

THE CURSE

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FADE IN:

EXT - CASTLE YARD - DAWN - 1335

Snow whitens the scenery. A large gate leads into the yard. A wooden platform; on it a bench, and a bucket in front of the bench.

LORD LAUROZ (30s), dressed in a long, red gown, paces the stage.

A CROWD is gathered at the foot of the platform.

A RUGGED MAN (40s) runs onto the stage.

MAN

Show us the thief!

The crowd goes wild. The man jumps off the stage.

A bell rings in the distance. The crowd goes silent.

The gate creaks open.

A PRIEST appears, followed by MIGUEL (25), his hands bound behind his back, his head held high. His clothes are ripped, covered in grime, his feet bare. He is a tall, handsome man.

The EXECUTIONER walks behind him, dressed in a black cloak, and hood. He carries a large axe.

They walk onto the platform, face the crowd.

LORD LAUROZ addresses the crowd.

LAUROZ

This man was found stealing chickens from the monastery. What should the penalty be for a man who steals from God's own?

CROWD

Death! Kill him!

LAUROZ

Thief, have you anything to say for yourself?

Miguel looks into the crowd, searching. He looks into the distance, drops his head.

LAUROZ (CONT'D)

A guilty man is unable to defend himself. This thief is to be put to death.

The executioner grabs Miguel's arm and shoves him towards the bench, pushes him down onto his knees.

The priest makes a cross in the air.

PRIEST

Sinner, may the Lord have mercy on your soul.

Miguel looks up at Lauroz.

MIGUEL

It is not my soul that is in danger.

Lauroz beckons to the executioner.

LAUROZ

Just get on with it.

Miguel puts his head down on the bench, still staring at Lauroz. The executioner swings the axe above his head, brings it down.

THUMP! Blood runs into the snow, staining it red.

EXT - CASTLE YARD - LATER

Lauroz and the priest stand in front of the stage.

LAUROZ

You will be richly rewarded.

PRIEST

Of course. The man was but a lowly peasant anyway. His cause is yet unknown.

LAUROZ

Exactly.

MARTHA (19) runs through the gate to the yard. Her long black hair flows over her shoulders, her skin pale, eyes hard. A striking woman. She is dressed in a threadbare cape.

She stops in front of the stage, observes the body and blood. She turns on Lauroz.

MARTHA
My God, what have you done?

The Priest avoids eye contact with Martha.

PRIEST
A thief was put to death today.
Justice has been done.

Martha advances on the priest. He backs away, frightened.

MARTHA
Justice! You call this justice?
This man is innocent of anything
you may have accused him of.

LAUROZ
He stole a chicken from the
monastery.

Martha stares at the bloody snow. Tears stream down her cheeks.

MARTHA
The only thing Miguel ever stole
was my heart. And for that, he has
paid dearly. If you thought this
would change my mind about marrying
you, you were wrong.

She bends down, takes a handful of the red snow, hesitates.
She throws it at Lauroz. It hits him in the face.

MARTHA (CONT'D)
By the blood of an innocent man, I
curse you. May you get everything
you deserve in life.

Lauroz wipes the snow from his face.

LAUROZ
This man was a thief.

MARTHA
Then I guess you have nothing to
worry about.

PRIEST
Witch! Witch!

Martha flees through the gate.

FADE OUT.