

GLOW IN THE DARK

Written by

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EXT. RURAL ROAD - NIGHT - 1986

Beneath a starry night sky, a car cruises down a dimly lit road, flanked by trees shedding autumn leaves.

Its headlights reveal a sign for a 'Coal Quarry' at the next turn.

The car continues straight on, crossing an old, narrow stone bridge.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

The car rolls through the sleepy village, stopping gently outside a charming little house opposite sprawling open fields and dense woodland.

CLAIRE (early 30s), a kind and homely woman, exits the vehicle wearing a cosy coat and hat. Weary from a taxing day, she heads to the house.

Moths flutter around the inviting porch light. At the doorstep, Claire finds two carved Halloween pumpkins. She quietly unlocks the door and enters.

INT. HALLWAY - NIGHT

Claire softly closes the door, switches off the porch light and turns on a lamp, its warm glow filling the space.

She removes her hat and coat, revealing tied-back blonde hair and a nurse's uniform with a 'CLAIRE' name badge.

Hanging the garments beside a family portrait, her gaze drifts to the dark staircase where abandoned kids' Halloween costumes lie. Tutting, Claire gathers and arranges them neatly.

Sitting on the stairs, she lets down her long hair, removes her shoes, and slips into plush slippers, sighing contentedly.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Claire flicks the light on, revealing a mess: dirty dishes in the sink, remnants of a microwave meal on the counter, and a bowl of trick-or-treat candy surrounded by discarded wrappers on the table.

With a shake of her head, she quickly tidies up, tossing all the rubbish and waste into a large bin.

She pours herself a generous glass of wine, discards the empty bottle into the same bin, and leaves with the bowl of candy.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Claire switches on the television and flicks through the four available channels.

Finding one to her liking, she settles into the sofa, enjoying sips of wine and bites of candy as she watches her chosen show.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

A dense fog emerges from the depths of the woodland, unfurling like a phantom as it swiftly traverses the open fields towards the village.

Silently, the fog envelops Claire's car and rolls up to her front door with an otherworldly touch.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Claire sleeps soundly on the sofa, the TV's glow flickering on her tranquil face. The empty wine glass rests in her hand.

Faint MERRY FIDDLE MUSIC drifts in from outside. Claire stirs, sits up, and turns off the TV. She listens intently to the merry melody.

Curious, she follows the sound to the window and parts the curtains, gasping at the sight of her front garden cloaked in thick fog.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

The distant FIDDLE MUSIC persists.

Claire opens the front door, amazed and bewildered by the dense fog and entrancing music. She flicks on the porch light, and the music abruptly stops.

A solitary moth flutters toward the glowing bulb.

From within the fog, a young woman's plaintive voice whispers, "Daddy."

Concern knits Claire's brows. She is about to respond when a nearby, SHRIEKING FIDDLE NOTE interrupts her.

The voice falls silent, and a mysterious orange glow appears in the fog, hovering a few feet above the ground.

Anxiety gripping her, Claire retreats into her home, ready to shut the door. Suddenly, a HAUNTING MELODY begins, captivating and beautiful.

Clare pauses, feeling an inexplicable pull. Overcoming her fear, she steps back out, closes her eyes, and surrenders to the music, her body swaying in a mesmerizing dance with the unknown.

As the beguiling music recedes, so does the glow, luring her deeper into the enigmatic fog. Guided by the ethereal glow, she twirls gracefully, her silhouette striking against the mist before disappearing into its embrace.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY - PRESENT

A lush jungle of houseplants fills the cosy apartment, vibrant greenery in every corner. By the front door, a bicycle hangs on a wall rack, a functional piece of art.

A gentle ALARM sounds from a mobile phone on the bedside table. The clock reads 6:52 AM.

Rising out of bed, a figure pulls back the curtains, flooding the apartment with radiant sunlight.

ALEX (early 20s), a grounded, pragmatic young woman with long dark hair, soaks in the energizing morning rays.

She approaches a wall calendar, excitement in her eyes, and gleefully circles "Camping with Peter" on October 31st.

Alex prepares a quick, healthy breakfast, meticulously sorting all rubbish and waste into an array of small recycling bins. Sustainability is her signature.

Seated by the window, she enjoys her meal while watching the bustling city street below.

INT. BATHROOM - DAY

Alex stands at the sink, brushing her teeth with minimal water. She shifts her focus to the mirror, scrutinizing the blonde roots along her central parting.

Finished brushing, she ties her hair into a tight knot, effectively concealing the more noticeable roots.

INT. STUDIO APARTMENT - DAY

Dressed in camping attire, Alex lifts her bike from the rack and leans it against the door.

She retrieves a sheet of paper from her laptop's printer tray, rolls it up, and stows it in her sizeable camping backpack.

Helmet on, backpack secured, she grabs her University Student ID card, labelled "Alexandra Hope," and opens the front door.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Alex wheels her bike onto the busy street.

A JOGGER dashes past, casually tossing an empty plastic bottle toward a bin. The bottle misses and lands on the pavement. The jogger continues without a glance back.

Disheartened, Alex awkwardly stoops with her bulky backpack, picks up the bottle, and slips it into her pocket. She mounts her bicycle and sets off along a dedicated cycle path.

EXT. UNIVERSITY - DAY

Alex pedals onto the bustling campus.

Approaching a sign that reads "Cyclists Dismount," she adheres to the instruction, stepping off her bike. However, another cyclist ignores the sign, breezing past her.

At a crowded bike rack, Alex's hope for a spot fades as she sees the last slot taken by the same cyclist. Despite her frustration, Alex pushes aside her annoyance and wheels her bike towards the main entrance.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Alex wheels her bike through the Halloween-decorated foyer, slowing her pace at the sight of a "Caution-Wet Floor" sign.

She heads to a row of recycling bins beside a busy bulletin board teeming with notices. Depositing the plastic bottle into the designated bin, she retrieves the printed sheet of paper from her backpack and pins it to the board.

The poster bears her campaign, "*Plant a Tree on Campus*", along with the timeless proverb, "*The best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago. The second best time is now.*"

Having completed her task, Alex continues to wheel her bike, following a sign directing towards the "Zoology Department".

A male student walks past her, glancing back over his shoulder to check out her ass. Unaware of the wet floor sign, he slips and unceremoniously falls flat on his back.

INT. ENTOMOLOGY LAB - DAY

PETER (late 20s), an unassuming nature lover, stands alone in the lab, captivated by a taxidermy display case of moths.

Beside him, a small saucepan cools on a mini gas stove. He carefully checks its temperature before transferring the thick, black contents into a plastic container, which he seals and places in a rucksack.

From a cupboard, he retrieves an empty vial and a half-full bottle of rum. He's about to fill the vial but pauses, changes his mind, and discreetly stows the whole bottle of rum in his rucksack.

The door swings open, startling Peter. He quickly zips up the rucksack and spins around, knocking the empty saucepan to the floor with a CLUNK.

Alex stands in the doorway with her bicycle.

ALEX

Sorry. I should have knocked first.

Peter hastily retrieves the fallen item and sets it on the counter.

PETER

Not at all. Just my clumsiness.
Please, come in.

Alex struggles to navigate her bike through the doorway due to her cumbersome backpack. Seeing this, Peter steps in to assist, holding the door open like a gentleman.

She smiles and wheels her bike inside.

ALEX

Could I possibly leave my bike in here overnight? There's no space outside.

PETER

Sure thing.

He courteously takes the bike from her and manoeuvres it to a corner.

PETER (CONT'D)
It'll be perfectly safe here in the entomology lab.

He props it against a radiator but then reconsiders.

PETER (CONT'D)
On second thought, do you have a lock?

ALEX
Yeah.

PETER
I'd use it if I were you. Better safe than sorry. You just can't trust some people. Especially some of that coleopterology lot.

Following his advice, Alex locks her bike to the radiator pipework.

An awkward silence lingers. Peter, clearly smitten, stands with an endearing smile. Alex motions towards the taxidermy display case.

ALEX
So, is it one of these?

PETER
Yes.

He points out a moths.

PETER (CONT'D)
Jodia Croceago. AKA, The Orange Upperwing.

ALEX
It's beautiful.

Peter subtly gazes at her.

PETER
Very.

He quickly averts his eyes as she turns to him.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'm trying not to get my hopes up,
but I've got a pretty good feeling
about this one.

He hoists his rucksack.

PETER (CONT'D)

Ready?

ALEX

Ready when you are.

PETER

Then lets get this show on the
road.

With theatrical flair, he swings the rucksack onto his
shoulders, accidentally knocking the saucepan to the floor
with a CLUNK. He swiftly retrieves it and places it back on
the counter, then courteously gestures for Alex to go ahead.

PETER (CONT'D)

After you.

Alex steps toward the exit, but Peter rushes forward to hold
the door open for her with gentlemanly grace.

ALEX

Thank you.

They both proceed through the doorway. As the door shuts
behind them, Peter's rucksack strap gets snagged. A BOOMPH
echoes as he tugs it free.

INT. CAR - DAY

Peter, in the driver's seat, sets up his phone's satnav. Alex
fastens her seatbelt beside him.

ALEX

Thanks again for letting me tag
along. I really appreciate it.

PETER

Honestly, it's not a problem. I
welcome the company. These field
trips tend to get a bit monotonous
by myself.

He struggles operating the satnav.

PETER (CONT'D)
 Bear with me. New phone.

He focuses on the device.

Alex's phone RINGS, displaying an "UNKNOWN NUMBER." She hesitates briefly before answering.

ALEX
 (on phone)
 Hello?
 (listens)
 Oh, hey. You okay? How've you been?
 (listens)
 No, I'm not. I'm going camping for
 the night.
 (listens)
 With a friend.

She glances at Peter, who offers a subtle smile.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 Yeah, it's a Uni thing.
 (listens)
 What!?! You're there right now?
 (disgruntled sigh)
 Why didn't you let tell me?
 (listens)
 Because I would have told you not
 to.

Peter completes the satnav setup.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 Why do you need to see me so
 urgently?
 (listens)
 Can't you just tell me over the
 phone?

She rubs her forehead in exasperation.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 (on phone)
 Alright, alright. Just stay put.
 I'm on my way.
 (pause)
 Yeah, love you too. Bye.

She hangs up.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(to Peter)

Sorry, Peter. I'll have to take a rain check. My impetuous older sister has decided to pay me a surprise visit because she urgently needs to tell me something, and is currently stood outside my apartment building, waiting for me.

PETER

Oh. Nothing serious I hope.

ALEX

Knowing Terra, probably not. She doesn't really do 'serious'.

PETER

Then why rush over? Just tell her you can't make it.

ALEX

Because were all the family each other has. She's my sister, and she needs me...apparently.

She unbuckles her seat belt.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Perhaps I can tag along next time?

PETER

Of course. Anytime.

Alex opens the car door, ready to exit.

PETER (CONT'D)

Unless--

(Alex pauses)

--I give you a lift, and if it's not anything too serious, maybe you can still come along today, if you still want.

ALEX

Are you sure? I wouldn't want to disrupt your plans.

PETER

Honestly, there's plenty of time. I don't really need to get there until late afternoon. I only suggested leaving this early so we could spend more time together.

He quickly adjusts his words.

PETER (CONT'D)
I mean, spend more time 'there,' to
enjoy the nature, together.

He offers a nervous smile.

ALEX
If your sure?

PETER
Absolutely.

ALEX
Okay, then. Thanks.

She closes the door and buckles up again. Peter readjusts his seat, checks his mirrors, and starts the engine.

PETER
Let's roll.

He tries to reverse out of the parking spot, but the car unexpectedly lurches forward. Sheepishly, Peter shifts to reverse and cautiously backs up the vehicle.

EXT. APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

A barefoot, bohemian busker strums an ACOUSTIC GUITAR. A passer-by tosses a coin into a donation hat on the ground.

Alex and Peter arrive on foot. Alex surveys the bustling street, but her sister is nowhere in sight.

ALEX
She's not here. Great. Now what?

PETER
Why don't you give her a call? See
where she is.

ALEX
I can't. Terra doesn't have a
phone. She refuses to own one.

She points to a payphone across the street.

ALEX (CONT'D)
She probably called me from over
there earlier.

Alex continues scanning the area for her sister.

Peter unintentionally makes eye contact with the busker, who smiles and encouragingly nods at his donation hat. Feeling pressured, Peter retrieves his wallet but only has notes. The busker grins appreciatively.

Reluctantly, Peter places a five-pound note in the hat. The busker bows gratefully and strums his GUITAR with renewed zeal.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Sorry about this, Peter. My sister means the world to me, she truly does, but she can be such an inconvenience at times.

Out of nowhere, TERRA (late 20s), an optimistic and uninhibited free-spirit with flowing golden hair, appears.

TERRA

Good morning!

Peter startles, and the busker abruptly stops playing.

ALEX

(to Terra)

There you are. Where have you...

Terra envelops her in a warm embrace.

TERRA

I'm so happy to see you.

Alex reciprocates the hug.

ALEX

It's good to see you too, sis.

She tries to disengage, but Terra holds on tightly.

TERRA

Feels like forever since I saw.

ALEX

It's only been a few weeks.

TERRA

Exactly.

The busker slings his strapped guitar on his back, collects the donations, and places the hat atop his head.

Terra releases her sister.

TERRA (CONT'D)
(to Peter)
And you must be the Uni friend.

He leans in for a handshake, but Terra surprises him with a hug.

TERRA (CONT'D)
It's wonderful to meet you, friend.

Peter appears taken aback by the warm reception.

PETER
It's nice to meet you too.

Terra prolongs the hug. Peter shoots Alex a sheepish glance for assistance.

ALEX
Peter, I'd like you to meet my
sister, Terra.

Terra releases the hug and gazes deeply into his eyes.

TERRA
You have a very old and gentle
soul, Peter.

She softly pats his cheek.

