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About This Edition

This book is a simplified English adaptation created for extensive reading practice.
The text was generated using ChatGPT and prepared for intermediate English learners as part of an educational project.

Target reading level: CEFR A2-B1

This edition aims to support fluency development through accessible vocabulary, expanded narration, and improved readability while preserving the original story structure.

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Walter Scott, *Ivanhoe: A Romance* (Simplified Edition, Adapted and Simplified by ChatGPT)

Part 1

In the green forests of England, long after the Norman kings had taken the crown, there still lived many proud Saxons who remembered the older days of their people. Among them was Cedric of Rotherwood, a wealthy Saxon lord who ruled his household with strict pride and strong traditions. Cedric refused to forget the ancient Saxon kings who had once governed England, and he often spoke bitterly of the Norman nobles who now controlled the country.

Cedric's hall stood deep within the forest, built of strong timber and surrounded by wide fields and grazing land. Inside the great hall a long fire burned along the center of the room, while heavy wooden tables stood beside the walls. Servants moved constantly between the benches carrying food and drink.

Outside the hall two figures stood beside a group of swine grazing among the trees. One was Gurth, a strong young swineherd wearing rough clothing. Around his neck hung an iron collar that marked him as a servant bound to Cedric's land. Though he was loyal to his master, he often felt the weight of that iron ring.

Beside him stood Wamba the jester. Wamba wore a bright cap decorated with small bells that rang softly whenever he moved. His clothes were colorful, and his eyes were always lively with humor.

Gurth watched the animals quietly while Wamba leaned against a tree.

"You look troubled," Wamba said.

Gurth shrugged. "I am thinking."

"That is dangerous work," Wamba replied. "Thinking has often caused more trouble than speaking."

Gurth glanced toward the distant road that ran through the forest. "Many strangers travel these roads now," he said. "Norman knights ride everywhere."

Wamba shook his head. "Normans ride horses, Saxons walk beside them, and fools like me ring bells so that everyone knows we are still alive."

Gurth allowed himself a small smile, but his expression soon grew serious again.

“England was not always like this,” he said quietly.

Wamba looked toward the distant trees. “No,” he agreed. “But the past does not walk beside us on the road.”

At that moment the distant sound of horses reached their ears.

Gurth straightened. “Riders are coming.”

Soon several travelers appeared along the forest road. At their head rode two powerful knights. One wore the white cloak marked with a red cross of the Knights Templar. His dark eyes studied everything around him with cold attention.

This was Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert.

Beside him rode Prior Aymer of the monastery of Jorvaulx, a cheerful churchman who seemed to enjoy good food and comfortable travel.

Behind them rode several attendants and servants. Among the group traveled a Jewish merchant named Isaac of York. His clothing was rich but plain, and his nervous eyes moved constantly from side to side.

Beside Isaac rode his daughter Rebecca.

Rebecca’s calm face and intelligent eyes set her apart from the other travelers. Though she wore simple clothing, she carried herself with quiet dignity.

The riders stopped near Gurth and Wamba.

Prior Aymer spoke first. “Good fellows, can you tell us where we may find the house of Cedric of Rotherwood?”

Gurth answered cautiously. “You are near it already.”

Bois-Guilbert leaned slightly forward in his saddle. “Then lead us there.”

Gurth hesitated. Cedric did not always welcome Norman guests.

Wamba stepped forward quickly.

“Our lord Cedric welcomes travelers who behave with respect,” the jester said with a cheerful bow. “But he has less patience with those who do not.”

Prior Aymer laughed. “We will try to deserve his welcome.”

The riders continued toward Cedric’s hall.

When they arrived, the large wooden doors were opened by Cedric’s servants. Cedric himself stood near the fire inside the hall. He was a tall, powerful man with

gray hair and a proud face.

Though he disliked Normans deeply, the old laws of hospitality could not be ignored.

Cedric stepped forward.

“Travelers are welcome to my hall,” he said.

Bois-Guilbert removed his helmet slightly in greeting, while Prior Aymer smiled warmly.

The travelers entered the hall and took their seats along the long tables.

Servants soon brought bread, meat, and cups of wine.

Cedric watched the Norman knights carefully.

Meanwhile Rebecca sat quietly beside her father, observing everything that happened in the hall. Her calm eyes noticed the tension between the Saxon lord and his Norman guests.

The evening meal continued beneath the warm firelight.

None of the people in that hall yet understood that the arrival of these travelers would soon change many of their lives.

Part 2

The evening meal continued in Cedric’s great hall while the fire burned steadily along the center of the room. Servants moved back and forth carrying dishes of roasted meat, bread, and wine. The long wooden tables slowly filled with conversation.

Cedric sat in the high seat at the end of the hall, watching his Norman guests with careful attention. Though he followed the old law of hospitality, he could not hide his dislike for the Norman nobles who ruled England.

Across the table Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert sat with calm confidence. His dark eyes moved across the hall as if studying everything around him. Beside him Prior Aymer spoke cheerfully with the servants and praised the food.

“Your table is generous, Lord Cedric,” the prior said. “Few monasteries offer such good meat.”

Cedric answered politely but without warmth. “My house provides what it can.”

Nearby Isaac of York ate quietly while Rebecca observed the room with thoughtful attention. She noticed how carefully Cedric’s servants treated their Saxon lord and how the Norman knights seemed both confident and cautious at the same time.

At the lower tables Gurth and Wamba sat among the servants. Wamba leaned toward Gurth with a small grin.

“Our hall has grown very noble tonight,” he whispered.

Gurth kept his voice low. “Cedric does not enjoy such company.”

Wamba nodded. “Yes, but the law of hospitality forces even a proud man to smile.”

Meanwhile Cedric’s attention turned toward the door of the hall.

A servant entered quietly.

“My lord,” he said, “a pilgrim asks shelter for the night.”

Cedric raised his head. “A pilgrim?”

“Yes, my lord. He has traveled far.”

Cedric considered for a moment, then nodded. “Let him enter.”

A tall traveler soon walked into the hall wearing the simple clothing of a pilgrim. His cloak showed the dust of long roads, and his face remained partly hidden beneath his hood.

The pilgrim bowed respectfully.

“Peace be with this house.”

Cedric answered. “You are welcome here.”

The traveler took a seat among the lower tables and quietly accepted the food that servants brought to him.

Though he spoke little, several people noticed him.

Rebecca watched him with curiosity. The way he carried himself did not seem like that of a tired traveler. There was something strong and careful in his movements.

Across the hall Bois-Guilbert also studied the pilgrim.

“You have traveled far?” the Templar asked suddenly.

The pilgrim lifted his head slightly. “Yes.”

“From the Holy Land?”

“I have been there.”

Bois-Guilbert leaned forward with interest. “Then perhaps you know something of the wars in that land.”

The pilgrim answered quietly. “I know enough to respect the courage of many men.”

The Templar watched him closely, but the pilgrim said nothing more.

Soon the conversation in the hall returned to other matters.

Cedric began speaking with Prior Aymer about the coming tournament at Ashby.

“Many knights will ride there,” the prior said. “It will be a great contest.”

Cedric frowned slightly. “Norman knights enjoy such displays.”

Wamba whispered to Gurth again. “A tournament is simply a polite way for knights to hit each other.”

