



Conwy Castle, with the northwest sally-port on the right.

Conwy Castle

“Tywysog.”

“Yes?”

“My Prince, two things: Gruffydd has arrived, and the gate-guards are changing.”

“Finally. Is the portcullis still open?”

“Yes, my Prince.”

“Good. Send Gruf to me. Then get the men going on the little distraction, then get back here quickly. We will not have much time to get our “Carpenters” into the Castle after the fool sallies forth. With both guard shifts mobilized, I hope we can get them all out at the same time. Baron Phillip has birthright, but brains didn’t come with it.”

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“Gruf.”

“Yes, Tad (Dad)?”

“It’s good to see you again, son. Are your uncles Rhys and Gwilym ready? Do they have the rope?”

“Yes Tad.”

“I hope they will not require many supplies – the men must move in fast and light. Are they ready?”

“Yes – and very anxious to move forward.”

“Good. Let’s get everyone into place quickly. We have little time.”

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“Lady Generys.”

“Ie, pwy wyt ti?” (Yea, who are you?)

“Ignosce, sed oportet me loqui latine...” (Forgive me, but I must speak in Latin.)

“Procedat. Quis es?” (Proceed then. Who are you?)

“I am a distant relative, and have come to warn you of imminent danger to young Rhys.”

“What? What? Who sent you?”

“I am a distant cousin of Gruffydd, your husband. Owain sent me here. Phillip, the Marcher Lord in Conwy Castle, has notified the King of Owain’s rebellion. King Henry has ordered the Baron to capture or kill all Glyndŵr family members, to punish the rebellion and destroy all Welsh claims to Gogledd Cymru (north Wales). Two Norman soldiers are approaching this village as I speak. You must take Little Rhys and go to Llandyarno.

“How can I trust you? You do not speak Welsh!”

“My Lady, Owain told me to give you this token of his esteem for you as his daughter-in-law.”

“Oh. Oh. This is his Red Ring! He sent *this?!??*”

“Yes, my Lady. Gruffydd was not present, busy with another serious task, but Owain said to tell you that Gruf hopes to soon embrace you and Little Rhys.”

“You said soldiers are coming?”

“Yes, my Lady. I saw them from the second bend in the road north, and rode like the wind to beat them here. Take my horse and go now with little Rhys. I will watch from the forest edge and follow on foot. Do not wait for me, but take the south road towards Gwydir, and I will run to find you when I know the soldiers have turned back.”

“God bless thee and thine, Welsh or not.”

“My lady, I did say that I am a distant relative. I am honored to serve thee and the Tywysog. Also, before you leave, please tell your lady-in-waiting that you are leaving to find Gruffydd, the boy’s father, over to the west at Beaumaris. You must then *head* west so she sees you do this, then turn south on the trail by Llygad’s farm. You know the place I’m told. Wait there and I will find you. Now you must hurry!”

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“Mama, what is happening?”

“Shhhh, *Babi*. Those are Marcher soldiers seeking to kill us.”

“Why do they want to kill us, Mama? Do they want to eat us?”

“Shhh, child. No, they want to punish your Tad (Dad) and your Taid (Grandfather).”

“Why, Mama?”

“Child do not speak! They will hear you and find us.”

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“Gwilym, after you get that apron on, help me lift this timber. When we cross the drawbridge, on my call “*ei ollwng*” (drop it) roll it down to your chest and together we will smash the guards against the wall. You have a hammer in your belt? We’re supposed to be carpenters, after all...”

“Ie Rhys, I’m ready. I also have the rope. Easy to explain, that... Ah! Gruf just signaled that the Baron is about to sally forth. I don’t want to get run down by horses as I’m carrying this big bloody thing, so let’s go slow, like it’s heavy.”

“That’s easy enough. It must weigh five stone!”

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“Now, Gruf! Our “Carpenters” are in! Signal the rest of the lads *now!* There may be more guards inside that we cannot see, and hammers won’t stand long against swords, even in Welsh hands.”

The band of men, holding their swords and sheaths with hands to keep them silent, rushed across the drawbridge. The two remaining guards were already down by the time they reached the castle.

