

They said there was a dreamer in the forest. His dream was once contained, and only the forest was forbidden. But over time, the dream bled out towards the village, consuming everything it touched. The villagers sought the help of elders and practitioners of seidr, and it was decided that a boundary be erected around the village.

The villagers imagined a great stone wall, like the Danework ordered by the queen, but the elders said this was not required. In the end, only a small wall was built. Any forest man could leap over it with ease, but the seidr women steeped the wall in magic; and so, dreams could not cross. Even after those who built it passed to the realms beyond, the barrier was reaffirmed through sacrifice each winter blót.

Despite growing up knowing the danger outside, Bergdís often crossed the heather meadows to the borderland, as if daring the dreamer.

‘You’ll be a woman soon,’ said her father, ‘your life is in the village.’

‘Bergdís, you *must* stay away from the wall,’ her mother implored. ‘The dream will destroy you.’

She questioned the grownups on *why* this was so, but they never had explanations, only precepts.

Her parents were good and kind to guests. She never feared wandering Blindr would punish them for ill manners. They loved Bergdís, and had named her so for the disír to love her, too. Misfortune had never visited their family, which they attributed to the grace of Freyja and her spirits.

And yet, the adult world seemed shrouded in a gloomy mist, each person carrying a yoke around their neck. There was endless toil; poor harvests; and every winter, a child died. Sometimes, longships cruised the horizon, and stories of flames and blood followed in their

wake. People urged Bergdís to assume her place in this world. To her, it seemed a great burden, but no one saw things the way she did.