemies to...to defend
them, and from the throne of my
ancestors to bear faithful rule,
all this do I swear."

He finishes in a rush, but it's good enough for Sapt, who gives Tarlenheim a disapproving look.

SAPT

Stop shaking, boy! You'd think
you'd got the ague!

He stands up and grabs Rassendyll's wrist, checking his pulse.

SAPT (CONT'D)

A little too quick, but you'll do.
We're all right till we get to the
cathedral. The princess hasn't
seen him for several years, but
Michael...

(beat)

Well, I've told you all I can.
I'll be at your ear every minute.

He POINTS out of the window.

SAPT (CONT'D)

Your capital, your Majesty!

The view through the window shows a station platform decorated with bunting and lined with soldiers on parade, people CHEERING and waving flags, and BRASS BAND MUSIC playing. Sapt, Tarlenheim and Rassendyll put on their helmets and prepare to disembark.

ND VOICE (O.S.)

God save the King!

SAPT

God save 'em both! Steady, lad!

They leave the train, and the pretense begins in earnest.

INT. STRELSAU CATHEDRAL -- LATER

The cathedral is packed, but beyond the columns lining the aisle, Michael and Hentzau wait for announcement of the King's non-arrival.

MICHAEL

It's the day, the hour, almost the moment!

HENTZAU

History is born out of a bottle of wine.

Their mutual congratulations are cut short by a FANFARE -- announcement of the King's arrival. Satisfaction changes to shock in an instant.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

The King?

The cathedral doors swing open and trumpeters march in, followed by Rassendyll, Sapt, Tarlenheim and an escort. Rassendyll pauses to give up HELMET and GAUNTLETS.

The CHAMBERLAIN bows to Michael and confirms his fears.

CHAMBERLAIN

His Majesty has arrived, your Highness.

HENTZAU

The King? How's it possible?

MICHAEL

Something went wrong! Go to Zenda--

HENTZAU

Zenda? Why? He's here!

MICHAEL

Find out what went wrong!

HENTZAU

If only he'd drunk what I wanted to put in the bottle...

Hentzau leaves and Michael hurries into the main part of the cathedral to stare down the aisle as the Royal Party approaches.

Rassendyll walks at a dignified pace along the red carpet as the congregation bows or curtsies. He looks every inch a King, but how much he feels like one is well hidden, while Michael watches and wonders why there's a King in the cathedral at all.

Though he subjects Rassendyll to intense scrutiny, he finally escorts "his brother" to the throne, where they're met by the ARCHBISHOP.

ARCHBISHOP

Look now upon our most puissant
liege lord, Rudolf the Fifth,
undoubted King of this realm. If
any man would deny our sovereign
lord's title to our lands and
fealty, let him speak now, or be
attainted traitor.

Michael knows that this is the time to say something, anything, but without proof he has to remain silent.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STRELSAU CATHEDRAL -- LATER

Rassendyll sits on the throne, now wearing coronation robes, with the ORB and SCEPTER already in his hands. The CROWN is brought on a cushion to the Archbishop, who takes it and formally shows it to "the King".

ARCHBISHOP

Receive the crown of the kingdom,
and understand what a glory of
sanctity, of honor and bravery it
signifies.

He places the crown on Rassendyll's head.

ARCHBISHOP (CONT'D)

God save the King!

ND ALL

God save the King! God save the
King! God save the King!

EXT. STRELSAU PARK -- CONTINUOUS

A line of cannon starts FIRING a salute.

INT. STRELSAU CATHEDRAL -- CONTINUOUS

The SWORD OF STATE is brought forward and like the crown is formally shown to "the King".

ARCHBISHOP

Gird thy side with thy sword, oh
mighty one, and be mindful that
kingdoms are conquered not with a
sword, but through faith.

He gives the sword to Rassendyll, who stands up, raises
it, and speaks the oath he was practicing on the train.

RASSENDYLL

I, Rudolf, with justice and mercy
to deal sovereignty, to guard with
vigilance and honor the welfare of
my peoples, from all enemies...
Er...

He hesitates at the same place and Sapt looks worried, but
then he remembers the rest and finishes as if he means it.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

...To defend them, and from the
throne of my ancestors to bear
faithful rule, all this do I swear.

With the King's oath complete, his bride-to-be Princess
FLAVIA comes forward to swear allegiance. She's a beautiful
young woman in her 20s and Rassendyll is immediately taken
with her. Kneeling in front of him, hands together in
homage, she concentrates on what she's saying and doesn't
notice his interest.

FLAVIA

I, Flavia, do become thy vassal,
swearing to serve thee in truth
with life and limb until death
findeth me. So help me God.

There's a pause, then Rassendyll asks Sapt what to do next --
and he's already guessed what it is.

RASSENDYLL (WHISPER)

Do I kiss her?

SAPT (WHISPER)

Yes!

Rassendyll takes Flavia by the hands and raises her up,
kisses her formally on both cheeks, then hand in hand they
walk down from the altar and the throne to be seen by the
people.

EXT. MONTAGE -- CONTINUOUS

Cannon FIRING another salute.

Trumpeters BLOWING another fanfare.

Church bells RINGING.

EXT. STRELSAU STREET -- LATER

The Royal Coach, with "The King" and the Princess inside, makes its way along a street lined with soldiers in full-dress uniforms and packed with CHEERING, flag-waving crowds.

INT. ROYAL COACH -- CONTINUOUS

Rassendyll and Flavia sit side by side, WAVING regally at the crowds.

RASSENDYLL

Well, I think it all went off very well, don't you? For a coronation.

Flavia gives him a quizzical glance suggesting she wonders what he means by that comment. Rassendyll covers hastily.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Oh. Of course I mean, that is, a coronation should go well. If the King puts in an appearance, properly dressed, and knows his part--

FLAVIA

And sober.

RASSENDYLL

That was a nasty one.

(beat)

By the way, among my failings I rather neglected you, didn't I?

FLAVIA

Two picture postcards in three years, I think.

RASSENDYLL

And all the time you've been changing into the loveliest princess in Europe. No, the loveliest girl in Europe.

FLAVIA

Your dynastic obligations to the Princess Royal don't compel you to make pretty speeches to her in private.

Rassendyll glances out of the coach window at the soldiers, the crowds, the bunting and the bands.

RASSENDYLL

You call this private?

Flavia smiles at the joke. She clearly doesn't want to like the man who ignored her existence for so long, but there's something more appealing about him now.

FLAVIA

You really behaved and looked like a King today.

RASSENDYLL

Thank you.

FLAVIA

Something, I must confess, few of us expected of you.

Rassendyll turns to her, ready with some new protestation of reformed character, but she nods towards the window and the crowded street beyond.

RASSENDYLL

Oh...

FLAVIA

Haven't you forgotten something?

RASSENDYLL

What? Oh.

He resumes waving, supporting his aching elbow with the other hand.

FLAVIA

That's better.

RASSENDYLL

Look, I have an idea. Supposing you bow on my side of this goldfish bowl, and I salute on yours? Like that.

He demonstrates, leaning forward. If it looks for a second as if he's about to kiss her again, that must be only a coincidence, but at least they can look at each other now.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

There: isn't that more cozy...?

EXT. STRELSAU PALACE -- EVENING

The crowds gathered in front of the palace are CHEERING and WAVING: hands, flags, even hats. "The King" and the Princess are out on the balcony.

EXT. STRELSAU PALACE BALCONY -- CONTINUOUS

Rassendyll and Flavia WAVE back at the people. On impulse, he BOWS to her and KISSES her hand. The cheers increase.

RASSENDYLL

Hmm, they liked that.

After a final bow, they go into the withdrawing-room.

INT. STRELSAU PALACE WITHDRAWING-ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

FLAVIA

Bless them, they're with you heart
and soul.

RASSENDYLL

Oh, it's you they're cheering. I
felt like doing it myself when I
saw you.

Flavia seems uncomfortable with this new kindly King. She glances at the door, with important people beyond it.

FLAVIA

I think we'd better go now.
They're... they're waiting.

RASSENDYLL

Oh, don't go yet. It's such a relief
to have you to myself for a moment.
All day long I've been on parade:
cheered at, waved at, stared at.
Not a chance to say--

FLAVIA

Say what?

RASSENDYLL

It's enough to make any man lose
his head a bit. I'm crowned King,
I meet the loveliest, most beautiful
woman--

FLAVIA

That isn't what you used to say.
You used to call me "tow-headed
little scarecrow."

RASSENDYLL

No! I hope you slapped me.

FLAVIA

I did. And once I kicked you, quite
hard.

RASSENDYLL

Where?

FLAVIA

In the garden.

RASSENDYLL

I deserved it. But I've reformed.

FLAVIA

Almost beyond recognition. You
seem an entirely different person.
I can't understand--

RASSENDYLL

Don't try. Just stand there and
let me look at you.

FLAVIA

I really think we should go. They're
waiting.

During their conversation they've strolled to the open door of the anteroom, where Sapt, Tarlenheim and various dignitaries are indeed waiting. One of them is Michael, who strides forward. Rassendyll sees him approach.

RASSENDYLL

Are they?

He shuts the door full in Michael's face.

INT. STRELSAU PALACE ANTEROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Michael stops abruptly as the door shuts. There's a MURMUR OF CONCERN from the watchers and he swings around, glaring. Sapt and Tarlenheim hastily conceal their SMILES.

SAPT

Shouldn't have done that. Bad
mistake.

A court dignitary, MARSHAL STRACKENCZ, thinks otherwise.

MARSHAL STRACKENCZ

Very encouraging! The royal wedding
is not far off.

That might be true -- if Rassendyll was really the King...

INT. STRELSAU PALACE WITHDRAWING-ROOM-- CONTINUOUS

FLAVIA

Tell me, Rudolf -- what's the world outside really like? Is it as wicked and exciting as it seems in the novels? What do you do on those long trips? I mean, when you weren't drinking.

