

LEGENDS OF HALVERN  
*Bones Of The Sea*

by  
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PROLOGUE

FADE IN:

INT. ON PARCHMENT - NIGHT

Primitive drawings of a vast sea, a god crowned in sunlight, another rising from the depths. Candlelight flickers across the aged parchment.

GALDRA (V.O.)

Many years ago, when time was young and memory still a dream, Auren, God of the Sun, commanded tribute from Tharos, Lord of the Lyrian Sea.

The parchment scrolls down to reveal ships upon waves of ink and gold.

GALDRA (V.O.)

Auren sought the treasures of the deep -- the jewels and gold of sunken ships -- to strengthen his light and crown the heavens.

Lightning and flame burst from Auren's hand, pouring down on the defiant Tharos. The ocean writhes beneath him.

GALDRA (V.O.)

But Tharos refused. Auren rained fire upon the Lyrian Sea. The waters boiled; ships were swallowed whole.

The parchment scrolls further, revealing a barren desert where the sea once was.

GALDRA (V.O.)

Tharos died, and in his final defiance of the Sun God, his bones entombed the greatest treasure ship ever to sail the Lyrian Sea -- The Seraphine.

A thunderclap tears through the silence. The parchment trembles -- the drawings seem to ripple.

## GALDRA'S VISION - THE STORM

A ship tosses in a furious sea. Lightning splits the black sky. Waves tower and collapse, swallowing the vessel whole. A scream lost in the thunder --

## INT. GALDRA'S HUT - NIGHT

GALDRA (70s) bolts upright from sleep, breath ragged, the echo of the storm still in her ears.

A wiry woman with sharp eyes and a weathered face, toughened by years of wind and work.

Outside, the distant roar of the sea. She rises from her bed and opens the door of her hut.

## EXT. THE SHORE - NIGHT

Galdra approaches the shoreline, cloak tugged by the wind. The surf whispers across the sand -- a chorus of distant, wordless voices.

She lifts her face to the sky. Wisps of clouds drift across a pale moon.

She raises her arms.

GALDRA

Auren... Auren...

The wind builds as it whistles like lost souls through the rocks.

She looks out across the dark ocean.

Mist spills down from the clouds and hovers above the water, glowing faintly in the moonlight.

GALDRA (CONT'D)

Auren.

## EXT. THE VILLAGE - MORNING

The pale light of dawn creeps over a cluster of worn huts. Smoke curls from a single chimney; the rest of the village still sleeps.

RENDAR (40s) moves through the empty street, pulling on his cloak against the cold.

Broad-shouldered, practical, the kind of man who keeps the walls standing through will alone.

He's joined by ELDRIC (40s), shorter, heavier, nursing a wooden mug that steams in the chill air. His voice is a low growl.

ELDRIC  
It's too damned early.

RENDAR  
Galdra has not asked to see the council in years. Must be important.

A woman's voice cuts through the quiet.

IVARA (O.S.)  
That's what worries me.

IVARA (30s) steps from her hut, cloak half-fastened, eyes already alert.

Where the others carry weight, she carries focus.

IVARA (CONT'D)  
Rendar.

RENDAR  
Ivara.

ELDRIC  
Maybe it's something good?

IVARA  
If it were, she would have waited until the sun was much higher.

They exchange a look, and head toward Galdra's hut.

DALEN (O.S.)  
Father!

DALEN (18) runs toward them -- restless, curious, a spark of youth in a world gone dim.

RENDAR  
Dalen.

DALEN  
I was just at the boat and we're all set to go. Are you ready?

RENDAR

I'm afraid it will have to wait,  
Dalen.

DALEN

You wanted to check the nets  
early, and --

RENDAR

We have been summoned by Galdra.

Dalen walks with them.

EXT. GALDRA'S HUT - MORNING

Dalen waits at the closed door, leaning in to listen.

INT. GALDRA'S HUT - MORNING

Rendar, Ivara, Eldric, and Galdra sit around the fire  
pit. Smoke curls through shafts of light.

Galdra stares into the flames, unmoving.

The Elders exchange uneasy looks.

A long silence.

RENDAR

Galdra... what is it you want to  
tell us?

Galdra lifts her eyes from the fire, her gaze distant,  
voice low and trance-like.

GALDRA

Auren... has sent us a message.

The three Elders shift, waiting.

GALDRA (CONT'D)

Auren demands tribute.

The words land heavy.

GALDRA (CONT'D)

We knew the time would come. It  
was foretold.

ELDRIC

I just wasn't expecting it today.

GALDRA

Hundreds of years have passed.  
Auren has been generous with time.

RENDAR

How much time do we have?

GALDRA

Soon.

IVARA

And what does Auren demand?

A beat. The fire POPS.

GALDRA

Treasure. Gold. Silver. Jewels --  
to feed the sun and make it burn  
bright.

RENDAR

There's nothing like that in the  
whole village.

ELDRIC

We're farmers and fishermen. Not  
kings.

GALDRA

Treasure. Gold. Silver. Jewels.

IVARA

And if we can't give it?

EXT. GALDRA'S HUT - MORNING

Dalen listens outside, brow furrowed, breath shallow.

GALDRA (O.S.)

Auren will take our sea... as he  
did with Tharos and the Lyrian.  
And all shall die.

INT. GALDRA'S HUT - MORNING

The Elders stare into the fire, the weight of silence  
filling the room.

ELDRIC

Let him drink up the sea! What's  
that got to do with us?

IVARA

We could move the settlement --  
further inland.

GALDRA

Your souls are bound to Auren.  
Auren will collect... no matter  
where you are.

ELDRIC

Why take us?

GALDRA

Tharos was destroyed. The oceans  
have no God. We, who take from the  
sea, now owe its debt.

ELDRIC

We can't give what we don't have.

IVARA

(quietly)  
I've never even seen a jewel.

RENDAR

Because there aren't any in this  
land.

GALDRA

There is one place.

RENDAR

Where?

GALDRA

The Sea of Bones.

A beat.

RENDAR

(uneasy)  
No. That's impossible.

The door bursts open -- Dalen stumbles in.

DALEN

Father!

RENDAR

Dalen! This is a council meeting!

DALEN

How can you say it's impossible!

RENDAR  
Because it is! I will not discuss  
this!

DALEN  
You have to try!

RENDAR  
(explodes)  
I said it's impossible! I'll hear  
no more of it!

ELDRIC  
Anyone who has ever attempted...  
has never come back.

Dalen glares at Rendar as if he doesn't know who he is.  
He speaks softly.

DALEN  
I never took you for a coward.

Dalen storms out of the hut.

RENDAR  
Dalen!

EXT. THE SHORE - DAY

Galdra sits on a rock near the surf, rune stones tumbling  
between her fingers. The sky hangs dark over the water.

Behind her, Dalen approaches in silence.

Galdra stills the stones in her hand.

GALDRA  
Dalen.

He stops.

DALEN  
How did you know?

She doesn't turn -- only lets a faint smile show.

Dalen moves closer and sits beside her.

GALDRA  
Footsteps of guilt.

DALEN

Guilt!?

GALDRA

For dishonoring your father.

DALEN

I did not dishonor him. He has dishonored the village.

GALDRA

He does... what he thinks best.

A pause.

DALEN

Is it true? About Auren... and destroying the ocean... and us?

GALDRA

It will come to pass.

DALEN

Unless there is a tribute?

GALDRA

Yes.

DALEN

And there is a treasure in the Sea of Bones?

GALDRA

Yes.

DALEN

Then why does my father say it's impossible to reach?

Galdra turns toward him, studying his face.

GALDRA

You are young. You would not know.

DALEN

Then tell me.

GALDRA

There are forces there.

DALEN

Forces? What do you mean?

GALDRA

You must pass through the  
Fellgrove.

DALEN

My father mentioned that once. I  
asked him what it was.

GALDRA

And what did he tell you?

DALEN

He said never to mention it again.

A quiet moment.

DALEN (CONT'D)

What is the Fellgrove?

GALDRA

A forest where nothing lives. Only  
demons... and shadow people.

Dalen takes this in.

DALEN

If no one has been there, how do  
you know?

GALDRA

Years ago, when hunting was  
scarce, twenty men went into the  
Fellgrove. Only one returned.

DALEN

Can I speak to him?

GALDRA

He died the day he came back... he  
lived long enough to give us the  
warning to never return.

A pause.

DALEN

What's after the Fellgrove?

GALDRA

The Scorched Reach -- where the  
sun touches the land.

DALEN

I've heard of that... but it's  
only a story.

GALDRA  
It's real, Dalen.

DALEN  
Has anyone been there?

GALDRA  
Our ancestors.

DALEN  
Then it's legend.

GALDRA  
Ancestors are not legend. Their  
words remain. The Scorched Reach  
is not a place for the living.

Dalen looks out over the ocean.

GALDRA (CONT'D)  
I see it in your eyes. You plan to  
go. Be warned, Dalen. The path  
will be more than you can imagine.

DALEN  
That remains to be seen.

Galdra gives a small nod.

DALEN (CONT'D)  
Besides... what choice do we have?  
Death out there trying, or death  
here waiting for it.

She hands him a blue stone.

DALEN (CONT'D)  
What's this?

GALDRA  
It will freeze for destruction  
when shadows billow black.

DALEN  
What does that mean?

GALDRA  
You will know when the time  
comes... should you need to use  
it.

She hands him a red stone.

GALDRA (CONT'D)  
This... is for guidance.

He examines the stone.

GALDRA (CONT'D)  
Guidance of the mind. To ease your  
doubts...and while you are  
eager... I sense doubt.

DALEN  
I don't believe in relics.

A beat.

GALDRA  
Take it... for the time that you  
do.

He takes the stone, rises, walks away.

Galdra stares back out to sea, rune stones tumbling  
between her fingers.

EXT. A HILL NEAR THE OCEAN SHORE - DAY

Dalen sits alone on a hill that overlooks where the tide  
meets the rocks.

His expression is uncertain as he turns the red stone  
over in his hand.

GALDRA (V.O.)  
Guidance of the mind... to ease  
your doubts... Guidance of the  
mind...

He closes his fist around it.

The glow builds -- faint at first, then pulsing red in  
time with his heartbeat.

