

THE TONE IS OPPRESSIVELY SUBDUED AND QUIET
THROUGHOUT.

FADE IN:

HORRIFIC FOG. A DENSE FOREST. THUNDEROUS HORSES
cut the mist. Black-robed RIDERS. Their faces
are strange. Warpainted blue. PULL BACK TO
REVEAL--

A TELEVISION.

The riders are crossing a panoramic screen.
Watching this television is a MAN. Tense.
Unmoving. His room is sparse, monastic. His skin
is painted like the riders: a dense blue scroll
pattern of lines, and a kind of black "X" across
his face. He wears a broad-brimmed hat.

PULL BACK AGAIN TO REVEAL--

EXT. THE CITY OF PARIS - NIGHT

His apartment rests in modern, rainy Paris.

The man moves out, to take to the street, as WE
CUT TO:

INT. PARIS HOUSE - NIGHT

A WOMAN WITH BRIGHT BLONDE HAIR, her back to us,
quiets her BABY in a crib. There is a BANG at
the door. And ANOTHER. She turns, heads to the
door. Opens it.

Outside stands one of the MEN with the blue-black
facepaint. He smacks in the door. She is
shocked. He lifts an AXE from his cloak and uses
it to butt her chest with the blunt end.

She collapses to the floor.

The baby is crying.

It is still crying MINUTES LATER when he ties the unconscious mother to a large wooden post--marked at the top by an X-shaped cross.

The terrifying painted man pours into her mouth a LIQUID from a black VIAL. He CHANTS, hoarse, an unknown language, then:

PAINTED KILLER

(to his victim, low, quiet:)

Do you intend to kill the King?

EXT. AN ENGLISH MANSION - NIGHT

Rain shrouds a large group of PEOPLE. *ALL of them have faces painted in the blue-black "X" pattern, and shaven heads, even women, and most wear wide-brimmed hats.*

They are CHANTING. Under their umbrellas, they gaze upward at a Georgian-style mansion flanked by spiked gates.

They look like visitors from another realm. Maybe they are.

INT. LONDON OFFICE - NIGHT

Another panoramic TV elegantly shows us the riders again, crossing a foggy moor, as suddenly the fog flies upward TO REVEAL a small group of Medieval-type TRAVELERS ahead.

A TEENAGED BOY watches the TV. He's transfixed, though we'll find he's seen it scores of times. He has a slouchy look to him, a friendly but blank face, hard to read. He's wearing square glasses, khakis, and a nearly-threadbare brown sweater, his untucked shirt messily pouring out of it.

WOMAN'S VOICE

Ben?

The teen, BEN TENNANT, turns. At the door his

mother, FRANCIS TENNANT, a stately, attractive gets-the-job-done-and-with-a-smile type of woman, 40s. Adores her son.

FRANCIS

You've seen it fifty million times. Can I get your attention please?

BEN

(distracted by TV, dryly:)

But now I get to see it with commercial interruptions.

FRANCIS

Don't smart off. You know, I've been getting calls from school that you do that, and you're cutting class, and telling lies constantly--we're going to get into it as soon as this is all done.

She lifts two suit jackets.

FRANCIS

Which one do you want? I got them from Ken, he's so small, he's almost your--

BEN

I don't want a jacket, it'll look like I'm, you know, trying to be Mr. Grown Up. I'm just tagging along. Invisible.

She sighs, crosses the room, which is filled with old, giant foreign movie posters, and clicks the TV to the news.

BEN (CONT'D)

What're you doing?

FRANCIS

I was afraid of this.

On the TV NEWS: the painted-faced people gathered.

BBC NEWSWOMAN

(amused)

--well, you'd have to be living under a rock not to know the basics, Tom. Mr. Goren is the legendary, reclusive director of the

film series THE SIGNET LORD by the author TK
Fanthom, and these people around me belong
to the fringe religious group founded by the
book's creator--

BBC ANCHOR

And this film trilogy is connected to a
series of murders, is that--?

