

The dark man and the dumb boy.

Fade in...

MEDIUM SHOT OF AN ATTIC WINDOW FROM OUTSIDE.

EXT/INT. ATTIC WINDOW - DAY

The window and the walls around it look like they're from the medieval England.

The camera moves in slowly.

THE BOY (14) is standing, topless, looking out.

The boy is scrawny. His cheekbones poke his milk-coloured skin.

He has a bowl cut of jet-black hair.

His eyes are tiny and black and tired-looking. His lips are thin.

In the reflection of the attic window, we see what the boy is watching.

Outside the walls of the medieval town, on a hill a cross is erected.

The townsfolk, guided by THE PRIEST (60s) are in the middle of THE CEREMONY.

Above the ceremony, a flock of crows is circling predatorially.

We do not hear the priests sermon. We do not hear anything.

The camera zooms in closer.

Now, the ceremony looks more like a ritual sacrifice.

A young child is being held down. The child struggles in the grip of two guards.

Another man appears out of the darkly-clad crowd. The man raises an axe above the child.

The axe comes down and cuts off the child's head.

The boy does not react. He masks his emotion. He's good at it. Like he has been doing it his whole life.

The townspeople stand for a moment, before dispersing down the hill, gloomily.

The corpse is left on the hill as the crows circle overhead.

CUT TO BLACK.

CUT TO:

CU OF A MOUSE.

The mouse scurries back and forth against a stone wall in the dark.

The boy's hands come into frame and scoop the mouse up.

INT. ATTIC - NIGHT

It seems the boy sleeps in this attic.

He strokes the mouse.

The boy begins tearing up, failing, for the first time, to mask his emotions.

The boy sheds a tear.

CUT TO:

SHOT OF A STONE WALL.

The boy removes one stone, leaving a dark hole.

The boy takes out a shrine from that hole.

Drawings of THE DARK MAN, bones, teeth and even whole carcasses of dead rodents.

The boy holds down the mouse and places a blade to his throat.

The boy is crying softly.

He kills the mouse.

It bleeds a very small amount and then it doesn't move. It's eyes wide and seemingly self-pitying.

The boy cries.

He goes back to bed.

EXT/INT. ATTIC WINDOW - DAY

The boy wakes up and goes to his window. He looks out. He's confused.

The camera pans and reveals:

The townspeople, arguing in the square.

The camera pans again and reveals:

A pasture with cows and goats. All the animals are dead or dying from the black plague.

The camera pans again and reveals:

The cross on the hill. The corpse of the sacrificed child is also rotting from the black plague.

The boy is shocked. He runs away from the window.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The boy runs out, holding pictures of the dark man.

He attracts the attention of the townspeople. They look at him in disgust and disbelief.

He shows them images of the dark man in an attempt to explain the cause of the rotting corpses and the failed harvest.

The priest is shocked by the boy's blasphemous theory. He yells at the boy.

The boy does not hear.

The priest flails his arms about cursing the boy, calling him "blasphemer".

The townspeople join in. Their mouths create vicious-looking words.

CUT TO:

CLOSE UP OF A MAN'S MOUTH.

The man's teeth are broken and yellowed.

It's difficult to make out what he is saying, but he is definitely yelling and spouting curses. Possibly "witch!" Or "burn him!"

QUICK CUT TO:

ANOTHER MOUTH.

Also angrily cursing and spitting viciously.

QUICK CUT TO:

A MOUTH

Cursing up a storm.

The boy backs away in fear. They stalk him like prey.

CUT TO:

SYMMETRICAL SHOT OUTSIDE THE TOWN WALLS. CAMERA POINTED PARALLEL TO THE WALL.

EXT. OUTSIDE TOWN - DAY

The boy, in only his long johns, runs from R to L. The townspeople follow.

They jump on him. He tries to escape. He cannot.

CUT TO:

SHOT OF THE BOY.

The boy is tied up with rope, hung from a dunking device. A device used to see if someone will float and thus to see whether or not they are a witch.

The townspeople are huddled together like scientists doing an experiment.

The boy is dunked in the river. It looks cold. The current is rapid.

The townspeople look dumbly at the boy, flailing desperately in the water, like they have never dunked someone before.

The boy struggles underwater.

