

KING HORATIO

— & —

“PLENTY OF TREES IN THE FOREST”

Episode 4

WRITTEN BY: JAMES HYATT-EVANS

CAST:

KING HORATIO - Wyatt Bowden ✓
SQUIRE BARTHOLOMEW - Mike Robert VO
SIR VANKALOT - Gethin Hughes ✓
THE PHYSICIAN - David J Court ✓
SIR NAH - Peter Evans ✓
ELEANOR - Kalsanthemum ✓
MERCIA SOLDIER - TheBastMaster ✓
ZOE - Mary Clare ✓

SYNOPSIS:

After a number of unconscious Mercian soldiers with an unexplainable illness are found in the forests of Meeyarsia, Horatio goes to investigate; not the cause of the illness, but instead the reason why Mercian soldiers were skulking about in Meeyarsia's forests. But what Horatio, Bartholomew and Vankalot find there, is certainly not what they expect... What do they find? And can they find the cause of the illness before it affects them and the rest of the kingdom?

SCENE 1: THE WOODS

FX: **BIRDS CHIRPING, PHYSICIAN WALKING THROUGH FOREST.**

THE PHYSICIAN So I need some Blackberries... Ah, here they are...

FX: **PICKS BLACKBERRIES.**

THE PHYSICIAN Some nettles... Better have a basket full of them...

FX: **PICKS NETTLES.**

THE PHYSICIAN And finally- Oh... Is that... Someone's foot?

FX: **PHYSICIAN WALKS TO THEM. NEARING SOLDIER STRUGGLING TO BREATHE.**

THE PHYSICIAN Hello? You shouldn't be sleeping here! It's dangerous and *dirty* and you make the forest look untidy! Hey! Get up, get- Oh my lord... This person... They are... A soldier... Not of Meeyarsia... Of elsewhere... Their face is pale and... Their breathing laboured... They must have some form of ailment... As a doctor, I must get them back to the castle and get them assessed right away! I must-

MERCIA SOLDIER (distant, weak) Help... Me...

THE PHYSICIAN What was that?

MERCIA SOLDIER (distant, weak) Help... Me...

FX: **PHYSICIAN WALK OVER.**

THE PHYSICIAN Who is there? Are you ok? Are you- Oh my...

MERCIA SOLDIER (weak) Help... Me...

THE PHYSICIAN There are more of these soldiers... So many... Most of them, unconscious... I must help them, I must get them back to the castle!

MERCIA SOLDIER (weak) You... Need to... Help me...

THE PHYSICIAN I will! I will come straight back! I just need to retrieve some assistance in order to carry you all back to the castle, alright?

SCENE 2: HORATIO'S ROOM

FX: **TIDYING.**

BARTHOLOMEW Phew, there we go, all done tidying his lordship's room... I even put a flower in that vase he never uses, and it makes the room look so much brighter, warmer, homelier...

KING HORATIO (outside, distant) AHHH!

BARTHOLOMEW What on earth is happening out there!?

FX: **RUSH TO WINDOW.**

KING HORATIO (outside, distant, child-like) You hit me! You hit me!

SIR VANKALOT (outside, distant) That's the point! We are meant to be training, my lord!

KING HORATIO (outside, distant) You hit the king! You should be punished!

BARTHOLOMEW Oh dear, Horatio and his sword training never goes well... Even when swords are substituted for pillows... I keep telling him not to take part, that it'll end in tears every time... But does he listen? No...

KING HORATIO (outside, distant) Bartholomew! What are you doing just staring down at all of us from up there?! Come down and help me get to the physician, man!

BARTHOLOMEW Here we go again...

SCENE 3: THE PHYSICIAN'S ROOM

THE PHYSICIAN Thankyou for your aid, Eleanor.

ELEANOR Any time. I could help diagnose their condition if you would like?

THE PHYSICIAN No, no, its fine, I only work with professionals.

ELEANOR I'm not saying I'm a professional but I did train under a physician such as yourself when I was growing up.

THE PHYSICIAN Really?

ELEANOR Yes. His methods were slightly different to the methods I have observed from you, but as long as they both get the job done, whats the harm?

THE PHYSICIAN Would I have heard of this physician?

ELEANOR I doubt it. He used a different name, he never liked to be seen as a physician. ...So, these people, were they found like this?

THE PHYSICIAN Some have grown more pale on the journey here...

ELEANOR I would say it's less pale and more... Gained a green... hue...

THE PHYSICIAN Who is Hugh?

FX: **DOOR OPEN, HORATIO AND BARTHOLOMEW WALK IN, HORATIO LIMPING.**

KING HORATIO Physician! Physician! You must help me!

BARTHOLOMEW He got hurt during fighting training.

ELEANOR Don't you guys use pillow's whenever you're involved in that, though?

KING HORATIO Vankalot was particularly rough!

ELEANOR Yes, he can be...

KING HORATIO Physician? Help me! Please! I could die!

THE PHYSICIAN Not now, boy. Can't you see I am busy? Look around you, at all the patients I am trying to heal.

KING HORATIO But... You're *my* physician!

THE PHYSICIAN I am the physician of the people, Horatio. Not just you.

KING HORATIO Then why do I only ever see me here getting your aid?

THE PHYSICIAN Because unlike you, most people don't like to go to the doctors every day.

KING HORATIO Pah! I don't go every day! I go whenever I have no other option! Any other time, I would patch myself up! Like a true king!

THE PHYSICIAN How about that time a money spider was in your room?

KING HORATIO It could have been a poisonous spider. I cannot heal a wound of poison, can I? That is what a physician is for.

THE PHYSICIAN We don't have poisonous spiders in Avalon. And even if it was a poisonous one, on another occasion why

did you come seeking my aid when a leaf landed on your Sabaton?

KING HORATIO It landed on my foot at extremely high speeds, Physician! You don't seem to understand this! It could have acted like an arrow!

THE PHYSICIAN Nonetheless it was a leaf, Horatio-

ELEANOR Look! Can we just stop this?! We have people we need to help!

THE PHYSICIAN Of course.

BARTHOLOMEW What is actually happening here? Horatio is right, this place is never usually this packed.