BBC NEWSWOMAN

That's right. Fanthom started a religious
group that has had off-shoots involved in
violence, most recently last night in
Paris...The point is, some of these people
can be extremely dangerous.

FRANCIS

Oh, God, they're going to talk about
the murders.

She clicks off the set and hurries out with Ben
in tow--

INT. OFFICE HALLWAY - NIGHT

Francis and Ben are joined by her assistant
FIONA, her dark hair in a bob, who darts out of a
cubicle with characteristic impish energy. She's
Asian-British and sparkly-eyed and brilliant and
twentysomething and arty and literate and
lithesomely beautiful. Ben has to act cool
around her or he'll die.

FIONA

I'm going too, right?

FRANCIS

I don't go anywhere without you.

FIONA

That's what I thought. I just don't
like to jump ahead of you.

Francis smiles, shakes her head at the silliness
of Fiona. But Francis looks like--and is--a
powerful woman. The few WORKERS in the office

subtly slip out of her way, avoid her gaze if they can.

EXT. OFFICE BUILDING - NIGHT

The three head for a waiting ROLLS ROYCE LIMO, old and beautiful, in the downpour.

BEN

You had them get a Rolls?

FRANCIS

We want to be impressive. Intimidating.

BEN

Good luck intimidating these people.

INT. ROLLS ROYCE - NIGHT

Ben sits. Disappointed, he sees Fiona sit beside his *mom*. Not him. Mom turns on the car's TV, to the news:

FRANCIS

I shouldn't even watch this.

BEN

Why do you?

BBC NEWSWOMAN (TV)

--the director decided to direct a new sequel to the series, and was allowed to edit the film in private. But he suffered a stroke a few months ago and investors are concerned he may be unstable.

FRANCIS

(to TV)

You don't have to sound so happy.

Francis's cel phone rings.

FIONA

Oh, criminy--studio's going to call us every minute.

FRANCIS (INTO PHONE)

Yes? No, I haven't got the results of my biopsy, they didn't call yet.

(realizing; anxious in front of everyone watching)

I can't really discuss this now.

I'll talk to you when I can. Alright.

She clicks the phone off. Everyone seems rather disturbed.

BBC NEWSWOMAN (TV)

Now what we have is, the studio reps are being sent in simply to retrieve the film in its current state, but these fans around me do not want the picture to see the light of day.

BBC ANCHOR (TV)

They think it's, what, a violation of the "Master's" work to release it at all--?

BBC NEWSWOMAN (TV)

That's right, Tom, and if looks could kill...

FRANCIS

(erupting momentarily)

Oh, shut it off!

Fiona clicks it off.

EXT. LONDON - NIGHT

The long car gracefully pushes past the battleship-gray, battleship-tall buildings. Ben stares out the window. Zoning out. A daydreamer. MUSIC PLAYS IN HIS HEAD, sweeping, mysterious--music from the film WE SAW on TV.

London takes on an enigmatic feel.

He SEES some of the "Painted Cultist" men weaving through the walkers on the street. WE PASS BY. Surreal. Unsettling.

EXT. ROLLS ROYCE - NIGHT - LATER

The car splashes through a narrow village town and onto a countryside road.

EXT. THE ESTATE - NIGHT

The Rolls edges through the large crowd of Painted Cultists. Uniformed SECURITY MEN hold them back as the car enters the gates.

IN THE CAR

Ben is amazed seeing the hordes of fantasy-figure people, eerie in the rain, and not whimsical for even a second. His face goes stony, hiding his enthusiasm to Fiona.

EXT. MANSION

The car pulls up. A young SERVANT in a suit stands waiting. The door's massive. Ben stares up at the mansion in awe.

FRANCIS

Come on, Ben--

INT. MANSION - NIGHT

Fiona, Francis and Ben all stand in the foyer. Everything's dark wood and moneyed and Old World.

Ben gazes ahead in amazement at what appears to be a Medieval corridor flanked by otherworldly SUITS OF ARMOR. Goblin-like HEADS hang in the hall.

A worried young male English SERVANT just stares.

