

THE ONCE AND FUTURE NERD
Book II - MYTH MADE FLESH

Chapter 6
"One For The Team"

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1 INT. MONASTERY - DAY

1

Replay:

RY'Y

Nia. What a relief to see you.

Location and time are the same as at the end of Chapter 5.

NARRATOR

But of course, when we last left Nia, she was feeling anything but relief at the sudden reappearance of Lord Commander Ry'y lo-Th'yyt.

FREDERICK

Goodness, you look faint! Let me fetch you something.

NIA

No, please, that's--

FREDERICK

--I insist. I've got some fresh oat cakes and chamomile tea with honey. Wouldn't that be nice? Oh, dear Nia, what an ordeal you've been through, I can only imagine. You sit there while I fetch the cakes, and just try to breathe. You're safe now.

NIA

(a morbid, almost spiteful chuckle)
Yes. Safe.

Frederick hurries off.

Once he's gone...

RY'Y

He's a sweet boy. He got worried when you came to see him, could sense something was amiss. So right after sending your letter - clever thought by the way - he notified the City Guard.

NIA

(should've known)
Oh, Frederick...

RY'Y

(whispers)
The building's quite surrounded, of course, in case that's why you keep glancing at the door.
(hams it up on purpose)
So naturally the City Guard let my footmen know. And I rode here posthaste, and told Frederick about the

(MORE)

RY'Y (cont'd)
ruthless band of brigands who had compelled you to criminality against your will. So you can understand his relief when you answered his call. The boy cares about you very much.

NARRATOR
Nia heard the derision in the Elf's voice and thought she understood her intention.

NIA
(*whispers*)
Frederick's a pillar of his community. People will come looking if he goes missing.

RY'Y
(*feigned shock*)
Missing?! Why ever would he go missing?

Frederick's footsteps return.

FREDERICK
Who's missing?

RY'Y
Why, young Nia's afraid you might be departing soon. Have you any plans to travel?

FREDERICK
I don't think so.

RY'Y
Splendid.

FREDERICK
Have you told her? About the commendation?

RY'Y
I was just coming to that. Nia, as we both know, your actions during and after the battle at Freehold were... extraordinary. And there is much *you are owed*. But when we were unable to find you, we instead sought out your next of kin. Benedict and Mildred are such darlings, by the way. They've been very hospitable to my detachment in Seahold. Had we not found you, we would have been forced to give them what you're owed. But now that you're here I think we can agree it's easiest just to deal directly.

FREDERICK
And now that you're a war hero, Nia, the Knights of the Wood saw fit to personally help you with the brigands. Isn't that right, Lord Commander?

RY'Y

Oh yes, I shall deal with the brigands myself.

NIA

(just the slightest whiff of calculation)
Frederick, I hate to be a bother but might you have any jam for these cakes?

FREDERICK

I'll have to check the cellar...but, I'm sure I can rustle something up!

NIA

Would you mind terribly?

FREDERICK

(thinks he's being cute)
I am eternally at your service.

NIA

(hides her bitterness but not very well)
Yes, that's you. Helpful as always.

He hurries off again...

...And again they wait until he's gone.

RY'Y

I'm sure you can infer the conditions required for your parents' safe release, but for the sake of clarity let's speak them anyway.

NIA

I can't give you my companions.

RY'Y

Can't?

NIA

Aerona Regan is many things but she is not stupid. She wouldn't tell me where they were staying - only where to meet her so she could bring me to them.

RY'Y

Then you should go to your meeting. I've agents who are very skilled at seeing while remaining unseen, and they can--

NIA

--Not in this city. With respect. She is born and raised of this place, as you are of the Hyy1-Ykbyyr.

RY'Y
Explains a lot, doesn't it?

NIA
She knows this city better than her own heart. Track her and she'll spot you, and then lose you, and you'll never hear from me again, even if I wished to save my parents.

RY'Y
And do you?

NIA
Yes, very badly.

RY'Y
(frustrated)
Well then I grow weary of excuses. Tell me what's on offer, that is worth your three wretched lives.
(beat)
Think carefully on what you say next, my time is precious.

NARRATOR
Nia looked down into her lap, deep in thought. Though she remained silent, it was not long before tears began to fall onto the front of Billy's borrowed shirt.
(beat)
Finally, she raised her pained and dewy eyes to meet Ry'y's.