THE PHYSICIAN Just people I found in the forest. I have no clue what's going on...

ELEANOR I checked over this soldier, here, while you were yapping and look at this... Behind his ear.

THE PHYSICIAN What is it...? Oh my, that is indeed strange...

KING HORATIO What have you found, Eleanor?

ELEANOR Some sort of scab... Behind their ear...

BARTHOLOMEW Theres some on this person's arm, too...

THE PHYSICIAN That's not a scab...

KING HORATIO What is it, then?

THE PHYSICIAN It looks to be... Bark... And look, here, a leaf... Not just stuck to this persons hair, but actually a part of his hair...

BARTHOLOMEW What is happening to these people...?

THE PHYSICIAN I cannot believe I am saying this, but... They appear to... Be turning into vegetation... Their skin is turning into bark, they are sprouting leaves... This is indeed strange...

BARTHOLOMEW You don't think it's... Magic, do you?

KING HORATIO Magic?! (chuckles) Not in the lands of Meeyarsia! Magic would never be used!

ELEANOR It used to-

KING HORATIO Never! It is a force for evil!

THE PHYSICIAN This is Horatio we are talking about, of course they won't... And I fear the woods are at their most dangerous at this moment in time...

ELEANOR Because of the potential for magic?

THE PHYSICIAN Because of the potential for *dangerous* magic...

ELEANOR Should Horatio have gone?

THE PHYSICIAN It's not like we can stop him, is it? Now, seeing as you have rather been of some use, so far, I could use your assistance examining these people.

ELEANOR It would be my honour, sir.

SCENE 4: THE WOODS

FX: **2x HORSE RIDING. ONE PERSON RUNNING IN ARMOUR.**

KING HORATIO Come on, Buttercup! Ya!

SIR VANKALOT (out of breath) Why do I have to run, sir?! Especially when both you and Bartholomew were allowed to take your horses!

KING HORATIO It is your punishment, Vankalot! For hurting me during training!

SIR VANKALOT (out of breath) It was with a pillow!

KING HORATIO But nevertheless. Now, resolve your sins and make your kingdom proud; help rid these woods of knights from other kingdom's...

SIR VANKALOT (out of breath) Yes, sir...

BARTHOLOMEW Sir...? Are you just scared after that threat King Odo of Kent gave?

KING HORATIO Me?! Scared? (chuckles) No, no! Not at all! Not at all! (desperate, quietly to Vankalot) Vankalot, quick! Find a convenient way to transition this conversation.

BARTHOLOMEW Sir, it's ok to be scared, just talk to me about-

FX: **DESPERATE NEIGHS OF DISTANT HORSE!**

SIR VANKALOT (out of breath) Sir! Up ahead, there! A horse! Trapped in vines!

KING HORATIO Oh my! Good spot, Vankalot! I almost missed that! I mean, I would have seen it, but... Anyway! Buttercup! Woah! Woah! Stop!

FX: **BUTTERCUP BRR!**

KING HORATIO Good Buttercup...

SIR VANKALOT Sir, would you like me to release this horse?

FX: **HORATIO GETS OFF HORSE.**

KING HORATIO No, Vankalot, no. I am sure I am capable of cutting down a few vines and saving the life of this mere horse. Bartholomew, my sword.

BARTHOLOMEW Sir, are you sure that's such a good idea after what happened during fighting training-?

KING HORATIO Bartholomew, sword. Otherwise I shall take you off sword protecting duty.

BARTHOLOMEW ...Of course, sir...

FX: **TAKE OUT SWORD.**

BARTHOLOMEW Here you go, my lord... Freshly sharpened this morning.

KING HORATIO I can always rely on you, Bartholomew. Now, stand back everyone, watch this great king get to work. (various grunts as he slashes vines with vigour)

FX: **SLASHES VINES, SWORD CLANGS! HE TRIES AGAIN.**

KING HORATIO How very peculiar... These vines seem to be rather strong...

SIR VANKALOT Do you want me to try, my lord-?

KING HORATIO No! I assure you that your king is capable! Stay back! (various grunts as he slashes vines with vigour)

FX: **SLASHES VINES, SWORD CLANGS! HE TRIES AGAIN AND AGAIN AND AGAIN.**

KING HORATIO (a little out of breath) What on earth are these vines made of?!

SIR VANKALOT May I try, my lord?

KING HORATIO You know what? Fine! Have a go!

FX: **VANKALOT TAKES OUT SWORD.**

KING HORATIO (CONT'D) But I assure you, Vankalot that you will be completely unable to relieve this horse of it's impenetrable prison-

FX: **SLASH! VINES COLLAPSE. HORSE NEIGHS!**

SIR VANKALOT (grunt as he slashes vines with vigour) ...Done, my lord.

KING HORATIO What!? But how on earth did you...? What!?

SIR VANKALOT It's just your method, sir.

KING HORATIO My method!? I have you know that my method is perfectly sound! It has never failed me! Not once!

SIR VANKALOT Well it did this time...

KING HORATIO This time is an exception! ...Maybe... Yes! Maybe Bartholomew didn't sharpen my sword enough! Yes!

BARTHOLOMEW But sir! I-

KING HORATIO Don't argue with your king, Bartholomew, you know I am right...

BARTHOLOMEW (sigh) Sir... (realisation) ...Hey... Do you two recognise this horse?

KING HORATIO Yes, I must admit, it does look rather familiar... A familiar buffness wouldn't you agree?

SIR VANKALOT It's... Yar... Sir Nah's horse, sir...

KING HORATIO Sir Nah's horse? How intriguing...

BARTHOLOMEW Where is Nah? Have any of you seen him today?

SIR VANKALOT I haven't... Not even when I was setting up for training... And we usually chat before training.

KING HORATIO Neither have I...

BARTHOLOMEW None of us have seen anything of him all day? Where could he be, I wonder?

SIR VANKALOT I do hope he is ok...

KING HORATIO It must have been those knights! Maybe they kidnapped him! Maybe-

FX: **TREE CREAKING.**

KING HORATIO What is that noise...?

SIR VANKALOT Just the trees moving in the wind, my lord...