RASSENDYLL

I used to go fishing.

FLAVIA

Fishing? But you used to tell me you despised fishing!

RASSENDYLL

Oh... Ah. Yes, well... I grew out of that. Now I'm very fond of fishing.

FLAVIA

I never got beyond the hook and worm stage. And talking of worms, do you remember that day when you dropped a caterpillar down my back?

RASSENDYLL

I didn't!

FLAVIA

You did. And glue in my riding-boots.

They laugh at this childish behavior, but then Flavia turns serious.

FLAVIA (CONT'D)

But once... Once you really hurt me. You've forgotten, haven't you?

RASSENDYLL

What did I do?

FLAVIA

It was at my fourteenth birthday party, and I thought I was grown-up. Your father told you to dance with me. You said you wouldn't, that I was a beastly infant, and when he insisted, you pinched me all the time we were dancing, and told me how gawky I was. I hated you.

RASSENDYLL

I should have been horsewhipped.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Well?

Fritz von Tarlenheim comes in and bows.

TARLENHEIM

Your Majesty, his Highness Duke Michael is waiting to pay his respects.

RASSENDYLL

Let him wait.

(beat)

And furthermore, Captain von Tarlenheim, your intrusion is decidedly uncalled-for.

Rassendyll gives Tarlenheim a swift WINK to take the sting from his rebuke, but Flavia doesn't see it.

FLAVIA

Rudolf, is it wise to make Michael angry?

RASSENDYLL

I'm the one that was interrupted; why should he be angry? Besides, I'm the King.

FLAVIA

He's probably furious.

RASSENDYLL

Bad-tempered fellow. Why worry about him?

FLAVIA

It's you I'm worrying about.

RASSENDYLL

In that case, I can afford to be generous.

He opens the door to reveal Michael standing irritably just outside it.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Ah, my dear Michael! I had no idea you were kept waiting.

(MORE)

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

(beat)

Why was I not informed? I am most scandalously served!

Sapt and Tarlenheim gape in astonishment. Rassendyll ushers Michael inside, where he promptly kisses Flavia's hand.

MICHAEL

This is indeed worth being kept waiting for, cousin.

FLAVIA

You're more than kind to say so.

RASSENDYLL

You know, brother, this was a day I've always dreaded. Had a queer feeling that something might go wrong. But with you in charge, it was foolish to worry, wasn't it? Can't thank you enough for the way everything went.

MICHAEL

It's gratifying to find your Majesty in such excellent spirits after the strain of the day.

RASSENDYLL

Thank you, Michael. Never felt so fit! Must be the excitement. First time I've ever been crowned, you know. That's rather good, isn't it?

MICHAEL

Very good indeed.

RASSENDYLL

Thank you. You know, there's another reason why I feel so well. Had a remarkable wine for dinner last night. Soothed my nerves. Went right off to sleep, slept like a top.

(beat)

Came from right near your castle, by the way. You must try it sometime, in case you're ever troubled about sleeping.

MICHAEL

I sleep very well.

RASSENDYLL

Is that so? You must have a very clear conscience.

MICHAEL

I have. And I've never yet had a dream that didn't come true, if I waited long enough.

Flavia watches the exchange uneasily, aware that it's not as friendly as it sounds.

RASSENDYLL

Really? How romantic. Still, some things come true that you've never dreamed of.

He pretends to yawn, full in Michael's face, then gazes at him, daring him to take exception to the insult.

MICHAEL

I see that I bore your Majesty. With your Majesty's permission, I bid you good night.

Michael bows abruptly and leaves the room. Flavia is next to Rassendyll at once.

FLAVIA

Rudolf, be careful! He hates you!

RASSENDYLL

Believe me, I return the compliment.

FLAVIA

But you don't understand! He wants the throne! He'll stop at nothing--

RASSENDYLL

Flavia, aren't you taking him too seriously?

FLAVIA

Rudolf, if you won't think of yourself, think of me. All my life I've known what my future had to be, and I was resigned to it. But now... I don't have to tell you how different it is.

RASSENDYLL

Flavia, I've been unfair.

FLAVIA

I only want you to realize how much your life means to... To your country.

RASSENDYLL

To my country?

FLAVIA

And to your friends...

RASSENDYLL

Friends?

FLAVIA

And to your cousin and most loving servant.

She offers "the King" a deep CURTSEY. Rassendyll is hoping for some declaration of love rather than all this honor and respect, but doesn't get it. Flavia goes to the door.

FLAVIA (CONT'D)

Good night, Rudolf.

RASSENDYLL

Don't go!

FLAVIA

But I'll see you tomorrow...

And she's gone, leaving Rassendyll all too aware that by tomorrow, he'll be gone too.

RASSENDYLL

Tomorrow...

INT. KING'S PRIVATE ROOMS -- LATER

Tarlenheim is having a drink when Rassendyll comes in.

TARLENHEIM

What a day for you to remember! I wouldn't mind being King for twelve hours myself.

(beat)

I'll never forget old Mueller in the cathedral...

(MORE)

Sapt enters and Tarlenheim starts to get up, but is waved back into his chair.

TARLENHEIM (CONT'D)

You know, he used to be the King's tutor. Fixed his eye on you and never took it off. I thought the game was up... Until I remembered it was his glass eye.

(beat)

By the way, Rassendyll, what were you doing with the princess in there all that time, eh?

(beat)

I mean, can't you even leave the King to do his own love-making? I only hope that his Majesty will not be a source of disappointment to her after you!

SAPT

Never mind that! We must get away at once if I'm to have the King back here by daybreak. Ready to start, Rassendyll?

Rassendyll NODS, too full of emotion for words. Sapt pats him sympathetically on the back then turns to Tarlenheim.

SAPT (CONT'D)

Remember, if anyone comes to see the King, you're to say that he's asleep.

TARLENHEIM

Yes, sir.

SAPT

And if it's Michael, and that doesn't stop him...

TARLENHEIM

That would be awkward.

SAPT

So awkward that if that door's forced, you're not to be alive to tell about it.

TARLENHEIM

Do you think I would be, sir?

SAPT

Good lad!

Tarlenheim goes to bid an awkward farewell to Rassendyll.

TARLENHEIM

Well... I'm not very good at making speeches...

RASSENDYLL

I don't think we need to, do we?

TARLENHEIM

You know what I mean.

They shake hands.

RASSENDYLL

I think I do, old man.

SAPT

We have no time for sentiment!
Come on.

RASSENDYLL

Well, in a few hours I'll be just plain Rudolf Rassendyll again.

SAPT

You'll be lucky if you're not the late Rudolf Rassendyll.

RASSENDYLL

There's a happy thought.

SAPT

By Heaven, I feel my head wobbling on my shoulders every minute you're in the city!

He presses a HIDDEN SWITCH, and a SECRET DOOR opens in the paneling of the wall.

SAPT (CONT'D)

In the old King's time, I knew this way well. Come on!

EXT. FOREST ROAD -- LATER

Sapt and Rassendyll gallop their horses through moonlight and shadows on the way to Zenda. They arrive at last outside the hunting lodge.

EXT. HUNTING LODGE -- CONTINUOUS

The lodge is in total darkness. Both men dismount and secure their horses.

SAPT

No lights, eh? That's odd.

INT. HUNTING LODGE -- MOMENTS LATER

Without light or fire, the room where they had dinner just the night before is dark and ominously silent. There's no sign of life.

SAPT

Josef? Josef!

Rassendyll LIGHTS several candles, but there's still nothing to see. Sapt looks about suspiciously, then grabs the CANDLESTICK and heads for the wine-cellar.

SAPT (CONT'D)

Josef!

INT. CELLAR STAIRS -- CONTINUOUS

Her ROPES and GAG lie on the floor, but the drugged, tied-up Frau Holf isn't there any more -- and the cellar door is locked. Rassendyll rattles the handle and slams his shoulder against the wood, to no effect.

SAPT

Here.

He hands Rassendyll the candlestick, draws his REVOLVER and shoots out the lock.

INT. WINE CELLAR -- CONTINUOUS

The body on the table looks much as Sapt left it this morning.

SAPT

Still drugged, by Heaven.

But when they roll the body over, it's not the King --

SAPT (CONT'D)

Josef!

-- And the blood on his shirt proves he's not drugged, either.

SAPT (CONT'D)

The King! The King!

RASSENDYLL

Look!

(MORE)

Rassendyll finds a NOTE pinned to Josef's body.

INSERT: THE NOTE.

One King is enough for any kingdom.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Kidnapped!

SAPT

Or murdered...

INT. HUNTING LODGE -- LATER

Sapt and Rassendyll are sitting at the table, trying to work out the details of what happened and who did it.

RASSENDYLL

...And Michael's been in Strelsau all day. Still is.

SAPT

But that young devil Hentzau isn't! I wondered why I hadn't seen him all day.

RASSENDYLL

Then that settles it. They know everything by now.

SAPT

Yes, they know everything -- but they can't speak. They can't denounce us without denouncing themselves. Can they say "that wasn't the King, because we kidnapped the King and murdered his servant." Can they say that?

RASSENDYLL

It still won't keep them from murdering the King.

SAPT

With you in Strelsau, they won't dare. If they do, they're finished. Can they kill him and leave you on the throne?

Rassendyll can see where this is leading.

RASSENDYLL

No, no! You're asking too much. Nobody could carry on this masquerade! I've tried to help you all I can, but...

SAPT

Yes, I suppose you're right. You've done all that could be expected. More than could be expected. It's just that... You see, Rudolf is my King. I have a feeling about my King. About the crown. I feel about it much as any other man would feel about his children... Or the woman he loved.

That jab is aimed straight at Rassendyll, and it hits home.

