

THE ONCE AND FUTURE NERD
Book II - MYTH MADE FLESH

Chapter 4
"I've Been Working On The Whale-Road"

Part One by Rhiannon Angell and
Christian T. Kelley-Madera

Part Two by Anya Gibian, Zach Glass,
Shannon Harris and Christian T. Kelley-Madera

Part Three by Anya Gibian,
Christian T. Kelley-Madera and Gregory M. Schulz

Part Four by Shannon Harris,
Christian T. Kelley-Madera and Gregory M. Schulz

Created and Executive-Produced
by
Zach Glass &
Christian T. Kelley-Madera

Copyright © 2017

PINK Production Draft for 9-16-17
+ YELLOW Production Revisions + GREEN day-of fixes

iordic.princes@gmail.com
onceandfuturenerd.com

1 INT. MERCHANT VESSEL CARGO HOLD - MORNING

1

Re-use dialogue, but muffled as it is heard through the ship's deck:

OLAFSSON

I had a feeling about you lot, should have thrown you overboard when I had the chance.

BILLY

Well there are a lot of us! So I'd like to see you try!

NIA

I'd hazard your spell was effective, Jen. Well done.

The same drum from the end of Ch. 3 just barely starts to waft towards us. It continues throughout the scene.

JEN

Cool. We should probably get up there, though, because, you know...Billy.

Shouts of panic erupt from above.

NELSON

Ah crap, what did he do now?

LONE SAILOR

(breaking through the noise)
PIRATES!

REGAN

Oh eat my fucking ass, you're shitting me.

NIA

Nelson, Jen, take Gwen and the child and hide yourselves in the barrels. Quickly now.

NELSON

I take it these aren't the zany, wear eyeliner and stumble around drunk on rum brand of pirates?

NIA

They may very well wear eye paint and drink rum but they no less dangerous for it. Now hide.

JEN

If they're dangerous then I'm not leaving Billy alone up there.

GWEN

And I'm not leaving Arlene.

REGAN

And hiding's no good, Nia. Pirates find hidden things on boats like it's...well, like it's their job.

JEN

Then we have to fight them, right?

BRENNEN

Aye, let me--hrrr--at them. I'll make the mangy curs wish they'd never--

--BRENNEN CONTINUES TO **GAG** AND **RETCH**.

From upstairs, we hear several heavy metal thunks.

GWEN

What's that?

REGAN

Grappling hooks. They're boarding.

BILLY

(muffled upstairs)

Uh, guys? I think now would be a good time to like, not not be here? Aww, Christ. Help!

JEN

Come on Nelson, let's go.

NELSON

Right behind you, girl.

BRENNEN

(retching)

Agh. Me too.

REGAN

Wait, wait, wait. We can't just run up there with our thumbs up our twats. This is gonna to take some finesse.

(beat)

Oh get over it, Nia. We all came from one.

NIA

Your language ceases to shock me, Your Grace, but to hear you advise caution does.

REGAN

Well we don't have enough swords to take on a boat fulla pirates and they're gonna know that as soon as they see us.

NARRATOR

The Thief Queen of Armstrungard and true Queen of Iorden hastily surveyed her surroundings.

REGAN

Jen, grab that clay jar.

2 EXT. MERCHANT VESSEL DECK - ONE MINUTE EARLIER

2

NARRATOR

We now return to Billy's side above deck, and jump backwards in time - just a moment - as the practiced marauders begin their boarding maneuvers.

We again hear the thunks of the grappling hooks, but they're much more present now that we're above deck.

OLAFSSON

Ayup, we're in it now. I'd recognize that banner sure as I'd recognize my maw's left pap. That's the flag of Red Ren the Ruthless.

Sounds of panic from crew members.

VARIOUS MERCHANT CREW

(ad lib)

Dread Red Ren...it's Red Ren the Ruthless alright...

Wood falls against wood.