BARTHOLOMEW In what wind? There is no wind...

KING HORATIO And the creaking is loud too... Have you ever heard a
loud tree before?

SIR VANKALOT No, sir...

KING HORATIO Now this is strange...

SIR VANKALOT ...Oh my...

KING HORATIO What is it, Vankalot? What's wrong? You're as white
as a sheet!

SIR VANKALOT (scared) Look... Over there...

FX: **THEY TURN.**

KING HORATIO Oh my...

BARTHOLOMEW A face in the surface of the tree...

SIR VANKALOT And a wooden hand reaching out of it...

KING HORATIO Maybe... Maybe it was carved!

BARTHOLOMEW Carved? Then how did they get the features so
perfect? So detailed?

KING HORATIO They are a good carver! Maybe I should hire them!

FX: **LONG TREE CREAK! THE FACE DISAPPEARS INTO THE TREE!**

KING HORATIO The face! And the hand! It just... Disappeared!

SIR VANKALOT Became part of the tree...

BARTHOLOMEW Sir... I... I hate to put you off your missions... But I
fear that we may have bigger things to worry about
than whether or not knights of other kingdoms are in
your forest...

KING HORATIO Yes... I might have to agree there, my loyal squire...
We can... Always search the woods another day... A day
where the forest is less... Bizarre...

BARTHOLOMEW I'm glad you got the gist of what I was saying, my
lord... So, maybe we should get back on our horses and
ride back to the castle.

KING HORATIO I must admit... I am rather partial to that plan...

SIR VANKALOT But how about what is happening here!?

KING HORATIO We don't need to deal with that right now... Let's just go back and-

SIR VANKALOT But how about if that was a person, sir?! What if a person was stuck inside that tree! And they just finished transforming into it?!

KING HORATIO Nonsense, Vankalot! Now, lets just-

SIR VANKALOT But sir, I must protest! It can't be that nonsensical! The people The Physician got from the forest were turning into trees! You said it yourself on the way here when you were explaining the situation to me!

KING HORATIO I was just reciting The Physician's thoughts, Vankalot! I never said I shared his views! Now get on the horse and-

SIR VANKALOT Do you not care that people are turning into trees?!

KING HORATIO ...Fine! You stay here! Bartholomew and I shall-

SIR VANKALOT What if it's... *Magic*?!

FX: **A LARGE GUST OF WIND. ECHOED SLOW CLAPPING.**

BARTHOLOMEW What is happening?

KING HORATIO It was Vankalot! He said something!

SIR VANKALOT No! No I-

ZOE (distant) Yeah, he, like, did.

KING HORATIO Who said that!?

ZOE Up here! (impatient) God!

SIR VANKALOT Am I right in saying that... There is a woman... Sitting in that tree?

BARTHOLOMEW Barely dressed other than a couple leaves... Isn't she chilly?

ZOE Oh my god! You guys, like, obviously don't understand fashion! Lydia, you know Lydia from, like, the underworld, she told me that I am like, totally fashion queen! But I said, no girl, you wear that corset so much better than I wear these random leaves I found on the ground! She slays!

SIR VANKALOT (quietly) What is she saying?

KING HORATIO (quietly to Vankalot) I fear she might be speaking a whole new language... (outloud) My fair maiden, do you not realise these forests have been dangerous as of late?

ZOE Well, yeah? I made it that way! God! Guys are so, like, unobservant, oh my god!

BARTHOLOMEW It was... You?

KING HORATIO You cursed these forests?!

ZOE I *live* here! Are you, like, telling me, I can't live how I want? That's, like, totally oppressive!

KING HORATIO I must inform you, that these are forests of Meeyarsia, Madam! You cannot claim it as your own!

ZOE Oh my god, I, like, can't believe this is happening right now... I was totally here before you!

KING HORATIO Were not!

ZOE Was too!

KING HORATIO Were not!

ZOE Was too, on, like... My fake nail's life!

BARTHOLOMEW I did wonder how it was possible to grow nails that long.

SIR VANKALOT If we can get back on track! Why are you doing this!? Why have you cursed those people?!

ZOE They were like, totally, crushing my style, you wouldn't get it...

SIR VANKALOT Then explain!

KING HORATIO Yes! Explain, madam!

ZOE Oh my god... I am not a "madam", thats like, totally creepy as hell to call me that.

BARTHOLOMEW Then tell us your name!

ZOE Ew. What are you, like, going to do with that information?

KING HORATIO Umm... Talk to you...?

BARTHOLOMEW Nevermind that! Just tell us your name, if you don't like being called "madam".

ZOE (sigh) It's so hard talking to you people... I'm Zoe. If you must know, I am a dryad. D-R-Y-A-D. It's, like, really not that hard to remember! Harriette from down, like, the road gets it!

KING HORATIO I'm sorry, who?

SIR VANKALOT So, why are you doing this, then Zoe?

ZOE I am, like, trying to put across every signal I can and you aren't, like, receiving, are you? None of you? Hello?! Is anyone there?! God, so hard talking to you...

BARTHOLOMEW Wait... You're a Dryad? Aren't they... Nymphs which protect the forest? I am sure I read that in a book somewhere...

ZOE Oh wow! Wow! He finally gets it! You took your time, god.

KING HORATIO Then why are you doing this?!

ZOE I was like, totally fed up with you and your... Stupid kingdom.

KING HORATIO What do you mean?

ZOE You and your knights enter this forest like you own the place! Like, who the hell do you think you are!? This is, like, totally, *my* forest!

KING HORATIO We have done nothing but treat this forest with respect! And this forest, I have you know, is property of Meeyarsia, so-

ZOE No it is not! I was totally here first!

BARTHOLOMEW I think she might have been. She is probably thousands of years old. Way older than our Kingdom, sir.

ZOE Yeah! And finders keepers and all that!

SIR VANKALOT But we haven't harmed your forest in any way, have we?

ZOE Uh? Yeah! Last time you three were in here, you broke one of the sticks I totally vowed to protect with my life, you kicked a root and then you burnt

loads of the forest. And then, *then*, if that wasn't, like, bad enough, you, like, totally let rip and killed half of the pretty plants I spent hours designing!

