

Mask of the Unicorn Warrior

by Y York

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Post Production Draft

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Dedication page
for Linda Hartzell

WHO

Tycho: The king designate; a young man.

Polo: The advisor to the king; former general, an older man.

Mercurial: The mysterious young woman.

Golan: (Golan) The prince; a soldier, Tycho's older brother.

Needle: The weaver; Mercurial's older sister.

Design note: The Wind is a character in the play. The sound of Wind should only be used when this character is present or approaching. Wind sounds cannot be used for atmosphere.

Warning: Characters lie. It's important for the actors and for the production to track their subtext and their truth, what they think, as juxtaposed to what they say.

WHEN AND WHERE

Never ago. A castle.

(Scene 1. A room in the castle. TYCHO and POLO. TYCHO with wedding attire. Clothing items strewn about. A crown sits on a pedestal.)

TYCHO Which do you prefer, Polo? The white or the gold?

POLO I prefer you come to your senses.

TYCHO The gold, yes? It is stronger—do you agree?

POLO If there were a mirror left in all the castle, you could decide for yourself.

TYCHO Come now, Polo, you're supposed to be the advisor. Advise me.

POLO Postpone this marriage, Tycho—

TYCHO I want to tell her which color—she will be here directly—

POLO You give her too much access. She roams the halls as if she were already your wife.

TYCHO She soon will be—

POLO Postpone until after you are crowned—

TYCHO I will not postpone—

POLO Until your knight returns from her land—

TYCHO One does not keep a princess waiting.

POLO That's the point—we have no proof of her royalty.

TYCHO The proof is in her bearing, in her every gesture.

POLO I don't deny her vitality—

TYCHO Her courage, her wisdom, her uncanny insight—I only hope to prove myself worthy of her.

POLO First prove yourself to the court—

TYCHO I will, Polo.

POLO They need to see something of your father's character in you.

TYCHO They must give me a chance—

POLO Do not ask patience of a court with no king.

TYCHO Then crown me today.

POLO If it were up to me alone... (Brief pause) If you should make a youthful blunder it will deepen their uncertainty about you.

TYCHO I make no blunder.

POLO You have enemies at court. If Mercurial is not of royal blood, they will use it against you.

(MERCURIAL sweeps in with trays of food. Around TYCHO she is filled with joy, affectionate joking, and carefree emotion.)

MERCURIAL Tycho! Your morning meal lies untouched. Good day to you, Polo.

TYCHO I thought it was some feast. I didn't know it was mine alone.

MERCURIAL Meat for your blood, bread for your muscles, and berries that you might never tire.

TYCHO Share it with me.

MERCURIAL I've already eaten twice this.

TYCHO Twice this?

MERCURIAL When I skip a meal my stomach can be heard in the next kingdom.

POLO An attractive thought.

MERCURIAL Oh no, I've shocked you again. I warned you that the princesses are more coarse where I come from.

POLO And this land of yours—?

MERCURIAL Please. If you want to question me, let it be in private. I believe it upsets Tycho—what is all this clothing?

TYCHO Polo is helping me select our wedding garments.

MERCURIAL (Joking earnestness.) But we are to marry on a hillside wearing nothing but dandelions.

POLO (to TYCHO) Is this the wisdom of which you speak?

TYCHO No, this is humor.

MERCURIAL I can wear mud and paint as long as the wedding is soon.

POLO I will take my leave.

MERCURIAL Oh no—I jest. I do not mean to offend.

POLO I will leave you to your private matters, Miss. Tycho, we will confer again. (He exits.)

TYCHO Of course.

MERCURIAL (Brief pause.) I swear he brings out a darker nature in me. I don't mean to scandalize him, but as soon as I sense his disapproval I can't help it.

TYCHO It would be good if you would try.

MERCURIAL I will try—I will succeed. Should I call him back to apologize?

TYCHO He is not so sensitive. Your amends can wait.

MERCURIAL Which of these am I to wear?

TYCHO Whichever you like. My mother wore the white.

MERCURIAL You choose.

TYCHO The red. For courage, for boldness. (Picks up a necklace.) My mother was a gentle soul. It is said I resemble her in character.

MERCURIAL Why look you so glum at that?

TYCHO Hers were not kingly traits. I fear I will be but half a king.

MERCURIAL Then don't be a king. We will run away, and you can be one complete husband instead of one half of a king.

TYCHO I can't do that. Everyone is counting on me to become like my father. He was a great leader.

MERCURIAL At nineteen?!

TYCHO No, at nineteen he was a silly boy.

MERCURIAL Well, there you have it. You're starting out exactly like your father. (Placing the crown on his head. TYCHO is made happy by her musings. She rhapsodizes.) Yes! And like your father before you, you shall assemble yourself one step at a time. You shall become a judge, a philosopher, a great leader of men. (Bows) A great king.

TYCHO With a great queen. Here, wear this. (The necklace.) My father gave it to my mother on their wedding day.

MERCURIAL I will wear it day and night.

TYCHO (joking) I will come by and check that you do.

MERCURIAL (ibid) Then I'd best tell you that we have moved our rooms.

TYCHO Again?

