

THE GARDEN AGE

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Just beyond the cricket city of WOODFALL...

**EXT. GRASS FOREST - MORNING**

Among the dew-slicked blades of grass, sits MARNIE (16, CRICKET, tall, nerdy and feisty!). She examines various pieces of HUMAN TRASH -- a PENNY, a THUMB TACK, a POTATO CHIP and a WAD OF GUM.

Marnie pokes at the gum, then takes out a NOTEBOOK made of leaves and writes:

MARNIE

(writing)

"Very... adhesive."

(she takes a big sniff)

And smells like grapes! Definitely a keeper.

She snaps the book shut, satisfied.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

I could use it to fortify Woodfall's defenses and cover up the cattlepillar manure smell! Another win, win for me, Marnie!

She squints down at the wad of gum.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Now... how to get it back?

Marnie digs her hands into the gum and tries to lift it. It's really stuck to the ground. As she pulls, the dirt around it starts to crack.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

<STRAINING EFFORTS> Just... a little bit... more!

The dirt gives way, and Marnie tumbles backwards into an unseen ditch.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Ack! <IMPACT>

As Marnie regains her composure she realizes some of the gum got in her hair.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Oh, come on, I just washed my hair!

She starts pulling the gum out -- but stops suddenly, sniffing the air.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

That's not grape...

Marnie's gaze crosses the ditch, focusing on a small pool of rainbow liquid - GASOLINE. Her eyes round in awe.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

(hushed wonder)

It can't be...!

She quickly flips open her notebook to a page detailing the liquid. The handwriting is different from Marnie's -- more mature.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

(reading)

"Rainbow liquid."

She sniffs again and winces.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Putrid smell.

(beat, then realizing)

This is from Mom's research.

There's no doubt about it -- this

is the blood of the Great Devourer.

But Marnie's look of wonder is suddenly washed over with fear. She hurriedly jots down a few notes, then pulls out her CANTEEN and fills it with a bit of the gasoline.

Then a HORN sounds in the distance --

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Sap! I'm late!

She slams the book shut and runs off.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

I'll be back for you!!

[TITLES]

**EXT. WOODFALL - CASTLE GRILL DAE - LATER**

The sun shines over CASTLE GRILL DAE (made out of an old upside down flower pot), and its surrounding cricket town of WOODFALL. The buildings are made of mud and leaves, and massive pieces of FIREWOOD enclose the area like a valley.



MARNIE

Yeah, well, maybe I don't want to have everyone gawking at me during some stupid festival, alright?!

ROOT (O.S.)

Some stupid festival?

Ailith and Hilda part to reveal Marnie's older brother ROOT (27, bulky, stern and brooding) making his way towards them. \*

MARNIE

(deflated)

Sap.

ROOT

This stupid festival is a celebration of you, Marnie. Today you turn 16 and become a warrior of Clan Gryll Dae. \*

Marnie sulks as she gets lectured. It's clear she's used to it. \*

MARNIE

I know, I know -- it's a sacred experience and I'll become one with the Flame and family. It will light my soul on fire and blah, blah, blah. \*

ROOT

If you know it so well, you must have gathered the sacred powder while you were out, right? The powder you'll put into the Flame tonight? \*

Marnie blanches. *Oh no.* Root scowls. \*

MARNIE

The... powder...?

AILITH

She doesn't even remember.

HILDA

Unbelievable. Is what I'd say if it wasn't completely believable.

ROOT

You had one task! What distracted you this time? \*

AILITH  
Stealing artifacts from the Giants?

HILDA  
Drawing your little doodles?

MARNIE  
No! It's not that! It's just --

Marnie pulls out her notebook.

MARNIE (CONT'D)  
I've found something! Something  
that can teach us more about the  
Great Devourer!

ROOT  
(eyeroll)  
Oh Giants, not this again. Marnie,  
we've been over this! The Beast  
doesn't exist.

But Marnie ignores him, flipping through the notebook.

MARNIE  
But I've actually found the Beast's  
blood! It real, Root!

She grabs her canteen, opens it and holds it up for Root to  
smell --

MARNIE (CONT'D)  
See?

Root is immediately repulsed.

ROOT  
Ugh! Did you get this from the  
cattlepillar stables? You're too  
old for pranks, Marnie.

MARNIE  
Why won't any of you take me  
seriously? Mom and Dad gave their  
lives to stop the Beast!

ROOT  
(snapping)  
No they didn't! They ran off to  
mess around with some stupid  
fairytale and left us all behind!

Root stops, seeing the pain in all three of his sisters'  
faces.

ROOT (CONT'D)

(a gentler tone)

It's important for us to look to  
the old ways in times like these.  
Together.

Root puts his hand on Marnie's shoulder, but she shrugs it  
off. Root <SIGHS>.

ROOT (CONT'D)

I'll have to move things around for  
you to get the powder later. For  
now just get to town square for the  
Meeting of the Elders.

AILITH

Also known as --

HILDA

The Pinching of the Cheeks!

