

(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

## **THE PIGEON CALLER**

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(Printed with the demonstration version of Fade In)

TITLE:

MANCHESTER. 1980.

FADE IN:

**EXT. GORTON ESTATE - NIGHT - ESTABLISHING**

DARK. Quiet. A sprawling complex of THIN STREETS and red-brick TERRACES. In the distance, a DERELICT FACTORY looms.

A STREETLIGHT flickers. A WIND picks up.

**EXT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - NIGHT**

Small, in the middle of the STREET. The breeze sends a PLASTIC BAG along the asphalt outside.

The windows are dim, except for one UPSTAIRS -- from which a faint orange LIGHT glows.

**INT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - HIS BEDROOM - NIGHT**

A boy's bedroom -- a collage of DRAWINGS litter the walls, hap-hazard and sporadic.

Some issues of BEANO scatter around the floor, and a large MANCHESTER UNITED poster hangs proud.

By the door, rests a BAT.

KEVIN (9, headstrong) hunkers over a small desk, lit by one BARE BULB, and writes out a LETTER.

In shaky handwriting, he signs it -- "LOVE FROM KEVIN".

He folds the paper in half. On the back, he writes "To: DAD". Then, "THE NICE PLACE". He puts a return address:

"23 TAN YARD BROW, GORTON, MANCHESTER".

Folding it a few more times into a tiny SQUARE, Kevin puts the letter into his worn-out jacket.

Kevin grabs a FLASHLIGHT and roll of DUCT TAPE from his dresser, puts them into a RUCKSACK.

He slings the rucksack round his shoulder --

Turns out the LIGHT.

**INT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

Narrow. Slow, careful, Kevin descends the STAIRS. As he nears the bottom, the sound of a TV emerges.

Kevin gets to the last step, peers through a DOORWAY:

**INT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

A mess. No lights -- save for the glare of the TV. A B-MOVIE plays on the screen.

FRAN (mid-30s, vacant) sits on a large SOFA, stares idly at the television. If not for the rhythm of her breathing, she would look dead.

From her limp, languid fingers a lit CIGARETTE dangles precariously close to the fabric.

Kevin watches -- tip-toes away, to the BACK of the house.

**EXT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - BACK ALLEY - NIGHT**

Behind the fences and the terraces, Kevin tapes the flashlight onto the handlebars of his BIKE.

He climbs on.

**EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

With ferocious speed, Kevin CYCLES down the street -- he VEERS around a corner, barrels out of sight.

**EXT. CORNER SHOP - NIGHT**

SHUT, old. A DRUNKARD bangs his fists on the ROLLER SHUTTER, a BEER CAN in one hand -- which spills out -- and more stuffed into his coat pockets.

Kevin rides by --

The Drunkard turns, fixes his eyes at him.

DRUNKARD

Chucky ar la! Ha-haaaa! Yer gemmy,  
lad? Chucky ar la!

Kevin's legs pump faster -- the pedals turn -- the bike shoots away. The Drunkard staggers -- loses balance, falls.

**EXT. MEADOWS ENTRANCE - NIGHT**

The asphalt at the end of the street gives way to a DIRT PATH and an OVERGROWN TREELINE.

Kevin approaches. He turns the flashlight on -- uses it as a guide as he rides into the maw of the forest.

**EXT. MEADOWS - DIRT PATH - NIGHT**

Lush, vast, endlessly black -- the woods surround Kevin on all flanks, his little light cycling its way through swoons of branches.

**EXT. MEADOWS - CLEARING - NIGHT**

Kevin's pedaling slows -- the bike comes to a halt at a CLEARING. The ground darts off into different paths.

Straight ahead, a BRIDGE. The noise of WATER flows under it.

He cranes his neck up -- flicks the flashlight off.

Kevin's eyes search the night sky.

They transfix on TWO DOTS -- Ursa Major, the start of the Big Dipper. His pupils follow the stars across -- land on

POLARIS. The North Star.

Kevin orients his handlebars with the direction of Polaris -- which aligns his bike with the bridge.

He turns the flashlight back on, pushes off and cycles across the bridge -- further into the forest.

**EXT. MEADOWS - HILL - NIGHT**

STEEP, full of MUD. Kevin's bike CAREENS down it --

The front tire STIFFS into the mud, the frame BUCKLES --

The back tire LIFTS --

With the bike, Kevin TUMBLES down.

Both SMASH into a brown puddle. Kevin grunts, lifts himself -- the flashlight illuminates a bloody GASH across his hand.

Kevin struggles up, onto his feet -- he picks up the flashlight, limps over to his bike.

With all his little, 9-year-old strength, Kevin HEAVES the bicycle out of the ground, pulls it across to a patch of grass off at the side.

He inspects it under the light:

The chain, in half, dangles. Kevin kicks the dirt -- calms, takes a deep breath.

He looks up again -- the sky is now OVERCAST. Thick, black and brown CLOUDS gather across, smother the view.

The stars are gone.

A DROPLET of WATER falls onto Kevin's head. He recoils, takes a step back -- he puts his hand out.

Another DROP hits his palm.

The clouds open -- RAINFALL descends, FAST and VIOLENT.

TREES shake and the WIND howls. SHEETS of rain now fall.

Kevin pops the end of the flashlight in his mouth, HAULS his bike up -- he FORCES his way through the treeline --

**EXT. MEADOWS - TREELINE - NIGHT**

As he pushes his bike along, Kevin forges a path FORWARD -- through the brambles and the overgrowth.

The flashlight barely cuts through the dark and the rain.

Regardless, Kevin moves forward, without fear.

He pushes into a LIGHTER area of the treeline -- he sets his bike against a fallen LOG.

In a radius, Kevin scans with the flashlight --

The BEAM hits off a small CREEK, which runs toward a STREAM.

Kevin approaches -- every step wet and sluggish, as his shoes wade into deeper MUD.

He shoves through some FOLIAGE, and spots:

A DOVECOTE. Large, wooden. HOLES line the outside.

Kevin smiles -- laughs with glee.

He turns the flashlight off.

The rain continues.

Tentative, quiet, Kevin makes his way toward the dovecote.

Gentle, he reaches into his jacket -- and retrieves a handful of GRAINS.

He reaches out with the grain, hovers by one of the holes.

A BEAK peeks out -- nips at the pile in Kevin's hand.

The PIGEON emerges, eats from his palm.

KEVIN  
'Ello, Artie.

Calm, Kevin slightly raises his hand --

Slow, the Pigeon steps, then PERCHES onto Kevin's palm.

Kevin lets the bird adjust.

A beat. Rain pours through the leaves.

Kevin, quiet, meticulous, uses his free hand to retrieve his LETTER, and a piece of STRING.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
I need ya to deliver this. I'm  
countin' on ya. Y'get me?

As if handling Crown Jewels, Kevin ties the letter around the Pigeon's leg.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
Thank you.

The Pigeon sits in Kevin's hand. He turns -- STOPS.

At the dark rim of dense foliage, a FOX lurks.

It eyes Kevin -- and the Pigeon.

A beat. An ugly stare down. The rain continues.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
Bugger off! Go on!

The Fox comes closer.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
Go!

Pigeon in one hand, Kevin grabs a STICK -- he WAVES it at the Fox, wards it off.

Kevin throws the Pigeon to the sky -- it flutters --  
The Fox LURCHES up -- Kevin CHARGES -- it DARTS off --  
The Pigeon flies AWAY.

Kevin pants, sighs. Drops the stick.

**EXT. SKY - NIGHT**

The Pigeon SOARS. The letter flaps on its leg.

It curves DOWN, back toward the Earth --

**INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT**

Grubby. The TILES yellow with age. SAMUEL ELLISON (60s, lean) sits in a full BATHTUB.

An empty bottle of SCOTCH rests on the floor. A tinny RADIO crackles out a classical SYMPHONY.

Samuel's ringed eyes stare at nothing in particular.

Almost in a trance, he reaches out to the side of the tub -- grabs something, brings it toward him --

A TOASTER. He hovers it above the water, just by his chest.

Samuel's breathing TIGHTENS -- his face contorts in a wave of existential desperation.

His fingers loosen on the toaster -- about to drop it --

THUD! Something BANGS on the wall outside.

Samuel JOLTS -- the toaster FLIES up -- OUT of the bathtub and SMASHES across the floor.

In hysterics, Samuel hyperventilates -- clambers out.

He throws a DRESSING GOWN on, regains his composure as he leans against the SINK.

**EXT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - GARDEN - NIGHT**

A quaint red-brick terrace. The garden is little more than large STONE SLABS.

Samuel exits the BACK DOOR, looks around. He looks up --  
A BLOOD SPLATTER rests on the wall above. Samuel squints at it, looks down --  
The Pigeon, with the letter, TWITCHES on the floor.  
Samuel furrows his brow. He picks up a STICK by his side, PRODS at the bird. It's dead.

**INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Clean, tidy. Samuel wraps the Pigeon up in TIN-FOIL.  
He walks over and sits down at the TABLE, unfolds the LETTER. His eyes scan across the jagged writing, the litany of misspellings...

**EXT. STREET - NIGHT**

Head-to-toe in MUCK and bits of BRAMBLE, Kevin drags the wreck of a bike down the asphalt.

KEVIN (V.O.)  
Dear Dad, I hope Artie gets this to you. It's gone cold again. Nights are longer than they was. The leaves are all brown and on the floor. Hope it's good where you are.

Kevin continues toward his HOUSE.

**INT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT**

Fran sleeps. The TV blares. As he tracks MUD across the carpet, Kevin turns the TV off, throws a blanket over Fran.

KEVIN (V.O.)  
It's my birthday in two weeks. Ten. The big one. I know you're busy, and couldn't come for Christmas.

Kevin watches Fran's breathing go up, and down, up...

KEVIN (V.O.) (cont'd)  
But I'd like ya to come. We can do the things we used to do.

And down.

**INT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - HIS BEDROOM - NIGHT**

The windows are open. Kevin looks out at the back alleys and the terraces. The solid black sky above.

KEVIN (V.O.)  
If it ain't much trouble.

He waits, his oval eyes transfixed on Polaris as it hangs in the heavens.

**INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

Samuel sits and holds the letter. A lit cigarette hangs from his mouth.

He turns it over -- reads the return address on the back.

Deep, he exhales smoke. Looks over at the half-heartedly wrapped bird corpse.

He lingers for a second on the sight -- slumps in his chair.

**INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY**

Empty BEER CANS and ASH litter all across the BEDSIDE TABLE. Samuel stirs in sleep -- wakes up.

He takes a moment to sit on his bed. He gets up, walks over to the curtains and opens them. SUNLIGHT fills the room -- Samuel winces at the sight, squints.

**INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY**

The toaster debris remains as Samuel combs his hair in the mirror. He tightens his jacket around his shoulders, gives a nod to his reflection.

**INT. BUS - MOVING - DAY**

Mellow, Samuel stares out the bus window. He carries a PLASTIC BAG with him.

**EXT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - DAY**

Along the road, Samuel checks the door numbers -- until he ends up at No. 23. Kevin's.

Samuel straightens, approaches the door and knocks.

Waits. No answer.

Samuel knocks again. Waits. With a sigh, Samuel BANGS on the door -- a flurry of FOOTSTEPS from inside --

The door YANKS open. Kevin looks up at Samuel.

KEVIN

Yeah?

A beat. Samuel isn't sure of what to say.

SAMUEL

Erm. Hiya. Name's Samuel. I, uh...  
I've got yer pigeon.

He raises the plastic bag, slightly. Gestures to it.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

The bird's dead, mate.

KEVIN

What?

Kevin SNATCHES the bag off him, disappears inside. Leaves the door WIDE open.

Samuel looks around, almost in a daze -- enters the house.

**INT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY**

The place is a complete mess. Fran is gone. Kevin puts the bag on the table, rummages through it.

Samuel enters, cautious -- hovers by the doorway.

SAMUEL

Uh, listen, son... Where, uh, where  
yer parents at? Eh?

KEVIN

(not looking at him)  
Mum's at work.

SAMUEL

Right.

Samuel looks at the carpets.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Y'should probably get a move on with  
them carpets, then.

KEVIN  
She don't mind.

SAMUEL  
Y'joking? Me mam woulda battered me  
through two walls and a window over  
the absolute state o' this.

KEVIN  
Maybe my mum's better than yours.

SAMUEL  
Fat chance, mine's dead.

Kevin pulls the corpse from the bag. He shakes his head,  
closes his eyes.

