

**EXOPLANET**

I - Plague

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

A group of CLOAKED MEN and WOMEN drag JEREMIAH (18) into a cave.

All along the walls of the cave are wall-mounted sconces, illuminating the way through.

Jeremiah doesn't cough, doesn't panic.

His eyes are cloudy, glazed over.

*A cross dangles from his neck.*

Jeremiah's demeanor, almost soulless.

The group reaches the farthest depths of the cave.

They enter a dome-shaped room.

Two men with torches light wall-mounted sconces, illuminating the room.

All along the walls are strange markings.

At the far end of the room is a sigil.

Under this sigil is a large, chiseled slab of obsidian black rock. All around the rock are strange etchings.

One man steps out and holds out his hands.

*We'll call this man THE LEADER.*

The Leader places his hands on the rock.

*We hear a cracking sound.*

The crowd hums and chants.

Jeremiah smiles.

The humming and chanting stops.

Jeremiah closes his eyes.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - DAY

The dim light of the sun, filtered to a dismal grey yellow by gathering clouds, illuminates expansive titanium blue grasslands - *we're not on Earth.*

Strange creatures roam, from small grey rodents of the ground to gargantuan bovine farming animals.

Even in the sky, winged airborne creatures float along carelessly with the wind.

Far in the distance, we see a large keep amidst a small city.

Wagons pass by on a dirt road.

EXT. FARM - MIDDAY

We come upon a small farm.

Sitting in the middle of the grasslands, it's as isolated from anywhere as can be.

Far north from the farm is a forest, arcing far west and east.

A light, tepid drizzle falls.

On the farm, a tiny shack is adorned with rotting wood crawling with termites.

A cobbled together stone chimney extends from the roof.

The thatch roof is soaked from the previous night's rain.

Next to the shack is a group of three tan hens corralled into a dingy wood fence.

FAYE WALTER (31), messy cloth clothes and raggedy brown hair), hangs wet cloths on a rope to dry.

CYRUS WALTER (11, short brown hair) gathers eggs from the ground.

Faye walks over to her son.

All three eggs have small boils on them.

CYRUS

The chickens are sick too.

Cyrus tosses the eggs to the ground.

FAYE

I'm sorry.

Faye guides Cyrus into the small shack.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Faye and Cyrus enter the tiny shack - hardly befitting of any family.

The shack consists of two rooms: a kitchen with one larger bed and an adjoining room with two beds.

A small dummy lays on the floor with signs of wear and tear.

FAYE

You've been hitting it again.

CYRUS

I'm fine, Mother.

Faye lifts up his shirt.

On his back, we can see a horrid red boil the size of a fist.

FAYE

Be thankful it did not burst.

Cyrus throws the sword down.

CYRUS

I am to be a man, yet all I can do  
is gather eggs, and rot like  
elderwood.

He sits, frustrated.

Faye sits next to him.

FAYE

You must weather this sickness  
first.

Cyrus grunts.

She runs her hand through Cyrus's hair.

FAYE (CONT'D)

I implore you, have *patience*.

Cyrus coughs again.

FAYE (CONT'D)

Alas, we must believe we will yet  
see better days.

Cyrus looks down at his wooden sword.

He picks it up, flipping it around in his hands.

FAYE (CONT'D)

What did your father teach - if not  
to see the hope in aught we have  
before us.

CYRUS

I wish he were here.

Faye sighs.

FAYE

As do I.

Faye reaches under her own bed and brings back a small box.

In the box are two small broaches with a helmet engraved on  
each.

CYRUS

A Knight's broach.

She takes a broach out of the box.

Faye puts it in his hand.

FAYE

Not any broach - From your father's  
armor.

Cyrus looks at the medal in awe.

FAYE (CONT'D)

I was to wait until you were of  
age... but I don't think he would  
mind.

Cyrus smiles and hugs her.

Faye looks surprised, but gently hugs him back.

Cyrus then coughs uncontrollably.

Faye takes Cyrus's hand.

Cyrus shivers as he coughs up blood into a small cloth.

CYRUS

It burns like a thousand suns.

Faye picks up a small bucket with one small root in it.

She mashes the root together into a paste and plasters it on  
Cyrus's wound.

Cyrus winces.

FAYE  
Is it better?

CYRUS  
Somewhat.

Faye looks out the small window out to the forest.

FAYE  
'Tis the last of the magnolia root.  
I must get more.

Faye looks Cyrus in the eye.

FAYE (CONT'D)  
Pray, do *not* move.

CYRUS  
Yes, Mother.

Faye leaves the house and walks out to the forest.

EXT. FOREST - MIDDAY

Small animals of the ground gather food as the cold chills of the wind push multicolored leaves around.

Faye walks through the forest with her wooden bucket.

She eventually comes upon a large river which cuts through the forest and runs as far as the eye can see in both directions.

Faye kneels down to gather water from the river.

A small pointy-eared *lefmous*, with brown fur, curiously patters up to Faye.

Faye smiles, and gives it a small walnut from the ground.

The *lefmous* scurries away.

Bucket full, Faye puts it down and searches along the river for the root of magnolia.

She steps to the other side of the river.

Moving into a large thicket a bit further down the river, Faye feels the wind turn very cold.

An eldritch chill creeps down her spine.

That feeling... *that someone's watching.*

Faye looks behind her.

Nothing.

EXT. FARM - CONTINUOUS

Cyrus goes outside, kicking the ball against the house.

The first sign of rain shows itself as storm clouds approach, covering the land in a dismal grey hue.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Faye makes her way further down the river.

*Close behind her - we can see someone watching.*

Then, Faye hears a *rustle*.

Faye looks to her left.

She then sees it - a magnificent animal with bronze hooves, silver fur and large antlers - this is an Eikthyr.

The Eikthyr bleats out.

Faye smiles.

She steps closer to it.

It stares at her for a moment, before bounding off.

Faye returns to her search for magnolia root.

She looks all around the river.

Faye then sees one - but she's not happy about it.

It's a veiny black color, maggots and worms crawling all over it.

Faye picks it up carefully with a cloth, searching for any more roots underneath.

There's nothing.

The sound of rolling thunder suggests she should return home.

EXT. FARM - EVENING

*Thunderclap.*

The rain now falls at a steady pace.

Cyrus looks out to the forest, then to the ball.

He kicks the ball as hard as he can.

It goes all the way out to the forest.

Cyrus walks up to the precipice of the forest.

His face shows visible fear.

The forest seems to beckon him.

He enters.