Marnie apprehensively rubs her cheeks.

MARNIE

Fine...

Marnie heads back down the hall and out the castle doors.  
Root watches her go, then turns to gaze up at the tapestry  
depicting THEIR PARENTS.

ROOT

Am I being too hard on her?

AILITH

A little. Let her make her  
mistakes.

HILDA

She'll keep making them if you  
don't.

**EXT. WOODFALL - TOWN SQUARE - DAY - LATER**

The Kindling Ceremony festival is in full swing! The  
atmosphere is jovial, and activities line the streets: food  
stalls, river dancing and weapon shops.

Marnie sits in the middle of the town square on her THRONE.  
Her elderly relatives are pinching her cheeks while she  
awkwardly smiles at them.

## ELDERLY CRICKET

Oh, I remember when you were just a  
pupa! Your parents would be so  
proud of you.

ACROSS THE WAY: at the entrance to town square OWEN (17,  
SNAIL, very excitable and charismatic) arrives, eyes wide  
with excitement. He takes a big <SNIFF>.

## OWEN

Ah, smell that festival air,  
stomach! Today we're finally eating  
food that *isn't* covered in dirt!

Owen dances into the festival, taking in the sights like a  
tourist, leaving a little trail of SLIME wherever he goes. He  
pulls out his sunflower seed DULCIMER and plays along with  
the music.

He soon catches a glimpse of a food stall selling --

## OWEN (CONT'D)

Spiced Elderberry?!

Owen dances over. The SHOPKEEPER is busy helping other  
customers. Owen helps himself to one of the berries on the  
counter, eating in bliss.

## OWEN (CONT'D)

<DELIGHTED EATING EFFORTS>

## SHOPKEEPER

Hey! You gonna pay for that?!

A few festival goers notice the commotion and drift over to  
watch.

## OWEN

Not to worry, my good shopkeep! I  
have your payment right here!

Owen pulls out his dulcimer and begins to serenade the  
incredulous shopkeeper and bystanders, dancing around the  
stall.

## OWEN (CONT'D)

(singing)

*There's no place like Woodfall,  
home of Clan Gryll Dae / The  
crickets are lovely and have legs  
for days!*

Owen winks at an ELDERLY CRICKET. She looks incredibly  
unamused. He shimmies away from her, then bows to the crowd.



OWEN (CONT'D)

I believe that should cover it.

Root approaches, drawn by the spectacle. \*

ROOT

What's going on here? Jigs are relegated to the designated jiggling areas.

SHOPKEEPER

This little thief is passing off his annoying song as payment!

OWEN

You don't have to be rude about it! I paid fair and square, but I'm happy to provide an encore -- free of charge! \*

Owen starts to strum, but it's clear he's getting nervous. \*

ACROSS THE WAY: Marnie notices the commotion from her throne. \*

OWEN (CONT'D)

(singing)

*In Meadowlark, the land of bugs,  
there roamed a beast of metal.* \*

Marnie's feelers immediately perk up at this.

MARNIE

Beast of metal...

ROOT

That's it, your jig is up. Guards!

Intimidating cricket guards approach. Owen sings faster, panicking. \*

OWEN

*It ate the world a thousand times,  
down to the very last petal!*

(a nervous beat) \*

Ahh, how does the rest of it go?? \*

The guards are about to arrest Owen, but Marnie suddenly appears, stepping between them. \*

MARNIE

Oh!! There you are, I've been looking everywhere for you!

ROOT  
Marnie, you know him?

MARNIE  
Of course! This is my new  
attendant, um...

OWEN  
(immediately playing  
along)  
Owen, loyal attendant! I was just  
getting her some Spiced Elderberry!

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

ROOT  
You know my sister is severely  
allergic to elderberries, right?

OWEN  
...I do now.

Root squints at Owen as Marnie smiles nervously.

\*

ROOT  
I don't remember approving an  
attendant for you.

MARNIE  
I decided it was finally time to  
appoint one myself. After all,  
today I become a warrior, right?

\*

Root contemplates this for a moment before finally relaxing.

\*

ROOT  
Well... it's good you recognize  
your time is valuable.

MARNIE  
That's something we can agree on.

ROOT  
You can take a short break from  
greeting family to get more  
acquainted. We don't want a repeat  
of this allergy mix-up.

Root nods at the two of them and departs. The shopkeeper  
crankily gets back to business.

\*

Owen turns to Marnie --

\*

OWEN  
Wow, how can I ever repay you? How  
about with a song?  
(MORE)

\*  
\*

OWEN (CONT'D)

(singing)

Oh...!

Marnie quickly stops him.

MARNIE

Or! How about no singing until we get to my workshop?

Owen clams up and the two move through the crowd. He begins strumming his dulcimer.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

And no dulcimer either!

**INT. CASTLE GRYLL DAE - MARNIE'S ROOM - DAY - LATER**

Marnie's room is filled with ITEMS left behind by humans, along with various INVENTIONS she has crafted out of them. Bottle caps, quarters, candy wrappers and thumbtacks fill the shelves around her room.

