

DUNGEON DELVERS

Written by

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Final Draft

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ACT I
Opening Titles.

1 EXT. MOUNTAIN CLIFFS. DAY.[FANTASY]

1

Four figures in furs scale a sheer rock face. They are climbing toward a cave set into the cliffs near the top. A blizzard howls as they climb.

MATT DELAVIGNE narrates.

MATT [V.O]

This may be the final entry in my journal. After a long and arduous journey, we have finally reached the Snapped-Bone mountains. We are hungry, weary; but I am not discouraged.

2 INT. CAVES.[FANTASY]

2

A hand reaches over the ledge and Matt pulls himself up into the cave. His narration continues.

MATT [V.O]

For we have already achieved the unachievable. We have destroyed Aengar the Wicked and reclaimed the Orb of Destiny, which he had stolen and corrupted to serve his vile machinations.

He throws off his fur shawl to reveal a fine suit of padded chain-mail armor, complete with tabard, sword and shield. He is an average looking man, about thirty years old.

Turning, he offers his hand to the next party member, helping them up into the safety of the cave.

MATT [V.O] (cont'd)

With no more than a torn and faded map to guide us we have sought out the hidden Temple of Aylash; the long lost location of the revitalizing river.

The second party member throws off his shawl. He is TERRY BICKERS; also in his early thirties, and slightly more handsome than Matt. He wears a barbarian's light armor with a two-handed sword on his back.

He and Matt offer their hands for the final two members of their group.

MATT [V.O] (cont'd)

All that remains now is to place the Orb into the river and dispel his evil magics, before returning it to the empress and claiming our rightful place in the Hall of Heroes.

The two figures throw off their snow-covered furs. The first is DEREK FARMER, a middle-aged dwarf with a mighty hammer. The second is COLIN PARSONS, a kindly looking older man in a medieval priest's robe. They strike flints together to light their torches and proceed further into the cave.

3 INT. CAVE ROOM. [FANTASY]

3

Entering a wider part of the cave, the group find a man-made room with a set of giant stone doors. There are several other tunnels leading off. The place looks as though it has been left untouched for centuries.

They head straight for the giant stone doors. Colin produces THE ORB OF DESTINY from his rucksack and hands it to Matt, who examines the doors.

MATT

There's no sign of a keyhole.

TERRY

So what do we do?

MATT

According to legend only the guardian can open the path. And he will only do so for those who are steadfast of will, pure of heart and righteous of spirit.

TERRY

Well where is he then?

MATT

I don't know. Maybe there's some kind of summoning ritual.

Derek interrupts, his thick Scottish accent can be heard through his sharp whisper.

DEREK

Shh! Do you hear that?

There is a muttering sound from the darkened tunnels, accompanied by the sound of many small blades being drawn. Derek readies his war-hammer.

DEREK (cont'd)

Goblins!

Large groups of goblins enter from multiple sides. Matt stashes the Orb of Destiny in his pack, Colin adopts the posture of a martial artist.

A small battle erupts, with each member of the group deftly fighting off several goblins. Derek is getting a particularly high kill-count, swinging his hammer around and sending goblins flying.

DEREK (cont'd)

Ah, come on! You can do better than this!

MATT

Shaman!

One of the smaller doors bursts open, a goblin shaman enters. It mutters something in gobbledegook and fires a bolt of lightning from the tip of its staff. The lightning strikes Derek, knocking him backwards.

Terry sees this and is enraged.

TERRY

BERSERKER!!

He charges in and impales the goblin shaman, flipping it over his shoulder and slamming it into the ground. Derek stands over it.

DEREK

Ya wee bastard.

Bringing his hammer down, Derek crushes the shaman's head. The other goblins panic and retreat back into the darkened tunnels. Matt, Terry, Colin and Derek regroup in the middle of the room.

MATT

Good work everyone!

DEREK

Can we get on with this now please?

MATT

Fine.

The group turn back to the doors, except for Colin.

COLIN
Hold, brothers. There is one more
thing that must be done.

MATT
Father Algernon?

Colin stands over the head of a deceased goblin. He begins
lifting his robe and squatting over its face.

MATT (cont'd)
What the hell are you doing?!

COLIN
Relishing the spoils of war.

MATT
Okay, NO!

JUMP CUT TO:

4 INT. DINING ROOM, IAN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

4

Matt, Terry and Derek sit around a dining room table wearing
unconvincing costumes that resemble their fantasy
characters. Derek's costume is particularly half-arsed.

IAN SHARPE, a balding man with glasses, also sits at the
table behind a game-master's screen.

MATT
No! I am not going to allow this!
That's not what Colin's character
would do!

TERRY
How do you know?

MATT
He's supposed to be a holy man! A man
of virtue and decency, why would he
start tea-bagging a dead-goblin?!

TERRY
Why do you have to get so serious all
the time?

MATT

Because, what if the guardian sees?
What if he doesn't let us into the
temple and when Colin gets back from
holiday I have to explain to him:
"Oh, sorry mate! Our whole campaign
is ruined because your character
stuck his bollocks in a dead goblin's
mouth"?!

TERRY

He won't care.

MATT

Yes he will, you know how seriously
he takes it!

DEREK

For god's sake...

Derek, surrounded by empty beer cans, clicks open his tenth.

TERRY

At the end of the day, it's the Dice
Master's decision. Do you allow it,
Ian?

IAN

I do.

MATT

You can't be serious. Does the
guardian see?

IAN

The guardian does not see. You
haven't summoned him yet.

TERRY

Ah, so there is a summoning ritual.

IAN

There is.

MATT

Do we know the invocation?

IAN

Roll me an arcane knowledge check.
All of you.

Matt, Terry and Derek all roll their twenty-sided dice.
Terry rolls twice.

MATT

Nine.

DEREK

Five.

TERRY

Eleven and... sixteen for Colin.

IAN

Okay, so...

BACK TO:

5 INT. CAVE ROOM. [FANTASY]

5

Colin still straddles the dead goblin's face. Matt approaches him and produces the Orb of Destiny.

MATT

Father, can you determine how we
summon the Guardian of Aylash?

He hands the Orb to Colin. Colin examines it, but does not shift from his position. He merely bobs up and down slightly.

COLIN

Mm. I've encountered similar
artifacts during my studies at the
monastery. I believe Aengar wanted
the Orb for its ability to magnify
the will of the user. It should be
enough to simply hold the orb and
state your intent to summon the
guardian.

He passes the Orb back to Matt.

MATT

Okay, thanks. Can you stop doing that
now? I want to summon the guardian.

There is a blinding flash; a strong breeze picks up and a giant figure of pure light begins forming by the giant stone doors.

MATT (cont'd)

No, that wasn't me summoning the
guardian! That was me saying I'm
about to, so Colin should probably
stop-

GUARDIAN

Who has awakened me?! Step forward, mortals, and announce yourselves.

MATT

I am Daniel Dire-heart; defender of the city of Gold Star! Hero of the fighter's guild and esteemed royal guard to the empress of Elsynnia.

TERRY

Carnage Deathslaughter. Demon in the sheets, murder in the streets.

COLIN

I'm Father Algernon, keeper of scripture at Langton Priory.

Colin waves politely from atop the dead goblin. Derek sparks up a cigarette.

GUARDIAN

And you, dwarf?

DEREK

Sir Gibley Creams-her-cheeks.

MATT

We're making you a new character next week.

GUARDIAN

Why have you disturbed me?

MATT

Oh, great guardian of Aylash! We are but a humble group of noble heroes. Our world was endangered by an evil mage, who perverted the Orb of Destiny. We beseech you, allow us to enter the temple so that we might purify the orb and restore peace to the kingdom!

GUARDIAN

Are you steadfast of will?

MATT

We are! Each man you see before you would gladly sacrifice his life for safety of this world!

GUARDIAN
Are you pure of heart?

Matt tries to ignore Colin, still squatting with glee on the dead goblin's face.

MATT
Um, yep. Mostly.

GUARDIAN
Are you righteous of spirit?

MATT
Can I confer with my associates and get back to you?

GUARDIAN
Do not test the patience of the guardian of Aylash!

MATT
Yes, yes! We're righteous of spirit!

GUARDIAN
Then you may pass.

TERRY
What, you're not even gonna test us?

GUARDIAN
Well... I mean... you could say the goblins were a test.

TERRY
But we hadn't summoned you at that point, you didn't even know we were here.

GUARDIAN
Look, it's been a busy week and I haven't had much time to come up with story-lines or anything. Do you want to go into the temple or not?

TERRY
Is there more stuff to kill in there?

GUARDIAN
Not really, it's an ancient temple that's been sealed off for a thousand years.

MATT

Is there a significant plot twist in there?

GUARDIAN

I am not at liberty to discuss that with you.

The guardian quickly turns and holds out his hand to the stone doors. The doors click and begin to grind open.

DEREK

Can we not just skip this bit and go back to the empress?

GUARDIAN

No. I'm saving that for next week.

CUT TO:

6 INT. DINING ROOM, IAN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

6

IAN

Oh, that reminds me. Next week.

MATT

What about it?

IAN

We can't do it here.

MATT

Ohh what, why not?

IAN

I don't know, some council thing. They're rebuilding the place from the ground up and I've got to stay in a Travelodge all weekend.

DEREK

Does that mean I can't be here either?

IAN

That depends, do you want to be sat on your own in a construction site?

DEREK

Is it twenty-four hour construction?

IAN
Round the clock.

DEREK
Then no.

IAN
Then you'll have to find somewhere
else to drink and smoke your life
away.

DEREK
Where else is there to go on a
Saturday night?

MATT
Where else can we play Dice Warriors?

TERRY
Don't look at me, I'm between rented
bedrooms.

MATT
Derek's it is then.

DEREK
Nah, can't be mine.

MATT
Why not?

Derek stubs out his cigarette in the ashtray and puts
another between his lips.

DEREK
It just *can't* be.

CUT TO:

7 INT. TUNNELS. [FANTASY]

7

Matt, Terry, Colin and Derek are moving down a tunnel,
climbing over ancient masonry collapses and piles of bricks.
Matt and Terry take the lead.

TERRY
Why don't you host for once Matt?

MATT
Oh no. No, no-no-no.

TERRY
Ah come on, your dad smokes a pipe
right?

MATT
What's that got to do with it?

TERRY
Well he can't complain about Derek
smoking if he does it, can he?

MATT
We're not doing it at mine.

TERRY
What are you so worried about? Are
you ashamed of your family or
something?

MATT
No!

TERRY
Are you ashamed of us?

MATT
Not completely.

TERRY
Wow, years of adventuring by your
side and this is how you repay me?

MATT
We could just do something else. You
know, go out in the real world.

TERRY
Don't be a wanker! It's Saturday
night. Saturday night is Dice
Warriors night. It always has been
and it always will be.

MATT
I don't think that's historically
accurate.

TERRY

Look, if you go out this is exactly what's gonna happen: you'll get all dressed up, go to a club, see all those beautiful single ladies standing at the bar waiting for some guy to come along and buy them a drink. And you'll think to yourself; "boy, I wish I could be that guy". Then you'll get drunk, fall over in the street and whine to some poor bastard about how goddamn unassertive you are.

Matt opens his mouth to speak, but Terry cuts him off.

TERRY (cont'd)

That's what you *always* used to do and that's why you *need* to play Dice Warriors with us every weekend.

MATT

Remind me why I hang out with you?

TERRY

Because I keep you on the right path. I let you know what you're good at and what you're bad at. And one thing that you are very very good at, my friend, is role-playing games.

MATT

That's not gonna help me get any beautiful single ladies either though, is it?

TERRY

No, but it does stop them seeing you crawling in the gutter when they leave the club. Besides, I haven't seen your mum in a while.

JUMP CUT TO:

8 INT. DINING ROOM, IAN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

8

DEREK

I've just realized something. Ian, I've never gone for a shit in your toilet. Do ya mind?

IAN

Um.

DEREK

You're getting a new one next week.

IAN

Knock yourself out, I guess.

DEREK

Thanks man! I owe you.

Derek stands up.

DEREK (cont'd)

You see lads? This is what *true* friendship is about.

He exits the room.

9 INT. TEMPLE OF AYLASH. [FANTASY]

9

A stone door scrapes open. Matt enters, followed by the other players. In the center of the temple is a large round altar with a stream of magic that pours upwards to the ceiling.

MATT

At last, the temple! Now we can finally finish this.

TERRY

It's about time, I've gotta be off in a minute.

The group approach the altar and Matt takes the Orb of Destiny from his pack.

MATT

Here we go.

He places the Orb into the stream of magic. It fits snugly over the hole in the altar, blocking the flow. The Orb begins to glow with a holy golden light.

Suddenly, it turns to dark shades of purple and green. A malevolent voice echoes around the chamber.

AENGAR [OFF]

You foolish fools!

MATT
Wait, that sounds like-

A giant glowing astral projection of AENGAR forms above the Orb.

MATT (cont'd)
Aengar the Wicked!

TERRY
Impossible! You're dead! I put my balls in your mouth to make sure!

AENGAR
Did you really think that I did not anticipate your actions? Fools! I knew that you would try to purify the Orb after you killed me, this was all a part of my master plan!

TERRY
It was your plan to get murdered?

AENGAR
Yes.

TERRY
No offense, but that's a pretty shit plan mate.

AENGAR
Fools! You understand nothing! By bringing my spirit here you have opened to me the gates of immortality!

MATT
No. This ends here. We will stop you.

Matt runs at Aengar with his sword drawn. Aengar zaps him with a bolt of magic, sending him flying backwards. Terry rushes in with his great-sword, but Aengar's giant astral fist slaps him away.

Colin tries for a drop-kick but Aengar catches his leg, throwing him aside. Derek stands ready with his war hammer, still stood directly beside the altar.

Matt is laying on the floor. He looks up and notices Aengar's form still attached to the Orb and Derek stood right next to it.

MATT (cont'd)
Gibley, break the Orb!

Derek takes no action. He just stands ready, staring aggressively at Aengar.

MATT (cont'd)
Gibley! For Christ's sake man, what are you doing?! Break it now!

Derek remains still. There is the sound of a toilet flushing and a door opening. Derek then seems as though he has just suddenly become aware of his surroundings, looking around with confusion.

DEREK
Did I miss something?

MATT
Break the Orb!

DEREK
What, why?

MATT
Because of Aengar the Wicked!

DEREK
I thought we killed him?

MATT
He's like a ghost or something, I don't know! Just break the orb!

DEREK
Alright, whatever.

Derek lightly taps the Orb with the tip of his hammer. The Orb shatters and breaks, Aengar is burned from the inside-out by the stream of magic from the altar.

AENGAR
Noooooooo!

A blinding flash fills the chamber.

WHITEOUT

Matt wakes up in a field. He stands up and notices Terry, Derek and Colin nearby.