KING HORATIO I beg your pardon! When on earth did we do that!?

BARTHOLOMEW (to Horatio) Don't you remember sir? When we first met Eleanor?

KING HORATIO Oh yes! When I saved her from those fiendish handless bandits!

ZOE And that's not all you have done wrong to damage this pretty sick forest! You can, like, totally fight me all you want, I won't stop until everyone in Meeyarsia has given back to the forest!

KING HORATIO And we shall keep fighting you until-!

BARTHOLOMEW (quietly) Sir, this is a battle you can't win...

KING HORATIO What do you mean?! I am King Horatio and I have the best army at my-

BARTHOLOMEW (quietly) Do you really want to go against someone who has *magic* on their side?

KING HORATIO Well, uh... You make a good point... (to Zoe) After careful consideration, we have decided it best to take a peaceful path to resolve this situation. How can we best aid you in order to make this... Go away, as it were?

ZOE Wait... You're... Not gonna fight me?

KING HORATIO No. It would be foolish to engage in combat with you.

ZOE Oh... ...Lydia said you would... I was totally ready to fight... You're so lame... ...Well, there is no way you can stop me until I have, like, totally, healed this forest and rid the planet of you and your kingdom, Horatio! And the way I shall do that? Turn you all into members of the forest!

KING HORATIO And what do you mean by-

FX: **TREE CREAKING.**

SIR VANKALOT Did you just... See that...?

KING HORATIO That tree moved...

FX: **TREE CREAKING. RISING OUT OF THE GROUND.**

BARTHOLOMEW And that one, sir!

KING HORATIO Four trees are rising out of the ground... Oh my...

ZOE This is, like, so cool! (chuckling)

FX: **TREE GROWLING!**

SIR VANKALOT What are you doing?!

ZOE Uh? What does it look like? Hello!? They are gonna attack you!

KING HORATIO I am sure we can sort something out that would please you, couldn't we?

ZOE Uh, no? This is, like, your punishment, and all those that survive these totally sick trees will turn into trees of their own...

BARTHOLOMEW Those trees are people?!

ZOE Well, yeah? Isn't that, like, obvious? These ones were, like, all my exes... The last one was so, like, negative... I literally couldn't get to the root of his problem. But anyway, I'm gonna get these guys to literally annihilate everyone in Meeyarsia. And anyone who survives? They get to be trees in the forest.

KING HORATIO You are warring with Meeyarsia over a mere toot?!

ZOE It was more than a "toot"! It decimated habitats! That is, like, totally uncool! And I am not just talking about that incident! I am talking about, like, all the incidents where you hurt the forest! ...Now, my ex-boyfriends, attack!

FX: **TREES GROWL.**

KING HORATIO Oh my lord! They are coming for us!

SIR VANKALOT We need to go! Now!

KING HORATIO Already doing that, Vankalot!

SIR VANKALOT I'll take Nah's horse!

KING HORATIO Bartholomew! Help me up!

BARTHOLOMEW What on earth do you mean sir!?

KING HORATIO As you always do, Bartholomew, lift me on my horse!
HELP ME UP! HELP ME! QUICKLY!

FX: **TREES GROWL!**

SCENE 5: CASTLE ENTRANCE

FX: **RIDING ON HORSES TOWARDS, DISTANT TREES NEARING.**

SIR VANKALOT We're almost there!

BARTHOLOMEW But the trees are getting closer!

KING HORATIO Everyone, off your horses! Into the castle!

SIR VANKALOT I was already planning on doing that!

FX: **TREE ROAR!**

KING HORATIO Quick!

FX: **GET OFF HORSES, RUN THROUGH GRASS TO CASTLE
(FOOTSTEPS ON STONE) .**

SIR VANKALOT We need to close these doors to stop them getting
in! Help me!

BARTHOLOMEW Right away!

FX: **MASSIVE DOORS SLOWLY CREAK CLOSED. TREE ROARING!**

KING HORATIO They're getting closer!

BARTHOLOMEW (struggling to push door) We know that, sir!

SIR VANKALOT (struggling to push door) Maybe you could help?!

KING HORATIO Touch that filthy door with my new gloves? No
chance.

SIR VANKALOT (struggling to push door) Brilliant...

BARTHOLOMEW (struggling to push door) Almost... There... And...

FX: **DOOR SLAMS SHUT!**

BARTHOLOMEW Done it! ...Is there any way we can lock it?!

SIR VANKALOT I don't think so...

BARTHOLOMEW Why not?!

KING HORATIO Why would a king lock himself inside his castle!?
That is not the way of a king!

SIR VANKALOT Do you want to go out then, my lord?

KING HORATIO Well of course not! There are living trees out-

FX: **BANG ON DOOR! FOLLOWED BY MORE BANGS! TREES GROWLING OUTSIDE!**

KING HORATIO Oh my!

SIR VANKALOT (impact against door) Argh! They're here!
Bartholomew! Help me hold the door shut!

BARTHOLOMEW Already- (impact against door) Argh! Doing it!

SIR VANKALOT Horatio! Help us! We need you! There are four of
those tree things- (impact against door) Argh!
Trying to get in!

KING HORATIO I have an idea! I will raise the bridge!

SIR VANKALOT No! I meant help us hold the door- Wait... The bridge,
what bridge?

KING HORATIO The one that goes over the moat! We raise that and
those beasties will fall in!

BARTHOLOMEW Sir! We don't have a moat!

KING HORATIO Do we not?! Why do we not have a moat?! If we had a
moat, we wouldn't be in this predicament, would we!?
This is why you should listen to your king!

SIR VANKALOT Just help us hold the door closed!

FX: **BANGING ON DOOR, ROARING OUTSIDE!**

SIR VANKALOT (impact against door) Argh! Well!?

KING HORATIO ...You two seem to be doing an absolutely splendid job
holding those doors closed. You... Don't need me
interfering...

FX: **HORATIO SLOWLY WALKING BACKWARDS.**

SIR VANKALOT Sir?! Where are you going?!

KING HORATIO You two just... Keep at it... You don't need my help...
(nervous chuckles)

FX: **BANG! ROAR!**

KING HORATIO (scared!) Ah!