“You two – shove those two into the ditch and pull the drawbridge up. Quickly now! Gwilym – send two men to the back wall, the river side wall, with the rope to await the rest of our band. The Marcher soldiers are Normans and do not know our Welsh hills. Our boys will double back soon and we must pull them in.”

(Grinning) “Ie Rhys! This is fun. I hope to be as smart as you someday.”

“Let’s not smile too soon. It’s Owain’s plan anyway. Have the men searched the rest of the Castle yet?”

“They are busy at it right now. I doubt there be any soldiers, but there might probably be women and children, and the Seneschal and groomsmen.”

“Free all Welshmen and women. If any Normans remain, lock them in the Keep until we can let them go safely.”

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“Tad?”

“Yes, Gruf.”

“I worry about Generys and Little Rhys. Marcher Lords have never been known to show kindness to Welsh women and children. Someone will realize that our families are not with us...”

“Forgive me, son, but I forgot to tell ye. Gwen and Morfyl, the two cooks, passed word two days ago that they overheard the Baron saying that he intended to capture them – that’s why I pressed this little “ownership exchange” so soon. I’ve taken care of them – you need not worry. An agent... someone who I have spoken with and trust, will make sure that they are protected and taken to a safe place.

“Llandydno?”

“Yes. It is remote and the area is still under Welsh control. After this night’s events all attention will be pointed to the castle anyway. I am assured that your family will be safe, and we will be travelling, you and I, in that direction as soon as we know the castle is secured.”

“Assured? By whom? An agent you said?”

“Yes. It is difficult to explain and we have more pressing matters. Balls-for-Brains Phillip will soon return. However, I trust this... agent. He knows things that only a good Welshman could know. He has shown me things that allowed us to capture Conwy Castle. I trust him.”

“Then I trust him also, whoever this not-Welshman might be. Thank you, father. I will trust anyone you trust, and will be able to sleep tonight.”

“Do not look to lay your head down anytime soon. I expect we will be awake all night and well into the day to come, making certain the Baron is tied down here.”

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“You there! Drop the drawbridge! We are back. Who the hell raised it?”

<silence>

“LOWER THE DRAWBRIDGE NOW OR SOMEONE WILL BE FLOGGED.”

<silence>

“My Lord Baron...”

“Shut up and crawl over the ditch to the drawbridge. Bang on it with your sword-hilt. If someone is asleep and I have to spend the night in the rain, I swear I will hang his head on a pike for an example.”

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“My Lord!”

“What is it?”

“It’s Tom and Rodry. They are beat to hell and can hardly move. They are lying at the bottom of the ditch, and not in the Castle!”

“!!! By the Blood of All Saints! Who did this to me?”

“Tom said the men spoke Welsh.”

“God in Heaven and the Mother of Christ, I’ve been had. Wait! Maybe they don’t know about the garbage chute! Take a man and see if you can get in through the back on the river side. Do it *NOW!*”

“Yes, my Lord Baron.”

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“Well?”

“My Lord, there are men going up a rope on the back wall. There must have been at least a dozen of them that we could see in the twilight. Probably more.”

“Did you stop them?”

“My Lord, two of them shot arrows at us, and there were many more than me and Jonathan. We had to retreat.”

“You are damned useless! I am surrounded by useless men who get beat up, fall in ditches, and run from arrows. My God, man, they’re just a bunch of illiterate country ruffians! If you had charged them, they would have run! What is the matter with you?”

“I’m sorry my Lord, I didn’t know what to do. You know I will follow you to Hell in a fight...”

“I don’t need men who follow me with their noses in my butt. I need men to go out in front and beat the shit out of the people who insult and abuse me and my authority. You are dismissed. Get out of my sight.”

“As you wish, my Lord.”

“You there! Robert!”

“Yes, my Lord?”

“You are now my Marshall. Find some sort of protection so I can spend the night in as little rain as possible. I swear to God that someone will pay dearly for this insult.”

“Yes, my Lord! Yes! Here, take my cape to protect yourself, my Lord! You three men – start building a lean-to here, in sight of the Castle. Use your swords to cut the poles. Cut strips off your jerkins to tie the poles together. You two! Go gather boughs that we can lay over the top to protect His Lordship...”