EXT. FOREST - CONTINUOUS

*Lightning strike.*

Cyrus jumps.

*Thunderclap.*

Cyrus sees the ball.

He picks it up.

As Cyrus raises up, next to a tree he sees a figure in a black cloak.

Cyrus freezes in fear.

The cloaked figure just stares at him.

*A hand on his shoulder.*

EXT. FARM - EVENING

Rain falls lightly.

Faye returns home.

She enters the shack.



INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Faye puts the empty bucket down. She doesn't see Cyrus sitting on the table.

She checks the adjoining room.

Nothing.

FAYE

Cyrus?

Faye lifts up his sheets.

FAYE (CONT'D)

CYRUS!

EXT. FARM - EVENING

Faye steps outside.

FAYE

CYRUS!

She looks all around the chicken coop.

Rain begins to fall heavier.

Suddenly, from the forest a tall, burly man carries Cyrus, unconscious, to her house - this is ERMUND WOOD (45)

FAYE (CONT'D)

Oh my god.

ERMUND

I found him in the forest.

FAYE

Pray - come inside.

INT. SHACK - CONTINUOUS

Ermund puts Cyrus down on his bed, Faye quickly covering him with a cloth.

He coughs and screams in pain.

Faye lifts up the back of his shirt.

She notices the ball in his hands.

FAYE  
What were you thinking?

CYRUS  
I'm sorry.

Faye nods to Ermund.

FAYE  
I thank you for saving him.

ERMUND  
You were in the forest. Why?

FAYE  
I sought root of magnolia. There was none.

CYRUS  
None?

ERMUND  
Aye. The plague's shadow covers all - man, plants, sky, and water. 'Tis an unholy blight.

Faye lifts Cyrus' shirt up.

Ermund sees the boil - it almost lights an alarm bell in his eyes.

ERMUND (CONT'D)  
He is plagued.

FAYE  
Yes.

The boil, now blackened and muddy, oozes a horrible pus-like liquid.

FAYE (CONT'D)  
It's gotten worse.

Ermund looks in her empty bucket.

ERMUND  
There is no time. We must hurry to my village.

FAYE  
A village?

ERMUND

Our healer, Abernath, will know  
what to do.

FAYE

We could not burden you so.

ERMUND

This is not about burden. It's your  
son's life. I implore you.

Faye looks at her son, in pain, then back to Ermund.

ERMUND (CONT'D)

I will carry him.

EXT. VILLAGE - EVENING

Faye and Cyrus, carried by Ermund, are greeted by the  
inhabitants of a small village.

It's a disorganized array of six wooden houses with thatch  
roofs - all connected by a weaving assembly of mud "streets".

At the center of the village is a small whitewood church.

Faye sees no signs of the plague. Two dozen men and women go  
about normal day to day life.

At the far end of the village is an array of sticks roped  
together in the shape of crosses - at least two dozen.

Countless men and women, either with missing limbs, or just  
looking defeated.

ARTHUR (27) and KENDRIC (19) - two of the strong men of the  
village - spar with each other. ISAD (21) watches and spurs  
them on.

In front of another building - roping white twine together  
and sewing - are sisters SILVIA, (16), EVE (10), and EDITH  
(8).

DEACON GREGORY (44, tall and lean), along with FALMAR (21,  
blonde hair) and LEO (18, brown-red hair) approach Ermund and  
the family.

They all bear similar wooden crosses to Ermund's and wear  
white church garments.

GREGORY

Ermund.

ERMUND  
He is plagued.

Gregory gives Cyrus the once-over.

GREGORY  
Come.

Faye nods to him.

INT. ABERNATH'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The group enters the house.

An assortment of plants, herbs, and potions line dark wood shelves.

At the center of the house is a small table.

ABERNATH (72, hunchback with one blind eye) limps out from a back room.

He glares at Cyrus.

ABERNATH  
Let's see it.

Faye lifts up his shirt to show the spot.

Abernath looks concerned. He glares at Faye.

ABERNATH (CONT'D)  
How long?

FAYE  
Months.

Abernath looks back at the spot.

ABERNATH  
'Tis not yet spread to his lungs.

CYRUS  
Will I die?

ABERNATH  
I can at least slow the spread.

CYRUS  
It hurts.

Abernath gestures to the table.

Faye lays him on his stomach.

Abernath gathers a clump of green herbs with red tips.

He places the sage into a small fire.

The clump creates a small trail of smoke.

He waves it over the boil.

The smoke covers the boil in a grey powder.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

I feel the pain lessening.

Faye smiles.

ABERNATH

The tinge of sage will hold off the pain for now.

Cyrus sits back up.

FAYE

Can you heal him?

Abernath looks her in the eye.

ABERNATH

The cure requires two days to concoct - for that time, you must stay here.

CYRUS

I wish to go home.

ABERNATH

If the infection were to spread, you would not survive another trip through the forest.

Faye looks at Cyrus, who shows fear.

ABERNATH (CONT'D)

You may choose what you wish.

FAYE

If you say 'tis best for him, we will stay.

CYRUS

I feel okay now, Mother!

ABERNATH

Do my words fall on deaf ears, boy?  
Do you *wish* for death?

Cyrus sheepishly looks at his mother.

CYRUS

No.

ABERNATH

Good.

Abernath looks to Leo and Falmar and nods.

They lead Faye and Cyrus out of Abernath's house.

Abernath's welcoming smile turns serious.

He limps to the back room of his house.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Falmar and Leo stop at a house.

FALMAR

This house once was Jeremiah's, a  
devoted apostle of the church.

CYRUS

What happened to him?

GRAVEYARD

Leo and Falmar take Cyrus and Faye to a conglomerate of  
roped-together sticks in the shape of crosses.

At least thirty crosses line the graveyard.

Each of them has an etched name on it.

One of them is *Jeremiah* - a *cross necklace* hangs over the  
grave marker.

Faye puts her arm around Cyrus.

FALMAR

As it has to all, the plague has  
taken many of us.

LEO

Alas, we have kept our faith in the  
Protector.

FALMAR

Jeremiah was a great servant to the Protector until the end.

FAYE

I only wish to have met him.

CYRUS

Will I die too?

FAYE

Cyrus...

Falmar smiles and kneels down in front of Cyrus.

FALMAR

Abernath is a devout man. His knowledge of this plague is second to none. You must keep faith.

LEO

We believe Jeremiah would welcome you to stay in his home.

FAYE

Oh, no - we couldn't.

LEO

'Tis vain to leave the house empty.

Faye looks at Cyrus.

