

I GIVE UP
written by
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A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

The music for this whole movie has to kick ass. I want to leave the movie theater with hearing damage; nothing written for my grandparents and nothing written for my kids.

If you want a specific recommendation, I'm listening to Freeze Me by Death From Above 1979 right now. What a fucking song.

FUCK YOU, HERE'S A WALL OF TEXT:

1 EXT. ARENA - DAY

1

I call it an arena, but it's just a shit-ton of bleachers stacked up around a pit full of mud and garbage. The bloodthirsty fans in the stands are... you could call it "screaming violently," but we'll call it "cheering."

Outfits are rough linens and leathers - if all you saw were the people, you might think this was a period piece or something, but the bleachers look like they were stolen from a modern high school, so you think it's more likely post-apocalyptic.

A few good slow-mo shots of people yelling and cheering. Spittle flying out a dude's mouth, someone unintentionally throwing their beer as they leap to their feet, that sorta thing. These people are fucking INTO IT.

And IT isn't just a bunch of people murdering each other.

IT, specifically, is JAQUESS, a 14-year-old murder machine wearing an outfit that looks like it's covered in knives, because it's literally covered in knives. She's a young 14, puberty hasn't quite taken hold yet, which I mention just because I know otherwise you fuckers will cast some 23-year-old with huge tits and she ain't that. This is a child.

A child who is currently sawing through a dude's neck with a serrated knife. She struggles once she reaches the spine, but a few heavy swings and she manages to hack through, severing the head entirely.

She drops the knife and picks up the head, chucks it into the crowd. **Badass.**

She's too busy roaring with victory to notice the bare-chested 70-year-old man charging up behind her - until he body-slams her. He SCREAMS, though, as she shoves him off of her and gasps for air - he forgot about her fucking knife shirt, and now his torso is shredded. What a moron.

Jaquess had the wind knocked out of her, though, which is bad, because TYRENTA, a 40-something woman with a pair of carpenter's hammers and a set of medieval plate mail, is moving in.

She's cautious, knows better than to underestimate Jacquess, but also doesn't want to miss her shot. Jacquess struggles to her feet, and as soon as Tyrenta can see how unsteady she is, she strikes, swinging one hammer high at Jacquess's head, and the other low at her waist.

But fuck her, because Jaquess doesn't need to be able to breathe to kick ass. She drops to her knees, ducking the high attack, but spins in towards the low hammer, forcing it to hit before it has enough momentum to cripple her.

Tyrenta swings an armored foot at Jaquess, and Jaquess rolls back. Tyrenta stomps through the muck at her, but her heavy footfalls get her mired in the mud and Jaquess is able to get to her feet.

Jaquess moves in, dancing through the mud like she can walk on water; she yanks a big dagger off of her back and tries to stab at Tyrenta, but the larger woman's armor is too strong for her to penetrate.

Jaquess backs off as Tyrenta manages to finally free herself from the muck, but Tyrenta doesn't move in to attack just yet - she's lost the momentum, and if she tries to move in too fast she'll get stuck again.

Jaquess sees her hesitate and backs off more. She scans the arena, sees a big beefy dude with a halberd stalking towards them - that guy might be able to penetrate Tyrenta's armor.

Tyrenta sees what Jaquess is thinking, and snarls at her.

TYRENTA

Don't run from me, puke-bag!

JAQUESS

Fuck you!

Jaquess charges off towards a boy wearing a loincloth and wielding a samurai sword. Much better odds.

Tyrenta shouts more curses at her as she leaves, but soon enough has to turn to face the halberd guy.

CUT TO:

2 EXT. THE WINNER'S CIRCLE - DAY

2

Jaquess stands on a podium, second place. She's holding that kid's samurai sword, so RIP him I guess. Tyrenta is in third and pissed about it, and whoever the fuck is in first place won't show up again in this story so I can't be assed to describe them.

Actually, wait, let's say it's a literal fucking bear. Not like some sort of mutant intelligent bear, just a bear that happened to wander into the arena. **Hell yeah.** Oh, he's showing up again, forget what I said before, he's my favorite character. His name is PAWMASTER.

JEFFY, a 30-something dude who's ripped as hell despite missing both arms below the elbows, walks by, and Jaquess leaves the circle to follow him.

JAQUESS

Jeffy! Hey, motherfucker, I'm talking to you!

3 EXT. FAIR - CONTINUOUS

3

Jeffy walks past a bunch of rowdy drunks and peasants eating turkey legs and other ren-faire shit. Jaquess is hot on his tail - he knows, and he's annoyed about it.

JAQUESS

You told me Tyrenta retired, you sonbitch.

Jeffy lengthens his stride, but Jaquess is next to him now and he's just gotta deal.

JEFFY

Guess she unretired.

JAQUESS

For why? What I do to her?

JEFFY

You're hot shit, Jaquess. Lotta old champs wonder if they can take you. I'd be careful if I were you.

Jeffy sees his chance, and ducks into the fucking tent - by which I mean a tent inside of which you can hear sounds of people fucking. A BOUNCER holds up a hand when Jaquess tries to follow him.

BOUNCER

No kids in the fucking tent.

JAQUESS

Fuck you!

But she doesn't press, just leans in to shout once more at Jeffy.

JAQUESS

And fuck you too!

A creepy, wet GIGGLE comes from inside the tent; Jaquess and the Bouncer both recoil a bit, but only Jaquess is allowed to leave, so she does.

4 INT. EATING TENT - NIGHT

4

Jaquess sits cross-legged on the center of a table otherwise occupied by a bunch of revelers; she tears huge

pieces off of a loaf of bread and dips them in the revelers' cups before eating them. If she's drunk, though, it doesn't show; she watches the room around her with eagle eyes.

TYRENTA (O.S.)

Move.

The revelers obey, and they part in front of Jaquess to reveal Tyrenta, now wearing a shockingly frilly outfit, covered in mud and in generally poor repair.

Jaquess doesn't react, but does keep her eyes on Tyrenta as she chews another huge chunk of ale-soaked bread.

Tyrenta sits at the table, putting her lower than Jaquess. They stare at each other for a beat.

JAQUESS

I take a dump in your bed or something?

Tyrenta snatches a mug from a reveler next to her, who's too scared of her to protest. They all scatter, leaving Jaquess and Tyrenta alone at the table.

TYRENTA

Jeffy said you were asking about the Diviner.

JAQUESS

Diviner ain't real.

TYRENTA

No shit. So why were you asking?

Jaquess shrugs.

Tyrenta leans back. Grunts.

TYRENTA

They said you were a killer, not a coward.

JAQUESS

I don't take shit from losers.

Tyrenta snarls... then cools. Nods.

TYRENTA

Fairanuff.

JAQUESS

Was that all? You just comed out of retirement to see you couldn't take me?

Yes, she says "comed." There isn't any public education in the post-apocalypse for some reason, and they've developed their own lingo besides.

Tyrenta spits.

TYRENTA

You beat me in points, little girl,
but you didn't beat me to death.

Jaquess tenses to strike, and Tyrenta readies herself to react...

But Jaquess relaxes.

JAQUESS

Fairanuff.

Tyrenta stands.

TYRENTA

Follow me.

5 EXT. WOODS OUTSIDE FAIR - NIGHT

5

Far enough from the tents to have some peace and quiet, but not so far that it doesn't feel safe.

Of course, it feels a lot less safe when there's five armed men lurking in the bushes, but Jaquess doesn't see them yet as she follows Tyrenta.

TYRENTA

They say he lives in the mountains
to the west. One of the big ones, I
assume.

JAQUESS

So Diviner shit is what, a hobby for
you?

TYRENTA

I like to pretend. Fuck you.

JAQUESS

Just asking.

One of the men in the bushes steps on a twig - Jaquess immediately has knives in her hands.

JAQUESS

Trap seems douchy for you.

But Tyrenta has her back to Jaquess, hammers in hand in a defensive posture.

TYRENTA

'Tis.

All five bushwhackers leap out at once, and rather than play it safe, Jaquess charges two of them, screaming at the top of her lungs.

She catches one off-guard and leaves a knife sticking out of his throat, but the other was ready and swings a sword, forcing Jaquess to dive into the bushes the dudes just leapt out of.

Unfortunately, there was SOMEONE ELSE waiting there, and he holds a knife to Jaquess's throat.

SOMEONE ELSE

We're not here for you.

It's too dark to make out any of his features, if it even is a he - I'm aware I default to masculine pronouns and maybe that's sexist, but shit dude, using "they" for generic characters gets really confusing sometimes, like when there's a group of them. I get it if you think I'm making the wrong choice, but fuck, I'm doing my best.

Where were we? Oh yeah - someone YELLS from outside the bushes, Tyrenta CACKLES, and then suddenly falls quiet.

Nothing happens for a beat.

Then the person with the knife to Jaquess's throat stands up, and helps her stand, too. Out of the bushes, we can see it's a fatass kid, maybe 17, with some peach fuzz and a sick tattoo of an angry elephant on his neck. This is ESURIO.

ESURIO

She dead?

No response.

Esurio and Jaquess emerge from the bushes to see everybody outside the bushes is dead. Tyrenta's body is propped against a tree by a guy holding a sword through her chest, and she's got a hammer buried in his skull.

ESURIO

Well, shit. There goes my life.

JAQUESS

Tyrenta doesn't have friends, and I don't hold grudges.

ESURIO

Not literally. I guess I meant,
 "There goes my entire family, upon
 (MORE)

ESURIO (CONT'D)
 whom I depend for survival in this
 blasted hell that we call society."

You will soon notice, if you haven't already, that Esurio
 talks gooder than most people.

JAQUESS
 Why kill her?

ESURIO
 Because we owed her money. A lot of
 money. Now we don't, but also now
 there is no "we," so.

He shrugs. He might be crying; it's dark, hard to tell.

JAQUESS
 Rough.

And she means it. But also:

JAQUESS
 You good enough with your knife to
 fight for a living?

ESURIO
 Nah.

JAQUESS
 Cool.

She flicks his knife out of his hand with her sword, and
 holds it to his throat.

JAQUESS
 Take me to your family's hoard.

Esurio sighs. "This might as well happen now."

ESURIO
 Yeah, sure.

He leads her back towards the fair.

6 INT. ESURIO'S TENT - NIGHT

6

The tent's not too big, but the floor is covered in thick
 leathers and pelts, so it actually looks really
 comfortable. A hard, dried leather in a corner holds a
 small pile of food, and there's a crate nearby that has a
 few weapons sitting on it.

Esurio holds the tent flap open for Jaquess, and
 immediately she's digging through the leathers, looking
 for one she can fashion into a coat.

Esurio is definitely crying now. Jaquess notices.

JAQUESS
Are you crying?

ESURIO
No.

JAQUESS
You gotta kill that parta you, or
you're gonna get killed whole.

Jaquess pokes around the weapons, peels open the crate they're sitting on - inside is a fine steel shield, polished to a mirror gleam.

Jaquess takes it out, admires it... glances suspiciously at Esurio.

JAQUESS
This is good steel. You could eat
for a year off of this.

ESURIO
And? You know I can't fight you for
it. Take it.

JAQUESS
Where did you losers get it?

Esurio shrugs.

ESURIO
Wrynt knew things sometimes. Where
to find good things. When they'd be
alone. Didn't stop him from getting
beat, but he had enough Sight to
find things.

Jaquess whispers to herself.

JAQUESS
Diviner shit.

ESURIO
Yeah, maybe. He's dead now, though,
so.

JAQUESS
Where will you do from here?

Esurio looks at her.

7 EXT. DESTROYED HIGHWAY - DAY**7**

Jaquess and Esurio walk down the road. Jaquess wears thick leathers over her bladed suit, which you can tell from the blades jutting out at her knees and shoulders.