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“Lady Generys! Oh, I am so relieved to see you! And here is baby Rhys, too! Come in, come in!” We have warm mead for you – you look exhausted!

“Yes, we can barely walk, we are so sore from riding the horse. I am not used to this, and the baby stinks...”

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“Lady Generys, we are worried that some of the Normans may pass through here, and we do not want them to find you and baby Rhys. There is a groundskeeper’s hut hidden inside the forest over yonder and we are cleaning it up and preparing it to shelter you and little Rhys...”

“Bendith duw bob Cymro!” (God bless all Welshmen). “That will do fine. I was not high-born as you well know, and I can easily lay my head anywhere that’s dry. You will bring food? May I have a lady-in-waiting present with me? I prefer someone with a husband who can also help stand guard.”

“Yes, my Lady. We have already been preparing just such a thing. We were warned two days ago. I have already tasked two men with expanding the hut to two rooms, and we will move a bed from the manor there to provide you some comfort. There will be men posted during the day, out of sight, to provide warning and defend against anyone coming. You are the mother of our next Tywysog, our next Prince of Wales. We are devoting all resources available to help and protect you.”

“I am deeply grateful. What is your name?”

“I am Angharad, merch i Thomas y gof haearn (daughter of Thomas the iron smith). We are your humble servants.”

“Angharad, I will not soon forget thee and thy help.”

“Thank you, my Lady, but I will feel I have earned thy praise when I see thee returned to thy home and Castle.”

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“My Lord Baron, there are men visible on the ramparts.”

“Unh. What a miserable, God-cursed night. Wait! What did you say?”

“There are two men on the ramparts over yonder.”

“I cannot see from beneath this stupid tree cover. What are they doing?”

“They are staring at us, my Lord Baron.”

“Staring at us. Let me see who it is.”

“Hallo! Hallo! Who are you?”

“We are the servants of the Tywysog. What are you doing at the gates of the Tywysog’s Castle?”

“The *what?* The too-woo... What the *hell!* This is *MY* Castle! Get the hell out of it NOW!”

“We do nothing without the Great Prince’s permission.”

“The Prince? The Prince of what?!?!”

“The Tywysog, you impolite man – the Prince of Wales in your crude Norman language.”

“The Prince of... The Prince of...”

“Cymru – Wales, you nitwit.”

<cursing and stomping> “GET OUT OF MY CASTLE!”

“You misunderstand. You are illegally standing in and soiling with your feet the Great Prince’s territory. God himself sent men to remove you from the Gogledd Cymru. I see you already had the wisdom to leave His Castle.”

<more cursing and stomping> “GOD CURSE YOU AND YOUR CRIMINAL BAND! GET OUT OF MY CASTLE OR I WILL CRUCIFY EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU!”

“As far as we, the Tywysog’s servants can tell, God has already blessed *Him* with this Castle. Now go away, I do not wish to repeat all this.”

<more cursing> Go tell your <sewage> ‘prince’ that I will speak with him.”

“He’s busy.”

“Busy with what? THIS IS MY CASTLE, GIVEN ME BY THE KING HIMSELF WHOSE FATHER BUILT IT!”

“The Tywysog is busy drinking the wine that you so kindly provided for his sustenance. He doesn’t have time to speak with foreign visitors right now. You should leave, and get your fat Norman arses, along with the ugly mules you rode in on, out of the sovereign land of Gogledd Cymru, which you call Wales, before he gets angry.”

<cursing, stomping, and repeated smashing of sword on the green> “If this is Owain, then I will kill him and all his family! I will kill all his children! GET OUT OF MY CASTLE!”

“You speak of very un-Christian behavior – *‘ware your soul!* Who are *you* to threaten a Great Prince? Go away or we will have to throw stones at you. My, but it grows warm this fine Welsh morning. I think we will have to go and seek shade. And wine. We have found a wonderful store of wine in the cellars...

