

THE ONCE AND FUTURE NERD
Book II - MYTH MADE FLESH

Chapter 5
"An Impregnable Missive"

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PART THREE:

13 INT. FRIAR IOHANSEN'S MONASTERY - AFTERNOON

13

NARRATOR

When last we parted, Nia had just read a note from her parents ostensibly requesting her whereabouts.

FREDERICK

Here's your medicine, by the way.
(*a few beats*)
Nia?

NIA

I'm sorry?

FREDERICK

The medicine.

NIA

Medicine?

FREDERICK

For your friend's arm?

NIA

Oh, yes of course. Thank you.

Frederick clocks something weird.

FREDERICK

Again, not to pry, but I do hope all is well with your parents.

NIA

Oh, you know. My mother and her dramatics. Looks like she roped my father in as well this time.

NARRATOR

Nia paced back-and-forth, ruminating over the note, while trying to maintain the cool ruse.

FREDERICK

Nia. What's going on?

NIA

Oh. Nothing...nothing serious.

NARRATOR

Friar Iohanssen followed Nia's lead in pretending to not be as alarmed as he felt he should be.

FREDERICK

...I take it it's been awhile since they saw you last.

NIA

(grasping)

That's it. Yes!...Or heard ...

NARRATOR

She wandered around the room to avoid eye contact.

FREDERICK

Well...such things happen. They'll be relieved to know that you are safe here. You can sit at my desk to write your response, if you want...I can send it for you afterward - not that you couldn't do it yourself--

NIA

--I'd appreciate that.

Beat.

FREDERICK

And your medicine.

NIA

Yes, thank you.

Some glass vials are placed on the desk.

FREDERICK

I'll leave you some privacy.

Frederick walks away.

A quill taps in an inkwell - incessantly, neurotically.

NARRATOR

But it took Nia a few moments of nervous fidgeting to decide her course.

Nia **sighs**.

We hear the quill scratching parchment. It fades out, and then...

...fades back in, the suggest the **passage of a few minutes**.

NIA

Frederick?

Frederick walks back into the room.

FREDERICK

All done?

NIA

Are you still in touch with your friend Romulo?

FREDERICK

Why, yes. We write each other letters every few months.
Why do you ask?

NIA

Does he still have his post up north, in Mooncrest
lands?

FREDERICK

(cynical again)
Yes...

NIA

And is he trustworthy?

FREDERICK

You know, I claim no right to know your business. But I
do claim a right to not be treated like a fool. And
even a fool could see all is not right with you.

Beat.

NIA

Very well. You are a smart man and I am a poor liar. So
I will say this. I do believe there is some...trouble
at home. And I do believe you can help.

FREDERICK

Just tell me what I can--

NIA

--But I need you to believe me that I know what I am
doing, that I know exactly what help I need, and that
the less you know about this the better it is for
everyone.

FREDERICK

Does this have anything to do with the Elves? I've seen
them all around asking--

NIA

--Frederick. Can you believe me or not?

FREDERICK

Yes, Nia, of course I can believe you. It's just that you put me in a very awkward position.

NIA

I know, and I'm sorry for that. I would not ask if I had better options at hand.

FREDERICK

Can I at least ask what I must do before I promise it?

NIA

I need you to take this letter and send it in a sealed package to Romulo. Ask him to send my letter back to my parents in Seahold, addressed from up where he is. And I also need your word that neither of you will break the seal and read it.

FREDERICK

I don't know, Nia. If something were to happen, I would feel responsible--

NIA

--No. You will have done a friend a great kindness, exactly as she asked. The consequences are my responsibility.

FREDERICK

That's not what the scripture says about responsibility.

NIA

And what does the scripture say about kindness and charity asking questions?

Beat while Frederick considers...

FREDERICK

I've never had reason to doubt you before...

NARRATOR

Frederick peered into her eyes, searching for reassurance that this instance was no exception, that this unusual request was, indeed, justified and necessary for reasons that she could not disclose at that time.

Despite lingering consternation, he conceded.

FREDERICK

So be it. I will send the letter to Romulo with your instructions. You have my word not to break the seal and I will implore him to do the same.

