

THE CRIES
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FADE IN

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The setting sun casts a red glow over simple homes and farmlands. Flowers bloom everywhere. The serenity of is disrupted by a WOMAN'S SCREAMS.

Four men wait outside a house, in nervous anticipation. The house is old and in need of some repair.

The SCREAMS are louder.

WILLIAM (20) paces in front of the house, very rattled. He's dressed in old and ill-fitted clothes.

A particularly loud SCREAM escapes the house. He looks at the door and storms it.

WILLIAM

I have to do something!

RICHARD (85) sits on a bench by the door, flask in his hand. He holds his leathery wrinkled hand up, stopping him. He's also dressed in thrift-shop-chic.

RICHARD

No, you ain't.

WILLIAM

Rachel needs my help!

RICHARD

And what are you gonna do, Will? Deliver that baby yourself? Rachel got her grandmother and Maggie McBride with her.

WILLIAM

But she's been screaming for four or five hours now.

Richard, GILLIS (30) and ANDREW (40), standing nearby, CHUCKLE at this. Gillis is a particularly obese man.

RICHARD

Four hours is nothing, boy. Anything less than six hours is considered a blessing by the women.

He drinks from his flask and offers it to William. He takes a quick drink, grimaces, and returns the flask.

WILLIAM

Six hours?

Richard finishes the flask. He sticks a cork in it.

RICHARD

If I remember, when Rachel was born, her Momma was in labor nearly ten hours.

ANDREW

My Lizzie was in labor eleven hours having the twins, two years ago.

GILLIS

My Momma was in labor seventeen hours having me.

They look at Gillis. Another SCREAM comes from inside.

WILLIAM

And I'm supposed to just stand out here?

ANDREW

Woman's job is to have the baby. Man's job is to wait.

GILLIS

That's right.

RICHARD

You feel the need to do something? You can go to the barn, and refill this.

He gives him the flask.

RICHARD

Gillis'll show you where the jug's kept. Heck, might as well bring the jug back.

Gillis slowly heads toward the barn. William quickly catches up.

ANDREW

What do you think?

Another SCREAM comes from the house.

RICHARD

I think we got a long night ahead of us.

Something catches Richard's eye.

NEARBY STREAM.

A cloaked figure stands in the water, its back to him.

RICHARD

Stay here...

He steps over to a nearby table and pulls out a tin of matches from his pocket. He lights two oil lamps.

RICHARD

You best get your rifle...

EXT. STREAM - SHORTLY

SPIRIT stands knee-deep in water. She pulls a white blouse from the stream and wrings water from it.

Her green cloak hangs over her head and shoulders, ending in the water. She wears nothing else. Her bony, aged body peaks out. Her face is hidden by her hood.

A glow comes from the shore. From Richard's lamp. He walks along the shoreline.

RICHARD

(hesitant)

You do not belong here.

SPIRIT dunks the blouse back in the water.

RICHARD

I--I ask that you leave.

She stands up. He watches her from the shoreline.

RICHARD

No one's dying here, tonight. You have no soul to take. Leave. Please.

SPIRIT

It is not for you to decide...

RICHARD

See here, spirit! You've already taken a wife from me, two sons and my daughter. You'll not take my granddaughter as well!

Richard puts the lamp down and storms the creek. A hand lunges from the water and grabs his leg.

He strikes it, horrified. A second hand jumps out and grabs his other leg.

He struggles as the hands pull on him. He breaks free and rushes back to land. He falls by the lamp, GASPING.

He gets up and turns to Spirit. She rinses the blouse further. A gap-tooth smile shines from under her hood.

RICHARD

You've taken enough of my family!

The others run up to Richard. William carries a lamp. Andrew, an old rifle.

GILLIS

Richard? Are you all right?

RICHARD

Rachel's in danger! Rachel's in danger!

They look at him, confused and alarmed.

WILLIAM

In danger?

RICHARD

Yes! From her!

He points over the water. Spirit is not there.

Rachel's SCREAMS are heard in the distance.

WILLIAM

Rachel?

The four run to the house.

INT. RACHEL'S BEDROOM - SHORTLY

The door swings open. Richard, Andrew and William rush inside and look around frantically.

They're met by the gazes of MAGGIE (50) and AGNES (65).

Agnes sits on the bed, next to the exhausted RACHEL (18). She lies in the bed, holding a CRYING BABY in her arms. Maggie sits on a stool, Bible in hand.

AGNES

William, come say hello to your son.