“*What?!?!*”

“Oh. And from here you seem very small, you know? Go away, *little man.*”

Baron Phillip, who was small of stature and very sensitive to that fact, froze and just stared. His men, sensing he was losing control, gingerly backed away several paces, trying not to let the metal of their arms telegraph that fact. The Baron paused, then drew himself up and turned to the men, not noticing the subtle distance that had opened up. His face was beet red. With artificial calm he called “Marshall Robert. How many men do we have here?”

Nervously, the newly-anointed Robert replied “Ah, some twenty-six or so, my Lord Baron.”

“Or so? Or so *what?*”

“My Liege, Tom and Rodry are fit for nothing. They cannot stand.”

“Since Tom and Rodry are the immediate cause of this unfolding disaster, send them to stand – or drag them over to sit if they cannot stand – at the gate of the Castle. If the drawbridge is opened upon them and they are crushed, it will be no great loss. Send men in pairs to watch the other three sides of the Castle. One to stay and one to report any activity. Tell them that they will be relieved in sunrise-sunset shifts. Have any of the men sent to find Owain Glendower and his family returned?”

“No, my Lord Baron. None have yet returned.”

Baron Phillip turned and stared long at the Castle, weighing the tactical position. The sneering and insulting men were no longer visible on the battlements. He had no idea how many men were inside by now. The defensive position was unassailable, and there was sufficient food and wine... *his* wine... even cattle and sheep inside, to last a very long time. This because *he* had considered the possibility of a Welsh siege against *himself* when he took control. There was a well in the center courtyard – unlimited water was available to the bandits. There were siege-stones on battlements and weapons in the armory to repel any possible assault. The terrain was deeply uneven and filled with houses to the southwest, while the three other sides were a river and a sound, all of which made any catapult or trebuchet extremely difficult to bring to bear – by design. One would have to be constructed on the spot... and all readily-available stones had already been used to construct the damned place! King Edward, Henry’s father, and his architects had thought this one through very carefully, first in positioning the Castle, and then in building ramparts formidable enough to intimidate anyone from even thinking of any assault.

Baron Phillip then began to weigh the political situation. It would not do to inform King Henry that he had somehow been turned out of the King’s own fortress, built by his late father at great expense to the Treasury. No. He must solve this problem himself. Phillip considered his fellow Marcher Lords in Harlech, Caernarfon, Beaumaris, and Prestatyn Castles. They were not close. Moreover, they would be loath to send men to help, thereby risking their own castle ownership in the midst of the Welsh rebellion. No, he must deal with this problem himself.

In cold anger Phillip began to lay out instructions for a siege. The men jumped to respond, carefully saying “Yes my Lord Baron!” “Immediately, my Leige!”

“The first order of business is to make sure that no more men enter that castle from the garbage chute or a rope let down from a wall.”

Baron Phillip then addressed the men within hearing and made it clear that any additional failure, allowing any more men access to the castle, would mean certain death to the guards who permitted it. He gave instructions that all men-at-arms who were not Welsh should be called up. He sent two men eastward to offer a promise of gold to anyone who was not Welsh who might want to join the siege.

“Send four men to the surrounding area and gather material to make a comfortable tent right here. Strip the villages if necessary. No. Wait. I want the tent out of sight of the Castle – I want no surprise arrows.

“Yes, my Lord Baron!”

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“Nothing?”

“No, my Lord Baron. We searched, but the countryside is all up in arms and we were made to feel very unwelcome. Owain’s family is not to be found, and clearly the peasants intend to make it stay that way. We got no help at all. When I whipped one woman who talked back to me – in Latin no less – men started converging with pitchforks and sharpened staves. We returned when it became clear that we would receive no aid from the local populace.”

<seething> “He knew.”

“My Lord?”

“This is all too well organized. Owain Glendower has known too much all along. He somehow knew that I was searching for his family – and they were moved before you could find them. There is just one possible explanation: there must have been a spy.”

“My Lord?”

“A *SPY*, you nitwit! Someone has been feeding the Glendower faction with information. The Welsh peasantry are too stupid to do more than bale weeds into piles. It must be a Welsh servant or maid that has been passing information to him. And they are all in yon Castle now! I must think about this.

