

## Episode 04

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“Ugh! Get off me!” shouts the hunter to the girl who’s perched atop his head.

She ruffles his hair then rolls off, smiling. She looks to the others gathered in the deep woods. It’s October, and the air is cold, damp and burdened with mist. Gathered around she can see Faustus, the Centurion, Maon, the Craftsman, Momo, the Foreigner and Seamstress, Katerina, clad in her black cloak, and of course, Wulfar, the Hunter.

“Why were you worried about me?” she asks in Japanese, looking to Momo.

“What’s that she saying?” asks Maon, confused.

Momo looks to him. “Oh, she’s speaking Japanese, my native language,” says Momo. “I’ve been teaching her since before we met.” She turns back to the girl, Hana and smiles. “She’s a very quick learner.”

Hana smiles back.

“We were worried because we couldn’t find you,” says Momo. “Is everything okay out here?”

“Everything’s fine,” smiles Hana. I’m just having some fun. Want to play?”

“If you’re quite finished,” interrupts Katerina gruffly, “we need to be getting back.”

“Oh yeah, right...” says Momo.

“Let’s get going,” says Wulfar.

“But you just got here...” frowns Hana, still speaking in Japanese. “Where are you going?”

“We’ve got to take care of some men made out of ice, or something,” says Momo. “I guess they attacked some soldiers. Faustus is going to look into it, but it sounds dangerous, so we’re all going to have a look. Maybe you can help us!”

Hana smiles broadly.

Katerina pulls on her hood and eyes the rest of the group. She shakes her head, then turns, her cloak sweeping along behind her, and walks back towards Londinium.

“I’m going for a quick hunt,” says Wulfar.

Hana frowns at the hunter, then looks back to Momo. “I wait here for you?” she asks.

“Yeah, we’ll be back. See you soon,” says Momo, as she waves to Hana, then walks back through the woods, followed by Maon and Faustus.

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Once she gets back to the city, Katerina visits an old acquaintance, a stable-hand, and procures a large, black charger. Then she purchases traveling provisions, enough for a journey three-times as long.

Faustus heads to the Legion Outfitter, where he’s going through the bureaucracy of getting a cart, tent, and other supplies.

Wulfar emerges from the woods with a pair of rabbits. He heads back to his room at the Inn, planning to cook them in a stew.

Maon returns to the smithy where he works, and tells the old man there that he’ll be gone for a few days.

Faustus and his men load the cart, then head out to the West Gate where they meet up with Katerina.

“Where are the others?” he asks.

“I’ll fetch them,” she replies, kicking the horse and riding off into the city.

She stops by the smithy where Maon works, but he’s already left, arriving at the gate where he meets up with Faustus.

She rides on to Wulfar’s Inn.

Inside, Wulfar is sitting down to a hot bowl of rabbit stew. The perfect thing for the chilly early winter of Londinium. He leans down, smelling the dish, relishing it to the fullest.

Then he reaches down and brings the bowl to his lips for a big drink.

“WULFAR!!”

Startled, the hunter splashes the hot soup ALL OVER HIS FACE!!

Outside, Katerina waits for a response from the hunter.

He steps out, covered in rabbit stew, looking none too pleased.

“Quit stuffing your mouth,” she says down to him. “We’re waiting for you at the west gate. Or do you wish to be left to your supper?”

Wulfar gives her a cold look though narrowed eyes. “I’m coming,” he finally mumbles.

Katerina shakes her head at him, then rides on to Momo’s shop and calls out to her.

“Foreigner! Are you in?”

“Heeeeere!” yells Momo from inside. She enthusiastically runs out, carrying a bunch of spare sets of winter clothing and some trail rations. Katerina looks down at her from atop the charger.

“You know, I have a name,” she says to Katerina.

“They’re waiting for you at the West Gate, *foreigner.*”

Momo sighs. “Okay. Well, here,” she says, digging out a white cloak from the pile of clothes she carries. “This should be warmer than what you’ve got on. It’s made of better material!” says Momo, smiling.

Katerina raises her nose at the white cloak, then rides away without accepting it. Momo frowns.

She rides through the North Gate back into the forest to collect Hana, but finds no trace of her.

Back at the West Gate, Wulfar and Momo arrive to meet Faustus and Maon. Momo hands out cloaks to anyone who’ll take one, looking slightly irritated.

“Something wrong?” asks Maon.

“No more so than usual,” quibs Momo.