OWEN

Wow. Now *this* is really something.

Owen picks up a thumbtack. He goes to touch the pointy bit before Marnie swipes it away, placing it back on the shelf.

MARNIE

Are you some sort of idiot?

OWEN

I'm more of a lover, myself.

MARNIE

Music isn't money. That's how you get arrested.

OWEN

Well it always seemed to work when my parents did it. I guess music is worthless at Woodfall.

MARNIE

I wouldn't say that. That song you sang just now, where'd you learn it?

OWEN

Oh that? Just something my grandfather taught me.

MARNIE

So he knows about the Great Devourer?

OWEN

The great what now?

MARNIE

The mechanical leviathan? The beast of metal?! You just sang about it!

Marnie pulls a CURTAIN back on her wall, revealing a large MURAL (actually just a ripped out page from a lawnmower instruction manual). The crumbling, stained paper displays the machine and labels all its parts.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Only one insect has ever seen the Beast, thousands of years ago. It's said that when the ice melts and the flowers bloom, it will return to consume all that we know.

\*

Owen's stomach grumbles. Marnie shoots him a withering look.

\*

OWEN

Man, I'd love to consume all that I know right now.

MARNIE

This isn't a joke. My parents gave their lives to prove it's real.

\*

OWEN

(instantly regretful)  
Lady Marnie... I didn't know.  
Please forgive me.

\*  
\*

Marnie gazes up at the mural.

\*

MARNIE

Nobody else in my family believes the Beast exists, or the that Giants created it. But maybe...

\*  
\*

She turns back to him -- eyes burning with hope.

\*

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Maybe your song could convince them!

\*  
\*

OWEN

I'm sorry, Lady Marnie, but I... I don't know the rest.

\*

Marnie turns away and sits, putting her head in her hands. \*

MARNIE

You can go now.

OWEN

I don't really have anywhere to go.  
I was hoping I could stay with you.

She looks up at him. Owen blinks, expectantly. \*

MARNIE

What? Oh no. No, I do *not* need an attendant. \*

OWEN

But... you said all that stuff to your big scary brother! \*

MARNIE

Uh, yeah? I was lying. \*

OWEN

But... the next town is so far! \*

MARNIE

Well, I guess you'd better get a head start then. Or do I need to call the guards? \*

Owen begins to panic, but then stalls -- \*

OWEN

Wait, I remember now!

Marnie's feelers perk up.

MARNIE

You do? \*

OWEN

Yes!

(BEAT)

I remember that there's more to the song!

Marnie's look of intrigue turns to skepticism. Owen covers -- \*

OWEN (CONT'D)

But it's on the tip of my tongue!  
Just give me the day, I'm sure  
it'll come to me!

MARNIE

Fine. I'll give you the rest of today to figure it out, but then you're gone.

Owen picks up a MARBLE and rolls it around his shoulder.

OWEN

Understood! And while I'm here, I'll be the best attendant you've ever had!

Owen drops the ball, literally. The marble rolls into a shelf, knocking all the trinkets off of it.

MARNIE

Or the worst.

OWEN

Well, technically both, since I'm your first. \*

(BEAT)

Right, I'll clean that up.

Marnie face palms as Owen scurries over to clean up his mess. \*

**END OF ACT ONE**

\*

ACT TWOEXT. MEADOWLARK PLAINS - DAY

In the fields outside of Woodfall, a CARRIAGE is pulled along by two CATTLEPILLARS (caterpillars that function as cattle). BEETLE SOLDIERS walk alongside the carriage sporting the insignia of the GARDEN EMPIRE.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

MEDORA (O.S.)

Stop!

The carriage comes to a sudden halt. The doors swing open, and out steps MEDORA (17, an elegant Orchid Mantis clearly out of her element) -- the princess of the Garden Empire.

\*  
\*  
\*

SOLDIER

Are you sure we should stop here, Princess Medora? The Empress was very clear about not wasting time.

MEDORA

I'm to be your future Empress. You would call my mission a 'waste of time'?

SOLDIER

N-No, that's not what I meant, I-

MEDORA

You are forgiven. But do not forget to whom you speak.

She pulls a map out of the pocket of her gown.

\*

MEDORA (CONT'D)

I've followed the legends. This is exactly where the Flame should be.

\*

VIVI (30s), a monstrous bug, exits the carriage. She wears a concealing black cloak, hiding what type of bug she is.

\*

VIVI

I don't see any flame.

MEDORA

Well, I didn't mean literally right here.

VIVI

You've gotten us lost. And I've lost my patience.

Vivi turns to the soldiers.

VIVI (CONT'D)  
I'm enacting Order 25.

MEDORA  
You *what*?

VIVI  
*In other words*, as one of the four  
Generals of the Garden, I override  
your authority.

MEDORA  
You can't do that, Vivi!

VIVI  
Empress Anju sent *me* on the mission  
to locate the Flame. You just  
decided you wanted to tag along and  
play politics at the last minute.

