

THE ONCE AND FUTURE NERD  
Book II - MYTH MADE FLESH

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

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## PART FOUR:

25 EXT. RED REAVER (ABOVE DECK)

25

*Replay:*

KLAUS

*There's a blockade in front of the port!*

REN

*Well, I'm afraid this changes things.*

NARRATOR

You'll remember, when last we met, that the reverie aboard The Red Reaver was interrupted by the discovery of an Elvish naval presence around Armstrungard.

REN

We can no longer smuggle you into Armstrungard. It's too dangerous.

REGAN

What? Fuck that, we had a deal.

REN

That was before. When I only half believed your royalty tale. My ass is done for if I set a foot on shore with the Elves around.

REGAN

So do I have to tell the whole underground that Red Ren's word is worthless?

REN

Test me and you'll only be telling it to sharks. Or keep your mouth shut long enough to listen and see beyond your nose for me to tell you what I am willing do for you.

\*

*Perhaps a beat.*

REGAN

*(begrudgingly)*  
I'm listening.

REN

I can get you past the breakers a good ways south of the blockade. And you can still have a rowboat on the house.

\*

\*

REGAN

You know damn well we can't row our way past five frigates.

\*

REN

Best offer. Take it or leave it.

REGAN

Come on Ren. We're cut from the same cloth. Let's put our heads together rather than let the Elves win.

REN

Ha! Have you heard a word I said? If we get anywhere near the city, you trot off my ship, blend in. My crew and I get strung up on sight.

REGAN

I can't believe what I'm hearing from the "fiercest pirate alive." How about this? We'll get back in some crates and barrels, a few of your strongest men dump us on shore. I can take it from there.

REN

You deaf? Stupid? Or do you think I was born yesterday? Why should I risk my life and my crew's lives for you? I roll up to the shore with an Elf blockade and there's no way they don't search this ship. And when they see me...No. My whole life I've stayed at sea as much as possible. My pa taught me that as a wee little thing--

\*

REGAN

--Least you had a pa - that you knew. Look, now's not the time for a round of "who've the gods fucked worse?" We can sit around a campfire some day and trade war stories--

REN

--You delusional twat!

(beat)

Pardon my lack of manners, Your Royal Majesty, Heir to the High Throne. I should know better. Insulting royalty might be a capital offense--

REGAN

--I was *raised* FAR from any throne--

REN

--And then you ran FROM one. Poor thing. It's hard to have choices in life, innit?

REGAN

You callin' me a coward?!

(getting her bearings / a little calmer)

I tried to tell you that the Elves--

REN  
Reclaiming my time.

REN  
*(record alt)*  
My time is money and I don't  
tolerate theft.

REN  
Now I've given you your options.

NARRATOR  
Regan and Ren were locked in a death stare.

ALF  
*(urgent, but distant, panned, and muffled)*  
Hey Mum!

*Footsteps trudge quickly towards us up some  
stairs. As they approach us...so does a crying  
baby.*

ALF  
*(closer now)*  
You'll wanna see this.

NARRATOR  
Alfie broke, or at least subdued, the tension as he  
barged onto the deck with the crying baby, followed  
closely by Arlene and Gwen.

\*  
\*

*Two more sets of footsteps run onto the deck.*

REN  
Wha--

\*  
\*

ARLENE  
--We can explain!

GWEN  
--We can explain!

\*  
\*

REN  
Shh! Right, you said you had a baby before you dropped  
it on me that you had an Elf.

\*

ALF  
But look at his eyes mum.  
*(beat)*  
Might not've noticed myself if I hadn't gotten close.

NARRATOR  
Red-Eye Ren studied the babe's eyes, just the slightest  
bit redder than would have normally been seen in the  
human realms.

REN  
Which one of you two been dallying on the other side of  
the mountains?

GWEN

*(stalling)*  
Well, uh, he's--

REGAN

--No. Tell her where he's from. The truth.

*Beat.*

GWEN

We think its mother was an Orc. Found her half-dead, fleeing the battle at Freehold. Didn't know what else to do but take him in and hope no one noticed.

REN

*(piecing it together/feeling them out)*  
But the Elves did. Which doesn't help your...situation.

