

# The Earth Emperor's Eye

## Series 1: Episodes 1-9

### Strapline

It's Magic!

### Genre

Romantic fantasy.

### Duration

Eight 55 min episodes, plus bonus 75 min final episode. 8 hours, 30 mins in total.

### **EPISODE ONE**

Red Alert: A Grim Dread is sentenced to death for heinous crimes, but, two centuries on, strange ghostly encounters suggest his reign of terror is far from over. (1/9)

Screen text:

#### Earth's Answer

'Earth raised up her head

From the darkness dread and drear

Her light fled:

Stony dread!

And her locks cover'd with grey despair.'

William Blake 1794

FADES to:

EXT: A White gloved hand holding a large wooden handled magnifying glass. A hint of pale blue reflected in the glass. Through the lens we observe:

Screen text: Hertfordshire, England – Autumn Equinox 1812

EXT: Twisted Chimneys Cottage, Barkers End – Dusk (drizzle)

NOISY unsettled jackdaws nestled together on clay crooked chimneys adjoining a white rendered, moss tiled cottage with small lead lined windows. Rural hamlet.

PAN silently with falling leaves to:

Figures gathered around a muscular balding KNEELED MAN with hands tied firmly behind back and head leaning forward. Blood drips on grass from gouge to cheek. Ankles bound. Feet bare, muddied. Weary, damp and dressed in canvas smock.

KNEELED MAN

(defiant, angry)

Arrgh. You and all your questions. They sicken me!

VICAR, round shouldered. mature, silver grey hair glistening. Ceremonious dress. Restless, facing the kneeled man. Fidgets with item in his palm. Eye contact with

other members of the group. About a dozen. All men, except for solitary woman. Stoic faces.

VICAR

Very well. Keep your silence!

KNEELED MAN

Silence, ha! (angry) I'll take the truth to my grave!

VICAR

(tentative)

So be it Clibborn, but the truth will out. That aside, there is no doubt on the charges against you and our consensus opinion on the rightful punishment.

(holds out a crucifix)

Do you repent before the eyes of the Lord? He is our witness! (jests) He and the birds!

CLIBBORN

Ha. What do you know of truth? Hypocrite!

(Glancing upwards towards the birds – CHATTERING)

Damn those crows!

EXECUTIONER

(examines pitchfork with traces of blood on the tips)

They're jackdaws, ploughboy! Ha, ha, ha. Listen! Hear how they mock you. Know this sly fox. They'll come to pick at your bones when we're done. Filthy animal!

Murderer. A cruel Grim Dread.

VICAR

Come now! Restraint.

(cross held firmly aloft)

Guide me. (whispered)

CLIBBORN

Ha, ha, ha! Sly fox! Grim Dread. Hear me Plummer! Hear me North! I'm betrayed by my own blood (despised look at sole woman, then back to Vicar). Have it your way. Do what you will. Send me to my grave, but sleep uneasy for I shall not rest. You know of the curse. I will rise again from the deep... from out of the dewy grass. Revenge shall be mine. I will claim all you cherish... your art... your love... and your nature. I will turn the whole world grey.

CLOSE UP on Clibborn's eyes. Low sun breaks through, casts eerie red glow in his pupils and lengthens his shadow.

VICAR

(eager)

It's time! Do you see Clibborn how the sun sets before us... when the day and night are equal in length. See here.. (points towards a crude tapered long wooden post) this stake has your name upon it. We will drive it through your heart to keep

you from rising. Then sink your body to the depths of Hell.

CLIBBORN

(apparently fearless)

A sun sets but a Harvest moon rises. Fools. Let the mourners come to weep over my corpse. Tell Kate she shall yet be mine.

Some figures approach Clibborn.

SLOW MOTION: Jackdaws startle and take flight at GUN fire and anguished cries from below.

Screen text: Hertfordshire, England – 200 Years Later

INT: Digital car radio tuned to 100.00 playing 'Love Me Do' Beatles. Hand turns up volume dial. Wedding ring visible.