KEVIN  
Artie...

SAMUEL  
So, uh. Sorry to drop in on ya. Like  
this. Think I'll head off, now.

KEVIN  
Why'd ya put him in tin foil?

SAMUEL  
Not bein' funny 'ere, mate, but this  
is my first time dealin' with this  
sorta thing.

KEVIN  
We have to bury 'im.

Samuel laughs.

SAMUEL  
Bury 'im? Just chuck it in the bin!  
What yer playin' at, lad? What's yer  
name, son?

KEVIN  
If we don't bury 'im, he doesn't go  
the nice place. D'ya get me?

SAMUEL  
Nice place? Who told ya that? Santa  
Claus?

KEVIN  
Me uncle.

A beat. Samuel softens -- slightly.

SAMUEL

It's a bird.

KEVIN

'Elp or not, fine by me.

With that, Kevin takes the bird and exits to the GARDEN.

Samuel, alone, looks around the room -- the mess, the broken toys, the muck and the grime, the family photos...

The family photos of Fran, Kevin and his FATHER (30s).

Samuel takes a closer look. He goes to leave the house -- stops, turns. Thinks.

**EXT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY**

A small SHOVEL breaks ground. Kevin heaves dirt off to the side, has the dead pigeon by his shoes. He digs.

By the fence, Kevin's mangled bike rests. Beyond repair.

Samuel exits the house, into the garden.

SAMUEL

Listen, son, shouldn't ya be in school or somethin'? Y'know?

Kevin continues to dig, without break.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Instead a buryin' a bird at one'o'clock in the afternoon?

KEVIN

He won't go to the nice place. He was a good bird. A bloody good bird.

SAMUEL

Really? From my angle it looked like he flew head first into a brick wall!

This causes Kevin to stop. He looks at Samuel -- and his eyes water. Samuel realises what he just said.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Uh, but -- y'know, I'm sure that didn't 'appen. And if it did, y'know, these terraces are built to last mate, it woulda been instant--

KEVIN

Why are ya still 'ere?

Ugly pause. Samuel goes over to Kevin, gently takes the shovel from him.

SAMUEL

Lemme take over. Alrigh'?

Samuel digs. Kevin wanders off a few feet, sits down on the grass. Stares at the pigeon.

He puts his head in his hands. Samuel sees -- stops.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Keep yer chin up, son. Really.

KEVIN

He didn't get me letter.

SAMUEL

(knowing the answer)

Oh... Who--what letter?

Kevin shakes his head.

KEVIN

Nevermind.

Samuel continues to dig. Kevin looks up at him.

KEVIN (cont'd)

You ain't some nonce, are ya?

SAMUEL

Mate, if I was a nonce, I wouldn't be buryin' a fuckin' bird right now.

Again, my name is Samuel. And yours?

KEVIN

Kevin.

SAMUEL

Kevin. Good name that.

The hole is deep enough now. Samuel wipes sweat from his forehead, plants the shovel in the dirt.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Right. It's, uh... It's time.

Kevin gets up, holds the bird's body -- lowers it slowly, and sacredly, into the earth.

KEVIN  
Have anythin' ya want to say?

SAMUEL  
I didn't really know 'im for long,  
frankly.

KEVIN  
(to the pigeon)  
I'll see ya soon, mate.

Kevin grabs the shovel, puts the dirt back in the hole.

As he does so, Samuel looks over at Kevin's bike.

With the tip of the shovel, Kevin pats the ground.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
Bloody good bird, that.

Samuel nods, feigns solemnity.

SAMUEL  
I'm sure the nest won't ever be the  
same.

KEVIN  
He lives in a dovecote.

SAMUEL  
A what?

KEVIN  
A dovecote. It's an 'ouse, but for  
birds and that.

SAMUEL  
Righ', righ'...

KEVIN  
Cheers. For, uh, bringin' 'im back.

They stand in silence.

**INT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Kevin leads Samuel to the front door, opens it.

SAMUEL  
Well, uh. I hope yer feel better.

KEVIN  
Soon.

They hover in the hallway. Awkward.

Samuel takes another look inside the house.

SAMUEL  
What a day, eh?

KEVIN  
Uh-huh. Ya got somewhere to be?

SAMUEL  
N-uh, yeah. Guess so. Guess so. Look  
after yaself, Kev, alrigh'?

KEVIN  
You too, Mister.

Samuel nods.

**EXT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - DAY**

Samuel leaves. The door shuts.

He walks out onto the road -- looks back at the house. A wave of disquiet comes over him.

**INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT**

A lit candle and a bottle of scotch. Samuel smokes and drinks, stares at the flicker of the flame.

Slow, a smile curls across Samuel's lips -- laughs, weak and hollow, to himself.

SAMUEL  
A bloody bird.

His eyes fall onto Kevin's letter. The smile fades, and the familiar emptiness takes hold on Samuel's face.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
Poor bastard.

Samuel takes the letter, and puts it over the candle. The flame licks at the corner of the paper -- catches it alight.

The fire spreads too quick -- ENGULFS the paper --

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
Shit!

It burns Samuel's hand. He drops the blazing paper, recoils -- he rushes over to the sink, fills a bowl of water, THROWS it at the fire. It's gone.

He coughs, wafts the air. The room is dark. Black bits of ash and paper litter the table.

Samuel breaks, YELLS:

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
Ffffff--*FUCK!*

A beat. A KNOCK comes from the front door.

**INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT**

In no mood, Samuel marches toward the front door and pulls it open. His NEIGHBOUR (30s, nice) stands before him.

NEIGHBOUR  
Hi, Mister Ellison.

SAMUEL  
Huh-hello? I don't do donations--

NEIGHBOUR  
Um, no, I'm uh... Number 7? Next door? We usually take our bins out at the same time?

SAMUEL  
Oh. Alrigh'. And?

NEIGHBOUR  
Jus' wanted to check on ya, make sure things were alright. We've, um... We've been hearin' a lot of noise comin' from ya.

SAMUEL  
I'll keep it down.

NEIGHBOUR  
With the twins, we ain't sleepin' anyway. But, ya not in any--

SAMUEL  
I'm fine.

NEIGHBOUR  
Anythin' I could do for ya--

SAMUEL

I said, I'm fine. Fuck off!

He slams the door. A beat.

Samuel flushes with regret. He can't believe it.

Samuel opens the door -- no one is there.

His face falls. He closes the door, slinks back toward the kitchen, hangs his head...

**EXT. CEMETERY - DAY**

Wide. Rows of headstones stretch under trees.

Samuel sits, with a picnic BLANKET, next to a GRAVE. He peels an ORANGE, tears off each sect.

SAMUEL

I was gonna join ya, y'know. I really was.

He tears another piece off.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

I'd, uh, I'd offer ya some -- but I know yer watchin' yer weight.

He lets out a painful chuckle.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Sat in the tub. Toaster ready. 'Bout to fry meself. What happens? A pigeon happens. Smacks into the fuckin' wall outside, can ya believe it?

For a beat, his thoughts drift. Samuel sighs.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Toaster's broke. I figured next time I'll turn the kitchen stove on and gas meself, but I don't think I've got enough money on the meter.

Across the way, a FAMILY -- a MOTHER, FATHER and TWO CHILDREN wander through the field of graves, away and into the distance.

Samuel sets the orange down. Watches them.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
I'm just an old man, talkin' to a bit  
of fuckin' stone. Aren't I? Yer not  
really here.

He rises, packs up the blanket.

**INT. PUB - DAY**

Smoky, dark. Samuel sits in a quiet booth, alone, with a  
PINT of amber ale.

He sips at it, looks at his WATCH. It's beautiful, old.

Two SKINHEADS play on the fruit machines -- one of them  
loses, THUMPS the machine.

Samuel takes the watch off, turns it over.

An engraving reads: FOREVER AND ALWAYS, YOU ARE CHERISHED.

The PUB LANDLORD enters, shouts at the Skinheads --

PUB LANDLORD  
Oi! Punch that fuckin' machine again  
and I'm gonna break a pool cue off in  
your arse! Got it?

Samuel downs the rest of his pint, gets up to leave.

**INT. PAWN SHOP - DAY**

A PAWNBROKER (40s, rotund) handles Samuel's watch, who  
stands opposite at the counter. The room is full of the  
disused and the discarded.

The Pawnbroker sniffs the watch, sets it down.

PAWNBROKER  
Mint.

SAMUEL  
I take good care of it. So. Can ya do  
a trade?

PAWNBROKER  
To be honest with you, mate, this  
seems like... Seems like somet' you'd  
miss. Are ya sure?

SAMUEL

My knees hurt and me back aches. I  
don't have much use for trackin' time  
no more.

A beat.

PAWNBROKER

Alrighty. What yer thinkin'?

SAMUEL

Have ya got any bikes?

**EXT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - DAY**

With a shiny new BICYCLE, Samuel walks up to the door. He  
knocks, waits.

No answer. Samuel sighs -- BANGS again. A flurry of sound --  
the door YANKS open. Kevin pops his head out.

SAMUEL

Look what I brought ya--

KEVIN

Come to the garden, quick.

Kevin runs off back inside.

Samuel lingers outside, in confusion, enters.

**EXT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - GARDEN**

Kevin runs over to the grass.

Samuel exits, puts the bike against the wall.

SAMUEL

They tell me it's a great make, y'can  
go ride it now if ya--

KEVIN

Look at this!

He finally looks to where Kevin is. From the dirt, a long,  
single BLADE OF GRASS rises out of the bird's burial spot.

This blade towers over the rest of the grass.

SAMUEL

It's... Grass.

KEVIN

It wasn't there before. Look at it!  
Artie delivered!

SAMUEL

Delivered what, mate? Come test this  
bike out, yer gonna--

Kevin pulls on the blade --

It LIFTS the square of ground under it like a TRAP DOOR,  
reveals a set of DESCENDING STAIRS.

Kevin flows with joy. Samuel can't think straight.

KEVIN

C'mon! Come with me!

Samuel walks over, stares down the steps.

SAMUEL

Wha... Yer've got to be 'avin' a  
laugh.

KEVIN

What's wrong? We found a secret!

SAMUEL

I-I-It could be a bunker -- from the  
war, y'know, it could have ordinance  
down there -- we've gotta, we need to  
call someone. Police, a priest,  
someone --

KEVIN

Are ya scared?

SAMUEL

To be honest with ya, mate, yes! This  
is a bizarre ock-urrence.

KEVIN

Look, cheers for the bike -- but I  
gotta go.

SAMUEL

Y'ain't goin' down there! Ya got no  
idea where it goes--

KEVIN

Stop me.

Kevin bolts down -- disappears.

SAMUEL

For fuck's sake... Y'do somet nice.

Careful, Samuel descends...

**INT. STAIRWELL - DAY**

Narrow, almost pitch black. Samuel makes his way down -- stumbles, feels the walls with his hands.

SAMUEL

Kevin! Kevin! Get back up 'ere lad, stop playin' silly buggers!

He continues down, calls out:

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Kevin! I'm sure yer mother'd be worried sick, and I can't explain this situation without sounding like an insane pervert. Please! Come back up!

Through the passage, his voice echoes -- bounces back.

Samuel groans, picks up his pace down the stairs --

The stairwell flattens into a CORRIDOR. Long, made of stone -- COBWEBS lace its damp walls.

Samuel moves down it -- at the end, a LIGHT shines. He approaches, closer, tentative and afraid.

The darkness envelops him.

**EXT. FOREST - CLEARING WITH A STREAM - DAY**

Samuel emerges, in bafflement, out of a TREELINE into a forest clearing. Golden SUNLIGHT bathes the entire place in a radiant glow.

A STREAM babbles, gentle, glistening.

Kevin perches on a rock by the stream. He looks at Samuel.

KEVIN

I told ya. The nice place. I told ya it was real!

In shell-shock, Samuel wanders over to Kevin, looks around.

Samuel is in complete disbelief.

SAMUEL

This... This can't be right. Fuck me, are we in Chorlton?

KEVIN

Me dad's here. I can feel it.

SAMUEL

Kev, mate, I know that yer've known me for two minutes. But y' really need to listen to me 'ere, son. Whatever is goin' on 'ere, it ain't right -- this is... We need to leave.

KEVIN

I ain't forcin' ya. Y'can go. I can look after meself.

SAMUEL

Mate, I don't... Yer not understandin' that this is not normal. This ain't right. We gotta go.

KEVIN

You can go.