He looks around to see the walled city of Gold Star beyond the fields; its Royal Palace seated on a high peak where the walls meet. A river surrounds the city. Matt turns to the others.

MATT

That's Gold Star! We're back home...

CUT TO:

11 INT. DINING ROOM, IAN'S HOUSE. NIGHT.

11

TERRY

That makes no sense at all.

IAN

It's a cliffhanger. You'll have to wait until next week to find out what happened.

TERRY

That's a really disappointing cliffhanger.

IAN

You said you had to go soon.

TERRY

I do, but damn. Waking up in a field? No explanation?

IAN

That's the mystery.

TERRY

It's not mystery, it's lazy writing. You haven't even thought up a conclusion yet have you?

IAN

Not as yet.

MATT

In fairness Terry, I'd like to see you do better.

TERRY

Oh, you think I can't be DM?

MATT

You would be the worst Dice Master I can possibly think of.

TERRY

Well if you're so sure about that,
I'll be DM next week. And you will be
eating those words my friend.

Terry gets up and puts on his coat.

MATT

Don't forget to use the three act
structure.

TERRY

Go fuck yourself, I'll see you on
Monday. Ian, Derek- I'll see you guys
next week. At Matt's house!

He beams a mischievous grin and exits.

12 EXT. CITY STREETS. NIGHT. TO EXT. GOLD STAR STREETS. NIGHT. 12
[FANTASY]

Matt is walking home, it is raining. As he walks, the real world behind him dissolves into the medieval streets of Gold Star. A taxi cab nearby becomes a horse and carriage; a car dealership becomes a stable. It is raining in his fantasy too. Matt narrates.

MATT [V.O]

With the villainous Aengar defeated once and for all, again, my companions and I went our separate ways for the night. I returned to my home in Gold Star; a gift from the empress for saving the kingdom last month. Father Algernon sought respite at the cathedral, while Sir Gibley went to stay with the dwarves who live outside the city.

Matt arrives at his Gold Star mansion, one of the largest homes in the city. He puts his key in the door.

CUT TO:

13 EXT. GOLD STAR TAVERN. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 13

Terry is staggering and rolling about in the streets outside the Gold Star Tavern. He balances a mug of ale, laughing and weeping.

MATT [V.O]

And my brother in arms, Carnage
Deathslaughter... he no doubt found
himself crawling in the gutter,
possessed of the ale, lamenting his
humiliation at Aengar's hands.

CUT TO:

14 INT. BEDROOM, MATT'S MANSION. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 14

Matt puts his sword on a weapon rack and climbs into bed.
His armor is neatly stacked nearby. A solitary bedside
candle lights the room.

MATT [V.O]

What are we to do after such a
Pyrrhic victory? With the orb of
destiny destroyed we have no way of
knowing if we succeeded in saving the
kingdom. The future holds an
uncertainty, the likes of which I've
never experienced. I just hope I'm
ready for whatever it might throw at
me.

Matt blows out the candle.

BLACKOUT

15 EXT. MAGES GUILD. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 15

The Gold Star Mages Guild is a tall building, somewhat
reminiscent of a small castle with several towers.
Battlements line the steep walls.

Up one of these walls climb three figures, hanging from a
rope.

16 EXT. MAGES GUILD ROOFTOP. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 16

A hand reaches over the ledge and POPPY GARDENER, an average
looking half-elf in her early thirties, pulls herself up
onto the roof. She wears stealth armor and carries a pair of
daggers. Checking to make sure nobody is around, she
whispers to her friends hanging below the ledge.

POPPY

All clear.

She helps the first of her party up, DAISY BYRD. A purple skinned creature, Daisy has a cute and innocent look. She also wears stealthy armor and carries a pair of daggers.

Next they help up SAFFRON TAIT, an elf in a regal blue dress who carries a longbow. She looks somewhat out of place.

They cross the rooftop to a ledge. Ducking low, they crawl along the ledge until they reach a window with a light in. Poppy cautiously peers through the window and sees a group of elderly wizards sitting in armchairs and smoking pipes.

ELDERLY MAGE

Of course, back in my day there were no "black magicians", wot!

The mages all bellow with a cretinous laughter. Poppy rolls her eyes and ducks her head back down.

POPPY

There's mages. Keep your head down.

They continue across the ledge until they reach the other side and make their way to a doorway.

17 INT. MAGES GUILD. [FANTASY]

17

A door opens; Poppy, Saffron and Daisy stealthily creep out into the large hall. All around the room are display cases and shelves full of magical artifacts.

They spy a particular artifact in a display case at the far end of the hall. They silently creep over to it, Poppy opens the case. She reaches in but her hand triggers an invisible force-field.

This in turn triggers a magical trap; a cylinder of energy forms around them and floats them up off the ground. With nothing to push against they claw at the air, frantically trying not to float further upwards. A door opens and a group of mages come bustling in.

HEAD MAGE

Well, well, well. What have we here?
A trio of dastardly degenerates.
Thieves! Females, to boot!

POPPY

Do you have to?

HEAD MAGE

Light-fingered larcenists, who didn't even think to perform detect magic before they opened the case! But one should expect no less from the inferior sex.

Another door at the end of the hall bursts open. Bright light shines from behind it, a figure in plate-steel armor is outlined. It is HEATHER LYONS.

HEATHER [OFF]

You see a familiar face.

POPPY

(to herself)

Oh for god's sake...

Heather steps forward into the hall, she is half-elf and half-orc.

HEATHER

Oh dear. It seems you've gotten yourself into a bit of a bind. Looks like I'll have to help you out, yet again.

POPPY

We're fine thanks Heather.

HEATHER

It's no trouble. Here, allow me.

She runs at the mages with her staff and swings it at them, knocking several to the floor in one blow. She quickly fights her way through the remaining mages in a matter of seconds, then approaches Poppy, Daisy and Saffron who are still floating in the air.

HEATHER (cont'd)

There you go, all taken care of.
Oops, I almost forgot.

She clicks her fingers and the magical cylinder-trap disappears. Poppy, Saffron and Daisy drop to the floor with a thud.

HEATHER (cont'd)

All better.

The trio stand up; Poppy and Saffron are visibly angry. Daisy is quiet and obedient.

POPPY

Why do you always have to do this?!

HEATHER

Do what?

POPPY

You make everything political!

HEATHER

I'm just trying to make it as believable as possible. It's called world-building!

POPPY

No, it isn't. It's just you putting your personal opinions into the story!

HEATHER

These aren't my opinions, Poppy, this is the real world! It's not my fault you don't see it.

POPPY

We play this game to get away from the real world!

HEATHER

Look. I'm just doing my part to make sure you do your part to make the world a better place.

POPPY

Then why does it always turn into your hero fantasy?

Heather turns her attention to the amulet in the display case.

HEATHER

We came here to do a job. Let's just get on with it.

POPPY

No, Heather, we came here to do a job. You're supposed to be DM. You can't DM and play!

HEATHER

I know what I'm doing.

She reaches into the display case and picks up the amulet.

HEATHER (cont'd)

Oh look! It's an amulet of chameleon skin! Why, this would allow you to turn transparent at will, any time! With no magic cost! But there's only one. Who should I give it to? Who's my most loyal follower? Daisy!

She puts the amulet around Daisy's neck. Daisy turns transparent for a split second, then fades back to normal.

HEATHER (cont'd)

Oh, it suits you my love! You look adorable!

Poppy exhales with annoyance. She starts walking towards the exit, Saffron follows.

POPPY

You know what? I'm done. That interview's tomorrow and I can't be bothered with this.

SAFFRON

See you later Daisy. Heather.

They both exit.

HEATHER

Hmph. They never appreciate the work I put into this! At least I can always rely on you, Daisy.

Daisy forces a smile.

18 EXT. CITY STREETS. NIGHT. TO EXT. GOLD STAR STREETS. NIGHT. 18
[FANTASY].

Poppy walks down the street in the rain, alone. As she walks the street around her morphs into the streets of Gold Star. She is in a different street to the one in Matt's fantasy, this is a more dilapidated area of the city. She narrates.

POPPY [V.O]

This may be the final entry in my journal. It's been one botched heist after another. For weeks I have traveled the kingdom, just barely scraping by. But now it seems my journey is over. Corruption follows wherever I go. There is no-one I can trust, no-one I can depend on.

She approaches an abandoned house and, checking over her shoulder, heads to the back of the building.

19 INT. ABANDONED HOUSE. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 19

Poppy quietly opens a window and climbs into the house to shelter from the rain. Old furniture lies dusty and unused. Lighting a candle she finds her way upstairs. Her narration continues.

POPPY [V.O]

But I have to remain strong. I have to believe that there is hope out there for the future. That one day I might find an ally, a partner in crime. Someone who'll help me bring back freedom to these lands. Until that day comes... I must struggle on alone.

She sits on a worn-out straw bed writing in her journal. Reaching the end of her monologue, she closes the journal and blows out the candle.

BLACKOUT

20 INT. MATT'S HOUSE. MORNING. [MONTAGE] 20

Matt's alarm goes off and he wearily reaches to turn it off. The clock informatively states that it is Monday morning.

He throws on his clothes, brushes his teeth and takes some cans of Red Ball energy drink from the fridge, stashing them in his work bag before leaving the house in a rush.

21 EXT. OFFICE. MORNING. TO INT. OFFICE RECEPTION. MORNING. 21

Matt walks in through the doors of a large, shiny office building signposted as "*Gold Star Security*". He greets the receptionist as he strolls past.

MATT

Morning!

RECEPTIONIST

Hiya!

He walks into an elevator at the back of the lobby and presses a button. As soon as the doors close, Poppy walks in through the front door and goes to the reception desk.

POPPY

Hi! Er, I've got an interview at half past.

RECEPTIONIST

Poppy Gardener?

POPPY

That's me!

RECEPTIONIST

Great! If you just want to take a seat, someone will be right down.

POPPY

Thank you!

22 INT. BREAK ROOM.

22

Matt enters the break room and gets two cups from the cupboard, drops a tea bag into each and starts filling them with water from the boiler.

An attractive co-worker enters.

CO-WORKER

Hiya!

MATT

Hey...

She reaches past him into the cupboard and gets a cereal bowl, starts making herself breakfast. Matt visibly exudes anxiety. After a few moments silence, she looks at him expectantly.

MATT (cont'd)

Er... do you want a cuppa?

CO-WORKER

Oh, there's one on my desk thanks!

MATT

Right-ho!

Matt realizes he could be misinterpreted.

MATT (cont'd)

As in, the phrase "right-ho", the... the figure of speech. I wasn't calling you a right hoe or anything.
(MORE)

MATT (cont'd)
Not that there's anything wrong with that! I-I wouldn't judge you if you were, you'd probably be really good at it!

Matt cringes as the words leave his mouth.

CO-WORKER
Bye!

The co-worker promptly takes her cereal and exits. Matt presses his forehead against the cupboard in self-loathing. Terry enters.

MATT
(to himself)
What is wrong with me?

TERRY
You're gonna have to be more specific.

Matt turns to him.

MATT
How long have you been there?

TERRY
Long enough, have you made my tea yet?

MATT
I'm just doing it.

Matt starts putting milk in the cups.

TERRY
Thank you sir! Looking forward to our game on Saturday?

MATT
Should I be?

TERRY
Oh yes! I've got something good lined up for you. You're gonna fucking die!

MATT
Oh, thank you.

TERRY
No need to thank me! It'll be *glorious*.

MATT

I bet.

TERRY

I'm going to introduce you to a whole new world of pain.

MATT

Do you have to? My world's painful enough as it is. I'm thirty-one next month, if I don't find someone soon I'm gonna be stuck at my parents house for the rest of my life. But I can't find someone because every time I try talking to a woman I fancy I end up insulting her.

TERRY

Talking to women isn't hard mate, you just open your mouth and say what comes out.

MATT

Just opening my mouth is what keeps getting me in trouble.

TERRY

No, overthinking what you say is what keeps getting you in trouble.

MATT

That's who I am, I overthink things.

TERRY

Then pretend you're someone else. What would Daniel Dire-heart do?

23 INT. OFFICE. DAY. TO EXT. GOLD STAR MARKET. DAY. [FANTASY]

23

Matt is sitting at his desk in the open-plan office, writing an email. He looks up at the clock, it reads Nine Thirty. He sighs.

On the other side of the room a door opens and a man in a suit, RICK, holds the door open for Poppy. They begin to cross the office.

RICK

There's a kitchen on this floor too, so if the fridge upstairs is full you can always use the one down here.

(MORE)

RICK (cont'd)

It's quite handy and it gives you an excuse to visit the more rural parts of the office.

As they cross the room, Matt notices Poppy. The office around her dissolves into the Gold Star Market.

In his fantasy, Matt is sitting at a table outside of a tavern. The table is covered with inkwells and parchment, he sits with a quill in hand watching Poppy cross the square.

Poppy is being led across the market by Rick, who now wears the uniform of a town guard. Matt rises from his seat and briskly moves between the market stalls to cut them off, making it look like a chance encounter. He approaches Poppy.

MATT

Greetings, my lady! I am Daniel Direheart, defender of Gold Star.

RICK

Ah, this is Matt! He works in our complaints department.

POPPY

Hello! I'm Lyra Lovecraft.

She holds out her hand, Matt takes it and kisses it.

MATT

A beautiful name. Pray tell, what brings you to our fine city?

POPPY

Alas, I am here to be judged.

She holds up her other hand, which is handcuffed to one of Rick's hands.

MATT

For what crime?

RICK

She's applied to join our accounts team.

MATT

Extortion?! You don't seem the type. There must be some mistake?

POPPY

There is! I'm innocent, I swear.

RICK
She's got two degrees in finance, we
couldn't let her get away.

MATT
I guess you can never judge a book by
its cover.

RICK
That's exactly what she said! Right,
come on then. We'd better get you to
the chopping block, eh?

Rick leads Poppy away, towards the Royal Palace. Matt
watches them leave.

24 INT. INTERVIEW ROOM. DAY.

24

Rick holds the door open and Poppy enters the small
interview room.

RICK
Best of luck!

POPPY
Thanks!

Rick closes the door. Two of the senior executives are
already sat in the room. They rise to shake her hand.

EXECUTIVE ONE
Hi, Poppy, good to meet you! Have a
seat.

She sits.

EXECUTIVE ONE (cont'd)
I'm John, head of marketing. This is
Daniel, he's head of customer
service. We're just waiting for
Cathy, she's the director.

The door handle twists and the door opens a crack.

EXECUTIVE ONE (cont'd)
Oh, that should be her now!

The door swings open.

JUMP CUT TO:

25 INT. ROYAL PALACE THRONE ROOM. [FANTASY]

25

Poppy stands in shackles in the center of the Royal Court. An audience is present. The two executives are standing either side of a large throne, now in medieval dress.

EXECUTIVE ONE

Citizens, lords and ladies, members of the jury. All rise in reverence for Her Majesty the Empress of Gold Star.

