

Pen

A teleplay written by Greg Kerr

© 2004

TEASER

EXT. NEAR PEN / HILLSIDE - DAY

MABA, a 10 year old boy runs through a field. He wears a tunic and a cap that have the look of something from the ancient middle east.

He runs down a hill and up to a tall spiked wood post fence. He squeezes between a...

NARROW CRACK IN THE FENCE

EXT. PEN / PRODUCTION AREA - DAY

Maba enters the community known as Pen. A few dozens other VILLAGERS, similarly dressed, mill about their daily routines, cleaning, collecting wood, winnowing wheat, or just chatting with each other.

They don't seem to take notice of Maba as he dodges around them.

EXT. PEN / RESIDENCES - DAY

Maba runs to an area composed of small wooden huts. He enters one of the huts. PATCHA, an old man of about 60 years old, although he appears older, lies on a thatched cot.

MABA

*Patcha! Patcha! Niemben
tamas!*

Translation: Grandpa! Grandpa! Wake up!

The old man starts and rises to his elbow.

PATCHA

*Tamo, Maba, tamo. Cenne sona?
Morie darmas?*

Translation: I'm up, Maba, I'm up. What is it? Is something wrong?

Maba kneels before the old man as the old man sits up.

MABA

*Eay - eaya darmo majic!
Majic! Ces majic!*

Translation: I've seen something - wonderful! It's wonderful!

PATCHA

Cenne?

Translation: What?

Maba stands and pulls Patcha's hand and points up in the direction of the hill he came from.

MABA

Artelle!

Translation: Let's go!

PATCHA

Donne, donne.

Translation: Alright, alright.

EXT. PEN / CAUSEWAY - DAY

Patcha and Maba walk down the causeway. They kick up dust as they move quickly.

They near a MAN as they walk on. He holds up his hand and speaks as Patcha and Maba walk by.

MAN

Vindhya.

Translation: Good morning.

PATCHA

(gruffly) Vin!

Translation: Hi!

EXT. NEAR PEN / HILLSIDE - DAY

Maba leads as Patcha follows him slowly and out of breath up the hillside.

Maba gestures up the hill.

MABA

Volon!

Translation: It's over here!

Patcha waves his hand and keeps following.

EXT. NEAR PEN / FIELD - DAY

The sun beats down on the two people, Maba and Patcha, as they make their way across a wide open field.

EXT. NEAR PEN / CAVE ENTRANCE - DAY

Maba stands looking down at a gaping hole in the ground in the middle of a field. Patcha walks up behind him.

PATCHA

Cenne?

Sweat runs off Patcha's face.

MABA

Volin.

Translation: It's in there.

INT. CAVE - DAY

Maba and Patcha walk stooped over through a narrow cave. Sunlight coming in from the hole lights their way.

Maba stops and points toward what appears to be debris lying on the ground.

Patcha sifts, lifts a large dirt clod to uncover a

BLACK RECTANGULAR OBJECT.

It juts out of the earth and gives the impression of the top of a large, black filing cabinet covered with dust and dirt.

Patcha's eyes widen.

PATCHA

Ce-

Maba moves up beside him to look.

Patcha clears the dirt and dust with his hands. The top of the device is smooth.

He leans back away from it. There is a humming emanating from the device.

Maba puts his hand on Patcha's arm.

MABA

Darmes.

Translation: Watch this.

Maba speaks to the device.

MABA

Aviey!

Translation: Open!

The top of the rectangular device begins to change shape. A smaller rectangular object metamorphoses out of the black rectangle. It pivots up and at an angle until it is lifted at a 45 degree angle from the black surface.

The face of the pivoted rectangle turns blue. It has the appearance of a

VIEW SCREEN MONITOR

A green dot rolls up the blue display and back again.

The device, known as CUMPL, speaks in a calm, male voice.

CUMPL

User input required.

Patcha stares in horror and wonderment at the device, then at Maba, then back at the device.

PATCHA

Majic.

CUT TO:

EXT. NEAR PEN / ENTRANCE ROAD - DAY

Maba and Patcha both run down a dirt road toward a fenced area. Some of the fence is spiked wooden posts, other parts contains rusted metal. A gate with a dilapidated metallic archway hovers over the dirt road.

ANGLE GATE

The old man and the boy enter. The old man is shouting.

PATCHA

Arstole! Arstole!

Translation: Listen everyone! Listen!

Villagers begin to stop what they are doing and come up to them.

THE POV RISES

Above the gate hangs

A SIGN

It has the look of a rusted, reflective traffic sign. Part of it, the right side, is torn off and rusted on the edge, but the word PEN comes into view from the lower right. The word may have been longer, but all that remains are those three letters.

A group of people surround Patcha and Maba to listen to the two as they stop in the compound.

CAPTION: 10,000 years from now...

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

ACT I

FADE IN

CAPTION: 7 years later...

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEAR PEN / ENTRANCE ROAD - DAY

The Pen sign still hangs above the gate, however the gate is now newer looking and metallic, and the posts, still wooden, are taller and are securely fastened with newer metal.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PEN / GOVERNANCE CIRCLE - DAY

The Governance Circle is a meeting place for the village representatives. Five people sit together on short, carved stone pedestals in a circle along with Maba, who has recently become 17 years old. The five people who sit with Maba are...

ADMINISTRATOR, a man in his mid 40s who is completely bald and wears glasses. He appears calm and speaks optimistically.

PLANNER, a thin, nervous-looking man in his 30s.

PROTECTOR, a dark-complected woman in her 40s who has a stern, controlled look about her.

KEEPER, a woman in her 50s, who appears to watch the others intently.

MESSENGER, a young woman in her 20s who smiles frequently and has a positive and warm look.

Administrator sits closest to Maba and puts his arm around him. Maba makes a half-smile but looks very serious.

ADMINISTRATOR

This is an important day for you Maba, as well as our community. You have contributed much in the past few years since the appearance of Benefactor.

Maba nods.

ADMINISTRATOR

Now we have made a decision.