Shamed, Medora looks down at her map once more.

MEDORA  
I *will* prove myself to the insects  
of the Garden.

VIVI  
We're doing things *my way* now.  
Understand, princess?

Medora angrily stares at Vivi before giving in, climbing back  
into the carriage. Vivi narrows her gaze at the road ahead.

VIVI (CONT'D)  
Whoever is hiding the Flame from me  
must be very cunning...

SMASH CUT TO:

**EXT. WOODFALL - TOWN SQUARE - DAY**

Owen guzzles a mountain of Spiced Elderberries as Ailith and  
Hilda and a few spectators cheer him on.

AILITH  
Chug! Chug! Chug!

HILDA  
Chug! Chug! Chug!

He pauses briefly, catching his breath.



OWEN

A-are you sure it's the attendant's  
job to take the Lady's palce in the  
berry eating contest?

\*  
\*

AILITH

Less talking, more eating!

Marnie makes her way through the crowd.

\*

MARNIE

Leave him alone!

AILITH

Fine, but he was about to beat  
Moirra's record.

Ailith and Hilda walk away as Marnie sits next to Owen.

\*

MARNIE

Did that trigger any memories?

OWEN

Yeah, but mostly from that one  
weekend I had food poisoning.

A HORN sounds, signaling:

\*

MARNIE

<SIGH> Time for the next tradition.

She pulls out her notebook, looking to Owen.

\*

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Time to multitask!

\*

BEGIN MONTAGE:

Marnie reluctantly undergoes the various Kindling Ceremony  
traditions. The titles of the events appear on screen as they  
occur.

\*  
\*

-- The first being the SPARRING OF THE YOUNG, where Marnie is  
going through the motions, "sword fighting" with her YOUNGER  
SIBLINGS.

\*  
\*  
\*

-- She looks over to see if Owen is reading her notes, but  
instead finds him also playing with the kids. The little  
cricket Marnie's sparring with sees this as the opportunity  
to strike her down.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

-- The next tradition is the FLOWING OF THE FEELERS,  
reminiscent to group river dancing. Marnie is dancing with  
Root, who is very into it.

\*  
\*

-- Marnie looks around and sees Owen on the sidelines. She pulls him in and opens her mouth to speak, but ends up slipping on his slime and falls, bringing them both down.

--The final tradition is the RUNNING OF THE CRICKETS, a sport event very similar to Cricket (not the bug!). Marnie is the striking batsman, while Owen is the umpire.

--Marnie opens her mouth to speak again, not paying attention to the game. The ball hits her upside the head and bounces into Owen's mitt.

END MONTAGE.

**EXT. WOODFALL - SACRED FLAME ALTER - AFTERNOON**

Marnie sits on a rock, exhausted from all the festival activities. Owen fans her with a leaf.

MARNIE

That was a lot of falling down.

OWEN

But you kept getting back up! Very admirable, Lady Marnie!

MARNIE

Thankfully there's only one more tradition to do before tonight...

She rises wearily, then heads towards a LARGE BUILDING with no roof. Owen follows.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Talking to my family.

OWEN

But you've been doing that all day!

MARNIE

Yeah, the living ones.

The two make their way into the building. Cricket guards stand at the entrance, allowing Marnie in but pointing their spears at Owen.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

It's okay, he's with me!

Owen sheepishly smiles as he scoots past them.

**INT. WOODFALL - SACRED FLAME ALTAR - AFTERNOON**

Inside is laid out like a small coliseum, with seating all around the sides. In the middle stands a grand altar holding the SACRED FLAME -- a massive, continuously burning EMBER.

MARNIE

Well... meet my family.

OWEN

That doesn't look like any cricket I've ever seen.

MARNIE

When a member of Clan Gryll Dae dies, they become one with the Sacred Flame. And tonight at my Kindling Ceremony, I'll devote my life to my family, and the Flame.

OWEN

That's exciting! ...Right?

Marnie stares deeply into the ember.

MARNIE

It used to be.

OWEN

What happened?

MARNIE

I don't know. One day I started to question what we believe in. The stories, the Flame... all of it. And then each day I believed less and less... until it was just... gone.

OWEN

You'll find it again, I know you will!

MARNIE

I don't know if I want to.

(BEAT)

Does that make me a horrible cricket?

OWEN

I don't think so.

Marnie smiles slightly, comforted.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Pretty ember... \*

Owen's eyes widen.

OWEN (CONT'D)

Ember... Ember! That's it! I  
remember the rest of the song!

Owen pulls out his dulcimer.

OWEN (CONT'D)

(singing)

*The ember born from light above,  
key to the Beast's demise / Lies  
waiting for a hero to come, lest  
all the world shall die.* \*  
\*

(BEAT)

Kind of a bumner ending. You'd be  
surprised how many of these folk  
songs end in death and all that. \*But Marnie stares wide-eyed at Owen, realization washing over  
her. \*

MARNIE

Could it be...? I need to test  
something!Marnie grabs a small LANTERN that sits next to the flame. \*  
Marnie carefully scoops a small bit of flame off the ember \*  
into the lantern. \*

OWEN

Is that allowed?