A small horn section plays a fanfare as the Empress enters and takes her throne. She bangs a hammer to bring the court to order. The room falls silent.

THE EMPRESS

You stand accused of fraud and trespassing. You belong in this city no more than you belonged in the abandoned house we found you in. You are a vagrant, a wanderer. You swear no allegiances and you fight for no cause. Tell me, why should we allow you to live?

POPPY

I could be of great use to Gold Star! I've traveled far and learned many things. I admit that I've never really found anywhere to fit in, but I'm trying to do better and I'm willing to work hard to prove it.

THE EMPRESS

It is clear that your criminal tendencies are the result of your own laziness and lack of determination. But I do not see you as a lost cause. I've had my sorcerer prepare a contract for you.

Executive Two produces a small piece of parchment with glowing words written on it in some arcane language. He gives it to Poppy along with a quill.

THE EMPRESS (cont'd)

You will agree to be rehabilitated. You will remain here at the palace working as a servant forevermore. Or, until you have proven your dedication to my empire.

Poppy reads through the contract, uncertain.

THE EMPRESS (cont'd)
The alternative is a slow death.

Poppy reluctantly signs the contract. As she puts the quill down a blue mark magically appears on the back of her hand.

THE EMPRESS (cont'd)
Glad to have you on board.

26 INT. STAIRWELL.

26

Matt goes down the stairs in his office to the floor below. Looking through the window in the door, he sees Terry sitting at a desk. He opens the door.

CUT TO:

27 INT. GOLD STAR TAVERN. DAY. [FANTASY]

27

Terry sits at a table, writing on parchment. Matt enters the busy tavern and goes straight over to him.

MATT
Terry, you're not gonna believe this.

TERRY
Liar.

MATT
There's a girl upstairs and I can actually talk to her.

TERRY
Oh, congratulations!

MATT
Thanks! It went really well.

TERRY
Cool, so when are you seeing her?

MATT
What?

TERRY
Well, if it went "really well" I'm assuming you asked her out?

MATT

Er...

TERRY

You didn't ask her out.

MATT

It didn't occur to me, I was getting to know her.

TERRY

Once a girl knows you exist that's like your foot in the door! You're supposed to take that initial curiosity and turn it into anticipation.

MATT

Well I didn't know that, did I? You never explained that far ahead.

TERRY

Why do you need me to explain it to you? You've had girlfriends before.

MATT

That was a long time ago, I'm out of the loop.

Suddenly, the door slams open. Captain BOYSTROW, head of the town guard, stands in the doorway. His mustache quivers with condescension.

BOYSTROW

Dire-heart. Come with me.

28 INT. GUARD TOWER OFFICE. DAY. [FANTASY]

28

In the office at the top of the Gold Star guard tower, a door opens. Boystrow and Matt enter.

BOYSTROW

Have a seat.

Matt complies. Boystrow remains on his feet.

BOYSTROW (cont'd)

Where are the documents?

MATT

I'm sorry?

BOYSTROW

Last week I set you twelve pages of generic paperwork to completed by six o'clock Freya's day. It's now almost ten o'clock Moon-day and I find you in the tavern with Mister Deathslaughter!

MATT

I'm sorry Mister Boystrow, we had to take the Orb of Destiny to-

BOYSTROW

I don't want excuses Dire-heart, I want results! You are supposed to be a defender of Gold Star. The younger soldiers look up to you! Now do you care about this city or not?

MATT

Yes, of course I do! Captain, I have always been willing to sacrifice my life for the people of this city. Whenever it was required of me I was ready to stay behind and man the battlements after everyone else had gone out for a take-away.

BOYSTROW

That's true. And that's why now, more than ever, I need to know that I can count on you. Something's coming, Daniel. Everyone can feel it. There are rumors, whispers in the streets. Reports from afar of an oncoming darkness, the like of which we've never seen.

Matt rises from his chair with calm confidence.

MATT

If there is any oncoming danger, my companions and I will do all that is within our power to keep these people safe. Now if you'll excuse me, I have much to attend to.

BOYSTROW

Very well. But I expect that generic paperwork on my desk by eventide.

MATT

You'll have it. I give you my word.

29 INT. OFFICE. DAY.

29

Matt walks out of Boystrow's office and passes Terry's desk on his way back to the stairwell.

TERRY

What was that about?

MATT

Oh, you know. Work stuff. I'd better get on.

Matt exits to the stairwell. Moments later Boystrow emerges from his office. He is still dressed as a medieval town guard. He crosses the room and steps into the elevator.

TERRY

Morning Mister Boystrow!

BOYSTROW

Get back to work, Bickers!

Boystrow presses a button and the elevator doors close.

30 INT. MEDIEVAL STUDY. EVENING. [FANTASY]

30

Matt sits in the study of his home in Gold Star, writing tirelessly on parchment. A single candle lights his workspace, an anachronistic can of Red Ball sits nearby. He narrates.

MATT [V.O]

I returned to my office and completed Boystrow's assignment. But all the while I could not shake the memory of the mer-touched beauty I had met that day. Something told me she was important, and that if we were to save the kingdom we were going to need her help.

He puts down his quill and sips his Red Ball, staring out the window across the city.

MATT [V.O] (cont'd)

I knew that I must seek her out and persuade her to join our cause if there was to be any hope for the future.

31 INT. GUARD TOWER OFFICE. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

31

Boystrow sits writing in his candlelit office. There is a knock at the door.

BOYSTROW

Enter.

Matt enters carrying several sheets of parchment and puts them on Boystrow's desk.

MATT

Here's everything you asked for, along with a detailed report of our encounter with Aengar the Wicked.

Boystrow briefly examines the papers.

BOYSTROW

Good work, Dire-heart! Keep on like this and you might just make town guard of the month!

MATT

Captain, there's something you could help me with. The girl you arrested this morning, I'd like to speak with her. Do you know where I might find her?

BOYSTROW

She's been put to work at the palace, serving the empress. I expect you'll find her on the top floor.

MATT

Thank you.

Matt turns to leave.

BOYSTROW

Daniel. What do you want with her?

MATT

I think I'm going to need her help.

BOYSTROW

Be careful. There's an old saying- never trust an elf.

MATT

She's only half-elf.

Matt exits. There is the sound of a modern telephone ringing. Boystrow opens the drawer in his desk and pulls out two tin cans, each one attached to a piece of string that leads back into the drawer. He puts one to his ear and holds the other under his chin.

BOYSTROW
Gold Star security, how may I help?

32 EXT. GOLD STAR STREETS. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 32

Matt walks home through the darkened streets of Gold Star. He climbs the steps to his mansion and puts his key in the door.

33 INT. MATT'S MANSION. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 33

Matt enters the illustrious, candlelit lobby of his home. He begins to climb the grand staircase that is the centerpiece of the room.

He is about halfway up when SOFIA DELAVIGNE, a blue-skinned dark elf with raggedy black attire, shouts at him from the bottom of the staircase.

SOFIA
You drank my fucking Red Balls!

JUMP CUT TO:

34 INT. MATT'S HOUSE. EVENING. 34

Matt is halfway up the stairs in his real house, much less grand and fairly typical for a middle-class home. He turns to face Sofia. Sofia appears human, but is still dressed in the same raggedy gothic outfit.

MATT
Oh, they were yours?

SOFIA
Of course they were mine! Mum and Dad don't drink anything but wine and Horlicks!

MATT
Calm down, it's just a beverage.

SOFIA

I'm meant to be having a gore movie marathon with April tonight! How am I supposed to stay awake?!

MATT

Well, sorry Sofia but some of us have got jobs we need to stay awake through.

SOFIA

That's not the point, I don't take your things! If I want something and I don't know who it belongs to I find out and ask them!

MATT

I didn't have time, I was in a rush.

Matt's mother, ELIZABETH DELAVIGNE, squeezes past Matt on her way down the stairs. She is carrying a basket of laundry.

ELIZABETH

Hello love!

MATT

Hi Mum. Oh, er... Mum? Can I use the living room for Dice Warriors on Saturday?

ELIZABETH

Yes, I don't see why not!

JUMP BACK TO:

35 INT. MATT'S MANSION. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

35

SOFIA

Then I'll give you a reason! This man is a liar and a thief. He's been stealing stamina potions from the local apothecary, thinking their absence would go unnoticed.

MATT

You lie, dark elf! Those potions were generously donated to aid in our defense of Gold Star! It was above board and honorable, not that you'd know anything about honor.

(MORE)

MATT (cont'd)
 You abandoned us at the battle of
 Terry's house!

SOFIA
 A curse upon you, Daniel Dire-heart!
 Once, twice, and thrice a curse!

MATT
 Leave, Maiwarrith! You are not
 welcome here!

Sofia hisses and slides backwards out of the front doors like a vampire in an old movie. The doors slam shut behind her. Matt turns to Elizabeth, whom he perceives as the maid of his house.

MATT (cont'd)
 I'm sorry you had to hear that,
 Missus Hobson. I'm going to bed. If
 she returns send her away
 immediately.

ELIZABETH
 Very good sir.

She exits as Matt continues climbing the stairs.

36 INT. POPPY'S HOUSE. MORNING. [MONTAGE]. 36

The alarm clock goes off and Poppy reaches out of bed to turn it off. The clock informatively states that it is Wednesday.

She throws her clothes on and brushes her teeth, then grabs her lunch from the fridge before leaving the house in a rush.

37 INT. OFFICE. MORNING. 37

Poppy sits at her desk, working at her computer. She looks up at the clock on the wall, it reads Ten Thirty. She sighs and looks back to her work.

38 INT. STAIRWELL. 38

Matt reaches the top of the staircase carrying two cups of tea. Peering in through the window, he sees Poppy at her desk. He carefully opens the door.

CUT TO:

39 INT. ROYAL PALACE KITCHENS. [FANTASY]

39

Poppy is washing up in the large stone kitchens of the Royal Palace's servants quarters. Matt appears in the doorway behind her, holding two small potion bottles in place of the tea mugs.

MATT

Hello Lyra.

POPPY

Daniel! What are you doing here?

MATT

I've come to rescue you. Smash those plates and let's get out of here.

She smiles, flattered, but then looks sad. She holds up her hand and shows him the magical mark.

POPPY

We can't. The empress would only have her sorcerer track me down. There's nowhere I could hide.

MATT

I see. Are they treating you well?

POPPY

Very well, but the hours are long and the work is exhausting.

MATT

I suspected as much. I've brought you something to help.

He hands her one of the potion bottles.

POPPY

What are they?

MATT

Just some potions of lesser healing. I didn't put sugar in, I wasn't sure if you took it.

Poppy pops the lid off the bottle and blows it like a mug of hot tea, taking a careful sip.

POPPY

Brewed to perfection. Thank you, truly!

MATT
It was an honor.

POPPY
One day, when I have my freedom, I
shall repay you for your kindness.

Matt looks around, to make sure they are alone.

MATT
You know, there may yet be a way you
can escape your servitude.

POPPY
You know of a way?

JUMP CUT TO:

40 INT. OFFICE. DAY.

40

Matt sits across from Poppy, who is very distracted from her work. They sit with their cups of tea, enthralled in conversation.

MATT
Actually, yeah! Have you ever played
Dice Warriors?

POPPY
Oh my god! If I don't play Dice
Warriors at least once a month I just
start slipping into a fantasy world!

Matt laughs nervously, knowing he does that all the time.

MATT
Same, yeah, I have to play at least
once a month.

POPPY
I'm a half-elf!

MATT
I knew it! I bet you're a rogue too!

POPPY
Obviously the best class!

MATT
I'm a fighter myself.

POPPY
Nice! Simple, but effective!

MATT
Maybe... we could... play together
some time?

POPPY
That sounds great!

MATT
Really?

POPPY
Yeah! Well, my old campaign sort of
died on its feet last weekend because
the Dice Master was a massive prick.

MATT
Oh, I know that feeling!

POPPY
So at the moment we don't have anyone
to DM for us.

MATT
W-what are you doing Saturday?

POPPY
Nothing I couldn't cancel.

MATT
I'm having a game at my house, if you
want to come?

POPPY
Awesome! Can I bring friends?

MATT
The more the merrier!

POPPY
Great!

She gives him an excited grin. A door opens to the
director's office. The Empress stands in the doorway, now in
normal dress for a company director.

THE EMPRESS
Poppy, could you be a dear and help
me go over the invoices for that
Reynholm installation?

Poppy rummages through the papers on her desk and picks up a particular folder.

MATT
I'll see you later, then.

POPPY
See you Saturday!

She smiles and heads into the office with the Empress. Matt watches her leave and stands smiling for a moment, tea in hand.

Then, the smile fades from his lips as he hears Terry's words echoing in his mind.

TERRY [ECHO]
You're gonna fucking die!

Matt drops his teacup and runs for the stairwell at full speed.

41 INT. STAIRWELL.

41

Matt bursts through the door, just as another person is approaching it with two cups of coffee. The door hits them and knocks them back, throwing coffee over them. Matt doesn't even slow his gait, he swings around the banister and calls out;

MATT
Sorry!

Then dashes out of sight, down to the next level.

42 INT. OFFICE. DAY.

42

Matt runs up to Terry's desk in a panic.

MATT
Terry! I need to be DM this weekend!

TERRY
No way! I've got this whole entire thing planned out where Aengar makes you his personal rent boy-

MATT
You don't understand! I've invited girls to play with us!

TERRY
Girl-Z? Plural?

MATT
Yes, so technically you already owe me one.

TERRY
Shit, good point.

MATT
So is that a yes? Please Terry!

TERRY
Alright, fine. But on one condition.

MATT
Name it.

TERRY
You have to play too. In character, in the game world.

MATT
I can't DM and play!

TERRY
You have to! If you want to impress these girls you have to demonstrate that you're both a capable storyteller and an experienced role player.

MATT
Why?

TERRY
Because that's what you're good at.

MATT
Okay, but just... don't make it difficult.

TERRY
No promises. So who else did you invite?

MATT
She's bringing friends.

TERRY
Yes, but who else did you invite?

MATT

Well...

TERRY

You can't *just* invite her, you've got to at least make it *look like* you have a social life.

MATT

That feels like lying, though.

TERRY

Well just invite one person then.

MATT

I don't have any other friends, do you?

TERRY

Pfft, no. Wait, I've got it! I know exactly who you should invite!

43 INT. CORRIDOR. TO INT. PRINT ROOM.

43

Matt and Terry approach a door with the words 'Print Room' written on the frosted glass. Behind the glass, there is a repetitive pulsing light. They both look at the door, then at each other.

TERRY

Trust me.

Matt coyly reaches up and knocks on the glass. A voice responds from inside.

JAMIE [OFF]

Enter.

They slowly push the door open to find JAMIE WOOD with his head closed in a photocopier, making copies of his face. The print room is archaic and dated, cobwebs hang in the corners as though time itself had forgotten the place.