Gurth shook his head but did not answer.

The evening slowly passed. At last the meal ended and servants cleared the tables.

Cedric stood.

“Guests of this house will find rest here tonight.”

The travelers thanked him and prepared for sleep.

Yet as the fire burned low in the great hall, several people lay awake thinking about the strangers they had met.

None of them yet understood how closely their paths would soon become joined.

Part 3

The morning at Rotherwood began early. Pale sunlight entered the hall through the narrow windows while servants moved quietly about their work. The fire in the center of the room burned again, and the smell of fresh bread slowly filled the air.

Cedric sat at the high seat while the household gathered for the morning meal. Lady Rowena sat beside him. She was young and beautiful, with calm dignity in her movements. Though Cedric treated her as the future hope of the Saxon people, she spoke gently and rarely showed pride.

At the lower tables Gurth and Wamba were already eating.

Wamba examined the bread carefully.

“This loaf seems honest,” he said.

Gurth looked puzzled. “Honest?”

“Yes,” Wamba replied. “It does not pretend to be cake.”

Gurth shook his head but smiled slightly.

Soon the Norman guests entered the hall. Prior Aymer greeted everyone cheerfully while Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert walked in with his usual confidence.

Isaac and Rebecca followed more quietly.

Cedric began the meal without much ceremony.

Conversation soon turned again to the great tournament that would soon begin at Ashby.

Prior Aymer spoke with excitement.

“Many famous knights are expected. The finest warriors in England will be there.”

Bois-Guilbert nodded. “It will be a worthy contest.”

Cedric’s expression remained cold.

“Norman knights enjoy showing their strength before crowds.”

Bois-Guilbert answered calmly. “Strength deserves to be seen.”

Meanwhile the pilgrim sat silently among the lower tables.

During the meal he spoke very little, but his eyes watched the hall carefully. Several times his gaze rested on Lady Rowena.

Rebecca noticed this.

When the meal ended and the guests began leaving the hall, the pilgrim quietly approached Rebecca and Isaac.

“You travel to Ashby?” he asked.

Isaac nodded nervously. “Yes, good pilgrim.”

Rebecca studied the traveler's face more carefully now.

"You have been in many lands," she said.

The pilgrim smiled slightly. "Enough to know that England still holds many dangers."

Isaac sighed. "That is true."

Meanwhile Cedric and Athelstane spoke together near the fire.

Athelstane was a large and slow-moving man who preferred comfort to action, but Cedric respected him as a Saxon noble of ancient blood.

"We ride for Ashby today," Cedric said. "The tournament will show the power of the Normans once again."

Athelstane nodded slowly. "Perhaps."

Cedric continued speaking with pride about the old Saxon kings and the dream that one day Saxon rule might return.

Across the hall Wamba whispered to Gurth again.

"Cedric dreams of Saxon kings while Norman knights sharpen their swords."

Gurth replied quietly. "Dreams are sometimes stronger than swords."

At that moment the pilgrim passed near them.

Gurth looked carefully at the traveler.

Something in the man's voice and movements seemed strangely familiar.

When the pilgrim stepped outside the hall, Gurth quietly followed him.

In the courtyard the pilgrim paused beside a horse.

Gurth stepped closer.

"My lord," he said softly.

The pilgrim turned.

For a moment the two men looked at one another.

Then the traveler lifted his hood slightly.

Gurth's eyes widened.

"Ivanhoe!"

The knight placed a finger to his lips.

"Quiet," he said.

Gurth nodded quickly.

“You have returned at last.”

Ivanhoe smiled faintly. “Yes. But for now my name must remain hidden.”

Gurth understood.

“The tournament,” he said.

Ivanhoe nodded.

“I will ride there.”

Inside the hall Cedric still spoke proudly of the future of the Saxons.

Yet outside his own house his disinherited son had already returned to England.

And before long the entire country would hear his name again.

Part 4

Soon after the morning meal the household of Rotherwood prepared for travel. Horses were brought to the courtyard, servants packed supplies, and the sound of moving wagons filled the air.

Cedric intended to attend the great tournament at Ashby, and Lady Rowena would ride with him. Athelstane also prepared to join the journey. Though he moved slowly, he enjoyed the thought of seeing many knights gathered in one place.

Outside the hall Gurth finished securing the animals that would travel with them. Wamba stood nearby watching the preparations.

“A journey is a strange thing,” Wamba said. “People leave home with many plans, and they return with many stories.”

Gurth tightened a rope on one of the packs.

“And sometimes they do not return at all.”

Wamba looked toward the forest road. “Let us hope this journey chooses the first ending.”

Meanwhile the Norman guests also prepared to continue their own travels.

Prior Aymer mounted his horse with cheerful energy.

“Ashby will be lively this year,” he said. “The finest knights in England will compete there.”

Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert rode beside him with his usual confidence.

“I look forward to testing their strength.”

Isaac of York and Rebecca also prepared to travel with the group for safety along the forest roads.

Isaac looked uneasy while adjusting his saddle.

“These roads are dangerous,” he said quietly to his daughter.

Rebecca answered calmly. “Travel is always uncertain, father. But fear will not make the road shorter.”

Isaac nodded nervously.

Soon Cedric gave the order to depart.

The riders moved slowly out of the courtyard and onto the forest road. The morning sun filtered through the trees, and the sounds of horses and wagons echoed along the narrow path.

Lady Rowena rode beside Cedric while Athelstane followed close behind. Gurth guided the animals carrying supplies, and Wamba rode among the servants.

The pilgrim also joined the travelers, keeping his hood low as he rode quietly near the rear of the group.

As the riders moved deeper into the forest, the road became more crowded. Merchants, soldiers, and travelers from many regions all moved toward Ashby.

The excitement of the coming tournament filled the air.

Wamba watched a group of brightly dressed knights ride past them.

“If armor could speak,” he said to Gurth, “these men would spend the entire road praising themselves.”

Gurth smiled faintly. “Let them speak with their lances tomorrow.”

After several hours the travelers stopped near a small clearing to rest their horses.

Servants distributed bread and water while the riders stretched their legs.

Rebecca walked a short distance from the road and stood beneath a tall tree. The quiet forest gave her a moment of peace after the noise of the journey.

The pilgrim approached her quietly.

“The road grows busy,” he said.

Rebecca nodded. “Many people wish to see the tournament.”

The pilgrim looked toward the distant hills.

“And many destinies travel toward the same place.”

Rebecca studied him carefully.

“You speak like a man who expects much from the coming days.”

The traveler smiled slightly.

“Perhaps.”

Soon the riders mounted their horses again and continued the journey.

As the sun moved westward, the road began rising toward the hills near Ashby.

In the distance colorful banners could already be seen moving in the wind above the fields where the tournament would soon begin.

The travelers rode forward with growing anticipation.

None of them yet knew how greatly the events at Ashby would change their lives.

Part 5

By late afternoon the travelers reached the wide fields outside the town of Ashby. The quiet forest roads behind them had given way to a place full of noise, color, and movement.

Tents covered the open land in every direction. Merchants sold food and wine, musicians played lively songs, and groups of knights rode proudly through the crowds. Banners of many noble houses waved above the tents, their bright colors shining in the sun.

