

05 Full Stage Script

Grandfather's Sword

A two-act stage musical adapted from the novella.

Script Notes

Grandfather's Sword is magical and memory-bearing, but it is not a speaking character. Sword memories are staged through light, music, and ensemble movement.

Characters

- Owen: A young man in Act I; husband and father in Act II.
- Clara: A prisoner of Maab in Act I; Owen's wife in Act II.
- Harlan: Owen's grandfather, a retired legend.
- Maab: The Wild Queen.
- Mother: Owen's mother.
- Daniel: Owen's father, deceased; appears in funeral and memory.
- Sarah: Owen and Clara's daughter.
- Thom: Owen and Clara's son.
- Parson: Village cleric; may double.
- Neighbor / Messenger: May double with ensemble.
- Ensemble: Villagers, memory figures, redcaps, forest creatures, Maab's court.
- Clara's Mother: A memory figure; may be doubled by Mother or ensemble.

Setting

A village at the edge of an ancient forest; Owen's cottage; Maab's tower; Maab's forest heart.

The production should use a flexible stage vocabulary: a hearth, a few boundary stones, a table, a bench, a sword, fabric/vines, and ensemble transformation.

ACT I

Sequence One: Funeral / Wake / Sword Passed

Scene 1: Daniel's Funeral

[Rain. Not literal water: sound, umbrellas, gray light. A coffin rests near center. Boundary stones sit dimly at the edge of the stage, not yet important. Villagers gather in black and muted wool.]

[OWEN stands apart, coat too thin, hands clenched. MOTHER stands closer to the coffin, composed by force. The PARSON speaks quietly. DANIEL may be represented by the coffin, a still actor, or a memory silhouette.]

PARSON:

We return Daniel to the earth that fed him, the rain that knew him, and the hands of the mercy that waits beyond winter.

[OWEN looks away.]

PARSON:

He was a husband, a father, a neighbor. A man of quiet labor. A man who mended what others broke.

[A stir moves through the villagers. HARLAN enters. He is old, broad, weathered, and too late. Villagers make room for him as if making room for weather.]

OWEN:

Of course.

MOTHER:

Owen.

OWEN:

No. Let him hear it.

[HARLAN stops beside the coffin. He lays one hand on it. For a moment the legend falls away.]

HARLAN:

Daniel.

[He cannot say more.]

PARSON:

Ash to ash. Root to root. May the hearth remember him.

[The ensemble begins to sing.]

SONG: "Grandfather's Sword"

Suggested singers: Ensemble, Harlan, Owen fragments near the end.

Staging: The song begins as funeral memory. The wrapped sword appears only gradually, carried by

Harlan or revealed near him. Ensemble figures briefly show past roads, storms, and graves around the stillness of Daniel's coffin.

[At the end of the song, the villagers disperse slowly. MOTHER accepts condolences. OWEN remains fixed, staring at HARLAN.]

MOTHER:

Come inside before the rain takes the last of your warmth.

OWEN:

I'll come.

MOTHER:

That is not the same as coming now.

OWEN:

I said I'll come.

[MOTHER looks between OWEN and HARLAN. She exits with the last villagers.]

HARLAN:

You grew.

OWEN:

People do that when years pass.

HARLAN:

Owen.

OWEN:

Did you know he asked for you?

[HARLAN absorbs it.]

OWEN:

Near the end. Not loudly. He wasn't a loud man. But he asked.

HARLAN:

I was on the north road.

OWEN:

You were always on a road.

HARLAN:

Yes.

OWEN:

That's all?

HARLAN:

No. But it is the part I cannot mend.

[A silence. HARLAN lifts a long oilcloth bundle.]

OWEN:

What is that?

HARLAN:

What's left.

[Lights shift toward the cottage.]

Scene 2: The Wake

[The cottage. Warm but cramped. A table, hearth, Daniel's empty chair. Villagers pass cups, murmur, exit. MOTHER moves like someone keeping the roof up by habit.]

MOTHER:

There is stew if either of you remember you have bodies.

OWEN:

I'm not hungry.

MOTHER:

No one is hungry at a wake. We eat because the living are inconvenient that way.

[HARLAN almost smiles. MOTHER notices, and the old hurt between them is clear.]

HARLAN:

I'm sorry.

MOTHER:

For which part?

HARLAN:

All the parts I can name. More for the ones I cannot.

