

MARIONETTE

Written by

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YA / Feature Film / Dark Fantasy
Approx. 95 pages

A Marionette only moves because someone taught it how to.

BLACK

A woman's whispered voice HISSES through the darkness.

MARY (O.S.)
Are you listening?

The voice draws nearer.

MARY (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Are you really listening?

A PAINTED CARDBOARD FULL MOON fills the screen, hanging like a giant, unblinking eye.

MARY (V.O.)
Long ago, Greyshore lived in fear.

Below it, a Marionette Village unfolds — Greyshore.

The village sits cradled by a deep blue painted sea. Still for now, but vast.

PUPPET VILLAGERS emerge from their cottages, performing evening rituals: Fishermen mend nets. Children play in cobblestone streets. Mothers prepare fish.

MARY (V.O.)
Once upon a time, Greyshore was bound by the sea. We marked time by its tides. It shaped our days, and gave us life.

A low RUMBLE. The sea snaps. A painted wave slams against the shore.

MARY (V.O.)
But the sea was never our friend.

The villagers freeze. A second wave crashes. Louder.

Fishermen and mothers drop their tasks, ushering children inside. Wooden shutters CLATTER shut against the darkening sky.

MARY
We feared its moods. How it could turn, without reason, without warning.

Families huddle by painted fires, praying.

MARY (V.O.)
Every night we whispered quiet
prayers, hoping the sea would
remain merciful.

Another CRASH. Louder.

MARY (V.O.)
But the sea was restless, and did
not care for prayers.

Then another. Closer.

The sea ROARS—CRASH. CRASH. CRASH.

Greyshore trembles as an eerie wind HOWLS through the night
sky.

Suddenly, a wave rises in front of the moon, eclipsing it from
view and towering over the tiny village!

MARY (V.O.)
It's wrath tore apart homes and
dragged our children away.

The wave CRASHES over Greyshore. Puppet Villagers tumble.
Homes collapse. Villagers disappear beneath painted water.

The storm gradually calms. The sea stills. Silence.

Puppet Villagers rise quietly, mourning those lost.

MARY (V.O.)
But one day, the sea offered
Greyshore a gift...

A PAINTED CARDBOARD SUN lifts behind grey clouds, shining
golden light on all of greyshore.

A new wave parts gently, leaving behind a **SMALL BOY**
MARIONETTE tangled in driftwood.

Puppet Villagers approach with caution, **WHISPERING**
uncertainties.

MARY (V.O.)
The sea had stolen our sons and
daughters and in its wake, it
left... an orphan boy only known by
the name stitched on his shirt:

INSERT - SHIRT DETAIL: A single word stitched into the
fabric: GRIMM.

A mother kneels first, trembling. She brushes sand from the boy's cheek, the way she would if he was one of her own. Others press closer, half in-prayer, half-inspection.

MARY (V.O.)

Was it mercy? A bargain? A cruel joke? No one knew. Only that he was here, and we were not ready to lose another.

A father lifts the boy-Grimm from the driftwood.

MARY (V.O.)

We took him in. Fed him, clothed him, called him one of our own.

He passes mothers mourning their children.

MARY (V.O.)

But grief is a stubborn teacher, and Grimm learned quickly.

Thunder RUMBLES. A second storm approaches. The sky darkens.

Puppet Villagers scatter, clanging doors, clutching children.

MARY (V.O.)

And when another storm came, as they always do, the villagers only knew panic.

The Boy-Grimm Marionette gathers ropes. Wood. Stone. He starts to build something. Alone.

MARY (V.O.)

But this time, Greyshore didn't face death alone. The Boy-Grimm built barriers. Dug trenches. Reinforced homes.

One by one, the villagers join him. They hammer, lift, pull together.

A WALL rises behind the village. The sea disappears behind it.

MARY (V.O.)

Together, they built a barrier. One that would block the sea completely

A vast shadow swallows the sky. Darkness spreads across Greyshore. Puppet Villagers look up, paralyzed.