NIA
(meekly, a surrender)
I can tell you where she'll be in three days time.

NARRATOR
And Ry'y lo-Th'yyt grinned.

2 INT. GREY FOX TAVERN - SIMULTANEOUS

2

A door slams!

REGAN
What the mother fuck?

We hear a small fire crackling in the corner.

NARRATOR
Regan, of course, had no way of knowing what transpired in Friar Iohanssen's monastery. Instead, she was reacting at that moment to the actions of her youngest comrades, whom you'll recall had disobeyed her fairly straightforward command.

REGAN

Why is it as soon as we stop treating you like children, you act like 'em again?

A beat of embarrassment.

REGAN

I'm serious. Help me understand, so I can talk myself outta throwing you out a window.

BILLY

We're sick of being helpless. We got pulled away from everything and everyone we've ever known and we still don't know jack shit about how or why.

JEN

This was our only chance to maybe figure it out. And it's like no one gives a shit about that!

REGAN

I give a shit about keeping you alive. You can't go home if you're hanging from a rope with your skin peeled off, can you?

(softens just a little)

Look. Sometimes, there's a hard choice and none of your options are great. But when you take it on yourself to get what you want, and put the people around you in danger, that's when the people around you have every right to drop you like a brick.

She lets the gravity of that sit a little while.

REGAN

There was a time - not that long ago - when I wouldn't even be talking to you right now. You'd just wake up in the morning and I'd be gone. Never see me again. And I can't honestly say that was the wrong move. But for one thing, Brennen and Nia would never let me do--wait. Where's Nia?

NARRATOR

The Pennsylvanians looked at each other, then back at Regan, and then all shrugged.

REGAN

She wasn't part of this little caper?

NELSON

(under his breath)
Heist.

REGAN

What?

NELSON
Nothing.

REGAN
Was Nia in on this or not?

JEN
No.

NELSON
Not really.

REGAN
No, or not really?

NELSON
She drew us a map when we bugged her enough but she didn't say it was a good idea or go with us or anything.

REGAN
So then where the fuck is she?

JEN
She had something of her own to do. Seemed important.

REGAN
Oh, yeah, no, as long as it was gods damned important.
BRENNEN! YLLOWYYN! Fuck me running.

Footsteps approach and a door opens.

BRENNEN
Your Grace.

YLLOWYYN
Your Grace.

REGAN
First - real quick - you wanna tell me how these three escaped?!

YLLOWYYN
They what?

REGAN
They've been gone for close to two hours.

BRENNEN
I...thought they were sleeping late.
(beat)
Their doors were closed.

REGAN
Ohhhhhhh, good good. Hey, um...free tactical tip, lemme show you something, watch.

Some cloth rustles slowly.

NARRATOR

Regan sloooooowly lifted the front of her cowl up to cover her face. And then quickly yanked it down.

Cloth rustles quickly now.

REGAN

Peek-a-boo, asshole, I still exist!

BRENNEN

(taking it)
Aye, your Grace.

REGAN

(to Yllowyyn)
And you! How's those superior senses working out for you? You still got a fever or something? We got you medicine.

YLLOWYYN

Yes, but I don't think it works--

REGAN

--I need to go find Nia. Might take a little tracking, so you're coming with. Put your hood up, and I don't know, try to slouch I guess. With your gangly ass.

YLLOWYYN

(a little sarcastic)
It honors me to obey Your Grace.

REGAN

Don't push your luck. Brennen, get everyone to the Whiskey Church.

BRENNEN

Pardon, Your Grace?

REGAN

Old market district by the east canal. There's a building used to be a church that they built a tavern in. Looks like a church, but they sell whiskey. Whiskey Church.

BRENNEN

Aye, Your Grace.

REGAN

Get a table in the back of the basement, by the coffins.

BRENNEN

Er...sorry?

REGAN

Catacombs in the basement, get a table by the coffins. That's important. And even more important, these three are *not to leave your sight the whole time*. Got it?

BILLY

Man, we were just--

REGAN

--Abup. This is a stay of execution, not a pardon. So practice your begging for mercy faces. Brennen?