TERRA (CONT'D)
I can see why my sister likes you.

Peter responds with a polite smile. Alex blushes, feeling a bit embarrassed.

ALEX
(to Terra)
I was looking for you. Where've you
been?

TERRA
Getting breakfast.

She holds up a high-street pharmacy carrier bag.

ALEX
From a pharmacy?

TERRA
Yeah. I really liked the sign above
the door, and they do tend to sell
healthier foods in pharmacies... I
think.

(MORE)

TERRA (CONT'D)

Unfortunately, I couldn't carry everything, so I had to buy a 'bag-for-life'.

She gazes at the bag with concern.

TERRA (CONT'D)

I've never owned one before. It's quite a commitment, isn't it? For life. I don't know if I'm ready for that level of responsibility.

Peter notices the busker is observing them.

ALEX

(to Terra)

So, what's going on, sis? What's this urgent thing you can only tell me in person?

Terra hesitates to answer.

DEVON (O.S.)

Me.

DEVON, the bohemian busker (early 30s), a charming and self-assured eco-warrior, steps forward.

TERRA

Alex, I'd like you to meet my 'friend', Devon.

DEVON

Greetings.

TERRA

Devon, this is my beautiful little sister, Alex.

Devon hugs Alex.

DEVON

It's an honour to meet you, Alex.

Terra motions towards Peter.

TERRA

And this is her handsome friend, Peter.

Devon tries to embrace him, but Peter smoothly steps back, offering a handshake instead.

DEVON

Not a hugger, huh? That's okay. I
wont hold it against you.

He firmly shakes Peter's hand.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Good to meet you, Pete.

Peter offers a polite smile.

PETER

It's Peter, actually.

Terra and Devon embrace affectionately.

ALEX

Is this why you needed to see me so
urgently? To introduce me to your
new boyfriend?

TERRA

Pretty much. But we're more than
mere boyfriend and girlfriend.

Devon and Terra exchange a meaningful look.

TERRA (CONT'D)

We're soulmates.

They share a passionate kiss. Alex and Peter exchange awkward
glances at the prolonged public display of affection.

ALEX

Okay, then.

Terra and Devon break their heated embrace.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Well, it was nice meeting you,
Devon.

She shakes his hand and then hugs Terra.

ALEX (CONT'D)

It's great to see you, sis, really.
You should visit more often; just
call ahead next time, okay?

She plants a kiss on Terra's forehead.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Now, if you don't mind, Peter and I
have plans.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)
 (to Peter)
 Shall we?

Peter nods, and they both turn to leave.

TERRA
 Wait. You're not leaving are you?

ALEX
 Yes.

TERRA
 But I was hoping we'd spend the day together. Catch up. Come on, since I'm already here and everything.

ALEX
 Terra, I already have plans. You can't just show up unannounced and expect me to drop everything. The whole world doesn't revolve around you, remember?

TERRA
 Alright, then how about we come with you? You said you were going camping, right? It'll be fun, the four of us.

DEVON
 I'm down for that.

Alex and Peter exchange concerned glances.

ALEX
 But it's not that kind of trip. Peter has important research to conduct. Plus, you don't have any equipment or supplies--

She gestures toward Devon's bare feet.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 --or even shoes, for that matter.

DEVON
 You don't need fancy equipment or foot-deforming shoes, made by some oppressed sweatshop worker, to go camping. No. Just the clothes on your back and a roaring fire at your side.

TERRA

And we have supplies.

She proudly lifts her "bag-for-life."

ALEX

That's not going to be enough for
the two of you.

DEVON

Not a problem. We'll just buy some
more supplies before we set off.

TERRA

(to Devon)

But I spent most of our money.

DEVON

No worries. I just earned us some
more.

He acknowledging nods at Peter, who looks slightly aggrieved
but politely nods back.

TERRA

Oh, goodie. So we can come?

(to Peter)

I swear we won't disrupt your
research. You'll barely even know
we're there.

Peter looks to Alex for her opinion. She gives him a "it's up
to you" look.

PETER

Um, yeah, okay. The more, the
merrier, right?

TERRA

Yay!

(kisses Peter's cheek)

We're going to have so much fun.

She links arms with Peter and Alex.

TERRA (CONT'D)

Lead on, Peter.

PETER

Uh, where are you parked?

TERRA

Nowhere. We took the train. Neither
of us owns a car.

DEVON

There's enough of those gas
guzzlers on the roads as it is.

PETER

Oh. Okay, we'll all go in my car
then, I guess.

Alex gives Peter an apologetic smile as they all head off.

INT. CAR - DAY

Peter and Alex buckle up in the front seats, while Devon and
Terra squeeze into the back.

Terra's bag-for-life is now brimming with additional
supplies. Devon struggles with his guitar, accidentally
BONKING Peter on the head before positioning it between his
legs.

Peter sets up his satnav. Terra leans forward, intrigued.

TERRA

(to Peter)

So, where's that little gizmo of
yours taking us, Peter? And what's
this important research?

Peter fumbles with the new device.

PETER

We're heading to a woodland near
some village about an hour south of
here. A rare and endangered species
of moth sighting was reported there
by a member of the lepidopterists
society, and as part of my Ph.D., I
need to investigate.

DEVON

Sounds like a worthy endeavour.

Devon leans forward too.

DEVON (CONT'D)

You two must be studying
entomology, right?

PETER

Lepidopterology, to be precise. It's the study of moths and the three super families of butterflies. It's a branch of entomology.

DEVON

Thought so.

ALEX

I'm not, though. I'm studying for a bachelor's degree in environmental science. Peter's just letting me tag along today to gain some hands-on experience in different fields before I decide on my master's.

DEVON

Cool.

Devon reclines in his seat, while Terra appears puzzled.

TERRA

(to Alex)

I thought you'd already decided on your master's.

ALEX

No, not definitely.

TERRA

But what happened to your whole ten-year plan you had? I can't remember all the specifics, but it was very precise, and I'm pretty sure butterflies weren't involved.

ALEX

Well, you know how it is, plans change. People develop new interests, and I'm just exploring my options.

Alex glances at Peter. Terra notices and understands.

TERRA

Ah, I get it now. And you're not sure yet if this 'option'--
 (points at Peter)
 --is interested in exploring you.
 (points at Terra)

She winks at Alex, who looks irked by her sister's lack of subtlety.

Peter, oblivious, finishes setting up the satnav.

PETER
Okay, all set.

He starts the engine, and checks his mirrors.

PETER (CONT'D)
Say goodbye to civilization, and
hello to nature.

Peter cautiously pulls away.

EXT. DUAL-CARRIAGEWAY - DAY

Peter's car is stuck amidst a sea of HONKING vehicles, caught in heavy traffic on the gridlocked road.

INT. CAR - DAY

Peter leans on the steering wheel, visibly bored and frustrated, while Alex scrolls on her phone.

Terra gazes out the window lost in thought, clutching the bag-for-life on her lap. Devon slouches back, humming to himself. Suddenly, he pulls out a small notebook and jots something down.

DEVON
Hey, Pete. How about some music to
lighten the mood?

PETER
Sure, okay; and it's Peter by the
way.

Peter turns on the stereo, indifferently tuning into a radio station playing a modern pop SONG.

Devon's expression twists to one of shock and disgust.

DEVON
I'm sorry, but what the fuck is
this?

PETER
Um, music?

Devon springs forward, looking offended.

DEVON

This tripe is not music, my friend.
Real music comes from the soul.
When it hits you, you feel no pain.
It stirs something deep within you,
influencing the very essence of
one's being. The only thing this
generic, corporate drivel
influences is some fat cat's bank
account.

PETER

Oh, okay. I can change the station
if you want?

DEVON

No need.

Devon leans in and switches the stereo off.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Allow me to demonstrate.

Devon launches into an impassioned SONG accompanied by his
GUITAR. Terra watches with adoration, swaying to the rhythm.

Alex offers Peter an apologetic smile.

As the traffic inches along, Peter lets out an exasperated
HONK of his horn.

EXT. RURAL ROAD - DAY

Peter's car glides through the serene countryside.

The vehicle passes the weathered 'Coal Quarry' sign, half-
hidden by overgrown foliage, then crosses the narrow stone
bridge spanning a babbling brook.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Peter's car cruises through the tranquil village and parks
near the charming little house opposite sprawling open fields
and dense woodland.

The group disembarks, greeted by the idyllic scene.

Terra hops out with her bag-for-life, exploring the charming
surroundings.

Devon slings his guitar onto his back, breathes in the crisp
air, and indulges in some yoga stretches.

Peter fumbles and drops his phone, quickly picking it up, relieved it's unscathed.

Alex heads straight to the car's boot and pops it open.

Terra subtly turns her back to the group, and discreetly retrieves something from her pocket, gazing at it with apprehension.

Meanwhile, Peter and Alex help each other don their hefty backpacks.

Devon peers into the open boot, searching for something.

DEVON

I'll give you a hand carrying it if you like.

PETER

Carry what?

DEVON

The kitchen sink. You two seem to have brought everything else.

He smirks and taps their heavily loaded backpacks.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I'll just carry this instead.

Reaching into the boot, he grabs Peter's rucksack and slings it over his shoulder.

PETER

Please be careful with that.

DEVON

Relax. It's in safe hands.

Devon shuts the boot with a confident SLAM.

Terra discreetly stashes the item back in her pocket and playfully twirls around to mask her secrecy.

Peter locks the car, testing the handles to confirm.

DEVON (CONT'D)

(to Peter)

So, where we headed?

PETER

Um?

Unsure, he consults the map on his phone.

PETER (CONT'D)

I believe I've already located the perfect spot to set up camp.

He works to orient himself on the device.

PETER (CONT'D)

There's a clearing in the middle of the woods somewhere. If the orange-upperwing is here, that'll be the best place to find them.

Determining the correct direction, he points ahead.

PETER (CONT'D)

This way.

He strides forward, focused on the map, then halts.

PETER (CONT'D)

Wait a moment.

(dithers)

No, this way.

He points in a different direction and sets off, periodically glancing at the map for reassurance.

DEVON

(to Peter)

You'd be completely lost without that contraption, wouldn't you?

The group follows Peter across the open fields.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I call it a con-trap-tion for a reason, you know. Because everyone who possesses one, has been 'conned' into a 'trap' for their mind.

Terra admiringly grins at Devon.

TERRA

I like that.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Devon and Peter lead the way to the woodland edge. Terra and Alex are further behind.

Taking hold of her Alex's hand, Terra rest her head on her sisters shoulder.

Alex senses something is troubling her.

ALEX
You okay? Something wrong.

Terra hesitates.

TERRA
Just thinking about Mum.

DEVON (O.S.)
Hey, check it out.

Devon points to a row of corrugated iron gazebos evenly spaced along the field's edge. Each shelter holds a stack of chopped wood beneath its weathered roof.

Terra's curiosity is piqued.

TERRA
Interesting. Let's take a look.

Alex raises an eyebrow, about to object, but Terra tugs her along. Devon follows.

PETER
Where're you all going? It's just a row of wood sheds.

DEVON
Come on, Pete.

PETER
(grumbles to self)
It's Peter.

He reluctantly follows.

EXT. SHELTER - DAY

Terra and Alex reach the nearest pile of stacked wood,

ALEX
Great, a pile of wood. Can we go now?

TERRA
It's not just a pile of wood--
(gazes along the line of
shelters)
--they're bonfires.

ALEX

Bonfires? Why would anyone build a line of sheltered bonfires here?

Devon and Peter join them.

TERRA

Hold on. It's Allhallows Eve, right? Maybe they're for Samhain.

PETER

For Sam who?

DEVON

Samhain. The Gaelic harvest festival that Halloween originates from.

Alex and Peter look clueless.

TERRA

Originally, on Allhallows Eve, the ancient Celts celebrated Samhain to mark the end of the harvest season and the start of winter. Druid priests would light these huge community bonfires--

Devon inquisitively picks up a small log.

TERRA (CONT'D)

--because they believed the veil between the physical and spiritual worlds was thinnest on that night, and the souls of the dead could cross over. The fires were lit to ward off any evil spirits.

Terra spooks herself. Alex rolls her eyes.

ALEX

It's alright, sis. I doubt there are many ancient Celts or Druid priests around here these days, so I wouldn't worry.

Terra sarcastically smiles at her sister.

Devon sniffs the log, then nibbles the bark.

PETER

What are you doing?

DEVON
 (to Peter)
 It's yew.

He spits out bits of bark.

PETER
 What's me?

DEVON
 Not 'you'--
 (spits)
 --'yew' wood.

Peter appears puzzled.

PETER
 I would what? You're not making any sense.

Devon places the log in Peter's hand.

DEVON
 It's 'yew' wood. From a 'yew' tree.

He glares at the row of sheltered bonfires.

DEVON (CONT'D)
 They're probably all made from it, I bet. And this isn't just pruned or fallen branches; it's an entire tree.

Terra takes the log from Peter.

TERRA
 (to Devon)
 Are you certain it's a yew tree?

DEVON
 I lived up one for a while. So yeah, I'm pretty damn sure.

Terra looks troubled.

PETER
 What's the issue if it's yew wood?

ALEX
 Yews are some of the most ancient trees in all of Europe. They can literally be thousands of years old. Yet they receive little to no protection from the government.

DEVON

There are listed bus stops that
have been granted greater
protection.

Peter smirks, thinking Devon's joking.

DEVON (CONT'D)

I'm not kidding.

Peter quickly drops his smile.

Alex crouches down and examines the earthy ground, gently
rubbing the dirt between her fingers.

ALEX

It's strange though. This isn't the
type of woodland where you'd
typically expect to find yew trees.
They prefer chalkier soil. In fact,
I haven't seen a single one since
we arrived.

She scans the area.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Wherever this wood came from, it's
not from around here.

Devon looks incensed.

DEVON

Well, someone here knows where it
came from--
(glares back at village)
--and I'd certainly like to find
out who.