SAPT (CONT'D)

He'd hate to leave her to her fate without putting up a fight.

RASSENDYLL

What fate?

SAPT

Michael's abducted him, who knows but...

RASSENDYLL

You know whom I mean.

SAPT

Oh... Princess Flavia. With the King dead, Michael as Regent would declare her the queen. After that he's marry her, of course.

RASSENDYLL

She'd never do that! She couldn't!

SAPT

Flavia's a princess of the Royal House. She'd have no choice. She'd expect none.

RASSENDYLL

But you can't let that happen to her!

SAPT

Can you?

INSERT -- AN INVITATION CARD

His Majesty the King commands the attendance of Her Royal Highness the Princess Flavia at the State Ball in honor of his Majesty's Coronation. In the Royal Palace, Strelsau, June the ninth 1897 at nine o'clock. Von Hauptwitz, Lord High Chamberlain. Orders and Decorations.

Rassendyll's hand, holding a pen, crosses out "*His Majesty the King commands*" and replaces it with "*Rudolf begs and implores*" -- then adds at the bottom, "*If you don't give me the first waltz, I'll cancel the ball. R.*"

INT. BALLROOM -- EVENING

A MAJOR-DOMO thumps his staff of office on the floor.

MAJOR-DOMO

His Majesty the King!

As the National Anthem plays, Rassendyll and Flavia walk down the grand staircase into the ballroom. It's filled with important people in ball-gowns, uniforms and diplomatic full dress, who bow and curtsy as "The King" goes by. The COMMISSAIRE comes forward and bows a greeting.

COMMISSAIRE

Your Majesty.

RASSENDYLL

Delighted to see you, Commissaire.

Flavia whispers behind her fan, telling Rassendyll what to do next.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Oh!

He signals to the MASTER OF CEREMONIES on the stairs.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES

*Avec la permission de sa Majesté,
le bal commence! Valse générale!*

And everyone starts dancing. The orchestra conductor, a fussy little man, gets into the swing of things. Various new arrivals saunter down the stairs, joining the glittering scene. Rassendyll and Flavia are the center of attention.

FLAVIA

You look troubled.

RASSENDYLL

Troubled? After all these glorious days with you? No, I was only thinking there may never be another night like this, another waltz...

FLAVIA

We shall always waltz together,
Rudolf.

And so they do, as the rest of the court waltzes with them.

RASSENDYLL
I dance with no-one but you tonight,
Flavia.

FLAVIA
And I dance only as my King
commands.

RASSENDYLL
Then your King commands--

He stops dancing to talk to her, and everything else stops
too: the other dancers, the music, even the conversation.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)
Why do they stop?

FLAVIA
You know the rule: because we do.

RASSENDYLL
And if we start, will they go on?

FLAVIA
Of course!

They start dancing again, and the ball resumes.

RASSENDYLL
If we walked out onto the terrace,
would they all do the same?

FLAVIA
Of course not!

RASSENDYLL
Well then--

He stops, and of course everything else stops too.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)
--In that case, let's go out on
the terrace.

FLAVIA
Not now.

RASSENDYLL
Later?

FLAVIA
Later.

(MORE)

They start, and everything starts, although the conductor
is starting to look flustered.

FLAVIA (CONT'D)

That is, if we can slip away.

Rassendyll stops. Everything stops.

RASSENDYLL

Oh no. No, I want that promise.

Everyone is staring, confused but amused.

FLAVIA

Come, we must dance!

RASSENDYLL

Not a step until I get that promise.

FLAVIA

I promise.

And off they waltz again, with the conductor fit to burst.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BALLROOM, STRELSAU -- LATER

"The King" is meeting-and-greeting when Sapt gives him some awkward news about who's next.

SAPT

The British Ambassador. Recently appointed.

Rassendyll glances at the Ambassador and grows uneasy.

SAPT (CONT'D)

Do you know him?

Rassendyll nods.

SAPT (CONT'D)

Let's trust in Providence.

RASSENDYLL

You'll never get Providence interested in this enterprise!

The AMBASSADOR and his wife LADY TOPHAM arrive, escorted by the Chamberlain.

CHAMBERLAIN

Your Majesty: His Excellency the British Ambassador and Lady Topham.

RASSENDYLL

Your Excellencies.

The Ambassador straightens from his bow and gives Rassendyll a look that's almost, but not quite, recognition. Rassendyll covers by putting on his MONOCLE and trying to appear as foreign as possible. It works, because the Ambassador's dubious expression clears.

AMBASSADOR

Your Majesty, Her Britannic Majesty the Queen-Empress commands me to convey her felicitations on your Coronation.

RASSENDYLL

Be pleased to convey our thanks to her Majesty, your Excellency. And you may add our felicitations on her Jubilee.

AMBASSADOR

Your Majesty.

(beat)

Would it be premature to congratulate your Majesty on your approaching wedding?

RASSENDYLL

Er... Yes, it might be.

He moves away, leaving the Ambassador and his wife gazing after him with interest.

AMBASSADOR

Amazing resemblance to the younger Rassendyll.

LADY TOPHAM

Not at all.

Flavia joins "the King."

FLAVIA

Rudolf, we must pay our respects to his Eminence the Cardinal.

They go to meet the CARDINAL, a dignified old gentleman in full ecclesiastical regalia.

RASSENDYLL

Your Eminence has greatly honored us tonight.

CARDINAL

Your Majesty's subjects already love their king.

(MORE)

CARDINAL (CONT'D)

I think they are impatient to love their Queen as well.

FLAVIA

I'm grateful for the interest of the people, and of your Eminence.

CARDINAL

Graciously answered. And now: our preparations will require much time. Will it please your Majesty to name the day?

RASSENDYLL

Now? Tonight?

CARDINAL

It was understood the ceremony would shortly follow the coronation.

RASSENDYLL

Well... Shall we say in about six months time?

The Cardinal is surprised; Flavia is shocked and insulted.

CARDINAL

So long a postponement?

RASSENDYLL

There's an old proverb, your Eminence. Something about crossing your bridges before you come to them.

CARDINAL

If your Majesty will examine that proverb, you will find how very difficult it would be to cross a bridge at any other time.

RASSENDYLL

Well, I'm sure my cousin will understand--

FLAVIA

Your cousin begs leave to bid your Majesty -- and your Eminence -- good night.

CARDINAL

Good night, my child.

RASSENDYLL

If you will excuse us--

He goes after Flavia, aware how offended she is.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

You promised to go out on the
terrace with me.

FLAVIA

Is that a command, sire?

RASSENDYLL

That's a command. Please.

MASTER OF CEREMONIES (O.S.)

La valse dernière!

Rassendyll and Flavia walk out onto the terrace, then down to the garden. Sapt stands in the ballroom doorway and watches from a distance.

FLAVIA

Need you bring me out here, cousin?

RASSENDYLL

I couldn't let you go home, not
after that.

FLAVIA

I'm sure you have excellent reasons
for what you said.

RASSENDYLL

I have. There are times when a man
might find it impossible to do
even what his heart prompts him to
do. But please believe me: I never
could willingly do anything to
hurt you.

FLAVIA

I still don't understand.

RASSENDYLL

Then... Will you believe this
without understanding? I love you.

FLAVIA

Oh, is it true? Or do you say that
because you must?

RASSENDYLL

I love you more than truth or life
or honor.

He KISSES her.

FLAVIA

Tell me, Rudolf -- why is it that I love you now, when I never even liked you before?

RASSENDYLL

Never before?

FLAVIA

It was at the coronation. I looked at you and--

RASSENDYLL

And that was the first time you loved me?

FLAVIA

You ask that as if you'd be pleased to hear me say "Yes."

RASSENDYLL

Would "Yes" be true?

FLAVIA

Yes.

They kiss again.

FLAVIA (CONT'D)

You seem so different.

RASSENDYLL

Your hair is so beautiful.

FLAVIA

I wanted you to be different from the Rudolf I knew, the Rudolf I didn't love. And you are, and yet you aren't.

RASSENDYLL

Flavia... If I were different, if I were not the King...

FLAVIA

Why do you say that?

RASSENDYLL

Could you still love me if I were not the King?

FLAVIA

In my heart there is no King, no
crown -- only you. Dearest, does a
woman who marries without love
look on a man as I look on you?

Rassendyll realizes that if there's a time to tell Flavia
the truth about himself and the King, that time is now.

RASSENDYLL

Flavia... I am not--

SAPT (O.S.)

Your Majesty!

With this interruption the moment for Rassendyll's
confession is lost, just as Sapt intended. He bows in
pretended apology.

SAPT (CONT'D)

A thousand pardons, sire. His
Eminence the Cardinal is waiting
to take his leave.

Rassendyll and Sapt exchange glares, each man well aware
of what would have happened without that timely
interruption, while Flavia watches in confusion.

RASSENDYLL

We must not keep his Eminence
waiting.

FLAVIA

Is something wrong, Colonel Sapt?

SAPT

Nothing, your Royal Highness. It's
always my unpleasant task to be
the reminder of duty.

That remark is aimed straight at Rassendyll, but Flavia
doesn't notice it.

FLAVIA

Faithful Colonel Sapt!

SAPT

God bless your Royal Highness. But
above all -- the King!

He's not referring to "the King" that Flavia thinks he
means, but she takes off the ROSE she wears as a corsage,
kisses it and gives it to Rassendyll as a keepsake.

FLAVIA
God save the King...

INSERT -- THE ROSE

INT. KING'S PRIVATE ROOMS -- LATER

SAPT
The romance progressed very well
tonight. You struck a good blow
for the King!

RASSENDYLL
What's to prevent me striking a
blow for myself?

SAPT
Don't take it so, lad. You're bound
in honor to play the King's part
for him.

RASSENDYLL
Have you left me any honor?

