

7 RAVENS & A SHIELDMAIDEN

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24-page comic script (5-page excerpt)

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CHARACTER NOTES

SWENJA: Ever-optimistic, cheerful, and eager to prove her worth, Swenja's most toxic trait is that she takes other people's burdens upon herself—especially those of her brothers. She is determined to save her brothers from a family curse. She blames herself for their situation, and believes it falls on her to fix her family.

ARNO: As the oldest of eight children, Arno never had much of a childhood. Responsibility and maturity were forced upon him from a very young age. Deep down, he resents his siblings for this. In temperament, he is world-weary and subdued. He frets constantly over wasted time, and pines after roads not taken.

LAURENZ: Laurenz is a coward. The seventh of eight children, he enjoyed being the “baby” until his sister was born. Of all the siblings, he is most critical of her. At the same time, however, he is more than happy to take advantage of her kindness.

PAGE ONE — FOUR PANELS

PANEL ONE

A wide view of seven brothers (barely visible from this distance) as they gather around a great, magical well inscribed with runes. From far away, it is clear that they vary in age, from just a few years old to about 16.

1. CAP - FLOATING: SIXTEEN YEAR AGO

2. KONRAD (OP): We can't let them do this.

PANEL TWO

FYNN, a 12 year old with gold hair and blue eyes, looks at his two older brothers. He carries a swaddled bundle in his arms. An infant's hand pokes out. KONRAD, a stern-looking 14 year old, stands with arms folded. ARNO, 16 years old, holds hands with LAURENZ. ARNO looks far too world-weary for a boy his age. LAURENZ, at 5 years old, is the youngest brother. LAURENZ looks scared, and he's clearly just confused, not following the conversation. The twins ISAAK and DIETRICH look at each other with the same concerned expression on their faces. MARCO, at only 11 years old, is already the tallest of his brothers. He is lanky and freckled. They are dirty, their clothes are threadbare and patched. German clothing, early 1800s attire.

3. MARCO: But what would father do to us?

4. CAP - SWENJA: What would you be willing to do for family?

PANEL THREE

ARNO rubs his tired eyes. KONRAD gets in ARNO's face, pointing at the bundle in FYNN's arms.

5. ARNO: Why can't we just do as we're told?

6. KONRAD: Look at her, Arno. She's *innocent!* You think she deserves this?

PANEL FOUR

Close up of baby SWENJA. She giggles, smiling toothlessly up at FYNN, who smiles back down at her.

7. CAP - SWENJA: What *wouldn't* you do?

PAGE TWO — SEVEN PANELS

PANEL ONE

FYNN's smile has faded. He looks down at baby SWENJA, serious and resolute.

1. FYNN: I'm with Konrad. I don't care what Mother and Father do to us. I won't let them hurt her.

PANEL TWO

Close up of KONRAD. He looks hopeful at hearing someone agree with him.

PANEL THREE

ARNO sighs, shoulders hunched. He looks at the rim of the magic well beside him where magic symbols stand out in carved relief.

PANEL FOUR

Close up of the magical symbol on the rim of the well.

PANEL FIVE

ARNO looks down at the palm of his right hand.

PANEL SIX

A close up of ARNO's hand. The same runic symbol inscribed on the rim of the well is burned into his flesh. The wound is old and healed, but well-defined.

2. CAP - SWENJA: And where do you draw the line between the two?

PANEL SEVEN

ARNO balls his fist over the burn mark.

3. ARNO: You're right.

PAGE THREE — FOUR PANELS

PANEL ONE

The seven brothers look at each other. KONRAD smiles, hopeful. So does FYNN. MARCO looks scared. The twins smile mischievously. ARNO sets his jaw. Little LAURENZ rubs his eyes.

1. KONRAD: Do we all agree, then?
2. MARCO: To disobey Mother and Father?
3. ARNO: Yes. It's the only way to protect Swenja.

PANEL TWO

ARNO squares his shoulders, and addresses his brothers. For the first time in this conversation, he stands tall. Like a leader.

4. ARNO: We need a plan. We can't just go back empty-handed. We'll need to hide her. Somewhere far away. Somewhere they can't find her.

PANEL THREE

MARCO looks confused. KONRAD's eyes bulge with realization and horror. FYNN is concerned, and holds SWENJA close.

5. FYNN: Shouldn't she stay with us?
6. KONRAD: Wait. Arno. You don't mean—
7. ARNO: We give her to the Unknown.

PANEL FOUR

KONRAD gets in ARNO's face again. ARNO is not swayed. In the background, FYNN steps away from his two older brothers, his baby sister clutched to his chest.

8. KONRAD: You have any idea how dangerous that is? There are worse things down there than our parents!
9. ARNO: Got any better ideas? It's the only place they can't get to her.

PAGE FOUR — THREE PANELS

PANEL ONE

The sky darkens. A disembodied voice rings out all around them. It is a voice they know all too well. The brothers are all terrified. LAURENZ clutches ARNO, terrified. The dialogue of FATHER could be expressed in a dark, sinister font.

1. SFX (THUNDER): CROOOM!
2. FATHER (OP): I'm disappointed in you, boys.
3. ARNO: Father's found us!
4. KONRAD: What do we do?

PANEL TWO

Close up of FYNN. He looks desperately from SWENJA to the magic well.

4. DIETRICH (OP): He's coming!
5. MARCO (OP): Do something, Arno!

PANEL THREE

ARNO is frozen to the spot. Magical energy coils around him. Black feathers start sprouting from his skin.

6. FATHER (OP): What will your mother think when she hears of this? You will all have to be **punished**.

PAGE FIVE — THREE PANELS

PANEL ONE

Close up on FYNN. A tear rolls down FYNN's cheek as he kisses baby SWENJA on the forehead. Black feathers are sprouting around his eyes, and the hand that cradles his baby sister is turning into a bird-like talon.

1. FYNN (SMALL): *Find us.*

PANEL TWO

FYNN drops baby SWENJA down the well. He's throwing the child toward us, while behind him, a terrifying shadowy figure descends from the sky in smoke. Magic strikes down on each of the brothers, all of whom are being transformed into ravens.

2. FATHER: Fynn? No. STOP!

PANEL THREE

Close up of baby SWENJA crying as she falls into the darkness.

3. SWENJA (OP): These are the questions I ask myself constantly. But over and over again, my heart sings out the same answer...

PAGE SIX — SPLASH PAGE

PANEL ONE

Close up on SWENJA's face. She is 16 years old. Her chainmail hood and metal helmet are askew, both of which are a bit too big for her. Tresses of her raven-black curly hair poke out from beneath her helmet. Her left brow is cut. Her left eye is swollen. She's missing a tooth. She's disheveled and dazed, yet defiant. Like a boxer who refuses to stay down out of sheer force of will.

1. CAP - FLOATING: TODAY

2. CAP - SWENJA: ... there's nothing I wouldn't do to save my brothers.