NARRATOR

Ren peered at the baby again. Arlene, Gwen, and Regan held their breaths as Ren stroked the baby's head and cheek. \*

REN

Nice of you not to leave a little baby to die.  
*(to Arlene)*  
May I hold him?

ARLENE

*(tentative but trying not to show it)*  
...Yes.

REN

Now. He and I are cut from the same cloth. \*

NARRATOR

As she bounced him gently in her arms and paced back and forth, his crying subsided.

*The baby gradually calms down under Ren's next lines.*

REN

*(to baby)*  
Oh, poor thing. Yes, I know. Life at sea can be rough, but you're safe little one...

SHE CAN KEEP COOING AD LIB FOR A LITTLE WHILE.

NARRATOR

Arlene, Gwen, and Regan's eyes bounced cautiously from one another to Ren and the baby. Ren then stopped her pacing and rocked the baby back and forth in her arms while she stood in place. By this time, he'd fallen asleep.

REN

There's a cove - a treacherous one - that we could use as an entry point to dock at Armstrungard.  
*(piecing it together)*  
 But we'd still need the cover of darkness, and we don't have the time to wait around for that. \*

REGAN

What if I could get you some fog? \*

REN

The fuck? Get me some fog? \*

REGAN

My second. She can make fog. She's a mage.

*Beat.*

REN

So you, the illegitimate scion of House Guernatal, brought a runaway Elf and a fugitive noblewoman with an Orc baby on my boat? And now a storm mage?

NARRATOR

Ren attempted to cup the baby's ears by pressing him to her body and placing a hand on the exposed ear.

REN

*(somewhat sotto voce)*  
 Who the fuck else you got with you, heh? The dead Prince Uther?

*THE BABY CRIES.*

REN

Throw some cold water on your crew, there's work to do.

26 EXT. MOUNTAIN PASS - EARLY MORNING

26

*Snow whips around us.*

ARDEN

Hmph.

NARRATOR

Arden the so-called Annihilator was not happy. He had been forced to give up pursuing the most direct path to the thing he sought due to the weather. Not that he couldn't stand the snow, he had after all recently been awoken from a block of ice. No, it seemed that the ancient warrior refused to leave his new companions alone and unprotected.

MAG UIDHIR

I fear those men are not long for this world. A storm-ridden mountain is hardly a suitable place for them, much less you or I.

ARDEN

Leave no man behind.

MAG UIDHIR

*(sighing)*

Alright. We should be coming up to the tunnel soon. Hopefully those two will do the sensible thing and stay be--

*--SNAP of a trap catching Mag Uidhir's bony ankle*

MAG UIDHIR

AGHHHH!!!

NARRATOR

Mag Uidhir had just set foot in a bear trap, snaring him to the spot and causing quite a bit of damage to his already decaying ankle.

MAG UIDHIR

A feckin' bear trap?!? What daft fool thought it'd be a good idea to leave one so close to--oh. Arden, we may have company soon.

ARDEN

We are too few to be a company. Full company requires many more men.

MAG UIDHIR

No not a group of soldiers you golem! These traps were set on this path for a reason which means whoever set them is likely trying to catch people. You two! Don't move an inch! There might be more-

*A tree trunk shatters*

NARRATOR

A tree beside the two men with them erupted as it was struck with a blast of magic. Jethro and Traft emerged from trees along the path, weapons drawn.

JETHRO

Lay down your weapons. There's nothing you can do and nowhere you can run.

ARDEN

Hmph.

JETHRO

*(to Traft)*

This one doesn't seem to get it. Big guy though.

*(back to Arden)*

Hey there big fella! I betcha don't take no for an answer and get whatever you will to be yours. Care to use that power to help us? Might mean your friends here get to stay breathing.

NARRATOR

Arden looked at the robed mage with contempt. He drew his warhammer, pointing it at Jethro.

ARDEN

Puny magic man. Prepare to die.

NARRATOR

Arden took up a battle stance...

*SNAP!*

ARDEN

ACK!

NARRATOR

...which unfortunately caused him to step into another of the bear traps Traft and Jethro had set.

JETHRO

I told you, there is nowhere for you to--

ARDEN

--AAUUUUUGGGGHHHHHHH!!!!

