LANDSCAPE MASKING

GUIDE

Goal: The driftwood and sky are our two anchors. Preserve a dramatic tree silhouette with visible natural grain; create a warm sunset from the clouds and light already present. Sand, grasses, and water support—not compete.

Our aha moment: With strong backlighting, adjusting the sky first made the tree difficult to balance. For THIS image, work from the tree outward and finish with the sky.

1. Crop and clean up

Press R; select 16:9; straighten horizon and protect the tree and grasses. Then use Remove to clear dust spots, people and distractions.

2. Tree — establish the subject

Masking → Objects. Select tree and horizontal log; inspect edges. Keep upper branches dark, reveal modest detail in trunk and log.

Starting sliders: Exposure +0.10 | Shadows +15 | Texture +25 | Clarity +8 | Saturation -5 | Temperature 0.

Watch: Pale sand on wood becomes too bright when Shadows are pushed. Use Subtract → Brush to protect pale patches; retain warm backlit edges.

3. Sand — reveal ripples

New Mask → Brush. Paint sand, avoiding log, grass and water. Subtract overlap.

Starting sliders: Exposure +0.15 | Shadows +15 | Temperature +12 | Texture +25 | Clarity +8 | Highlights -10 | Saturation -5.

Refinement tested: Add about +5 Temperature and +3 Saturation if still blue-gray. Keep natural shadows between ripples.

4. Vegetation — catch the light

Brush over grasses and sea oats, not sky. Preserve dark stems and brighten sunlit tips.

Starting sliders: Exposure +0.30 | Shadows +30 | Temperature +12 | Highlights +10 | Texture +15 | Clarity +5 | Saturation +5.

Optional: Soft brush on seed heads only: Exposure +0.15, Temperature +10.

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5. Water — subtle sparkle

Brush the narrow water strip, excluding the shore and distant trees.

Starting sliders: Exposure +0.15 | Highlights +15 | Shadows +10 | Texture +10 | Clarity +5 | Temperature +5.

6. Sky — set the mood LAST

New Mask → Select Sky. Inspect mask edges around branches and grasses.

Keep some blue-gray above and golden warmth around the horizon.

Starting sliders: Temperature +15 | Exposure 0 | Highlights -15 | Texture +10 | Clarity +5 | Dehaze +5 | Saturation +5.

Existing clouds only: Optional soft Brush: Highlights +15 | Whites +10 | Texture +20 | Clarity +8.

Possible refinements (not confirmed): If sky looks green, Tint +8 and Saturation -5. If horizon looks too orange, a subtle Linear Gradient with Saturation -8 and Highlights -10.

7. Final review

Use backslash (\) for Before/After. Check masking edges at 100%, horizon, clipping and natural color. A photo of the monitor can misrepresent colors.

TEACHING MESSAGE

Every mask has one job. Texture reveals detail; Exposure changes brightness.

We enhance the light that was there—we do not invent a new scene.

Remember: These are starting values, not prescriptions. The best masking order depends on the image.