Esurio sings at the top of his lungs. He's pretty good.

ESURIO
 Y'ALL LISTEN UP
 I ROCK THIS BITCH
 HARDCORE ASS UP
 FUCK THIS BITCH
 DON'T ASK ME FOR NO FAVORS
 CAUSE I DON'T GIVE A SHIT
 DRESS UP IN A LITTLE DRESS
 PINK LIPSTICK

Jaquess slows her pace, drifts off the road into the surrounding brush... and suddenly she's gone.

Esurio keeps walking, but stops singing. He looks nervous.

CUT TO:

8 EXT. DESTROYED HIGHWAY - NIGHT**8**

Esurio sits next to a small campfire off the highway. It's cold, and he huddles close to it.

A strange shrieking music - Esurio shifts a little, it's not clear if the music is diegetic* or not.

(DIEGETIC means "exists in the world of the story." So glad I spent \$100k on film school, or I might've just said "it's not clear if he can hear the music or not" like a plebeian.)

Suddenly there are three masked figures sitting at the campfire with Esurio. Either they moved out of the bushes scary fast, or this is post-apocalyptic fantasy and there's magic. Fuck you, I'm not telling.

The first figure wears a DEER skull, the second an OX skull, and the third wears a wooden MASK.

DEER
 Where is the girl-thing, boy?

ESURIO
 She left hours ago. Think she could smell you. I know I could.

OX
 Then why are you here?

ESURIO
 (huge fucking lie)
 I'm not scared of you.

DEER
 Neither is she.

ESURIO
 What do you want?

The masked one stands behind Esurio, rests... ah shit, I did this to myself. They're explicitly androgynous so I guess I have to say "they," right? Or give them their own pronouns. Let's just stick with "they," and fuck me if it gets confusing.

Mask rests their head on Esurio's shoulder, drapes their arms around him.

MASK
 This one doesn't smell right.

OX
 He has pissed himself.

Masks's hand slides down to Esurio's crotch. It's soaked with piss.

MASK
 It disgusts me.

But they don't move their hand, either.

DEER
 We seek Wrynt.

ESURIO
 Wrynt is dead.

Ox stands up straight. They hear something.

OX
 The girl-thing is here.

Mask's hand clutches Esurio's balls; Esurio just barely stops himself from crying out in pain.

MASK
 The pissboy lied to us.

DEER
 Tell the girl-thing we do not share
 her vendetta.

And then they're all gone.

Esurio sits for a beat.

Starts to shake.

Jaquess emerges from the brush, weapons out and ready for a fight.

Esurio jumps a bit when he sees her, but then relaxes.

ESURIO
I thought you'd left.

Jaquess realizes they're gone. Puts her knives back on her armor.

JAQUESS
What did they say about me?

ESURIO
How do you know the Weirds?

JAQUESS
Did they mention a little boy?

ESURIO
I don't.... think so. No.

JAQUESS
Which three was it? I saw the deer and the cow, but I couldn't make out the third.

ESURIO
There wasn't a third. Just the two.

JAQUESS
I saw three. The third was touching you.

Esurio flinches. Puts his hand on his shoulder where the masked one rested their head.

ESURIO
I...

JAQUESS
Was it the crocodile? The chimera?

Esurio's confused. He can't get his thoughts straight.

ESURIO
Don't they travel in threes? Why were there only two?

JAQUESS
I just said...

She starts to understand something hinky is going on.

JAQUESS
Get some sleep. I'll be hard-pushing
for a while.

Esurio nods.

9 EXT. WEIRD CULT - NIGHT

9

Dozens of hooded figures wearing skulls, each from a different animal. They move in silence and sit in darkness, no lights. If it wasn't a full moon out, you wouldn't know what the fuck was going on.

One wearing a LION skull whispers into the ears of a little boy, maybe eight years old, naked and shivering. This is DEQUINN, Jaquess's brother.

Dequinn looks straight at the camera:

DEQUINN
Jaquess?

Lion looks at the camera too.

LION
How did this get here?

The camera walks backward.

DEQUINN
Jaquess, run! Find the Diviner! Get
out of here!

Lion lunges at the camera.

SMASH TO:

10 EXT. ESURIO'S CAMP - DAWN

10

Jaquess shoots awake. A nightmare?

Nah, man, you're genre savvy enough to know it was a vision or something. This is totally a post-apocalyptic fantasy. Makes you wonder if there are gonna be dragons or anything cool like that.

What was that dragon movie with Christian Bale? Reign of Fire? That movie kicked so much ass.

11 EXT. FARM - DAY

11

A simple farm off the highway; at least one other farm can be seen nearby, this is a little community.

Oh, fuck, I should've said before now, this is post-apoc, but it's not, like, just brown shit everywhere, no yellow color filters. This is a farm, lots of green. The Earth is

alive, it's just all the people who are dead. There's probably a lot more green here than there is in real life.

Jaquess and Esurio walk through the fields towards a farmhouse.

12 EXT. FARMHOUSE - DAY

12

Jaquess barter with a FARMER for some food, trading that kid's samurai sword for a bundle of veggies.

FARMER

You're not gonna keep going today, are you? Only an hour left of daylight, you should find shelter. We could maybe find a roof for you, if not a blanket.

JAQUESS

Miles to make up, no time to rest.

The farmer leans in close, whispers.

FARMER

My pop has a touch of Hearing, says the Weirds are out in these parts. It's not safe.

Esurio shudders involuntarily.

JAQUESS

Does he know which Weirds? I saw the Cow and the Deer, but I couldn't find the third.

The farmer takes a step back.

Fuck, she's serious.

He hesitates. Turns.

FARMER

Pop!

CUT TO:

An OLD MAN stands with them. He's that crazy mix of decrepit but in great shape that you see sometimes in elderly farmers - a stiff breeze would knock him over, but also he could bench-press a horse.

OLD MAN

It came like a wave, came crashing over me. Me ears still ring with the Truth, ken.

He coughs violently. Spits a glob of phlegm to the ground.

OLD MAN
No offense, fairanuff? Just an
excess of phlegm.

JAQUESS
Fairanuff. Do you know which it is?
I saw the Deer and the Cow, but-

The old man shakes his head.

OLD MAN
You're asking the wrong question, I
think. But I am unknown of the right
question, ken.

JAQUESS
This doesn't sound like any of them.
Rat King, paps, as they're always
whisper-creepy, but-

OLD MAN
Not the Rat, and not the Man,
neither, before you ask.

JAQUESS
Must be a new one. Fuck.

ESURIO
They didn't feel new.

Everyone looks at him.

Esurio touches his shoulder absent-mindedly.

ESURIO
Felt... didn't feel new.

OLD MAN
(to Jaquess)
Old is worse, ken. Old is worse.

JAQUESS
I ken.

She looks out at the fields.

JAQUESS
I'll trade a good stelium shield for
a riding wagon.

13 EXT. ROLLING HIGHWAY - NIGHT

13

Jaquess and Esurio ride on the back of a strange rusty
vehicle that balances on a single giant tread - called a
riding wagon, you guess. There's enough space to stand up
and stretch your legs, but not much more than that.

Jaquess sits on the end, meditating. Esurio lies on his back, feet hanging off the edge.

ESURIO

I think it's time I asked you some questions.

(This is for your benefit, so fucking pay attention. I don't normally do exposition, but I know this story's batshit and you could use something to hold on to.)

Jaquess doesn't open her eyes.

JAQUESS

I don't care.

ESURIO

What do you want? What are you trying to do?

JAQUESS

My brother's looking for the Diviner. The Weirds are looking for my brother. I'm trying to stop both of them.

ESURIO

Diviner's a fairy tale. Some old man in the mountains is supposed to know everything? It's bullshit.

JAQUESS

I know that. My brother doesn't.

ESURIO

What do the Weirds want with him?

JAQUESS

What do they want with anyone?

ESURIO

Usually they just kill people. I'm a little surprised they didn't kill me.

JAQUESS

They're afraid of me is why they didn't. I killed one of them, once.

ESURIO

Lie. How'd you do that?

Jaquess opens her eyes. Looks at Esurio.

Closes her eyes again.

Smiles.

Something moves in the darkness ahead of them. Esurio notices, slaps the riding wagon twice, and it stops.

Jaquess opens her eyes.

JAQUESS

Why did you-

Something heavy SLAMS into her side and hurls her to the ground.

By the time she hits the ground, she's tangled in a net. She wriggles violently and her blades cut her free, but when she stands, Esurio isn't on top of the wagon anymore either - he's gone.

JAQUESS

Shit! Esurio?!

Blood-curdling WAR CRIES echo around her, and half a dozen CANNIBALS in bloody, half-destroyed tuxedos crawl around her, surrounding her with her back to the wagon.

JAQUESS

I fucking hate cannibals.

The cannibals move more like animals than humans, crawling on all fours. Fuck, they look like they've got too many joints in their arms and legs, too. Mutant cannibals?

One of them opens its mouth wider than its head, revealing several rows of rotten teeth. It SCREECHES at her - until one of her swords suddenly buries itself in its throat.

Jaquess threw that one (duh) and already has another two swords drawn and ready. She holds them underhanded, like a ninja. Sick.

The cannibals charge her, and she kicks off the wagon to get enough momentum to leap clear over them, cutting one in half as she goes. She pins another to the ground through its spine, chops the fourth one's head off, and then the last two run off into the darkness.

(If you're pissing about it, cannibals have rotten bones, that's why she can cut them so easily when she struggled to cut through a spine in the opening. Also fuck you, it's not that kind of movie.)

(Fuck CinemaSins.)

Jaquess snarls at them as they go, but doesn't chase - instead, she climbs the wagon and looks around.

No sign of Esurio.

JAQUESS

Shit.

Another maybe-diegetic-maybe-not musical cue plays, this one discordant and jarring.

It draws Jaquess's attention to one side (so definitely diegetic).

JAQUESS

What was that?

It plays again, fades out like it's moving.

Moving towards some subtle lines in the dirt - like someone's been dragged.

Jaquess leaps into a dead sprint towards them.

14 INT. BOARD ROOM CAVE - NIGHT

14

Alright, so bear with me on this one.

This is a cave that has been arranged in sort of a cargo-cult version of an executive board room. A long bamboo table fills the center of the room, high-backed fur-covered chairs all around it. A carved stone "television" sits on a wall covered in the cave-painting approximation of wood paneling. A bone analog clock sits on the adjoining wall.

Oh, and Esurio is hog-tied and gagged, lying on the table, with cannibals sitting around him. The CANNIBAL CHIEF sits at the head of the table, in the bloodiest and most damaged suit.

(It'd be really easy to interpret this as some sort of allegory or parable about modern office culture, so be careful not to.)

One of the cannibals howls something at the cannibal chief, who raises and finger and growls.

CANNIBAL CHIEF

EAT ELEPHANT ONE BITE AT TIME. NO
BITE OFF MORE THAN CHEW OR I MAKE
EAT YOUR DOG FOOD.

The cannibals all growl and mutter quietly to each other. How wise the chief is!

Some echoing HOWLS OF PAIN come from outside the room. The cannibal chief jumps up on the table.

Jaquess steps into the room, cool as can be.

The subordinate cannibals are spooked, shift back in their seats as she hops up on the table facing the cannibal chief, Esurio tied up between them.

The cannibal chief roars at Jaquess, but she doesn't flinch.

JAQUESS

Back at you. Let's party.

She draws a pair of large butcher's cleavers.

CANNIBAL CHIEF

WAIT.

Jaquess stops. This is unexpected.

CANNIBAL CHIEF

YOU KILL EVERYBODY TO GET HERE?

Jaquess glances behind her.

JAQUESS

I think some of them are still breathing. For now.

CANNIBAL CHIEF

WANT EAT, BUT WANT MORE NOT DIE.