A monstrous wave towers above, blocking out the stars...

CRASH! It hits the wall. Dust shakes loose.

Another wave. CRASH! The village reels, lanterns flicker.

A third. Louder, heavier. BOOOOOM!!! It slams down like judgment.

But the wall, somehow, holds.

Puppet Villagers stand beneath the barrier, still staring. But no one cheers. They just listen to the barrier creak, and the waves still pushing, somewhere, out of sight.

MARY (V.O.)

The Boy-Grimm was right. The barrier saved them.

The storm clears. The sea stills. Silence.

MARY (V.O.)

Greyshore learned to trust the boy. We gave him our faith. And in return, he vowed to give us safety.

Puppet villagers gather around the Boy-Grimm, kneeling in silent awe.

MARY (V.O.)

That was when everything changed for the humble seaside town of Greyshore.

Then... the Boy-Grimm marionette doll begins to grow-

Strings pull tight with a sudden SNAP. Limbs CRACK like splintering bone. Joints twist the wrong way as his frame stretches upward, becoming MAYOR GRIMM right before our eyes.

MARY (V.O.)

He was no longer the cruel joke from the sea. He was Mayor Grimm of Greyshore. And he taught the townsfolk order. Harmony through obedience. And strength in unity.

The now Mayor Grimm Marionette stands at a podium-like platform with villagers below.

MARY (V.O.)

(hopeful)

Under Mayor Grimm's guidance, Greyshore prospered. There were rules to follow. Roles to play. Everyone had a place.

(MORE)

MARY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
Everyone belonged. And if we all
agreed, there was nothing to fear.

All around the stage of Mayor Grimm and the villagers, the world changes: The barrier grows taller, fields bloom, homes rise stronger, similar.

The stage freezes in a final, HEROIC TABLEAU. Then, all marionettes and puppets collapse under their own weight, no longer controlled.

A FADED BLUE CURTAIN drags shut across the miniature stage.

A hush. Then, soft and civilized POLITE APPLAUSE.

EXT. GREYSHORE VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS (REALITY)

We pull back from the miniature marionette stage to reveal-

MARY CORBIN (16), dark hair, our gentle but burdened storyteller, standing behind her handcrafted marionette box. She carefully packs away her puppets.

Greyshore surrounds her. Same village. Same buildings. But concrete now, clinical. Grey instead of gold. The story's warmth has faded.

The WALL looms in the distance. Pale grey. Seamless. It rises behind the village, higher than any building and wider than the horizon. It swallows the sky.

Dozens of townsfolk stand in neat rows, still clapping-mechanically, as if programmed.

EXT. EDGE OF THE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

A low, cracked cobblestone wall. FINN CORBIN (11), dark hair and brown eyes, presses his chin to the stone and curls his fingers over the edge, watching.

From his vantage point, he observes-

The square beyond. Townsfolk disperse in silence. Mary stands alone, nearly finished packing.

Then, a FIGURE appears on the far side of the square. Finn ducks out of sight, then runs.

EXT. GREYSHORE VILLAGE SQUARE - CONTINUOUS

Mary gently adjusts the last puppet. She rewinds the mechanism- Mayor Grimm's marionette shrinks back into Boy-Grimm.

A YOUNG BOY slouches past, arms folded, unimpressed.

Mary lifts the Boy-Grimm marionette. It mimics the boy precisely: slouched, arms crossed... then abruptly straightens with exaggerated pride

The boy huffs a laugh, unfolds his arms, stands a little taller, and wanders off. Mary smiles back.

A TALL SHADOW spills across Mary and the puppet.

GOEBBELS (O.S.)
(syrupy)
Beautiful work, as always, Mary.

Startled, Mary fumbles the marionette onto the ground.

GOEBBELS (50s), stands a few paces behind. Tall, composed, wearing a practiced smile.

MARY
(caught off guard)
Oh. Mr. Goebbels-

GOEBBELS
The Mayor sends his gratitude
(beat)
And his admiration. Few can hold a crowd like you, Mary.