The wind dies.

The surf... hangs suspended.

Every sound fades into stillness.

Time seems slow.

MONTAGE - THE VISION

THE FELLGROVE

Dalen slashes with a blade against a Shadow Person – black smoke coiling, eyes burning like embers. His strike lands – the shadow dissolves into mist.

#### THE SCORCHED REACH

He stumbles across dunes under a brutal sun. Wind howls, the light sears. His silhouette becomes a wavering mirage – rippling from the heat

#### THE BONES OF THE SEA

The world turns pale -- skeletal ships buried in salt and coral. He looks upward -- a sun too close, burning like the eye of a god.

The light intensifies, swallowing everything -- until only Dalen's face remains, bathed in red glow, eyes wide with awe and terror.

#### BACK TO SCENE

The vision shatters. He gasps -- the waves crash again, foam splashing against his legs.

The stone in his hand dims, its glow gone.

He stares at it -- breathing hard.

#### EXT. PATH TO VILLAGE - DAY

Dalen strides along the dusty trail, the ocean wind tugging at his cloak. From the opposite direction, Rendar appears, weathered and stern.

RENDAR

Dalen. You're going the wrong way.

DALEN

I am?

Rendar lifts a calloused hand and points toward the shimmer of sea beyond the cliffs.

RENDAR

The boat is that way.

DALEN

It's late. I didn't think you were going out because of the --

RENDAR

I'm late because I had to confer  
with the council.

He closes the distance with firm, deliberate steps.

RENDAR (CONT'D)

Let's go.

DALEN

To the boat? What about the  
tribute?

Rendar exhales -- a weight behind it.

RENDAR

The council believes that an  
answer will come to us.

DALEN

The answer is to act.

RENDAR

No, it is to take the advice of  
the council.

A heavy pause hangs in the air.

DALEN

I think the council is wrong.

Rendar's hardened features show a crack of compassion.

RENDAR

You are young, Dalen. Don't  
confuse cowardice with wisdom.

Rendar lets that sit a moment.

RENDAR (CONT'D)

I do not believe that Auren will  
destroy our ocean for lack of a  
tribute.

DALEN

He destroyed the Lyrian sea. Why  
not this one?

RENDAR

Auren was at odds with Tharos. He  
is not at odds with us.

DALEN

Not yet. Come with me, Father.

Rendar stops cold, confused.

RENDAR

Come where?

DALEN

To Lyrian. The Bones of the Sea.

The moment fractures. Rendar's face steels again -- granite resolve.

RENDAR

No. Listen to me, Dalen. I forbid you to go.

DALEN

We can find the treasure together. We could --

RENDAR

I said no! Do you understand me?

DALEN

Father --

RENDAR

Not another word.

(a beat)

Forget the boat today. I'll bring in the catch alone. I want you to think. Think very hard how foolish your thoughts are.

Rendar pushes past him, his shoulder brushing Dalen's.

Dalen turns, his gaze trailing Rendar's shrinking figure as he descends the path.

INT. RENDAR'S HUT - DAY

A modest home carved by years of survival. MOTHER (40s) sits at a wooden table, peeling apples. Her beauty is quiet now -- softened by time, etched by sorrow.

Sunlight bleeds through the small window, but the room clings to shadows.

The door creaks. Dalen steps inside.

Mother turns, eyes already searching his face. Worry is the first thing she wears.

He stops, silhouetted by the doorway.

DALEN

You know.

She nods, slow. Heavy.

MOTHER

Your father told me of the  
tribute.

Dalen walks to the window, gaze lost in the light beyond.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

There is nothing to be done. We  
will soon see the end of days.

DALEN

Did you ever know hope, Mother?

MOTHER

I know reality.

DALEN

Reality is what you make it.

Her hands still -- something flickers in her expression.

MOTHER

You can't go, Dalen. Not you.

DALEN

Then who? Father will not -- and  
none of the council. How can they  
just ignore what Auren has  
demanded?

MOTHER

(scoffs)  
Galdra has demanded!

A stillness.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

She is a feeble old woman with  
wild dreams. You cannot take them  
as fact.

DALEN

Then why did Father and the other  
council members meet with her?

MOTHER

To humor her! I don't know!

She turns back to the apple -- slicing too fast now. The blade skips. She freezes, eyes fixed on nothing.

Dalen steps forward, gently lays his hand on hers.

DALEN

What is it, Mother?

MOTHER

I knew it would come to this. I knew...

She breathes, regathers, lifts her face again.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

To reach the Bones of the Sea, one must pass through the Fellgrove... and then Scorched Reach.

DALEN

Galdra told me that only one man ever returned from the Fellgrove.

Mother lifts her eyes. There's a crack in her voice.

MOTHER

That man... was your uncle. Your father's brother.

The weight of it lands on Dalen. He reels silently.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

It is a place of death... and it has taken enough from this family.

DALEN

Why did he go into the Fellgrove with the others?

MOTHER

To find the treasure in the Bones of the Sea.

DALEN

For a tribute?

MOTHER

For the village. Your father's brother was a warrior who served in the Crimson Host -- soldiers forged for wars that no one remembers.

Dalen listens -- quiet, but stirred.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

If the Fellgrove could destroy a man like that... what chance have you?

Their eyes meet. Hers glisten from tears.

EXT. HALVERN WOODS - DAY

Filtered sunlight flickers through a canopy of old trees. Dalen sits beneath one, an animal-skin map spread across his lap - edges worn, symbols faint.

FAYRA (18), sharp-eyed and composed, watches him.

FAYRA

You haven't answered me.

Dalen doesn't respond - eyes locked on the map.

FAYRA (CONT'D)

Dalen.

He finally looks up.

DALEN

Hm?

FAYRA

Why are you studying that map? There's hardly anything on it.

DALEN

That's the problem. I guess it's hard to draw a map where very few have ever gone.

FAYRA

So, why bother?

DALEN

Because it's all there is.

FAYRA

Dalen --

DALEN

How far is the Fellgrove from our border? Or Scorched Reach beyond that? And the Bones of the Sea? No one knows.

FAYRA

Dalen --

DALEN

No one knows, Fayra!

FAYRA

Those places may not even exist.

DALEN

They exist.

FAYRA

And you will risk your life to find out?

DALEN

Don't you ever want to see what's beyond Halvern?

FAYRA

No. This is my home.

DALEN

There might be something better.

FAYRA

I thought this was about the tribute... or is it about getting away from your father?

DALEN

I don't want to get away from him.

FAYRA

You said you called him a coward.

Dalen looks down.

DALEN

I don't understand why he won't go.

FAYRA

Maybe because he doesn't think it's something worth dying over. That makes him sensible. Not a coward.

DALEN

You don't think saving the village and the Aurenic Sea is worth dying for?

FAYRA

Yes, of course I do... if it were really a threat.

DALEN

Do you believe in Auren?

FAYRA

Of course -- and I can't believe he would destroy us for not giving tribute.

DALEN

Galdra does.

Fayra leans back against the tree.

A beat.

FAYRA

When are you going?

DALEN

Tonight.

FAYRA

Alone?

DALEN

Yes.

FAYRA

You should ask your father again. If he knew you were really going --

DALEN

My father is afraid.

He stands.

DALEN (CONT'D)

I won't ask him again.

Fayra watches Dalen as he walks away.

EXT. RENDAR'S HUT - NIGHT

The woods lie still. The surf murmurs in the distance.

The hut sits in darkness.

A faint glow flickers behind the window.

INT. RENDAR'S HUT - NIGHT

A flame dances low in a stub of candle.

Dalen moves in silence.

He places bread into a sack. Then apples.

Each movement careful, exact.

He shifts -- a knife in a worn leather sheath catches the light at his hip.

He stops. Listens.

Nothing.

He ties the sack, tight. Opens a pouch. Checks: the map. The rune stones. All there.

He crosses to the door.

Opens it slowly.

A hushed voice behind him.

MOTHER (O.S.)

Stay.

He turns.

She stands in the dark, lit only by the candle.

MOTHER (CONT'D)

Dalen, it's too dangerous.

DALEN

Mother, you know I have to.

MOTHER

But alone?

DALEN

Father won't go -- or the other two council members.

MOTHER

Let me wake him --

DALEN

No... Mother, why? He will not change his mind.

MOTHER

Maybe he can make you change yours.

DALEN

If you wake him, I will be going anyway. Why make it harder for everyone?

MOTHER

Why you? Why do you have to be the one to go?

DALEN

Mother... you might think Galdra is a feeble woman with wild dreams... but what if she's right?

MOTHER

Dalen --

DALEN

Someone has to go to the Bones of the Sea. We need a tribute for Auren... and that's where I'll find it.

She steps forward and wraps her arms around him.

MOTHER

I may never see you again.

DALEN

You will. I'm coming back.

She lifts her head.

Candlelight catches her face.

MOTHER

Dalen...

DALEN

You know I have to go.

MOTHER

You're just a boy...

He presses a kiss to her forehead.

DALEN

Have faith in me.

He turns, and slips out the door.

It closes behind him -- soundless.

EXT. OUTSKIRTS / WOODED ROAD - NIGHT

Dalen walks along a moonlit path. The trees lean close. Halvern fades behind him.

FAYRA (O.S.)  
I've been waiting here for an  
hour.

Dalen stops. Whirls.

Fayra comes out of the shadows, dressed in a cloak and ready to travel.

FAYRA (CONT'D)  
I was starting to think you had  
already gone.

DALEN  
What are you doing here?

FAYRA  
I'm going with you.

DALEN  
No, you're not.

FAYRA  
That's not for you to decide.

DALEN  
I'm not going to argue.

FAYRA  
Good! Then it's agreed!

DALEN  
You're not going.

FAYRA  
Give me one good reason why I  
can't?

DALEN  
Because I don't want you to.

FAYRA  
That's not a good reason.

DALEN  
It's all I need.

FAYRA

You of all people should know that  
I can fight with the best of them.

Dalen glances away.

DALEN

I won't ever forget that.

She gives a coy smile.

FAYRA

Then it's settled.

DALEN

It is.

FAYRA

Good.

DALEN

You're staying here.