He leans forward and with a little bit of effort, rolls Esurio towards Jaquess.

CANNIBAL CHIEF

WE HAVE DEAL? SHAKE?

He starts to shimmy, because he has drastically misunderstood what it means to "shake" on a deal.

Jaquess is surprised. She creeps forward, cuts the ropes tying Esurio.

Esurio takes the gag out, scrambles to hide behind Jaquess.

All of the cannibals start to shake violently. Maybe they're chanting the word "Shake," maybe they're just gurgling incoherently.

JAQUESS

No deal.

The shaking and the chanting stops.

The cannibals lunge as one at Jaquess.

15 EXT. STREAM - MORNING**15**

The sun is just peeking over the horizon as Jaquess cleans the blood and guts off of her swords/armor. Esurio helps by drying and oiling the swords she's finished washing.

ESURIO
Why did you fight them?

Jaquess stops, looks at him.

JAQUESS
...Seriously?

Esurio stops, shrinks beneath her glare.

ESURIO
I mean... just because, like, they were gonna let us go?

JAQUESS
They're cannibals. Are you upset that I killed them?

ESURIO
No. Obviously not, no.

Jaquess goes back to cleaning.

JAQUESS
'Kay.

The camera lingers just long enough to let you suspect this conversation is of some importance to the plot or theme or something.

You really hope the moral of this story isn't "Killing mutant cannibals is bad."

JAQUESS
We should get going.

She stands, walks away. Esurio stumbles to his feet.

16 EXT. ROLLING HIGHWAY - DAY**16**

Just, like, a shot of them traveling again so we know they're moving and time is passing.

Thick dark clouds are on the horizon. Jaquess notices them.

17 EXT. SHALLOW CAVE - DAY [RAINING]**17**

Jaquess and Esurio hide from the rain in a small cleft in a cliff, with their walking wagon leaning against it to form a sort of makeshift awning.

Jaquess looks at Esurio. Musters her courage.

JAQUESS
Did you see a little boy in there?

ESURIO
What?

JAQUESS
Are you deaf or are you stupid? DID
YOU SEE-

After she rescued him from mutant cannibals, Esurio was kind of starting to think Jacquess was his friend, so that stings a bit.

ESURIO
No! I just saw, like, cannibals.

Jaquess snarls.

But it's not at Esurio, it's at her next question.

JAQUESS
Did you see, like...

Fuck.

JAQUESS
Bones? That could be a little boy's?

It takes Esurio a second, but he eventually manages to understand what's prompting this line of questioning.

ESURIO
Oh! No, no, I didn't. There was a
pile of bones, but only, like, adult
bones.

Of course he wasn't actually paying attention to that, but he's not a complete dipshit. Maybe honesty would work better, but shit, if we're speaking honestly, would anyone else in Jacquess's shoes actually want him to say-

ESURIO
I mean, I couldn't really see them,
it was just for a second, so like,
maybe there were some little, um...
like, it's theoretically possible
there were some little kid bones
there. Or maybe they kept little kid
bones in a different pile. Should we
have looked through them after the
fight instead of leaving?

Oh, Esurio.

Jaquess stands up and stomps into the rain a short distance.

18 EXT. FIELD - DAY [RAINING, CONTINUOUS] 18

The rain hides Jaquess's tears, and the thunder hides her sobs, but anyone can see her trembling and gasping as she gives herself a few minutes to fear the worst.

19 EXT. FOREST VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - DAY 19

Jaquess and Esurio ride into a small village built out of old airplane wreckage.

Jaquess hops off the riding wagon, but stops Esurio from following her.

JAQUESS
(cold, she's still pissed)
Watch our shit. I won't be long.

ESURIO
Are we not staying?

JAQUESS
There's nothing here for us. I'ma re-up our food and ask around a bit, then the place is dry.

ESURIO
Sure, it's just, I could use a night indoors. I'm not used to road life yet.

JAQUESS
Get used to it.

And she leaves him.

20 EXT. FOREST VILLAGE - DAY [CONTINUOUS] 20

The villagers watch Jaquess with fear and whispers. She stomps past them all and directly towards the Chief's Hut, built into the destroyed base of an air traffic control tower.

21 EXT. CHIEF'S HUT - DAY [CONTINUOUS] 21

Outside the hut stands THE CHIEF, like if Schwarzenegger in his prime had a baby with a werewolf. He might be naked (it's hard to tell under all that body hair), and he carries a battleaxe bigger than Jaquess.

He glares at Jaquess as she approaches.

CHIEF
Told you not to come back here.

JAQUESS
I ain't staying. But I know you hate
Weirds more'n you hate me.

The chief spits.

CHIEF
They're hunting you and you led them
here?

JAQUESS
Vicewise. I'm hunting them.

The chief raises an eyebrow.

JAQUESS
Not here for favors, not here to
disturb your Peace. Just knew you'd
have the shit I need and that you'd
sell it fair to a good cause.

She holds out a hand.

The chief stares at it.

CHIEF
There ain't no Peace here anyway.

He shakes her hand.

22 EXT. FOREST VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

22

Esurio laughs with a couple of KIDS, leans against the wagon, completely oblivious to the kids sneaking around behind him, rooting through the stuff Jaquess told him to watch.

ESURIO
Oh, this?

He gestures to his tattoo.

ESURIO
It's a symbol of wisdom. My brother
did it for me when I solved a...
it's actually kind of hard to
explain, unless you know what an
"accountant" is?

The kids shake their head.

KIDS
Tell us!

ESURIO
Basically, there was someone
(MORE)

ESURIO (CONT'D)
stealing from my family, but they
were doing it with paper and numbers
instead of by sneaking around.

lol, what a dope.

CHIEF (O.S.)
Cut that out!

Esurio startles, almost falls over.

The kids scatter, leaving behind most of the goods that
would have been stolen.

Jaquess and the Chief walk up; Jacquess shakes her head in
disappointment.

JAQUESS
I told you to watch the stuff.

ESURIO
I did! I was! I never left-

He looks and sees the bags open, half-ransacked.

ESURIO
Oh, no. The kids were-

CHIEF
They'll give it all back. Like
didn't know who it belonged to.

ESURIO
I was standing right here.

The chief chuckles.

JAQUESS
He was talking about me.

ESURIO
Right. I'm Esurio, by the way.

He holds out his hand to the Chief.

The Chief just stares at him.

JAQUESS
That's the Chief. He doesn't shake
hands.

ESURIO
Fair enough.

CHIEF
 (to Jaquess)
 You were right. He is strange.

Jaquess nods.

JAQUESS
 He doesn't whine, though, so I can
 put up with a lot.

ESURIO
 Thank you?

CHIEF
 Come with me, Esurio. I will show
 you what to carry.

23 INT. STORAGE SHED - DAY

23

Esurio loads some supplies into a bag - dry foods, a
 crystal ball, whatever the props guy thinks makes sense.

The Chief watches him, occasionally points to things for
 him to gather.

ESURIO
 It's a nice village you have here.
 Chill vibes.

CHIEF
 Why do you travel with the girl?

ESURIO
 Jaquess? I dunno. Didn't have
 anywhere else to go.

CHIEF
 After her friend killed your family?

ESURIO
 I don't think that was her fault.

The Chief grunts.

Points to something else. Esurio grabs it.

CHIEF
 How long ago did the Weirds get
 Dequinn?

ESURIO
 Dunno. Before I joined up with her.

CHIEF
 You know he is certainly dead.

Esurio stops.

ESURIO
Yeah. I think she does, too. She
just...

Beat. Esurio keeps working.

The Chief grunts.

24 EXT. FOREST VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - DAY

24

The Chief helps Jaquess and Esurio board their wagon.

JAQUESS
Thankee. You won't see me again.

CHIEF
You're hunting Weird. If you were
going to survive... you wouldn't be
welcomed back quickly, but there'd
be a path you could follow.

JAQUESS
Don't make promises you don't intend
to keep. Dequinn likes it here.

CHIEF
Not a promise. Just the truth.

He nods to Jaquess, and she nods back.

He looks meaningfully at Esurio, and Esurio struggles to
figure out what the meaning of the look is. Fails.

Jaquess slaps the wagon and they're off.

ESURIO
Can I ask what the story is here?

JAQUESS
What do you mean?

ESURIO
There's clearly... you have a
history here. Seems complicated?

JAQUESS
Not that complicated.

Esurio waits for her to continue.

She doesn't.

25 EXT. WOODS - DAY

25

Dequinn rides a pony on a thin dirt path through the woods
- yes, this is another dream.

Dequinn cocks his head.

DEQUINN

Hello?

No response. He stops the pony.

DEQUINN

You can come out.

And suddenly he's surrounded by three Weirds - LION, GOAT, and RAT KING (who has a dozen rat skulls assembled into one big mask).

Dequinn's pony is spooked, but he lays a hand on its mane and it calms down.

RAT KING

The boy is-

DEQUINN

I'm not lost. I live near here.

The Weirds each look at each other.

DEQUINN

Yes, I can hear you.

Rat King looks at Dequinn.

Whatever the fuck he "says," it finally spooks Dequinn.

DEQUINN

My sister is right behind me, I should-

All three Weirds step closer to him.

HARSH FREAKY CUT TO:

26 EXT. WEIRD CULT - NIGHT

26

The same dream Jaquess had before, with Lion whispering to a naked, shivering Dequinn.

Except this time Jaquess is standing there, too.

JAQUESS

Get off of him!

Lion is startled to see her, stumbles back.

LION

How did it return?!

Dequinn is overwhelmed to see Jaquess.

DEQUINN

Jaquess! What are you doing?

JAQUESS

Dequinn!

Jaquess runs to him, but Lion gets in front of her.

LION

Stop it before-

Jaquess draws a sword and swipes in the same motion; Lion dodges, leaving her a clear shot to Dequinn.

DEQUINN

Jaquess! The Diviner! Find the
Diviner!

Jaquess charges forwards, but Lion grabs her.

She spins and stabs him straight through the eye.

Lion ROARS like an actual lion, and throws Jaquess.

27 **EXT. ROCKY HIGHWAY - MORNING**

27

Jaquess falls off the riding wagon as she startles awake.

She scrambles to her feet and looks around.

JAQUESS

Dequinn! DEQUINN!

Esurio stops the wagon, leans off to look at her.

ESURIO

Did you see that?

Jaquess wheels on him.

JAQUESS

What did you see?

She's hostile, aggressive, like it's his fault.

ESURIO

I don't know! It was, like... it was
night and day at the same time. And
there was a...

He tries to hold on to the vision, but it's slipping away from him.

JAQUESS

Did you see the little boy?

ESURIO

I did! Was that your brother?

Jaquess starts calming down. It was a dream, and even if it was more than a dream, it's not happening now.

And it probably wasn't Esurio's fault.

JAQUESS

He was trying to... get to me. Get me to him.

ESURIO

Was that... real? Like, did that happen?

Jaquess ponders the question.

JAQUESS

I don't know.

Jaquess climbs back onto the wagon.

ESURIO

We both saw it, though, so it's gotta be... something. Why does he want you to find the Diviner?

JAQUESS

I don't know. I've been having... he's been jabbing at me for weeks. Started a couple days after... After. He's trying to lead me to him.

ESURIO

Diviner's not in this direction, though.

JAQUESS

Weirds are, though, and he's with them.

Esurio takes a moment to choose his words. Maybe he's learning.

ESURIO

What if... I don't know what's going on, or how he's sending the messages, but-

JAQUESS

He's got It.

ESURIO

What?

JAQUESS

The Sight. The Hearing. The Touch.
(MORE)

JAQUESS (CONT'D)

The fuckin' Smell. All of it. He's got It.

ESURIO

Woah.

JAQUESS

Got us into some trouble, but it got us out of twice-a-much. It'll get us outta this.

