

"Haruspex"

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. A FIELD NEAR AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE. DAY.

ETHAN (40) moves a scythe gracefully through the corn row, the sun reflecting off the metal blade.

He collects the fallen corn stalks into a bundle and puts them in a brown leather satchel at his side.

A field sparrow lands on an old stone wall, up from where Ethan is gathering. It watches him work.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD NEAR AMESBURY, WILTSHIRE. DAY.

Gray clouds are forming over the hills through which a hump-backed road weaves.

Down this road, drives a large black Sedan car. It is small at first, but each time it is obscured by the lie of the land, it reappears closer, following the undulation of the hill.

EXT. A FIELD NEAR AMESBURY. DAY.

Ethan wipes his brow and looks up at the sky.

A black speck hovers.

The field sparrow on the wall pecks at a head of corn lying in the crack of the stone.

The black speck overhead reveals itself to be a Harrier Hawk, swooping in on the encroaching gray clouds.

The black Sedan car drives down the road, next to the field.

INT. BLACK SEDAN CAR. DAY.

The backs of the heads of a smartly dressed Man and Woman look out through the windshield.

The man is driving. His left hand is covered in a white bandage which he rests on the steering wheel.

The woman looks to her left and through the moving gaps in the bushes, Ethan can be seen.

With a violent turn of the wheel, the man forces the car through the low-bushes and onto the field itself.

EXT. A FIELD NEAR AMESBURY. DAY

The car flattens the corn more effectively than any scythe as it hurtles towards Ethan.

The black hawk continues swooping in the sky.

Ethan looks at the approaching car in fear.

The car comes to a stop next to him.

The field sparrow watches the car.

The passenger door opens.

EXT. A COUNTRY ROAD NEAR AMESBURY WILTSHIRE. DAY.

Seen from a distance through the bushes, Ethan drops his scythe and walks towards the car.

He leans into the window and talks unheard for a brief moment before getting into the back seat.

The black hawk now sits on the stone wall, a large red stain on the smooth rock.

EXT. BLENDING UNIT. HARUSPEX FACILITY. LONDON. DAY.

The black Sedan car pulls into the rusted metal gates of the clinic. The building looks like a disused factory. The glass from smashed windows and faded green electrical transformers litter the ground.

A man in a long black cloak and walking stick walks painfully down the steps. His face is covered in white bandages.

The car stops a small way from the metal entrance steps.

Ethan, the man and the woman get out of the car.

The woman points Ethan to the main door and remains motionless.

Ethan walks up the steps and into the building.

The man follows him a few steps behind.

INT. RECEPTION AREA. HARUSPEX FACILITY. LONDON. DAY.

The entrance hall is filthy. A broken pushchair is upturned in the light of the doorway. The sound of pigeons fluttering in the metal struts above. The wide open hall looks like a Victorian workhouse.

Ethan looks behind him to see the man pointing forwards.

A large double door is seen at the end of the hall.

Ethan walks to the door.

The man overtakes Ethan and produces a swipe-card from his black jacket pocket.

He inserts it into a keypad which flashes neon red. The bright metal numbers look out of place with the decay around them.

The light flashes green and a deep click is heard.

The man pushes open the door.

INT. CLINIC AREA. HARUSPEX FACILITY. DAY.

Ethan pauses in the doorway and swallows.

The corridor is tiled a sickly white from floor to ceiling. Horrific red smears, like clutching handprints streak the lower tiles on the left. A single glass window is visible at the end of the corridor.

Ethan looks at the man questioningly.

MAN

Walk to the door at the end, sir.

Ethan steps forward.

MAN

Keep looking ahead, sir.

Ethan tentatively walks towards the door.

The sound of a dentist drill coming from his left causes him to turn his head.

He sees the small aperture of an opaque window, through which is just visible a man wearing a blood-stained butcher's smock, leaning over a mortuary slab. He wears a pigs head mask.

On the slab is a large decapitated pig's head. The man holds a small precision cutting tool, which he brings down to the pig's eye causing juice and smoke from bone on metal to rise up.

Ethan hears the man from the car over his shoulder.

MAN

Keep moving, sir.

Ethan reaches the end of the corridor. A glass window against the smooth tiles. He pushes and the door opens.

INT. DOCTOR PRAETOR'S OFFICE. HARUSPEX FACILITY. DAY.

