

THE ONCE AND FUTURE NERD
Book II - MYTH MADE FLESH

Chapter 7
"What's Close To You"

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A1 OUTSIDE TIME AND SPACE

A1

NARRATOR

Previously on *The Once And Future Nerd*...

Well, you all know my thoughts regarding recaps, but needs must I suppose.

Once upon a time, three children from Pennsylvania got magically transported to the world of Iorden, where-- what's that, you don't need that much of a recap? Fine then.

You will recall, our group of heroes had found themselves on the run from the Elf general Ry'y lo-Th'yyt, in search of allies or, in the absence thereof, in search of cash with which to purchase allies. To the dismay of our party, Ry'y lo-Th'yyt had captured Nia's parents, and was using them to blackmail Nia into revealing Regan's location.

Nia saw this threat as an opportunity, and plotted an elaborate heist at the annual horse fair. If all went according to her plan, this heist would rescue Nia's parents, liberate a large pile of gold, and eliminate the threat of Ry'y lo-Th'yyt, all in one fell swoop.

And of course in all well-crafted stories, everything always goes according to the protagonists plans, yes? Let's rejoin the tale now to confirm.

FADE IN:

1 EXT. WINNER'S CIRCLE - DAY

1

Replay:

BRENNEN

The net should be coming back up any minute.

Beat, and then...

We hear the pulleys start to go again.

BRENNEN

(just the slightest bit relieved)
As I said.

NARRATOR

When last we left Brennen, Regan, and Jen, they were waiting for the ingenious machine which Jen had devised
(MORE)

NARRATOR (cont'd)

to return, so that they could be safely lowered from the cliff to the beach below.

But you'll also recall the carnage left in the wake of a skirmish between Elves and Armstrungard gangsters. In case you don't, I can assure you that Regan was very keenly aware of it. She held one fist at her side and the other in its makeshift sling, but both clenched into knots as she looked upon the corpses - some of them children.

REGAN

Is Ry'y lo-Th'yyt dead?

JEN

What?

(flustered)

I don't know. She's down for now, that's what matters right?

REGAN

Well did you hit her with enough to kill her?

JEN

It's not exact like that.

REGAN

But you gave her everything you had.

JEN

I gave her a lot. But there were people over there!

A tense moment.

JEN
Hey. We gotta go.

REGAN
You go.

JEN
What?!

BRENNEN
Your Grace?

REGAN
Send the net back up one more time, I'll meet you on the ship.

JEN
What the hell are you talking about?

REGAN
I'm finishing this fight. Gonna make gods-damned sure she's dead. Plus her armor'll make us too rich for all the piss-pants sell-swords to turn down.

JEN
We won, just stick to the plan!

REGAN
(We can hear the shit-eating smirk)
I'm always sticking to my plan.

She gallops away.

JEN
Wait, Regan!

BRENNEN
Your Grace!

JEN
God dammit. What now?

BRENNEN
You should ride the net down. Send Yllowyyn back up.

JEN
(struggling with the decision)
Aggggggggh.
(then, decides)
Fuck it.

She takes off running in the same direction as Regan's horse.

BRENNEN
Jen! Where are you going, gods dammit?

We hear him run to the cliffside.

BRENNEN

(Shouting down)
Yllowyyn! We need help!

NARRATOR

Brennen looked around him for something heavy with which to send the net back down. He saw a marble pillar which adorned the winner's circle.

BRENNEN GRUNTS AND GROANS.

We hear marble scraping against stone as the pillar rocks back and forth, back and forth, until finally, it falls into the net.

We hear the pulleys start working again.

Brennen runs off.

2 EXT. BEACH - SIMULTANEOUS

2

We're right down on the beach, with the gulls and lapping waves.

A horse pulls something heavy across sand.

Yllowyyn's Elf-hearing FX kick in:

BRENNEN (REPLAY)

(through Elf-hearing)
Yllowyyn! We need help!

Elf-hearing ends.

YLLOWYYN

Push it as far as you can into the cove. We'll catch up with you.

NIA

Is everything all right?

YLLOWYYN

Get as far as you can. Don't wait to board the ship if you make it there.

Yllowyyn runs along the beach.