FALMAR

Abernath's

Even though it's only midday, the clouds completely cover the village in darkness.

FALMAR (CONT'D)

I must check on our other plagued.

Falmar bows out and splits off from them.

Faye and Cyrus follow Leo to a small house.

INT. VILLAGE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The inside of the village house is far more spacious than their small shack.

Two full wooly beds, a small chimney with a fireplace, and a bucket of water.

Cyrus jumps on one of the beds.

CYRUS  
'Tis like being on sheep's wool!

FAYE  
Do not break it!

Leo smiles.

LEO  
We hope 'tis a welcome home for  
you.

FAYE  
It is. Thank you.

LEO  
'Tis our charge, to cure those who  
are plagued.

Leo nods.

LEO (CONT'D)  
I will let you settle in.

Leo leaves.

Cyrus sits on his bed.

CYRUS  
Do you really think they have a  
cure?

FAYE  
There is not a path to take  
otherwise. We must hope and pray.

A knock at their door.

Gregory opens the door.

He smiles.

GREGORY  
I hope you have felt welcomed.

FAYE  
We have.

GREGORY  
I am Gregory, a Deacon of the  
Church. I wished to check on you,  
Cyrus.



CYRUS  
I feel much better now.

GREGORY  
Abernath will take care of you.

FAYE  
I can never repay you for this.

GREGORY  
We do not seek any gold. These are dark times. To shine forth the light of the Protector, is all I wish to do.

Gregory starts to leave, but turns again.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
The church communes at first light.  
I hope you will join us.

Gregory leaves.

Cyrus looks around the house, smiling.

FAYE  
I haven't seen one of those on you in a long time.

Cyrus sits.

He takes the Knight's sigil out of his pocket.

CYRUS  
When I'm cured, I will wear this just like Father did.

FAYE  
And he will look upon you with pride.

Cyrus puts it away.

CYRUS  
Do you believe they have a cure?

FAYE  
'Tis all we can believe.

CYRUS  
What if it doesn't work?

FAYE

Let us cross that path when it  
comes but hope it does not.

Cyrus lays down on his stomach.

Faye checks it one more time.

FAYE (CONT'D)

Does it hurt?

CYRUS

Not at all.

FAYE

Perhaps we can finally get one good  
night's rest.

Faye kisses him on the forehead.

She sits on her bed.

Faye reaches into her pocket and takes out a Knight's broach,  
just like the one she gave to Cyrus.

She closes her eyes.

Faye kisses the broach and puts it away.

Exhausted, Faye lays down and drifts quickly to sleep.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Night falls.

Someone approaches the village.

They walk up to a house and knock at the door.

INT. FAYE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Faye snaps awake.

The door to her house is open.

The soft breeze from outside causes it to swing

Back

And

Forth.

*Creaking.*

Faye stands slowly.

She picks her knife up.

Faye walks up to the door.

Then, behind her.

She hears

*Scraping.*

*Scratching.*

Faye turns.

At the door behind her, a figure in a black cloak walks by.

Faye turns.

The scraping sound stops.

Faye walks outside.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

The light of the full moon shines over the village.

Faye carefully steps out.

The hairs on her neck stand up.

Faye turns.

*Scraping.*

Faye goes to the back of her house.

Etched into the wooden walls is a strange sigil.

She then hears it - *bleating*.

Faye turns.

The Eikthyr stares at her.

It trots into the forest, almost beckoning Faye to follow it.

Faye does.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Faye follows the Eikthyr into the forest.

It bounds off deep into a thicket.

Faye goes through.

At the other side, looming in front of her, is the entrance to a cave.

Etched into the top of the cave is the same sigil that was on her house.

Faye backs off.

Everything goes quiet.

She hears a sound like rope stretching.

Faye turns.

The Eikthyr hangs from a rope, dead.

Pests pick at its rotting corpse.

Carved into the corpse's body is the sigil.

The sigil glows green.

Then...

*The cracking sound.*

INT. VILLAGE HOUSE - NIGHT

Faye snaps awake, back in her bed.

She's sweating.

Faye looks over at Cyrus.

He's fast asleep.

Faye takes a deep breath.

She calms herself.

Faye rubs the sweat off herself with a cloth and lays back down.

EXT. VILLAGE - MORNING

The sun beams just over the forest and shines upon the village.

The villagers get to work on their daily tasks.

Gregory steps outside the church.

Danor walks up to Gregory.

GREGORY  
Will you hunt?

DANOR  
If it is required.

Gregory looks toward Faye's house.

Silvia looks at Gregory.

SILVIA  
When will it be?

GREGORY  
Be patient.

EVE  
We can't wait much longer.

INT. VILLAGE HOUSE - MORNING

Faye wakes slowly.

The nightmare still with her, she struggles.

Faye wakes Cyrus as the chiming of the church bell rings out.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

The villagers file into the church like bees to their queen.

Gregory stands at the entrance to the church with a rather ornate cup of clear water, dips his thumb in it and places his thumb individually onto each person's forehead.

Faye and Cyrus walk up to Gregory.

He smiles and anoints each of them with the water.

When Cyrus comes up, Gregory gives him a... *particular* stare.

GREGORY

I am glad you have chosen to join  
us.

INT. CHURCH - MIDDAY

The village all stands in various parts of the church.  
Gregory walks up to the pulpit.

Faye notices Ermund looks distraught.

Gregory places the ornate cup down and picks up a small,  
decrepit book.

*A cloaked figure is watching from the church window - far  
away.*

Gregory holds up his hands.

Then, Gregory moves his hands down.

The villagers sit at his command.

Faye and Cyrus follow suit.

Gregory hangs his head.

He flips to a page in the book.

GREGORY

Grace to the Protector in our time  
of suffering. Peace the souls we've  
lost. And courage to the souls that  
yet live.

The church members raise their hands and mutter *amens*.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

We have lost two more souls to this  
unholy sickness. The plague spares  
none.

Ermund wipes away another tear.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Along with our beloved apostle  
Jeremiah, Ermund's daughter,  
Amelia, was lost.

Faye looks at Ermund in shock.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

In my prayers, I have asked...

He grips the book.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
... if we have been abandoned.

The church mumbles amongst themselves.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
But we are not.

Gregory smiles.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
Despite my doubt, I am reassured,  
in my faith, that the great  
Protector will take us through this  
hardship.

Ermund nods.

SILVIA  
AMEN!

The villagers clap.

GREGORY  
Ermund, would you like to say a  
word?

Ermund stands.

He approaches the pulpit.