*A stake is ripped out of the ground as footsteps plod towards us.*

NARRATOR

Arden, seemingly undeterred by the trap lodged in his ankle, yanked it out of the ground and charged Jethro. The old mage barely dodged the massive warrior, retreating to the trees. Arden glared at the foliage, unsure of where his robed foe had disappeared to, before turning to Traft, weapon raised.

ARDEN

Tell me where your friend has gone.

TRAFT

He's not my friend.

ARDEN

You fight with him.

TRAFT

Not by choice.

ARDEN

All men choose who they fight with.

NARRATOR

Traft stared at the hulking warrior in front of him. A glint of recognition crossed his face before setting into a look of determination.

TRAFT

Damn right they do.

NARRATOR

With blinding speed, Traft threw his miner's axe towards Arden.

*Whoosh.*

The giant's eyes widened as the weapon whirred inches past him...embedding itself in Jethro's chest as he tried to sneak up on the goliath.

\*

*Squish.*

JETHRO

Aaaaahhhhhhhh!!!!

NARRATOR

Jethro fell to his knees, as he shot a look of rage and surprise at Traft. With a nod of respect towards said  
(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

General, Arden turned to the humbled wizard, raising his hammer high and, as with most of his enemies...

ARDEN

RRAUUGHHHHHH!!!

*Crunch.*

NARRATOR

...brought the hammer down upon Jethro's head, shattering it with one strike. Though an astute observer might have noticed that Jethro's body went limp a moment *before* Arden's devastating blow.

ARDEN

Hmph.

TRAF T

Damn spooky son of a bitch had it coming a mile away.

*Beat.*

MAG UIDHIR

Arden, I'm glad you made a new friend and all but would you mind getting me out of this blasted trap? These two seem to be no help at all.

NARRATOR

The two orcs stood awestruck, not at yet another show of Arden's strength, but at Traft. Both ran to Traft's feet, kneeling and weeping to see him alive.

*Footsteps scurry through snow.*

TWO MEN LAUGH WITH JOY.

MAG UIDHIR

Well. Not quite what I was expecting.

TRAF T

*(sigh)*

Get up. I'm not your leader anymore.

NARRATOR

Arden took in the scene before deciding to free both Mag Uidhir and himself from the bear traps.

*Metal creaks and brittle bone crunches.*

MAG UIDHIR

Thank you Arden.

*Arden grunts exertively.*

*Metal creaks again and flesh squishes.*

MAG UIDHIR

*(to Traft)*

I gather you're someone I ought to know.

TRAFT

Gather I could say the same. That old bastard we killed had a cabin up the path a ways. I'm headed there anyway for supplies, plenty to go around. Come in out of the cold a bit we can talk about how we got here.

27 INT. JETHRO'S CABIN - SHORTLY AFTER

27

*A fire crackles in the hearth.*

NARRATOR

So as these five warmed their fingers and toes by the late Jethro's hearth, the two young Orcs regaled Mag Uidhir and Arden regarding the rise - and *temporary* fall - of Comrade General Traft Sixhills, the forger of clans and smasher of gates, born of an Easterner and raised by the Elves, who burned many Eastern forts.

ARDEN

Das ist ein gōd friend to motherland.

TRAFT

Not nearly as glamorous as they make it sound, I promise. But yes, I've fought to free my people from Elven slavery. And I aim to keep doing so.

MAG UIDHIR

Well in that we're kindred spirits.

TRAFT

The big fella...if I didn't know better I'd say he matched the description of Ar--

MAG UIDHIR

--Arden the Annihilator.

TRAFT

The Annihilator's been dead for three thousand years.

MAG UIDHIR

Not dead so much as imprisoned with magic. I, on the other hand, have been dead for three thousand years.

NARRATOR

Mag Uidhir lowered his hood to reveal the mummified death mask that was presently his face. Traft could not help but be taken aback.

TRAFT

How?

MAG UIDHIR

What do you know of the arcane arts?

NARRATOR

Traft's eyes flicked back in the direction of Jethro's cellar.

TRAFT

Whole lot more than I used to, I'll tell you that.