NARRATOR

And thus Yllowyyn returned to the base of the cliff, and looked up at it. He saw the net, laden with a marble pillar, returning to the ground.

The heavy pillar touches down. In sand.

YELLOWYYN

Dammit.

NOW YELLOWYYN GRUNTS AND GROANS.

We hear some sand shifting about but that's it.

NARRATOR

But of course it is much easier to knock a standing pillar off its balance than it is to lift it out of sand.

YELLOWYYN

Sir Brennen!

No response.

YELLOWYYN

Blast it all.

NARRATOR

He grabbed one of the two ropes connecting the net to the sand bags.

A knife is unsheathed.

NARRATOR

He unsheathed his hunting knife, and cut the rope.

A rope is cut. We ZOOM upwards as a pulley whirls like mad.

3 EXT. RACETRACK - STARTING GATE - DAY

3

NARRATOR

The fog was beginning to clear and the dust was beginning to settle near the demolished seating area as Regan stalked through it, crossbow in hand. And as the sun began to pierce the thick, man-made clouds, an opalescent glint caught her eye.

We enter some sort of sound-space where time crawls to a halt.

Now this next series of events unfolded extraordinarily quickly, so pray permit me to explain it to you instant-by-instant.

Ry'y lo-Th'yyt lay prone, bloodied and burned, but with eyes open and crossbow at the ready. But I imagine it will please you to know that, through tremendous skill and a little bit of luck, Regan managed to spot the Elf a split second before she spotted her.

Regan whipped her healthy arm up to level her weapon at Ry'y, but as she did, something caught in her shoulder. Something she had noticed once or twice before but forced herself to ignore. It hurt her, stole her breath for barely a second, and knocked her arm off course, so that when she loosed her bolt...

Her repeating crossbow shoots and the bolt hits dirt.

...It flew a good foot wide of Ry'y lo-Th'yyt. And before Regan could line up and loose again, the Elf returned the attack.

Ry'y shoots her larger crossbow.

Acting on pure instinct, Regan raised her injured arm up in front of her face. Now, in a certain sense, it was fortunate for Regan that Ry'y lo-Th'yyt was such a skilled shot. Most fighters in her position would have aimed for the trunk of Regan's body, and struck her belly or lung or throat, and it would have been her doom. But Ry'y's shot was aimed straight at Regan's eye, and so her injured arm got in the way.

A bolt hits flesh and something crunches.

Now, of course, in another sense this was not fortunate for Regan. For the arm, not nearly healed from her last encounter with Ry'y lo-Th'yyt, broke again. And this time much less cleanly than the last.

REGAN
AGGGHHHHH!

We hear a few scuffed and uneven footfalls.

NARRATOR
Regan staggered backwards and lost her footing.

Ry'y shoots again twice...

NARRATOR

And so Ry'y's next two bolts missed high.

RY'Y

(hurt and exhausted)
Mem-rhypaas!

Ry'y shambles to her feet.

NARRATOR

The badly burned Ry'y lo-Th'yyt struggled to her feet. The instant she was able to stand, she trained her crossbow down at Regan and loosed...

The crossbow shoots...

...but then there's a strange HUM of power.

NARRATOR

...and then watched in disbelief as the bolt changed course in mid-air for no discernible reason. It fell harmlessly to the ground a few feet away from Regan.

Again the crossbow shoots.

NARRATOR

She loosed again, and this time the bolt deflected far left - again for no reason that could be seen. But Ry'y lo-Th'yyt, as you know, did not want for cleverness and quickly made a reasonable guess as to the reason.

She aimed upwards, into the clearing fog, just in time to see the blonde-haired girl she'd met once before, emerging with arms outstretched. Ry'y shot a bolt straight at Jen's eye.

The crossbow shoots again, and the hum of power intensifies.

NARRATOR

And this one slowed mid-flight, and then stopped completely, as though held in place by an unseen hand. As Jen placed herself between Regan and Ry'y, her face was wracked with strain and concentration. And so her eyes were not open to see the head of the crossbow bolt glow red and then orange and then white. In one sense of course, it was unfortunate her eyes were closed, as she had no chance of avoiding what happened next.

