

**PORTFOLIO SAMPLE: CINEMATIC SCRIPT - LONG**

**Lesley Donaldson ([info@aquhorthies.com](mailto:info@aquhorthies.com))**

**Dryad Salvation: The Bleached Lands**

**FADE IN**

Ext. Wheat field, Belgium, August 1914.

SEBASTIEN, a seven-year-old boy in brown shorts-overalls and a plaid shirt, chases a SWALLOWTAIL BUTTERFLY into long, yellow wheat sheafs. Insects BUZZ as he GIGGLES with delight. The farther he goes, the quieter voices of his MOTHER (35) mother and grandfather (60) become. They speak in French, SUBTITLED:

MOTHER [OS]

Hurry up. We should have left days ago.

GRANDFATHER [OS]

I am too old to hurry.

MOTHER [OS]

The invaders won't care how old you are. The stories Matron Cavell told me of her patients from Ypres are horrible... Wait. Where is Sebastien? Sebastien?

END SUBTITLES

The butterfly stops. Sebastien pauses, his hands about to cup it.

MOTHER [OS]

Sebastien! Run!

GRANDFATHER [OS]

Mon dieu!

Multiple shots of GUNFIRE erupt. Sebastien crouches and looks over his shoulder to where he left his family behind. FOOTSTEPS CRUNCH through the field toward him. His eyes widen with fear. The silhouette of a German soldier crosses his face. Sebastien's mother SCREAMS. GUNFIRE cuts her off. Tears roll down Sebastien's cheeks and his lip trembles.

ZOOM IN

The butterfly flutters its wings. A single gunshot CRACKS.

SLOW MOTION

An ethereal glow lights up the butterfly and the wheat sheaves. The butterfly alights into the air.

END SLOW MOTION and PULL BACK TO REVEAL

The German soldier in front of Sebastien backs away from a GLOWING BLUE-WHITE TOKTIXIAN. The alien darts into the soldier's body, who collapses to the ground, twitching. Pursued by a second alien, Sebastien runs away from the oncoming army.

At the family farmstead, a DAIMLER MARIENFELD TRUCK blocks a horse-drawn cart laden with belongings. Most of the soldiers walk past the bodies of Sebastien's mother and grandfather, bleeding on the ground. A couple of soldiers investigate the wheat field, where they help the alien-infected soldier off the ground. He seems unharmed.

Sebastien and the glowing entity get lost amid the wheat field. The butterfly continues its flight toward the city of BRUSSELS on the horizon, in the same as A7V TANKS that slowly roll on the dirt road past the farmstead. The Belgian landscape transitions from one of late summer bounty to grey, bombed-out devastation.

The skies cloud over and darken.

#### **FADE TO BLACK**

Additional narrative design cues:

- Germans invaded Belgium in August 1914 at the start of the harvest season. Colours on the farm should be warm and homely until the pan-out.
- The [swallowtail is an endangered butterfly](#) with an eye-catching flash of blue and orange-red circles on the lower part of its wings, which then swoop into a swallow's tail shape.

- **CINEMATIC SCRIPT: Longer opening**

The following is the cinematic opening of my concept game *Dryad Salvation: The Bleached Lands*. I wrote it with the opportunity to include playthrough tutorial elements, such as character movement and ability triggers. However, these haven't been specifically written into the script.

**SCENE 1.0: THE OLDEST TRICK IN THE BOOK  
(OPENING CINEMATIC 1/2)**

EXT. DAYTIME, A CLEARING IN ARNBOIA WOODS

GAGGING on soot, dryad HESONE NORTHSTAR (35) races through a dense temperate forest in human form with her semi-unconscious twin brother, TRELIN, in her arms. She struggles to stay ahead of the BLAZING fire that consumes the forest around her.

Tears streak down the channels of Hesone's dark, wood-grained cheeks. She dodges fallen trees by jumping over them and swerves around falling branches that fall onto the old game trail. Black smoke drift grasps at her green, woolen robes. In her arms, Trelin's sickly white skin stands out in stark contrast against his earthy brown robes.

TRELIN  
(painful moaning)  
Hesone, it hurts.

HESONE  
Not far, Trel. Stay with me. I'm sorry.

TRELIN  
(worried)  
Poachers?

HESONE  
Lost...lost in the fire.

Leaves SNAG at Hesone's broken antler headdress, tearing it off her head. At the end of a worn path, she dashes through a thinning patch of bushes and almost falls off the cliff on the other side. She GASPS and rears back. She shakes the haunting image of the sharp rocks below from her mind, then seeks her home's hiding place from this vantage point. The dryad's mark on her forehead fades. The Red Gloaming, home, is so close, yet unreachable.

HESONE  
Help!