MARNIE

Technically using the Flame for \*  
anything is a slap in the face of \*  
our most sacred beliefs... but what \*  
they don't know won't hurt them!

Then another HORN sounds, startling them. \*

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Oh no... I forgot I have to go get  
the powder! Again! I won't have  
time to do my test! \*

Her eyes shift over to Owen.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

Unless... Owen! My dear, sweet,  
lovely attendant!

OWEN

Aw, Lady Marnie, flattery will get you everywhere!

MARNIE

I need you to get the powder for me.

Marnie pulls out a small SACK and a CHISEL, handing them to Owen. She starts to walk away as she explains:

MARNIE (CONT'D)

It's a little sacrilegious, but it'll be fine! Just head 30 paces out of town, turn right at the gnarled dandelion and then chisel the magnesium under the largest toadstool!

Marnie runs off. Owen stands alone in front of the Flame.

OWEN

Magnesium. I'm on it.

(BEAT)

Hey, what's magnesium?

**EXT. MEADOWLARK PLAINS - EVENING**

A MERCHANT WAGON barrels down the path as the frantic MERCHANT cracks the reins on his cattlepillars. Close behind him is the Garden Empire carriage, driven by Vivi in ferocious pursuit. Medora sits next to her, looking rather uninvested.

MERCHANT

Please, leave me alone!!

VIVI

TELL US WHERE THE FLAME IS!!

Vivi cracks the reins, pushing their exhausted cattlepillars too far. One of them breaks free, stampeding away. The carriage lurches forward, crashing into the merchant wagon.

MEDORA / VIVI

&lt;IMPACTS&gt;

They tumble out of the overturned carriage as it is dragged away by the frightened cattlepillars. The two stand up, rubbing their heads in pain as the beetle soldiers rush up to help them. The merchant wagon is long gone.

MEDORA

Who could have foreseen this? \*

VIVI

I don't need your wisecracks! He was this close to telling us!

MEDORA

Sure he was. \*

Medora heads toward the grass forest. \*

VIVI

Where do you think you're going?

MEDORA

To fix your mess.

Medora follows the cattlepillar tracks. A beetle guard follows, much to her annoyance. She notes the trampled foliage, pursuing its wake until -- \*

She finds the cattlepillar being calmed by a familiar face - Owen! He's playing his dulcimer. \*

MEDORA (CONT'D)

That song is beautiful.

OWEN

Finally, company that appreciates my music! This guy especially likes it.

The cattlepillar stands up and gives Owen a lick.

MEDORA

Thank you so much! I'm no good with larvae.

OWEN

Well, that's the thing, you can't think of them like that! You gotta think of them as friends, just like you and me.

MEDORA

Friends? But you don't even know my name.

OWEN

You haven't given me any reason to think you're not a friend. My name's Owen.

MEDORA

Medora. Can I repay you, Owen?

OWEN

Hm... Well, do you know what mage-nees-ee-um is?

MEDORA

Oh, magnesium? Hm... Oh! My earrings are made of them. \*

Medora quickly removes her intricate earrings and hands them to Owen. \*

MEDORA (CONT'D) \*

Please take them, I have so many other pairs. \*

OWEN \*

Oh, perfect! Thanks!

Owen places the delicate earrings on a rock and smashes them with another rock. Medora's eyes go wide. He scoops the powder into his pouch. \*

MEDORA

Um. You're welcome.

VIVI (O.S.)

What's taking so long?!

MEDORA

Ah, I've got to go.

OWEN

Well hey, maybe this is forward of me, but there's this great festival happening right now in Woodfall! For my friend, Marnie. Lots of great food, dancing, and this crazy bright light! \*

Medora pauses at the mention of the bright light. \*

MEDORA

Bright... light? \*

OWEN

Anyway, I've got to skedaddle too. Hope to see you and, your er... friend there!

Owen gives a pat to the cattlepillar before he departs. Vivi comes up behind Medora.

VIVI  
Bright light, huh?

Medora looks at Vivi, worried. Vivi smiles menacingly.

VIVI (CONT'D)  
How very interesting.

**EXT. GRASS FORESTS - EVENING - MEANWHILE**

Marnie stands in front of the pool of gasoline, reading her notebook. \*

MARNIE  
Mom had so many notes about the  
blood, but could never figure out  
its properties.

Marnie puts the book away and hoists up the lantern. \*

MARNIE (CONT'D)  
But she didn't have Owen's song.

Marnie reaches the lantern out over the blood, ready to drop it in. She hesitates, uncertain. The moment feels like an eternity, but she eventually pulls it back. \*

MARNIE (CONT'D)  
Why?!

She stares into the Flame, eyes burning with emotion. \*

MARNIE (CONT'D)  
Why can't I let you go?

She <SIGHS>, regretful. Then HORN sounds once more, signaling another tradition about to begin. \*

MARNIE (CONT'D)  
Ugh!!