Peter starts edging toward the woodland.

PETER

Lets just carry on, shall we? We're
not here to make any trouble.

Devon lets out an exasperated sigh. He closes his eyes and
takes deep, meditative breaths, attempting to calm himself.

DEVON

Alright.

His eyes snap open and he marches resolutely toward the
woods.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Come on, Pete. Let's go find this moth of yours.

PETER

It's Pe...

He begins to correct Devon but opts to just let it go; it wont change anything anyway.

Alex and Peter follow Devon. Terra hesitates for a moment, staring at the small yew log in her hand with a worried expression.

ALEX

Terra, let's go.

Terra tucks the yew log into her bag and joins the others.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Beside Peter's car, a figure stands, watching as the group enters the woodland in the distance.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY

Peter leads the group through the scenic woods, frequently checking his phone's map.

Terra walks between Alex and Devon, holding hands with both.

ALEX

Sorry, but I have to ask.

(to Devon)

Did you say earlier that you once lived up a yew tree?

DEVON

Yeah, for a while, and a few other types of trees too.

Alex is intrigued, waiting for more, but Devon isn't very forthcoming.

ALEX

Care to elaborate?

TERRA

Devon's a tree sitter.

ALEX

Tree sitter? As in the
environmental protest kind?

Devon nods modestly, a hint of pride in his voice.

DEVON

Someone has to protect our ancient
woodlands from all these greedy
developers who think they can just
cut them down, like they have some
kind of ownership over them. No, I
say. Not on my watch.

ALEX

So, you're a eco-activist?

DEVON

Among other things.

He plucks one of his GUITAR strings.

Alex looks at Devon in a new light.

TERRA

(to Devon)

Alex is becoming quite the activist
herself, you know.

DEVON

Oh, yeah?

ALEX

Nothing as admirable as what you
do. I mostly organize litter picks
and tree planting drives—small
things like that.

DEVON

That's more than most.

Peter beckons to them.

PETER

This way.

(points in a direction)

No, wait.

He pauses, checking the map. The others stop, waiting for
guidance.

ALEX

(to Devon)

So how long do you usually live up these trees for?

DEVON

For as long as it takes. It's essentially a stalling tactic to buy time for legal action to secure the tree's long-term protection. My fellow sitters and I take it in shifts, but it can go on for weeks, even months sometimes.

Terra spots something through the trees.

TERRA

What's that over there?

She gestures towards an open area beyond the woods.

TERRA (CONT'D)

Is that the clearing your looking for, Peter?

PETER

No, that's just an old, abandoned coal quarry. I can see it on the map.

TERRA

Abandoned quarry? Why didn't you say?

Excitedly, Terra takes Alex and Devon's hands, leading them towards the quarry.

PETER

(to himself)

Because I didn't want 'this' to happen.

Peter reluctantly follows.

EXT. QUARRY - DAY

Devon, Terra, and Alex, reach the edge of the flooded quarry. Terra leans over the precipice, peering down at the calm water below.

TERRA

I wonder how deep it is?

Alex gently pulls her back from the brink.

ALEX

Too close.

Devon gazes at the vast hole in the ground, visibly sickened.

DEVON

Yet another example of humanity's
ruthless disregard for this world.
Piece by piece, we're tearing out
and consuming the very soul of this
planet.

TERRA

But nature always finds its way
back.

She smiles, finding solace in the wildlife reclaiming the
site.

Peter arrives, slipping his phone into his pocket and keeping
a safe distance from the edge.

DEVON

Anyone up for a dip?

Peter smirks.

PETER

Your joking, right?

DEVON

No.

He sets down his guitar and Peter's rucksack, stepping to the
verge and gazing at the water.

PETER

But it's dangerous. Can't you see
the signs?

He points to "Danger-Deep Cold Water" and "Do Not Swim"
warning signs.

DEVON

Yeah, I saw the signs. I simply
choose to ignore them. It's just
scare tactics. I'll be fine.

ALEX

You can't just ignore the signs.
That water's probably freezing this
time of year. If you jump in there.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

You could go into hypothermic shock
and drown.

PETER

Or crack your head on hidden rocks
below the surface and drown that
way instead.

DEVON

Okay, okay, relax. I was only
joking. Jeez, you two need to
lighten up.

Devon steps back, picking up the rucksack and guitar.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Go on then, Pete, lead us to this
clearing.

Peter retrieves his phone from his pocket but fumbles it,
desperately trying to catch it as it ricochets from hand to
hand. Just before it plummets over the edge, he snatches it
out of the air, relief washing over his face.

PETER

Ha! Got it.

His footing becomes precarious, teetering on the precipice,
the weight of his backpack shifting his balance, pulling him
over.

Devon reacts swiftly, yanking him back to safety. Peter
stumbles into Devon's arms, holding on tightly.

DEVON

Hugging me now, aren't you?

Peter releases his grip, slightly embarrassed. Alex exhales
in relief.

ALEX

You okay? You nearly went over.

PETER

Yeah, yeah, I'm fine.

Despite his brave front, it's clear he's shaken up. Terra
gives him a comforting hug.

PETER (CONT'D)

(to Devon)

Thanks, Devon. I think you might
have just saved my life.

Devon shrugs it off.

DEVON
It was nothing.

Terra theatrically plants a kiss on Devon's cheek.

TERRA
My hero.

Peter consults his phone's map and points at the treeline.

PETER
This way.

The others follow his lead, venturing back into the woods.

EXT. GLADE - DAY

The group arrives at a picturesque clearing in the woods.
Peter grins with satisfaction.

PETER
Perfect.

Terra wanders off, marvelling at the natural beauty. Alex and Peter set their backpacks down and discuss where to pitch their tents.

DEVON
Leave the campfire to me. I'm a bit
of an expert.

Spotting a cluster of wildflowers at the edge of the glade,
Terra kneels to admire them.

A SNAP of a twig nearby catches her attention.

JOHN, (mid 70s), a grizzled and sullen yokel, stands before
her, gripping a hefty axe. They lock eyes. Terra stands up.

TERRA
Hello.

He doesn't respond, staring at her wide-eyed.

TERRA (CONT'D)
I like your axe.

Devon notices John.

DEVON
Hey!

Devon rushes over, protectively standing in front of her.

Alex and Peter watch on, tense and concerned.

DEVON (CONT'D)
(to John)
Can we help you with something,
friend?

John remains silent, his unblinking gaze fixed on Terra.

DEVON (CONT'D)
(insistently)
Hey.

He snaps his fingers in front of John's face.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Look at me.

Reluctantly, his glare shifts to Devon.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Can we help you?

JOHN
You can't camp here. This is
private land.

DEVON
Private? Oh right, sorry about
that. We didn't realize this
woodland's owned by someone. We
didn't see any signs.

JOHN
Me telling you is sign enough,
don't you reckon?

DEVON
All depends really. Who are you?

JOHN
John Wortman. The owner of the land
you're trespassing on.

DEVON
You're the landowner? Well, good.
In that case, I'm glad you're here.

Devon adopts a more open and friendly demeanour.

DEVON (CONT'D)

As the legal owner, you have the authority to grant us permission to stay here.

(gestures toward Peter and Alex.)

My associates over there are from one of the top Universities in the country--

(Peter waves sheepishly)

--they need to conduct some very important research in these woods tonight. So...

John rudely interrupts.

JOHN

I don't give a damn where you're from or why you're here. This is my land, and I want you off it. Right now. Go on. The lot of you. Sling your hook!

John makes an aggressive shooing gesture with the axe, urging them to leave.

Peter hurriedly complies, shouldering his backpack.

Devon maintains his composure, not backing down.

DEVON

Okay, if that's the way you're going to be about it.

He faces John directly, his tone assertive.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Until you provide us with some form of documentation substantiating your claim as the legal owner of these woods, we're not going anywhere.

Devon resolutely stands his ground.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Should you decide to attempt to use force to evict us prior to producing said documents, then that, my friend, is classified as assault.

John squares up, gripping his axe intimidatingly.

JOHN

If that's what it takes.

An intense standoff ensues as they lock eyes in a tense stare-down.

Alex intervenes, stepping in to defuse the situation.

ALEX

(to John)

Look, we're sorry for trespassing on your land, okay? But there's no need for things to escalate any further, because we're leaving.

(to Devon)

Right now.

She prepares to leave, Peter earnestly assisting with her backpack. Terra gently nudges Devon, signalling him to disengage.

DEVON

(to John)

A little advice, friend. Next time you decide to share your charming personality with others, pop a breath mint first--

(shoulders the rucksack and guitar)

--you stinking old booze-hound.

John watches sternly as the group clears out of the glade, his stare unwavering.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

The group approaches Peter's car.

DEVON

This is bullshit. We can't just bow down to intimidation like this. We should stand up to it, not run away.

Peter unlocks the vehicle and opens the boot.

ALEX

What choice do we have? He's the landowner, after all.

They load their backpacks and rucksack into the car. Terra holds on to her bag-for-life.

DEVON

Yeah, but it's only his so-called land because at some point in the eleventh century, a member of William the Conqueror's army was granted ownership of this area, and over the years, it's been passed down, divvied up, and sold off. The truth is, no one can truly claim ownership over any part of this planet. No one.

PETER

That may be true, but he's got a really big axe.

(shuts boot)

So we're getting out of here.

Peter and Alex settle into the car and buckle up. Terra comforts Devon.

TERRA

I know it's not fair, but sometimes it's best to just be the bigger person and walk away.

DEVON

Yeah, but sometimes being the bigger person can make you feel so small.

She kisses him tenderly on the cheek.

TERRA

Come on. Let's go.

Reluctantly, Devon yields. Terra gets into the car. Devon is about to follow when realization strikes.

DEVON

Damn it.

He turns back towards the distant woodland.

DEVON (CONT'D)

He's probably the one responsible for those bonfires then, or at least knows something about it.

Devon is aggrieved, unwilling to leave. He scans the surroundings, hoping to spot John.

DEVON (CONT'D)
I've got a couple of questions I'd
like to ask him.

Peter starts the ENGINE, ready to leave.

PETER
(to Devon)
We are leaving.

Devon pauses, closes his eyes, and takes deep breaths in an attempt to find inner calm. He soon abandons the effort and pulls out his notebook, passionately jotting something down.

In an act of defiance, he strums his GUITAR and raises a rebellious middle finger to the world, hoping John sees it.

He finally gets into the car, and the vehicle speeds away.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY

John watches the group from afar, ensuring their car departs the village.

INT. CAR - DAY

The atmosphere is sombre and silent, except for Devon, still seething with frustration.

The vehicle crosses the narrow stone bridge.

DEVON
So, what's the plan?

PETER
Don't know. Go home, I guess.

DEVON
Go home?

Alex offers Peter a sympathetic smile. Devon spots something up ahead.

DEVON (CONT'D)
To hell with that. I've got a
better idea.

He leans forward and points emphatically to the upcoming turn leading to the quarry.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Take the turn, Pete.

PETER
What? Why?

DEVON
Trust me. Just do it.

Peter hesitates as they approach the side-road.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Now!

Peter abruptly hits the brakes and jerks the steering wheel, causing the car to skid around the bend. Everyone grips tightly. The vehicle comes to a jolting halt, perfectly aligned with the road. The group bumps back into their seats.

Terra grins, elated.

TERRA
Weeeee.

DEVON
Geez, Pete. Tad slower next time,
yeah?

Peter remains unresponsive, fixated on the road ahead, his hands clenched tightly around the steering wheel.

ALEX
Peter, are you alright?

Suddenly, he lets out a mini scream and loosens his grip.

PETER
(to Devon)
Why did you do that?

DEVON
Because I've got a plan. We can
camp at the quarry. There's no way
he owns that land as well, and it's
right next to the woods. Problem
solved.

ALEX
(to Peter)
He's got a point, you know. I doubt
he can claim to own that quarry.

Peter is reluctant, unsure about this new plan.

PETER

Even if it's not his land, I don't think that guy will be too happy to find us camping there. He'll probably still make us leave.

DEVON

That's only if he sees us. If we park somewhere down this road, cross over the stream, and stay out of sight, he'll never even know we're there. And if he does show up, don't worry; I'll handle him.

Peter remains unconvinced.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Come on, Pete. Show some bottle. It's the only way you're ever going to find this moth of yours.

Alex offers Peter an encouraging smile.

PETER

Sod it. Lets do it

DEVON

Good man.

He pats Peter on the shoulder and settles back in his seat.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Drive on.

Peter starts the engine and slowly pulls away.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

The group progresses along the stream's bank, carrying their bags, with Devon leading the way.

They reach stepping stones across the water.

Devon helps everyone cross, Peter needing the most assistance.

EXT. CAMPSITE - DUSK

The group has established camp near the quarry, their two tents at the edge of the woods.

Alex taps the last pegs into the ground with a rubber hammer. Devon expertly builds a campfire, while Peter stretches a white sheet between two trees.

With the tents securely pitched, Alex organizes their supplies and utensils.

Terra emerges from the woods, carrying firewood in her otherwise empty bag-for-life. She notices Peter is watching Alex with an affectionate gaze. When he realizes Terra sees him, he quickly looks away.

She empties the wood next to Devon but keeps the yew log in the bag. She brushes off the dirt and gently places the bag beside the woodpile.

Stealing a glance at Peter and Alex, a sly smile forms on her lips.

TERRA

It feels like it might get a bit chilly tonight.

(to Alex)

Can we borrow your tent?

The query piques Devon and Peter's interest.

ALEX

I thought you said you didn't need one.

DEVON

We don't.

(to Terra)

My fire shall keep us warm.

He proudly gestures to his unlit campfire.

TERRA

I know it will.

She wraps her arms around him wearing a teasing grin.

TERRA (CONT'D)

But a little privacy later would be nice, if you know what I mean.

