

EXT. DRAGON DEN FOREST - DAY

Much has changed in the future. Yet the forest remains a good place for refugees. More so for giant creatures on the run...

Dragons hoot through the mist -- soft but urgent -- like dinosaurs singing foreboding lullabies of T. Rex.

The brown dragon NORACHI fidgets on the edge of her nest. She lifts her head on a slender goose-neck. She sniffs the air. Her eyes glow like electric gems. She pauses, a wary mother.

Norachi snorts, momentarily content, and snakes her head down, down, to nuzzle her sleeping, pony-sized baby.

STARPATCH blinks awake. Peeps, then purrs. He's a bit like ET with wings: a good dose of ugly, but glowing eyes that play the heartstrings. A unique star-mark graces his forehead.

WHOOSH. Giant wings flap overhead. BAIYAK, Starpatch's father, swoops to the nest and lands. He and Norachi HOOT, talking. He gestures to the distance, she nods, flies off.

Starpatch SQUEALS in protest: all children love mother more.

But suddenly, the forest falls QUIET. Baiyak SNIFFS the air.

IN THE UNDERBRUSH: BARBER, 28 -- a soldier far from home who hates this job -- shakes with fear as he creeps forward. He wears a black Ender armband showing a triangle on a stick.

His war gear: a spear and scrappy body armor made of metal plates with forgotten logos: "Don't worry, be happy." He clutches a strange wire mesh shield like a naked umbrella.

BARBER

(whispering)

The End is Past, I Follow the Task

GENERAL GRANIB, 45, is human earth mover. Clever only where force is concerned, he uses force in every concern. He leaps up from hiding, fires a crossbow at the dragons.

GRANIB

Ataaack!

Barber and thirty others obey. They throw small bombs, rush the dragons.

Some dragons fly away. Baiyak stands in front of his son.

MOORE, 32, short, backs up Barber holding a cricket bat. They attack Baiyak. Baiyak breathes LIGHTNING down on Barber.

ZAP, current SIZZLES through Barber's armor, down a wire and into the ground. Barber shakes but continues forward.

Baiyak closes his eyes, pulls at the air with his wings, as if yanking invisible strings connected to...

Barber's luminous SPIRIT, plucked from his body, **LIFTS** into the air. It floats, graceful. It would be a moment of beauty, except that Barber's spirit face clenches in petrified fear.

MOORE

Stop. You're lifting.

Moore WHAPS Barber on the head with his bat. Barber's spirit whips back down. Huge relief for the two soldiers.

BARBER

Thanks. Ow.

Baiyak bellows, stomps: sheer animal power. Barber and Moore back off. Starpatch cowers under daddy.

Dragons fall around them. General Granib marches forward. He sees Barber retreating. Granib FIRES his crossbow. WHAP. Baiyak stumbles, falls in front of wide-eyed Starpatch: dead.

GRANIB

Clean the nest, soldier!

Granib marches off. Barber raises his spear to kill Starpatch. The young dragon waits in unbelieving terror.

A dragon stampedes between them. It shakes Starpatch from his paralysis and buys him time. He hops away. The men follow.

AT THE NEST: Norachi flies back. She dodges arrows and small bombs. She lands at her dead mate and empty nest. She looks around, and bellows a heartrending scream.

She squints and PROJECTS HER THOUGHTS outward in visual form: a PICTURE OF STARPATCH **CASTS** away from her in several directions: like a moving, immaterial hologram.

IN THE FOREST: Barber follows Starpatch. Soon he has him cornered. He pulls back his spear. Starpatch cowers.

CRASH, Norachi lands in front of her son. She bites at Barber. He throws his spear. She catches it, SNAP, breaks it.

She grabs a tree branch in a hind leg, HURTLES it. Barber SMASHES to the ground. Moore jumps away.

Norachi grabs Starpatch. She flaps toward freedom...

But the General sees her. He mounts a bomb on his crossbow. Fires. It EXPLODES in the air next to Noraci. They plummet screaming into the river.

IN THE RIVER: Noraci lies broken on some rocks. Starpatch clings to her against the current. She gives him a sad, last nuzzle, then the glow in her eyes fades away.

Starpatch SCREAMS. He looses his grip and washes downstream.

EXT. DRAGON DEN FOREST - LATER

Weary soldiers sort moaning comrades from dead dragons.

TRAVIC, 45, conceals a great loss under his grim foreboding frown. He pulls a cart labeled 'Undertaker.' He shakes his head at the carnage, then turns at a faint cry.