Samuel sighs. He grabs Kevin by his collar, PULLS him back toward the treeline -- Kevin kicks at him --

SAMUEL

C'mon!

KEVIN

Get offa me!

SAMUEL

I'm not dealin' with this shit today, son, no chance--

Samuel pushes through the treeline -- into MORE forest.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

What!?

Kevin BREAKS free -- gives a weak slap to Samuel's leg.

KEVIN

Don't ever do that again!

SAMUEL

Where's the stairs?

KEVIN

Bugger the stairs! Don't ever touch me again, I'll batter you.

SAMUEL

Kevin, SHUSH. Just shut up, ya little shit. Give me time to think.

A beat. Kevin takes a few steps away, turns his back to Samuel -- sulks. Samuel regains composure.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Sorry. Sorry, I'm sorry. That was... It's been a rough coupla days. That's no way for me to talk to a kid, right? I'm sorry.

KEVIN

You're mean.

SAMUEL

Yeah, well... I'm sorry.

Samuel looks back at the stream. Mulls.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Look, we gotta get back to civilisation. Right?

KEVIN

I'm findin' my father.

SAMUEL

And we can have a look, but we need to figure where we're at.

(under his breath)

Shit...

He turns to Kevin.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Do you walk against the current or with it?

KEVIN

Y'what?

SAMUEL

The stream. The direction the water's in -- what's the old sayin'?

KEVIN

Y'walk with it.

SAMUEL  
That can't be right.

KEVIN  
It is.

SAMUEL  
It can't be.

KEVIN  
Well, it bloody is, Mister Sam.

A beat. Samuel exhales.

SAMUEL  
Alrigh'.

Kevin still sulks.

Samuel walks over to Kevin, crouches down in front of him.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
'Ey. Yer good at this stuff. Yer an adventurer, yeah? Why don't ya lead the way, son? We can get somewhere, we can ring yer mum -- or whoever.

KEVIN  
I'm findin' me dad.

SAMUEL  
We can do that, too. But, for now, how 'bout we get a move on. Okay?

Slow, Kevin nods. Samuel smiles at him.

Kevin licks his finger, points it in the air.

KEVIN  
It'll rain soon.

SAMUEL  
I'm sure it will.

KEVIN  
Let's go.

SAMUEL  
Sure thing, son.

They walk along the stream, head in its direction.

As they disappear into the distance, a FOX stalks them through the bushes, slow, quiet...

**EXT. FOREST - DOWN THE STREAM - DAY**

Kevin leads the way. Samuel struggles to keep up.

The stream forks into TWO directions -- left and right. The two stop.

Kevin looks at both ways -- forges down the RIGHT one.

Samuel follows.

**EXT. FOREST - DEEPER - DAY**

The two step through the forest. The stream leads.

Samuel's foot rests on -- and BREAKS -- a branch.

The sound causes Kevin and Samuel to stop. The ambience of the forest has gone silent.

In this quiet, they share a nervous look.

Sounds emerge from the overgrowth around them... Kevin searches for the source, squints.

KEVIN

Hello?

From the treeline, emerges a LEGION of SPEARS -- held by the LITTLE'UNS. Dwarves in rustic clothes. They're angry.

Three Little'uns JUMP on Samuel -- take him to the ground, wrestle him into restraint. Samuel yelps and fights -- to no real avail.

SAMUEL

Gerroffa me!

The LEAD LITTLE'UN (40s, scarred) points his spear at Kevin's chest, who holds his hands up.

LEAD LITTLE'UN

(to Kevin)

Name yourself.

KEVIN

Don't hurt 'im! We're passin' through--

LEAD LITTLE'UN

Your giant has killed.

SAMUEL

The fuck are you talkin' 'bout?

LEAD LITTLE'UN

The branch. You snapped it. For that, you must die.

KEVIN

Don't! He's with me.

LEAD LITTLE'UN

Then you shall perish by his side. Who are you? What are you doing in the Neverwood?

KEVIN

We came 'ere by accident! I promise! We're travelers.

SAMUEL

Tell this prick to get that stick outta my sight!

LEAD LITTLE'UN

The giant must hold his tongue. What are you doing here?

Kevin tries to calm the Little'uns.

KEVIN

We're passin' through. That's all. I promise.

LEAD LITTLE'UN

No one passes through the Neverwood without us knowing. Where are you from? The Great Beyond? The Crimson Escape?

KEVIN

We--

LEAD LITTLE'UN

Where does your allegiance lie? The Sun Wraith? Answer me!

KEVIN

We're new 'ere. Jus' makin' our way through. Leave 'im alone. Please.

The Little'uns relax their spears.

The Lead Little'un sizes Kevin up and down.

LEAD LITTLE'UN  
You're not one of us.

KEVIN  
No. We're not from round 'ere. He  
meant no offense -- he didn't know.

Samuel strains himself up as the Little'uns relax on him.

SAMUEL  
Can someone tell me what the fuck is  
goin' on?

LEAD LITTLE'UN  
You betray the very sanctity of this  
place. Apologise.

SAMUEL  
To what?

The Lead Little'un points his spear at the broken branch.

LEAD LITTLE'UN  
Apologise!

A beat. Samuel looks at Kevin. Kevin nods at him.

KEVIN  
Do it.

Samuel sighs. He bends over, speaks to the broken branch.

SAMUEL  
I, uh... I'm sorry.

The Lead Little'un shakes his head.

LEAD LITTLE'UN  
You are to be put to death. How do  
you plead?

SAMUEL  
Plead? To what? Who the--

LEAD LITTLE'UN  
Silence! Your little'un will answer.

They all turn to Kevin.

KEVIN  
Lemme explain. We're travelers. We  
came 'ere to find me father. I'm  
sorry about your branch.

A beat. The Lead Little'un tenses.

LEAD LITTLE'UN  
Haul them off. Maligas can deal with  
them.

KEVIN  
Wha--

The Little'uns seize Kevin and Samuel, DRAG them away -- as  
they kick and shout.

**EXT. FOREST - LITTLE'UN COURT - DAY**

The Little'uns throw Kevin and Samuel onto the ground. Their  
wrists bound by twigs and leaves.

MALIGAS (50s, dwarf, erudite) sits on a THRONE of THORNS.

SAMUEL  
You bastards! I'll call the po--

MALIGAS  
Silence!

Quiet settles over.

PANIC rises on both Kevin and Samuel's faces.

The Little'uns stand at arms, ready.

Maligas gets up from his throne. The thorns curl away,  
retract into the overgrowth.

Slow, Maligas paces. He stands over Kevin, inspects him.

MALIGAS (cont'd)  
Your giant has been accused of a  
serious crime. How do you plead?

KEVIN  
We didn't mean nothin'! Honest!

MALIGAS  
So, you are guilty?

KEVIN  
No!

SAMUEL  
Who are you people!?

Maligas KICKS Samuel in the side -- he yelps. Maligas stands over Samuel, shakes his head.

MALIGAS

We are the Little'uns. Protectors of the Neverwood. And you two have *strayed*.

He turns to Kevin.

MALIGAS (cont'd)

Your giant. You vouch for him?

KEVIN

I 'ardly know 'im!

MALIGAS

Then, that settles it.

Maligas turns to the other Little'uns.

MALIGAS (cont'd)

For the desecration of the Neverwood. For crimes for which are unconscionable. Take the giant's hand.

They set on Samuel with their spears -- Kevin kicks, shouts.

KEVIN

No! Don't! I vouch! I vouch, alrigh'?

Maligas tuts. He halts the other Little'uns with a gesture.

MALIGAS

You *really* don't know where you are, do you?

KEVIN

No! We came through a hole in me garden! Honestly! Let us go.

Maligas turns to the Little'uns.

MALIGAS

Hold off. For now.

He turns back to Kevin.

MALIGAS (cont'd)

With the breaking of the branch, you have sinned against the sanctity of the Neverwood. You *do* understand what that means, don't you?

KEVIN

How many times do I gotta say it? We ain't from round 'ere!

MALIGAS

Hm. The Neverwood is the place between worlds. A sliver between life, death, and the after. What you see, all around you, are the spirits of lost souls. Wandering, waiting. From a single blade of grass, to the veins of a leaf, to the curve of driftwood -- the ants and the bees, the melody of the birds... All is imbued with the spirit of a lost one. This is a forest of the dead.

Tears form in Kevin's eyes -- he fights them.

Maligas bends down, looks at Kevin -- *properly*.

MALIGAS (cont'd)

(softer)

You *really* don't know where you are, do you?

KEVIN

I'm tryin' to find me dad. That's all.

SAMUEL

Are you people fuckin' INSAAANE!?

MALIGAS

(to Samuel)

Silence, giant!

(to Kevin)

You look like us. But you aren't one of us, are you? Where are you from?

KEVIN

M-Ma-Manchester.

A beat. Maligas thinks. He nods at a PAIR of LITTLE'UNS -- they untie Kevin, put him on his KNEES.

MALIGAS

This... "Manchester". Where is it?

SAMUEL

About eighty miles from fuckin' Birmingham, ya prick--

MALIGAS

Silence! You are lucky we haven't taken your arm, giant. Let your little'un speak.

Kevin exhales. He looks at Maligas.

From deep within, Kevin finds a new and steely resolve.

KEVIN

We 'ave come very far. He meant no 'arm -- I mean it. We didn't know. We're not from 'ere, we don't know yous. We're tryin' to pass through.

MALIGAS

I see. And you know not of the Sun Wraith?

KEVIN

We don't where we are.

Maligas sighs. Goes into deep thought.

With great prejudice, Maligas turns to the surrounding Little'uns --

MALIGAS

Maligas has spoken. These two are absolved of their crimes against the Neverwood.

Yells, groans and protestations rain from the Little'uns.

Maligas snaps his fingers -- they all fall silent.

MALIGAS (cont'd)

Who are we, to condemn these two to death for a sin they didn't understand? Is it not to condemn a leaf to fall in the autumn, a flower to wilt without rain? By their nature, they are good. By that, they are to be absolved.

Another PAIR of Little'uns untie Samuel, who staggers up onto his feet.

Maligas looks at the two.

MALIGAS (cont'd)

You look hungry. Eat with us.

As he leads the way, Maligas walks away -- the Little'uns push Kevin and Samuel in tow.

**INT. LITTLE'UNS HUT - DAY**

The structure is made of WOOD, the curtains of VINES. Low, the ceiling hangs -- Samuel's scalp scrapes it, as his sits at a LONG TABLE.

The Little'uns sit along it, over bowls of piping hot STEW. At the head of the table, Kevin sits with Maligas.

MALIGAS

Before we dine, we observe the apology to the jack-rabbit.

In unison:

LITTLE'UNS

We apologise to feast on your meat.

They tuck in. Samuel looks around, baffled. He goes to take a spoonful from his bowl -- Maligas POUNDS on the table.

MALIGAS

Giant. You have not apologised.  
(to Kevin)  
Tell him.

Kevin, sheepish, looks over at Samuel.

KEVIN

Say yer sorry.

SAMUEL

Is this really all fuckin' necess--

KEVIN

Jus' do it, ya old bastard. They're bein' nice, now.

With a sigh, Samuel relents.

SAMUEL

(to the bowl)  
I, uh... I'm sorry for eatin' ya.

MALIGAS

That's better.

Everyone continues to eat. Maligas looks over at Kevin.

MALIGAS (cont'd)  
You don't belong here.

KEVIN  
Nah. We're tryna find the way home.  
Get me dad, as well. We didn't mean  
nothin' by anythin'.

Maligas lets out a short laugh.

MALIGAS  
"Home". A strange saying. Everything,  
from the wisps of the wind to the  
pollen of a flower is trying to find  
it. For you, there's only one way  
home.

SAMUEL  
Which is what?

Maligas swallows a spoonful of stew.

Everyone stops, turns to Samuel -- looks back at Maligas. He  
leans back, pulls out a small POUCH from his tunic.

He shakes the bag, opens it -- pours out a pile of POWDER  
onto his palm. He blows it:

The powder swirls and settles into the air above the table,  
teams and glistens like glitter -- forms a scene: the  
Neverwood, the passage of the SUN over it.

Kevin and Samuel watch, in a trance.

MALIGAS  
The Neverwood is where souls come to  
pass. Onto what, we are not sure.  
Once night falls, so do the leaves --  
everything passes, to turn anew with  
daylight.

As the powder sun descends, the rest of it evaporates --  
only to re-form in a different way.