In the center of the field stood the great tournament ground.

A long wooden barrier divided the space where the knights would ride against each other with their lances. At one end a high platform had been built for the nobles and ladies who would watch the contest.

Cedric and his companions stopped for a moment to observe the scene.

Wamba stared at the colorful tents.

“If pride could fly,” he said, “this field would look like a sky full of banners.”

Gurth watched the armored knights riding through the field.

“Tomorrow many of them will test their strength.”

Cedric guided his horse slowly toward the platform reserved for noble guests. Servants hurried to prepare places for Cedric, Lady Rowena, and Athelstane.

Rowena looked across the tournament field with calm interest.

Though she had seen noble gatherings before, the scale of the event impressed even her.

Meanwhile Isaac and Rebecca moved carefully through the crowd toward a quieter part of the field where merchants and travelers had gathered.

Isaac looked nervous as armed knights passed nearby.

“So many swords,” he whispered.

Rebecca answered quietly. “Yes. But we will keep to ourselves.”

Across the field Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert rode among the Norman knights. Several warriors greeted him with respect.

One of them spoke loudly.

“Will you ride tomorrow, Sir Brian?”

Bois-Guilbert smiled slightly.

“Of course.”

Nearby Prior Aymer had already found a comfortable tent where wine was being served.

As evening approached the heralds rode across the tournament ground announcing the rules for the coming contests.

Trumpets sounded as one herald raised his voice.

“Hear the proclamation! Tomorrow the knights of the southern party will challenge all who wish to test their strength!”

The crowd listened with excitement.

“Each knight may choose his opponent. The strongest warrior will become champion of the day.”

Cheers rose from the spectators.

The herald continued.

“The champion will choose the Queen of Love and Beauty from among the

noble ladies present.”

Many eyes turned toward the platform where Lady Rowena now sat beside Cedric.

Even among the many noble ladies gathered there, Rowena’s beauty drew admiration.

Meanwhile at the edge of the field a single rider approached quietly.

His armor was plain and carried no symbol. His shield showed no noble crest.

The rider guided his horse toward the place where challengers would declare themselves.

The herald approached him.

“Knight, declare your name.”

The rider answered clearly.

“I am the Disinherited Knight.”

A murmur spread through the crowd.

No one knew who this mysterious warrior might be.

From the platform Cedric leaned slightly forward as if listening more carefully.

Something about the rider’s voice stirred a strange memory in his mind.

But the knight had already turned his horse and ridden away toward the tents where the competitors prepared for the coming contest.

Tomorrow the great tournament would begin.

And before the day ended, the unknown Disinherited Knight would become known throughout the field of Ashby.

Part 6

The morning of the tournament arrived bright and clear. From early dawn the fields around Ashby filled with people. Travelers came from towns and villages across the region, all eager to see the great contest of knights.

Trumpets sounded as the heralds rode into the tournament ground. Servants finished preparing the barrier that divided the field, and soldiers stood ready to keep the crowd from moving too close to the fighting.

On the raised platform the nobles and ladies took their seats.

Cedric sat beside Lady Rowena, while Athelstane settled comfortably nearby. Several Norman nobles also occupied places along the platform, their rich clothing and banners showing their rank.

Rowena's calm face drew many admiring looks from the crowd. As Queen of Love and Beauty had not yet been chosen, many knights hoped to win that honor before the day ended.

Below the platform Gurth and Wamba stood among the spectators.

Wamba stretched his neck to see across the field.

"So many helmets," he said. "If every one of them holds a clever mind, England must be a wise country."

Gurth watched the knights quietly.

"Today we will learn which helmets hold the strongest arms."

Soon the challengers rode forward.

At their head appeared Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, riding a powerful black horse. His shield bore the red cross of the Knights Templar, and his armor shone brightly in the sunlight.

Several other famous Norman knights rode beside him, including the giant warrior Front-de-Boeuf and the fierce knight Malvoisin.

The herald raised his staff.

"These knights challenge all who wish to meet them!"

A loud cheer rose from the crowd.

One by one the challengers took their positions at one end of the field.

Then the herald called again.

"Let those who accept the challenge ride forward!"

For a moment the opposite side of the field remained quiet.

Then a single rider appeared.

The Disinherited Knight.

His armor was plain but strong. His shield showed no crest, and his helmet hid his face completely.

The mysterious rider approached the herald calmly.

“Name your opponent,” the herald said.

The knight slowly lifted his lance.

Across the field Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert watched him closely.

The lance pointed directly toward the Templar.

A murmur spread through the spectators.

Bois-Guilbert smiled coldly.

“A brave choice.”

The two knights rode to opposite ends of the field.

Trumpets sounded.

The herald lowered his staff.

“Charge!”

The horses thundered forward across the ground.

The riders lowered their lances.

The crash when they met echoed across the entire field.

Both lances shattered into pieces.

The horses raced past one another, but neither knight fell.

The crowd shouted with excitement.

New lances were quickly brought.

The two knights returned to their positions.

Again the trumpets sounded.

Again they charged.

This time the Disinherited Knight struck with terrible force. Bois-Guilbert’s saddle shook beneath the blow, though he managed to remain mounted.

The crowd leaned forward in anticipation.

A third charge began.

The riders rushed toward each other at full speed.

The Disinherited Knight’s lance struck the Templar squarely upon the shield.

Bois-Guilbert was thrown from his horse and fell heavily to the ground.

For a moment the entire field fell silent.

Then a roar of cheers burst from the crowd.

The mighty Templar had been defeated.

Bois-Guilbert rose slowly to his feet, anger burning in his eyes.

But the herald raised his staff.

“Victory to the Disinherited Knight!”

From the platform Cedric stared in astonishment.

Gurth whispered quietly to Wamba.

“That knight rides like a man we once knew.”

The mysterious champion remained silent in his saddle.

The tournament had only just begun, yet already he had shaken the pride of the Norman knights.

Part 7

After the fall of Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, the entire tournament ground buzzed with excitement. Spectators stood, shouted, and waved their caps while the heralds rode quickly across the field to prepare the next contest.

The Disinherited Knight remained calm in his saddle. Though he had defeated one of the most feared knights in England, he showed no sign of pride. He simply turned his horse and waited for the next challenger.

The herald raised his voice again.

“Who challenges the Disinherited Knight?”

A knight in bright blue armor rode forward. His shield carried the image of a golden lion. The crowd watched closely as the two riders moved into position.

Trumpets sounded.

The horses rushed forward.

Their lances struck with a loud crash.

A moment later the knight in blue armor fell from his saddle and rolled across the ground.

The herald lifted his staff.

“Victory to the Disinherited Knight!”

Cheers rose once more.

Another knight rode forward.

Then another.

Each believed he might defeat the mysterious stranger who had already defeated the Templar.

Yet each time the same result followed.

The Disinherited Knight struck with steady skill and perfect aim. One by one his challengers were thrown from their horses.

Soon several defeated knights had been carried away from the field.

The crowd began speaking excitedly among themselves.

“Who is he?”

“No one knows.”

“He fights like a master.”

On the platform Cedric leaned forward with growing interest.

“That rider has the strength of a Saxon,” he said quietly.

Athelstane nodded slowly.

“Yes. His arm is powerful.”