BARBER

Travic?

TRAVIC

I'm here.

BARBER

I, I need you to remember me.

Travic peeks under the log at Barber's wound. Barber watches his face. They lock eyes. They know. They've seen it before.

TRAVIC

The Bishop never forgets his men.

BARBER

No! I don't wanna be a soldier in the prayer-cast. I wanna be remembered as a singer. I used to write the best ... ask any of the kids in my village. I never wanted to ... But no one pays a singer...

TRAVIC

Sing me something.

BARBER

I... I... it's, it's gone dark.

His head flops. Travic closes his eyes, whispers.

TRAVIC

Go to the Light.

BISHOP RECTOR, 60, arrives on horseback. He has expensive taste, refined education, and no time for distractions from his holy crusade.

Granib and his troops file in behind Rector.

BISHOP RECTOR  
Is he lost, undertaker?

TRAVIC  
Yes, your Eminence.

BISHOP RECTOR  
Then we shall add him to the prayer-  
cast. He was a valiant soldier --

TRAVIC  
He asked to be remembered as a  
singer, your Grace.

BISHOP RECTOR  
A sing-- Nonsense! He was a -- what  
was his name?

TRAVIC  
Barber.

BISHOP RECTOR  
Barber! Yes! Was always a valiant  
soldier.

The Bishop holds one hand up in the air. He *CASTS*.

His palm emits a translucent *casting* PROJECTION of a giant gold medal with Barber standing proud over a dead dragon. Telepathic propaganda.

The vision hangs in front of his men. They regard it soberly. Rector's voice narrates.

BISHOP RECTOR (V.O.)  
And so shall he be remembered. We  
shall pass his memory on, for a  
time shall come, when the Dragons  
are gone, and God may forgive our  
trespasses. We Follow the Task.

All repeat after the bishop except for Travic.

CROWD  
We Follow the Task.

BISHOP RECTOR

Now General, prepare your troops  
There's a village down the valley.  
We've bags to fill.

Rector winks at Granib. The General orders his soldiers.

GRANIB

Bury him here.

TRAVIC

He should have a proper service.

GRANIB

Too slow. Armband. Service that.

Granib RIPS off Barber's armband, shoves it at Travic. He glares at the undertaker. Travic stares back, treading a line between defiance and respect.

Granib spots BRAX, 32, stout guard of zero imagination, eating bread. The general smacks the food out of his hands.

GRANIB

Move it.

BRAX

Aw.

Granib slaps Brax. The soldier hops to activity. Travic grimaces, pushes his cart away alone.

EXT. STREAMBED - DAY

SAMANTHA GRAVES, 12, holds a deliberate smile on her face. It's not a natural smile. There's something determined, resourceful, and mischievous about that grin.

She wears a patchwork dress that's a little frayed. In her hand, she dangles a worm as she approaches an angry goose on its nest by the river.

SAMANTHA

C'mon, aren't you hungry? I won't hurt you. That's it. That's it.

The goose wavers from anger to interest. Samantha waves the worm back and forth -- hypnotizing.

The goose waddles off its nest toward Samantha. She leaps past it, grabs three eggs from the nest, jumps up.

The goose HISSES, cheated. Rushes to bite Samantha.

SAMANTHA

Shh, shh, don't you bite me. Don't you do it.

She waves her fingers. Again she has an unnatural power over the bird. It stops its attack, hisses instead.

SAMANTHA

I'll give you one back, alright?  
Shh, shh.

She places one down in the nest, backs away. The goose takes back its nest. Samantha makes off with the other two, grins.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry Ezmerelda, but I get you every year.

She throws a handful of worms to the goose. It sniffs, gobbles. Samantha grins, stashes her eggs in a basket.

She wipes off her hands, looks at them. TRIUMPH turns to DEFEAT. She holds out her hand like Rector did when he cast.

She CONCENTRATES. Hard. But nothing happens.

She stomps in frustration, blinks back tears, then huffs off with her basket.

EXT. VILLAGE OF DESTOCK, SOUTH RIVER LANE - DAY

A ruined Foundry looms like a cliff-top castle above the neo-medieval village of Destock. Tall wooden fencing surrounds the village: protection from dragons and evil spirits.

Peasants use once-modern technology to scrape a living from the craggy valley. Horse-drawn carts roll on brand-name tires. A bumper sticker reads "Child on Board."

Samantha plods on the dirt road. She sees a group of teenagers approaching. She holds her smile like a shield.