NARRATOR

As the grappling hooks pulled the two vessels together, planks were lowered to bridge the gap between the... amidst the...things along the sides of the ships. Sorry, I'm a wood sprite. This nautical sojourn is asking a lot.

Did you know that boats are in essence big moldy piles of my friends' twisted corpses that your kind casually rides around in for warfare and pleasure and everything in between? How's that terminology suit you? Does it make you feel good about your choices?

Sorry, yes, yes, the pirates.

BILLY

(voice raised)

Uh, guys? I think now would be a good time to like, not not be here? Aww, Christ. Help!

OLAFSSON

Oh now you take this seriously? Well if you're smarter than you've been 'til now, you might just live through this. A pirate won't kill if it's easier just to steal.
(to his men)

Everyone keep your wits. When they come aboard, show them your hands, no sudden movements, and give them what they ask for quick as you can.

THE PIRATE CREW WHOOPS AND HOLLERS.

NARRATOR

And indeed, no sooner had the Captain spoken, than the pirate crew began to board, leaping between the railings - ah, yes, that's the word - as if the distance and danger was that of a garden stepping stone. The fact that the small merchant ship's crew was woefully outnumbered was immediately apparent. Within moments, the merchant vessel was crawling with marauders in roughspun clothes, faces hidden with all manner of masks and hoods and cowls.

Heavy footsteps plod across the planks.

NARRATOR

Then all heads turned, as a large man with flaming red hair and an equally fiery beard - which he made no effort to hide - crossed between ships.

The footsteps come to a dramatic stop.

This guy's speech is shockingly friendly.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

Ohh by gods. Perfect weather today, wouldn't you say? Not a cloud in the sky! Oh yah, couldn't ask for a better day. Now who's the Captain of this beautiful ship?

NARRATOR

Steadily, cautiously, Otto Olafsson stepped forward.

OLAFSSON

I am. Captain Otto Olafsson. I assume I'm addressing the Captain who calls himself Red Ren. Your legend precedes you, and we're prepared to cooperate. As you can see, we're all--

--THUD.

NARRATOR

The large man hit Captain Olafsson across the face with a massive, meaty fist, and sent him careening into the ship's mast, where he collapsed in a quivering heap.

Clunk. Crumple.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

Where's the First mate? You've been promoted. Now if you'd be so kind as to go fetch us the manifest, we're gonna tie the rest of you up, okay? And if anyone tries anything clever, I'll pull them inside out starting from their private bits, don't you know.

NARRATOR

And as the pirate surveyed the cowering crew, his eyes fell on Arlene. Dirty as she was, she most certainly did not look as if she belonged on the deck of a boat.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

Well, well, well. Morning, dear. Now I might be crazy - been called it before don't you know - but you don't look to me like a sailor. In fact I'd hazard a guess you were born into money. What do you think boys and girls?

RAUCOUS CHEERS FROM THE PIRATE CREW

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

Oh yah sure. Lots of money. Maybe even lands and a title. Would one of you be a dear and bundle her up on the Red Reaver right away? Make sure she's comfortable. And treat her *as suits her rank* you lousy flea-bitten sons of no one.

NARRATOR

But just as two pirates were approaching a petrified Arlene...

BILLY

Hey! Red Rum! Or whatever your stupid name is!

NARRATOR

The behemoth pirate turned toward the sound of Billy's voice and was met with an oar in the face.

Wood splinters.

Beat of silence.

THE PIRATE CREW **OOHS** LIKE SCHOOL KIDS WATCHING A FIGHT.

NARRATOR

Though the makeshift weapon had knocked the large man back a few steps, he didn't seem terribly bothered by it. He addressed Billy very calmly, as he dabbed at a small trickle of blood from his nose.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

Ohh by gods. Here I am being polite as can be don't you know, and then you have to go be rude.

NARRATOR

The massive marauder grabbed Billy by the neck with one hand and lifted him off his feet.

BILLY CHOKES AND SPUTTERS.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

Now I'll have to butter my bread with your rib bones and drink a toast to your mother out your shattered skull.

