

FADE IN

EXT. THE MARSHLANDS - DAY

A forest of dark and murky swamplands. RAT BANDITS pull a rickety wooden cart carrying large crates down a trail.

The BANDIT LEADER, a larger rat, oversees their efforts. One of the shaky wheels THUMPS over a rock, forcing the cargo to jump. The Leader SMACKS a Bandit, sending him to the ground.

BANDIT LEADER

Idiot! You trying to sabotage this deal?

RAT BANDIT 1

Can we break, boss? We've been movin' this load all morning!

BANDIT LEADER

The client wants this shipment sealed and delivered on time! Last thing we need is for one of those greasy tubs to spot us!

ARION (O.S.)

Greasy, you say?

The rats flinch at the site of ARION, a large, naga-esque leopard slug in a sapphire-colored suit of armor. A GREAT AXE with a matching sapphire trim strapped to his back.

ARION (CONT'D)

I like to refer to it as a healthy sheen. So, what are you boys hauling? Gold? A load of cheese? I won't judge.

BANDIT LEADER

None of your concern, slug.

The Bandit Leader gestures his fingers to the ground. A bandit grabs DAGGER and slips into the shadows.

ARION

Easy now. I'm just making sure we got nothing contraband coming through.

They remain tight-lipped. Arion becomes more suspicious.

ARION (CONT'D)
You are sure this is the case,
right?

The rat leap from behind at Arion!

Without turning, Arion catches his arm, then hurls him at the cart. A crate falls and shatters.

It's full of salt!

BANDIT LEADER
Get em!

Bandits grab their weapons and rush towards Arion.

Arion unsheathes his axe. Challenge accepted!

A rat with a sword swings at him. Arion blocks each attack and shoves him back.

Another rat wildly SWIPES a club at him. Arion dodges each swipe in limber fashion, then splits the club in half.

The spiked ball of a flail flies at Arion. He slips his head into his armor just as it SMASHES against his armor.

RAT BANDIT 1
Nice going there!

The 'headless' Arion grabs the bandits and CLANGS their heads together.

ARION
Never gets old.

A SCRAGGY RAT is all that remains. Trembling, he scurries away. The bandit leader face palms.

ARION (CONT'D)
That's all you boys got?

BANDIT LEADER
You idiots are embarrassing me. All
at once, ATTACK!!!

The rats all charge together. Arion braces himself. Then--

--a loud SPLURCHING sound! Rats trip over face first. They're stuck in his slimy trail! Arion's face becomes flush.

He scoots past them and heads for the cart. He shoves it down a hill. It SMASHES into the creek. Salt pours out and immediately dissolves.

He turns to the remains of the smashed wooden box, taking an interest in a chunk with the insignia of a CRAB PINCER burned on it.

EXT. MOLNOCK - DAY

Sunset before a muddy, cobblestone village concealed by tall grass. SNAILS, SLUGS, and VARIOUS INSECTS go about their day, browsing and trading at various STOREFRONTS.

Arion slithers over to a BLACKSMITH SHOP. Smoke pours out of a furnace where CATALINA, a tomboyish snail with a maroon bandana on her head, hammers away at a metal shield.

ARION

You missed a spot.

Catalina looks up, rolls her eyes and puts a hand on her hip.

CATALINA

You're home early. Some salamander scare your slimy butt home?

ARION

You wish. Last thing I need is to give you something new to brag about. I made good time yesterday.

She looks up at Arion.

ARION (CONT'D)

By the way, do you have time for a quick fix?

CATALINA

Fix what? Your gear looks great. You're welcome, by the way.

ARION

Do you not see it?

Arion points to the most minuscule ding on his chest plate.

CATALINA

You can't be serious.

ARION

Do you not see it?

CATALINA

Armor is *suppose* to get banged up. You can't just expect me to smith out every little ding.