

THE ONCE AND FUTURE NERD
Book II - MYTH MADE FLESH

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

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+ YELLOW Production Revisions + GREEN day-of/edit fixes

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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.

PART TWO:

6 INT. OTTO'S QUARTERS - DAY

6

NARRATOR

We resume our tale in the quarters of one Captain Otto Olafsson, whose ship you'll recall had recently been overrun by a large band of raiders. At this moment, the quarters had been commandeered by the leader of the outlaws so that she could have a private conversation with Regan.

REN

So if I give you passage to Armstrungard, what are you prepared to give me?

REGAN

You mean aside from the gold we already gave Olafsson?

REN

His gold is my gold now and will be no matter what. So that's no offer.

NARRATOR

Also present for this negotiation were Jen, and the pirate called Alf Fire-Beard. At the moment, the two seconds were locked in a staring contest. A rather absurd-looking staring contest, as Alf towered over Jen by closer than not to a full two feet. But the young woman mustered all the apparent ferocity she could under the circumstances.

*

ALF

I'd like to know what you think you're looking at there, little missy.

JEN

Oh, nothing much.

REGAN

Look I'll be honest with you.

REN

Ha!

ALF

Ha!

JEN

Hey! Where she's from a thief trades on her word more than gold. Thought you'd know that.

REGAN

Thank you Jen. I was saying we don't have much coin beyond what we already paid for passage. Can scrounge up maybe another...fifteen pieces but that's it. But. But.

NARRATOR

Regan gesticulated emphatically as though to convey the gravity of what would come next.

REGAN

You strike me as people who'd benefit from friends in high places.

REN

I'm listening.

This next bit is maybe played like an aside.

REGAN

Jen?

JEN

What?

REGAN

Tell her.

JEN

Tell her what?

REGAN

For fuck's...do the name and titles thing!

JEN

...You sure?

*

REGAN

Just. Fucking--

JEN

(puffs up)

--You're addressing Aeron Margaret Regan, last scion of the Great House Guernatal, champion of the civilized peoples and rightful High Queen of the Human Realms of Iorden.

Beat.

Alf and Ren burst into hysterics.

ALF

(through shaking laughter)
That's what you come to offer us?

REN

(fighting fits of giggles)
Gal, there is no more House Guernatal, I never gave a shit about "civilized" peoples, and if your bum ever touches the High Throne then my paramour's face is Galadon's mead bench.

REGAN

(taking it)
When I found out I thought the same exact thing. But turns his late majesty Gunther was diddling my grandma.

REN

Yeah, you and half the orphans in Armstrungard.

REGAN

But he was gonna make it all legitimate and shit until Ardel Redmoor had him killed.

ALF

Oh yah sure he was.

REGAN

I know how it sounds.

REN

I wonder how the Elves and the Great Houses would react to this claim of yours.

REGAN

I...haven't exactly declared to them yet.

REN

Ohhh but of course.

REGAN

Wasn't the right time last time I saw them.

REN

You were scared you mean.

REGAN

I mean I wasn't a fucking idiot under the circumstances. But now I *am* pushing the claim.

REN

Why?

REGAN

That's my business. Point is I'm building an army. And one day not too long from now, gonna need a navy too. How's 'Admiral Ren' strike you? Maybe 'Captain Alf'?

Ren sighs.

REN

Alf, the ledger.

NARRATOR

From a satchel at his side, Alf produced a hefty, hand-bound tome, and dropped it on Olafsson's desk.

Thud.

NARRATOR

And, knowing what was about to be asked of him, he pilfered Olafsson's quill and hastily set to scribbling some figures.

Under dialogue, a quill scratches parchment until specified otherwise.

REN

My pa always said to me, he said, "Ren, to survive this line of work you need to be a good sailor, a good fighter, a good negotiator...and a great bullshitter." And thief queen, you've got a special knack for bullshit to bring a tall tale like that in front of the greatest bullshitter to ever sail the seas. If it was up to me, I'd be inclined to do you a favor.

REGAN

Who's it up to then? Captain?

REN

Alf, what's the ledger say about doing the thief queen a favor?

Alf stops writing.

ALF

Well, if you reckon with the ships we won't be able to...visit on our way, and the foodstuffs we won't be able to fence before they rot, it's a deceptively costly endeavor.

JEN

Wait, lemme see that.

The book slides across the desk.

REN

I've learned many times over - don't question Alf on figures. Man's some kind of wizard.

JEN

Rationing coefficient, rate of attrition in barrels per hour per hour...where'd you learn this?

ALF

Uncle was a fishmonger, taught me the basics. Picked up that trick for working with an unknown number from a Mooncrest deserter. Rest I taught myself.

JEN

This is incredible. He's mastered algebra and he's halfway to calculus.

REGAN

All right, all right, keep it in your pants.

ALF

Don't know all that's in Olafsson's hold yet, but I'd reckon we turn a very slim profit.

REGAN

That plus the gold we gave him, plus the extra gold we're gonna give you...that's still not a bad day.

REN

But when you split it among the crew, it'll fetch them one fun night at port and little else. On the other hand, if we were to ransom that Elf or that high-born girl--

JEN

--No way. They're off limits.

NARRATOR

Ren the Ruthless cocked an eyebrow at Jen.

REGAN

You got the numbers, sure. But we can make that kidnapping cost you a fuck of a lot.

NARRATOR

In a practiced motion, Regan brushed back her cloak, revealing the small armory that she kept on her person at all times.

REGAN

Try me if you don't believe me.

ALF

Well now there's no need to get ornery.

REN

I'm not saying I'd do that, tough girl. I'm just explaining the position you leave me in. A ransom like that...why it's damn near enough for somebody to buy their way out of this life. My crew knows it. If I let the chance go, and all I give them in return is some cock and bull story about a bastard queen...how's that likely to turn out Alfie?

ALF

Well, if not for the impeccable moral fiber of our crew, and their steadfast respect for authority... that's the type of thing that'd start a mutiny against a lesser captain.

