

SURVIVOR'S HOPE

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FADE IN:

EXT. KINGDOM OF HARKEN - MORNING

A sprawling kingdom stretches out to the horizon.

Even from the wide angle, one can see how the city buzzes with life. Traders with carts and horses move in and out of the grand city gates.

People within the sturdy stone walls move in waves through the pristine streets, lined with shops, taverns, and more.

The city of Harken seems to be the shining example of a fantastical medieval city.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. ABANDONED KINGDOM - MIDDAY

Until it's not.

The buzzing kingdom now sits in an uncomfortable silence - backdropped by a cold, gray sky.

The crumbling walls and rusting gates are now lit not by the lights of buildings, but by burning fires set within their condemned remains.

CUT TO:

INT. CITY HALL RUINS - MIDDAY

A huddled mass of survivors, ragged and gaunt, crowd together in what remains of the City Hall.

Ash and dust permeates the room, punctuated by a few COUGHS bouncing off what remains of the walls.

SHANE (30), stands at the front of the crowd. While he too looks worse for wear, he attempts to keep his posture tall and his voice steady as he speaks to the crowd.

SHANE
LISTEN UP!

We need to find somewhere else to go - before the BLOOD RUNNERS come back for us. There's no time to waste.

The Blood Runners.

The very name sends a ripple through the crowd, murmurs rising to audible concerns as JASON (24), skepticism written all over his face, harshly shoves his way to the front to face Shane.

JASON

And where do you suggest we find that?

(sarcastically)

Almighty leader.

SHANE

This isn't the time for messing around.

Shane unfolds a map, showing it to Jason and pointing to a specific region.

SHANE (CONT'D)

There's a cave north of here where we can camp out. It might just be our best shot at survival.

JASON

So, let me get this one straight.

SHANE

Go for it.

JASON

It's either death in a matter of seconds tomorrow or a multiple day trip with death along the way?

SHANE

Yeah, that sounds about right.

JASON

Well, then I choose to stay.

SHANE

Oh, come on, Jason, would you rather die tomorrow or would you rather live to see another day?

JASON

I could go either way, but what do we - what do they - get out of all this?

SHANE

Let me see... Safety, shelter, and a chance to build new lives for ourselves?

JASON

So we risk it all. Is that really all that's left for us?

SHANE

Hate to say it, but yeah. It is. It's not a great chance, but it's the only chance we've got.

Jason SIGHS, dramatically - as if deflating himself.

And to add a new layer of displeasure on top of it all, he rolls his eyes.

JASON

Alright. Fine. I'll roll with the punches. But I'm going to complain the whole way. At least give me that.

SHANE

That'll get annoying, but I can deal with annoying. I can't deal with dead. Now, let's get a move on, people.

The group moves all at once to begin gathering what's left of their belongings.

Or rather, what's left of their belongings.

EXT. CITY GATES - THE NEXT MORNING

The survivors cautiously make their way through the gates, keeping an eye out in all directions for any members of the Blood Runners.

SHANE

(quietly)

Keep moving, stay low, and don't make a sound.

Suddenly, a distant GUNSHOT fires, sending shivers down their spines.

Everyone turns to each other and nods in silent agreement to move faster.

EXT. DESERT - DAY

The city of Harken now lies as a crumbling shadow at the backs of the survivors - the group halved in number from when they originally left.

SHANE

This trip was a death wish.

JASON

You know, I wouldn't say I told you so, but... I told you so.

SHANE

People just... keep dying. They keep seeing this "almighty oasis" - wandering off into the desert looking for it.

JASON

That seems like a you problem.

SHANE

Explain. Please. I would love to know how.

JASON

(matter-of-factly)

Simple. You arrive in our thriving kingdom, rise to power in a week, and then the Blood Runners just magically appear.

SHANE

So you think I'm the reason why this all happened?

JASON

Yeah, I do, actually.

SHANE

That was all just a coincidence! I was just as surprised as you that I rose to power so fast.

(incredulously)

Do you think I wanted this to happen?!

JASON

That's it. I am done following this... this madman! People stop, we need a vote here.

Jason stands up on a small rock and gathers everyone up.

SHANE
What are you doing?

JASON
What I think is the right thing.
What a leader should be doing.

The twenty-six people that are left in the group start to group up around the rock.

JASON (CONT'D)
People, listen to me, please! A vote needs to be made!

GROUP MEMBER
What are our options?

JASON
Stay in this death march to a cave that doesn't seem real, or head back the way we came and can get back to Harken by dusk.

SHANE
Hey- No- stop. No one listen to him!

JASON
Who wants to go back and try again in the ruins?

More than half the group puts their hands up.

JASON (CONT'D)
And who wants to stay with this asshat?

The nine people left who didn't raise their hands to leave, now raise their hands.

JASON (CONT'D)
Well, that settles it. Come on, folks, let's head back.

SHANE
Hold it right there. You are not taking them anywhere. I am their leader.

JASON
You're leading us straight to death. I'm placing my bets in the city - where we might have a chance to live.

SHANE

But what if you don't make it back?
Then what? People will freeze to
death!

JASON

(mimicking)

That's fine by me.