BRENNEN

Whiskey Church. Table by the, er...coffins. And not to leave my sight.

Regan **sucks in some air** then **huffs** it out.

NARRATOR

Regan took a steadying breath, tossed up her hood, and departed, with Yllowyn close on her heels.

A door opens and then slams shut.

3 EXT. VILLAGE OF THREE-BRIDGES (OUT WEST) - DAY

3

Out on the prairie, There is a loud indistinct chattering, a large crowd of people gathered together in an open town square. The voices skew young, old, and female.

THERE'S AN **UNDERCURRENT OF CONCERN** FROM THE CROWD, BUT NO OUTRIGHT PANIC.

After a moment, we hear a hint of a magic pad. Then, Steady River speaks. (She sounds as though she's coming through a low-quality amp or PA system.)

STEADY RIVER

Neighbors, friends, brothers and sisters. Thank you for attending this town meeting on short notice. As your chosen representative to the Federation, I formally open this meeting.

AS SHE SPEAKS, THE CROWD QUICKLY **QUIETS DOWN**.

NARRATOR

Steady River, a venerable elder of the western village which named itself after its Three Bridges, addressed a gathering of nearly five hundred of her neighbors. She spoke into a fired clay cone. Nearby, a young girl concentrated deeply on the cone, causing it to twist almost imperceptibly. As a result, the matriarch's voice, although plenty powerful on its own, was amplified enough to carry easily to the far edges of the town square.

STEADY RIVER

There is news, from the Federation House, as well as from the Western fields. However, regular order must prevail. Town issues first. Updates on the planting season?

NARRATOR

Steady River nodded towards an older man standing near the center of the square. At this signal, the young girl with the speaking cone ran to this gentleman, offered the device to him, and resumed her magical duty.

SHRUB SURVIVES THE STORM

(Very stressed)

Neighbors, friends...we all know the update is not good. We just don't have enough hands, nor enough bodies! We've sown seed in half of the field by the hill. By now, we should have completed that field, and half of another! We need more workers!

A murmur of assent from the crowd.

STEADY RIVER

(not magically enhanced, but shouting across the field)

And...

SHRUB SURVIVES THE STORM

(Sighing audibly)

And...Everyone is working their absolute hardest, and I personally thank all of our friends for their dedication in this trying time.

STEADY RIVER

Thank you neighbor. We knew there would be struggles, back when Traft of Six-Hills took so many of our strongest to the East for his war. Yet that knowledge makes this struggle no easier. I appreciate your hard work towards the feeding of our community. We will discuss how to get more workers to the fields. But first, we must hear the news from the Federation, and so I turn to the Signal House Speaker.

NARRATOR

At this, the girl with the speaking device began to run towards the young woman known as First Snow. However, First Snow waved the girl away, closed her eyes for a moment, and concentrated before beginning to speak. When she spoke, First Snow's voice was nevertheless amplified. I should note that this skill, which was made to seem easy by First Snow, would have proven difficult for not a few mages twice her age.

FIRST SNOW

Neighbors, Friends, Brothers and Sisters, thank you for allowing me to speak. As this month's Signal House Speaker, I have news. As a neighbor, I have even more. Yesterday morning, we received a signal from the Federation House. They request more corn, to feed the old and the sick.

A GENERAL HUBBUB BREAKS OUT.

SHRUB SURVIVES THE STORM

Are your ears closed, Signal-sender? We just discussed how dire our own situation is!

NARRATOR

Sensing the meeting spiraling quickly out of control, Steady River made a gesture to the girl with the clay cone. She closed her eyes and focused, and a loud, sharp shriek rang out.

The sound of a loud whistle being blown. The crowd stills a bit.

STEADY RIVER

Friends and Neighbors, we will have order. Signal-sender, please continue.

FIRST SNOW

Thank you Grandmother. In light of this news, I took it upon myself to inspect the Eastern Fields. Those fields should be next in the rotation, and I wanted to check the progress of the soil health for myself. I was accosted by a group of Easterners claiming protection of the White Forest. They have claimed the eastern fields as their own, by virtue of a new Easterner law. The Elves can now declare dominion over any land that is not actively in use. And to be honest, I do not trust them to thus limit themselves. I spoke directly with the Elf himself, who made several threats. I fear our town may be in danger.