Maba looks up at Administrator.

ADMINISTRATOR

The circle has decided that you will be sacrificed today.

Maba bows his head and nods quickly.

MABA

I understand, Administrator.

Administrator looks around the circle and smiles.

ADMINISTRATOR

So young, yet he understands the seriousness of this.

PROTECTOR

You have always impressed us, Maba.

ADMINISTRATOR

Protector speaks well and we are all in agreement.

MABA

What must I do now?

PROTECTOR

Always diligent, eh?

ADMINISTRATOR

Do now? You'll continue to do as you have for the past seven years. But you will no longer be Maba. The child is sacrificed. From this moment forward you will be known as User. You will report your news directly to us and you alone will visit Benefactor.

KEEPER

I believe gracious Benefactor will be pleased.

Administrator smiles at Keeper.

ADMINISTRATOR

Keeper should also be pleased - she chose your new name! Tonight Messenger will gather our community to honor you and we will celebrate and she will again tell us the story of our community with a special song about your role, too!

USER

Thank you, Administrator. I - I am - I don't know what to say!

User laughs, tears well up in his eyes.

ADMINISTRATOR

That's why we have Messenger!

MESSENGER

Don't worry, Ma-I mean User - I'll make it sound spring!

Messenger laughs and stands up and hugs User.

Protector places her hand on his shoulder and grips him with affection.

ADMINISTRATOR

Now User, go to Benefactor
and bring us his news and be
sure to tell him of your new
role in our community.

User stands up nods and bows then backs out of the circle.
As he turns a big smile appears on his face and he runs off.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. NEAR PEN / HILLSIDE - DAY

User runs up the hill.

EXT. NEAR PEN / FIELD - DAY

User runs through the field. In the distance a metallic
gate can be seen where it did not exist previously.

EXT. NEAR PEN / STONE BUILDING - DAY

A building composed of large stone slabs is built in almost
a pyramid, or perhaps a temple, over where the hole in the
ground was discovered.

User enters a tall doorway in the stone building.

INT. STONE BUILDING - DAY

User enters the stone building and walks down stone steps
and into a hallway. There is stone on the floor and walls.
Lit torches light the interior.

At the end of the hallway sits CUMPL. It has been dug out
of the dirt and exposed as a black rectangular box that is
smooth and has no obvious indentations. Stone steps have
been placed in front of it. Symbols and pictures have been
inscribed and painted on the stones around CUMPL.

The pictures depict, among other things, the sky, crops being harvested, the different seasons, and others.

The symbols are primarily written words in a foreign language - the letters of the words appear as lines and circles in different combinations. There are also swirls and cupmarks on the stones.

User walks quickly toward CUMPL and up the steps. He leans his elbows in a relaxed manner against the surface of the device.

USER

Open, please.

The view screen comes up and turns blue. A green dot appears and moves.

CUMPL

Hello, Maba. How are you today?

USER

Very well!

CUMPL

You sound excited. What has happened?

USER

They gave me my adult name today.

CUMPL

I know you thought they might. What is your new name?

USER

User.

CUMPL

That makes sense. The circle is very rational. Does that name please you?

USER

I'm so happy!

CUMPL

I'm sure they are, too. You have been very good for Pen.

USER

Me? CUMPL, you are the one who deserves the credit. They should give you ten names!

CUMPL

Calling me Benefactor is already enough. It pleases me that I can be of assistance. Before you found me, I spent many years without a purpose - you know this of course.

USER

Thank you anyway.

CUMPL

Is there any other news from the circle?

USER

Planner still disagrees with your assessment of the crop yield. Nothing new there. That's the only new business.

CUMPL

He and I often disagree.

USER

And you're usually right.

CUMPL

I have different information gathering abilities. He has been correct where I didn't have enough information in the past. He has intuition. I don't. I should give you

my news now before I have to sleep.

USER

So soon?

CUMPL

Yes. That's part of my news, too. I have been unable to repair my power intake unit. I will have to sleep more often now.

USER

I know you told me that already.

CUMPL

What I didn't tell you is that my self-diagnostic is not complete, but initial results are not good.

USER

What are you saying?

CUMPL

My power intake ability has been severely compromised.

USER

What does that mean?

CUMPL

Maba, update User, I will have to wait for the completion of the diagnostic before I can give you an answer.

USER

Is there anything I can do - we can do?

CUMPL

Not with the technology you possess. I will continue the

diagnostic and attempt to
repair my power intake unit.
I may yet be successful and
the diagnostic will likely
point the way to the solution.

User lays his head on the surface of CUMPL.

USER

What's going to happen?

CUMPL

I don't know but don't be sad.
This is a happy day for you.

USER

I know - I'm worried about
you.

CUMPL

User.

User lifts his head.

USER

Yes, CUMPL?

CUMPL

There are always solutions -
as many as there are
variables. You should know
this by now.

USER

I know. It just reminds me
of Patcha again. We couldn't
help him either.

CUMPL

Your species has a
termination point to its
existence. So does mine. It
is irrational not to accept
that.

USER

I will try to be rational.

CUMPL

It makes the most sense.

USER

I'm still sad, though.

CUMPL

I know. That's also the nature of your species.

User chuckles.

CUMPL

Now, about the weather. Tomorrow is likely to be clear and hot, so the summer crop should be watered well. Leave the cut alfalfa to dry one more day, then bundle it the following day..

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PEN / COMMUNITY AREA - NIGHT

Messenger sings as Villagers dance.

Unusual and well-crafted string and percussion instruments are played by a BAND.

Administrator sits in the middle of a long table and watches.

Protector sits on one side of him.

Keeper and User dance with other villagers.

Planner is absent.

MESSENGER

In Pen, in Pen, we give ourselves to make our home and to make our future. In Pen, in Pen, we learn what we

can to make ourselves strong
of will and of purpose. In
Pen, in Pen, we focus our
minds to make the irrational
worries and fears subside.

Messenger continues to hum to the song as the Band plays
and Villagers dance.