FX: **HORATIO RUN AWAY!**

SIR VANKALOT Where are you going?! Sir?! Sir! COME BACK! Come-
 (impact against door) Argh!

BARTHOLOMEW He's... gone... (impact against door) Argh! He's left
 us...

SIR VANKALOT Just what would you expect from Horatio... If only Nah
 were here, he wouldn't cower like Horatio is..

KING HORATIO (distant, calling back, echoed) I'm not cowering!
 It's a tactical retreat!

SIR VANKALOT Yeah right... (impact against door) Argh! Bartholomew,
 how are you doing?!

BARTHOLOMEW These things won't give up, will they?! Won't they
 just go away!?

SIR VANKALOT That Dryad seemed pretty set on destroying
 Meeyarsia. I doubt that'll be happening. Just stand
 your ground!

BARTHOLOMEW I'm trying!

SCENE 6: THE PHYSICIAN'S ROOM

[illegible]

KING HORATIO (deep breath) ...People that have been turned into trees are attacking the kingdom because a dryad in the forests of Meeyarsia is upset with us!

ELEANOR What?!

FX: **ELEANOR GO TO WINDOW.**

THE PHYSICIAN You are talking absolute nonsense!

ELEANOR I, uh... Don't think he is... Look out of the window...

FX: **THE PHYSICIAN GOES TO WINDOW.**

THE PHYSICIAN I assure you, all this fuss is over nothing, it's just Horatio having one of his little- What in the name of Albion...?

ELEANOR Those trees... They are animated and... Trying to break the door down...

THE PHYSICIAN Did I drink the wrong potion last night...? Am I seeing things?

ELEANOR Horatio, did you leave your horses outside?

KING HORATIO Oh yes! Buttercup! I hope he is ok!

ELEANOR Well, look... The trees, they aren't hurting the horses... Not even paying them any attention.

KING HORATIO It's probably because the dryad in the forest said she only had an issue with us Meeyarsian people... I'm glad Buttercup is ok...

THE PHYSICIAN This does indeed look like the work of a dryad... But I thought they were extinct...

KING HORATIO Well that one wasn't!

ELEANOR ...Interesting...

THE PHYSICIAN What is it?

ELEANOR Whilst the other horses you and Bartholomew left outside are moving away from the trees, that buff one there is staying near one of the trees... Like it is cuddling up to it...

KING HORATIO That's... That's Nah's horse... It's always been strange. But that doesn't matter right now! What matters is getting this kingdom-

MERCIA SOLDIER (coughing, spluttering)

ELEANOR Oh my! One of the knights is awake!

FX: **GROUP WALK OVER.**

ELEANOR Are you ok?

MERCIA SOLDIER I... Argh... I...

KING HORATIO Pay no attention to some *spy* from Mercia! We have to deal with the threat outside!

THE PHYSICIAN Horatio! Be quiet! He is my patient! (to soldier)
Hello, are you ok?

MERCIA SOLDIER Something... Something is... In my mind...

THE PHYSICIAN What is it you mean?

MERCIA SOLDIER Argh... No...! I... I will not listen to the commands of some... Some crying girl! NEVER!

ELEANOR What do you mean?!

KING HORATIO People! Remember the trees outside! They are still trying to get in! We need an escape plan!

THE PHYSICIAN Quiet, Horatio! (to soldier) Talk to us.

MERCIA SOLDIER I only take orders from the great King of Mercia... Not from some... Some... *Crying girl*! NEVER!

FX: **WOODEN CREAKING NOISE AS HE CHANGES.**

MERCIA SOLDIER (pain) ARGH!

ELEANOR What's happening to him!?

THE PHYSICIAN The rest of his skin... It's... It's turning to bark...

ELEANOR The same is happening to the rest of them...

FX: **THEY ALL STAND IN SYNC.**

KING HORATIO Uh... They are all standing up at the same time in a sinister way... They are possessed! There is no other explanation! And they are turning into those trees outside! We need to go!

MERCIA SOLDIER (in pain) Oh, Horatio... Your father would not be very happy with you... ARGH!

KING HORATIO My father? What do you know of my father?!

MERCIA SOLDIER (in pain) Argh... For... FOR THE LOVE OF MERCIA!
ARRRGHHHH!!!

FX: **SOLDIER CRY TRANSITIONS INTO TREE ROAR!**

ELEANOR We need to go! They are turning!

KING HORATIO I did rather say that!

ELEANOR Where do we go?!

THE PHYSICIAN I know just the place! There is a secret escape in Horatio's room.

KING HORATIO There's what?!

THE PHYSICIAN Your father installed it... He had a lot of... Haters. Come on! I shall show you!

SCENE 7: CASTLE ENTRANCE

FX: **BANGING ON DOOR, TREE ROARING OUTSIDE!**

SIR VANKALOT (impact against door) Argh! I don't know how much longer I can hold this for!

BARTHOLOMEW Me... (cough) Too...

SIR VANKALOT Are you quite alright, dear fellow!? (impact against door) Argh!

BARTHOLOMEW I am feeling very... (cough) Weird... Weak and ill and...

SIR VANKALOT Well, you need to keep holding this door. For Meeyarsia, remember!? ...Bartholomew!? What's with that face?!

BARTHOLOMEW (sneeze imminent) I... I think... I'm going to... Sneeze... (goes to sneeze)

SIR VANKALOT No! Don't you dare! Don't you dare take your hands off this door!

BARTHOLOMEW (sneeze imminent) But I need to... So... I'm not... Unhygienic... (sneezes!)

FX: **DOOR BURSTS OPEN! TREES ROARING! TREES WALKING IN.**

SIR VANKALOT Woah! What have you done, man!? Now those things are in the castle!

BARTHOLOMEW You don't... Happen to have a tissue, do you?

FX: **TREES ROAR! TAKES OUT SWORD.**

BARTHOLOMEW What are you doing?!

SIR VANKALOT Fighting them to protect Meeyarsia! Now go!

FX: TREE ROAR!

BARTHOLOMEW I shall not leave you!

SIR VANKALOT Yes you shall! Now go!

BARTHOLOMEW Wait...