MARY
Thank you, sir, I-

She kneels to pick up the marionette, But Goebbels crouches before she can. His knees crack as he lowers himself.

GOEBBELS
Funny things, aren't they? You can't even see the strings.

He picks up the Boy-Grimm marionette off the floor and looks it in the eye. Then brushes off the dust.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
And yet...
(slight smile)
Here he is... waiting for someone to move him.

He dangles it toward her. Mary hesitates, then takes it.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
Impeccable craftsmanship. Your
mother taught you?

MARY
My father.

That hangs in the air. Goebbels studies her a moment.

GOEBBELS
Of course.

He brushes a fleck of dust from his coat.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
He had strong hands, didn't he?
Always building something.

He steps closer, not threatening, but somehow always too close. He runs a finger lightly across the marionette boxes edge.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
And always so many ideas.
(thin smile)
You Corbin's are so full of ideas,
aren't you?

MARY
We just want to help.

One of Boy-Grimm's puppet strings hangs loose, frayed near the shoulder.

GOEBBELS
Ah. This one's wearing thin.

He plucks the frayed string between two fingers, examines it.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
That's the trouble with puppets.
Once they wear-

Then SNAPS it off in one smooth motion.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
-It's best to replace them early.
Before the whole thing unravels.

Mary stays silent. He straightens his coat, standing up nice and tall.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

Good job tonight, Mary. Greyshore
relies on voices like yours.

He smiles. Warm. Practiced. Then turns and walks off, whistling
something that might've once been a lullaby.

Then-

From behind the cracked wall, a soft whisper.

FINN (O.S.)

(loud whisper)

Mary!

Relief flashes across her face. In one motion she swings the
marionette box onto her back and hurries toward the edge of the
square.

INSERT: The broken puppet string rests limp on the cobblestone.
A breath of wind stirs it-

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. GREYSHORE STREETS - NIGHT

Mary strides through the silent streets of Greyshore, puppet box
bouncing on her back. Finn scurries beside her, half a step
behind.

Identical concrete houses line the path- windows shuttered,
doors bolted. A warped sound HUMS from a rusted loudspeaker
overhead.

Faded posters cling to the walls:

- *"A BUSY MIND IS A HAPPY MIND"* - bold, black lettering on beige
paper. A dotted line of worker silhouettes march like ants.

- *"TRUTH IS WHAT STAYS TOLD."* - torn halfway down. It's unclear
if it was ripped in defiance or left to decay.

FINN

-You cut the best part again.

MARY`11

So you were listening then?

Finn glances down a side street, brow furrowed like he's
hearing things no one else does.

FINN
(deadly serious)
I'm always listening.

MARY
God help us.

FINN
I have highly attuned senses, you know.

MARY
You eat crayons, Finn.

FINN
That was once. And I was four.

MARY
You were eight.

FINN
It was a dare!

MARY
From yourself.

FINN
Dad always used to say you've gotta trust your gut.

MARY
And look where that got you. Now you have a gut full of crayons.

FINN
And courage.

MARY
Mostly crayons.

They walk a few steps in familiar silence. Then, out of nowhere, they both laugh. Real. Like it caught them off guard.

MARY (CONT'D)
What was it, then? The part I missed?

FINN
The second storm.

Mary doesn't respond. She doesn't know this version.

FINN (CONT'D)
When it crashes and wipes out Mayor
Grimm!

MARY
(snapping)
Finn!

She quickly scans the street. Eyes darting to the windows,
the shadows. Her voice drops to a whisper.

MARY (CONT'D)
(whisper)
Keep your voice down. Someone could
be listening.
(beat)
You know that's not part of the
approved story.

FINN
Well, it should be.
(beat)
Mr. Rowan says Dad's stories had
teeth.

Finn flashes his teeth in a crooked grin— playful, but
there's something behind it.

FINN (CONT'D)
That's why people kept coming back.