Esurio starts to wonder if maybe Dequinn is not, in fact, dead. He doesn't know much about magic, but you gotta be alive to do anything else, so it makes sense Dequinn would have to be alive for this too, yeah?

ESURIO

Maybe so.

JAQUESS

Def so.

MASK (O.S.)

Not so.

The wagon stops of its own accord; Jaquess and Esurio are surrounded by Weirds. Jaquess already has swords in hand, and Esurio is frozen in fear.

I'm just gonna use Weird names (labels? Descriptors? whatever) and you can assume they've been here the whole time, I'm not gonna waste time listing off each one that's here, that's not important.

The wooden Mask one is obviously here, though, front and center.

MASK

Stay your swords. Let's palaver.

JAQUESS

Fuck that.

She dives headfirst towards the Mask, but falls straight through them; their mask and empty robe fall to the ground beneath her swords like Obi-Wan after Vader cut him down.

Given the force with which Jaquess was diving, this leads to something of a rough landing, and she struggles to disentangle herself from the empty robes.

One of the other Weirds ducks down, takes off their skull (we don't see their face, they cover it) and replace it with a wood mask, becoming Mask.

MASK

We have taken precautions. To fight
is futile. Let there be peace, if
only for the span of this
conversation.

Jaquess holds her swords out at either side, cautious.

JAQUESS

Esurio. Can you move?

He can't even speak. He's unnaturally still; this is more
than just fear holding him down.

JAQUESS

So you can swap bodies. I cut down
everyone here, and you'll-

As one, the Weirds all collapse, empty robes.

MASK (O.S.)

You will do nothing.

The empty robes Mask was initially occupying stand up, and
suddenly they're Mask again, right behind Jaquess. She
doesn't notice.

Jaquess hesitates. Mask looms over her.

JAQUESS

(to herself)

Fuck.

She sheathes her swords.

Turns around and looks Mask straight in the eyes; guess
she wasn't unaware after all, asshole.

JAQUESS

We have nothing to talk about. I'm
gonna kill you, and I'm gonna kill
your friends, and I'm gonna save my
brother. Not necessarily in that
order.

MASK

Your vendetta will lead to grief for
both sides.

JAQUESS

Is that a threat?

Mask makes a weird CLICKING sound, like an old computer
thinking. (No, I'm not talking like an old modem, I'm
talking about their thinking sounds.)

MASK

Understanding pierces the veil
between our minds, and I begin to
see you.

Mask turns, looks past Jaquess and at the camera, though it's hard to tell that's what they're doing because, you know, they're wearing a mask.

MASK

You have come in search of glorious
battle in which good will vanquish
evil, winning safety and security.
But you will be disappointed.

Yes, I just told my audience they're gonna be disappointed. Fuck you. Are you not entertained?

Mask turns to Jaquess.

MASK

There will be no battle, and even
there is, it will accomplish
nothing.

JAQUESS

I'd be happy just with you being
dead.

MASK

I don't believe-

Jaquess leaps forward, grabs Mask's mask by the eyeholes with one hand.

At the same time, her other hand draws a slender silver stake from her hip and drives it into Mask's chest.

Mask SHRIEKS like an inhuman nightmare, struggles desperately, but can't recoil from Jaquess's grip on their mask.

JAQUESS

Esurio?!

Esurio has snapped out of it and is holding a sword in front of him, waving it around in a panic.

He is panicking because all of the other Weirds are FREAKING THE FUCK OUT and it is freaking him the fuck out.

JAQUESS

ESURIO!

ESURIO

WHAT?!

JAQUESS

RUN!

He stomps on the riding wagon several times, and it kicks into gear.

Jaquess lets go of Mask's mask and sprints to the wagon, grabbing onto the back just before it's going too fast to keep up with.

Mask immediately pulls the silver stake out of its chest, spilling a thick black ichor all over the ground. The Weirds immediately calm down.

Mask SHRIEKS, this time a command to the others rather than a cry of pain. The Weirds sprint into the darkness; Mask follows, limping.

28 EXT. THE WAGON ON THE RUN - NIGHT [CONTINUOUS]

28

Jaquess takes Esurio's sword from him and gives him a silver stake instead. She digs another one out of one of the bags from the Chief and immediately begins lashing it to a long pole to make a spear.

ESURIO

What the fuck was that? What did you do to them?

Jaquess is keenly aware of the Weirds running alongside them, significantly faster than humanly possible, but they're close enough to the darkness that Esurio hasn't seen them yet.

JAQUESS

I only have the one pole. If I give you the spear, are you gonna use it?

Jaquess holds the finished spear towards Esurio.

ESURIO

What?

JAQUESS

Are you gonna fucking use this?

Esurio looks behind himself in time to see a Weird leap at them, but Jacquess steps forward with the spear, and the Weird alters course in mid-air to stay away.

Esurio takes the spear, and Jacquess takes his stake in exchange.

ESURIO

Shitlets.

Jaquess maneuvers Esurio to the back of the wagon.

JAQUESS
Watch our back. I've got the rest.

She steps to the middle of the wagon.

Mask is in front of the wagon, simultaneously standing perfectly still and flying backwards to keep perfect pace.

JAQUESS
You want some more?

MASK
(still panting, talking hurts)
You are going to die tonight.

JAQUESS
Tough talk for a crump with a hole in their chest!

DEQUINN (PRE-LAP?)
JAQUESS!

CUT TO:

29 EXT. WEIRD CULT - NIGHT

29

Jaquess stands facing Dequinn, with Lion grabbing Dequinn's shoulder tightly. Ichor drips from Lion's wounded eye.

The other Weirds move about their business. They might not be able to see any of this.

Jaquess raises her stake, but even though it's in her hand when she starts the movement, by the time her hand is up, it's gone.

Lion squeezes Dequinn harder, and he grunts in pain.

Jaquess lunges forward, but Dequinn shouts at her and she freezes.

DEQUINN
Stop!

JAQUESS
If you don't let him go-

DEQUINN
You have to pay attention.

Jaquess breathes heavily. Glares at Lion.

Tears her eyes off of him to look at Dequinn.

JAQUESS
I'm listening.

DEQUINN
(voice cracking, he's
scared)
They're going to kill me. Tonight, I
think.

Lion nods.

JAQUESS
Tell me where you are. I'll stop
them.

Dequinn shakes his head.

DEQUINN
It's not about where I am,
Jaquess.

CUT TO:

30 EXT. THE THE WAGON ON THE RUN - NIGHT

30

Jaquess is back where she was, and Mask is still in front
of her.

JAQUESS
NO! NO!!

Mask cocks their head; they know something has happened.

MASK
Time is truly an illusion. We have
much to think about.

They drift out of the way of the wagon and then stop, as
do all the Weirds in the shadows. The riding wagon passes
them all quickly.

JAQUESS
GET BACK HERE!

She doesn't wait for the wagon to stop; she dives off the
back of it and charges into darkness.

ESURIO
What?! Jaquess!

But it only takes a moment before she's too far away to
see, too.

ESURIO
Jaquess!!

No response.

Esurio breathes heavily. He's not sure what to do.
He stomps on the wagon, stops it.

ESURIO
Oh damn it. Damn it.

He grips his spear tightly, points it against the darkness.

ESURIO
Jaquess?! Please come back!

Still nothing.

Nothing at all.

31 EXT. DESTROYED HIGHWAY - MORNING

31

Esurio has the wagon kneeling at an angle, working sorta like a lean-to. Gives him a wall at his back.

He's exhausted, but he's not in danger of dozing off yet. Still too scared.

He sees Jacquess walking towards him, shoulders hanging low.

Remember my note about the music for this whole movie kicking ass? I was lying, it only kicked ass until now. Hard pivot to something mournful, acoustic. I'm listening to that violin song from Arrival right now.

32 LATER - DAY

32

Jaquess and Esurio sit near the wagon. Esurio has some soup cooking over a campfire.

Jaquess looks more than exhausted; she looks defeated.

Really linger on this shot. Thirty seconds can feel like eternity if nothing's happening, but it's still only thirty seconds. Don't be a coward.

I respect you too much to pretend you don't know what's going on, but not quite enough not to double-check: Dequinn is dead, and was talking from the past.

"If this is important it should be in the movie," you say, and you're not wrong, but I don't think you're right, either. Audiences are big enough I can just write for the ones who will get it; readers are rare enough I need to make sure you're keeping up.

(Have you seen *Upstream Color*? By Shane Carruth, the guy who did *Primer*? That movie is my *jam*, man. Doesn't explain shit; if you get it, you get it, and if you don't, you don't. Carruth doesn't feel like he owes the audience jack shit. And because he doesn't, he totally gets away with it.)

Besides, I'm not an idiot. I know this isn't a movie that's gonna get made. It's not gonna sell. And by now you're either on board with my bullshit or you've checked out, so I can just assume you're on board with it. <3

33 EXT. FOREST VILLAGE OUTSKIRTS - DAY**33**

The riding wagon has been set up into something of a permanent shelter - it's not a lean-to anymore, but there's some walls leaning against three of its sides to make a little hut. In fact, let's make that the scene heading:

34 EXT. JAQUESS'S HUT - DAY**34**

Jaquess looks different. Older, maybe, but not much; it probably hasn't even been a year. She's not wearing her armor anymore; instead she's got some loose pants and a tunic, and her hair is shorter, more maintained.

She does a training kata, something cool and kung-fu. A little exercise montage with her jogging, doing situps hanging from a tree branch, that sorta thing.

As she's winding down, Esurio walks over. He's looking better than she is, but he's... careful. He's scared of hurting her, but he's also scared of her.

ESURIO

Hey.

Jaquess glances at him.

ESURIO

You, uh... Chief says you're doing... making progress.

Jaquess grunts.

ESURIO

He still hasn't told me the story, by the way. Your story here. But he says you're making progress.

JAQUESS

Tell him to fuck himself.

ESURIO

I'm probably not gonna do that.

Jaquess walks inside her hut, pulls the curtain that serves as its door/wall shut.

Esurio walks closer, but doesn't go inside, just talks to the curtain.

ESURIO

I think he... I'm still getting used to things here, but I think he feels bad? Maybe? Like he wishes he'd handled... whatever... better?

No response.

ESURIO

I know last week I was saying I still felt weird here, but I think it's starting to click. I don't know if they, like, like me? But I'm not pissing them off anymore, and they're not laughing at me as much. So I'm, I actually had a good week. Pat and the kids are gonna help me build a house.

JAQUESS (O.S.)

Tell Pat and the kids to fuck themselves.

ESURIO

I am starting to understand why maybe everyone is so slow to let you live inside the village.

Jaquess emerges with a couple improvised javelins.

ESURIO

You going hunting?

Jaquess shrugs.

JAQUESS

Do you want something?

ESURIO

Just wanted to chat. I don't think you're doing okay.

Jaquess stares at him.

ESURIO

Are you doing okay?

Jaquess walks into the woods.

ESURIO

I'll come with you.

He follows her.

35 EXT. FOREST - DAY

35

Jaquess field dresses a deer. Esurio tries to watch, but is too squeamish to pay much attention.

ESURIO

Who taught you how to do all this?

JAQUESS

My parents.

Esurio freezes, just for a split second, but it's long enough for you to know he knows he's treading on dangerous ground.

ESURIO

Right. That... that makes sense.
Duh.

Jaquess pulls out some organs. Gross.

ESURIO

You haven't talked much about, uh-

JAQUESS

Yup.

Very dangerous ground.

ESURIO

My parents were okay. I guess they were kinda, um, cannibals. They made Wrynt kill them once they started to mutate. Kinda fucked him up, but what can you do, right?

Jaquess looks at Esurio: "What the fuck?" But there's pity there too, and curiosity.

