

RINGS OF POWER

02X01

"Have we lost our way?"

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TEASER

FADE IN:

INT. KHAZAD DUM MINES - SOMETIME

Following its nose, a curious SQUIRREL wanders down the vertical shaft of a wet and eerie mine...

It reaches a cavernous web of interconnecting paths. Tools and equipment lay around, futilely awaiting use.

Galadriel MUSES.

GALADRIEL (V.O.)

Cursed are those who wander in the dark without a light to guide them. For where there is no light, hope is hard to see. And when there is no hope in sight...

The squirrel hurries deeper, in a manic effort to reach the scent's origin. It fits through a crack on the bottom level.

INT. MITHRIL DEPOSIT - SOMETIME

The squirrel scurries through the DARK. Then...

...Tiny specs of light glimmer all around like a walk in the night sky.

The squirrel wanders in the dark... revealing it's in a massive mithril deposit.

A pebble sized ore is picked up and admired.

GALADRIEL (V.O.)

...Faith is easily manipulated. Mithril is power. And power fosters hope. The most precious metal in Middle Earth. Found in the deep dark, where souls do not belong.

The world TREMBLES. A deep ROAR rattles the cave, causing webish fractures and a faultline. The squirrel holds tightly to its ore.

From the abyss, a Balrog ROARS. A rush of FIRE shoots up from the dark, engulfs the space, and incinerates the squirrel.

GALADRIEL (V.O.)
What evils have we awakened? What
evils lie within?

We're consumed by fire.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. FIERY SEA - SOMETIME

A crimson fiery sea.

Like a mirage, a RING becomes visible.

SAURON (V.O.)
(black speech)
Change *nauk-quireuk ukacrifice*.
(Change requires sacrifice)

We drift intrusively close to the ring. Bursting with
powerful dark magic, the air around thins, and its density
like hypergravity - an abomination to the natural world.

MATCH CUT TO:

FLASH FORWARD **HAPPENS LATER IN THE SEASON, DURING SAURON'S
WAR ON EREGION.*

INT. EREGION. CELEBRIMBOR'S QUARTERS - DAY

A ring spins in the eye of a sad elven man, CELEBRIMBOR, who
sits facing us. His wrinkled canvas painted blue.

GALADRIEL (V.O.)
When there are no more sacrificial
lambs, the fight will come to us.
In the face of such evil, what will
we become? Have we lost our way?

The sound of WAR penetrates the tower walls. Celebrimbor
moves to look out the window. The BATTLE reflected in his
terrified, guilty eyes.

ELVEN GUARDS burst in. A decorated CAPTAIN in the lead.

CELEBRIMBOR
We have lingered here too long.

Celebrimbor whips away from the horror outside.

INT. ROYAL PALACE HALLS - DAY

The guard escorts Celebrimbor through PANICKED ROYALS and SERVANTS in an UPROAR, seeking guidance that he cannot offer. They push past...

INT. MAIN HALL - DAY

Celebrimbor and the escort navigate the CROWDED space.

BANGING at the palace's barricaded main door.

All go quiet and linger in a terrible SILENCE.

BANG! BANG! BANG!!! The door fissures.

Chaos consumes all in a messy, desperate retreat.

Celebrimbor is safely surrounded by his escort.

Sauron's forces, ORCS and MEN, rush in with WEAPONS readied.

The royal guard meets them head-on.

The captain clashes with a BRUTE ORC.

Sword strike, equally matched.

Elven warriors and Sauron's forces cut each other down.

The captain wearies. Celebrimbor makes a run for it.

Sauron's forces outnumber the elven warriors.

The brute orc spartan kicks the captain, dizzying him.

Celebrimbor trips and falls to the ground, where he's petrified by the slaughter all around.

The brute orc lands another kick that takes the wind out of the spent captain. A clean slash by the orc sends the captain's severed head...

...Right in front of Celebrimbor.

Sauron's forces have won the battle. The brute orc rushes at Celebrimbor and knocks him out with a boot to the face.