MALIGAS (cont'd)  
But, since the Sun Wraith came, night  
has not fallen. What came here,  
remains here, trapped.

The powder shows a great RIFT above the Neverwood, and the  
sun stays still. Fades away.

Maligas looks at Samuel.

MALIGAS (cont'd)  
Night must fall, giant.

KEVIN  
And if it doesn't?

MALIGAS  
Then what comes, remains. This day,  
that you see -- this light. Has  
reigned for an eternity. We do not  
sleep. The sun does not change.  
Eternal daylight pits us in eternal  
stasis.

All together,

LITTLE'UNS  
Night must fall.

Maligas turns to Kevin.

MALIGAS  
The Sun Wraith keeps the light high,  
the day strong. Infinite daylight  
traps us, binds us -- keeps the souls  
here. But, this is not their home.  
This is a passage. They are tortured.  
So are we. Until night falls, not one  
soul can leave. The only way out, is  
if the Sun Wraith lifts this curse.  
Night, must fall.

A beat. Kevin straightens himself.

KEVIN  
We can help.

SAMUEL  
Kevin!

MALIGAS  
(to Kevin)  
I believe you can. You two have  
blessed us with a chance to do what  
we cannot. The Sun Wraith must be  
defeated. And you two are our only  
hope of doing so.

Another LITTLE'UN pipes up:

LITTLE'UN  
Maligas! You can't trust two  
outsiders--

MALIGAS

Silence. The Neverwood does not accept visitors. If they are here, they are here for a reason. The Sun Wraith has reigned too long. He must be vanquished. This giant, and the one like our own, can help us.

SAMUEL

Is this some kinda fucked up fetish roleplay shit?

MALIGAS

This is your way out. Will you help us? Will you defeat the Sun Wraith?

Ugly quiet settles once again. Kevin looks at Samuel, then back at Maligas. He nods.

KEVIN

Tell us where to go.

MALIGAS

The Sun Wraith lives atop the Black Mountain. Only there, will you find him.

KEVIN

And will I find me dad?

MALIGAS

If your dad is here, he will find you.

Kevin thinks. Relents.

KEVIN

We will help ya.

SAMUEL

Kevin, shuddup. We don't know shit from Shinola out 'ere. What if we get lost? 'Ey?

MALIGAS

There is no lost in the Neverwood. This is the place where shadows are chased. If you feel lost, then stop -- look. The leaves and the trees know where they are.

Samuel stands -- BANGS his head on the ceiling.

SAMUEL

Kev, can I speak to ya for a--

MALIGAS

No one stands until the food is eaten. Respect is crucial, giant -- do not forget such a thing.

Awkward, Samuel sits back down.

Maligas looks back at Kevin, who scoffs down his stew.

MALIGAS (cont'd)

We shall set you on the path. It is for you and your giant to follow it. Do you understand?

KEVIN

(while chewing)

Uh-huh.

MALIGAS

Then, that settles it. Once you have eaten, it will be so.

Kevin looks down at the table, at Samuel.

KEVIN

Sound good?

Samuel finishes his bowl, shrugs.

SAMUEL

Fuck it, this day is already a write off.

Maligas smiles, clasps his hands --

A THOUGHT hits Samuel.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Why not do it yerself?

All eyes, yet again, set on Samuel. Kevin shushes him.

KEVIN

They're bein' nice.

SAMUEL

Kev, I've been round the block more times than you know how to count.

(to Maligas)

If yer want a job doin', do it yerself.

Maligas shakes his head.

MALIGAS

Your giant is sharp. But, he fails to see. Peace is our province. Yes, we eat -- for it is in our nature. But we do *not* make war. Two outsiders, such as yourselves, are bound by no such coda.

SAMUEL

That's a long-winded way to say yer've got a limp wrist.

MALIGAS

It is what we live by. And if you want to leave this place, giant, then you must enact which we refuse to denigrate ourselves with.

Heaviness hangs. Samuel looks over at Kevin.

Kevin looks up at Maligas -- stands to meet his eyes.

KEVIN

We accept.

The little'uns cheer. Samuel shakes his head, puts his face in his hands.

**EXT. FOREST - PATHWAY - DAY**

TREES sprawl out into every direction. Kevin and Samuel plod through, as Kevin carries a spear by his side.

Samuel looks glum. Kevin glances at him along the way.

KEVIN

What've yer got a face like a slapped arse fer?

SAMUEL

Who taught ya to swear like that?

KEVIN

Ain't ya 'appy? We're on an adventure!

SAMUEL

We're on a fool's errand for a midget. Fer fuck's sake, why'd they give you the spear for?

As they continue, Kevin offers Samuel the spear.

KEVIN  
Take it.

SAMUEL  
No.

KEVIN  
Why? 'Cos yer a scaredy cat?

SAMUEL  
Kevin, I'm deeply disturbed by this  
sequence of events.

KEVIN  
Well, yer 'ere now -- yer coulda  
left, I told ya.

Samuel stops, rubs his eyes.

Kevin carries on down the path, stops and turns.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
Bloody 'ell, what now?

Samuel yawns.

SAMUEL  
I'm an old man, Kev. I ain't got the  
spring in me step like you 'ave. Not  
for this bollocks. We needa rest.

KEVIN  
We ain't restin'. We got a job to do.

SAMUEL  
And the job can bloody well wait! I'm  
tired, I'm old and me knees are  
knackered. Me joints are fucked, and  
me bones make a noise.

KEVIN  
C'mon!

In anger, Samuel SNATCHES the spear off Kevin.

SAMUEL  
Listen, son. I've given yer a lotta  
leeway 'ere, but I'm puttin' me foot  
down. Ya wanna play fairies with  
these silly buggers, fine. But I need  
me sleep.

Kevin tries to grab at the spear -- Samuel holds his head, keeps him at arms length.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
I'm the grown up. Understand?

Reluctant, Kevin relents -- sulks.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
Yer wanna go on yer big adventure?  
Fine. We can. But, we're sleepin'  
first. Alrigh'?

KEVIN  
Yer no fun you.

SAMUEL  
And ya've got no idea how bangin'  
this bloody 'eadache is. Them dwarfs  
make a shit stew.

Samuel sits down by a TREE, wraps the spear in his arms. He rests his back against the bark, shuts his eyes.

Kevin watches him. Within seconds, Samuel snores.

A beat. Kevin paces, kicks the dirt. Sits down.

He lies himself out on the dirt, looks up --

LEAVES flutter above, shot through with sunlight. He watches their intricate dance. His eyelids droop... Drifts to SLEEP.

LATER:

Samuel is still out. His mouth agape.

Kevin stirs -- his eyes BOLT open. A FOX sniffs at him --

Kevin SCRAMBLES up and away. The Fox stands its ground.

KEVIN  
'Ey! Bugger off!

The Fox comes closer -- Kevin LUNGES -- it RUNS.

Samuel wakes up in a daze. Looks at Kevin.

SAMUEL  
Y-Y-Yer alrigh'?

Kevin watches the Fox disappear. Turns to Samuel.

KEVIN

Yeah, I'm uh... I'm fine. Thought that fox was gonna eat me.

SAMUEL

Fox? They don't eat people, son.

Samuel rises to his feet. Kevin shakes. Samuel goes on one knee, meets Kevin at eye-level.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

You okay?

KEVIN

I said I am.

A deep guilt washes over Samuel. He hands Kevin the spear.

SAMUEL

Look, kid. Yer better with it than me.

Kevin smiles.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Now, since I'm awake and we're still 'ere... Looks like we gotta go on, yeah?

Kevin nods. Samuel flashes a smile at him.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Let's go.

The two head on.

BEGIN MONTAGE:

**- EXT. HILLS - DAY**

ROLLING hills above a blue sky. Kevin bounds down, as Samuel struggles to keep his pace.

**- EXT. FIELD OF FLOWERS - DAY**

Verdant and vibrant. FLOWERS stretch to the horizon. Kevin and Samuel walk through.

**- EXT. POND - DAY**

Samuel washes his face with the water. Kevin skips stones.

END MONTAGE:

**EXT. SWAMP - DAY**

Kevin and Samuel wade through a thick BOG. Overgrown trees create a dense canopy of leaves -- through which only flashes of sunlight dapple through.

FIREFLIES flutter through. Kevin and Samuel come to a stop.

SAMUEL

We're... We're lost. Which way, Kev?

Kevin stares off into the distance. Samuel looks down at him -- furrows his brow.

Timid, Kevin tugs on Samuel's sleeve -- Samuel looks up:

Just ahead of them, across a series of LILY-PADS and BRANCHES: FROGS. Twenty or so. All silent, all with their BEADY EYES on Kevin and Samuel.

The two share a look.

KEVIN

(quiet)

Could ask them?

SAMUEL

Who'dya think knows? Eh? That one?

Samuel points at a LARGE FROG -- it lets out a ribbit in E FLAT. As it does, a FIREFLY glows -- fades out.

A beat. Samuel scrunches his face -- he points at ANOTHER FROG: D. Another firefly blinks on and off.

Samuel trudges closer.

KEVIN

Careful!

SAMUEL

No -- no, it's alright, Kev. Don't ya see?

KEVIN

See what?

SAMUEL

It's music.

Kevin blinks at him.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
Music! Do they teach ya nothin' at  
school these days?

Samuel points at two other frogs: G and F ribbits, two more  
fireflies blink on and off.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
G. E-flat. F. D. It's uh, uh -- a  
melody. There must be some... Some  
arrangement to it. Ya familiar with  
Beethoven, Kevin?

KEVIN  
"Bait oven"? What's tha'?

SAMUEL  
Nah -- nah, mate. He's, um...  
Composer. Made music and tha', way  
back in the day -- before my time,  
certainly before yours.

He points at a few FROGS -- A, D, C. Three fireflies light  
up, briefly.

With a deep inhale, Samuel straightens -- widens his arms.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
I'm gonna try somet'. Keep your eyes  
on them bugs.

KEVIN  
What ya doin'?

SAMUEL  
Beethoven. Symphony number five.

In a quick succession of points, Samuel conducts the frog  
orchestra -- they ribbit out: *dah-dah-dah-DAHMMMM!*

Samuel's hand swirl in a FLURRY: he tempo QUICKENS, the  
Ribbit Symphony builds in intensity:

Kevin's eyes DART as the FIREFLIES light up --

Samuel's melodic line builds -- builds, builds toward a  
CRESCENDO! The frogs hit the climax of the symphony.

The fireflies light a way forward -- a path out.

Samuel breaks out into a smile -- laughs. He pats Kevin on  
the back.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
Old but gold, eh?

He salutes the frogs, pushes Kevin along in the direction of the lit fireflies.

KEVIN  
Ya good at tha'.

SAMUEL  
(stiff)  
... Thanks.

KEVIN  
D'ya do that back home?

SAMUEL  
Nah. Wasn't in the cards for me.

They walk on.

**EXT. BEGOTTEN CAVE - DAY**

A clearing. The sharp jaws of a CAVE rest ahead.

In exhaustion, Samuel and Kevin stumble through the treeline -- take a moment. Mud cakes their clothes -- sweat dribbles down their faces.

Kevin looks at the cave entrance. A wind HOWLS through the trees -- all the leaves point toward the cave.

He looks back at Samuel, who leans on a tree.

KEVIN  
Come wi' me. I think we gotta go in there.

Kevin sets off -- Samuel gets a bad feeling. Kevin bounds toward the cave entrance --

Samuel rushes after him, pulls Kevin away.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
What are ya doin'!?

As he holds Kevin, Samuel searches the cave entrance with his eyes -- the deep black ahead... Shakes his head.

SAMUEL  
I... I don't trust it.

KEVIN

Give over! Yer just a scaredy cat.

SAMUEL

Kev. Whatever's in there, I don't  
wanna face it. C'mon.

He drags Kevin away. They walk in the opposite direction.

As they move away, Samuel shoots a look back at the cave --  
shudders -- keeps on.

**EXT. FOREST - DAY**

Deep and overgrown. Kevin and Samuel, dirty and tired, forge  
onward. Samuel slows -- breathing weak.

Kevin waits, impatient.

Samuel takes a deep breath, straightens. Nods.

Kevin nods back. They continue on -- but as they do, a MIST  
slowly fills the path.

Soon, the mist ENVELOPS them both.

In fear, Kevin holds onto Samuel's shirt.