MAG UIDHIR

Well you should keep at your studies. Turns out any idiot can get quite good. To answer your question, I'm here because one such idiot so wanted to boff one of his schoolmates that he learned how to disturb the rest that should not end.

TRAFT

Raise the dead you mean. Where is this idiot? I've got some questions I'd like to ask him.

MAG UIDHIR

Ack! Matron only knows. Left him on an ice floe after the Annihilator annihilated what was left of his body.

TRAFT

*(let down)*  
I see.

MAG UIDHIR

Believe me. Your life is better for not having known him.  
*(beat)*  
If you like, I can teach you most of what he knew. And the rest...well, best to leave it forgotten.

TRAFT

I appreciate the offer, uh...

MAG UIDHIR

Ah yes. I was called Finn Mag Uidhir.

TRAFT

I've read about you. You were a General in the Rebellion of the Unnamed King.

ARDEN

*(sharply)*  
Queen.

TRAFT

What's that?

MAG UIDHIR

Queen Aeron a Siobhan Mac Cumhaill was the name the  
Elves erased from history.

ARDEN

Great Queen. Greatest Queen!!

MAG UIDHIR

Aye she was an excellent Queen.  
*(whispers to Traft)*  
Speak no ill of her. It's a badly-kept secret that  
Arden carried a bit of a torch.

ARDEN

*(defensive)*  
Did not! I fought for the SAFETY OF THE MOTHERLAND.

\*

MAG UIDHIR

And yes. I did lead one of her armies.

TRAFT

Well then. Kindred spirits indeed. Where y'all headed  
after this?

MAG UIDHIR

Under the mountains.

TRAFT

Fixing to get back west?

MAG UIDHIR

Not just yet. But we'd be happy to point you in the  
right direction.

TRAFT

What're you going for then? If you don't mind my asking.

ARDEN

Hero's arsenal.

MAG UIDHIR

Ever heard of it? We're after Mac Connor's shield  
first.

TRAFT

You gonna tell me that tall tale's true as well?

MAG UIDHIR

Young man I've seen it wielded in battle. Iron can't pierce it, and Elf-silver flies right around it.

TRAFT

Well shit today's just a day for learning I suppose. Listen, General. I'm inclined to travel with you a ways if you wouldn't mind.

MAG UIDHIR

Not at all.

TRAFT

Unfortunately I oughta get going soon, weather be damned. Some folks looking for me I'd rather not meet.

MAG UIDHIR

That's well enough. The snow's only like to get worse the longer we wait.

TRAFT

There's some food in the cellar. But some of it...you wouldn't wanna eat. I'll gather what's good, then we can get going.

NARRATOR

A few minutes later, Traft emerged from the cellar with a full pack.

*A trap door slams shut.*

TRAFT

Let's go. I'm inclined to burn this place to the ground 'fore we do though.

MAG UIDHIR

Aye and I'm sure you've ample reason. But better not to. Should the snows worsen quickly we'll be glad to have shelter we can return to.

TRAFT

*(doesn't like it but...)*  
Suppose that's wise. All right then.

NARRATOR

Traft gestured to his new companions that they might leave first. Mag Uidhir bowed politely, and then obliged.

*Four sets of footsteps, one very very big,  
walk through a door.*

NARRATOR

But before Traft left, he stopped in front of Jethro's portrait, and its uncannily lifelike eyes.

TRAFT

Thanks for the supplies. Maybe I'll find what you were looking for. Maybe not. Either way, good riddance.

NARRATOR

Traft turned and walked out the door, joining his new travelling companions, unaware that the eyes he was just staring into followed him all the way.

28 EXT. REN'S ROWBOAT - MORNING

28

NARRATOR

Having worked out their differences for the moment Ren and Regan saw to getting Regan's party where they needed to be.

REGAN

You sure you can keep that thing from squawking?

GWEN

Aye, Your Grace.

ARLENE

*[Quietly hums to the baby.]*

REGAN

And you'll keep us hidden as long as we need it?

JEN

*(distractedly)*

Yea yea, sure thing.

*(more excitedly to Alf)*

So you dye the ropes at certain lengths and that tells you how far away the object is?

ALF

Oh ya. The key is being consistent with your throws. Results won't mean much if the measurement is inconsistent.