..... <three long months later>

“Ye Gods! I grow weary of this tent, and the weather in Wales makes me think God is pissing on me. Since I’ve been out here it only rains, except when it snows. I have missed a decent bed for nearly five months now. Oh, how I miss my feather bed! The bastards haven’t opened the drawbridge in all that time. They *must* be running out of food by now! *Nothing* goes over the walls anymore!”

“You! How many different faces have you counted on the ramparts?”

“Between fifteen and twenty, my Lord Baron, I have counted as you asked. They are hard to recognize on the night watches, however. These Welsh all look alike anyway.”

“Yes. Yes. Where is that damned Bishop?!?”

“I summoned him as you asked, my Lord Baron. He said he would be here after he finishes leading the Primes and the Lauds. He also supervises a number of monks, so this alone could take more than the ninth hour before he even leaves the church. The churchmen keep their own time in their little world, My Lord.”

“I’ve waited five months in the rain and snow, I can wait another hour. I thought it would be wonderful to be a Marcher Lord and have my own castle. Now I understand why the King and his dukes never show up in this region. I miss Suffolk.”

“My Lord Baron, I believe I see the Bishop and his entourage approaching.”

“Damned slow. Where did he originally come from?”

“I believe he was a Monsignor in Canterbury, my Lord, and made a Bishop and sent here less than a month ago.”

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“My Lord Baron, greetings and may the Light of the Lord Jesus Christ smile upon you.”

“Welcome, Bishop... ah...”

“I am Bishop Paul, most recently of Canterbury, but my brother is Duke of Lancaster, where I grew up. We can speak in French or Latin as you wish.”

“Bishop, you have been in this land now for...?”

“I have been in Conwy Church for three weeks now. I have not seen you at Mass yet, my Lord Baron.”

“Ah, no. I have very important things to manage in my role as Liege to King Henry. I am sure that you have heard that a Welsh bandit has been holed up in the King’s castle for five months now? I cannot leave while a siege is underway.”

“I understand, and I hope to see you at the Communion rail soon. I am always available for Confession every Thursday and Saturday.”

“Bishop, I will get to the point. Yon Welsh bandit has been occupying my feather bed and eating from my stores for three months now. The castle was built by the King’s father and I am the Liege Lord. I beg of you to speak with the man – his men insult me when I seek to talk with him...”

“I understand my Lord Baron. I will be happy to speak with him.”

“I will summon him to the battlements...”

“No, my Lord Baron, let me, as a Man of the Cloth, go to *him*. By myself. He will not feel threatened by me, one man only, even though I am the son of a Norman Duke. I will speak with him.

“God be with you, Bishop. I am at my wit’s end. Be my guest <waves him forward>.”

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“Oh, I am glad to see you again. I have come to depend upon your secret counsel, and have missed it this past month. I would offer food, but in these forest camps it is now very meager, and what wine remains is sour. What news have ye for me?”

“Owain... excuse me, I keep forgetting to use the formalities. My prince, I...”

“Stop. Be at peace. You are from another world, I know, and these formalities are simply time-wasters in most cases anyway. You have done great good for me and mine, and the Gogledd Cymru, and you can address me in any fashion you wish.”

“Thank you Owain. As I said before, I am honored to speak with my most famous ancestor...”

“Clearly you think more of me than I do. I am just a Welsh captain.”

“You are the Tywysog. It is my determination to ensure that your line continues, even after, as I have warned you, King Henry will initiate naming the King’s first-born descendants ‘Prince of Wales’ for the future. It doesn’t change the nature of the princely Welsh line, and your descendants will know it, and where it comes from...”

“Thank you. Thank you. But I am all in a lather to learn what you can tell me.”

“The Bishop is already your secret ally – and your cousin. He will affect the transfer, and Baron Phillip, who thinks you are still inside sleeping on his feather bed in the castle, will believe that he has won a great victory in this exchange with you. I can promise you that *you* will do even better on this exchange. More importantly, you and your line through Little Rhys will continue. The countryfolk are already informed and will be in place at the right moment...”

“My son Gruffydd?”

“He will be free for a long time, but as he grows old, he will be captured – but not killed. I am not permitted to say more. As you are aware, in the long scheme of things this must happen to all of us in one way or another....”

“And...”

