

NOMAD'S SPAWN

By

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FADE IN:

MONTAGE - BEAUTIFUL LANDSCAPES FROM A MOVING, HIGH, AERIAL VIEWPOINT (AS FROM A SATELLITE - CLOUDS ARE OFTEN IN VIEW, HOVERING OVER THE LAND, AS SEEN FROM ABOVE)

-- An ocean, with tiny seagulls in view.

SUPER: "'Earth gods do not grow old or die naturally, however they may be slain.' Works of Yarin, Book 2, verse 194."

-- A field and stream, tiny, nondescript livestock.

SUPER: "'...and the Earth Warden's chief servant became jealous, and along with his followers, sought to usurp the throne. Yet they were cast down to the earth until such a time as justice would be served. Enraged, this chief rebel gave himself over to the ruining of all the Earth Warden's good work - such provided the necessity of the Lore.' Depths of the Lore, Chapter 1, verse 27."

-- A mountain and forest.

SUPER: "'Should the Earth Warden be slain by the fully matured Spawn, the Nomad shall feast upon the Earth, and it shall fester and be lost as carrion.' Works of Yarin, Book 5, verse 344."

END MONTAGE

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN SHORE - DAY

SUPER: "Year 1 - The First Year of Yarin's Revelation"

A vast ocean horizon beside two men. The Earth Warden, a regal figure, clad in gleaming white form fitted armour including helmet and holding a rough-hewn wooden box about the size of loaf of bread, stands next to YARIN (male, 30s), bearded, wearing a simple, thread-bare tunic.

EARTH WARDEN

Be careful to remember all I have told you. Pass it down to all members of your clan and teach them to do the same. It is of utmost importance for the safety of your people. The enemy is just too dangerous.

YARIN

It's too much for me.

EARTH WARDEN

I believe you can do this.

The Earth Warden hands Yarin the wooden box, revealing a sliding wooden lid.

Yarin tentatively receives it. He slides open the lid, revealing a segmented set of paints yellow, red, green, blue, white, black and a roughly constructed paint brush made of a thick wooden stick with a wide bunch of animal hair fastened on the end with rough twine.. Perfect for cave paintings.

CUT TO:

EXT. OPEN FIELD - NIGHT

SUPER: "Present Day - The 1,178th Year After Yarin"

Seven priests stand in a semi-circle around a fire. Alternatingly, they lift their hands, fold their hands, CHANT "Earth Warden, we beseech you." Or "Oh Earth Warden, grant us mercy." Or "Speak to us." The worship is freeform, not in unison.

Suddenly a RECTANGULAR PORTAL flashes open a short distance in front of them - dim red light emanates from the portal. An old priest, the HIGH TWELFTH, satchel around his shoulder, stumbles out, and falls to his knees, face white with fear. The other priests GASP and rush to help him.

HIGH TWELFTH

He has spoken.

Another priest helps him to his feet.

PRIEST

What is the word?

HIGH TWELFTH

Many things. And he gave me this.

Th High Twelfth pulls out a red cube with intricate lines and indentations all over it. The priests are hanging on every word.

HIGH TWELFTH (CON'T) (CONT'D)

We can use it to find him.

FAST CUT TO:

EXT. UNPLOWED FIELD - HERRICK'S FARM - MORNING

An arrow suddenly STRIKES a fence post. The rough post is weathered and pock-marked with hundreds of arrow strikes.

SHIN, a boy of 16, practicing archery on his family's farmland, still gazing down the sightline of his bow. He lowers the bow to his side still looking at his shot - an intended hit of a fencepost some 30 yards away.

Shin takes another arrow from the quiver lying at his feet and takes aim at another post 10 yards beyond the first.

Shin squints and releases the shot. It flies and STRIKES the intended post.

Calm as ever, Shin, picks up another arrow. He focuses intently on the next further post along the fence - the furthest on the yard. He BREATHES IN, pulling back to full extension, and HOLDS HIS BREATH as he takes careful aim. He releases the shot and EXHALES.

The arrow sails true through the air and HITS THE POST.

A small smile crosses Shin's lips. He picks up another arrow. He gazes out beyond the fence line to a large tree almost twice the distance of the previous shot.

EXT. LARGE TREE - MORNING

A large, purple, scaly rodent scurries up the tree into the foliage above. Shin is seen far in the background.

EXT. UNPLOWED FIELD - HERRICK'S FARM - MORNING

Shin slowly pulls the bow to full extension, and HOLDS HIS BREATH. He adjusts his angle and RELEASES THE SHOT. It sails through the air, at first it looks true, but soon is seen to be drifting to the side. It misses the target.

Shin looks to the flag atop the doorway of his family hut behind him. The flag mostly hangs limp - only a faint breeze tussles it.

Shin picks up another arrow, his last. He takes steady aim as before, and RELEASES THE SHOT. It sails out, looking true but drifts ever so slightly to the side and misses the target by a hair.

Shin displays muted satisfaction as he did not fully expect to hit the tree. He picks up his quiver and begins walking out to retrieve his arrows.

Behind him, his AUNT CIEL exits their hut.

AUNT CIEL

My child. Do not be late again. You are in the older group now. This is important.

Shin turns to his Aunt and smiles at the woman who has raised him and whom he loves as a mother.

SHIN

I know.

Shin picks up his quiver. He turns and jogs out to his arrows.

EXT. ZOKA'S GATHERING SPOT - ROCKY OUTCROPPING - MORNING

Shin is with his class of about a dozen teen boys and girls, including RAX, JILWAE, HIJO, PILM, TRAEG, and KERZIN. The students stand in a half-circle, spaced about arms length apart, eyes closed, each student has their arms held out in front of them, hands up-turned, each hand has all four fingers touching the thumb.

From the front, Shin stands at the far left side of the semi-circle, Jilwae beside him. Walking amongst them is ZOKA (male, 50s), a priest (or "The First") of their town. They listen intently to him. Off to the side (furthest from Shin), CORIN (male, 30s) sits on a large rocky outcropping, observing the students intently.

ZOKA

Focus not on my words, circle, but on the invisible meaning behind them.

Zoka continues to walk slowly around and in between the students as he speaks.

ZOKA (CON'T) (CONT'D)

It has been well over 500 cycles since Yarin bestowed on us the wisdom that gives us peace and protection. Time has a way of eroding even the most sacred of teaching... We are seeing this breaking of faith more every day.

(MORE)

ZOKA (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 People are foolishly putting their trust in abundant harvests, new farming implements, mineral wealth, but none of these can protect against the danger of the enemy... By choosing to remain in your devotion, you hold up the only true bastion of hope for our civilization.

Zoka lets his speech resonate, as he continues to move around the students.

ZOKA (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 Circle, Today we are most fortunate to have with us, Corin Thule, our most renowned explorer priest. He will relate to you of his role in the priesthood.

Zoka gestures to Corin.

ZOKA (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 Be welcome Corin.

Corin hops off the rock and walks up to the students, whose eyes remain closed. Zoka stands close to the rock that Corin had been sitting on. Corin stops a few paces directly in front of the group. (He has not yet walked in close proximity to Shin.) He gives them a careful look over.

CORIN
 Circle, please, open your eyes.

The students comply.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 I bring exciting news, circle. My journey is to the High Priestly Council at Tirvon, returning from the Bleeding mountains, 12 leagues south. As the humble town of Warden's Heel is on the way, you are blessed enough to hear this before even the Great council does.

Corin pauses for effect, looking at each face, mounting with subdued excitement.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 The Warden's smile was indeed over my last expedition... The Cave of Truth has been found.

Gasps from the class. Zoka's mouth is wide.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 I scarcely believe it myself.. The location seemed to match well with the descriptions in the Lore, but up until now it had never been explored to the extent necessary to make the discovery. Now, I have not actually been inside the cave - the way is blocked. But that it is the Cave, there is no doubt. The truth of what the cave holds is there to be discovered..

Corin begins to pace to the left (closer to Shin).

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 ...if the right effort be made.

Suddenly Corin is disturbed by a SENSATION OVER HIS CHEST - he immediately stops and places a hand on an ORB hanging on a twine necklace around his neck, and unsettled, scans the surrounding area.

ZOKA
 What is it? Are you well?

Corin waits. The class is confused. Corin keeps his hand on the orb, waiting for - something. He walks closer to Zoka. The sensation dissipates, and Corin removes his hand.

CORIN
 (to Zoka, serious)
 We must speak privately.

ZOKA
 (concerned, to all)
 Circle, we must adjourn early today.

EXT. JUTJOW FIELD - AFTERNOON

Shin's class and several other youths are playing jutjow. A game like baseball but with a number of differences.

Shin positions himself to receive the pitch. Jilwae hurls the dense, balled up cloth, tightly wrapped in twine, at Shin. He focuses in at it, performs a rotating side kick at the ball and MISSES.

Groans from his teammates. Cheers from the other team.

Shin, grits his teeth, looks over to the hurler, and focuses harder.

Jilwae hurls another stone. Shin glares hard, kicks, and MISSES. More and louder groans from his team. Traeg, one of Shin's teammates, grunts in dissatisfaction. Cheers from the other team.

TRAEG

Always - what grace from the false child!

RAX

Hold your tongue Traeg!

Shin keeps looking down, waits a moment, and walks directly up to Traeg, within arms reach. Shin is calm, even with a hint of gladness.

The group is quiet. All eyes are fixed on the two boys.

TRAEG

Ever so faithful - yet false. How does that feel?

SHIN

I am a false child, by no fault of my own. I am not perfect, but I am true to my Earth God. Are you?

Shin's breathing remains calm. Traeg sneers and then SWINGS AND STRIKES SHIN IN THE MOUTH. Gasps from the group. Shin drops to the ground, eggs scrambled.

Traeg turns and walks briskly away from the field. Rax and Jilwae swarm around Shin. He rubs his face but he is alright.

EXT. TRAIL HOME - AFTERNOON

Rax and Jilwae walk home with Shin.

SHIN

You throw well Jilwae.

JILWAE

Thanks. I plan to forgo motherhood - form a group of elites, who do nothing but play jutjow.

RAX

I would pay gold to watch that.

SHIN
Me as well.

They chuckle.

RAX
Well, at least we won't have to
withstand Traeg in the circle any
longer.

SHIN
It is not something to hold joy
over - I fear for his future...
Friends, return home. Why do you
follow me still? I am fine.

RAX
I thought you might want to hunt.
Perhaps we shall collect a yellow
fox. Their numbers are said to be
greater this year.

Shin contemplates the idea. They stop at a crossroads.

SHIN
(to Rax)
I must not stay out late, but there
is time. Get your bow. Meet me at
the trail.

RAX
I shall see you there. Jilwae?

JILWAE
I must help prepare the evening
meal today. Do catch me a fox
though.

Shin continues on the main path while Rax and Jilwae leave on another. Clouds close up the sky. It begins to rain, hard.

Shin walks alone in the rain, approaches his home, a large circular stone hut with a thatched roof. He is soaked and his sandals are muddied. He rushes into the hut.

INT. HERRICK'S HUT - AFTERNOON

Shin walks past the hanging flap door and into his hut. The hut is decorated with several homey things, including a large deer-skin rug in the center of the floor. A table is on the edge of the room. Curtains hang on the other edges of the room, segmenting sleeping areas.

Shin walks to the opposite side of the hut, tracking mud onto the deerskin rug at the center of the one-room hut.

He picks up a second leather quiver.

CIEL

Shin! Look what you've done!

Shin is surprised by the tone of his aunt. Then he notices his muddy footprints all over the white rug and immediately feels guilty.

SHIN

Oh-- I'm sorry, Aunt.

CIEL

Apologies don't remove dirt. Get the moss and start scrubbing. We've barely had that rug one season.

She notices his bruised face.

CIEL (CONT'D)

(concerned)

Shin - your face.

SHIN

It's of no concern. I am fine. A small disagreement, now resolved.

CIEL

(unimpressed)

Resolved. How wonderful.

Shin looks down, and knows he must comply. He picks up the moss.

SHIN

My apologies.

EXT. TRAILHEAD - FOOTHILLS NEAR TOWN - AFTERNOON

Rax waits at the designated point and has found shelter from the rain, now just a light drizzle, under a large leafy tree. He begins to pull on branches in boredom.

A large, scaled, red and black bird is startled and CRASHES OUT THROUGH THE LEAVES, SQUAWKING very close to Rax. Rax falls over in surprise but quickly grabs his bow, sets an arrow and takes a shot that misses. He watches the bird escape.

RAX
(under his breath)
Tim Bak!

CUT TO:

INT. HERRICK'S HUT - AFTERNOON

Shin is feverishly scrubbing the last of the footprints, though the stains remain. Ciel sees the progress. Shin takes a moment to survey the rug and looks up at his Aunt.

She smiles at him.

CIEL
Go. The stain will await your
return.

Shin gets up and grabs his things. He kisses his aunt and leaves.

EXT. TRAILHEAD - FOOTHILLS NEAR TOWN - AFTERNOON

Some time has passed. Shin jogs up to the trailhead. Rax steps out from under the tree.

SHIN
(catching his
breath)
Sorry, my friend.

RAX
You will never guess what nearly
killed me while I waited.

Rax waits for Shin, still breathing hard, to answer. Shin just stares back at him, until he must reply.

SHIN
(wryly)
You said I could not guess.

RAX
I wish you to try.

SHIN
A grass hare?

RAX
(smiling)
I clearly would not have remained
alive if that were the case.

SHIN

You show no scratches - must have been a battle for the epoch.

RAX

(pointing)

A full grown talix wing! Resting here in this shab tree - nearly flew right through me when I startled it.

SHIN

You jest.

RAX

I jest not.

SHIN

Male or female?

RAX

Female. Bright red coloring.

SHIN

(smirking)

Easy prey. You should have struck it down.

RAX

Let us go find another - or has the run finished you?

Shin pushes Rax in jest as they sling their gear over their shoulders and begin walking up the trail into the hills.

EXT. FOREST TRAIL - FOOTHILLS NEAR TOWN - AFTERNOON

Shin and Rax converse as they walk up the trail. They each have added a dead hare, tied and slung over their shoulders. Trees are scattered on either side. They keep an eye on the forest around them as they walk.

RAX

Your mom makes the most delicious hare and radish stew. My mom's has not nearly as much flavor.

SHIN

Tell her to put in more flavor.

RAX

I do! It makes no difference. I promise you I will be dreaming about your evening meal as I am having mine. Perhaps your family would adopt me in?

Shin is silent and Rax suddenly worries that he may have overstepped his bounds, briefly forgetting that Shin is adopted.

RAX (CON'T) (CONT'D)

My apologies Shin. I meant nothing by it.

Shin smiles at Rax.

SHIN

I know. I am not nearly as sensitive as most think. I would speak of it but all else are afraid to.

Rax is silent for a moment, not sure what he should do.

RAX

Do you want me to speak of it further?

SHIN

(showing annoyance)

Do you always ask people what you should speak of before you speak?

Rax is flushed, but then Shin smiles showing the annoyance to be a jest. Rax is relieved.

RAX

So you never knew your real mother?

SHIN

No... She died giving me birth. She was not healthy after the... attack she suffered - neither in body or in mind... I am told.

RAX

Such evil... And then you were given to be cared for by your aunt and uncle?

SHIN

Yes - they are all I have ever known as parents.

(MORE)

SHIN (CONT'D)

We moved up to Warden's Heel when I was yet a child.

RAX

Your aunt and uncle are good people. Considering the trauma from which you came, you are blessed.. And I still wish to be your brother so I can have your Aunt's cooking.

SHIN

Your family would rejoice that they were free of you.

Rax smiles and pushes Shin in jest.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

Why did your family move to Warden's Heel?

RAX

My father wants to bring his iron working to a place that is in need - a place that is growing.

SHIN

Are you glad with your new home?

RAX

Indeed. I hated the city. I have a desire to hunt, like you. To breathe free air.

SHIN

Free air, yes.. But this region seems to be losing its grip of the Lore.. Even my uncle doubts.

RAX

My father doubts the Warden lore as well.

SHIN

(silent for some time)

I venture many of the fathers feel likewise.

RAX

Yet my grandfather did not. He told me many stories of the ancient battles. He believed fully.

(MORE)

RAX (CONT'D)

As did your uncle, as did all - it seems the doubt of the city dwellers has found its way to the farmlands... Why is your faith so strong?

Shin is silent for a time.

FLASHBACK - ATTACK ON SHIN'S MOTHER

EXT. A DARKER FOREST - DAY

Two men walking in a forest. They run into a large derit, which ATTACKS THEM, leaving one dead and the other bloodied.

The MAN MEETS UP WITH TWO WOMAN - HE RUSHES THEM, tackling one and knocking the other over. He STRIKES THE FIRST WITH A STONE, she's motionless, dead. He then slowly WALKS TO THE OTHER ONE who is terrified on the ground, defenseless...

END FLASHBACK

SHIN (V.O.)

The man who forced himself on my birth mother was one who found himself alone in the deep forest when his partner was felled by a great derit. He also suffered from the attack but killed the beast with his axe. All alone for days he eventually came across my mother and her friend. He killed her friend, and then... who else but the Nomad could cause someone to do such a thing?

BACK TO SCENE

Rax is silent for a time.

