

SURVIVOR'S HOPE

Written by

Abigail Bielski & Joey Hraska

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 hundreth 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.