MOTHER:

Then start with my son. He has been holding his face together all morning.

[MOTHER exits to the back room. OWEN and HARLAN are alone.]

OWEN:

Don't.

HARLAN:

I haven't said anything.

OWEN:

You came with a bundle. Men like you never bring comfort in a bundle.

HARLAN:

Your father never wanted this.

OWEN:

Good. Then bury it with him.

HARLAN:

He refused it.

OWEN:

He refused you.

HARLAN:

Yes.

[That answer lands harder than OWEN expected.]

HARLAN:

He chose home. I did not. Maybe he was wiser.

OWEN:

Maybe?

[HARLAN unwraps the sword. The hearth sigil catches light.]

HARLAN:

Grandfather's Sword.

OWEN:

I know what it is.

HARLAN:

It's yours now.

OWEN:

No.

HARLAN:

Owen--

OWEN:

No. You don't walk in after years, put that thing on our table, and call it mine.

HARLAN:

I am finished.

OWEN:

Finished? Father is finished. You are tired.

HARLAN:

Tired men can still be dangerous.

OWEN:

Is that meant to frighten me?

HARLAN:

It is meant to warn you.

[HARLAN takes the sword. OWEN does not.]

SONG: "The Grandfather"

Suggested singer: Harlan, with memory ensemble.

Staging: This must be active, not static. Harlan offers the sword more than once. Owen refuses, circles, interrupts physically, turns away. The ensemble becomes past sword-bearers, wounded companions, graves, roads, and doors left behind. DANIEL appears in memory and silently refuses the blade. Owen sees this but misunderstands it as surrender rather than courage.

[As the song ends, HARLAN places the sword on the table, not in OWEN's hand.]

HARLAN:

I give you not a hero's prize.

OWEN:

Then what?

HARLAN:

The truth I should have brought home sooner.

OWEN:

Get out.

HARLAN:

I will sleep in the shed.

OWEN:

I said get out.

MOTHER:

[From the doorway.]

He will sleep in the shed.

[OWEN looks at her, betrayed.]

MOTHER:

We do not throw old men into rain on funeral nights. Even when they have earned it.

[HARLAN nods once and exits. MOTHER approaches OWEN.]

MOTHER:

Do not let that sword tell you what your father was.

OWEN:

It doesn't speak.

MOTHER:

Things do not need tongues to lie.

[She exits. OWEN is alone with the sword.]

Sequence Two: Sword Memories / Boundary / First Blood

Scene 3: Hearth At Night

[Night. The cottage is quiet. OWEN cannot sleep. The sword lies on the table.]

OWEN:

You ruined him.

[He touches the hilt. A pulse of light. Ensemble figures emerge from darkness: younger HARLAN, past wielders, monsters, DANIEL.]

OWEN:

No.

[The sword memories move. Battles flash briefly: not realistic combat, but fragments. Harlan victorious, then wounded. A door closing. Daniel refusing the sword. A tower silhouette.]

OWEN:

Father?

[DANIEL turns away from the sword and toward an unseen home.]

OWEN:

Why? Why would you leave this sitting above the hearth if you were so afraid of it?

[The tower grows clearer. A woman's silhouette behind vines.]

OWEN:

Who's there?

[A cold green light. The ensemble whispers without forming words.]

HARLAN:

[Entering, having heard movement.]

You saw something.

OWEN:

You knew.

HARLAN:

The blade keeps memory.

OWEN:

There is someone in a tower.

HARLAN:

Maab's tower.

OWEN:

You left her there?

HARLAN:

I never reached her.

OWEN:

Father?

HARLAN:

He chose not to try.

OWEN:

So everyone chose. Everyone but her.

HARLAN:

That forest takes more than courage to cross.

OWEN:

Good. Then courage will be a start.

HARLAN:

Listen to me. If the sword shows you a road, that does not mean the road is yours.

OWEN:

That's very convenient advice from the man who walked every road but the one home.

[OWEN belts on the sword, awkwardly.]

HARLAN:

You are angry.

OWEN:

Yes.

HARLAN:

Anger makes a poor lantern.

OWEN:

Then I'll stumble.

[OWEN exits toward dawn.]

Scene 4: Boundary Stones

[The boundary stones. The cottage light glows behind OWEN. Forest ahead. The ensemble becomes trees.]

HARLAN:

[Appearing behind him.]

Last chance.