REN

So you see my problem. A Captain's not a queen. When her subjects go hungry because she's a fool, she actually has to answer for it.

JEN

It's a long-term investment. Alf, you get it, right? Compound interest?

ALF

To hear you yourself tell it, that investment depends on an army of - what, nine? - most of them not fighters, winning a war against all the Great Houses and maybe the Elves.

REN

I really would like to help you, Thief Queen. Give me *something* I can promise my crew today that won't insult their intelligence.

Beat.

REGAN

...Gimme ten minutes.

7 INT. MERCHANT VESSEL (BELOW DECK) - NEARLY CONTINUOUS

7

NARRATOR

And so Regan returned below deck to the side of her very ill Knight, to discuss an idea she'd had.

BRENNEN

(weary from illness)

Your Grace, you cannot trade the Guernatal Talisman of Dominion for passage aboard an outlaw ship.

REGAN

I can't see any other way that gets us all safely to port.

*
*

BRENNEN

But, without it, how will we ever hope to--

REGAN

--What? Claim I'm legitimate in front of the Elves? That ship has sailed my friend.

BRENNEN

(heartbroken)

But...it is ancient and priceless. I beg of you.

REGAN

Look, I know who this belonged to. I know it means a lot to you. But you want me to be Queen. Gunther wanted me to be Queen. If we can't give up something shiny to keep my people safe, then what are we even doing?

A beat, then...

8 INT. OTTO'S QUARTERS - NEARLY CONTINUOUS

8

NARRATOR

Back in Olafsson's quarters...

A cloth covering is pulled away.

REN

(or ad lib alt.)

Well fuck me. Now you're talking sense.

NARRATOR

As the talisman caught a stray beam of morning sun through a porthole, its jewels cast a dazzling dance of rainbow light across the otherwise drab cabin.

ALF

How in Selbirin did you nab that?

REGAN

I told you. It's mine by birthright.

REN

Sure it is.

REGAN

Well it's more mine than it is Ardel fucking Redmoor's. Anyway it's too hot to fence in Armstrungard. But you'll find somebody in the Sugarcane Isles who'll melt it down no problem.

REN

Daresay we will.

REGAN

So is that a deal?

REN

In exchange for this treasure, safe passage to Armstrungard for you and your whole crew. We can't make port but we'll get you close enough to row and throw in a boat no charge.

Ren spits.

NARRATOR

Ren spit in her hand and presented it to Regan.

REGAN

What about the other part? Do I have a navy yet, Admiral?

REN

Ha! Don't push your luck, and don't ever spurn my open hand.

REGAN

Fine.

Regan spits too. Hand strikes hand.

REGAN

Deal.

9 INT. JETHRO'S CELLAR

9

JETHRO

(sharp whispers like the Templars' chanting)
 Ssselokar Ssselokir Naaamokar Naamokir. Ssselokar
 Ssselokir Naamokar Naamokir.

Jethro continues under the narration.

NARRATOR

Jethro, the woodsman who had captured the half-Orc Traft, was reciting an arcane and forbidden spell out of his skinbound grimoire. Torchlight danced manically across the walls of the cellar as the old man's voice pronounced the incantation. In the corner, the creature Caleb whimpered.

A dog whines.

NARRATOR

The corpses of Jethro's previous guests were still, the dead eyes seeming to stare directly into Traft's soul. Traft lay still, bound to the table, waiting for something to happen. He waited...and waited, and waited.

TRAFT

Uh...Am I supposed to be feeling something here?

JETHRO

Hush now. Concentrate. Ssselokar Sselokir. Saalamir Naladir

NARRATOR

Jethro resumed his chanting. Five minutes passed, and then ten. After fifteen minutes had passed without a single sign of anything happening, Traft's patience snapped.

TRAFT

All right, that's it! You convinced me to cooperate. Gods help me, I guess I am still a fool for Dagmar. But we've been up all gods-damned night and you haven't told me anything more about what you're trying to do.

JETHRO

Boy I told you I ain't got time for your--

TRAFT

--But you got time to say gibberish for gods only know how long?

JETHRO

Boy! You will not disrespect my magicks. They are ancient and very hard learned.

TRAFT

Maybe so. But tonight they ain't done shit. And now I'm tired. So you start talking, or I'm done. You're gonna have to cut me up for your porridge after all.

JETHRO

All right all right cool yourself off now. What you wanna know so bad?

TRAF T

You keep saying I'm gonna see Dagmar. I'm gathering you don't mean in a poetic sense, where all the good little boys and girls meet in Selbirin after death and eat pies and sing hymms to Galadon.

JETHRO

Nay, nay, I don't mean like that. If I'm right about what I've been working on, you could touch her, smell her, as though she's standing right yonder.

TRAF T

You know you sound outta your head, right? Shit maybe you don't know that. *Why* do you think we can meet her again?

JETHRO

I first met Dagmar, ohhh must be near to twenty years now. I served House Greenhorn then. But I never rose no higher than a petty knight. And I was well past fighting age. But they kept me around, guess they thought it was courteous. They sent me with Dagmar when she came to Guernatal's court. We spoke often, we became...close. We spoke about life, about philosophy. I found that Dagmar and I shared a number of...values.

NARRATOR

You may recall, dear listener, that Dagmar had shared very similar conversations with Traft. You can be sure that Traft recalled it all too well.

*

JETHRO

Then I began having Dreams. In 'em, Garedian gave me instructions. Told me to go to this location or that. I met others at those locations. Templars, you called them. They taught me things, great powers. Gave me their vestments and idols. I rose in their ranks. And then one night, the Dream sent me to an inn, outside of Brimshire. Dagmar was there. It was her, but not just her. Something in her I'd never seen before. And she bore this very staff I hold today. Lots of other Templars had come too.

(Beat. This is a big deal.)

