

"Morax, Solas, Orias, Albion, Elidor, Beleth, Floures. On each of them, words of High Magic, unspoken since they were made. Wayland knew the danger... that's why he scattered them. And for hundreds of years they remained apart. Two of them were buried, others lost in battle and some so cunningly hidden that no-one had knowledge of them. Except the Cauldron of Lucifer..."

The Plot

THE rhythmic pounding of horses hooves is heard under a blood red sky. A group of demonic masked riders descend upon the quiet village of Uffcombe and invade the church. They force open the tomb of a soldier, and remove a sword from the hands of the skeletal corpse. Their leader, Verdelet, holds up the weapon and triumphantly whispers its name; "Orias!" It is one of the seven swords of Wayland.

In Nottingham Forest, Herne the Hunter orders Robin to take up his sword, Albion. It is also one of Wayland's; "charged with the power of Light and Darkness". A stranger arrives calling Robin's name. Marion recognises him as Gareth, her late father's steward. Gareth has travelled to ask them to help his village, Uffcombe, which lives in terror of flying demons from Hell. Despite the fact that Uffcombe is five days away, Robin, Marion, Little John, Friar Tuck, Much, Nasir and Will Scarlet agree to help.

At Ravenscar Abbey, near Uffcombe, the Reverend Mother Morgwyn meets with her servant, Verdelet.

As the outlaws journey to Uffcombe, Herne appears before Robin and warns him that there are those who plan to release the Devil upon the world - but they can only do so if they take Albion. Robin swears to guard it with his life.

Morgwyn and her Sisters enter a cavern below the Abbey. They cast off their habits to reveal skimpy flowing robes. Morgwyn offers up Orias, the sixth sword of Wayland, to Lucifer.

At Uffcombe, Gareth introduces the outlaws to the miller, Adam. The terrified man relies on spells to ward off the unholy attackers. At first, the villagers are wary of Robin and his followers. One of them, Philip, tells how the Hounds of Lucifer rode off with his son. Robin tries to convince them that the attackers are mortal and so can be stopped.

Later, Verdelet calls on Adam at his mill. He orders that the Hounds shall ride tonight. Gareth and the outlaws are to be killed...

The villagers are taught self-defence, and traps are set for their attackers. On



look-out, Much witnesses the arrival of the Hounds. The villagers panic, but Robin calms them in readiness to fight. The Hounds attack, but many of them are killed in the traps. One fatality amongst the villagers is Gareth. Of the raiders, only a masked Adam escapes.

After the battle, a captured raider is unmasked. It is Philip's son, James. The terrified boy fails to recognise his parents. He draws a knife and kills himself.

At Ravenscar, Adam fearfully tells Morgwyn of their defeat by the outlaws. She sends a message to the Earl of Godwin, stating that Uffcombe has been taken by unholy outlaws, and begs that they be vanquished.

James's body is examined, and a parchment discovered around his neck. Similar parchments are found on the other corpses, and Tuck recognises them as signed pacts with the Devil. Robin notices that the Hounds have flour on their boots - they have come from the mill. He fears

Above: A Hound of Lucifer
Below: Herne the Hunter Photos © HTV/West



for Adam's safety.

Robin goes to the mill alone, but is attacked by a masked assailant. It is Adam. Robin overpowers him, and threatens to destroy the miller's signed pact. Adam is forced to reveal the existence of Morgwyn and the Cauldron. Robin leaves the man in tears, but as he heads back to his friends he is captured by the Earl of Godwin's soldiers. Albion is found and recognised by Verdelet, but the Captain confiscates it. They discover Adam dead in the river, and blame Robin.

The soldiers arrive at Uffcombe to arrest the outlaws, who hold their ground. Unwilling to risk lives, the Captain retreats. Little John vows they will get Robin back...

Verdelet tells Morgwyn that Robin has Albion. She fears the stranger...

Robin is brought before the Earl and accused of terrorising Uffcombe. He retorts that he was defending the village from the Hounds of Lucifer and Morgwyn. The Earl is horrified that anyone could sully the name of such a holy lady. Robin is placed in the dungeon.

Morgwyn arrives at Godwin's castle and asks for the return of Albion, which she claims is a holy relic stolen from the Abbey. Marion and Tuck enter - the former is known to Godwin; he was a close friend of her father's. Marion begs for mercy for her husband. Morgwyn feigns pity but Marion is allowed to see him. Robin instructs her to retrieve Albion.

Leaving Marion in Godwin's care, Tuck goes to organise the Merry Men. They ambush Morgwyn's party, demanding Albion's return. The Abbess walks forward, raises the sword and mutters an incantation. The men howl in agony - Morgwyn now controls them...