She softly plants a kiss on his lips. Devon grins, getting the message.

DEVON

I'm down.

(to Alex)

So, can we borrow your tent then?

ALEX

And where am I suppose to sleep?

TERRA

You can share with Peter.

(to Peter)

You don't mind bunking with my sister for the night, do you?

PETER

Um, yeah. I suppose that'll be okay.

(to Alex)

That's, if you're alright with it, of course.

ALEX

I guess it'll be fine.

An awkward pause.

TERRA

Great. Then it's settled.

With the matter resolved, everyone resumes their tasks. Terra quietly enjoys her matchmaking success.

Peter finishes tying up the white sheet and retrieves a paintbrush and the container of viscous black goo from his rucksack. Terra approaches curiously.

TERRA (CONT'D)

(to Peter)

What's that?

PETER

It's called sugaring. It attracts moths.

He opens the container, and Terra inspects the gooey substance.

TERRA

What are you going to do with it?

PETER

I'm going to smear it all over this sheet. Then, when it gets dark, I'll leave a light shining on it.

He retrieves a battery-powered UV lantern from his rucksack.

PETER (CONT'D)

I'm using a UV lamp, which will help attract a wider variety of species. In a few hours, this sheet should be swarming with moths, and hopefully, the endangered orange upperwing will be among them.

Terra sniffs the goo.

TERRA

Smells nice. What's in it?

PETER

There are various recipes, but I found this one works best. It's a boiled mix of brown ale, brown sugar, and black treacle. Then, just before applying, you add the secret ingredient.

He takes out the bottle of rum from the rucksack.

PETER (CONT'D)

A few drops of rum.

Devon's ears perk up.

Peter pours a capful of rum into the container, stirs it with the paintbrush, and begins smearing the goo on the sheet.

TERRA

May I?

She requests the brush.

PETER

Sure.

Dipping the brush in the goo, he hands it to her.

PETER (CONT'D)

Just smear it over...

Terra tastes the sugaring.

PETER (CONT'D)

No, you're not supposed to...

She takes another taste.

TERRA

Yum. I see why they like it.

She hands the brush back to Peter, who smiles.

PETER
They love it.

DEVON (O.S.)
Yes, Pete.

Devon stands nearby, holding the bottle of rum with a mischievous grin, inspecting the label.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Looks like someone was planning on
having a good old time tonight.

Peter hurriedly clarifies, a bit sheepish and stealing a glance at Alex.

PETER
No, I wasn't. It's not for
drinking. It's for the moths.
Besides, it's not even mine. I have
to return it to the entomology
department tomorrow.

He tries to take the bottle, but Devon playfully pulls it away.

DEVON
Hold your horses. That's not fair.
Why should the moths have all the
fun? Besides, you can easily buy a
replacement. I'm happy to
contribute. Here...

Digging deep into his pockets, he retrieves his loose change and hands it to Peter.

DEVON (CONT'D)
That's a start. I'll give you some
more as soon as I earn some.

Devon gives Peter a friendly pat on the shoulder and walks away, inspecting the bottle's label again.

DEVON (CONT'D)
Oh yes, this will do nicely.

Peter is astonished, staring at the coins in his hand. He shakes his head in disbelief and smirks, seemingly impressed by Devon's audacity. He slips the cash into his pocket and continues to smear the sugaring.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The group is gathered around the blazing campfire. Devon sits on the ground, strumming his GUITAR softly, the open bottle of rum nearby.

Terra dances to the music, spinning around the fire while gazing up to the starry night sky.

Alex and Peter sit side by side in their camping chairs, quietly watching Terra with curious expressions.

Terra grabs Alex's hand, urging her sister to join her.

ALEX

I'm fine right here, thanks.

TERRA

Oh, come on, dance with me. Don't be such a stick in the mud.

Terra persists playfully, but Alex yanks her hand away.

ALEX

I said no, Terra.

TERRA

Aw, party pooper.
(turns to Peter)
Peter, you'll dance with me, won't you?

He hesitates briefly.

PETER

Um...

Terra takes the initiative and gets him on his feet. Peter appears uneasy.

PETER (CONT'D)

Actually, I think it's probably about time I check the sheet again.
Excuse me.

Quickly exiting, he heads towards the UV-lit sheet adorned with several moths. Retrieving a small torch, he begins inspecting each one carefully.

Terra remains determined to liven up the night.

TERRA

You both need to loosen up a little and let your hair down.

She eyes Alex's tightly tied back hair.

TERRA (CONT'D)
Literally.

Terra suddenly whisks Alex's hairband off, freeing her wavy, dark locks.

ALEX
What are you doing?

Alex appears self-conscious.

TERRA
Helping.

She runs her fingers through Alex's sleek mane.

TERRA (CONT'D)
You have such beautiful hair; you should let it flow free.

Terra playfully tousles her sister's hair, adding volume.

TERRA (CONT'D)
I don't understand why you started dying it though. You have such a glorious natural colour.

ALEX
You mean like yours?

TERRA
Nicer. Like Mum's.

Mentioning their mother brings a bittersweet moment of reflection.

ALEX
Yeah, well, I have my reasons.

Devon stops playing guitar and takes a swig of rum.

DEVON
(to Alex)
Let's hear them then. I'm intrigued.

Terra finishes styling Alex's hair and snuggles up to Devon.

DEVON (CONT'D)
(to Alex)
So, why do you dye it?

ALEX

I started dyeing it because of the stereotypical bias that still exists against blonde women. People take me more seriously with darker hair. It's as simple as that.

TERRA

And you're okay with that?

ALEX

Absolutely not. It infuriates me, but if it's going to enable me to make a bigger impact in saving this world, then it's a sacrifice I'm willing to make.

Devon raises the bottle of rum.

DEVON

I'll drink to that.

He takes a hearty swig.

DEVON (CONT'D)

But I'm afraid it's going to take much bigger sacrifices than just dying hair to save this mess-up planet.

He offers the bottle to Alex and Terra, but they politely decline.

DEVON (CONT'D)

What gives? Why am I the only one drinking?

Peter returns, looking visibly despondent as he collapses into his chair.

DEVON (CONT'D)

You won't let me drink alone, will you, Pete?

(offers him the bottle)

Here. Looks like you could use it.

He playfully jiggles the bottle, tempting Peter.

PETER

Sod it.

Snatching the bottle, he takes a substantial swig, and promptly hands it back to Devon.

DEVON

Good man.

Peter grimaces and coughs as the alcohol slides down his oesophagus.

ALEX

(to Peter)

Still no sign of the orange upperwing I assume?

PETER

Of course not. I don't know why I got my hopes up. These rare species sightings often turn into a wild goose chase, and increasingly so. Plus, the quantity of moths being attracted just keeps dropping. Ten years ago, there would've been double the amount. Their numbers are declining at an alarming rate, and not enough is being done to stop it.

Devon offers the bottle again.

DEVON

Drown those sorrows, my friend.

Peter takes another swig, grimacing and coughing.

PETER

And it's not just moths and butterflies. Practically all insect life on the planet is being driven down by habitat destruction and modern farming. At this rate, they'll be nearly extinct in a few decades. Then mankind will really be in trouble as the entire ecosystem catastrophically collapses. Discovering the return of a species like the orange upperwing would at least give a faint glow of hope in the looming darkness ahead.

He has one more swig, and hands the bottle back, his words hanging heavily in the air.

DEVON

Jeez, Pete. I know you're right; but talk about a buzzkill.

TERRA

Don't lose hope, Peter. There's still time. It's not that late, it may still show up.

Peter smiles, looking little tipsy.

ALEX

And even if it isn't here, that doesn't mean it never will be. There's a lot of good work being done globally to reverse this decline. New laws and legislation are being created to preserve biodiversity, regenerate damaged ecosystems, and implement more eco-friendly agricultural practices. Insect life won't go extinct; we simply can't allow it to.

Devon laughs.

ALEX (CONT'D)

What's so funny?

DEVON

Sorry. You just remind me of myself ten years ago. So full of hope and faith in the powers-that-be to steer us in the right direction. Trusting all their promises and assurances. Believing everything's going to be alright. Blinded to the truth that's been purposely concealed to ensure we all keep dancing along to the merry capitalist tune, just so the one percent can continue to line their greedy little pockets while luring the planet deeper into danger.

Devon springs forward, strumming his GUITAR.

DEVON (CONT'D)

But my eyes have since been opened. Now I see through their deceptive smiles and hollow words. Now I have seen the true evil face of 'corporate-government', and the system of greed that it has created. One which cares more about profit margins and economic growth than life itself.

(MORE)

DEVON (CONT'D)

As long as a ruinous and unsustainable institution like that remains in place, we're doomed.

Devon takes a swig of rum and offers it to Peter, who declines with a earnest shake of his head.

ALEX

I'm not naïve, you know. My eyes are open too. I understand why enough isn't being done to save this planet. Promises have been broken, and targets have been monumentally missed; but things are changing. More people are signing petitions, organizing campaigns, and protesting, putting pressure on the powers-that-be to change their ways before it's too late, and it's starting to make a difference. Like you and your tree sitting.

Devon smirks.

ALEX (CONT'D)

What, you don't agree?

DEVON

Do you know what happens to the majority of trees I try to protect?
(pause)

They get chopped down. I've barely saved any. Most of the time, all I'm really doing is delaying the inevitable. Which is exactly what all this so-called global good work is doing. It's not enough to save the planet; it's just prolonging its demise. All the recycling, electric cars, and--

He spots Terra's bag, and grabs it.

DEVON (CONT'D)

--fucking bags-for-life wont count for Jack shit, unless we force the greedy bastards to change their ways; right now.

With careless abandon, he drops the bag near the fire. The heat quickly sears and distorts the plastic. Terra reacts swiftly, rescuing it from the flames and inspecting the damage with concern.

DEVON (CONT'D)

And it's going to take more than just petitions and protests. It requires a global revolution! But they work tirelessly to prevent that from ever happening. Silencing those who dare speak, spreading fear and lies to keep us divided and fighting amongst ourselves while they tighten their grip, like a snake, wrapping itself around the globe, squeezing the very life out of it.

Devon staggers to his feet, strumming his GUITAR with drunken enthusiasm.

DEVON (CONT'D)

But all we need is a spark. Something that will unite the people of this world.

(pulls notebook out)

That's why I'm writing a song, one that will inspire and unify the masses against the corporate bastards.

(staggers back)

For when words alone fail, the universal language of music speaks volumes.

With theatrical flair, he proudly holds his notebook and guitar aloft.

DEVON (CONT'D)

For this instrument and these lyrics shall be my weapons against those who seek to destroy...

He loses his balance, crashing to the ground. The group winces collectively.

TERRA

(to Devon)

Are you okay?

Devon dispiritedly sits up, tucking his notebook away. He smirks at himself and shakes his head.

DEVON

Who am I kidding? It's already too late. Humanity's a dead man walking.

(MORE)

DEVON (CONT'D)

The previous generation created this mess, and left ours to fix it, but we've failed to act in time. Now our children, and our children's children will suffer the devastating consequences.

He picks up the bottle of rum.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Why anyone would willingly bring a child into this fucked-up world is beyond me. Given the bleak future that awaits them, it's practically child cruelty.

Devon raises the bottle to drink.

ALEX

Don't you think you've had enough?

DEVON

Yes. I think I have.

He takes a long swig of rum and starts strumming his GUITAR quietly. Terra stands up.

TERRA

I'm going for firewood.

She walks off with her partially burnt bag. Alex, noticing their already substantial woodpile, grows concerned and watches Terra head into the dark woodland.

ALEX

Hey, Terra. Wait up.

She takes Peter's torch and follows her into the woods.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Alex cautiously moves through the darkness, the dim torchlight offering little guidance in the dense woods.

ALEX

(calling out)
Terra? Where'd you go?

There's no response.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(calling out)
Terra?

Still no reply. Alex grows concerned.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Stop messing around. This isn't
funny.

Hearing a twig SNAP behind her, she swiftly turns, shining
the light on a tree trunk.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Terra?

There's a soft SNIFFLE from behind the tree.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Please say that's you.

Terra steps into the torchlight.

TERRA
That's you.

Alex visibly relaxes, relieved.

ALEX
Are you purposely trying to creep
me out or what?

She notices Terra's teary eyes, realizing she's been crying.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Hey, what's wrong?

She comforts her sister.

TERRA
Oh, it's just everything you were
all talking about; the state of the
world, the future. It's all so
upsetting.

Alex remains unconvinced.

ALEX
It's not just that though, is it?
Something else has been troubling
you all day. I can tell. Come on,
what is it?

Terra hesitates to answer.

ALEX (CONT'D)
What's the real reason you needed
to see me so urgently today?

Terra blurts it out.

TERRA

I'm pregnant.

She reaches into her pocket and pulls out an unopened pregnancy test.

TERRA (CONT'D)

Or at least I think I am.

She hands Alex the test.

TERRA (CONT'D)

As soon as I realized this morning that I needed to take a test, I knew I had to have my sister by my side. So I told Devon I wanted you to meet him, and we hopped on the first train we could.

Alex's face lights up with joy.

ALEX

Why didn't you tell me sooner.

TERRA

I wanted to tell you straight away, but Devon was right there. Then, we unexpectedly went camping, and I didn't want to spoil your trip with Peter any more than I already had. So, I decided I'd tell you when we got back tomorrow.

ALEX

You haven't told Devon then?

Terra shakes her head nervously.

TERRA

No. You've just heard his views on having children. I don't know how he'll take the news. He might run for the hills, and I can't raise a child by myself. I just can't. I'm not ready to be a parent, let alone a single one. I mean, I can't even take care of a silly plastic bag for one day--

(holds up the scorched bag-
for-life)

--let alone a baby.

(MORE)

TERRA (CONT'D)

What if I can't cope? Like Mum
couldn't. What if I end up like
her?

Alex pulls her sister into a reassuring hug.