We captured the crown Prince Uther. Took him out in the middle of the woods. The conversation Dagmar had with him...I'll never forget it.

*Replay 010101:**UTHER**Not your most imaginative work.**DAGMAR**You haven't seen the most interesting part yet.**UTHER**See you soon, dear.**DAGMAR**Will you?**JETHRO**They were talking to each other, but it was like they weren't...them. And then she stabbed this very staff, through the Prince's heart.**TRAFT**Wait wait wait. You're telling me that Dagmar herself killed Uther Guernatal? The biggest assassination in centuries, and it was done by his own stepmother?*

*

*JETHRO**I'm saying she did more than kill him.**TRAFT**And she kept it from...well, me and everyone else in the damn world?! All while sharing the King's bed? Why would she do that?**JETHRO**That's what I'm trying to tell you if you'll shut your yap. She told us lower our hoods and close our eyes tight. I did. But when Uther breathed his last I could see like a bright sunny day, even through all that. And when I opened my eyes again, the Prince's body was gone without a trace.*

*

*TRAFT**So what's that mean?*

JETHRO

For a long time I didn't know. Spent years trying to understand. Only one thing I did know. Whoever was coming to me in my Dreams - she and Dagmar were one in the same. By then I had dreamed every night for three, four years. True dreams too - the dream tells me to go somewhere, sure enough someone's waiting for me. And I tell you, that night, it was Dagmar's body, her voice, but sure as the sun sets, it was Garedian done the killing.

NARRATOR

This should have struck Traft as the ramblings of an unwell old man. To be fair, it was literally the ramblings of an unwell old man. But he thought back on his life, on his time shared with Dagmar, and something of the old man's story struck a chord.

TRAFT

(half buying it)

If that's true...why'd Garedian kill Uther?

JETHRO

The time you knew her, was she not fond of saying "Galadon is gone from this world?"

TRAFT

Well, yeah. I guess I always figured she meant...
(making a connection)
...in a poetic sense.

JETHRO

Nay, nay, I don't think she did. I think that for a time, Galadon was Uther the same way that Garedian was Dagmar. And then she found a way to send Galadon to another place. That he couldn't easily come back from.

TRAFT

Wait. *That's* where you wanna send me? Someplace I can't come back from?

JETHRO

But I think you can come back. That's what I been working on all this time.

TRAFT

Working on, and failing.

JETHRO

But the others didn't believe like you do.

TRAFT

Now hang on. I take it you reckon this traveling is done by means of magic.

JETHRO

Aye, that I do.

TRAFT

So assuming they were to believe like you say, it stands to reason that someone better trained in magic than I am would have a better chance of being able to come back.

JETHRO

Suppose so. But the snows'll be back afore long. No one in their right mind gonna be through this pass any time soon.

TRAFT

Just so happens your old friends the Templars - they're looking for me. None too pleased how my last battle went. They probably weren't too far off my trail when you found me. If I went out and drew just a little attention to myself, I'm sure you could catch you a Templar or two. How'd that serve?

NARRATOR

A twisted grin crept over Jethro's face.

*

10 INT. MERCHANT VESSEL (CARGO DECK) - SIMULTANEOUS

10

Above us, we hear crates and barrels carted around along with general cheering and carousing.

NARRATOR

As the crew of the Red Reaver transferred their newly-won loot from Otto Olafsson's ship over to Ren's, Arlene and Gwen stole down to the hold.

We hear the baby lifted gently. He fusses in his sleep.

GWEN

Shhh....shh....no need to wake. Well wasn't that a comfy bed for you! Who'd've thought a sack of flour and some straw could make a suitable cradle?

ARLENE

He certainly slept soundly enough, all through the commotion up on deck. Oh, Gwen.

SHE **SIGHS.**

ARLENE

When you left your family to go serve the nobility, did you ever imagine being in a place like this?

THEY BOTH **CHUCKLE**.

GWEN

Can't say I did. But then, I never imagined I'd meet the love of my life either. Galadon's plans are hidden from us all.

ARLENE

Yes. Some days more so than others. This is no place for the young one. What are we to do here?

*
*

GWEN

The same thing we've been doing all along. The best we can under the circumstances.

11 INT. FREEHOLD GREAT HALL - NIGHT

11

Sounds of laughter and merriment under the Narrator's lines below.

NARRATOR

We now return to the camp of Bryce Riverfell, where the General is finishing supper with his inner circle. I would be remiss not to remind you that Regan and her makeshift court had him to thank for their escape from Freehold.

*

GARETH

To General Riverfell!

Amidst general cheers, we definitely pick out a swelling off...

GUESTS

Bryyyyyyyyyyce!

Glasses clink.

BRYCE

Now settle down, I've a few words to say if you don't mind.

The raucous atmosphere continues.

GARETH

(good-natured)

Hey shut up you drunken idiots, your General's trying to speak!

The crowd calms down, just a little bit.

BRYCE

Thank you, Gareth. We all know - some too well, as we've watched our sworn blood brothers fall by our side, some kin and some closer than kin; for some, our fathers, mothers, brothers before us - we know that the life of a soldier is often hard and brief. Whether by choice or necessity, for valor or to feed our families, we put ourselves on the line and hope that, in the end, our work is just and does some good in the world.

The crowd is silent now.

Bryce's words hang in the air as his earnest mood catches on.

BRYCE

My point is that we carry a heavy burden. And you, and all your fallen friends, have carried that weight admirably and honorably. And with the completion of repairs to the outer hold, a *full two weeks ahead of the impossible fucking schedule we were given...*

It's a blatant applause line and the crowd goes for it with aplomb.

...All the realms can sleep a bit easier tonight. So on this evening, I wanted to raise a glass and a ruckus to brotherhood, to thank you for your service and your partnership. To assure you that it's the greatest honor of my life to serve among you! Here's to you!

Glasses clink. There are cheers.

GUESTS

(ad lib.)