SERVANT

Uh. I could get you some tea.

(beat)

Yes. I'll get some. You'll need to present

your...court documents. Mr. Goren will want to see them.

ENGLISH LADY'S VOICE (OS)
I doubt it.

Everyone looks over to the side hall where a young INDIAN-BRITISH WOMAN, a nurse named Preet, rolls in a wheelchair with the slumped, disturbing figure of GOREN, the elderly film director.

He is bent strangely over to one side, and has a fierce look to his face. He is like an angry sorcerer himself, but there is little left of his personality. He has one eye closed, and the other fiercely fixed on Francis.

PREET
He's not what he used to be.

INT. A LONDON HOME - NIGHT

Black riders on horseback clash with swords
with other warriors on a large TV screen.

NARRATOR (ON TELEVISION)

It began as a beloved novel. T.K.
Fanthom's book...was so powerful it
inspired what many call a religion...

Images of castles, moors, skeletons, cobblestone villages...

NARRATOR (ON TELEVISION)

With the films came an international
audience of children and adults alike.
The story of young Fyfer Jack and his
friends *captivated* the world...

4 CHILDREN dressed in half-Medieval/half-Victorian clothes...
are trailed by WARRIORS and small, NEANDERTHAL-LIKE MEN...

NARRATOR (ON TELEVISION)

Helped along by human comrades and the
childlike warriors known as Thivvens,
his journey to find the Signet Ring and
help the Halo Lion heal the
land...became a global phenomenon...

All of them are led by a gigantic STONE LION with ram's horns and an intermittently-FIERY mane...strange, magical...

NARRATOR (ON TELEVISION)

Now BTV presents the iconic film series uncut in its legendary 100th time on television...Be a part of the magic...

IT IS THE STRANGEST AND DARKEST CHILDREN'S ADVENTURE EVER.

NARRATOR (TV)

We'll also have a tribute to the late Julia Dupont who played Annalowe.

Suddenly a young man--bookish, perpetually nervous Brit NESTOR AMINGTON--stirs from bed as if from a nightmare.

NES:

Annalowe.

He's upset by the TV. He looks to a HUGE POSTER for THE SIGNET LORD--a blend of Harry Potter, Narnia, and Tolkien.

On the poster, Nes is a child actor in a top hat, pictured with several others and a group of furry-hatted Hobbitlike Neanderthal dwarves, and a lion king with huge ram's horns, a crown and mane of fire(!). They are all surrounded by the fearsome blue-black tattooed-faced men and a looming, Hooded Figure. Now--the floor is suddenly RAPPED HARD.

INT. COFFEEHOUSE - NIGHT

Nes, disheveled, in thrown-on brown blazer jacket, stumbles downstairs to a mostly-empty coffeehouse. The TV news is on. A lone barrista, CARR (a nebbishy Spanish college-age fellow) is banging his broom on the ceiling.

NES

I'm here. What is it?

CARR (SPANISH ACCENT)

Annalowe. They had a news report. Were you asleep already?

NES

(dazed, looks at TV)

I never sleep.

CARR

They said she was having a
relationship with one of the, the
cultists. He went...
(points at head, indicates crazy)
They have the baby in foster care.

NES

This can't be happening.

A young woman sits at the bar looking furtively at him,
concerned:

YOUNG WOMAN

You think those people are dangerous?

NES

(disturbed by her)

Uh. No, no, fluke, crazy thing...

YOUNG WOMAN

(sees he's figured it out)

I'm with the Daily Mail--can I get a
comment on what's happened?

NES

Oh, God, you're all going to be
descending on me...How did you find
me? No one can find me...

YOUNG WOMAN

Had you been in touch with Annalowe?
I mean Julia Dupont--

NES

No, no, and we mustn't jump to
conclusions, alright?

YOUNG WOMAN

Were you on bad terms?

NES

No, no.

YOUNG WOMAN

--right, look, question is: is this the start of something?

NES

Start of?

YOUNG WOMAN

Are you worried unstable individuals are killing off all you child actors from the film?