ALEX

You are not her, Terra. Do you hear
me. She couldn't cope with life and
chose to take the easy way out. She
gave up, on herself, on us, on the
whole world. But you're so much
stronger than she ever was.

She breaks the embrace and locks eyes with Terra.

ALEX (CONT'D)

And whatever happens with Devon,
you won't have to do it alone.
You'll have me, always. We promised
each other, remember? To always be
there for one another, no matter
what. Okay?

She looks for affirmation.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Okay?

TERRA

Okay.

Terra smiles, and plants a kiss on Alex's cheek.

ALEX

Now, before I start getting excited
about becoming an auntie, let's
find out if you're definitely
pregnant first, shall we?

She opens the pregnancy test and reads the instructions.

TERRA

Right now? Here?

ALEX

No time like the present. Now pull
down your knickers and wee on this
piece of plastic.

She hands Terra the test stick.

TERRA

Okay. It's good timing actually.
I'm bursting.

Terra pulls her underwear down and squats while Alex holds the torch, providing the necessary lighting.

EXT. QUARRY - NIGHT

A dense fog rises from the centre of the flooded quarry, blanketing the dark water. It billows up the quarry's edge and creeps ominously toward the nearby woodland.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Devon tends the crackling fire, adding more wood.

Peter sits slouched, head in hands, quietly groaning.

DEVON

Hit the rum a bit too hard, did you, Pete? Been there many a time, my friend.

PETER

I'll be alright in a minute.

He lifts his dizzy head, unsteady.

PETER (CONT'D)

Or not.

(drops head into palms)

What was I thinking? I don't even like rum.

Peter moans, shaking his head in remorse.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Terra finishes urinating on the test stick. She gives it a gentle shake, and hands it to Alex, who takes it gingerly, trying to avoid contact with any urine.

Terra pulls up her underwear.

TERRA

Now what?

Alex shines the torch on the test window.

ALEX

Now we wait and see.

A fire materializes in the far distance beyond the woodland, grabbing their attention.

ALEX (CONT'D)

What is that?

TERRA

It's the bonfires. They're being lit.

She clutches her bag anxiously.

TERRA (CONT'D)

We should go back to camp.

ALEX

It's alright, Terra. It's just a bonfire. No evil ghoulies are coming to get us.

Another bonfire lights up, increasing Terra's unease.

TERRA

We need to go; right now.

ALEX

Just wait, we'll know the result in a minute.

Terra snatches the test and slips it into her pocket.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Eww. What are you doing?
(wipes her hand on her
trousers)
You got wee on me.

Terra seizes her sisters arm and drags her away.

ALEX (CONT'D)

This is so unnecessary.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Devon sits by the campfire, tuning his GUITAR. Peter still wearily rests his head in his hands.

PETER

You know, I think I'm starting to feel better.

He lifts his head.

PETER (CONT'D)
Yeah. I think the worst is over.

Peter abruptly throws up.

DEVON
Purge, my friend. Get it out.

Sitting up straight, Peter wipes his mouth.

PETER
Now I feel better.

He spots something behind Devon.

PETER (CONT'D)
What the hell!

A thick wall of swirling fog enters the campsite. Devon springs to his feet, both of them awestruck.

The fog engulfs them, rolling into the woodland, leaving the campsite shrouded in mist.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Terra leads her sister through the darkness. Alex does her best to light their path with the weak torch.

ALEX
Slow down. I can't see where we're going.

The torchlight suddenly falls upon the approaching wall of fog. They stop, astonished.

TERRA
Which way's the campsite? I can't see our fire.

ALEX
I don't know.

They back away from the foreboding fog.

ALEX (CONT'D)
(calling out)
Peter. Devon. Can you hear me?

DEVON (O.S.)
 (calling out)
 Over here.

They head toward Devon's voice, entering the fog with apprehension.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

The entire area is shrouded in fog, visibility reduced to a minimum.

DEVON
 This is some crazy-ass fog, man.
 You ever seen anything like this
 before, Pete?

PETER
 Not like this.

Suddenly, Alex and Terra emerge beside the campfire. Terra urgently takes the yew wood log from her bag and throws it into the flames, tossing the bag aside.

The log CRACKLES and SPARKS, catching alight. The veil of fog begins to lift, retreating from the glow of the fire.

Everyone stares in disbelief at the swirling mist encircling the campsite, its movements fluctuating in response to the flickering flames as if an invisible forcefield holds it at bay.

DEVON
 What the actual fuck? Is this
 normal?

Peter, still groggy, stands in amazement.

PETER
 Most certainly not.

Alex shines the torchlight on the wispy wall and cautiously touches it with her fingertips.

Alex curiously shines the torchlight on the wispy wall and tentatively touches it with her fingertips.

ALEX
 (to Terra)
 What did you put in the fire?

TERRA
 Yew wood.

Everyone gazes at the log burning among the flames.

TERRA (CONT'D)

The druids called it 'The tree of the dead.' They revered it as sacred, believing it offered them protection.

PETER

Protection? From what?

TERRA

Evil.

Alex scoffs and rolls her eyes.

ALEX

Oh, come on, Terra. Enough with the druid stuff already.

Devon gestures toward the surrounding wall of fog.

DEVON

How do you explain this then?

ALEX

I don't know. But it's obviously some kind of natural phenomenon. Whatever it is, there's a rational explanation for it. One grounded in science and natural laws, not folklore and fairy tales.

In the distance, faint MERRY FIDDLE MUSIC drifts on the breeze. The group falls silent, their attention captured.

DEVON

Where's it coming from?

ALEX

I can't tell.

Terra listens intently, pinpointing the source.

TERRA

It's coming from the quarry.

They all turn in the same direction as Terra, eyes fixed on the wispy wall.

PETER

It's probably that old guy, right? He knows we're camped here, and now he's trying to creep us out, right?

ALEX
Yeah. Must be.

DEVON
Whoever it is--
(listens to music)
--they're pretty damn good on that
violin.

Devon enthusiastically starts to play along on his GUITAR. Peter abruptly grabs the guitar neck, silencing it. The fiddle music also ceases.

PETER
What are you doing?

DEVON
Jamming.

PETER
But now whoever it is definitely
knows we're here.

Suddenly, a single SHRIEKING NOTE pierces the silence, chillingly close to the campsite. Startled, the group steps back from the wall, Alex shining the torch toward the sound.

ALEX
Hello?

An unbroken silence hangs in the air. Then, a shrouded orange glow appears a few feet off the ground within the veil of fog.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Who's there?

Beautiful, HAUNTING FIDDLE MUSIC begins to play; a different melody from the one Claire heard in 1986. The group listens in awe to the masterful composition.

Captivated by the enchanting melody, Terra closes her eyes and sways gently to the rhythm.

The mysterious glow starts to retreat, carrying the haunting music with it. Terra follows, her movements synchronized with the mesmerizing beat, about to enter the fog.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Terra. Stop.

She grabs Terra's swinging arm, causing her to snap out of her trance and open her eyes. The music abruptly halts, and the glowing presence vanishes.

ALEX (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

Terra, her expression a mix of fear and confusion, stammers.

TERRA
I...I couldn't stop myself. I
wasn't in control. Something took
over me.

A burst of aggressive, OFF-KEY NOTES pierces the air.

Alex swiftly ushers her sister away from the wall. Terra
clings to her, petrified.

Unnerving PLUCKED STRINGS resonate within the fog.

PETER
(calling out)
Alright, we get the message. We're
sorry for camping here, okay? We're
going to leave, so you can stop
now.

Alex looks deeply concerned, witnessing Terra in a state of
catatonic fear.

ALEX
I don't think it's him, Peter.

Alex pans the flashlight along the fluctuating wall, tracking
the PLUCKING as it circles the campsite.

The sound ceases behind Peter's UV-lit sheet adorned with
moths, situated just within the fogs border. The glow
suddenly radiates from behind it.

The group stares at the taut sheet with bated breath. A
small, sharp blade slices the bottom of the material, slowly
cutting upward. Whatever is behind it is about to be
revealed.

A burnt-out piece of wood on the campfire SNAPS, causing the
smouldering yew log to shift and roll out of the flames.

The fog advances, concealing the glow just as the sheet
drops, causing a flurry of moths to take flight.

Devon springs into action, setting aside his guitar and
placing the yew wood back into the fire.

The fog retreats again. The white sheet now hangs in two, but
nothing is behind it.

Terra is visibly terrified. Alex and Devon sit her down, trying to comfort her.

Peter pulls out his phone and tries to make a call.

DEVON
Who are you calling?

PETER
The police.

The line won't connect. He raises the phone higher, desperately searching for a signal.

PETER (CONT'D)
Why's there suddenly no reception?

He frantically taps the screen.

PETER (CONT'D)
Stupid bloody thing. Nothing's working.

Alex tries her phone, encountering the same issue.

ALEX
It must be the fog.

DEVON
Fat lot of good it would do us anyway. We don't need the police, we need the God damn Ghostbusters.

Peter gives up on his phone.

PETER
Right. So what are you actually trying to tell me? That there's some kind of evil, violin-playing ghost out there or something?

A woman's blood-curdling FURIOUS CRY OF ANGUISH echoes in the distance, startling the group.

DEVON
(to Peter)
Among other things, it would seem.

Peter edges closer to the fire, a greater sense of unease settling in.

PETER
Well...fuck. What the hell are we going to do?

(MORE)

PETER (CONT'D)

That one yew log won't last all night. What happens when it burns out and the fog closes in? What happens when that thing gets in here? What's it going to do to us?

Peter's anxiety spirals. Devon grabs his shoulders firmly.

DEVON

Calm the fuck down. Take some deep breaths. Getting hysterical isn't going to help us out of this.

Following the advice, Peter takes a few deep breaths.

PETER

No, it's not working. What are we going to do? We need a plan.

ALEX

(to Terra)

Terra, did you take any more yew wood from the bonfire earlier?

She doesn't respond, staring fearfully at the split sheet.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Terra. Look at me.

Reluctantly, Terra shifts her gaze to Alex.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Do you have any more yew wood?

Terra shakes her head regretfully.

PETER

That's the answer though. We need more yew wood to burn and we'll be safe, right?

Peter searches the campsite, desperate for anything wooden.

Suddenly, Terra grips Alex's arm.

TERRA

Don't let him take me. Please, I'm begging you. Promise you won't let him lure me away.

Alex reassures Terra with a determined look.

ALEX

I promise.

Devon adds firmly.

DEVON
 Whatever's out there will have to
 get through me first.

Peter's searching eyes land on Devon's guitar beside the
 fire.

PETER
 Your guitar--

He grabs it, inspecting the wood.

PETER (CONT'D)
 --what's that made of?

Devon, concerned for his precious instrument, steps forward.

DEVON
 Whoa, take it easy, my friend.
 Don't do anything foolish now.

Peter, jittery, holds the guitar too close to the flames for
 Devon's comfort.

DEVON (CONT'D)
 It's not made from yew, so just
 hand it over, okay?

He extends his hand, demanding the return of his property,
 but Peter edges it closer to the fire. Devon backs off,
 anxious.

PETER
 What's it made from then?

DEVON
 Cedar, I think. Now calm down and
 give me my fucking guitar, Pete.

PETER
 Stop telling me to calm down! And
 for the last time; It's Peter!

Devon suddenly lunges forward, grabbing the guitar. Peter
 refuses to let go, and a struggle ensues.

DEVON
 Let go. You're going to break it.

PETER
 You're the one who's going to break
 it. You let go.

Alex steps in to intervene.

ALEX
Stop it. This isn't solving
anything.

In the heat of the moment, Devon bites Peter's hand. Peter yelps, releasing his grip on the guitar. They tumble, crashing onto Alex with a resounding THUD.

The three lay winded in a tangled heap, Alex pinned beneath the weight of both men.

The shrouded glow suddenly reappears in the fog, farther back than before. Terra's eyes widen in fear as she looks to Alex.

TERRA
Alex? Help me.

Alex spots the glow and desperately tries to scramble out from under Devon and Peter.

ALEX
Get off me! Quick!

The same HAUNTING MELODY starts again. Terra closes her eyes, stands, and sways to the enchanting music.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Terra, no!

The glow retreats, taking the music with it. Terra follows, moving to the rhythm as she twirls majestically, disappearing into the fog.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Stop her, Devon!

Devon realizes what's happening. He releases the guitar, gets to his feet, grabs the UV lamp, and gives chase into the fog.

Peter rolls off Alex, stands, and offers his hand to help her up. Annoyed, Alex spurns his assistance and rises to her feet on her own.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

Devon chases after the FADING MUSIC and the diminishing glow through the fog, catching occasional glimpses of Terra dancing ahead.

DEVON
 (calling out)
 Terra, wait.

He loses sight of her, and both the glow and music vanish.

DEVON (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 Terra?

Devon sweeps the area with the UV lamp, searching the murky surroundings.

DEVON (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 Where are you?

A WOMAN WEEPING echoes nearby. Devon hastens toward the sound.

The lamp reveals a SNIVELING WOMAN with long blonde hair, her back turned to Devon. He tentatively touches her shoulder and turns her around.

DEVON (CONT'D)
 Terra?

It's Claire, the nurse from 1986. Her eyes are gruesomely gouged out, and a sun-wheel symbol is meticulously carved into her forehead. She weeps, tears of blood trickling from her raw, empty sockets.

Devon recoils in horror, stumbling backward into a figure behind him, their face obscured by a tilted wide-brimmed hat.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Alex waits anxiously, watching the fog while Peter paces with his phone.

PETER
 Even the maps not working.

A distant SHRIEKING NOTE permeates the air, followed by Devon's SCREAM.

Alex and Peter freeze, their breath caught. Silence envelops the campsite.

ALEX
 (calling out)
 Terra? Devon? Can you hear me?

RAPID FOOTSTEPS approach, causing Peter to back up.