Rowena watched the field silently.

Though the knight’s face remained hidden, something in his voice and movements seemed strangely familiar to her.

Meanwhile below the platform Wamba spoke again to Gurth.

“If this unknown knight defeats many more Normans,” Wamba said, “Cedric may adopt him as a son.”

Gurth smiled slightly.

“Perhaps he already has one.”

Soon another challenger entered the field.

This time the knight was enormous.

His dark armor seemed as heavy as iron walls, and his shield carried the symbol of a black bull.

It was the feared knight Front-de-Boeuf.

A hush spread across the spectators.

The two riders moved into position.

Trumpets sounded again.

The horses thundered forward.

Their lances struck with tremendous force.

For a moment both riders seemed ready to fall.

But only one did.

Front-de-Boeuf crashed heavily to the ground.

The crowd roared with excitement.

The Disinherited Knight had defeated another famous warrior.

The herald rode forward once more.

“The contests of this day are finished!”

The spectators cheered loudly.

“The champion of the day is the Disinherited Knight!”

According to the rules of the tournament, the champion must now choose the Queen of Love and Beauty.

The mysterious knight slowly guided his horse toward the platform where the noble ladies sat.

For a moment he hesitated.

Then he lifted his lance.

It pointed directly toward Lady Rowena.

A murmur passed through the crowd.

Servants placed a crown of flowers upon Rowena’s head.

The herald announced the decision.

“Lady Rowena is the Queen of Love and Beauty!”

Applause spread across the field.

Yet as the Disinherited Knight looked toward her, something silent passed between them.

A moment of recognition.

But the champion did not remove his helmet.

His true identity remained hidden.

And the second day of the tournament would soon bring an even greater battle.

Part 8

The second day of the tournament began with even greater excitement than the first. From early morning the fields around Ashby filled again with spectators. News of the mysterious Disinherited Knight had spread quickly through the crowds, and many people had come hoping to see him fight again.

The contest of the second day would not be a simple duel between two riders. Instead the knights would take part in a great melee, a large battle where groups of knights fought together across the field.

Trumpets sounded loudly as the herald rode into the arena.

“Hear the rules of the melee!” he called.

The crowd quickly grew quiet.

“The knights will divide into two parties. Each knight may strike any opponent he meets. The battle will continue until one party clearly defeats the other.”

A loud cheer answered the announcement.

On the raised platform Lady Rowena still wore the crown of flowers she had received the day before. Cedric sat beside her, watching the field with serious attention, while Athelstane leaned comfortably in his seat.

Below the platform Gurth and Wamba stood among the spectators again.

Wamba folded his arms.

“Yesterday the knights tried to knock each other from their horses one by one,” he said. “Today they plan to do it all at once.”

Gurth nodded.

“Stay behind the barrier.”

Soon the knights rode into the field.

The Norman party gathered confidently together. Among them rode Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, Sir Front-de-Boeuf, and several other powerful warriors eager to take revenge for the previous day’s defeats.

Across the field their opponents formed their own line.

Among them sat the Disinherited Knight.

Beside him rode a tall knight dressed entirely in green armor. He carried a heavy battle-axe and rode with quiet strength. Few people recognized him, but his

powerful build drew attention.

Trumpets sounded again.

The herald lowered his staff.

“Let the melee begin!”

At once the field erupted into motion.

Horses rushed forward, lances shattered, and swords flashed as the two sides collided.

The noise of battle echoed across the arena.

The Disinherited Knight rode directly toward the strongest enemies. His sword struck quickly, forcing several Norman knights back.

Across the field Bois-Guilbert searched for his rival.

At last he saw the knight with the plain shield.

The Templar lowered his lance and rode toward him with fierce determination.

The two knights met with a powerful clash. Their weapons struck again and again while their horses turned sharply across the field.

Around them the battle continued fiercely.

The knight in green armor fought like a storm. His great axe rose and fell with tremendous strength, breaking shields and driving opponents aside.

Wamba watched with wide eyes.

“That green knight swings his axe as if he were cutting wood,” he said.

Gurth nodded.

“He is very strong.”

Meanwhile the Disinherited Knight began to struggle. Several Norman knights surrounded him at once, striking from different sides.

One heavy blow struck his shield.

Another struck his horse.

Suddenly the animal stumbled beneath him.

The knight fell to the ground.

A shout of triumph rose from the Norman side.

Bois-Guilbert pushed forward quickly.

If the fallen champion were captured, the Normans would surely win the battle.

But before they could reach him, the knight in green armor charged forward with terrible force. His axe struck Front-de-Boeuf's shield and forced the giant knight backward.

Then he placed his horse beside the fallen champion and defended him fiercely.

The Normans hesitated.

That moment was enough.

The Disinherited Knight rose quickly and mounted another horse brought by a servant.

Now the two mysterious warriors fought side by side.

Their combined strength slowly drove the Norman party backward across the field.

At last the herald rode forward and raised his staff.

"Stop the battle!"

Trumpets sounded again.

The fighting gradually ended as the knights lowered their weapons.

The herald announced the result.

"Victory to the party of the Disinherited Knight!"

The crowd roared with excitement.

Yet as the champion sat upon his horse, his strength began to fade.

Soon the truth about the mysterious warrior would finally be revealed.

Part 9

After the herald announced the victory, the noise of battle slowly faded across the field. Servants hurried among the wounded knights, leading injured horses away while physicians examined the fallen warriors.

The Disinherited Knight remained mounted, but those who watched carefully could see that he was struggling to remain upright. His armor showed deep marks from the fight, and his movements had become slower.

The herald rode forward again.

"The champion of the tournament must now receive the prize from the Queen

of Love and Beauty."

All eyes turned toward the platform where Lady Rowena stood with the crown of flowers upon her head.

The Disinherited Knight slowly guided his horse toward the platform. The crowd moved aside to allow him to pass.

As he approached the steps of the platform, the knight seemed to sway in the saddle.

Gurth noticed it immediately.

"He is wounded," he whispered.

Wamba leaned forward anxiously.

"Then he should stop fighting."

But the champion continued riding until he reached the front of the platform.

At that moment his strength failed.

The knight suddenly slipped from the saddle and fell heavily to the ground.

A cry rose from the crowd.

Several attendants rushed forward and lifted his helmet.

When the helmet was removed, his face became visible.

Cedric stood suddenly from his seat.

"Ivanhoe!"

The name spread quickly through the spectators.

The mysterious champion was none other than Wilfred of Ivanhoe, Cedric's own son.

Cedric stared down at the wounded knight in shock. For many years he had refused to speak his son's name. Ivanhoe had supported the Norman king Richard, and Cedric's Saxon pride had led him to disinherit the young knight.

Yet now the son he had rejected lay wounded before him after winning the greatest honor of the tournament.

Rowena stepped forward with concern.

"He is hurt," she said softly.

Physicians knelt beside Ivanhoe and examined his wounds.

After a moment one of them spoke.

“He has suffered several injuries during the battle, but none are deadly. Still, he must rest.”

Rebecca had been watching from the edge of the crowd beside her father.

She moved forward calmly.

“Allow me to assist,” she said.

Isaac looked worried but did not stop her.