OWEN:

To do what? Stay and become my father?

HARLAN:

If you understood what that meant, you would say it with more respect.

OWEN:

I will come back with the prisoner.

HARLAN:

You may come back with blood you cannot wash off.

OWEN:

Did you?

HARLAN:

Every time.

[OWEN steps over the boundary. The forest closes.]

Scene 5: First Blood

[Redcaps emerge. Sharp hats, quick knives, chattering laughs.]

REDCAP ONE:

Fresh village meat.

REDCAP TWO:

With old steel.

OWEN:

I don't want trouble.

REDCAP ONE:

Then why bring a sword?

[They attack. OWEN is clumsy. The sword seems to remember forms his body does not. He survives. One redcap dies.]

[Silence after the violence.]

OWEN:

No. No, get up.

REDCAP TWO:

[Backing away.]

Maab will know.

OWEN:

Wait.

REDCAP TWO:

She knows all debts paid in her soil.

[The redcap vanishes. OWEN stares at the body.]

HARLAN'S MEMORY:

Every first kill is a debt.

OWEN:

I didn't ask you.

HARLAN'S MEMORY:

None of us ask the dead to stay with us.

[OWEN wipes the blade badly, sickened, and presses deeper into the forest.]

Sequence Three: Tower / Clara

Scene 6: Maab's Tower

[A tower suggested by height, shadow, vines, and twisted iron. OWEN enters.]

OWEN:

Hello?

[The tower echoes. Broken shields and old cloth hang from the ensemble. The sword catches fragments of previous failed rescues.]

OWEN:

How many came here?

[No answer. He climbs.]

Scene 7: Clara's Chamber

[CLARA alone in the tower. Vines bind the room, but she has made small marks, hidden scraps, and signs of survival. She watches the road through a high window.]

SONG: "The Maiden in the Tower"

Suggested singer: Clara.

Staging: Clara tests her bonds, marks time, hides a charm, listens for Maab, and keeps herself mentally alive. Owen should not dominate the song; he may appear near the end or just after.

[OWEN appears at the chamber entrance, breathless.]

OWEN:

Are you hurt?

CLARA:

That depends who sent you.

OWEN:

No one sent me.

CLARA:

Then you're either lying or foolish.

OWEN:

My name is Owen.

CLARA:

Clara.

OWEN:

I saw you in the sword.

CLARA:

Of course you did. She likes using bait that looks like rescue.

OWEN:

Maab?

CLARA:

Do not say her name loudly here.

OWEN:

Why are you here?

CLARA:

My mother served the Wild Queen. She owed a debt she could not finish paying.

OWEN:

So Maab took you?

CLARA:

Not took. Claimed. She prefers words that sound lawful.

OWEN:

I'll cut you free.

CLARA:

Not yet.

OWEN:

Not yet?

CLARA:

This room is a bargain. The vines are only the lock.

[Green light. MAAB appears or is revealed, magnificent and terrible.]

MAAB:

How quickly boys reach for blades when they do not understand doors.

OWEN:

Let her go.

MAAB:

I did not invite you to command me in my own house.

CLARA:

Owen. Listen.

[The THORN CROWN appears: suspended, carried, or lit. It is beautiful.]

MAAB:

There. The crown men dream of when they call themselves heroes. Take it, heir of old steel. Take strength. Take renown. Take the song your grandfather wanted.

OWEN:

And Clara?

MAAB:

The girl remains.

CLARA:

That is the bargain. It is always the bargain.

MAAB:

One prize. A crown, or a debt-bought girl whose mother should have taught her not to hope.

OWEN:

Why?

MAAB:

Because choices reveal appetite. Heroes come hungry.

OWEN:

I'm not a hero.

MAAB:

Not yet.

Sequence Four: Thorn Crown / Escape / Unpaid Debt

Scene 8: The Choice

[The Crown glows. Vines tighten around CLARA.]

CLARA:

If you take it, she will use you.

MAAB:

If he takes it, he will become what he was bred to be.

[OWEN looks at the Crown, then at the sword, then at CLARA.]

OWEN:

My father refused this life.

MAAB:

And died poor.

OWEN:

My grandfather chased it.

MAAB:

And became a name.

OWEN:

Names don't sit beside you when the fire goes low.

[He turns from the Crown.]

MAAB:

Careful.

OWEN:

I'm not here for her games.