INT. TORTURE CHAMBER - NIGHT

Strung up by his wrists, Celebrimbor drips blood going in and out of consciousness. An ORC executioner slaps him cognizant.

EXECUTIONER
Wake up, filth.

CELEBRIMBOR
(weakly)
I do not have the knowledge you
seek. It was he who made possible
the forging of the rings.

EXECUTIONER
Wrong answer to the wrong question.
Ready for another flogging?

Ghoulisn captain, THE BLACK HAND, steps into moonlight. Its
lanky figure in a hooded cloak, completely concealed.

EXECUTIONER (CONT'D)
The Black Hand of Sauron will break
you.

The Black Hand shoves the orc aside and dehoods. Twisted
burnt flesh, sunken hollows for eyes, and jagged teeth that
chew through its own pale gory flesh. Uglily unnatural.

CELEBRIMBOR
(afraid)
You do not belong here. From which
dark pit did Sauron drag you?

Long, bony fingers wrap around Celebrimbor's head, enclosing
him in a nasty grip. The Black Hand speaks telepathically at
will; an intrusive baritone whisper in mind.

BLACK HAND (V.O.)
I have seen the void. That hellish
place where light does not exist.

CELEBRIMBOR
Abomination. Sauron wields power
like a child with a new toy.

BLACK HAND (V.O.)
Only through him will we break this
world and create a new one where
power is earned, not given to those
who live by the light of Valinor.

CELEBRIMBOR
Sauron will never break us.

BLACK HAND (V.O.)
The Dark Lord does not need to.

CELEBRIMBOR

He will manipulate men right into
their own demise.

BLACK HAND (V.O.)

The feeblest of all creations. So
easily seduced by spectacle. Driven
by an insatiable hunger for titles
and riches.

CELEBRIMBOR

(struggles to speak)

This evil will not prevail. There
will be a reckoning-

The Black Hand's grip tightens. Celebrimbor's losing it.

BLACK HAND

Yet, it is the elves who hide
behind this evil. Administering
protection in exchange for absolute
allegiance.

CELEBRIMBOR

Light protect me. Light protect me.
Light protect me...

The Black hand momentarily eases its grip.

BLACK HAND (V.O.)

Celebrimbor, son of Curufin, King
of Eregion... you will die within
the walls of which you hide. But
not before you taste the carnage
caused by your kin... Open your
mind. Embrace the dark and feed me
your light. Witness what you have
done. Feel the pain you have
caused, every delicious moment of
suffering.

Celebrimbor goes into a TRANCE.

The Black Hand steps back, their sunken eye pits glowing deep
red, a telepathic BUZZ CRESCENDOS.

END OF FLASH FORWARD

FADE OUT.

END OF TEASER

ACT ONE

EXT. OLD ROAD - DAY

Rainy season. A downpour is imminent. Perpetual grey paints these lands depressed.

On the broken cobblestone road, a boyishly pretty half-elf, DASYRA (20s), HUMS riding on her hardy palomino, TALLAGOR. A cart of grain sacks in tow. A village ahead.

DASYRA
(sarcastic)
Ah, home sweet home.

Tallagor NEIGHS disapprovingly. She eyes the cart, pats him.

DASYRA (CONT'D)
Sorry bout the weight, Tallagor. It
won't always be like this. Now, put
your game face on. Guards up ahead.

EXT. VILLAGE GATE - DAY

Dasyra plays it cool as they reach the main gate. An unsightly ORC GATEKEEPER in standard black armor awaits her. ORC GUARDS with a menacing presence loiter nearby.

Mounted, Dasyra presents her arm. The orc grabs it tightly and eyes a black speech BRANDING seared into her skin.

GATEKEEPER
You can pass.

Dasyra massages her pained wrist as Tallagor pulls forward.

The orc glances at the cart suspiciously.

GATEKEEPER (CONT'D)
Stop! What's in the back?

He probes the grain sacks.