RAX

But why then do you also go out alone to hunt - breaking the holy rules? You must believe that you could likewise be preyed upon by this evil.

Shin lets his gaze fall to his feet, as they continue to walk. He is silent for a time.

SHIN

The lore says the Nomad is a man
with blood flowing in his veins
like you and I...

Shin looks at Rax.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

...I hope he tries.

Rax stops and stares at Shin in bewilderment.

Shin also stops and looks carefully around in a circular gaze
in all directions. He squints and sees something.

SHIN (CONT'D)

There... I do not believe it.

RAX

What?

Shin takes up his bow and grabs an arrow.

SHIN

(whispering)

Two throws or more - there.

He points into the trees. Rax struggles to see the creature,
then finds it. A most-rare YELLOW FOX sitting restively on a
log over 100 yards away. The path is clear but an extremely
narrow forest corridor. An impossible shot.

RAX

(in disbelief)

A yellow-

SHIN

(whispering)

Shh!

Rax adjusts his volume.

RAX (CON'T)

(whispering)

It lies four throws distant Shin.
And there are too many trees.

Shin is already readying his arrow in the bow.

SHIN

(whispering)

I may never see another - I must
try. And I will not risk getting
closer.

RAX

(whispering)

Do you think it is true they give
you wishes if you catch one alive?
Perhaps you shouldn't kill it.

SHIN

(whispering, still
focused)

Now those are children's tales.

Shin takes careful aim and focuses intensely on his target. He breathes slowly - adjusts his angle to perfection. He closes his eyes, which Rax finds odd. To Shin, TIME SEEMS TO SLOW. The fox remains comfortable on the log.

Shin exhales and RELEASES THE SHOT. Time remains slowed as Shin opens his eyes and the boys watch the arrow sail through the forest corridor, narrowly missing trees and branches. Shin's face remains FOCUSED AND INTENSE.

The arrow drifts slightly away from the target. Shin closes his eyes once more and redoubles his INTENSE MENTAL FOCUS. The arrow subtly drifts back on course.

Shin opens his eyes to watch as THE FOX HOPS OFF THE LOG A SPLIT SECOND BEFORE THE ARROW STRIKES THE TREE BEHIND IT. The fox scrambles away, out of sight.

RAX

(astonished)

Warden true!

Shin remains staring at the place where the arrow struck. Both boys are strangely amazed and confused.

SHIN

(afraid)

Does the fox remain in sight?

RAX

(distracted by
Shin's shot)

No, it is gone - we will not see it
again.

SHIN

There must be winds over there.

RAX

Shin, I saw the arrow drifting side
to side. There were no winds. I
fear-

SHIN
You fear what?

RAX
You must know what. That you
controlled that arrow.

SHIN
I could not have.

RAX
Yet you did.

SHIN
No, it's-

RAX
We must tell the First.

SHIN
No. Not yet.

RAX
You of all people know the rules.

SHIN
Perhaps it was something else. I
must at least try it again before
we go setting the whole town into-

Suddenly, a slight CRUNCH sound. Rax drops to the ground,
COUGHING UP BLOOD, AN ARROW STICKS OUT OF HIS BACK. A kill
shot from behind - but who?

SHIN (CONT'D)
Warden! Rax!

He drops to his knees beside Rax, viewing the arrow, utterly
shocked, he scans the landscape behind them, but only sees
trees.

SHIN CON'T
Rax, say something to me!

Rax GURGLES, then stops. Silence. He's dead.

SHIN
No. No.

Shin gets up in a fury, yelling in the direction behind them.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
(screaming)
Do you know what you have done?
Your arrow has killed someone!

Silence in reply. Shin, breathing hard, collects himself.

He collapses back down beside the body of his friend. He notices something of interest about the arrow - he studies it more closely.. the feather style and color, are very familiar - his own.. he removes his quiver and takes out an arrow, studying it carefully.. he slowly holds the feather end out next to the one in Rax. THEY MATCH.

EXT. NEAR TRAEG'S HOME - ROAD - EVENING

Shin walks home, uncertain, disillusioned, in a daze. He passes Traeg's hut. Shin sees Traeg hoeing on his family's garden plot. Suddenly, Shin stops walking and contemplates a response - his emotions swirling from everything that has happened that day.

He takes a step toward his original direction, but immediately stops.

He turns, takes up his bow from around his shoulder, and walks briskly, directly to Traeg. An anger burning within him.

EXT. TRAEG'S PROPERTY - EVENING

Traeg hears Shin approaching and turns around to Shin's loaded bow pointing at his face. He swallows a scream.

Shin glares at Traeg with eyes full of malice.

TRAEG
(terrified)
I - I am sorry.

Shin has given himself over to his anger too much to back down - he adjusts his angle slightly and shoots the arrow which KNICKS TRAEG'S EAR. Traeg screams, and drops to the ground, holding the side of his head.

Shin immediately draws and loads another arrow, aiming it at Traeg who remains sputtering in terror. Shin smiles to himself as he watches Traeg cower on the ground. Satisfied, he releases the tension safely from the bow.

CUT TO:

EXT. ROAD - EVENING

Shin shakes his head as if to dislodge the hateful thought.
THE PREVIOUS SCENE WAS JUST SHIN'S IMAGINATION.

He walks to Traeg, still in a daze.

Traeg sees Shin approaching and stops his work.

TRAEG

I see, you are now ready to pick up
your fists.

Shin walks slowly to within arms reach of Traeg, but Shin's eyes look right through him.

TRAEG CON'T

False child.

Shin looks with a steady gaze, but displays no emotion.
Traeg, uncertain, waits to see what Shin will do.

SHIN

I-- Rax...

Shin's stare exudes confusion. The silent gaze lasts an uncomfortable amount of time.

TRAEG

You are not well.

Shin blinks, and looks at Traeg.

SHIN

I'm sorry. Nevermind.

Shin walks away. Traeg is left speechless.

EXT. TEACHING CIRCLE - NIGHT

Corin sits with his back against the rock he was on earlier, in the dead of night. He waits, fully awake, senses alert. He places his hand on his orb, but there is no activity. He picks up a small stone and hurls it.

A stone's throw away, the stone lands, bouncing off Shin's leg. Shin, initially believing himself to be unnoticed, lying on another rock. Corin waves, and signals "quiet" and "come here".

Shin, still unsettled and confused, wants to run, but thinks better of it. He quietly walks over and sits down next to the enigmatic figure. They speak in hushed tones.

CORIN
Your name young one.

Shin is cold, in body and mind.

SHIN
Shin.

CORIN
Something troubles you.

Shin decides how to respond.

SHIN
It is my concern alone.

Corin eyes him.

CORIN
Fair enough. Let us speak of the
Lore then.
(beat)
You believe the Lore. Why?

Shin takes a moment.

SHIN
Evil.

CORIN
Please, expand.

Shin just wants this to end quickly.

SHIN
If evil exists, there must be good.
And if good exists, there must
exist a source of it.

CORIN
And why not believe the source to
be both good and evil?

Shin looks off into the distance.

CORIN (CONT'D)
Speak your mind - I do not judge
the young.

SHIN
Something that is both good and
evil, is not good.. but evil.

(MORE)

SHIN (CONT'D)

Like a loaf of bread with a grain
of poison. Only the pure is good...
or so it would seem.

CORIN

(impressed)

You are wise beyond your years,
young one. Perhaps I shall consider
you for one of my disciples in the
future.

Shin just looks off into the distance.

CORIN (CONT'D)

Do you know what this is?

Corin holds up the orb hanging around his neck.

SHIN

No.

CORIN

It was given to the High Twelfth by
the Earth Warden many generations
ago, intended for a travelling
priest - it is a sensing stone.

SHIN

What does it sense?

CORIN

The proximity of something very
specific.

SHIN

What?

CORIN

Evil.

The word hangs in the air. Corin fondles the orb.

CORIN (CONT'D)

It sensed something before, but
whatever it was, it is now gone.

SHIN

Why would the enemy be here?

CORIN

That understanding I seek as well...

SHIN

Do you possess anything else that
was given by the Earth Warden?

CORIN

I do.

Corin pulls out a unique arrow from a side sleeve on his
quiver, it is all red, with intricate engravings on the head.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

It is said that such an arrow may
kill the Nomad.

Shin gazes at it with interest.

CORIN (CONT'D)

Just the one is known to remain. It
has passed through many
generations.

Corin returns it to the sleeve on his quiver.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

Many people would believe it has no
power.. But I can see are not be
one of those.. Shin it is
faithfulness like your that will
save this land.

Shin absorbs this great compliment.

CUT TO:

INT. HERRICK'S HUT - MEAL TABLE - MORNING

Ciel and HERRICK sit silently eating stew at a small table to
the side of the hut. Shin joins them at the table. Herrick's
demeanor is cold. Shin, still distant, takes a bite of stew.

CIEL

Rana said Rax did not return home
last night. Did you not return with
him from your hunt?

Shin's eyes seem to glaze over.

SHIN

I know not what happened to him
after I got home.

Shin takes another bite of stew. Ciel looks uncertain.

HERRICK
 We may need to help Vec for the
 full of daylight today.

Shin is silent.

HERRICK (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 It will be a strenuous day. His
 field is full of stones.

SHIN
 Very well.

HERRICK
 I heard you were struck by a boy in
 your class yesterday. Why this
 disagreement?

Shin is silent for a moment.

SHIN
 He lacked faith.

HERRICK
 It is said, you did not return his
 wound.

SHIN
 I have no need for revenge.

HERRICK
 (with disinterest)
 One who lacks instinct for self-
 preservation is of little worth.

Shin looks down. Ciel's face is downcast at the comment.
 Herrick finishes the last of his meal.

HERRICK (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 Ready then?

Shin puts down his spoon and stands up. He walks over to pick
 up his bow and quiver.

HERRICK (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 Leave them. You will have no need.
 Get the tools.

EXT. WEST ROAD - OUTSIDE OF WARDEN'S HEEL - MORNING

Shin and Herrick walk silently down the road. A bright
 morning sun overhead.

Shin carries a long wooden pole and a wooden shovel, Herrick carries a small metal pic axe. They each have a pack sack slung on their backs.

HERRICK

You are strong enough to farm.
Perhaps I will withdraw you from
the priest's circle this season.

Shin is silent.

HERRICK (CONT'D)

You must have grown a handbreadth
since last harvest. Do you think
yourself strong enough to plow a
whole field on your own?

SHIN

Maybe.

Herrick looks at the sky, and out to the horizon.

HERRICK

We will begin the harvest early
this season. If it does not rain,
perhaps in the next three or four
days - I will need your help to
prepare.

SHIN

Fine. It is best.

HERRICK

Thank you for doing your duty to
your family... Perhaps you will
return to your learning at a later
time.

They walk a little further.

SHIN

(emboldened)
Do you doubt?

Herrick is silent for a few moments.

HERRICK

I told you many stories as you were
growing up Shin - the same stories
I was told... and I apologize... I
should not have filled your mind
with myths.

They walk a few steps more.

HERRICK (CON'T) (CONT'D)

I have come to believe that there is no Earth Warden. There is no enemy. The priests waste their days. There is only the people around you, the work you must do to stay alive - and the ground beneath your feet. That is all.

SHIN

How do you know this father?

Herrick is again silent.

HERRICK

I just know.

Shin walks on silently, nervously.

CORIN (O.S.)

(yelling)

Greetings!

Herrick and Shin turn to see Corin trotting up to them, staff in hand, a pack sack slung on his back. Shin averts his gaze.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

May I walk with you by the way?

Herrick is not impressed but has no reason to deny the request. He gestures with an open hand to their side.

HERRICK

If you must.

The group continues to talk as they walk.

CORIN

You must be Shin's father. You must be very proud of him. He shows much promise.

HERRICK

He is strong and able, but the circle has left him without courage. I shall remove him from training in the Lore.

Shin remains emotionless to all of this. Corin notices this, but takes it in stride.

CORIN

A time away is sometimes necessary.
(beat)

(MORE)

CORIN (CONT'D)

But tell me father, did you take the training?

HERRICK

I did.

CORIN

And did you find it of no benefit to you? Were you not taught to work hard in whatever your hand finds to do?

HERRICK

I was. But after that lesson, I could have abandoned the circle and been no worse for it.

CORIN

So you believe our society was not aided by the Lore, over the generations?

Herrick is silent.

CORIN (CONT'D)

Perhaps you should ask the boy why he finds the training of value.

Herrick is not enthused, but compliant.

HERRICK

Very well. Defend the value of your training.

Shin speaks coldly and with growing fear.

SHIN

It is required for the benefit of our society. The Lore provides us with both order and protection... We may flourish with harvests but may be devoid of meaning. A people without meaning will always wither over time... Moreover, protection - The Earth Warden warns us of the Nomad's attacks--

HERRICK

(raising his voice)
Nonsense!

Shin and Corin are silent at the outburst.

HERRICK (CONT'D)

(still hot)

There have been no stories of attacks for hundreds of cycles. They stories we have were passed down by my forefathers' forefathers. Why is the Nomad so afraid to attack? Perhaps he has given up and we need not worry any longer.

Corin looks at Shin who continues to look down, but who is getting suddenly more emotional.

SHIN

(angry)

Earth gods do not grow old or die naturally - the Nomad may be waiting for just such an opportunity - for us to let our guard down. The Earth Warden has committed to us our own self-preservation, over generations - we ignore this task at the risk of all existence - for faith to die in one generation because battles are not seen, is nothing but blindness!

All are stunned into silence by the outburst. Corin looks over to Shin and raises his eyebrows and nods, as if to say "well done". They walk a few moments in silence - Herrick is unreadable.

HERRICK

When your mother returned from the forest that day she was... Her eyes were not the same.

(beat)

There could be no caring warden if such things happen in the world.

This guts Shin. Corin looks at the ground, stoically. They walk in silence again.

Shin, as depleted as ever, gains courage to speak, but cannot look them in the eye.

SHIN

Something... happened today.

The two look at Shin and wait for more.

SHIN (CONT'D)
 Something which lends credence to
 the Lore being true.

HERRICK
 (irked)
 And what was this?

SHIN
 Rax - We were hunting... And I felt
 as though I--

As they round a bend in the road they are caught off guard by a DERIT - A SIX-FOOT TALL, PART-BEAR-PART-WOLF CREATURE standing on the road, 30 yards ahead. It SEES THEM AND LETS OUT A TERRIFYING GROWL.

Shin instinctively grabs for his bow but finds nothing.

Corin fluidly readies bow with an arrow but does not fire.

HERRICK
 Why do you wait?

CORIN
 A beast that size - Unless the
 first strike kills it, it will only
 be angered..

The beast turns to face them directly and GROWLS RAVENOUSLY and bears its teeth. A terrifying moment passes. IT BEGINS TO RUN TOWARDS THEM.

Herrick grabs a long pole out of Shin's hand. Shin takes a step backwards and begins to turn around to flee, trying to pull Herrick with him. Corin remains focused.

CORIN (CONT'D)
 (strongly)
 Do not run!

Shin obeys and stands a step behind Herrick, who steadies the pole in the direction of the beast. He is terrified and doesn't know what to do. Corin gazes intently - lining up a shot for the perfect moment.

The beast closes the distance with them in but a few of its giant strides. They brace and watch their approaching doom as if in slow motion.

Then, with one stride between them, A BLINDING FLASH OF LIGHT EXPLODES ON THE SIDE OF THE BEAST, and it is thrown through the air several yards to the side, spinning as it sails through the air - obviously struck with much force.

Shin, Herrick, and Corin are knocked backward by the blast. They tumble and slide on the ground.

The derit comes crashing down against a large rock outcropping some twenty yards away. It lies motionless.

The three cautiously lift their heads from their positions on the ground. They see the derit lying still - ribbons of smoke rise from its side.

They look at each other.

HERRICK
(shaken)
Are you well, Shin?

SHIN
I think so. Are you?

HERRICK
Yes. Corin?

CORIN
I am unharmed.

Corin gets up slowly and cautiously.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
(at the others)
Stay down.

Corin takes a few steps towards the beast and as he gets closer, notices a giant, blackened hole in its side. It is definitely dead. He is astonished.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
Get up. It is safe.

Shin and Herrick get up and join Corin. They see the wound.

SHIN
What could have caused this?

No one speaks, they just look around.

SHIN (CONT'D)
Must we speak with Zoka about this?

CORIN
No. We must meet one higher than the First.

Corin pauses to think seriously.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
Herrick, how far does your Second
live from here?

HERRICK
Ruel, our Second Level, is to the
west of town. However, Tal, our
Third level, lives south of us, not
a day's journey.

CORIN
It delays my return to Tirvon, but
I see no other choice. I must speak
to a priest about whether such
things have been known to him. To
have a Third near is fortunate.

HERRICK
May we accompany you?

CORIN
It is not necessary. I'm sure your
work is pressing.

HERRICK
I fear it may be of value for us to
speak with the Third as well.

CORIN
And why is that?

HERRICK
There are things... you do not yet
know, but may be important. I do
not wish to speak them now.

Shin is caught off-guard. Corin studies Herrick intently.

CORIN
Very well. The day is strange. Let
us go together.

HERRICK
The road South is not far ahead.

They walk on.