Hooray! Hear, hear! Bryyyyyyyyyyce

BRYCE

Now if you'll all excuse me, I've some other business to attend to.

(said with a wink)

Back east.

This is met with whistles and ribald cheers

FREEHOLD SOLDIER

Give Bailey a kiss for all of us, General!

BRYCE

Watch it now, Sergeant. Gods be with you all. Sleep well!

Beneath growing sounds of merriment...

BRYCE

(aside)

Professor, a word before I leave.

12 INT. BRYCE'S STUDY - NIGHT

12

NARRATOR

And so did the most erudite of Bryce Riverfell's Captains follow the General to his private study.

PROFESSOR

General. I can tell something's on your mind.

BRYCE

Ha. Nothing gets past you, buddy. I've got a good crew I've built over the years. You, Clarence, Gareth, Max, Steffan, Nils. Each one of you's a great fighter in your own way. It's a luxury to know this infantry'd be in good hands if ever I wasn't around.

PROFESSOR

I appreciate the compliment, though I'm not sure I like where this is headed.

BRYCE

It's not headed anywhere, yet. I just...well, you've got a way with words. I'd like you to start preparing everyone for the possibility of a change in leadership.

PROFESSOR

You're not ill, are you, Bryce?

BRYCE

Ha, ha, maybe. But not like that. No, tell you the truth I'm thinking it's time to retire.

PROFESSOR

Retire? You can't be serious.

BRYCE

This is a tough job, Professor. I won't lie to you. And I've...just seen *too much*. It's an important thing we do here, fighting to protect those who can't fight for themselves. A noble cause, I've gotta believe that. Whosoever leads that effort, needs to do it with all their heart. And that ain't me anymore. So I'm getting out while I still can.

PROFESSOR

(at a loss)

I...I suppose there's no talking you out of it. What'll you do with all your spare time.

BRYCE

Take it day-by-day, for once in my life.

PROFESSOR

Your men will--

--In the distance, an Elven horn.

NARRATOR

Both men instantly recognized the distinctive sound of that very particular horn.

PROFESSOR

The Knights of the Wood. Back here again?

BRYCE

(very dry)

Well there go my plans for the evening.

NARRATOR

The Professor quickly caught a flash of something in Bryce's eyes, just before he bent to a locked cabinet beneath his desk.

Keys are jingled. A lock clicks open.

NARRATOR

Bryce retrieved a bottle of brown liquid from under his desk, along with a single drinking glass.

Two glass objects hit the desk.

PROFESSOR

Not in a sharing mood?

BRYCE

Well it looks like you've gotta work tonight, Professor.

Bryce pulls out a cork and pours himself a tall drink.

PROFESSOR

Were you...expecting the Elves, Bryce?

BRYCE

Sooner or later, I was. Was hoping it'd be later.

The bottle is picked up.

NARRATOR

Then Bryce bent down again, and replaced the bottle in his locking cabinet.

Keys jingle, and the lock clicks shut.

BRYCE

Maeve is gonna be pissed. I told her to wait up for me.

PROFESSOR

I'm sure she'll forgive you.

BRYCE

She always has. Will you make my excuses for me? In person if you can manage it.

*
*

NARRATOR

Something about the earnestness in Bryce's request caught the Professor off guard.

*
*
*

PROFESSOR

If you say so, Bryce.

*
*

Knock on the door.

BRYCE

Come.

GUARD #1

Lord Ry'y lo-Th'yyt here to speak with you. Says it's urgent.

BRYCE

'Course it is. I'm coming.
(almost hesitant?)
Bottoms up as they say.

BRYCE GULPS DOWN HIS DRINK.

NARRATOR

Bryce drained his glass, before leaving his study to answer Ry'y lo-Th'yyt's summons.

END OF PART TWO.

PART THREE:

13 EXT. MERCHANT VESSEL (ABOVE DECK) - DAY

13

NARRATOR

As the crew of the Red Reaver loaded the last bit of Otto Olafsson's cargo onto their ship, Regan and her "court" began to make their way across the, what do you call it...gangplank.

ALF

We're all loaded up, mum. Just waitin' on our new passengers there.

REN

Well-done. What are you lot waiting for?

REGAN

After you, I insist.

REN

No pirate worth her salt is gonna walk a gangplank with her back to a thief she hardly knows.

REGAN

Then why would a thief turn her back on a pirate?

NARRATOR

I believe there's a riddle your kind is fond of. It involves a fox, a chicken, some grain and a rowboat. Do you know the one? This was like that except they were all foxes and all rather cranky. And Jen for one had little patience for riddles.

JEN

(huffing)

Hey, sorry, I don't have a tape measure with me.

She walks briskly across the plank.

JEN

(on the other boat)

But I'm sure both of your dicks are enormous.

REN

I see why you like her.

BRENNEN

I'll go first, Your--HRUK. Your Grace. As a show of--HRUP. Good faith.

REGAN

Nia, help him over. He should be half his weight by now.

YELLOWYYN

I'll help him over. Sir Brennen I am sorry I didn't remember until now but I might have something for your nausea.

NARRATOR

Yllowyyn opened a small pouch on his belt.

A drawstring opens.

YELLOWYYN

Place this between your cheek and jaw.

BRENNEN

Elf medicine?

YELLOWYYN

...Of a sort.

NARRATOR

And as the human cargo one by one transferred from the merchant ship to the pirate ship, Olafsson and his crew were left tied to the mast. In fact, it had been Billy himself who was tasked with fixing the knots on Olafsson himself.

We hear ropes being tied.

BILLY

Sorry dude, you know how it is.

OLAFSSON

You filthy ingrate. I risked life and limb to take you on my ship and this is how you repay me? You're the son of a thousand fathers, each one a bastard like--

--OLAFSSON IS **GAGGED**.

NARRATOR

But Otto Olafsson managed to slip his gag just as the pirates cast off from his now barren vessel.

*

OLAFSSON

You salt-drenched sons of a scurvy whore!