DASYRA
(grits teeth)
Just feed for the livestock.

GATEKEEPER
Where's your supply tax. anything
that doesn't go directly to the
cause gets taxed.

Disgusted, he traces her ears - oddly in between elvish and human - peeking out from under a messy braided pony.

GATEKEEPER (CONT'D)

And what's the matter with your ears? You some kinda deformed elf?

The orc posse MURMURS INSULTS.

DASYRA

Not if I can help it. And do I look like I have any coin?

GATEKEEPER

Off the horse.

DASYRA

It'll rain soon. Can't have the grain getting soaked.

GATEKEEPER

Now!

Not far, a mysterious hooded MAN (*Arondir, who will reveal himself later*) watches Dasyra dismount. He's ready to intervene should the need arise.

GATEKEEPER (CONT'D)

Pay up, you gypsy types are always smuggling something.

DASYRA

(pleads)

You're joking, right? No one in this damned, forsaken valley has anything. We barely have enough food and you're asking for more. Please, I need to get this-

He SLAPS her hard across the face, shutting her up.

The orc posse LAUGHS and PROVOKES the assault.

Arondir feels for an arrow beneath his cloak. One swift motion could send it into its target.

Dasyra spits blood, grimaces and bares it.

The orc pulls out a dagger, walks to Tallagor and drags the blade over his hindquarter, just enough to unnerve her.

DASYRA (CONT'D)

Okay, okay. Please, just stop.

Defeated, Dasyra digs through her tattered satchel and pulls out a tarnished stopwatch. She begrudgingly hands it over.

GATEKEEPER
What's this trash?

DASYRA
An old family heirloom. My only
heirloom. It belonged to my mother.

Engraved on the back: *Bronwyn*. The orc isn't impressed.

DASYRA (CONT'D)
(quick lie)
But, it's made of silver. Purest
silver all the way from Lindon.
Crafted in the workshop of the
greatest of all elven smiths,
Celebrimbor.

GATEKEEPER
(awed)
Lindon? Gotta be worth something.

DASYRA
Take it. Family's never been worth
much to me.

He pockets the stopwatch.

GATEKEEPER
Get outta here, before I put your
pony on tonight's menu.

Dasyra grabs Tallagor's reigns and dejectedly leads him away.
Arondir relaxes.

EXT. VILLAGE STREETS - DAY

Arondir trails Dasyra through the oppressed village occupied by Sauron's forces.

A compact settlement with crumbling roads, a shanty ghetto, and a heavily guarded COMMAND FORTRESS. Patrolling GUARDS monitor downtrodden LOCALS who go about their business, some on their last leg.

They pass through a BUSTLING marketplace. An OLD BEGGAR in rags lingers on a corner. Dasyra digs a crusty loaf from her satchel and hands it over. The beggar smiles, reciprocates with a pretty dried flower from a crate of pitiful wares.

DASYRA
(sincerely)
Thank you. I love it. Flowers are
my favorite of all things.

Nearby, Arondir watches Dasyra lead Tallagor away and into...

INT. STABLES - DAY

Downhearted livestock light up when Dasyra enters, filling the silence with LOVELY HUMMING.

Dasyra unhitches the cart, unbridles Tallagor, feeds him a carrot, and turns her attention to the grain sacks.

DASYRA
(self talk)
Keep pressing your luck.

She cycles through the weight of everything and moves on.

Discretely, she pushes a pseudo-haystack aside, revealing a floor hatch. She knocks a unique code. The hatch opens to a ruggedly beautiful woman, RENNA (20s).

RENNA
What the hell took you so long?

DASYRA
Sorry, I got caught up. Didn't mean
to keep you waiting.

RENNA
Not me you need to apologize to.
Old Maylin'll have words with you
for being this late.

Renna's intense, smoldering eyes are fixed on Dasyra's bambi-ish veneer. Dasyra holds out the dry flower.

DASYRA
I come in peace.

RENNA
I was worried.