EXT. COUNTRY PATH - DUSK

Shin, Herrick, and Corin walk on a grassy path through the
countryside. Trees scatter the landscape. They crest a hill,
from the top of which they can see TAL'S hut in the plain
below.

A glowing light is seen in the open window of the hut and smoke rises from a small chimney. They stop for a moment and Shin looks at Herrick, who does not return his gaze.

Corin is carefully surveying the hut and surrounding area.

EXT. TAL'S GATE - DUSK

HERRICK
(with raised voice)
Greetings, Third!

INT. TAL'S HUT - DUSK

Though sparse, Tal's hut, a circular single-room stone structure, is furnished and arranged invitingly, with a large semi-circular fireplace built into the stone brick wall, an ornate woven carpet, a bed, and priestly clothing and armor hanging on the walls.

Tal sits at his table, studying various scrolls, and drinks from a steaming goblet. He is startled to hear a voice at this hour. He puts down his goblet and walks to the window. He strains to see the visitor but it is too dark.

TAL
(with raised voice)
Who comes to my gate?

HERRICK
It is Herrick son of Ult, my son,
and Corin, Explorer priest. Might
we glean from your wisdom this
evening?

Tal pauses to consider his guest.

TAL
Of course. Friends, come in.

Tal rushes to the heavy leather flap securing the door and begins untying it from the places it is tied to the wall.

EXT. TAL'S GATE - NIGHT

Herrick opens the low gate at the edge of Tal's property and the group enters and walks up to the door of the hut and stop to wait for Tal to finish unlatching the door.

Shin looks at Corin, who looks at Herrick and then scans behind them. Herrick stares intently at the door.

A few moments pass and then the leather flap is flung aside and Tal appears.

TAL
Herrick. May the Warden give you
peace.

They clasp both hands to greet each other.

HERRICK
Third. They release hands and Tal
looks to Corin.

TAL
Priest Corin, I don't believe we
have spoken since your
commissioning. And there the words
were few indeed.

Tal and Corin clasp hands.

CORIN
Third. I believe you are right. It
is good to see you this night.

As he speaks, Tal notices Shin and stares at the boy for a moment. Tal catches himself and stands aside offering the group entrance.

TAL
Please, come in my friends, come
in.

They all enter the hut.

INT. TAL'S HUT - NIGHT

Tal latches the door behind them.

TAL (CON'T)
(to Shin)
You have become a man it seems,
Shin. I dare say that you will
become of the same strength and
frame of your father.

Tal smiles at Shin, who faintly smiles back, then looks away.

TAL (CON'T) (CONT'D)
I am pleased to see you all - but I
must say this is unexpected.

HERRICK

I apologize for the lateness of the hour. I hope I do not disturb your studies.

TAL

Ah. My studies are eternal - one night will not be missed... Please, let me take your cloaks.

Herrick and Shin remove their cloaks and Tal hangs them on the wall. Silence offers Herrick a chance to guide the conversation but he is nervous and delays.

CORIN

Third, tell me why you choose to live so far away from town?

TAL

The forest I edge onto - it contains rocks imbued with special power - they set the blood on fire, sparing neither man nor beast... nor invisible forces... One of the messages that came down from the high twelfth, several cycles back, stated that, with the proper armor, such a forest would provide safety from the Nomad and his forces... should it ever be required.

Tal leads them to a heavy suit of armor on the wall - a tunic and skirt made of iron plates, tightly tied together with leather bands, expertly crafted. A helmet, boots and gloves hang beside. Shin's gaze lingers on the armor.

CORIN

And for this you sacrifice community?

TAL

I find my way into town often enough... The solitude is also beneficial.

Tal sees the group is still uncertain about something. He suddenly grabs Herrick's arm, pulls him close, and looks into his eyes. They share an uncomfortable silent gaze. Tal glances at Corin.

TAL (CONT'D)

I see no deception in you, only fear. Tell me what is on your heart... Here, let us sit.

Tal walks to get two extra stools from the edge of the room and brings them to the table to join the two already there.

Chairs in place, all sit. Shin stares at Herrick.

TAL (CONT'D)

Would you like some nura? It's hot.

HERRICK

No, my thanks.

CORIN

No, not this day.

TAL

Shin?

SHIN

No - my thanks.

TAL

It takes no wisdom to see something troubles you deeply. You are welcome to tell me all, or nothing. As your Third, I am here to serve you in the Warden Lore however it fits your needs, if it be nothing but a warm hearth, so be it.

CORIN

Third, we do indeed seek your knowledge of the Lore... This day, with our own eyes, we have seen the invisible forces of the earth gods exert their power.

Tal studies Corin's face as he speaks. Tal glances at Herrick and Shin.

TAL

You are most serious... Tell me everything you saw.

CORIN

As we traveled, along the East road, not far from the road south, suddenly, not a throw ahead of us, was a ravenous adult derit - larger than I have ever seen. This alone is not completely unheard of in the foothills...

Corin pauses, looks at Herrick and Shin.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 But what is surely uncommon is an
 invisible hand of smoke and light
 felling a derit in full charge...
 tossing it aside with such strength
 as to send it spinning through the
 air like a flung stick... Tell me,
 Third - has anything like this
 fallen under your gaze or been
 brought to you?

A worried look crossed Tal's face.

TAL
 A derit attack and all of you
 without wound. What of the beast?

CORIN
 Dead - a hole burning in its side -
 we did not wish to study it for
 long.

TAL
 Yes, of course. Such is wise
 action. Herrick, do you recall
 events in the same manner as Corin
 has said?

HERRICK
 Yes, Third.

TAL
 Shin?

SHIN
 Yes, Third. It was just as Corin
 has spoken.

TAL
 I have not heard of anything like
 this happening... other than in the
 battles of old.

The group absorbs this solemnly.

HERRICK
 Tal, Holy Third, do you have
 understanding of this?

Tal cannot hide his nervousness. He gets up and walks to the
 fire.

TAL

I'm sorry. I do not know with certainty the meaning of this occurrence.

HERRICK

(voice becoming pointed)

Well tell us your ruminations then.

TAL

(dropping his gaze)

I'm afraid it would do you no good to hear my half-founded speculations. I apologize.

HERRICK

(incredulous)

You will tell us nothing then?

TAL

(sullen)

My apologies, Herrick. This is a matter for priests.

Tal glances at Corin. He silently acknowledges the need for secrecy.

TAL (CONT'D)

I know you expected more from this visit. But I cannot give you the answer you seek.

HERRICK

(angry but composed)

Might this have something to do with the incident surrounding Shin's mother?

Something of great importance crosses Tal's thoughts. He suddenly looks over at Herrick.

TAL

Wait - Do you yet hold your son's Ril blade?

HERRICK

(pauses, confused)

Yes, I hold his Ril. Why do you ask this?

TAL

Allow me to medicate Shin with the sleeping herbs. I have questions for you alone. Questions that only priests may ask.

HERRICK

I - but why--

TAL

You will understand when I speak with you. For now you must trust me. I realize this is difficult but I see now how important it is to gather certain information.

As he speaks, Tal gathers herbs from various satchels and baskets around his hut. He presses them in a cup with a pestle. After the mixture is ready he pours some water into the cup, and turns to Herrick.

TAL (CON'T) (CONT'D)

(at Herrick)

Do not fear. It is safe. But as the holder of Shin's Ril, you must make the decision.

Herrick is conflicted, and hesitates, looking into Tal's eyes. Herrick looks at his son, to Tal, and back to Shin.

HERRICK

Shin, you will take the herbs.

Shin looks at Corin. Corin looks intently at Shin, with uncertain eyes. Shin looks back to Tal, who is holding out the cup.

They look deep into each other's eyes.

Shin carefully takes the cup.. and drinks.

Tal leads him to his bed roll, and helps him lie down.

To Shin, the world rolls and fades away.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Shin stands in the middle of sparse forest of narrow birch trees. A layer of snow covers the ground but it is sunny and warm. There are no footprints lead to where Shin is standing, highlighting the fact that this is A DREAM.

Shin looks at his surroundings carefully, aware that something is not right.

He looks behind him. Mountains can be seen rising above the forest. He looks forward again.

He spots A HOODED BLACK-ROBED FIGURE moving through the trees - it slowly moves towards him, navigating, sure-footed, through the sparse trees.

The figure is shorter and slighter than Shin. The head of the figure stays facing downward as it moves, keeping its face hidden.

SHIN
(at the figure)
New Day.

The figure is silent and continues moving closer to Shin until it is within arm's reach - it then stops and lifts its head revealing the face of a young woman.

She removes the hood from her head and smiles. She reaches out and takes hold of Shin's right hand with both of her hands. Shin does not resist.

YOUNG WOMAN
Greetings Shin.

SHIN
My apologies O'shay. I cannot place you in my memory.

YOUNG WOMAN
Dear Shin. It would simply not be possible for you to truly remember me.

A faint expression of recollection crosses Shin's face.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
I am the mother of your birth, Shin. You are my son.

Shin is lost in a growing wave of emotion and does not know what to say. He becomes aware he is not saying anything.

SHIN
I- I-

YOUNG WOMAN

Say nothing my son. I have only a message to present to you - on behalf of the Earth Warden himself. Do you wish to hear it?

SHIN

(smiling through
emotion)

I do.

YOUNG WOMAN

The enemy is mounting a new form of attack - the Earth Warden has had to do something new... You are a unique child my son. You have been chosen to be a new kind of warrior. Already you are discovering your abilities. These are a gift. A gift to all the people, for you are to be mighty in the battle against the evil one.

SHIN

(through tears)

I do not know what to think. The Warden Lore does not speak anything of a chosen warrior, only that the Nomad--

YOUNG WOMAN

The enemy will not be able to stand against you. You are the first of many warriors that will come. You are to lead them. But as the first you must be protected - if the enemy found out about you, he would use all his efforts to harm you. Therefore, my son you must obey my word precisely. The Earth Warden has these specific instructions for you: you are to go to Tirvon and enter the priesthood, this very cycle. You will be safe there, although - and this is most important Shin - you must not reveal your powers to anyone, neither that you received a message from the after-plane - not even to the priests. The enemy has ears, even in the priesthood.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
 Simply undertake all the priestly
 lessons, cycle by cycle - it is
 your destiny to become a warrior
 priest - and the greatest warrior
 in the land... My son, will you
 promise me you will obey my words?

Shin is emotional but still confused.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (with feeling)
 You must promise me, my child.

SHIN
 (emotion taking
 over)
 I promise you mother.

YOUNG WOMAN
 You make my heart so proud. Now
 that my current duty is done, I
 must leave you.

SHIN
 (through tears)
 But we've only just met. Will I see
 you again?

YOUNG WOMAN
 I believe so. You are to be given
 more instructions as the need
 arises. But beyond that I cannot
 say... Goodbye my loved one.

SHIN
 (through tears)
 Goodbye.

The woman pulls the hood back onto her head and turns around.
 Shin watches as she leaves in the same way she arrived.

As soon as she moves out of sight, Shin hears a BLOOD
 CURDLING SCREAM.

SHIN (CONT'D)
 (worried, yelling)
 Mother? Mother!

Shin takes a step forward, but then sees the young woman
 returning from where she came, IMPOSSIBLY FAST. She stops
 inches from his face.

YOUNG WOMAN

(at a feverish
pace)

My son! The Nomad's forces have found you. They will not hesitate to kill you. You must take precautions. Tell the priest to be prepared to use his talisman. If you are in possession of it, understand that it can only be activated by the tightest of grips. Now go, Shin. Be careful.

The world suddenly begins to cave in around him, everything gets hazy and then slowly clear again as the dream GIVES WAY TO REALITY.

INT. TAL'S HOME - NIGHT

Shin opens his eyes to find himself once again in Tal's hut. The conversing voices of Tal, Corin, and Herrick slowly become defined in the background.

TAL

(to Herrick)

The man who deflowered your sister - he was a member of your community - this is for certain?

HERRICK

All knew Terin, but it is true he was not the same after the incident. His spirit was broken, not to speak of his visage and voice - having been so badly mauled by the beast - he was nearly beyond recognition.

CORIN

(very concerned)

Wait - you say his face was not recognized after the attack? Nor his voice?

HERRICK

This is so - but he was recognized by the clothing he was wearing and the knowledge that he had - and his sincere claim to be Terin. No one had reason to doubt.

TAL
(sweating and more
worried)
Herrick, these details should most
certainly have been told to the
priest -

Shin rises to a sitting position trying his best to collect his awareness but he still strongly FEELS THE EFFECTS OF THE DRUGS. Tal notices shin sit up, and cuts himself off.

TAL (CONT'D)
He awakens - sooner than I
anticipated.

Shin looks over to Tal and Herrick, internally gathering his bearings.

SHIN
(calmly, though
disoriented)
The Nomad approaches outside.

TAL
(shocked)
What? What say you boy?

SHIN
You are to grip your black
talisman.

Tal's hand moves instinctively towards his chest, where SOMETHING hangs around his neck, under his robes.

TAL
(growing in fear
and anger)
How do you know about my talisman?
Did you receive a messenger in a
dream?

SHIN
(still dazed, unguarded)
Yes. My birth mother.

Tal stands, overwhelmed by revelation.

TAL
(loudly and growing
louder)
Evil most foul. It is now proven..
Living darkness itself - he is the
Spawn!

Tal's voice is immediately cut off by A BLAST THAT EXPLODES HALF OF HIS HEAD. A giant mass of blood splatters on the wall behind him. The rest are blown off their chairs.

Tal's body crumples onto the floor. All are rife with shock and terror.

Shin stands unsteadily, still not fully lucid.

CORIN

Shin, get down!

Shin stumbles over and falls onto Tal's body. He reaches down the neck of Tal's robe to grasp the talisman, just as another BURST OF ENERGY EXPLODES in the room.

Shin stays low and pulls out the talisman, a black metal cylinder, and grips it as hard as he can, while shielding his head. At first it does nothing but he maintains his grip - suddenly it LIGHTS UP AND BECOMES TOO HOT TO HOLD - he drops it.

LOUD POPPING AND SIZZLING NOISES are heard outside and the sound of bodies falling to the ground.

Corin moves to a window and slowly raises his head to look out the window in the direction of the sounds he heard. It is dark outside but two dark forms can be made out, sprawled on the ground, about twenty yards away.

Shin turns to Herrick and sees in horror that he has been MORTALLY WOUNDED by the last energy blast. Herrick has a large, smoldering hole in his side, blood pooling under him, but he is lucid and breathing. Shin moves to him, afraid. Corin notes the mortal wound with disdain but remains watchful for further danger at the window.

SHIN

(scared)

Father?

Herrick knows he is dying. He COUGHS and GROANS periodically as he speaks for the rest of the scene. He is also extremely sad for the knowledge he has about his son. They whisper.

HERRICK

You must flee son.

SHIN

(confused)

But--

HERRICK

You are the Nomad's Spawn, and
your... birth father, has come for
you.

SHIN

(pained)
It's not true.

HERRICK

Tal gave explanation of your past.
It was not for certain... until
this. It has been prophesied and no
doubt remains Shin, you must flee.

SHIN

(afraid)
But, how does one outrun prophecy?

HERRICK

(through tears)
My son... I do not think it is
possible... But you must try -
perhaps there is a way...

Shin, still lying on the floor, drops his head to the floor.
He is at a loss.

SHIN

(suddenly
remembering)
But I received a message, in a
dream - it is how I knew to use the
talisman. It was my birth mother -

HERRICK

(fading)
Do not trust any messengers in your
dreams... the enemy may have power
to...

Herrick dies. Shin chokes back a sob.

SHIN

It's not true...

CORIN

Who can say for certain but I agree
that it is time for us to flee.

Mystified and pained, Shin gestures at the Talisman

SHIN

What purpose would the Nomad have
to give me a defense against
himself?

CORIN

We must not delay. Assume the Nomad
yet pursues. We'll use the forest.
The town of Revig is to the south.
We'll find the priest there.

SHIN

(tearing)

Corin - I do not wish to be his
spawn.

Corin looks at Shin with uncertain eyes.

Suddenly, a STRONG WIND envelops the hut, extinguishing the
fire in the fireplace.

It is nearly pitch black, but the light of the moon and stars
provides some light through the window. Fearful, Shin
crouches down during the phenomenon. The wind quickly dies.

Silence.

Corin, still crouching, lifts his head to just above the
window line. The two dark figures still lay in the same
location.

He looks beyond to the tree line of the forest and out over
the grassland as far as he can see. A further tree line,
about a hundred yards away is the only other area in view.

A FAINT GLOW is visible from the far tree line. The glow
grows brighter.

A RED GLOWING FIGURE emerges from the trees, moving directly
towards the hut, HOVERING EERILY OVER THE GROUND.

Shin watches, terrified, as it LIFTS ITS HAND TOWARDS THE
WINDOW and PICKS UP SPEED.

Corin ducks down to avoid being seen.

CORIN

He comes. Shin, put on the armour.

Shin looks right into Corin's eyes. The room seems to shift
around Shin and he shakes his head to loose the haze. He
trusts Corin's tone and eyes that he only has a few moments.
He breathes rapidly.

Shin grabs the heavy armor from the wall and slides it on.

He hurriedly steps into the boots and puts on the gloves and helmet. He notices Corin.

SHIN
What about you?