“And you, Owain, will die in Wales a free man. You have many years left yet. Your countrymen will never betray you, despite all the enticements of King Henry. Your name will be had with honor for tens of generations in Wales.”

“The coming exchange?”

“...will go forward exactly as you have hoped and anticipated. In addition, I myself have ensured the additional involvement of the local population. The monks are all Welshmen, too. More to the point, Baron Phillip will not soon leave the Castle thereafter, at least not in this life. This has been a powerful lesson to him. This will provide some respite for the local population for a long time. May God bless you.”

“One more thing. How did you arrange for a Bishop to be sent here who is the son of a Welsh princess?”

“I cannot give away *all* my secrets now, can I?”

<smiles>

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“Rhys.”

“Yes, Gwilym?”

“The Bishop has finally come. He did say he would have to await a summons from the Baron or it would seem he were obeying you instead. Old Balls-for-Brains thinks Owain is still inside – giving Owain free rein in the countryside – and the Baron must have finally broken down when he saw us throwing empty barrels over the ramparts.”

<chuckling> “Yes, I was trying to signal his mounting loss, but not give away the fact that we are nearly out of food here. Where is the Bishop now?”

“He is approaching the ramp to the northwest tower.”

“We will stay out of sight until he calls. You will respond that I, Owain, am busy at a feast, say, and to rub it in make sure that you say the feast part loudly. Then say that you will summon me. I will wait an appropriate amount of time to ensure appropriate dignity, then with a helmet on to disguise myself, I will appear at the ramparts of the northwest tower with you. I do look like my cousin Owain, and from the other side of the ditch the Baron won’t be able to tell the difference. Bring all the men to armed-ready, and have guards watching all sides of the castle, even the river sides. Have men prepare to lower the drawbridge – and have a sizeable force ready in case there is any trick being planned. If you see any movement anywhere near the northwest tower, sound the alarm and the drawbridge will *not* go down. I’m not really worried about this, as I have powerful assurances from Owain, but we poor Welshmen must take all precautions. If it is clear, let the Bishop in and *immediately* pull the drawbridge up. Understand?”

“Ie, Rhys, I do. I miss my wife and little ones. This has been fun, to tweak old Baron Balls-for-Brains, but I grow weary with this game.”

“As do I, cousin. I also miss my beautiful Welsh hills and clean water. There is too much salt in that well water, being this close to the Estuary. Let’s be about it now.”

“Ie, Rhys, I go.”

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“Bishop, thank you for taking the time out of your many responsibilities to come here.”

“I am glad to help, cousin. My Liege is God himself, so I can appear to be neutral. As *you* already know, my mother was a Welsh princess, and as Baron Phillip already knows, my brother is the nearby Duke of Lancaster. Thank you for reaching out earlier so this process can be all planned out carefully. I do not want to see any further bloodshed. I bury too many people from disease already. To that end, I am prepared to convey to the Baron what Owain and I privately talked about, but for appearances’ sake I must return with any counter-offer. I will say that the Baron appears to be very anxious to get back his castle back – and especially his warm feather bed. Did you in fact tear up a feather mattress and throw it down the garbage chute?”

“I chose a least-favored down pillow and yes, I had a man shred it and scatter it widely yesterday afternoon so that it looked like we were destroying an entire feather mattress.”

<chuckling> “It certainly had the salutary effect. The Baron summoned me this very morning.”

<smiles> “Let’s spend a bit of time here so that it appears we are actually negotiating. I still have half a barrel of the Baron’s wine left – would you share a cup with me? It’s starting to go a bit sour, but it will still serve, and is certainly better than the well water.”

<smile> “With great pleasure. It cannot be worse than the swill distributed by the Archbishop’s office.”

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“My Lord Baron, I believe I have succeeded. Owain Glendower has agreed to vacate the castle on condition of permanent immunity for his family. He further stipulates...”

“Immunity? *Immunity?! He has camped in my bed for three months now! Wait. Are you sure you even spoke with Owain? I’ve not seen him on the battlements...*”

“I spoke with the man who is certainly the oldest and is clearly in charge. However, I have never met Owain Glendower personally, as I am new to this province. But Owain and his brother say they have abundant food and can stay much longer if necessary...”