MERCURIAL Needle wants to be deeper within the castle.

TYCHO You had the most inner rooms.

MERCURIAL She found accommodation in the lower halls.

TYCHO She will turn the two of you into moles.

MERCURIAL Such is her fear.

TYCHO Was she always thus, or only since the shipwreck?

MERCURIAL ...I would not speak of my sister's fear in front of Polo.

TYCHO In front of Polo—?

(MERCURIAL gestures toward the entering POLO, who carries a mirror.)

TYCHO (continued, to MERCURIAL.) How did you know--

POLO With this you can select your garments yourself-

MERCURIAL No, Polo—

POLO (Insistent) Tycho will choose his garments!

MERCURIAL Do not turn it around. A mirror is all vanity. You will corrupt the entire palace.

POLO We are hardly corrupted by a reflection.

MERCURIAL I will tell Tycho how each color is reflected in his eye so that he may choose.

TYCHO ...You were supposed to destroy every mirror.

POLO I thought it prudent to keep one in case of emergency.

TYCHO (To MERCURIAL.) How can one hurt? One hidden away in a closet.

MERCURIAL What emergency? There is no “mirror emergency.”

POLO If someone were to fall, appearing to be dead—only his breath on a mirror would tell that life remained.

MERCURIAL I can tell when life remains. If it’s ever a question, ask me. Smash it, and save us from ourselves, Polo.

POLO (to TYCHO) Must I?

TYCHO (Torn, but relents.) Do as Mercurial asks.

POLO I don’t believe she did ask. I believe she commanded. (Exiting) You should wait until you are king to wear the crown.

TYCHO I— (Returns crown to pedestal)

MERCURIAL He should show more respect.

TYCHO I am still a boy to him, Mercurial. He means me no ill will—please don’t persist in this hostility. Compromise is surely possible—one mirror--it is some matter of pride with him.

MERCURIAL ...But pride is the issue.

TYCHO Leave him some. A man without pride is dangerous.

MERCURIAL It is my pride that I speak of. My corrupting vanity. My father charged me to rid this evil from myself. Please don’t ask me to break the promise to my dead father.

TYCHO I concede. But you must reconcile with Polo. He was advisor to my father. He is my oldest friend.

MERCURIAL I will try...but he must also try.

TYCHO Fair enough. How did you know he was coming? I heard nothing.

MERCURIAL ...I have keen senses. It is common in my land.

TYCHO Tell Polo. He is eager to know everything about your kingdom.

MERCURIAL And he shall.

TYCHO This strife will pass when my knight returns from your kingdom. When Polo has his proof, he will see you as I already do.

MERCURIAL ...I wish it could be sooner, but the voyage is long—and my ability to draw a map was far from expert. I fear we will be husband and wife before Polo can be satisfied--who enters now without announcement?

(Enter GOLAN.)

GOLAN Are you Tycho, son of Near?

TYCHO ...I am.

GOLAN Then prepare to meet your doom. (Raises his sword.)

TYCHO I am unarmed.

GOLAN May I suggest you remedy that?

(TYCHO retrieves his sword from his clothes heap.)

TYCHO I will punish this arrogance.

(MERCURIAL starts to exit.)

TYCHO Stay, Mercurial.

MERCURIAL I will get help.

TYCHO It isn't necessary. En garde.

(They fight.)

GOLAN It appears his majesty is in need of some instruction.

TYCHO Not from you.

(They fight. MERCURIAL tries to intervene.)

GOLAN Your filly would fight your battle.

TYCHO Keep away, Mercurial.

(She does. GOLAN and TYCHO fight.)

GOLAN Perhaps a nice border war would tighten these flabby muscles.

TYCHO I have muscle enough to defeat you.

(GOLAN disarms him. TYCHO loses his sword.)

GOLAN (With the sword at TYCHO's heart.) Any final words, my lord?

(MERCURIAL retrieves TYCHO's sword and attacks GOLAN.)

MERCURIAL Here's some final words for you!

TYCHO What--?

MERCURIAL Criminal, murderer, traitor, fiend—

(MERCURIAL and GOLAN fight. She is good, if somewhat clumsy.)

GOLAN (Playing.) I should have brought reinforcements.

MERCURIAL Here's some lesson, some instruction for you.

TYCHO Golan, enough! Mercurial, put down the sword.

MERCURIAL I can defeat this viper.

TYCHO (To MERCURIAL.) I will not have you fight my fight! Put up your sword, Golan.(GOLAN retreats.) Mercurial, my brother.

MERCURIAL Your--

TYCHO My brother. My rash and foolish brother.

MERCURIAL He attacked you!

TYCHO (Taking the sword from her.) It is our game. Brother.

(The brothers embrace.)

GOLAN You are much improved, Tycho. (Flirtatious.) And you, Miss, are quite adept.

MERCURIAL What kind of game threatens murder?

TYCHO Golan would keep me sharp.

GOLAN Who is this sweet mouse who wears my mother's necklace?

TYCHO Mind yourself, Golan. This is my wife.

GOLAN Wife? I'm sorry I missed the wedding.

TYCHO My wife to-be. Lady Mercurial, your future brother, Golan.