CORIN
Do not worry! Go!

Seeing Tal's bow and quiver, Corin slings them on and picks up the talisman, he adjusts his satchel as he pulls Shin outside.

EXT. FOREST AT TAL'S - NIGHT

Moving as fast as they can move dealing with the weight of the armor, the two run towards the near tree line.

They glance behind as they move and the red figure is nowhere to be seen. They jog deeper into trees and shrubs.

Suddenly THE RED FIGURE IS DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF THEM. Shin falls backward in terror - his helmet falls off. In an instant motion, the figure reaches out and grabs the top of Corin's head in an iron grip. A FLASH OF RED LIGHT UNDER HIS PALM and CORIN DROPS LIKE A SACK OF ROCKS.

SHIN
(yelling)
No!

Shin holds up the Talisman and squeezes it as hard as he can.

RED FIGURE
I did not kill him - I simply want
to talk with you alone.

When the red figure speaks, it does so with a human voice yet somehow unearthly and artificial. No mouth movement can be observed. Shin is shocked, looks at Corin, who faintly stirs.

RED FIGURE (CON'T) (CONT'D)
I am not what you think, Shin.

Shin scrambles to his feet and holds up the Talisman - now squeezes it with both hands as hard as he can.

SHIN
(letting it out)
Die!

RED FIGURE

(calmly)

The Talisman takes a few moments to restore its power.

The Red Figure slowly moves in closer.

RED FIGURE (CON'T) (CONT'D)

Shin - I am not here to hurt you -
I am here to help you... Do not enter
the forest - it is most deadly.

Shin sees the Talisman is not working, his hand, still holding the device, drops in defeat, glancing again at Corin, who faintly grimaces though he is still out of it.

SHIN

(defeated)

I hate you.

The red figure looks on in silence for a moment.

RED FIGURE

I know you are discovering your power. Shin, you are my creation.

SHIN

Deceiver! My mother told me who I am in truth. I am to destroy you.

RED FIGURE

That is a lie. The Earth Warden will say anything to keep you from me for he knows he cannot defeat you. But you are nothing without me. Meaningless. I am your purpose. You must come with me.

Shin pauses briefly to process the words, but refuses to accept them.

SHIN

I am not evil.

The Red Figure studies Shin.

RED FIGURE

(gravitas)

Neither am I, at least not always. Are you so sure the Earth Warden is not also evil at times? All are.

Shin is quiet as the unheard-of comment floats in the air.

SHIN

The Earth Warden is perfection. You don't know the meaning.

RED FIGURE (CON'T)

(calmly)

Even if you were to find yourself at the Warden school, do not think the priests will let you use your power according to your desires - no, they will strip your will away from you and align it to theirs. What good is power if you cannot wield it the way you choose?

SHIN

Yet you offer to take me and align my will to yours.

RED FIGURE

No Shin, I offer to open the door to what I designed you to be... I offer to set you free.

Shin is at a loss, and can't answer for a moment. The figure takes an almost imperceptible glance at the talisman. Shin notices - immediately raises his arm and threatens to use it.

SHIN

Just leave me!

The red figure swiftly hovers backwardly in response.

RED FIGURE

Do not enter the forest, your armor will not be of sufficient protection.

Shin, suddenly angry, again thrusts the talisman towards the Red Figure.

SHIN

(yelling)

I shall do what I wish! Leave me!

The Red Figure once again quickly hovers backward.

Corin stirs on the ground.

RED FIGURE

Very well. But take care to heed my words. Please, my son.

Shin's grip tightens around the talisman - if it had power it would be used to kill. The figure sees and turns and flees away in the direction it came. Shin watches until the Figure disappears from view.

Overwhelmed, Shin drops to the ground, emptied.

He pounds the ground with his fist - once, then twice more.

SHIN
 (angry but
 whispering)
 Earth warden, if you can hear me, I
 shall go into the middle of the
 forest and die there. I'll remove
 my armor, and just die.

Corin sits up slowly, groggily, rubbing his head.

CORIN
 What happened? Is it gone?

SHIN
 Yes. Are you well?

CORIN
 My head burns, but I feel I can
 travel.

Corin stands, strong enough. Shin puts on his helmet. Corin leads, and they venture into the forest.

EXT. FOREST DEPTHS - NIGHT

Bright moonlight bathes Shin and Corin as they walk. The deeper they go, the more the growth looks DISFIGURED and GROTESQUE. Plants have strange shapes and features, and the towering trees have massive gnarls like TUMORS. Strange CHIRPS and CLICKS fill the air.

They proceed carefully, caught in growing amazement at their surroundings. They pass some indiscernible rotting husks and are visibly assaulted by the terrible smell.

Forest creatures arrive - some squirrels and a raccoon-like creature - as DISFIGURED as the plants. When they notice the intruders, they awkwardly scurry away.

One squirrel with a disproportionately large and non-functional hind leg, remains. It has white eyes and is nearly blind. Shin walks near it, as it turns and slowly drags itself after its friends.

Shin stares at it in horror.

SHIN
What is this place?

CORIN
I do not understand.

Somewhere between horror and wonder, the two continue deeper into the forest. It becomes increasingly difficult to move freely, as various plants, vines, and tree branches become thicker, more tangled and more DISTURBING and STRANGE.

One hanging vine has a grey mouth-shaped flower, as big as a human head, with toothy protrusions. When the two draw near, it seems to "smell" them, and snaps at them, three times, each one slower. Both are horrified.

CORIN (CONT'D)
Earth Warden protect us.

SHIN
This place is the seat of evil.

CORIN
It is a distortion, but I am uncertain it is evil.

SHIN
How do you mean this?

CORIN
All is natural.

SHIN
This is not natural.

CORIN
Of course it is not normal, but everything is a living thing - changed most horribly, but it is all based on life - nothing seems to have evil power... My sensing stone detects nothing as well.

SHIN
How can this happen outside of evil influence?

CORIN
I do not know... But Tal did say that the Nomad could not enter here. If it is his doing, it has become more powerful than him...

Shin takes it all in in shock and awe.

SHIN
Corin, was that indeed the Nomad?

Corin takes a few steps.

CORIN
(hiding fear)
It would seem so.

SHIN
What does it mean?

CORIN
It is too much for me to-- the high
priests--

SHIN
Will what? Can prayer defeat the
enemies work?

CORIN
Prayer must be done. But also
battle. Not always with their
hands, but with the power that the
Earth Warden provides. You saw the
Talisman - it was strong enough to
nullify two of the Nomad's forces.

Shin Is silent for a moment.

SHIN
Yet it was also weak.

CORIN
Perhaps, but it's power was clear.
Do you not see that this is a real
battle? You fight with all possible
power - to forgo any is to forgo
the battle... And let the enemy
have free reign.

SHIN
But what of that reign? Why does
the Earth Warden not describe what
the Nomad truly wants?

CORIN
Other than to destroy the Earth
Warden himself?

SHIN

Yes, other than that. Why do they hate each other so? There must be more to explain this.

CORIN

Undoubtedly there is, but it is beyond our comprehension. If it would help us to know, the Earth Warden would have shared it.. There is much wisdom that the Earth Warden has shared - it is that which we must grasp.

Shin drops to his knees, weeping.

Corin determines the reason for Shin's distress.

CORIN (CONT'D)

I do not know if you are the Nomad's Spawn, Shin. I would tell you honestly if I thought it the case. Right now, I am your friend.

SHIN

But I may be? The Spawn?

Corin is at a loss for a moment.

CORIN

You spoke of your dream - your mother came to you - tell me of this - what did she say?

SHIN

(composing himself)
She said I was a secret warrior of the Earth Warden. But nothing - is spoken--

CORIN

Nothing is spoken but the Earth Warden also keeps surprises. There are mysteries written in the Lore... Shin, at least trust that this is still possible.

Shin is calm. He gets up. Corin helps him up. They embrace.

SHIN

I will try.

CORIN

Good.

SHIN

Where are we to go?

CORIN

We shall go through this forest, escape the red figure, and go to Revig. I have a friend there. We can stay with her, and then I will speak to their First, see what wisdom he may have. Come.

Corin gestures Shin to continue moving.

Continuing on, the ground softens and more puddles appear. The forest is becoming a SWAMP. Occasionally, Shin and Corin must jump from one patch of dry ground to another.

Decaying branches and stumps in the water impede progress.

They are several strides from each other.

SUDDENLY one stump that Shin is jumping over turns out to be a GHASTLY, GREY MUTATED CROCODILE. It lifts its head out of the water and SNAPS AT HIM. Shin stumbles as he lands and rolls into a deep puddle of swamp water.

Corin turns, too far away to help.

CORIN (CONT'D)

Shin!

A small island of earth separates Shin from the beast. Shin struggles to pull himself out of the water. He reaches for an arrow and just as he gets above water, the creature attacks, and SHIN STABS IT DEEPLY THROUGH THE EYE.

The creature falls, DEAD.

Shin calms himself and stares at the creature in disbelief. Corin, rushes to his side. Puts his hands on him.

CORIN (CONT'D)

Are you well?

Shin gets up.

SHIN

I am well. Not how I often make my arrow kills.

Corin smiles. They laugh.

Corin turns to look ahead, looks back from where they came from, and they continue on.

The larger trees begin to thin out and cease, but the swampy ground continues to spread out in front of him SEEMINGLY ENDLESSLY.

Lone, twisted, dead trees are scattered sparsely on the swampy landscape. Far in the distance a tall outcropping of massive, barren rocks can be seen, surrounded by swamp water and steam.

EXT. DEEP FOREST BOG - MORNING

They come to an expansive lake of bog water scattered with patches of dry ground. A few decaying trees poke up out of the landscape. As there is no way around, they hop from one dry patch of ground to another in the direction of the rocks. They each take a different but parallel path, facing the same obstacles. The jumps become longer and more difficult.

At one particularly long jump, Shin stops and sizes up how much effort it will require. He peers into the water.

Black, obscured figures move beneath the water. Shin swallows. HE MAKES THE LEAP...

...BUT COMES UP SHORT. His lead foot splashes down knee-deep in the water, and his upper body falls forward and hugs the island of ground. He pulls himself up but his boot is stuck in mud. Corin turns and looks at Shin.

Shin pulls his bare foot out of the water, turns, and reaches down into the mire and plucks out the boot. He crawls back onto the center of the dry ground, sits down, and empties the boot of water.

Shin sees two or three BRIGHT RED LEECHES pour out of the boot. He immediately inspects his naked foot only to find A THROBBING RED LEECH ATTACHED to the back of his foot. Shin stares in horror.

Without thinking, Shin grabs the leech and flings it away into the water. A bright red bite mark remains. Shin rapidly removes all his armor and, as he does, feels over his entire body under his clothing.

CORIN

What is it?

SHIN

Leeches. Red ones.

Corin jumps to the island Shin is on.

After much checking, Shin feels confident there are no more, and calms himself. Still sitting, he lets out another FURIOUS YELL, picks up his helmet and HURLS it as far as he can ahead of him.

CORIN

Calm, Shin! We must stay focused.

Shin breathes.

Resigning himself to the earlier goal, Shin reclothes himself in his armor and stands up. He briefly stumbles, feeling woozy from the slightly poisonous leech bite (unnoticed by Corin) - he steadies himself.

Corin leads, and they continue leaping from dry patch to dry patch.

Shin struggles to remain steady with each jump. He arrives at his helmet - sticking up, half-buried in shallow mud.

Shin picks it up, inspects it carefully, and wipes off the mud. He puts it on. He experiences a short wave of blurred vision.

Suddenly he hears a distant but dangerously nearby DERIT ROAR. Shin quickly removes his helmet and the two scan the landscape - A SNARLING MUTATED DERIT is bounding full-speed towards him from behind - it will overtake him in minutes.

CORIN (CONT'D)

Warden true - we must flee.

Hurriedly, Shin replaces his helmet and they continue forward - perhaps they can gain ground. They leap as fast as they can, sometimes stumbling and narrowly avoiding falls.

They arrive at a moving stream that many of the swamp waters are emptying into. It is deeper than the other waters and is too wide to jump. Corin looks for an alternate path, Shin looks behind - the derit is still getting closer.

Then Shin eyes the impossible - ANOTHER DERIT following behind the first. He turns back around looking for any sort of hope. Corin points. There - a large decaying tree, only a few leaps away. It is large enough to hold them above the derits.

They head towards it, leaping haphazardly, derits closing in.

Corin arrives at the tree and immediately climbs onto the first branch. He immediately readies an arrow, but as he does, HIS QUIVER DROPS TO THE GROUND.

Shin arrives and reaches up and grabs a different low-lying branch to lift himself up. The branch snaps and he falls flat on his back, his bow and quiver falling off. He screams, flings off his helmet, and gets up as fast as he can. The derits are still running and will be there in seconds.

CORIN (CONT'D)

Shin! Hurry!

Shin sees his bow on the ground, from his knees, picks it up and sees yet another enemy - a FEROCIOUS MUTATED CROCODILE coming towards him, two mounds over. It will arrive at about the same time as the first derit.

Shin loads an arrow, but has no time to draw and fire, Corin's arrow hits the derit between the eyes. It crashes to a halt. Shin points his arrow at the other crocodile, now upon him with mouth WIDE OPEN, RELEASES.

The arrow strikes its head through the mouth. The derit falls DEAD but its momentum carries it into Shin, knocking him over and pinning his legs. Shin grunts loudly, pulls himself out.

Shin scrambles up and loads an arrow aiming at the remaining derit but his STRING SNAPS as the derit is only ONE STRIDE AWAY.

The derit leaps - SHIN reflexively drops his bow, holds the arrow with two hands, twists away to the side, thrusting the arrow into the side of the derit's neck as the derit makes contact.

The force of the contact sends both crashing, glancing into the rotted trunk of the dead tree, which breaks and all fall, submerged, into the wider flowing river.

EXT. RIVER - MORNING

From under the water, Shin sees the dead tree and the derit, struggling in its death throws, above him.

Shin struggles to free himself from his armor which is pulling him down. He pulls off all of the pieces, and with much effort, swims up towards the now floating tree and pulls himself on.

The tree is wide enough for him to straddle and relax. Shin breathes heavily. He looks for Corin but cannot find him on land or in the water, which is become turbulent.

Then shin hears the faint RUMBLING sound of FALLING WATER.

He looks ahead and sees the river ABRUPTLY ENDING INTO OPEN SKY. It is a MASSIVE ONE HUNDRED FOOT WATERFALL.

SHIN

Corin!

Nearing the edge, Shin looks for any other way of escape - nothing. He grips the log tightly and SCREAMS as he GOES OVER THE EDGE, falls away from the log, and plunges into the deep pool below.

Under the water Shin's motion slows, and he aligns himself to the surface. He swims upwards. He emerges with a HUGE BREATH. He sees the dead tree floating nearby and moves himself to it.

He pulls himself on and straddles it as before, and lies down, wrapping his arms around the tree. He BREATHES HEAVILY for several moments then lifts himself to look for Corin, who is nowhere to be seen.

EXT. RIVER - DAY

Hours have passed and the surroundings are different. The river is moving swiftly but calmly, and Shin has crossed a great distance. Shin is passed out on the log. He floats on, unaware of the distance he is covering.

EXT. RIVERSIDE - DAY

Shin is lying unconscious on the shore, beside the tree.

YEV (male, 7), stands above him, poking him with a stick, his other hand hidden behind his back. Shin BREATHES IN SUDDENLY and COUGHS water from his lungs. Yev jumps back.

Shin rubs his head and sits up. He looks around and sees Yev and his sister MING (female, 13), eying him uneasily.

Shin rubs his legs and chest, taking stock of his body. After a moment, he stands. Shin looks over to the tree, and then off in the direction of where he came. Still no Corin.

SHIN

Did you see another? I had a companion.

Yev and Ming shake their heads. They are still unsure of Shin.

Ming kicks Yev's foot, and nod's in Shin's direction, urging Yev to do something.

MING
 (to Yev)
Come on.

Yev glares at his sister.

 YEV
I know.

Yev slowly pulls Shin's bow from behind his back and holds it out to Shin.

EXT. GRASSLAND - PATH TO TOWN - DAY

Shin, Yev, and Ming are walking together to Yev and Ming's farm. Yev is walking ahead of Shin, leading the way. Ming follows behind. Shin has his bow slung over his shoulder.

 YEV
And my dad is widely known as the best farmer in the region. I'm going to be the best farmer after him, once he teaches me everything he knows. He's already taught me nearly everything he knows, but there's certain things I can't do yet. My dad has the most land of anyone. We have the biggest hut of anyone too. Two winters ago when people were running out of food because of the drought, we had extra food so people had to come to us for help. And we were so nice that we gave nearly everyone the food they needed. But there were two guys from Baska that my dad knew were thieves so he told them to go vex themselves. My dad sometimes uses foul language. I will too once I'm old enough, but my mom says I can't yet. Sometimes I practice when she can't hear me, but don't tell her, swear?

Yev pauses and looks at Shin, waiting for a reply.

 SHIN
Sure, I swear.

YEV

(immediately
contented)

My mom is pretty much the best woman in our town. She always cooks the best meals and tells the best stories. People say she has it really hard at home, but all she does is take care of me.

(beat)

Even when I do something wrong, she lets me know it, but I always know she loves me. Does your mother do that?