NARRATOR
He put on quite the show for his crew, yelling and struggling, until the pirates were out of earshot.

OLAFSSON
I swear on my maw's left pap you'll choke on what you stole, every pox-ridden one of you, and you'll deserve it.

OLAFSSON
And as you die, Garedian's rotten hounds will turn you away from the gates of Selbirin for smelling too foul.

NARRATOR
And then Otto's hand found a small, hard object he didn't recognize. As he wriggled it around to his feet, he saw it was a small, retractable knife, with a red hilt and a white cross insignia, and the name "Billy" scrawled on it.

*
*

14 INT. RED REAVER (CARGO HOLD) - A LITTLE LATER

14

NARRATOR
As Olafsson's screams and curses echoed into the wind, the Red Reaver prowled away, towards Armstrungard. Though Regan seemed relatively comfortable on the deck among rogues and thieves, the rest of our party was considerably more cautious and uneasy. So they settled once more in the hold of a ship, surrounded by quite the same cargo as before.

The baby cries throughout this scene. It is jarring and unpleasant.

NELSON
(to Jen)
So we're basically Kiera Knightly on Geoffrey Rush's ship now, right? Or are we Legolas hanging out with Johnny Depp? I can't tell which is the better option.

JEN
As long as no one turns into skeletons at night, I say just go with it. At this point we have to trust Regan that she knows what she's doing. These are her...people I guess.

NIA
As much as I prefer the company down here to that upstairs, I think I *must* get some fresh air.

BRENNEN
My apologies, Nia. The nausea is fading at last.

NIA

(walking it back)
Oh, no, Sir Brennen. I didn't mean--

GWEN

--The wee one needs a change too, we just haven't had the time.

NIA

Forgive me everyone. These are difficult circumstances but none of you are to blame. I'm going up top lest I continue to be rude.

NELSON

Right behind you.

Off to the side, Arlene rummages through some bags.

ARLENE

Now where did I--oh, confound it.

GWEN

What?

ARLENE

I left one of our bags up there. It had his music box in it. I must go up as well.

GWEN

Not without me you won't.

ARLENE

Ylloyyyn, will you tend to the little one for a moment?

Ylloyyyn

What?

Several sets of footsteps on a ladder.

NARRATOR

And so the whole of our party, save Ylloyyyn, Sir Brennen, and the infant, ascended the ladder up to the deck...

15 EXT. RED REAVER (ABOVE DECK) - CONTINUOUS

15

NARRATOR

...Where the pirates were celebrating their new haul.

Sounds of drinking and sloshing and merriment.

NARRATOR

Some of Olafsson's precious cargo was a few dozen kegs of ale from Seahold. Ren had tapped four of those, and the whole crew was already a few sheets to the wind, drinking and carousing.

REN

Well, Thief-Queen. Seems you can hold your ale, even if you can't hold a knife!

REGAN

Hey! Where do you get off saying I can't hold a knife?

REN

To start with, the way your hand's hanging there all bandaged.

REGAN

(half-joking)

Well now you've insulted me. And I demand satisfaction.

REN

Care to make it interesting?

THE PIRATE CREW **OOHS** A LITTLE.

REGAN

Five finger pin-cushion. I win I get your cabin for the night.

REN

And what if I win? Since you already told me you're piss-poor.

A knife is unsheathed and stabbed into the table.

REGAN

A gift. From one of the finest fencing teachers in Armstrungard. You won't see craftsmanship like that robbing a bunch of second-rate bean-counters.

REN

A *gift*?

REGAN

I resent the implication. Me and this fencing teacher were on very good terms, 'til I realized he just wanted to show me his other sword.

NARRATOR

Ren examined the blade for a long, careful moment.

REN

You're on.

PIRATES **CHEER RAUCOUSLY.**

REN

You're the guest. After you.

The knife is pried from the table.

Footsteps dash toward us.

JEN

Woah woah woah woah. Bad idea.

REN

Back off, gal. Your friend made a bet.

JEN

She's drunk off her ass.

REGAN

You're drunk off your ass, Mom.

REN

'Course she's drunk! So's my crew, and they've been promised a show. You'd be a fool to leave them frustrated.

NIA

(frantic)

Ah, Lady Arlene, perhaps instead you could regale them with a song.

ARLENE

...Pardon?

NIA

The Lady's voice is famous in some parts. Come now, my lady. Quickly as you please.

Very tentative footsteps.

NARRATOR

Arlene timidly made her way to the center of the gathered ring of raiders, with Gwen beside her practically attached at the hip. She looked at her audience the way a deer looks at a bowman.

ARLENE

*There were two sisters by the sea. \
 Maidens fair as fair can be. \
 The younger's voice was the purest one. \
 The elder's bright as candle in the sun.*

NARRATOR

The pirates slowly turned to listen to this rather clean and proper noblewomen and her small but strong voice.

The magical reverb fades in.

ARLENE

*To town one day there rode a knight. \
 The elder hoped to be his wife. \
 That he'd love the younger this she feared. \
 Soon as her voice he chanced to hear.*

ARLENE

*She called out "sister come with me." \
 Let's go walking by the sea. \
 The waves did crash, the wind did churn. \
 But only the elder did return. \
 Returned alone, returned alone. \
 Fa la la la la doe doe.*

Beat of just the ocean waves.

REN

What in the holy fuck is that racket?

ARLENE

A...song?

ALF

What kind of song is that?

REN

Ha! Trying to bring a landlubber song on *this* ship.

ALF

Why don't we teach the lady some of our favorite songs?

PIRATE CREW

*We're the salty sons of no one.\
 Sailing the Red, Red Reaver.\
 Though the seas get rough, she's sticking tough.\
 Gotta see her to believe her.*

*
*
*
*
*

JEN

Oh that's cute, they have like a theme song.

*
*

*The pirates should now ad lib several verses
of the filthiest limericks they can possibly
imagine.*

JEN

(or ad lib. similar)

Probably should seen that coming.