The room is full of lush green plants and foliage against bare stone, windowless walls. At the back centre of this indoor forest sits DOCTOR PRAETOR (65) behind a large oak desk. On his desk is a large peach.

He eagerly beckons in Ethan, smiling, but remains seated. When he speaks his voice is high-pitched and overly-enthusiastic to the point of panicked mania.

DOCTOR PRAETOR  
Ethan, Ethan, you've arrived. Sit  
down won't you.

Ethan looks around for a chair but can't see one.

DOCTOR PRAETOR  
No? Very well, stand. Now, tell  
me, who are you?

ETHAN  
You know.

Doctor Praetor stands up to reveal he too is wearing a white butcher's smock. Just below where the desk was covering him, large swirls of red blood and mucus stain the smock.

The doctor continues to be maniacally friendly.

DOCTOR PRAETOR  
This is a military facility,  
Ethan dear boy, codes of conduct  
must be adhered to. Procedures  
followed.

A buzzer sounds and the grunting of pigs in pain is heard.

DOCTOR PRAETOR  
So I ask you again. Who are you  
please.

ETHAN  
My name is Ethan Crowley.

DOCTOR PRAETOR  
And do you know why your  
government has sent you to us,  
Mr Ethan Crowley?

ETHAN  
Is it true? Have you really found  
an original copy of the Mallaeous  
Mallificarum?

The sound of pigs grunting grows louder.

Doctor Praetor waves his hand.

DOCTOR PRAETOR  
Pigs. The closest animal to  
humans, genetically. We have made  
great progress at this facility  
to bring them even closer.

ETHAN

I don't understand. I thought I was here to translate the Mallaeous.

DOCTOR PRAETOR

Some things are better experieced than explained. Follow me.

The doctor picks up the peach from his desk and brushes aside the large fronds of a fern to reveal a door. He walks through, followed by Ethan.

INT. ANTI-CHAMBER OF OPERATING ROOM. HARUSPEX FACILITY.

Doctor Praetor and Ethan enter a darkened observation room. A large window against the far wall reveals a bright operating theater in the next room. Against the wall of this next room is a sign reading "HARUSPEX 3"

Through the window, a female body covered in a blue smock and wearing a World War One gas mask lays on a gurney.

Two surgeons, both wearing long plastic red robes with hoods stand over her, motionless. Their faces are obscured by red surgical masks. Each surgeon holds his hand in the shape of a triangle, ritualistically.

Ethan takes in the view and turns to Doctor Praetor.

ETHAN

What is this?

Ethan approaches the window and his thigh bumps against a table in shadow.

On the table is a large white tray in which a mass of blooded entrails sit.

Doctor Praetor places his peach next to the tray, reaches into his pocket and puts on a pair of latex gloves.

He moves to the tray and sticks his hands in deeply, pulling out the long strands of intestines and holding them up to his face, inspecting them.

Behind him, through the window the "Haruspex 3" sign is visible.

DOCTOR PRAETOR

The Haruspex were Roman soothsayers and magicians, using the intestines of animals like runes to predict the future. An early blending of science and magic.

Ethan moves back to the door and quietly tries the handle. It is locked.

DOCTOR PRAETOR

Don't be alarmed Ethan. We are merely reviving an old tradition here. Don't think of this facility as a military hospital, think of it as a blending clinic or even a sacred space where magic meets science.

He reaches into his smock and pulls out a knife.

ETHAN

To what end? Why me?

Doctor Praetor picks up the peach, his hands still bloody from the entrails and cuts into the juicy flesh.

DOCTOR PRAETOR

We can't crack the code, Ethan. We've followed all the proscribed rituals, but... We can't get it to work.

Ethan visibly shudders.

ETHAN (WHISPERING)

Get what to work?

DOCTOR PRAETOR

The sacred blending.

Doctor Praetor holds a large slice of peach in his bloodied gloved hand and takes a bite. The juice runs down his chin.

He walks to a shelf cut into the left hand wall and pulls out a large file.

He throws it to Ethan who catches it and opens it.

What he sees forces him to hold his hand to his mouth and gag.

CUT TO

Flash images. A montage of still photo's of birth defects, mutations and burn victims, interspersed with bleached images of pigs hanging upside down on abattoir meat hooks.