Shin has been losing focus, thinking about his own problems, but this question summons him back to alertness.

SHIN

What?

YEV

Does your mother love you like that?

Shin waits a moment to respond.

SHIN

My mom is dead.

YEV

How did she die?

MING

Yev. Be polite.

Yev scowls at his sister. After a few moments Shin responds.

SHIN

She died giving birth to me.

YEV

My dad says when women die giving birth, it happened because they were cursed.

MING

Yev!

(at Shin)

I apologize for my brother's impertinence.

Shin waits a moment to respond. Yev looks at Shin. Shin is staring at the ground as he walks.

SHIN

Perhaps she was cursed.

YEV

Do you know the manner of curse
that she was cursed with?

Ming raises her eyes to the heavens in frustration.

SHIN

I don't wish to talk about it.

Yev looks at Shin and they walk on silently for a moment.

YEV

My dad works so hard his muscles
are pretty much the biggest in
town.

CUT TO:

INT. YEV'S HOUSE - DAY

Shin, Yev, Ming and their father, STAVIC (40s), mother, ORNA (40s), and grandfather, GITHPA (70s), sit at a low stone table at the center of their hut. Steaming bowls of stew are laid out. Shin ravenously eats his stew. All eyes are on him.

Githpa, who has obviously lost most of his faculties, is squatting near Shin, staring at him while MUTTERING to himself. Githpa's hair is scraggly and unkempt. He moves right up to Shin's face, so close that his nose ALMOST TOUCHES Shin's cheek. Shin notices and looks at Stavic.

STAVIC

Githpa. Return to your seat.

Githpa does not shift his gaze.

GITHPA

This one is sick in the mind.

Stavic is unable to contain a small but loud burst of laughter, "Ha!"

Orna glares at him and he immediately contains any further laughter. He gives her a look that says he can't believe she didn't find the same humor in the irony.

Shin, unfazed by Githpa, returns to devouring his food.

STAVIC

Githpa!

Githpa scrambles backward, but keeps focus on Shin. He reluctantly returns to his seat at the table, maintaining his distrusting stare at Shin.

ORNA

I'm glad you like the stew. There's plenty so eat your fill. I can't imagine what you've been through.

STAVIC

Does Tal, son of Gryden remain the highest priest in Warden's Heel?

Shin freezes at the mention of Tal. He realizes this was noticeable and quickly resumes eating.

Yev's parents look at each other.

STAVIC (CONT'D)

Shin, we know your parents must care much about you. I ran away once when I was your age. And then I feared the wrath of my father when I knew I had naught else but to return. Do not fear - your parents will be joyful to see you back.

ORNA

My boy, we would suffer the utmost travail if we were missing one of our children. Your parents' hearts must be yearning for you. Let us help you return. We can send you with one of the messengers that makes his route every few days. Syrik leaves tomorrow, he will return you safely to your mother's arms.

YEV

Shin's mother is dead.

Yev's family is shocked at this. They look at Yev, then at Shin. Shin remains silent, looking down, eating his food, albeit slower.

STAVIC

I am very sorry to hear this Shin. Did she die very recently?

Shin remains silent and focused on his meal. Stavic looks at his wife.

ORNA
 (worried, to
 Stavic)
 We must return him.

STAVIC
 He suffers in his heart. He is not
 ready to return.

ORNA
 What then?

YEV
 (looking at Shin)
 This one has strong arms and an
 able back, I can put him to work in
 the fields if he be ours now.

MING
 He's not our slave!

STAVIC
 (looking at Shin)
 True. But if he wishes to eat more
 of that stew, he will have to earn
 it by the sweat of his brow...
 (at Orna)
 But for a few days, until he has
 time to clear his head.

ORNA
 (uncertain,
 hesitates)
 Very well. A few days.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

Shin, Yev, Ming, and Stavic are plowing the family field.
 Stavic is leading a team of oxen. Shin and Yev are using
 shovel-type implements to turn the soil.

The sun is hot, and all are sweating. Shin, Yev and Ming are
 working together, Stavic is not within earshot.

YEV
 What level have you achieved in
 your Lore studies?

Shin remains silent.

YEV (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 I have advanced beyond my friends.
 Our first says I have unusually
 high aptitude. I could probably be
 a first or even a second if I
 wanted, but I'm going to be the
 best farmer - A first must do so
 much preaching and I don't care
 much for talk.

Shin looks at Yev and then to Ming. He smiles. Ming laughs.

YEV (CONT'D)
 What?

Yev looks at Ming.

SHIN
 Ayrin.

Yev looks at Shin.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 I have reached Ayrin.

YEV
 My cousin has reached Ayrin. She is
 also advanced beyond her peers. She
 has my Father's line's blood in her
 so naturally she is adept.

SHIN
 What level have you reached?

YEV
 I have only begun in the Lore.

SHIN
 (feigning surprise)
 Only begun? I would have thought
 someone as adept as you would have
 advanced to Fargra at least, by
 now.

YEV
 I am sure to be pushed beyond prime
 very soon. I am by far superior to
 my classmates and have a much
 deeper understanding of the Lore.

SHIN
 Surely.

YEV

My Father talks much to me about the Lore. He understands it better than anyone - except the priests of course - but my father could speak meaningfully with even a third or fourth without issue.

SHIN

What do you think of the Nomad's silence?

YEV

My Father says the war may be going on across the sea and the Warden's forces may have caused so many casualties to the Nomad so they are unable now to form an army. But it could also be that the Nomad has another plan - an unseen plan, which requires long preparation.

Shin is silent.

SHIN

What do you think of the words of the abandoners?

Yev is silent and exchanges a glance with his sister.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

You understand their doubting.

YEV

(angry)

I understand that they are betraying the Earth Warden and everything that is true!

MING

But you have no proof of what you believe.

YEV

The high priests--

MING

(angry)

The high priests are wandering in forests, looking for phantoms, or else they're hiding away in their high-walled school, making up stories about their power.

YEV

(angry, but matter
of fact)

Grandfather was a child when one of
the warring priests journeyed
through his town. The priest showed
him the power of the Earth Warden -
in front of his eyes.

Yev falls silent. His sister is fueled by his silence.

MING

Perhaps grandfather saw what he
wanted to believe. And you're just
like him. You have no firm
foundation - nothing you can touch -
your faith in the Earth Warden is
as secure as a wisp of smoke.

YEV

(angry, screaming)
You don't know my faith!

Yev swings his hoe at his sister, who leans back to avoid it.
The hoe slips out of Yev's hand, flies and STRIKES one of the
oxen in the head. It REARS AND BUCKS VIOLENTLY.

Stavic struggles with the beast. The ox KICKS at the harness
and part of it breaks, leaving a sharp splintered beam. The
ox lunges forward pulling Stavic off balance and onto the
beam, IMPALING HIM IN THE NECK. Ming screams.

YEV (CONT'D)

(screaming)
Father!

Stavic releases the reins and the beast lurches forward,
erratic and bucking, with the plow trailing behind. It bucks
sideways, staying very near Stavic.

Stavic lays in a growing pool of blood. Yev runs towards his
father. Shin follows hoping to restrain him. As Yev gets
close, the ox swings around and leaps at Yev. In a moment,
YEV WILL BE CRUSHED.

Shin, his momentum still carrying him forward towards Yev and
the ox, without thinking, raises his hands upwards towards
the ox but not touching it, YEV IS PULLED BACKWARD, CLEARLY
SUPERNATURALLY, JUST IN TIME.

Yev's backward momentum lands him in Shin's arms. Shin pulls
him back further from the bucking ox, which is now moving
further away from Stavic.

Shin lets go of Yev and stares in uncertain wonderment. Yev turns toward Shin in confusion and fear, he slowly backs away from Shin. Shin looks to Stavic, who is also staring at him in disbelief. Yev and Ming clasp onto their father.

Stavic points at Shin and coughs and sputters blood.

STAVIC
(gurgling blood)
Spawn.

YEV
(in fear and shock)
You... You are the Nomad's Spawn.

SHIN
No - It's not what you think. I am
a special warrior... for the Earth
Warden.

YEV
Get away. Get away from us! You-

Yev is cut off suddenly falling limp. Shin stares in horror. A line of blood drips from Yev's ear. HE IS DEAD.

Stavic's shock intensifies, but he can only cough more blood.

SHIN
(yelling)
No!

Shin and Ming lock eyes. She takes a few small steps backwards. Then suddenly, SHE FALLS DEAD, blood dripping from her nose and ears.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
(suddenly angry)
Nooo!

Orna crests the hill, close enough to see the carnage and Shin standing above it. She drops her basket of food.

Shin stops screaming and stares at her. He backs away slowly.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
(uncertain,
yelling)
No. Get away!

Shin turns and runs.

He runs, trying to get as far away from people as he can. Orna can be heard screaming in the background.

EXT. STREAM - DAY

Shin is now walking, deflated, on a path next to a gently flowing stream. His face shows that he has shed many tears.

Shin stops and kneels down beside the stream to take a drink. He sees his reflection in the water. His face contorts in anger, first a little, then A LOT.

SHIN

What do you want from me?

Shin stands up and punches the air.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

(yelling)

What do you want from me?

Shin stumbles forward, ready to emit a full-bodied scream.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

(yelling in intense
anger)

What do you want from me?

Shin falls to his knees, deflated. He slowly calms down.

THE TIP OF A SPEAR IS SUDDENLY HELD NEAR HIS HEAD. Two soldiers loom above him.

TOWN SOLDIER

You will come with us.

EXT. COUNTRY PATH - DUSK

Four soldiers escort Shin back towards town, his hands bound. Shin plods along, devoid of emotion and exhausted.

INT. PRISON ROOM - NIGHT

The guards throw Shin down into a chair. Shin slumps against the wall, eyes closed, clearly exhausted.

TOWN SOLDIER

You are held under the law of the land by the townspeople of Revig. The elder circle will convene tomorrow at mid-day to discuss your accusation.

The soldier leaves, closing an iron bar door and locking it. Shin's eyes remain closed. Voices and murmurs outside persist for a few moments.

HAZRA

Are you a murderer Shin?

Shin opens his eyes and turns to see HAZRA (50s), in preist's robes standing on the opposite side of the cell.

Shin stays quiet.

HAZRA (CON'T) (CONT'D)

My name is Hazra, the First of Revig. I must ask you again - did you kill Stavic, his daughter and his son?

Shin turns away and stares at the wall. Hazra studies Shin.

HAZRA (CON'T) (CONT'D)

I am told it appears possible that Stavic befell an accident with his oxen. The boy and girl, however, were not crushed or kicked by an oxen. This, coupled with the fact that you fled the scene immediately upon being observed with the bodies makes your guilt extremely likely.

(beat)

You know the law of the land in these circumstances, Shin. The town circle will arrive at your guilt, this I can tell you for certain. Unless you can establish your innocence by explaining how the deaths occurred. Shin. Did you slay them?

Shin raises his head and looks Hazra straight in the eye. Shin studies Hazra for a long moment.

SHIN

(depleted)

I did not intend for them to die.

HAZRA

It was in passion that you killed them?

SHIN

I did not lay a hand on them.

HAZRA
I am most confused.

SHIN
I am at fault...

HAZRA
Tell me, my son.

SHIN
My very presence caused it... Death follows me.

Shin keeps his head lowered. Hazra carefully studies Shin.

HAZRA
It will find you then - death always finds those it follows.

SHIN
Perhaps that is better.

HAZRA
Why?

Shin looks at Hazra, then at the floor.

SHIN
(pained)
Tell me who I am.

HAZRA
(tentative)
It is not known who you are - other than your name, and that you claim to be from the town of Warden's Heel... Are you someone else than who you claim?

SHIN
(sullen)
Yes.

Hazra studies Shin.

HAZRA
Who are you?

SHIN
(pained)
This is what I ask you. I do not know. How can I know?

HAZRA
You do not speak clearly.

SHIN
(tormented)
I want to be good.

HAZRA
The Earth Warden cares for all, my
son. A person may choose to be
good, even after committing the
gravest of crimes.

Shin hangs his head.

SHIN
He cannot care for the Nomad's
Spawn.

Shin looks up at Hazra, who is at a loss.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
For that is who I am.

Hazra is taken aback for a moment.

HAZRA
My child - such is a ridiculous
notion - what evidence do you have
for such a claim?

SHIN
I have three times now experienced
the invisible presence of violent
forces. Yet I have come away
unharmed. And I also have
experienced--

Hazra's eyes widen. Shin is unsure whether to continue.

HAZRA
What else...?

SHIN
(pained)
I am able to hold sway over objects
with the force of my mind.

Shin's pain grows to outright fear. He speaks through tears.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
Is my destiny forever sealed?

Hazra does his best to keep a modicum of calm but fails, struggling for words.

HAZRA

This..You..But surely you must..Shin, understand that there are many things we do not understand of the world. Do not be quick to make assumptions.

SHIN

(broken)

You know as well as I the amount of concern we are to take with the smallest sign. You show remarkable disregard for a First... And your stammering reveals your true thoughts.

Hazra still struggles with words.

HAZRA

I..You cannot..We may all need time to carefully consider these matters.

SHIN

Indeed.

Hazra composes himself.

HAZRA

My child, remember that the Nomad's Spawn is given to pure evil. You do not appear to be of that nature. Your conflation speaks strongly of this... and, seeing signs of power can often be due to our eyes being deceived--

SHIN

Tell me, First - is anything spoken in the Lore, about a special warrior for the Earth Warden, who has powers like that of the Nomad's Spawn?

HAZRA

I know of no such word.

SHIN

If there were such a person... would the Earth Warden kill to protect him?

HAZRA

The Earth Warden does not kill the innocent, only the guilty.

Hazra pauses and sees the turmoil in Shin, but uses the silence to turn the conversation to the other issue.

HAZRA (CON'T) (CONT'D)

Shin, your immediate concern is the judgment circle that must occur tomorrow. Have you nothing else to say about your defense?

Shin exhales a quiet laugh. He gazes at the floor.

SHIN

(growing cold)

As I said, perhaps it is best that I am killed by the circle.

Hazra is silent for a moment.

HAZRA

If--

SHIN

(matter of fact)

But know this - if I am the Spawn... any person or group who attempts to harm me will face slaughter at the hands of the Nomad's forces who make constant watch over his child.

Shin looks up at Hazra.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

I would suggest great caution.

Hazra swallows hard, failing once again at hiding his nervousness.

HAZRA

(loud)

Guard.

A guard enters the jail from outside and unlocks the cell door. Hazra exits nervously looking at Shin, whose face is cast downward.

INT - JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Shin sleeps in the empty, moonlit cell. A hooded figure steps out from the shadows under the high, barred window.

It is the YOUNG WOMAN from Shin's dream.

YOUNG WOMAN
It's time to go Shin.

Shin wakes with a start.

SHIN
Mother?

YOUNG WOMAN
My son.

Shin tries to focus his eyes. The young woman stands in the center of the cell. She pulls off her hood revealing severe BRUISES and only partially healed CUTS all over her face.

Shin stands up, feeling fear and empathy for his mother.

SHIN
What has happened?

YOUNG WOMAN
The after-plane is not as peaceful
as some would suggest.

SHIN
Are you well?

YOUNG WOMAN
Do not worry for me my son. All
that matters is that I am here to
once again remind you of your great
duty.

SHIN
Are we inside a dream?

YOUNG WOMAN
Yes. It is how I have been given to
speak to you. Though - this time -
it has cost me much more.

SHIN
Who did this to you? Could not the
Earth Warden protect you?

YOUNG WOMAN

I would certainly not have survived
if it was not for the Earth Warden.

SHIN

I do not understand.

YOUNG WOMAN

It would take days for me to share
with you, fully, all of the
realities of the after-plane, the
Earth Warden, and the Lore. You
know only in part - shadows of the
real. But we cannot take the time
to speak of it all. The suffering I
have endured is a testament to the
importance of your calling my son,
and what you must do now. The time
is nearly lost for you to do your
duty... My dear Shin - you have
delayed much, and moved further
from your goal. This is putting the
fate of the entire land in great
doubt.

Shin is pained at having disobeyed his mother.

SHIN

I--

YOUNG WOMAN

It matters not. What matters is
that you obey my voice from this
moment on. Do you understand Shin?

SHIN

W-- Yes, but--

YOUNG WOMAN

Good. My son do you still hold to
your promise to do whatever I tell
you?

Shin is conflicted and doesn't know how to answer.

YOUNG WOMAN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

(means business)

Do you?

SHIN

(pained)

Yes.

YOUNG WOMAN

Good. It is not easy what I must ask of you. But it is most certainly imperative. Do you understand me?

SHIN

Yes.

YOUNG WOMAN

You must get the keys and escape.

SHIN

But how?

YOUNG WOMAN

My son. Because of your ill-advised detour, we are left with no choice. You must use your gift - and injure the guard.

SHIN

(shocked)

What? Surely the Earth Warden--

YOUNG WOMAN

--would not ask you to do this unless the person was acting as an agent of the enemy. My son, you must trust me. The justice of Revig have been tainted to evil by the Nomad himself. For such a one, the Earth Warden allows the use of force. Only do not kill him.

SHIN

Wha- but how-

YOUNG WOMAN

There is not time for questions. You have promised and now you must act. Look at me, my son.