PAN to: Ben Whittenbury – 40, Dark short hair, struggling to control grey. Clean shaven. Casual dress. Earth from space t-shirt, jeans.

BEN

Who would have thought it? (Excited voice) It has to be a sign... Eh, C'mon Julia, you got to admit, what were the chances, just as the cottage came into view? Trust me... this has to be the best thing we've done in a long time. (Turns to look briefly at wife)

Julia Whittenbury. Late 30s. Attractive. Shoulder length auburn hair. Brown eyes. Casual wear.

JULIA

Ok Ben, we've been over this. You don't need to keep pushing it. (voice struggling against the music). I'm doing this for you, not because of your list, but because we need to get this out of your system. (she looks towards the house). The mid-life crisis! (whispered)

EXT: Keeper's Cottage, Cobling Green, Hertfordshire – Day (sunny)

Spacious 1800s character cottage. Timber framed and brick structure largely hidden along overgrown tree lined track. One of three aged properties – a farmhouse and a smaller Gardener's Cottage - on a disused rundown arable farm. Imposing frontage with sinister top windows that resemble eyes. Cottage overshadowed by large evergreen tree.

INT: Car, used estate vehicle.

Sarah Whittenbury – 12 years old. Slim. Fair hair tied in pony tail. Unicorn top. Small panda adorned bag on lap. Sat in rear seat. Curious face pressed eagerly against side window.

SARAH

Excuse moi. (spoken with mimicked French accent) What's a mid-life crisis?

JULIA

(glancing back)

It's when your father has a head full of questions about the purpose of life and a crazy idea that moving to the country will keep him from growing old. (reaching to lower the radio volume)

BEN

No. Let it play. I want this memory.

They briefly fall silent.

BEN

(continues)

Thank you! Let's do this. Eh! (nudging Julia). I mean look at this place... a Keeper's Cottage. It's just amazing. It sure beats the city. (nodding with music, whilst parking).

Oh, I'm not worried about getting old! I just want to live a bit. You know, have an adventure. Find my purpose.

JULIA

It is... well, unique, I'll give it that.

BEN

Sure is. And the timing couldn't be better! May day! (pause) And we're here because of what you sensed when we viewed, remember? (Hard stare. Engine off)

JULIA

Oh yes, the curiosity... but sometimes I'm wrong. (checks appearance in sun-flap mirror. Frowns briefly at wrinkles about her eyes).

SARAH

Are the fairies the curiosity mum? Are we going to search for them in this garden too?

JULIA

Yes sweetie. It's what your nana would have wanted. (sigh)

BEN

Fairies. And you say I'm the dreamer. (leaves car)

JULIA

The removals van's behind us.  
(talks to self as Sarah had already joined her father at the porch door. An early Painted Lady butterfly flutters by).

BEN

It's stuck! Do we have the right key?  
(tries hard to open an imposing oak door with a small window and a lion head  
knocker).

JULIA

It doesn't open easily, remember (smug face). Use the side entrance... Hang on.  
(spies Ben's scribbled list on dashboard.)

CLOSE UP on list

May Day 2012 – Red Alert

Mother Nature weeps  
Beautiful creatures dying out  
Elephants, tigers and rhinos killed by poachers  
Tropical rainforest and woodland destroyed  
Climate chaos  
7 billion people  
Craving a 'piece of the pie'  
Polluting the land and the sea  
Because of the Dark Satanic mills  
And the rise of a cruel Grim Dread.

JULIA

(reading)

Only a magician can save us now!  
(list ends)

Intense and terrifying. (mumbled, collecting list) But we need to try.

INT: Keeper's Cottage, Lounge. Dark oak beams. Inglenook Fire. 1980s patterned  
carpet. View to bridleway at front.

BEN

(stands before a wall. Holds a framed print at arm's length)  
Here will be good. She'll like it here. What d'you think?

JULIA

Huh, you amuse me. (checks position). Yep, looks good to me. It's right at home  
here.