Katerina arrives, she looks around for Hana, but she isn’t there. Surveying the rest of the band, she nods.

“I guess we’re assembled. Let’s head out.”

Maon raises his hand, "Shouldn't we go get Hana?"

"She isn't there, I just looked," answers Katerina.

"I'm sure she'll catch up," says Momo.

"We shouldn't leave her by herself, should we?" asks Maon.

"I think it's for the best," says Katerina, lowering her head. "I'd rather not take a child to war."

As the group debates, Wulfar subconsciously notices something's amiss. More like a feeling than anything tangible. He walks over to the cart, looking in among all the supplies. He then pulls away a canvas covering and HANA LEAPS OUT AT HIM!

"What took you guys?" she says, smiling from her perch atop Wulfar.

"Ugh! Get off of there!" shouts the hunter!

The girl smiles and ruffles his hair.

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They head out, through the thick fog. They can see their breath in the cold air. The road west is overgrown, but well built. The cart is comfortable enough for its occupants, for all but Katerina, who rides her charger out in front. She leads them down the trail, like she has traveled it many times, and through the thickest fog, as though she can see through the mists.

They make camp at sensible hours, and after 6 days of traveling through the woods, they arrive.

The road leading through the forest takes them into a field, at the center of which is the roman fort at Dyfed. But the field is cold, not the normal crisp chill of the morning, but fiendishly cold. As the group moves in to the edge of the clearing, they hear the frozen ground crackling underneath them.

Maon shivers and pulls his cloak tight. "I think we need a fire. Heh, I thought things would be warmer as we moved southwest!"

Katerina looks across the field, seeing the tells of a battle, and looks to the fort, whose gates are slightly ajar.

"The fort is frozen," says the hunter, squinting. He then looks to the others. "There are ice-sculpture things in it."

"I... I really hope they *are* sculptures..." says Maon.

"Wulfar," says Katerina, "follow me to the gates."

"We should stay together," says Wulfar.

"I'm not leading the wagon into the fort unless I'm certain there's no ambush," says Katerina.

She pauses and narrows her eyes at him. "You're not afraid, are you Wulfar?"

"I'm not afraid, I'm just not a fool, unlike *some* people," he says coolly back.

"Ah, insulting a woman," retorts Katerina, "very heroic."

She rears the horse up, then bolts for the gate in a full gallop! "Hyaah!"

Wulfar shakes his head.

"Hey, wait for the rest of us!" shouts Maon.

The rest of the group gets down off the cart and follows after Katerina.

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Katerina passes through the gates into the fort, where the temperature is bitterly cold. Her charger whinnies in protest then rears, but she pushes it reluctantly onwards.

There are five buildings within the walls of the fort, but in the courtyard are six ice-sculptures, all men in various positions of agony.

The rest of the group arrives as Katerina dismounts, looks of deepening concern spreading throughout. Katerina the reins of the charger to Hana, and heads off towards one of the buildings.

Inside she sees what must've been the mess-hall. The tables are broken and the signs of battle are evident, but there isn't a single body.

Back outside, Maon is squinting at one of the statues as he shivers. She then rests his head and announces. "These are no sculptures."

He looks back at Momo who gives him a worried look, and shivers.

Hana looks strangely at the reins of the horse, then at the horse... then towards Katerina... then back at the horse. She then shrugs and hops up atop the mount and takes it for a gallop outside the fort, waving at Momo as she goes.

Meanwhile, Wulfar has been looking at the frozen ground.

"These are definitely the footprints of Saxons," says the hunter. He follows the tracks towards a building and looks in, but only for a moment.

"You need to take a look at this, NOW!" yells the hunter.

The group comes running, slamming open the doors, light and wisps of frost flooding into the room. Inside is the remnants of the fort's barracks, but scattered about the room are half-frozen body parts. Frozen blood dots many of the bunks and a large pile of limbs in the center seems to have been fed upon!

Momo staggers to a corner, leans a hand against the wall and throws up!

Katerina walks back outside, bends over and wretches.

Maon contains himself. "I kind of wish they were all sculptures now."

There's shouting from outside. Hana is at the gate, still atop the horse and is pointing away. She rides away, calling to the others.

"Hana! Wait!" cries Momo.

By the time the group gets to the gates of the fort, they see Hana reach the cart, leap off the horse, then vanish into the woods. The group runs after her, but when they finally reach the cart, Hana emerges from the woods.

Momo runs up to her. "Hana! What is it? What did you see?"

She lowers her head, "nothing..."