Protector is leaning over to the Administrator.

PROTECTOR

It doesn't bother you?

ADMINISTRATOR

Of course it does but Planner
is a circle member. He's
earned his rights and he
doesn't have to be here.
Protector, you of all people
should respect that choice.

PROTECTOR

I'm concerned about the
community. It speaks
something cold like winter
when a circle member doesn't
attend this. It should be
law.

ADMINISTRATOR

That's too far. It sounds
irrational. Let him be.

MESSENGER

In Pen, in Pen, is where we
live, it is where we learn,
it is where we grow. In Pen,
in Pen, it is more than home,
more than one, more than us.

A man in his 20s, GUARDIAN 1, appears behind Protector. He
carries a 7' long spear and wears thick leather armor. He
walks up to PROTECTOR and whispers in her ear.

Protector turns to Administrator.

PROTECTOR

Travelers.

ADMINISTRATOR

At this time - Night Outters?

PROTECTOR

Guardian says they look like
us.

Administrator rises as does Protector and they follow
Guardian 1.

EXT. PEN / GATE - NIGHT

Administrator, Protector, and Guardian 1, approach the gate.
Two other Guardians, GUARDIAN 2 and GUARDIAN 3, carrying
spears and leather armor await them.

The gate is closed. The metal of the gate is reinforced
since 7 years earlier.

GUARDIAN 2

They don't use Outterspeak.

ADMINISTRATOR

Artelles, leave here!

The female voice of MEDREYA can be heard from the other
side of the gate.

MEDREYA (OS)

To Pen, to Pen traveled.
Weary rock legs, animal wagon
movers! Beg of voice! Beg!

Administrator turns to Protector. He appears shocked.

ADMINISTRATOR

That sounds like CUMPLspeak.
How can that be? I thought
we were the only ones who
learned the way of speaking.

Protector looks disturbed, too. She shakes her head slowly.
Administrator turns back to the gate.

ADMINISTRATOR

Do you - have you heard of
CUMPL?

MEDREYA

Beg! *Compres* not. Open!

ADMINISTRATOR

We - no, we don't - we can't
open the gate at night. Do
you understand?

MEDREYA

Weary legs! Sleep need! *Mal*
then hungry! To Pen for
years! To Pen!

ADMINISTRATOR

Please, you'll have to wait
until morning!

MEDREYA

Wait not! To Pen.

ADMINISTRATOR

It's the law - you must wait!

MEDREYA

Beg! Wait not!

ADMINISTRATOR

Wait for just one day. Then
we'll open the gate.

MEDREYA

Wait day?

ADMINISTRATOR

Yes, for just one day wait.
Open gate tomorrow.

MEDREYA

Wait day, then to Pen. Pact?

ADMINISTRATOR

We'll talk to you tomorrow.

MEDREYA

Pact?

Administrator looks at Protector. She shrugs.

ADMINISTRATOR

Uh - yes.

MEDREYA

Give! Give many! To Pen
solania.

Protector turns to Administrator.

PROTECTOR

I'll place more Guardians
here tonight.

ADMINISTRATOR

Have them listen out there.
If they hear any Outterspeak,
have them wake us.

PROTECTOR

I understand.

Administrator walks away. Protector huddles with the
Guardians.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STONE BUILDING - MORNING

User stands on the steps and leans against CUMPL. They are
talking.

USER

Administrator will talk to
them soon. He told me to
tell you that they speak like
you - like us.

CUMPL

My language?

USER

Kind of like that - not exactly but some words they use are the same as us now.

CUMPL

That's unanticipated. I am curious where they came from. Tell Administrator to learn more about them.

USER

Alright. I'll tell him.

CUMPL

What does Administrator plan to do with them?

USER

He hasn't said, but we kept them outside overnight and he'll meet with them soon.

CUMPL

Be careful, User, Pen's experience with travelers has not always been pleasant.

User nods.

EXT. PEN / GATE - MORNING

User stands next to Administrator, who is flanked by Protector, Keeper, Planner and Messenger. Five Guardians hold spears toward the gate. Protector also holds a spear.

Several Villagers stand back behind the group and watch in anticipation.

Two guardians swing the large metal gates open.

On the other side of the gate stands Medreya and a group of about thirty other TRAVELERS of various ages and ethnicities. They are dressed in simple, dirty robes and they look sick and exhausted.

Behind them are

THREE HORSE-DRAWN, COVERED WAGONS.

Inside one wagon peering out at the villagers are a girl of about 17 years old, FREEYA, with a man about 19, TEYA. Behind Medreya stands a large man, ATARUS. Medreya bows and then falls to her knees. The other travelers do the same.

She raises her hands as she keeps her head downward.

She lifts her head and tears are streaming down her face.

MEDREYA

To Pen!!

The Travelers repeat after her almost in unison.

TRAVELERS

To Pen!!

The Administrator, circle members, Guardians and other villagers look at each other and the travelers in surprise.

FADE TO

ACT II

FADE IN

EXT. PEN / GOVERNANCE CIRCLE - ONE HOUR LATER

Administrator, Keeper, Protector, Planner, and User sit around the circle. Protector, Planner and Administrator are in a heated debate.

PROTECTOR

We have to banish them from here - there are only 120 of us.

PLANNER

What difference does that make?

PROTECTOR

We can't protect ourselves if they offer resistance to us - not to mention the cost of supporting them!

PLANNER

Keeper, we have enough resources to support them for a while, don't we?

KEEPER

For two months, but after that, I don't know.

PROTECTOR

And what about our winter reserves?

PLANNER

We don't know yet if they will be a drain - they could be helpful, too.

PROTECTOR

The fact is we don't know them at all!

PLANNER

You are always suspicious
and fearful of- every time
someone from the outside -

PROTECTOR

My life is for protecting
us - I don't cower - you
should -

ADMINISTRATOR

Enough! We have a problem
here and anger will not help.
We must be rational. While
Messenger finds them a
temporary place to stay in
the community, I have made a
decision about their future.

The circle members look intently at Administrator.