This stops Nes cold.

NES

Not sure I...even thought of that.

Lost, Nes stares out the rainy window--where, *casually in the backdrop as the woman talks, WE SEE A TROOP OF RIDERS ON BLACK HORSES fighting in the streets with swords against MEDIEVAL FOOTSOLDIERS...*

YOUNG WOMAN

Well, would it be outlandish to say it? I mean, there were threats, the cult that surrounds Fantom have some...imbalanced individuals... You know where I'm going, is there a quote I could get on that? You alright, mate?

Nes blinks. The daydreamed soldiers outside in b.g. VANISH.

NES

Haven't slept well in quite...some time.

(realizing he revealed too much)

Uh, look, I have to get going--Carr, get her something, on the house.

He starts to head out.

YOUNG WOMAN

Wait, wait--one thing, one thing--rumor is, you actors are planning a reunion?

NES

(beat, obviously lying)

No. We're all...lying low.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A MAD SCRAMBLE OF YELLING REPORTERS greet SYLVIA DASS (20s), a flamboyant British party girl, Cockney, slightly punkish, but a bit of a put-on, not as rough as she pretends--

SYLVIA

(shouting to the crowds)

Get outta 'ere. It's no' a bloody fantasy--it's no' entertainment for th' masses 'ere, a real live breathin woman is dead. A lovely woman. Julia wi' be missed. An' thank you all for leavin' us be whilst we have our grief about it--

INT. HOTEL PUB - NIGHT

Nervous, Nes watches her on TV with a portly friend, STUART (20s), a caustic, well-dressed American in a bad mood... And ETTIE (20s) a prim-and-proper British church girl, astoundingly innocent and literal-minded...

ETTIE

She doesn't seem very broken up.

NES

Did she have to choose this place for our get-together? Could we be more public?

STUART

Shoulda gone to your coffeeplace. How's it doing these days?

NES

If money doesn't start coming in,
(indicates Sylvia on TV)
I'll end up on her reality show...

STUART

Well, if you'd stop keeping it secret, use your name power, it's business 101, man, you gotta--aaah, shit, whatever. Want another drink?

NES

Another drink?

STUART

Don't be sanctimonious. It's my last thing. You still on sleeping pills?

NES

(uncomfortable nod, sees

Stuart's accusing tone)

Don't know which is worse. Insomnia or the nightmares.

STUART

(knowingly)

You see him, don't you? Your old friend..."The Evil Behind the Veil"?

NES

(upset)

He's in my head all the time. And with all this going on? I mean, sleep's impossible...

ETTIE

You need to find religion and get yourself right.

The two men look at her, annoyed. But she has caring eyes. Now--they watch Sylvia leave the reporters on the TV. The commotion now transfers to the hotel lobby, they hear it...

STUART

Here she comes.

ETTIE

Be nice.

Sylvia enters, still waving off the hounding media...

SYLVIA

(smiling to Nes and the actors)

Aw, 'ere we all are! The Two Sons of Dawn and the Two Daughters of Night.

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

All the former child actors--Nes, Stuart, Sylvia, and Ettie--are sprawled unhappily around the opulent suite... On a giant TV SET "THE SIGNET LORD" again plays, a castle scene with

CHILD VERSIONS of all those present here...

SYLVIA

(wistfully innocent; re the TV)
God, were we really that young once?

STUART

I am absolutely the worst child actor
in history. Look at that. And I
think I was drunk that day. Should've
improved me.

They almost laugh but a GIRL onscreen stops them short.

NES

Julia...

ETTIE

God. Now, look, I'm not going to say
she was asking for it...

SYLVIA

Then don't--it was some lunatic--

ETTIE

(feeling bad saying it, but)
But Julia was weird, promiscuous, Lord
knows who she got involved with over
there in France.

SYLVIA

"Over there in France." Like she was
some floosie. Her baby daughter was
left behind. A li'l sympathy?