REN

Alf! Quit showing off to your new friend and get to the bow. We'll need your fancy rope soon enough.

NARRATOR

Ren looked over the Reaver one last time before nodding to one of her crew mates to lower their boarding ship into the water.

\*  
\*

*Pulleys lower the rowboat into the sea.*

29 EXT. ON THE WATER - CONTINUOUS

29

*Throughout this next section the sound of the waves lapping up against the boat will be constant.*

*A soft plop sounds as the boat hits the water.*

NARRATOR

The boat effortlessly dropped into the water on the starboard side, concealing it from the blockade. With a nod from Regan, Jen raised her hand into the air.

\*

*Jen's magical pad slowly comes up.*

NARRATOR

Slowly, a mist gathered around, hiding the skiff's passengers and its light wake as the oars gently guided them towards the shore.

\*  
\*

*For the rest of this section the sound of oars lightly slapping the water.*

NARRATOR

After a few moments, Ren gave a nod to Alf. The second mate lifted a harpoon made of light wood and tipped with a piece of pumice with a lead of colored rope. With a measured arm, Alf threw the harpoon in the water at a shallow angle with barely a whisper of a splash.

*Whisper of a splash.*

NARRATOR

Alf let the rope feed through his hands until he grabbed the end. He waited for a moment, and then pulled the harpoon, which had floated to the surface, back to the boat. This happened again and again, Alf leaning forward, listening for something.

*Whisper of a splash...*

*Whisper of a splash a little further away...*

*Further away still...*

NARRATOR

And then...

*Soft muffled thud.*

NARRATOR

At the sound of the thud, Alf's hand snapped shut on the rope. He noted the color, made a gesture to Ren at the rudder, and drew the harpoon back in, only to throw it once more. \*

*Splash...thud.*

*Splash...thud.*

*The rowing stops.*

*The creaking of a ship slowly starts to come in.*

NARRATOR

A shadow gradually formed into the shape of an Elven ship. Brennen and Nia hurriedly pulled in their oars as the ship loomed ever larger above them. The small boat was turning to angle itself parallel to the great craft to travel in its opposite direction, but had too much momentum to avoid collision. Alf widened his stance across the width of the boat and held out his harpoon. \*

THE WHOLE GROUP BRIEFLY SUCKS IN THEIR BREATH.

*Quiet group inhale of breath.*

NARRATOR

As the soft pumice hit the hull of the ship the great pirate pushed off of it with his harpoon, causing the rear of the boat to only graze the warship.

*Soft scrape of wood on wood.*

NARRATOR

Unfortunately Elvish ears are finely attuned. Ren knew as much and with a flurry of sharp looks and brusque hand gestures managed to get the rowing crew back to work.

*Restart soft paddling.*

NARRATOR

The group spent the silent, tense journey out from under the ship looking up at the dark form of the deck that lay in the mist. Just as the boat got out from under the ship...

*Two muffled footsteps walk above us.*

NARRATOR

...Two Elves approached the railing of their ship near where the rowboat had been.

\*

ELF SAILOR 1

*(muffled)*  
Hwy pryyxyr ta?

ELF SAILOR 2

*(muffled)*  
Ygyth'yys, fala. Ag ta?

NARRATOR

The thick mist provided the rowboat ample coverage from where they stood.

\*

*Alf continues with small splashes.*

BILLY

So did we-

ALL

*Shhhh!*

NARRATOR

Billy threw up his hands defensively, returning to his oar.

*Thud.*

NARRATOR

At the sound of his harpoon hitting an object, Alf raised a fist into the air. Ren motioned for the rowing to stop.

*Cut rowing noise. Slowly bring up sound of waves hitting a rocky shore.*

NARRATOR

Alf sent one more hand signal to Ren who set the rudder in its last position.

*Sound of the wooden boat hitting the shore.*

NARRATOR

As the boat ran aground parallel to the shoreline, Ren and Alf reached out to catch well worn rocks in a motion used hundreds of times before.

*Everyone speaks quietly for the rest of this scene.*

REN

Well, Thief Queen, this is where we part ways.

*Nine sets of footsteps gingerly touch sand.*

REGAN

Appreciate the ride, Ren.

REN

Can you keep that fog going a little while longer, gal?