SHANE

(annoyed)

How dare you mock me?

Jason laughs at Shane.

Jason and the others start to leave. Some stragglers are staying behind because they don't want to die in the cold.

SHANE (CONT'D)

(angry)

Fine! We don't need you. We can find the cave on our own. More importantly, we have fire supplies, and you don't.

Shane breaks down and starts to cry in the sand.

A hand shoves itself into the soft sand, trying hold on to something that only slips through his fingers.

A cold, quiet moment passes, before Shane gets up and wipes the sand and dirt off of his face.

Or tries to.

SHANE (CONT'D)

(sniffling)

Alright folks. Come on. Fate will be on our side - we can make it by nightfall.

EXT. DESERT - NIGHT

Harsh, cold winds start to blow, and sand starts to pick up. The group struggles against the gusts, teeth CHATTERING as some stumble to the ground - others trying to lift them back to their feet.

SHANE

So... goddamn... cold.

EMILY (22) tries to comfort Shane with a frigid and stiff hand to his shoulder, her voice hoarse as she speaks.

EMILY

Shouldn't we make a fire and stop
here for the night?

SHANE

I suppose we should, but we keep
going. We're almost there.

EMILY

This is why you are our leader,
Shane; you always told us to never
give up hope. It's... inspiring.

SHANE

I know, but in times like these, I
fear the worst. Not only for you,
but for everyone.

Shane's eyes well up, and he brings a hand over them, shaking
his head.

SHANE (CONT'D)

I let them all down. I'm failing
them, Em-

Unexpectedly, Emily stands upright and points.

EMILY

Shane, is that what I think it is?

Shane wipes his eyes and clears his throat.

SHANE

If you say the almighty oasis, I
swear I am going to dig a six-foot
hole and throw you in it-!

EMILY

No, Shane - look! The promised land
you told us about!

Shane looks baffled for a second until Emily physically
pushes his head to look where she's pointing - and he spots
it.

The cliffside, with the cave entrance at the bottom.

SHANE

Holy shit, it's real.

EMILY

(dreamily)

You led us to safety, Shane.

(MORE)

EMILY (CONT'D)

You are our prophet, and we are
your loyal followers.

SHANE

...Stop calling me that. All of
you. Please drink some water.

EMILY

We're fine, Shane! We have been
drinking from the almighty oasis.

SHANE

(confused)

Say that again.

EMILY

We have, we have drinking from the
almighty --

SHANE

Dear God, you're insane -- all of
you are.

EMILY

(cackling)

We are not insane - we are inshane.

The rest of the group starts laughing hysterically.

SHANE

Stop it, please! GET ME AWAY FROM
THIS NIGHTMARE!

The sky darkens as the wind picks up, cold and biting around
them.

Shane's vision starts to fade to black.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. CAVE

Shane wakes up in a panic and SCREAMS.

EMILY

You're awake. Thank God - I thought
you were dead. We all thought you
went mad from the heat.

SHANE

(raspy)

What were --

Shane starts coughing violently.

EMILY

Lay back down and drink. This may be cave water, but it's clean, I swear.

Shane drinks the water and clears his throat.

SHANE

What were you just talking about? Did the group suspect that I saw the almighty oasis?

EMILY

We did at first, but then you started to act weird.

SHANE

All I remember is the group going insane, and that is it.

Emily picks up a bowl and gives it to Shane.

EMILY

Nope, only you. Now, you need to drink more, babe. Staying hydrated will allow you to continue on.

SHANE

Wait, did you just call me babe? We are not dating. We never have been.

EMILY

What do you mean, babe? We have been dating for the last week and a half.

SHANE

(shocked)

It's been a week!

EMILY

Are you alright?

SHANE

No, I could have sworn that it was just last night that we found the cave before everything happened.

EMILY

Okay, are you pulling my chain here? Are you for real?!

Emily points at the cave entrance.

EMILY (CONT'D)
You have been guiding us for the
last week in this cave, and then
you fell ill last night!

Emily crosses her arms, expression stormy as she awaits an explanation.

SHANE
Honest to God, I... I don't
remember any of that.

EMILY
So you mean to tell me that our
love isn't real?

SHANE
Most likely not, unless I have some
kind of split personality that I
don't know about.

EMILY
Wow, helping the great leader was
so much fun... while it lasted.

Emily starts to walk to the entrance, stomping her feet as she goes, as if to intentionally draw attention to herself and Shane scrambling to his feet.

SHANE
Just wait one minute and hear me
out, please.

EMILY
Not unless you actually show me
that you somehow have no memory of
what happened in the last week.

Shane starts to SMACK his head.

SHANE
How am I supposed to show that?
Open my skull, look through my
brains - I dunno!

Emily picks up a small stone.

EMILY
Well, gee, thanks for the genuine
answer, finally.

Emily hurls the stone at Shane's head and storms out.

All goes dark in an INSTANT.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. DESTROYED HUT - NIGHT

Shane awakens underneath the rubble from the hut. He quickly scrambles to get the rubble off, chest heaving as he tries to breathe.

SHANE
(wheezing)
What the fuck is happening right now?