They walk on, slow, careful -- ALERT. Samuel shifts his  
eyes, squints to make out the way --

As the mist thickens, disembodied VOICES cry out, of all  
ages and genders:

VOICES

*Has the bus come yet?*

Both SPIN, try to locate the source --

The voices grow LOUDER.

VOICES (cont'd)

*You won't forget about me, will you?*

*Did I leave the oven on?*

*Wait a sec --*

*'Urry up, will ya!?*

Kevin and Samuel twist and turn -- Kevin gets his spear  
ready, his eyes flitter in the mist --

VOICES (cont'd)

*Tell him I didn't mean it.*

*I love you.*

(MORE)

VOICES (cont'd)  
*Regretfully, I must inform you  
that --*

The Voices overlap, SWELL --

VOICES  
*I hate you! I HATE YOU!  
Please, PLEASE come home --  
I-I can't -- I can't move!  
HELP! FOR THE LOVE OF GOD,  
HELP!  
It's watching... Don't  
look --  
Just a bruise, honey, don't  
worry --  
Mummy! Mummy!  
Dear heavenly father...*

VOICES  
*Why am I here? Who are you?  
You coulda done better on  
that.  
Do you hear yourself?  
When I am ready, I'd like it  
to be you.  
I've never felt alive.  
They dug me too shallow. I'm  
too shallow!  
MAKE IT STOP! MAKE IT STOP!  
MAKE IT STOP!*

Kevin STABS at the mist with his spear --

Samuel SHUTS his hands over his ears --

The wind PUSHES by them --

The Voices rise to DEAFEN, HOWL:

VOICES  
*PLEASE! PLEASE! PLEASE!  
Not like this, not like  
this --  
Daddy, where do goldfish  
come from?  
You can't do this to me.  
She never told you?*

VOICES  
*You're sick. Sick in the  
fuckin' 'ed!  
Liar. You're a liar!  
No, no, no -- come back! I'm  
sorry! Don't go! Don't--  
They hate you, you know  
that?*

CRESCENDO. The Voices die down into whispers.

VOICES (cont'd)  
*You won't forget about me, will you?*

The mist CLEARS. To reveal...

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - BOTTOM - DAY**

In utter awe, Kevin and Samuel look up.

BLACK MOUNTAIN towers above, into the sky -- jagged and  
gigantic, black like coal.

Kevin cranes his neck -- nearly falls backwards.

Samuel GRABS him -- holds him up.

They stare in an almost divine silence.

As their eyes settle, their faces fall: stuck outside, on a large SPEAR, is the HEAD OF A LITTLE'UN. A warning.

Samuel doubles-over and THROWS UP.

Kevin tugs on Samuel's sleeve -- he's lost for words.

Kevin clenches his jaw, marches toward Black Mountain. As he fights timidity, he starts the CLIMB.

Samuel staggers forwards -- follows.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - ROCK-FACE - DAY**

The way is STEEP. Kevin clambers up with ease.

Samuel HAULS himself up, slow, trembles with each reach --

He digs his heels into a slew of ROCKS, PUSHES up --

The rocks give way -- collapse --

Samuel SMASHES down, CRIES out in agony.

Kevin stops, looks down -- Samuel lies, a GASH cuts through his jeans, into his leg. BLOOD oozes from it.

SAMUEL

Fuck!

Kevin descends, goes over to Samuel.

KEVIN

Yer okay?

SAMUEL

Do I look like it!?

Samuel nurses his leg, grimaces in pain.

KEVIN

Wha-what do I do?

Through gritted teeth, Samuel groans. Kevin looks about -- to their right, a CAVE rests in the mountain's side.

Kevin grabs Samuel by the shoulders, DRAGS him away.

**INT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - CAVE - DAY**

DARK and HARD with edges. Kevin props Samuel against the stone wall, looks properly at the cut.

Samuel winces as Kevin rips his jeans further, reveals the full extent of the wounds.

KEVIN  
What do I do?

Through the pain, Samuel pats down his jacket -- retrieves a POUCH OF TOBACCO. He slaps it into Kevin's hands.

SAMUEL  
Stuff it with that!

KEVIN  
Wi' this? How?

SAMUEL  
The tobacco! It's septic, pack it with that!

KEVIN  
Yer sure?

SAMUEL  
'Course I'm bloody sure!

Kevin RIPS the pouch open, STUFFS the cut with tobacco.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
Put pressure on it -- go on!

KEVIN  
I -- I don't wanna hurt ya --

SAMUEL  
Just *do* it!

Kevin applies pressure -- HARD and STRONG. Samuel YELLS, his face contorts.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
That's enough -- it's enough!

Kevin eases, lets go -- takes a step back.

Samuel writhes, grits. He controls his breathing -- slows.

Kevin looks at him in panic.

KEVIN  
Are yer alrigh'?

SAMUEL  
I'll -- I'll be fine, okay, Kev?  
Jus' -- gimme a minute.

Samuel holds his leg, calms.

A beat.

TEARS flow from Samuel's eyes.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
I 'eard 'er voice.

KEVIN  
Who?

SAMUEL  
In the mist. Me wife's. I 'eard 'er.  
How is that? 'Ey?

Kevin is dumbstruck.

KEVIN  
Ya married?

Samuel pushes through the pain.

SAMUEL  
Was. I was, Kevin.

Kevin sits down, on an UNEVEN ROCK.

Samuel fights the tears. They pour, like a broken DAM.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
That lovely voice... I ain't 'eard it  
in years.

KEVIN  
Where's she now?

SAMUEL  
She's dead, kid. Been dead a long  
while. I -- I'm sorry, I shouldn't --

KEVIN  
Nah, it's... It's alrigh'. I didn't  
know ya like that.

Through pangs of pain, Samuel lets out a laugh.

SAMUEL

It's... It's okay. I jus' didn't expect it.

The two sit in quiet. The darkness silhouettes them against the stark light of day outside.

KEVIN

Yer good? Think ya can climb?

SAMUEL

Jus'... Jus' gimme a minute.

Kevin nods, solemn.

Samuel breaks out into laughter -- borderline MANIC. TEARS stream from his eyes, yet the laughing can't stop.

Worry fills Kevin as he watches Samuel deteriorate.

Samuel notices -- SIMMERS down.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

She, uh... I met 'er a long time ago. Way before your time, mate. Gave me this watch, y'see. It said "you are cherished -- forever and always". Panned it fer that bike I gave ya. What a waste, eh?

Kevin looks to the ground.

KEVIN

I'm sorreh.

SAMUEL

Don't be. I did it gladly. I, uh... I jus' didn't expect *this*.

Samuel looks outside. He shakes his head.

Outside, a THUNDER stirs -- LIGHT rain falls, platters across the stones.

As the rain crashes down before him, Samuel smiles.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

You know how children are made, righ'?

He looks at Kevin, who nods.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

She got one. In 'er belly. But, uh... It didn't work out. Sometimes it don't work out, Kevin. Sometimes it goes wrong. Y'know? Anyway, we, uh, we took her t' doctor's. We lost the kid. Didn't leave 'er. And since that, she wasn't able to, uh... She wasn't able to 'ave one again. Do you know how 'ard it is to mourn somethin' that doesn't even 'ave a name?

Rain falls. Kevin tries not to look at Samuel.

Samuel looks at the constant sheets of water. He looks to the floor, turns to Kevin.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

She's been gone a while. We loved how we could, given everythin'. And all I've got is the mem'ry o' 'er. It's like... It's like I carry 'er. She's with me. Always. Whether I'm shoppin', gamblin', drinkin'... I know where she is. She's righ' where I am. Do ya understand me?

Kevin shrugs, looks out the maws of the cave.

KEVIN

Yer've got no kids?

SAMUEL

No. I wanted a daughter, y'see.

Samuel trembles.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

I never resented 'er fer what 'appened. But, I know she thought I did. God, why didn't I convince 'er?

Kevin looks away. Plays with his fingers.

KEVIN

(absent)

Does it get worse?

Samuel narrows his face at him.

SAMUEL

Whaddya mean?

KEVIN

The feelin'. Not knowin' what it is.

For a moment, Samuel sees himself in Kevin. A sadness falls over his aged face, his eyes search for an elusive answer.

Kevin stares at nothing in particular, the weight on him heavier than his age can muster.

Soft, Samuel touches Kevin on the arm -- brief, gentle.

SAMUEL

(lying)

Everythin' gets better, Kevin.  
Everythin'. You jus' gotta believe  
it, kid.

The two sit, still and quiet, both small in this moment.

It POURS outside.

KEVIN

Do ya think yer gonna be alrigh'?

Samuel laughs. He slaps his knee -- recoils at the pain. Looks at Kevin.

SAMUEL

I think we're both gonna be great.

Careful, Kevin reaches out -- grasps onto Samuel's hand. Samuel grips back -- the two stay in their physical bond.

Together, they watch the rain.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - TOP - DAY**

It's clear. The SUN blazes above.

BLACK SHARDS of STONE jut out of the ground, SHARP and TALL, surround an enclosure of ROCK. The Neverwood stretches out, WIDE and BELOW.

Kevin and Samuel HAUL themselves from the ridge, STEADY themselves on the rim of the EDGE.

They've made it. The TOP of Black Mountain.

Slow, Kevin -- spear at the ready -- moves IN, Samuel close in tow. They tread careful, soft...

It's quiet. The two share a look.

Kevin's face quivers with adrenaline.

KEVIN  
(yells)  
Where are ya!?

His voice ECHOES around them, fades and escapes far away...

SAMUEL  
(under his breath)  
Knew it was bullshit...

The two scan the area, guards UP...

Before them, a GLOW forms -- outlines the SHAPE of a FIGURE.

Kevin and Samuel watch, unable to process:

The glow HARDENS -- the outline SOLIDIFIES --

Out of this brilliance, the **SUN WRAITH** emerges.

It composes of long, flowing WHITE ROBES, so white it's blinding. Its HOOD spreads into PENTACLES without a face. If not for its HUMANOID frame, it would look like a SHEET. WHITE GLOVES cover its slender hands.

Kevin and Samuel FREEZE in fear.

The Sun Wraith speaks in THREE distinct VOICES -- a MAN, a WOMAN and a CHILD. They're in unison, yet discordant.

SUN WRAITH  
You have come a long way.

Kevin points his spear at the Sun Wraith.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
I've been expecting you. The Sun  
Wraith expects all.

The Sun Wraith approaches Kevin -- who shakes with each STEP. Calm, the Sun Wraith crouches in front of him.

Intense, the two STARE into each other -- though Kevin searches the Sun Wraith's hood for eyes that aren't there.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
You are here for something, are you  
not?

Kevin takes a few steps away, re-points his spear at the Sun Wraith. His grip QUIVERS.

Samuel cannot believe what he sees.

The Sun Wraith stands. Raises its arms in SURRENDER.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
Kill me, child. Do what you must.

Kevin fights his inner thoughts -- tries to REAFFIRM his hold on the spear. He AIMS at the Sun Wraith's chest, TIGHTENS his grip.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
Though. If night falls, you will have come for nothing.

A beat. Kevin furrows his brow. His grip WOBBLES...

The Sun Wraith keeps its hands up.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
You wanted to find him.

It points away, behind -- Kevin looks.

The Fox waits, gazes back.

The Sun Wraith lowers its arms, touches Kevin's face.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
He's here. And he can be, forever.

Kevin stares at the Fox -- his eyes SWELL with tears. His whole body shakes.

KEVIN  
Daddy?

The Fox takes a step closer, reticent.

Kevin and the Fox share a deep, intense eye contact. Its as if the two can see INTO each other.

It DAWNS on Kevin. He GASPS. It's a look only a FATHER and SON could share.

Kevin's eyes FILL. His entire body RATTLES.

Samuel moves toward Kevin --

SAMUEL  
Kevin. What are ya waitin' fer?

The Sun Wraith turns its head to Samuel. Shakes its hood.

SUN WRAITH

If you vanquish me, boy, he is gone forever. The sun will lower. The moon will rise. And he will be gone. Night cannot fall. This is what you wanted, correct?

Kevin SHAKES. His face twists, as he tries to process...

With great prejudice, yet a FIRM and STRONG resolve, Kevin turns to Samuel:

POINTS the spear's deadly TIP right at HIM.

Samuel takes a step back. FEARS Kevin, for the first time.

SAMUEL

Kevin. What are ya doin'?

KEVIN

Ya 'eard 'im.

SAMUEL

Kevin. Listen to me, son --

KEVIN

Don't! Don't call me that!

SAMUEL

Okay -- okay. But, yer ain't thinkin' straight, lad.