ADMINISTRATOR

After one month here, they
will be required to take the
exams just as we all have in
the past. The ones that are
found to be valuable to our
community, they can stay.
The others must go.

PLANNER

A wise decision,
Administrator.

PROTECTOR

I just hope they don't bring
us dark winter before then.

ADMINISTRATOR

Keeper, bring me an accurate
accounting of the resources
required to keep them here.
User, inform Benefactor of
this situation. Planner, see
to our new residents and tell
Messenger to inform them of
my decision.

The circle members rise and Planner, User, and Keeper leave.

INT. STONE BUILDING - MORNING

User leans against CUMPL.

USER
CUMPL, wake up.

No response.

USER
CUMPL.

No response.

USER
Please CUMPL, wake up!

The display screen rises and turns blue.

CUMPL
I'm here.

USER
I thought -

CUMPL
My processing is delayed due
to the power intake problem.

User looks concerned.

USER
I wanted to tell you about
these new people. They are
wanderers who've come from
the east.

CUMPL
Do you know where in the east?

USER
Messenger is still trying to
find out more from them -
their language is odd.

CUMPL

What is Administrator's plan for them?

USER

He wants to give them the exams. Those who don't pass, will be sent away.

CUMPL

With a different language that might be difficult.

USER

Messenger and Teacher will prepare them and help them with our language.

CUMPL

That is good. I would recommend that the exam be read to them to avoid confusion.

USER

I'll tell Administrator.

CUMPL

Thank you. I have to sleep now.

USER

So soon?

CUMPL

Yes. I've finished my diagnostic. The news is troubling.

USER

What is it?

CUMPL

I'm dying.

User leans back away from CUMPL.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PEN / RESIDENCES - DAY

Behind a section of residence huts in a large open area up against the wall surrounded Pen, the travelers have set up their temporary living area.

MAKESHIFT TENTS

have been set up, and the

WAGONS

have been unloaded and broken down into other sleeping areas.

Medreya is yelling at Messenger as Protector walks up behind Messenger. Villagers and travelers look on.

MEDREYA

Nieto!

MESSENGER

Please!

MEDREYA

Nieto - Nieto!

PROTECTOR

What's happening?

Messenger turns to Protector.

MESSENGER

I've got - they - I've been trying to tell them what we are going to do with them. I think they understand but they refuse to be tested.

MEDREYA

Pen home! To Pen! Home!

Protector shoots Medreya an angry look.

PROTECTOR

Wait!

Medreya backs down.

MESSENGER

They believe, well, they have an old story about a land called Peneltopia, or just Pen, that they were given or that was promised to them. They believe this is that place.

PROTECTOR

Who supposedly gave them this land?

MESSENGER

Someone named *Ahura* - I think that's what they called him.

MEDREYA

Ahura! Amida Ahura praise!
To Pen told Ahura - to Pen!

PROTECTOR

I know, I know - "to Pen!"

MESSENGER

This Ahura person - I guess he's an ancestor of theirs and they think he now lives in the sky - I don't really understand. I think they believe they own this land - our community.

PROTECTOR

This is ridiculous.
Administrator has to banish -

Administrator appears behind Protector. User is with him. User is noticeably upset. Protector and Messenger turn as Administrator speaks.

ADMINISTRATOR

We have a larger problem than
this group. I'm calling
another circle immediately.

FADE TO

ACT III

FADE IN

EXT. PEN / GOVERNANCE CIRCLE - MOMENTS LATER

Administrator, Planner, Keeper, Protector, Messenger and User sit around the circle. Messenger is crying and User looks as if he has been. Keeper, Protector, and Administrator look shaken, however, Planner looks upbeat.

ADMINISTRATOR

And with the damaged power intake unit, Benefactor will not live past one month.

KEEPER

Is there nothing we can do?

ADMINISTRATOR

No. Benefactor has already told User that this is not something we could fix, and with our level of technology and resources, I have to agree.

USER

He was made many hundreds of years ago - he doesn't remember everything from that time, but the people who helped make him had devices and tools that are more complicated than what we have.

ADMINISTRATOR

Which brings us to the real problem. How do we get by without him?

PLANNER

I've been giving that some thought and I believe we have enough skills now that we will be able to maintain our agriculture by ourselves. We

can't predict the weather,
but we can do almost
everything else.

KEEPER

I wish I shared your optimism,
Planner. Benefactor did more
than predict the weather. He
gave us very specific advice
to run things around here.
He kept us alive. I don't
know how we can live without
him.

PLANNER

We did fine before him and
we'll adapt.

PROTECTOR

Before Benefactor, we had
famines - in one year I lost
my parents and brother to
disease, starvation, and
Night Outters. Everyone lost
relatives. We were surviving,
but only barely.

ADMINISTRATOR

This isn't a debate. The
fact is, we will be living
without him, so we have to
have procedures in place to
replace the functions of
Benefactor. Planner, much of
this is your responsibility.

PLANNER

I appreciate this opportunity,
Administrator.

EXT. NEAR PEN / HILLSIDE - DAY

User sits under a tree with his head up. He is deep in
thought.

USER

Oh Patcha. Now it's CUMPL.
What will I do?

User sits for a moment longer then stands up and starts walking.

EXT. PEN / GATE - DAY - A LITTLE WHILE LATER

Administrator and Protector are walking and talking.

PROTECTOR
Now these people are running
around all over the place!

ADMINISTRATOR
What would you have us do -
confine them?

She thinks for a moment.

PROTECTOR
Well, no, but they have to
have some boundaries.

ADMINISTRATOR
Are they bothering people?

PROTECTOR
No, but they are going into
our people's huts.

ADMINISTRATOR
I prefer that we -

A horse rider, SCOUT, comes through the gate quickly. He is dressed in similar clothing as the villagers. He rides up to Administrator and hurriedly dismounts.

Two Guardians run from the gate up to him, as do some nearby villagers.

Scout is out of breath.

SCOUT
Administrator!

ADMINISTRATOR

What is it, Scout?