SAPT
Oh come, come--

RASSENDYLL
You forget the human element, don't
you? I'm a man in love with a woman
who loves me! You saw, tonight?
You heard, tonight?

SAPT
I did.

RASSENDYLL
Then why should I ever leave the
throne? Could you expose me? I
could marry the Princess and send
Michael and the King to--

SAPT
If you did that, you'd have to
kill me first.

RASSENDYLL
Well, and if I did? I could raise
all Strelsau on you in an hour!

SAPT
You could do that -- but you
wouldn't.

RASSENDYLL

Then find the King! Find him --
before it's too late...!

INSERT -- A LETTER

The question which has troubled you is this -- "how can a King be in two places at the same time?" I know you will be delighted to pay me well for the answer -- and forgive my failure to report to you since the coronation. Ever your humble and faithful servant -- Hentzau.

INT. MICHAEL'S OFFICE -- CONTINUOUS

Hentzau has just finished telling Michael that the present "King" is a fake, and is laughing at the expression of disbelief on his face.

HENTZAU

Odd, a man not knowing his own brother. But I assure you, they're enough alike to be twins.

MICHAEL

You're trying to tell me that the man I saw crowned is an impostor?

HENTZAU

Not your type of fiction I see, your Highness. Too incredible? But still, those things do happen. I knew twin sisters once that, er... That's another story.

(beat)

I see your Highness isn't interested. Shall I go to market elsewhere?

Hentzau pulls on his greatcoat and uniform cap, getting ready to leave or at least making a good pretense of it.

MICHAEL

If what you say is true, then why hasn't the King been heard from? Where is he?

HENTZAU

He's in a woodcutter's cabin. Oh, and by the way, royal blood is not blue as most people think. It's red. I know: I had to spill a little.

MICHAEL

You've abducted him!

HENTZAU

It's an old medieval custom,
abducting kings.

Michael slaps Hentzau on the back: he approves.

MICHAEL

Rupert, only you could have carried
out a coup like that! What have
you done with him?

HENTZAU

Well, there's something we haven't
discussed. In fact it's the same
old topic--

MICHAEL

In a cabin, you say? Where, man?
Where?

HENTZAU

Now why do people abduct kings?
For fun, your Highness? Surely
there's always the little matter
of the King's ransom?

MICHAEL

You can be the first man in the
kingdom -- after the King.

HENTZAU

Thanks.

(beat)

How about something on account?

MICHAEL

Ten thousand.

HENTZAU

That's a poor price for a King --
and a crown.

MICHAEL

Twenty.

HENTZAU

Well, it's too cheap, but I will
admit that he's a bit of a nuisance,
always whining about being chained
up...

MICHAEL

You say you wounded him?

HENTZAU

Only slightly. But the cabin is very damp, your Highness, and he might develop pneumonia...

MICHAEL

And let the Englishman reign for the rest of his life? Could we ever expose him?

HENTZAU

That hadn't occurred to me.

MICHAEL

But if the Englishman dies first, and is buried in the cathedral as the King...

HENTZAU

There are moments in your presence, your Highness, when I feel myself an amateur.

MICHAEL

This fraud is an insult to the whole country.

HENTZAU

Your Highness points out the path of duty. Any patriot ought to kill him on sight.

INSERT -- AN ENVELOPE

Rudolf Rassendyll, c/o Captain Fritz von Tarlenheim. Deliver instantly.

INT. KING'S BEDROOM -- LATER

Rassendyll is in bed, but sits up to take the ENVELOPE from Tarlenheim. He reads the name again; not one he'd been expecting to see.

RASSENDYLL

Rassendyll...? Can't be a bill from my tailor.

He opens the envelope and READS the LETTER inside.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

(reading)

"If Mr Rassendyll desires to know the whereabouts of the King, let him come tonight at two o'clock to

(MORE)

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)
the deserted summerhouse behind
the wall on the Boulevard Elphberg.
He must be alone. If he neglects
this invitation he may harm the
Princess Flavia."

TARLENHEIM
Oh, it's a trick of Michael's,
obviously. They must take you for
a fool.

RASSENDYLL
Wait a minute, here's some more.
(reading)
"If you hesitate, consult Captain
von Tarlenheim."

TARLENHEIM
They must take me for a bigger
fool!

RASSENDYLL
(reading)
"Ask him what woman would do most
to prevent Michael from marrying
the Princess Flavia, and thus most
to prevent his becoming King --
and ask if her name begins with
'A'?"

TARLENHEIM
"A"...?
(beat)
Antoinette de Mauban! Frenchwoman:
madly in love with Michael. Of
course! Definitely, she would lose
Michael if--

RASSENDYLL
How far is the Boulevard Elphberg?

TARLENHEIM
Are you going?

RASSENDYLL
I am.

TARLENHEIM
Not without me!

RASSENDYLL
Good man! But no Sapt.
(MORE)

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

He'll have fourteen different reasons why we shouldn't go, and all of them good ones.

(beat)

If he can't find any news of the King, perhaps we can.

EXT. GARDEN WALL -- NIGHT

The wall's about ten feet high, with a heavy wrought-iron gate. Rassendyll tries the gate without success.

TARLENHEIM

Locked?

RASSENDYLL

The note said "behind the wall."

He starts CLIMBING a tree next to the wall; its branches extend conveniently into the garden beyond.

TARLENHEIM

But how are you going to get back?

RASSENDYLL

You would think about that!

He reaches the top of the wall and looks over into the garden. There is indeed a summerhouse, and a shadowy female figure is pacing to and fro in front of it.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

She's there. Alone.

He clammers over the wall and scrambles down the far side.

EXT. GARDEN -- CONTINUOUS

Rassendyll prowls cautiously through the overgrown garden, REVOLVER in one hand, BULLS-EYE LANTERN in the other. Its beam illuminates Antoinette standing in the doorway of the summerhouse.

ANTOINETTE

Hurry, Mr Rassendyll!

He follows her into the summerhouse and she shuts the door.

INT. SUMMERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

ANTOINETTE

You've been trapped. Three men are coming here to kill you.

RASSENDYLL

Where's the King?

ANTOINETTE

Before I tell you, I must have your word: no harm must come to Michael.

RASSENDYLL

If you're betraying Michael now, why are you so anxious about him?

ANTOINETTE

Think what you like. Think that I don't like murder -- or think that I'm just a jealous woman. Have I your word?

RASSENDYLL

Yes, as much as I can give. If you're telling the truth.

ANTOINETTE

They're moving the King from a hut in the forest to Michael's castle near Zenda.

RASSENDYLL

That's what I wanted to know!

ANTOINETTE

If the castle is attacked, the King will be killed instantly and no trace of his body will be found--

RASSENDYLL

Nice chap, Michael.

ANTOINETTE

Do you want my help or don't you?

RASSENDYLL

I do! How can we rescue the King?

ANTOINETTE

Leave that to me. You must have his friends near at hand, at his hunting-lodge, on some pretext or other. Boar-hunting, perhaps. When I can arrange an escape, I'll send you a message.

RASSENDYLL

All right.

(MORE)

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

(beat)

How will I know it isn't another trap of Michael's?

ANTOINETTE

Oh, yes...

She thinks for a second, then removes one of her EARRINGS and gives it to him.

ANTOINETTE (CONT'D)

The man I send you will have the mate to this. Now go, quickly.

RASSENDYLL

And you?

ANTOINETTE

If Michael finds out what I have done, you and I shall not meet again.

Rassendyll kisses her hand.

RASSENDYLL

Good luck -- in everything.

ANTOINETTE

And to you... With her.

Then they hear the sound of approaching FOOTSTEPS.

ANTOINETTE (CONT'D)

They're coming! They're too soon!

EXT. SUMMERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Hentzau and his henchmen KRAFSTEIN and BERSONIN are outside the door, though none of them are ready to open it yet.

HENTZAU

Pardon this untimely interruption, Mr Rassendyll. I only ask a word with you.

INT. SUMMERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

ANTOINETTE

It's Rupert of Hentzau! Don't trust him!

RASSENDYLL

We can talk with the door between us, Count Rupert.

HENTZAU (O.S.)

Will you give me your honor not to fire while we talk?

RASSENDYLL

I give you my honor not to fire before you do, but I won't let you in. Stand outside and talk.

EXT. SUMMERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

HENTZAU

As you please. A truce, while we offer peace terms.

To emphasize how peaceful those terms might be, Hentzau and the other two stealthily DRAW their REVOLVERS.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

Fifty thousand pounds in English notes, and safe conduct to the frontier.

RASSENDYLL (O.S.)

Sound like a reasonable offer.

HENTZAU

Come out, then. I've a good horse for you, and the money ready.

INT. SUMMERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

Rassendyll doesn't believe any of this blarney for a minute.

RASSENDYLL

Just a minute while I think it over.

He looks around the dim interior of the summerhouse, and spies a round cast-iron TEA-TABLE, the sort of thing used by pavement cafes. It's small enough to be carried, but big enough to act as a shield.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Stand back out of the line of fire.

ANTOINETTE

What are you going to do?

RASSENDYLL

Show you a new use for a tea-table.

(MORE)

He PICKS UP the table, holding its pedestal under one arm.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)
Gentlemen, I accept your offer,
relying on your honor. If you will
open the door...?

EXT. SUMMERHOUSE -- CONTINUOUS

KRAFSTEIN
Don't open it! He may fire--

HENTZAU
Shoot with a lady present? In
England, old boy, it simply isn't
done!

RASSENDYLL (O.S.)
Come on. My pistol's in my pocket,
and all my cards on the table.

HENTZAU
Go on!

Krafstein shakes his head; he's not going to be the first
man through that door. Hentzau glares at him, then laughs.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)
Three men afraid of one?