JAMIE

How many pages?

MATT

It's... Jamie, isn't it?

Jamie pulls his head out of the photocopier and looks at them with curiosity and a hint of suspicion.

JAMIE
Have I done something wrong?

MATT
No, no! We were just wondering, what
are you up to this weekend?

JAMIE
The same thing I do every weekend.

TERRY
What's that?

JAMIE
You don't want to know.

MATT
Well, how would you like to come to a
little get together at my place?
We're playing Dice Warriors and we
thought it might be the sort of thing
that maybe you're interested in?

JAMIE
Will there be any hot bitches?

MATT
Er... well. There'll be at least one.
But actually I was sort of hoping to
get with her myself, actually.

JAMIE
Then may the best man win.

TERRY
So, you're coming then?

JAMIE
Not right now, but soon.

Jamie opens the photocopier and closes his head back inside
it.

JAMIE (cont'd)
Very soon.

CUT TO:

Terry pulls the print room door shut.

TERRY
This can not go wrong!

MATT
What do you mean?

TERRY
Do you have any idea how good he's
gonna make us look?

MATT
That seems a bit... unethical.

TERRY
Trust me. Have a little faith.

Terry pats him on the shoulder and heads off one way down the corridor. Matt watches him leave with a disgusted look, then slips into a daydream.

CUT TO:

45 INT. CATHEDRAL. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

45

Matt enters the candle-lit cathedral and walks down the aisle. Colin sits praying before the altar.

MATT
Father, may I speak with you?

COLIN
Of course my friend. What troubles you so, to come visiting at this ungodly hour?

MATT
It's about Carnage. His behavior lately has been... unusual. This afternoon we were training outside the guard house. Naturally, we drew quite an audience. I threw my dagger, expecting him to dodge or deflect it. Instead he grabbed an innocent from the crowd and threw him before the blade. He wasn't hurt badly, it only caught him in the shoulder, but still.

COLIN
That is very strange. Master Deathslaughter has always been a man of peace.

MATT

Do you think it's possible that a part of Aengar's soul was transferred into Carnage when it struck him, but that that same phenomena did not occur when you were struck due to your incontrovertible relationship with the divine?

COLIN

It's entirely possible. In fact, I'd say it's one hundred percent certain.

MATT

Good. Then at least we know where to start.

46 EXT. GOLD STAR STREETS. [FANTASY]

46

Matt walks the streets home to his mansion. Dark clouds are gathering above the city, the wind picks up and a strange purple aura lights the sky. Around him the citizens all look fearful and seek shelter.

MATT [V.O]

It was decided, then. I was to be the author of our destiny. In just three short days I was to decide on a plan that would save the kingdom from whatever malevolent evil was threatening it. It was probably Aengar. It was *always* Aengar.

Matt stands on the stairs to his home looking up at the looming storm that swirls above the city, centered over the Royal Palace.

MATT [V.O] (cont'd)

But something was different this time. This time he was about to make things personal.

47 INT. TEMPLE OF AYLASH. [FANTASY]

47

The fragments of the Orb of Destiny begin reforming. Aengar's laughter quietly echoes about the temple.

BLACKOUT

END OF ACT I

ACT II

48 INT. MATT'S HOUSE. MORNING. [MONTAGE] 48

The alarm goes off and the clock informatively states that it is Saturday morning.

Matt wakes up, throws his clothes on and brushes his teeth. He downs a cup of tea before leaving the house in a rush.

49 EXT. SUPERMARKET. DAY. 49

Matt approaches Terry who sits on a bench outside the supermarket. Terry stands up and greets Matt by cheering and overtly hugging him, embarrassing him.

MATT

Oh get off!

Terry laughs, they enter the supermarket.

50 INT. SUPERMARKET. [MONTAGE] 50

Matt and Terry push a trolley around, filling it with all manner of snacks and food, in fast motion. They reach the alcohol aisle.

MATT

Should we get some drinks in?

TERRY

I think you should get absolutely slaughtered.

MATT

Really?

TERRY

No! They're not gonna be impressed by you crying.

MATT

Alright... what about for everyone else?

TERRY

They'll probably just find it funny.

Matt shrugs him off and they fill the trolley with copious amounts of alcoholic drink.

CUT TO:

51 INT. HALLWAY, MATT'S HOUSE. EVENING.

51

The front doorbell buzzes. Matt answers the door, Derek and Ian are outside. Derek is grinning excitedly.

MATT

Alright guys!

DEREK

Apparently you've brought us a drink tonight?

52 INT. LIVING ROOM, MATT'S HOUSE. EVENING.

52

There is a large stack of bottles and crates of various alcohol in the corner of the room. Derek eyes them with glee. He starts picking up bottles and crates, stashing as much as he can carry.

MATT

Now remember, these are for everyone, so-

DEREK

Don't worry lad, I'll no take more than my fair share!

Derek puts the drinks on the dining table next to Ian, who is setting up maps and small figurines. Terry is already seated, wearing his poor quality costume.

DEREK (cont'd)

Have you got my suit of armor?

IAN

It's in the carrier bag, down there.

Derek starts rummaging through Ian's bag, taking out his costume. CLIVE DELAVIGNE, Matt's elderly father, enters carrying a newspaper and smoking a pipe. He spots Ian and Derek.

CLIVE

Hello Ian! Derek!

DEREK

Clive! You alright mate?

CLIVE

I'm very well thank you! Here for a game of the old Dice Warriors I see.

DEREK

Aye that's right! Do you want to join us?

MATT

Oh, it's not really dad's sort of thing anymore.

CLIVE

Don't be too sure about that, Matthew! Admittedly my adventuring days are long behind me, but... when the kingdom is in danger, no man who claims to be a hero could stand idle while its people are suffering!

Clive pulls up a chair and sits down.

MATT

Oh god.

DEREK

It'll be nice to have you around again Clive, it's been too long since we played!

The doorbell buzzes.

MATT

I'll get it.

Matt gets up and briskly leaves the room.

53 INT. HALLWAY, MATT'S HOUSE. EVENING.

53

Matt opens the front door to find Jamie outside, dressed in a superb fantasy costume that looks like he spent a lot of time and money on it.

MATT

Wow.

JAMIE

Hello, my nemesis.

MATT

You do realize that we're supposed to be playing on a team together, right?

JAMIE

Manric the Gnome King does not share his concubines.

MATT

Right.

54 INT. LIVING ROOM, MATT'S HOUSE. EVENING.

54

Matt and Jamie enter. Derek, Clive, Terry and Ian are already sat around the large dining table wearing costumes that pale in comparison to Jamie's.

MATT

Guys, this is Jamie.

IAN

Hello Jamie!

JAMIE

I greet you, peasants.

Jamie takes his place at the table and Matt exits the room.

DEREK

That's a fine costume, lad. Did you make it specially for tonight?

JAMIE

This? No, I've had it for years.

IAN

How long have you been playing Dice Warriors?

JAMIE

Oh, I've never played. It looks fun though, from what I've seen.

55 INT. BATHROOM, MATT'S HOUSE.

55

Matt looks at himself in the mirror. He has now donned his pathetic cardboard costume. He wets his hands and slicks his hair back, then puts on his cardboard helmet. The doorbell rings.

56 INT. HALLWAY, MATT'S HOUSE. EVENING.

56

Matt opens the front door to find Poppy, Saffron and Rick standing outside. Matt sees Poppy and smiles, then spots Rick and his smile becomes noticeably forced.

POPPY

Hi Matt! This is my friend Saffron.

SAFFRON

Hiya!

POPPY

My friend Daisy's coming later, and you remember Rick. From my floor in the office.

Rick extends a hand for Matt, business like.

RICK

Hi, Matt. Love the outfit! The tin-foil is a nice touch.

Matt awkwardly shakes his hand.

MATT

Thanks! Come on in!

They bustle in and Matt closes the door.

57 INT. LIVING ROOM, MATT'S HOUSE. EVENING.

57

The curtains are closed, the candles are lit, and everyone sits around the dining table in their home-made costumes. Matt sits at the head of the table behind a small game-master's screen.

MATT

We begin our tale in the city of Gold Star, capital of the kingdom of Elsynnia. Night has drawn in and the sky is filled with a dark and menacing aura.

JAMIE

Are we all together?

MATT

Not at first. First it's just... you.

He looks at Poppy. She leans in with interest.

POPPY

Me? Where am I?

MATT

In the dungeons, at the Royal Palace...

CUT TO:

58 INT. DUNGEONS. [FANTASY]

58

Poppy sits behind the iron bars in a medieval dungeon. Torches line the walls and a guard patrols the room.

MATT [V.O]

You were caught trespassing and have been made to work for the empress until you have earned your pardon. But you have a greater destiny. A destiny that cannot wait. Across the way, you spy movement in another cell...

In the cell opposite, a figure stirs beneath a blanket. Jamie stands and throws off the blanket. He appears as a gnome in royal garb.

JAMIE

Hey baby. What's a beautiful woman like you doing in a dirty dungeon like this?

The prison guard comes over, moving into the light. It is Rick.

RICK

The prisoner will be silent. Wait, why am I the prison guard?

Saffron is in another cell. She chimes in.

SAFFRON

Hello! Um, I really shouldn't be here. I mean look at me. Do I look like I belong in a dungeon?

RICK

Not at all. Who are you again?

SAFFRON

I'm the grand princess of the kingdom of Aternia!

RICK

Oh, well, I guess I'll let you out then.

Rick starts looking for the correct key on his key ring. Matt enters the room running, out of breath, his sword drawn. He wears a backpack. Terry follows behind him wearing a bow and quiver on his back, alongside his great-sword.

MATT
Hold your horses!

POPPY
Daniel!

MATT
Stand down, guard! This is a
jailbreak!

RICK
So what do I say?

MATT
You say...

RICK
These prisoners are property of the
empress! I cannot allow you to take
them!

Rick draws his sword.

MATT
Suddenly, at that exact moment.

A lightning bolt strikes Rick's sword and he drops it.
Clutching his hand, he looks up to see Ian enter and stand
beside Matt.

IAN
Stand aside. This is a jailbreak.

RICK
Sovek the Sorcerer! I should have
known you'd be here too. Where's the
rest of your entourage?

Colin and Derek enter, standing ready for combat.

DEREK
We don't wanna fight you. But we will
if Matt decides we have to.

RICK
Father Algernon! I'm surprised to see
you're involved in all this.

COLIN
I just tag along for the opportunity
to get my balls wet, and I've got to
say it's been a mighty dry week.

RICK
Aren't you all supposed to be
defenders of Gold Star?

TERRY
We defend the kingdom. And right now
the kingdom needs these prisoners.

RICK
Why not petition the empress for
their freedom?

MATT
Because there isn't time! Now give me
the keys.

RICK
I can't do that! What kind of prison
guard would I be if I just let the
prisoners wander off, willy-nilly?

Clive stands up in another cell and drops his blanket to the
floor.

CLIVE
Perhaps I might offer a solution?

RICK
Speak, bard.

CLIVE
You can come with us. Keep an eye on
us. If we get caught we'll say we
overpowered you and forced you to go
along with us.

MATT
Which is actually *exactly* what
happened.

RICK
Very well.

Rick tosses Matt the keys.

RICK (cont'd)
I hope you know what you're doing,
Dire-heart.

MATT
Don't worry, I've got it all planned
out.

Matt unlocks Poppy's cell. Poppy runs out and hugs him.

MATT (cont'd)
Oh, hello!

POPPY
I knew you'd rescue me!

MATT
We're not out of this yet. Come on.

He takes her hand and leads her up the stairs, towards the exit.

CLIVE
Um, hello! Aren't you going to let me out too?

DEREK
Aye, a bard could be useful. He's helped us already, we should take him with us.

MATT
Do we have to?

TERRY
Just let him out.

MATT
Fine.

Matt unlocks Clive's cell.

CLIVE
What about the gnome and the princess?

MATT
Did I not let them out already? Oh, sorry guys! It's a lot to keep track of.

He unlocks the final two cells and the group all begin heading up the stairs toward the exit. As they reach the top of the stairs, a dark purple mist starts flowing into the room, hovering about their ankles.

A large group of masked town guards enter. They appear emotionless, as if possessed.

MATT (cont'd)
Stand aside! The empress has ordered
these prisoners be released.

The guards ignore him. A menacing laughter echoes around the
dungeon. Terry narrows his eyes and puts a hand on his
sword.

TERRY
Aengar...

The guards draw their swords. Matt throws his backpack to
Poppy.

MATT
Here! You'll need these.

She reaches into the pack and takes out her two daggers.
Terry throws Saffron her bow and quiver.

The guards leap in and attack. The heroes defend themselves
briefly, exchanging a few glancing blows before Aengar
interrupts.

AENGAR [OFF]
Enough!

The purple mist swirls into a humanoid shape near the
entrance. It is clearly Aengar, but he is still spectral and
does not completely materialize.

MATT
What have you done to these men?
Release them at once!

AENGAR
Their minds belong to me now, along
with this entire wretched city.

MATT
The empress would never allow that.

AENGAR
The empress is dead, by my hand.

TERRY
You monster!

Matt extends an arm to hold Terry back.

MATT

You're supposed to be trapped in the Temple of Aylash. What are you doing here?

AENGAR

Actually, I came to thank you. By releasing my essence into the revitalizing river you have made my soul eternal.

IAN

No!

AENGAR

Yes! You have defeated me time and time again, but now I shall finally have my revenge!

Aengar holds up his hands and a wall of flames appears, stretching from one wall to the other, trapping the group in the dungeon.

Matt takes a step backwards; the flames spread wider, as though they are following him.

AENGAR (cont'd)

See you in hell, valiant heroes.

Aengar turns away and his smokey form collapses back into the cloud of mist. Matt and the others keep stepping back, losing more ground to the flames.

CLIVE

What do we do?

MATT

Sovek, have you any water spells?

Ian casts a magical spell to make a torrent of water shoot from his staff. It has no effect on the flames.

IAN

Cursed flames! They're resistant to magic!

MATT

Then we'll have to jump.

CLIVE

It's too far, you'll never make it!

MATT

We have to try!

POPPY

Wait! I have an idea! Gibley, smash this wall with your hammer.

Derek looks confused for a moment, then catches on.

DEREK

Ah, right lass! I get where you're coming from! Everyone stand back.

The others stand as far back as they can, giving Derek room to swing.

DEREK (cont'd)

Shattering Hammer of the Gods!

His hammer glows with a golden energy as he swings it full force into the wall. The wall smashes leaving a large hole. The open night sky can be seen outside.

The group peer over the ledge; the dungeons are underground in relation to the Royal Palace, but the palace is built up on a plateau. They look down the sheer cliff face, into the river that surrounds the city. It's a long way down.

DEREK (cont'd)

Follow me! Geronimo!

Derek takes a running jump and dives from the cliff. The others are hesitant, but looking back at the encroaching flames restores their determination. Ian and Rick jump decisively after him.