“His *brother...*”

“Owain and the other lord with him both say they miss the beautiful Welsh hills where they grew up, and would be willing to exchange them for this castle.”

Baron Phillip considered this, eyeing the placid Bishop thoughtfully. “How does he propose being granted immunity? He must know that other Norman lords will not be bound by my word – if given.”

“My Lord Baron, Owain only requires that you grant his family safe exit and freedom from pursuit for a day. He requires nothing more than a bloodless exchange.”

“Go back and tell him... Excuse me, my Lord Bishop, please return and ask Owain what he expects me to do? My men are very angry at sleeping in the rain, as am I.”

“I will return and query further, my Lord Baron.”

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“My Lord Baron, the Bishop returns.”

“This better be good. My back aches from sleeping on a miserable peasant bed. God, I’m weary of this.”

“My Lord Bishop, what have you negotiated for me?”

“My Lord Baron, Owain Glendower and his brother ask that the monks will line the center of the causeway, and with townspeople provide a line of separation between you and your men as they depart, and his...”

“Well, is that all? I must say...”

“And Lord Baron, Glendower promises not to set the interior beams and stables alight when he leaves...”

<blanches> “*WHAT?* He wouldn’t do that! He wouldn’t... that will lead to collapse of the towers...”

“My Lord Baron, I do not know this man’s mind, not like you clearly do, but I sense in him a steely determination. I would suggest that you accept this guarantee, and ensure that your own guarantees are upheld and honored. At least until you are in the castle and he and his band are out of sight. I am prepared to array and align my monks and the townspeople to that effect.”

<exasperated> “Fine. Do it. Today?”

“My Lord Baron, it will take a day just to arrange for people including monks to be here in position. I am afraid you will have to await one more day.”

<fuming> “So be it. What time tomorrow?”

“After Primes and Lauds, I will insist that the monks eat their breakfast, then I will lead them here. As this is an important event, I and the priests will be wearing full vestments. I will carry both Staff and Miter, and a Monsignor will follow behind carrying The Splinter of the Most Sacred Cross in its gold Monstrance. I expect that by mid-day you will be able to march back into your, excuse me, into the High King’s castle...”

“The High...”

“Yes, my Lord Baron. You are Liege indeed, but the castle remains the High King’s. I understand from one of the Archbishop’s couriers who arrived from Chester this morning that the King is watching this situation very closely. The Archbishop has instructed me to do all that is necessary to affect a bloodless exchange, including offering the King’s protection. Don’t you think the King will be pleased when he learns that you have successfully negotiated an exchange of the castle with just immunity offered in return? He will think you are a master of negotiation.”

“Ah. Ah, yes. The King will see that I offered nothing in return!”

“...except a bloodless exchange, and the King’s own immunity to Glendower’s family. The High King does not want any of his subjects unnecessarily killed, as his tax-base depends on them and their work.”

“Ah. Yes. Yes. Taxes. I understand. The High King...”

“Yes, my Lord Baron. I will leave now to convey your terms for this exchange to Owain Glendower and his family.”

“My terms. Ah. Yes. His family. And you will inform the Archbishop of this whole, ah, thing?”

“Of course, my Lord Baron. The Archbishop expects me to be his eyes on the non-martial half of Our Lord’s vineyard.”

.....

“Finally! But which one was Owain? I thought I knew him, but the two “lords” even at a distance looked different. Anyway, I don’t care, because God bless that stupid Bishop – I have my castle back! Seneschal. *Seneschal!* I am starved! Bring me food. *Now!*”

“My Lord Baron, we are searching in the camp, as there is no food here in the castle. It has been stripped of everything edible.”

“*WHAT?!??* What were they feasting on, then?!?”

“My Lord Baron, it appears that they ate everything in the stores. There is no wine in the two barrels that remain in the lower storage...”

“Those lying Welsh bastards! I could have starved them out after all!”

.....

“God in Heaven and the Burning Saints! What is that smell in here?!?? Wait. My bed... my feather bed! It is soaked with piss! There’s piss all over the floor! Twenty men must have stood around pissing on my bed! My wonderful feather bed is ruined! Those Welsh are *animals!*”