[He cuts toward CLARA. Vines lash him. CLARA works from within, pulling where the vines are weakest.]

CLARA:

Low. Cut low. The root feeds from beneath.

OWEN:

How do you know?

CLARA:

My mother taught me what to do with pretty traps.

[Together they break the binding enough for CLARA to fall free.]

MAAB:

Foolish child.

OWEN:

Run.

CLARA:

Gladly.

Scene 9: Escape To The Boundary

[The tower becomes forest. Ensemble creatures pursue. OWEN and CLARA flee.]

OWEN:

This way.

CLARA:

That path wasn't there before.

OWEN:

Is that bad?

CLARA:

In this forest, a path appearing is rarely generosity.

[A creature lunges. CLARA grabs a fallen branch and drives it back.]

OWEN:

You can fight.

CLARA:

I can survive. Fighting is louder.

[She pulls a small charm from her dress.]

CLARA:

My mother's.

OWEN:

Will it help?

CLARA:

For a little while. Her gifts usually do.

[They reach the boundary stones. The cottage light is far beyond.]

OWEN:

Cross.

CLARA:

Wait.

OWEN:

They are behind us.

CLARA:

So is she.

[MAAB appears in the forest darkness.]

MAAB:

Did you think a door ends a debt?

OWEN:

She is free.

MAAB:

She is delayed.

CLARA:

My mother paid you.

MAAB:

Your mother served me. There is a difference.

CLARA:

She died serving you.

MAAB:

And left a daughter.

OWEN:

You can't have her.

MAAB:

All mortals say that when holding what is not theirs to keep.

[A thorn curls around CLARA's wrist or her charm darkens.]

CLARA:

Owen.

MAAB:

A debt unpaid does not die. It waits.

[CLARA looks at the boundary, then at OWEN.]

CLARA:

If I cross, she follows.

OWEN:

Then we learn how to close the door.

CLARA:

Together?

OWEN:

Together.

[They cross the boundary. The stones flare. MAAB remains beyond them, smiling.]

MAAB:

Build your little fire.

[Blackout.]

END OF ACT I

ACT II

Sequence Five: Home Years Later

Scene 1: Domestic Montage

[Dawn warmth. The same cottage, fuller now. A repaired table. Children's things. The sword hangs above the hearth, dusty, quiet.]

[Music underscores lightly: title theme, gentler. CLARA kneads bread. OWEN mends a shirt badly. Sarah runs through with a ribbon. THOM follows with a wooden sword. HARLAN, older and softer, tries to stack firewood indoors and is gently corrected by everyone.]

CLARA:

Not there.

HARLAN:

Wood belongs near the fire.

CLARA:

Not in the soup.

HARLAN:

In my defense, the soup moved.

SARAH:

Soup doesn't move.

THOM:

It does if it's afraid.

OWEN:

Your grandfather has that effect on vegetables.

HARLAN:

Great-grandfather. If you are going to insult me, girl, use the full honor.

SARAH:

Great-grandfather makes soup afraid.

[CLARA laughs. OWEN looks at her. This is the life they made.]

CLARA:

You're staring.

OWEN:

I'm mending.

CLARA:

You have sewn the sleeve to your knee.

[OWEN looks. He has.]

OWEN:

Practical. He'll never lose the shirt.

[They share a married smile.]

Scene 2: A Small Road Opportunity

[A NEIGHBOR or MESSENGER enters at the door, hesitant.]

NEIGHBOR:

Owen?

OWEN:

Come in.

NEIGHBOR:

I won't. Not with muddy boots. There is word from the east road. Something took two goats near Miller's Hollow.

HARLAN:

Wolves?

NEIGHBOR:

Maybe. Maybe worse. They asked if the sword--

[The room stills.]

NEIGHBOR:

If Owen might come look.

CLARA:

Miller's Hollow is a day's walk.

NEIGHBOR:

There would be coin. Not much. But some.

OWEN:

I'll think on it.

NEIGHBOR:

They leave at noon.

[NEIGHBOR exits. OWEN glances at the sword. CLARA sees.]

CLARA:

You said you would think.

OWEN:

I am thinking.

CLARA:

With your eyes on the sword.

OWEN:

Two goats can become two children if the wrong thing is hungry.

CLARA:

And one day becomes two. And two becomes winter. And winter becomes a letter that never comes.