By no fault of his own, he is released from the device and begins to roll down river, still tied up.

The townspeople take a moment before they notice. They run after him.

The river meanders and rides over rocks and rough terrain, down muddy slopes. The townspeople cannot catch up with the boy.

The boy fights to keep his head above water. He coughs up water and gasps.

The river flows through a forest now. It seems the townspeople have given up catching the boy.

Now he only has to stay alive.

But the boy gets unlucky. His head is held under the water too long. He passes out.

FADE TO BLACK.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The boy wakes up, half-naked, freezing.

He's tied up, washed up on the river bank in the middle of the forest.

He looks around and sees:

A crow, sitting on a log only inches from the boy. It's black eye watching him like a CCTV camera.

The boy is frozen in fear. He manages to get to his feet with his hands behind his back.

He's paranoid. He's helpless.

He starts walking aimlessly through the forest.

Eventually the boy finds a fallen tree. He stops and lies underneath it, semi-sheltered.

The boy closes his eyes.

A beat.

CUT TO BLACK

A beat.

A hum. The first sound we hear in the film. Minute at first.

The hum grows louder. Louder.

CUT TO:

CU OF THE BOY'S FACE.

He can hear. A hum. The first thing he has ever heard.

He's still under tree.

He sits up and stares.

The boy's POV:

A vortex. A hollow, ink-black void. Humming violently through the forest for all to hear. Even the deaf.

CUT TO:

CU OF THE BOY'S FACE.

His jaw is hanging open.

CUT BACK TO:

VORTEX.

A figure has appeared in front of the black void.

The humming grows more vigorous.

A man, tall as a bear and with the build of a mighty viking.

Clad in black robes with long black hair covering his face.

THE DARK MAN rides a black horse, taller and more muscular than any horse the boy has ever seen.

The horse stands. The dark man looks around the forest heavily.

CUT BACK TO:

CU OF THE BOY'S FACE.

He's shaking with terror now.

The horse begins to trot through the forest, lazily.

CUT BACK TO:

BOY'S POV:

The void has disappeared. The boy is deaf again. Only the dark man and his steed remain.

The boy watches them closely.

A crow flies over to the dark man. It lands on the dark man's arm. The dark man strokes the bird.

The man looks at the crow like it's talking to him. Reporting to him.

Then, the dark man turns his head, revealing a sliver of his face to the boy. He looks like he's caught the boy's scent.

The boy shits himself.

The crow flies off the dark man's arm as the horse turns, and trots toward the boy.

The dark man approaches.

The boy is frozen.

As the dark man approaches, the boy begins to cry.

The horse turns in front of the boy so the dark man can reach out and touch him.

The dark man's gloved hand slowly covers the boy's forehead. The boy is paralysed and can do no more than cry noiselessly.

The dark man communicates with the boy, not through words, but through touch.

QUICK CUT TO:

SHOT OF AN ENORMOUS WOODEN HORSE.

QUICK CUT TO:

SHOT OF THE BOY, CRYING

QUICK CUT TO:

THE WALLS OF A GREAT ANCIENT CITY.

Ancient greece. A hot, sun-scorched land.



The drawbridge slowly lowers.

QUICK CUT TO:

THE BOY.

He sees it all. Through the palm of the dark man.

QUICK CUT TO:

SHOT OF THE FARM ANIMALS, BLACKENED AND ROTTING.

QUICK CUT TO:

SHOT OF A CROW, FEASTING ON A CORPSE.

It's bloody beak.

The crow's black eyes like a vortex.

QUICK CUT TO:

THE BOY.

QUICK CUT TO:

SHOT OF A CARCASS, BUGS FEASTING ON IT.

We see a time lapse of the carcass, turning to a dried up skeleton within a second.

QUICK CUT TO:

SHOT OF THE WOODEN HORSE.

In flames. A gargantuan structure of fire.

QUICK CUT TO:

THE ANCIENT WALLED CITY.

In flames, shimmering in the hot, dusty landscape.

QUICK CUT TO:

THE BOY.

QUICK CUT TO:

SHOT OF THE TROJAN HORSE.

In flames one second, then another second, rats are crawling out in thousands and scampering out in every direction.

QUICK CUT TO:

THE BOY.