They keep moving. Mary shifts the puppet box on her
shoulders. Finn walks beside her, kicking at a loose stone.

FINN (CONT'D)
... 'cause it was like dad's stories
knew something about you... that
you didn't even know yet.

This lingers between them.

MARY
(dismissive)
Mr. Rowan says a lot.

FINN
Yeah. But he remembers. Better than
you do.

They reach a narrow lane that splits off the main street.

Mary peeks around the corner, checking for something.

She turns back—

Finn isn't beside her.

She spots him a few paces behind, frozen, staring up at something on the wall.

Finn bows theatrically.

FINN (CONT'D)

Thank you, Great Wall, for existing.

INSERT: A FRESH PROPAGANDA POSTER PLASTERED TO A WALL.

"THE WALL IS FOR YOU."

A happy child smiles up at the towering cold-concrete wall.

Mary strides back, yanks his sleeve, hauling him into the side lane.

MARY

(sharp whisper)

Come on. Do you want night patrol on us?

A distant loudspeaker crackles.

LOUDSPEAKER

...curfew commences in twenty minutes...

They vanish down the shadowed lane.

EXT. FISHER'S ROW - NIGHT

They slip into the part of Greyshore that's been left to rot.

It might've once bustled with fishermen and life. Now everything bends, cracks, and creaks, worn down by years of sea-salt before the wall.

A crooked shack hunches at the alley's end, paint flaking, roof sagging under its own weight. A broken fence. Windows blacked out with cloth.

Mary leads Finn through the gate. Glances over her shoulder. Then:

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK... KNOCK.

MR. ROWAN (O.S.)
(a smoker's rasp)
Mary... in you come, girl.

She lifts a loose panel of timber, more hidden hatch than door.
They duck inside.

INT. THE CORBIN'S HOUSE - BACK ROOM - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS

Dim light. Low ceiling. A single oil-lamp flickers in the corner. Books line the walls in uneven stacks. Rusted spoons in chipped mugs. Salt curls the edges of old nautical charts

MR. ROWAN (late 60s) lies on a low cot near a sealed-off back window. He's buried under layers of mismatched blankets, sunken into the room like he's become part of it.

Mary sets the broth on a stool beside Mr. Rowan, then kneels to adjust his pillows, tucking one, straightening another.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)
Extra salt. Now this is real
medicine, not that slop they're
giving us these days.

At the foot of the cot, Finn fishes in his pocket and produces a glass MARBLE the color of deep ocean blue, almost black.

FINN
I found you another, Mr. Rowan.

He places it in Mr. Rowan's hand.

FINN (CONT'D)
This one's got a swirl in it. Like
a storm.

Mr. Rowan studies it in the lamplight. Finn leans in, just a little, watching him.

Mr. Rowan smiles, then slowly shakes his head.

MR. ROWAN
You think I don't see what you're
doing?
(beat)
No stories tonight, boy.

Finn leans back, slightly disappointed, though he masks it as best he can.

As Mr. Rowan sets the marble on the sill, Mary rises and moves through the room, tidying without purpose, just to keep her hands busy.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)

Sit down, girl, have a rest for god's sake. You're just like ya father-couldn't sit still even if you tried.

(laughs)

She ignores him and folds a towel draped over the chair.

MARY

A busy mind is a happy mind.

SPLASH – Mr. Rowan drops his spoon into the broth. Freezes.

MR. ROWAN

What'd you just say?

MARY

What?

MR. ROWAN

What the hell did you just say?

MARY

I don't know. It's just something people say-

BANG! He slams his hand on the bedside table. Mary stiffens. She doesn't look at him. The room goes quiet.

MR. ROWAN

Do you remember what your dad used to tell you!?

She doesn't answer. Maybe she doesn't remember.

FINN

(quiet)

Keep the puppet busy, and it won't look up...

Mr. Rowan nods. *That's it.*

MR. ROWAN

It sounds harmless now. But say it enough, and soon you'll start believing the Wall is here to protect us.