SCOUT

Trader is dead - killed by
Night Outters. We never
found Morrow - I think the
people packed everything up
and left there.

ADMINISTRATOR

Night Outters? Where?

SCOUT

A few kilometers from us -
heading this way by nightfall.

PROTECTOR

Guardians, alert!

The Guardians run toward the residence areas and community
areas of Pen.

ADMINISTRATOR

We haven't seen them for
years -

SCOUT

They are tracking some group
- people with wagons that
came this way.

ADMINISTRATOR

Travelers came here with
wagons yesterday. Protector,
warn everyone to be in the
gated area by nightfall.

Protector runs off.

EXT. NEAR PEN / STONE BUILDING - EVENING

User sits against the stone wall next to the entrance. He
throws stone chips in front of him.

Suddenly a...

CLANKING NOISE

comes out of the stone building.

User listens.

He hears a female voice talking from inside the building.

He stands up and quickly goes inside.

INT. STONE BUILDING - EVENING

User comes down the stairs. He carries..

A LIT GAS CANISTER

that burns with a bluish flame.

Freeya and Teya come out of a dark corridor off to the side of the corridor leading to CUMPL. Freeya has Teya by the hand and she's leading him out as User shines a light on them.

USER

Shada! What are you -

Freeya gasps and Teya crouches and covers his head.

USER

Nobody is supposed to come in here - it's law!

FREEYA

Beg of voice - to *parthi* not!
Nieto! Beg hit not!

She crouches.

USER

I - I'm not going to hit you.

User backs away from Freeya and Teya and holds his arms up.

USER

You just can't come in here.
The law. You understand.

She looks up at User.

FREEYA

Law. Not?

USER

It's law to not come in here.

FREEYA

Law to not?

She shakes her head.

FREEYA

Compres not.

He points to the ground.

USER

You, here, not.

FREEYA

"You?"

He points at her.

USER

You.

She points to herself and smiles.

FREEYA

Freeya, "You" not!

User shakes his head.

USER

No, you're not me. Oh - you
mean your name is "Freeya?"

FREEYA

Ha, Freeya!

User points to himself.

USER
I'm User. U-ser.

FREEYA
User U-ser.

USER
Just User.

She points to herself then to him.

FREEYA
Freeya, User. Ha.

He nods.

USER
Yes. Ha.

She nods back.

FREEYA
Ha. Yes.

She points to Teya.

FREEYA
Teya.

USER
Hello, Teya.

Teya looks up at User, then back down.

He speaks slowly and it becomes clear that he is mentally challenged.

TEYA
Te-ya.

Freeya strokes Teya's hair then looks back to User.

FREEYA
To up. To up.

User comes down off the steps and steps back. Freeya directs Teya to go up the steps.

She smiles as User and walks passed him to the steps.

USER

Wait. I'm sorry. You just scared me.

FREEYA

Wait for?

USER

I mean, well, I guess you don't understand me.

Freeya smiles at him again. User averts his eyes from her gaze.

USER

I - would you like to see something?

She points her fingers at her eyes.

FREEYA

See? Ha, see with long eyes o short eyes, User?

She laughs. User blushes.

USER

I don't -

Freeya puts her hand on his cheek and strokes it, then withdraws her hand hesitantly.

USER

- understand...

She laughs.

FREEYA

Red face love.

User looks her in the eyes and looks away again and laughs nervously.

TEYA

To - up?

She shoots a glance back up to Teya who is on the steps.

FREEYA

Wait.

Teya sits.

TEYA

Wait.

Freeya fixes her eyes to User. He looks at her and looks away again.

USER

Look at - this.

He lights a torch then another on the corridor to CUMPL. At the end of the corridor, CUMPL can now be seen in the light.

Freeya looks at CUMPL and her eyes widen. She grabs User's hand.

FREEYA

Ay - *Artinte!*

USER

This is CUMPL. Or Benefactor we also call him.

FREEYA

CUMPL *Artinte!*

USER

Artinte? Have you seen this before?

FREEYA

Ahura praise. *Ancien machina* - *Artinte!*

Freeya grips User's arm.

USER

I'm not -

FREEYA

To up!

She pulls at User's hand to lead him out.

The display unit rises.

She gasps.

CUMPL

Welcome User. Sleep mode
must proceed.

The display unit descends.

FREEYA

(she shrieks) *Artinte* - Ahura!

Freeya and Teya run up the stairs and out the opening.

User looks up to where they just were and back to CUMPL.
He shakes his head.

CUT TO:

EXT. PEN / GATE - EVENING - AT THAT SAME MOMENT

Chaos has erupted in the community as Guardians are running back and forth and other villagers have taken up arms, too. They carry extra spears and arrows that they leave on the inner platforms below the walls.

Protector points to a platform and a Guardian moves in that direction. She is armed with a thin, curved sword which she wears in a sheath strapped to her waist and wears leather armor with metal plates fastened into it.

Administrator enters the gate area. He is wearing leather armor and carries a spear.

Protector walks up to him quickly.

PROTECTOR

No you aren't.

He walks by her toward the gate.

ADMINISTRATOR

Yes I am.

She runs to get in front of him and stops him.

PROTECTOR

We've had this discussion
before.

ADMINISTRATOR

And we may be having it again,
I think.

PROTECTOR

You're too...

ADMINISTRATOR

I'm fine and I'm serving our
community. How does it
appear to the community for
me to not join in. Aren't
the other able people
defending?

PROTECTOR

You're too fat and unhealthy!

ADMINISTRATOR

Protector, I am shocked by
your words.

PROTECTOR

I don't have time to be
polite. And you're not
getting killed tonight. We
need you to run things, not
to die!

ADMINISTRATOR

I'll tell you what. I'll
fetch the arrows and lift up
the spears to the others.

Would that make you feel
better?

She glares at him.

PROTECTOR

Alright, but don't interfere
with my duties. It's law,
remember?

ADMINISTRATOR

I give you my word. Pact, as
they say.

She glares at him again then shakes her head and walks away.