ERMUND  
My little girl is dead.

Ermund grips his hand into a fist.

He then raises his arms up in praise.

ERMUND (CONT'D)  
Yet I know it to be true - the  
Protector stood by her side.

Faye shifts uncomfortably in the pew.

Gregory nods.

GREGORY  
*Amen.*

ERMUND

Amelia is in the place beyond ours  
- at peace. No longer tied to our  
mortal coil.

Ermund turns and smiles at Faye.

ERMUND (CONT'D)

Everything happens in accordance  
with the Father.

Faye does nothing.

Many villagers mutter an "amen".

ERMUND (CONT'D)

But I know under the Protector's  
blessing, I will see her again.

The village mumbles another "amen".

GREGORY

Her death is not in vain.

The villagers all raise their hands.

Faye, confused by this speak, grows visibly uncomfortable.

VILLAGERS

AMEN!

GREGORY

The time's soon upon us.

Ermund kneels at the altar.

Gregory raises up his hands again.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Protector, soothe his soul.

SILVIA

Amen.

LEO

Amen.

ERMUND

Amen.

Gregory looks around the faith-enflamed congregation.

GREGORY

The days have yet been long.



Gregory closes his eyes and holds the book.

Ermund closes his eyes in tandem.

Gregory swirls the ornate cup.

He takes his necklace off and dips it in the water.

Gregory turns to Faye.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

But we have been blessed to save another. Faye, and her son Cyrus, called by the Protector.

Faye looks *completely* lost - not sure what's going on.

She puts her arm around Cyrus.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Cyrus's affliction yet assures us that the Protector calls all to the cure!

ERMUND

The Protector provides for us all!

VILLAGERS

*Amen.*

GREGORY

We bless you, Ermund. Such that Amelia shall peacefully pass to the next life.

Gregory looks at Faye.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

'Twould be befitting, I believe, if Faye were to perform this blessing.

The whole congregation turns to her.

Faye looks into Ermund's eyes.

FAYE

It despairs me to hear of your loss, but I am not fit to bless you.

ERMUND

Would you? Please?

Faye sees the desperation in Ermund's eyes.

She half-smiles, and nods.

Gregory smiles.

Faye walks up to the pulpit, the searing eyes of the congregation following her like hawks to their prey.

GREGORY

Place your finger upon the holy  
water.

Faye dips her thumb into the water.

She places it on Ermund's forehead.

The water drips down onto his nose.

ERMUND

Thank you. Thank you.

Ermund kisses her hand.

Gregory gestures Faye back to her seat.

Faye looks confused - *not really sure what she's just done.*

Gregory returns to the back of the church without another word.

The villagers stand and leave, along with Faye and her children.

EXT. VILLAGE - EVENING

Faye waits for Ermund.

She stops him.

FAYE

I did not know you lost your child  
to the plague. I am sorry.

Ermund just looks at her.

There's something weird about it.

ERMUND

I thank you for the blessing.

Ermund smiles and walks away.

Faye watches.

Cyrus stands next to her.

FAYE

Come.

Gregory approaches her.

GREGORY

'Tis a good deed, what you did for  
Ermund.

FAYE

I didn't know his daughter was  
taken by the plague.

GREGORY

We have all lost ones we loved.

Gregory walks her and Cyrus through the village.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

We've kept strong.

FAYE

You spoke of "the Protector".

GREGORY

Do you not keep the faith?

FAYE

Aft' the plague took my husband, I  
tried to pray. But there were no  
answers.

GREGORY

I am sorry.

FAYE

I've found peace in making sure my  
son survives.

He looks down at Cyrus and smiles.

GREGORY

You did a good thing bringing him  
here.

FAYE

I must thank you again for  
accepting us.

GREGORY

We're all servants under the  
Protector's watchful eye.

Gregory nods.

DANOR (O.S.)  
Winter yet approaches, Gregory.

Gregory turns.

DANOR (CONT'D)  
The hunt must begin.

GREGORY  
Ah, I don't believe you've yet met  
Danor.

DANOR  
Cyrus, is it?

Cyrus recognizes the broach on his cloak.

CYRUS  
You're a Hunter.

Danor smiles.

DANOR  
Not many recognize our seal.

CYRUS  
Many a time have I read of the  
accounts of the great hunt.

Danor nods.

He gives a side glance to Silvia, who smiles.

DANOR  
We would welcome your presence in  
the hunt.

Cyrus' eyes light up.

CYRUS  
Really?

FAYE  
He is very sick.

CYRUS  
I feel fine, Mother!

DANOR  
My men -

He turns to Isad, Kendric, and Arthur, all who're preparing their weapons.

DANOR (CONT'D)

They are the best warriors this village has to offer.

FAYE

What do you hunt?

DANOR

We seek an Eikthyr - a creature of great rarity. This will be the last hunt 'fore winter bears upon us.

Danor nods to Cyrus.

DANOR (CONT'D)

We could use an extra pair of eyes.

Silvia and her sisters, having overheard this, barge in.

SILVIA

We hope the hunt's successful.

Cyrus turns to the sisters.

They smile at him.

EVE

Winter approaches.

EDITH

Without food, what will we do?

Danor looks at Cyrus inquisitively.

DANOR

What do you know of the hunt?

CYRUS

Only what I have read.

Abernath steps out of his house.

Cyrus looks up at Faye.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Please, Mother.

FAYE

You are not ready.

DANOR

He will not come under any harm.

Faye considers.

ABERNATH

And you will make sure of it.

Abernath glares at Danor.

ABERNATH (CONT'D)

For he must be cured.

DANOR

We will return before night falls.

Faye looks down at Cyrus.

FAYE

Perhaps it will be a way to forget  
aught that has happened.

Cyrus's eyes glow.

CYRUS

Really?

FAYE

No bows. No swords. Stay in the  
middle of them at all times, do you  
understand?

Faye looks at Danor, who nods.

CYRUS

Okay!

FAYE

You can go.

Cyrus hugs her.

CYRUS

Thank you!

Faye smiles.

DANOR

Best meet the others.

Cyrus rushes to the crowd of men.

They all greet him and talk to him, laughing and showing him  
around their weaponry.

Faye sighs.

FAYE  
Keep a close eye on him.

Danor laughs.

DANOR  
I assure you Faye, we will not let  
*anything* happen to him.

He then looks at Cyrus - *almost obsessively*.

DANOR (CONT'D)  
He's not going anywhere.

FAYE  
Take care, Cyrus!

Cyrus waves at Faye as they prepare.