OWEN:

Clara--

CLARA:

Do not gentle my name. Not while you are measuring the road.

[The children are ushered upstairs or to the side by HARLAN.]

HARLAN:

Come. I require advice on frightening soup.

SARAH:

It needs teeth.

THOM:

And a sword.

[They exit. CLARA and OWEN remain.]

SONG: "The Wife Left at Home"

Suggested singer: Clara.

Staging: Clara sings to Owen and to the sword over the hearth. The children may be visible asleep above or in soft light. Owen listens; he should not defend himself through the song. The number begins in anger and ends in love's plea: return, or better, do not let the sword take all of you.

[After the song, OWEN slowly takes the sword down. CLARA watches, wounded. He wraps it and places it back above the hearth.]

OWEN:

I will send Harlan to Miller's Hollow with our old spear and my apologies.

CLARA:

Harlan?

OWEN:

He frightens soup. Imagine what he can do to goats.

[A fragile laugh through tears.]

OWEN:

I choose here.

CLARA:

I know.

OWEN:

No. I need to say it when the sword can hear. I choose here.

[The sword is silent.]

Scene 3: The Wooden Sword

[Day. Yard/cottage. THOM plays with a wooden sword. Sarah participates, half-amused, half-commanding.]

SARAH:

I am not being rescued from the well again.

THOM:

It is a dragon well this time.

SARAH:

Then you can fall in it.

[OWEN, CLARA, and HARLAN watch from different places.]

SONG: "The Son"

Suggested singer: Thom, with Sarah and family/ensemble support as desired.

Staging: The song should be charming and troubling at once. Thom's play is innocent. The adults hear the danger underneath. The wooden sword becomes the visual seed of the inheritance problem.

[At the end, THOM offers OWEN the wooden sword.]

THOM:

Was I brave?

OWEN:

Very.

THOM:

As brave as you?

OWEN:

Braver. I didn't have to face your sister.

SARAH:

I am fearsome.

CLARA:

Terribly.

[CLARA looks toward the boundary.]

OWEN:

What is it?

CLARA:

Nothing.

HARLAN:

There is no such thing as nothing at the forest edge.

CLARA:

Then perhaps the wind.

Sequence Six: Clara Taken / Owen Leaves

Scene 4: Dusk At The Boundary

[CLARA with basket or cloak, gathering mushrooms/herbs near the boundary. This must feel ordinary: the danger arrives through the ordinary.]

CLARA:

Just enough for soup. No bargains. No heroics. Just soup.

[Green light. A whisper.]

MAAB:

Clara.

[CLARA freezes.]

CLARA:

No.

MAAB:

Come home.

CLARA:

This is home.

[Vines or fabric move. CLARA fights, using charm and herbs.]

CLARA:

Mother, help me remember.

MAAB:

Your mother remembered her place.

CLARA:

She remembered enough to hide knives in kindness.

[CLARA nearly breaks free, then the darkened charm/old thorn flares. She is pulled into forest shadow.]

CLARA:

Owen!

[Lights snap to cottage.]

Scene 5: The Empty Door

[OWEN searches. Sarah and THOM are frightened. HARLAN stands near the door, alert.]

OWEN:

Clara!

SARAH:

Where's Mama?

OWEN:

Inside. Both of you.

THOM:

I heard her.

OWEN:

Inside.

[Sarah sees the fear in him.]

SARAH:

Will you bring Mama home?

[OWEN cannot answer quickly. That hurts more.]

HARLAN:

Yes.

[OWEN looks at HARLAN.]

HARLAN:

He will.

OWEN:

I can't leave them.

HARLAN:

You are not leaving them. You are going to their mother.

OWEN:

That sounds like the lie you told yourself for forty years.

HARLAN:

Yes. So hear me say the part I never said: I will stay.

[A beat.]

HARLAN:

I will stay with them. I will bar the door. I will burn the furniture if the fire dies. I will tell terrible stories. I will not move from this hearth until you bring her back.

THOM:

Can I come?

OWEN:

No.

THOM:

I have a sword.

[He holds up the wooden sword. OWEN kneels.]

OWEN:

Then I need you here. Guard Sarah. Guard Granddad from the soup.

THOM:

But--

OWEN:

Bravery is not always going.

[THOM tries to understand.]

SARAH:

Sometimes it's staying?

[OWEN looks at HARLAN.]

OWEN:

Sometimes.