FAYRA

I just said I could fight --

DALEN

A sword skirmish for fun is not  
the same as fighting Shadow  
People.

FAYRA

I'd be as good as you.

DALEN

That's not the point.

FAYRA

So, what is the point?

DALEN

I want you here when I get back!

Fayra stops. The fire in her drops away.

DALEN (CONT'D)

If I get back. What I mean is... I  
don't know what I would do if  
anything were to happen to you.

He steps closer. Touches her cheek.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Please.

They kiss.

Fayra reaches under her cloak, pulls a gold chain from around her neck.

She removes an amulet -- a worn pendant with an odd shape and a red stone at its center.

FAYRA

This has been in my family for generations. My great-grandfather said it represents the God Tharos... but I'm not sure.

(smiles)

He always liked to weave stories.

She places it in his hand.

FAYRA (CONT'D)

Maybe it will help keep you safe.

He looks at it. Loops it around his neck.

DALEN

I won't take it off. And I will give it back when I return.

A low RUMBLE of THUNDER.

They turn toward the distant sea.

FAYRA

Look!

Out beyond the cliffs, the ocean glows red beneath the moonlight -- a strange, unnatural shimmer.

FAYRA (CONT'D)

How is that possible? Why is it doing that?

The glow fades. The sea returns to black.

DALEN

A warning from Auren.

A beat.

They kiss again.

He turns and continues down the path.

Fayra watches until he can no longer be seen.

EXT. A FOREST PATH - DAY

Beams of sunlight cut through the canopy. The dense trees glow under Auren's burning sky.

Dalen walks the trail.

He stops beside a tree and reaches for his pouch. As he unties the rawhide cord --

WHOOSH!

THUMP!

An arrow slams into the trunk -- inches from his face.

Dalen jolts back, eyes snapping toward the treeline.

BRANN (O.S.)

AH! Missed!

Brann (40s) emerges from the brush -- massive, broad-shouldered, draped in furs. A warrior's helmet sits low over his brow. A longbow in hand. Two swords cross his back. Another hangs at his hip.

His beard is thick. His grin, even thicker.

Dalen draws his knife and crouches.

Brann bursts out LAUGHING.

BRANN (CONT'D)

What are you planning to do with that?

DALEN

Defend myself!

More LAUGHTER.

DALEN (CONT'D)

You just tried to kill me!

BRANN

I thought you were a deer.

DALEN

Do I look like a deer!?

BRANN

From the distance I was at, you could have been anything.

He yanks the arrow from the tree.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
Sun was in my eyes.

Brann gestures toward Dalen's knife.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
Put that away. If I wanted you  
dead, you'd be dead already.

DALEN  
Not with the sun in your eyes, I  
wouldn't be.

Brann considers it -- then erupts in LAUGHTER again.

BRANN  
You're right!

DALEN  
Either that, or you can't see good  
anymore.

The LAUGHTER cuts off.

BRANN  
What did you say?

DALEN  
Losing your hearing, too?

Brann stares. Dalen holds his ground.

Brann grins.

BRANN  
Well, kick me with a krag-horn's  
hoof! You got guts, boy.

DALEN  
My name is Dalen, from the Village  
of Halvern.

BRANN  
I'm Brann -- and I've never been  
to Halvern in my life!

He extends a hand.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
I'm from Kelthar's Stand, near  
Dravengarde, where I served in  
their army.

They shake hands.

DALEN  
Were you in command?

BRANN  
No. I just killed things.

DALEN  
When did you leave the army?

BRANN  
When we ran out of things to kill.  
Peace treaty with the Skelhar.  
(beat)  
There's nothing to do in peace.

DALEN  
I heard of the Skelhar Wars.

BRANN  
What are you doing out here?  
Nobody comes this far.

DALEN  
I am on my way to the Fellgrove at  
the other end of this forest.

Brann eyes Dalen's knife again.

BRANN  
That's your weapon!?

Dalen glances at the knife in his hand.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
You looking to get yourself  
killed, boy?

He pulls a sword from across his back.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
Here...

He offers it hilt-first.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
Give that a try.

Dalen takes the sword. Swings it. Tests a stance.

DALEN  
That's a blade.

BRANN

But even that will not be enough  
for the Fellgrove.

DALEN

I still need to go.

BRANN

Why?

DALEN

To reach the Bones of the Sea.

BRANN

Where is Halvern?

DALEN

At the Aurenic Sea.

BRANN

So you have been traveling since  
daybreak.

DALEN

Yes.

BRANN

You'll want meat and drink.

(beat)

Come with me.

Brann heads off. Dalen follows.

EXT. BRANN'S CAMP - DAY

A well-worn hideaway built by hand. Glassless windows, a  
thatched roof, tools hang from the walls. Animal hides  
stretch to dry. A fire crackles at the center.

Brann gnaws a thick leg of meat.

Dalen holds a wooden mug.

BRANN

More skarnsheep?

DALEN

No. Thank you. I couldn't eat  
another bite... it was a feast.

Dalen watches as Brann continues to strip the meat down  
to the bone.

DALEN (CONT'D)

(awed)

How can you eat so much?

BRANN

Can't let it go to waste. It only lasts so long.

DALEN

It would last more than a day, I would think.

BRANN

Don't know. Never had a skarnsheep last more than a day.

DALEN

You eat... all of it!?

BRANN

Except when I have company -- and you're the first visitor I've had since I left Kelthar's Stand.

DALEN

How long have you lived here?

BRANN

Two winters and a war ago.

DALEN

Why don't you live in a village?

BRANN

Too many people. I tend to hate everyone I meet.

DALEN

I don't know -- my village has some nice people in it.

Brann shakes his head.

BRANN

No. I'd hate 'em.

DALEN

You hate me?

BRANN

You stood up to me and you were not afraid. I respect that. You come from a brave family.

Dalen looks down.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
What does your father do?

DALEN  
He's a fisherman.

BRANN  
Noble profession. I hate fish, but  
it's a noble profession.

Brann rips off another piece of meat.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
Fish can't compare with  
skarnsheep.

A pause.

DALEN  
So... you left the army because  
the war ended and peace broke out?

BRANN  
Not really. I said that when I  
wasn't sure if you deserved the  
truth.

DALEN  
Oh? What happened?

BRANN  
I defied orders, led the army to  
the right flank, took the Skelhar  
by surprise, and won the battle.

Dalen stares at him -- unconvinced.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
For disobeying orders, I was  
exiled.

Dalen keeps staring.

Brann twitches.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
Fine. I had an affair with my  
commander's wife. Let's call it  
self-exile.

A beat.

They both burst into laughter.

Brann refills Dalen's mug.

BRANN (CONT'D)

Here -- I make more sense the more  
of this you drink!

DALEN

Thank you -- but I need a clear  
mind for where I'm going.

The laughter fades. Silence settles.

BRANN

You're going to get killed, you  
know.

DALEN

You told me that already.

BRANN

And I am telling you again because  
it is true.

DALEN

If you allow me to use your sword,  
I'll return it when I come back.

BRANN

Back? Keep thinking positive, boy.

DALEN

You doubt my abilities?

BRANN

Not at all. I just know the Shadow  
People.

DALEN

Galdra told me of them.

BRANN

Telling is one thing. Seeing them,  
and fighting them, is another.

DALEN

You have seen them?

BRANN

As much as any man can.

DALEN

How do you kill them?

BRANN

You can't. You just pray to Auren that you get through the Fellgrove alive. And I doubt it will do any good.

A beat.

BRANN (CONT'D)

You can take the sword.

DALEN

Thank you.

BRANN

I'll be coming along... just to make sure you don't lose it.

Brann tears off another bite of meat and pretends not to notice as Dalen watches him with a faint smile.

EXT. DENSE FOREST - DAY

They walk off-path. Dense trees press in. Almost no sunlight breaks through.

BRANN

You trust this Galdra?

DALEN

Yes.

BRANN

Her prophecy's a bit... far-fetched, don't you think?

DALEN

You said something about praying to Auren... so you must have faith.

BRANN

I believe in Auren. But him sucking the water out of the ocean? That's another story.

DALEN

Explain how the Lyrian Sea went dry.

BRANN

I can't.

DALEN

It died because Tharos defied Auren.

BRANN

As a soldier... that sounds too easy. Visions and Gods.

DALEN

What else could it be?

BRANN

Something unexplainable... but logical.

(beat)

Visions are not logical.

DALEN

All right -- what do you call them?

BRANN

Nightmares.

DALEN

And the treasure ship Seraphine? You've heard of it?

BRANN

Yes. Legend.

DALEN

I'm surprised at you, Brann. You're a soldier. You've seen a lot more than I ever have.

(beat)

How could you do all that without any faith?

BRANN

I had the faith that I could kill my enemies. That's all. My perfect aim.

DALEN

Perfect aim? You missed me.

BRANN

A rare instance. The sun blinded me.

DALEN

Auren spared me -- he knew I was doing his service by getting the tribute!

BRANN

That's foolish.

DALEN

No. It's faith.

BRANN

I believe in Auren -- the God of the Sun... but I don't think he gives a grack about anything that happens down here.

EXT. NEAR THE FELLGROVE - EARLY EVENING

The forest closes in. Shadows stretch long across the land. Light fades.

Brann stops cold.

BRANN

Listen.

The wind carries a ghostly, wordless chorus -- distant, but clear.

Dalen turns, scanning the trees. On edge.

BRANN (CONT'D)

The Whispering Trees.

(beat)

They mark the border of the Fellgrove.

Dalen listens. The sound grows -- thin voices threading the wind.

DALEN

It sounds like... almost like...

BRANN

The wails of the Nythra... coming to collect the spirits of the dead.

The chorus lingers. A breath on the wind. Faint. Endless.

Brann scans the canopy.

BRANN (CONT'D)  
We'll make camp here.

DALEN  
If we're that close to the  
Fellgrove, why don't we push on?

BRANN  
You don't want to spend more than  
one night in the Fellgrove.  
Tomorrow we won't have a choice...  
but tonight -- we live while we  
can.

EXT. THE VILLAGE - EARLY EVENING

Rendar enters the village. Ahead, Fayra walks slowly,  
eyes unfocused, as if in a trance.