(MORE)

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)

That you're safer when you don't ask questions.

(beat)

And then you'll pass it down to him.

He nods toward Finn, who watches from the foot of the cot.

MARY

I didn't mean it like that.

MR. ROWAN

Doesn't matter. Grimm don't need you to mean it. He just needs you to repeat it.

A long silence.

MARY

I'm just... tired, Rowan. Goebells has me rewriting half the town's ledgers—Cleaning up *inconsistencies*. Birth records, disappearance logs... even my own stories.

She lets out a dry, laughless breath. They both watch her closely.

MARY (CONT'D)

Do you remember Sarah Milburn? We shared a desk at the Writing House. She used to write these... strange, beautiful stories. The kind that got under your skin. Stories that moved you and made you ask questions.

(soft)

Stuff I could never write.

She shakes her head, half in disbelief.

MARY (CONT'D)

Last week, I found one of her stories buried in the archive. Filed anonymous, but I knew it was hers. I just knew. When I asked about her, they told me she was never enrolled. Like she never existed.

Her voice catches slightly, but she keeps going.

MARY (CONT'D)

I don't know. Maybe I'm wrong.
Maybe I made her up.

A silence.

MARY (CONT'D)

But then why do I remember her? Her
stories. How real they felt- how
they meant something.

She exhales. Her shoulders sag slightly, as if some part of her
has come loose.

MARY (CONT'D)

I don't know what's real anymore. I
don't know if I ever did.

The anger drains from Mr. Rowan's face. He nods, slowly, as
if just now understanding how much she's had to hold
together.

Mary doesn't say anything else. Her breath is shallow.
Shoulders slack. There's something raw about the way she
stands now.

Finn shifts slightly, like he wants to speak, but thinks
better of it.

MR. ROWAN

Sit down, Mary.

She hesitates. Then lowers herself onto the chair by the cot.
She doesn't meet his eyes.

A silence settles. RAIN TAPS against the window. Had it just
started? Or had it been there all along?

Mr. Rowan leans back, pulling the blanket up to his chest. He
stares out the window, unsure of what to say. Then his eyes
drift to the MARBLE on the sill, seeing it differently now.

He picks it up, holds it to the lamplight. Rolls it slowly
between his fingers. Inside: faint swirls, like storm clouds
trapped in glass.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)

You remind me so much of your
father.

His gaze drops to the marble in his hand.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)

He wanted answers too.

Mary finally lifts her eyes. Her expression is unreadable, but she's listening now.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)

One night when you two were just kids, we were down at the docks. Air felt thick, and smelled of salt and something else... fear, maybe. Your father had this look in his eyes. Said he'd been hearing things. People sayin' they were gonna shut down the boats. Block off parts of the shoreline. Said it was to keep us safe.

He almost smiles.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)

But there was already talk goin' round. Boats comin' back empty. Fishermen missing. Entire families disappearing overnight. People said it was the sea. That it was dangerous. But your father-he knew better. He knew it wasn't the sea we had to be afraid of.

Mr. Rowan pauses, turning the marble again. Slower now. Finn stiffens. His voice drops, like he's not sure whether to keep going.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)

We were loading nets when we saw them... They weren't even hiding it, dragging someone from their home. A friend of your father's. He watched them. Watched every step. Could've said something. Done something. We all could've.

The shack groans faintly in the wind.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)

He told me later he was thinkin' of you and Finn. Thought if he stayed quiet he could keep you safe.

He looks between them both. Mary's eyes drop. Finn fidgets with the cuff of his sleeve.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)

So he stopped askin' questions. Stopped tellin' stories, too. Kept his head down best he could.

(MORE)

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)
Figured if he didn't stir the pot,
they'd leave him be.

Mr. Rowan remembers what happens next before he says it.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)
But truth is... they already had
their eye on him. He'd always said
too much. Always poked where they
didn't want him pokin'. His
stories—

He lets out a breath, weary.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)
They made people feel things.
Things Grimm didn't want 'em
feelin'.