Agnes gets up as William takes her place on the bed. He stares at the baby and kisses Rachel's head.

Agnes steps up to the others.

AGNES

Take your rifle outside, Andrew. There's
a baby in the room.

Gillis rushes into the room, panting. He, Richard, and
Andrew look at each other.

EXT. HOUSE - NIGHT

Richard, Gillis and Andrew stand by a roaring fire.
Andrew holds tightly onto his rifle. Richard and Gillis
each hold an axe.

GILLIS

Are you sure of what you saw, Richard?
It was getting dark--

RICHARD

I know what I saw! It was Bean Nighe.

ANDREW

Bean Nighe?

RICHARD

Like a banshee--

ANDREW

There's no such thing as banshees--

RICHARD

I know! I said it's *like* a banshee!
Bean nighe are spirits! Show up when
someone dies to takes their soul!

GILLIS

What? How do you know?

RICHARD

I saw her the night she took Amelia! The
cloak. Standing in the water! I saw--

Andrew jumps back and raises his rifle. The others do
double-takes and jump back.

Spirit stands nearby. Her stringy hair masks her face.

RICHARD

Begone, demon! Get off my land!

SPIRIT

I cannot...

The three ready their weapons. They jump back with each step she takes toward them. Her clawed feet make no noise as they step along the ground.

RICHARD

Then I'll get you off--!

He swings his axe. Spirit catches the handle in her bony twisted claw. She swings her other claw at him. He's thrown to the ground with a heavy THUD.

Andrew raises his rifle and fires. It ROARS as Spirit jerks back. Her hair ignites from the rifle's flare.

Her cloak hangs off her crone body, revealing a gaping gunshot wound in her shoulder. Her unhooded head reveals a hideous woman with jagged teeth.

ANDREW

Saints in heaven!

She swipes a claw across his chest, raking his flesh. Blood spurts as he collapses to the ground.

Gillis flees. She lunges at him--

Only to be shot in the back by Richard. He stands over Andrew's remains, rifle in hand. He jerks on the lever and shoots again.

Her chest explodes in a mess of decayed flesh. She spins to him and SCREAMS an unearthly and pain-filled cry.

He tries reloading. She backhands him, knocking him to the ground. His face a bloody mess.

SPIRIT

The child and the mother are both mine...

She proceeds to the house.

INT. RACHEL'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Agnes and William step to the bedroom door.

WILLIAM

Was that a rifle?

AGNES

Probably Richard announcing his great grandchild. You should join them.

WILLIAM

But Rachel--

AGNES

Needs her rest.

Rachel lies in bed, holding her baby.

AGNES

You can tell the men--

As Agnes opens the door, Gillis falls in, out of breath and due for a heart attack.

GILLIS

She's... coming...

Agnes and William look at him, confused.

The front door swings open, slamming into the wall. Spirit stands there.

SPIRIT

The mother and the child are mine...

Spirit rushes the bedroom. She knocks Gillis aside like a rag doll. Agnes and William shove the door closed. The hag is pinned halfway in. Everyone SCREAMS.

AGNES

Not if I can help it, demon!

Maggie runs up to the door with a metal pitcher in her hand. She beats Spirit on the face with it.

MAGGIE

Heaven help us!

Rachel holds tightly to her baby, horrified.

Spirit thrashes her hand at William, slashing his arm with her claws. He SCREAMS in pain.

Spirit reaches for Agnes, gaining ground with the door--

And is struck in the back by something.

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Richard pulls his axe from between Spirit's shoulders. He takes another swing and buries it the same spot.

Gillis hits her with a fireplace poker.

Spirit struggles with the door, though with a less fire.

RICHARD
Protect Rachel and the child!

INTERCUT: BEDROOM/FRONT ROOM

William and Agnes push against the door as Maggie props a chair against it. Dark fluid oozes from Spirit's mouth as she HISSES.

WILLIAM
How do we kill her?

Richard continues hacking away.

RICHARD
I don't know!
(to Gillis)
Get something to tie this devil up!

Gillis looks around. He grabs a throw rug and wraps it around her body.

RICHARD
We're going to pull her out here. Let go of the door!

Agnes and William do so. The door opens and Spirit disappears into the front room. More CLAMOR is heard.

GILLIS (O.S.)
She's still alive!

William races to his wife's side.

RICHARD (O.S.)
I can see that!

CHOP!

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The bright sun shines over the land. Spirit's SCREAMS are still heard.