CLOSE UP: framed copy of The Haymakers painting by George Stubbs. Idyllic  
country scene of rural folk about a hay cart.

JULIA

(continuing)

She still reaches out to me. It's just as strong as the first time. Remember at the

Tate Britain on our first date. (an arm about her waist).

BEN

It's strange... the hold this painting has over us. It brought us together. It brought us here... imagine the odds of finding it in an antique shop in Ware. (pause) I don't know how she does it? (eyes on central figure in painting of woman in light blue dress and bonnet holding a shepherds crook).

JULIA

C'mon, your love affair with this painting's because the man holding the pitchfork's your double. (pause) When you're without the 'tash of course. (an embrace)

BEN

Handsome fellow, don't you think?

JULIA

Maybe... but I doubt if he ever heard of the 'Summer of Love' though. What say the Captain? (glance to Ben)

INT: Keeper's Cottage, Master Bedroom – late evening

Rose pink decor. Blocked off feature fireplace. Items largely unpacked. Large window facing bridleway. Small window to left of fireside overlooking large evergreen tree.

Ben and Julia in bed. Small bedside lamp providing ambient light.

BEN

What a day. I'm still buzzing.  
(leans against bed head)

JULIA

Me too. I hope Sarah will be ok next door.  
(head rests on Ben's chest)

BEN

She's fine. Well, I mean she's sleeping. I took Houdini downstairs so he won't wake her tonight. She'll probably tell me off in the morning, but hey.  
(gently teasing Julia's tangled locks)

JULIA

Oh no. You'll be in the dog house. (pause) Only a few months at school before the holidays. I hope she keeps her secret to herself now. Can't face more bullying or the curiosities. It'll help too if we go easy on her if she plays silly games again. She'll grow out of it. Hopefully this French thing of hers will help... and the bag... to remind her of what not to do.

BEN

Fingers crossed huh, but it's the secrets that get to me. We're her parents. She should confide in us.

JULIA

You're one to talk. You never did tell her about the thing you saw at her birth.

BEN

You mean the boy? Look, he was only there for a few seconds. It was probably just an adrenalin rush... my mind playing tricks on me.

JULIA

Or the Freudian son you crave, but never had.

BEN

Nah. I'm perfectly happy with Sarah. Hey, talking of curiosities, anything more?

JULIA

No. Just the usual feeling that we're being watched. It's stronger than ever, but I've not seen the shadow again or heard the tune. (Lightly clicks fingers to the beat).

BEN

So, do you think Keepers' is haunted?

JULIA

Maybe, but not in the way that people might normally imagine. I mean it was only there against that wall for a few seconds.(pointing) And I only saw it in the window pane reflection. It's strange because the persons shadow moved like it was in a dance... a tap dance... to the jazz tune I heard.

BEN

Well I heard nothing and we were only in the garden. Maybe the ghost liked jazz?

JULIA

Puttin' on the Ritz... that was the tune. I'm sure of it. I also think it might have something to do with the tree.

BEN

What... the one out there... through the small window? The Goblin Tree!  
(hands make creeping gesture)

JULIA

Well you have to admit, it's a bit... weird. The top of the tree looks like a horned creature and the branches lower down like limbs... reaching out.

FLASH of Goblin Tree at night before a full moon.

BEN

Ha, ha, ha! The Goblin's going to get you (grabbing Julia and pretending to try to eat her) especially when there's a full moon eh. (laughter, then an embrace)

JULIA

Oh, let's not call it that.

BEN

Too late. Can't turn back the clock now. Anyway Sarah chose it.

JULIA

I know. That's what worries me. Perhaps she senses something I can't. I hope not. Still there was something else... this squirrel (reaching to turn off the light, letting moonlight brighten the room.) It emerged from the top of the tree not long before the shadow danced. It beckoned me with a paw.

FLASHBACK – Julia recalling the squirrel's presence, then the sight of the shadow dancer.

JULIA

It wanted me to stay. It told me. I felt it.

BEN

(suspect expression)

I wish I had a gift like yours... a third eye.