He shifts slightly in the blankets

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
He thought maybe bein' quiet would be
enough. But it wasn't. Not after they
took your mother.

Mary flinches, just slightly. But she doesn't look away. Finn
shifts, eyes fixed on the floor.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)
After that... he changed. Didn't say
much, but you could feel it.
Like he'd been lit from the inside.
He was done pretendin'.

MR. ROWAN (CONT'D)
And that's when they came for him—

KNOCK.

KNOCK.

KNOCK.

The sound echoes through the shack. Dull. Hollow. Heavy.

No one moves. The rain presses on, steady as ever. Then—

KNOCK.

KNOCK.

KNOCK.

MARY
(low, urgent)
Hide him. Now.

Mary jolts up out of instinct. Finn doesn't question, he's already moving.

INT. CORBIN'S HOUSE - ENTRYWAY - NIGHT

The old wooden door CREAKS open.

Standing in the glow of a stormy night- GOEBBELS.

Impeccably dressed, holding his hat in one hand, the other relaxed at his side. He's drenched, yet he seems untouched by the weather. He smiles warmly, as if dropping by for tea.

GOEBBELS
Apologies for the hour, Mary. I do
hope I'm not disturbing. Might I come
in for just a moment?

Mary hesitates. Then steps back

MARY
Of course.

He enters like he owns the place.

INT. CORBIN HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Rain TAPS the roof overhead. Quiet. Constant.

Goebbels strolls into the living room. The space is modest and warm.

Mary closes the door behind him, her hands knot behind her back. She moves through the room, lighting the scattered candles one by one, making it seem as if she's been here all along.

His eyes drift, collecting details. He's not being subtle about it either.

- A bowl of broth on the table, still steaming faintly.
- Her FATHER'S DESK broods in the corner. On it, an old marionette rests beside scattered pages.
- A damp MAN'S OVERCOAT hangs by the door.

Mary stiffens as she spots the trail of MUDDY PRINTS across the floorboards. Quickly, she nudges a small rug over them with her foot.

Goebbels doesn't say a word. But his glance lingers a moment too long. He saw. She's almost certain of it.

He offers a pleasant, practiced smile. Then turns, as if nothing happened.

GOEBBELS

(sniffing the air
pleasantly)

Mm, something smells wonderful. I'm
intruding on your supper hour, it
seems.

MARY

(quickly)

Not at all, sir. Just a simple
broth... Please, make your self at
home.

He offers a thin smile, slipping off his gloves and tucking them away. His polished shoes CLICK softly as he wanders. Mary follows, careful to keep her distance.

GOEBBELS

You've kept the place well.

He pauses by the side table and picks up the marionette gently by its strings. It's an old carved jester with faded paint.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

Did you make this?

MARY

(swallowing nervously)

It belonged to my father.

Goebells raises his eyebrows with polite interest, delicately bobbing the puppet once before setting it down.

GOEBBELS

Ah, your late father. A talented
man, from what I remember.

(meeting her eyes)

And an esteemed writer, too, yes?

Mary's jaw tightens at the mention, but she nods.

MARY

Yes. He was.

GOEBBELS

I was so sorry to hear of his disappearance. A loss to Greyshore's literary circle.

Mary forces a thin, polite smile in return.

MARY

Thank you, sir.

Goebbels drifts to the old desk, tracing a finger along the dusted wood.

GOEBBELS

This was his desk?

Mary hesitates as he moves behind the desk without waiting for an answer.

MARY

(quietly)

Yes... it was.

GOEBBELS

May I?

He is already pulling out the chair. He sinks into the leather chair-her father's-with an air of familiarity. Mary remains standing opposite, stiff.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

You know, your father and I spoke a few times

(smiling up at her)

He had great admirations for your talents.

MARY

(surprised, wary)

I... I didn't know that

GOEBBELS

Oh indeed. That is actually why I'm here. Congratulations are in order, Mary.