Shin looks at her and she stares deeply into his eyes.

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

(slowly and firmly)

The fate of the land is at stake. I am aware of your doubt, but there is no time for it.

(MORE)

YOUNG WOMAN (CONT'D)

Think with understanding - if you are the spawn of evil, you would not care for those around you, and if you are not, then it is I who speak the truth to you - and I would not lie to you, my beloved son. Use your power and escape the prison. Go to the priest school at Tirvon. Fulfil your duty and save the land from the evil that you have seen with your own eyes.

SHIN

Mother--

YOUNG WOMAN

I love you my son. Good bye.

The young woman disappears. Shin is in shock. He takes a breath to yell out. But immediately--

CUT TO:

INT - JAIL CELL - NIGHT

Shin bolts upright from his bed mat.

SHIN

(yelling)

Mother!

Shin breathes rapidly. He looks around the room, adjusting to the fact that he has had another important dream. He closes his eyes and calms his breathing.

GUARD

Hey! Quiet down!

Shin takes a few moments to collect his thoughts. His eyes seem to glaze over.

FLASHBACK - DEATH OF HERRICK

HERRICK

Do not believe any messengers in your dreams...

END OF FLASHBACK

FLASHBACK - MEETING THE YOUNG WOMAN

YOUNG WOMAN
(with feeling)
You must promise me, my child.

SHIN
(emotion taking
over)
I promise you mother.

END OF FLASHBACK

Shin's eyes find focus.

SHIN (CONT'D)
(sullen)
Guard.

The guard walks to the door of the cell.

GUARD
(gruff)
What is it boy?

Shin looks at the guard with uncertainty.

GUARD (CON'T) (CONT'D)
Well?

Shin makes up his mind - his face contorts in anger. He closes his eyes and FOCUSES on the Guard.

The guard feels A TUG FORWARD, he is surprised and confused and pulls back against it. The pull increases, and his boots make divots in the earthen ground as the force is too strong to resist.

Then, in a very sudden motion, the guard is RIPPED FORWARD OFF HIS FEET, headfirst into the bars of the cell. Shin cringes at the HEAVY CLANG of the guard's head on the bars. The guard falls unconscious, bleeding from his forehead, but it wasn't hard enough to kill. He is still breathing.

Shin lifts his arms and pulls on his hair, in turmoil over what he has just done. He drops to all fours and composes himself.

Shin crawls to the door, reaches through, grabs the keys from the guard's belt.

He unlocks the door, scrambles out of the cell as fast as he can.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

Shin jumps logs and dodges trees to enter into the deep, shroud of the forest.

He slows to a jog, and enters a small mossy clearing.

EXT. MOSSY CLEARING - NIGHT

Shin falls to his knees and catches his breath. His face streams with angry tears.

He breathes hard in the otherwise silent clearing.

A blue glow illuminates the clearing. A BEAUTIFUL GIANT BIOLUMINESCENT BUTTERFLY flies gracefully, to within arm's reach of Shin. It is nearly the size of a full grown man.

Shin is caught in a dumbfounded stupor. He gazes at the glowing creature as things begin to move in SLOW MOTION.

Bright, intricate vein structures are vivid on the creature's already glowing skin. The veins and wing markings appear to SHIFT AND PULSATE IN STRANGE AND BEAUTIFUL PATTERNS.

The butterfly drifts forward and GRASPS SHIN WITH ITS LEGS - its forelegs gripping Shin on the neck, its middle legs on Shin's arms. Shin stares into its cold, black, insect eyes - HE IS PARALYZED. It lowers him to the ground - SHIN LOSES CONSCIOUSNESS.

INT. CAVE - NIGHT

Shin awakes on the stone floor of a cave, mind still clouded from the insect's touch. A small fire burns in the center of the cave, illuminating the cave wall except for the rear portion, which fades to darkness.

Some parcels, supplies, and a bed roll are beside the wall.

A small boulder sits against the cave wall on one side.

Shin scans his surroundings and sees ZALA (female, 27), confident and strong, wearing hunter leathers, sitting on a log on the other side of the fire. He lifts himself part ways off the floor to a sitting position.

SHIN

Who are you?

ZALA

Who are you?

Shin tries to clear his head and collect his thoughts.

SHIN

I am a simple farmer's son. I am travelling to Tirvon to enter the priesthood.

ZALA

I saw no travel parcels with you - seems rather light for travelling to Tirvon.

Shin is silent for a moment.

SHIN

Am I a prisoner here?

Zala keeps eye contact.

ZALA

You may leave when you wish.

SHIN

Where is the exit to this cave?

ZALA

Behind the rock.

Zala nods her head towards the boulder.

ZALA (CON'T) (CONT'D)

It keeps the biting ferrets out. They're ravenous at this time of night. I would not recommend leaving until morning.

SHIN

What is that way?

Shin points to the darkness on the other side of the room.

ZALA

A very narrow path to another exit. Only myself and one other know its path... Correct me, but you are late to be travelling to Tirvon - the last for entrance is in but a few days.

SHIN

I was delayed... What happened to me?

ZALA

You were nearly implanted with the eggs of a rather large Neverwing. Had I not been near, your carcass would be nourishing some beautiful children right now.

SHIN

My thanks for that... Do you always wander the forest at the peak of night?

ZALA

I do when I sense it serves the Earth Warden's purposes.

Shin bristles at the name of the Earth Warden. Zala notices Shin's subtle reaction.

ZALA (CON'T) (CONT'D)

You did not tell me your name.

Shin is slow to respond.

At this, Corin emerges from the edge of the darkness.

CORIN

(Calmly)

His name is Shin.

SHIN

(surprised)

Corin? What is this?

CORIN

This is my rest stop when I am in this region. You are a hard one to track...

(gesturing)

My friend Zala.

Shin looks over to Zala, who smiles.

SHIN

Friend?

CORIN

I admit that I disobey the priestly rule to refrain from marriage. I choose to keep this a secret - I would appreciate if you kept it as well.

Shin takes a moment to evaluate his situation.

SHIN
I need to leave.

CORIN
I think you should stay until the morning.

SHIN
Why? I can handle ferrets.

CORIN
No, because Zala makes great eggs.

ZALA
He lies. I botch eggs. It is Corin who makes them well.

Deflated, Shin looks around the cave, and notices a drawing of a priest battling an armour-clad figure. SHIN IS TRANSFIXED BY IT - IT SPARKS A THOUGHT.

Shin turns SLOWLY AND DELIBERATELY to Corin.

SHIN
Tell me how to find the Cave of Truth.

Corin smiles and lets the words hang in the air.

CORIN
The Cave of Truth is found at the foot of the largest peak to the west. But a great blanket of rock lies above it. It would take a team of hundreds to quarry it down.

SHIN
You must let me go there.

Shin looks at Corin, then looks back into the fire.

CORIN
Why do you wish to go to the cave?

SHIN
I seek the truth.

CORIN
I have said, it is sealed. You will not find anything of use there.

SHIN
I wish to search for myself.

Corin studies Shin.

CORIN

You are not prepared for the journey.

SHIN

I am able.

CORIN

I'm sorry, I will not be responsible for your demise.

SHIN

Then I will attempt to find it myself.

Corin glares at Shin.

CORIN

That is your choice. But rest - perhaps you will think more clearly tomorrow.

Shin sees the bedroll, decides to comply.

SHIN

Very well.

INT - CAVE - NIGHT

Shin lays on a bed roll, awake. Corin and Zala appear to sleep on a bed roll on the other side of the fire.

Shin quietly gets up, gathers his things, and picks up a burning stick from the fire and crafts a torch.

He glances over at Corin's bow and quiver, tucked under his arm as he sleeps. Shin abandons the thought and slips out the "back door" of the cave.

The path is narrow but Shin navigates the winding corridor.

Finally he sees the cave opening. Through it, the moon is bright and illuminates a path to the west.

EXT. - FOREST PATH - MORNING

Shin walks with steady resolve. The path is discernable through the forest but sometimes the foliage is dense. The sun is warm. Unique ANIMAL SOUNDS ECHO through the forest.

Every few steps, Shin clears branches in front of him.

Suddenly, after clearing away more branches, CORIN IS STANDING THERE, in front of him, confident and in control, with a firm look. Then Corin smiles.

CORIN

You have an iron will. This I grant.

EXT. FOREST PATH - DAY

Shin and Corin walk west through the forest. Corin leads, bow and quiver slung on his back.

CORIN

I suppose you have heard of those who say that if the cave was found, the words would be altogether different than what the priests say.

Shin is quiet. Corin studies Shin.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

What do you say to those who have lost faith due to such thoughts?

SHIN

This argument is not made from knowledge. It is known that the priests were meticulous and we have the scrolls from the earliest years, and which show no deviation in the writings through all the years we have had the Lore.

Corin is impressed by Shin's response.

CORIN

Then what do you expect to find if you were ever able to enter the cave?

SHIN

There is mention in the Lore that Yarin did not understand everything that the Earth Warden had him write on the walls. It may be that there is more information there than has been recorded in the Lore.

CORIN

And what do you think this new information would speak of?

Shin is quiet for a few moments.

SHIN

Who is to say.

EXT. PATH TO MOUNTAIN - DAY

Shin and Corin walk through landscape that transitions from forested to rocky and mountainous.

EXT. CAVE OF TRUTH - ENTRANCE - DAY

Corin and Shin stand on a rocky outcropping at the base of a wall of volcanic rock. The top of a volcano is visible in the distance. A large rock formation, reminiscent of a hammer, looms directly above the cliff. Rough volcanic landscape all around.

CORIN

(pointing to the wall)

It is my estimation that the original opening of the cave is behind that wall of rock.

SHIN

Why were the priests unable to find this?

CORIN

(reciting from memory)

*At the foot of the Dragon's throat,
where the great hammer in the sky
meets the great horse at winter's
height, there the Cave of Truth
resides.*

(beat)

The priests have always assumed that both the great horse and the great hammer were formations in the stars - caused them much confusion. They overlooked this mountain completely, focusing rather on those that fit with their flawed interpretation.

Corin points at the formation and then upward to the sky.

CORIN (CONT'D)

I have been here at the peak of winter, and the hammer indeed aligns to the Great Horse.

Shin thinks on this for a moment, surveying the scene.

SHIN

How certain are you of your conclusion?

CORIN

(serious)

I have been studying the Lore and searching out its mysteries since before you were born. I have examined this entire fire mountain thoroughly, and others like it... I am most certain.

Shin keeps his gaze on the rock wall.

CORIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

What will you do here, Shin?

SHIN

(Serious)

I will meditate here.

CORIN

For how long?

SHIN

As long as it takes... Alone.

The two lock eyes and are silent for a moment. Shin's eyes tell Corin he'd better leave.

CORIN

Unfortunately I cannot remain, even should I wish. In less than two days, I have further business with the priests in Nessor... I take my leave of you.

SHIN

Thank you for your guidance.

The two keep a locked gaze for a few more moments.

CORIN

Fare thee well.

Corin turns and leaves. Shin watches as Corin disappears out of view far in the distance.

Shin turns to the rock wall and studies it. He runs his hand along the hardened lava rock and surveys its scope.

After several moments studying the rock, Shin steps back several paces and breathes deeply. He DECIDES TO USE HIS POWER ON THE ROCK.

He closes his eyes and focuses with intensity at a point on the lava rock. A few seconds pass. His closed eyes clench tighter. A few more seconds. And then - a chunk of the rock, about the size of an egg, EXPLODES INTO SMALL PIECES.

Shin takes a few moments to take stock of what he just accomplished. He walks up to the rock and runs his hand along the point where the rock exploded, and brushes off dust and some remaining fragments.

Shin smiles.

He returns to his previous position and FOCUSES AGAIN. His eyes level on the same place on the rock face. After a few moments a portion of rock the size of a man's fist EXPLODES into small pieces.

Shin continues to use his power to blast similarly sized and even larger pieces of the lava rock off of the cliff wall. With each blast, Shin's face gets more serious.

The blasts come QUICKER and LARGER. Shin must protect his face from the blast fragments. He does the work of a hundred men in very short order.

Then, A LARGE CRACK becomes visible in the rock wall behind the lava rock that he has removed.

Shin runs to the cave opening and pushes off loose fragments to make it big enough for him to fit through. He squeezes his upper body through the opening and tries to look into the cave, but it is pitch black.

Shin runs to the forest edge and picks up some moss, several dried reeds, and breaks a dried branch off of a dying tree. He wraps the dried reeds tightly around one end of the stick to make a thick torch.

He finds two appropriate rocks and strikes them together several times over the moss. Flame. Shin grabs his torch and holds it over the burning moss. The torch is lit.

Shin carries his torch to the cave and stops and stares at the opening.

FLASHBACK - FACING THE RED FIGURE

RED FIGURE
I am your purpose...

END OF FLASHBACK

He is FROZEN IN THE FEAR of what he might find.

Finding resolve, he ENTERS THE CAVE.

INT - CAVE OF TRUTH - DAY

Shin walks slowly through the cave holding his torch ahead of him. There are many tight turns and narrow corridors.

Shin walks deep into the cave.

He turns a corner and the passage opens up into a large open room. The walls of the room are covered in CAVE DRAWINGS. THEY ARE THE FAMED WORDS OF YARIN.

Shin FALLS TO HIS KNEES IN AWE.

Shin gets up and moves closer and begins to study the drawings. He finds the place where they seem to begin and follows them around the room, careful not to miss any details.

MONTAGE - CAVE OF TRUTH GLYPHS

-- The Earth Warden seeding the world with people.

-- A circle of people raising their hands to the Earth Warden, seated on a platform in the sky.

-- The Nomad in red, and Earth Warden in white, in a fight on the platform.

-- The Nomad being thrown down to earth.

-- A battle on earth between the Earth Warden's forces, in white, and the Nomad's forces, in red, while the Earth Warden remains on the platform.

END OF MONTAGE

BACK TO SCENE

Shin continues to walk along the cave wall, studying each glyph. Then, Shin's eyes lock on the glyphs he is most afraid to see.

MONTAGE - GLYPHS OF THE NOMAD'S SON

-- The Nomad with a young son.

-- The son, now older and alone, is shown to be holding up a heavy stone with his mind.

-- A large warrior, semi-transparent, within a circular shield, hovering above the ground, escorting the son, protecting him from danger.

-- The Nomad wearing a mask of a young woman, speaking to his son while he sleeps.

-- The Nomad's son, on the platform above the Earth, killing the Earth Warden with the power of his mind.

END OF MONTAGE

BACK TO SCENE

SHIN
 (shaken and
 terrified)
 No... No.
 (In tears)
 No.
 (Screaming)
 NOOO!

The realization makes Shin throw up. Shin wipes his mouth and then runs out of the cave, sobbing. He grunts as he throws himself haphazardly against the cave walls trying to escape.

He thrusts himself out of the cave opening. The skies have grown darker. He hurls his torch away as hard as he can. He yells at the sky.

SHIN (CONT'D)
 (yelling)
 Why did you allow me to be
 created?!

Shin begins to run back in the direction he came from.

EXT - FOREST - DAY

Storm clouds roll in. Shin is running away from the cave as if his life depended on it. He is weeping as he runs.

The wind gets STRONGER. It begins to HAIL.

HAIL occasionally pelts Shin as he runs. The hail becomes larger and more painful.

Suddenly A HAND grabs Shin from behind and SPINS HIM AROUND. IT IS CORIN.

Corin, also running, releases his grip as his momentum carries him ahead of Shin. Corin, breathing heavily, turns and they face each other. Shin takes a few steps backward and catches his breath.

SHIN

Go away.

CORIN

I know what you are.

SHIN

Then you should leave.

CORIN

Why are you running?

SHIN

I do not wish my fate.

CORIN

Then why keep it?

SHIN

(yelling)

No, do not give me false hope - it has been prophesied!

CORIN

You do not know all things.

Suddenly Shin sees a variation in the falling rain and hail up ahead, behind Corin. Two rounded "gaps" are moving towards them. Hail is actually BOUNCING OFF or SHATTERING when it hits the gaps. Shin stops and stares in horror.

As Corin notices Shin's expression, an orb hanging on his neck, under his clothing, gives off a bright glow, which he immediately feels. Corin spins around, pulling out the orb and grasping it tightly in his hand.

The orb gets very hot in his hand and he lets go of it, just before the two "gaps" converge on them - POPPING SOUNDS and the "gaps" become visible - revealing two ARMOUR-CLAD SOLDIERS, EACH IN A SPHERICAL SHIELD - their shields now deactivated by the orb, veer away and tumble into a rocky ditch, out of sight.

Shin stares in astonishment at the path, and then Corin.

CORIN (CONT'D)

You are being followed by Nomad forces. The binding orb I have used is not a very powerful one - it will not be long before they have rejuvenated. Come, we must go.

Corin grabs Shin's hand, and leads him quickly in the direction they were travelling, away from the cave.

SHIN

Where are we going?

CORIN

Back to Revig. We have safety there. I must decide what to do.

Shin pulls his hand away and stops. Corin stops, faces him.

SHIN

Why should I trust you?

CORIN

Why do you speak thus?

SHIN

You know who I am. You will kill me.