*
*
*

ARLENE

Oh dear.

NIA

Oh dear.

16 EXT. RED REAVER (ABOVE DECK) - CONTINUOUS

16

The limericks probably continue a bit into this scene, but duck under the narration.

NARRATOR

As the pirates completely forgot about the pi-- dexterity contest between the two Sovereigns on board, and instead focused on shocking the Lady Arlene, Nelson noticed Billy sitting apart from the merriment, looking overboard at the water.

As Nelson walks towards us, the singing pans and fades away. We still hear the occasional drunken shout of celebration.

NELSON

Hey.

BILLY

Sup.

NELSON

You all right?

BILLY

Yeah. I guess. I dunno.

NELSON

I never thought you'd turn down free beer.

BILLY

Eh. Not feeling it tonight.

Beat.

NELSON

I never liked parties.

BILLY

Did you go to any?

NELSON

Yes, Billy, I went to parties.

(beat)

It wasn't that hard to figure out where they were. There was a way people'd get when they were drinking. You could just, like, hear it in how they laughed. And then I was never sure when some dumb drunk hick was gonna stop being polite. Eventually I just stopped going.

*
*
*

BILLY

Look man, I know you're trying to be real with me, and I don't wanna just throw it back in your face. But I can't deal with more shit right now.

(beat)

I'd just make it worse anyway.

NELSON

You've actually done a lot right while we've been here. I wouldn't say that if I didn't mean it.

BILLY

Stupid, stupid, fuckup. I shoulda just stuck to the plan like Regan said.

NELSON

Didn't you? Seemed like the sailors liked your Styx covers.

BILLY

Look, man...don't tell anybody this. But I steered us further out from shore. I thought it would help.

NELSON

(chuckling)

Wait that's what you're upset about?

BILLY

Yeah, cause now we're captured by pirates, and everything's fucked up.

NELSON

Dude, you weren't steering anything. Yllowyn disconnected the rudder. Jen was doing all the steering with the wind.

BILLY

...Oh.

(more pissy than ever)

Really? Man, fuck that!

NELSON

What? I thought you'd be glad - it's not your fault. You didn't do anything.

BILLY

Yeah! I never fucking do anything! I'm not even a fuck-up, I'm just...dead weight getting dragged around like a big old floppy dick. This morning Jen had to rescue me.

NELSON

Yeah, she loves you. I'm sure she didn't mind rescuing--

*

BILLY

--Well maybe I mind!

(beat)

It's dumb. I know it's dumb. No, actually, I know it's my dad talking. That doesn't mean it doesn't feel shitty.

NELSON

Man, Jen is...something else. Like she's clearly doing things here, we've seen her save lives. And I don't know much about relationships, but anyone can see you keep her on the ground somehow. If that's what you're good at, that's not nothing. I know it's not the most macho-sounding thing, but what's macho ever gotten us?

BILLY

Still feels shitty.

*

NELSON

Yeah. I get it. But there's a lot of people right now with a lot more to feel shitty about it. So feel shitty, but then get back in the game.

THIS EARNS A **CHUCKLE** FROM BILLY.

NELSON

You wanna get some beer?

BILLY

I'm gonna hang out here a little longer. You go ahead. Do me a favor and check in on Jen.

NELSON

...Okay.

We hear Nelson start to walk away, but his footsteps are intercepted by Brennen's.

This next bit is panned to where Nelson ended up:

BRENNEN

(strangely bubbly)

Nelson my lad! How do you fare?

NELSON

Uhh...fine?

BRENNEN

I'm going to go look at the ocean!

NELSON

Cool.

*Nelson's footsteps continue away from us while
Brennen's approach.*

Now we're back center:

BRENNEN

Ah, William my lad. How do you fare?

BILLY

I'm hanging in. You seem better.

BRENNEN

Aye. That Elf medicine is a blessing from Galadon.

A beat of just the lapping ocean.

BRENNEN

The sea is so large. And we're...so small.

BILLY

Uh. Yeah I guess.

BRENNEN

Sets a man to wonder - what truly matters in life.

BILLY

You sure you're feeling okay?

BRENNEN

We never traveled when I was young. Not sure my father ever saw the sea. But somehow, I doubt he'd have found the beauty in it. Not a manful thing to find beautiful. And a man must always be manful, mustn't he?

BILLY

Man I am not on your level right n--

BRENNEN

--What does it mean to be a man? Is the image of manfulness we strive for truly a Galadon-given ideal? Or do we but tell ourselves that, as we relive the sins of our fathers?

Long beat.

BILLY

You know I think I am gonna get that beer.

17 INT. RED REAVER (CARGO HOLD) - SIMULTANEOUS

17

We still hear some partying above-deck.

The baby fusses a little.

NARRATOR

Meanwhile, below deck...

YELLOWYYN

All right, let's see here. Surely I can figure this out. Just...

Some cloth is unwrapped.

YELLOWYYN

(smacked in the face by smell)

Oh gods. Ohh. Your superior senses are Galadon's gift they said. Proof of your race's destiny to rule they said.

18 EXT. RED REAVER (DOOR TO THE HOLD) - CONTINUOUS

18

The pirates keep yelling and getting continually drunker.

NARRATOR

As the marauders continued their revelry, Gwen found her paramour leaning on the railing observing the merriment.

GWEN

M'lady, come back down to the hold. Think we've had enough songs for one night.

ARLENE

I've had an idea.

ARLENE

They like bawdy, bloody songs. Let us give them one.

GWEN

What? Why?

ARLENE

They travel from port to port do they not? One might presume they spread their songs with them.

*

GWEN
And Galadon knows what else.

ARLENE
Do you remember the tale of Lady Barnard and little
Matty Groves?

ARLENE
Well, suppose that instead of Barnard, the cold-hearted
cuckold were called Ardel. *

NARRATOR
And for the first time since she had boarded the Red
Reaver, the worry left Gwen's face, and was replaced
with a mischievous grin.