He pushes Krafstein aside and KICKS the door open. All
three of them start FIRING at once, but all they hit is
the iron top of the tea-table. Rassendyll CHARGES at them,
using the table as a battering-ram. He knocks all three
enemies over, SPRINTS across the garden, LEAPS up to grab
that handy tree-branch he came in on, then SWINGS himself
up over the wall and away. None of the shots sent after
him come even close.

On the far side of the wall, Tarlenheim returns fire through
the wrought-iron gate, more for the look and sound of the
thing, because he can't see anyone to shoot at. Rassendyll
DROPS down beside him.

RASSENDYLL
Fritz, that door's locked.

TARLENHEIM
Than heaven you're safe!
(beat)
What are you laughing at?

RASSENDYLL
I've got a grand tea-table story
for you and Sapt. And here's
something else!

He takes Antoinette's earring from his pocket and holds it up.

TARLENHEIM

What?

RASSENDYLL

A pledge from a lovely enemy!

They hurry off into the night.

INSERT -- COURT ANNOUNCEMENT

Court of Strelsau. By order of his Majesty the King, all engagements are canceled. His Majesty is leaving at once for the hunting-lodge at Zenda. Von Hauptwitz, office of the Lord Chamberlain.

INT. STRELSAU PALACE WITHDRAWING-ROOM -- DAY

Rassendyll is in uniform and greatcoat, ready for the hunting-lodge, but Flavia is in riding-costume, ready for a canter in the park. She's not in a good temper.

FLAVIA

I regret that we don't seem able to amuse your Majesty here in Strelsau. I would have offered you better entertainment than just riding with me, but I was foolish enough to think...

RASSENDYLL

What?

FLAVIA

That just for a day or two, after... After last night, you'd be happy without much gaiety. I only hope the boar-hunting will be more engrossing.

RASSENDYLL

Are you offended with me?

FLAVIA

What right have I to be offended? Last night you made me feel that every hour away from me was wasted -- but boar-hunting? That's a different thing!

RASSENDYLL

Do you think I want to go?

FLAVIA

Of course not! It's the boars:
they're simply pining for you to
hunt them! Did they send a
delegation for you?

RASSENDYLL

Perhaps the boars will hunt me.
Perhaps, Flavia, they'll catch me.
Aren't you touched even by that
danger?

(beat)

Wouldn't you weep for my danger?

Flavia does indeed start to WEEP, but not for any danger to "the King" either real or imagined. What hurts is something far more personal.

FLAVIA

This is like you used to be... Not
like the King I've come to love!

RASSENDYLL

My darling, did you dream I was
leaving you to go hunting?

FLAVIA

Then you're not going?

RASSENDYLL

Well, I'm not going hunting. That
is, just for boar.

FLAVIA

Then what...?

(beat)

Rudolf -- it's Michael!

RASSENDYLL

Oh, it's nothing. It seems he's
hatched a little plot at Zenda.

FLAVIA

Against you? Darling, you mustn't
go!

RASSENDYLL

My sweet, shall I tell them that I
can't go because you and I have an
engagement to go riding?

FLAVIA

I won't let you go! Send someone
else!

RASSENDYLL

And what sort of a King could do that?

FLAVIA

But I don't understand...

RASSENDYLL

And I can't explain... Yet. But believe me, there are reasons why I must go.

FLAVIA

I'm sorry... You see, I've never been in love before.

RASSENDYLL

That's better.

He kisses her, then holds her in a last embrace.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

And now... I must go, darling.

When he releases her, Flavia makes a movement as if she means to come with him.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

No. Stay here. Let me go alone, very quickly.

He walks towards the door behind her and again she moves as if to follow him to the door at least.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

No... Don't turn. If I see your eyes, I might forget to be a King.

He BACKS AWAY, watching her the whole time and not just to make sure she doesn't turn, because though she doesn't know it, this is goodbye. Whatever happens, this is probably the last time he'll ever see her.

FLAVIA

Rudolf... Come back to me soon.

RASSENDYLL

Shan't a man come back to the loveliest lady in all the wide world?

(MORE)

He quietly eases the door open.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

A thousand Michaels couldn't keep
me from you.

(beat)

But if I shouldn't -- no, don't
turn!

FLAVIA

Rudolf...!

RASSENDYLL

If I shouldn't, you'd never forget
me?

FLAVIA

Never!

RASSENDYLL

You'd be a brave queen, and do
your part?

FLAVIA

Though my life be empty and my
heart dead.

RASSENDYLL

You would do your part.

He leaves the room at last, and the door closes behind him
with a CLICK of utter finality. Knowing it's too late to
see him, knowing he's gone, Flavia still turns at last.

FLAVIA

Rudolf...

EXT. HUNTING LODGE -- AFTERNOON

It's a bright, sunny day. Rupert of Hentzau rides his horse
towards the lodge, WHISTLING a tune and twiddling his riding-
crop. Guards come to meet him with leveled REVOLVERS. He
eyes them and the guns with equal scorn.

HENTZAU

Put those toys away, children, and
lead me to the King.

INT. HUNTING LODGE -- CONTINUOUS

Rassendyll, Sapt and Tarlenheim watch as Hentzau dismounts
and hands his horse over to a sentry.

RASSENDYLL

Well, the man has courage, you
must grant him that.

SAPT

I'll grant him six feet of earth
when the time comes.

TARLENHEIM

No time like the present!

A GUARD comes in and bows.

GUARD 1

Your Majesty -- Count Hentzau,
with a message from the Duke of
Strelsau.

SAPT

Tell him his Majesty is indisposed.

RASSENDYLL

No, let's hear what he has to say.
Send him in!

When the guard opens the lodge door again, Hentzau is
lounging in the doorway. He hands over his REVOLVER as if
it was a gift, then SAUNTERS inside as though he owns the
place. When he sees "the King", his salute is no more than
a casual WAVE of his riding-crop.

HENTZAU

Ah, the play-actor!

SAPT

Hentzau!

HENTZAU

Your Majesty... I bring you your
brother's humble greetings and his
sincere wish that you enjoy good
boar-hunting here in Zenda.

(beat)

And his respects, of course, to
your two principal bores.

RASSENDYLL

Well, what price the crown today?
The last offer from my brother was
fifty thousand pounds. Do I hear
perhaps fifty-two thousand?

HENTZAU

You'll hear a much better offer
than that, your Majesty.

(beat)

In private.

Rassendyll goes across to a seat in one of the lodge's big bay-windows. The window is OPEN because of the fine day. Hentzau follows.

RASSENDYLL

Before you deliver another of Michael's handsome offers, I must tell you that I have decided to give you a chance to escape your thoroughly well-deserved end, on condition that you yourself return the...the Prisoner of Zenda...to me. Alive.

HENTZAU

Are you trying to tell me that you actually want the King back? Now really, Rassendyll...

RASSENDYLL

Then I suppose the next order of business is Michael's proposal.

HENTZAU

Well the Duke offers you more than I would. I simply said "Hang the play-actor and save the money."

RASSENDYLL

Indeed. And Michael?

HENTZAU

Doubles the offer. A hundred thousand pounds.

Rassendyll chuckles at such eager generosity.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

I told him you'd refuse! Now, the fact is -- between ourselves -- Michael doesn't understand a gentleman.

RASSENDYLL

You and I, we do, don't we?

HENTZAU

Rassendyll, you're a man after my own heart. Now frankly, you and I are the only two people worthwhile saving out of this whole affair. Now aren't we?

(beat)

This is my plan for us: now listen.

(MORE)

HENTZAU (CONT'D)
Attack the castle boldly. Let
your...

He indicates Sapt and Tarlenheim with a dismissive gesture.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)
Your friends take the lead. Arrange
a time with me--

RASSENDYLL
I have such confidence in you, of
course.

HENTZAU
Michael will fall. The King... You
don't want to find him. You won't.
That's been provided for. If your
friends should fall too, well then,
you and I are the only ones who
know the truth about what happened.
Understand? I, Rupert Hentzau, and
you, King of the realm!

Rassendyll pretends to consider the scheme, stringing
Hentzau along to hear how far he'll take his treachery.

RASSENDYLL
Aren't you being just a little
unkind to Michael?

HENTZAU
Perhaps a little. But I can't stand
his jealousy!

RASSENDYLL
Jealousy?

HENTZAU
Yes -- you've seen her.

RASSENDYLL
Oh, the tea-party! Where you and
your friends got on the wrong side
of the table...

There's a chilly instant as Hentzau decides whether to
take this as an insult or a joke, but then he starts to
laugh. This time it's Rassendyll who briefly joins in.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)
Surely she doesn't prefer the Duke?

HENTZAU
Yes, silly creature!

RASSENDYLL

So you're doing all of this for love, are you? How romantic.

HENTZAU

Well, love -- and your Majesty's gratitude throughout your long and happy reign. And then, of course, you might make over to me Michael's castles and estates.

RASSENDYLL

It's a very clever scheme. It does you great credit.

HENTZAU

Look what I offer you! The throne -- and the Princess. You're planning on it anyway, and this way is sure.

(beat)

Shall we shake hands on it?

Shaking hands with this murderous traitor is the last thing Rassendyll intends to do. He's let the joke go on for long enough, but now he's had enough of Hentzau. Instead of laughing with the man, he laughs at him.

RASSENDYLL

Sapt, listen to this! Count Rupert offers me the throne. That is, if you two don't mind being killed--

Hentzau glowers, furious that Rassendyll has been treating him like a fool all this time. He slides a hidden DAGGER from his tunic sleeve.

HENTZAU

Their turn will come later, play-actor! Yours comes now!

He HURLS the dagger, and Rassendyll dodges just in time. The blade slams into one of the lodge's wooden pillars right beside his head.

Hentzau leaps through the open bay-window, VAULTS onto his horse and gallops away, unscathed by the revolver shots sent after him.