THE CROWD HAS STEADILY GROWN LOUDER AND MORE CONCERNED.

THERE'S A REPEAT OF THE WHISTLE SOUND AND A
REPEAT OF THE QUIETING CROWD.

STEADY RIVER

Neighbors! This news is indeed grave, but we will learn nothing and get nowhere by shouting over each other. It is my duty to assess the consensus of the town, and by the Matron I will do it! We will hear proposed responses today, followed by two nights of campaigning and discussion, with the vote in three days. As per tradition, the bearer of the news, having had the most time for consideration, is given first right to speak. First Snow, do you have a proposed solution?

FIRST SNOW

Thank you Grandmother. Friends, Neighbors, I have an idea to address both problems at once. Regarding the Federation, of course we must provide food for the old and sick.

THE HUBBUB BEGINS TO RISE AGAIN.

First Snow speaks louder, even despite the amplification.

FIRST SNOW

We must! If we withhold food from the old and sick, that which we keep will be like ash in our mouth.

SHRUB SURVIVES THE STORM

(Shouting over the din, not amplified)

If we give away all of our food, we will have nothing but ash in our mouth throughout the winter!

FIRST SNOW

I am aware. We have two problems. First, we need more food. Second, the Elves will claim any land we do not till. To me, the solution is obvious. We simply till every field available to us. Even those fields which are not yet ready.

THE HUBBUB IS **EVEN LOUDER**. (IT FADES GRADUALLY UNDER THE NEXT MONOLOGUE.)

FIRST SNOW

Please! Friends, hear me! Shrub Survives, you requested more workers for the fields. I agree. We must make this our only priority, the stakes are too large on both the Federation and the Elven fronts. Every able person in this town, for the next two weeks, must stop their other work to take extra shifts, aerating and fertilizing the fields, so that we can sow them come spring. Exceptions only for medicine.

SHRUB SURVIVES THE STORM

(slightly mollified, mostly confused)

That...still will not be enough people to till all of the fields...

FIRST SNOW

(genuinely excited for her plan - she is still only fifteen after all)

I know. Here is the fun part. We till every field. We do not till *all* of every field. Each field is one thousand paces on a side. We till all around the border of each field, but only about fifty paces deep. Once the plants have grown tall, from the outside it will look as though we have used the whole field, satisfying the Elves' stupid rules. But each field will only require a fraction of the work, making it easier for our limited worker numbers. Those fields which still need to rest--aside from the outer border, they will still have their rest, while still claiming them away from the Elves. And by having the entire town working together, our yield will be higher than expected, allowing us to both feed ourselves *and* deliver to the Federation House.

NARRATOR

The square stilled, as the town contemplated this proposal.

STEADY RIVER

Thank you First Snow. That is certainly a unique strategy. Are there any counter-proposals?

SHRUB SURVIVES THE STORM

Yes! The young Signal-Sender has complicated the scenario far more than we need. I agree, we pull all workers in the town, but only for one week. We till only the three fields we intended to till this season. We all know that the Elves will not be deterred by wordplay and technicalities. This foolish plan would only provoke them, and we don't have enough warriors to survive a fight right now. No, we must allow them to take the other fields, let them believe they have won. The three fields will be enough for us. I say again, they will be enough *for us*. We must regretfully inform the Federation that we just have nothing to spare.

THERE'S SOME GENTLE VERBAL DISAGREEMENT AMONGST THE CROWD.

FIRST SNOW

But the Elves--

SHRUB SURVIVES THE STORM

--The Elves will do the same thing they always do. If we provoke them outright, the bloodshed will be terrible. Ask anyone who used to live further east. But
(MORE)

SHRUB SURVIVES THE STORM (cont'd)

if we do not provoke them, they will play a slower game. They will push our boundaries as far as they can bend, but if we play by their rules, there will not be any bloodshed this harvest season. We will adapt, we will set new boundaries, until they push those boundaries again. And then we'll adapt again. It isn't full of glory, but it is the only path to survival. If we had warriors, we could fight. But that fool Traft took away every soul who could have defended us. Who knows if or when they're coming back. If we fight today, we die. I say, we do what we must to survive the winter, build our strength, and find a better time to oppose the Elves.