RENDAR  
Fayra?

She doesn't respond. Keeps walking.

Rendar steps in gently, placing a hand on her shoulder.

RENDAR (CONT'D)  
Fayra?

She turns to him.

FAYRA  
Rendar.

RENDAR  
Are you all right?

FAYRA  
I did the right thing... didn't I?

RENDAR  
What thing? What did you do?

FAYRA  
My amulet. It will protect him.

RENDAR  
What amulet?

FAYRA  
For his protection.

She stares forward, unmoving.

RENDAR  
The amulet of the Lyrian Sea?

FAYRA  
It will protect him....

Rendar stands still, stunned.

INT. RENDAR'S HUT - LATE AFTERNOON

Mother sits at the table, upset. Ivara beside her.

Eldric stands at the door, watching as Rendar paces.

RENDAR  
Why did you not tell me?

MOTHER  
I was going to... when you  
returned home. There was no  
talking him out of it.

RENDAR  
Why didn't you wake me?

MOTHER  
You could not have stopped him,  
Rendar.

ELDRIC  
He may turn back once he realizes  
what he has undertaken.

RENDAR  
I wish I could believe you... but  
that's not Dalen.

IVARA  
When did he leave?

MOTHER  
Long before dawn.

RENDAR  
He's doing what I should have  
done. If he dies out there, it's  
because we hid behind fear... and  
called it wisdom.

A beat.

IVARA

Then we better not let him die  
alone.

They exchange a look.

EXT. THE CAMPFIRE NEAR THE FELLGROVE - NIGHT

Brann and Dalen sleep beside a small fire.

Its flames crackle and flicker softly, casting shadows  
across their faces.

A faint rustle in the brush.

From the dark, KAEL (20s) emerges - ragged, wary, and  
moving like a predator.

He crouches beside Dalen and carefully reaches for the  
pouch at his belt.

A whisper of leather. A faint JINGLE of coins.

A sword blade presses against his neck.

BRANN (O.S.)

Drop the pouch and step away.

Kael freezes -- wide-eyed -- and lifts his gaze.

Brann stares him down, blade steady.

Kael rises slowly. The sword follows his every move.

Dalen stirs awake.

KAEL

I just wanted to borrow a few  
Aurens, that's all!

BRANN

Borrow? You were robbing him.

Dalen stands. Kael trembles.

KAEL

No! No, I wasn't! I was going to  
ask you afterwards if you didn't  
mind!

DALEN

You expect me to believe that?

KAEL

Give me credit -- it was fast!

BRANN

I'm going to run him through! The world will be rid of a thief!

Kael drops to his knees.

KAEL

No! I beg you! I didn't touch one of the Aurens! You'd be killing me on suspicion!

BRANN

Suspicion? You had his money pouch in your hand!

KAEL

I was just checking it to see what was inside -- curiosity!

A beat.

Dalen LAUGHS. Brann and Kael glance at each other.

BRANN

What's funny?

DALEN

He can talk himself out of anything!

Kael smiles nervously. Brann lowers his sword.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Where are you from?

KAEL

Here... these woods. My family had a small farm -- very small.

BRANN

Where, exactly?

KAEL

About twenty shards from here.

DALEN

Had? What happened?

KAEL

Last year we were attacked by the Shadow People.

DALEN

I thought they never left the  
Fellgrove?

BRANN

When they're hungry, they do.

DALEN

What do they eat? Farm animals?

BRANN

The Shadow People feed on light  
and warmth.

(beat)

They drain the life from whatever  
they touch.

DALEN

But your farm -- it wasn't in the  
Fellgrove, was it?

KAEL

No. But close enough that they  
crossed the border when they were  
hungry. They killed my parents.

BRANN

How is it you survived?

KAEL

I was out hunting.

(beat)

That was a year ago. Since then,  
I've been helping travelers  
lighten their load -- just enough  
to live on.

BRANN

You're not very good at it. It's a  
wonder you haven't starved to  
death.

(beat)

We need sleep. We enter the  
Fellgrove in the morning, so be on  
your way.

KAEL

Yes, sir.

Brann raises his sword again.

BRANN

And remember... I'm a light  
sleeper.

KAEEL

I won't try to rob you. I'm sorry.

Kael turns and disappears into the dark.

DALEN

Do you believe him?

Brann lowers himself by the fire, eyes still fixed on the dark trees.

BRANN

Not really.

EXT. THE CAMPFIRE NEAR THE FELLGROVE - MORNING

Sunlight filters weakly through the trees.

The campfire still burns -- flames high, untouched.

Dalen stirs. Shifts upright.

He rubs sleep from his eyes as he stares at the still-burning fire.

DALEN

The fire didn't go out.

Brann groans, half-asleep under his cloak.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Brann!

Brann opens one eye.

BRANN

What is it?

DALEN

The fire didn't go out last night.  
Did you keep it going?

BRANN

No.

He jolts upright.

BRANN (CONT'D)

No!

Kael steps out of the trees, grinning, two fish dangling from a line.

KAEL

I caught breakfast!

(beat)

Figured we should eat before  
heading into the Fellgrove.

BRANN

"We?" There is no "we."

KAEL

I got to thinking after I left  
your camp last night. I've been  
scraping by on my own for a year.  
Time I did something that matters.

DALEN

We're not just passing through the  
Fellgrove. We're going on -- to  
Scorched Reach, and then the Bones  
of the Sea.

Kael goes still, the weight of it hitting him.

KAEL

But if I can help... even a  
little...

BRANN

So you want to risk your life just  
for something to do?

KAEL

Three is better than two.

Dalen turns to Brann. Shrugs.

DALEN

There's truth in that.

Kael smiles.

KAEL

I'll clean the fish!

He disappears into the trees with the catch.

Brann lowers himself by the fire.

BRANN

I hate anything that slithers and  
swims. Can't eat it.

DALEN

You'll be hungry later.

BRANN

Doesn't matter. We'll be dead by  
noon.

EXT. THE BORDER OF THE FELLGROVE - DAY

The light dims -- but the sky remains clear above.

An unnatural gloom presses against the edge of the woods.

The group slows as The Fellgrove comes into view -- a  
tangle of trees wrapped in a faint, shifting fog.

Dalen stares ahead.

DALEN

This is the Fellgrove?

Brann gives a single nod.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Doesn't look dangerous.

BRANN

It is.

They step forward.

The moment they cross the threshold, the sound of the  
forest dies.

No birds. No wind. Nothing.

Only silence.

MONTAGE

The three move deeper into The Fellgrove. The light fades  
with every step. The trees grow denser. The fog thickens.

Dalen grips the sword at his side, scanning the woods.

A flicker of movement between the trunks -- but nothing's  
there. Brann kneels, touches the soil.

He wipes his hand on his cloak and keeps moving.

Kael picks his way over twisted roots and mud. A skeletal  
hand juts from the ground.

He stares at it, then steps over.

Their boots splash through shallow black water.

Shapes move between the trees -- thin, human-like, shifting just out of view.

They pass through a grove where scraps of clothing hang from branches. Some are old and rotted.

Some are freshly torn.

Brann stops beside a tree gashed with deep claw marks. He traces the grooves with his fingers.

Too wide for a blade.

The woods narrow around them. Fog coils along the ground.

No birds. No insects. Just the sound of their own breath.

The trees part -- revealing a dark, still lake.

END OF MONTAGE

EXT. A LAKE - DAY

The surface doesn't move. No ripple. No wind.

Just their reflections staring back.

DALEN

So far... so good.

A distant, female BATTLE CRY rips through the quiet.

Kael snaps to attention.

KAEL

Oh!?

DALEN

Someone's in trouble!

He takes off toward the sound.

BRANN

Dalen!

With a GRUNT, he follows with Kael.

EXT. THE FOREST - DAY

Dalen crashes through the undergrowth.

The SCREAMS grow sharper -- not of fear, but of someone fighting for their life.

Another sound joins her -- the inhuman SCREECHES of the Shadow People.

EXT. A CLEARING - DAY

Dalen rushes through the trees -- branches whip past -- and then the forest breaks open.

In the clearing ahead, SERA (19) battles for her life.

Leather armor, tall boots, and a broadsword nearly as tall as she is.

She moves fast, striking with precision.

The Shadow People swarm her -- vaporous forms with glowing, ember eyes.

She slices through one -- it bursts like smoke, reforms in seconds.

Another grabs her, lifts her from the ground -- she twists free midair, slams to the dirt, and hacks it clean in half.

Dalen races forward --

Brann and Kael crash in behind him, swords raised, SCREAMING into the fray.

The Shadow People vanish -- torn into mist.

Silence.

Sera drops to the ground, breathless.

SERA

I've been fighting them... for an hour at least. Thank you...

DALEN

Are you hurt?

SERA

Just my pride. I was told they could not be killed, but I didn't believe it.

BRANN

Do you believe it now?

SERA  
What do you think?

DALEN  
I'm Dalen -- from the Village of  
Halvern.

She extends her hand.

SERA  
Sera. My brother and I came from  
Lorynth... what's left of it.

DALEN  
Where's your brother?

SERA  
He was killed by the Shadow  
People. Last night.

DALEN  
I'm sorry.

BRANN  
Where's Lorynth?

KAEL  
It was a coastal province on the  
Lyrian Sea.

SERA  
When the sea vanished, the people  
turned to Auren. I didn't.  
They called it blasphemy -- said  
Tharos was dead. But I still feel  
him -- in the waves that never  
came back.

Her eyes drift to Dalen's chest -- the amulet.

She stares.

DALEN  
What?

She lifts a pendant from under her tunic -- an identical  
amulet, faintly glowing.

Dalen's eyes widen.

He looks down at his own as it glows softly in the same  
red hue.

DALEN (CONT'D)

They're identical... It's never  
glowed before.

SERA

They glow when near divine energy.

DALEN

What are they?

SERA

The red stone - it's a fragment of  
Tharos' heart. It shattered when  
Auren struck him down and boiled  
the Lyrian Sea.

BRANN

Sounds far-fetched.

SERA

To a non-believer, yes. There were  
three amulets: One carried by the  
faithful... me. One for the  
defiant, and one for the fallen.  
Which are you?