Shane stumbles to his feet and gazes around frantically - trying to gather his bearings.

SHANE (CONT'D)
Where the hell is everyone?

EXT. HUT ENTRANCE - NIGHT

Shane leaves the ruined hut to find a bunch of dead bodies in front of him.

SHANE
Dear God, did no one make it out?

Unexpectedly, YELLING is heard.

And it's not far.

BLOOD RUNNER
We have a live one over here!

A GUNSHOT is heard. A bullet passes Shane's face, and Shane starts sprinting for his life.

SHANE
SHIT! Shit, shit, shit-!

SCREAMING is heard from all directions as the Runners get closer.

Shane sprints through a destroyed building to get out of sight, adrenaline pounding through his veins and breathing hard and heavy.

SHANE (CONT'D)
C'mon, c'mon--!

Shane ducks into a nearby building, covering his mouth and nose with a free hand - the dust clinging to it STINGING his nostrils and eyes.

Shane walks quietly through the building,

SHANE (V.O.)
Hopefully, they do not spot me.

Shane makes it to the front and sees that he is at the front gates.

SHANE
(shouting)
I MADE IT-!

A GUNSHOT is heard too close to Shane for comfort.

He flops over in an instant, like a ragdoll, and SCREAMS in agony.

The Blood Runners.

They swarm the front of the gate, looming over the crumpled body.

Their leader, JAX (40), stone faced and criss-crossed with scars, steps out of the building adjacent to Shane with a nonchalance about him.

Like this was the hundredth time he'd done this.

This week.

JAX
Well, well, well, look what I
bagged. It's our runaway bounty.

SHANE
How did you find me? What did you
do to my friends?

JAX
Your friends are long dead. Now,
you will join them in the almighty
oasis.

SHANE
What did you just say?

JAX
You heard me, you traitor.

Shane's vision goes black as a BANG goes off.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

Shane wakes up SCREAMING.

Doctors rush in and calm him down, a swarm of scrubs and white coats.

SHANE
(panicked)
What is going on? Where am I?

NURSE
It's alright, it's okay. Breathe.
Deep breaths, now.

Shane complies - inhaling and exhaling deeply, or at least faking it until his chest is rising and falling the way it should be.

NURSE (CONT'D)
Good. Very good. Any better?

SHANE
(groggy, coming down off
the panic)
I mean... a little. What- am I
doing here?

NURSE
(hesitating)
You've... been in a coma for some
time now.

Jax strides into the room - just as Shane had seen before.

JAX
(excited)
Shane! You're back! My number one
is back!

SHANE
(confused)
Huh?

Jax steps back.

JAX
Oh, sorry, I should've given you
some room, huh? Glad to see my
number one killer is back.

Confusion colors Shane's expression as Jax stares at him expectantly.

SHANE
Killer? What do you mean?

Jax quickly looks puzzled.

JAX
Quit playing around, Shane. You
know I hate jokesters.

Shane looks around and spots a board with posters.

One poster reads "WANTED", and he sees none other than Jason's face in the unflattering mugshot.

Shane turns back to his leader.

SHANE
Is that... Jason? Why is he wanted?

JAX
That asshole left us and we wanted
to start over.
(chuckles)
But you know that's not possible.
Once a Blood Runner, always a Blood
Runner.

Shane glances over at the poster again.

SHANE
Seeing that poster is giving me
deja vu.

JAX
(tf is this guy on about)
You better start to explain how.

SHANE
The dreams I had in the coma. I
can't tell if it was a warning or a
future vision. It felt so real.

JAX
Does that mean you might know where
that traitor is? Cough it up.

SHANE
I have a hunch about one kingdom.
To the south of us. The Kingdom of
Harken.

JAX
(excited)
Well, then what are we waiting for,
number one? Once you break out of
here- we're gonna hunt the fucker
down. Make him sorry.

Shane nods his head.

SHANE
Then let's start a bounty wager -
and whoever wins gets double the
money from everyone else.

Jax LAUGHS harder than ever.

JAX
This is why you're my number one.

There's a pause between them for a moment.

Shane lost in thought. Eyes distant.

JAX (CONT'D)
(almost joking)
Anything else pop up in those weird
dreams of yours?

SHANE
I just... have a hunch. If Jason
isn't in Harken after a week, he'll
be somewhere close by. A cave. I
think.

JAX
(sarcastically, just
messing with him)
I love the enthusiasm.
(seriously)
Now - rest up, soldier. We have a
war to prepare for.

Shane looks down at his hands and wonders.

SHANE (V.O.)
Was it all really a dream? Did I
really imagine it all, or did I see
Jason's future and put it in my
eyes?

Suddenly, a loud CRASH is heard in the hallway, followed by
some SHOUTS.

JAX (O.S.)
(shouting)
It's wartime, people! Rally up the
troops!

SHANE (V.O.)
How did I end up in a place like
this? Why do I have no memory of
why I'm here? More importantly, why
did I rat on Jason?

A horrible thought seems to hit him. Shane's eyes get wide.

SHANE (V.O.)
Or... did I?

Shane lies down and ponders his thoughts.

FADE TO BLACK.