At night, Marion is able to free Robin and they escape the castle.

In Ravenscar Abbey, Morgwyn leads a ceremony. Albion is placed with the other swords on a circular altar, their tips pointing to the centre.

Marion and Robin see Little John in the distance. She calls him and he turns. His eyes are opaque and lifeless as he draws his bow to kill her. The others join John in

the hunt, which ends as Scarlett finds them. Robin appeals to Will's memory, but is unable to get through. As Scarlett moves in for the kill, Little John stops him. Morgwyn wants Robin alive.

Bound hand and foot, Robin and Marion are dragged along the edge of the cliffs towards Ravenscar Abbey. A mad peasant appears before them, muttering nonsense. Unseen, he cuts through Robin's bonds. Robin leaps from the cliff into the sea. His body plummets into the depths, then rises, unmoving. He is left for dead.

Morgwyn is disappointed at the news. Their purpose fulfilled, she releases the outlaws from her spell.

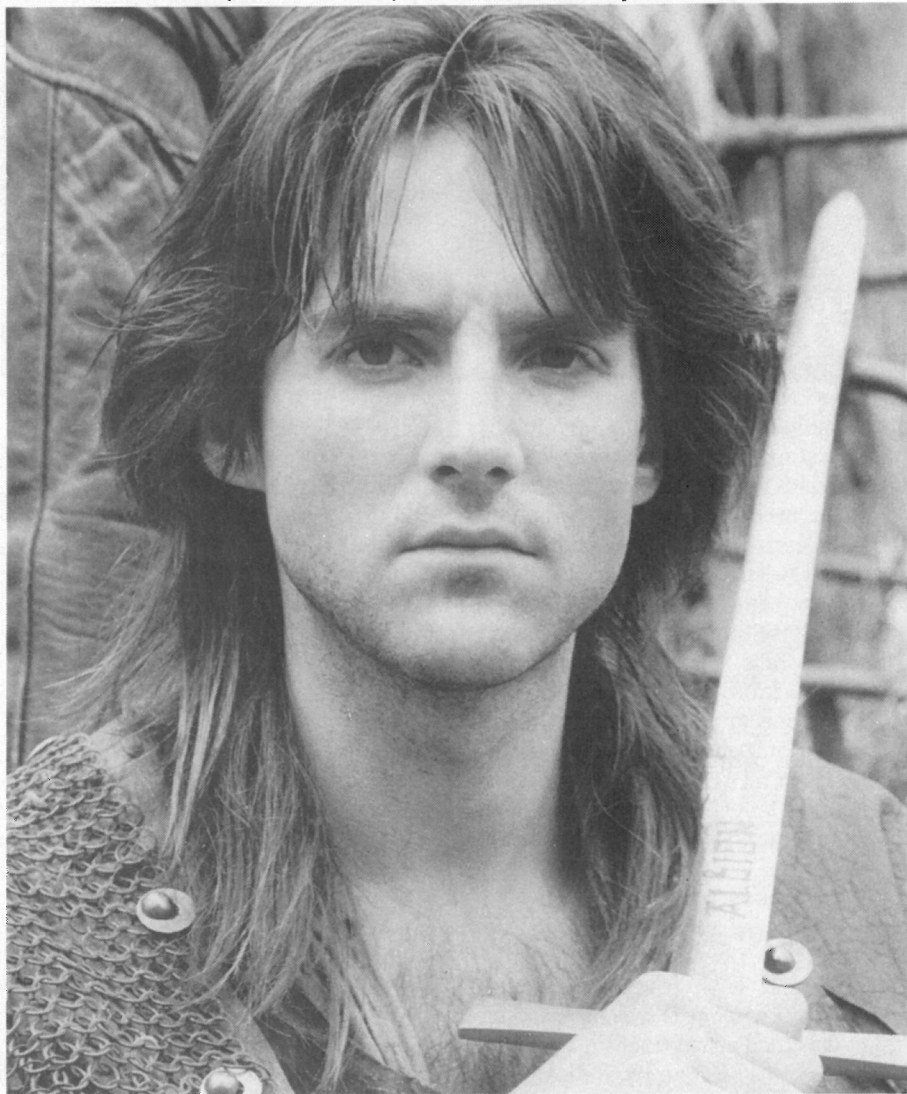
Robin comes round at the base of the cliff. He climbs up, and at the top is helped by the peasant. The man is not mad; he was once an archer who developed a taste for venison, until his hand was cut off as punishment. He gives Robin a bow, and as the Hooded Man leaves the stranger turns to his master. It is Herne.