GWEN
(playful now, has an idea)
And what about little Matty Groves?

ARLENE
What about him?

GWEN
Who said it had to be a him?

19 EXT. RED REAVER (ABOVE DECK) - CONTINUOUS

19

Pirates shout and rough-house all around us.

*One meek set of footsteps walks to the center
of it all.*

*Arlene clears her throat quietly, to no
effect.*

ARLENE
Beg pardon, I'd like to sing another song.

*A few pirates snicker but most don't give a
shit.*

ARLENE
*Day of feasting, day of rest,\
of good will, and good cheer.\
Lord Ardel's wife came down to court,\
the scriptures for to hear.*

The pirates actually settle down a bit.

ARLENE

*And when the reading it was done,\
she looked around the hall.\
Her eye was caught by Maddy Groves,\
most handsome of them all.*

THERE ARE A FEW SPARE **CHEERS** OF RECOGNITION AND **WHISTLES** FROM THE PIRATE CREW. THEY KNOW THIS SONG AND KIND OF DIG IT.

ARLENE

*Come home with me young Maddy Groves.\
Come home with me tonight.\
And let us keep each other warm,\
until the morning light.*

OKAY THAT LINE HOOKED THEM. *

ARLENE

*My Lady, I'd love nothing more,\
but o! to think the strife!\
The rings upon your fingers say\
you are my liege's wife.*

ARLENE *

*(belts with years of pent-up rage)
And what if I am your Liege's wife?\
Your liege is not at home.*

BIG CHEERS ON THIS ONE.

ARLENE

*He is out a-hunting stag,\
and I pray he'll ne'er come home.*

ARLENE *

*And she told the servants of the house,\
if you my secret keep,\
My gold and silver and my lace,\
and more besides you'll reap.*

NOW THE PIRATE CREW PIPES IN WITH A RESPONSE TO THE CALL: *

PIRATE CREW *

*Hay Downe! Hay Downe!\
And more besides you'll reap.*

THE PIRATE CREW CALL AND RESPONSE WILL NOW REPEAT AT THE END OF EACH VERSE. *

AND NOW THEY START **CLAPPING** ALONG. *

ARLENE

*And none thought twice to take her gold,\
besides one lowly page.\
Thought he no treasure man could count\
was worth Lord Ardel's rage.*

*So he met his liege as he rode home.\
Lord, I'd ne'er lie to you.\
If you approach most quietly,\
you'll see your wife's untrue.*

*And so the lord crept through the door,\
and lifted up the sheets.\
The lovers they awoke to see\
him standing at their feet.*

What's this my wife, it vexed me so, *
But now I understand.
All the years you've spurned my touch.
You prefer a woman's hand.

THIS REVEAL EARNS AN EXTRA RESPONSE FROM THE PIRATES.

NOW THEY'RE **STOMPING** ON THE DECK AND HITTING CHAINS AND *
GENERALLY LOSING THEIR SHIT. *

ARLENE

*Man or woman, all the same.\
I must now take your life.\
You've dragged my honor through the mud.\
And ta'en to bed my wife.*

*Kill me if you wish, my Lord.\
And curse me far and near.\
It's plain to see your Lady wife\
has made her choice most clear.*

*And if honor, Sir, you wish to claim,\
you'll have to spare my life.\
For you have two fine steel broadswords,\
and I but a pocket-knife.*

*It's true I have two fine steel swords,\
and dear they cost my purse.\
But you shall have the best of them,\
and I shall take the worse.*

*So Maddy struck the very first blow,\
but little did it do.\
When Ardel raised his arm to strike,\
it seemed Maddy was through.*

But then a blow came from behind,
(MORE)

ARLENE (cont'd)
that neither one foresaw.
The lady stuck her lover's knife
beneath her husband's jaw.

MASSIVE CHEERS.

*

*And as Lord Ardel's blood ran out,\
so boldly spake his wife.\
You'd have stole the soul from me,\
had I not stole your life.*

*And yes it's women I prefer,\
And yes your touch I've vexed.\
But your cruel heart repulses me.\
So far more than your sex.*

*The undertaker, fetch him quick.\
I smile to pay his toll.\
My husband was of noble blood,\
but Maddy's of noble soul.*

PIRATE CREW

*Noble soul, hay downe!\
Maddy's of noble soul!*

ARLENE FINISHES WITH A **CADENZA FLOURISH**, AND THE PIRATE CREW **MATCHES HER**.

ALL FALL INTO **RAUCOUS APPLAUSE**.

NARRATOR

And Arlene couldn't help but smile with pride, as the heretofore cold-faced brigands cheered for her song.

20 EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE FREEHOLD - NIGHT

20

Hoofbeats stomp through the night.

NARRATOR

Bryce Riverfell had ridden with Ry'y lo Th'yyt and her retinue some ways away from Freehold, before they set up a small camp in which they could converse.

We hear a small fire.

BRYCE

Far enough ride for ya?

RY'Y

General, we've very sensitive matters to discuss. I'm sure you can appreciate the need for discretion.

BRYCE

Of course.

RY'Y
General Brennen of Greyfield was in your camp until very recently, was he not?

BRYCE
He's been knighted, you know.

RY'Y
We've reason to doubt that. Have you any idea where he was headed when he left your camp?

BRYCE
Generally, yeah.

RY'Y
(*growing impatient*)
Well?

BRYCE
Well he told me in confidence, so it's not really mine to start spreading around.

RY'Y
General, this is not a sewing circle. I am ordering you to tell me what you know.

BRYCE
I respectfully refuse.

RY'Y
As a commander of the Civic Guard, you are bound to--

BRYCE
--You know I been thinking it's about time I retired.

RY'Y
Is that your idea of a joke?

BRYCE
Repairs to the outer hold are done and the rest are ahead of schedule. And any one of my Captains is fit and ready to lead the garrison. Clarence is my first choice, the men adore him. But Roy's a brilliant tactician.