Shaken by the sudden attack and his narrow escape, Rassendyll TUGS the deeply embedded dagger from the pillar, looks at its wicked point and shudders.

RASSENDYLL

Well, if at first you don't succeed...

EXT. NEAR ZENDA CASTLE -- LATER

The castle is on a small island in a lake, connected to the mainland by a short causeway and a drawbridge. Anyone intending to attack the place has only that one way in, the very route any defender would want them to take.

Hentzau canters along the road towards this grim spike-turreted fortress, looking none the worse for his escape from the hunting-lodge guards.

INT. ZENDA CASTLE GUARDROOM -- LATER

This is deep in the bowels of the castle, with low ceilings, massive pillars and oppressive stonework. It's a place where anyone kept as a prisoner will be aware of how close confinement can be. Hentzau pays no attention to the brooding atmosphere. He crunches on an APPLE and ambles over to the table where Krafstein and Bersonin are PLAYING CARDS, and takes a look over Krafstein's shoulder.

HENTZAU

Play the Queen, you blockhead.

Krafstein does so, but Hentzau has already gone to the heavy door of a dungeon cell and pushed it open. Inside, Antoinette is tending to the injured, feverish King.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

Ah! Florence Nightingale!

It's not a compliment, just sarcasm, and Antoinette knows it. She also knows that she doesn't want to be alone in the cell with Hentzau when there's only the sick King as a possible protector.

INT. ZENDA CASTLE DUNGEON -- CONTINUOUS

Hentzau stands in the doorway and watches with amusement as Antoinette hurries to leave.

HENTZAU

"Oh woman, in our hours of ease,
uncertain, coy and hard to please.
When pain and anguish wring the
brow, a ministering angel thou!"

He bows mockingly as she passes him on the steps, then turns his attention to the King. Rudolf is a sick man, unshaven, unwashed and chained to the wall. Antoinette has laid a cloth on his forehead, but he needs better care than she can give a prisoner.

KING

Water... More water.

Hentzau goes to a TRAP-DOOR in the floor, OPENS it and secures the LID to the wall.

HENTZAU

You'll find plenty of water down here, sire.

The King struggles to sit up far enough that he can see what Hentzau is talking about. Once the King can see what's happening, Hentzau drops his half-eaten apple down the trap. There's the scary delay of a long drop before it SPLASHES into water far below.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

So even a King can be curious, I see.

(beat)

Now, Jacob's Ladder went up into the sky, didn't it? Well, this goes down into the moat but it serves the same purpose. Because if this castle's attacked, there are always two of us in the guardroom, just up those steps, ready to shove you down Jacob's Ladder. Properly weighted, of course.

Trying to conceal his horror, the King lies back down again.

KING

I'd like... To be left alone, if your orders permit.

HENTZAU

My audience is ended, your Majesty? Very well, sire -- try and get some sleep.

(beat)

And may you dream of Jacob's Ladder, with Paradise at the end of it!

INT. ZENDA CASTLE GUARDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Michael enters the guardroom just as Hentzau leaves the dungeon. As they pass one another, Hentzau pauses, grinning.

HENTZAU

I've just done my poor best to make his Majesty more... Receptive.

INT. ZENDA CASTLE DUNGEON -- CONTINUOUS

MICHAEL

Brother.

KING

At last you've the courage to
present yourself.

Michael moves forward and takes a folded PARCHMENT from
the pocket of his greatcoat.

MICHAEL

Sign this, and a comfortable bed
is yours.

(beat)

This historic document... Your
abdication.

The King tries without much success to assume a more regal
posture than flat on his back, and stares at Michael with
all the dignity he can muster.

KING

I haven't lived like a King, but
perhaps I can die like one, and
not disgrace the crown I never
wore.

Michael simply tucks the abdication document away again.
There'll be another time.

INT. HUNTING LODGE -- EVENING

Rassendyll, Sapt and Tarlenheim sit around the table,
waiting to hear from Antoinette. The talk is
inconsequential: in Rassendyll's case, about fishing.

RASSENDYLL

Did you ever see England in the
spring? I know a little stream
near Aylesbury I'd like to show
you two, where the trout are--

He RAISES PARTED HANDS in the traditional fisherman's "this
big" gesture, but Tarlenheim raises a skeptical eyebrow.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Well...

Rassendyll reduces the extravagant gesture to something
smaller and more realistic, and both men smile.

SAPT

It would be a pity if we never get
the chance. God grant you at least
can see your own home again.

RASSENDYLL

I'm not sure it can ever be the same again.

SAPT

I know, lad. I know.

There's a KNOCK at the door.

SAPT (CONT'D)

Come in!

Another GUARD enters and salutes.

GUARD 2

A man is here who insists he has a personal message for his Majesty. He says he's one of the Duke's men, sir.

SAPT

Have you searched him? Thoroughly?

GUARD 2

Certainly, sir.

SAPT

Send him in.

TARLENHEIM

Oh, if only this is--

SAPT

Quiet!

JOHANN, an inoffensive-looking 40-something man in senior servant's uniform, is escorted in between a pair of guards. Sapt dismisses the guards and summons Johann forward.

SAPT (CONT'D)

What is it you want?

JOHANN

I have a message for...

He holds up Antoinette's second EARRING, and Rassendyll takes it. The rescue is under way.

INSERT -- PLAN OF ZENDA CASTLE

SAPT (O.S.)

Be faithful, and his Majesty will reward you beyond your dreams.

JOHANN (O.S.)

You may count on me, sir.

INT. HUNTING LODGE -- MOMENTS LATER

Sapt, Rassendyll and Tarlenheim lean over the plan as Johann points out relevant features.

JOHANN

I am to lower the drawbridge at two hours past midnight--

RASSENDYLL

But the noise? You say the King will be killed at the first alarm!

JOHANN

That is correct. She says, before the bridge goes down one of your men must swim the moat and climb to her room...

RASSENDYLL

Well?

JOHANN

Alone, one man might reach the dungeon. That man, alone, must hold off the guards from murder until the others cross the bridge and get below.

SAPT

Always two guards on the prisoner, you say?

JOHANN

Two by day and two by night, sir.

RASSENDYLL

No other men who can fight?

JOHANN

Only his Highness and Count Rupert tonight.

RASSENDYLL

That's three against six. Tell Madame we will be ready at two, waiting for her signal. Then... I'll swim the moat. The others will be waiting for you to lower the bridge. Good luck!

Johann leaves, and once the door closes behind him, the objections begin.

TARLENHEIM

But why three against six? Surely we're going to take our men?

RASSENDYLL

We don't dare, if the secret's to be kept.

SAPT

No. The odds are too great. We must have help at hand to use if needed. Yes, let them come.

TARLENHEIM

I think I should be the one to go into that castle, Rudolf.

SAPT

Right, lad. We can't afford to lose both our kings.

RASSENDYLL

One King you'll lose tonight. If anything should happen to him and not to me, your game's up anyway. I've been an impostor for your sake -- I'll not be one for my own. No, Fritz: I climb into that window.

SAPT

But if we lose you both, what'll become of us who are left?

RASSENDYLL

You'll serve Queen Flavia. I would to God I could be one of you...

EXT. NEAR ZENDA CASTLE -- NIGHT

Rassendyll, Sapt and Tarlenheim rein in their horses on the same road that Hentzau traveled earlier. They dismount and proceed cautiously on foot, keeping to the thick undergrowth that lines the lakeshore.

EXT. ZENDA CASTLE -- MOMENTS LATER

They study the castle from cover at the edge of the moat, and Tarlenheim checks his POCKET-WATCH. A few seconds later there's a moving light at one of the windows as Antoinette signals with a CANDLE.

Rassendyll takes off his cap and greatcoat; beneath it he's wearing dark boots, breeches and shirt, with a DAGGER at his hip. He shakes hands all round, then Sapt and Tarlenheim help him SLIDE down the stone-faced banking of the moat.

Once in the water he SWIMS quietly across to the castle and climbs the rough masonry of the wall with only a couple of slips. Soon he's high enough for Antoinette and Johann to reach out and help him the rest of the way.

SAPT

And now he's alone in that devil's castle...

EXT. NEAR ZENDA CASTLE -- MOMENTS LATER

Sapt and Tarlenheim have rejoined their guards and all sit on horseback, awaiting the next act in the drama.

INT. ANTOINETTE'S ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

Rassendyll accepts a restorative BRANDY from Antoinette and GULPS it down.

RASSENDYLL

Thanks! Takes the chill off.

Johann gives him a dry SWEATER to wear over his wet shirt.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Very thoughtful, Johann. Rather damp, these old moats!

Johann also hands him a REVOLVER, and Rassendyll, like any sensible man with a strange gun, checks the cylinder to make sure it's actually loaded. Antoinette watches him.

ANTOINETTE

Are your men ready? If a shot is heard before the bridge is down, the King will be killed.

RASSENDYLL

I understand.

ANTOINETTE

(to Johann)

Go now. Give Mr Rassendyll time to hide in the passage, then open the great doors and let down the bridge.

JOHANN

I hope I can work the mechanism, Madame.

RASSENDYLL

I certainly hope you can!

Josef leaves the room, closing the door behind him.

ANTOINETTE

The Duke has retired for the night.
Hentzau is in charge of the guards.

RASSENDYLL

I've been rather hoping I'd meet
that young man again.

ANTOINETTE

The crash of the bridge will rouse
the castle. The guards will follow
their orders and kill the King
before your men can get to him,
unless...

RASSENDYLL

Unless I can handle the two of
them until our men can get down to
me. That's it, isn't it?

ANTOINETTE

Exactly. You see, I've trusted you --
your word -- no harm to Michael.

RASSENDYLL

We've all agreed. It means exile,
of course, but that's what you
want, isn't it?

She nods silently, then goes to her door and opens it to
reveal the Great Hall and the inner passages of the castle.

