

BEGIN CINEMATIC CAMERA

EXT. TRAIN BRIDGE - NIGHT

PRUDENCE ABEYES and HAL MALLORET approach the bridge, a covered wooden truss. Pru curses under her breath when she sees a mob of townsfolk armed with torches and rustic farm implements. An older man, the MAYOR, stands at their head, wearing a waistcoat and hat. Pru, with effort, takes her hand off the axe in her belt. She steps forward, holding Hal's hand. Dogs howl and bark in the distance, growing closer each minute.

MAYOR CHRISTOPHE

Ms. Abeyes! I know you as an honourable woman. Give over the monster.

PRU

I will not! He's only a lad.

A man holding a bottle in one hand, a torch in the other speak from the middle of the crowd.

CLARENCE

He'll spoil our crops. Attack our children!

PRU

Clarence Pomeroy, is that you? You're more a danger to your children than poor Hal. You have some nerve calling him a monster!

MAN IN THE CROWD (V.O.)

She would defend it? She probably raised it herself with vile magic.

PRU

How dare you!

Pru drops Hal's hand and moves closer to the crowd. The light of their torches shines on her face, illuminating a woman pressed to the limit. Her eyes target different members of the mob as she speaks.

PRU

Tremblay, didn't my mother's remedies save your little girl from the wasting disease last winter? Isn't the honey from my hives given to the townspeople

for their use, save what I must  
 sell to live? Don't I bury your  
 dead - your auntie, Celia! And  
 Mayor, your own father? Treat  
 them with honour and respect that  
 their own families do not give  
 them?

The crowd murmurs; for a moment, it seems like Pru is  
 getting through to them.

PRU

I have been nothing but generous  
 with my time and service -

MAYOR

(interrupting)

That's not in question but -

PRU

(continuing)

- service I can no longer  
 provide, because a mob of yokels  
 torched my home and destroyed my  
 hives. My ancestral book is gone.  
 You've left me clanless!

MAYOR

It's been a long day. A stressful  
 one. I'll take the creature into  
 protective custody for tonight.  
 We can settle this tomorrow, when  
 our emotions aren't so high.

PRU

You assholes killed my dog!

The baying hounds suddenly burst onto the scene from the  
 woods, starved and slavering. Their handler, FERGUS, is  
 an older man with a moth-eaten fur cap and ragged, silver  
 hair.

FERGUS

Ha! Cornered ya bastards!

The dogs barrel into Hal like furry steam engines,  
 eagerly whining. Without hesitation, Pru draws the axe  
 from her belt and wades into the fray. One of the dogs  
 yelps when she smacks it with the flat of the blade.

FERGUS

Hey now, there's no call for  
 violence!

PRU

No call? NO CALL?! Siccing your  
starving mutts on poor, lost soul  
dragged here from the ghostlands?  
He's a lad, not a chew toy.

She lunges at another dog who shies away from her weapon, and drags a third away from Hal by the hind legs. The first dog, recovering, slinks around her side, spume trailing from its mouth. Hal is very still, from shock or fear, or both. Fergus tugs on the Mayor's arm.

FERGUS

Get her off my dogs!

PRU

Get them off my friend!

MAYOR

Right, that's quite enough -

The Mayor steps forward, as if to take control. Spotting the circling dog, Pru swings. The dog skips backwards into the Mayor's legs. He stumbles and falls. At the sight, the crowd sweels forward to defend their mayor from this assault. A torch drops on dried grass, flaring and blinding Pru. The axe is twisted out of her hand and a booted foot lands in her stomach, knocking the wind from her. Wood splinters nearby.

HAL

Auntie! Pru!

PRU

Hal! No! Get away from him. Hal!

A roar erupts from the crowd, too animalistic to be a cheer. It ebbs into silence as the far away sound of bones shattering on rock echoes across the canyon.

PRU

Hal? HAL!

FERGUS

Best you leave, Ms. Abeyes.  
Unless you wants to be next.

He spits on her. Pru doesn't flinch, only stares at the hole in the truss' lattice. Spit drips down her face onto her hands, clasped tightly together, as if to keep herself from shaking apart.

FERGUS

Thanks for the axe.

END CINEMATIC CAMERA.