CORIN

Shin, what to do is not clear, but there is yet hope for--

SHIN

(angry)

Hope for the land, but not for me.

CORIN

(pained)

My boy, would you not die for the good of the land? I am ready at all times to die for the Earth Warden's purposes.

SHIN

(eyes set to kill)

I will not go with you.

CORIN

(matching eyes)

I will not let you go, Shin. Too many lives are at stake.

Shin's face contorts in anger. He closes his eyes and focuses on Corin. Corin takes a step towards Shin and lifts his arms but is immediately immobilized and drops to a knee. He GRUNTS in discomfort. The grunting becomes LOUDER.

Corin SCREAMS as he FALLS TO HIS KNEES. SHIN JOINS HIM IN SCREAMING.

CORIN DROPS TO THE GROUND. Blood drains from his eyes and nose. DEAD.

Shin breathes hard and looks with scorn at his victim. He notices the orb around Corin's neck, and takes it, placing it around his own neck. He also glances down at Corin's bow and quiver - he removes them carefully, looks at them, then slings them over his shoulder. Shin continues walking in the direction he was going (onward to Tirvon).

CUT TO:

INT/EXT. CAVE AND ROCKY FIELD - MORNING

Shin is asleep on the ground under a large stone overhang. The shelter has a wide opening on one side, through which the forest can be seen.

Shin wakes from the sound of distant voices outside.

Shin waits a few moments and calms his nerves. He takes stock of his surroundings. His possessions lay beside him.

He rubs his forehead as he recalls the events before his loss of consciousness.

He gets up and walks to the edge of the overhang. About 40 marauders are making camp nearby. One of them notices Shin and points, signaling the others to his presence.

Shin is frightened, but then notices the orb around his neck is getting brighter.

FLASHBACK - HAILSTORM

Shin and Corin are facing each other in the hail. Shin sees the variation in the falling rain and hail behind Corin.

Two rounded gaps, where the hail is actually BOUNCING OFF or SHATTERING, are moving towards him.

END OF FLASHBACK

FLASHBACK - DERIT ATTACK

Shin and Herrick are staring down the Derit. Shin watches in horror as the Derit lunges at them and is suddenly knocked sideways through the air.

END OF FLASHBACK

FLASHBACK - CAVE OF TRUTH

The glyph of two semi-transparent, shielded warriors escorting the Nomad's Spawn.

END OF FLASHBACK

BACK TO SCENE

Shin breathes deeply and levels his gaze at the group that is walking towards him. HE BELIEVES HE IS FULLY PROTECTED NO MATTER WHAT.

A group of 20 or so marauders converge in front of Shin.

MARAUDER 1

A little far from home, aren't you young one? What are you doing here?

SHIN

What I wish.

The Marauder chuckles and looks at his fellow ruffians.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

I warn you, do not harm me.

Marauder 1 looks behind and around Shin. He smiles.

MARAUDER 1

(pleased with his own malevolence)

Oh my boy. We will harm you. Unless you can make us believe that you will not tell anyone where we are camped.

Shin is silent, keeping his gaze on Marauder 1.

MARAUDER 1 (CON'T) (CONT'D)

Then again, I'm not likely to believe you.

SHIN

You should leave.

Marauder 1 turns and nods to a bowman, who draws and aims his bow at Shin, who is UNFAZED. He releases the arrow which makes it half way to Shin before SHATTERING IN MID AIR as if hitting an invisible stone wall.

The entire group exclaims or gasps in shock and takes a few steps back. Exclamations consist of "Warden True!" and "Tim Bak!".

SHIN (CONT'D)
Must have been a poor arrow.

MARAUDER 1
(afraid but
undeterred)
Kill him!

The group draws strength from the anger of their leader.

Each member of the group draws their swords and advance on Shin. All of the remaining soldiers are now converging on the scene.

The first two marauders with swords drawn come to the same point that the arrow shattered and are suddenly BLOWN BACKWARDS INTO THE AIR, MASSIVE SMOLDERING HOLES IN THE CENTER OF THEIR UPPER BODIES.

Several of the marauders are knocked over when the lifeless smoldering bodies land on the group. EVERYONE STOPS AND STARES AT SHIN IN SILENT HORROR.

SHIN
Now, they will not let any of you
live.

MARAUDER 1
What- who- please?!

Marauder 1's chest EXPLODES as he is blown backwards into the group. The group retreats in terror.

One by one, and at times two at the same time, the marauders are killed in the same way.

Shin, watching the horrific damage, grows in remorse.

FLASHBACK - PRISON ESCAPE

Shin in the jail cell, injuring the guard. The guard GRUNTING and falling down.

END OF FLASHBACK

FLASHBACK - KILLING CORIN

Shin facing Corin, killing him. Corin contorting in pain, blood pouring from his eyes and nose. Corin falling to his knees.

END OF FLASHBACK

BACK TO SCENE

SHIN

No.
 (growing sorrow)
 Let them go.
 (yelling)
 Let them go, please!

The carnage continues unabated. Marauders helplessly swing their swords at the invisible foes. Occasionally an arrow or a sword makes contact with the force shield and glances off abruptly.

Shin's conscience is torn and he feels he must do something. He pulls off the orb from his neck and looks at it... he squeezes it hard - nothing happens - is he doing it right? Is it not powerful enough? He throws it down. He runs forward a few steps, stops, kneels and calms his breathing.

Shin closes his eyes and FOCUSES ON THE LOCATION OF ONE OF THE INVISIBLE FORCES, carefully tracking their motion.

A few moments pass as Shin remains INTENSELY FOCUSED.

Suddenly Shin releases his breath, balances himself on the ground with his hands, breathing heavily. SOMETHING HAPPENED.

The fury of the carnage has lessened, though the marauders are still frantic, either running away or blindly attacking. The attack is now on only one side of the battlefield.

SHIN STARES IN DISBELIEF REALIZING HE HAS STOPPED, PERHAPS KILLED, ONE OF THE NOMAD'S GUARDING FORCES.

He rushes towards the ongoing battle, and again focuses on the location of the attacking invisible force. He FOCUSES INTENSELY - CAN HE DO IT AGAIN?

The focus energy nearly drops him again, but SUCCESS! The blasting from the Nomad's forces stops entirely.

In fear and disbelief, Shin surveys the scene.

Bodies are scattered across the ground. Bodies are bloodied and are dismembered or have large smoldering holes.

The last of the marauders are still scattering and disappearing into the distant trees.

Shin notices two perfectly rounded indentations in the ground, one at each place where he focused on the Nomad's forces. Each indentation looks like what a giant, heavy invisible sphere would make in soft ground.

Shin slowly walks over to the indentations. As he nears the first indentation, he cautiously feels the air ahead of him. His hand shakes as he gets closer.

The PADS ON THE TIPS OF HIS FINGERS FLATTEN as he presses against the invisible force shield. Shin pulls his hand away in fear, rubbing his hand to ensure it is intact, and takes a few quick steps back. He looks around - nothing.

He steps forward again and flattens his whole hand onto the surface - and then his other hand. He runs his hands along the surface to feel its shape. His hands move as if moving over a giant sphere, slightly taller than a man.

Shin closes his eyes and tries to focus on the contents of the invisible shield.

Suddenly Shin is aware of ANOTHER INVISIBLE PRESENCE. He spins around and freezes - the only sound is Shin's FEARFUL BREATHING.

Shin reaches out in front of him, and THE PADS ON THE TIPS OF HIS FINGERS FLATTEN as he touches another force shield that has moved in, DIRECTLY BEHIND HIM - this one still levitating. Fear.

CUT TO:

EXT. SNOWY FIELD - DAY

The Woman claiming to be Shin's Mother stands facing Shin in the same snowy field Shin saw in his first vision.

For a moment the woman stares at Shin and both are silent.

YOUNG WOMAN

You disappoint me my son.

SHIN

(angry)

Stay out of my mind.

The Young Woman smiles.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
I know who you really are.

The woman is again quiet for a moment and stares at Shin.

YOUNG WOMAN
You must fulfil your destiny.

SHIN
I could kill you.

YOUNG WOMAN
(smirking)
Believe me, I am faster than you.

Shin stares at the woman for a moment.

YOUNG WOMAN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
In the cave, you saw the Lore with
your own eyes. You have a purpose.
You know what it is.

SHIN
I appear to have free will. I will
take my gifts and use them how I
wish.

The woman steps in close and moves her face in close to Shin.
When she speaks, it is THE VOICE OF THE NOMAD.

YOUNG WOMAN/NOMAD
No. You won't.

Shin falls down in shock and fear.

YOUNG WOMAN/NOMAD (CON'T) (CONT'D)
If only that derit had not forced
my soldiers to show their hand,
this would all have gone according
to plan. All is not lost but I will
give you only one more chance.
Fulfil your destiny or I will kill
you and start again.

BACK TO REALITY

EXT. CAVE/FIELD - DAY

Shin is lying on the ground beside the indentations. He rubs
his head. He gets up slowly onto his knees.

The air has shifted. He feels for the invisible shield of the Nomad. It is no longer there. He feels the ground around the indentation, and then in the indentation.

Nothing invisible remains. Bodies remain scattered all around.

Shin rises to his feet. He looks in the direction of the road. He turns and looks at the way back.

He turns again and retrieves his bow and quiver. He then begins walking towards the road to Tirvon. He passes through some forest areas on his way to the road.

He walks on - mentally exhausted and disillusioned.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Shin looks at the trees around him. The forest is statuesque and pristine. Colored flowers speckle the ground. BIRDS SING. Beauty surrounds.

Then, off in the distance, Shin notices something - ANOTHER YELLOW FOX. He stops and watches it carefully. It is as far away as when he took a shot at the last one.

He looks around but does not sense the presence of the Nomad. He takes up his bow and pulls out an arrow. The fox is digging at the base of a tree, but basically stationary.

Shin aims his shot. Time seems to move slowly.

He releases the shot. The arrow sails through the air. Shin closes his eyes, able to focus on the arrow and fox, without sight.

Suddenly THE ARROW STRIKES THE FOX PINNING IT TO THE TREE.

Shin's eyes fly open. He sees the fox's body twitching in its final moments. Shin is expressionless. He does not know what to feel.

Then he sees an even more disturbing sight: A BABY YELLOW FOX SNIFFING AT ITS NOW DEAD MOTHER.

He drops his bow and his quiver, heart fractured, uncovering deeper pain. He continues to walk in the direction of the road, leaving the fox.

He walks. Slowly a scowl forms on his face.

SHIN
 (angry, yelling)
 You could have saved her Earth
 Warden! You could have protected
 her! But you didn't!

Shin lifts his face to the sky.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 (livid)
 I hate you! And if I get the
 chance, I shall kill you.

He walks on, becoming angrier with each step. He stops.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 (yelling)
 You can't have me Nomad! Show
 yourself! I'll kill the Earth
 Warden - but only if you let me
 take you on in battle!

The air is silent.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
 (yelling)
 Show yourself! Let us finish this!

Shin hears a RUMBLE in the distance, and turns his head. Then, another BLAST with an emanation of light above the forest where the sound originated. Shin goes back and grabs his bow and quiver and starts walking in the direction of the noise.

As he walks, there are more BLASTS and EMANATIONS OF LIGHT. Shin begins to jog towards the disturbance.

EXT. FOREST CLEARING - DAY

As he gets closer he hears UNDISCERNIBLE YELLING, and catches BRIGHTER FLASHES and blurred streaks of figures moving hurriedly.

Shin sneaks closer to the scene, moving from tree to tree.

He gets to the closest point he can, a large rock outcropping. He peers over the rock.

Shin's eyes grow wide. A group of about 20 brown-robed priests lay dead, bodies bloody and smoldering. Several other figures, clad in blocky form-fitted black armour, lay intermixed with the priests.

Shin waits to see if there are any more combatants around. SILENCE. Shin cautiously walks out among the carnage, staring in disbelief. Then suddenly -

HIGH TWELFTH
(faintly)
My son.

Shin turns to see one of the robed figures in a very recognizable ornate blue robe, struggling to prop himself up with his arms. It is the HIGH TWELFTH.

Concerned, Shin rushes over and bends down to him, slinging his bow and quiver around his neck, and puts his arm around him to help him sit up.

SHIN
High father, are you injured?

The High Twelfth speaks slowly and slightly dazed. Blood has saturated his robe over his abdomen and over his legs.

HIGH TWELFTH
I have suffered mortal wounding.
But praise the Warden - his shields
saved my life long enough to defeat
the enemy.

The High Twelfth cringes in pain.

SHIN
What can I do to help mend your
wounds?

HIGH TWELFTH
Nothing. It is too late.

The High Twelfth COUGHS and then smiles, looking upwards.

HIGH TWELFTH (CON'T) (CONT'D)
The battle was most fierce. Tales
will be told for cycles.

The High Twelfth stops and looks at Shin, still dazed.

HIGH TWELFTH (CON'T) (CONT'D)
What is your name my son?

SHIN
I am Shin.

HIGH TWELFTH
Shin, my son, you are the first to
receive the news.

SHIN
What news, High Father.

HIGH TWELFTH
(laughing,
cringing)
Today we have slain him... We have
slain him!

Shin catches sight of a body a short distance beyond the High Twelfth. It is charred, but it is CLAD IN RED.

Shin stands and walks cautiously toward the body. As he nears it, he recognizes the figure, IT IS THE NOMAD, Red blood flowing out from behind broken plates of armor.

Shin sits down, cross legged, beside the body, still close enough to converse with the High Twelfth.

SHIN
Was this foretold?

HIGH TWELFTH
No, it was an uncertainty. But it
was always our aim... Now, for an
age of peace that will last
forever.

SHIN
What of the Nomad's Spawn?

HIGH TWELFTH
Also an uncertainty. Who is to say
if he was even created. But without
the Nomad, there can be no Nomad's
Spawn, at least not one that is
brought to perfection... It is
unlikely he could complete his
mission with his father slain.

The High Twelfth COUGHS and CRINGES.

HIGH TWELFTH (CON'T)
We are free.
(coughs)
We are free.

The High Twelfth is stirred to memory, and suddenly is full of urgency.

HIGH TWELFTH (CON'T) (CONT'D)
No, this cannot be! I cannot die
alone. My son, come near.

The High Twelfth gestures Shin to come near. Shin is jarred out of his gaze at the body of the Nomad. He gets up, approaches and kneels down beside the High Twelfth.

HIGH TWELFTH (CON'T) (CONT'D)

I cannot pass from the earth
without sharing my high priestly
ward - else the knowledge pass away
from the earth.

The High Twelfth adjusts his body to try to raise himself to a seated position. But he CRINGES in extreme pain and falls flat on his back.

SHIN

High father, stay still.

HIGH TWELFTH

It is required that I speak the
ward only to a priest, but there is
none that can reach me before I
die... I must tell you, Shin... But
you must promise.

(coughs)

Promise to bring the knowledge
directly to the High Eleventh at
Tirvon. No one else. Can you do
this?

SHIN

(at a loss but
willing)
Of course father.

HIGH TWELFTH

Do you know the meaning of the high
priest's ward?

Shin is mesmerized by what the High Twelfth is asking him, and does not answer immediately.

HIGH TWELFTH (CON'T) (CONT'D)

Do you know?

SHIN

It is the incantation used to open
the door to the Earth Warden's
throne room.

HIGH TWELFTH

Yes. It is knowledge to be wielded
by the High Twelfth only. Entering
the throne room is as good as death
for anyone else. Do you understand?

SHIN

Yes.

The High Twelfth gestures Shin to come near to his face.

Shin lowers his head to come close.

HIGH TWELFTH

Closer.

Shin moves his ear right up to the High Twelfth's mouth.

The High Twelfth WHISPERS SEVERAL WORDS to Shin - about six seconds worth. He then pulls out the amulet that hangs around his neck, and puts it in Shin's hand.

HIGH TWELFTH (CON'T) (CONT'D)

Be faithful my son. Look at me!

Shin is jarred and looks deep into his eyes.

HIGH TWELFTH (CON'T) (CONT'D)

(most serious)

Take the offer of life, though it means your death.

The High Twelfth draws A FINAL BREATH, AND FALLS STILL.

Shin stares at the priest's lifeless, open eyes. Tears well in Shin's eyes.

SHIN

(heartbroken but calm)

What do you mean?

He slowly removes the amulet from around the High Twelfth's head.

He stands up and surveys the scene once more.

He begins to walk towards the road to Tirvon.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

As he walks he tries to ignore the mind-blowing truth - he can access the Earth Warden's chamber - but he can't. He keeps coming back to the amulet and he alternately takes it up to look at it, and puts it away under his clothing.

Shin begins to cry, then sobs come first small and then great. He weeps to expunge all of the pain and loss of the last few days.

Then as if a switch was turned. HE YELLS IN FURIOUS ANGER.

He pauses, breathing heavily. HE YELLS AGAIN, LOUDER AND LONGER.

SHIN

I am my destiny! I am the death of all!

(sobbing))

I am sorry father.

He grabs the amulet to activate the portal, but then -

Suddenly A SHRILL EAGLE'S CRY pierces through the air. Shin looks over and remembers where he is. He does his best to compose himself and walks in the direction of the eagle.

Shin arrives at the EDGE OF AN EXTREMELY HIGH CLIFF. The waters of a river flow around treacherous rocks, hundreds of feet below.