FIRST SNOW

(really worked up)

But can't you see that if we don't--

STEADY RIVER

--First Snow! You have made your proposal, and Shrub Survives has made his. Thank you, by the way, Cousin. That is a very pragmatic strategy.

FIRST SNOW

That's one word for it.

STEADY RIVER

Tsst! You know well enough - you're to convince your neighbors over the next two nights, by the strength of your position, not by disparaging others. Before we adjourn, are there any other proposals?

(a pause)

Very well. In three days time, we will vote.

(one more beat)

Now. There is one more matter. As you all know, once the tilling season ends, there will be a meeting at the Federation House. While I am not too old to travel, I certainly am too old to want to travel, especially when at risk of inclement weather. At the end of the season I will step down and we will elect a new Town Speaker.

THE VILLAGERS KIND OF **LOSE THEIR SHIT** AT THIS.

DISSOLVE TO:

4 INT. SEAHOLD GARRISON - MAIN HALL - MORNING

4

We're in a big wide hall, but conspicuously...
...there seem to be a LOT of pigeons.

D'AYV

And there's breakfast for you, and for you, and - ah! -
who could forget you, you beautiful darling?

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

We've found her, you know.

D'AYV

Pardon?

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

The Memyet cleric. The Lord Commander tracked her down
in Armstrungard.

D'AYV

(blissfully oblivious to the hint)
Oh, splendid!

Beat.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

So...that means...there's no longer a need for pigeons
here.

D'AYV

Oh there's always a need for pigeons once you know how
clever they can be.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

My boy, I'm sure that someone misses y--I mean...
wouldn't you rather be back in the White Forest?

D'AYV

Oh, no! This is much more exciting. It's like in *Duel
of Cronos*, when--oh! You've read it haven't you?

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

(Reluctantly)
...Yes.

D'AYV

Well don't you remember the scene when Lady Greenwich
must send a secret message to her true love?

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

Do...do you mean the Prince from the North?

D'AYV

Oh, yes! You do remember it! Wasn't it exhilarating?

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

The Prince from the North is *not* the Lady's true love.

They both start to get heated, and it escalates. Quickly.

D'AYV

Of course he is! The...the...the chemistry! And the passion betw--

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

--Oh nonsense! They spent one night together, and he's barely given a name!

D'AYV

(indignant and derisive)

Oh and I suppose you think she belongs with Mathias the Solicitor.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

Who else could be her One True Paramour?

D'AYV

Oh, I don't know, how about *anyone else in the realm?*

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

He is there for her through thick and thin, his love neither possessive nor dispassionate, and he will always--

D'AYV

--HE DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO PLEASE HER!

Zyka'ad unsheathes a blade.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

YOU TAKE THAT BACK YOU LITTLE SHIT!

MILDRED CLEARS HER THROAT.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

(startled)
Reverend!

MILDRED

Sorry. Is everything all right?

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

(regaining composure)

Of course. Just...a bit of sparring. Is everything all right with you? You could have called for a page, you know, instead of climbing all those steps.

MILDRED

Well, we asked the pages if we could take a walk, and they said no.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

(offhand / under her breath)

At least *that* remains under control.

MILDRED

...control?

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

(deflecting)

You and Reverend Ben--

(Ben arrives on this line)

--impeccable timing, Reverend - are understandably restless under the circumstances. You're welcome to stretch your legs in this hall. This is my...mmm, colleague D'ay-vaad lo--er...

D'AYV

You can just call me D'ayv! Pleasure to make your acquaintance!

BEN

(maneuvering the slightest bit)

Likewise. Are these your birds?

D'AYV

Why, yes!

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

(hates this)

Yes they are.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

(threatening)

In any case, D'ayv was just leaving.

BEN

So soon?

MILDRED

Ben!

BEN

What? I find the coo-ing of the pigeons strangely soothing.

D'AYV

(very charmed)
Why, I agree!

MILDRED

SCREW pigeons! No offense mister...

D'AYV

(tirelessly jovial)
D'ayv!

BEN

You've assembled quite the flock.

D'AYV

(Flattered)
Why, thank you.

BEN

For what purpose did you bring them here? If I might ask.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

I'm afraid he's short on--

D'AYV

--Well it all started when
my dear friend Yllowyyn
returned home to visit.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

(beat to plan, then...)
Sergeant!