Brann and Kael glance at Dalen.

DALEN

The... defiant, I guess.

BRANN

Where is the third?

SERA

I don't know.

(to Dalen)

I didn't even know yours existed.  
Three hearts. Three bearers. When  
joined -- the sea remembers.

BRANN

We must move. The Shadow People  
will return.

DALEN

Where are you headed?

SERA

To the Bones of the Sea.

They exchange glances.

DALEN

That's where we're going.

BRANN

Why are you going there?

SERA

That's my business.

The distant SCREECH of the Shadow People.

DALEN

Let's get out of here.

They head into The Fellgrove fog.

EXT. BRANN'S CAMP - DAY

Eldric waits at the hut.

A beat.

Rendar steps out just as Ivara approaches from the trees.

RENDAR

Nothing inside.

IVARA

Two sets of footprints headed east  
-- toward the Fellgrove.

ELDRIC

He's traveling with someone. That  
should rest your mind a bit,  
Rendar.

RENDAR

My mind will rest when we find  
him.

They move toward the treeline.

RENDAR (CONT'D)

Show us the tracks, Ivara.

Ivara leads the way as they disappear into the woods.

EXT. THE FELLGROVE - DAY

Dalen, Brann, Kael, and Sera move in silence, their steps  
hushed by moss and scattered leaves.

Then -- a faint, rising wail.

Distant. Inhuman.

It echoes from all directions.

The group freezes.

KAEL

They're all around us...

BRANN

Keep moving.

They press forward - blades ready.

DALEN

The Shadow People can't be killed,  
you said.

BRANN

Right.

DALEN

They drain your energy...

BRANN

They pull it out of you -- until  
there's nothing left but an empty  
shell.

The ghostly whispers linger.

Kael scans the trees, restless.

DALEN

Anything that exists can be made  
not to exist. There has to be a  
way.

SERA

Deprive them of energy.

DALEN

How?

SERA

Don't let them latch on to you.

(beat)

If you hadn't arrived when you  
did... I would be an empty shell.

She and Brann share a glance.

They keep moving -- cautious, slow -- weapons in hand.

EXT. DEEP IN THE FELLGROVE - DAY

Dark shapes drift between trees -- vaporous, flickering at the edges.

They move in silence, low to the ground, gliding through roots and fog.

Through a break in the trees:

Dalen, Brann, Kael, and Sera -- distant silhouettes moving cautiously through the forest.

The shadows keep pace.

EXT. IN THE FELLGROVE - DAY

The wailing of the Shadow People returns -- blood curdling and shrill.

The group halts.

DALEN

They're following us.

BRANN

They never stop.

Sera scans the fog -- a SCREAM -- but closer.

SERA

Look.

Two Shadow People emerge from the fog, half-formed in the dim light -- flickering like smoke with burning eyes.

More Shadow People, black smoke coming out of white fog, begin to encircle them.

Brann readies his sword. The others do the same.

Disembodied WHISPERS echo through the trees... a haunting chorus that curls through the fog.

SHADOW PERSON 1

SHADOW PERSON 2

Your weapons are useless... Useless.

Brann ROARS and charges. His blade slices a Shadow in half -- a clean, perfect cut.

Sera and Kael leap into the fray --

steel whirling through vapor -- blades pass through bodies like smoke.

The halved Shadow stitches back together -- reforming with a sickening hiss.

Kael turns -- too slow.

A Shadow wraps around him, latching onto his chest.

It drinks his light.

Kael's back arches in agony, a pale glow draining from his skin.

Dalen freezes -- steps forward -- and stops.

A piercing, high-pitched tone fills the air.

He digs into his pouch, hand shaking -- the rune stone glows blue, pulsing like a heartbeat in his palm.

He stares at it, breath shallow.

DALEN (V.O.)

It will freeze for destruction...  
when shadows billow black...

His eyes rise.

The Shadows are changing -- no longer grey mist -- but black smoke, twisting violently within their forms.

He grips the stone -- his fist flares with red light.

Dalen charges.

He plunges his fist into the Shadow holding Kael --

BOOM -- a colorless blast erupts.

The Shadow SCREAMS, then shatters into dust.

Dalen turns, finds another lunging at Sera --

He slams his glowing hand through it --

BOOM -- another blinding flare.

The last Shadow, mid-swing against Brann, hesitates.

Then -- vanishes into the trees.

Silence falls.

Only Brann's ragged breathing remains.

BRANN

What happened!? I was getting the better of him!

Sera steps closer, her eyes on Dalen's hand -- the stone still hot, pulsing with faint light.

SERA

The stone. It... killed the shadows.

Dalen stares into the fog.

DALEN

Every place we pass... something born of Auren still clings to it.

Brann drops to his knees beside Kael, who lies on his back, gasping on the ground.

KAEL

I'm all right.

The stone's glow fades.

Dalen studies it -- dull again. Lifeless.

EXT. THE FELLGROVE CAMP - NIGHT

The group sits close around a low fire. Sera pokes the flames uneasily.

BRANN

That fire is dangerous. We're lighting a beacon for the Shadow People.

SERA

I think we're safe. The rune stone proved the Shadows can be destroyed.

KAEL

The only thing I don't like about what you just said, is the word "think."

SERA

I'm confident.

KAEL

I'm not as confident.

DALEN

It's been hours and they haven't returned.

KAEL

Where did you get that stone?

DALEN

A soothsayer in our village -- Galdra. She gave it to me... but I didn't know it had power. I think she told me... but just not in a way I understood.

A distant Shadow Person SCREAM.

They all jolt alert.

BRANN

It's a great distance away.

KAEL

What if they attack when we're asleep?

BRANN

One of us will be awake at all times. We'll take turns.

DALEN

I'll take first watch.

BRANN

Very well.

Brann and Kael settle in under their cloaks.

Dalen rises, takes a step from the fire and looks towards the foggy woods.

Sera joins him.

SERA

Your amulet. Where did you get it?

DALEN

From Fayra -- a girl in my  
village. A family heirloom she  
told me.

SERA

She gave it to you?

DALEN

To bring me luck. But now I wonder  
if she even knew what it really  
was.

He looks at Sera.

DALEN (CONT'D)

What do you believe the Heart of  
Tharos really is?

SERA

It's not an easy thing to carry.

She turns and stares into the flames.

Her voice quiet... far away...

SERA'S VISION

A monumental struggle -- vague, godlike shapes clashing  
in a rolling sky.

One wields light. One, shadow.

SERA (V.O.)

When Auren struck Tharos down, his  
power shattered. Three fragments  
of his heart sank with him. Those  
who still worshipped the sea took  
them -- hoping one day, they  
could bring it back.

A blinding explosion.

Three glowing crystals fall through smoke -- into the sea  
-- vanishing beneath stormy waves.

THREE FIGURES in cloaks stand along the shore. They each  
lift a glowing red amulet to the sky.

A wall of water crashes down -- and then disappears.

The sea is gone.

Only endless sand.

BACK TO SCENE

Dalen watches Sera, touches his amulet.

DALEN

Then how did they get here --  
around our necks?

SERA

My family guarded one. Your  
friend... perhaps without knowing  
what it was... another. They are  
very old... the original  
custodians have long since  
departed.

A long pause.

DALEN

You should try and get some sleep.

She smiles with a nod, and returns to the fire.

EXT. THE FELLGROVE CAMP - EARLY MORNING

The campfire has dwindled to embers. Dalen remains awake,  
staring at the amulet.

The others sleep under their cloaks.

A soft TREMOR ripples the ground.

He turns toward the fog in the woods.

EXT. THE BORDER OF THE FELLGROVE - EARLY MORNING

Rendar and Eldric stand at the treeline, weapons ready --  
eyes fixed on the shifting fog ahead.

Ivara kneels, studying the ground.

RENDAR

Three sets of prints?

IVARA

Three. Headed straight in.

Eldric stares at the gray haze, uneasy.

ELDRIC

They say it takes a full day to  
cross.

A long pause. From deep within -- a ghostly SCREAM echoes through the trees.

They freeze.

Another SCREAM -- closer this time.

ELDRIC (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
God of Auren...

Rendar doesn't flinch.

RENDAR  
Let's go.

He steps forward, into the mist.

Ivara follows without hesitation.

Eldric hesitates -- then goes in after them.

The forest swallows them whole.

EXT. FAR EDGE OF THE FELLGROVE - DAY

The trees thin, giving way to searing brightness. Before them stretches Scorched Reach... endless dunes and a blazing horizon.

The heat ripples like a living thing.

BRANN  
The Scorched Reach.

DALEN  
Where the sun touches the land.

SERA  
We have water for one day. If we don't get across by then... we won't get across at all.

A SCREAM echoes behind them.

Kael turns back and looks toward the fog.

KAEL  
I hope what's in front of us isn't as bad as what's behind.

Dalen steps forward onto the sand... and enters the Scorched Reach.

## MONTAGE - THE SCORCHED REACH

- A white-hot sun blazes in an empty sky.
- Wind lashes across endless dunes. The air shimmers, warped by heat.
- Boots sink deep in scorching sand. Each step slower than the last.
- Brann wraps a torn cloth across his face, eyes squinting into the glare.
- Kael stumbles, nearly drops his canteen - catches it just in time. Dust clings to his skin.
- Dalen and Sera crest a high dune, shielding their eyes, scanning the endless horizon.
- A dead tree, half-buried and sun-bleached, juts like a broken bone from the sand.
- Heat waves distort the distance - something moves.
- Kael stumbles to his knees, panting. Brann grabs his arm and pulls him up.
- Sera clutches her canteen, weighing it in her hand -- nearly empty.
- Overhead, the sun burns unforgiving, high and white.
- Dalen wipes sweat from his brow, revealing red skin. His cheeks and nose are already sunburned.
- Sera's lips are cracked, her shoulders streaked with dust and heat.
- Kael licks the inside of his canteen cap, desperate for moisture.
- Shadows lengthen. The color of the sand deepens to rust as they continue forward.
- In the distance: a jagged ridge of black rock rises out of the dunes like a scar -- the edge of Scorched Reach.
- They keep walking, their figures shrinking against the immensity of the wasteland.