Rebecca knelt beside Ivanhoe and carefully examined the wounds beneath his armor. Her movements were gentle but confident.

“He must be taken somewhere quiet,” she said. “He has lost much strength.”

Cedric finally found his voice.

“Bring him to my tent.”

Servants quickly brought a stretcher. Ivanhoe was lifted carefully and carried away from the field.

Rowena walked beside him, her expression filled with concern.

Meanwhile the crowd slowly began to leave the tournament ground. Though the contests had ended, the excitement of the day remained strong among the spectators.

Across the field Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert watched the scene in silence.

His eyes slowly moved from Ivanhoe to Rebecca.

Something dangerous stirred within his thoughts.

As the sun began to fall toward the horizon, the great tournament of Ashby had come to an end.

Yet the struggles between these people were only beginning.

Part 10

After the tournament ended, Cedric’s tent stood quietly on the edge of the great field. The noise of the crowds had begun to fade as travelers slowly left Ashby, but inside the tent the atmosphere remained tense.

Ivanhoe lay on a bed while Rebecca carefully examined his injuries. His armor had been removed, and clean cloths covered the wounds along his side and

shoulder.

Cedric stood nearby watching in silence. His face showed deep conflict. Pride and anger still lived in his heart, yet the sight of his wounded son troubled him more than he wished to admit.

Rebecca worked calmly.

“He has lost blood,” she said, “but his wounds are not fatal.”

Cedric spoke quietly.

“You are certain?”

Rebecca nodded.

“Yes. But he must remain still for several days.”

Rowena stood beside the bed, her eyes fixed on Ivanhoe’s pale face.

After a moment Ivanhoe opened his eyes slightly.

“Rowena,” he whispered.

She leaned closer.

“You are safe now.”

Ivanhoe tried to speak again, but Rebecca gently stopped him.

“Do not move,” she said. “Your strength must return slowly.”

Ivanhoe closed his eyes again and rested.

Cedric turned away, struggling to hide his emotions.

Outside the tent Gurth and Wamba waited together near the horses.

Wamba sat on a wooden crate and looked toward the distant tournament field.

“Our mysterious knight has finally found his name again,” he said.

Gurth nodded.

“Yes.”

Wamba tilted his head thoughtfully.

“Do you think Cedric will forgive him?”

Gurth shrugged.

“Time may soften even the hardest pride.”

At that moment Isaac of York stepped out of the tent looking anxious.

“My daughter must not remain here long,” he said. “Powerful men may not welcome her help.”

Gurth looked surprised.

“She saved Ivanhoe’s life.”

Isaac sighed.

“That is not always enough.”

Meanwhile inside the tent Rebecca finished preparing the bandages.

Cedric watched her work.

“You have skill,” he said at last.

Rebecca answered calmly.

“My father and I have traveled widely. I have learned many ways to treat wounds.”

Cedric nodded slowly.

Though Saxon pride remained strong within him, he could not deny the help she had given his son.

At that moment a messenger entered the tent.

“My lord,” he said to Cedric, “many knights have already left the field. The roads are becoming crowded.”

Cedric thought for a moment.

“We will leave Ashby tomorrow.”

Rowena glanced at Rebecca.

“Will you travel with us?”

Rebecca hesitated slightly.

Isaac answered quickly.

“We will travel for safety along the same road.”

Cedric agreed.

“Very well.”

Outside the sun slowly disappeared behind the hills.

Yet while the camp prepared for rest, another rider moved quietly through the darkening forest.

Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert had not forgotten Rebecca.

And before the travelers reached their homes again, danger would return.

Part 11

The next morning Cedric's party prepared to leave Ashby. The tents were taken down, the horses were saddled, and the wagons were loaded for the journey home. Many travelers had already departed, and the once-crowded field had grown quieter.

Ivanhoe remained too weak to ride. He would travel slowly in a covered wagon while Rebecca continued caring for his wounds.

Cedric stood near the horses giving orders to the servants. Though he spoke little, his attention often moved toward the wagon where Ivanhoe rested.

Rowena noticed this but said nothing.

Gurth secured the last ropes on the wagon while Wamba watched the road.

"The tournament has ended," Wamba said. "Now the real trouble begins."

Gurth looked at him.

"Why do you say that?"

Wamba shrugged. "Because peace often invites mischief."

Soon the travelers began moving along the forest road. Cedric and Athelstane rode at the front while the wagons followed behind. Isaac and Rebecca rode near the center of the group.

The road wound through thick woods where tall trees blocked much of the sunlight. For several hours the journey passed quietly.

Then Gurth noticed something strange.

Several riders appeared ahead on the road, dressed as ordinary travelers. They seemed harmless at first, but their movements were too careful.

Gurth whispered to Wamba.

"Something is wrong."

Before he could warn Cedric, more riders appeared behind them.

The travelers were surrounded.

The strangers suddenly pulled weapons from beneath their cloaks.

"Stop!" one of them shouted.

The attack happened quickly.

Cedric and Athelstane tried to draw their swords, but the attackers had chosen their moment well. Several servants were pushed aside while others were tied with ropes.

Gurth fought fiercely but was soon overpowered.

Wamba raised his hands in surrender.

“I prefer jokes to swords,” he said.

Within minutes the entire party had been captured.

Their attackers removed their disguises.

Among them stood three powerful Norman knights.

Front-de-Boeuf.

De Bracy.

And Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert.

Cedric glared at them.

“You attack travelers like thieves.”

De Bracy laughed.

“Not thieves, Lord Cedric. Soldiers.”

Bois-Guilbert’s eyes moved across the prisoners until they reached Rebecca.

His gaze lingered there.

Isaac noticed and trembled with fear.

“What do you want from us?” Cedric demanded.

Front-de-Boeuf answered coldly.

“Ransom.”

The prisoners were quickly bound and placed on horses.

Ivanhoe, still weak from his wounds, was also taken with them.

The riders turned away from the road and entered a narrow forest path.

Gurth whispered to Wamba as they rode.

“They are taking us somewhere hidden.”

Wamba nodded.

“Yes. And I suspect the place has thick walls.”

By evening the forest opened before them.

A dark stone fortress stood on a hill.

Its towers rose above the trees, and heavy walls surrounded the castle.

This was Torquilstone.

The prisoners were led through the gate and into the courtyard.

Their captors had chosen a place where rescue would not be easy.

Inside those walls, their fate now rested in the hands of dangerous men.

Part 12

The heavy gate of Torquilstone closed behind the prisoners with a loud crash. The sound echoed across the stone courtyard while armed guards watched from the towers above.

Cedric, Rowena, Isaac, Rebecca, Ivanhoe, and the others were quickly separated and led into different parts of the fortress.

Front-de-Boeuf gave the orders.

“Lock them in the tower chambers. We will decide what to do with them later.”

The guards obeyed immediately.

Cedric and Athelstane were taken into a large stone room high in one of the towers. The chamber had narrow windows and thick walls that kept the prisoners safely trapped inside.

Cedric looked around with anger.

“Norman thieves,” he said.

Athelstane sat heavily on a wooden bench.

“At least the room is large,” he said calmly.

Cedric stared at him in disbelief.

“You speak of comfort at a time like this?”

Athelstane shrugged slowly.

“Anger will not open the door.”