DASYRA
(sarcastic)
I couldn't tell.

A flirty grin.

INT. HIDEOUT STOREROOM - DAY

Dasyra and Renna carry in the last grain sack; Dasyra struggles, Renna holds most of the weight and teases.

RENNA

What would you do without me?

DASYRA

(breathy joke)

I'd find me the biggest heffer on this side of the mountain. Sweeten em up with maple scones, extra lard. And in return, I'll have protection all my days.

RENNA

How lucky that heffer would be.

DASYRA

The luckiest.

RENNA

Dasyra, you're ridiculous.

They organize the sacks on a workbench.

DASYRA

(playful)

It's just a bit of fiction. Thing is, I'm actually spoken for.

RENNA

(goes along)

Must be very patient, that one.

DASYRA

A bit of a quick fuse with a slow burn. Thing is - because there's always a *thing* with creatures of such beauty - but, she gets a bit threatened by my many loathsome suitors.

RENNA

(factually)

That makes no sense. And does not. I highly disagree with this whole jealousy narrative. Delusional.

Renna cuts open the sack. Dasyra digs her hand into the loose grain and feels around.

DASYRA
Oh, sure. See, if a bit of jealousy
is the cost of such a magnificent
creature...

Dasyra pulls her hand out and caresses her dusty fingertips
over Renna's lips.

DASYRA (CONT'D)
(innuendo)
...One who knows what I smell like
from the inside out...

Entranced, Renna bites her lip. Dasyra sinks her hand back
into the sack and searches.

DASYRA (CONT'D)
...Then, I suppose it's a cost
worth incurring.

RENNA
(gets close)
You know, in another life, you'd
been a bard.

DASYRA
In another life... Problem is you
gotta die to get there.

Dasyra pulls a small satchel from the sack...

...Renna steals a kiss. They linger in fleeting tenderness.

DASYRA (CONT'D)
It won't always be like this.

Renna sensually kisses Dasyra's neck.

RENNA
So, let's seize each moment.

Another kiss.

A weathered yet hardy woman in a darkly beautiful kaftan, OLD
MAYLIN (60s), barges in and interrupts. They fix themselves.

MAYLIN
(playfully stern)
Ya know, too much sweetness'll give
you a cavity. And before you know
it, your teeth are rotting out.

RENNA
(sarcastic)
Yes, mother. Mitigate adverse
effects of excessive sweets. Noted.

DASYRA
You're gonna start rationing out
sweetness?

RENNA
(jokes)
I'll keep it in a little jar
between my legs.

MAYLIN
Hurry your asses up. We need those
meds.

Dasyra tosses the satchel to Maylin.

MAYLIN (CONT'D)
That's a start. Let's get this
sorted so we can start running this
place like a proper refuge again.

Maylin exits. Dasyra digs through the tabled sack.

RENNA
I love that old goat like a mother.

DASYRA
Little orphan me should be so
grateful.

EXT. VILLAGE ALLEY - DAY

Hungry BIRDS and RODENTS pick at spilled grain. Patrolling
ORC GUARDS pass by. One of them throws a rock that kills a
bird. The remaining animals scurry away. We fly away with a
fleeing bird...

EXT. SKY - DAY

The bird flies away from the sad village, over a decrepit
countryside and vanishes into a migrating FLOCK.

MONTAGE BEGINS

-A battlefield; sweeping plains of dead things.

-Tainted streams that intersect the Anduin River.

-Similar villages all bestowed the same tragic fate.

GALADRIEL (V.O.)
One village to the next, men fall
to Sauron's forces. Those who join
him are promised prestige and
titles in his new world order.

-A CARAVAN is raided by Sauron's forces.

GALADRIEL (V.O.)
Those who do not will hope for a
quick death. What evil have we
grown to accept as part of our
world?

-The flock steers clear of Fangorn Forest's eerie woodline.
ENT CRIES echo from deep within.

-The flock flies into Lorien's pristine, protected realm.

MONTAGE ENDS

EXT. CARAS GALADHON - NIGHT

An ancient and astonishing mallorn forest with a magnificent
tree city. The nerve center of Lothlorien has exquisite,
earthy, and complex architecture.

EXT. PALACE COURTYARD - NIGHTMARE

The flock hovers over an elaborate rose garden where
GALADRIEL lingers in a tragic state.

GALADRIEL (V.O.)
There is a shadow growing in my
mind. An infection. A poison in my
blood diffusing the light.

From the dark, HELBRAND walks up and caresses her sad face...

...His Other hand sinks a dagger into her gut.

A dark psychic force reverberates through the air around as
he SHAPESHIFTS into SAURON; Taller than men and darkly
sinister in black armor.

Sauron roars. Galadriel screams.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. GALADRIEL'S QUARTERS - MORNING

Covered in fine furs and melancholy, Galadriel shoots up screaming from a nightmare. She massages an unbearable pain in her gut and wrestles with internal ruin.

King Amdir authoritatively SPEAKS.

KING AMDIR (V.O.)

When we indulge in the things we cannot change, obsession infects our minds with mania. These are dark times. But, we have seen dark times before.

Galadriel swallows it all down.

INT. COUNCIL CHAMBER - DAY

In a tense air, an eloquent elf with a feminine flare, KING AMDIR (50s), addresses a finely adorned COUNCIL at the stone roundtable.

KING AMDIR

What will the limit be if we involve ourselves in Sauron's southern scrimmages? Are we to go to war for the likes of men? Men who are so easily seduced by power. Half the Southlands have sided with the enemy already!

DISSENTIOUS CHATTER.

Galadriel abruptly enters, much to Amdir's disdain.

KING AMDIR (CONT'D)

You're late. Again.

GALADRIEL

(dances around truth)
I'm having sleep complications. Besides, it would seem you have your majority. Shall we cower?

KING AMDIR

Must you be so offensive, Galadriel? I am still your king.

GALADRIEL

By blood, not merit.

KING AMDIR
(whispers)
You spoilt brat, concede.

An intense stare down, neither gives.

KING AMDIR (CONT'D)
Remember, it was Galadriel who let
the traitor, Halbrand, into our
midsts? Clearly, her faculties have
been jeopardized. Sad and ruined.

Stung, Galadriel guiltily looks away. Amdir grins.

A meek elven man, MAGOR (40s), rushes in with a scroll,
calming the hostility.

Amdir reads to himself and passes it to Galadriel.

KING AMDIR (CONT'D)
It would appear Eru shines down on
us. Your presence is requested in
Rivendell. Best pack your things
and collect your daughter.
(an insult)
Speaking of daughter, where is the
little lady? Do you even know?

Galadriel studies the ELVEN PRINT and dejectedly exits.

INT. GALADRIEL'S QUARTERS - DAY

On the bed, Galadriel's messy-haired and free-spirited
daughter CELEBRIAN (13) dramatically reads from a journal.

CELEBRIAN
*It was a blade in my back. The
fiercest punch to my gut. But it
was the wake-up call I needed. In
the face of immortality, I cannot
shake the ghosts of my many
mistakes. I merely learn to live
with them.*

Behind her, the door quietly opens to Galadriel.

GALADRIEL
(sternly)
You should not be in here,
Celebrian.

Startled, Celebrian shoots off the bed.

CELEBRIAN
I'm sorry... I... I-

GALADRIEL
You're petulance is unbecoming.
Give me that.

Celebrian obliges.

CELEBRIAN
I was only curious. We never talk-
You never talk of life before
Lorien.

GALADRIEL
(coldly)
You're not entitled to stories
beyond your limited comprehension.
Order is how we survive. Your
curiosity will be your death.

Celebrian gulps, doesn't know how to react.

GALADRIEL (CONT'D)
It matters not. At nightfall, I
make for Rivendell.