JEN

*(very winded)*  
Yeah. How long you need?

REN

Fifteen minutes?

ALF

Should be enough to get back to the Reaver.

JEN

You got it.

BILLY

Babe you sure? You look pretty zonked.

JEN

I'll tough it out. Alf, you ever think about using a crossbow for your rope trick? Should be easier to keep consistent than your arm.

ALF

Oh ya sure. Thought about it, tried it...never could get the figures sorted.

JEN

It's a squared relationship. The energy stored in the bow is the draw distance times itself, times some constant specific to the bow.

ALF

Times itself you say? Well now that changes things. Thanks for the tip, little miss.

REGAN

Ren, think about my offer all right?  
(beat)  
Admiral's good work if you can get it.

REN

I still don't think you got a snowflake's chance in Summerhold at the High Throne. But if I'm wrong perhaps you'll hear from me. Let's be on our way, Alfie.

\*

ALF

You all be well, now.

*The rowboat casts off.*

30 EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE FREEHOLD

30

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, at the site of the unceremonious death of the great Bryce Riverfell, we find Ry'y lo-Th'yyt as we left her: fuming over being outmaneuvered yet again and by an opponent who was worthy indeed. She had, however, moved on to a subsequent step in the grieving process, if you will: burying the dead. That is, she barked orders at the men charged with disposing of the General's body in a nearby ditch.

\*

*Sounds of feet carrying a dead body, leaves rustle underneath.*

RY'Y

Quickly!

*Sounds of body being rolled and hitting the ground*

RY'Y

Now burn him. I'd have you piss on him first if there were time.

*A coo and a flutter of wings.*

NARRATOR

A messenger pigeon descended onto Ry'y's shoulder. Its message bore the seal of the faculty of the College of Armstrongard. Ry'y withdrew a few steps from her company and began silently reading the eagerly anticipated correspondence.

\*

BA'A (V.O.)

Greetings Lord Commander: In response to your query, I am writing to confirm that I am well acquainted with the clerical acolyte after whom you inquired. Nia is a former pupil of mine, humbly born, to clergy in Seahold. She left my coveted tutelage for, as I'm told, a life of vagrancy.

*Ba'a's V.O. trails off as Ry'y squishes the paper against her chest.*

BA'A (V.O.)

I neglected to ask why she is of interest. Do you require a recommendation on her behalf? Perhaps as a spiritual adviser to your company. If so, I am afraid...

NARRATOR

Ry'y beamed as she held Ba'a lo-Kyyr's letter to her chest like a note from a dear friend or a lover with whom she was eager to reunite.

RY'Y

*(aloud, to herself)*

"Humbly born, to clergy in Seahold..."

31 EXT. SEAHOLD - DAY

31

*Sounds of coastal rural village.*

NARRATOR

Ry'y obviously did not bask in her reverie for too long. Within moments, a messenger pigeon was dispatched to Seahold. We turn our attention there now, just as an Elvish officer believes she is finishing a conversation with the town's humble clergy.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

I appreciate your time, Reverends.

MILDRED

Please, m'lord. Mildred and Ben. And you're very welcome of course.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD  
I'll take my leave of you now.

NARRATOR  
The humble priest and priestess bowed low, before  
turning and walking away.

*Footsteps recede, but don't get too far  
before--*

*--A pigeon coos and flutters.*

NARRATOR  
When the pigeon arrived, and the Major saw its message  
bore the personal seal of her Lord Commander, she  
hastily unfurled and read it.

*Paper noises.*

MAJOR ZYKA'AD  
(urgent)  
Reverend Mildred? Reverend Ben?

*Footsteps stop.*

MILDRED  
(panned to where the footsteps ended)  
Yes, m'lord?

*Footsteps walk back towards us.*

MAJOR ZYKA'AD  
Am I right to understand you've a daughter named Nia,  
left here to study in Armstrungard?

NARRATOR  
Mildred and her husband shared a look of grave concern.

MILDRED  
Yes. Why, what's happened?

MAJOR ZYKA'AD  
(hamming it up)  
I'm afraid your daughter is grave, grave peril. I must  
ask you to come with me. Quickly as you please.

**END OF CHAPTER.**