In another chamber Rowena sat quietly while a guard stood outside the door. Though she remained calm, she understood that their situation was dangerous.

Meanwhile Rebecca was led into a smaller stone room in a different tower.

Isaac tried to follow her but was pushed back by the guards.

“My daughter!” he cried.

The door closed between them.

Rebecca remained calm inside the chamber. The room contained only a small window and a simple wooden chair.

After a few moments the door opened again.

Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert entered.

He removed his helmet and looked at Rebecca with intense attention.

“You are safe here,” he said.

Rebecca answered steadily.

“A prisoner is never safe.”

Bois-Guilbert stepped closer.

“Your courage interests me.”

Rebecca looked directly at him.

“Then your interests are strange.”

The Templar’s expression darkened slightly.

“You misunderstand me.”

Rebecca shook her head.

“No. I understand you clearly.”

For a moment neither of them spoke.

At last Bois-Guilbert turned away.

“The castle is strong,” he said. “No one will rescue you.”

Rebecca answered quietly.

“God may still help us.”

The Templar left the chamber without another word.

Meanwhile in the lower courtyard Front-de-Boeuf and De Bracy spoke together.

“Cedric will pay a great ransom,” Front-de-Boeuf said.

De Bracy smiled.

“And I will persuade Lady Rowena to become my wife.”

Bois-Guilbert joined them.

“And the Jew’s daughter?” De Bracy asked.

The Templar’s voice remained calm.

“She is mine to question.”

Night slowly fell over the fortress.

In their separate chambers the prisoners waited anxiously.

Yet beyond the walls of Torquilstone, other men had already begun to learn of the capture.

And before long the castle would face enemies it did not expect.

Part 13

Far from the dark walls of Torquilstone, several men moved quietly through the forest. They wore green clothing that blended with the trees, and each carried a long bow across his shoulder.

At their head walked a tall archer with sharp eyes and calm confidence.

This was Locksley.

His men knew every path through the forest. Travelers often spoke of them as outlaws, yet many poor villagers trusted them more than the Norman lords who ruled the land.

That evening two men hurried toward Locksley’s camp.

One of them was Gurth.

The other was Wamba.

During the confusion of the attack on the road, Wamba had managed to escape. Later he returned secretly to free Gurth from the ropes that bound him. Now both men had come seeking help.

Gurth spoke quickly.

“Cedric, Rowena, and the others have been taken to Torquilstone.”

Locksley listened carefully.

“Front-de-Boeuf’s castle,” he said.

Wamba nodded.

“A large stone cage on a hill.”

Locksley thought for a moment.

“How many guards?”

“Many,” Gurth answered. “And powerful knights inside.”

One of the archers nearby spoke.

“Breaking that castle will not be easy.”

Locksley smiled slightly.

“Nothing is easy.”

Gurth stepped forward urgently.

“Ivanhoe is there as well. He is wounded.”

Locksley’s expression changed.

“Ivanhoe?”

Gurth nodded.

“Yes.”

Locksley looked toward the dark trees.

“Then we will help.”

He raised his hand and called several archers closer.

“Prepare the men. We ride before dawn.”

Meanwhile another traveler entered the forest camp.

It was the pilgrim who had traveled earlier with Cedric’s party.

Locksley recognized him immediately.

“You have returned.”

The pilgrim removed his hood.

“I heard of the capture.”

Locksley nodded.

“Then you know our task.”

The pilgrim looked toward the distant hills.

“Torquilstone will not be easy to take.”

Locksley smiled.

“No fortress is perfect.”

Soon the forest camp filled with quiet activity. Archers prepared arrows, ropes were gathered, and several men built ladders for climbing the castle walls.

Gurth watched the preparations with growing hope.

“Cedric will not expect help from outlaws,” he said.

Wamba leaned against a tree.

“Then we will surprise him as well as the Normans.”

As the night deepened, the rescuers finished their plans.

At the first light of morning they would move toward the hill where Torquilstone stood.

Inside the fortress the prisoners waited helplessly behind stone walls.

But outside the forest had begun to gather an army.

Part 14

The first pale light of morning spread across the forest as Locksley and his men moved quietly toward the hill where Torquilstone stood. Mist hung between the trees, hiding their approach from the guards on the walls.

Gurth walked beside Locksley while Wamba followed close behind.

“If this plan fails,” Wamba whispered, “we may all become prisoners ourselves.”

Gurth answered quietly.

“Then let us succeed.”

Soon the rescuers reached a position where they could see the fortress clearly.

Torquilstone rose above the trees like a dark stone mountain. Its high walls and towers seemed strong enough to resist any attack.

Locksley studied the fortress carefully.

“The gate is the strongest point,” he said. “But the western wall has fewer guards.”

The pilgrim who had joined them looked toward the same place.

“If we attack there first, the defenders will rush to protect that side.”

Locksley nodded.

“Then we strike the gate while they are distracted.”

The men prepared their bows and arrows.

When everything was ready, Locksley raised his arm.

“Now.”

A sudden rain of arrows flew toward the castle walls.

The guards shouted in surprise as several arrows struck the stone beside them.

One soldier dropped his spear and ran for cover.

Bells began ringing inside the fortress.

“Attack!” shouted the defenders.

The rescuers rushed forward carrying ladders toward the western wall.

Inside the castle the alarm spread quickly.

Front-de-Boeuf stormed into the courtyard.

“Who dares attack my castle?” he roared.

A soldier answered breathlessly.

“Outlaws from the forest, my lord!”

Front-de-Boeuf seized his helmet.

“Drive them away!”

Meanwhile Rebecca heard the noise from her chamber.

The sound of bells and shouting echoed through the stone corridors.

She moved toward the narrow window and looked down at the courtyard.

Soldiers rushed in every direction while smoke began rising from the walls where arrows struck wooden beams.

“Someone has come,” she whispered.

At that moment the door opened.

Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert entered.

He was already wearing armor.

“The castle is under attack,” he said.

Rebecca answered calmly.

“Then justice has come to your walls.”

The Templar frowned slightly.

“Justice? No. Only violence.”

Rebecca met his eyes.

“Perhaps they are sometimes the same.”

Bois-Guilbert said nothing more and left the chamber.

Outside the battle grew louder.

The rescuers placed ladders against the walls while Locksley’s archers

continued shooting arrows upward.

Guards pushed at the ladders with long poles, trying to throw the attackers back.

At the same time another group of men ran toward the great wooden gate carrying heavy axes.

Each blow against the wood echoed across the hill.

The siege of Torquilstone had begun.

And before the day ended, the strong fortress would face a fight for its survival.

Part 15

The battle around Torquilstone grew louder as the sun climbed higher in the sky. Smoke drifted across the hill while arrows flew through the air toward the castle walls.

Locksley's archers stood among the trees shooting carefully. Each arrow forced the defenders to hide behind the stone battlements.

"Keep them down!" Locksley called.

Meanwhile Cedric's rescuers rushed toward the gate carrying heavy axes.

Gurth ran beside them.

"Strike together!" he shouted.

The first blows landed against the thick wooden door.

The sound echoed across the courtyard.

Inside the castle Front-de-Boeuf roared with anger.

"Hold the gate!"

Soldiers rushed forward to block the entrance.