[OWEN takes the real sword down.]

HARLAN:

Take Clara's mother's charm.

OWEN:

It failed her.

HARLAN:

No. It brought the warning home.

[OWEN takes it.]

OWEN:

Keep the hearth warm.

SARAH:
Bring Mama.

OWEN:
I will.

[He exits across the boundary.]

Sequence Seven: Forest Return / Clara Resists

Scene 6: Owen's Return To The Forest

[Forest. OWEN moves with more skill than Act I, but no swagger.]

OWEN:
Maab!

[Forest creatures appear and vanish.]

OWEN:
I don't want your crowns. I don't want your gold. I want my wife.

[A shadow hound lunges. He drives it back. A goblin/creature falls wounded. OWEN raises the sword, then stops.]

OWEN:
Go.

[The creature hisses.]

OWEN:
Tell her I am coming.

[It flees.]

Scene 7: Clara's Binding

[Maab's forest chamber. CLARA wakes bound by roots and silver cords. MAAB stands over her. CLARA'S MOTHER appears in memory: not a ghost who explains, but an image of hands sorting herbs, tying a charm, teaching breath.]

MAAB:
You grew soft beside a mortal fire.

CLARA:
Warm. Not soft.

MAAB:
The debt of blood must be paid.

CLARA:
My mother is dead.

MAAB:
And still useful.

CLARA:
That is all anyone is to you.

MAAB:
No. Some are mine.

CLARA:
I am not.

MAAB:
Your mother promised service.

CLARA:
My mother taught me how to survive service.

[MAAB begins a binding ritual. CLARA quietly uses a hidden herb pouch or strand of hair.]

CLARA'S MOTHER:
[Memory, soft.]
Root with leaf. Truth with silence. Breathe where the knot is weakest.

CLARA:
[Barely audible.]
I remember.

MAAB:
What was that?

CLARA:
I said I remember.

MAAB:
Good.

[MAAB does not realize CLARA has begun to tangle the spell.]

Sequence Eight: Maab's Court / Final Confrontation

Scene 8: The Taxless Queen

[The forest heart expands. MAAB's court appears: redcaps, goblins, trolls suggested by masks and movement, shadow creatures, ravens, roots. Some are frightening. Some are mourned.]

SONG: "The Taxless Queen"

Suggested singer: Maab, with forest court/ensemble.

Staging: Maab's grief is real. Her children are not sanitized; they are dangerous beings, but they are hers. The number must end in threat, not forgiveness. Owen may enter near the end or immediately after.

[At the end of the song, OWEN enters the forest heart.]

OWEN:

Let her go.

MAAB:

Again those words. Again that sword.

OWEN:

This is between us.

CLARA:

No. It is not.

[CLARA lifts her head. She is weakened but clear.]

CLARA:

She wants you to think I am the prize. I am not. I am the door she keeps trying to force open.

MAAB:

Be silent.

CLARA:

Make me.

[MAAB raises a hand. CLARA gasps but resists.]

OWEN:

Clara.

CLARA:

I am here.

MAAB:

You could have had the Thorn Crown. You could have broken my forest. You chose a woman.

OWEN:

I chose a life.

MAAB:

Life? Your kind makes life with one hand and graves with the other. Ask my children what your heroes bring.

OWEN:

Some of your children eat ours.

MAAB:

And yours cut down mine and call it song.

OWEN:

Then let it end.

MAAB:

It ends when the sword line ends.

[Roots snare OWEN. He struggles.]

CLARA:

Owen, the binding is not in the roots.

OWEN:

Where?

CLARA:

The bargain. She tied it to the bargain.

[The Thorn Crown or a thorn knot appears again.]

MAAB:

Take power and lose her. Take her and lose power. Choose as men always choose.

OWEN:

No.

MAAB:

There is no third door.

OWEN:

There is home.

[OWEN drives the sword down between Crown and Clara, not at Maab. Light flares from the hearth sigil.]

OWEN:

I choose to return. I choose my family. I choose to come home.

[CLARA pulls against the binding at the same moment, using her mother's remembered gesture. The vines snap.]

MAAB:

No!

[CLARA falls. OWEN catches her.]

CLARA:

Took you long enough.

OWEN:

I stopped for directions.

CLARA:

From whom?

OWEN:

Something with too many teeth.

CLARA:

Never trust those.

[They almost laugh. MAAB rises, furious.]