Gregory chuckles.

GREGORY  
To be a boy again.

FAYE  
He is persistent. You wouldn't  
believe he was sick.

Gregory smirks.

GREGORY  
You could have fooled me.

FAYE  
Deacon, might I have a word in  
confidence with you?

GREGORY  
Of course.

Faye watches for a moment as Cyrus, Danor, and the men head  
out to the forest.

INT. CHURCH - DAY

Gregory closes the doors of the church.

Faye sits on a pew, Gregory on the pew across from her.

GREGORY  
What is it that troubles you?

FAYE  
I had a dream last night.

GREGORY  
What of?

FAYE  
A strange sigil.

GREGORY  
A sigil?

FAYE  
I did not recognize it.

Gregory thinks.

FAYE (CONT'D)  
And a cave. With the same sigil.

Gregory looks her in the eye.

FAYE (CONT'D)  
I wished to confide in you what it  
might mean.

He smiles comfortingly - *but it's not very comforting.*

GREGORY  
It means nothing. Dreams are a  
conjunction of a world we do not  
understand. It's best we leave it  
that way.

Faye nods.

She hangs her head.

FAYE  
I feel burdensome.

GREGORY  
Why is that?

FAYE  
I could not help Cyrus.

GREGORY  
You brought him here. The only  
place he *could* have been brought,  
to even have a chance of living.



FAYE

To see him cured, to see him become a man... I know his father Garrand would have been proud.

GREGORY

The boy's father -

FAYE

Taken by the plague.

GREGORY

I only regret that we could not cure him too.

Faye smiles.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Rest assured, the Protector now watches over him, as everything.

FAYE

Oft' have I heard this Protector's name spoken.

GREGORY

There are many names, are there not?

Gregory takes a cross out.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

The One who calls us to faith, to eternal service.

Gregory takes Faye's hand.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Tell me, do you keep the faith?

FAYE

I have not known the comfort of any faith, nor the blessing of peace within my mind since Garrand's passing.

GREGORY

I am sorry to hear it. Perhaps you will yet hear the Protector's voice, and may it comfort you.

Faye smiles and nods.

A moment of silence passes.

FAYE  
I will be glad to return home when  
this is all over.

Something about this triggers something in Gregory.

GREGORY  
Home?

His face suddenly grows sad, almost *frustrated*.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
Have we not provided you a home?  
Food? Shelter?

FAYE  
I thank you for your hospitality.

GREGORY  
But you will not stay?

FAYE  
We have a home.

Gregory nods.

GREGORY  
I'm sorry to hear it.

FAYE  
I meant no offense by it.

He smiles.

GREGORY  
Of course not. I have clerical work  
I must attend to. Excuse me.

Gregory stands and walks away.

Faye leaves the church after a moment of silence.

EXT. BEHIND THE CHURCH - DAY

Gregory walks to the back of the church.

Ermund kneels in front of a large plot of soil.

Gregory kneels next to him.

Ermund looks at Gregory.

ERMUND

Is it time?

Gregory reaches into his pocket.

GREGORY

Do you still believe?

ERMUND

You promised I would see her again.

GREGORY

Do you not believe the words of the  
Protector to be true?

Ermund looks down at the plot of soil.

He places his hand on it.

A tear falls from his eye.

ERMUND

I do not know what I believe  
anymore.

Gregory smiles.

GREGORY

You have followed me thus far. Have  
I led you astray yet?

ERMUND

No. I trust you with my life.

GREGORY

You must stay with the faith,  
Ermund. The Protector's path is not  
far from us now.

ERMUND

I am ready.

GREGORY

Then allow the Protector to show  
you.

Gregory opens his hand.

Ermund looks down.

*The cracking sound.*

ERMUND

It is almost time?

Gregory puts his hand on Ermund's shoulder.

GREGORY

'Tis.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

In front of Abernath's house, the three sisters smile, continually weaving.

Silvia weaves thread from wool.

Eve ties the various pieces thread together with a loom.

Edith stitches the threaded cloths together.

FAYE

What do you weave?

SILVIA

Cloths, cloaks, aught the villagers need.

EVE

Especially when the men return from the hunt, they're usually bloody and sweaty.

EDITH

'Tis disgusting!

Faye smiles.

SILVIA

Would you like to join us?

FAYE

I was going to ask Ermund of the cure's progress.

SILVIA

As you came to us in desperation, we now ask patience.

EVE

It will be done soon.

Edith reaches behind her.

She holds out a white piece of fabric.

EDITH

Would you like to try?

FAYE

I wouldn't want to stain such  
handiwork.

SILVIA

We insist.

Faye sits with them.

Edith puts the cloth in her hands, and smiles.

Faye then looks down at the cloth.

She feels something... strange.

An eldritch chill, crawling up her spine.

Faye looks up.

Behind Abernath's house.

A cloaked figure.

It just stands there.

Faye can't move.

She looks down at the cloth again.

The sigil is etched into the cloth.

Faye looks up again.

*The cloaked figure isn't there.*

She then feels a hand on her shoulder.

*Cracking sound.*

Faye jumps up and screams.

She throws the piece of cloth down.

Gregory comes out of the church.

GREGORY

Are you okay?

Faye looks around the village.

Everyone looks at her like she's insane.

She looks down at the cloth.

No sigil.

FAYE  
'Twas nothing.

Faye returns to her house without another word.

As she does, we can see the back of her house - *the sigil, engraved in the wood.*

Gregory looks down at the sisters.

They all look up at him in unison.

GREGORY  
She saw it.

They nod.

EDITH  
Is it almost time?

GREGORY  
Patience.

Gregory looks out to the forest.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
He shall hear the call.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Cyrus, Danor and the other men make their way through the forest.

DANOR  
We have oft' followed the Eikthyr's tracks to the forest's depths.

CYRUS  
What does it look like?

KENDRIC  
Grey fur. Massive antlers. Thing's three times' your size.

ARTHUR  
Keep a weathered eye out for tracks.

They continue on.

A light drizzle begins to fall.

ISAD

Shit.

DANOR

We must hasten. The rain will cover  
the tracks.

Danor, Cyrus and the men quicken their pace.

Cyrus, keeping his eyes on the ground, finally sees it.

Tracks.

CYRUS

Danor! Here!

Danor and the men gather around the track.

It leads directly in front of them, past a large thicket.

DANOR

Well done, Cyrus.

Danor walks up to the thicket.

DANOR (CONT'D)

Through here.

Arthur then sees a tuft of fur.

ARTHUR

It's close.