A loud CRASH and SCREECH of pain to her right catches her attention. She spins around, stunned by the unexpected presence of a harpy, the dryad's most feared enemy. THELYORE (49), a harpy with sharp eyes and sharper, red talons, FLAPS her brown and black wings as she attempts to extricate her legs from beneath a massive branch. Slick-haired and streamline, she wears a sleek leather jerkin with metal fastenings. There is a glowing yellow amulet on a gold chain around her neck. RAGING FIRE eats up the woods behind her.

HESONE

(gasps)

A harpy!

TRELLIN

Run, Hes. Do not let her strip off your bark! The Methuselan elders said not to—

Thelyore SCREAMS in agony and frustration, then attempts to free herself, without success.

HESONE

She is hurt.

TRELLIN

Hesone, you cannot help her.

HESONE

I cannot abide suffering, not even in our sworn enemy.

THELYORE

Hey, sproutling brats. Stop bickering and get this huge chunk of my cousin off your legs. I'll fly you to safety.

HESONE

Trellin, if she can get us out, what other decision do I have?

Hesone gently lays Trellin on the ground far enough away from the fire to be safe. He cries out in pain.

TRELLIN  
Hes, do not leave me.

Trellin's eyes roll back into his head. He succumbs to his injuries. GRUNTING with effort, Hesone casts vines around the heavy branch. She leverages it off Thelyore.

WINCING, the harpy slides free. She eases to a standing position, unable to bear weight on the right side. Hesone drops the branch to the ground with a THUD.

HESONE  
I have played my part. Now fly us to the Red Gloaming.

Thelyore FLAPS her wings in a haughty display.

(CONT'D)

THELYORE  
Is there sap between your ears? I said I would fly you out of here. Not *both* of you. That tree injured my leg. I can only carry one of you.

A burning tree CRASHES to the ground behind Thelyore.

THELYORE (CONT'D)  
Leave your brother behind. He doesn't look well. If the fire doesn't get him, whatever's he's sick with certainly will.

Hesone hides brewing tears of frustration from the harpy by kneeling next to her brother.

HESONE  
I followed them...Trel did not want me to...poachers set him on fire.

THELYORE  
Humans. One day they'll destroy everything. They're worse than locusts.

(pauses) Maybe there is *one* way I can manage to carry you both.

HESONE

How? I will do anything. We are twins. I cannot imagine life without him.

THELYORE

If you extract his twilight heart and protect it within your chest, when you shift into your healing tree you'll preserve his spirit. I'll fly you both out, in a manner of speaking.

HESONE

But then his body will be—

(CONT'D)

THELYORE

Yes, yes. His body will be left behind. Probably burned to ash. Can't your elders use lifeseed magic to plant his twilight heart into a new tree form? Maybe a nice pine?

SPARKS from the leading edge of the fire drift toward them. A single spark lands on Hesone. Thelyore briskly PATS it out as the dryad WINCES.

THELYORE (CONT'D)

Decide or burn, little plant. I'm leaving before it's too late.

Thelyore FLAPS her wings in preparation for flight. Hesone places her hand on Trellin's chest.

HESONE

Trel, forgive me. I *will* make you whole again.

Once extracted, Trellin's twilight heart, the core of his spirit, HUMS with magical energy. His humanoid form turns dusky—

grey and lifeless. Hesone holds his twilight heart against her chest. Bright green magic sparkles around the heart as she presses his spirit into herself.

THELYORE (O.S.)

Quick! Shift into your healing form to preserve his spirit. The fire is almost upon us.

Hesone casts her self-healing spell and transforms into an oak sapling with ORGANIC, WOODEN TWISTING.

Thelyore saunters to her on two uninjured legs. The harpy removes her necklace and hangs it around Hesone's trunk. The amulet glows brighter.

(CONT'D)

THELYORE

You should have listened to your brother. Oldest ambush in the book: the injured bird.

The BLAZE breaks through to the cliff's edge. Thelyore jumps onto Trellin's corpse and digs her talons into him. She LAUNCHES herself into the sky. Trellin's corpse dangles from her clutches. She hovers for a moment, studying Hesone.

THELYORE (CONT'D)

The amulet is a little gift from friends of mine in low places. "Use it on a dryad," they said. "See what happens." I wonder if it will protect you from this nasty fire? At least I have your brother to fill the bellies of my clutch tonight. And his bark will make such wonderful bedding. No offense. Circle of life, and all that. Best of luck.

CAACKLING, Thelyore wheels away and soars over the Red Gloaming into the horizon. Black smoke and RAGING fire consume the forest.

FADE TO BLACK

/END SCENE

CUT TO TITLE CARD

Growing vines spell out "Dryad Salvation: The Bleached Lands". They CRACKLE as they become desiccated.