INT. HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Spirit is tied to a chair with an obscene amount of rope. She's naked, except for a blindfold and has a huge gaping slash in her neck.

Richard, Agnes and Gillis stand a few feet away from her.

AGNES
(to Richard)
Are you sure of this?

RICHARD
It's what the stories say. We have no
choice but try... I want you and Gillis
in the bedroom--

AGNES
But--

RICHARD
No buts, woman. Do as I say and go.

Gillis leads Agnes to the bedroom door and knocks.
Maggie peeks out. She lets them squeeze through.

Richard watches the door close behind them.

RICHARD
(to himself)
If you asked me yesterday what I would be
doing today...

He creeps up to Spirit as she SCREAMS, unaware of his
presence. He shakes his head in disgust and crouches.

INT. RACHEL'S BEDROOM - SHORTLY

William, Gillis and the women wait nervously in the now-
crowded bedroom. Rachel holds her baby to her heart.

A loud CLAMOR comes from the next room. Furniture is
thrown. Glass is SHATTERED. Spirit SCREAMS.

SPIRIT (O.S.)
You cheated!

RICHARD (O.S.)
I did no such thing!

INT. FRONT ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Spirit unravels the loose ropes from around her.

Richard stands nearby, axe in hand.

SPIRIT
Cheater! Liar!

RICHARD

You are the liar, hag! I followed your rules! I drank your milk--!

She frees herself. She looks smaller than she did the night before.

RICHARD

It was sour Like old vinegar. And you know what this means!

SPIRIT

I refuse!

RICHARD

You can't! I drank of your teat and that makes me your child! I demand my wish!

She throws her chair. It shatters in the hearth.

SPIRIT

Never!

She CRIES out in disgust and shame. She throws a bench through a nearby window, shattering it.

RICHARD

Stop breaking furniture!

SPIRIT

Is that your wish?

RICHARD

No! I wish you to leave this home and never harm those in it. And that those of us be left alone from this day forward! That is my wish.

Spirit stares at him with hate-filled eyes. After a long silent pause, her expression changes. Softens a bit.

SPIRIT

So be it. If that is your wish.

RICHARD

It is.

She picks up the throw rug and drapes it over her shoulders. She walks out the front door.

Richard watches in silent victory.

The bedroom door opens. Agnes sticks her head out and peeks around. She rushes out and hugs her husband.

AGNES
You saved us, Richard.

The others come out, except for Rachel and the baby.
They gather around Richard.

GILLIS
They won't believe this at the public
house, I can tell you.

AGNES
You need to meet your great grandson,
Richard.

He kisses her on the forehead. They enter the bedroom.

FADE OUT

FADE IN:

EXT. COUNTRYSIDE - DAY

The ground and rooftops are covered in snow. Smoke
escapes from the chimneys, into the grey clouds above.

INT. HOUSE - DAY

A few coals burn in the ash-filled hearth.

Rachel sits in a chair draped in blankets, pale and on
the edge. She cradles her baby in her arms.

The baby CRIES one of those annoying cries that makes you
want to punch someone.

William sits next to her. He stares through a window,
shaking his head in disgust.

Gillis sits in the middle of the room. He licks an empty
bowl. Despite his girth, his face looks thin, sickly.

Richard sits on a bench with Agnes. They both look near
death. The scars on his face still look fresh.

RICHARD
Do you really think there's anything left
in that bowl?

GILLIS
I still taste lamb.

And he continues his gluttonous ways.

RICHARD

There's no lamb! There hasn't been lamb
in that bowl in ages. Stop it!

Maggie huddles in the corner in a blanket, half-crazed.

MAGGIE

Why is this happening? Why is this
happening?

GILLIS

I know... Richard made a wish.

RICHARD

This not what I wished for!

GILLIS

You wished that the spirit wouldn't take
us. That we would be left alone--

RICHARD

Shut up!

GILLIS

You got what you wished for. The spirit
didn't take us and we're all left alone.

Gillis returns his attention to his bowl.

GILLIS

None of us have died in six years... and
none of the neighbors will even look at
us. It's as if we're not even here.

MAGGIE

I miss my husband.

GILLIS

He doesn't miss you. Probably doesn't
remember you.

AGNES

Shut up, you miserable, gluttonous fool.

GILLIS

No, Agnes. I won't.

Richard casually reaches down and picks up his axe.

GILLIS (O.S.)

And there's nothing anyone can do to shut
me up.

FINAL FADE OUT: