

# **Song of the Kingdom**

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## **EXT. TAVERN - DAY**

A beaten down tavern in the middle of a great wood. A diminutive old man, OBAN rides up on a slow donkey. With care, Oban ties the donkey to a hitching post and goes into the building.

## **CUT TO:**

## **INT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS**

The tavern is even worse on the inside. The tables look dangerously weak. A man resting in the corner looks like he's been there for years. Flies buzz in the air.

Oban, still carrying his traveling bag and walking stick, wanders up to the bar and speaks with the oversized bartender. As he speaks, a THUG takes notice of the old man. He quietly moves to a back table where some other THUGS sit drinking. He cautiously gets their attention.

THUG: Hey! You see that old timer at the bar? (carefully motions behind him)

THUG 2: The one with the sack?

THUG: Yeah! I think he's the old singer, Oban. He's wanted by Tarold himself!

THUG 2: That old man?

THUG 3: The black general wants him?

THUG: I swear it's him! I swear on my mother's grave!

THUG 2: Your mother--

THUG 3: Wait. You've never led us wrong before. Besides...(looks to Oban, he's alone now)...He IS just an old man. I wonder what he's got in that bag...  
Slowly the three idle up to Oban, leaning back on the bar.

THUG 3: Hello friend. You look a bit lost, and I consider it my personal duty to assist anyone traveling through these parts.

OBAN: Oh, I...

Oban, sensing danger, tries to move towards the door, but he's been surrounded. The thug leans in closer.

THUG 3: You know, they say these woods are haunted the further in you get...I happen to know a couple of ghosts personally, and unless you'd like to meet them--

OBAN: You've got a fly on your nose!  
Suddenly self-conscious, the thug looks down his nose. Oban tries to make a quick break for it.

THUG: He's making a break for it!  
Instantly, the three men converge on Oban. There are sounds of a struggle, and Oban is swallowed up by them. Some fists fly, some grunts, and then--

THUG: I've got him!

THUG 3: That's me you idiot!  
The men all back away quickly. Oban is gone.

THUG 3: Where'd he go?

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. TAVERN - CONTINUOUS**

Oban is walking peacefully away, leading his donkey and humming to himself.

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. SEA CLIFF - AFTERNOON**

A sickly yellow sun is setting over a gray ocean. High on a cliff, amidst a foreboding landscape overlooking the water, is Oban on his donkey. His pace is slow, almost strained. Behind him plays "*The Legend of the Song.*"

**OBAN (SINGING V.O.)**

Long time ago in the Kingdom of Skye  
Where all the true kings lived and died  
Music was the magic  
That made our kingdom strong  
This is the legend of the song

Refrain  
It's the Song of the Kingdom  
The song of the free  
It's the song welling up in you and me

The song was the truth that we counted upon  
Old as the rocks, young as the dawn  
We all lived in harmony and danced in the sun  
The song was the bond that kept us one  
(Refrain)

Then came the darkness that shut out the light  
Bringing our world the blackest night  
Sealing our song away that saddest of days  
Locking our magic tune away  
(Refrain)

But one day we'll here it  
In the night when its still  
Drifting down softly from the hills  
It wont really matter  
Where we first here its strains  
Our lives will never be the same  
(Refrain)

So it has no beginning and it has no end  
One day it's just singing on the wind  
And it goes on forever  
Like the song in our souls  
Like love it will never be controlled  
(Refrain)

It's the song of the Kingdom  
The song of the free  
It's the song welling up in you and me

Finally, he reaches a massive rock formation that guards a jagged path that leads to a bowl shaped beachhead below. Credit sequence ends.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. HAMEN - CONTINUOUS**

The town of Hamen is small, and spread thin across the shore. As Oban approaches the town proper, he passes a group of fishermen pulling endless, empty nets in from the sea. They give the stranger a vacant glance, and then continue with their work.

Further in town, Oban finds all the houses shut. Any sounds of life are distant, behind closed doors. Oban looks sadly around the town, then turns his animal back towards the sea.

Alone on a wharf the boy ORIN sits staring blankly at the perpetual movement of the sea. Oban, off his donkey, walks up behind him. Orin looks up at Oban, but then back at the ocean. However, Oban senses something different about him...

Three apples appear in his hands. Orin is enticed, more by the sight of the apples than by the magic. Oban juggles them. Orin follows the apples as they arch upwards, more apples appearing with each revolution. Then, one by one, they disappear.

Orin looks back down and sees that the apples have been replaced by a stringed instrument, a Ballinor. He doesn't know what it is. Oban strums a chord, and Orin is amazed.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. ORIN'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER**

Orin bursts in excitedly on his mother, BYREN. He stops when he notices his father, ERMANE, sitting at a table. Instantly, his demeanor changes. He walks respectfully up to the man.

ORIN: Father, there's a stranger outside.

ERMANE: I saw him come into town. I'd have thought he'd have left by now.

ORIN: Well, he needs a place to stay, and...

BYREN: Absolutely not!  
Orin's mother walks between the two.

BYREN: You know the town's rules about outsiders. I don't care if the black general Tarold rode into town with all his horsemen, I wouldn't give him a room.  
The room is silent.

ORIN: But mother, he can do tricks--

BYREN: No. No buts.

ERMANE: Orin, into the next room.  
Orin, who was exhilarated when he entered the house, reverts to his apathetic gaze and leaves. His father rises.

ERMANE: Did you see Orin just now? Did you see the way he looked, spoke? He's not usually like that. If there's someone in this village, stranger or not, who can make our son think...feel like that, I can't see why we shouldn't invite him into our home.

They stare at each other for half a second. Finally, the mother relaxes.

BYREN: Alright.

ERMANE: Good! And I especially don't see why we shouldn't see whatever tricks made the boy so invigorated.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. HALL - NIGHT**

An old hall illuminated by low burning torchlight. All the people of Hamen have been gathered, and a makeshift stage has been assembled. Oban stands atop it, waiting for the murmurs of the crowd to die down. Finally, he clears his throat, and the hall silences.

OBAN: I don't know about you, but I always feel better in front of a crowd if the lights are dim.

He motions with his hands, and the torches smoothly diminish until they are out. The crowd gasps a little.

OBAN: (apologetically) Whoops, that's too much. Now how can you see the show?

With a sudden thrust, Oban throws his hands towards the ceiling. All at once, the torches blaze brighter than before, filling the hall with violent red light. The crowd

cheers. Oban looks around and sees Orin. He is the only one not cheering. Oban cocks an eye, and continues.

Oban waves his hands, and a dark red ball appears. He tosses it into the air, and it becomes a rose.

OBAN: I'm good with roses.

He tosses it into the air again, and it becomes a bouquet of roses. They fall towards the crowd, and turn into a flock of dark red birds. Everyone else is watching the birds, but Orin is staring intently at Oban.

Oban starts to sing. As the birds circle around Oban's head, turning into pulsating balls of fire, the Ballinor again fills his hands.

OBAN:       Whatever happened to what we once had  
                  Where is the who that we were  
                  Noblest of mind, kindest of deed  
                  Simpler yet wise were we  
                  But we lost it. Let it wither.  
                  Like vines no one tended  
                  That dried up and died  
                  We just tossed it, by the wayside  
                  Never knowing the cost it was going to mean  
                  Whatever happened to what we once had  
                  Where is the who that we were  
                  Noblest of mind, kindest of deed  
                  Simpler yet wise were we

                  Oh what we had then  
                  Good fortune was our friend  
                  Everyone sang  
                  The hillsides all rang  
                  With the music of love  
                  Laughter was our guide  
                  No need for us to hide  
                  The whole island danced with our hands lifted high to the sky up

above

                  Whatever happened to what we once had  
                  Where is the who that we were  
                  Noblest of mind, kindest of deed  
                  Simpler yet wise were we...  
                  Whatever happened to what...we once had

The crowd is completely silent, emotionally caught up in the melody and words. Orin, unaffected, carefully studies Oban and the instrument. Oban strums the Ballinor one last time, and the balls of light explode into darkness.

OBAN:       Thank you all. Good night.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. ELDEWOOD - NIGHT**

The dark of the hall turns into the dark of the Eldewood. A lone soldier, TAROLD, stalks through the forest. He carries a sword and a greasy torch, but it might as well not be there. He stumbles blindly through the woods, occasionally hacking at the plants and roots that restrict his path. Weird cries chatter at him from all sides. Suddenly, the torch goes out.

Now in total darkness, Tarold spins around fearful of the alien forest. He trips on an overgrown tree root, his sword slips from his hand. He pulls himself up, and tries to crawl forward to look for his weapon, but he can't, something is holding him back. It's the forest itself. It has come alive with shrieking vines, intent on holding him down, strangling him. He pulls a crooked dagger from his belt, but it's too late. The plants surround him, and--

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. CAMP - CONTINUOUS**

Tarold snaps awake from his dream. Beads of sweat roll down his brow. His GUARDS peak cautiously into his worn-out tent. Tarold ignores them. He wraps his blanket tighter around his body and rises from his low cot, making his way to the edge of the camp. A guard stands at sleepy attention. Tarold wakes him with a single kick.

GUARD: Sir, I--

TAROLD: Shut up. (He looks beyond the camp) Have you found the old wizard yet?

GUARD: Uh, yes sir. Our scouts have reported that he's heading for a little village called Hamen.

Tarold pushes past the guard, staring into the rising sun.

TAROLD: ...Oban...

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. OUTSIDE HAMEN - MORNING**

Tarold's sun becomes Oban's. The old man leads his donkey over the cliff out of town. He reaches the top to find Orin already waiting for him, sitting on the rock formation.

OBAN: I thought it was you. I had my doubts, but when everyone else was caught up in the magic, you were the only one trying to see how it worked.

ORIN: I want to. I want to, to know how it works. Or at least see it, one more time.

OBAN: The magic?

ORIN: The music. I want to see the, see the--

OBAN: The Ballinor? Yes, I thought so. You'll see it...in due time.

Orin shifts nervously on his seat. Oban sees that he's brought nothing with him, just the clothes on his back.

OBAN: Here, is that all you're taking with you?

ORIN: It's all I own.

OBAN: (smiling) Good. Follow me.  
Orin does so.

**DISSOLVE TO:**

**EXT. HAMEN - DAY**

A group of giggling young boys throws eggs at Orin's house. Byren bursts from the door, chasing them away.

BYREN: Get out of here! If I catch you around here again, you'll wish you'd been caught by the black general--

She stops as a cloud passes overhead, blocking out the sun. She stares into the sky until the sound of horses tears her from her daze. Streaming into the village marches an army of men on black horses. The man in front is Tarold, dressed in his distinctive black uniform.

BYREN: Tarold...

Tarold halts his horse in front of Byren. She looks around, and sees that the street has emptied itself around her. Tarold leaps down from his horse.

TAROLD: (smoothly) Woman, please tell me. Is this the town of Hamen?

BYREN: (still dazed) Why, why yes sir, it is.

TAROLD: I see. And did a traveling magician pass through here? An older man, perhaps with a donkey?

BYREN: Yes sir. He performed tricks sir, he stayed in my own home.

TAROLD: (pleased) Good! And...is he still there?

BYREN: No sir. He left this morning. Which reminds me, I can't find my son--

TAROLD: (disappointed) Oh. He left? Alright. Thank you, you've been very helpful, I assure you.

Tarold immediately turns around and walks back toward his men. A couple have dismounted. He pulls one of them, his LIEUTENANT, to the side.

TAROLD: The old bastard's already left. (considers) Burn the village. No survivors.

LIEUTENANT: Yessir.

Tarold starts walking away as his men draw their weapons.

**CUT TO:**

**EXT. OPEN FIELD - DAY**

Oban stops the donkey, and motions for Orin to stop. The Eldewood is in sight. Oban spins around, arms spread wide.

OBAN: Don't you feel it? Don't you feel that this is the spot? Right here. This is the perfect place for-- (stares at Orin) Our lunch.

Orin, caught up in the moment, is suddenly disappointed.

OBAN: Tell you what, let me show you some magic. Better yet, let me give you some magic. From now on, this will be your responsibility.  
Oban reaches into his cloak and pulls out something, and tosses it to  
Orin. Orin looks into his hands and sees an iron and flint.

ORIN: Flint? For a fire? That isn't magic.

OBAN: Fire might be simple, but it's still magic. It's also the oldest kind of magic there is. Besides, it's the simplest things that make the best magic, the things that anyone can do. The things that everyone does, everyday, from the highest king to the lowest scullion.

Oban starts gently singing "*Music is the Best Kind of Magic.*"

OBAN: Let music fill your soul  
Let it awaken  
The joy you've long forsaken  
Music is the best kind of magic

Orin is caught up in the melody and joins him in song as he sets up the campfire.

OBAN AND ORIN

Let music fill your soul  
Let it awaken  
The joy you've long forsaken  
Music is the best kind of magic

After it finishes, he leans over to light the fire. As the first sparks take form in the kindling, Oban sees distant smoke leer over the horizon. He also sees something else. Tarold and his cavalry.

OBAN: Too late for that now boy. Quickly, follow me!

Oban pulls Orin from the embers he's creating and towards the Eldewood. The donkey obediently follows. Orin, realizing where they're going, resists.

ORIN: You can't be serious! We can't go in there, that's the Eldewood! It's haunted, it's forbidden! It's always been forbidden! Dark spirits live in there!

OBAN: It's either your invisible phantoms, or Tarold's cold steel.



Oban, still pulling him, motions for Orin to look around. Tarold's cavalry is gaining. Tarold himself is at the front, his horse's thumping hooves putting out the meager campfire. Orin quickens his pace, and soon they've crossed the threshold into the forest.

TAROLD: (drawing his sword) NO!

Tarold urges his horse onwards, but suddenly yanks the reins back. The forest in front of him sprouts tendrils and shrieking vines, like in his dream. Tarold gasps and shields his eyes. He looks again, and the forest is back to normal, as if nothing ever happened.

The cavalry have stopped behind him. Tarold's lieutenant comes up beside him.

LIEUTENANT: Sir?

TAROLD: I--We--

LIEUTENANT: Sir, the men are nervous about entering the Eldewood. I told them... Tarold spins around to face his men.

TAROLD: WHAT?!? Cowardly fools. I-- (pauses) Idiots. Ride down the tree line, find a way inside. GO!

Tarold's men disperse. From within the forest, a hidden Oban looks on. As soon as Tarold leaves, he pulls Orin deeper into the woods.

**CUT TO:**

**INT. THRONE ROOM - DAY**

Tarold kneels before the KING of Skysea. The king, flanked by two AIDES, is standing over him, roaring in rage.

KING: IDIOT! Why couldn't you capture ONE OLD MAN?!?

TAROLD: Your majesty, Oban is a sorcerer. He commanded the cursed Eldewood. It swallowed him whole.

KING: SHUT UP! Do I command CHILDREN?!? You take an army of horseman to catch an old man and a donkey, and DARE return to me empty handed?

TAROLD: My lord, I--

KING: Silence!

The king flops back into his throne, looking a little tired. He forces himself up and starts to pace around the throne room, singing "*The Non-Song.*"

KING: All I hear of lately are these singers Traipsing round my island  
Drawing crowds as they regale them  
With their songs and magic tales  
Well enough, I say enough  
I have no patience for this stuff  
We've got to run them down like foxes

Find the lair where they've been hiding  
Then exterminate them all...don't you agree?

AIDES: We must kill them  
We must kill them

The king turns sharply around, arm outstretched accusingly. The two must quickly duck to avoid being hit.

KING: Are you singing?

AIDES: No M'lord.

KING: Are you singing?!?

ADIES: No M'lord!

KING: Well I should hope not  
You know the sentence

The King stops for a moment, as if lost in thought. Then he starts pacing again.

KING: You know their music is as dangerous  
As anything we're facing  
Not an arrow or a sword  
Can match their spell inducing chords  
Well they're through  
You know it's true  
Now here's what all of you must do  
Cross the mountains and the moors  
Chase down all these troubadours  
Do away with them for good...am I understood?

ADIES: We must kill them  
We must kill them

KING: Are you singing?

AIDES: No M'lord.

KING: Are you singing?!?

ADIES: No M'lord!

KING: Well I should hope not  
You know the sentence

The King seems to forget what he's trying to say, then starts up again.

KING: We must hound them till they're finished...  
How I long to crucify them...

Oh we mustn't let them become martyrs  
I'll say...what a pity to have lost them...  
Now go and get them!

Finally, the King comes back to the throne and seats himself, exhausted.

**KING:** Bring me the old man's hands. If you don't, you won't have to worry about coming back. Do you understand?

**TAROLD:** Yes sir, I understand. (he stares angrily at the ground) It shall be done.

**FADE OUT.**

**FADE IN:**

**EXT. ELDEWOOD HUT - DAY**

A simple hut stands alone in the Eldewood, the only bright inviting spot in the overgrown, forboding forest. Climbing the path to the hut is Orin, looking slightly older, more mature than we last saw him. He's carrying freshly cut firewood up to the house.

Entering the house, Orin hears the melodic sound of the Ballinor. He drops his firewood, caught up by the sound. Oban, who was tuning the instrument, stops.

**OBAN:** You dropped something.