Metal cracks violently and then ricochets.

NARRATOR

Which is to say the arrowhead shattered into molten fragments, some of which flew straight at Jen. Of course, in another sense it was fortunate her eyes were closed, for the fragment which struck her eyelid would have otherwise struck her eye.

Flesh sizzles.

JEN

Ahhhhhh!

NARRATOR

And so mercifully Jen's eye did not boil out of its socket. But from that day forward, there was forevermore a small grey mote on the left side of her vision.

Needless to say, Jen lost her concentration and her balance.

Jen stumbles.

And Ry'y lo-Th'yyt aimed to end her life. But as the Elf pulled her deadly lever...

Crossbow clicks empty.

...She was suddenly forced to remember her arithmetic.

We hear a crossbow thrown to the ground and a sword hastily unsheated.

Ry'y drew her saber on Jen...

An arrow whizzes past us and strikes a body.

RY'Y LETS OUT A **STUNTED AND WOUNDED CRY.**

NARRATOR

...but dropped it as an arrow pierced her flank.

A throwing axe whirls past us and clatters in the dirt.

NARRATOR

And she narrowly sidestepped the arc of a throwing axe.

Another arrow flies past.

NARRATOR

At last, keenly aware of her sudden but significant disadvantage, Lord Commander Ry'y lo-Th'yyt quickly hobbled away.

Shuffling footsteps quickly retreat...

...As two more confident sets of footsteps quickly approach.

Yllowwyn shoots one more time. We don't hear it hit anything.

BRENNEN

Who's hurt?

JEN

She is.

REGAN

She is.

BRENNEN

Can you walk?

JEN

Yeah.

REGAN

Yeah.

BUT REGAN **STRUGGLES PAINFULLY** TO STAND.

REGAN

(woozy and hurt)

Yllowwyn, you gotta go after--

--SHE **RETCHES** ONTO THE GROUND.

BRENNEN

You need a medic quickly, Your Grace.

YLLOWYYN

Make haste to the cliff. I'll cover your retreat.

4 EXT. CLIFFSIDE - A LITTLE LATER

4

We're on top of the cliff overlooking the ocean.

NARRATOR

The return trip to the cliffside took considerably longer than the trip Brennen and Yllowwyn had just made, as you can no doubt understand.

Frantic, uneven footsteps shamble towards us.

The dialogue approaches us gradually, along with the footsteps.

YELLOWYYN

There!

BRENNEN

What happened to the machine?

YELLOWYYN

I had to get back up very quickly. Not to worry. I'll get myself down and tie it back on where I cut.

BRENNEN

Quickly. Go.

5 EXT. BEACH - A MINUTE OR SO LATER

5

We're back down on the beach. Above us, someone climbs down in a series of large, graceful hops.

YELLOWYYN

[Sounds of exertion, ad lib.]
And...there.

Two feet touch down in sand.

NARRATOR

When Yllowyyn - calling on all of his grace and speed - returned to the beach, he immediately set to refastening the sandbags to the device above.

We hear him making a knot and yanking it tight.

YELLOWYYN

Right.

He tugs on the rope.

NARRATOR

But when he tested his handiwork...

We hear a considerable burst of sand spill out of the bags.

YELLOWYYN

Galadon above.

NARRATOR

...Several of the sandbags gave way, spilling their now useless contents below them.

YELLOWYYN

Gods dammit, I warned them not to skimp on textiles. What now, what now?

BRENNEN

(shouts down, very distant)
Yllowyyn! Is it nearly ready?!

YELLOWYYN

(shouts back)
I need to get something from the others!

BRENNEN

(Still shouts)
What?!

We hear Yllowyyn running away.

YELLOWYYN

(shouts but trails off)
I won't be two minutes!

6 EXT. CLIFFSIDE - CONTINUOUS

6

JEN

What did he say?

BRENNEN

That he needed to get...something.

JEN

What's wrong with the sandbags?

BRENNEN

Would that I knew.

JEN

Maggie? How you holding up?

REGAN **GROANS IN PAIN** - VERY OUT OF IT.

JEN

Hey. Hey. Hey! You gotta stay with me.

REGAN

Unggggggh.