Devon bursts from the fog, without the UV lamp. He collapses by the fire, clutching his bloody hand.

Alex rushes to his aid, seeing the top of his index finger sliced clean off.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 (to Peter)
 Get the first aid kit from my
 backpack, quick.

He promptly retrieves the kit and hands it to Alex, who begins tending to Devon's wound.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 (to Devon)
 What happened? Where's Terra?

DEVON
 I don't know. I lost sight of her.

Grabbing the bottle of rum, he removes the cap with his teeth, and takes a large gulp

DEVON (CONT'D)
 But I saw this other woman out
 there. I thought it was Terra at
 first. She was crying, but...

He recounts the harrowing sight in his minds eye.

PETER
 But what?

DEVON
 She had no eyes, just bleeding
 empty sockets and a symbol carved
 in her forehead. I'm pretty sure it
 was a god-damn ghost.
 (finishes the bottle)
 That's when that violin
 playing...motherfucker, sneaked up
 behind me and sliced my fucking
 finger off.

He yanks his hand from Alex's attentive hold, glaring at his severed finger in dismay.

DEVON (CONT'D)
 Fucking look at it. I'll never play
 again. All because of that--
 (MORE)

DEVON (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 --fucking, evil-spirit, bastard!

Alex gently takes his hand back.

ALEX
 Keep still.

She starts bandaging the wound.

PETER
 This...violinist. What is it? What
 did it look like?

DEVON
 I don't know. I didn't hang around
 to find out. As soon as I dropped
 the lamp, I just legged it. But the
 fog is so thick; I got completely
 turned around out there.
 (to Alex)
 But then I heard your voice, and I
 ran toward it as fast as I could.

Alex finishes bandaging his finger and gives him a reassuring
 nod.

ALEX
 Perhaps that will guide Terra back
 too.

She faces the swirling wall of fog.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 Terra? Terra, can you hear me?

No response.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 (calling out)
 Follow the sound of my voice.

Peter helps Devon to his feet.

DEVON
 (calling out)
 Terra, we're over here.

ALEX
 (calling out)
 This way.

They listen intently, but there's only eerie silence.

DEVON

We have to find her.

PETER

Find her? You mean go in there?
 (gestures to the wall)
 Didn't hear yourself? We'll get
 lost, and then maybe we'll all end
 up with our eyes cut out, or worse;
 searching for someone who might
 already be dead.

Devon angrily shoves Peter.

DEVON

Don't say that. You don't know.

PETER

I'm sorry, but it's true. She might
 be.

Alex interjects confidently.

ALEX

No. She's not dead. Terra's still
 alive. I can feel it.

She momentarily feels a profound connection to her sister.

ALEX (CONT'D)

But Peter's right. If we blindly go
 wandering around out there, we'll
 get lost. Even if we were to find
 her, then what? We won't know which
 direction to go.

Devon is growing frustrated.

DEVON

But we have to do something. We
 can't just sit here. That yew
 wood's not going to last much
 longer anyway.
 (gestures to campfire)
 One way or another, we're going to
 have to face this fog and
 whatever's in it.

Alex suddenly has an idea.

ALEX

The yew wood bonfires. We saw them
 being lit earlier.

(MORE)

ALEX (CONT'D)

If we can reach them, we can use the wood to come back and search for Terra.

DEVON

But what if there's not enough time for that? We might be too late by then.

ALEX

That's why we must hurry. It's the only way.

Devon reluctantly concedes she's right.

DEVON

Okay. But which direction are the bonfires in?

(motioning toward the wall)

Because I haven't the foggiest; no pun intended.

Alex gets her bearings.

ALEX

We need to head as straight, and as quietly as possible, in that direction--

(gestures between the tents)

--until we're close enough to see the bonfires through the fog.

The encircling wall begins to gradually close in as the yew log burns out.

PETER

Okay, sounds like a plan.

They huddle together, trepidation palpable.

DEVON

Arm yourselves.

They each grab a weapon: Devon takes the empty rum bottle, Alex the tent hammer, and Peter his torch.

DEVON (CONT'D)

(to Peter)

What do you think you're going to do with that?

PETER
Hopefully, nothing.

Devon grabs his guitar by the neck, wielding it like a weapon.

DEVON
Here.
(hands bottle to Peter)
You have the bottle.

Alex aligns herself between the two tents.

ALEX
Quick, get behind me, and hold onto each other.

They fall in line, Devon gripping Alex's shoulder, Peter clutching Devon's.

The last embers of the yew wood flicker, nearly extinguished in the roaring campfire.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Whatever happens, we have to stick together until we reach our target, no matter what we might encounter.

The fog rushes in, enveloping them all in its sinister shroud.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

The group creeps in single file through the drifting, dense fog.

In the distance, the woman's FURIOUS CRY OF ANGUISH echoes.

Peter grows increasingly jittery.

PETER
(whispering)
We must be close to the edge of the woods now, right? I thought we'd at least see a faint glow of the bonfires by now.

ALEX
(whispering)
So did I. But this fog is so unnaturally thick. We might have to get a lot closer than I anticipated.

Devon suddenly halts, hearing something.

PETER
(whispering)
What is it? Why have we stopped?

Devon shushes him and closes his eyes, intently listening.

DEVON
(whispering)
Listen. Do you hear it?

The faint sound of FLOWING WATER reaches their ears.

ALEX
(whispering)
It's the stream.

PETER
(whispering)
The stream? But we shouldn't be
anywhere near the stream. We're
lost.

ALEX
(whispering)
I'm sorry. I thought I was leading
us in the right direction, but I've
obviously veered massively off
course.

She looks disappointed in herself but resolute.

ALEX (CONT'D)
(whispering)
But we're not lost. We can follow
the stream all the way back to the
village. It'll take longer to reach
the bonfires, but there's still
hope.

PETER
(whispering)
Great, a new plan. Now lets...

Suddenly, a blond-haired woman appears out of nowhere,
staggering straight into Peter's arms.

It's another GHOST WOMAN with her eyes cut out and a symbol
carved into her forehead. She feebly pleads for "HELP."

Peter screams, shoves her away, and SHATTERS the bottle over
her head, knocking her down.

PETER (CONT'D)

Go!

The group flees toward the stream, helping one another to stay on their feet as they stumble and trip along the way.

An abrupt, bone-chilling SHRIEKING FIDDLE NOTE emanates directly ahead, causing them to halt.

PETER (CONT'D)

It's found us.

Before them stands JACK, a slender man in a gypsy-style waistcoat and wide-brimmed hat that hides his face.

He holds a fiddle tucked beneath his chin, the bow tipped with a small blade. A sun wheel pendant hangs around his neck, matching the symbol carved in the women's foreheads.

Consumed by fear and rage, Devon charges forward and SMASHES his guitar over Jack's head, knocking the fiddle and bow from his hands.

DEVON

Ha! Fuck you, spirit!

Devon flips him the middle finger.

Jack barely flinches. Slowly, he looks up from under his hat, revealing his horrifying face: grotesquely scorched lips and cheeks, eyes replaced with glowing hot lumps of coal.

He smiles, his mouth stuffed with hot coal. The radiant glow shines through his partially burnt-out cheeks, giving him an extended, sinister grin, resembling a human Jack-o'-lantern.

An aggressive SHRIEKING NOTE. The fiddle and bow reappear in Jack's hands.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Ah shit.

In one fluid motion, Jack slashes Devon's throat with his bow-blade, then calmly rests it back on his violin's strings. Alex and Peter watch in horrifying disbelief.

Devon staggers toward them, clutching his throat as blood squirts between his fingers. He falls to his knees, gargling, eyes filled with despair.

DEVON (CONT'D)

Run.

He drops dead with a THUD. Jack calmly approaches.

Peter grabs Alex, and they run for their lives. Hand in hand, they flee through the foggy woodland, pursued by frantic OFF-KEY NOTES. They can't see Jack, but they know he's close.

Suddenly, Alex trips, dragging Peter down with her. He tries to help her up, but her boot is wedged in a tangle of tree roots.

ALEX

It's stuck.

They both pull desperately, but it won't budge. The OFF-KEY NOTES are closing in.

Peter reluctantly gives up and backs away, regretfully staring into Alex's panicked eyes.

PETER

I just want you to know that I think you're awesome, and clever, and pretty, and I really wanted to be your boyfriend.

Clicking on his torch, he sprints away, waving the beam of light through the haze.

PETER (CONT'D)

(calling out)

Hey, I'm over here! This way!

He disappears into the fog.

PETER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Come and get me you ugly bastard!

The OFF-KEY NOTES shift direction, moving away from Alex toward Peter.

Alex unlaces her boot but still struggles to free her foot. She has an idea. Using the tent hammer, she pries the roots apart, finally liberating her foot from the trapped boot.

She swiftly removes her other boot and stands up, disoriented. Listening intently, she hears only distant OFF-KEY NOTES.

Contemplating her next move, Alex chooses a direction and resolutely sets off.

MEANWHILE:

Peter hastens as fast as he dares through the shrouded woodland, pursued by frantic OFF-KEY NOTES.

He hurls his flashlight aside as a diversion, but it's futile. Jack emerges behind him, the SHRIEKING NOTES intensifying.

Terror-stricken, Peter lets out a MINI SCREAM as he races forward. Jack abruptly stops playing, coming to a standstill.

Peter keeps running, then suddenly drops out of sight. A chilling silence follows, then a SPLASH echoes from far below; he's plummeted into the quarry.

MEANWHILE:

Alex navigates cautiously between trees, utterly lost and overwhelmed by the dense fog.

Suddenly, a FURIOUS CRY OF ANGUISH shatters the stillness from directly ahead. Alex freezes in fear.

Another blond-haired WOMAN crosses Alex's path, her eyes hollow and forehead carved with the symbol. Wearing gypsy-style clothing, the woman appears visibly agitated, shaking her head and muttering incoherently to herself.

Alex remains perfectly silent and motionless, assuming the woman can't see without eyes. She's wrong.

The woman abruptly locks eyes with her, emits an ENRAGED ROAR, and charges with frenzied determination.

Alex bolts, stumbling through flailing branches and dense undergrowth, desperately trying to evade the woman's relentless pursuit.

Suddenly, Alex trips over a taut guy-rope and smacks her head against the woodpile beside their smouldering campfire.

She lies there, dazed and disoriented, back where she started. Her eyes flicker shut as she succumbs to unconsciousness.

EXT. FIELD - NIGHT

The line of sheltered yew wood bonfires burns brightly, creating an expansive barrier of light that holds the encroaching fog at bay along the woodland edge, shielding the nearby village from the malevolent forces within.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

Alex regains consciousness, eyes snapping open. She sits up, clutching the camping hammer defensively. She scans the foggy campsite; silence, no immediate threat.

Touching her tender head wound, her fingertips come away stained with blood. She checks her phone: early morning. She's been out for hours.

ALEX
(shocked)
What?

She scrambles to her feet, groggy and desperate, and tries to make a call, but the line still won't connect.

APPROACHING FOOTSTEPS echo, accompanied by an orange glow in the fog. Panic grips Alex. She darts into a tent, zipping it up quickly and quietly.

INT. TENT - NIGHT

Alex cowers in the middle of the tent, intently listening.

The FOOTSTEPS draw nearer, and the flickering glow moves about the campsite. Alex covers her mouth to stifle her fearful breathing.

She hears the other tent's zipper being rapidly UNZIPPED. The glow stops outside her door. Alex raises the hammer, poised to strike. The tent is UNZIPPED and thrown open.

To her surprise, it's John, holding a burning bundle of woven yew wood sticks. The flickering flames push back the fog. He looks concerned to see Alex alone.

JOHN
Where are the others?

Alex is too scared to respond.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Where are they, I said?!

She flinches.

ALEX
I don't know. We got separated. But one of them is dead. This...thing slit his throat, right in front of me.

John takes the news hard.

JOHN
God damn it! I told you all to
leave. Why didn't you listen?

Alex edges back, tightening her grip on the hammer. John notices and eases off.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I'm sorry. It's not your fault. I'm
to blame for all this.

He offers Alex a hand. She hesitates.

JOHN (CONT'D)
It's alright. I'm not going to hurt
you, girl.

Alex lowers her weapon and takes his hand.

EXT. CAMPSITE - NIGHT

John assists Alex out of the tent. A swirling wall of fog encircles them, shifting with the movement of John's burning yew wood torch. He carries another unlit torch strapped to his back.

JOHN
Your blonde friend, what happened
to her? Did she dance to his music?

ALEX
Yes. Like she was under its spell
or something. Please, you have to
help me find her, and my other
friend too, they're both still out
there.

John checks his wristwatch.

JOHN
I can't say the same for your other
fella friend, but I'm certain the
girl's still alive, and I know
exactly where to find her. But we
must hurry. She hasn't much time.

He surveys the surrounding trees, orienting himself.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Follow me, and stay close.

With steely resolve, John marches into the woods, Alex following closely behind.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT

John strides confidently through the woods, Alex keeping pace beside him. The fog parts before the burning torch in John's hand.

ALEX

So, are you going to tell me what's happening or what? What is that thing? And what does it want with my sister?

John hesitates.

JOHN

That thing is the vengeful spirit of a murderous lone traveller who was killed for his crimes in these very woods, on this very night, thirty-nine years ago. But every Halloween ever since, he has returned with this fog to play his haunting music.

A GHOST LADY with a SNEERING LAUGH appears in the fog ahead. John doesn't break stride, and the ghost is silenced and swept aside with the receding fog.

ALEX

The eyeless women? Who are they?

JOHN

They are the tormented souls of all his victims. They're bound to his spirit, trapped here with him forever.

ALEX

How do you know all this?

John takes a deep breath and admits the truth.

JOHN

Because I'm the one who killed him.

EXT. FARMLAND - DAY - 1985

A younger JOHN (mid-30s), dressed in typical farming attire, toils in a sun-drenched field near the village, uprooting turnips and loading them onto an '80s-style pickup truck.