END MONTAGE

EXT. SCORCHED REACH - DAY

Dalen and Sera crest a dune.

A piercing, inhuman SCREAM splits the silence ahead.

DALEN

Someone's in trouble!

He takes a step as Sera grabs his arm.

SERA

No! It's not "someone." It's a Furnace Demon.

DALEN

What's that?

SERA

When Auren turned this land to heat and sand, the people here burned but didn't die. They lost their minds, but survived.

Another faint, hollow SCREAM across the dunes.

SERA (CONT'D)

Auren made them his gatekeepers... to the Bones of the Sea.

DALEN

Shadow in the forest, fire in the sand... Auren left a piece of himself in every ruin.

The group stands frozen, staring across the dunes.

Dalen grips the hilt of his sword.

They move toward the SCREAMS.

EXT. A DUNE - DAY

A distance away, the group is watched as they descend the dune like a shimmering mirage at the horizon.... tiny silhouettes distorted by heat waves. Low, guttural sounds -- half growl, half-breath -- drift through the air.

EXT. ON THE SCORCHED REACH - DAY

The group trudges forward in the deep sand as the sun blazes overhead. Sweat and sand streak their faces.

KAEL

I was happier in the woods... a little robbery now and then...

BRANN

No one forced you to come. It was your idea.

KAEL

I know. My life has been a long line of bad ideas.

DALEN

But this time you have purpose.

Kael tosses it off.

KAEL

To find a treasure in an ocean that no longer exists.

DALEN

It will save another ocean -- and a village.

KAEL

Well... if we make it out alive -- maybe grab a jewel or two -- I'll call that a fair trade.

A faint, constant RUMBLE.

Sera holds up a hand for them to stop.

SERA

Listen.

They stop.

The RUMBLE -- like footsteps -- but deeper.

They look at the ground.

BRANN

Something's moving... under us.

Dalen looks to the horizon. Through the ripples of the heat waves... a flicker of shapes.

Not clearly seen.

Low, rhythmic THUDS carry across the dunes.

Heavy. Inhuman.

KAEL  
(whispers)  
That's not the wind.

They draw closer together, instinctively forming a circle. Weapons ready.

The sand stirs.

The rumbling stops.

Silence.

KAEL (CONT'D)  
Looks like we're all right...

SERA  
Don't count on it.

A violent BLAST of sand erupts nearby -- a geyser of dust and heat.

From the crater rises a creature of fire and ruin:

A FURNACE DEMON.

Charred skin cracks like baked earth, glowing faintly from beneath -- veins of ember-light pulse through its body, alive with fire.

Twisted horns curl from its skull. Its face -- human once, is now a mask of scorched hatred.

Heat rolls off it in shimmering waves.

Kael staggers back, shielding his eyes.

KAEL  
What in all the gods' names --

BOOM -- another eruption.

A second Demon claws its way free from the sand.

Then a third.

All of them turn -- molten eyes fixed on the intruders.

They exhale smoke. Each breath hisses.

Every movement CRACKS the air.

In their hands, weapons of fused bone and warped metal, blackened and cruel.

They step forward, one by one -- sand turning to glass beneath their feet.

A beat.

A distant RUMBLE.

Out on the far horizon, through the rippling veil of heat, shapes begin to stir. Moving. Marching.

Indistinct. Too many to count.

Not fast. Not clear. But constant.

A low, rising WAIL builds -- hollow, otherworldly.

Heavy, rhythmic THUDS follow. The sound of something massive drawing near.

BRANN

Looks like the welcoming party.

The nearest DEMON unleashes a deafening ROAR -- like a furnace igniting.

Brann shoves Kael aside, stepping into the charge.

His blade meets a molten weapon with a CLANG that showers sparks -- the metal hissing red on contact.

Sera spins past Dalen, her broadsword carving a deep slash across a Demon's chest --

A burst of black ash and ember-glow cinders erupts from the wound.

The creature's flesh sizzles shut, the damage erased.

SERA

They don't die easily!

Kael lunges forward, grabbing a fallen spear.

He drives it into a Demon's side -- it howls, staggers -- but keeps coming.

Dalen ducks a swing -- a molten blade carves the air just above him.

Sand sprays into his eyes -- he stumbles, blinded.

The Demons close in -- heat pulsing, suffocating.

He fumbles for his pack -- the blue rune stone shows no sign of power or energy.

He grips it -- pauses. Nothing changes. No reaction.

He looks up -- the Demons surround them in a halo of flame and fury.

Dalen flails his sword, unable to see.

SERA (CONT'D)

Dalen! Move!

Dalen rolls aside just as a molten blade carves the air where he stood.

Brann charges in, teeth bared, driving his sword deep into the demon's chest.

A blinding scream --

Cracks spiderweb across the demon's body, ember light leaking from within --

and then -- an explosion of ash and flame. The creature vanishes into cinders.

Brann stares at the glowing edge of his sword, stunned, smoke curling from the blade.

BRANN

(to himself)

Maybe I am blessed after all.

The two remaining demons reel, smoke snorting from their nostrils -- then drop back into the sand, vanishing in a swirl of dust and steam.

A deep hum continues beyond the dunes.

The unseen horde still marches, its presence felt in the vibration underfoot.

Heat distortion warps the world -- lines ripple through the air like waves over fire.

Kael stumbles back, catching his breath.

Sera wipes blood and ash from her sword.

Brann scans the ridgeline.

Dalen rubs his eyes from the soot. He rises, and joins Sera, squinting into the haze.

SERA  
The stone did nothing.

DALEN  
I guess it was just for the Shadow  
People.

The low shuffle of movement continues beyond the dunes.

Brann sheathes his sword with a grunt, sweat running down  
his face.

KAEL  
What happened? Why did they stop?

SERA  
They were testing us.

KAEL  
What happens when they stop  
testing?

SERA  
I don't know. Maybe you should  
have turned back.

KAEL  
I almost did.  
(beat)  
Then I didn't. Don't know what  
that says about me.

Dalen looks to the horizon -- dunes roll endlessly under  
the shimmering sky.

DALEN  
Let's go.

He moves forward.

The others fall in behind.

EXT. SCORCHED REACH - LATER

The sun beats down.

The group drags their feet, soaked in sweat, skin burned  
and raw.

BRANN  
I've known some hot days... but  
this? How can your lips blister in  
under an hour?

SERA

Like Dalen says -- this is where  
the sun touches the land.

KAEL

They just... burst from the sand.

He glances at the shifting ground.

KAEL (CONT'D)

Could be under us right now.  
Waiting.

SERA

And we need to be ready for them.

A few silent paces.

SERA (CONT'D)

(to Dalen)

What are you thinking?

DALEN

My father.

(pause)

How worried he and my mother must  
be.

Another beat.

DALEN (CONT'D)

I hope he's on his boat... trying  
not to think about any of this.

EXT. THE FELLGROVE - DAY

The middle of a ferocious fight. Rendar dangles in midair  
-- throat caught in the smoky grip of a Shadow Person.

His boots kick, choking -- eyes wide with panic.

Nearby, Ivara and Eldric fight off two more of the  
creatures -- blades flashing through vaporous bodies that  
shift and reform.

ELDRIC

(gritting)

They won't stay dead!

He SLASHES one across the chest -- it tears apart into  
smoke... then curls back together, whole again.

Eldric pivots -- DRIVES his sword clean through the Shadow holding Rendar.

It unravels in a hiss of black smoke.

Rendar drops hard to the ground, gasping.

Before he can rise -- another Shadow lunges at him, its motion sharp and twitching like broken limbs.

Ivara jumps in, drives her blade forward -- the tip bursting through the creature's chest.

It lets out a shriek and SPLINTERS into mist.

IVARA

This way! Hurry!

She sprints into the trees.

Rendar scrambles to his feet. Eldric grabs his arm and hauls him along.

They vanish into the fog -- Shadows pouring after them, silent and relentless.

EXT. SCORCHED REACH - THE LAST DUNE - DUSK

Dalen and Brann crest the last dune. Ahead... the Bones of the Sea.

A vast world opens before them.

A cracked sea bed with large rock formations once under water... littered with skeletal ships, petrified coral, and salt-white earth stretching to the horizon.

Sera and Kael arrive next to them.

SERA

There it is.

Behind them, the faint RUMBLE of the Furnace Demons echoes from beneath the dunes.

Kael turns and watches behind them -- he scans the Scorched Reach.

Dalen stares ahead.

DALEN

This is what I came for.

They move down into the desolation -- their silhouettes small against the endless expanse.

EXT. THE BONES OF THE SEA - DUSK

The horizon shimmers with faint blue -- a ghostlight glow spilling across endless dunes.

Fossilized coral juts from the sand, glinting like glass in the moonlight -- jagged, ancient, beautiful.

The terrain hardens beneath their feet, wind-carved ridges shaped like frozen waves.

The group rests near a cluster of rock formations.

Dalen climbs onto a boulder for a better view. The others follow his gaze --

In the far distance, rising from the seabed --

-- the shattered wreck of THE SERAPHINE.

A once-mighty vessel, half-swallowed by stone and time. Hull cracked, gold paint flaking dull in the moonlight.

A broken mast leans at an angle, bone-white ropes swaying like seaweed in a dead tide.

KAEL

Is... is that it?

BRANN

It must be.

SERA

The Seraphine.

DALEN

Are you sure?

SERA

It was painted gold.

DALEN

We made it.

BRANN

Let's go!

DALEN

We should wait till morning. It'll be dark soon -- and who knows what's between us and the ship.

BRANN

Very well. I'll start a fire --

DALEN

No fire. We're too close to Scorched Reach... just in case.

BRANN

Right. No fire. I bet it gets cold around here at night.

EXT. THE COLD CAMP - NIGHT

They sleep close to the rocks under their cloaks, curled against the chill.

Kael stirs.

He peeks out -- eyes fixed on the distant silhouette of the Seraphine.

Quietly, he rises, cloak slipping from his shoulders.

One step. Then another.

He glances at the others. Still.

Kael moves off into the dark.

EXT. ON THE SEA BED - NIGHT

Kael moves fast but quiet, navigating the ridged terrain.

The Seraphine looms ahead -- vast and broken, its splintered hull like the ribcage of a fallen beast.