NIA

Thank you, Frederick. Truly.

FREDERICK

But, at the right time, you have to explain--

NIA

--I will. As soon as I can. You have *my* word on that.

FREDERICK

Very well.

NIA

You may receive a response through MoNewstery. I would know that response.

FREDERICK

Can you tell me where you're staying?

NIA

I'm afraid not.

(ponders)

Do you remember the green down by Miller's point? With the big--

FREDERICK

--The big silver birch, yes of course.

NIA

If you hear anything, leave a ribbon on that tree. Then I'll come back here.

(beat)

I must be going now.

FREDERICK

Do take care of yourself, Nia.

NIA

And you as well.

NARRATOR

Nia hugged Frederick and he responded in kind. Their eyes locked as they unfastened from one another and she kissed him...on the cheek.

NIA

It really was nice to see you. I'm sorry I got cross.

Nia departs hastily.

FREDERICK

Don't mention it.

14 INT. GREY FOX TAVERN - EVENING

14

The inn is busy downstairs but we're behind a locked door.

NARRATOR

While Nia was rekindling old...friendships, the Pennsylvanians were settling into the next public house that Regan had moved them to.

We hear chests set down and unlatched.

JEN

(secretive)
Okay, I think we're clear.

NARRATOR

But with Regan gone to retrieve Nia from her sortie, they took the opportunity to discuss the map which Nia had left for them.

NELSON

So thirty minutes to the college gates, once we're inside another ten to the library.

Billy starts **singing** a song which in no way infringes on the copyrights, trademarks, or other intellectual properties of Paramount Pictures or any other Viacom company, but sounds like it could be the theme song to a completely imaginary and original IP called, uhh..."Bission Bimpossible."

JEN

So say an hour and--Billy, do you need to sing right now? We're trying to be sneaky here.

Billy **stops singing**.

BILLY

Sorry.

NELSON

No, actually, it makes it sound more bad-ass. Like we're doing a heist.

JEN

It's not really a heist. It's a library. The books are technically free. This is a caper at best.

BILLY

You mean like that gross salty pea thing?

NELSON

Whatever it is, can Billy sing? It actually makes me feel cool.

JEN

Fine.

BILLY

Right on dude. I got you.

JEN

Just, you'll be quieter when we actually do this right?

Billy starts singing again.

JEN

So...say an hour and a half for travel, just to be safe.

NELSON

Which means even if we find what we need in half an hour - unlikely Nia said - we'll still need two hours when we know Regan will be away.

JEN

Ideally more. That's why I've been keeping track of her meetings--or, doing my best with hourglasses and sundials and pre-industrial clocks. She's had ten meetings. The shortest was forty five minutes, the longest was two and a half hours. The median is somewhere around an hour forty five. But definitely the best predictor of the longer meetings is if Regan told me she "went way back" with someone.

BILLY

(to the song)
IF THEY FUCKED, IF THEY FUCKED...

JEN

Well...maybe. I definitely got that vibe on the longest of the meetings. So...next time she leaves for a meeting we'll see how much she's willing to tell us.

(beat)
Probably far too much.

NELSON

Let's go over the plan again.

DISSOLVE TO:

15 EXT. ARMSTRUNGARD MARKET SQUARE - EVENING

15

We're in an outdoor market that is still bustling over the early night crickets.

NARRATOR

Nia had proceeded as promptly as possible to the meeting spot Regan had given her. As instructed, she'd purchased some garbage from a vendor so she'd have a plausible reason to sit still for a while. She'd also been instructed to eat slowly. But between the news she'd just received, and keeping her head on a swivel for Elvish patrols, the queasy feeling in her guts made slow eating quite natural.

Cloth rustles.

Nia gives a quiet **yip!**

NARRATOR

And so she nearly jumped out of her seat when a small but powerful hand grabbed her arm from behind.

REGAN

C'mon sweetheart. Let's go home.

DIP TO QUIET.

FADE IN MORNING SOUNDS:

16 INT. GREY FOX TAVERN - THE NEXT DAY

16

Outside the window, a rooster crows.

NARRATOR

It was early the next morning when Nia heard a very quiet knock on her door.