CELEBRIAN
Rivendell? Can I come? Please, I
promise not to be curious or-

GALADRIEL
No. This isn't for leisure.

CELEBRIAN
Please, I've never been beyond
Lorien's borders. I'll be your
personal squire.

GALADRIEL
(almost reflective)
I said no! Why must you be so
needy? Behave yourself like a royal
daughter ought to behave. You have
no idea what horrors live beyond
our borders. Follow your orders. I
am still your mother.

Celebrian swells with emotion. A tear slips. She wipes it
away and hardens.

CELEBRIAN
(coldly)
Yes, mother.

NORI (V.O.)
Family is how we survive. It's how
we always have.

Celebrian exits. Galadriel lingers in an ugly silence.

EXT. FANGORN FOREST - NIGHT

A CARRIAGE trudges on an old road that cuts through the dark.

NORI (V.O.)
And you didn't have a family. So,
in a way, we're family now. And
family takes care of their own, no
matter what.

STRANGER (V.O.)
Wait. Shh. Do you hear that?

On the hunt, the MASSIVE LEGS of a GIANT SPIDER stealthily
cross the road...

In an open carriage, NORI and the STRANGER focus on the
eerily quiet. He shuts his eyes, hones in on the beast's
faint FOOTSTEPS.

QUICK CUT: Malevolent red eyes of a hungry Ungoliant-spawn, a
sapient giant spider. Its five-foot fangs drip venom.

The stranger snaps back.

NORI
What is it? Is it the voices again?

STRANGER
(almost fearful)
A vision. Not a pleasant one. We
shouldn't have come through this
side of the woods.
(pained, massages temples)
Another ache. It hurts.

NORI
One sec, I think we still have some
of that herbal tonic.

Nori checks their pitiful crate of supplies.

STRANGER
Finished it yesterday.

NORI

That's right. They're coming at you every day now. Still, ought to be glad we have your memory back. Well, some of it.

STRANGER

(re: vision)

There's something rotten in me. Something rotten in these woods.

Up ahead, moonlight turns a glade into a safe haven.

NORI

Look, over there. We should make camp for the night, and at first light head North for supplies, then back East again.

STRANGER

What about pipe-weed? Have we got anymore of that?

NORI

Alas, we're clean out of pipe-weed.

STRANGER

The horror.

They share a weary smile.

INT. HIDEOUT MAIN HALL - NIGHT

Refuge MEMBERS and NEW RECRUITS drink and banter in a jovial celebration. A MAN plays a TUNE on a beat fiddle.

Shoulder to shoulder, Dasyra and Renna watch their comrades drunkenly horse around.

DASYRA

It should be like this every day.

RENNA

I'll skip the drunken foolishness.

DASYRA

They deserve it. Hell, I deserve it. A little bit of happy in terribly dark times. Now, how about a dance?

RENNA

Maybe later. I prefer to keep my wits about me.

DASYRA

Fine. Keep your wit. I'm going to have a dance.

Renna gestures to an endearingly nervous farmhand, MIKEL (20s), checking Dasyra out across the way.

RENNA

You should ask poor Mikel for a dance. You've had his eye all night.

DASYRA

He's got two left feet.

RENNA

Come on, might cheer him up. But, if you just so happen to suggest cleaning the hog's pin in exchange for a dance, I'll give you anything you want.

DASYRA

(taps Renna's chest)

I've already got what I want. One clean hog pin coming up.

Renna watches Dasyra move to Mikel. They have a brief exchange. He lights up with a smile as she leads him to dance amongst their comrades.

Mikel moves awkwardly cute. Dasyra tries not to laugh. She shares a humored glance with Renna.

A SIREN BLARES outside, penetrating the hideout walls. The room goes still. NERVOUS CHATTER builds. Maylin enters and joins Renna.

MAYLIN

That can't be good.

The siren ceases to collectively held breaths.

Catapulted fiery debris HITS the structure above, IMPACTS the hideout, and sets a wild BLAZE. All are thrown under smoke.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT ONE