/END TITLE CARD

CUT TO SCENE 1.2

**SCENE 1.2: THE NEWEST TREE IN THE FOREST  
(OPENING CINEMATIC 2/2 - OPTIONAL AS CINEMATIC; MAY BE FULLY  
PLAYTHROUGH )**

EXT. NIGHT; NEW ATLANTIC OCEAN, WESTERN COASTLINE, NEW SCOTLAND

**FADE IN**

CRASHING OCEAN WAVES and LIGHTNING drown out the haunting echoes of the Arnboria Fire in Hesone's mind. As she comes to, she finds herself floating through the air above the ocean. There's no land in sight and she is still trapped in a hibernation state unable to move.

RATTLING chains attached to a bulky metal arm wrap around her body. Three BUZZING discs, each with a single blue eye, hover over her without wires or pulleys. A heaving metal boat looms in her peripheral vision. CREAKING, the arm mechanism lays her down on a deck cluttered with boxes and technological equipment.

MASAKI UCHIYAMA (45) eagerly rolls his wheeled chair closer, then locks it into place. RAINFALL drips off the brim of his worn hat, one decorated with a bear superimposed on the Earth. Water plasters long strands of black hair to his cheeks. A handful of humans wearing modern clothes unfamiliar to Hesone cautiously stand behind him. His eyes sparkle with joy and deep wrinkles enhance his broad smile.



MASAKI

After all these centuries, I've finally found you.

Masaki reaches for Hesone. His hand pauses over the amulet.

EDT TEAM MEMBER

It looks pretty waterlogged, Mr. Uchiyama. We should get it inside.

MASAKI

Words spoken without consideration may hurt someone's feelings. This is not an "it". You are looking at the only free dryad on the planet.

Masaki unclasps the amulet from around Hesone's trunk. He slips it into a red leather pouch. A crew member takes the pouch from him and stows it away below deck.

Hesone transforms into her humanoid form, INHALING deeply, her first in centuries. The air is salty and stale. She flexes unyielding joints.

HESONE

By Digin's Beard, I can move again!

Masaki offers a hand to help her up. She draws back, edging away from him.

MASKAI

I'm Masaki Uchiyama. You're safe.

(over his shoulder)

Keep the camera drones back. She won't know our technology.

HESONE

Where am I?

(panicking)

Where's Trellin?

TRELLIN (O.S.)

(sarcastic)  
I never left, Hes.

HESONE  
Trel? Trel, is that you? I cannot see you anywhere on this metallic nightmare of a ship.

(to Masaki)  
What have you done with my brother?

HUMAN EDT TEAM MEMBER 01  
She's hallucinating.

HUMAN EDT TEAM MEMBER 02  
Dryads can do that?

MASAKI  
Stop being insensitive. Both of you.  
(CONT'D)

(to Hesone)  
Most reverent one, I assure you that you are quite safe. Explore if you wish. I won't speak to you again until you're ready.

Hesone stands on her own. She staggers about the narrow confines of the deck.

TRELLIN  
The human speaks rightly, Hes: I am trapped inside just you like the harpy wanted.

HESONE  
We were on the bottom of the ocean? But that means the Red Gloaming is...

TRELLIN  
Gone. They are all gone.

HESONE

And the lifeseed...Without it, how can  
I heal you, Trel?

Maskai waits at the railing, hands folded in his lap, wheels  
locked. THUNDER rolls in the distance and the rain begins  
easing. Hesone approaches him, ready to talk.

MASAKI

You're aboard Greta's Glory, a rescue  
vessel, of sorts. Who is Trelkin?

TRELLIN

Do not tell him. Humans cannot be  
trusted.

HESONE

(to Masaki)

That is nothing you need concern  
yourself with. You found me on the  
bottom of the sea?

MASKAI

We were investigating one of the  
mythicals' ruins for a particular  
artifact. In the aftermath of Quantum  
One, everything that was once land here  
is now ocean floor.

HESONE

Where is Arnborea Forest? Or my home?

MASAKI

In the environmental fallout from  
Quantum One, the tectonic plates  
shifted. Oceanic volumes increased.  
Everything that was once land here is  
now ocean floor.

Tears brew in Hesone's eyes. She SNIFFLES and wipes them away  
with the back of her hand.

HESONE

Quantum One?

*GRETA'S GLORY* CREW MEMBER (O.S.)

Incoming Matriarch survey drones.  
Starboard side. Take cover!

MASAKI

There's no time to explain. You must  
get inside to safety before Matriarch  
sees you. We'll keep you hidden below  
deck until we make landfall.

/END SCENE

/CUT TO GAMEPLAY