She storms off, heading back into town. \*

**INT. CASTLE GRYLL DAE - FEAST HALL - EVENING - LATER**

The feast hall of CASTLE GRYLL DAE is packed to the brim with CRICKETS and various other bug ATTENDANTS. Marnie sits at the head table, wearing ceremonial garb. She looks totally bored. \*

Root approaches, noting Marnie's disinterest. He sits next to her. \*



ROOT

Pretty festive, eh? Might make a cricket want to dance?

MARNIE

Neither you nor I have had enough nectar for that.

ROOT

Fair enough.

Silence falls between them. Finally --

ROOT (CONT'D)

We won't have much one-on-one time after the feast, so I... I wanted to take this moment to give you this.

Root presents his sister with a long wrapped gift. Marnie unwraps, revealing a beautiful WOODEN SWORD. She marvels at the gift, then looks up at Root.

MARNIE

This is... Mom's...

ROOT

Aye. It was always meant to be yours. I just didn't think I'd be the one to give it to you.

MARNIE

(deeply moved)  
Root... Thank you.

Root looks away, scratching the back of his feelers, clearly uncomfortable with expressing emotion.

ROOT

I know this hasn't always been easy for you. Especially having to deal with me.

He turns back to his sister, looking her in the eye.

ROOT (CONT'D)

But I'm so proud of you.

MARNIE

Root, there's... there's something I need to tell you.

ROOT

What is it?

She's about to speak, but stops herself. She doesn't want to ruin this moment. Instead, Marnie just hugs her brother. \*

MARNIE

Never mind. This is wonderful.  
Thank you.

Another HORN sounds. The room quiets down. One of the elders rises and speaks \*

ELDER

The time has come. Let us move  
towards the Sacred Flame to begin  
the Kindling Ceremony of Marnie  
Gryll Dae.

Marnie swallows nervously as the guests begin to rise and head out for the ceremony. \*

OWEN (O.S.)

Psst!

She looks over at Owen who gives her a big thumbs up and holds up the powder sack. \*

OWEN (CONT'D)

I got the powder!!  
(BEAT)  
Um, I mean I grabbed the powder  
from your room that you gathered  
yourself!

He gives a wink. Marnie shrugs sheepishly at Root. \*

MARNIE

<AWKWARD LAUGH>

**INT. WOODFALL - SACRED FLAME ALTAR - NIGHT - LATER** \*

Royal, noble, and common crickets all watch from the surrounding seating as Root prays to the Flame. He then turns and ushers Marnie forward. She is visibly nervous. \*

ROOT

(addressing the crowd)  
The memories of our loved ones...  
They dance together in the Sacred  
Flame. All through our lives we  
feel the warmth of their love, and  
the faith they share for the  
Giants. \*

(MORE)

ROOT (CONT'D)

My brothers and sisters, tonight  
Marnie will become one with the  
Flame. Tonight she will become a  
true warrior of Clan Gryll Dae!

The crowd <CHEERS>. Marnie stands before the Flame, its size  
and heat imposing. She looks back to Root, who gives an  
encouraging nod. Marnie picks up a rock shard wrapped with  
dried vines and sticks it into the Flame, bringing a small  
fire out with her like a torch. She plants it into the  
pedestal.

ROOT (CONT'D)

Now add the powder you ground from  
the earth yourself, and become one  
with the Flame.

Marnie removes the pouch from her side and sprinkles it over  
the Flame. The fire sparkles with bright white flickers.

ROOT (CONT'D)

Go on. The prayer, just as we  
rehearsed.

Marnie looks out towards the crowd. All is quiet as the  
citizens of Woodfall wait for her.

MARNIE

(softly)  
I can't do this.

ROOT

What?

MARNIE

I can't do this! Everyone, I need  
to tell you something about the  
Beast!!

The crowd <MURMURS> unhappily. The proud look on Root's face  
immediately turns to that of disappointment.

CRICKET

Here we go...

CRICKET 2

Again with this?

Ailith is seen handing Hilda money.

HILDA

Toldja she'd mess it up.

MARNIE

Owen's song speaks of our Flame!  
The two must be connected! If we  
could just work together, we could--

ROOT

Stop! STOP!!

Nearby, an Elder stands angrily. \*

ELDER

Root, what is the meaning of this?!  
You trained her, did you not?

ROOT

Yes. I take full responsibility for  
her actions. \*

Root turns to Marnie, furious. \*

ROOT (CONT'D)

You have forsaken our family.

Marnie stares back, defiant. She's ready to speak when -- \*

Suddenly an ARROW pierces Root's shoulder! The impact of the  
shot takes him to the ground. \*

ROOT (CONT'D)

<IMPACT>

MARNIE

Root!!

She runs to him, then they both look up to see a beetle  
Garden Guard holding a bow, far back behind the crowd. More  
guards approach, spilling into the coliseum and blocking the  
entrances. The cricket crowd <ERUPTS> into a panic. \*

The beetle guards part to allow Vivi to step forward. She  
smiles menacingly from under her hood as Medora steps in  
beside her. \*

MEDORA

What are you doing?!