GERARD WELDER, 17, lanky, scowling, leads a bunch of teenagers. He steers them toward their favorite prey: Samantha. Their grins promise trouble.

GERARD

Look who's here. Hey Samantha!  
Where ya goin?

She points up the hill to the Foundry.

SAMANTHA

I'm going home, Gerard. I, I found some eggs.

The teens surround her. She stops.

SAMANTHA

I didn't do anything.

Gerard winks to HILDA, 16, smirking bad-girl.

GERARD

'Course not. We're just gonna talk.

Gerard lifts his hand. He *CASTS* a vision of Hilda placing a hoe behind Samantha's feet.

The *casting* floats through Samantha. She squints, trying to see it, but can't. She looks down in habitual humiliation.

SAMANTHA

You know I can't see it Gerard.  
Tell me what you're saying.

Hilda nods to Gerard, places the hoe behind Samantha.

GERARD

I said you need to ... Watch out.

He yells. Samantha startles, steps back. She *TRIPS* over the hoe. Her eggs *SMASH*. The teenagers laugh. Schoolyard torment.

GERARD

'Cause there's a hoe behind you.

SAMANTHA

Oh, my eggs.

GERARD

We gave you fair warning. Not our fault you can't *cast* -- watch out.

He *DUCKS*. It's convincing: Samantha ducks too. Hilda and the teenagers squeal with laughter. They're easily amused.

GERARD

You're hopeless.

*ACROSS THE STREAM:* Travic walks into the village, alone, pulling his cart. He squints across the stream. He sees Samantha's humiliation.

Travic *TWITCHES* one eye.

BY SAMANTHA: A hissing SNAKE slithers from the grass behind her. Hilda SCREAMS, recoils. Gerard is suspicious.

GERARD  
*Castings* be gone.

He holds his hand out toward the snake. A light beams from his hand like a flashlight. The snake ignores it.

GERARD  
Yikes. It's real. Samantha, look out.

SAMANTHA  
I'm not stupid. I'm gonna leave this village. See what you say then.

The snake PASSES THROUGH her feet. They realize that if she couldn't see it, it really was a *casting*.

GERARD  
(whistles)  
Wow.  
(to Samantha)  
Like we'd miss you. Lighten up Sam.  
(to the teenagers)  
Who cast that? It was like, real.

Hilda and the teenagers mumble. No one had the skill.

Gerard glances across the stream, sees Travic. Samantha follows Gerard's gaze.

Travic grins back at her.

GERARD  
Who's he?

Behind the teenagers, a gate opens. HOREAN, 61, a short, crotchety, weathered peasant steps down into the street. His feet land square in the mess of broken eggs.

HOREAN  
Hey now. What's this? Wasting food. Shmekeria. Just like my basket.

GERARD  
We didn't swipe your potato basket.

HOREAN  
I know you took my potato basket. You git along now.

He chases them back from Samantha. To her, he softens.

HOREAN

(to the teenagers)

Clear outta here.

(to Samantha)

You run along home now. Don't mind those Dragon Seeds. Go on up to your auntie. She a-knows how to take care of a poor girl like you.

Instead of moving on, the teenagers look across the stream. Travic was only the first stranger to enter the village.

ACROSS THE STREAM: Rector and Granib ride through the gates. Their army follows.

Rector casts an announcement. It floats down the road, a stylized parchment complete with scroll ends, grand pictures of battle and Rector's booming VOICE.

BISHOP RECTOR (V.O.)

I am Bishop Rector. I come, following the Task, seeking a new Judgement Day. We have killed many a dragon today. Your duty to the Order shall be to provision us. But fear not, for your generous Ender Order shall pay you well.

BY SAMANTHA: Gerard and Horean admire the army.

GERARD

Well paid. I can buy an anvil.

Samantha watches Gerard reading Rector's *casting*.

SAMANTHA

Who is he? What's he saying?

GERARD

Why don't you go ask him?

He smirks, then scurries off, excited by thoughts of money.

HOREAN

He's a mighty Bishop. And he's a-fightin' dragons. And he's a-gonna PAY us for *food*. Hee, hee, ...

Horean shuffles away with the glee of an old codger selling silver for gold. The street empties.

Samantha gapes in excitement at Rector. He's her opportunity to leave the village of Destock. To escape daily disgrace.

Copyright 2004 H. Woods McLaughlin -- All Rights Reserved

For the complete script please contact Jennifer Brooks at  
[info@filmmakers.com](mailto:info@filmmakers.com)