Shin removes his bow and quiver and lays them on the ground. He steps close to the edge. SHIN BREATHS DEEPLY. HE TAKES A STEP CLOSER TO THE EDGE - HIS TOES PEEKING OVER.

Shin closes his eyes and breaths in his readiness to end it all.

Then, right before he throws himself over the edge, he YELLS IN FURY. Shin pulls himself away from the edge and YELLS AGAIN. He cannot do it.

Shin pulls the amulet up to his mouth. He squeezes it and speaks into it.

SHIN (CONT'D)

Asek Be'mal Ru'nith.

(yelling)

Asek Be'mel Ru'nith.

Shin lets the amulet fall from his hand.

SHIN (CONT'D) (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

Shin, full of uncertainty, closes his eyes, falls to his knees, and lowers his head to the ground.

Eyes closed, he waits. SILENCE.

After a few moments, he opens his eyes, lifts his head and looks around. No sign of a portal.

He waits a few moments and then lays down on his back, and stares up at the sky. It is bright blue and cloudless. He feels strangely at peace. Perhaps he does not have to fulfill his fate after all. Shin gets lost in the sky.

Another eagle screams, jarring him from his reverie.

He gets up and dusts himself off. He turns around to take a step, and finds HE IS STANDING DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF AN OPEN PORTAL.

Shin peers into the portal in awe. The portal is rectangular, about the height of an average man. Inside the portal is dark except for two red semi-transparent columns of energy, side by side, a few strides beyond the opening.

He slowly walks laterally around to view the side and rear of the portal, giving it a wide berth. It is perfectly flat, and disappears when viewed from behind - only the open forest is visible from this angle.

As soon as Shin sees the portal disappear, he rushes back to his original position. He sees the portal is still there.

He slowly reaches his hand out into the portal. He pulls it back and looks at his hand, rubbing it with his other hand. He's still in one piece.

He presses his hand up to the open air next to the edge of the portal. Like the previous force shield, the pads on his fingertips press flat, SOMETHING INVISIBLE IS SURROUNDING THE PORTAL.

Shin pulls his hand back and holds it with his other hand though he felt no pain.

Shin backs away a few steps, eyes fixed on the portal. He looks all around. He is alone - and there is nothing for him anywhere.

Shin looks over to his bow and quiver (holding the red arrow), he rejects the notion of retrieving it.

He levels his gaze again on the portal. He breaths out hard. HE BREATHES OUT HARDER. Suddenly, HE SPRINTS THROUGH THE PORTAL.

INT. PORTAL - DAY

Shin FALLS FLAT on a hard black surface. Shin looks at it and feels it. A LOW ETHEREAL HUM pervades the room.

A quick WHOOSH of air and the outside light disappears. Shin whips his head around and sees THE PORTAL HAS CLOSED. The red glow from the columns casts a dim light on the room revealing dark walls and a ceiling as high as the portal.

Suddenly Shin's body SLIDES BACKWARDS A FEW FEET, MAKING CONTACT WITH A BLACK WALL, MOVED BY AN UNSEEN FORCE. Shin passes out.

CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - DAY

The wind BLOWS some leaves over the ground where Shin entered the now absent portal. The (alive) High Twelfth and another priest - their deaths a ruse - inspect the scene.

In his hand he grips the red cube.

HIGH TWELFTH
It is done.

INT. PORTAL ROOM - DAY

Shin comes to on the floor of the small portal room. He feels the floor again, and then feels his face. He is, apparently, still alive.

Shin notices the light. He turns his upper body to look at the Portal door - IT IS OPEN. Uniform, bright white light emanates into the portal room.

Shin stands up, and faces the portal door.

SHIN
(quietly)
New day?

A moment passes, everything is silent except for a gentle ETHEREAL HUM of the portal room. And then -

EARTH WARDEN (V.O.)
(gently, but in charge)
Come, Shin.

Shin gasps at the sound of the unseen voice and takes a step back from the portal.

EARTH WARDEN (V.O.)
Don't be afraid.

SHIN

Who are you?

EARTH WARDEN (V.O.)

You know who I am.

SHIN

Yes.

EARTH WARDEN (V.O.)

Come to me.

Shin's fear grows, as he begins to worry that the Earth Warden will execute him for being an unholy presence. Shin closes his eyes and "searches" for the Earth Warden, so he can get to him first if he needs to.

EARTH WARDEN (V.O.) (CON'T)

I do not wish to hurt you Shin.
Step through the door.

Shin cannot yet "get a lock" on the source of the voice.

Shin exhales hard. HE STEPS THROUGH THE PORTAL.

The room is perfectly white all around, except for a wide rectangular window - A SHADOWED FIGURE STANDS BEHIND THE WINDOW. A large, glowing red circle lies on the floor, in front of the window.

Shin walks up to the window so the red circle lies between him and the window. The figure is sitting on a raised chair and glides forward into greater light. The figure is wearing plated armour like the Nomad, but all white - IT IS THE EARTH WARDEN.

The EARTH WARDEN STANDS and takes off his helmet, revealing the face of a man.

EARTH WARDEN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

I know you have come to kill me.
But you must not. I do not hate you
Shin.

Shin contemplates the Earth Warden's words. The offer is enticing, but it is asking much.

SHIN

(angry)
Why should I trust you?

EARTH WARDEN

I know what happened to your mother, it was evil most vile, and the Nomad will be punished, of this you can be certain. I know that he has created you with special powers aimed at my destruction- it was I who foretold your existence in the Lore. I am putting myself at great risk just allowing you near so that we may talk.

SHIN

It is my fate to kill you.

EARTH WARDEN

No, it is your potential. You can refuse it.

SHIN

You lie! You wish to kill me, to save yourself.

EARTH WARDEN

If I wanted to kill you Shin, you would be dead. Do you not see my power at all times?

Shin ponders this for a moment.

SHIN

And yet you could not save my mother? Some manner of power you have, unless you be evil yourself.

EARTH WARDEN

It was another's evil that killed your mother, not mine. The order I have created allows for pain simply because it is real - and I want a world that is real. Have I not also created love and goodness? Do not let pain drive you from the truth - that will only cause more pain.

Shin lets the weight of this answer seep into him. Tears form in his eyes.

EARTH WARDEN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

I must heal you Shin. No one should have the power that you do - it is not safe.

(MORE)

EARTH WARDEN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

I have the ability to remove what
the Nomad put in you, and return
you to your home, a regular boy...

(beat)

All you must do is step into the
red circle... I cannot force you,
you must choose.

Shin's tears grow, he closes his eyes, WILL HE TAKE THE
OFFER? He hesitates.

The Earth Warden, noticing the hesitation, drops his gaze, he
knows what he must do.

A thin rectangular outline, the size and shape of a doorway,
appears on the whiteness beside the window - the whiteness in
the rectangle slides to the side revealing an opening into
the Earth Warden's personal sanctum.

The Earth Warden walks through the doorway and approaches
Shin.

Shin opens his eyes and recoils at the sight of the Earth
Warden so near.

EARTH WARDEN (CONT'D)

Peace. I could kill you at any time
Shin - I do not wish to do so. I
see that you struggle with my offer
- so I wish to show you something
unlike anything you have ever seen.
No earthly eyes have ever seen what
I will show you, not even the High
Twelfth. If you wish to see it,
follow me.

Shin stares in uncertainty. The Earth Warden turns and walks
slowly back through the doorway.

Shin breathes, thinks.. He takes a step to follow - pauses,
breathes, closes his eyes.

He walks through the doorway, and follows the Earth Warden
down a white-walled hallway. Cables, pipes, and metal panels
with strange markings line the walls.

INT. CONTROL ROOM - DAY

They enter a room full of brightly lit monitors, consoles
with dancing lights, and space-age instruments. Empty chairs
are in front of each station. The room could hold about a
dozen people at the stations.

On the far side of the room is a large, extra-wide window, black, but with specks of white. Shin is overwhelmed by the sight.

Shin's eyes are drawn to the large black window. He walks, stumbles, slowly, towards it. Earth Warden follows.

As Shin approaches, we slowly see the truth - through the window is a large rounded horizon of a blue-green planet.

THE EARTH WARDEN INHABITS A SPACE STATION THAT ORBITS SHIN'S WORLD, A PLANET.

SHIN

What - What is this?

EARTH WARDEN

It is your world.

Shin is dumbfounded. Eyes locked on the unbelievable sight.

EARTH WARDEN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

This is what your world looks like from my vantage point. ... Above the blue sky my world floats in the world of the stars.

Shin continues to drink in the sight.

EARTH WARDEN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

I created your planet with an art called terraforming, and I created your people with an art called genetics. They are patterned after my own people, but at an earlier stage of development - before we used genetics to end the aging process... I always knew the Nomad would try to make his way back here and have his revenge. That is why he used this same art, genetics, to create you - a weapon to destroy me - crafting an escape from his exile... You are an amazing creation, Shin - you have more power than any other being... but you are not ready for that power. I have the power to remove it - you must let me.

SHIN

All this, why?

EARTH WARDEN

We are a curious people, and we wish to observe a people such as ourselves, before we developed the many technologies that we achieved over many ages - powers like flight and invisibility. For my people, it is a beautiful and highly-honored assignment to study that which is far removed from ourselves.

SHIN

Study... Your people.

EARTH WARDEN

(compassionate)

I know this breaks your heart Shin. You were not intended to learn this at your people's level of development I am telling you this Shin, because I care deeply about you - as I care for all my created beings... Everything I do, is for you.

Shin silently contemplates this as it threatens to shatter his heart. The Earth Warden watches in hope - everything is riding on this moment.

A tear runs down Shin's cheek.

EARTH WARDEN (CON'T) (CONT'D)

Your true purpose is not what the Nomad intended.. Don't believe him, Shin.. Even though he crafted you with an ability to kill me... your essence is still part of my original creation. Let me heal you.

A terrifying moment of choice passes. Then ANGER -

SHIN

(coldly)

No.

Shin closes his eyes and focuses on the Earth Warden, SEEKING TO KILL HIM.

The Earth Warden stumbles. As he speaks, his voice becomes increasingly STRAINED and interrupted by QUICK BREATHS and MINOR GUTTURAL NOISES, showing Shin's attack is working.

EARTH WARDEN

Shin... even if you succeed in
killing me... enter the red
circle... you can yet be healed...
I did not need to bring you here...
I wanted to... Please... be healed.

SHIN

(still focusing,
under his breath)
Liar!

Shin is unmoved even as tears run down his face, eyes still closed. He FOCUSES INTENSELY as the Earth Warden speaks.

And then SILENCE. The EARTH WARDEN COLLAPSES, DEAD, BLOOD RUNNING FROM BOTH EYES AND NOSTRILS.

Shin exhales A LARGE BREATH and DROPS TO THE FLOOR, WEEPING.

MONTAGE - MEANINGFUL MEMORIES

-- Shin and Rax walking in the hills behind his home.

-- Herrick's dying words.

-- Cave of Truth glyphs.

-- Aunt Ciel, smiling.

-- Nomad's warning that Shin must fulfil his destiny.

-- High Twelfth's Dying words.

END OF MONTAGE

BACK TO SCENE

Shin looks in remorse at the body of the Earth Warden.

Shin walks back into the white room, pauses, peers at the all-menacing RED CIRCLE... is it his ending? A moment of pure, momentous decision...

HE WALKS INTO THE CIRCLE.

Immediately his BODY ILLUMINATES and is lifted off the ground, fully immobilized. Shin begins to BREATHE DEEPLY IN FEAR.

SMALL RED CIRCLES OF LIGHT SWARM ON THE SURFACE OF HIS FACE and then FREEZE IN POSITION.

EVERYTHING GOES BLACK.

SILENCE. Then the sound of growing wind.

 YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
 What have you done Shin! All is
 lost.

CUT TO:

INT. CENTRAL CHAMBER - CAVE OF TRUTH - NIGHT

Shin awakes with A LOUD GASP. He ROCKETES UP, finds that he is in the Cave of Truth. He sees the glyphs that teach about the Nomad's Spawn.

There are two glyphs at the end of the row that he didn't see before - the FINAL GLYPHS. He walks up to them. One is the Nomad's Spawn in the red circle in front of the Earth Warden. The other is the Nomad's Spawn, very old, in a cave without exit - AN ETERNAL PRISON. HORROR.

Shin turns around to scream but turns into THE RED FACE OF THE NOMAD, just inches from his own.

 NOMAD
 We are together now... forever.

QUICK CUT TO:

EXT. FOREST - HILLS BEHIND SHIN'S HOME - MORNING

Shin awakes to find himself on the ground in the forest near where he saw the first yellow fox. He lifts himself to a sitting position and looks around. Branches sway and birds flit through the trees.

He feels his head - there is no pain or marks on him.

Shin stands up and looks around again. Birds flit past him.

He begins to walk towards home.

CUT TO:

EXT. SHIN'S HOME - MORNING

Shin walks towards his hut. His aunt sees him and rushes out to him. She weeps as she embraces him.

Shin cries with his aunt.

CUT TO:

INT. SHIN'S HOME - MORNING

Shin sits at the table, a cup of hot liquid in his hand. Aunt Ciel stirs a pot of stew.

AUNT CIEL

Take your time my son. When you are ready you can tell me what happened.

Shin is silent and stares in his cup.

AUNT CIEL (CON'T) (CONT'D)

When Zoka and the Second came to tell me of your uncle, it didn't seem real. They had questions for me, but I could not answer anything. What a quandry this was to them - a sudden attack by the enemy, in a meaningless town, on two... meaningless people.

She begins to cry as she says "meaningless people".

AUNY CIEL (CON'T)

(smiling through
the tears)

But I thought I lost you too Shin - you can't imagine my joy at finding you again.

EXT. ROAD IN FRONT OF SHIN'S HOME - MORNING

A messenger boy runs past on the road outside.

MESSENGER BOY

(yelling)

A report from the priesthood: The best of all news! The Nomad is dead! Come to the town circle. The Nomad is dead!

INT. SHIN'S HOME - MORNING

Aunt Ciel moves to the doorway and looks out.

AUNT CIEL

What is this?

Shin stares at his cup, expressionless.

EXT. ROAD - DAY

Shin and Jilwae are walking along the road into town.

Jilwae tosses stones at nothing.

JILWAE

He was flesh and blood like you and me, just like the Lore said... People know not what life will be like now. Some who lost faith are finding it again...

Jilwae tosses another stone.

JILWAE (CONT'D)

And there are some who doubt that the Nomad's forces are fully removed. Some think the Nomad's Spawn may yet live - hidden - preparing further destruction.

Shin's focus is interrupted. He looks at Jilwae.

JILWAE (CONT'D)

What is it?

Shin picks up a stone and turns to face a tree that is several dozen yards away. He looks at the stone.

He slows his breathing - EVERYTHING DEPENDS ON THIS THROW.

SHIN CLOSES HIS EYES. HE THROWS THE STONE AT THE TREE.

The stone sails through the air. Shin's eyes remain closed as he tries to lock onto the rock. Time seems to slow.

THE STONE SAILS PAST THE TREE, unaffected, missing it by several yards.

Shin opens his eyes and absorbs the truth that he has been healed, and HE IS NO LONGER THE NOMAD'S SPAWN.

He lifts his face to the sky, beaming, tears of gratitude.

JILWAE (CONT'D)

Shin, are you well?

SHIN
Yes. Very well.

Shin lowers his gaze to the ground.

SHIN (CON'T) (CONT'D)
(whispering)
I only wish I had been faithful.
Forgive me. Thank you.

A figure approaches from behind, unseen. He is wearing gleaming white, plated armour. He is The EARTH WARDEN!

EARTH WARDEN
You are most welcome.

Shin and Jilwae spin around in surprise.

JILWAE
Who--?

SHIN
But I--

EARTH WARDEN
Yes... you did. But by the same power that healed you, I was able to heal myself.
(beat)
I knew you could kill me, but I also knew that you could not do damage beyond my capacity to heal, because you were not yet fully mature in your ability.

Shin stares at the Earth Warden, trying to let it sink in.

JILWAE
(nervous)
Shin, who is this?

The Earth Warden and Shin remain locked together in gaze.

EARTH WARDEN
The important thing is that you chose healing for yourself... If you had not, you would have been lost forever - in your unnatural state, there would be no possibility for you to continue living in my realm, or to be returned to yours.

Shin lets this sink in for a moment.

SHIN

How is it that you choose now to
walk on the earth?

The Earth Warden looks deep into Shin's eyes.

EARTH WARDEN

There are no enemies left in this
world... There will be consequences
for your transgressions, but that
is only temporary... You are clean,
Shin. You are free.

Shin gazes with emotion back at the Earth Warden.

SHIN

Thank you.

The Earth Warden bends down onto his haunches.

EARTH WARDEN

Live, my son. And be ready -
secrets remain - and a day may come
when I desire your help. Remain
faithful - you will certainly be
tested. And remember, with me, even
when it looks to be the end...
there is more.

The Earth Warden steps backwards. He smiles at the two, and
then SUDDENLY DISAPPEARS.

Jilwae GASPS. They look at each other, Jilwae's face full of
astonished excitement. Shin's full of gratitude.

QUICK CUT TO FADE OUT:

THE END