BILLY STRUGGLES FUTILELY.

REGAN

(panned, slightly enclosed)
Settle down, freckles. or we'll all be doing a lot more swimming than we bargained for.

NARRATOR

Strolling casually out of the doorway of the ship's hold came Regan. The elbow of her broken arm was hung through the sleeve of her cloak, so that the garment served as a makeshift sling. At her side were Nelson, Gwen, and of course Jen, who held a small clay pot high over her head. *

JEN

Whole ship's rigged to blow. I throw this behind me and we're all chum. So put him down.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

Now I call horsefeathers on that.

REGAN

You wanna bet your life on it? This ship's come from the South Sea. Hold's full of thunder dust for the war effort. Course you'd know that if you'd done your fucking job and read the manifest, instead of getting in a pissing contest with a teenager. I expected better from Red Ren the Ruthless.

JEN

Put. Him. Down.

Beat.

Body crumples to the ground.

BILLY GASPS FOR AIR.

NARRATOR

As the pirate dropped Billy, Gwen took the opportunity to shuffle over to Arlene and grasp her hand tightly.

JEN

Can you crawl towards us, babe?

NARRATOR

But the pirate planted a heavy foot firmly between Billy's shoulder blades.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

Oh no. Can't have that. He stays right within stomping distance until we sort out this bomb business. Now how's about you put that thing down gently.

JEN

I'll hold it at waist level.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

So. You've heard of us. Any chance I'd have heard of you?

REGAN

Regan. Aeron Margaret Regan. Been called the Thief Queen of Armstrungard.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

Prove it.

REGAN

Now how in the fuck would I do that? It's not like they give you a gods damned sigil ring. And unlike you, I don't have anyone to sit around and sew me a flag.

THE PIRATE CREW **GRUMBLES**, OFFENDED.

FEMALE VOICE

(in back)

Ah, let the stupid boy go.

The pirates shut up.

NARRATOR

Then the throng of raiders grew silent, and quickly parted to make way for a short woman, dressed head to toe in black, her face half-covered with a cowl.

FEMALE VOICE

I'll hear her out.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

You sure, mum?

FEMALE VOICE

I don't know if she's the thief queen, but she just bested you lot with a jar of salt fish or whatever else she's got in there. Sure enough not thunder dust.

(to Regan)

You have my attention for the moment. Make the most of it.

REGAN

Yeah, and who the fuck are you?

NARRATOR

The woman lowered her cowl and looked straight at Regan. Her eyes were a vibrant rose red.

REN

Them that sail these seas call me Red Ren the Ruthless.

NELSON

Dope.

RED-HAIRED PIRATE

Show some gosh darned respect to Red-Eye Ren Svendsdottir. First of her name. Only living child of Sven Jonsson, son of Jon Ronsson, son of Ron Swannsson.

Half a beat.

RANDOM PIRATE

Ron's da was called Harold.

REGAN

So all that half-Orc stuff you spread around is actually true.

REN

We tell people I've got red eyes. We tell people what happens when we visit a ship with crew that thinks they're tough. People fill in the rest.

REGAN

And this big fucker here. The old "make everyone think your giant bodyguard is you" grift? Flashy.

REN

Alf Fire-Beard here's an odd one, but he's good in a fight and got a good head for numbers. Now speak, Aerona Margaret Regan. I'm getting bored already.

REGAN

You ever heard of me, Ren?

REN

I've heard of the Thief Queen of Armstrungard. Word is she's not been seen around for a while.

REGAN

You ever been to the Bloody Rat?

REN

I don't go ashore.

ALF

Oh yah sure, I know the place. Heard it burned down.

REGAN

It did. City Guard was trying to burn me with it. And then this one here - her name's Jen - she burned down the Well-Groomed Lemming to throw the Guard off her tail. After she killed a Sergeant. So yeah, we had to split town.

NARRATOR

Ren Svendsottir appraised Jennifer Andrews suspiciously.