ZYKA'AD SNAPS HER FINGERS.

D'AYV

Yllowyyn and I go far back, and his sister...well, my
parents swear she's keen on me but I'm not--

--Sounds of underlings arriving to seize D'ayv.

D'AYV

Oh, hello!

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

As much as I hate to deprive us of this sure-to-be
charming anecdote, D'ayv and his...retinue were just
called away on urgent business. Isn't that right.

D'AYV

"Retinue" - why yes - that's a lovely way to describe
them, but I'm not--

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

--Quickly. Before they are better described as game,
mmm?

D'AYV

(finally clocks the threat)

Oh. Ah...um...Come along little darlings...

We hear D'ayv escorted away by two Knights,
followed closely by his ~~flock~~ ~~retinue~~ swarm.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

Back to the matter at hand...

D'AYV

(a few steps away)

My, that grip's a bit firmer than warranted ...

GRUNT from handler, which startles D'AYV.

D'AYV

...but helpful, lest I fall...

NARRATOR

With D'ayv finally fully out of the way...

Pause for final pigeon exit sounds and line
from D'ayv as he fully exits the space.

D'AYV

(very distant, but still audible!)

...til next time!

NARRATOR

I think we're in the clear...

D'AYV

(ad lib.)

So sorry, just forgot one pigeon! Oh wait, this one's
wild.

Final pause. This time: sweet, merciful
quiet.

NARRATOR

(sighing)

I try not to be too judgmental about such things but
I'll admit I find the voice of that D'ayv quite
grating. Always seems to be trying too hard, you know?
Anyway, back to the matter at hand indeed. As Major
Zyka'ad returned her attention to the reverends, it was
clear that some manner of high stakes discussion was
underway, even if the words spoken were rather mundane.

BEN

("I know what I'm doing")

...I'm sorry honey. I'm as torn up about this as you--

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

--Reverends! I trust that I have the solution to both
of your jitters. Good news.

MILDRED

Good news...

BEN

What's that?

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

Well, as I was trying to say before, we've found your daughter.

MILDRED

Praise Galadon!

NARRATOR

The Reverends responded cheerfully and embraced one another with relief at this revelation.

BEN

Oh! That's wonderful news indeed, m'lord. Thank you. Thank you!

NARRATOR

Ben bowed his head to the Major, and fervently raised his clasped hands in a gesture of gratitude. He then embraced his wife once more.

BEN

Milly, we should get back to the priory at once.

MILDRED

Yes, our parish must be worried sick. They've not seen hide nor hair of us in three days.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

Ah, hmm...Reverends. I'm afraid the pages were correct. You cannot leave the premises.

MILDRED

Cannot?

MAJOR ZYKA'AD

I have explicit orders from Lord Commander Ry'y lo-Th'yyt to...act as your...custodian until further notice.

NARRATOR

The Reverends exchanged a discreet look of concern.

MILDRED

...Well, that's kind of you. We really do appreciate your...looking after us...under the circumstances but--

BEN
 --But we have duties and responsibilities to return to.
 Our congregants and neighbors will start to worry--

MILDRED
 --If they haven't already. Best not to stir up any
 trouble among them.

BEN
 Right, might not be the best to have them come looking
 for us.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD
 Is that a threat?

BEN
 Oh no, m'lord.

MILDRED
 Perish the thought!

BEN
(aside, under his breath)
 And maybe perish us...

MILDRED
(stepping on Ben)
 Respectfully, m'lord, we've cooperated at every turn
 and achieved the mutual goal of finding our daughter.

BEN
(regrouping)
 Yes, we will remain at your service as needed for future
 reconnaissance, especially as it relates to her...

MILDRED
(overlapping, in agreement)
 Uh-hmm.

BEN
 But...you can't just keep us here.

MAJOR ZYKA'AD
 Mm. As it happens, I can.

We hear a few set of resolute, armored
 footsteps on every side of us.

NARRATOR
 As the reverends noticed Elves posted in every exit and
 corner of the room, they inched closer to each other
 and ended huddled in an embrace. And when they looked
 back to Major Zyka'ad, all pretense of cordiality was
 at last stripped from her face.

END OF PART ONE.