STUART

I'll miss her. She was the best off of
any of us. Got to play the elfin girl,
didn't have to be the butt of
everybody's fat jokes. She was the one
who turned out alright actually.

NES, ETTIE

(as if, "what about us?")
Hey...

STUART

Right.

SYLVIA

We can dance 'round it all night, but
we don't know for sure what happened.
There are a lot of crazies out there.

(eyes Nes, lustful; playful?)
I figure we stick together tonight.

Nes is alarmed to be caught in her crosshairs.

STUART

They could be wrong about the boyfriend
stalker. It could be one of the Painted
Men got to Julia, the Fanthomites.

ETTIE

Face it. We made a Satanic little
anti-God witchcraft epic, and now
we're going to pay the price the rest
of our lives. One way or another.

Everyone stares at her.

Nes moves to the window, looks down. Sees the woman from the
shop.

NES

Bloody hell. It's that reporter, she
followed me from the cafe.

STUART (irritated)

We always managed to keep the
media out of our little reunions, Nes.

SYLVIA

Have to admit, this is a little annoying.
Does anybody have the money to hire some
serious security or what?

ETTIE

What money? We had the same kind of
parents as you.

(sigh)
We ought to just get out of London.

NES

We don't need security, I'm sick
of this. I'm getting rid of her.

EXT. LONDON HOTEL - NIGHT

Nes heads out into the rain. The reporter is across the street in a well-lit covered area talking to VALET PARKERS.

Nes hesitates. Strategizing. Upset.

He turns away, hikes his collar, so she doesn't see who he is.

But then, looking worn, strung-out on insomnia drugs and insomnia itself, he sees something very weird.

He trembles just a little.

There, across the stormy city street, he *sees what appears to be a slinky, white, MANLIKE GOBLIN CREATURE* crawling down the wall of a nearby building. It disappears around the corner.

He shakes it off. Takes a calming PILL. Clearly he's been known to go a bit far with imagination before...

LIGHTNING FLASHES, LINKING A CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY

A Young Nes (10) stands in a foggy forest near a castle. Clouds of mist FLASH QUIETLY with eerie, unexplained flourishes...

Out of the mist comes a HOODED FIGURE, supernaturally tall.

HOODED FIGURE (DEEP MALE VOICE)

Do you fear the unknown, little boy?

Young Nes is extremely fearful. From behind him, his young friends, Sylvia, Stuart and Ettie (all 10 years old) emerge protectively with the furry-capped DWARVES...

HOODED FIGURE

It is the only thing you have to fear.
If you come into my world, Fyfer Jack,
I will show you that everything you
know is false.

YOUNG NES

I'm not going anywhere with you.

HOODED FIGURE

You think the old Halo Lion will
protect you? You are a fool to
trust him.

(beat)

Step closer and I'll show you why.

Young Nes is too terrified to move.

PULL BACK -- AND WE SEE ALL THIS IS IN THE TV SET--

IN THE HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

Sylvia, Ettie, and Stuart watch the film in silence.
Hypnotized. Solemn. Frozen.

Nes enters behind them quietly, still shaken, wet from the rain outside.

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY

Now suddenly Nes is having a flashback and WE SEE THE BOY ON A MOVIE SET with PRODUCTION STAFF around, and an elderly, bushyhaired British DIRECTOR with hot and cold running eccentricities storming toward the kid--

DIRECTOR

No, Nes, no. This is not what Fanthom wrote. Fyfer Jack is braver than this. The hesitation is over, move in and confront him. See? Like this--

Young Nes stares in terror at the unmoving, hooded figure. The old director gets right in the boy's face--

DIRECTOR

What the bloody hell are you so scared of? It's make believe, boy, it's all movie magic, get in here--

Nes resists him pulling.

DIRECTOR

We're not going to sit here on our asses while you get motivated. You're getting a tidy fortune for this. You want something to be scared about, we'll do the pit scene next, that's what's coming--

(angrily, to all the kids)

We're going to make true believers out of

you--
 (to crew)
THE PIT SCENE--

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. CASTLE GROUNDS - DAY - A FLASHBACK

Young Nes and his child comrades, Sylvia, Ettie and Stuart, are stuck in a muddy pit as the hooded figure stares down...