REN

That was you killed that Sergeant?

JEN

He had it coming.

REN

Couldn't have timed his death better myself. Whole City Guard was tied up trying to find the killer. Left the warehouses by the docks wide open. We made a small fortune that day. Shit I damn near owe you a favor. Alfie, for Galadon's sake, will you let the boy up?

ALF

Right then. Off you go.

NARRATOR

As Alf Fire-Beard lifted his foot from Billy's back, the young man scurried away as quickly as he could back towards his friends.

*

Quick shuffling footsteps.

REGAN

Appreciate that, and you're welcome. Now obviously, you're in a position to do us...one more kindness. But I think we can help you out too. Can we go somewhere to talk?

NARRATOR

And then suddenly...

A trap door flies open.

BRENNEN

How now you poxy villains!

NARRATOR

Brennen vaulted out of the ship's hold with axe held high...

BRENNEN

Surrender your weapons or die where you--hmmmp.

Footsteps run left.

NARRATOR

...And immediately ran to the railings.

BRENNEN VOMITS.

THEN SPITS. AND SPITS. AND SPITS.

BRENNEN

(groaning)
Oh, gods.

REN

Who is this old geezer?

NIA

(approaching from inside)
He is the Legendary Brennen of Greyfield.

Nia walks onto the deck.

NIA

I am sorry. He refused to stay in the hold.

REGAN

Heard of him?

REN

The Beast of Blackhold? You trying to impress Red-Eye Ren with a famous Orc-killer?

NARRATOR

Regan opened her mouth to respond, but was not entirely sure how.

REN

Who else is with you?

Silence.

REN

We'll find them soon enough. Best not to get our negotiations off on the wrong foot.

REGAN

These two have a child with them. And I've got an Elf.

REN

An Elf!?

REGAN

He does what I say.

REN

You'd better have something gods damned worthwhile to offer me, Thief Queen.

REGAN

It's gonna take you a while anyway to unload this ship. My crew'll help.

NIA

We'll do what?

REGAN

Meanwhile you and I parlay.

REN

All right.

NARRATOR

Ren turned to address her crew.

REN

Gather them all up, take their weapons, then tell them what to do.

NIA

What happened to the Captain?

ALF

I did.

NIA

May I please tend to him? Head wounds can get out of hand very quickly if not treated. You may have my staff, I am otherwise unarmed.

REN

Fine. But then take a look at one of my ensigns. Had a cut go putrid.

NIA
I can promise no particular outcome but I'll do all I can.

REN
Regan, we'll use the Captain's quarters on this ship for the time being. Bring your second.

REGAN
My what?

REN
Haven't you got a second in command?

REGAN
(covering)
Oh, yeah, of course I do.

NARRATOR
Hastily, Regan surveyed those who stood by her side. The seasick old knight, the steadfastly principled acolyte, the trembling noblewoman and her handmaiden...

REGAN
Jen. C'mon.

JEN
Uh. Okay.

Four sets of footsteps recede.

3 INT. WHITE FOREST INFIRMARY - DAY

3

We hear the mystical woodland ambiance of the White Forest.

NARRATOR
Upon her return to the White Forest, it was only with the greatest reluctance that Ry'y lo-Th'yyt took the advice of her inferiors and stopped by the tree where the ill were cared for. But then again, meditation can only stave off the effects of two shattered legs for so long.

PHYSICIAN
There you are, Lord General. This will soothe the pain and help the bone to set.

RY'Y
(tremendous pain)
Thank you, Doctor.

SHE TAKES A **SIP**, AND THEN LETS OUT A BIG **SIGH**.

RY'Y

(feeling much better)

I've grown used to the battlefield. I should remember to appreciate the comforts of home from time to time.

PHYSICIAN

Or else what is it all for? I don't know if you remember, Lord Commander, but I served under you many years ago.

RY'Y

(deffo doesn't remember)

Of course I remember. Your name is...

PHYSICIAN

Ry'ynaald, Commander.