Terry and Saffron approach the ledge.

TERRY

Don't worry, the river's deeper than it looks.

SAFFRON

How do you know?

TERRY

Oh trust me. I know.

He jumps from the ledge. Saffron mimics his confident jump. Next, Jamie and Clive timidly launch themselves over. Matt and Poppy stand side by side on the ledge, the flames licking at their backs. Matt offers his hand, which Poppy takes.

MATT

Good luck.

POPPY

You too.

They jump in unison.

CUT TO:

59 EXT. RUSHING RIVER. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

59

There is a splash as Matt and Poppy hit the water. They are separated by the current and dragged downriver towards a waterfall. Unable to stop themselves, they are swept over the falls. As they hit the water below, everything goes black.

BLACKOUT

60 EXT. RIVERBANK. DAY. [FANTASY]

60

The river rolls by peacefully, somewhere further downstream. The city of Gold Star can be seen in the distance, engulfed in a dark cloud.

There is a sudden splash and splutter as Matt rises from below the surface and pulls himself up onto a rock. He stands up to get his bearings, his comrades are nowhere to be seen.

MATT

Lyra?!

There is no reply. Climbing over a large rock he spots Rick crawling on the shoreline, coughing up water. Matt clambers down and waddles over to him.

MATT (cont'd)

You there! Have you seen my fellow adventurers?

RICK

I don't know, you tell me.

MATT

You haven't, no.

RICK

No. I haven't.

MATT

We've got to find them!

RICK

I'm confused. Am I on your side now?

MATT

Yes, but only because my dad beat you on a persuasion check.

RICK

I don't understand this game. What's the point of all this?

MATT

Look, er... what was your character's name again?

RICK

Doom-bringer Dude Five-thousand.

MATT

Listen, Doom-bringer. You need to find your prisoners just as much as I do. If we don't find them the kingdom will be doomed and everyone will fall to an all consuming darkness. Is that what you want?

RICK

No, of course not!

MATT

Good, because we'd both die and I'd have to go into all sorts of gory details that nobody wants to listen to. Now come on, they could be anywhere by now.

RICK

They're sitting right next to us!

MATT

Are they? Oh I see what you mean.

RICK

Why are we pretending they're not here? And what's so bad about telling a gory story?

MATT

Nothing. We should keep moving.

Matt walks past him toward a dusty path than runs alongside the river.

RICK
It sounds to me like you're afraid.

MATT
What?

RICK
You're afraid. You don't want to *have* to go into gory details.

MATT
Oh, you wanna put that to the test?

POPPY [OFF]
Guys!

Poppy stands by the river, dripping.

POPPY
We have more important things to worry about. You're both gonna have to learn to get along if we're going to save Elsynnia.

MATT
She's right. What are we doing?

RICK
Sitting around a table pretending we can't find each other.

MATT
(huffing)
Oh look, it's Father Algernon!

Matt points down the path, where Colin is approaching from further upstream. Matt and Poppy rush over to greet him, Rick dawdles behind.

Further downriver Ian clammers from the water. He sees a small village, Scatsbridge, just beyond some fields. Hearing a splash, he looks behind him to see Derek climbing from the river. Jamie, Clive and Saffron are on the opposite bank, waving.

IAN
(calling out)
 There looks to be a bridge near the town, you can cross over there!

DEREK
(calling out)
 We'll meet you in the tavern!

Clive gives a clear thumbs up and they all begin heading in the direction of the village.

62 EXT. RIVERSIDE RIDGE. DAY. [FANTASY]

62

Matt, Colin, Rick and Poppy stand on a ridge overlooking Scatsbridge.

MATT
 Scatsbridge. Fifty gold pieces says they're in the tavern.

RICK
 Of course they are, he just said they were going there.

MATT
 We're not supposed to know about that, it was miles away. Are you taking the bet or not?

RICK
 No.

MATT
 Heh. Now who's afraid?

Matt coolly saunters off in the direction of the village. The others follow him, but a black crow with a strange blue sigil on its head is watching them from the trees...

63 INT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. DAY. [FANTASY]

63

Matt, Poppy, Rick and Colin enter the tavern to find Derek, Ian, Clive, Jamie and Saffron sitting around a table enjoying a mug of ale. They approach the table and Ian rises to greet them.

IAN
 Daniel! Father Algernon! I'm so pleased to see you're alive. And unharmed it would seem.

MATT
Yes, we were all very lucky.

IAN
But where is Master Deathslaughter?

COLIN
Yes. Where *is* Carnage Deathslaughter,
Matt?

MATT
Carnage Deathslaughter has a very
important role to play in this
story...

CUT TO:

64 EXT. ROYAL PALACE. [FANTASY] 64

A dark storm fills the sky and clouds swirl around the royal palace. It is impossible to tell day from night.

65 INT. ROYAL PALACE THRONE ROOM. [FANTASY] 65

The throne room is large and grand, but silent and foreboding. The purple mist swirls about Aengar, who sits on the throne. He now appears fully formed and solid.

Captain Boystrow enters with two possessed town guards. The guards carry Terry between them, he is unconscious and soaking wet. They drop him at the foot of the stairs leading up to the throne.

BOYSTROW
We found him in the river, my liege.
He was cursing your name.

Aengar rises from his throne. Terry coughs awake.

AENGAR
Ah, yes! My pet project.

TERRY
I don't know what you mean.

AENGAR
You will be my greatest weapon.

TERRY
I'll never help you.

AENGAR

You won't have any choice. Boystrow!
What news of the Orb of Destiny?

BOYSTROW

Our scouts have just returned from
the Temple, my lord.

Boystrow clicks his fingers and one of the guards produces the Orb of Destiny. He hands the Orb to Boystrow.

BOYSTROW (cont'd)

We have already retrieved the Orb.

AENGAR

Excellent work, Boystrow!

Aengar turns his attention back to Terry.

AENGAR (cont'd)

Tell me, Barbarian. Do you know why
you can never defeat me?

TERRY

Because you have insanely thick plot
armor.

AENGAR

Because *I* always stay one step ahead!

Aengar goes over to a display case at the back of the throne room which contains the crown jewels.

TERRY

Your last plan was to get murdered!

AENGAR

The Royal Palace contains treasures
far more valuable than any of you
know.

He smashes the case, then throws the crown jewels aside. As he lifts the stone base the display case was resting on, a stream of white-blue magic shoots up from beneath it. The resemblance to the revitalizing river in the Temple of Aylash is uncanny.

AENGAR (cont'd)

Boystrow! Place the Orb into the
fountain!

Boystrow puts the Orb on top of the pedestal, blocking the flow. The Orb begins to charge with magic, pulsing and glowing.

AENGAR (cont'd)

Yes! Soon!

Aengar clenches his fist, evilly, and turns back to Terry.

AENGAR (cont'd)

My plan is all but complete! Only one thing remains. To deal with Direheart, once and for all!

He takes a JEWELLED AMULET from his pocket and hangs it around Terry's neck.

TERRY

What is this?

Aengar holds out his hand. His purple mist swirls into Terry's face through his mouth and nose. Terry falls down, dead.

After a moment, he coughs and wakes up. His eyes are now tinted with a golden shine.

TERRY (cont'd)

What have you done to me?! You... you've turned me into a Lich!

AENGAR

Yes! And thanks to my background in necromancy, you are now a slave to my power.

TERRY

How is this an important role in the story?!

AENGAR

Just wait and see. It'll all turn out in the end.

TERRY

You can't just change my alignment in the middle of a campaign!

AENGAR

The Dice Master's decision is final.

TERRY

But you've turned me into a Lich!

AENGAR

And now you will go. Rejoin your companions in the town of Scatsbridge and await my order to attack.

TERRY

You're never gonna get away with this. I object to this in the strongest sense of the word objection!

AENGAR

Your objection has been noted. But like it or not, from this moment forward- you serve Aengar the Wicked.

Aengar clicks his fingers and Terry is magically teleported.

CUT TO:

66 EXT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. DAY. [FANTASY]

66

Terry appears outside the tavern in Scatsbridge; the sign out front reads "*The Drunken Bastard*" above a small carving of an ale mug.

Terry scowls.

67 INT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. DAY. [FANTASY]

67

The door to the busy tavern swings open and Terry looms in the doorway, glaring at Matt. Matt stands at the bar with Derek, the others all sit chatting around the room. Matt cheers, raising his mug of ale in Terry's direction.

MATT

Whey! There he is!

Terry goes over, not taking his eyes off Matt.

MATT (cont'd)

What took you so long? We've been worried about you. Glad to see you're still alive.

He drunkenly winks at Terry, who continues to stare at him in silence.

MATT (cont'd)

So, anything to report?

Terry gives him a disgusted look.

MATT (cont'd)
Don't suppose you dropped by the
Palace?

TERRY
Can I have a word?

MATT
Sure?

Terry leads Matt over to a cupboard the back of the tavern.
They both go into the cupboard.

CUT TO:

68 INT. HALLWAY, MATT'S HOUSE. EVENING.

68

Terry and Matt walk into the hallway, Matt's mug of ale has
turned into a plastic cup full of orange alcohol.

TERRY
What are you doing?

MATT
I'm just trying to tell an
interesting story.

TERRY
No you're not, you're putting
everyone else down to make out like
you're the hero.

MATT
Women like heroes, I'm supposed to be
the hero.

TERRY
Well you're not acting like one. All
that power's gone to your head.

Matt looks into his drink and sways.

MATT
It's not the only thing.

TERRY
You're being too blatant, you've got
too much dutch courage. Why don't you
let me take over?
(MORE)

TERRY (cont'd)
 You can still play, I'll just DM and we'll do my story instead. That way you can focus on being smooth and subtle.

MATT
 We can't interrupt the story! Are you mad?

TERRY
 Are you?

MATT
 We have to finish it! Promise me, promise me we'll finish it!

He starts leaning into Terry, trying to remain balanced, patting him softly on the chest.

TERRY
 Alright fine, but you've got to keep it together.

MATT
 I can handle it! I can handle it!

TERRY
 I hope you know what you're doing.

MATT
 Shh! I am the epitome of subterfuge!

TERRY
 Don't think this means I've forgiven you.

MATT
 Shh!

Matt gently opens the door.

69 INT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. DAY. [FANTASY]

69

The cupboard door opens and Matt and Terry return to the main room of the tavern. The other players are all gathered around one of the largest tables. Matt drunkenly eases himself into a chair at the table, Terry takes his seat beside Matt.

IAN
 What was that about?

MATT

Oh, you know. Town guard stuff.
What's going on with you guys?

POPPY

We figured out what Aengar's plan is!

MATT

What, why?

SAFFRON

Isn't that the point?

MATT

I mean, how?

POPPY

Well, I started wondering: why did
Aengar take over the Royal Palace if
the revitalizing river is the Temple
of Aylash?

MATT

Because he didn't need it anymore.

POPPY

Because he didn't need it anymore!
Which means there must be a specific
reason he chose the palace and not a
more fortified location!

MATT

Wait a minute...

POPPY

So then, while you were gone, we
performed a history check for Colin
and it turns out he had some ancient
scriptures in his bag that told of
how the Royal Palace was built on top
of an ancient power source called the
Fountain of Forevermore, where all
magic enters this realm from the
beyond.

MATT

You're not supposed to know about
that yet. To find out about that one
of you must have been... who was DM
during this?

JAMIE

I was.

MATT

Manric the gnome king?! Who said you could look at my story pages?

JAMIE

Your dad set everything up for me.

MATT

Oh thanks dad!

CLIVE

I tried not to peek too far ahead.

MATT

And as for you, "Colin"-

He pokes Terry on the shoulder accusingly.

MATT (cont'd)

With your ancient scriptures and your history checks! This is mutiny!

COLIN

I'm always glad to be of service. And perhaps one day, if you're feeling generous, you might return the favor.

POPPY

How might we do that?

COLIN

Well. If, god forbid, you were ever to fall in battle-

Matt suddenly throws his hands up.

MATT

Right, that's enough. You've come too far. We've all come too far. There's no going forward and no going back. All we can do now... is forget! Barkeep! Another round for all my friends!

Elizabeth is serving drinks behind the bar.

ELIZABETH

Right you are, love!

TERRY

I really think you should-

MATT

I've got it in hand! We need to get potions! Who's keeping track of the gold?

IAN

You are.

MATT

Oh yes. To the apothecary!

Matt stands to leave, raising his finger to the sky defiantly.

CUT TO:

70 EXT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. DAY. [FANTASY]

70

The door bursts open and Matt staggers out of the tavern. The other players all walk out behind him and start drawing their swords as they notice the tavern is surrounded by possessed town guards. Matt doesn't notice at first. He reaches the end of the path and looks up to see Boystrow.

BOYSTROW

Hello, Dire-heart.

Boystrow slurs his words. He and Matt both stagger, trying to retain their balance.

Matt gasps melodramatically.

MATT

Captain Boystrow! What are you doing here?

BOYSTROW

We've been sent to apprehend you on behalf of our dark lord and master, Aengar the Wicked. Peace be upon him.

MATT

What does he want with us?

BOYSTROW

He wants to watch each and every one of you die. Horribly, painfully, and gorily.

Matt pulls out his sword and holds it up, drunkenly.

MATT

Not on my watch, captain.

Boystrow draws his sword and stares down the blade at Matt, struggling to stay upright.

BOYSTROW

Who do you think you are, town guard of the month? Yaah!

Boystrow lunges at Matt and they begin having a wobbly drunken sword-fight outside the tavern.

The possessed guards attack the others and a pitched battle ensues. During the battle a guard corners Clive, who is unarmed, up against a wall.

CLIVE

Stop! You don't want to hurt me!

There is the sound of a dice rolling.

POSSESSED GUARD

I don't wanna hurt you.

The guard casually walks away. Clive pumps his fist victoriously.

Poppy throws her daggers to kill a guard, they magically reappear back in her hands after.

Jamie and Terry stand off to one side, watching the battle unfold.

TERRY

I'm not sure who I'm supposed to be attacking to be honest. Aren't I a bad guy now?

JAMIE

I'm king of the gnomes and I don't even have a sword yet.

Matt and Boystrow's drunken duel continues.

BOYSTROW

You can't defeat me, Dire-heart! I taught you everything you know about town guarding!

MATT

That may be true, but I guard more than just the town.

(MORE)

MATT (cont'd)
I've ventured across the treacherous
peaks of the Snapped-Bone mountains!

Matt knocks Boystrow back with a particularly powerful blow.

MATT (cont'd)
I've traveled to the depths of the
wretched catacombs that run beneath
the lost city of the damned!

Another powerful strike.

MATT (cont'd)
I've walked in magical realms, spun
from the dreams of the insane and the
idiotic!

A third blow knocks Boystrow flat on his arse.

MATT (cont'd)
I am a defender of Gold Star! And I
guard the kingdom.