DANOR

Come.

Danor and the men go through the thicket. Cyrus follows.

EXT. FOREST DEPTH - MIDDAY

Cyrus pushes through the thicket.

On the other side, he doesn't see Danor or the men.

CYRUS

Danor?

The canopy covers the last of the sun's rays, a bare minimum  
of light coming through.

Cyrus then hears a *rustle*.

He turns.

Nothing.

*Rustle.*

Cyrus turns.

Nothing.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

DANOR!

Cyrus takes out his knife, hand shaking.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Isad! Arthur!

A chilling wind.

Then... *a cracking sound.*

Cyrus turns.

A cloaked figure stands a few feet away from him.

Cyrus steps back.

The cloaked figure just stares.

Cyrus runs through the thicket.

As soon as he does, in front of him, the entrance to the cave looms.

At the top of the cave's entrance is the sigil.

CYRUS (CONT'D)

Danor?

Two cloaked figures emerge from the cave.

They hold out their hands, beckoning him forward.

Deep from the darkness of the cave, Cyrus hears it.

*The cracking sound.*

*A whisper like the wind.*

Cyrus can't take his eyes off the sigil.

It glows, reflecting in Cyrus' pupils.

DANOR (O.S.)

Cyrus!



Cyrus turns.

He's back out in the forest.

Danor and the other men are there.

CYRUS  
You went through -

Cyrus turns, looking around.

There's no thicket, no cave, no cloaked men.

CYRUS (CONT'D)  
There were cloaked men - a cave.

ISAD  
'Twas just a trick of your mind.

ARTHUR  
You must not roam the forest alone.

DANOR  
Come. The tracks lead this way.

Cyrus follows them but can't shake the inescapable feeling of being watched.

Danor stops them. The tracks end at a large clump of mud.

All sorts of pests and maggots surround it.

Danor clears off the mud to reveal the Eikthyr's corpse.

He cuts off a piece of the fur - large black boils.

DANOR (CONT'D)  
The damn plague got to it first.

CYRUS  
What will we do?

DANOR  
There is naught more that can be done.

Cyrus looks around the forest.

DANOR (CONT'D)  
Come. The hour grows late. We must return.

Danor and the men walk away.

As they do, Cyrus sees something strange.

The Eikthyr's throat, already slit.

DANOR (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
Come, Cyrus!

Cyrus follows.

As he leaves, we stay with the Eikthyr's corpse.

Under its fur, we see *the sigil*, etched into its skin.

INT. VILLAGE HOUSE - MIDDAY

Faye closes the door behind her and holds her head in her hands.

An image of a cave entrance flashes in her mind.

Faye jumps back.

She writhes and holds herself.

A knock at her door.

Faye flinches.

FAYE  
Come in.

Ermund opens the door.

ERMUND  
I apologize for my intrusion.

FAYE  
You are welcome here.

ERMUND  
Are you okay?

FAYE  
The days have been long. I fear  
lack of sleep has clouded my mind.

ERMUND  
'Tis not lack of sleep.

Ermund sits at a chair.

ERMUND (CONT'D)  
Your son's ailment has put a great  
weight onto you.

FAYE  
Yes.

Ermund puts his hand on her shoulder.

ERMUND  
Truly, I was lost when my sweet  
Amelia died. But the Protector  
promises we will yet see those we  
have lost again.

FAYE  
I wish I had your faith.

ERMUND  
You can! The Protector can take the  
weight from you. Give you a true  
purpose.

Faye nods, but clearly isn't very convinced.

FAYE  
I thank you for your comforting  
words.

Gregory walks up to her door.

GREGORY  
The hunt has returned.

EXT. VILLAGE - CONTINUOUS

Faye steps out of her house.

Danor and Gregory meet, with the men close behind, and Cyrus  
at the back.

Gregory sees Danor is empty-handed.

GREGORY  
The hunt was unsuccessful.

DANOR  
The Eikthyr was plagued.

Gregory nods.

GREGORY

We will have to survive the winter  
on what we have.

Cyrus walks up to his mother.

CYRUS

I would like to bed.

GREGORY

What troubles you, boy?

CYRUS

I'm just tired.

FAYE

I will check on you shortly.

Cyrus returns inside.

Faye looks infuriated.

FAYE (CONT'D)

I warned he should not go on the  
hunt. What a fool I was to allow  
it.

DANOR

The days have been harsh on him.

FAYE

And he should have stayed *here*.

DANOR

I assure you; he came under no  
harm.

Faye returns to her own house without another word.

Danor looks at Gregory, stone-cold.

GREGORY

Did he hear the call?

DANOR

Yes.

GREGORY

It is time.

Danor nods.

Silvia, Eve, and Edith smile.

SILVIA, EVE, EDITH  
It is time.

INT. VILLAGE HOUSE - NIGHT

Faye enters her house.

Cyrus sits on his bed, staring at the wall.

FAYE  
Something bothers you.

Cyrus looks Faye in the eyes.

She doesn't see his happiness anymore.

In his eyes is

*Fear.*

CYRUS  
I want to go home.

FAYE  
The cure will be ready at first  
light.

CYRUS  
I'm scared of this place.

Faye sees her son's fear.

FAYE  
Why?

CYRUS  
There were cloaked men... in the  
forest.

Faye remembers what she saw.

FAYE  
We both need a good night's sleep.

CYRUS  
I know what I saw, Mother!

Cyrus looks into Faye's eyes.

CYRUS (CONT'D)  
I heard a voice in my head.

The image of the sigil etches into Faye's mind.

CYRUS (CONT'D)  
You heard it too, didn't you,  
Mother?

Faye just stares forward.

CYRUS (CONT'D)  
Why must we stay?

Faye smiles and strokes his hair.

FAYE  
We will be home 'fore midday  
tomorrow. All of this shall be  
behind us.

Cyrus lays down but can't close his eyes.

FAYE (CONT'D)  
Try to sleep.

Faye stares at the door.

*In her heart, she wants to believe her son will be cured.*

*But in her mind - she knows something's wrong.*

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Clouds cover the light of the moon.

The pitch black of night plunges over the village.

Brightbugs come out from the depths of the forest and bathe the village and the forest with a soft amber glow.

INT. VILLAGE HOUSE - NIGHT

Faye and Cyrus sleep.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Lit torches pass by the windows of the house.

The light from the torches wakes Faye.

She looks out the window.

Nothing.

She steps out of her house.

Leaving the village, she sees three cloaked figures leaving.  
Faye follows them.