RY'Y

Yes, that's right.

PHYSICIAN

And if you don't mind my saying so, you were a great leader then and you're a great leader now.

RY'Y

Thank you for saying so, Ry'ynaald.

PHYSICIAN

I'd not fret overmuch about this business with the Council.

RY'Y

(testy)

And what business is that exactly?

PHYSICIAN

Oh, whatever they're displeased with you for.

RY'Y

Whatever it is you think you've heard, I'd remind you that such matters are confidential.

PHYSICIAN

Well, you know how it is. I've a nephew who's a page to a trustee.

RY'Y

I'd encourage you to remind your nephew that the Council's secrets are secret for a very good reason, and that the safety of the realm often depends on them remaining as such.

PHYSICIAN

Of course, Th'aayd. I meant no disrespect.

RY'Y

Talk to that nephew of yours. Or I shall.

A door creaks open ostentatiously.

There's a long, long pause.

It lingers.

NARRATOR

Oh I'm sorry were you waiting for me to comment on the door? I thought I'd made my policy clear. Let's get on with the program.

PHYSICIAN

Ah, hello nephew. Is the Council ready for their guest?

4 INT. GREAT COUNCIL CHAMBER - DAY

4

Footsteps echo off of polished marble.

NARRATOR

And so did the young Elvish page escort the venerable General to the massive chamber in which the High Council of the White Forest held its meetings.

We should now try as closely as possible to match the ambiance and reverb from the prologue of Bk. 1 Ch. 8.

NARRATOR

As the Council looked down upon her from their circular dais, Ry'y held herself high over the diminutive podium where Brennen had been made to stand not a fortnight prior.

BA'AT

Lord Commander Ry'y lo-Th'yyt, the purpose of this meeting is to hear you explain how it came to be that a Memyet soldier was permitted to witness a mass culling of Orcs.

RY'Y

(clears throat)
I'm sorry, a...culling?

BA'AT

Yes. For as we're all aware, the Memyet are a gullible and at times soft-hearted race, and such sights could easily pervert their sympathies.

RY'Y

Th'ayyd, your care in this matter is wise, but--

BA'AT

(blatant grandstanding)

--My spouse and I have served on this Council ere four centuries. And I submit with pride that the Human Realms, their typical squabbles and foibles aside, have shown peace and docility for the entirety of our tenure.

RY'Y

And for mine, Th'ayyd, but I must--

BA'AT

--And so General, this Council is supremely interested to hear how this situation escaped your control, and what is being done to mitigate the damage.

RY'Y

Of course. But might I first inquire as to the source of your information?

WYYN

General, I believe you were called here to answer questions to us.

RY'Y

Of course, Th'ayyd. But if we're to confront this problem, ought we not share what we know about it with each other?

WYYN

We heard from our child Yllowyyn who heard it from a Memyet soldier, does that suffice?

RY'Y

And Yllowyyn says only that a culling has been witnessed.

BA'AT

Witnessed, and gossiped about. By Memyet soldiers who say they can see no difference between Urkyet young and Memyet young.

RY'Y

(relieved, but feigning grimness)

I see. Very troubling indeed. The Council has my most abject apology. And my assurance, though I am not yet certain how this has happened, I intend to devote myself fully to finding out and solving the problem.

(MORE)

RY'Y (cont'd)
(pivots to her true goal)
 Now to that end, might I inquire, Th'ayydi, when was the last you heard from your child Yllowyyn?

WYYN
 Now why would that matter?

RY'Y
 I...simply hope to estimate the potential reach of the problem.

BA'AT
 Do you mean to imply that my child would have been foolish enough to spread what he had heard?

RY'Y
 I mean to imply nothing of Yllowyyn. But soldiers' gossip can spread like wildfire.

WYYN
(flaring)
 Yes, we're aware.