Kevin takes a STEP closer -- the spear INCHES toward Samuel's heart.

Samuel takes a few steps back, puts his arms out.

Anger BUILDS in Kevin. FEAR rises in Samuel.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Kevin, THINK. Think. Please!

The Sun Wraith watches.

Kevin readies the SPEAR --

The Sun Wraith CLAPS its hands.

SUN WRAITH

You care for him. I won't compel you.

Kevin CRIES. Tries to keep quiet.

KEVIN  
If I do what ya say... He stays?

The Fox looks between Kevin and the Sun Wraith.

SUN WRAITH  
Forever.

Kevin wipes his tears.

KEVIN  
Wha'do I need ta do?

SUN WRAITH  
Open your hand.

With one hand on the spear, Kevin lets the other loose --  
uncurls his fingers, opens a PALM.

The Sun Wraith SNAPS its fingers --

A KEY materialises in Kevin's hand.

Kevin looks at it -- tightens his grip on the spear.

The Sun Wraith nods.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - KEEP ENTRANCE - DAY**

Hands high, Samuel enters the maw of the Keep. It's a  
tunnel, cut into the mountain side.

Kevin follows him in, keeps his spear ready.

**INT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - THE KEEP - DAY**

At spear-point, Kevin pushes Samuel into a WET, DARK  
corridor of CELLS -- carved from ROCK.

Samuel keeps his hands high. COBWEBS lace the walls.

Slow, Samuel backs into an OPEN CELL. Kevin keeps the tip of  
his spear firm at Samuel's chest.

SAMUEL  
Yer don't need to do this.

Kevin SHUTS the gate -- locks it with the key.

The two look at each other through the rusted BARS.

KEVIN

I'm sorry.

As he fights his inner torment, Kevin leaves.

Samuel remains in his cell. Trapped. His eyes watch Kevin disappear, out of view.

A beat. Silence falls.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - TOP - DAY**

Kevin returns. The WIND is high. He wears a forlorn look.

The Fox runs over. The Sun Wraith watches, distant.

Kevin looks down at the Fox.

KEVIN

It's really 'im, ain't it?

SUN WRAITH

You look disturbed, little one.

The Sun Wraith floats closer to Kevin -- bends, strokes the Fox's fur.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)

This is what you wanted, isn't it?

A beat.

Kevin hardens.

KEVIN

... Yes.

**INT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - THE KEEP, SAMUEL'S CELL - DAY**

Samuel sits on the floor. WATER drips from the ceiling, onto the hard, cold ground.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - TOP - DAY**

The Fox rubs against Kevin's legs. He bends, embraces the animal -- the two hold in this moment.

The Sun Wraith looks out at the NEVERWOOD, as it sprawls below. The WIND continues to howl.

Kevin looks up, at the Sun Wraith.

KEVIN

Why'd ya make me do that?

As it considers each movement, the Sun Wraith looks back.

SUN WRAITH

Pain is to be felt, child. You feel it, do you not? As it courses through your veins? Like a black bile, clogging your arteries?

Kevin nods. The Sun Wraith looks out again.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)

I remember. I was just an infant. No bigger than you.

KEVIN

Let 'im go. *Please.*

SUN WRAITH

Why? So he can destroy a beautiful dream? *Your* dream?

The Sun Wraith points at the Fox.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)

Your father is here. You can be together. Forever, and the rest.

KEVIN

But... Sam didn't mean nothin'. He just wants to go 'ome.

For a time, the Sun Wraith studies Kevin. The two share a look, which drips in repressed agony.

SUN WRAITH

When I was a child, I watched my world burn. It was almost... *Magnificent.* The horror of it was... Unimaginable.

Kevin strokes the Fox, rises.

KEVIN

Yer not from round 'ere?

SUN WRAITH

No. Where I come from was lost. You should have seen it. The sky was on fire. Mothers cried for their children. Fathers perished by the millions.

(MORE)

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
Many took their own eyes out, to avoid the sight. The very fabric of my reality was devoured -- torn *asunder*. The likes of which a mortal such as yourself would never bare witness, let alone comprehend. The very ground trembled, ripped apart. I watched. Helpless. A child amid flame, a baby in ruination. All that I had known -- collapsing infinitely unto itself. Rage, *rage* shook the foundations upon which I stood. A cataclysm, so great, that it would turn the sane mad. Genocide. The very heavens shuddered. I was alone, naked, in the eye of that devastation. And that's how I found this place. Blooming forth from the slaughter. Loss is something that carves a hole, child. You feel it. Even if you don't accept it. I can tell. It becomes you. But, it does not need be. That is my gift.

Kevin and the Sun Wraith remain where they are. The WIND subsides. Kevin wrestles with his choice.

KEVIN  
Long as I help ya, me daddy stays? He stays 'ere?

The Sun Wraith nods.

SUN WRAITH  
As long as the sun stays high, you will never have to feel the cold of night. I have built paradise. Molded it. A place where the lost may never truly leave. You can stay here, for all of eternity, your father -- right here -- as firm by your side as the day you were born.

Kevin and the Fox look at each other.

The Sun Wraith approaches, places a hand on Kevin's shoulder. Kevin strokes the Fox.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
The question is. Do you accept?

Kevin tenses, returns the Sun Wraith's gaze.

KEVIN

I... I do.

The Sun Wraith squeezes -- lets go.

**INT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - THE KEEP, SAMUEL'S CELL - DAY**

It's dim. Samuel presses his back against the wall.

In the quiet desperation, Samuel BREAKS down. He clasps his hands over his face, WAILS into his palms...

Through a CRACK in the wall -- something SKITTERS out --

A RAT. It zigzags across, SNIFFS at Samuel's feet...

Samuel parts his fingers. Eyes the Rat.

He goes to reach out --

The Rat SCUTTLES away --

Samuel THROWS himself at it --

The Rat disappears into its CREVICE. Gone.

The wind out of him, Samuel gasps on the floor. He stares at the crack -- shuts his eyes.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - ROCKFACE - DAY**

Sharp, steep. The Sun Wraith WATCHES below, stands on top.

Kevin THROWS a STICK into the distance --

The Fox LEAPS and BOUNDS after it, vanishes beyond an outcropping. Kevin waits.

Soon, the Fox returns -- stick between its jaws -- RUNS back to Kevin. It drops the stick at his feet.

Kevin laughs, as if for the first time. He picks up the stick, waggles it at the Fox.

KEVIN

I knew yer'd come back.

As he arcs his hand, Kevin THROWS the stick again. The Fox runs off after it.

On a nearby ROCK, the KEY lies.

Kevin waits for the Fox.

As he does, a PIGEON swoops down -- PICKS up the key, FLIES off into the distance.

The Fox sprints back to Kevin, drops the stick.

Kevin smiles, rubs the Fox's head.

**INT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - THE KEEP, SAMUEL'S CELL - DAY**

Samuel sits against the wall. Waits.

He tears at a piece of SKIN by his THUMB. Picks the flake off, drops it by his legs.

WINGS flutter -- he looks to his CELL WINDOW, a hole with bars through it. The Pigeon sits, the key in its beak.

Samuel stands -- approaches. He stares at the Pigeon, overcome by its beady eyes.

SAMUEL

It's... It's you, isn't it?

The Pigeon opens its beak -- DROPS the key inside the cell. It flies off, gone.

Samuel picks the key off the ground, turns to the cell gate.

He reaches his arm through the BARS, rattles the key into the lock -- his wrist twists, TURNS --

The gate opens.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - ROCKFACE - DAY**

Kevin throws the stick. The Fox CHASES after it.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - MIDDLE - DAY**

Samuel RUNS -- TUMBLES down the face of the mountain. He winces, gets up, continues his DESCENT.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - BOTTOM, WITH STREAM - DAY**

Samuel WADES through a stream, COLLAPSES on the rocky bank. He looks at Black Mountain, as it SPIRALS up before him.

Half out of amazement, the other out of confusion, Samuel cannot help himself but LAUGH.

He gets up, STAGGERS away -- into the FOREST...

**EXT. FOREST - DAY**

Samuel LIMPS, winces with each painful step.

He rests his hand on a nearby TREE -- his legs give WAY.

As he sits on the ground, Samuel turns his eyes UP:

The LEAVES hang above, sway in a gentle breeze. Samuel grits his teeth together.

SAMUEL  
(whimper)  
*Please.*

A beat. A GUST. The leaves TURN -- point, in unison, in one direction -- WEST.

Westward, Samuel CRAWLS away.

**EXT. FIELD - DAY**

Flat, wide. Samuel DRAGS himself across the grass, DIGS his nails further into the dirt with each HEAVE forward.

For a moment, he tries to catch his breath. Samuel lies on his side, looks up -- around -- his eyes SETTLE:

A CABIN stands, quiet and quaint.

Samuel scrambles toward it -- he attempts to HAUL himself onto his feet -- STUMBLES -- CRASHES back to the ground.

He flips onto his back, groans.

Empty, Samuel's eyes search the SKY above. Endless blue.

Samuel closes his eyes. *This is it.*

FOOTSTEPS, light and cautious, approach.

With his last ounce of strength, Samuel opens his eyes.

A cloaked FIGURE stands over him, BLOCKS the sun.

Samuel PASSES out.

**INT. CABIN - DAY**

Tight, CLUTTERED. Rustic, cozy. A CAULDRON boils over a fire. FLOWERS, HERBS and SPICES, all in MOLESKIN wrappings, scatter across the place.

Samuel comes to. He's bed-bound, VINES around his wound.

RADDI (very old, a haggard Little'un) stirs the cauldron. She looks up, smiles at Samuel, goes back to the pot.

RADDI  
You're awake. That's good.

SAMUEL  
Wh-Where... Where am I?

RADDI  
You had a nasty fall, giant. That wound wasn't far from infection.

Samuel eyes the cauldron. Looks at Raddi.

SAMUEL  
Yer not gonna eat me or somet', righ'?

RADDI  
I'm making you soup. Limewood soup. It's good for healing. My name is Raddi.

As she grabs a BOWL, Raddi uses a ladle to pour Samuel a serving. The soup is green, thick.

Raddi walks over to Samuel, hands him the bowl. As Samuel takes it, Raddi pulls up a stool -- sits down.

The two share a hard, disquiet look.

SAMUEL  
Do ya know a way out of this place?

RADDI  
You know, I am over four thousand and twenty three years old, young man. I expected a little gratitude.

Sheepish, Samuel nods.

SAMUEL  
Th-Thanks. For this.

RADDI  
You're welcome, giant.

Samuel takes a spoonful, blows on it -- GULPS it down. Tries to hide his distaste for it.

RADDI (cont'd)  
You learn to gain a little insight,  
over the years.

An uncomfortable pause. Raddi moves CLOSER to Samuel -- gets her eyes right up into him. Samuel can only watch -- frozen.

Raddi takes her seat again.

RADDI (cont'd)  
You're a warrior, are you not? A  
soldier, maybe?

SAMUEL  
I, uh... I was at Dunkirk.

RADDI  
A *great* battle, perhaps?

SAMUEL  
A humiliation. Look, i-it doesn't  
matter. I was just a boy back then.

RADDI  
Hm. I see. You turned heel.

This INFLAMES Samuel.

SAMUEL  
Are ya callin' me a coward?

RADDI  
Not a coward. A man who can't bare  
himself is no coward. He's just  
honest.

Samuel puts the bowl to the side -- sits up -- winces.

SAMUEL  
Who are ya?

RADDI  
I told you. Raddi the Wise. Raddi the  
Outcast.

SAMUEL  
You know them other lot?

RADDI

Maligas, and his troop of clowns? Of course.

SAMUEL

They sent me and, uh... Me and a *child* up Black Mountain.

Raddi stands, smiles.

RADDI

Of course. Weak as they are, they chose you two as lambs to the slaughter.

Raddi goes back to the cauldron. Stirs.

SAMUEL

The... The Sun Wreath --

RADDI

*Wraith.*

SAMUEL

Whatever. He has the boy. An', I, uh... I left 'im. I ain't cut for this. I *am* a coward.

Samuel shakes his head.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Shameful. Shameful. I left 'im.

Raddi takes a deep breath, exhales.

RADDI

You... Are at a crossroads, dear boy. And the choice is shockingly clear. Turn, run -- hide in a world you weren't born into, nor prepared for, feasting on the kindness of strangers and the odd beetle found in the muck. Trapped in your own misery, your own failings, the "what ifs" and "could have beens" that haunt a man who's led a mediocre life. That, young man, is a story as old as time itself. Or, the second option. You do what must be done. Both choices are a death. It's up to you to decide which one is more dignified. Liking the soup?