EXT. FOREST DEPTHS - CONTINUOUS

In the depths of the forest, Faye loses track of them.  
Brightbugs light her surroundings.

Faye then hears it.

*The cracking sound.*

She turns.

Like roots snapping underneath her feet.

Faye follows the sound.

She comes upon a thicket.

Somehow... *the thicket beckons her.*

Faye walks through the thicket.

She comes upon the entrance of a cave.

The cave beckons her to enter.

Faye sees the etching of the sigil on its arch.

The sigil glows.

INT. CAVE - CONTINUOUS

She sneaks into the cave.

As she enters, Faye sees the three cloaked figures.

They take their hoods off - *it's Silvia, Eve, and Edith.*

They continue through the cave.

The light of the torch leaves Faye in the dark.

Faye moves her foot.

A rock crumbles.

Faye hides herself.

Silvia turns.

She sees nothing and continues through the cave.

Faye sneaks to where they just were.

She covers her mouth.

A skeleton lays there.

Then, Faye hears it again - *the cracking sound* - further into the cave.

She moves through a large opening.

#### CAVE DEPTHS

In the depths of the cave, Faye sees a large room.

Etched into the wall is the sigil.

And dozens of humans, bowing to it.

Faye then feels something under her feet.

No longer the rocky surface.

She stands on a pile of rotting corpses.

Each of the corpses have boils all over them.

Faye falls onto them, screaming.

One of the corpses wakes.

He has a cross necklace on his neck.

Faye recognizes it - from the marked gravestone.

It's Jeremiah.

His eyes glazed over.

Boils cover his body, veins and eyes black as coals.

His throat has a large cut on it.

#### JEREMIAH'S CORPSE

They're coming for you... they're  
coming for him...

Jeremiah takes Faye by the shoulders.



She's petrified by fear.

JEREMIAH'S CORPSE (CONT'D)  
It's under my skin...

Faye backs up.

SILVIA (O.S.)  
Faye?

Faye turns.

She looks below her.

The floor is now rock again.

It's Abernath.

Silvia, Eve, and Edith stand behind him.

They all three look at the etching of the sigil in unison.

SILVIA (CONT'D)  
If you didn't believe before...

EVE  
Do you now?

EDITH  
The Protector calls for everyone.

Faye backs off.

FAYE  
You swore you could cure my son.

ABERNATH  
Only the Protector can do that. And you, of little faith, shall see the light.

FAYE  
What is this place?

Silvia smiles.

SILVIA  
'Tis beauty.

EVE  
'Tis the truth.

EDITH  
'Tis our Protector's home.

Faye then sees something horrific.

It wriggles over her eye, only for a brief moment.

Silvia smiles.

SILVIA

The Protector shows us who we have  
lost.

EVE

And we give it new life.

Faye stands slowly.

Edith smiles.

EDITH

You're so close now.

Faye hears the voice in her head again.

SILVIA

We know you've heard it.

Silvia smiles.

EVE

We can show you, too.

The sisters then enclose her from all sides.

Something wriggles in the corner of Edith's eye again.

Faye sees a spindly leg creep out.

Her eyes widen.

Abernath smiles.

ABERNATH

We've been here longer than you  
know.

Faye runs.

SILVIA, EVE, EDITH

She's not going anywhere.

EXT. FOREST DEPTHS - NIGHT

Faye rushes out of the forest and runs back to the village.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

She sees no one.

INT. FAYE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Faye sneaks into her house and wakes Cyrus.

She covers his mouth.

FAYE  
We must go home.

CYRUS  
The cure.

FAYE  
We must go.

CYRUS  
Mother!

FAYE  
This place is cursed.

Faye leads him out of the house.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Faye and Cyrus sneak out.

THE LEADER  
Where are you going?

Faye and Cyrus turn.

It's Gregory, holding out his hands.

Surrounding the village at all sides are the villagers,  
wearing hooded cloaks.

Gregory takes his hood off.

GREGORY  
To where do you go?

FAYE  
We're going home.

GREGORY

But the cure has just been completed. The Protector will free your son of this cursed plague.

FAYE

Come, Cyrus.

GREGORY

The Protector has much to show you, dear Faye and Cyrus.

Gregory walks closer to her.

FAYE

I trusted you.

GREGORY

Trust in the Protector.

Faye points her knife at him.

FAYE

Do not come closer.

Gregory steps back.

GREGORY

Return home.

Faye's confused.

The cloaked villagers part the way for her to leave.

Faye and Cyrus run.

Gregory smiles.

*Something wriggles in his eye.*

GREGORY (CONT'D)

The Protector will call you back.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Faye and Cyrus run through the Brightbug-illuminated forest.

*Cracking sounds.*

*Humming.*

*Chanting.*

FAYE

Do not stop.

EXT. FARM - NIGHT

Faye and Cyrus return to the farm.

An amber glow illuminates Faye's broken countenance.

Faye kneels down.

She weeps.

The farm is completely up in flames.

Danor, hooded, smiles.

He holds a torch, along with the other men.

CYRUS

What have you done?

DANOR

We follow the Protector.

ISAD

No matter what.

KENDRIC

You will follow too.

ARTHUR

In time.

Suddenly, Faye's vision goes black.

INT. CAVE INCUBATION CHAMBER - NIGHT

*Darkness.*

*Chanting.*

*Humming.*

Faye's vision slowly returns.

Through a cloth cover, Faye can barely see the orange glow of torches, and the cloaked villagers walking down the cave's path.

## CAVE DEPTHS

The two villagers dragging Faye throw her to the ground.

Gregory kneels in front of her.

GREGORY

'Tis a sin to remove the link  
between mother and son.

Gregory removes her blind.

She's inside a part of the cave she's never seen before.

A dome-like room.

The walls lined with etchings of strange symbols.

The villagers stand in perfect formation, a direct path down  
the center.

At the far end of the room is the ever-familiar sigil.

Under this sigil is a large, perfectly chiseled slab of  
obsidian black rock.

Gregory stands behind it, like a pulpit.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

Bring the new vessel.

Danor carries the unconscious body of Cyrus.

FAYE

CYRUS!

Faye's held back by the two villagers.

Danor lays Cyrus' body on the rocky floor.

Silvia, Eve, and Edith form a triangle around him.

SILVIA

The Protector calls for a new  
servant.

EVE

A new servant shall be brought.

EDITH

And the blessing shall be complete.

Gregory smiles and holds up his hands.

GREGORY

Grace to the Protector in our time  
of suffering. Peace the souls we've  
lost.