Matt holds his sword up, ready to bring the death blow, but
Boystrow jabs his sword upwards into Matt's abdomen.

Everyone turns to look at Matt, in slow motion.

TERRY
Nooooo!

Matt awkwardly stumbles back, then looks at his wound.

MATT
Oh. Shit. I'm down.

He collapses to the floor, unconscious.

BLACKOUT

FADE IN:

71 EXT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. DAY. [FANTASY]

71

Matt's vision is blurred, the battle still rages around him
as he rolls about on the floor. His hearing is muffled, but
he can make out the sound of swords clashing and the screams
of battle. He can also hear a crow cawing.

The crow with the blue sigil on its head lands on a fence
post and looks at him. He looks back at it. Another crow
appears and lands beside it.

Soon all he can hear is the sound of birds as a huge swarm swoop in and start attacking the possessed town guards.

The players take this opportunity to dispatch several of the guards while they are distracted. Boystrow flails his sword around, but the blade passes through the crows like they were ghosts.

BOYSTROW

What manner of sorcery is this?!

Boystrow hears a horse neighing. He looks around to see Sofia on the edge of the town square, riding a black horse.

SOFIA

Mind if I play with you guys?

BOYSTROW

Be gone, foul witch!

SOFIA

I wasn't asking you.

She rides in and clobbers a guard with her staff as she passes. Hopping down from her horse, she slams her staff into the ground as three guards approach her. Thorny vines rise up from the earth and lash themselves around the guards, bringing them down.

Ian launches lightning strikes while Colin punches guards with fists of flame. Boystrow looks around in a panic, watching the battle deteriorating around him.

BOYSTROW

Fall back! Everyone, fall back!!

He and what remains of his guard squad run out of town, the swarm of crows in hot pursuit.

72 INT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. DAY. [FANTASY]

72

The door opens; Sofia and Ian carry Matt into the tavern and lay him gently on the floor. The other players come in behind them. Elizabeth is still working at the bar.

ELIZABETH

Everything alright, dear?

SOFIA

Matt? Matt can you hear me?

She gently slaps his cheeks, trying to get his attention.

MATT

I'm alright, I'm fine... I can do this.

SOFIA

He's delirious. Get him some water, quickly.

IAN

Right.

Ian heads over to the bar.

MATT

Everything was going so well. I had it all under control... didn't I?

POPPY

You did great, just relax. You're going to be okay.

Matt passes out again.

73 INT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. EVENING. [FANTASY]

73

Some time later. Rick, Saffron and Jamie are at the bar, watching as Sofia mixes some herbs on a table and grinds them with a pestle and mortar. Matt lays unconscious on a sleeping bag, Poppy sits beside him helping him sip water from a canteen.

Clive, Ian and Colin sit in chairs by the fireplace, while Derek and Terry sit at a table having a quiet drink together.

TERRY

I tried to warn him, but he wouldn't listen. This is my fault, I should have stepped in.

DEREK

You can't blame yourself mate. It's not your responsibility to make sure he knows his own limits.

TERRY

It is though. I put him up to this, I pushed him too hard. I told him I'd look out for him.

DEREK

He did turn you into a Lich.

TERRY
You aren't supposed to know about
that, it was miles away.

DEREK
I don't think he's going to notice.

They both look at Matt, who is still lolling about on the
floor.

DEREK (cont'd)
Besides, I'm a paladin. I know an
undead when I see one. But don't
worry, your secret's safe with me.

The doorbell rings. Derek and Terry both make puzzled faces.

DEREK (cont'd)
Who could that be?

Terry shrugs.

DEREK (cont'd)
Don't worry, I'll get it.

Derek gets up and goes into the cupboard.

74 INT. HALLWAY, MATT'S HOUSE. EVENING.

74

Derek opens the front door.

DEREK
Can I help you?

HEATHER [OFF]
Dear god, you're every bit as hideous
as I imagined you'd be.

DEREK
Thanks. You too.

75 INT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. EVENING. [FANTASY]

75

Sofia wraps her finished herb mixture into a leaf and takes
it over to Poppy.

SOFIA
Here, give him this.

POPPY
What is it?

SOFIA
An ancient druid remedy. We call it
'Alka-Selzter'.

Poppy feeds Matt the folded leaf and gives him another drink.

POPPY
How long will it take?

SOFIA
About half an hour.

Suddenly, the wall by the cupboard explodes. Derek comes flying through, backwards, as though struck by some immense force. A figure can be seen in the dust cloud.

HEATHER [OFF]
YOU SEE A FAMILIAR FACE.

POPPY
Oh no.

SAFFRON
How did she find us?!

Poppy narrows her eyes at the dust cloud as another figure can be seen beside Heather.

POPPY
Daisy.

Heather walks into the room, Daisy in tow.

DAISY
I'm sorry! I had no choice! She threatened to block me from our Facebook group.

CLIVE
(to Heather)
Have you no honor?

DEREK
A true warrior would have faced the ban-hammer with dignity!

HEATHER
HEY. WHAT'S UP GUYS.

POPPY
Oh, you know. Just... hanging out.

HEATHER
HANGING OUT?!

POPPY
Yeah. Hanging out.

HEATHER
PLAYING DICE WARRIORS.

POPPY
Are we? Er, yeah, I- I guess we are.
It's just a small game though,
nothing serious.

HEATHER
Well, thanks for letting me know you
weren't coming to play with me
tonight! Face to face! Via Daisy!

POPPY
Okay, yes, that was a... poor
decision.

HEATHER
And how are you going to make it up
to me?

POPPY
*(trailing off into a
mumble)*
Well, you could always... join in.

HEATHER
Hm?

POPPY
I said you could always join in.

HEATHER
I could, couldn't I?

She begins patrolling the room, looking at the other players individually.

HEATHER (cont'd)
Tell me. Which one of you is the Dice
Master?

Everyone looks at Matt.

HEATHER (cont'd)
Ha! Well, this is a turn up for the
books.

(MORE)

HEATHER (cont'd)
A group of characters with no
storyteller! I suppose I'll have to
fill in for him.

She looks at the table and sees some rolled up scrolls
sticking out of Colin's bag. Using a magical power she pulls
the scrolls into her hand.

HEATHER (cont'd)
Are these his story notes?

Colin stands, alarmed.

COLIN
The ancient scriptures!

HEATHER
Oh dear. He hasn't even talked about
harmful gender stereotypes!

POPPY
Oh for god's sake, Heather! I'm sick
of this!

Poppy and Heather start arguing, their din fades into the
background.

DEREK
Jesus Christ.

He sits, puts his elbow on the table and sparks up a
cigarette.

JAMIE
I should probably be heading home
soon. My gnomes will be needing me.

SAFFRON
It is getting a bit late. We can
always do this another time.

IAN
My wife's all alone in a Travelodge.

Terry sits, listening to the defeatism and conflict going on
around him. Everything starts to fade into the background
and he hears whispers in his mind. Quiet at first, then
growing louder.

WHISPERS
The time is now...

Hundreds of whispers repeating, building, until he hears Aengar's voice clearly among them.

AENGAR [ECHO]

The time is now!

TERRY

Suddenly, and without warning!

Terry jumps to his feet and draws his sword. Everyone stops what they are doing and looks at him.

TERRY (cont'd)

Carnage Deathslaughter springs to his feet, his weapon in hand. His handsome visage appears cold and lifeless, and his eyes now glint with a golden shimmer.

DEREK

Terry man, what are you doing?

While Heather is distracted Colin puts his hand around the scrolls. He quickly spins around and plants his palm firmly on her torso. With a flash of magic she is sent flying out through the tavern's front door.

COLIN

I have a promise to keep to my friend. So one way or another...

Colin hands the scrolls to Terry.

TERRY

We're gonna finish this story. Ladies and Gentlemen, from this moment forward...

TERRY & COLIN

I will be your Dice Master.

TERRY

Now, let's see here.

Terry begins leafing through the scrolls.

TERRY (cont'd)

Average. Shit. Workable. Oh for god's sake Matt.

He gets to the last page, huffs, then gives the scrolls back to Colin.

TERRY (cont'd)
Okay. Derek, you know what to do.

DEREK
Are you sure?

TERRY
Let's do this.

DEREK
He's a Lich!

Derek charges in with his hammer, but Terry flips him onto the floor. Ian and Sofia blast Terry with magic but he grabs a silver platter from a table and reflects their magic back at them, knocking them down too.

Colin runs to engage but Terry throws the platter at his face, putting him out of the fight. Poppy and Rick face him next.

Derek is still on the floor.

DEREK (cont'd)
Bard!

CLIVE
Actually, my character's name is
Daenorin.

DEREK
I don't care. Use 'voice of immediate
compliance'!

Terry knocks Poppy and Rick down and starts heading towards Matt, who still lays unconscious on a bedroll.

Clive steps into his way.

CLIVE
Stop, you fiend!

TERRY
It doesn't work on undead.

Terry punches Clive with the hilt of his sword, knocking him out. He steps over him and stands next to the bedroll, ready to slay Matt.

TERRY (cont'd)
Goodnight, sweet prince.

Suddenly Matt's sword plunges through Terry from behind. He turns and drops to his knees. Poppy is behind him, having dealt the killing blow. Derek grabs the jeweled amulet from around Terry's neck.

DEREK
I'll be taking that.

TERRY
No! You can't have it! It's mine!
Mine!

DEREK
Yeah, keep talking.

He puts the amulet on the floor in the center of the room, brings his hammer down and smashes it.

TERRY
Nooooo!

A ghostly energy leaves Terry's body as he falls down dead. The group all pick themselves up and stand over him, solemnly. Saffron, Daisy and Jamie creep out from their hiding place behind the bar.

SAFFRON
That was intense.

COLIN
You know it, baby.

END OF ACT II

ACT III

76 INT. UPSTAIRS BEDROOM, SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 76

Matt wakes up in one of the upstairs bedrooms. Rain is pattering on the window, he can hear music and conversation downstairs. He sits up, holds his head for a moment, then gets out of bed.

77 INT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 77

Matt walks out of the cupboard, entering the tavern and finds the other players all partying. Clive, Jamie and Colin play medieval instruments while Poppy, Saffron, Daisy and Sofia dance in circles. The others sit talking at tables. Heather sulks in the corner.

When Matt walks in, they all stop and look at him. Colin puts his instrument down and goes over to greet him.

COLIN
Good! You're finally awake.

MATT
What happened?

COLIN
You were wounded in battle so I took over while you coalesced.

MATT
You're DM-ing?

COLIN
I had to make a few minor adjustments, but we've mostly been following the story you had planned.

Matt looks momentarily worried.

COLIN (cont'd)
It's alright. Your secrets are safe with me.

MATT
Why is Father Algernon saying this to me? Where's Carnage? And why are you all playing musical instruments?

COLIN
We're celebrating our victory! We killed a Lich!

MATT
A Lich? So does that mean...?

The others stand aside revealing Terry's corpse still laying on the floor, skewered by Matt's sword, exactly where he fell.

MATT (cont'd)
CARNAGE! NOOO!

Matt runs over to Terry's lifeless body.

MATT (cont'd)
Why has no-one cast resurrection?!

CLIVE
It doesn't work on undead...

MATT

I'm sorry Carnage! I never meant for things to turn out this way. You still had so much more to give to the story! I had plans for you!

Matt cradles Terry's body, rocking backwards and forwards. Colin puts a hand on Matt's shoulder.

COLIN

Unfortunately, my friend, those plans were shit. I've come up with a new plan. I wrote it down for you.

Matt stands up and Colin passes him a sheet of parchment. He briefly reads through it, before turning to look at the others. They all look at him expectantly.

COLIN (cont'd)

We always knew you would recover, Daniel Dire-heart.

MATT

Will you stand aside and allow me to finish what I've started?

COLIN

I have stood by your side for many years. I shall always continue to be your faithful ally.

IAN

I think I speak for everyone here when I say: we're with you, Matt.

POPPY

We're with you Matt!

CLIVE

We're with you, Matthew.

DEREK

We're with you, laddie.

SOFIA

Can I have a go?

MATT

What? No.

RICK

I think she should have a go.

MATT

I'll tell you what- we'll roll for it. Go ahead, Sofia. Make my day.

There is the sound of a dice rolling.

SOFIA

Eighteen, suck it!

Another dice roll sound.

MATT

Natural Twenty.

CUT TO:

78 INT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

78

Matt unrolls a big map of the kingdom on the largest table. Everyone gathers around to hear his plan.

COLIN

Maiwarrith has informed us that Aengar now holds full control of Gold Star and the surrounding settlements. His power grows by the hour.

MATT

How did you come by this information?

SOFIA

A little birdy told me.

MATT

What about his forces?

COLIN

The entire legion is under his command. We'd need an army to retake the palace.

MATT

If what you say is true, then-

There is the sound of a mobile phone ringing. Rick pulls out his phone and looks at it.

RICK

International number? Sorry guys, gotta take this!

He heads into the cupboard.

MATT

If what you say is true, then we have a lot of work to do. We'll split up into teams. Sovek and Father Algernon, I need you to go back to the Temple of Aylash with Carnage's body and use the revitalizing river to resurrect him. Manric, Daenorin, Gibley and Maiwarrith- you'll travel to the kingdom of the gnomes and attempt to enlist the help of their army in liberating Gold Star. Lyra, myself, Doom-bringer and the princess of Aternia-

SAFFRON

The *grand* princess.

MATT

The grand princess of Aternia, will attempt to infiltrate the city, figure out what Aengar is up to and ideally put a stop to it. Any questions?

HEATHER

What about us?

She gestures to herself and Daisy.

MATT

Sorry, who are you?

HEATHER

Damachus the Destroyer.

MATT

And what is it that you do?

HEATHER

I'm a half-elf, half-orc, barbarian warlock multi-class.

MATT

Oh, right. I guess you're with me then. Any other questions?

Everyone looks confident in the plan.

MATT (cont'd)

Then I suggest we all take a long rest. We're going to need one.

79 EXT. STABLES. MORNING. [FANTASY]

79

The sun rises over the small village of Scatsbridge.

Matt and Colin approach the Scatsbridge stables. The stable-master stands outside, tending to the horses. Matt calls out as they approach.

MATT

Hail, stable-master! We require the fleetest steeds in all of Elsynnia.

STABLE-MASTER

Then by a slightly unbelievable coincidence you've come to the right stable.

COLIN

Never have I seen such a fine troupe of stallions, stable-master! They all have such wide mouths.

STABLE-MASTER

Our horses have the widest mouths this side of Shatty Field. How many do you need?

MATT

Twelve horses and a barrow fit for a king!

CUT TO:

80 EXT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. MORNING. [FANTASY]

80

Matt dumps Terry's body into a shambolic wooden barrow tied to the back of a horse. Derek, Ian and Colin are with him.

DEREK

Ah come on, they must have had something better than that!