Disquiet settles over. Samuel grabs his bowl.

SAMUEL

Yer... Yer right--

RADDI

Of course, I am. You know why Maligas and those fools cast me out? Exiled me? Because the mere sight, my mere presence, reminds them of the oath *they* broke. I pleaded with them to take the fight to the Sun Wraith. Begged. But, truthfully, as long as the sun remains high, and they are fed...

Raddi shrugs.

RADDI (cont'd)

Why bother? The Neverwood aches in daylight, bloated, fat in its stasis. Maligas is not a leader. Do you consign yourself, and that child, to the stifling nature of such complacency? No.

SAMUEL

I can't do it alone.

RADDI

I "can't". Ever heard of positive visualisation?

SAMUEL

I can visualise you doin' me fuckin' 'ed in.

RADDI

Language.

Samuel stands. His head BANGS against the low-ceiling -- he bites his lip, calms.

SAMUEL

What if... What if I -- we -- could some'ow... Convince them lot?

RADDI

Maligas and the others? I gave up on that centuries ago.

SAMUEL

Who's the hypocrite now?

Raddi stops, furrows at Samuel.

RADDI  
I beg your pardon?

SAMUEL  
Yer sit 'ere, wankin' off in a cabin,  
waxing sage advice 'bout duty and all  
that other bollocks... Yet yer too  
lazy to pull yer finger out. I'm  
offerin' ya a chance. I can't do this  
without 'em. Come with me.

A beat. Raddi considers it.

RADDI  
You know... You remind me a little  
bit of a fresh, two-thousand year old  
me.

Raddi smiles.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - MOUNTAINSIDE - DAY**

Kevin and the Fox lie on a ROCK, stare into the sky.

KEVIN  
It'll be me birthday soon. Turnin'  
10. Mum says I'll be double digits. I  
wish she was 'ere. It's nice, init?

He sits up, looks over at the Fox.

The Fox sighs, whimpers -- turns away.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
What's wrong? Yer can talk to me,  
y'know. I'm 'ere now, and that's not  
gonna change.

A beat. The Fox leaps off the rock, slowly wanders off.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
'Ey! W-Where ya goin'?

Glum, ears down, the Fox glances back at Kevin -- saunters  
across the rocky mountainside.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
Yer tired? Need feedin'? We--

The Sun Wraith APPEARS beside Kevin.

SUN WRAITH  
He's just tired.

KEVIN

Why won't he speak to me?

SUN WRAITH

In his own way, he will. Come, young one. There is much for you to learn.

Kevin takes the Sun Wraith's hand -- they walk away. As they do, Kevin looks back once more --

On the ridge of the mountain, the Fox looks back.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - TOP - DAY**

It's a CLEAR DAY. The Sun Wraith leads Kevin to the edge. They survey the Neverwood.

The great forest breathes and undulates below.

SUN WRAITH

It is beautiful, is it not?

Kevin nods. He seems distant.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)

I sense some reticence. What is wrong?

KEVIN

Will he... Will me dad ever, y'know. Look like 'e did? Do as 'e did?

SUN WRAITH

Anything is possible here. But, you must have *faith*, young one. Faith binds us all, the powerful and the weak. No more distractions.

The Sun Wraith places a hand on Kevin's shoulder.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)

Look at the Neverwood. See how the sun burns above it. *Control* it.

KEVIN

How? Do what?

SUN WRAITH

Where there is light, there is shadow. *Will* it.

Kevin reaches his hand out -- stretches his fingers...

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
Good. Keep going.

The little boy concentrates -- his face HARDENS -- his hand tries to grasp onto air --

From the forest below, SMOKY, BLACK TENDRILS lift from the shadows -- they rise above the broad canopy of leaves, lick at the sky above. They intertwine, entangle...

Kevin makes a FIST.

The shadows COALESCE before the two, an ORB of blackness which suspends in the air.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
Mold it.

Kevin stares DEEP into the orb, his fist SHAKES with the intensity that RUSHES through him --

QUICK CUT TO:

ARTIE, the PIGEON --

BACK TO:

Kevin. His fist SOFTENS -- the orb of shadow ERUPTS into a flock of BIRDS, which FLY out and away into the sky.

As he watches them, a THRILL surges within Kevin.

KEVIN  
That... I did that?

SUN WRAITH  
You did. An admirable first attempt.  
You will learn. In time.

The Sun Wraith walks away.

Kevin looks out at the Neverwood. He smiles.

**INT. LITTLE-UNS TREE HOUSE - DAY**

Maligas and the Little'uns sit around the long table. In a reverie, they clasp their hands over bowls of STEW.

MALIGAS  
We apologise.

LITTLE'UNS  
We apologise.

SOUND outside -- they turn. One LITTLE'UN gets up, draws the curtains -- looks down.

**EXT. LITTLE-UNS TREE HOUSE - DAY**

Samuel and Raddi look up.

SAMUEL  
Maligas! I got someone fer yer!

**INT. LITTLE-UNS TREE HOUSE - DAY**

The Little'un gasps, turns to the others --

LITTLE'UN  
It's the giant! He's got the Outcast!

Maligas SHOOTS up.

**EXT. LITTLE-UNS TREE HOUSE - DAY**

In a PANIC, the Little'uns DESCEND from the tree -- draw their SPEARS -- Maligas unsheathes a SWORD.

They surround Samuel and Raddi.

MALIGAS  
Giant! How dare you bring this vermin here!

SAMUEL  
We jus' wanted a chat.

MALIGAS  
Silence!

Maligas approaches Raddi -- he keeps his sword at her, but cannot conceal his fear.

MALIGAS (cont'd)  
How long has it been?

Raddi smirks.

RADDI  
By my count, eight hundred and seventy-four years.

MALIGAS  
Why? Why come back? Why now!? With this -- this --

SAMUEL

I'm not fond of ya, either.

Raddi takes a step toward Maligas -- who takes a step BACK.

RADDI

Maligas. We both know that the only thing you will do with that blade is polish it. Let's drop the pretense.

MALIGAS

You are the only Little'un, in the history of the Neverwood, to be exiled. Now, nearly a millennium later, you come back to lecture ME!?

RADDI

I was as right then as I am now.

A beat. Maligas turns to Samuel.

MALIGAS

Kevin. The one like us. Where is he?

SAMUEL

He, uh... He's with the Wraith now.

The Little'uns share a series of glances and looks, CONCERN builds among them.

Maligas lowers his sword, paces.

RADDI

You sent a child to fight your battle?

MALIGAS

How was I supposed to know how old he was! He's taller than me!

RADDI

Look at you. Flailing and squirming out of a responsibility.

With that, Maligas MARCHES right up to Raddi and puts the sword's blade to her THROAT.

Samuel tries to intervene -- a LITTLE'UN gets in the way, points his spear at Samuel's stomach.

MALIGAS

Peace is our province!

Raddi looks into Maligas' eyes, which twitch and water with rage -- the intensity of a thousand-year-old grievance.

As Raddi stares into Maligas' eyes, she smiles -- softens.

RADDI  
Then what is this?

For a moment, Maligas mulls. He takes a step back.

SAMUEL  
We can't leave the boy wi' that  
creepy fucker. Help me. Please.

MALIGAS  
Giant, you are in no position to ask  
me for anything.

RADDI  
But, I am.

A beat. Maligas scoffs.

MALIGAS  
Going to war with the Sun Wraith is  
*suicide*. Who will tend to the  
Neverwood in our absence? Hm?

Samuel looks at the other Little'uns.

SAMUEL  
I get it. Yer afraid. Why wouldn't  
ya? He literally controls the fuckin'  
sun out 'ere. But, take a giant's  
word for it's worth.

He paces, keeps his arms high -- his hands visible.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
I lived a life in fear.

Maligas clenches his jaw. Raddi watches Samuel -- proud.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
I spent me time, in ev'ry nook and  
cranny, of ev'ry pub I could find.  
Drank to get numb. Pretended none of  
it bothered me, none of it mattered.  
Now I'm old, and I'm knackered. And I  
know now that there's more days  
behind than in front. Now, it's too  
late. I've made me choices. But,  
those choices mattered. They still  
do. And so does this one.

Samuel stops, braces himself.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
Gotta be honest 'ere, lads -- this has been the weirdest fuckin' couple of days of me life. Maybe I'm a loon. And yer all jus' pots and pans in me kitchen. But, there's a boy up there on that mountain. A boy that, a boy that hasn't 'ad a *chance*. He's not had a chance to be a fuck-up yet. But he's smart, and he's strong -- and he needs us.

He turns to Maligas, directs his words at him:

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
He needs *you*.

Raddi takes a step forward, places a hand on Maligas.

RADDI  
Night must fall, Maligas. The Neverwood must be allowed to heal. The spirits to leave.

Maligas softens -- sighs. Relents.

**INT. LITTLE-UNS TREE HOUSE - DAY**

A poorly drawn MAP splays across the long table.

Maligas, Raddi, Samuel and the Little'uns STAND around it, pour over every detail.

SAMUEL  
What if we split up, ascend the mountain on either side? Flank the bastard.

Maligas shakes his head.

MALIGAS  
Directly storming Black Mountain would be foolish. The terrain, the weather -- no. Too dangerous.

SAMUEL  
How else, then?

Samuel scans the map -- his eyes tighten around one part of it... He points: the BEGOTTEN CAVE.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
There. I've seen that place.

A beat.

RADDI  
Ah. The giant is smarter than he  
seems.

Everyone looks at Raddi. Raddi taps on the map again.

RADDI (cont'd)  
There are a network of tunnels that  
run beneath the Neverwood. The  
Begotten Cave is an entrance.

Raddi traces her finger across the map -- ends at Black  
Mountain, which is drawn as jagged and sharp.

RADDI (cont'd)  
One tunnel will lead under Black  
Mountain.  
(to Samuel)  
You were imprisoned in a keep, were  
you not?

Samuel nods.

SAMUEL  
Aye. It stank.

RADDI  
That keep must have been formed in  
the rock of the mountain. Embedded.  
Which suggests, we could enter it  
through the tunnels.

Maligas scratches his face, exhales.

MALIGAS  
It's... It's doable.

RADDI  
Exactly. We could've done it several  
centuries ago.

Raddi rolls up the map.

Everyone's face tightens.

Two LITTLE'UNS share a glance -- hold each others' hands.

**EXT. FOREST - PATHWAY - DAY**

Led by Maligas, Raddi and Samuel at the front, the band of Little'uns MARCH forth.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - ROCKFACE - DAY**

Kevin CHUCKS the stick -- the Fox watches it arc away, disappear over some rocks...

Stays by Kevin.

KEVIN  
Go on! Get!

The Fox lies down. Kevin sighs, sits. He plays with some small stones in his hands -- lets them fall through his fingers. He looks over at the Fox.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
Still tired, yeah?

A beat.

The two sit in silence. The sun blazes above.

Kevin gets up, dusts off his palms.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
I'll be back, alrigh'?

The Fox rubs its nuzzle against Kevin's leg.

Kevin sighs, walks off.

**INT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - THE KEEP - DAY**

Slow, timid, Kevin walks down the corridor of cells. He reaches the end cell -- looks in.

His eyes go wide. It's empty.

KEVIN  
Sam?

Behind, the Sun Wraith emerges. Places a hand on Kevin's shoulder. Kevin shudders, recoils.

KEVIN (cont'd)  
Wh-Where is he?

SUN WRAITH  
Is it not obvious, child? He left.

Kevin shakes his head.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
They all leave. Eventually. Do you  
not see?

KEVIN  
I jus'... I jus' wanted to say sorry.

SUN WRAITH  
Cast the old man aside. Your place is  
here now.

The Sun Wraith leads Kevin outside.

**EXT. FOREST - BEGOTTEN CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY**

Amid the forest, a sharp CAVE ENTRANCE stretches open. Its  
rocks like teeth.

Raddi, Maligas, Samuel and the Little'uns reach it.

Maligas hardens. He holds a piece of WOOD in his hands. A  
LITTLE'UN runs up to him, with FLINT and STEEL.

MALIGAS  
(to the wood)  
I apologise.

The Little'un STRIKES the flint and steel -- the piece of  
wood catches ALIGHT. A TORCH.

Maligas looks back at the TROOP. Raddi rolls her eyes.