Scene 9: The Hoard

[The forest heart reveals Maab's hoard: crowns, blades, jewels, charms. It should be tempting but unsettling.]

MAAB:

Take her, then. Take your sweet little victory. But every victor takes a prize.

OWEN:

I don't want one.

MAAB:

All men want one.

[The hoard glows. OWEN sees visions: power, conquest, Maab kneeling, the forest mastered.]

CLARA:

Owen.

[The visions break.]

OWEN:

Not power.

[He selects only practical items: a plain purse, needle case, healing draught, hearth-warding stone.]

MAAB:

Trinkets.

OWEN:

Coin buys winter flour. Needles mend what tears. Medicine keeps fever from becoming a funeral.

MAAB:

You stand in a queen's hoard and choose housework.

CLARA:

He learns.

OWEN:

I choose what brings us home.

Sequence Nine: Boundary Restored

Scene 10: The Last Threat

[MAAB, diminished but not beaten in spirit, watches them.]

MAAB:

Take your comforts. Take your wife. Your children will grow. They will wander. Boys reach for sticks and call them swords. Girls hear roads singing. I can wait longer than your blood can remember.

[OWEN's anger rises. The sword brightens.]

CLARA:

Owen.

[He could strike Maab. He does not.]

OWEN:

No.

MAAB:

No?

OWEN:

If I kill you, they inherit that too.

MAAB:

Mercy?

OWEN:

A boundary.

[He turns the sword point-down.]

MAAB:

You cannot command the forest.

OWEN:

I don't have to.

[He drives the sword into the earth. The boundary stones appear around the stage, one by one, lit by gold hearth-fire.]

OWEN:

I only have to bring back what belongs home.

[The stones flare. Ensemble becomes boundary, roots, light, living thorn. MAAB strikes against an invisible line.]

MAAB:

You bar me from what is owed.

CLARA:

No. From what is not yours.

MAAB:

The forest remembers!

OWEN:

So will we.

[The forest folds around MAAB, containing but not destroying her. For one moment, she is ancient grief in thorns.]

MAAB:

Then keep your hearth bright, swordbearer.

[She vanishes into green dark.]

CLARA:

Home?

OWEN:

Home.

Sequence Ten: Homecoming

Scene 11: Dawn At The Cottage

[The cottage threshold at dawn. HARLAN sits awake with Sarah and THOM asleep against him, or nearly asleep. The wooden sword lies nearby.]

SARAH:

[Waking.]

Granddad?

HARLAN:

Great-granddad.

SARAH:

I don't care.

HARLAN:

Fair.

THOM:

Did they come back?

[HARLAN looks toward the door. He does not know.]

HARLAN:

Not yet.

[Then: OWEN and CLARA appear beyond the boundary. HARLAN rises.]

HARLAN:

Children.

[Sarah and THOM run. CLARA drops to her knees and catches them. OWEN folds around all three.]

SARAH:

Mama!

THOM:

I guarded everything.

CLARA:

I can see that.

THOM:

The soup was afraid.

CLARA:

Very wise soup.

[HARLAN approaches OWEN. His eyes go to the sword.]

HARLAN:

You ended it?

OWEN:

No.

[A beat.]

OWEN:

We brought it home different.

[HARLAN's face breaks, just slightly.]

HARLAN:

Daniel would have understood that before either of us.

OWEN:

I know.

[MOTHER may appear in the doorway or as part of the community image, if casting allows.
Villagers/ensemble gather at a distance, not intruding.]

CLARA:

Where will you put it?

[OWEN looks at the sword.]

OWEN:

Not above the children's heads.

HARLAN:

Good.

OWEN:

Near the hearth. Where we can remember it. Not worship it.

[He carries the sword inside and lays it near the hearth, wrapped but visible.]

SONG: "Grandfather's Sword" reprise/finale

Suggested singers: Begin with Owen, Clara, Sarah, Thom, and Harlan; expand to company.

Staging: This is not a repeat of the opening's burden. The same musical idea now means chosen memory, family responsibility, and a legacy changed. The ensemble can reprise funeral images transformed into hearth images: roads become paths home, graves become names remembered, the sword becomes an object at rest.

[Final image: The family at the hearth. Boundary stones glow faintly at the edge of the stage. The forest remains beyond them, alive and dangerous, but held at its proper distance.]

END OF MUSICAL