JULIA.

Mmm. Be careful what you wish for. Still, if you had the Anja then you'd know where I put your list!

BEN

(supportive hug)

My list? Oh, my list. (pause) It's a bit frightening and intense.

JULIA

That's what I said (yawns). G'night Captain! Love you.

INT: Keeper's Cottage. Sarah's bedroom – morning. Spacious. Light. Lemon walls. Window facing bridleway. Faded carpet. Used laminate wardrobes. Boxes everywhere. Many large soft animal toys lined up against one wall.

CLOSE UP: a Syrian hamster held aloft by small hands in a clear plastic running ball.

PAN to: Sarah wrapped in dressing gown and a pair of unicorn slippers.

SARAH

Naughty Daddy took you down stairs last night. It won't happen again. I promise. Non, non. (pause). Okay so I've showed you downstairs, including the creepy cellar.



Now you mustn't get lost in there. Understand? (Kisses ball).

FOLLOW Sarah touring the upper floor, with hamster ball in hand.

SARAH  
(continuing)

Let's do mum and dad's room last... the Goblin tree might scare you. (pause)  
Right, here we are this is the bathroom (compact, basic and in need of a good  
clean)... yuk... non bien... and this will be daddy's den.

INT: Keeper's Cottage, study

Long awkward shaped room with a flat-pack desk and a chunky PC waiting to be  
set up. Guitars stacked in the corner. A Sgt Peppers Beatles album cover poster  
already on a wall.

SARAH  
(continuing)

Oh, and this here's the glorious back garden, flowers, grass and the lovely fields  
and lots of fluffy clouds. There's some really old sheds... probably full of spiders,  
surprises and creepy things. And there's my swing hanging from the (voice  
trembling) tree!

FOCUS on 'barely there' image of boy riding on the wooden swing seat tied to a  
branch. Hair dark, oily and brushed to one side. Skin pale. Blue jacket, below the  
knee shorts, long white socks and jet black shoes. Eyes big, looks up at study  
window. Smiles)

SARAH  
(suppressed) SHRIEK (hamster ball dropped). Houdini. Oh, no.  
(Squats to recover pet) You ok? (Houdini unharmed) It was the boy. (whispered)  
Did you see him too? He scarred me. (looks into garden).

A still vacant swing.

SARAH  
(continuing)

Impossible. Where's he go? (scans garden, and unkempt grounds beyond). You  
saw him Houdini. I know you did. (pause). Nothing. (looks to hamster) I won't tell, if  
you don't.

Screen Text: Summer Solstice

EXT: Ancient woodland close to Keeper's Cottage – Day (sunny)  
Hornbeam, oaks and shrubs, embrace a gully with a barely trickling stream –  
Nimley Bourne. Bright sunshine cuts beams of light through foliage. A clearing. A  
dog stands proud. HEAD SHOT of creamy white Samoyed dog. Panting. Expectant.

Ears pick up. FOOTSTEPS. Walking boots approach.

BEN

(casually dressed)

What have we here?

(As dog runs towards him).

Hey. Hello Boy

(dog greets him excitedly)

Aren't you a handsome fella! Unusual breed. Where's your owner?

Hello... anyone? (shouted, repeated several times. Looking about)

You lost? A heart shaped tag... let's see.

(dog sits quietly as red-heart name tag examined)

Malachi... what an unusual name. No contact number?

(More CALLING. Pacing about. Eventually)

Well. I've no lead but you're free to follow me home if you like. I'll ring around and see if I can find your owner. (pause) maybe your tagged.

MOVING SHOTS – Snippets of Ben returning to Keeper's Cottage. Dog running ahead, but looking back periodically.

BEN

He knows the way. Must be local.

(dog races up bridleway. Turns into cottage drive)

That's bizarre.

INT: Keeper's Cottage, Lounge – Day

Whittenbury's huddled about Malachi.

BEN

I don't understand it either, but the Vets say he's tagged to this address and I'm the registered owner. All very odd.

