The Barrier Closing In (working title)

The protagonist (who will henceforth be referred to as “you”) is a baker. That being, they make food with their hands.

You live in this small town which is only getting smaller. A barrier which separates the corporeal realm from a void-like realm beyond is closing in. As far as anyone knows, there’s no escape. People are losing family members, neighbors, etc. as the barrier inches closer. The people caught on the outside just seem to vanish. Never heard from or seen again. There’s also sightings of these strange creatures who peer over the barrier, palms pressed together in prayer.

On the day the game begins, you are awoken in the night by something. You crawl out of bed, head outside, and see, over the wall, one of the creatures that people have spoken about. You don’t know what else to do but stare. “Malignant,” it seems to say to you. But you aren’t sure, because its voice is so odd. Then, it leaves. You see, where it stood, a small hole in the barrier. You can investigate this if you like.

Fading to the next scene, it’s midday now, and the remaining townsfolk have gathered. They’re suicidally worried.

“We’ve put this off for too long, now,” says the de facto leader. “It’s too late. Whatever’s out there, it’s going to swallow us, whole.”

“I’ve lost my husband,” another says. “My husband, my daughter, my mother, to whatever that…thing is.”

“We’ve all lost people,” says another, “your grief is no more than any other.”

“The question isn’t who has lost more,” says the de facto leader, “the question is, should we not end it now?”

“What do you mean?” says the widow, “as in…”

“Suicide, yes,” the leader says. “Deny whatever it is the pleasure of consuming.”

At this point, you can say “yes,” or “no.”

**If yes**

“I think it’s for the best,” you say. “We die by the barrier, or we die by our own hands.”

“So there’s no hope? No hope to change anything?” says the widow.

“I don’t think so. No.”

“That’s what I thought, as well,” says the de facto leader. “Let us take this last night, and tomorrow, those who wish to leave this world can do so.”

“I can’t do it,” says the widow. “I won’t do it. There must be something. Something we can take back.”

**If no**

“I saw one of the creatures,” you say.

“The prayers?” the widow says.

“Yes,” you say. “It called me ‘malignant.’”

“Malignant?” the de facto leader says.

“It viewed me as some sort of tumor. I imagine it views all of us the same.”

“And what does this mean?”

“It means we can’t let something which views us as no more than tumors destroy our hope.”

“Thank God,” says the widow. “Someone with reason.”

“It’s foolish to believe the ant, given it has enough hope, will ever overcome the foot of an elephant. But fine, those who wish to perish by the barrier, do so. Those who wish for some agency in their passing, take this last night. We will congregate here tomorrow morning.”