VIVI

That little snail was right. This  
is some party. \*

**END OF ACT TWO** \*

ACT THREEINT. WOODFALL - SACRED FLAME ALTAR - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

The entire crowd vibrates with terror. Owen stares at Medora, utterly betrayed.

OWEN

Oh no... Medora...

MARNIE

Medora?! You know them?

OWEN

I met them while I was out getting the powder... this is all my fault!

The Beetle Garden Guards stand ready to attack. Meanwhile the Cricket Guards have begun to assemble.

Medora gets in Vivi's face, furious.

MEDORA

What are you doing?! I had a plan! We could have convinced them to part with the Flame peacefully!

VIVI

They *worship* that thing. They would never give it up without a fight.

MEDORA

It didn't have to be this way! Nobody needs to get hurt!

VIVI

You want to prove yourself to the Empress? Then watch what needs to be done.

Vivi turns to the crowd.

VIVI (CONT'D)

You all seem like smart bugs. So let's all do the smart thing and surrender the Flame. That way nobody *else* needs to get hurt.

The Cricket Guards unsheathe their weapons, defiant. Vivi smiles. She was hoping for this to happen.

VIVI (CONT'D)

Then again, I've always been a poor judge of intelligence.

Vivi pulls off her cloak, revealing at last: she's a massive WHIP-TAILED SCORPION. She towers over the other bugs. \*

VIVI (CONT'D)

Let's play.

Then, it's on! The Crickets and Garden Guards engage in combat, as the citizens start to flee the coliseum. Vivi takes on several Crickets, quickly knocking them aside. \*

Root yanks the arrow out of his shoulder, the pain barely phases him. An attendant approaches him, holding a LANCE. \*

ATTENDANT

My lord!

He tosses Root his weapon. He jumps into the chaos, heading for Vivi. \*

MARNIE

Root!

OWEN (O.S.)

My lady!

Marnie turns as Owen pathetically tosses her the new sword. It lands a few feet out of reach. She glares at him. He shrugs. A few Garden Guards approach. Marnie quickly grabs her sword and holds it up defensively. \*

OWEN (CONT'D)

Marnie! <OOF>

Owen is knocked aside as Garden Guards encircle Marnie. \*

MEANWHILE: Vivi is knocking down cricket after cricket. Root approaches from behind, lance in hand. \*

VIVI

You crickets are dropping like flies. No, even flies put up a better fight!

ROOT

You will not harm my family.

Root lunges. Vivi counters with her massive claws. \*

ACROSS THE WAY: Marnie stands defiant against approaching Beetles. \*

MEDORA (O.S.)

Stand down!

The Garden Guard pauses as Medora approaches Marnie.

MEDORA (CONT'D)

You must be Marnie. Please, listen.  
I didn't want it to turn out like  
this.

MARNIE

What?! Your army is trying to  
destroy my family! Call off your  
giant scorpion lady!

MEDORA

I heard you. You don't believe  
that, do you? No... you know what  
the Flame *truly* is.

Marnie glances at the Flame, then back to Medora, uncertain.

MEDORA (CONT'D)

We *both* want to use it to help  
others. I need the Flame to gain  
the trust of my people.

MARNIE

I don't care!

MEDORA

If you knew what's at stake, you'd  
give it up in a heartbeat!

MARNIE

I know what's at stake! My kingdom!  
My family! Step away from the  
Sacred Flame.

Marnie levels her sword at Medora. Medora furrows her brow.

MEANWHILE: Root and Vivi engage in a brutal fight. Root  
lunges at her with his lance, as she dodges. Despite her  
size, her speed is unmatched. He's getting tired.

In the blink of an eye her whip tail strikes Root from  
behind, bringing him to his knees.

ROOT

<IMPACT>

Vivi stands over him, victorious.

ROOT (CONT'D)

How... How did you know about the  
Flame? \*

VIVI

You've got a chatty little snail  
amongst your ranks. \*

Roots eyes widen. Vivi arcs her tail up into striking  
position. \*

VIVI (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Root of Clan Gryll Dae. \*

Root watches helplessly as Vivi prepares to finish him off. \*

ACROSS THE WAY: Marnie sees what's about to occur. \*

MARNIE

No! ROOT!! \*

Medora turns and sees Vivi. She quickly looks back and forth  
between the Flame and Vivi and makes her decision. \*

Vivi's tail whistles through the air toward Root's throat --  
when suddenly -- KLANG!! Medora counters the blow with her  
DUAL BLADES. \*

MEDORA

I said NO KILLING!! \*

Vivi looks furious, but sees that the Flame is completely  
unguarded, save for Marnie. \*

VIVI

Then I'll be the one to bring the  
Flame to the Empress. \*

Marnie manages to fight off a beetle, but another charges in.  
Vivi approaches. \*

VIVI (CONT'D)

I'm not here to talk like Medora.  
Step. Aside. \*

Marnie looks back at the Flame. She holds up her sword. Vivi  
barks a cruel <LAUGH>. \*

VIVI (CONT'D)

What? Do you really believe that  
Flame is your mommy and daddy? \*

Marnie's sword trembles. She sees Owen hopping up in the  
crowd. \*



OWEN

Don't give it up, Lady Marnie!  
Remember the song!!