SARAH (heart shaped top)

Oh let's keep him daddy. Please. He's so adorable... like a cuddly polar bear... and Houdini loves him already.

JULIA

It could be a sign. You know that Malachi means 'messenger'. Maybe this happened for a reason.

MALACHI

Barks

CLOSE on Malachi. Head shot. He looks into camera.

MALACHI  
(softly. Winks)  
I am the voice of the animal kingdom.

BEN  
I had in mind a Labrador or a Springer, but never mind. (hesitant) we'll keep him...  
but he's on trial.

BRIEF MONTAGE of family enjoying Malachi's company – garden play, walks and cuddles. Exploring the grounds of Cobling Green. Sarah on swing with Malachi dancing about her feet. Brief GLIMPSE of a blue boy at the study window.

EXT: A field of crops to the rear of Keeper's Cottage – Day ( Sunny. Hot)

Sarah (flower fairy top) ambling with Malachi. Jackdaws circling overhead. SQUAWKING. Observes wheat folded flat, creating a path into the field. Malachi runs through gap. Sarah follows. The path leads to a huge circle – one of three joined by paths. Malachi leads her to a walking stick stuck in the centre of a circle. The jackdaws fall SILENT. Prompts RINGING in ears, as Malachi slips from view. Sarah disorientated. sits crossed legged. Closes eyes tight. Ringing ends. Re-opens eyes. A woman stands before her, resembling that in the Haymakers painting.

LUCY  
Bonjour! Je suis Lucy. Comment allez-vous?

SARAH  
(unperturbed)  
Salute Lucy! Je m'appelle Sarah! (stands) You know I speak some French?  
(Pause) Look I'm not supposed to be here. (worried look) Dad said I had to stick close to the cottage.

LUCY  
(stepping closer)  
I promise that no harm will come to you. We know a lot about you and your family. It's why we sent you Malachi. I hope you like my circles. I made them just for you. I've some gifts too... courtesy of The Emperor (offers a pack of playing cards and a long-handled magnifying glass). A game of chance and I-Spy awaits. It begins with Mabon.

SARAH  
(tentatively accepting the gifts)  
Mabon, oh. Cards? I-Spy? I'm confused. And who's the Emperor?

LUCY  
The cards represent the spirit of Gaia... your Earth. Four suits for four seasons. 52 cards for 52 weeks. 13 cards in each set, which matches the number of lunar cycles each year. Red and black for night and day. If you total them up and add a joker you get 365, which is the number of days in a year. The rest will become clear with time

and the I-Spy glass.

SARAH

How strange. Does this have anything to do with the blue boy? (looks at Lucy through the I-Spy glass) And, I'm curious, are you the woman in the painting?

LUCY

Why ask what you already know?

SARAH

Tell me, am I imagining this?

LUCY

Seeing is believing.

SARAH

And you sent us Malachi... why?  
(looking about for her dog)

LUCY

A head full of questions, perfect, just like your father. Malachi is the Whittenbury Watch Dog. He's part of the deep magic of Keeper's Cottage. But be warned  
(Finger to her mouth. A whisper)  
Shush. Do you hear it? The Silence! There are dark days ahead.

SARAH

Dark days?

LUCY

A cruel Grim Dread rises. He creeps. He crawls. He rips out hearts.

INT: Keeper's Cottage – Lounge, Day

SARAH

(on couch appears to wake from a slumber. Malachi sits beside her. Upon a coffee table, an I-Spy glass and a dishevelled pack of playing cards with Three of Hearts on top).

Seeing is believing (toying with her gifts and gazing up at the Haymakers)  
How do I explain this now?

BOY (O/S)

You don't. You have to play by the rules.

Screen Text: Mabon - Autumn Equinox

EXT: Haystacks in meadow adjacent to Keeper's Cottage – Dusk (Partly cloudy)

Ben standing atop of hay bales with Malachi beside him. Setting sun. Panoramic sky shades of crimson and orange. Long shadows abound. Malachi BARKS. Flock of jackdaws settled in the meadow take to flight. MOVING SHOT follows them to rosebud and stem shaped cloud. Bud glows fiery orange. Cloud quickly distorts suggesting fading petals.