There's a quiet knock.

NARRATOR

In fact, had she been sleeping deeply she might not have heard it at all. But as it happened, her night had been most restless.

NIA

Yes?

The door creaks open.

JEN

(whispers)
Hey.

NIA

(matches her)
Jen. Good morning. Is everything all right?

JEN

Yeah. Um...We're pretty sure Regan's gonna be gone for a little bit. So...if you've got anything to take care of outside...

NIA

I appreciate it. And what of Sir Brennen?

JEN

We're gonna lock our door from the inside and go out the window. If he asks, say we wanted to sleep in.

NIA

You know I'm loathe to lie to him.

JEN

Yeah. Um, I guess...try and be gone before he gets up?

NIA

(subject change)
Be safe.

JEN

(a little wry)
Always.

We hear Jen walk down the hallway a ways.

She opens one more door.

JEN

(still whispers)
Regan is confirmed taking a bath. So, when she leaves...This is our best shot to grab those books. You ready to...learn something, I guess?

Throughout this next sequence, we will intercut between the main action, and **two** atemporal elements:

-Main action will not be specifically called out. It should be mixed as normal, to reflect the physical reality of the scene.

-**V.O.** will be characters taking the place of the Narrator to help describe the action. It should be mic'ed close and EQ'd intimate with no reverb.

-**Flashback** will function as memories of an earlier conversation, with significant reverb and some spatial distance to imply such.

NELSON (V.O.)

And a few minutes later, when Regan did leave, the heist was--

JEN (V.O.)

--Caper.

NELSON (V.O.)

The "caper" was on? That doesn't scan right.

(beat)

Whatever. The shit popped off.

17 EXT. ARMSTRUNGARD STREETS - DAY

17

Billy's Song is now treated as **score**, as our three heroes walk down the bustling streets of the city.

NELSON (V.O.)

Nia gave us two books to look for. The first was a gimme.

JEN

You remember the name of the book, babe?

BILLY

An Introductory Treaty on the--

JEN

--Treatise.

BILLY

Right, Treatise...on the Loss of Home, by Elric of Summerhold.

JEN

In the public section, just ask the archivist.

BILLY

That's gonna be the librarian-looking lady.

JEN

Probably. They should be easy to find. And you remember about the bibliography?

NIA (FLASHBACK)

Elric's bloated, self-aggrandizing prose is nigh unreadable. But his citations are impeccable. Would that you had time to comb the library for each of his sources...But, under the circumstances...

BILLY

Grab the first entry for each chapter.

JEN

Exactly. And don't forget the reference book.

BILLY

I won't.

NELSON (V.O.)

But the second book...that was the trick.

JEN (FLASHBACK)

On The Totemic Traditions of Primitive Iorden. By, uh...is that...

NIA (FLASHBACK)

Phyul lo-Dyk the Elder.

BILLY (FLASHBACK)

(snorts)

Good one, Nia.

(beat)

Wait that's really his name?!

NIA (FLASHBACK)

Currently in the private collection of Professor Blu'u lo-Ba'al.

BILLY (FLASHBACK)

Oh come on!

NELSON (FLASHBACK)

So anyone can read it, but they can't leave with it.

JEN (V.O.)

And we needed to leave with it.

NELSON (V.O.)

Fortunately, Billy had a plan to get us started. And I gotta say...it wasn't bad.

18 INT. COLLEGE OF ARMSTRUNGARD LIBRARY - DAY

18

The library is EXTREMELY quiet. We only hear the occasional page being ruffled or stifled cough panned off to our side

The quiet drags on for several beats.

Until...

The door flies open.

Billy strolls in singing his Bission Bimpossible song at the top of his longs

BILLY

BA! BA! BADA DA! DA! BADA--

EVERYONE IN THE LIBRARY

--SHHHHHHH!

BILLY

(loud)

Oh, sorry! I was in--

(quieter)

--I was in the zone.

The song resumes quietly as non-diagetic score, as...

We hear Billy take a few steps and then stop.

(He does actually speak at a reasonable library volume for the rest of the scene.)

BILLY

Hey.