The bushy-capped dwarves have been turned to MUDDY STATUES...

A PANAVISION CAMERA dollies past them to the pit. On the sides of the pit, frightful black WOLVES with snakelike heads stand, half-defying gravity, SNARLING and SNAPPING. The vines in the pit become fat, quivering SNAKES.

The creatures are clearly being operated by a small army of FX TECHS outside the pit. The director yells at them to intensify the attack...

IN THE PIT

The child actors are terrified. The way the wolves snarl, the way the FX Techs and the Director are yelling and hooting at them, has a nightmarish feel.

Young Nes is in a state of absolute terror. He believes he is in this reality. The wolves SNARL RIGHT AT HIS FACE--

He screams--Suddenly he is an ADULT here, himself, GASPING FOR AIR as--

INT. HOTEL SUITE - NIGHT

--he stares insanely at a TV in the LIGHTNING-BATTERED room. He's shaking.

NES

Stop this.

The others turn to see him.

ETTIE

What's going on--?

NES

(shaken up)

The pit.

Sylvia stares in fear, nods, depressed.

SYLVIA

I hear it in my sleep.

STUART

Did you take care of the reporter?

NES

(suddenly realizes where he is,
takes him a moment to respond)

I don't know.

ETTIE

You don't look alright.

NES

I dream with my eyes open sometimes.
Insomnia forces it, I guess.

They look at each other, uncomfortable. Bad joke,
halfhearted:

SYLVIA

Waking dream. It's a message from
the Fanthom realm.

NES

A lot of times in my dreams, he just
keeps yelling at me to get closer
to...Speaknot...

STUART

What dream? It was a memory. Don't
you remember that day?

NES

There are all sorts of days I've
forgot.

ETTIE

(dread, knowing)

They come back to you when you sleep.

NES

(nods)

Sometimes I dream we're going after the
signet ring, and we never find it. And
the Halo Lion never comes to help us.
And we just...wander the wastelands...
never get home.

Sylvia growls a frustrated groan. Everyone looks at her.

SYLVIA

(dreamily)

What the hell is wrong with us... It
was just pretend...why can't we bloody
get over it...

STUART

You want to know what's wrong with us?
Nothing is wrong with us. We were ten-
year-old freakin kids in a bizarre
fantasy world that someone who
absolutely despised children created.
Satanic rites and ferocious creatures
and dead parents everywhere? And that
insane director *tortured* us--that's
what he did, he tortured us--and no one
would stand up to him.

Silent, the others nod. Even mention of him scares them.

STUART

No one will stand up to him *now*.

He looks at them angrily.

STUART

And why the hell is that? I mean, you
think about what those movies did to
us-- Goren oughta be brought up on
charges. No one even made him stop
shooting, he broke the law going all
night--we were exhausted half the time
he was making those supernatural things
pounce on us.

NES

No one cared.

SYLVIA

They were making money hand over fist.

STUART

Let me ask you something: why are we sitting here cowering in some hotel room, when we could be at Robert Goren's fancy English estate making him eat shit for what he did to us kids? Huh?

NES

What are you talking about?

STUART

Why didn't anyone ever make him answer for the way he treated us? I was terrified *half* my childhood. You haven't had a good night's sleep since you were 13. I eat like a maniac, Ettie spends all day hiding in a church somewhere, Sylvia's the devil's whore--

SYLVIA

Well said, Stuart. Really makes a girl feel nice.

STUART

--and what do we do about it? Someone's out there wanting to kill us because of that stupid damn movie. Why don't we all get a car and go out there right now, and *make* him apologize? Just make him say he's sorry for ruining us? Huh? Just that much? Why don't we?

NES

Because we're scared.

Ettie and Sylvia won't look at Stuart.

STUART

Well, you're not going to let me go alone to that cult compound of his. And I'm getting the hell out of here--

He storms away. Nes and the others do look worried for him.