ANTOINETTE

Down the steps is the passage to
the guardroom. Across the guardroom
is the door to the dungeon -- and
the King.

INT. GREAT HALL -- CONTINUOUS

Rassendyll SLIPS AWAY across the open expanse of the great
hall, watched by Johann, who starts making his own way to
the gates and the drawbridge mechanism. Then they HIDE as
Krafstein and Bersonin come downstairs for their duty shift.

As Rassendyll ducks out of sight, his dagger SCRAPES across
the wall and the two guards stop.

KRAFSTEIN

What was that?

BERSONIN

It's probably the castle cat.

They march on into the guardroom and Rassendyll follows them, only to hastily hide again at the sound of voices.

HENTZAU (O.S.)

Guard relief, ten minutes early?

KRAFSTEIN (O.S.)

The Duke's as nervous as a kitten.

HENTZAU (O.S.)

He must expect old Sapt to bob up out of Jacob's ladder in a diving-helmet.

Rassendyll is out of sight by the time Hentzau, Lauengram and De Gautet leave the guardroom.

LAUENGRAM

Is it true, Hentzau, that he's sent for more men?

HENTZAU

Yes, a regular garrison.

LAUENGRAM

Then maybe the Duke will give us eight-hour shifts after this. Twelve hours is too long on guard.

They pause at the top of the steps, looking across the Great Hall, and Hentzau notices that Antoinette's door stands a little open. Lauengram keeps on griping.

LAUENGRAM (CONT'D)

You can come and go as you like. We have to stay in that dingy hole!

HENTZAU

I'll have a look at the doors and the bridge before I turn in.

Rassendyll watches him cross the Great Hall. When Hentzau reaches the door, he opens it without a second's hesitation. Antoinette turns, startled.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

It was very careless of you to leave your door ajar. Very careless -- and very inviting.

ANTOINETTE

Oh... Yes...

Leaving the door open may have been an accident, or a planned distraction, but either way she's having second thoughts about it.

HENTZAU

Now come, admit I've been patient.
And patience is a virtue I generally lack.

ANTOINETTE

You never lack audacity, Rupert.
Had it occurred to you I might not be alone?

HENTZAU

I always accept the risks -- and am prepared for them.

ANTOINETTE

You... You really shouldn't be here, you know.

It's not a dismissal, but halfway between nervous and seductive. That's all Hentzau needs. He enters the room.

HENTZAU

'Course I shouldn't.

And closes the door behind him.

Once he's out of the way, Johann emerges from his own hiding-place and hurries to the castle GATES. He slides back the massive BOLT, then goes to the DRAWBRIDGE WINCH. In his haste and the darkness, he knocks over an IRON BAR, which CLANGS noisily on the stone floor.

Johann hides again as the noise brings Michael out of his room to see what's happening. There's no other sound from Johann, but after a few seconds there's a laugh -- Hentzau's laugh -- from behind the closed door of Antoinette's room. Michael crosses the Great Hall, flings open the door and discovers them locked in an embrace. Antoinette looks as if she might be reluctant, Hentzau far from it.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

I was only apologizing for your absence, your Highness.

MICHAEL

The moat can hold more than the King, Hentzau!

HENTZAU

Is your Highness threatening me...?

Michael lunges for him and seizes him by the throat, but Hentzau has a DAGGER sheathed at his belt. He draws it and STABS Michael in the chest. Antoinette SCREAMS and flings herself across his body as he collapses to the floor.

ANTOINETTE

Michael! Oh, Michael! Why did I
let them come? Oh, Michael! Oh, I
only did it to save you, my
darling...!

Antoinette slumps sobbing onto his corpse, but she's already said enough to send Hentzau hurrying from the room.

The first thing he sees is Johann, still struggling with the ROPE securing the drawbridge winch. Hentzau creeps up behind him, lifts the fallen iron bar -- and brings it down with an ugly THUD on Johann's head.

HENTZAU

De Gautet! Lauengram! Rouse the
castle! De Gautet! Lauengram! The
drawbridge, quick!

As they come running with REVOLVERS drawn, Hentzau drags open the unbarred gate.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

I caught a servant trying to lower
the bridge! Must have been bribed!
Go outside and guard it!

INT. ZENDA CASTLE GUARDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

While all this goes on above, downstairs Rassendyll sneaks into the guardroom. Only one man is in sight. Bersonin is unaware of any intruder until he's staring down the barrel of Rassendyll's revolver. He RAISES HIS HANDS -- but at the same time Krafstein, down in the King's dungeon, starts WHISTLING a tune. Rassendyll keeps his gun trained on Bersonin as he ducks out of sight behind a pillar.

RASSENDYLL (WHISPER)

Quiet! Very quiet!

Krafstein appears at the door of the dungeon and realizes at once what Bersonin's hands-up posture must mean. He keeps up his innocent whistling as he works round the other side of the pillar, then jumps on Rassendyll.

KRAFSTEIN

Kill the King!

As Krafstein grapples with Rassendyll, Bersonin grabs his SABER and makes for the dungeon.

Rassendyll draws the knife at his belt. In a second Krafstein is dead and Rassendyll has a SABER of his own.

INT. ZENDA CASTLE DUNGEON -- CONTINUOUS

Bersonin opens Jacob's Ladder, then wastes time trying to undo the King's chains, so that by the time he tries a killing blow, Rassendyll is there to parry it. They fight to and fro across the dungeon while the King, sick as he is, tries to lend a hand.

KING

Cousin Rudolf! I'll help you! I'll help you, cousin...

He finally manages to trip Bersonin with a thrown FOOTSTOOL. Before the villain can recover his balance, Rassendyll RUNS HIM THROUGH. Bersonin SCREAMS, reels back and TUMBLES down the waiting trap of Jacob's Ladder. Hastily dropping the lid again, Rassendyll goes to reassure the King.

RASSENDYLL

It's all right now, sire! You're safe.

KING

Cousin Rudolf...

Rassendyll leaves him in the relative safety of his dungeon until more rescuers arrive. He closes the door, LOCKS it, takes the KEYS and turns round--

INT. ZENDA CASTLE GUARDROOM -- CONTINUOUS

--To find Hentzau, armed with a REVOLVER, standing in the guardroom doorway.

HENTZAU

Well, if it isn't the play-actor. With his tin sword, too. You'll have no more use for that.

Rassendyll glances at his saber, but with a revolver already pointed at him, it's useless. He DROPS it to the floor.

RASSENDYLL

It's a pity. When did you give up knives for pistols?

HENTZAU

I left my knife in Michael. He got in my way once too often.

(beat)

I'll relieve you of those, too.

(MORE)

He means the dungeon keys. Rassendyll THROWS them to him.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

You've settled Krafstein, I see.
And Bersonin too, I presume? My
compliments.

RASSENDYLL

They tell me you rather fancy
yourself with a saber. Why not
finish me off in more sporting
fashion?

HENTZAU

You may as well face it, Rassendyll --
I'm not a gentleman. If I were
only some King's twin...

(beat)

Well, sorry. I really am sorry.

He raises the revolver and deliberately TAKES AIM.

RASSENDYLL

Er... How do you know I didn't
kill the King and drop him into
the moat?

HENTZAU

No, oh no. You've worn the Queen's
uniform and the old school tie.
You wouldn't do that.

RASSENDYLL

Why not take a look?

Hentzau hesitates, because it's just the sort of thing
he'd do himself if the positions were reversed. He also
knows that where Princess Flavia is concerned, Rassendyll
has good reason to want the King out of the way.

HENTZAU

Well, what if the King is dead?
What's your offer? Talk fast.

RASSENDYLL

Couldn't we have a smoke while
we're talking?

Hentzau pulls a CIGARETTE-CASE from his shirt pocket and
TOSSES it to Rassendyll, who catches it.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

You mentioned something once about
Michael's castles and estates,
remember?

HENTZAU

Do you think you can buy your life
for a few old stones and two
provinces of mulberry trees?

RASSENDYLL

I suppose I'm not in a position to
haggle.

HENTZAU

Scarcely.

RASSENDYLL

Half my kingdom!

Hentzau is surprised, then dubious, and his gun-barrel
wavers.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

...For a match.

Hentzau THROWS his BOX OF MATCHES the same way he threw
his cigarette-case. This time, instead of catching them
clean, Rassendyll FUMBLES and they CLATTER to the floor.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Oh, I'm sorry.

He STOOPS to pick up the matches, a move as automatic as
his apology, but he's also reaching for an overturned CHAIR.
Hentzau sees it coming--

HENTZAU

Never mind that!

--But he's too late. Rassendyll grabs the chair and sweeps
it up, KNOCKING the revolver from Hentzau's hand, then
DIVES for his abandoned sword. Hentzau GRABS another from
the rack of arms on the guardroom wall. The two CIRCLE FOR
ADVANTAGE before crossing swords and Hentzau remains amused
by Rassendyll's trickery.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

Touché, Rassendyll. I cannot get
used to fighting with furniture!
Where'd you learn it?

RASSENDYLL

That all goes with the old school
tie!

HENTZAU

Well then... Here's your last
fencing lesson!

(MORE)

They exchange several cuts and thrusts, taking each other's measure, then Hentzau LEAPS into a vigorous flailing attack.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

Look out for your head!

Rassendyll meets his assault, PARRYING quickly, then beats Hentzau back far enough to let him DART OUT through the guardroom door. If he can keep Hentzau busy, the King stays safe -- and then there's always the drawbridge to lower.

INT. GREAT HALL -- CONTINUOUS

Hentzau catches up with Rassendyll on the steps and there's another flurry of cut and thrust.

HENTZAU

Why don't you stand your ground
and fight?

RASSENDYLL

He who fights and runs away,
remember?

HENTZAU

I see -- you want to let the
drawbridge down. Well, well. I
just killed one man for trying
that.