JEN

Uh, what did the bartender say when the thief, the Elf, and the cleric walk into the bar?

A long pause.

JEN

(aside)

I don't know why I thought I'd just come up with a punchline there.

(shouts)

Brennen! What's Plan B?

BRENNEN

(doesn't know the phrase)

Er, pardon?

JEN

If--

(realizes she should be quieter)

--I know Yllowyyn's coming back. But if he doesn't come back in time, what do we do?

NARRATOR

Brennen opened his mouth to speak, but no sound emerged.

(beat)

Jen gave him a look which could only be described as pleading, but he only shook his head, apologetically.

A pulley wiggles.

NARRATOR

And so the relief was palpable when a tug came on the rope.

BRENNEN

(Shouts down the cliff)

Yllowyyn?!

Brennen runs to the cliff's edge.

BRENNEN

He's back. He's waving to us.

JEN BREATHES AN AUDIBLE **SIGH OF RELIEF**.

BRENNEN

I'm going to climb down and grab the rope. Pass Her Majesty to me, and then grab on yourself.

7 EXT. BEACH

7

NARRATOR

And back down on the beach, Ylloyyyn watched with rapt attention as, high above, his friends took precarious hold of the rope.

We hear the rope tug and strain a little.

NARRATOR

The cord pulled taut against...a large and sturdy chest of oak and iron.

(pause)

Which did not budge.

Ylloyyyn gives an **exasperated sigh/grunt**.

Ylloyyyn

(shouts up)

I need to remove some weight! Hold fast!

A heavy padlock jingles.

Ylloyyyn gives a **more exasperated sigh/grunt**.

NARRATOR

Ylloyyyn found a heavy rock on the beach, and set to work on the lock.

Clunk. CLUNK. SMASH!

The lid of the chest is opened, and an absolute shit-load of treasure jingles around.

NARRATOR

And as he scooped armfuls of coins and precious stones and fine tableware out of the chest...

Several discrete scoops of treasure clatter out onto the sand, as the rope tugs.

NARRATOR

...It finally began to lift into the air.

8 EXT. CLIFFSIDE - A FEW SECONDS AGO

8

NARRATOR

But as Brennen and Jen waited above with a nigh insensate Regan, they began to hear an unmistakable sound.

It's hoofbeats. Approaching. ...Fast.

NARRATOR

And though Jen had learned to read various emotions into Brennen's usually stoic visage, she'd never before seen him panic up close.

BRENNEN

(desperate)
YELLOWYYN!

The pulley starts to move.

BRENNEN

Oh, Galadon's Mercy.

9 EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

9

NARRATOR

And so when Jen's device set them down on the beach below, they were in quite a state of haste.

YELLOWYYN

Help me load our spoils back into--

JEN

--No time.

YELLOWYYN

But, Her Grace said that--

--Crossbow bolts begin to fall around us.

BRENNEN

No time!

YELLOWYYN

Grab what you can and run.

We hear them scoop up an armful each of
treasure and sprint away.

Behind them, the rain of missiles continues.

10 INT. RED REAVER - BELOW DECK - PICKING UP FROM CHAPTER 6

10

We're in the same spot we were in the last
scene of Chapter 6.

NELSON

(replay)

Uhhh dude, what are you?

NARRATOR

Nelson, you'll recall, had just had a rather strange experience with the babe entrusted into his care.

The baby is still laughing.

NELSON

I...uhhhhhh--

--From above, sounds of hasty footfalls and hurried commotion.

An alarm bell rings.

SAILOR

(up above us)
They're back!

NELSON

(overwhelmed)
Daaaaaaaaah!

The baby starts crying.

CUT TO:

11 EXT. RED REAVER - ABOVE DECK - CONTINUOUS

11

The crew of the ship is moving with great speed and determination

ALF

(cheery as ever)
Right then, lads, set to! Make like you've done this before. Three minutes 'fore the Elves are on us like salt on the wind, doncha know.

Some heavy ropes are thrown overboard and splash into the water.

CREW MEMBER 1

(shouting up from a lifeboat)
There's injured down here!

CREW MEMBER 2

(on our level, relaying the message)
They say someone's hurt.