GOLAN Are you from a land where women war?

MERCURIAL My father had no son. I have not fought in many years.

GOLAN The knowledge glistens from your every pore.

MERCURIAL ...I will take my leave, Tycho. I am flushed from the fight.

TYCHO As you wish.

(MERCURIAL exits.)

GOLAN What a little minx, your future wife.

TYCHO She is life itself, Golan.

GOLAN A large responsibility for so small a lady.

TYCHO Do not be fooled by her stature. I am mighty with her by my side.

GOLAN ...What are you doing with the royal fru-fru?

TYCHO Choosing wedding clothes—I tried to involve Polo—you know how he must have an opinion about everything—but he remains detached.

GOLAN You waste no time in giving away our mother's jewels.

TYCHO They are mine to give...but if there is something you want, take it, take what you will.

GOLAN I would not deprive your queen. Tell me how you met.

TYCHO I was night hunting when I found her.

GOLAN Found her? Like a seashell?

TYCHO (Excited to be telling somebody about it.) She appeared like an apparition standing in the dunes, then approached me with a boldness you can't even imagine.

GOLAN Lucky for her you are a gentleman.

TYCHO Yes, from that first moment she has seen into my soul. It was near midnight—I had just seen the Unicorn when the clouds swallowed the moon and plunged me into darkness--

GOLAN (Disbelief.) You had the beast in sight?

TYCHO And lost it.

GOLAN Why didn't you give chase?

TYCHO I told you--Mercurial appeared--

GOLAN You let a Unicorn escape?

TYCHO What would you have done, Golan?

GOLAN I would have followed it until one of us perished.

TYCHO And left a woman alone in the dunes?

GOLAN To have a chance at a Unicorn, yes! I would have left my men to protect the woman.

TYCHO I was alone.

GOLAN (Impressed.) Well. Alone. ...My lieutenant faced a Unicorn alone. He ended up pierced through the heart.

TYCHO I'm sorry for him. And for you.

GOLAN He was a good man. ...What about her ship?

TYCHO How do you know about her ship? (Brief pause) Oh. I see. You were sent for. (His anger grows.) Big brother Golan is summoned to protect Tycho from making a “youthful blunder.” Well, tell me, Golan, who will protect me from your protection?!

GOLAN Where was she going?

TYCHO Don't you know already?

GOLAN I do not.

TYCHO Then you must chastize Polo for the omission. ...She was sailing north to marry a king, but a storm brought her to me.

GOLAN You should deliver her to the northern king.

TYCHO She chooses not to proceed. I think you should return to the border, Brother. There is nothing for you here.

GOLAN Come with me.

TYCHO ...There is time for that later.

GOLAN The soldiers would see their next king.

TYCHO I have matters here—

GOLAN (Sarcastic.) Yes, pressing matters, clearly.

TYCHO Spare me your bite, Golan. I am not your little brother any more. I am to be your king...If you will excuse me. There are matters of state. (Exits)

GOLAN (derision) Your majesty.

POLO (entering) What are you doing here, Golan?

GOLAN Good greetings to you, too, Polo.

POLO I did not send for you.

GOLAN Listening in doorways, General?

POLO I mean to protect your brother.

GOLAN And I've come a long way to offer my help.

POLO I wonder how you knew help was needed.

GOLAN I have friends here.

POLO Friends that are enemies to your brother.

GOLAN It is not treason when a friend sends me word that my brother needs my help.

POLO I didn't say it was treason.

GOLAN You wear your suspicion like a dark cloak. You must trust me again. I am that same boy you turned into a warrior.

POLO (brief pause) Your disappointment was profound.

GOLAN I am over it. I have told my soldiers that I am not to be their King.

POLO And they are satisfied?

GOLAN (adamant) I am their leader. They do as I say. ...Believe this of me, Polo.

POLO (sighs as he relaxes with Golan) Perhaps you can also persuade your supporters here.

GOLAN You know I give them no encouragement.

POLO They don't require encouragement—they see your brother with his books—he refuses to go to the border—and now this marriage. Their doubts mount daily.

GOLAN I have come to put their doubts to rest. I will do whatever I can. Whatever you need.

POLO I thank you, but I do not need your help.

GOLAN I think you do. I think this girl tries the court's patience with her demands. I think removing every mirror in the castle makes Tycho seem like a lovesick puppy.

POLO Alright. Help me unmask her for the peasant she is.

GOLAN You question her royalty?

POLO I do.

GOLAN What if you're wrong? What if she is a princess with an enormous army to defend her?

POLO If that is true, I will see them married in an instant—

GOLAN I see.

POLO (slightly over) -but her tale of a miraculous deliverance from the sea is absurd.

GOLAN Whatever her secrets, she guards them well.

POLO Yes, she is sly, but I have a plan that may trap her. (Idea) In the meantime, you could question the her sister—

GOLAN Does she claim to have survived a shipwreck as well?

POLO (derisively) Oh, yes, washed ashore with heavy carpets. It is all blatantly preposterous. Speak to her—praise her weavings—flattery may uncover their origins. Find out if they have royalty in their blood.