MALIGAS (cont'd)  
Keep your wits about you, and your  
guards high.

As Maligas leads, they ALL enter...

**INT. BEGOTTEN CAVE - DAY**

DARK. The walls of BLACK ROCK stretch high and tight.

Single-file, the Troop slither their way through. The tunnel  
seems endless.

The light from outside dissipates -- all that remains is the  
flicker of Maligas' torch.

As they venture deeper, and deeper -- a HOWLING wind RUSHES through the rocky passage... It BLOWS through the Troop --

The torch goes out. It is now **PITCH BLACK**.

LITTLE'UN 1  
What's happening?

LITTLE'UN 2  
Where's the flint?

MALIGAS  
Everyone, calm.

SAMUEL  
'Ang on, just stay still. I got a match 'ere.

Samuel fumbles around his jacket in the dark -- the sound of a BOX OF MATCHES --

He strikes ONE off the side. A little ember of LIGHT. Samuel puts his hand behind the flame, lets it grow.

Only his face can be seen. He takes a step forward:

A Little'un looks back at Samuel, half lit by the match.

LITTLE'UN 3  
Get to the fr--

Little'un 3, by an unknown FORCE, PULLS into the darkness -- GONE. Samuel FLINCHES -- the match goes OUT.

DARKNESS resumes. In the blackness, ring out:

HORRIFIC SCREAMS. The Little'uns SCREAM in utter terror -- their VOICES cut out, ABRUPT.

LITTLE'UN 4  
RUN! RUN! RUN!

RADDI  
GO!

The sound of FEET, heavy and FAST in a maelstrom of PANIC -- the SCREAMS continue -- INTENSIFY.

**INT. BEGOTTEN CAVE - DEEPER - DAY**

The sound of flint and steel -- the TORCH sets alight. Maligas, shaken, holds it -- waves it through the darkness.

Raddi, Samuel, and five REMAINING Little'uns cower in a tight, rocky passage.

SAMUEL

What was that!?

MALIGAS

The Cave... It consumed them.

He turns to Raddi.

MALIGAS (cont'd)

*I told you!* I told you for hundreds of years, I told you this was a mistake!

RADDI

I never said this would be easy.

MALIGAS

They lost their lives for THIS!

A beat. Anger swells.

SAMUEL

They're dead?

Raddi sighs.

RADDI

We must keep on.

MALIGAS

For what!? To die ourselves?

RADDI

If we do not, they will be lost in vain!

MALIGAS

Fools! The two of you! Petulant, wastrel FOOLS!

They simmer.

Behind them, in that deep darkness...

THUD. THUD. THUD. Something LARGE approaches... The sound of wet, heaving BREATHS... A SNARL.

One only a BEAST could make.

A quick succession of fearful glances shoots through the troop. Samuel clenches.

Raddi UNSHEATHES her sword, puts herself between the dark and the others.

MALIGAS (cont'd)  
What are you doing?

Raddi points the blade at the black. Smiles.

RADDI  
It is called sacrifice, my dear friend. Go now.

Maligas looks at Samuel. Back at Raddi.

MALIGAS  
You are as indignant as ever.

With that, Maligas passes the torch to Samuel.

MALIGAS (cont'd)  
(to Samuel)  
Save the boy.

Maligas draws his sword, joins Raddi.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

The two stand side-by-side.

Samuel looks at the other Little'uns.

SAMUEL  
C'mon.

He leads the Little'uns away -- down the passage, looks back at Raddi and Maligas as they disappear from view.

RADDI  
*Alas, ye mighty horror!*

THUD. A ROAR. The CLANG of METAL --

Samuel and what's left of the Troop SPRINT.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - TOP - DAY**

Kevin and the Sun Wraith stand at the edge.

SUN WRAITH  
Focus.

It places a hand on Kevin's shoulder. Kevin's reaches out -- concentrates, hard.

The SHADOWS rise from the Neverwood...

**INT. BEGOTTEN CAVE - TUNNEL - DAY**

Samuel leads the Troop down a NARROW tunnel, torch high.

They turn a corner -- the tunnel curves UPWARDS.

Samuel SCRAMBLES up it -- the Little'uns just behind --

**INT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - THE KEEP - DAY**

A HATCH in the ground.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - TOP - DAY**

The Fox watches Kevin, as the shadow TENDRILS coalesce mid-air. An ORB forms between them, pulsates...

**INT. BEGOTTEN CAVE - TUNNEL - DAY**

Samuel passes the torch to the Little'un below him.

He PUNCHES at the bottom of the hatch, over, and over, STRONGER and FIERCER --

**INT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - THE KEEP - DAY**

The hatch BLASTS open.

Samuel CLAMBERS out of it. He helps the Little'uns up, as they climb into the Keep one-by-one.

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - TOP - DAY**

The Orb emboldens -- FALLS apart.

Kevin sighs. The Sun Wraith squeezes his shoulder.

SUN WRAITH

Again.

The Fox runs over to Kevin -- butts its head on his leg.

Kevin bends down, pets the Fox.

KEVIN

What is it, Dad?

The Fox turns -- Kevin looks:

Samuel stands, spear by his side. The Little'uns gather behind him, ready for battle.

A tense quiet.

SAMUEL

Kevin. I'm gonna need ya to step away from that thing.

Kevin falters.

KEVIN

I... You left.

SAMUEL

I'm 'ere now. And I need ya... To step. Away.

As he looks from Samuel to the Sun Wraith, and back, Kevin stands his ground -- firm.

KEVIN

I've made me choice.

SAMUEL

I know you 'ave. But, ya need to listen to me, lad.

Samuel takes a step further.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

Yer've got a mother at 'ome. More than that, yer've got a life to live.

KEVIN

This *is* my life.

SAMUEL

No, it isn't. Yer life is back on an estate. Yer life is the one... Where yer dad is dead. And that is tough. And I *am* sorry. I am so, so sorry. But, this has gotta end.

The Sun Wraith laughs -- horrid, distorted.

SAMUEL (cont'd)

What's funny?

SUN WRAITH

You are a most pitiable man.

Samuel nods. He even smiles.

SAMUEL  
Yeah. Guess I am. But. I ain't a  
coward.

A beat.

SUN WRAITH  
We will see.

The Sun Wraith raises his arms --

The sun burns BRIGHTER -- INTENSE. White LIGHT engulfs the  
mountaintop -- SHADOWS stretch out, long --

The Little'uns look back at their shadows --

TENDRILS leap out, IMPALE the Little'uns THROUGH their  
CHESTS -- the tendrils HOOK them up -- SLITHER out --

The sun recedes --

All around Samuel, the bodies of the Little'uns FALL. Hit  
the ground around him.

Samuel looks in horror -- but his resolve STEELS. He turns  
back to the Sun Wraith.

The Sun Wraith outstretches a hand -- forms a SPEAR in his  
palm. He hands it to Kevin.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
Kill him.

Kevin looks at the weapon in his small hands, up at Samuel.

The two LOCK eyes.

SAMUEL  
Kevin. Don't.

Kevin trembles. The heaviness weighs on him.

Samuel shakes his head.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
You don't have to do this.

The grip on Kevin's spear TIGHTENS. Kevin hardens.

He CHARGES --

Samuel BLOCKS with his spear's haft --

Their weapons CLASH with a loud CRACK.

A quick succession of BLOWS and PARRIES --

Samuel WHACKS Kevin's spear point down -- REELS the end of the haft up WHACKS it across Kevin's face.

Kevin STAGGERS back -- a CUT across his cheek.

Blood OOZES from it. He READIES again.

Samuel keeps his spear point at Kevin.

The two CIRCLE each other, pant.

Blood POURS from Samuel's leg wound, trickles down his leg.

Kevin SPOTS it. He LUNGES --

Samuel BLOCKS --

Kevin delivers a swift KICK into Samuel's leg --

Samuel YELPS -- FALLS. SMACKS into the ground.

His spear rolls away.

Kevin approaches, AIMS his spear down. Ready to plunge.

Samuel looks up at him.

For a moment, Kevin hesitates. The spear's tip hovers above Samuel's torso, a sword of Damocles, ready to drop.

A beat.

Kevin and Samuel hold a gaze. For a long time.

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
(under his breath)  
Do it.

Kevin continues to hesitate. SWEAT pours down his face.

Rage FLARES in Samuel --

SAMUEL (cont'd)  
(screams)  
DO IT!

Uncertainty WRACKS Kevin's mind. His face contorts in a tsunami of emotions -- anger, sadness, regret...

Hate.

The Fox approaches. Kevin glances at it -- back at Samuel -- back to the Fox...

The Sun Wraith appears behind Kevin.

SUN WRAITH  
Be done with it.

Kevin keeps his spear where it is -- but his eyes FIX upon the Fox.

The animal and the boy hold a long stare.

It's as if they look *into* each other.

Slight, the Fox nods at Kevin. TEARS fill Kevin's eyes.

Kevin lets out a PRIMAL YELL. He PULLS the spear BACK -- about to STRIKE --

TURNES and PLUNGES it into the Sun Wraith -- IMPALES it through the back.

As the Sun Wraith staggers back, the haft SLIPS from Kevin's fingers. He lets it go.

The Sun Wraith falls to its knees.

BLACK OOZE fills from the wound, stains its white robes.

SUN WRAITH (cont'd)  
A... Most beautiful dream.

The Sun Wraith falls onto its side -- DISSOLVES into an inky sludge, the texture of OIL.

Samuel sits up.

The SUN begins its descent...

Kevin turns to the Fox. The Fox runs to him -- they EMBRACE.

Samuel watches as Kevin BREAKS DOWN. He WEEPS -- SOBS, uncontrollable and inconsolable.

The Fox nuzzles into the boy's shaking arms.

The sun meets the HORIZON --

As it does, the sky IGNITES in ORANGE and PURPLE hues.

SUNSET.

**EXT. FOREST - SUNSET**

The Neverwood DECAYS. Leaves FALL. Flowers WILT.  
Slow, everything turns to ASH...

**EXT. BLACK MOUNTAIN - TOP - NIGHT**

NIGHT FALLS. The MOON arcs HIGH into the night sky.  
Kevin HUGS the Fox tight --

KEVIN

I... I...

As it dissipates into DUST in his arms.  
Kevin stares at the CINDERS that litter his body.  
His CRIES deepen. A child mourns for his father.  
Samuel goes over -- WRAPS Kevin around him.  
The two CLING onto each other, as Kevin BAWLS.

SAMUEL

It's... It's okay. You don't have to  
say the words. The love's still  
there.

Kevin relents. HUGS Samuel as if he would never let go.  
Before them, a DOORWAY forms --  
Which leads to ASCENDING STAIRS.  
Samuel PICKS Kevin up, carries him to the steps.  
He takes one last look --  
In the distance, a new SUN peeks over the horizon... Sunrise  
will come.  
Samuel, as he holds Kevin, ascends.

**EXT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - GARDEN - DAY**

Samuel and Kevin EMERGE from the grass. He sets Kevin down.  
The two look up --  
Fran, in her work UNIFORM, stands -- stares.

A beat.

Kevin RUNS to her. The two cry in each others' EMBRACE.

Samuel watches, battered and bloody, and knows this is something he shouldn't see.

**EXT. KEVIN'S HOUSE - DAY**

Samuel exits out onto the STREET. In a slight DAZE, he sits down on the CURB.

He retrieves his pouch of tobacco... Looks up.

It's a beautiful DAY.

**EXT. HIGH STREET - DAY**

BUSY. Bustling.

Samuel walks down it, so out of it that PASSER-BYS nearly KNOCK into him. Yet he does not falter.

He turns, walks into a SHOP.

**EXT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - DAY**

With a plastic BAG, Samuel WALKS up to his house... Gets his keys, unlocks the door, enters.

**INT. SAMUEL'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

It's just as he left it. Samuel enters, sets the plastic bag down -- pulls a BOX from it.

He opens it... A TOASTER.

Samuel plugs it in, pops two slices of BREAD into it. Pulls the LEVER down.

Weary, Samuel leans on his table, looks out of the WINDOW...

Outside, a PIGEON lands on the ledge. Its head twitches, its beady eyes look through -- directly at him.

Samuel gives it a little nod. The Pigeon FLIES off.

DING. Samuel turns --

The toast is done.

CUT TO:

**BLACK.**

THE END

**\*\*NOTE:** We need a scene, on the eve of the Little'uns final battle against the Sun Wraith, where Raddi and Maligas have a pre-fight drink together beforehand.