MATT

Yes, they did. But we spent all the money on beer and horses. This is all we could afford.

Colin climbs up on the horse that leads Terry's barrow.

MATT (cont'd)

Take care, father. You look after him. Make sure he gets there in one piece.

COLIN

I will guard his body as if it were my own.

Matt nods solemnly. Colin starts to ride the horse and barrow slowly out of town. Ian climbs up onto another horse.

MATT

Good luck. And er, don't leave him alone with himself.

IAN

See you on the other side, Daniel.

He whips the reigns and follows Colin out of town just as Clive and Jamie come out of the tavern. Matt turns to Jamie.

MATT

Manric. I know we haven't always seen eye to eye. There were times when I neglected the important role you play in our party. That was my mistake. Without you, there wouldn't be...

Jamie waits for Matt to finish his sentence.

MATT (cont'd)

There wouldn't be a gnome! Or a convenient segue for me to bring in an entire army of gnomes. So for that I thank you. And as a token of my gratitude, I've got you this.

Matt reaches behind a small brick wall and picks up a rusty sword, which he hands to Jamie. Jamie looks at it with a modicum of disgust.

JAMIE

Gee, thanks...

MATT

I knew you'd like it. Use it well.

Matt turns to Clive as Jamie uses a small stepladder to climb up onto his horse.

MATT (cont'd)
Daenorin. I know we haven't always
seen eye to eye, but-

CLIVE
Don't worry, Daniel. I already know
everything you're about to say.
You've been a brave leader, but the
time has come for us to go our
separate ways.

DEREK
Can you hurry it up already? I'd like
to get this finished before the sun
reaches the end of its natural
lifespan and goes supernova.

JAMIE
That's scientifically inaccurate.

DEREK
I don't care.

CLIVE
You have taught me much. So in honor
of the occasion, I've made you a
parting gift. Come.

81 INT. BACK ROOM, SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. MORNING. [FANTASY]

81

Clive leads Matt into a back room where a wooden chest sits
on a workbench.

CLIVE
Open it.

Matt opens the chest to find his sword, freshly polished. It
now hums and glows with a magical aura.

MATT
My sword! You cleaned it up for me.

CLIVE
You'll find it now gives you
advantage on all saving throws, as
well as dealing one D-six holy
damage, and draining the target's
magicka.

MATT
But... how?

CLIVE

While everyone else was asleep I stayed up to equip it with an enchantment.

MATT

You mean... you haven't had a long rest?

CLIVE

Don't worry about me, I'll be fine. Just take this weapon and make Aengar pay for his crimes.

Clive turns to go.

MATT

Wait, dad... thanks.

82 EXT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. MORNING. [FANTASY]

82

Clive, Derek, Jamie and Sofia are on their horses. Matt stands outside the tavern, giving them a final address.

MATT

Your mission is perhaps the most important of all. If you don't return with an army of gnomes, we won't last ten seconds in an open confrontation with Aengar. My team will do our best to go undetected, but if we fail you will be Elsynnia's last line of defense against this unspeakable wrecker of chaos. Go now. And may the blessing of Oculus go with you.

He salutes the four as they turn and ride out of the village.

83 EXT. GOLD STAR STREETS. [FANTASY]

83

A drain cover in an alley slides back and Matt climbs out. He helps Poppy, Saffron, Rick, Daisy and Heather climb out one by one. The air is filled with a purple mist. Matt narrates.

MATT [V.O.]

When we returned to Gold Star, nothing could prepare us for what we saw. The city had changed.

(MORE)

MATT [V.O] (cont'd)
 Strange mist hung in the air,
 polluting every breath.

84 EXT. GOLD STAR. [FANTASY] TO INT. MATT'S MANSION. [FANTASY] 84
 [MONTAGE]

Matt peeks through the curtains from inside his mansion. In the hazy streets outside the citizens mill about like zombies. Signs and posters commanding the citizen's to 'OBEY!' have been plastered all over the city.

MATT [V.O]
 The people were dazed and confused,
 they showed no memory of their former
 individuality. They wandered the
 streets, aimlessly, stripped of their
 freedom of thought. Aengar's
 influence had crept into their minds,
 like a wolf to an egg farm.

In the animal pens at the market, bizarre demonic creatures are penned up where the cattle, sheep and hens should be.

MATT [V.O] (cont'd)
 Even the animals had let themselves
 go. It was a sorry state of affairs
 to say the least.

Matt closes the curtain and steps away from the window, in silent contemplation.

MATT [V.O] (cont'd)
 I prayed that our friends would
 complete their missions soon, for we
 could wait no longer. Tonight we must
 breach the palace.

85 EXT. FOREST VILLAGE. EVENING. [FANTASY] 85

Clive, Jamie, Derek and Sofia ride into a silent village. They stop in the center of town.

CLIVE
 Strange. It's awfully quiet.

DEREK
 Aye, too quiet. We should keep
 moving.

CLIVE

Oh, come now Derek, where's your sense of adventure? We should investigate! I sense a mystery, perhaps even a side-quest.

SOFIA

We have been riding all day. Maybe we should stop and find something to eat.

Clive and Sofia get down from their horses.

DEREK

We don't need to stop, there's food in our packs.

CLIVE

Yes, but it isn't fresh and warm. Why don't we have a fireside drink at the tavern? You always like to visit the tavern in every town we pass through. More than once, usually!

DEREK

Aye, but this is a blatant trap and I don't wanna get sidetracked. We'll never get this done. I don't wanna end on an underwhelming cliffhanger two weeks in a row.

CLIVE

Five minutes.

Clive and Sofia enter the village's tavern. Derek sparks up a cigarette.

86 INT. FOREST VILLAGE TAVERN [FANTASY]

86

Inside the tavern there is further silence. Food and drinks remain on the tables as though everyone left suddenly. Meals are half-eaten, a fire still burns in the grate. Clive and Sofia enter and start looking around.

CLIVE

Hello? Anybody home?

They move across the tavern. Sofia passes one of the meals, picking up a leg of chicken and taking a bite. Clive looks under the bar.

SOFIA
They haven't been gone long.

CLIVE
No. There's still coin under the counter, they didn't even take that with them.

They enter the tavern's kitchen. Sofia starts putting food in her bag.

SOFIA
We should take some of these supplies.

CLIVE
Shh! Can you hear that?

They hear the sound of horses and troops marching outside. Clive peeks out of the window.

Boystrow and a large number of possessed guards are outside, searching the town. Derek and Jamie are nowhere to be seen. They hear the tavern's front door being kicked open.

CLIVE (cont'd)
Quick! Hide, in here.

Clive bustles Sofia into a small room at the back of the kitchen and closes her inside. He turns around and heads back toward the tavern proper, just as two possessed guards enter the kitchen with their swords drawn. Clive puts his hands up.

87 EXT. FOREST VILLAGE. EVENING. [FANTASY]

87

The two guards drag Clive out of the tavern and present him to Boystrow, who sits menacingly on a horse.

BOYSTROW
Well, well. If it isn't another one of Daniel Dire-heart's geriatric sycophants.

CLIVE
Steady on, Matthew.

BOYSTROW
Under the true and just law of Aengar the Wicked there is only one crime. Rebellion.

(MORE)

BOYSTROW (cont'd)

And yet you are somehow still unable to manage the simple task of being a law-abiding citizen! By the power vested in me I sentence you to an eternity spent serving the community you have harmed.

CLIVE

You have underestimated me captain. For I know an incantation that can dispel evil magic. Including the magic that controls you! *Deia Katim!*

Clive holds up his hand and begins charging a spell. He throws his magic towards Boystrow, but it dissipates the moment it leaves his hand. Clive looks confused and concerned.

Boystrow and the possessed guards start laughing.

BOYSTROW

He's run out of spell slots! Take him! And burn this festering hole to the ground.

The guards restrain Clive and start ransacking the village, burning the houses and the tavern.

Sofia remains hidden in the tavern's backroom, covering her face with her sleeve as the room fills with smoke.

CUT TO:

88 EXT. FOREST RIDGE. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

88

Derek watches the village burning through a telescope. He and Jamie are a safe distance away with their horses, up on a ridge.

DEREK

Ah, stupid Bard. You shouldn't have stopped! Come on, we've still got a long ways to go.

He and Jamie continue onward.

89 EXT. MOUNTAINS. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

89

Ian and Colin, with Terry's body in tow, arrive at a large stone staircase. It is snowing quite heavily.

IAN
This climb will be too dangerous at night. We should find shelter.

COLIN
That's Chilicoq staircase. Isn't there a cave near here? The one we camped in last week?

IAN
I wouldn't know, I wasn't with you.

COLIN
Oh, that's right. There's a cave near here, we camped in it last week.

IAN
Can you remember which direction?

COLIN
Fuck you, why are you making it difficult?

IAN
That's not what Colin's character would say. Follow me.

He starts moving.

90 INT. CAVE. [FANTASY]

90

Ian and Colin wheel Terry's barrow into the cave and light a small fire.

COLIN
There we are! This seems like a fine spot to bed down for the night. What was the name of this cave again?

Ian stares at Colin, stubbornly silent.

COLIN (cont'd)
Oh come on! Don't be like that.

IAN
Dead Man's Folly.

COLIN
Oh yes, that's right! We did clear it out didn't we? Killed all the enemies and such?

IAN

That would be the Dice Master's decision. A title that no longer belongs to you.

COLIN

How could you speak that way to a man of god?

IAN

I suggest we both get some rest.

COLIN

You sleep. I'll take first watch.

IAN

Oh I wouldn't hear of it. *I'll* take first watch.

COLIN

It's no trouble, really! Besides, I'd like to spend some time alone. Praying. With Master Deathslaughter's body. Alone.

IAN

You're a very strange man, Terry.

COLIN

That's not what your character would say.

91 EXT. GOLD STAR STREETS. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

91

A grate covers a large sewer tunnel that protrudes from beneath the Royal Palace. Heather melts through the bolts with her magic, Matt and Rick move the grate as it comes loose.

They hold it aside for Poppy, Saffron, Daisy and Heather to creep through then follow, keeping an eye out to make sure they are not seen.

92 INT. SEWERS. [FANTASY]

92

Matt and his group of players creep through the sewer tunnels. Matt and Rick are up front, side by side.

RICK

I've got to say, this is not how I envisioned my Saturday night.

MATT
 (to himself)
 No, I suppose it's all cocaine and
 hookers for you senior management
 types, isn't it?

RICK
 Sorry?

MATT
 I said we should be nearing the
 access tunnel soon. Be on your guard.

Saffron and Daisy walk side by side in the middle of the
 group. Heather and Poppy are at the back.

HEATHER
 It's very hypocritical you know.

POPPY
 What is?

HEATHER
 You get mad at me for playing whilst
 DM-ing, but you're perfectly happy
 for *him* to do the same thing.

POPPY
 It's not what you do, it's how you do
 it.

HEATHER
 Oh, that explains everything. Maybe
 next time I'll try getting drunk and
 passing out.

MATT
 (calling back)
 I heard that.

POPPY
 It may not be the kind of story you'd
 have told, but at least I've gotten
 to do something that actually made a
 difference to it.

HEATHER
 I haven't.

POPPY
 There's nothing stopping you, That's
 the best thing about this game.
 (MORE)

POPPY (cont'd)

You're free to choose whatever you want to do. And so far this has been a very good story. It's not my fault you don't see that.

93 INT. UNDERGROUND TUNNELS. [FANTASY]

93

Matt's group enter a multi-leveled room where many tunnels cross paths. They crouch behind a low wall to observe the scene from the upper level.

Below them is a guard's rest area with a fireplace, storage chests, some tables and chairs. A guard snoozes in one of the chairs, some other guards patrol the tunnels. There are stairs leading up to the exit and the palace, but they are blocked off by a metal portcullis.

MATT

You reach a spacious chamber with multiple tunnels adjoining. You can see the exit across from you, but the way is barred by a hefty portcullis.

POPPY

How do we open it?

Matt points out a lever on the wall in the rest area below them, near to where the guard snoozes.

MATT

You look down and see a makeshift rest area below you. A solitary guard snoozes next to a large wooden lever.

RICK

That lever must open the gate!

MATT

My thoughts exactly.

SAFFRON

But how do we get to it without being seen?

POPPY

I don't think we have to- look.

Daisy has crept down near to the guard. She backs up against the wall and holds the amulet she wears; the one given to her by Heather. Closing her eyes, she turns translucent. Her vague, clear outline moves along the wall and pulls down the lever.

The portcullis starts grinding open. Matt, Heather, Poppy, Rick and Saffron all move for the gate.

The sound wakes the snoozing guard, who jumps to his feet and draws his sword. He sees Matt and the others heading for the exit.

GUARD

Intruders!

He turns and kicks the lever back up. The portcullis starts to quickly drop, but Matt catches it and holds it open.

Two more guards come running in on the upper level. They charge in to attack, Rick and Poppy fight them off.

Daisy becomes visible again and stands ready to attack the guard who called out, but the guard notices she is focused on the lever behind him.

He spins and cuts the lever away from the wall. Daisy backs off and spryly climbs back to the upper level. Matt still holds the portcullis open.

MATT

Hurry up, I can't hold it!

Heather blasts the guard that Poppy is fighting with a bolt of magic.

HEATHER

Come on!

Her, Poppy, Saffron and Daisy all run through the gate. Rick remains, fighting off the two remaining guards.

MATT

Doom-bringer! Get through!

RICK

You know, I think I finally understand the point of this game!

MATT

What, what are you talking about?!

RICK

It's about teamwork, Matt! It's about each player having a chance to let their imagination save the day!

MATT

This isn't a good time to be having a revelation!

RICK

It's the only time to have one, Matt!
Now go! Go!

MATT

Right you are.

Matt drops the portcullis, trapping Rick in the chamber. He looks back, watching Rick fight the guards for a moment.

RICK

Tell Aengar I'll see him in hell!

Matt decisively nods, then turns and runs to the exit.

94 EXT. GNOME KINGDOM. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

94

Derek and Jamie arrive at the gnome city. They ride into the center of town and dismount outside the town hall. Several masked gnomes open the doors for them.

95 INT. GNOME TOWN HALL. [FANTASY]

95

Derek and Jamie enter the hall, where a crowd of gnomes are gathered; drinking, eating and being merry. These gnomes also hide their faces beneath hats and hoods. They all turn their heads toward Jamie and Derek as they enter. The room falls silent.

DEREK

Alright laddie, it's all on you now.

JAMIE

My fellow gnomes! It is I, Manric!
Your king has returned, just as I
promised I would. I must speak with
my overseer.

The crowd of gnomes stand aside, making a path for them through the crowd to the high throne.

Jamie and Derek approach the throne, where a gnome sits.

JAMIE (cont'd)

You're on my throne, overseer.

The gnome looks up. He has Matt's face.