RY'Y
Who in Brennen's party have you spoken to? What lies have they told you?

BRYCE
Yeah I'm pretty sure Brennen wouldn't lie to me.

RY'Y
Who else have they spoken to?

BRYCE
No one but me, that I can swear to you.
(burps)
'Scuse me.

RY'Y
Listen to me you snide little shit. I don't give a damn if you retire. You will tell me what Brennen's party has been saying, who they've said it to and where they've gone, and you will tell me now.

BRYCE
Agree to disagree.
(burps louder)
'Scuse me.

RY'Y
This can be very unpleasant for you if you wish it so.

BRYCE
Believe it was you yourself taught me to resist torture. *

RY'Y
Then how about that flea-bitten innkeeper you're sweet on?

BRYCE
(sighs, resigned)
Yeahhh, I knew you'd stoop to going after Maeve. I sure will miss her.

RY'Y
(scoffs, thinks she's got him)
How about we go fetch her, pull out her nails and teeth in front of you.

BRYCE
You'd cause a whole lotta ruckus and bad will and still not get what you wanted.

BRYCE LETS OUT A HUGE **BURP** AND **HICCUP**.

RY'Y
I don't believe your bluff for a second, you--

--RY'Y **SNIFFS**.

NARRATOR

At last, Ry'y's Elvish nose detected a very distinctive odor emanating from Bryce. Only then did she realize that *she* was not the cause of the oily sheen of sweat on his brow.

RY'Y

(frantic)
Oh gods dammit.

WHOOSH TO:

21 INT. BRYCE'S STUDY - SIMULTANEOUS

21

Papers and drinkware shuffle around.

NARRATOR

And it was almost at that exact moment, back at Freehold, that the Lieutenant Colonel known as the Professor took it upon himself to tidy up his commander's office. As he picked up the drinking glass that Bryce had drained just before leaving...

THE PROFESSOR **SNIFFS**.

NARRATOR

...his trained herbalist's nose detected the same odor as Ry'y lo-Th'yyt.

*
*

PROFESSOR

Oh, gods, Bryce.

22 INT. FREEHOLD STOREROOM - MOMENTS LATER

22

The Professor sprints down some stairs.

NARRATOR

He raced to his storehouse.

A door flies open and footsteps run in.

NARRATOR

And made straight for a jar in which was kept a particular mushroom known commonly as Lady's Farewell.

*
*

Footsteps slow and then stop.

NARRATOR

The Professor closed his eyes and hung his head low. For gone were the mushrooms.

*

WHOOSH BACK TO:

23 EXT. FIELD OUTSIDE FREEHOLD - SIMULTANEOUS

23

NARRATOR

Ry'y reacted quickly as soon as she realized.

RY'Y

(re-use)

Oh gods dammit.

(shouting to her men)

Grab him! Put your fingers down his throat!

A struggle ensues.

BRYCE

(intense pain)

Too late for that, Lord Commander.

NARRATOR

The Elves restrained Bryce.

BRYCE RETCHES PAINFULLY.

*This continues underneath narration for a bit.
Puke hits the ground.*

NARRATOR

But Bryce was already retching gobs of bile, tarry and crimson, onto the dusty ground.

RY'Y

Don't you do this you gods-damned coward. Don't you die. No. No! Answer my questions you river-filth son of a whore!

NARRATOR

But Bryce had grown motionless and pallid, as his unblinking eyes stared accusingly at Ry'y.

In between every word, Ry'y pounds on Bryce's body with her fists.

RY'Y

Gods! Damn! These selfish! Fragile! Vermin!!

SHE SPITS IN DIGUST, AS SHE PANTS FROM THE EXERTION.

NARRATOR

And thus did Bryce Riverfell, one of the greatest and most honorable warriors of his generation, draw his last breath: cursed, beaten, and spit upon, with his sword still sheathed, and laying in a puddle of his own sick. An ignoble death, nobly done. Peaceful be his rest.

We sit with this for a long, contemplative beat.

24 EXT. SHIP DECK - PREDAWN

24

We hear footsteps and some snoring.

NARRATOR

As the eastern horizon began to lighten, Ren walked her deck, surveying the damage the celebration had caused. Overall the ship remained unharmed, but her crew would need some extra time to recover. She was surprised to find some of Regan's retinue slumped over a table along with several of her own.

*

Footsteps approach.

REGAN

Don't tell me you're bailing on the party too.

REN

No luck with Alf after all?

*

REGAN

Not in cards it seems. I think he was probably scared little Alf'd be too drunk to stand straight.

REN

That what you're telling yourself?

REGAN

Hey fuck you, all right? I'm not--

REN

--Relax, I'm just taking the piss out. Coulda told you before, you were barking up the wrong tree.

REGAN

Oh. Really? How'd I miss that?

REN

Gal, I've met pirates who like any damn thing you can imagine. But before Alf I never met a pirate who *didn't* like to fuck.

REGAN

Huh. Okay.

REN

But oh well, ah? If we were like everyone else we wouldn't be pirates. Be glad you only spent one night confused. I spent months not knowing what I was doing wrong.

REGAN

Well. In that case, Ren...

REN

Ohn no. Not when there's business still to finish.
(*But later...?*)
Besides Thief Queen, you couldn't handle me.

REGAN

Well now you've insulted me. And I demand satisfaction.

A frantic bell clangs incessantly.

NARRATOR

Both women looked up at the frantically ringing bell in the crow's nest.

REN

Klaus! Stop your foolishness, you drunk bastard!

KLAUS

Blockade!

*

REN

What?!

KLAUS

There's a blockade in front of the port!

NARRATOR

Ren pulled a spyglass from her belt and pointed it towards the growing city.

REN

Shit.

NARRATOR

There Ren saw five Elven warships patrolling the entrance to the city port.

REN

Well, I'm afraid this changes things.

END OF PART THREE.

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 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.