Marnie backs up. The warmth of the Flame on her back becomes intense. \*

VIVI

MOVE!!

OWEN

Don't!

MARNIE

I... I...

Marnie doesn't realize how far she's retreated back until she bumps into the pedestal for the Flame itself. \*

VIVI

Argh, enough of this!

Vivi lunges forward. Marnie attempts to fight back, but Vivi's massive claws quickly knock her down. Vivi picks up the Flame's base. \*

VIVI (CONT'D)

Hurk! Heavier than I thought! But  
nothing I can't handle.

Vivi begins walking away. Marnie recovers and kicks at her legs, tripping her! The Flame falls to the ground. Vivi scrambles for it, but in a moment of panic, Marnie kicks the Flame's base backwards. \*

Everyone stops and watches as the Sacred Flame falls into the small moat of water that surrounds the altar. \*

VIVI (CONT'D)

No!

ROOT

NO!!!

And then -- the Flame extinguishes completely. \*

Immediately, a huge rush of steam and smoke fills the space and spills out, engulfing all of Woodfall. \*

MEDORA

(to Vivi)

Look what you've done. \*

A look of humiliation and anger washes over Vivi, as she retreats into the smoke and steam. \*

A guilty Medora looks at Marnie who stares down at the water, hand covering her mouth with tears pouring from her eyes. \*

Owen makes eye contact with Medora, who then disappears into the smoke and steam. As we follow her out, she opens her cloak to reveal that one of the LANTERNS, and with it the last existing piece of the Sacred Flame. \*

As Owen turns back to Marnie, he sees she has disappeared as well. \*

**EXT. WOODFALL - OUTSKIRTS - NIGHT - LATER** \*

Owen wanders around the edge of town, looking for Marnie.

OWEN  
Lady Marnie! \*

He finds her hiding behind a grass tree, crying alone. \*

MARNIE  
(softly) \*  
I... didn't mean to, I-

She suddenly notices Owen there and instantly turns away from him, not letting him see her cry.

MARNIE (CONT'D)  
I'm fine! \*

Owen sits next to her.

OWEN  
Marnie, I'm so sorry. This is all my fault.

MARNIE  
I said I'm fine! I just -- \*

Her throat gets tight and she stops talking.

OWEN  
The Flame is gone... but your family's love for you isn't. \*

Marnie's feelers perk up at this. She looks at Owen, tears streaming down her face. She wipes them away.

MARNIE  
I'm sorry I got you mixed up in this.

OWEN

You don't need to apologize at all.  
It's my fault.

Root is heard calling out through the smoke. He's getting closer.

\*  
\*

ROOT (O.S.)

Marnie?! Marnie, where are you!?!?

OWEN

It's time I face the music. I'll  
tell Root about what I did.

Marnie hesitates for a moment before grabbing Owen's arm and pulling him down with her. The grass rustles as they disappear. Root steps into the area, looking around desperately. Ailith and Hilda approach.

\*  
\*  
\*

AILITH

We've looked everywhere, but...

HILDA

She's nowhere to be found.

ROOT

We must find her. That snail she's  
with... he is a *spy* for the Garden!

Tears well up in Root's eyes before he puts his head in his hands.

\*  
\*

ROOT (CONT'D)

Oh Giants... Marnie...

**EXT. MEADOWLARK FIELDS - DAWN**

\*

Marnie runs through the forest as morning light starts to break through the treetops.

MARNIE

Quickly !!

\*

She stops to catch her breath. Owen finally catches up, <WHEEZING>.

\*  
\*

MARNIE (CONT'D)

I think... I think we've put enough  
distance between us and Woodfall.

She looks back at him.

\*

OWEN

My lady... Why?

MARNIE

Despite everything, you believed  
me.

They smile at each other. Marnie turns around and sees a vast  
PLAIN spreading out ahead of them: the beauty of all of  
Meadowlark.

OWEN

Ah, the open road. No food or  
money. Just us and the journey.

He &lt;SIGHS&gt;. Marnie is at a loss for words.

MARNIE

It's beautiful.

OWEN

You've never been out of Woodfall,  
have you?

MARNIE

I haven't...

Owen takes out a map, opening it upside down.

OWEN

Looks like we have our work cut out  
for us. I don't even know where to  
start!

MARNIE

Maybe try holding the map the right  
way?Owen gets an "ah-ha" moment. He flips it, and they smile at  
each other.

MARNIE (CONT'D)

There must be a way to stop the  
Beast. And we are going to find it.

The two set out as the sun rises over the beautiful vista.

**END OF EPISODE 1.**