JOHN (V.O.)

It was late October, 1985. My dear wife, Mary, had tragically passed earlier that spring, leaving me and our cherished daughter to tend the farm and mourn our loss together.

ROSE (18), the epitome of an innocent farm girl with blond hair neatly tied back, joins John in the harvest, working diligently by his side.

JOHN (V.O.)

Her name was Rose, my precious flower. She was both intelligent and beautiful, in every way. Her future was full with promise, far from this place.

John abruptly stops working, his gaze fixed across the field.

JOHN (V.O.)

Until he arrived.

A horse-drawn vardo caravan travels along the road, guided by a slender bohemian man in a wide-brimmed hat.

JOHN (V.O.)

A lone traveller--

The caravan veers into an adjacent field, heading toward the woodland.

JOHN (V.O.)

--who set up camp in these woods.

John puts down his tools, removes his gloves, and strides off to confront the unexpected visitor, leaving Rose to labour.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY - 1985

John marches through the woods, his face stern. He follows horse hoof and wheel tracks in the muddy ground.

JOHN (V.O.)

I immediately went to confront him, to tell him to clear off.

(MORE)

JOHN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
 Folks around here didn't want his
 kind in their community.

The beguiling sound of a FIDDLE emerges in the distance. John pauses, his steps arrested as he listens reverently.

JOHN (V.O.)
 But then I heard him playing. It
 was unlike anything I'd ever heard
 before. It as so...disarming.

John's stern demeanour softens as he becomes captivated by the music, following it further into the woods.

EXT. GLADE - DAY - 1985

The horse, unhitched from the old-fashioned caravan, grazes contentedly on lush grass. Leaning against a tree, the slender man skilfully plays BEGUILING MUSIC on his fiddle, his wide-brimmed hat obscuring his face.

John enters the clearing, steadily approaching him.

The slender man stops playing, and courteously removes his hat to introduce himself. It's JACK (late 20s), a charming, clean-shaven young man with boyishly handsome features, a warm smile, and trustworthy eyes.

JOHN (V.O.)
 He said his name was Jack Smith, a
 traveling musician passing through
 on his way to the next big city to
 earn his living. His provisions
 were running low, and he was
 looking for work to replenish his
 supplies.

John's demeanour has transformed completely. He welcomes Jack with a smile, warmly shaking the musician's hand.

JOHN (V.O.)
 I told him I had no use for a
 musician, but an extra pair of
 hands on the farm would surely come
 in handy. I had lost my usual
 harvest workforce the year before.
 After the quarry shut down, many
 folks in this area lost their jobs
 and had to up-sticks to the city in
 search of work.

He notices the peculiar sun-wheel pendant hanging around Jack's neck.

JOHN (V.O.)

He was unlike any traveller I'd encountered before. He was clean, well-spoken, and educated. He seemed like a respectable, trustworthy fellow, so we struck a deal.

The two men seal their agreement with a handshake.

EXT. FARMLAND - DAY - 1985

John, Rose, and Jack work tirelessly together, harvesting turnips.

JOHN (V.O.)

We agreed he'd help out on the farm for a few days, in exchange for food for his pantry, hay for his horse, and coal for his stove. He was a good worker too, a real grafter. But he wasn't really interested in the payment.

John observes Jack and Rose exchanging lustful glances and flirtatious smiles. His disapproval is palpable.

JOHN (V.O.)

He was after my Rose.

Rose notices her father's scathing glare and quickly focuses on her work. John sternly eyes Jack, who casually picks up a crate of turnips and loads them onto the truck.

He throws John a charming smile, retrieves an apple from his pocket, and perches on the back of the truck to take a well-deserved break.

JOHN (V.O.)

The moment I saw his interest in her, and hers in him, I should have sent him packing, right then and there. But I didn't--

Jack retrieves his fiddle and bow from the truck. He removes a small sheath from the tip of the bow, revealing a concealed blade. With a deft move, he slices off a piece of apple, eats it, and tosses the rest over his shoulder.

JOHN (V.O.)

--I let him stay.

He places the fiddle beneath his chin and plays Rose her own beautiful, HAUNTING MELODY.

JOHN (V.O.)
Biggest regret of my life.

John returns to work while Rose remains captivated by Jack, exchanging secret smiles under her father's watchful gaze.

INT. ROSE'S BEDROOM - DAWN - 1985

A dimly lit, rustic bedroom.

JOHN (V.O.)
A couple of days later, the morning
after Halloween, I went to wake
Rose at dawn, as was our routine--

The bedroom door swings open, and John flips the light switch. To his surprise, Rose is absent. The bed is neatly made, and the window is wide open.

JOHN (V.O.)
--but she wasn't in her room, and
her bed hadn't been slept in.

His expression darkens with anger.

JOHN (V.O.)
But I had no doubt about where to
find her.

John storms out of the room, forcefully SLAMMING the door behind him.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAWN - 1985

John strides purposefully through the softly illuminated woods, his face thunderous.

JOHN (V.O.)
I headed straight to his campsite
to bring her back home and make him
pay for taking advantage of my
impressionable daughter.

EXT. GLADE - DAWN - 1985

Smoke gently rises from the caravan's modest chimney. Jack's horse sleeps peacefully on a bed of hay nearby.

The caravan door swings open, and Jack steps out with his bow in hand. He gazes up at the sky, dangling something over his open mouth.

John bursts into the clearing suddenly, demanding to know his daughter's whereabouts.

Jack casually drops the object into his mouth, swallowing it whole. He politely removes his hat and steps aside, gesturing toward the caravan's entrance with his bow.

JOHN (V.O.)

But I had severely misjudged the
sinister depths of his intentions
towards my daughter.

A solitary drop of blood falls from the bow's tip.

John's aggressive demeanour vanishes instantly. Fear takes hold, and he rushes straight into the caravan.

Jack retrieves his fiddle and launches into a MERRY TUNE.

INT. CARAVAN - DAWN - 1985

John bursts in. Dozens of candles cast an eerie glow throughout the cluttered interior, with several ritualistically arranged around a sun-wheel calendar with locks of blonde hair pinned to the first ten months.

He spots a figure lying beneath a bloodstained white sheet on the bed.

JOHN

By the time I got there, it was
already too late--

Hesitantly grabbing the sheet, he pulls it away. The MERRY TUNE outside simultaneously stops.

JOHN (V.O.)

--he had murdered my precious
flower.

Rose's lifeless body lies on the bed, covered in blood. Her eyes are gouged out, and the sun wheel symbol is etched into her forehead.

JOHN

He'd mutilated her body, just like
all the others. I had failed to
protect that which I held most
dear.

He cradles her limp form, letting out a heart-wrenching wail of despair.

JOHN (V.O.)
And then he tried to kill me.

Jack emerges behind him, making a desperate move to slit his throat. John thwarts him at the last moment.

JOHN (V.O.)
But he failed.

The two men engage in a fierce struggle. John quickly gains the upper hand, disarms Jack, pins him down, and beats him mercilessly.

He shouts furiously into Jack's bruised and bloodied face.

JOHN (V.O.)
I restrained him and demanded to know why he'd killed my Rose, and what had he done with her eyes.

Jack, severely battered, weakly points a trembling finger toward his glowing stove and emits a feeble, disturbing laugh.

JOHN (V.O.)
And then I saw it--

John opens the stove and gazes inside, horrified. A single eyeball sizzles and pops atop lumps of burning coal.

JOHN (V.O.)
--one of her eyes, burning away in his stove.

John plucks the steaming eyeball from the stove and gazes at it on the floor in disbelief.

JOHN (V.O.)
That's when I realized I'd already witnessed what he'd done with her other eye earlier. He had swallowed it whole, right in front of me.

Jack erupts into manic laughter, blood spitting from his mouth. John seethes with vengeful rage.

JOHN (V.O.)
That's when I lost control--

He ruthlessly presses his knee into Jack's neck, choking him. Jack struggles, but John restrains his flailing arms.

JOHN (V.O.)

--and savagely tortured him to death with glowing hot lumps of coal.

He seizes two searing lumps of coal with his bare hands and sets them on Jack's eyes.

Jack screams in agony as the scalding coal blisters his flesh. He desperately tries to shake them off, but John holds his head firmly in place.

Clutching the pendant hanging around his neck, Jack recites a PHRASE in an unknown language, repeating it over and over.

John scoops up a fistful of burning coal and forcefully shoves it down Jack's throat, effectively silencing him.

Jack gargles and shrieks as the coal melts through his cheeks and lips, forming a grotesque grin. The coal on his eyes sinks deeper into his sockets. He falls silent and convulses violently.

Gradually, Jack's body stops twitching, his hand still clutching the pendant.

John backs away, staring at the disfigured corpse, mortified by the gruesome events that just unfolded.

EXT. GLADE - DAWN - 1985

John carries Rose out of the caravan, his face etched with sorrow. He gently lays her on the grass and weeps. He kisses her cheek, removes his blood-stained jacket, and covers her face with it.

JOHN (V.O.)

What I did to him was despicable. No matter how justified I was in killing him, I knew I would go to jail for such a brutal act. So, I decided to cover up what I'd done--

His gaze shifts to Jack's horse, now awake.

JOHN (V.O.)

--and I knew the perfect place to dispose of his body.

EXT. QUARRY - DAWN - 1985

John guides the horse, hitched to the caravan, to the precipice of the quarry.

JOHN (V.O.)

I drove his caravan back to the main road first, leaving tracks to make it appear he'd fled the scene of the crime. Then, I brought it to the newly flooded quarry--

The nervous horse stamps its hooves uneasily at the edge. John soothes the skittish animal, gently rubbing its neck.

He steps back and delivers a mighty slap on the horse's rump

JOHN

--and dumped it over the edge, with his body still inside.

The horse rears up, WHINNYING in fear. It loses its footing, and tumbles over the edge, taking the caravan with it. Both SPLASH into the deep, dark water below, and quickly sink out of sight.

EXT. GLADE - DAY - 1985

Beams of morning light stream through the trees, illuminating the clearing.

JOHN (V.O.)

Then, I brought my darling Rose back home--

John gently lifts Rose's lifeless body and carries her into the woodland.

INT. ROSES BEDROOM - DAY - 1985

John tenderly places his daughter on her bed, removes his jacket, and covers her body with a fresh, white sheet.

JOHN (V.O.)

--and called the police.

INT. FARM HOUSE - DAY - 1985

John sits at the dining table, showered and dressed in fresh clothes, lost in despondent thought.

A KNOCK at the door.

He rises and walks to the front door.

JOHN (V.O.)

I wasn't proud of what I'd done. I was ashamed, but I was glad he was dead; it's what he deserved, not locked up in some cosy prison cell for the rest of his life.

Police lights flash through the window.

JOHN (V.O.)

At least this way, he couldn't hurt anyone else ever again.

John reaches for the handle.

JOHN (V.O.)

But I was wrong.

He opens the door.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT - ONE YEAR LATER - 1986

John staggers drunkenly along the dark road, taking swigs from a whisky bottle.

JOHN (V.O.)

The following year, on the first anniversary of my daughter's murder, he returned.

A dense fog emerges from the darkness, enveloping John, leaving him bewildered.

In the distance, MERRY FIDDLE MUSIC plays.

John freezes, his heart skipping a beat. He drops the bottle, which shatters, and hastens towards the familiar music.

Navigating through the fog, he stumbles and trips repeatedly.

The music abruptly ceases.

John halts, listening intently, scanning the murky haze.

A SHRIEKING FIDDLE NOTE pierces the air, followed shortly by Claire's HAUNTING MELODY.

John dashes towards the source, soon spotting a faint orange glow in the fog ahead. It moves away from the village, carrying the music with it.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT - 1986

John pursues the glowing light through the shrouded woods, steadily closing the distance.

Ahead in the haze, he spots Claire being led away, twirling rhythmically to the MUSIC.

JOHN (V.O.)

A young mother was lured away from her home in the village by his music.

Desperately, John yells for her to STOP.

The music abruptly halts, the glow vanishes. Claire freezes, hands by her side, head stooped.

JOHN (V.O.)

I was there when it happened. She was right in front of me at one point. I could have saved her.

He reaches out to her.

JOHN (V.O.)

But then the impossible happened.

ROSE (O.S.)

(whimpering)

Daddy.

John spins around, eyes wide with shock, staring into the fog with bated breath.

JOHN (V.O.)

I heard my Rose's voice.

ROSE (O.S.)

(whimpering)

Daddy.

He catches a fleeting glimpse of Rose wandering past.

JOHN (V.O.)

And then I saw her. Just for a moment, but I saw her. My precious flower had returned.

He hurries after Rose, leaving Claire behind. The glow reappears, and the haunting melody plays again, enticing Claire deeper into the woods as she resumes her dance.

John stumbles through the fog, banging against trees, desperately calling after his daughter.

JOHN (V.O.)

I tried to follow her, but the fog was too thick, and I lost her.

Suddenly, he trips and falls, his head hitting a rock with a painful smack.

JOHN (V.O.)

Next thing I know, I trip and knock myself out cold.

John lies unconscious on the ground.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAY - 1986

The morning is dim and dreary, the fog having lifted. John lies still on the damp woodland floor, slowly regaining consciousness.

He groggily wakes, sits up, and massages his throbbing head, both hungover and concussed.

JOHN (V.O.)

When I finally came to, it was morning. The fog had lifted, and my Rose was gone.

John recollects the events from the previous evening. He quickly gets to his feet, orients himself, and rushes off in a determined direction.

EXT. GLADE - DAY - 1986

John is horrified to find Claire's lifeless body sprawled on the grass where the caravan once stood. Her eyes have been brutally gouged out, and the symbol is etched into her forehead.

JOHN (V.O.)

I found the woman he had lured to the clearing; dead. Her body mutilated, just like my Rose. He had claimed another soul, and it was all my fault.