Morgwyn asks the outlaws to make a pact with Lucifer, but they refuse. The Merry Men are to be sacrificed - suspended in a cage which will be lowered into a pit of fire. A column of light rises from the centre of the altar, and a figure begins to form. It is a handsome young man, with evil, dark eyes... The cage is falling into the pit as Robin arrives. He and Verdelet begin a fight to the death, which ends when Robin pushes a cover over the pit, and the cage crushes Verdelet. Releasing his friends, Robin throws himself upon the altar and removes Albion. Lucifer fades away. The outlaws each grab a sword, and engage in an angry battle with the Cauldron. Robin's men are the victors, and they gather around the altar. Every sword, except for Albion, is thrown into the centre and destroyed.

Morgwyn runs for her life along the seashore, pursued by the remaining Hounds. She has failed them. Trampled to death by their horses, her body floats lifeless in the water.

Herne appears before Robin, and says that the power of the swords was blind. "Nothing we make is good or evil until we use it... Albion is in good hands!"

Robin (Michael Praed) with a sword of Wayland, Albion



Credits

Peter Verdelet Dallas Adams
Herne the Hunter John Abineri
Robin Hood Michael Praed
Gareth James Donnelly
Will Scarlet Ray Winstone
Much Peter Llewellyn Williams
Little John Clive Mantle
Nasir Mark Ryan
Marion Judi Trott
Friar Tuck Phil Rose



Morgwyn of Ravenscar (Rula Lenska) prepares to conjure up the Devil

Morgwyn of Ravenscar Rula Lenska
 Sheriff David Trevena
 Adam Norman Bowler
 Cedric David Cain
 Philip Conrad Phillips
 Mary Ingrid Hainer
 James Vic McGuire
 Captain Dick Brimble
 Earl Godwin Anthony Steele
 Guards Roger McKern, Ned Kelly
 Ragged Man Mariais Thomas
 Lucifer Marcus Gilbert

Writer Richard Carpenter
 Costume Designer Lynnette Cummin
 Costume Supervisor Anne Crawford
 Make-up Supervisor Cherry West
 Art Director Kate Barnett
 Stunt Co-ordinator Terry Walsh
 Designer John Biggs
 Lighting Cameraman ... Brian Morgan
 Assistant Producer ... Esta Charkham
 Music Clannad
 Director Robert Young
 Producer Paul Knight

Background

Robin of Sherwood was created by Richard Carpenter and Paul Knight, two formidable names in the world of children's television. Carpenter, a one-time actor, turned to writing and worked

on many series including **Black Beauty**, **The Ghosts of Motley Hall**, **Dick Turpin** and his proudest creation, **Catweazel**. He was fascinated by the supernatural, and thought up the original concept of combining the legend of Robin Hood with a magical element. This was embodied in Herne the Hunter, a mystical figure who would materialise out of thin air surrounded by clouds of dry ice. It was Carpenter's intention that we should never know if Herne was human or not.

The series became popular very quickly, not only because of the high quality writing, but also for its production values. Directors were drawn from the world of advertisements, and each episode was made entirely on film. Of the twenty two separate adventures, *The Swords of Wayland* must count as the finest. The story embodies all of the series' major strengths: magic, swordplay and characterisation, all beautifully packaged and complemented by Clannad's BAFTA Award-winning music.

Robert Young's imaginative direction provides many memorable scenes. The first attack of the Hounds in the opening moments of the story is pure nightmare. Shot with blood-red filters, men and horses in demonic masks approach in slow motion accompanied by a thundering soundtrack. No surprise then that Mrs Whitehouse and the National Viewers and Listeners Association didn't like the series - and in particular this episode.

Devil worship in a children's programme was just too much for them (although there were few complaints when **Doctor Who** encountered *The Dæmons* over a decade before).

Another striking scene is Morgwyn's possession of the Merry Men. Illustrated by flashbacks (and a flash-forward!), it comprised shots of the outlaws screaming in slow motion, mixed with an image of Robin held captive. Random glimpses of Orias, Herne, the Hounds, Morgwyn in worship and of the altar spewing out a column of light followed. The possession was further illustrated by giving each actor milky-white contact lenses to obscure their eyes. The final materialisation of the Devil was achieved by slowly melting a wax bust of the actor. The footage was then used in reverse so that the features form from a shapeless mass.

The Swords of Wayland was broadcast as a two-hour special by ITV on 6th April 1985. It was also available as a two-episode package; part one ending on Little John's vow to release Robin from Godwin's men. The story forms part of a novel by Robin May. Called **Robin Hood and the Hounds of Lucifer**, it foolishly tries to compress the entire second series into one hundred and sixty-seven pages. It is best avoided.

The series was an HTV production in association with Goldcrest films and television.

Richard Houldsworth