SYLVIA

Wait.

EXT. HOTEL - NIGHT

A LIMOUSINE pulls up as Nes and company hustle in the rain to get in.

SYLVIA

He's a sick old man, he's not going
to understand-

STUART

We'll make him understand.

NES

(to driver)

Robert Goren's estate-you know where it is?

The car pulls off.

DRIVER

Yeah, I would say I do.

(beat, quiet)

The whole world is beating his gates
down.

EXT. ENGLISH HOUSE - NIGHT

The "Painted Cultists" hordes-a brand of Fanthomites known as Wraithians--thrash at the Estate gates. They are tireless. In fact, angrier... chanting, "NEW FILM: SACRILEGE." The security guards watch the TV vans pull away...

SECURITY GUARD

Where the hell they going--?

SECURITY GUARD 2

Prime Minister's, threat of a recall vote
now--it's going to throw us off the
news...

SECURITY GUARD

Nice. They'll feast on us in privacy.

The cultists glare, teeth bared, at the Estate.

EXT. LONDON - NIGHT

The limo leaves the city in the beating rain.

IN THE LIMO

Nes, Stuart and Ettie are advising Sylvia to keep from a stash of liquor--

ETTIE

No--no, it's enough--you don't need that tonight--

SYLVIA

I decide wha' I need and don't, thank you, and for this, I need.

NES

We're all going to be together.

SYLVIA

Oh, please. We're just in this for blood, mate.

Nes is disturbed by her.

EXT. ENGLISH ESTATE - NIGHT

The limo shoves into the small army of PROTESTING CULTISTS. A SECURITY CHIEF at the gate moves past his TWO UNIFORMED GUARDS to look into the car.

It opens and he's staring at the cast of the Signet Lord.

NES

Have room for Fyfer Jack tonight?

The Security Chief is in awe.

INT. ENGLISH HOUSE - NIGHT

In the rain, the Security Chief leads Nes and the others through the door entryway--

SECURITY CHIEF (SCOTTISH BROGUE)

I couldna believe it was you, it was Fyfer Jack and his merry mates, right

there in front of me eyes.

INT. ENGLISH HOUSE - MAIN HALL

Rushing in from the rain, Nes and the others stand shaking off water as the Security Chief shuts the door. The male servant is hurrying up...

SECURITY CHIEF

No one said a word to me 'bout this--

SERVANT

Nor to me.

The child actors stare at the surroundings. The estate is a castle, the hall before them imposing and very reminiscent of Signet Lord-style fantasy.

SYLVIA

Well, you can break ou' the
hospitality, cause this li'l Castle
an' Keep wouldn't be standin' 'ere
if it weren't for us actors.

NES

Is Mr. Goren here?

SERVANT

He doesn't know you're coming?

At the side hall's imposing fireplace, Goren sits in his wheelchair with his nurse, Preet, and both Francis and Ben talking to him over tea.

He shifts his wheelchair around to view the new arrivals.

Even from this far away, he is a frightening figure.

Nes looks nervous.

Ben stands up in amazement.

There, gathered at the door, are his childhood idols: the Circle of Children, Fanthom's heroes.

SERVANT

(nervous, sad smile to Goren)

Just like the films, it is.

Goren, the director, now an old Englishman with bushy eyebrows, mussed hair, and watery, crazed eyes prone to fury, moves his chair forward slightly. With great difficulty due to his stroke:

GOREN

Come to burn the house down like the rest of them?

SYLVIA

(meekly)

Damn right.

GOREN

Boy...?

Goren's eyes settle on him in surprise. Touched.

GOREN

Boy, it's you. My ol' Fyfer Jack.

NES

That's not who I am.

Ben just stares. To him, that's exactly who Nes is.

FRANCIS

(calm, wry)

I hope there's traces in you, it might save us from those madmen out there.

(smiles at them assembled)

The Circle of Children.

Ben finally recovers, but remains quietly stunned by them.

There they are. Come straight from the darkness...

The Circle of Children.