John avoids touching the body and quickly departs the scene.

EXT. WOODLAND - NIGHT - PRESENT

John and Alex hurry through the woods together, his burning yew torch pushing back the encroaching fog.

JOHN

I soon became the prime suspect. The police eventually accused me of her murder, and my Rose's. I couldn't tell them what I knew. They'd likely lock me up in the loony bin. But without evidence, no charges were made.

Alex winces, her bare feet hurting on the rough terrain.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Their accusations weren't baseless, mind you. Jack might have killed them, but their deaths were my fault, and I vowed no one else would pay for my mistakes, so I went looking for answers.

He briefly stops to survey the trees, reorienting himself before continuing.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I showed the symbol he carves in his victims foreheads to members of every religious group I could think of, but no one recognized it. Until I showed it to a Druid priestess. She was afraid the moment she saw it and demanded I leave immediately. I pleaded for an explanation, but all she said was, 'Flames of the yew fire shall force evil to retire.' So, that's what I did, and have continued to do every Halloween since.

In the distance, the woman's FURIOUS CRY OF ANGUISH echoes.

ALEX

So your daughter's one of them, and you've had to look upon her mutilated face on the anniversary of her murder for years.

John heavily sighs.

JOHN

I've roamed this fog every Halloween for nearly forty years, but I've never seen or heard her again since that night; only his other victims. He keeps my Rose from me, hides her away to torment me, to make me suffer. I've begged him to let me see her, but all he does is grin and taunt me with his music.

Faint MERRY FIDDLE MUSIC wafts through the fog.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Already?

He checks his wristwatch, urgency in his eyes.

ALEX

What does it mean? What's happening?

JOHN

Just before dawn, he always summons all his souls to the glade. That's where your sister will be. But I must hurry. Come sunrise, she'll be dead, and he'll have claimed another soul.

They press on through the foggy woods.

EXT. STREAM - NIGHT

A swirling wall of fog remains fixed along one bank of the stream, halted by the flowing water.

Distant MERRY MUSIC persists.

The fog suddenly parts. John and Alex burst through, splashing into the shallow water. John throws his burnt-out torch into the stream, extinguishing its light. The fog promptly closes behind them.

JOHN

You're safe now. It can't cross the stream.

(motions downstream)

Follow it back to the village. I'll meet you there.

He starts to dash off upstream, but Alex grabs his arm.

ALEX

Wait. I'm coming with you.

JOHN

No, it's too dangerous. This is my responsibility. I won't risk anyone else getting hurt because of me.

ALEX

It's my responsibility too; she's my sister, and she needs me now more than ever. I'm coming, like it or not.

John glances at Alex's dark hair, then reluctantly relents.

JOHN

Alright, but stay close and do exactly what say.

Alex nods, and they hurry upstream together.

EXT. STREAM - DAWN

The first hint of morning light starts to brighten the darkness.

John and Alex wade through knee-deep water, their surroundings gradually becoming more visible. Alex, barefoot, struggles to keep up.

The MERRY MUSIC has grown louder, indicating their proximity.

JOHN

Come on--
(gestures to bank ahead)
--it's up this way.

Alex tries to catch up but slips, plunging headfirst into the water. John comes to her aid, helping her up. She sweeps her wet hair from her face, and they continue forward.

John plants a boot upon the foggy bank and extends his hand to Alex.

JOHN (CONT'D)

So I don't lose you in there.

ALEX

Why not light the torch?

She points to the unlit torch on his back.

JOHN

Because we don't want him to see us coming. Now, take my hand, and stay quite.

Alex takes his hand, and they disappear into the fog.

EXT. GLADE - DAWN

The fog thins as morning approaches, improving visibility.

John and Alex sneak to the edge of the clearing, crouching behind a tree. They peer into the glade.

Jack stands by his caravan, playing the MERRY MUSIC.

TWELVE GHOST WOMEN, with disturbing forced smiles on their mutilated faces, skip hand in hand in a circle around a blue-flamed fire.

Alex spots Terra dancing within the circle.

ALEX

(whispering to John)
There she is.

Terra spins uncontrollably around the fire, eyes shut, flushed and drenched in sweat.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(whispering)
Quick, light the torch.

John doesn't respond, glaring at the caravan suspiciously.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(whispering)
What are you waiting for? She's right there. Let's go.

JOHN

(whispering)
The caravan. It's never here. This is the first time I've ever seen it again.

ALEX

(whispering)
So what? Light the torch.

Jack stops playing. The ghost women halt, still holding hands and smiling as Terra collapses into an exhausted heap.

Playing a SINGLE NOTE, Jack commands two ghost women to create an opening in the circle.

ALEX (CONT'D)
(to John)
Light it now.

John springs into action. He tries to light the yew torch, but his lighter won't spark.

Jack turns, hearing the commotion.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Quickly.

John continues to try to no avail.

JOHN
The flint is damp.

He abandons the useless lighter and frantically searches his pockets.

Jack charges toward them, playing frenzied, OFF-KEY NOTES.

ALEX
He's coming.

John finds his backup lighter. One click, and it works. The torch bursts into flames.

The fiddle falls silent. Jack and the fog recoil from the radiant light.

Holding the blazing torch aloft, John charges into the glade, Alex close behind. The ghost women and caravan retreat to the edge of the torch's glow, extinguishing the blue-flamed fire.

Alex rushes to her sister lying on the ground.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Terra, it's Alex. Can you hear me?

She sweeps Terra's sweaty hair from her face, revealing her unconscious state.

ALEX (CONT'D)
Terra, wake up.

Alex gently slaps Terra's rosy cheeks, but she remains unresponsive.

ALEX (CONT'D)
 (to John)
 Help me lift her.

Jack defiantly PLUCKS his fiddle at the fog's edge.

John steps toward him with the torch, pushing him back and silencing him.

JOHN
 (to Jack)
 Shut up, you! I won't let you claim another!

Alex struggles to lift Terra's limp body by herself.

ALEX
 (to John)
 Help me. I can't do this alone.

John turns back to help the sisters.

Jack proceeds to play Rose's HAUNTING MELODY. John freezes, instantly recognizing the tune.

The caravan door swings open, revealing Rose as she was before her murder, unutilated. She sways to the music, eyes closed, gracefully dancing up to the edge of the fog.

The melody abruptly stops. Rose freezes, her intact eyes snap open, fixed on John.

ROSE
 (whimpering)
 Daddy.

She appears frightened and disoriented.

JOHN
 Rose?

Desperate to reach her, he tries to approach, but the torch's glow pushes her back. He plants the torch in the ground and steps toward the fluctuating wall.

JOHN (CONT'D)
 My precious flower.

He wraps his arms around Rose, partially entering the fog. He holds her close, her head resting upon his chest.

ROSE
 (whimpering)
 Daddy, please help me.
 (MORE)

ROSE (CONT'D)

I don't like it here. I'm so scared. Please take me home.

John weeps sorrowfully.

JOHN

I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. I...

A sudden, ear-piercing SHRIEKING NOTE disrupts the moment. John gasps, bewildered, and pulls back, looking at his daughter.

Rose's face is now mutilated; eyes gouged out, symbol carved into her forehead. A small blade protrudes from her cheek just inside the fog's boundary.

John staggers back in horror, blood gushing from a stab wound directly over his heart.

Jack's sinister, glowing face emerges behind Rose. She remains calm as he slowly withdraws his bow blade from the back of her neck.

John drops to his knees, clutching his chest, blood oozing between his trembling fingers. He looks remorsefully at Alex.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Forgive me.

With a final THUMP, John collapses dead.

ALEX

No!

Jack menacingly patrols the perimeter of the torch's glow, PLUCKING STRINGS with an intimidating presence.

Alex tries to lift Terra to her feet but fails. She grabs the burning torch and stands protectively beside her sister.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(to Jack)

I don't know how long this fire will last, but I'm betting it's long enough. So go to hell, you twisted fuck!

Jack ceases plucking and plays Terra's HAUNTING MELODY.

Terra springs to her feet, swaying uncontrollably to the music, still unconscious. Alex tries to restrain her.

The music abruptly stops, and Terra collapses, dragging Alex down and causing her to drop the torch.

Jack plays the melody again. Terra rises and wildly twirls, trampling the burning torch.

Alex quickly snatches up the torch before it extinguishes. She scrambles to her feet and marches toward Jack.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Stop it!

The radiant glow forces Jack back, silencing his playing. Terra collapses again.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Leave my sister alone!

Jack registers "sister" and glances at Alex, tilting his head inquisitively.

The torchlight highlights Alex's wet hair, revealing her shimmering blonde roots.

Jack grins and proceeds to play a variety of FLEETING NOTES.

Alex's body uncontrollably responds to one particular note, her eyes widening with fear.

ALEX (CONT'D)

(to herself)

No.

Jack then proceeds to play Alex her own HAUNTING MELODY. Spellbound, she drops the torch, closes her eyes, and begins to dance gracefully.

He progressively increases the tempo, making Alex dance faster and faster. She stomps on the burning torch in her bare feet, extinguishing the flame.

The music abruptly stops. Alex collapses in an exhausted heap beside her unconscious sister. The ominous fog rushes in, enveloping them both.

EXT. BONFIRE - DAWN

The row of yew bonfires burn low, yet still hold the fading fog at bay. Sunrise is imminent.

EXT. GLADE - DAWN

Terra and Alex lie motionless beside the blue-flamed fire as the thinning fog drifts over them. Suddenly, Alex gasps awake, sitting up abruptly.

All the ghost women, including Rose, form a circle around the sisters. Their forced smiles remain, but their faces are no longer mutilated. Their unblinking eyes are intact, and the carved symbols have vanished.

Alex looks for Jack but sees no sign of him. She checks on Terra, who is semi-conscious, groaning weakly with her sodden hair concealing her face.

Hearing movement inside the caravan and seeing smoke billowing from its chimney, Alex urgently grabs Terra's ankles and drags her out of the circle, manoeuvring under the ghost women's clasped hands.

Draping Terra's arm over her neck, Alex strenuously hoists her to her feet. Terra is still weak but capable of bearing some of her own weight now.

With mighty determination, Alex supports her sister, and they flee into the woods.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAWN

Alex pants, struggling to keep Terra propped up as they stagger through the dissipating fog.

She pauses, unsure of the direction. Closing her eyes, she listens intently and catches the faint sound of FLOWING WATER.

Resolute, Alex continues labouring on toward the stream.

EXT. GLADE - DAWN

The caravan door flings open, and Jack steps out.

He strides toward the circle of ghost women, their faces in their mutilated form. Jack plays a SINGLE NOTE, commanding the circle to open.

Jack halts suddenly, realizing Alex and Terra are missing. He plays a sharp, SHRIEKING NOTE, and all the ghost women point in the direction the sisters fled.

He briskly heads that way into the woods, playing another SINGLE NOTE to command the ghost women to close the circle around the blue-flamed fire.

EXT. WOODLAND - DAWN

Alex glances back anxiously upon hearing Jack's fiddle from the glade. Trying to quicken her pace, exhaustion sets in. Unable to bear her sister's weight any longer, Alex falters, dropping to her knees with Terra.

ALEX

He's coming, Terra. We have to keep moving. Please, you have to stand.

Terra moans weakly. Alex tries again to lift her sister, but they're both drained of energy. They crash back down with an awkward THUD.

Terra lies motionless, face down in the dirt. Alex wearily gets to her knees, spotting something on the ground.

She picks up the pregnancy test. It's positive.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Terra. Your pregnancy test. It's positive. Do you hear me? You're going to be a mother.

Terra stirs, showing signs of consciousness.

ALEX (CONT'D)

Now, for the sake of your unborn child, and my future niece or nephew; you must stand up.

Terra determinedly grunts, struggling to lift herself. Alex lends a hand.

ALEX (CONT'D)

On your feet, sis. On your feet!

Together, they muster their strength and rise, taking gruelling steps forward. Terra tries lifting her weary head, her eyes still partly hidden by her hair.

Suddenly, a SHRIEKING NOTE pierces the air ahead. Alex freezes, terror-stricken.

Jack emerges from behind a tree, his hat concealing his face. He casually leans against the trunk, then looks up from under the wide brim.

Jack has reverted to his normal, handsome self, just as when he first met John. He throws Alex a charming smile, reaches into his pocket, and retrieves a freshly severed eyeball.

Alex looks at her sister with great trepidation, Terra's head drooping in exhaustion.

Jack dangles the eyeball by the nerve ends over his gaping mouth, drops it in, and satisfyingly swallows it in a single gulp. He places his fiddle beneath his chin and starts playing a MERRY TUNE.

EXT. STREAM - SUNRISE

Sunlight bursts through the woodland canopy, scattering rays across the scene. The wall of fog along the stream's bank begins to recede, yielding to the energizing touch of the morning light.

EXT. WOODLAND - SUNRISE

Jack continues playing his MERRY TUNE. Alex's gaze is locked on him as she continues to support her sister.

Terra, summoning strength, lifts her weary head and sweeps her hair away from her blinking, dry eyes.

She sees Jack leaning against the tree with his evil, glowing coal face. Then she looks to Alex.

Terra's eyes fill with absolute horror as she gazes upon her sister's face before she lets out a harrowing scream.

In an instant, Jack, Alex, and the retreating fog vanish, the music fading away.

Without her sister's support, Terra drops to her knees, the pregnancy test landing beside her. She picks up the strip of plastic and inconsolably sobs.

EXT. GLADE - SUNRISE

The fog retreats, taking the circle of mutilated ghost women, the blue-flamed fire, and the caravan with it. As the caravan vanishes, a distinct THUD echoes.

On the grass lies Alex's lifeless body, eyes cut out, and the symbol carved into her forehead.

An orange upperwing moth flutters through the glade, briefly landing on Alex's hand before flying off toward the glorious sunrise.

THE END