QUICK CUT TO:

A PILE OF BLACKENED, ROTTING CORPSES.

Maggots, rats and crows feasting on the bodies.

We see a flash of the corpses on fire.

Then the feasting animals and insects.

CUT TO:

THE BOY.

He understands. He is the trojan horse of the dark man's plague.

Now the boy can move, he looks up, the dark man is gone. The horse is gone. It's daytime.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The boy is in shock. He curls up in a ball and shivers.

JUMP CUT TO:

WIDE SHOT OF FOREST.

The boy appears tiny. He gets up and walks, through the trees.

EXT. OUTSIDE TOWN - DAY

The boy appears out of the woods. The town is in front of him. He walks forward.

A guard in a watchtower spots the boy. He aims his weapon at him and yells at the other guards noiselessly.

There is commotion.

They look down at the boy and think of what to do.

CUT TO:

BOY'S POV:

The gates of the town open slowly.

On the other side, guards are standing with their guns aimed.

In the background, the townspeople watch curiously.

CUT TO:

SHOT OF THE BOY.

In a cage. On the gallows in front of the whole town.

Boy's POV:

The priest is in front of him, in the background, the townspeople mouth medieval slurs at the boy.

The priest bends down and speaks to the boy. He shakes his head in disapproval.

The boy does not react.

The priest stands up and allows the cage to be lifted by ropes and hung in the town square for all to see.

The townspeople throw rocks at the boy. He flinches as they bounce off the rusty metal cage.

The cage sways from side to side.

The boy tries his best to get comfortable.

CUT TO:

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

The townspeople have left the boy. He sits in his cage, shivering. He's hungry.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The people go about their business. Rarely acknowledging the boy with grimaces and looks of disgust.

Two young boys appear in the town square and throw rocks at the boy, laughing.

The boy tries to ignore them.

Then, there is a great commotion.

A number of guards and other figures of authority, including the townpriest, scurry through the town square, carrying the body of a guard.

The body is black and rotting.

The body is carried to the apothecary.

The boy watches as people crowd the door of the apothecary.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

The boy sits, freezing, starving.

He watches one of the guards in a parapet at eye level with the boy.

The guard coughs, he can hardly stand. He collapses.

The boy squints and sees the guard lying against the wall.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The boy is awoken by the cage, swaying back and forth. He's being lowered down.

As he's being lowered, he looks at where the guard had collapsed during the night. The body is not there.

The boy looks down, the priest and a number of guards stand below him.

He is lowered onto the wooden platform of the gallows and the cage is opened.

The guards drag the boy's tired body out of the cage and through the town, following the priest.

INT. APOTHECARY - DAY

There are a great number of rotting corpses outside the apothecary.

There is a plague doctor who attempts to speak to the boy.

The boy sees only a mask, like an animal, swaying side to side.

The priest flails his arms and yells at the boy.

The boy does not react.

He is given water. He guzzles it down.

Then he is beaten to a pulp by guards and put back in his cage.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

More bodies are left outside the apothecary.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

A hearsecart led by four horses carries more than two dozen corpses out of the town to a mass burial.

The boy's POV:

A funeral on the hill with the cross.

The priest speaks at it. He coughs. He has a fit of coughing. He falls over and dies. The townspeople scream, crying. The boy does not hear.

A beat.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

The boy is so hungry he tries to eat the flesh of his own fingers.

He cries.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The priest is dead.

The guards are dead.

About 20 people remain. They rob and kill each other. Some flee on horses. Some die of the plague. Their bodies are left in the street.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - NIGHT

A few people wander around the town, drinking, yabbering and cursing each other.

The boy is forgotten about.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - DAY

The last man standing. An old man. His skin is black.

He wanders through the town in a wolf skin coat, hung over.

He falls over and dies in the middle of the town square.

The town is lifeless.

The boy sits in his cage.

EXT. TOWN SQUARE - SUNSET

The dark man rides into town on his horse. He looks around lazily.

The boy stares down at him and rattles his cage.

Like he expects to be released. Rewarded. Respected.

The dark man does not even acknowledge the boy. Or what the boy has done.

CUT TO:

THE BOY'S POV:

The dark man rides out of town and disappears behind the town walls.

The boy is left. Freezing, starving, alone and worthless.

CUT TO BLACK.