ESURIO

I was eight or nine. Kinda fucked me up too, maybe. I guess.

JAQUESS

Fuck.

Esurio's glad to have gotten a real reaction.

ESURIO

Right? They made him promise to take care of all of us, so he, uh, did. He was real good to us.

JAQUESS

'Till Tyrenta killed him.

ESURIO

Yeah.

Jaquess hesitates. He doesn't blame her for that, does he?

ESURIO

I guess I'm glad he took her with him, right? I'd hate to, um... I dunno. I'm not good at revenge.

Guess that answers that.

Jaquess leans back, careful not to touch anything, because her hands are covered with blood in what is only kind of intended as a metaphor.

JAQUESS
My parents made me promise to take
care of Dequinn.

Esurio gets a little pale. He wasn't ready for this conversation.

ESURIO
(oh shit)
Oh yeah?

Jaquess nods.

JAQUESS
I meant it, too. I would've...

She looks at the sky. Tears up a bit, but doesn't cry.

JAQUESS
Turns out Chief was right all along.
No such thing as Peace in this
world.

Esurio's not sure what to say.

ESURIO
Probably not.

Jaquess looks at him. There's something bubbling beneath that look. She feels bad things towards him, but she's not sure why. Might not even realize they're there.

Jaquess looks back at the deer.

Shoves her hands back inside it.

36 EXT. FOREST VILLAGE - DAY

36

Jaquess carries the dressed kill into the village. Once they're in the village, she hands it off to Esurio, who carries it to the local butcher or whoever.

ESURIO
I'll come by later with the meat?

Jaquess shakes her head.

JAQUESS
Put it all towards my tab.

ESURIO
Sure. I'll tell the Chief.

He walks away.

Jaquess stands in the village. Looks at everyone looking at her, with mixtures of fear and anger and pity.

She doesn't like it.

JAQUESS
Keep fucking staring, maybe I'll
grow wings.

She stomps away. Everyone clears a path for her as she goes.

37 EXT. JAQUESS'S HUT - NIGHT

37

Jaquess cooks a skewered lizard over a campfire.

The Chief walks over, sits across from her at the fire. He stares at the fire with her.

Jaquess tenses up, but doesn't say anything. Tries to look relaxed.

CHIEF
The kid is worried about you.

No response.

CHIEF
I'm worried about you.

JAQUESS
Anyone else?

Chief grunts.

CHIEF
I think it's just us.

Jaquess nods.

JAQUESS
Not looking good for me.

The Chief shrugs.

CHIEF
If you'd come back with Dequinn....

Jaquess twitches, but she knows he's just being blunt, not making jabs.

CHIEF

...Or if you killed one of them,
maybe it'd be different.

JAQUESS

I'm working on it, but they're
nowhere. It's like they're hiding
from me.

CHIEF

I know. It's why everyone's okay
with you being here.

He considers.

CHIEF

So far. And I know if they ever do
come back you'll either kill them
all or die trying, and either way
the problem will be solved.

JAQUESS

Then why are you here?

He looks at her for the first time.

CHIEF

Because I'm worried about you.

JAQUESS

Afraid of me, more like.

The Chief grunts. Maybe it was a chuckle.

But he doesn't say no.

CHIEF

It's a quiet life here, most times.
But you... you live loud.

JAQUESS

("You want me out.")
I get it.

The Chief shakes his head.

CHIEF

This ain't that talk. Not yet.

Jaquess sighs.

JAQUESS

Taking long enough either way.

CHIEF

Violence scares folks 'til it's of
(MORE)

CHIEF (CONT'D)
 use. You stick around long enough,
 you'll show your value. You scare
 folks afore then, you won't get the
 chance.

He stands, but waits for a response.

JAQUESS
 I don't wear a collar.

CHIEF
 You would, though. If it'd keep you
 safe.

JAQUESS
 Fuck off.

Chief grunts. Leaves.

38 EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

38

Esurio tills the soil; it's sweaty work. A few others
 watch, but nobody helps.

Jaquess walks past on the edge of the trees; Esurio
 notices.

ESURIO
 Hey, Jacquess!

The watchers notice her for the first time, shift their
 positions to not be along her path to Esurio.

Jaquess looks over. Shouts rather than walks over.

JAQUESS
 What?

ESURIO
 Come here for a minute! I want to
 show you something!

JAQUESS
 I can see from here!

Esurio gestures. "Come on."

Jaquess rolls her eyes. Approaches.

Curtseys exaggeratedly to the watchers as she passes them.
 "Fuck you guys."

Esurio raises an eyebrow as she does.

JAQUESS
 What you want?

ESURIO
I'm making a farm.

JAQUESS
And?

ESURIO
Look!

He gestures at the clearing. It needs a lot of work, but yeah, looks like he's getting there.

ESURIO
The hunter-gatherer thing works fine when the village is this small, but if we want room to grow, we're gonna need to grow our own food.

JAQUESS
"We."

ESURIO
Yeah. You and me and everyone.

He nods to the watchers. Jaquess supresses the urge to flip them off.

ESURIO
They're not on board yet, but they'll come around. This is just a... call it a trial run.

JAQUESS
Looks like a lot of work for a trial run.

ESURIO
It'd be easier with proper tools.

He holds up his hoe; it's rough, made of wood and stone.

ESURIO
I was wondering if you still needed all of your armor.

JAQUESS
You think I'm giving that up for-

Now she does flip off the watchers.

JAQUESS
For them? These people want me to give up my actual safety so that they can *feel* safe?

ESURIO

No! I want you to give up something you don't even use anymore so that you can be welcome.

Jaquess scoffs.

Grunts.

Softens.

JAQUESS

(to herself)

Fuck.

(to Esurio)

I got one that's decroded shit, but it'll do you.

ESURIO

That's a great start! We'll call it a trial run.

39 EXT. WOODS - DAY

39

Dequinn rides a pony on a thin dirt path through the woods.

Dequinn cocks his head.

DEQUINN

Hello?

No response. He stops the pony.

DEQUINN

You can come out.

And suddenly Jaquess is standing in front of him. She looks around, surprised.

JAQUESS

What's going on?

Dequinn's pony is spooked, but he lays a hand on its mane and it calms down.

DEQUINN

Are you lost?

JAQUESS

Is this a dream? Or is this... are you real?

DEQUINN

I don't know. I'm not supposed to go this far from home.

Jaquess realizes where they are. She reaches for her swords, but she doesn't have any. Shit.

JAQUESS
This is where they got you. This is when they got you.

DEQUINN
Who? I don't understand what you're saying. Everything's fuzzy.

Jaquess backs up to Dequinn, scanning the woods. She's anxious, ready for a fight.

She's startled when Dequinn grabs her shoulder.

DEQUINN
What are you doing, Jacquess?

JAQUESS
I'm gonna protect you this time. I'm here. You're safe.

Dequinn opens his mouth to say something else, but then Lion, Goat, and Rat King emerge from the woods.

LION
There you are.

Lion's eye is still fucked up; it's not bleeding anymore, but the eye socket is black, scorched, cracked.

JAQUESS
I won't let you take him!

DEQUINN
You can't stop them, Jacquess. You weren't here. And that's not-

Lion lunges at Jacquess, and Dequinn shoves her down; she falls harder than she should, impacts

40 INT. JAQUESS'S HUT - NIGHT 40

on her bed, hard enough to make her head crack against the ground and knock her out.

She lies there, unconscious.

Jerks to consciousness with a gasp.

41 EXT. FOREST VILLAGE - DAY 41

Jaquess walks into down with a boar in a makeshift litter. She's wearing her full armor, and everyone is more afraid of her than usual.

Someone leads the Chief out of a building, points at Jaquess.

The Chief heads over directly.

CHIEF
What's with the armor, Jaquess?

JAQUESS
Got you a boar. Take it and shut the fuck up.

The Chief slows down earlier than he'd planned, keeping a safe distance between him and her.

CHIEF
Careful, girl.

Jaquess yanks the boar litter towards the Chief, lets it fall.

Reconsiders; she draws a knife (the Chief doesn't move, but everyone else takes a step back) and cuts off a leg for herself.

JAQUESS
This is my cut.

She stomps away.

Someone runs up to the Chief, whispers to him.

He nods.

42 EXT. JAQUESS'S HUT - EVENING

42

Jaquess cooks her boar leg, still in her armor.

Esurio walks nearby.

ESURIO
Hey, Jaquess.

JAQUESS
Hey, Esurio. You wanna grub? Some of it's done.

She scoots over, gives him space next to the meat.

Esurio is nervous, awkward. Doesn't know what's going on.

ESURIO
Suuure.

He sits.

ESURIO
Chief told me about the armor.
Everything good?

JAQUESS
I realized something today. Realized
why I've been so out of sorts.

ESURIO
Armor makes you feel safe?

JAQUESS
Killing the bad guys makes me feel
safe. Killing the bad guys makes me
safe. But the people here don't
want me to do that. They don't want
a warrior, they want a...

She looks at Esurio. Waggles a finger.

JAQUESS
They want you.

ESURIO
But you're doing so well. Nobody
bags more boar than you, and
everyone loves it even if they're
whining about how you drop it off.

He wants to put a hand on her shoulder, but can't find a
place that's not sharp. Gives up.

JAQUESS
Fuck 'em. Fuck the chief. Maybe fuck
you, too.

ESURIO
I kinda thought we were friends,
though?

JAQUESS
Kinda think something else.

ESURIO
Nah.

What a bro.

Esurio takes some of the meat. It's greasy and delicious.
Man I hate watching people eat good food in movies, I
always get jealous.

ESURIO
You're not thinking about leaving,
though.

It's not a question, because he doesn't want it to be.

JAQUESS
If I don't leave sooner, they'll
kick me out later.

Esurio nods, not to agree, but because he doesn't know
what to say.

JAQUESS
I'm not gonna ask you to come with
me.

ESURIO
Good. I like it here.

If she did, he would. But she has to actually ask.
They're both cowards at this.

ESURIO
Do you think you'll come back?

JAQUESS
I don't think I'll survive.

ESURIO
Right. Makes sense. Um... what do
you think will kill you?

JAQUESS
Gonna look for the Diviner. Like
Dequinn told me to to begin with. If
he really exists, a guy who knows
everything will come in handy for
finding a group that can't be found.

Esurio's losing it a little bit, knowing she has a plan.

JAQUESS
I imagine I'll freeze or starve or
fall to my death climbing a
mountain. Even if he's really up
there, the Weirds will prolly kill
me when I attack them.

ESURIO
Fuck.

Jaquess shrugs.

She takes some meat.

Doesn't eat it. Neither of them do now.

JAQUESS
I ask you a question?

ESURIO

Yeah.

Beat.

JAQUESS

Tyrenta killed... everyone to you.
All that counted.

Beat.

ESURIO

Yeah.

She doesn't know how to ask what she wants to ask. Might not even know what it is.

JAQUESS

These people can't keep you safe.
They can't even keep themselves
safe.

ESURIO

Chief's a big guy.

Jaquess looks at him. He nods in acknowledgement.

ESURIO

Probably not, though, yeah.

JAQUESS

So you're just gonna let it happen
again?

ESURIO

Let what happen again?

Jaquess grunts. Thinks about using tact, then decides to just go for it.

JAQUESS

Let all you're close to die.

Esurio looks at her.

He's starting to understand her a little better, just as he's about to lose her.

ESURIO

I don't think I can stop it, you
know? We aren't all... you.

He leans back, looks at the fire.

ESURIO

If I could fight like you, maybe I'd
(MORE)

ESURIO (CONT'D)
 feel different. But I can't, so I
 just take what I can get, and enjoy
 it while I can.

Jaquess tears up. Doesn't move otherwise.

JAQUESS
 Bullshit. You don't even try.

Esurio laughs despite himself.

ESURIO
 I'm trying as hard as I can, all the
 time. I'm exhausted from trying so
 much.

He looks at her.

ESURIO
 I just don't try to do the things I
 can't do.

Jaquess stares at him for a beat. She's angry.

Esurio knows she is, but for once he lets her be angry
 without trying to pacify her.

He knows this is about her, not about him.

Jaquess stands up.

Walks into her hut.

Esuro sits at the fire alone.

CUT TO:

43 EXT. JAQUESS'S HUT - MORNING

43

Esurio and the Chief stand outside Jaquess's hut. The
 curtains are gone, along with anything valuable that she
 could carry.

Esuro's tearing up.

ESURIO
 I guess she kinda did say goodbye.

The Chief grunts.

CHIEF
 Why leave the wagon? It broke?

ESURIO
 Riding wagons don't do much good
 (MORE)

ESURIO (CONT'D)
 climbing mountains. She knew we'd
 get more use out of it.

Chief grunts.

ESURIO
 Put it towards her tab?

CHIEF
 Ain't no tab.

Esurio gives him a look.

CHIEF
 Paid it off years ago. Afore she
 left.

Esurio is angry.

ESURIO
 Then why-

CHIEF
 Hafta ask her.

Chief walks away.

Esurio doesn't.

44 EXT. EDGE OF THE FOREST - DAY

44

Jaquess emerges from the forest and looks at the rocky hills ahead of her.

She pulls a compass out of her pocket, checks it. She's headed west.

Puts the compass away.

Keeps walking.

IMPORTANT: Stick with the mournful music here. This is not the outset of an epic journey, this is self-destructive spiraling.

45 EXT. BARREN PLAINS - DAY

45

A couple of scavengers hike through the plains - RIKER is a dude with a mohawk and goggles, wielding a shovel that's been ground to a razor edge, and MARIA is a woman with a backpack loaded with so much shit, it's taller than she is.

Maria sees a column of smoke in the distance. Not big; most likely a campfire.

She gestures to Riker, points it out.

Riker swears under his breath.

RIKER
Bandits.

MARIA
Could be. Could just be folk.

RIKER
Ehh. Rather not take the chance.

MARIA
Me neither, just saying fact. I vote
we hoof it, but we can hide if you'd
rather.

RIKER
Nah. If they're local, hiding's just
waiting for nothing. We hoof it, we
can be outta here in a few days.

MARIA
Fairanuff. Still means no fires.

RIKER
Not a-day. Nestle in a nook, we can
spare the light at night.

MARIA
("I agree.")
Hey.

She starts walking, a little faster now. Riker stares at
the smoke a beat longer, then follows.

46 EXT. NESTLED IN A NOOK - NIGHT

46

Riker and Maria have set up camp in a cleft in some hills;
they're hidden pretty well, but it means they wouldn't be
able to see anyone coming, either.

They have two tents, both leather and rawhide and clearly
made with an emphasis on function over form.

Maria sits at a small campfire, warms her hands. Riker
isn't here at the moment.

A long beat.

Maria hears something, looks off to one side.

Just the wind, she guesses.

When she looks back, three Weirds are sitting at the fire
with her - WOLF, OX, and DOG.

Maria freezes.

MARIA

Ahoy.

They don't respond.

MARIA

I keep the Weirding Ways. You'll
have no trouble from me.

WOLF

We know this. It has no secrets from
us.

Maria's breathing gets faster.

OX

There is no fear for it. Only a
task.

WOLF

Kill the girl-thing.

MARIA

What girl?

DOG

It will have no questions.

OX

It will obey.

WOLF

It will kill the girl-thing.

MARIA

I will. I swear it.

Riker emerges from one of the tents, and the Weirds are gone.

Maria gasps in fear, almost cries.

RIKER

Everything okay?

MARIA

Fine. Bad dream.

Riker grunts.

RIKER

Don't fall asleep at the fire. Put
it out if you're done.

He goes back into his tent.

47 **EXT. BARREN PLAINS - DAY**

47

Maria and Riker hoof it across the plains.

Riker stops. Stares at something in the distance.

MARIA
What is it?

RIKER
Not sure.

It's Jaquess, lying on the ground.

RIKER
Looks like a person. Short, wearing
armor.

MARIA
What are they doing?

Maria steps forward and looks, but doesn't see Jaquess.

RIKER
Not moving. There.

He points, and she sees.

And she knows what she's supposed to do. She grimaces.

RIKER
I think he might be dead.

MARIA
She's not.

Riker gives her a look.

48 **INT. RIKER'S TENT - DAY**

48

A large leather tent, almost tall enough for Riker to stand up comfortably in.

Jaquess lies on the floor, buried in more leathers. She's unconscious, pale, blistered by the sun, dry as a bone.

Riker kneels next to her, examining her.

RIKER
She'll pull through or she won't.
All we can do is water her.

MARIA
Armor was good stelium, more'n good
knives. Makes no sense why she was
out here alone.

RIKER
Caravan guard got cut loose?

MARIA
If so, 'tweren't on good terms.
Bodes poorly for us if she wakes.
But nah, she's too small. Guard
needs to be scary more'n good, if
she's even that.

RIKER
Don't get stelium if you aren't
good.

MARIA
Fairanuff. Still no idea awhere she
comes from. Better to leave her.
Maybe give her a mercy.

Riker scowls at Maria.

RIKER
That ain't my way, and it ain't our
way.

MARIA
Don't hafta tell me. But-

RIKER
But nothing. We'll wait a day or
two, see which way she's turning. No
talk of mercy 'til then.

Maria takes a deep breath.

MARIA
Fairanuff.

49 EXT. MARIA AND RIKER'S CAMP - DAY

49

Maria cooks something flat and white in a simple solar oven - basically just aluminum foil wrapped around a cardboard box.

Riker climbs out of his tent. Maria grunts at him.

MARIA
Oven's not doing too good here. Need
sunlight or fire.

RIKER
So food sucks.

MARIA
This girl's weight grows still. Even
stelium ain't worth everything.

RIKER
Aye. I'll take a peeky, maybe we can
risk a fire.

MARIA
That's not what I meant.

Riker glares at her.

He knows the answer to his question, but he wants to make
her answer it:

RIKER
What did you mean, then?

Maria CLICKS her tongue at him, apparently a rude gesture.

50 INT. RIKER'S TENT - NIGHT

50

Jaquess wakes up. She doesn't know where she is or how she
got there. Maria is sitting at her feet, staring at her.

Jaquess scrambles back to a seated position; she's unarmed
and unarmored, just wearing a simple canvas shift.

MARIA
Ahoy.

JAQUESS
Who are you? Where am I?

MARIA
I'll keep my name, nofense, but
you're in the barrens. Safe as one
can be, which ain't much here.

Jaquess looks around the tent.

JAQUESS
Where are my things?

MARIA
Mosta taken. Payment for saving your
life.

JAQUESS
No deal. Give it back.

Maria pulls a long, curved knife from a hidden sheath.

MARIA
Can do, if you truly wish.

Jaquess stares at the knife. It's very intricate, covered
in patterns and runes.

JAQUESS
 Nay. My life worth more'n most, your
 trade is fair.

MARIA
 Why come your life worth so much?

Jaquess looks Maria in the eyes.

JAQUESS
 You want to claim it, you can try.
 Wouldn't be the first.

Maria's breathing gets ragged, shaky.

JAQUESS
 Where are they? Point me at them,
 they won't bother you no more.

Maria barks a laugh, growing more afraid by the moment.

JAQUESS
 Why you think they want me dead? I
 scare 'em.

MARIA
 Weirds don't fear.

JAQUESS
 They're deep, but they ain't wide.
 Hoof it real quick, don't light no
 fires at night, like as not they
 won't find you.

Maria spits.

MARIA
 I have no secrets from them.

JAQUESS
 Better kill me then. Or hope
 otherways.

Maria considers her options.

Riker suddenly climbs in the tent; Maria holds the knife
 against her stomach, hiding it from him.

RIKER
 Heard talk. Glad you're 'wake. We
 needta talk.

51 EXT. OUTSIDE MARIA AND RIKER'S CAMP - NIGHT

51

The full moon illuminates the wastes well enough. Riker
 stands with Jaquess, who's wrapped in some of the tent's
 leathers.

RIKER

Fire's thataway, and getting closer. Maria and me'll be leaving in the morning, heading otherways. If you can hoof it you can come with, but if not, your stelium bought you the tent and leathers. 'Sa good spot to hide, and you might get lucky.

JAQUESS

I can hoof it, but I'm going to the mountains.

Riker looks perpendicular to where he had been looking, towards the mountains.

RIKER

Ain't much there, but suit yourself. You leave me the tent, I'll give you some furs astead.

JAQUESS

Why?

Riker looks at her.

JAQUESS

Coulda killed me easy, wouldn't evena had to do it to do it. Leave me, take my shit, you're home free.

RIKER

Not our way.

Jaquess looks down at the camp.

RIKER

Not my way and nor hers.

JAQUESS

I'll want a sword, too. One of the good ones.

Riker grunts.

JAQUESS

Leaving me without it's good as leaving me to die.

RIKER

Maybe so.

52 EXT. MARIA AND RIKER'S CAMP - DAWN

52

Maria and Riker have just about finished packing up the rest of their stuff. Jaquess has a pack on her shoulders bundled with furs, leathers, and one good steel sword.

RIKER
Unsafe land. Bandits, cannibals.

JAQUESS
Weirds?

RIKER
Neh. None seen them in months.

Jaquess looks at Maria. Maria looks away.

RIKER
'Slong as you don't light no fires
at day, you're like as not safe.

JAQUESS
I know how to care for me.

MARIA
Clearly not, or we'd notta found
you, hey?

Jaquess grunts.

Riker and Maria stare her down a beat longer, then they
start walking away.

RIKER
Good luck.

Jaquess watches them go.

53 EXT. BARREN PLAINS - DAY 53

Jaquess hikes the plains.

54 EXT. FOOTHILLS - DAY 54

Jaquess makes her way through increasingly rough terrain.

55 EXT. MOUNTAIN - DAY 55

Jaquess climbs the mountain. It's rough going, some real
bouldering and climbing necessary. She's wearing the furs,
now.

56 EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY 56

The mountain stands tall over an endless sea of clouds.
One or two more peaks are visible in the distance, but
otherwise there's nothing but howling wind.

No music here, or at all for the rest of the movie. None.
Don't be a coward.

An old man, maybe 70, sits in meditation, looking out over the clouds. He's shirtless, with homemade wool pants, a hairy back, and a long beard.

This is the DIVINER.

Jaquess crests the mountain behind him.

Stops.

Stares at him.

He doesn't notice her.

Jaquess drops to her knees - either in exhaustion or reverence, it's hard to tell.

The Diviner hears that - he turns and sees her.

They look at each other.

57 INT. THE CABIN - DAY

57

The cabin has been repurposed from an old radio installation. The tower is long gone, and plenty of holes have needed to be patched, but the bulk of the structure is intact.

The decorations are eclectic; a photo of an old bridge, a hanging tapestry, a lace doily hanging on the wall behind a decorative sword.

The furniture is all either sturdy stuff that will last forever, or pieces of junk a single moth away from complete disintegration, with no exceptions.

Jaquess sits on one of the latter examples; the Diviner sits across from her on a sturdy stool.

JAQUESS

I guess you know why I'm here.

DIVINER

Pretend I don't.

Jaquess nods.

JAQUESS

I...

She considers.

JAQUESS

How many questions do I get?

DIVINER

Mm. A lot of questions you want to ask, but you don't know which are important.

Jaquess nods.

DIVINER

Do yourself a favor. Don't ask them until you know. Don't ask anything. If you made the trek here, you're not in a rush. There's plenty of time.