All the villagers bow and begin chanting and humming.

Gregory stares at Faye.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

And to those souls that the  
Protector will yet reveal.

Ermund steps forward, removing his hood.

FAYE

What is this... devilry?

Ermund smiles.

He kisses her forehead.

ERMUND

You blessed me. And now, I can see  
my daughter again.

Faye's eyes tear up - *confusion, rage* - welling up within  
her.

FAYE

WHAT IS THIS DEVILRY?

ERMUND

You will see the beauty of it soon.

Gregory puts his hands onto the chiseled rock.

Etchings all around the rock glow.

The top of the slab opens.

Inside it is a large, web-like structure.

All along the webs are hundreds of small cocoons.

Gregory takes one out and puts it on Gregory's stomach.

The cocoon sits there for a moment.

Faye watches in disbelief.

The cocoon then wiggles.

A spindly leg bursts from the cocoon.

The leg rips the cocoon open.  
 From it, a small, four-legged organism crawls out.  
 The legs all move in tandem, incisors on its front.  
 From the side of the room, Abernath approaches.

ABERNATH

A Protector has been brought forth.

EVE

And now, the plagued one will  
 answer.

Silvia takes out a knife and etches the sigil onto Cyrus' chest.

The sigil begins leaking blood.

The organism's incisors snap fast, as if the sigil attracts it.

Cyrus is still unconscious.

Faye watches in horror as the organism uses its incisors to burrow into Cyrus' eye.

Cyrus then wakes up.

His eyes are glazed over.

Cyrus looks over to Faye.

His eyes turn to normal.

FAYE

CYRUS!

Silvia, Eve, and Edith hold up their hands.

CYRUS

The Protector calls us, Mother.

Faye's eyes fill with tears.

FAYE

What have you done to my son?

CYRUS

I see the truth now, the light of  
 the Protector.



GREGORY

Amen.

The villagers bow down, chanting and humming.

CYRUS

We are one.

VILLAGERS

*AMEN! PRAISE THE PROTECTOR!*

The inside of the chiseled rock glows.

Faye is continually held.

GREGORY

And to those souls that the  
Protector will yet reveal.

Cyrus stares forward, his eyes soulless and blank.

Faye sees in his eyes - the soulless, blank expression - *her son is gone.*

ABERNATH

The Protector has called Cyrus, the  
plagued one, to be its new vessel.

Faye's eyes fill with tears.

ABERNATH (CONT'D)

And by this holy and blessed  
vessel, new life shall be granted  
unto the Protector.

Gregory smiles.

GREGORY

Those, gone before. Taken by the  
plague. But under the watchful eye  
of the Protectors, we can be one  
with them again.

Ermund approaches and kneels.

An organism slithers in his eye.

GREGORY (CONT'D)

What beauty this world bestows unto  
us.

Gregory kisses the cross, then throws it to the ground.

He turns to Cyrus.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
 The vessel, now delivered unto us,  
 the gift of new life for the  
 Protector's offspring.

Gregory smiles.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
 THE PROTECTOR CALLS!

VILLAGERS  
 THE PROTECTOR CALLS.

Ermund turns to Faye.

ERMUND  
 Now your blessing is complete.

Faye's eyes widen.

ERMUND (CONT'D)  
 I will be reunited with Amelia. I  
 can yet see my daughter again.

FAYE  
 You are all BASTARDS! All of you!  
 INSANE! BASTARDS!

Tears flow down Faye's eyes.

ERMUND  
 Thank you.

Faye's hands shake.

Her eyes fill with tears.

Ermund bows before Cyrus.

Gregory raises up his hands.

ERMUND (CONT'D)  
 O Protector, I grant you new life.

VILLAGERS  
 AMEN.

ERMUND  
 Such that I am reunited with my  
 daughter once more.

The villagers praise incoherent words and phrases.

Ermund then takes out a knife.

He slices Cyrus's throat.

Faye's heart sinks.

Her son's body falls to the ground.

Faye doesn't scream.

Doesn't cry.

Just stares forward. Empty.

GREGORY  
Come forth, Protector.

From the incision in Cyrus's throat, the bug wriggles out. It pulls two fresh cocoons out.

Faye watches in disbelief.

Silvia picks the cocoon up and puts it in the chiseled rock.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
New life, granted unto the  
Protector.

Ermund closes his eyes.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
Now, O Protector. Cure Ermund's  
daughter.

He opens his eyes.

Ermund's eyes are glazed over.

Empty, soulless.

He smiles.

AMELIA (12) stands in front of Ermund.

She smiles at her father.

ERMUND  
Amelia... my daughter...

Ermund puts his hands on his daughter's countenance.

His eyes fill with tears.

*But we can see the reality - Ermund sees nothing, touches nothing.*

FAYE

It deceives you, Ermund! It  
deceives you *all!*

Gregory's eyes dart to Faye.

As he speaks, the alien writhes under his skin.

GREGORY

(spoken in strange alien  
dialect)

*Thou shall not hereticate our  
Protector.*

Faye's eyes widen.

Gregory places his hand on Ermund.

Ermund smiles.

ERMUND

My daughter is cured.

GREGORY

The cycle is complete.

ERMUND

Praise the Protector.

Ermund lowers his whole body in prayer position.

VILLAGERS

*HALLELUJAH! PRAISE! HALLELUJAH!  
PRAISE!*

Faye kneels down to her son's body.

Tears flow from her eyes.

Gregory kneels down to her.

GREGORY

He is one with us now.

FAYE

Your mind is lost.

Gregory smiles.

GREGORY

Those naysayers, the ones who defy,  
shall be our greatest servants.

The bug twitches in his eye.

Edith and Eve pick up the two new cocoons and put them into the chiseled rock.

Gregory picks the bloody organism up.

Gregory kneels down to Faye, who stares at her son's body, and puts his hands on her shoulder.

GREGORY (CONT'D)  
You can see him again.

Silvia and her sisters kneel in front of Faye.

Faye, completely emotionally broken, does nothing.

Silvia etches the sigil into Faye's chest.

Gregory holds out the organism in front of her.

Faye looks into Gregory's eyes.

EXT. GRASSLANDS - DAY

We come upon grasslands.

A figure in a black cloak stands at the precipice of the forest.

*It's Faye.*

Far in the distance, she sees a small townhouse.

A FATHER, MOTHER, and two DAUGHTERS.

One of the daughters coughs. *We can see boils on her hands.*

A wriggle in Faye's eye.

*Cracking sound.*

CUT TO BLACK.