SIR VANKALOT What is it, man?!

BARTHOLOMEW These trees used to be people, right?!

SIR VANKALOT The ex's of that dryad. Now, why does that matter!?

BARTHOLOMEW Maybe... Maybe they are all soldiers?! As Horatio only allows soldiers in those forests due to dangers! Plus those Mercian soldiers we found in the forests!

FX: SWORD SLASH AND CLASH! TREE ROAR!

SIR VANKALOT What are you saying?!

BARTHOLOMEW All knights are honour-bound to follow rules!

SIR VANKALOT So!?

BARTHOLOMEW No person other than pre-designated people are allowed in a King's room! Unless to protect the king or if given permission by the king himself. So, if we go into Horatio's room...

SIR VANKALOT These beings, if they are true to their knight's oath... Won't be able to get to us...

BARTHOLOMEW Yes!

SIR VANKALOT But that means I will need to break the oath I made to be able to enter Horatio's room...

BARTHOLOMEW I can smooth it over with Horatio!

SIR VANKALOT But-

FX: TREE ROAR!

SIR VANKALOT Right! Yes! Right you are! You lead, I'll follow right behind! Now go!

SCENE 8: HORATIO'S ROOM

FX: RUN IN, SLAM DOOR CLOSED!

THE PHYSICIAN (out of breath) I haven't run that fast in years... Especially up the stairs...

KING HORATIO You don't see me complaining!

THE PHYSICIAN Horatio! Really?!

KING HORATIO Now! Where is this mystery exit you alluded to?!

THE PHYSICIAN Behind the bed. Someone help me move it.

ELEANOR I'll help.

FX: **WALK TO BED.**

THE PHYSICIAN Horatio? We could use your help too?

KING HORATIO I, uh... I think I may have done something to my arm... Yes... In my infinite nobility, I was trying to hold the entrance door closed to keep those trees out, you see.

ELEANOR Well, if you're here... Who is keeping the door closed now?

KING HORATIO That'll be Bartholomew and Sir Vankalot. Very loyal, you see.

ELEANOR And... We are just escaping without them?

KING HORATIO If there was any other way, I would take it... But... Alas, they fought to defend their king and that is mighty noble...

ELEANOR Horatio! We can't just leave them!

THE PHYSICIAN I must admit, he is right. There is nothing we can do. We need to prioritise our lives at the moment... Now! Start shifting! (struggling to move bed)

FX: **MOVING BED.**

ELEANOR (Struggling to move bed) What is this thing made of?!

KING HORATIO Only the strongest wood found...

THE PHYSICIAN (Struggling to move bed) And the heaviest, apparently...

ELEANOR (Struggling to move bed) Why do you need such a strong bed?! A normal one works fine!

KING HORATIO Because it'll defend me from threats.

ELEANOR What!?

KING HORATIO It's strong, so... It'll fight for me while I sleep.

ELEANOR How does that logic make any sense!?

THE PHYSICIAN (Struggling to move bed) Nevermind that! Just help me push the bed, so-

FX: RAPID KNOCKING AT THE DOOR!

KING HORATIO (gasp!) Those... Those spawn of satan... They are... Here...

ELEANOR And why would they knock the door?

KING HORATIO Maybe they are polite...

ELEANOR Didn't you call them "spawn of satan" I am not sure Satan is too into "politeness"-

THE PHYSICIAN Just open the damn door, Horatio! Someone could be out there! Eleanor! Keep helping me!

KING HORATIO Ok... (deep breath) Horatio... You can do this... Even if it is those trees... You can stand up to them... For your kingdom... For your kingdom.

THE PHYSICIAN HORATIO!

KING HORATIO Ah! Yes! On it!

FX: OPEN DOOR! BARTHOLOMEW AND VANKALOT ENTER, CLOSE DOOR!

SIR VANKALOT (out of breath)

BARTHOLOMEW (out of breath)

ELEANOR/KING HORATIO Vankalot?! Bartholomew!?

BARTHOLOMEW Hello there...

ELEANOR We thought you'd be... Dead...

SIR VANKALOT I see you lot were prepared to leave us... That's nice, isn't it, Bartholomew?

ELEANOR No! We just-

KING HORATIO What are you doing in my room without my permission, Vankalot?! Have you forgotten your oath?!

SIR VANKALOT Well, the situation seemed rather dire, sir, and I-

KING HORATIO Not only that, I thought you were meant to be holding the door shut!

SIR VANKALOT Yeah... Well, those things are in now...

KING HORATIO They are... In the castle!?

BARTHOLOMEW I'm sorry, sir...

KING HORATIO No, Bartholomew! You have nothing to apologise for! Vankalot, man, you have seriously sinned against Meeyarsia, now! As a knight of Meeyarsia, I expected better!

SIR VANKALOT Actually, it was Bartholomew that let them in.

KING HORATIO What?! How dare you accuse my loyal squire of such-

BARTHOLOMEW no... it was me, sir... I just felt so... Ill... And I needed to sneeze and... (weak) Oh... I need to sit down...

FX: **COLLAPSE TO FLOOR.**

KING HORATIO Bartholomew?! What happened to him!?

SIR VANKALOT I don't... I don't know...

KING HORATIO Physician! Get him some medicine! He needs one of your remedies!

THE PHYSICIAN In the rush to leave, I have none, Horatio! None! And even if I did, I don't know what ails him! I can do nothing!

KING HORATIO Useless, you are! Useless! How are you even a Physician!?

ELEANOR Oh my... Look... Look at the back of his neck...

THE PHYSICIAN Bark... Just like the other patients...

SIR VANKALOT That dryad... Zoe... Must have cursed him too...

KING HORATIO No...

ELEANOR He could turn! He could turn into one of those things! He could attack us!

KING HORATIO NO! Bartholomew would never do that! Never!

THE PHYSICIAN Horatio...

KING HORATIO No! I will not accept it! I shall not!

THE PHYSICIAN But do you want to risk it? We need to get him out of here in case he changes-

KING HORATIO How dare you, Physician. NO! I will never let that happen!

BARTHOLOMEW (weak) Sir...

KING HORATIO Bartholomew, do not listen to those dalcops...