COUNCIL MEMBER
(impatient with his peer)
 Oh she means your child no insult, Th'ayyd.
(to Ry'y, cordial)
 Yllowyyn was here two days ago. He told his parents what he heard, and they immediately summoned the Council and sent Yllowyyn back to the Memyet to contain the situation.

RY'Y
 If that is the case, then Th'ayyd Wwyn lo-Dyk, Th'ayyd Ba'at lo-Yl, I'm afraid your child may be in danger.

WYYN
 Danger? What danger?

RY'Y
 I'm afraid the Memyet he rides with may not be well-intentioned.

BA'AT
 Do you mean Sir Brennen?

RY'Y

I mean specifically the low-born girl who claims to be his arms-bearer. I grew suspicious of her when she testified before this Council, and so I made inquiries regarding Brennen's entire party. I now believe she intends to press a very dubious claim to the Memyet throne, based on a relationship between Gunther Guernatal and this woman's grandmother - a prostitute.

There are a few derisive snickers.

RY'Y

Yes, the claim is indeed laughable. But for someone in such a position, a Hyylyet hostage with parents on the High Council could prove very useful.

NARRATOR

At this, Yllowyyn's parents shared a look of deep concern.

WYYN

(worried, not rhetorical)

If you feared this might be the case then why did you wait so long to let any of us know?

RY'Y

She seemed a known quantity, and I figured it useful for Yllowyyn to keep close watch on her.

BA'AT

That was not for you to decide.

RY'Y

I of course understand your concern, Th'ayyd. If you would permit me to make amends, I would leave here at once, ride through my injuries, and find your child as fast as the fastest horse in Iorden can carry me.

BA'AT

No, thank you, General. You worry about this Memyet gossip. We shall send our House's personal guard after Yllowyyn.

*

RY'Y

(Oh, fuck.)

Your personal...Th'ayyd, with respect. I don't doubt your bodyguards' dedication or fighting prowess. But none in Iorden can track or ride as my Knights can. Allow me to do you this service and put your minds at ease.

WYYN

General, the safety of our child is our concern. The safety of the realm is yours.

RY'Y

(scrambling)

If you insist. But in any case I *must* be getting back to my duties. I trust the council has been satisfied with my testimony, and I bid you--

BA'AT

--Not quite, General. Before you leave, we wish for you to furnish us with the names of three persons serving under you who might be suitable to lead the Th'ar lo-Hyyl.

A huge deafening silence. In terms of High Council etiquette, Ba'at might as well have just shit in Ry'y's breakfast.

RY'Y

Excuse me?

WYYN

Oh you know how it is. Just in case the need should arise.

CUT TO:

5 EXT. WHITE FOREST ROAD - A LITTLE BIT LATER

5

A creaky door bursts open, loud and fast. Spurs jingle toward us very briskly.

NARRATOR

As Ry'y lo-Th'yyt stormed out of the High Council chamber some ten minutes later, she made no effort to conceal her fury.

A horse snorts.

NARRATOR

But as she approached her mount, she saw the physician called Ry'ynaald standing nearby.

PHYSICIAN

I hope you don't mind my dropping in, Th'ayyd. I wanted to leave you some more medicine for the road.

RY'Y

(extremely curt)

Thank you, Doctor.

Some glass vials jingle, and Ry'y mounts up.

RY'Y

I'm afraid I must be going now.

PHYSICIAN

I'd hazard a guess it did not go well with the Council.

RY'Y

Ry'ynaald, if ever these trees should wither and these walls should crumble, make sure you know the politicians and bureaucrats were to blame.

PHYSICIAN

If it makes you feel any better, Th'ayyd, politics is a delicate and oftentimes inscrutable game. Even the greatest soldiers may find themselves outmaneuvered.

RY'Y

(explodes)

I HAVE NOT BEEN OUTMANEUVERED. Some worthy adversary has not backed me into a checkmate. An *idiot child* has stumbled into the room and upended the game board.

(to her retinue)

We're for Freehold. Ride like you never have. GITUP!

Five horses thunder off.

END OF PART ONE.