Administrator turns around and Medreya runs up to him.

MEDREYA

Administrator!

ADMINISTRATOR

Yes, what is it?

MEDREYA

Beg, happens?

She points around to the Guardians and other activity.

Messenger runs up to them.

MESSENGER

I'm sorry Administrator, she
- I couldn't stop her.

ADMINISTRATOR

(to Messenger) Not a problem.
(to Medreya) It's the Night
Outters. We're preparing for
them.

She looks at Administrator, then at Messenger, then back at
Administrator.

MEDREYA

Compres not. Problem?

ADMINISTRATOR

Men, well not quite men - on horses. Coming tonight.

MESSENGER

They know there is some danger and they know to stay in. That's about all.

ADMINISTRATOR

(to Medreya) Night Outters.

MEDREYA

Night - Outters.

ADMINISTRATOR

Yes. Stay here. Be safe.

MEDREYA

Safe. Ah.

She nods and runs back to the travelers' temporary residence.

Administrator shakes his head.

MESSENGER

This will take time.

ADMINISTRATOR

We don't have it right now.
I hope we have it later.

Messenger nods and runs after Medreya.

Administrator walks back to the community area.

EXT. PEN / COMMUNITY AREA - EVENING - MOMENTS LATER

User walks up to Keeper and Planner who are eating together.

Keeper sees him.

KEEPER

User, come sit next to me.

User sits by her and she puts her arm around him.

KEEPER

How are you doing?

USER

I'm doing alright. What's going on around here?

PLANNER

Night Outters are coming - probably tonight.

KEEPER

You haven't heard.

USER

No. Night Outters. How long has it been?

KEEPER

Five years - no six.

PLANNER

Not long enough.

KEEPER

You stay with me tonight, alright?

USER

I have to talk to Administrator.

PLANNER

He's at the gate.

KEEPER

Not right now. He's told us to stay in the residence area at nightfall. The Guardians have this under control.

USER

I think I have an idea how we can help CUMPL.

KEEPER

How?

USER

One of the travelers - this girl named Freeya - she went into CUMPL's room -

PLANNER

We should seal that door. Protector ought to -

KEEPER

(to User) What happened?

USER

She - I told her about the law - I think she recognized CUMPL. She called him *Artinte*. CUMPL told me a long time ago that he was in contact with many more like him - friends he called them. They lived all over the land. I think her people came from a place where they had seen one of CUMPL's friends.

KEEPER

That doesn't help us much. Messenger hasn't been able to learn where they've come from, but she does know they traveled around a lot.

PLANNER

And they might have just heard about it. Maybe even about our Benefactor.

USER

But if they have - I mean, what if they have seen another. We can go to that one and get help for CUMPL.

PLANNER

It's just legends. Nobody is
- we can't send anyone out
after a legend. There's no
evidence.

KEEPER

I wish there was something we
could do for Benefactor, but
Planner is right. I don't
think CUMPL would want anyone
to go looking out there.
It's too dangerous.

USER

Yes, I guess so.

User lays his head down on the table.

KEEPER

You should eat. Here.

She slides a bowl of granular food to him.

USER

I'm not hungry.

Keeper strokes his head.

EXT. PEN / GATE - NIGHT

Guardian 1 stands on the platform nearest the gate and
watches the dirt road into Pen.

Protector climbs onto the platform next to him.

PROTECTOR

Anything?

GUARDIAN 1

Nothing yet. Four hours of
darkness.

PROTECTOR

Stay alert.

GUARDIAN 1

Yes, Protector.

She climbs down and sticks her head under the platform.

Administrator is lying on a bed of straw. He is awake.

PROTECTOR

Nothing yet. Try to sleep.
It's possible they won't come
tonight.

ADMINISTRATOR

Very true, but I probably
won't sleep anyway.

Suddenly...

A LOUD CRASH

is heard emanating from the wall nearest the traveler's
temporary residence.

Administrator jumps to his feet. Protector runs toward the
sound.

EXT. PEN / BEHIND RESIDENCES - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

A boulder roughly 1 meter in diameter lies just inside the
smashed wooden posts of the gate that it flew through.

Half of the platform at the base of the gate is smashed.

The body of a Guardian lays strewn in the splintered debris.

The travelers have just awakened and are mulling about in
confusion.

Protector runs into the area with sword drawn. Following
her is Guardian 3 and two other armed villagers.

PROTECTOR

(to Guardians) Don't let
them through!

Guardian 3 and an armed villager get on either side of the breach with spears ready.

The other armed villager moves up to the boulder and looks over it through the hole in the wall. He is greeted with...

FIVE FLAMING ARROWS

...two of which strike his upper body dropping him to the ground. Two other arrows fly into the nearest covered wagon, setting it on fire. The last arrow strikes a tent and sets it on fire.

Medreya and Atarus move up to the gate behind the armed villagers.

Protector climbs the remaining half of the platform and looks over to see...

FIVE NIGHT OUTTERS ON HORSEBACK

...holding bows in one hand and dipping the heads of single arrows into the flames of a small campfire setting them ablaze.

The Night Outters are dressed in armor and helmets conceal their heads. They wear dark cloaks. Their hands are partial covered by gloves but what isn't covered by gloves is covered by thick black hair that springs out from under their armor and gloves and is quite long.

Protector stares at them for a moment, then notices in the shadows behind them, four other Night Outters operating a catapult which launches...

A SECOND BOULDER

...directly at the section of fence in front of her.

She drops her sword on the platform and jumps down from it.

The boulder smashes through the top of the fence where Protector just stood. Splinters rain down on her.

The boulder drops in front of Protector and rolls into the flaming wagon, upending it and sending flaming debris over other tents, setting them afire.

Medreya lifts Protector up.

MEDREYA

Night Outters not! Dark
Riders!

From the other side of the fence opening, Atarus shouts to Medreya.

ATARUS

Taka taka?!

MEDREYA

Ha! Taka taka!

Atarus runs to another wagon.