RASSENDYLL

An unarmed man, of course?

HENTZAU

Of course!

There's more fighting amongst the massive pillars of the hall, and Hentzau starts to realize that Rassendyll is better with a saber than he's been expecting.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

You English are a stubborn lot!

RASSENDYLL

Well, England expects that every
man... You know.

HENTZAU

Your golden-haired goddess will
look well in black, Rassendyll.
I'll console her for you. Kiss
away her tears. What, no quotation?

He forces Rassendyll back against the spiral staircase to the upper level, and LEANS IN close to get more leverage on their crossed blades. Too close.

RASSENDYLL

Yes -- a barking dog never bites.

Rassendyll KICKS Hentzau in the midriff and pitches him to the floor, then makes a run for the drawbridge winch. He's not quite there before Hentzau is after him again.

HENTZAU

You'd be a sensation in a circus!
(beat)
I can't understand it! Where did you learn such roller-skating?

RASSENDYLL

The Coldstream Guards, my boy.
Come on, when does the fencing lesson start?

He retreats again, drawing Hentzau on, and parries a couple of vicious slashing cuts. This isn't the pushover Hentzau was expecting, and he isn't cheerful any more.

HENTZAU

Stand still and fight, you coward!

RASSENDYLL

Bad-tempered fellow, aren't you?
Underneath the charm.

There's the traditional sequence where two huge shadows DUEL with one another across the castle wall.

HENTZAU

Why don't you let me kill you quiet?

RASSENDYLL

Oh, a little noise adds a touch of cheer.

There's more fencing, and now some LEAPING OVER TABLES as well, but with every step Rassendyll is working in the direction he wants to go.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

You notice I'm getting you closer to the drawbridge rope?

HENTZAU

You're so fond of rope, it's a pity to have to finish you off with steel!

(beat)

What did they teach you on the playing fields of Eton? Puss in corner?

RASSENDYLL

Oh, chiefly not throwing knives at other people's backs!

Rassendyll GRAPPLES Hentzau and throws him to the floor again. This time he gains enough space and time to CUT at the winch-rope. It PARTS -- but not all the way through, and Hentzau is too close to risk a second attempt. Rassendyll is driven away from the winch, and the two fence back and forth across the expanse of the Great Hall.

When they're close to the winch again, Rassendyll throws himself at Hentzau and they wrestle for a second on the ground until Rassendyll finally gets his chance to HACK at the rope again. This time he CUTS IT THROUGH and the winch is RELEASED.

EXT. ZENDA CASTLE -- CONTINUOUS

The drawbridge comes THUNDERING down, leaving De Gautet and Lauengram exposed in the castle gateway. Colonel Sapt sees his opportunity.

SAPT

Come on, men!

With Sapt and Tarlenheim at their head, the column of mounted guards CHARGE across the causeway. Lauengram and De Gautet FIRE their revolvers and bring down a couple of the horsemen, but it's not enough to stop the charge. The rest RIDE OVER THEM in a tidal wave of horseflesh and steel, and both are CUT DOWN by the sweeping sabers.

INT. GREAT HALL -- CONTINUOUS

Rassendyll and Hentzau are still fighting, and Rassendyll is WOUNDED in the arm -- but already the rising noise of the attack tells Hentzau that it's time to leave.

HENTZAU

This is getting too hot for me!

(MORE)

He POISES his saber like a javelin and HURLS it at Rassendyll, more a parting gesture than an attack. Despite his wound, Rassendyll parries easily, but it gives Hentzau time to jump onto a windowsill and FLING THE WINDOW OPEN.

He waves, mockingly cheerful despite his defeat.

HENTZAU (CONT'D)

Au revoir, play-actor!

Then he turns, DIVES elegantly down to the moat and SWIMS away into the night.

The gates BURST OPEN as Sapt, Tarlenheim and their men come running in. What they see is "the King", wounded, but with a saber in his hand, apparent hero of the hour.

SAPT

The King!

TARLENHEIM

Stand by in the courtyard!

He CHIVVIES the guards out and CLOSES THE GATE against inopportune witnesses. As Rassendyll drops his saber and SLUMPS against the castle wall, Sapt rushes to his side.

SAPT

The King...?

RASSENDYLL

The King...lives.

INT. ZENDA CASTLE BEDROOM -- LATER

The King is in bed. He's been SHAVED and given clean clothes, but he's still sick and frail, exhausted by his ordeal. Sapt is with him.

KING

You know, it seems a hundred years since I struck you in the face. Please forgive me... And be my guide, as you were my father's.

SAPT

Thank you, sire.

KING

And now... We mustn't keep him waiting.

Sapt leaves and Rassendyll comes in, his wounded arm in a SLING. He goes straight to the King's bedside, shakes his hand, then removes the signet ring and returns it to the King's own finger.

RASSENDYLL

I've tried not to dishonor it, sire.

Only Flavia, Sapt and Tarlenheim know just how hard he's been tempted, and how well he managed to resist.

KING

I can't talk much. I wanted to keep you with me, and tell everyone what you had done. You would have been my best and nearest friend, cousin Rudolf. But Sapt says the secret must be kept.

RASSENDYLL

He's right. Let me go. My work here is done.

KING

Yes, it's done. As no-one but you could have done it.

(beat)

I don't know when I'll see you again.

RASSENDYLL

If I can ever serve you, sire...

KING

You could never serve me better, cousin. You've taught me how to be a King.

INT. GREAT HALL -- MOMENTS LATER

Sapt is waiting for Rassendyll as he comes down the spiral stairs from the King's bedroom.

RASSENDYLL

Is she here?

Sapt nods towards a closed door.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

Does she know everything?

SAPT

Everything.

RASSENDYLL

What did she say?

SAPT

Nothing.

(beat)

She wants to see you.

Rassendyll walks towards the door, and he's moving less like a man about to see his lover than one going to his execution.

INT. ZENDA CASTLE ROOM -- CONTINUOUS

It's a wide, vaulted chamber with heavy old furniture, paintings and tapestries on the walls, and a single huge window casting a stark light into the middle of the room. Everywhere else is shadowy, and Flavia is standing in the shadows furthest from the door.

When Rassendyll comes in, he crosses the floor about halfway, then stops and BOWS VERY FORMALLY. After all, he's now a commoner in the presence of a Royal Princess.

RASSENDYLL

Your Highness?

FLAVIA

I sent for you to thank you...for the service you've done this kingdom and its King.

(beat)

No-one could know better than I how... How conscientiously you've played your role. You even--

Before she can say "convinced me", she sees the sling and his injured arm, and all her careful, cold formality falls apart.

FLAVIA (CONT'D)

Oh, you're hurt! They didn't tell me--

RASSENDYLL

My only hurt's the thought of the pain I've caused you.

(beat)

I love you. With my whole heart and soul, I love you. In all else I've been an impostor, but not in that. From the first moment I saw you in the cathedral, you've been the only woman in the world for me. As I stand here now, I know there never can be any other.

FLAVIA

It would have made no difference if I'd known. It was always you and never "the King."

(MORE)

FLAVIA (CONT'D)

(beat)

Is it true that you're going home
to England?

RASSENDYLL

Tonight.

(beat)

Come with me! I won't give you up!
I won't let them stand in the way
of our happiness! Come with me!

FLAVIA

Oh, if I could!

RASSENDYLL

There's a world outside, our world,
and a throne for you -- a woman's
throne, in my heart.

FLAVIA

I want that!

They EMBRACE AND KISS, lost in the moment.

FLAVIA (CONT'D)

And you'll always love me? Always?
Even as now?

RASSENDYLL

Always, always. Oh, my love, think:
you'll be free, free of all these
cares and duties, to live your own
life as freely and joyously as...

Flavia's rapt expression changes and she PULLS BACK out of
Rassendyll's arms. He stares at her, not knowing what he
said, but that something's wrong -- very wrong.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

What is it, Flavia?

FLAVIA

I was born to those cares and
duties, Rudolf. Help me to do what
I was born to do! Help me to do
what I must!

RASSENDYLL

But my dear, how can I? I love
you!

FLAVIA

But is love the only thing?
(MORE)

FLAVIA (CONT'D)

If love were all, I could follow
you in rags to the ends of the
world...

(beat)

But if love were all, you would
have left the King to die in his
cell.

(beat)

Honor binds a woman too, Rudolf.
My honor lies in keeping faith
with my country and my House.

(beat)

I don't know why God has let me
love you, but I know that I must
stay.

RASSENDYLL

I was mad to ask you.

FLAVIA

For one lovely moment, I too was
mad.

RASSENDYLL

Never to see you again? Never to
hold you? Never...

He KNEELS on one knee.

RASSENDYLL (CONT'D)

My darling.

Flavia LAYS HER HANDS on his head, a gesture like accolade
given to a knight, or a blessing.

FLAVIA

Your heart will always be in my
heart, and the touch of your lips
on mine...

EXT. FRONTIER ROAD -- LATER

Rassendyll, Sapt and Tarlenheim ride across a field and
REIN IN their horses at the road leading to the frontier.
Rassendyll SHAKES HANDS one last time with his friends.

RASSENDYLL

We'll meet again, Fritz.

TARLENHEIM

Fate doesn't always make the right
men kings.

RASSENDYLL

Goodbye, Colonel. We've run a good course together.

SAPT

Goodbye, Englishman. You're the finest Elphberg of them all!

Rassendyll turns his horse. Ruritania and the past lie behind, the rest of the world and his lonely future lie ahead.

Sapt and Tarlenheim SNAP TO THE SALUTE, holding it as Rassendyll canters up to the crest of the hill. He pauses, silhouetted against the evening sky, and RAISES HIS HAT, an English gentleman to the last.

Then he crosses the horizon, and is gone.

FADE OUT:

THE END