

TERROIR — PROJECT BRIEF

Format

Feature Film

Genre / Tone

Elevated Body Horror / Psychological Thriller

Hereditary meets *The Substance*, with the rural nightmare quality of *Pearl*.

Credit Note

Written by Ryan Clarke

Based on a story by John Salcido and Ryan Clarke

Budget / Buyer Lane

Low-to-mid / contained rural horror with practical body-horror effects

A24, NEON, Shudder / IFC, Blumhouse, MUBI lane

Core Hook

A desperate New Mexico farmer discovers his daughter's tears produce a euphoric wine, then turns the family vineyard into an extraction farm.

One-Sentence Pitch

When a farmer learns his daughter's pain produces a miraculous wine, he builds a brutal business harvesting her tears until the daughter he has exploited and the sister he trained to guard her join forces to destroy the buyers who now own them.

Why It's Timely

It turns exploitation, addiction, poverty, family control, and the monetization of suffering into a literal body-horror premise: a child's pain becomes a luxury product.

Main Characters

Iris Sepp — A feral, selectively mute teenager whose body has been turned into a commodity. Her silence is not weakness. It is the only private thing her father has not been able to harvest.

Mae Sepp — Iris's older sister, raised to believe she is protecting the family from outside monsters. Her arc is the slow collapse of indoctrination: from guard, to witness, to accomplice in Iris's liberation.

Harland Sepp — A desperate farmer who begins as a loving father and becomes the manager of his daughter's suffering. His horror comes from how completely he convinces himself that exploitation is protection.

Edda Sepp — Iris and Mae's mother, broken by guilt, addiction, and fear. She hides inside domestic ritual and fantasy because reality is too unbearable to face.

The Sommelier — The buyers' representative: clinical, refined, and monstrous. He treats Iris's pain as a luxury product with notes, purity, yield, and market value.

Story Snapshot

1. Harland Sepp moves his pregnant wife, Edda, and young daughter, Mae, onto a rotting New Mexico vineyard with cursed soil and no real future.
2. When Iris is born, the family discovers that her tears produce a glowing crimson wine that gives drinkers a euphoric empathy high.

3. What begins as desperate survival becomes a business. Harland and Edda start intentionally hurting Iris to harvest more wine, attracting dangerous buyers who demand an endless supply.
4. Years later, Iris is a feral teenager trapped on the farm, while Mae has been brainwashed into guarding her from imaginary outside monsters.
5. When the buyers send a Sommelier and armed crew to take over the operation with a mechanized extraction rig, Mae finally sees the truth and turns against Harland.

Ending / Final Image

Iris sabotages the billion-dollar batch, and the sisters use the farm's massive antique iron wine press to crush Harland and the Sommelier. At dawn, Iris escapes the cursed perimeter and cries a normal, clear saltwater tear for the first time in her life.

Theme in One Line

Everything beautiful becomes something to consume.

Positioning

It's contained rural body horror about a family farm that becomes a factory for monetized suffering — and the daughter who finally destroys the system built from her pain.

Materials Available

One-pager and full screenplay available upon request or through the private script library.

RYAN CLARKE

Screenwriter & Playwright | Albuquerque, NM

Dark Comedy | Satire | Character Drama | Social Thriller

Ryan Clarke is an Albuquerque-based screenwriter and playwright whose work blends dark comedy, social satire, and intimate character drama. Across a slate of 20+ feature scripts, his stories often follow deeply flawed people pushed into impossible situations, finding humor, tension, and humanity in characters who are entirely in over their heads.

His screenwriting recognition includes Grand Prize Winner, 30th Annual Fade In Awards Comedy Competition (*#FightForNoah*); Semifinalist, 30th Annual Fade In Awards Comedy Competition (*The Trencherman*); 2026 Top 10 Finalist, ISA Table Read My Screenplay at Cannes (*A Walking Shadow*); 2026 Quarterfinalist, Finish Line Script Competition (*#FightForNoah*); two-time Semifinalist, ISA Emerging Screenwriters Competition (*Flashbang* and *Ghost of the Highway*); and four additional 2026 Honorable Mentions from Finish Line (*The Finalists*, *How to Be a Human: A Musical with No Songs*, *Ghost of the Highway*, and *Dead Signals*).

As a playwright, Ryan is a three-time winner of FUSION Theatre Company's short works festival, "The SEVEN", in 2024, 2025, and 2026. The stage version of *A Walking Shadow* was also selected in 2026 for The Road Theatre Company's 17th Summer Playwrights Festival.

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