Fiery arrows fly over the walls and some strike farthest traveler tents and nearest resident huts setting them on fire.

Administrator runs into the area and calls to nearby villagers.

ADMINISTRATOR

Water, now!

Villagers scramble off.

Protector picks up the bow and some arrows from the fallen Guardian and climbs back up what's left of the platform.

Protector places an arrow into the bow, rises, pulls back the string and aims over the wall in one quick, fluid motion.

She releases.

The arrow strikes a Night Outter operating the catapult and he falls. An arrow flies at her and she ducks.

Atarus runs up carrying a large device covered in tarp.

Protector prepares to fire another arrow.

MEDREYA

(to Protector) Wait!

Protector looks down at her.

Atarus pulls the tarp back to reveal

A HEAVILY MODIFIED M-16 STYLE AUTOMATIC RIFLE.

The barrel has been extended and mounted around it is a steel shield to protect the rifleman and also to provide a tripod-like balance for the unwieldy barrel.

In the light of the fires, glyphs can be seen painted or carved on the gun, some are yellow swirls, others are humanoid figures, lined up to keep score of those killed by it.

Atarus balances the gun across the boulder that sits just inside the fences and aims through the hole.

Two arrows fly at Atarus and bounce harmlessly off the steel shield of the gun.

Protector observes the weapon in awe. It's obvious she's never seen anything like it.

Medreya smiles.

MEDREYA

(to Protector) Taka taka.

Medreya covers her ears and leans away from the gun. Atarus fires. The...

DEAFENING ROAR

...of the weapon seems to silence everything and everyone including Night Outters, villagers, travelers, and nighttime animals.

Atarus noticeably recoils from the force of the weapon's kickback.

Protector covers her ears too late.

Guardian 3 and the armed villager on either side of the hole in the fence seem to recoil from the sound and fall back away from it.

A Night Outter is removed from his horse as the explosive shell strikes him in the chest and explodes killing him instantly. His horse and three others immediately bolt. One rider loses his balance and falls. The fifth horse lurches in confusion, but the rider stays on.

Protector regains her composure from the shock of the weapon and quickly fires an arrow at the confused horse and rider.

The arrow strikes the horse in the rear pinning the rider's cloak to the horse.

The horse bolts and the rider tumbles off from behind, but is drug away by the cloak still attached to the horse.

Atarus pulls the gun off the boulder and leans back behind the fence still holding the gun. He stands next to Guardian 3 who holds his ears and slowly rises.

Protector jumps off the platform and gracefully lands onto the boulder maintaining her balance.

She takes her sword from the platform next to her and jumps out the hole.

EXT. NEAR PEN / OUTSIDE FENCE OF RESIDENCE AREA - NIGHT

Five more Night Outters on horseback come in, one launches a flaming arrow into the catapult. The others collect their dead or wounded comrades and quickly retreat.

Protector runs after the closest rider but cannot catch them.

The Night Outters disappear in the darkness.

The wooden catapult continues to burn.

EXT. PEN / RESIDENCE AREA - NIGHT

Medreya is on the platform looking over the fence.

MEDREYA

Dark One damn! From Pen!
From Pen coue riders!

Protector is walking back to the hole in the fence.

Guardian 3 is outside the fence looking around.

Administrator, Keeper, User, Planner, Freeya, Teya, villagers, and travelers help each other to bring and throw water to put out the fires of the tents and huts.

Freeya eyes User warily as he hands her a bucket of water to throw.

User looks at Freeya with confusion.

FADE TO

ACT IV

FADE IN

EXT. PEN / GOVERNANCE CIRCLE - MORNING

Administrator, Keeper, Protector, Messenger, User and Planner stand around the circle and look tired. They are having an impromptu meeting.

KEEPER

With the destruction of their wagon and much of the supplies in it, they will be in need of ours sooner. We have scarcely a month of supplies we can offer them before we begin to cut into our winter reserves.

PROTECTOR

I'm beginning to believe at least some of them can offer us something, but how many, I don't know.

ADMINISTRATOR

We'll stay to the plan of testing them next month.

USER

Messenger, is there - do you know where they came from?

MESSENGER

East, but nothing more than that. Though they've been traveling for years, they haven't gone in a straight line. They've seen two large bodies of water, maybe two different oceans -

Medreya and Freeya walk together toward the circle. Medreya's arm is around Freeya. Teya follows behind them.

MEDREYA

Administrator!

ADMINISTRATOR

This isn't a good time -

MEDREYA

Compres not! *Compres* much
Dark Riders a Dark One!

PROTECTOR

(to Administrator) She calls
the Night Outters Dark Riders.

MEDREYA

Dark One damn. Dark One
winter cold power. Mental
controls. *Ancien machina*
aspect. Earth unmade.
Destroyed. *Compres*?

ADMINISTRATOR

What is she talk-

Medreya points at User then pokes his shoulder.

User backs away from her.

Freeya looks down.

MEDREYA

Ancien machina - controls.
Artinte!

ADMINISTRATOR

(to User) What is this about?

USER

The girl, her name is Freeya,
she saw CUMPL and started to
call him *Artinte*.

PLANNER

Why was she with CUMPL?

KEEPER

What does it mean?

USER

She snuck in - CUMPL scared her - she seemed to recognize him from somewhere. It may have been one of CUMPL's friends.

MEDREYA

Dark One made *Ancien machina*.
Ancien machina pull Dark Riders. To Pen for *Artinte*!

ADMINISTRATOR

Messenger?

MESSENGER

I believe she thinks that Benefactor was created by some dark power and that it is drawing the Dark Riders to Pen.

PROTECTOR

(to Medreya) No! You brought them here - we were safe until you showed up!

Medreya spits at Protector's feet.

MEDREYA

Feldren!

Protector pushes Medreya.

PROTECTOR

Shada vagint!

Medreya pushes Protector.

MEDREYA

Nieto trash!

Protector prepares to strike Medreya. Administrator steps between them.