BARTHOLOMEW (weak) I'm sorry, sir, but... They are right...

KING HORATIO They are not... I should know, I am king...

BARTHOLOMEW (weak) And a great one at that... It has been a pleasure serving you... A pleasure, sir... But, this is where it ends... You need to let me leave... I would never hurt you, sir, but even if there was a slight chance I could hurt you because of this, I would want to be as far away from you as I could. I could never hurt you... And I would never be so selfish as to stay...

KING HORATIO Bartholomew...

FX: **DOOR CRASHES DOWN! TREE ROARS!**

KING HORATIO Oh my!

SIR VANKALOT Hey! Hey! Hey! You lot can't come any closer! This is King Horatio's room!

FX: **TREE CONFUSED NOISE!**

SIR VANKALOT *King* Horatio's room! You are not allowed to enter his room! No prosaic person is allowed in a King's bedroom!

ELEANOR Especially at such a heartwarming and sad moment of the story!

SIR VANKALOT Yeah! So stay back!

KING HORATIO No... It is alright, Eleanor, Vankalot... Let them in...

SIR VANKALOT What?!

THE PHYSICIAN Have you gone barking mad!?

KING HORATIO I have some things to say to them. Come in! ALL OF YOU!

FX: **THEY COME IN.**

Oh god...

HORSE WALK IN, HORSE BRR!

Yar?! What are you doing here!?

He really likes staying by that one particular tree-person, doesn't he...?

Now, if you even have a shred of decency, you will allow me to say what I have to say before you act.

TREES STOP.

They stopped...

I am going to assume you are possessed by that dryad. Now, physician, you can correct me if I am wrong, but does that mean that the dryad will hear what I am saying?

yes... Yes it will...

So then, dryad... You can hear me...

(weak) Horatio... Be careful...

I would like to say that I had no intention of harming your dear forest. From a young age, I used to frolic in the forests of Meeyarsia...

No you didn't. You were scared of them.

That is rather besides the point. I had memories of them for my whole life. They are as important to me as they are to you, dryad. Which is why I was so distraught when I thought there may be spies in the forest, which is why, on another occasion, I fought off those handless bandits which I am sure were doing harm to your grand forest.

Actually, it was me and Nah that-

BUT! But... It pains me to hear that you thought of Meeyarsia with such hatred, only associating our great kingdom with nothing but destruction. And I hope to make amends to that. But how on earth are we, as a kingdom meant to grow and blossom, if you in turn destroy us? How can destruction be culled by destruction? My... My best friend in the entire world is lying on the floor, changing because of you. How would it feel for you to... To lose someone that meant so much to you...? Because losing Bartholomew, I know

from when I lost my father, that would tear me apart...

BARTHOLOMEW (weak) Sir...

KING HORATIO (CONT'D) Instead of killing, instead of destroying, wouldn't it be grander for us to harmonise? For us to work together to not only help Meeyarsia grow, but the forests as well. What do you say?

ELEANOR That was... That was beautiful...

BARTHOLOMEW (weak) He's... He's never said a speech like that before... Actually, he has never said a proper speech before...

KING HORATIO Well, Dryad? Zoe, I should say... Could you forgive us? Could you change all these people back if we begin to respect your beautiful forests?

(beat.)

FX: **TREES ROAR!**

KING HORATIO Is that a no?

FX: **TREES ROAR! TREE DESTROYS SOMETHING! VANKALOT TAKES OUT SWORD!**

SIR VANKALOT I think thats a no! I shall defend you, my lord!

ELEANOR How could that be a no!? That was beautiful!

THE PHYSICIAN I don't think the dryad cares...

KING HORATIO But...

BARTHOLOMEW (weak) Sir... I... Argh...

FX: **CREAKING...**

ELEANOR Bartholomew is changing!

SIR VANKALOT (fighting back trees) Well then, get him out of here!

KING HORATIO NO! I... Uh... Ah!

FX: **RUN OVER, PICK UP PLANT POT!**

THE PHYSICIAN Horatio?! What are you doing with that potted plant?!

BARTHOLOMEW (weak) Thats the one I got for him this morning... Argh...

Do you see this, dryad?!

TREES STOP FIGHTING AND MOVING.

I can just as easily go back on what I said... You use destruction on us... I use it on you... And I shall start by destroying this plant and then... With the help of some of my friends... I shall burn down your forest...

What!?

I am not sure going up against a being of magic is a good idea...

If you kill Bartholomew, then I shall do it! I shall! So! It's either a path of peace and harmony with Meeyarsia where we can both grow and prosper or... All shall be lost. Which is it?!

WIND PICKS UP!

Well!?

God, you're like, ruining everything...

Ah !

I never thought I'd actually say this but... There's a woman on your bed, Horatio!

The dryad...

If you, like, destroy that flower, then you shall be sorry.

And if you don't change everyone back, including Bartholomew...

ARGH !

(CONT'D) I will destroy much more than this flower.

You totally wouldn't dare.

You obviously don't know me then...

Well, I do and I know you wouldn't dare-

(shut up!) Physician...

Why are you going to such drastic measures? The forest is still there, isn't it?

God, you don't understand...

KING HORATIO Then help me understand.

ZOE ...People, like, walk through the forest like they own the place... They rip the sticks off of trees to make their fires, they cut down the trees to make their houses, they take the vegetation to make their remedies and... What do I get from it? Less forest. Less habitat... And it keeps happening... I keep getting shoved to the side, not cared about, no one thinks about how the dryad is feeling when they steal stuff from *my* forest.

SIR VANKALOT Mostly because we didn't know you were there.

ZOE Yeah... I am always invisible to you, aren't I...

KING HORATIO We promise you, dryad... That we will never forget about your presence... We shall never mistreat your forest again. And we shall always ask before taking.

ZOE So... You, like, admit that the forest is... Mine?

KING HORATIO Like it always has been. ...Now, what do you say? Do these people you have changed really need to suffer any more?

ZOE I mean, they are my ex's, they could have been nicer to me...

ELEANOR But is the punishment you gave them really that fair?

ZOE They could have paid me more attention. Like all of you could!