ARCHIVIST 1

(braces for the worst)

Good afternoon.

BILLY

My, uhh...Patron sent me here to find A Treat--An Introductory Treatise on the Loss of Home by Elric of Summerhold. Could you show me where to find it?

ARCHIVIST 1
(pleasantly surprised)
Oh...why, yes. Right this way.

Two sets of footsteps walk quietly.

ARCHIVIST 1
We've just had a new edition come in, with an expanded bibliography.

Footsteps stop.

ARCHIVIST 1
Here we are.

She pulls a book down from a shelf.

BILLY
Sweet, thanks.

ARCHIVIST 1
Is there anything else?

BILLY
Yeah maybe actually.

We hear Billy open the book and quickly flip to the end.

BILLY
Where can I find this one?

ARCHIVIST 1
(tries to be patient)
Ah, yes, well you see the title is "On The Early History of Elven Shipmaking," so it would be in the History section.

BILLY
Cool cool cool. So like where in the history section?

ARCHIVIST 1
Within each section they're organized by author.

BILLY
Right, yeah no totally. So that would be...

ARCHIVIST 1
(tries so fucking hard to be nice)
Do you see - right next to the title - where it says Snorli the Lesser?

BILLY

Woououououoord gotcha gotcha gotcha.

Beat.

ARCHIVIST 1

Is there anyth--

BILLY

--So is that gonna be under Snorli, or The Lesser?

ARCHIVIST 1

Let me just show you.

TIME WHOOSH

They walk up to another book.

ARCHIVIST 1

It's right here.

BILLY

Sick, sick.

ARCHIVIST 1

(please please please)

Will that be all, sir?

BILLY

Do you have "Elven Agriculture Prior to the First Concordat?" It says the author's name is Var?

ARCHIVIST 1

Various.

BILLY

Boss name. Is that Varius the Elder, or the Lesser, or...

(beat)

...Or was there just the one?...

ARCHIVIST 1

(scream whispers)

Hilde? Hilde!

Footsteps - and a cane - walk over.

ARCHIVIST 2

Yes? What's wrong?

ARCHIVIST 1

It's time for my break can you help this young man?

NELSON (V.O.)

Planning a big score means knowing the strengths of your team. And this plan really played to Billy's strengths.

BILLY (V.O.)

Right. Like being an undue burden on the women around me.

BILLY

So do you have like a cart, or something? I need a lot of books.

19 INT. LIBRARY - PRIVATE COLLECTIONS - SIMULTANEOUS

19

As score continues, two sets of footsteps walk on marble.

NELSON (V.O.)

So while the library's administrative staff was otherwise occupied, or forced into the break room in desperation, Jen and I went after the tougher prize.

NIA (FLASHBACK)

At the entrance to the wing containing the private collections, there is usually a doctoral candidate, being paid a pittance by the college.

NELSON (FLASHBACK)

So, grad student on work-study got it.

JEN

(putting on a show)

So was the Art Department garbage any good?

NELSON (V.O.)

We saw the kid at the desk take the bait immediately.

NELSON

(following Jen's lead)

I mean, it's whatever, but hey *free food* right?

DESK MONITOR

Hey, uh, I have to leave. If you go in there can you just sign this book?

Footsteps straight up sprint away

DESK MONITOR

(as he's running away)

Thank you kindly!

NELSON
Score.

DESK MONITOR
(even farther away)
What?

NELSON
Nothing!

20 BLU'U LO-BA'AL'S COLLECTION CORRIDOR - CONTINUOUS

20

NELSON (V.O.)
But the next part would be something else.

JEN (V.O.)
We got lucky twice. First, the shadows of the two Elf guards tipped us off to them before we rounded the corner. And second, I spotted the window at the other end of the hall.

NELSON (V.O.)
When we ducked behind the big bookshelf, I could tell Jen had an idea. But the next part...man I never got tired of seeing her do this stuff.

We hear a bit of Jen's magic pad.

Off to the side, a wooden window shutter rattles...

...then rattles louder...

...Louder still, until--

--It BURSTS OPEN with a big gust of wind behind it.

(The Elves begin panned to the opposite side from the window.)