Meanwhile ladders rose against the western wall. Several attackers climbed upward while the defenders tried to push them back with long poles and stones.

One ladder slipped and fell, throwing two men to the ground.

Another ladder held firm.

An outlaw reached the top of the wall and leaped onto the battlement. Others followed him.

Soon a fierce struggle began above the gate.

In the courtyard De Bracy ran toward Front-de-Boeuf.

“They are breaking through!”

Front-de-Boeuf lifted his massive sword.

“Then we meet them there.”

Smoke began spreading through parts of the castle where burning arrows had struck wooden roofs.

Meanwhile in the tower chamber Rebecca listened to the sounds of battle.

The noise of shouting and steel striking steel filled the air.

She knelt beside the small window and whispered a quiet prayer.

“May those who fight for justice be protected.”

At that moment the door opened again.

Bois-Guilbert entered.

His armor was already marked by battle.

“The attackers are strong,” he said.

Rebecca answered calmly.

“Then perhaps the innocent will be saved.”

The Templar studied her face for a moment.

“You still believe rescue will come.”

Rebecca nodded.

“Yes.”

Bois-Guilbert turned away without another word.

Outside the gate another powerful strike landed against the wood.

The heavy door began to crack.

Wamba crouched behind a fallen tree watching the attack.

“That gate will not enjoy the morning,” he muttered.

Gurth lifted his axe again.

“Strike!”

The rescuers delivered several more heavy blows.

At last a loud crack split the air.

The wooden gate broke open.

With a great shout the attackers rushed through the entrance into the courtyard.

The battle now raged inside the walls of Torquilstone itself.

Swords flashed and shields shattered as the two sides fought fiercely among the stone towers.

And somewhere within the fortress, the prisoners waited for the moment when their fate would finally change.

Part 16

Once the gate of Torquilstone burst open, the attackers rushed into the courtyard with loud cries. Cedric's allies and Locksley's archers poured through the broken entrance, their weapons raised as they faced the defenders.

Steel rang against steel as the two sides clashed.

Front-de-Boeuf himself stepped forward to stop them. His great sword swung through the air with terrible strength, forcing several attackers backward.

"Back!" he shouted.

But the rescuers did not retreat.

Gurth fought beside several archers while Wamba moved carefully behind them, trying to stay clear of the worst danger.

"I admire bravery," Wamba muttered, "but I admire survival even more."

Meanwhile on the walls above, the defenders tried to hold their positions. Yet many archers had already climbed the ladders and now controlled parts of the battlements.

Locksley himself stood on the wall shooting arrows down into the courtyard with calm precision.

One arrow struck a soldier who was about to attack Gurth from behind.

Gurth looked up and nodded in thanks.

Across the courtyard De Bracy attempted to organize the defenders.

"Hold the tower!" he shouted.

But the attackers continued pushing forward.

Smoke now filled much of the fortress as flames spread through the wooden structures. Burning beams began falling from the upper galleries.

In the tower chambers the prisoners heard the growing noise of the battle.

Cedric stood beside the narrow window of his prison room listening to the clash outside.

Suddenly the door burst open.

Gurth rushed inside.

“My lord!”

Cedric turned quickly.

“Gurth!”

The servant cut the ropes that bound him.

“The castle is falling,” Gurth said.

Cedric seized a fallen guard’s sword.

“Then let us finish the fight.”

Together they hurried down the stone stairs toward the courtyard.

In another chamber Rowena had also been freed by the rescuers. Servants led her safely toward the gate.

Meanwhile Rebecca still remained in her tower room.

The door opened once more.

Bois-Guilbert entered.

His armor was dark with smoke.

“The castle will not stand much longer,” he said.

Rebecca looked at him calmly.

“Then you must answer for what you have done.”

The Templar’s expression showed conflict.

“You should come with me.”

Rebecca shook her head.

“I will not flee with you.”

For a moment he seemed ready to argue.

Then he turned and left the chamber without another word.

Outside the battle reached its final moments.

Cedric and his men forced the defenders back across the courtyard. Several soldiers fled toward the towers while others threw down their weapons.

At last Front-de-Boeuf himself fell during the fighting.

With their leader gone, the remaining defenders quickly surrendered.

The rescuers helped the prisoners escape from the burning fortress.

As they left the courtyard, the flames spread higher through the castle.

Torquilstone, once a strong fortress feared by travelers, was now collapsing into ruin beneath the rising smoke.

The battle had been won.

Yet one enemy had already escaped the burning walls.

Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert.

Part 17

After escaping from the burning fortress, Cedric and his companions gathered in the forest beyond the hill. Behind them the towers of Torquilstone continued to burn, sending dark smoke into the sky.

Many of the rescuers rested beneath the trees while the wounded received treatment.

Cedric stood beside Rowena watching the ruins of the castle.

“Front-de-Boeuf’s power has ended,” he said.

Rowena nodded quietly.

“Many innocent travelers will now be safer.”

Nearby Gurth spoke with Wamba.

“The battle is finished,” Gurth said.

Wamba stretched his tired arms.

“Then I will gladly welcome peace.”

Locksley approached them.

“Not all danger has passed.”

Cedric looked toward him.

“What do you mean?”

Locksley answered calmly.

“One of the Norman knights escaped.”

Cedric frowned.

“Bois-Guilbert.”

Locksley nodded.

“Yes.”

At that moment Isaac suddenly rushed toward the group in great distress.

“My daughter!” he cried.

Cedric turned quickly.

“Rebecca is not here?”

Isaac shook his head desperately.

“No. I have searched everywhere.”

Gurth looked around the forest.

“She must have left the castle during the confusion.”

But Locksley spoke quietly.

“Or someone carried her away.”

Cedric’s face darkened.

“The Templar.”

The truth slowly became clear.

During the chaos of the battle Bois-Guilbert had taken Rebecca with him as he escaped.

Isaac fell to his knees in despair.

“She has been taken again.”

Rowena stepped forward and helped him rise.

“Do not lose hope,” she said gently.

Isaac looked at her with fear.

“The Templars are powerful. Who will challenge them?”

Meanwhile Ivanhoe, still weak from his wounds, had been carried safely away from the castle during the rescue.

When he heard the news of Rebecca’s capture, he struggled to stand.

“She must be saved,” he said.

Cedric looked at him with concern.

“You are still wounded.”

Ivanhoe answered firmly.

“She risked her life to heal me.”

Locksley spoke thoughtfully.

“The Templars follow their own laws. If they accuse someone, they often demand a trial.”

Gurth frowned.

“A trial?”

Locksley nodded.

“A trial by combat.”

Isaac’s face grew pale.

“They will say she is a sorceress.”

Cedric folded his arms.

“Then she will need a champion.”

Ivanhoe looked toward the distant road.

Though he was still weak, his decision was already made.

“I will ride,” he said quietly.

Somewhere far away Rebecca was now in the hands of the powerful Templar order.

And soon her fate would depend upon the courage of one knight willing to fight for her life.

Part 18

Far from the forest where Cedric and his allies rested, a strong stone fortress stood beside a wide plain. This fortress belonged to the Knights Templar, a powerful military order whose members followed strict laws and discipline.

Inside those walls Rebecca now stood as a prisoner.