ALF

Right then Froggy, go and fetch your medicine bag. And tell the rowers: At the catch!

Footsteps hurry away from us.

Passing those footsteps and heading towards us is Nelson, who is preceded by the sound of the crying baby.

NELSON

Did they say someone's hurt?

Nelson is holding the baby. He carries it with him as it begins to cry.

Pulleys begin lifting a lifeboat out of the water.

NARRATOR

As the small rowboat was raised out of the sea, Nelson saw the panicked and haggard state of his friends.

NELSON

Oh, shit.
(Running towards them)
 What happened?
(He gets there)
 Who can I help?

CREW MEMBER 1

We're all aboard, sir!

ALF

Right, then. Tell the Rowers Power Thirty. Take us away from this lovely cove.

Somewhere on a deck below us, a coxswain's drum beats out a grueling pace. Oars beat the water, and the ship moves, steadily accelerating throughout the rest of the scene.

ALF

And full sail, fellas, full sail! And Jen? Are you here, kiddo?

NELSON

She's hurt!

JEN

I'm fine. What do you need?

ALF

A little extra wind would sure go down smooth, doncha know.

JEN
Right.

We hear a magic pad begin to build.

NIA
Jen, Her Grace still needs purified air. Are you sure you're up to handling both?

JEN
I've got it.

The magic pad intensifies...but then drops out abruptly.

JEN **WINCES** IN EXERTION.

NARRATOR
Jen faltered on her feet, but Billy was there.

BILLY
Woah woah woah, I got you.

NIA
Take her somewhere cool and dark, make sure she rests. Especially her eye. I'll be in to see her shortly. And I'll get Her Grace as much purified air as I can.

This scene **FADES OUT** under the remainder of the dialogue.

NIA
Yellowwyn, Sir Brennen - rustle up some dry blankets for Her Majesty. Gwen, Lady Arlene - I'll need your help undressing her. And someone fetch me a board and some bandages for a splint. Alf? Is there any poppy milk on this boat? Some very strong rum will do in a pinch...

DIP TO:

12 SAME - DUSK

12

The boat is coasting at a comfortable pace. A few gulls circle nearby. It's serene...relative to the last scene at least.

NARRATOR
By the time Nia had finished her work, the sun had nearly consummated its eventide courtship of the sea.

We hear Nia walk out onto the deck.

MILDRED

How are your...friends?

NIA

They'll live.

MILDRED

(casual, not especially pious)
Thank Galadon.

NIA

I can't speak as to the one's fencing career. In addition to the broken forearm, I suspect she had a hairline fracture in her upper arm from a prior injury. She either refused to tell us or refused to acknowledge it herself. I suspect that's why she was bested in combat. The younger one still has her sight, though she'll see a little worse. Still, both are lucky.

A beat. Both cautious.

MILDRED

You did a good job, Nia. You really are a fine healer.

NIA

(trying a little too hard to stay even-keeled)
Thank you.

Another beat. This one a stalemate.

MILDRED

(truly overwhelmed)
I...don't really know where to start.

NIA

Me neith--

--HER VOICE CRACKS AND SHE BREAKS DOWN.

NIA

(through tears)
Oh, Mum. Me neither. Me neither.

We hear them hug each other.

MILDRED

(crying too)
It's all right, dear, it's all right. I'm so glad you're safe.

We let them be, for just a moment,
until...

Another set of footsteps walks onto the deck. A
VERY BIG set of footsteps.

ALF
Nia.

NIA
Alf. Good evening.
(She sniffles and attempts to collect herself)
Pardon me, it's been...quite a day.

ALF
No, no, I understand. Ah...the Captain was relieved to
hear that none of your party's wounds were fatal, and
she sends her best wishes for their speedy recovery.

NIA
(waiting for the other shoe to drop...)
That is...kind of her to say.

ALF
She also demands parlay, in her quarters, at your
earliest convenience.

NIA
(...and there it is.)
Yes, I expected she might. Mother, if you'll excuse me.

MILDRED
(flabbergasted)
...Of course.

NIA
Lead the way.

Nia and Alf's footsteps recede into the cabin.

We're left with just the water and the gulls.

END OF PART ONE.