LIBRARY GUARD 1
Go check on that, will you?

Footsteps approach center.

JEN (V.O.)
When he came around the corner, I just gave it one more little push.

There's one more BIG GUST, and tons of papers and scrolls and parchments go whipping away.

The guard runs towards the window.

LIBRARY GUARD 1

Blast it all! Can you help?

The second guard runs to help.

(This next bit should recede, as our heroes walk away from it.)

LIBRARY GUARD 2

I'm coming! Close the damned window!

LIBRARY GUARD 1

I am! Catch that damned scroll!

Billy's incessant score reaches a climax and then...

21 BLU'U LO-BA'AL'S COLLECTION READING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

21

...quiets down.

NELSON (V.O.)

And just like that, we were in.

JEN (V.O.)

But we still needed to find the book, and we knew we didn't have much time. Fortunately...

(When not in Voiceover, they both whisper.)

NELSON

They're all in order. Talismans of Dominion and Their Origins, In the Time of the Chieftains...

(bingo)

On the Totemic Traditions of Primitive Iorden. I...this is it!

JEN

That's great! Grab it!

NELSON

Wait! We should check for traps.

Beat.

JEN

Do you know how to do that?

NARRATOR

And thus did the three Pennsylvanians walk straight out of the gates of the College of Armstrungard, carting a dozen common books, one rare book, and one exceedingly tarnished bronze statue.

DISSOLVE TO:

23 EXT. ARMSTRUNGARD - MILLER'S GREEN - DAY

23

We're still in a city but it's not horribly hectic. Think like Central Park.

NARRATOR

Now, as the Pennsylvanians were carrying out this... vaguely illicit venture that was somewhere between a caper and a heist depending on whom you asked, Nia was venturing an excursion of her own. On Jen's advice, she had used Regan's absence to make for the public square upon which she and Frederick had agreed.

Footsteps walk towards us--

--and come to an abrupt stop.

NARRATOR

And she stopped in her tracks when she saw the ribbon tied around the limb of a venerable birch tree. She looked up at the sun, hoping to estimate how long she'd been gone. And then, realizing that she could not do otherwise whatever the time, she hurried off in the direction of Friar Frederick's.

She walks off quickly.

DISSOLVE TO:

24 EXT. ARMSTRUNGARD STREETS - DAY

24

Return to the streets the Kids were walking down.

JEN

Oh! Did you get the reference book?

BILLY

Yeah! Uhh...sorta.

JEN

Okay...

BILLY

I got an encyclopedia.

JEN

Well that could work. Can I see?

Billy rustles through his bag.

JEN

Dweezil's Encyclopedia of Oddities, Maladies, and Plagues?

BILLY

It was only encyclopedia I could find!

(beat)

Okay, it was the first encyclopedia I found and I wanted to look at the pictures.

JEN

Billy...

BILLY

But check out the page I marked!

Pages flip.

JEN

Ugh. Gross.

BILLY

Yeah it's pretty gnarly. But look!

JEN

Oh, no way! It says this drawing of some guy's giant pustule is to scale. And there's a ruler on the side of the page!

BILLY

Yeah! And look here!

More pages flip.

JEN

Where?

(beat)

Oh! It compares the density of this tumor to water and lead.

BILLY

Yeah I didn't remember exactly how to do density but I think it has something to do with weight.

JEN

No, this...this is perfect. This is exactly what I need to make sense of their units of measurement. You did great honey.

BILLY

Thanks.

JEN

That thing you said...about being a burden? It's not true.

BILLY

It is a little bit.

JEN

(how to approach this...?)

You did great today. We couldn't have done that without you. And I love you.

BILLY

(very proud)

Check out the last page.

JEN

Okay!

More pages still.

JEN

(grossed out)

Oh. Um...what am I looking for?

BILLY

Nothing, it's just a dude with huge balls. I thought it was funny.

JEN

Okay, we are gonna talk about how you think about illness and difference, but still...progress is progress.

REGAN

And we're gonna talk about whose ears don't work and who's about to have no balls.

Footsteps come to an abrupt halt.

JEN

Oh shit.

REGAN

Inside. Now.

END OF PART THREE.