CUT BACK TO

Ethan holds onto the glass window and retches.

Doctor Praetor takes another juicy bite of peach, a faint smile on his face.

DOCTOR PRAETOR  
You're a shaman Ethan. You  
understand these rites. Show us  
where we are going wrong. You're  
country needs you Ethan.

For the first time, Doctor Praetor allows his face to  
become serious. He points at the book.

DOCTOR PRAETOR  
Our Patients need you.

A cough is heard in the darkness in the far corner of the  
room. The man from the car steps out from the shadows. He  
is wearing dark sunglasses and in his bandaged hand is a  
gun. A small line of red seepage is visible through his  
white bandage.

INT. OPERATING ROOM. HARUSPEX FACILITY.

The two surgeons stand over the girl in the blue smock,  
their hands still frozen in triangle shapes.

On closer inspection it is clear the girl is being  
restrained by leather ropes.

Her eyes are visible, pleading through the large peep-  
holes of the gas mask.

The door opens and Ethan appears holding the tray of  
entrails. He too is now wearing a red hooded cloak.

He places the tray on the ground and pulls up the hood of  
his cloak to hide his face.

He reaches into the tray and pulls out a length of yellow  
blooded intestines.

He drags them on the floor round the table in a diagonal  
movement.

Looking down from the ceiling it is clear he has drawn a  
large bloodied pentangle around the operating table.

He drops the entrails to the floor and looks at himself  
in the large reflective two-way mirror.

INT. ANTI-CHAMBER OF OPERATING ROOM. HARUSPEX FACILITY.

Doctor Praetor stares back at Ethan, unseen and takes a  
bite of peach. He raises his finger to his ear.

DOCTOR PRAETOR  
Begin the procedure.

INT. OPERATING ROOM. HARUSPEX FACILITY.

An large metal overhead fan spins round. A low humming like white-noise mixed with baritone chanting gradually increases in volume.

Ethan, his face shrouded by the large hood, opens out his arms in a star shape.

The two surgeons start to move. One produces a hypodermic syringe filled with a luminous blue liquid from the folds of his gown.

He bends over the patient and injects it into her neck.

The other surgeon collects the entrails from the tray and places them on her blue smock.

The white noise humming increases to an almost unbearable level.

The overhead fan spins to become the blurred blades of a distant black helicopter.

The helicopter moves off, blurring against the gray metal sky until it becomes a large black spider in a gray web.

Stars in a night sky appear behind the web.

The stars become dim and evolve to a medical image of semen swimming, as seen through a microscope.

The wriggling semen become translucent maggots on a shiny aluminum tray containing a large hen's egg.

The egg cracks and small spiders crawl out, over the tray and mass of maggots.

The girls eye, open wide with fear, flashes as if in strobe.

River Eels congregate against the flow of water over a small mossy green dam which disappears into a dark river bank gash. This dank hole is shaped like a vulva.

Clouded water passes through the rusted metal bars of a storm drain. Bright red twigs follow the flow of the current and off into the dark depths of the drain.

The surgeon raises a soldering iron to his face and watches the acetylene steam rise up. He brings it down to a pigs head and pushes it into the cheek, making a vaginal slit in pink flesh.

The pigs yellow teeth are visible.

The girls eye is once again wide with fear, the black and white flashing of a strobe light no longer affecting her iris.

A hairy tumor with teeth is pulled from underneath the blue smock of the girl on the operating table by a pair of large forceps.

A metal pole is being dragged through wet sand, leaving a deep and long indentation in its wake.

The transformers from an electricity sub-station hum menacingly.

A small bird, flapping and trapped in the holes of a metal mesh fence.

A white egg bobs in a large glass of red wine.

Bread being broken open by hands in latex gloves. Inside the bread are a mass of writhing maggots.

A pigs head is nailed to a wooden cross, the blood dripping down and collecting in a large silver tray at the base.

Ethan lets his hands fall to his side. He falls to his knees with exhaustion.

The sound of grunting comes from the operating table.

The eyes in the gas mask are now seen yellow and wolfish.

EXT. BLENDING UNIT. HARUSPEX FACILITY. LONDON. DAY.

A woman in a black cloak, her face completely covered by white bandages, moves awkwardly amongst the broken glass and metal wires. In her hand she drags a heavy metal pole.

FADE OUT.