Guards led her through a long stone corridor toward a large hall where several Templar leaders had gathered. Their white cloaks, marked with red crosses, showed their rank within the order.

At the center of the hall stood the Grand Master, the highest authority among

them.

Rebecca was brought before him.

The Grand Master studied her carefully.

“You are Rebecca, daughter of Isaac of York,” he said.

Rebecca answered calmly.

“Yes.”

“You were captured at Torquilstone during the recent battle.”

“Yes.”

The Grand Master’s voice grew colder.

“Several witnesses claim that you possess strange powers. They say you healed a wounded knight using unnatural knowledge.”

Rebecca understood that they spoke of Ivanhoe.

“I used only medicine,” she replied. “Nothing more.”

Murmurs spread among the Templar knights.

One of them spoke sharply.

“The art of healing may hide darker powers.”

Rebecca raised her head.

“Knowledge is not sorcery.”

The Grand Master lifted his hand for silence.

“The laws of our order demand judgment.”

He turned to the other knights.

“What is your decision?”

After a brief discussion the knights answered.

“Trial.”

The Grand Master looked back at Rebecca.

“You will face judgment by trial.”

Rebecca spoke quietly.

“Trial by combat?”

The Grand Master nodded.

“Yes.”

The hall grew silent.

According to the law of the Templars, a person accused of sorcery could be defended by a champion. If the champion won the combat, the accused would be declared innocent.

If no champion appeared, the prisoner would be judged guilty.

Rebecca spoke calmly despite the danger.

“Then I ask for a champion.”

The Grand Master answered.

“A champion may come if one dares.”

Meanwhile in another part of the fortress Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert stood alone in a small chamber.

He stared at the stone wall in deep thought.

Though he had brought Rebecca to the Templars, he now faced a conflict within his own heart.

One of the knights entered the room.

“The Grand Master has ordered the trial,” he said.

Bois-Guilbert turned slowly.

“Who will fight for the order?”

The knight answered.

“You.”

The Templar said nothing.

He understood the meaning clearly.

If he fought as the champion of the order, Rebecca’s fate would rest in his hands.

Outside the fortress the news of the trial slowly spread.

And far away, Ivanhoe had already begun his difficult journey toward the place where Rebecca’s life would soon be decided.

Part 19

The day of the trial arrived beneath a gray and silent sky. Outside the Templar fortress a wide field had been prepared for the combat. Soldiers, knights, and spectators gathered around the open ground to witness the judgment.

At one side of the field stood Rebecca, guarded by several soldiers. Though she was surrounded by enemies, she remained calm. Her face showed neither fear nor anger.

The Grand Master of the Templars rode into the field with several knights beside him. He raised his hand for silence.

“The accused stands before us,” he declared. “Rebecca of York, charged with sorcery.”

The crowd murmured quietly.

The Grand Master continued.

“According to the law of our order, she may be defended by a champion. If her champion defeats the champion of the Temple, she shall be declared innocent.”

He turned toward Rebecca.

“Have you found a defender?”

Rebecca answered steadily.

“I have asked for one.”

The Grand Master nodded.

“Then we will wait.”

Across the field another rider appeared.

Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert rode forward as the champion of the Templars. His armor shone beneath the cloudy sky, and his dark eyes showed no weakness.

He stopped his horse in the center of the field.

“I stand ready,” he said.

The Grand Master raised his staff again.

“Let the accused bring forth her champion.”

Silence filled the field.

Many spectators whispered among themselves.

No rider appeared.

Isaac of York stood near the edge of the crowd, trembling with fear. His eyes searched the road again and again.

Rebecca remained calm.

“He will come,” she said quietly.

At last a distant sound reached the field.

The steady rhythm of a horse's hooves.

All eyes turned toward the road.

A single rider approached slowly.

The knight's armor was plain, and his face looked pale from recent wounds. Yet he rode with firm determination.

It was Ivanhoe.

The crowd murmured with surprise.

Cedric stood among the spectators and watched his son ride into the field.

Ivanhoe stopped beside Rebecca.

"I will defend you," he said.

Rebecca looked at him with gratitude.

"You should not have come," she said softly.

Ivanhoe answered.

"Honor brought me here."

The herald stepped forward.

"Champions, prepare yourselves."

The two knights moved to opposite ends of the field.

Bois-Guilbert lowered his lance.

Ivanhoe did the same.

Trumpets sounded.

The herald lowered his staff.

"Charge!"

The horses raced toward each other.

Their lances struck.

Ivanhoe held his seat with effort.

Bois-Guilbert swayed suddenly in his saddle.

For a moment he struggled to remain upright.

Then he collapsed and fell heavily to the ground.

The field fell silent.

Ivanhoe had not struck a deadly blow.

The Templar had fallen from his own inner conflict.

The Grand Master spoke at last.

“The champion of the Temple is defeated.”

He turned toward Rebecca.

“The accused is declared innocent.”

A great shout rose from the crowd.

Rebecca had been saved.

And the long struggle that began at the tournament of Ashby had finally reached its end.

Part 20

After the fall of Sir Brian de Bois-Guilbert, the field remained silent for several moments. The spectators watched as soldiers approached the fallen knight.

The Grand Master of the Templars dismounted and examined the body.

“He is dead,” one of the knights said quietly.

The Grand Master stood slowly.

“The judgment is clear.”

He raised his voice so that all could hear.

“Rebecca of York is declared innocent.”

A murmur spread through the crowd, followed by loud voices of relief and approval.

Isaac of York hurried forward, tears in his eyes.

“My daughter,” he said, taking Rebecca’s hands. “You are safe.”

Rebecca smiled gently.

“Thanks to those who showed courage.”

Ivanhoe dismounted slowly. His wounds still weakened him, and he leaned on his sword for support.

Rebecca approached him.

“You should not have risked your life,” she said softly.

Ivanhoe answered quietly.

“You saved mine before.”

Rebecca lowered her eyes for a moment.

“Then we are both in each other’s debt.”

Cedric soon joined them.

For a long moment the Saxon lord looked at his son.

At last he spoke.

“You have acted with honor.”

Ivanhoe bowed his head.

Cedric placed a hand on his shoulder.

“You are my son.”

The simple words carried great meaning. The long conflict between father and son had finally ended.

Rowena approached next.

Her eyes were warm with quiet happiness.

“England has many brave knights,” she said, “but only one Ivanhoe.”

The crowd slowly began leaving the field as the Templars withdrew from the scene.

Rebecca stood beside her father watching the people depart.

After a moment she spoke.

“Father, it is time for us to leave England.”

Isaac nodded slowly.

“Yes. This land will never fully accept us.”

Rebecca looked once more toward Ivanhoe and Rowena.

“But we will remember those who showed kindness.”

Ivanhoe stepped forward.

“You will always have friends here.”

Rebecca smiled gently.

“That is enough.”

Soon Isaac and Rebecca prepared for their journey to another land where they hoped to live more peacefully.

Cedric returned to Rotherwood with Ivanhoe and Rowena.

The years of anger between father and son had ended, and a new peace slowly began in their household.

Though the struggles between Saxons and Normans would continue in England, the lives of these people had changed forever.

Their courage, loyalty, and sacrifice would long be remembered by those who heard their story.