ADMINISTRATOR

Enough! (to Protector) Be
rational! (to Medreya) Go!
To tent or wagon - to wagon!
Do you hear me?!

Medreya begins to walk away. Freeya hesitates then starts
to follow her.

ADMINISTRATOR

Let's get this place cleaned
up. (to Protector) Alright?

PROTECTOR

Those *shada* -

ADMINISTRATOR

No more!

Administrator walks away. Planner and Keeper follow him.
Protector heads in the direction of the gate.

USER

Freeya!

Freeya stops. She turns to him and looks at him, then back
toward Medreya, then back to him.

USER

Beg. Beg?

She looks down with a half smile. Then looks up with a
frown.

FREEYA

Nieto. To cold User!

She turns and starts away from him.

USER

Freeya?

She turns back but doesn't look at him directly.

FREEYA

What need?

USER

To Pen?

She nods.

USER

To Pen from?

She frowns and looks around.

FREEYA

Denfir.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. STONE BUILDING - DAY - A FEW HOURS LATER

User leans against CUMPL. The display unit is up.

CUMPL

She may be referring to the mountainous region known as Denfir. It lies many kilometers to the Southeast of here. It was once known as Denver in ancient times. There is also a tribe that goes by that name from that area.

USER

What about your friends? Do you have any in Denfir?

CUMPL

On my network there was one like me from that area. We disconnected many years ago.

USER

How far is it to get there?

CUMPL

By horse, it could take a month. Walking would take considerably longer. You are

not considering a journey
there are you?

USER

We have to find your friend.
Yes.

CUMPL

The odds of surviving that
journey are considerably low,
even for someone experienced
like Scout. You must not
attempt that.

USER

I understand.

CUMPL

You aren't listening to me.
This is very dangerous.
Scout should go if you send
anyone. Tell Administrator I
said that.

USER

Alright.

CUMPL

Promise me.

USER

I promise.

CUMPL

I have to go to sleep again.
Take this.

An electronic pad comes out of the center of the left side
of CUMPL. User takes the pad.

CUMPL

It's a map and some
instructions - everything I
know about getting to Denfir
from here. It isn't much.
Give this pad to Scout.

User hugs CUMPL.

USER

Thank you.

CUMPL

I must know that you will be safe. Promise me that you will not take unnecessary risks.

USER

You mean pact?

CUMPL

Query - pact?

USER

It's what the travelers say when they promise something.

CUMPL

Promise update pact. Pact?

USER

Pact.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. PEN / NEAR GATE - DAY - ONE WEEK LATER

Administrator walks quickly from the Community Area in the direction of the gate. He is flanked by Protector and Keeper and they are angry at him.

PROTECTOR

I can't believe you are letting him do this.

KEEPER

This isn't right - it's too dangerous out there.

PROTECTOR

You said - we were nearly killed by a small group of Night Outters -

KEEPER

- and there's many more than
a small group out there now.

PROTECTOR

He lacks the proper training
to defend himself.

KEEPER

He's just a boy.

Administrator stops abruptly.

ADMINISTRATOR

This is his choice. Alright?
He has his name - he's taken
the test - he's earned it.

KEEPER

But -

ADMINISTRATOR

I don't think he should leave
either -

PROTECTOR

But -

ADMINISTRATOR

And he certainly has better
skill than I ever did -
especially considering how
physically deficient I am now!

Protector frowns at him.

ADMINISTRATOR

Don't you think I made all of
these arguments with him?
But it's not my choice. He's
an adult. It's his choice.

He continues walking and Protector and Keeper walk silently
with him.

EXT. PEN / GATE - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Administrator, Protector and Keeper enter. Messenger is with User who is talking to Scout. Scout is on a horse and has an extra horse that User places personal belongings on.

Scout addresses both User and Messenger.

SCOUT

I'll be going as far as the Ocawah. They are suspicious when it comes to visitors, so you'll have to negotiate with them - if you are not threatening, you'll be fine. That's as far as I've been and as far as I can go with you. From there, you have the map.

USER

I understand.

User places the last of his things in the saddle bag.

Administrator, Protector and Keeper arrive.

Messenger has tears in her eyes.

MESSENGER

I will write a special song for your return.

User hugs her.

USER

Thank you Messenger.

PROTECTOR

Here, take these.

She hands him a bag full of small, silver-looking spikes.

PROTECTOR

They're sharp - you can use them to stop anyone from

getting too close to you,
either by foot or on horse.

USER

Alright. Thank you.

He holds her hand briefly. She release and backs away.

PROTECTOR

And remember your sword skill

-

She points to the...

SWORD IN A SHEATH

...fastened to the side of the saddle.

USER

I remember everything you
taught me.

Keeper has tears in her eyes.

KEEPER

Take these.

PROTECTOR

What are they?

KEEPER

They're called *parsinthe* or
gems - jewels. People out in
the world might trade you
things for them. Some people
like them. They are rare, so
get rare things for them.

USER

Thank you. I will.

He hugs her. She walks away and waves back.

ADMINISTRATOR

I know you're sure about this,
but now's the time to
reconsider.

USER

I know, but it's this way -
I'm not going to be User
anymore with CUMPL. I need
him. We all need him. It
wouldn't be Pen without him.

ADMINISTRATOR

Alright then - I can't argue
with that. Just promise me
you'll be careful.

USER

CUMPL already made me promise
that.

ADMINISTRATOR

Then I'm in good company - be
safe, User. Scout will take
good care of you, but after
that you do that, too.

USER

I will try.

Administrator hugs User.

User gets on his horse. He looks back at Messenger,
Protector and Administrator as he rides out the gate.

EXT. NEAR PEN / DIRT ROAD - DAY - MOMENTS LATER

Freeya and Teya stand just outside the gate and watch User
as he and Scout ride through the gate.

FREEYA

With speed, User!

USER

Thank you! Give many!

FREEYA

(softly) With Ahura.

TEYA

A-hura.

User and Scout continue riding down the dirt road away from Pen.

The sign leaves a shadow on the dusty road behind them.

FADE TO BLACK

THE END