He reaches into his coat, retrieves a letter, and hands it to her. A Greyshore seal marks the fold.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

(wide smile)

You've been chosen to write the Jubilee address.

Her fingers knot behind her back. She forces them still, reaches for the letter, trying to keep her hands from shaking. She nods.

MARY

Thank you, sir... That is very kind.

Goebbels peers up at her, a look of concern on his face.

GOEBBELS

You look a bit pale, my dear. I hope the assignment won't cause too much stress? Writer's fatigue can creep up on one, especially under pressure.

MARY

(forcing a tiny laugh)
I'm fine, sir, it's just been a long day.

GOEBBELS

(pleased smile)
Excellent. The Mayor is very eager to read what you craft for the Jubilee. It must be inspiring—truly from the heart. After all, a speech like this will set the tone for the entire town's celebration.

Mary nods, feeling the weight of his gaze.

MARY

Of course. I understand completely.

GOEBBELS

Splendid.

He rises from the chair with a fluid motion. His eyes drift toward the kitchen as the savory scent of the broth continues to waft.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

Might I trouble you for a drink? That aroma has made me realize how thirsty I am.

MARY

Oh, certainly. I have coffee, or tea—

GOEBBELS

Actually, a glass of milk would be wonderful, if you have it.

Mary blinks at the unexpected request, but recovers quickly.

MARY

Of course. Please, excuse me a moment.

She turns to the kitchen. A flicker of anxiety crosses her face. Leaving him alone, even briefly, unsettles her. Goebbels just smiles and waves her off.

GOEBBELS

Take your time.

Once Mary disappears into the kitchen, Goebbels's pleasant facade fades. He rises and circles the room, hands clasped behind his back. His gaze sharpens, sweeping over every detail.

He stops by the coat rack near the door. Beside Mary's cardigan hangs a man's overcoat, much too large to be Finns.

Goebbels rubs the wool between his fingers. His lips curl, faintly amused.

From the kitchen: the CLINK of a glass, the fridge door opening and closing.

Goebbels releases the coat and glides toward a half-open door at the end of the room.

It leads to a shadowed hallway. He tilts his head. Listens.

The house is still... until a single floorboard CREAKS in the back hall. Goebbels's eyes shift toward the sound. He stands motionless. One brow lifts.

Mary returns with a tray and a tall glass of milk. Goebbels now stands in the middle of the room, a few steps from where he was.

MARY

Here you go, sir.

Goebbels turns back to her, taking the glass from the tray. Mary watches his every move as he lifts the milk in a casual toast.

GOEBBELS

To your health... and your creativity.

He takes a slow sip, eyeing her over the rim of the glass.
The seconds drag as Goebbels savors the milk.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
(smacking his lips
lightly)
Excellent. Nothing like pure milk
for clarity of mind, wouldn't you
agree?

MARY
(quietly)
Yes.

Goebbels strolls away from her again, still holding the glass
by the rim with two fingers. He seems restless, or perhaps
simply nosy, as he wanders towards the shadowed hallway
again. Peering into the darkness.

A beat of tense silence. Mary watches him intently.

Goebbels begins meandering back toward her. Stops. Slowly, he
looks down at the floor.

Mary's breath catches. Her eyes flick to the partially
revealed MUDDY PRINT on the wooden floor beneath, then back
to Goebbels.

GOEBBELS
Have you had any visitors recently?

MARY
(quickly, too quickly)
Visitors? No... no sir. None at
all.

She's crumbling.

Goebbels hums skeptically under his breath. His knees CRACK
as he crouches to pinch the corner of the rug between his
fingers.

GOEBBELS
Forgive me, I only ask because...
it seems someone dragged in a bit
of mud.

He flips back the rug, revealing a trail of muddy boot prints
leading partway down the hall before vanishing into shadow.

Mary feels the blood drain from her face. Her hands are
clenched so hard her nails bite into her palms.

MARY
I-I must have-

THUD. THUD. THUD. THUD.