Kael crouches behind coral-encrusted debris with dagger in hand.

A faint glint -- metal. A rusted lantern, half-buried in the sand.

Then -- movement.

Figures on patrol. Hulking, irregular, inhuman.

Bodies crusted with salt, coral, and bone. Faces like eroded statues. Eyes hollow.

The SALTFORGED.

They drag weapons fashioned from wreckage -- rusted hooks, mast shards, barnacled blades.

Kael freezes, breath shallow.

One turns -- head cocked toward him.

Kael doesn't move.

After a long beat, the creature moves on.

Kael crawls back, then bolts.

EXT. THE COLD CAMP - NIGHT

Dalen and Sera sit alert at the edge of camp.

Kael stumbles from the dark -- breathless, GASPING.

DALEN

Where were you?

Kael can't speak, still heaving.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Let me guess -- the thief in you couldn't resist treasure a shard away.

Kael shakes his head "no."

DALEN (CONT'D)

I should send you back home right now.

SERA

Why?

DALEN

He was going to take some of the treasure and leave anyway.

KAEL

No... I wasn't... honest... but you're right... I'm a thief at heart and knowing there was gold and jewels a shard away... I just had to see for myself...

(MORE)

KAEL (CONT'D)  
but I wasn't going to steal any! I  
promise!

Dalen studies him.

DALEN  
Part of me believes you. But I  
don't trust you.

KAEL  
We've got bigger problems. The  
Seraphine is guarded by these --  
big, ugly things...

BRANN (O.S.)  
We know.

Kael spins as Brann steps forward -- dragging something  
behind him.

A Saltforged Scout, wrists bound, stares with sunken  
eyes. Skin crusted in salt and coral like armor.

KAEL  
You got one? How?

BRANN  
You did some scouting... and so  
did they.

The Scout's voice grates like stones grinding.

SALTFORGED SCOUT  
Humans have their own smell. The  
wind was not in your favor.

KAEL  
It talks...

The Scout fixes him with a dead stare.

DALEN  
Are there many of them?

KAEL  
From what I saw -- plenty.

Dalen steps closer, calm.

He draws the blue rune stone -- holds it up.

No glow. Nothing. He lowers it.

DALEN

I am Dalen, from the village of Halvern beyond Scorched Reach and the Fellgrove.

The Scout is silent.

DALEN (CONT'D)

We have been ordered by Auren to offer a tribute.

A flicker -- recognition, faint.

DALEN (CONT'D)

We need the treasure aboard the Seraphine.

SALTFORGED SCOUT

We were men once. Sailors who refused to abandon Tharos when the sea turned to dust.

(beat)

Auren cursed us -- fused us to salt and bone, to stand guard for eternity.

DALEN

Guard the treasure?

The Scout nods.

DALEN (CONT'D)

But... Auren needs the tribute.

SALTFORGED SCOUT

Did he tell you to come to the Bones of the Sea?

A long beat.

DALEN

No. He did not.

SALTFORGED SCOUT

Then the treasure of the Seraphine is not for you... or your village.

DALEN

You don't understand.

SALTFORGED SCOUT

I do.

The Scout pulls his hands apart -- the rope crumbles like dry kelp.

Brann lunges -- sword up -- but the Scout moves faster, striking his neck.

Brann flies back, hits the ground hard.

Dalen glances at Brann, who gestures he's all right, then back to the scout.

DALEN

We will take the treasure.

SALTFORGED SCOUT

You can try.

SERA

We're not afraid of you.

The Scout turns to her -- eyes narrowing.

SALTFORGED SCOUT

That will change.

He walks off into the dark.

Brann pushes himself up, rubbing his neck -- blood trickles from a shallow gash.

BRANN

His hands are like... seashells.

Dalen watches the Scout vanish.

SERA

I don't think you'll convince them.

DALEN

He was a scout. There must be someone in command... maybe they would see reason.

SERA

They're cursed. The cursed don't reason.

DALEN

The rune stone didn't react to him -- so it won't help us.

Dalen steps away, lost in thought.

EXT. A BOULDER - NIGHT

Dalen leans against the stone, gazing up at the stars -- cold and distant.

DALEN

Galdra... what can I do? How do I fight the Saltforged?

(beat)

Did I make a mistake? Am I not up to this task? Was Father right?

Soft FOOTSTEPS.

Sera approaches, sensing his turmoil.

SERA

Are you all right?

A pause.

DALEN

I don't know.

She leans beside him.

DALEN (CONT'D)

All this time I've been confident... somehow the leader.

(beat)

But the truth is... I was supposed to be on the shore, mending nets. Watching the tide roll in. Not here. Not... all of this.

He looks toward the wreck.

DALEN (CONT'D)

I keep waiting for someone to tap me on the shoulder, tell me it's a mistake -- that I was never meant to be part of this story.

(a beat)

I'm no one, Sera. Just a fisherman who wandered too far from home.

SERA

If that were true... I'd be dead.

(beat)

You brought us through the Fellgrove, the Reach, the Saltforged. You kept us moving when we wanted to stop..

(beat)

(MORE)

SERA (CONT'D)

You may not feel like a leader...  
but we followed you anyway.

He looks at her. She holds his gaze, steady, quiet.

She leans in and kisses him.

EXT. THE COLD CAMP - NIGHT

Kael walks from the camp.

He stops -- mid-step.

A long pause.

His expression changes -- awkward, surprised.

DALEN (O.S.)

Sera...

He slowly turns away.

Brann approaches him.

BRANN

Where is Dalen?

He takes a step forward -- Kael grabs his arm.

KAEL

Now is not a good time.

Brann stares, confused.

EXT. THE COLD CAMP - DAWN

Dalen stands along at the camp's edge, eyes fixed on the Seraphine. His brow furrows.

He looks down to his pouch, and opening it, a red glow pulsates inside.

He reaches in for the red rune -- glowing.

GALDRA (V.O.)

...to ease your doubts... guide  
your mind...

Brann stirs under his cloak, yawns, joints CRACKING as he sits up.

He sees Dalen.

BRANN  
Any activity?

DALEN  
No.

Brann groans, stretching. His knees CRACK loudly.

Dalen's head turns. A spark of realization flares across his face.

DALEN (CONT'D)  
Brann! You did it!

BRANN  
Did what?

Dalen spins toward camp.

DALEN  
How to fight the Saltforged!

He returns the stone to the pouch.

BRANN  
With my cracking knees?

Sera and Kael jolt awake.

DALEN  
Kael, come with me.

KAEL  
Where to?

DALEN  
There's a shipwreck to the south --  
away from the Seraphine.

KAEL  
More treasure?

DALEN  
Weapons!  
(to Brann)  
We'll be back.

Dalen and Kael race off.

EXT. THE DESERT SKY - DAY

The sun blazes overhead - angry yellow streaked with red.

EXT. THE COLD CAMP - DAY

Sera watches the sky.

BRANN

They've been gone too long. I  
better --

SERA

Auren grows angry.

Brann squints upward.

BRANN

I'm not too happy myself.

SERA

Maybe it's his way of saying we  
cannot offer him the tribute of  
Seraphine gold.

BRANN

Gold is gold. I don't know why  
he'd be picky about it!

A DEEP RUMBLE.

They listen -- another, louder.

BRANN (CONT'D)

That's marching.

He scrambles up a boulder, peers over.

Dozens of Saltforged advance in perfect formation --  
silent thunder rolling closer.

BRANN (CONT'D)

They're attacking. Good tactical  
move -- taking the offensive.

SERA

Maybe we should fall back.

BRANN

To where -- Scorched Reach?

Dalen and Kael rush into camp, arms full -- torn canvas,  
wood fragments, an iron tin.

BRANN (CONT'D)

Where have you been?

SERA

The Saltforged are advancing this way.

Brann eyes the gear.

BRANN

What's all that?

DALEN

Canvas from a mast, wood from a keel, rivenpowder from a gun chest. It's a hunch -- but it might work.

SERA

What might?

DALEN

I'll explain later -- Brann, you have twine for your bow strings?

BRANN

Yes.

DALEN

We'll need it!

EXT. THE BONES OF THE SEA - DAY

The Saltforged close in -- dozens strong -- marching like a tide.

The ground trembles beneath their synchronized steps.

EXT. THE COLD CAMP - DAY

Dalen crouches, watching the Saltforged advance. In his hand -- a makeshift torch wrapped in soaked canvas.

Brann finishes pouring rivenpowder around the canvas, sealing it tight.

Sera joins Dalen. Kael and Brann follow.

BRANN

I don't think this is a very good idea.

DALEN

It was your idea.

BRANN

Mine!?

DALEN

Let's go out and meet them.

(to Kael)

You've got the flint?

KAEL

Ready.

They move out.

EXT. THE BONES OF THE SEA BATTLEFIELD - DAY

The Saltforged march in formation, their armored feet grinding across the sand.

Dalen, Brann, Sera, and Kael stand in a tight line just beyond the camp, torches in hand.

DALEN

Now, Kael.

Kael kneels, striking flint to steel.

SPARKS -- then flame.

He lights each torch in turn. Four blazing brands whip in the wind.

The Saltforged close in -- silent, relentless.

The brittle grind of salt and bone fills the air.

Dalen lifts his torch.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Now!

He charges. The others follow -- a sudden, blazing line against the tide.

Dalen drives his torch into a Saltforged chest --

FWOOM!

It ignites, bursts into sparks and ash, then collapses into drifting salt.

The wind carries it away.

Sera slashes through another -- its shell cracks, glows, and disintegrates. She rolls, strikes upward -- another burst of white fire.

Kael hurls a burning brand --

Direct hit. A creature SCREAMS, blackens, and shatters.

KAEL

It works! They burn!

Brann roars, shoulder-checks one back, and stabs deep.

The creature glows from within -- shell fissures, steam hissing through cracks -- then bursts.

The battle rages.

Fire and salt collide.

White powder drifts like snow through the haze.

Sera spins with a flame-seared shield -- two Saltforged ignite mid-stride.

Kael swings wide, scattering ash and fragments.

Brann fights with rhythm and fury -- every thrust ending in light.

The Saltforged hesitate. One drops to its knees, then sinks into the sand.