BEN

It's a Red Alert. We can't go on like this... an Earth in Crisis  
(breathing deeply- empowered. Clenched fist raised to the Heavens)  
Now is the time for action (shouted. Echoes. Look of approval from Malachi.)

MALACHI

(Begs for bone posture. Looks into camera. Sings)  
Please, please, help me.

Ben takes out an old pocket watch. CLOSE UP detail of watch. Roman numerals. Dial glows red in sunlight. TICKING amplified.

BEN

How much time have we got? Let's stop the clocks. Save what little is left.  
(Watch hurled toward woodland in frustration. White stag seen. Watch travels much further than feasible)

Curious CLUMP, THUMP, CLUMP heard as it travels.

MALACHI

(tilts head. To camera)  
Listen! The Mighty Being is Awake!

PAN TO a lean figure traversing the bridleway that adjoins the meadow. A head lowered and a backpack carried. He scurries away towards the woodland.

The SCREECH of a barn owl. It sweeps low over Ben and Malachi. Its feathers an eerie glow from the setting sun. It's shape – contorted by a trick of light into an arrow.

The bird heads toward the Goblin Tree. At its peak sits a grey squirrel able to witness Ben and his dog. It's animated. Excitable. CHATTERING.

Ben leaps from the hay bales and walks purposefully to the foot of the Goblin Tree. He stands beneath its shadow. Malachi follows.

BEN

(Raising an imaginary goblet at the tree).

Waes Hael – Good health

(then lifting an imaginary sword)

I commend my services to you... Tree of the World... symbol of life. Do you find me pure of heart? Am I a worthy champion of Nature? Do you honour me... a simple

Haymaker... with the greatest challenge ever, as Mother Earth's Keeper?  
(posture held... silence)  
For the planet blue in a sea of black (cried triumphantly, echoes)

MALACHI

Barks

(Ben kneels before him. To camera).  
Arise brave knight... go claim your prize.

MUSIC clip: Fade to Grey, Visage: [One man on a lonely platform, One case sitting by his side

Two eyes staring cold and silent. Show fear as he turns to hide. Aaah, we fade to grey (fade to grey). Aaah, we fade to grey (fade to grey)]

A peel of BELLS from the local village church. Five tolls each prompting Ben to lead up Malachi and return to the bridleway. A ghostly figure appears to emerge from the track.

BEN

(uncertain, disturbed)

What on earth?

Figure becomes more solid. A frail elderly Lady in Grey. Ragged shawl and bonnet.

BEN

(tentative)

Are you lost?

LADY IN GREY

No (mumbled softly)

No (repeated. Head bowed. Pacing slowly. Awkward steps, disturbing the soil with feet).

But it is... seems like 'n age 'n all (a curious fading tone).

BEN

Can I help... in anyway? (observes as the Lady in Grey leans down to search the soil with bare hands)

Stop... no please... do let me help. (urging as Malachi sits quietly beside him)

LADY IN GREY

Listen! Listen! Did you hear the bells? It's time. He'll be coming for her.

BEN

Who's coming? What is this? (curious)

LADY IN GREY

(head up now)

I never meant any harm. It was a simple mistake. I was afraid. You would be too.

It was simply a matter of timing, but I made a promise to put things right. And a promise is a promise. I must keep trying.  
(looking at Ben. Face in shadow)  
I'm innocent... You doubt me?

BEN

No... no. Please, I'm here for you. Whatever it is, whoever he is that you say is coming, let me help. I want to help.

LADY IN GREY

(pondering Ben's face)

Help you say? (pause) Is it you? Lady Plummer must know. You must tell her you have returned. Forget her not. She is waiting... always waiting. We've been denied happiness for so long. We can bear it no longer.  
(touches Ben's arm)

BEN

(shocked at her icy touch)  
Who are you?