Jaquess takes a breath, about to object... but yields.

This guy's the Diviner, he knows better than she does, right?

JAQUESS

Okay. Um, yes, sir.

The Diviner cracks a light smile.

DIVINER

You had a long journey. Get some rest.

He nods to the sofa Jaquess is sitting on, and that's all she needs; she lies.

Rolls over to face the back of the sofa, hiding her face.

She has tears in her eyes.

58 EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

58

Jaquess sits next to the Diviner. The Diviner is deep in meditation; Jaquess is trying to meditate, but finds it hard to focus.

She wants to say something, but doesn't want to bother him.

She thinks about saying it anyway.

Decides against it.

She sighs. Fidgets.

She stands.

DIVINER

It was hard for me at first, too.

She jumps a bit, looks at him; his eyes are still closed.

JAQUESS
Sorry, I just-

DIVINER
I'm just letting you know. It took
me years before I could calm my mind
down.

JAQUESS
Right.

She hesitates. Is he giving her permission to leave, or
encouraging her to stay?

DIVINER
It's hard sometimes when people meet
me. They're not used to a complete
lack of judgement.

He lets out a slow breath, then opens his eyes and looks
at her.

DIVINER
You can do whatever you want, and I
will not think more of you or less
of you.

JAQUESS
'Kay, but... I don't know what I'm
supposed to do.

The Diviner chuckles.

Guffaws.

And then settles back into meditation.

Jaquess doesn't know what the fuck to do with that.

She stands facing him.

59 EXT. THE CABIN - NIGHT

59

The Diviner cooks potatoes along with some stringy green
vegetables in a frying pan over a small campfire.

Jaquess's voice rings out from inside.

JAQUESS (O.S.)
I don't know how to make it make
water!

DIVINER
(shouting back)
Turn the lever to the left!

He never turns away from his vegetables.

He HUMS to himself.

Jaquess comes out with a kettle of water.

JAQUESS

I got it.

DIVINER

Excellent. Just set it on the coals,
there.

She obeys.

Sits next to him.

JAQUESS

I'm not a great cook, but I know how
it's done, if you want me to cook
for you sometime.

DIVINER

I appreciate that, thank you.

They sit in silence, the only sound is the SIZZLING of the
vegetables.

JAQUESS

I would like to know when it will be
ready.

The Diviner smiles.

DIVINER

You've been very diligent about not
asking questions, but you didn't
need to take me so literally.

JAQUESS

Oh. I can... ask questions?

DIVINER

You can ask me anything you want.

JAQUESS

What if I ask the wrong question?

DIVINER

It wouldn't bother me.

Jaquess thinks about that.

DIVINER

And dinner'll be ready as soon as
the pot's boiling.

60 INT. THE CABIN - DAY**60**

Jaquess sweeps the floor while the Diviner dusts the sills.

Jaquess pauses.

JAQUESS
I have a question.

The Diviner doesn't stop.

DIVINER
Go ahead.

JAQUESS
My brother's dead, right? Like,
really dead?

The Diviner stops.

Puts his duster down.

Faces Jaquess.

Jaquess stares at him, holding back her emotions behind a blank mask.

The Diviner walks over to her.

Puts his hands on her shoulders.

Jaquess sniffles.

The Diviner embraces her.

Jaquess bursts into sobs, cries in his shoulder.

The Diviner doesn't say anything, just pats her back gently.

61 EXT. TERRACE FARM - MORNING**61**

A gentle slope a little lower on the mountain has been terraced and turned into a potato farm.

The Diviner guides Jaquess, showing her how to harvest the potatoes.

DIVINER
I like them big, so I wait until the
leaves on top are mostly dead, a
little bit of green left. Here-

He crouches down, plays with some mostly-dead leaves.

DIVINER
Like this.

JAQUESS
Okay.

DIVINER
I loosen the soil a bit with with my
pitchfork, but then I just go in
with my fingers, real gentle.

He demonstrates; the soil is soft and loose, and he easily
digs around until he unearths a small potato.

JAQUESS
Like this?

She digs around, finds a larger one.

DIVINER
Ooh, that's a good one. Good job.

They both dig around in the soil, gathering potatoes.

Jaquess stops.

JAQUESS
I have another question.

The Diviner doesn't stop.

DIVINER
Go ahead.

Jaquess goes back to digging.

JAQUESS
How do I kill a Weird?

DIVINER
Hmm.

Jaquess stops again.

JAQUESS
You know, right?

DIVINER
I know how to kill a Weird, yes.

JAQUESS
So tell me!

DIVINER
I also know what you'll do with that
information.

JAQUESS
I'll kill the Weirds.

DIVINER
Mmhmm.

JAQUESS
Are you saying it's bad for me to
kill Weirds?

Diviner bobbles his head. "Hard to say."

JAQUESS
Weirds are evil, though. Like...
true evil.

DIVINER
True enough.

JAQUESS
So shouldn't it be good for me to
kill them?

DIVINER
It's good for them to die.

JAQUESS
How will they die if I don't kill
'em?

The Diviner stops. He's got a nice little pile of potatoes
now.

DIVINER
This is enough for now. Put these in
that basket, please?

He gestures to a basket nearby.

Jaquess obeys, but doesn't relent.

JAQUESS
Tell me how to kill them.

DIVINER
I will. If you insist, I will.

He stands.

DIVINER
But there are some other things I
have to teach you, first.

Jaquess finishes putting the potatoes in the basket.

JAQUESS
I killed one once before, so you can
just tell me.

DIVINER
If you killed one once before, why
do you need me to tell you?

He starts back. Jaquess follows.

JAQUESS
It was an accident, I'm not sure how
I did it.

He says nothing, which just annoys Jaquess even more.

62 INT. THE DOJO - DAY

62

A large, circular room with a soft dirt floor.

It's not clear what this room used to be, but it's been repurposed as a training area. Some wooden weapons sit on a rack along the wall, along with some metal ones - Jaquess's sword with them.

The Diviner and Jaquess stand facing each other in the center of the room.

DIVINER
Close your eyes.

Jaquess obeys.

DIVINER
Stand up straight. Raise your head,
lower your tailbone.

She obeys.

The Diviner paces around her.

DIVINER
Tongue on the roof of your mouth,
breathe through your nose. Slow
breaths, to your stomach. Keep your
shoulders lowered.

Jaquess tries to obey, but apparently does something wrong.

DIVINER
You're still raising your shoulders.
Give me your hand.

He takes her right hand, places it on her left trapezius.

(The muscle that goes from your neck to your shoulder, if you want to follow along. This is all real kung fu.)

DIVINER

Feel this muscle? Raise your left arm. Feel it go up? We want it to stay down and relaxed.

Jaquess relaxes, apparently succeeds this time.

DIVINER

Good. Now bend your knees - not too much, just make sure your thighs are doing any work.

He continues pacing around her. Nods.

DIVINER

That'll do for now. Hold this posture for an hour or two - as long as you can, really.

Jaquess opens her eyes.

JAQUESS

Fucking what?

DIVINER

Eyes shut.

Jaquess closes her eyes.

JAQUESS

This isn't gonna help me kill Weirds.

DIVINER

You're free to leave whenever you want. There's nothing holding you here.

JAQUESS

Chill, dude. I'm whining.

The Diviner smirks.

DIVINER

Why do you want to kill the Weirds?

JAQUESS

They killed my brother.

DIVINER

So it's revenge?

JAQUESS

I thought you knew everything.

DIVINER
Who told you that?

Jaquess opens her eyes again. Looks at him.

DIVINER
Eyes shut.

She does not obey.

JAQUESS
Diviner's supposed to know
everything. That's what the Diviner
is.

DIVINER
When did I claim to be the Diviner?

Jaquess is confused, uneasy, maybe angry.

JAQUESS
You can teach me how to kill Weirds,
though?

The Diviner stops pacing right in front of her.
Beat.

DIVINER
I can teach you much more than that.

JAQUESS
That's all I want.

The Diviner leans in. Sizes her up.
Stands up straight.

DIVINER
I believe you.

He leaves.

JAQUESS
Wait, what are...

She looks around.

63 INT. THE CABIN - SUNSET

63

The Diviner drinks some tea, reads an old encyclopedia.
He looks out the window, sees the day ending.
He looks around.

64 INT. THE DOJO - NIGHT**64**

Jaquess stands in the position the Diviner told her to hold. Her legs are shaking; it's not a particularly difficult position at first, but when you've been doing it for hours, it gets rough.

The Diviner walks in, sees her.

Nods approval.

DIVINER

Silver holds them in place. Then you take their mask off. You need to do both.

Jaquess's eyes shoot open.

JAQUESS

Ohhh! OH!

She shakes her legs out, stretches out of the posture, suddenly full of energy again.

DIVINER

Harder thing is finding them.

Jaquess's energy fades again.

JAQUESS

How do I... do you know how-a find them?

The Diviner leaves; Jaquess follows.

65 INT. THE CABIN - DAY**65**

Jaquess and the Diviner eat a simple breakfast of boiled grains.

JAQUESS

The tricky thing isn't getting to them, it's making them thinka you as safe. Then they just walk right up easy.

DIVINER

I believe you. But let's talk about something else?

JAQUESS

Yeah, yeah. Just-

DIVINER

Why do you want to kill them? As much as you do?

JAQUESS
Psh. You're the Diviner.

DIVINER
And I know everything, right. Why
would I ask a question I already
know the answer to?

Jaquess sighs, swears under her breath.

JAQUESS
So what, you dunno? There ain't no
Diviner for real?

DIVINER
Are you going to answer any of my
questions?

Jaquess chews on her tongue as she stares at him.

JAQUESS
They killed my brother. Dequinn.

She pauses.

JAQUESS
That's not enough for you, though,
hey?

Diviner doesn't react at all.

JAQUESS
I dunno. I wanted to save him, afore
I knowed he was dead. Now, I ain't
thoughta it too much. Revenge, I
guess.

DIVINER
Inertia.

JAQUESS
Probably. What's that?

DIVINER
I suggest you think about it. Think
about it a lot. Don't hide from it.

Jaquess is offended.

JAQUESS
I don't hide from shit, shit hides
from me. What did I say, make you
think I'm hiding?

DIVINER
Nothing. Just wanted to make sure.

Beat.

Jaquess plays with her food.

JAQUESS
If I don't, though... if I don't
hunt'm, I mean. What do I do?

DIVINER
I suggest you think about that, too.

66 EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

66

The Diviner meditates alone.

And then a Weird is standing next to him. Not just any
Weird: it's Lion.

DIVINER
Mm. Now is not a good time.

LION
Now is the only time.

Lion sits next him.

DIVINER
There's a girl here who doesn't like
your kind.

LION
We know this thing.

DIVINER
And not like I don't like your kind.

LION
(frustrated?)
We know the girl-thing.

DIVINER
Ah.

Beat.

DIVINER
What do you hope is going to happen
here?

LION
Lucubration.

(No, I don't expect you to know what that word means. But
hey, if you do, more power to you.)

DIVINER
Might be hard if she gets ahold of
any silver. You really killed her
brother?

LION
Death is only an old door.

DIVINER
I don't want anyone opening that
particular door. Not here.

Lion turns to look at him.

And then it's gone.

67 INT. THE CABIN - DAY

67

The Diviner and Jaquess eat at the table. Jaquess has a
book open in front of her, but she's only looking at the
pictures.

The Diviner's face is clouded.

DIVINER
I'm not one for keeping secrets. Too
heavy a weight.

Jaquess doesn't look up.

JAQUESS
You only spoke sideways since I
met you.

DIVINER
That's not true. I've spoken over
you sometimes, it's true, but only
to encourage you to stand taller.

Jaquess looks up at him.

JAQUESS
What's the secret, then?

DIVINER
I'm worried you aren't tall enough
for this one. Not yet.