Footsteps. From the dark at the end of the hallway, someone bolts. Too fast. Too loud.

Goebbels stands quickly, letting the rug fall back into place. But his eyes stay fixed on the hallway.

GOEBBELS
(slipping back into a
polite tone)
Ahh, of course...

It's Finn. He stands in the darkened doorway.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
Finn Corbin. How clumsy of me to
assume otherwise. You're taller
than I remember.

Finn doesn't reply. Goebbels turns to Mary with an almost paternal smile.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
You know, I have quite a keen eye
for detail. Occupational habit.
It's both a blessing and a curse,
I'm afraid... at least for those
around me.

Mary forces a brittle little laugh. Goebbels doesn't laugh. He merely cocks his head, studying her pale face.

Goebbels holds her gaze a moment longer, then blinks and steps back, sliding his gloves from his pocket.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)
Forgive me. I won't keep you any
longer. Big week ahead, Mary.
Jubilee and all.

He pulls on his gloves, one finger at a time, heading for the door. Mary trails him, her knees threatening to buckle with each step.

At the door, Goebbels picks up his hat and adjusts his coat. The performance is over. Mary musters the strength to meet his eyes one last time.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

Thank you for the hospitality. The milk was perfect.

MARY

(softly)

It was my pleasure, sir.

He turns toward the door, hand already on the knob. Then stops. Still facing away:

GOEBBELS

(almost casual)

Oh... I almost forgot.

He turns back to face her. A thin smile.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

We're looking for an old friend of your fathers... Francis. You wouldn't happen to know where he is, would you? Francis Rowan.

Mary doesn't blink. Her breath catches. Finn's jaw clenches in the hallway. A silent dare in his eyes. Goebbels' eyes flick to him.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

(to Finn)

You've got your father's fire. Shame it never did him much good.

He holds their gaze just long enough for it to become unbearable—

Then opens the door. The rain SWELLS. A gust of cold air moves through the room.

GOEBBELS (CONT'D)

(polite)

Take care, Miss Corbin.

Mary stands frozen.

INT. CORBIN HOUSE - UNDERFLOOR ROOM - SIMULTANEOUS

We hear the door close above.

In the dark beneath the house, wedged between pipes and stacked crates, Francis Rowan sits still. Holding his breath. Far too old to be hiding down here.

FADE OUT.

EXT. GREYSHORE - DAWN

The first sunlight hits the top of the Wall. Seabirds perch along it's rim.

Sunlight doesn't reach the town yet. The sun needs to rise higher to clear the barrier. For now, everything below remains grey. Greyshore mains in shadow.

INT. CORBIN HOUSE - BACK ROOM - DAWN

Rowan sleeps on the cot, blanket pulled to his chin. He lightly SNORES.

Mary, already dressed, places the Jubilee Letter into a small satchel, then tightens the strap.

Across the room, Finn kneels beside the puppet box. He lifts the Jester Marionette and studies it. The paint is chipped at the chin. A string has been retied with fishing line.

Glancing to make sure Mary's not watching, he tucks it beneath the others.

Mary crosses to Mr. Rowan's cot. Kneels. Gently pulls the blanket higher, tucking it near his shoulders. The old man murmurs but doesn't wake.

She pauses. Watches him a moment. Then pulls a pencil from her satchel and writes on a scrap of paper:

Be back by curfew.

She sets it on the stool beside his bed.

Behind her, Finn stands ready with the puppet box in his arms.

Mary nods to Finn. He moves to the back door and eases it open.

EXT. FISHER'S ROW - DAWN

Mist hangs low. Mary and Finn step from the crooked doorway, shutting the panel behind them.

They head toward the distant Wall, two small figures against its vast outline.

A lone gull CRIES from above. The morning is still.

Farther down the row, a man drags a handcart through the mist. An old woman sweeps in silence. Then-

A distant SIREN winds up far across Greyshore, echoing against the concrete. One sustained note, signaling the day has begun.

No one reacts. Mary and Finn keep walking.