KING HORATIO We are deeply sorry about that. We are all in the wrong here... Just... Please... This doesn't need to be worse than it is, does it? We accept we did something wrong... Now, cease the cruelty you are putting these people through...

ZOE (sigh) Fine... Like, blah-de-blah-de, oakley-pokey, change these people from a stump into a... A...

ELEANOR I don't think there's much that rhymes with "pokey", honestly.

ZOE Oh, whatever! Just change them back!

FX: **CLICK FINGERS! CREAKING! POOF!**

BARTHOLOMEW Argh...

KING HORATIO Bartholomew!? Are you ok!?

BARTHOLOMEW Much... Better... Yeah...

THE PHYSICIAN No bark on him anymore, so thats good...

MERCIA SOLDIER Argh... What... What happened...?

SIR VANKALOT Our king saved you from being a tree!

ZOE Actually... It was me, god!

MERCIA SOLDIER Your king...? Wait... *Horatio*?

ZOE No! It was me!

MERCIA SOLDIER Are we in... The castle of Meeyarsia?!

KING HORATIO In my room, in fact!

MERCIA SOLDIER ...Ew... Come on, lads, let's go... I need to get back to Mercia and take a shower.

FX: **THEY ALL LEAVE MUMBLING TO THEMSELVES.**

KING HORATIO Well, uh, that wasn't very nice...

SIR NAH (completely confused) Nah...?

SIR VANKALOT Nah?! How did you get here?!

ZOE I turned him into a tree, silly!

ELEANOR So... That was why Yar was so... Cuddly to that particular tree...

ZOE Yeah, he like totally cared about that horse more than me...

SIR VANKALOT Wait... He was one of your boyfriends!?

ZOE He was my latest! And he was so negative so I dumped him!

SIR NAH Nah?

SIR VANKALOT He seems rather... Confused about that. Are you sure you were his girlfriend?

ZOE Well he obviously liked me! Why else would he be in the forest so often?

SIR NAH Nah!?

SIR VANKALOT (chuckles) Oh, no! No! He just likes walking through the forest! Thats all!

ZOE Nothing... To do with me...?

ELEANOR Doesn't look like it...

ZOE How about the rest of my... Boyfriends?

ELEANOR Did you treat them the same way?

ZOE Yeah... But...

ELEANOR Then they probably had no idea you had decided to be in a relationship with them...

ZOE Everyone always pushes me aside... Ugh, this is so, like, annoying! God!

ELEANOR All that is needed is communication and... No offence to Nah, but I don't think Nah is your best bet for that.

SIR NAH Nah...

ELEANOR Not only that, I don't think turning them into trees is that... Flattering...

ZOE It's like, so crazy, I have been on this world for millennia and I, like, always have to learn new stuff... it's kinda totally overwhelming...

ELEANOR Theres uh... Plenty of Fish in the Sea... or, I guess, in your case, Plenty of Trees in the Forest.

ZOE Maybe... (sigh) ...Well, it looks like I was in the wrong... Again... I better, like, go back to my forest...

KING HORATIO Wait, Madam! Before you do!

ZOE What have I said? "Madam" is like, totally creepy as hell!

KING HORATIO Sorry, Zoe, I mean... I was, uh... Wondering if you could do us all a favour...?

ZOE What would that be?

KING HORATIO Maybe... Rid the forests of our... Unwanted guests?

BARTHOLOMEW Oh yes... The handless bandits...

KING HORATIO And the Mercian Soldiers. They could do the forest harm.

ZOE ...Hmm... I'll, like, think about it...

SCENE 9: BALCONY

FX: **LIGHT WIND BLOWING.**

KING HORATIO Ah... This view over the forest is nice...

FX: **DOOR CREAKS OPEN.**

BARTHOLOMEW Sir? Are you quite alright on this here balcony?
Isn't it getting a bit cold?

KING HORATIO Maybe, yes... But I appear to have stumbled across a
new form of entertainment...

BARTHOLOMEW What is that, then, my lord?

KING HORATIO Just listen, Bartholomew... Just listen...

(beat.)

BARTHOLOMEW (quietly) What is it, my-

KING HORATIO Shush! ...Just a little longer...

(beat.)

ZOE (distant) BOO!

MERCIA SOLDIER (distant, cries out in fear from within)

ZOE (distant) Leave this forest now! Or you shall, like,
be, totally, cursed for life!

MERCIA SOLDIER (distant, cries out in fear from within)

KING HORATIO (chuckles heartily)

BARTHOLOMEW Sir?! Someone could be in danger! We have to-

KING HORATIO No, no, do not worry, my loyal squire... That is just
Zoe hard at work...

BARTHOLOMEW What?

KING HORATIO She is putting on the act of a ghoul, Bartholomew... I
knew those Mercian soldiers would be back, prowling
the forests...

BARTHOLOMEW So... She's scaring them away?

KING HORATIO That is correct, Bartholomew.

BARTHOLOMEW You two are getting along now?

KING HORATIO Oh yes. Very well, in fact. Actually, could you make sure you remind me that this weekend I am going out shopping with Zoe? Bit of a girls night out.

BARTHOLOMEW A what?

KING HORATIO (coughs) Uh... Nothing. Just remind me on Saturday that I have an arrangement.

BARTHOLOMEW Yes, sir.

 (beat.)

BARTHOLOMEW Sir...?

KING HORATIO Yes?

BARTHOLOMEW Thank you for... What you said... Trying to defend me when I was cursed...

KING HORATIO Anything for my loyal squire...

BARTHOLOMEW (chuckles) Thanks... ..Mind if I have a seat to listen to the action? I brought berries.

KING HORATIO Oh! Berries! Yes, Bartholomew, of course. Be my guest, have a seat next to me.

BARTHOLOMEW Thank you, sir...

FX: **SITS DOWN.**

BARTHOLOMEW Nice view isn't it?

KING HORATIO Isn't it just...?

ZOE (distant) OI! YOU!

MERCIA SOLDIER (distant) AHHH!

ZOE (distant) OUT! NOW!

BARTHOLOMEW (chuckles, same time as Horatio)

KING HORATIO (chuckles, same time as Bartholomew)

END.