Jaquess closes the book. Sits up straight.

JAQUESS
Speak tall then, see if I can reach.

DIVINER
Sometimes we have a right to do bad
things.

JAQUESS
Sure. Like killin' a killer.

DIVINER
Exactly like that.

JAQUESS
'Cept that ain't bad anymore, yeah
or nah?

DIVINER
Mm. Maybe. Maybe sometimes it is.

JAQUESS
Like if they're sorry? I say
fairanuff, but-

DIVINER
Not like that. You're trying too
hard to understand. Don't pull the
truth down, stretch yourself higher.

Jaquess grimaces. Fairanuff.

DIVINER
Sometimes doing a small good thing
causes a big bad thing. Sometimes
doing a small bad thing causes a big
good thing. Ken?

JAQUESS
([yes])
Hey.

DIVINER
Which one's worse? To do a bad thing
yourself that causes a great good,
or to do a good thing yourself that
causes a great evil?

Jaquess considers.

JAQUESS
I have to choose one?

DIVINER
Sometimes.

Jaquess stands. Paces.

JAQUESS
Can you gimme a whatif?

DIVINER
If I gave you three different
what-ifs, you might give me three
(MORE)

DIVINER (CONT'D)
 different answers. And none of them
 would be what I'm looking for,
 anyway.

JAQUESS
 But... without...

She stops, faces the Diviner.

JAQUESS
 I dunno there is one answer. It's
 always gonna depend, hey? How big,
 how small, how much of it's me?

DIVINER
 That's part of what I'm looking for.

He stands. Puts a hand on her shoulder.

DIVINER
 Think about that. Hard. It's
 important.

Jaquess nods.

68 INT. CABIN BEDROOM - NIGHT

68

Jaquess sleeps on the top bunk of a rusty old bunkbed, the
 Diviner on the bottom bunk.

The Lion stands in the corner of the room, staring at
 them.

Jaquess sleeps restlessly. She tosses and turns, mumbles
 in her sleep.

Lion drifts closer to her, hovering rather than walking.

They reach out one finger - a normal human finger, it's
 worth nothing - and touch Jaquess on her forehead.

MATCH CUT TO:

69 INT. CABIN BEDROOM - DAY

69

Jaquess shoots straight up, only now, it's morning, and
 Lion is gone.

She's sweaty, panting.

The Diviner yawns, sits up.

DIVINER
 Morning.

Jaquess leaps down off the bunk into a crouch. Predatory.

Diviner is immediately wide awake.

DIVINER

Jaquess-

Jaquess hisses.

JAQUESS

Shh!

She reaches into her sleeve and pulls out a long silver spike.

DIVINER

Where did you- no, Jaquess, wait-

She prowls out of the room, fast and quiet like a cat.

70 INT. THE CABIN - DAY [CONTINUOUS]

70

Lion sits at the table, facing the door Jaquess exits.

A lot of shit happens at once:

- Jaquess screams and charges Lion;
- Lion stands, its robe billowing out like an octopus trying to make itself look big;
- The Diviner runs out behind Jaquess just too late to catch her;
- Jaquess dives over the table, silver spike held in front of her.

Lion spins, narrowly avoiding the spike, and Jaquess tucks into a roll and slashes with the spike as she lands, cutting off a long strip of Lion's robe.

DIVINER

Jaquess, stop!

But she doesn't stop. She charges again, but this time Lion isn't there, they're on the other side of the room somehow.

Jaquess spins and tosses the stake; it goes straight through Lion's eye and pins them to the cupboards behind them.

Lion SCREECHES and flails; they try to grasp the spike to yank it out, but it's buried too deep.

Jaquess leaps towards Lion, but the Diviner lunges between them and tosses her aside with some of the kung fu moves he was teaching her earlier.

DIVINER

I said stop!

JAQUESS
I'm going to kill it!

She charges the Diviner now, but he deflects every punch and kick. She tries to slip past him, but he trips her and somehow forces her to fall backwards.

She rolls backwards to her feet, but the Diviner isn't only fighting defensively; he charges her this time.

CUT TO:

71 EXT. THE CABIN - DAY [CONTINUOUS]

71

Jaquess flies out the front door and hits the ground in a roll.

By the time she's back on her feet, the Diviner is outside with the door shut behind him.

Jaquess is furious, but she isn't just furious - she's confused, sad. She feels betrayed.

JAQUESS
Whya you protecting it? You know
what it is!

DIVINER
Better than you, hard as that is to
believe!

Jaquess paces slowly, looks for an angle to attack. Looks for an excuse not to.

JAQUESS
Then why?

DIVINER
Will you wait here while I make sure
they're secure? That they won't
escape?

Jaquess hesitates. The fuck is his game?

The Diviner sees her hesitation, doesn't wait longer; he goes inside.

The screeching quiets down a bit, but doesn't stop.

Jaquess takes a step forward then stops.

She waits.

Then she walks away.

72 EXT. MOUNTAINTOP - DAY

72

Jaquess sits, legs crossed, looking out over a sea of clouds. You can't hear the screeching here, or maybe it did stop after all.

The Diviner walks up behind her.

DIVINER
They aren't going to go anywhere fast. Thank you for trusting me.

JAQUESS
Yeah, well.

The Diviner sits next to her.

They sit in silence for a beat.

JAQUESS
You said it was good to kill Weirds, hey?

DIVINER
I did. But there's killing, and there's killing.

Jaquess chews on her tongue. She does get that, but she thinks this is the right kind of killing.

JAQUESS
This is the thing you talked about. Small good and big bad.

DIVINER
This is the thing.

Jaquess gets to her feet.

JAQUESS
This whatif is easy. I'ma kill it.

The Diviner gets to his feet, too, and moves to cut her off.

DIVINER
Please think before you-

Jaquess squares up.

JAQUESS
Or what? You gonna fight me again? I fought older than you, yeah, and younger too. I didn't want to hurt you before, but we fight again-

The Diviner shakes his head, solemn.

DIVINER
You couldn't lay a finger on me.

JAQUESS
You wanna find out?

The Diviner shakes his head and steps aside.

DIVINER
No.

Jaquess freezes.

JAQUESS
Real? You'na let me go?

The Diviner nods.

JAQUESS
To kill them?

DIVINER
But I hope you won't.

Jaquess looks at the Diviner.

DIVINER
You can take your time. If you
decide to kill them in an hour, I
still won't stop you.

Jaquess considers.

Jaquess turns around and sits back down.

JAQUESS
You earned this much. Not much more,
but this much, yeah.

The Diviner closes his eyes. Sighs, grateful.

He sits next to her.

JAQUESS
I know why you're doing this,
y'know. Sat through this convo
plenty.

DIVINER
Why don't you tell me what you think
I'm going to say, then.

Jaquess looks at him, suddenly less confident.

JAQUESS
I dunno. "Killing is bad."

DIVINER

Sure.

JAQUESS

"No take-backs."

DIVINER

What would I mean by that?

JAQUESS

Like... once someone's dead, you can't un-kill them. It's forever.

The Diviner considers.

DIVINER

I understand where it's coming from, but that doesn't sound like something I'd say.

JAQUESS

It doesn't?

DIVINER

It's true, of course. Technically. But the intention behind it feels short-sighted. "It's forever." Everything is forever.

JAQUESS

Well, but, you stab a guy, and he can still heal. You cut a guy's head off, he don't get better.

DIVINER

Or you don't cut his head off, and a hundred years from now you're both dead anyway.

Jaquess rolls her eyes; she's seen this approach too: argue insane positions to make it clear how insane she's being.

JAQUESS

That ain't the same, and I know it.

DIVINER

Isn't it?

JAQUESS

No. One version, guy gets to spend the rest of his life. Other version he don't.

DIVINER

And what's different because of it?

JAQUESS

I dunno! The guy's family is... less sad? Probably has more family, more friends. Maybe more enemies. It's different.

DIVINER

A thousand years, then. A thousand years from now, what's different?

JAQUESS

I don't know anything last a thousand years. Rocks, probably.

DIVINER

So?

Jaquess considers.

GROANS.

JAQUESS

You got a point?

DIVINER

Not yet. Just asking questions.

Jaquess scoffs.

JAQUESS

You got a point. You're not just saying "killing don't matter, we all die anyway."

DIVINER

I'm not just saying that, you're right.

Jaquess gives him a look. "What the fuck is happening? Who are you?"

DIVINER

Say you don't chop that guy's head off. Does that mean you're not gonna kill anyone ever again?

JAQUESS

Course no. But-

DIVINER

Or if you do kill him, that you'll never spare anyone else?

JAQUESS

You're just saying shit now, it's-

DIVINER

Do you know what your problem is, Jaquess? The one problem that's been hounding you for as long as you can remember?

Jaquess isn't sure whether she should be offended or interested, so she's a little both.

JAQUESS

Tell it.

DIVINER

You think that you can reach a point where you aren't terrified and miserable anymore.

Jaquess freezes.

Just about every negative emotion that exists flashes in her eyes - sadness, rage, terror, despair - but the rest of her face is impassive.

She wants to speak, wants to ask questions, but even more than that, she desperately wants the Diviner not to continue speaking. Not to tell her she's going to be scared and lonely forever.

The damage is done, obviously. She already knows it's true. But still she'll try to wriggle her way out of it.

JAQUESS

You're lying. I met plenty happy people. Not very happy, hey, but-

The Diviner nods, which is maybe the worst thing he could've done.

JAQUESS

Don't... can't that happen to me, too?

The Diviner puts a hand on her shoulder. There's kindness in his eyes, but all she can see is the sorrow that's there, too.

DIVINER

No. No, Jaquess. Peace doesn't happen to anyone.

JAQUESS

But-

DIVINER

Peace is not a goal to be achieved. Peace is a momentary choice. Peace is always fleeting.

JAQUESS
So can't I choose it, then? At least
sometimes?

The Diviner smiles.

DIVINER
You can choose it every time.

Jaquess doesn't understand. She's terrified and hopeful
and now she's crying.

DIVINER
But you have to choose it. Every
time.

JAQUESS
How?

DIVINER
It can be hard, sometimes. But I
find the hardest part is how often I
don't want to choose it. Choosing
revenge, or despair, or hatred - it
feels so good, but it also feels so,
so terrible.

Jaquess looks back at the house, her fear renewed.

JAQUESS
If I kill them, I can never be
happy?

DIVINER
Not at all, Jacquess. The opposite.
What I'm trying to tell you is just
the opposite.

Okay, nope, too confused to be afraid.

JAQUESS
I have to kill them to be happy?

DIVINER
If you kill them, or if you don't,
you'll feel something. And then
later you'll make another decision
that will determine how you feel.
Maybe that decision will be whether
or not you dwell on this one. Maybe
it will be whether or not you undo
this one.

JAQUESS
Can't undo killing.

DIVINER
You can undo sparing them, though.

Jaquess considers.

JAQUESS
So I should spare them, because
that's-

The Diviner shakes his head.

DIVINER
You still think I'm trying to tell
you what to do. I'm trying to tell
you why you should do whatever you
do. Not just this, but anything.

He sighs, looks out at the clouds.

DIVINER
I won't judge you, good or bad,
whichever you choose, or whyever you
choose it. But I hope you'll think
about this for a while before you
make your choice.

Jaquess looks at the clouds, too.

JAQUESS
How long do I have?

DIVINER
As long as you take.

JAQUESS
What if I take forever?

DIVINER
Why do you think I came up here, all
alone on top of a mountain?

Jaquess thinks about that.

Jaquess thinks about all of that.

Slow pan out over a minute or two.

ROLL CREDITS as you continue to pan out, neither of them
moving.

If you're feeling cheeky, pan out for another minute or
two after the credits are finished.

And then, finally:

FADE OUT.