Another follows.

Then a third.

The last charges Dalen -- he braces, strikes upward under its jaw --

FWOOM!

It erupts, scattering molten salt across the wind.

Silence.

Ash falls like snow.

DALEN

Anyone hurt?

KAEL

Small cut.

SERA

Same. The torches kept them back.

Brann approaches, panting.

BRANN

How was this my idea?

DALEN

This morning. Your knees cracked when you got up. I thought -- if the Saltforged are salt and shells, they can crack. And salt, when touched with fire, fizzes away.

Brann grins.

BRANN

I didn't know I was so smart!

DALEN

Let's get to the Seraphine. Keep the torches. Our friends might return.

EXT. THE BONES OF THE SEA - DAY

They cross the fossil dunes. The wreck of the Seraphine looms -- its hull rising like the ribs of a dead leviathan. The ground hardens beneath their feet -- salt ridges and coral veins.

KAEL

I keep thinking they'll crawl back out.

SERA

They might.

BRANN

Just hope the torches don't go out.

SERA

They might.

BRANN

Comforting.

Dalen glances back -- FIGURES on the horizon. Blurred.

KAEL  
They don't walk like the  
Saltforged.

BRANN  
Furnace Demons?

DALEN  
At least a shard away.

He turns to the wreck.

DALEN (CONT'D)  
We work fast.

INT. THE WRECK OF THE SERAPHINE - DAY

They descend through the split hull, past beams etched with sun and wave symbols. Coral chokes the corridors. White dust rises with every step.

INT. CENTER CHAMBER - DAY

Half-buried under sailcloth and timbers -- an ancient stone altar carved in the shape of the Lyrian Sea. Three hollow circles mark its surface.

Sera stares at them.

Sera removes her amulet, fits it into a circle. Perfect.

She turns to Dalen.

Dalen adds his. Perfect.

They stare at the third hollow.

Dalen looks to Brann.

BRANN  
(quietly)  
I don't have it.

Dalen almost smiles.

KAEL  
Does this even mean anything?

SERA  
Tharos needs the third piece of  
his heart.

FOOTSTEPS echo outside -- slow, unsteady.

They draw weapons.

Footsteps draw closer.

Rendar enters -- torn, bruised, bloodied but upright.

DALEN

Father?

He rushes to him, embracing hard.

BRANN

I couldn't let you face Auren  
alone.

Brann clasps his shoulder -- respectful.

DALEN

How did you make it here?

RENDAR

Ivara and Eldric. They're beyond  
the ridge. Eldric's wounded.

He turns to the others.

DALEN

This is Brann, Sera, and Kael. My  
father -- Rendar.

Nods all around.

BRANN

Your son's quite the warrior.

KAEL

And leader.

DALEN

We found this instead of treasure.

He gestures to the altar.

SERA

It holds the three amulets that  
contain --

RENDAR

The three pieces of Tharos' heart.

A hush.

DALEN

How do you know about that?

Rendar draws a third amulet -- red crystal pulsing faintly -- and sets it into the final hollow.

CLICK.

Silence.

KAEL

That's it? Three trinkets and a story?

BOOM!

Thunder CRACKS. The amulets glow red-gold, their light fusing into a spiral beam that tears through the clouds.

The ground shudders. Cracks race through the sand.

A massive chest rises from beneath the altar -- barnacled, sealed in coral. Steam hisses from its seams.

They stare.

DALEN

(whispers)

The treasure of the Seraphine.

He and Brann force the lid open -- CREAK!

Inside: gold, jewels, relics. Centuries untouched.

Dalen raises his arms high.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Auren! We, the people of Halvern,  
offer you this tribute!

Silence.

A ghostly choir hums.

No words. Just sound -- soft, ancient -- like wind moving through a hollowed tree.

Overhead, clouds shift unnaturally fast.

A sweeping veil of darkness covers the sky.

The sun dims... then blackens.

The treasure reacts.

The gold dulls.

The jewels crack.

The brilliance fades as if drained of life.

THOOM!

The lid SLAMS SHUT.

Silence.

The treasure chest sits motionless, sealed tight. Dust settles in faint beams of dim light.

A low RUMBLE.

The wood beneath their feet TREMBLES.

A single red crack of light splits across the altar -- pulsing like a heartbeat.

SERA

Something's happening...

The wind howls through the shattered hull -- not natural wind -- a sound of something waking.

A voice speaks.

Booming, distant, layered with THUNDER.

AUREN'S VOICE (V.O.)

You were warned. The sea cannot return without a price.

The hull GROANS. Sand trickles down from the fractured beams above.

The sky outside shifts -- a violent swirl of black storm clouds gather, shot through with veins of red lightning.

Kael stumbles back.

KAEL

We should go. Now!

Brann pulls his sword.

BRANN

What are we fighting?

The wind dies. Stillness.

A soft, rising glow from the sealed chest. Blue light this time -- not Auren's flame, but something gentler.

A VOICE.

Calm. Familiar. Reverent.

Two voices layered. One human. One divine.

Speaking as one.

THAROS/RENDAR (O.S.)

Let the salt be washed away. Let  
the heart remember the tide.

Dalen looks up, stunned.

DALEN

(whispers)

Father...?

Rendar stumbles, clutching his chest.

A dull red glow pulses through his tunic -- faint at first, then brighter.

It builds, white light pushing outward in slow surges, visible through the cloth.

The glow spreads across his chest in rhythmic bursts.

He lifts his head.

His eyes now glow -- steady and pale, reflecting light not of this world.

The altar pulses with light.

Cracks race through the salt-hardened ground -- sharp and fast like lightning strikes.

A low, pressure-building RUMBLE grows beneath their feet.

Sera steps back. Eyes scanning the trembling horizon.

Kael grips the side of the hull. His knuckles white.

Dalen tries to help his father stand... but he is fading.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Father! Get up! We have to go!

His eyes meet Dalen's.

RENDAR

(fading)

I spent so long turning away... I  
didn't see where the tide was  
pulling me.

A shockwave BLOWS through the wreck -- throwing everyone  
to the ground.

Dust and salt rain down.

EXT. THE BONES OF THE SEA - DAY

The sky explodes with blue fire -- streaks of light tear  
across the clouds.

A sound rolls overhead -- like waves crashing in reverse.

Far off -- a titanic vortex of WATER spirals upward from  
a fissure in the earth, swallowing sky.

The ground splits open -- ancient ridgelines CRACK wide,  
spewing seawater from deep below.

INT. THE WRECK OF THE SERAPHINE - DAY

Rendar glows now -- light pouring from beneath his skin --  
calm, still.

For a moment, he looks into his son's eyes --  
recognition. He smiles and grasps Dalen's hand.

He vanishes.

Dalen stares -- his hand holds nothing but air.

He speaks quietly.

DALEN

One for the faithful... one for  
the defiant... and one for the  
fallen.

A beat.

BRANN

Dalen. We have to move! Now!

EXT. BONES OF THE SEA - DAY

The group emerges from the wreck of the Seraphine just as another fissure RIPS open behind them -- water geysers out, crashing into coral and wreckage.

They sprint across the brittle seabed -- the ground quaking beneath each step.

KAEL

It's flooding!

Behind them -- the vortex climbs higher, pulling dark clouds into its spiral. Water pours in from every direction -- not a wave, but a rising tide.

BRANN

Head for the ridge!

They race across broken coral and petrified dunes.

A massive slab of shipwreck collapses beside them -- BOOM -- sending a spray of debris into the air.

EXT. SCORCHED REACH - EDGE - DAY

The group crests the first dune -- the sea far behind, but chasing them fast.

Lightning forks through the sky.

KAEL

We're not gonna make it!

DALEN

Yes, we are! Keep moving!

The vortex behind them lets out a final, deafening roar -- then begins to collapse -- seawater falls back down in a thunderous wall.

EXT. THE LAST DUNE - MOMENTS LATER

Ivara and Eldric appear on the ridge.

IVARA

This way! Move!

DALEN

There they are!

One final sprint -- legs churning through sand and water.

They reach the ridge -- just as the tide CRASHES into the flat below -- swallowing the seabed in a massive swell.

The group collapses from exhaustion... but not Dalen, who stares at the new ocean.

DALEN (CONT'D)

Goodbye, Father.

EXT. SCORCHED REACH NEAR THE FELLGROVE - LATER

Dalen and Ivara walk ahead, leading the others across the transformed landscape.

What was once cracked red stone now glitters -- a vast salt flat laced with tidepools and strange coral-like formations. The air is still... peaceful.

Behind them, Kael supports Eldric. Brann trails, scanning the horizon.

BRANN

One day and one night... and still not a single Furnace Demon.

KAEL

I keep expecting them to pop out of the ground in front of us.

SERA

Maybe they were part of the imbalance... And now that Tharos is whole again --

KAEL

They don't have a reason to be here anymore. I can get used to that!

Dalen, lost in thought, stares ahead as he leads the way.

Ivara speaks gently.

IVARA

Your father knew. He was the sacrifice Tharos needed... To deny Auren. To bring the sea home.

DALEN

Because it was his brother who came back from the Fellgrove...

IVARA  
With a stolen amulet.

DALEN  
Where did he get it?

IVARA  
No one knows.

He pulls the blue rune stone from his pouch.

No glow. No heat. Just stone.

He stops.

DALEN  
We're at the border of the  
Fellgrove.  
(quiet)  
It's not reacting.

BRANN  
Maybe it's broken.

IVARA  
Or maybe... the Shadow People are  
gone as well?

SERA  
When Tharos brought the sea back,  
he took Auren's hunger with it.  
The Shadows, the Demons -- all of  
them. His power's broken. The  
world can finally breathe free.

Dalen, stone in hand, takes several steps forward.

He listens... silence. Then turns to the others.

DALEN  
What stops Auren from taking the  
sea again?

No one answers. The silence says everything.

Dalen looks into The Fellgrove.

A long pause.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. RIDGE ABOVE HALVERN - SUNSET

The group stands at the top of a worn ridge.

Below -- the fields and rooftops of Halvern, faint in the distance in the soft orange glow of the setting sun.

Dalen leads the way as they head down the path.

FADE OUT