MATT

You discover, to your horror, that in your absence your gnomes have taken a vote to have you replaced. The new overseer sits on your throne and eyes with you with contempt. He accuses you of abandoning your people, and-

JAMIE

I object to this sub-plot.

MATT

What?

JAMIE

My gnomes would never betray me.

MATT

Well, I've got to give you *something* to do here.

JAMIE

We arrive at the city. My gnomes welcome me back with open arms and we spend a night of passion with our womenfolk before departing at sunrise, eager for battle.

MATT

(sighing)

Fair enough.

Matt stands up and addresses the crowd.

MATT (cont'd)

Alright everyone, change of plan. Get naked and polish your swords.

The crowd erupts with gleeful cheers. They return to partying and merriment. It is clear now that all the gnomes have Matt's face, even the womenfolk.

96 INT. ROYAL PALACE THRONE ROOM. [FANTASY]

96

Matt, Poppy, Saffron, Daisy and Heather cautiously enter the throne room. They hide behind some display cases and survey the area.

Aengar and Boystrow stand conversing by the throne. Matt notices the Orb of Destiny on the pedestal, still charging and pulsing with magic.

MATT
The Orb of Destiny!

POPPY
What's happening to it?

MATT
I don't know. But we need to get it
back. I have an idea.

By the throne:

BOYSTROW
What will you do with Dire-heart when
you finally catch him, my lord?

AENGAR
Terrible things. Unspeakable things.

BOYSTROW
Gory things, my lord?

AENGAR
Exceptionally. And the best part is,
we don't even have to chase him. It's
inevitable that he will try and stop
us. Sooner or later, he will come to
us.

Matt rushes over, his sword in hand.

MATT
Stop right there!

BOYSTROW
Dire-heart!

AENGAR
Like a moth to hell's furnace.

Heather, Poppy and Saffron run over to back Matt up.

MATT
We've come to stop you.

AENGAR
You foolish fool! You have no idea
what you are meddling in.

MATT
What dastardly scheme are you
hatching this time, Aengar?

AENGAR

The Orb of Destiny is the most potent magical artifact in the kingdom. But it has the capacity to become even greater! I have placed it into the Fountain of Forevermore, where it will fill to the brim with magical energy. And when it is fully charged...

MATT

You'll absorb it. And become the most powerful sorcerer the world has ever seen.

AENGAR

You catch on fast. I could use a mind like yours. I have a proposition for you; for all of you! Join me! And together we shall rule this fool creation! We shall crush the minds of our enemies and drain the life from this universe!

HEATHER

What's in it for us?

AENGAR

Come again?

HEATHER

If we join you. What do we get? What are the benefits?

AENGAR

Um. *Infinite...* power? *Limitless...* authority? We have dental.

HEATHER

I just want to help make the world a safe space for everyone.

AENGAR

Me too! Why, if everyone served me there would be no more wars! No more suffering!

HEATHER

Exactly! You get it!

MATT

Don't listen to him, he's just telling you exactly what you want to hear!

Poppy tries to hide her laughter.

AENGAR

If you truly want to unite this world, then join me! And start by eliminating these dissenters.

Heather considers his offer. Daisy, translucent and barely visible, is sneaking up to the pedestal. She reaches for the Orb of Destiny.

Heather senses Daisy reaching and casts a bolt of magic at her, knocking her down.

POPPY

Daisy!

HEATHER

I'm sorry it had to be this way, ladies.

POPPY

Not as sorry as we are.

Poppy and Saffron ready their weapons. Boystrow draws his sword and approaches Matt.

BOYSTROW

I'm sorry it had to be this way, Dire-heart.

MATT

Not as sorry as you will be.

A battle then erupts between the two sides, with Matt facing off against Boystrow while Poppy and Saffron face Heather. Aengar watches from his throne.

Matt and Boystrow's sword fight leads them out onto a balcony.

A possessed guard stands watch on the wall of the city. Another guard approaches him, but is suddenly struck down by an arrow.

Hundreds of gnomes start leaping from the undergrowth and launching flaming arrows over the walls. Derek and Jamie ride alongside the generals.

The possessed guardsman runs to the war horn and blows it. Gold Star's forces rush out through the main gate to meet the gnome army in battle.

98 EXT. ROYAL PALACE BALCONY. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

98

Storm clouds swirl around the palace as Matt and Boystrow continue their duel.

Boystrow is pushing Matt backwards towards the edge.

BOYSTROW

You're getting too big for your boots, Dire-heart! I should have you reprimanded for this!

MATT

I've outgrown you, captain. I'll defend Gold Star single-handed if I have to!

Boystrow manages to sever Matt's hand. It falls from the balcony along with his sword. Matt screams, clutching his wrist.

BOYSTROW

Pride comes before the fall, Dire-heart. You couldn't guard the town if your life depended on it! You're nothing compared to me. You are the student, I am the master!

MATT

Not anymore. You've been reduced to nothing but a slave, serving the corrupt ideology of a mad-man!

BOYSTROW

I serve the future!

MATT

You call this guarding the town?! Look at the city! Look at Gold Star! You have destroyed the town, captain!

BOYSTROW

No. Nooo!

Boystrow lunges at Matt angrily. Matt swiftly dodges, causing Boystrow to stumble from the balcony. Matt looks down as Boystrow falls, screaming, hundreds of feet to the ground below.

MATT
You don't need pride to fall,
captain.

He runs back into the throne room.

99 INT. THRONE ROOM. [FANTASY]

99

Matt enters just as Heather finishes defeating Poppy and Saffron, knocking them to the ground.

HEATHER
You're too late, Dire-heart.

MATT
Damn it, I shouldn't have stopped for
that one-liner.

AENGAR
Excellent! Excellent! Now, finish
this. Kill him.

HEATHER
Actually, I have a better idea.

AENGAR
Please, do go on.

HEATHER
I've come to a realization. I don't
need you anymore. There's only one
Orb of Destiny and I don't intend to
let anyone else have it.

She begins approaching the Orb.

MATT
Damachius, no! Don't! Nobody should
have that much power!

HEATHER
And who's gonna stop me?

She turns back to the Orb but doesn't notice Daisy is crouching between her and the pedestal while using invisibility. Daisy springs forth and ambushes Heather, stabbing her through the heart with her daggers.

HEATHER (cont'd)
Daisy?! The fuck?!

Heather falls down dead. Aengar begins chuckling and rises from his throne.

AENGAR
Perfect! Now there is truly no-one to stop me!

MATT
I will stop you.

AENGAR
I think not.

Aengar pulls a cord on the wall. A curtain opens on the far side of the room, revealing a possessed guard: holding a blade to Clive's throat.

MATT
Daenorin!

CLIVE
Never mind me, just keep him away from the orb!

Aengar approaches the pedestal, brushing Daisy aside with a magical force.

MATT
Aengar! Stop!

AENGAR
No.

Aengar puts his hands on the Orb of Destiny and begins drawing magic from it. His body begins to glow brightly, the whole room begins to shake. Streams of magic start arcing like electricity around him, smashing holes in the stone walls and burning the fine wooden furniture.

Poppy, Saffron and Daisy stand up.

SAFFRON
We have to get out of here!

Poppy sees that the guard holding Clive is also blinded by the light. She takes the opportunity to throw her dagger at him, knocking him down. Clive runs over to them as her dagger reappears in her hand.

Matt stares into the light in horror, watching Aengar growing and transforming.

CLIVE

Daniel! We have to leave *now*!

Matt finally acknowledges the room falling apart around them. All five of them quickly flee for the exit.

100 EXT. GOLD STAR. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

100

Matt, Poppy, Saffron, Daisy and Clive run out of the Royal Palace to a safe distance then stop to look upwards.

The top of the tower, where the throne room was, collapses in a cloud of magic and dust. A giant pair of black wings spread from the dust cloud.

Aengar has become a giant winged beast. He leaps from the top of the tower and crushes the Gold Star tavern.

MATT

The tavern!

CUT TO:

101 EXT. FIELDS OUTSIDE GOLD STAR. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

101

The battle rages between the gnome army and the possessed Gold Star soldiers. Derek is happily knocking guards down, but unexpectedly stops and clutches at his heart. Jamie is nearby.

JAMIE

What's wrong?

DEREK

I've just had the strangest feeling. Like hundreds of gallons of ale cried out all at once and were suddenly silenced.

BACK TO:

102 EXT. GOLD STAR. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

102

Aengar looms over Gold Star. The group run through the streets, trying to avoid being smashed by aengar's thrashing claws.

CUT TO:

103 EXT. GOLD STAR STREETS. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 103

Matt sword is laying on the ground. He runs past it, realizes, then quickly darts back to grab it. He dodges another strike from Aengar and carries on running.

104 EXT. GOLD STAR. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 104

Aengar corners Matt, Clive, Poppy, Saffron and Daisy, but suddenly thorny vines start bursting from the earth and wrapping around him. Sofia stands behind him, controlling the vines.

CLIVE

Maiwarrith! You're alive!

Aengar surrounds himself in a magical fire and disintegrates the vines, freeing himself.

SOFIA

For now!

She magically bursts into a swarm of crows that swoop away into an alley, as Aengar breathes fire in her direction. He then begins charging a giant ball of magic above him, readying himself to throw it at Matt and the others.

A dazzling portal opens between Aengar and Matt. Ian and Colin step out of it.

MATT

Sovek! Father Algernon! You're back!

IAN

And we're not alone.

Terry steps out of the portal, alive and well. The portal closes.

MATT

Carnage!

TERRY

Oi, Aengar! The only murder in *these* streets... is me! Hit him where it hurts, boys.

Ian and Colin fire bolts of energy into Aengar's ball of magic, which explodes knocking Aengar down and causing a huge blast.

105 EXT. GOLD STAR. NIGHT. [FANTASY]

105

The dust settles. Aengar climbs back to his feet, his wings have been burned off.

Matt notices the Orb of Destiny has become a part of Aengar's forehead.

MATT

The Orb! Princess can you hit it from here?

Saffron fires an arrow at Aengar's head. The arrow streaks across the sky with an aura of fire, but rebounds off an invisible magical shield that surrounds Aengar.

TERRY

No good. Time for plan b.

MATT

What's plan b?!

TERRY

BERSERKER!

Terry charges at Aengar with his great-sword. Aengar is unable to hit Terry, who dashes around slashing at his ankles. Saffron is transfixed.

SAFFRON

He's so brave!

Matt looks at the sword in his hand and remembers Clive's words;

CLIVE [ECHO]

You'll find it now gives you advantage on all saving throws...

MATT

Of course!

Matt turns to Poppy and the others.

MATT (cont'd)

I have an idea, but I need your help.

CUT TO:

106 EXT. GOLD STAR. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 106

Aengar is still thrashing, trying to hit Terry, but Terry is too fast. He finally manages to catch Terry and send him flying with his tail.

Matt rushes over and stands in front of Aengar.

MATT

Hey! Aengar! Do me a favor. Put me out of my misery! Well, come on! What are you waiting for? I'm right here! Squash me! SQUASH ME!

Aengar brings up his palm and then brings it down again on Matt, trying to swat him like a bug.

Matt holds his sword pointing upwards and Aengar puts his palm down on it, impaling himself through the hand. He lets out a loud roar and holds his hand in pain.

MATT (cont'd)

Nice try! Better luck next time, eh!

Aengar roars and Matt starts running away from him. Aengar follows.

CUT TO:

107 EXT. GOLD STAR GATES. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 107

Matt leads Aengar through the arch of the city gate. When Aengar is halfway through, Matt calls out:

MATT

Now!

CUT TO:

108 INT. GATEHOUSE. [FANTASY] 108

Poppy, Daisy, Saffron and Clive turn the large wheel to drop the city gate.

BACK TO:

109 EXT. GOLD STAR GATES. NIGHT. [FANTASY] 109

The metal portcullis drops on Aengar, pinning him to the ground with his head sticking out of gate.

Matt stands in front of Aengar's monstrous face. Derek and Jamie approach him.

MATT
Ah, Gibley. Can I borrow your hammer?

DEREK
Sure.

Derek hands Matt his war-hammer.

MATT
Now, what was it? Oh yeah. Shattering Hammer!

Nothing happens.

MATT (cont'd)
... Of the gods.

The hammer begins to glow and Matt swings it into the Orb of Destiny. The Orb shatters into tiny pieces and Aengar begins to shrivel and dry out, turning into dust.

AENGAR
Nooooo!

The sky returns to normal, the sun comes out, it is daytime again. The battle stops, the guards are no longer possessed. Matt looks up at the blue sky.

MATT
It's over. Gold Star is saved!

Everyone cheers.

110 EXT. GOLD STAR. DAY. [FANTASY]

110

Matt regroups in the center of town with Poppy, Saffron, Daisy, Clive, Ian, Colin, Terry, Derek and Jamie. Poppy runs up and hugs him.

POPPY
You did it!

MATT
We did it.

IAN
What now?

DEREK
Now we celebrate. To the tavern!

MATT
The tavern... didn't make it. I'm
sorry.

DEREK
(*heartbroken*)
What?

TERRY
So where are we gonna celebrate?

MATT
I know just the place.

CUT TO:

111 INT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. DAY. [FANTASY]

111

The players are all gathered at *The Drunken Bastard* tavern in Scatsbridge. Matt's hand has miraculously grown back.

Matt sits at a table with Rick, Poppy and Sofia. They all have mugs of ale.

MATT
Ah, Scatsbridge. There's *no* place
like it.

RICK
That was exhilarating!

MATT
You didn't find it boring?

RICK
I'll admit, I was skeptical at first.
But now that I've seen what a great
team building exercise this game can
be- I'm inclined to start using
similar techniques in the office.

MATT
Wow. Glad I made a good impression.

RICK
You certainly did. Anyway, I've got
to be off. Got to see a man about a
dog. Thanks for the invite Poppy.
(MORE)

RICK (cont'd)
And Matt, thanks for broadening my horizons.

Rick stands up, pats Matt on the shoulder and heads into the cupboard.

SOFIA
I'm gonna get to bed, I'm exhausted. Thanks for not being as much of a dick as you could've been, Matt.

MATT
No problem. See you in the morning.

SOFIA
Night!

Sofia heads into the cupboard. At the bar, Terry and Colin stand talking with Saffron and Daisy.

TERRY
Of course, this was just a minor skirmish. We've had bigger fights on account of Aengar.

SAFFRON
Really? I'd love to hear about them!

TERRY
If you'd like I could even show you actual site of the great battle of Terry's house.

Saffron laughs.

SAFFRON
Sounds great. I love war history.

COLIN
(to Daisy)
Of course, you're welcome to come along too, young lady!

Daisy blushes.

Jamie is watching Terry chatting up the girls. He sighs and approaches Matt.

JAMIE
It looks like my mission here is over.

MATT

Manric! What will you do now?

JAMIE

I will return with my gnomes to our kingdom, to partake in sacred rituals of carnal depravity. I bid you farewell.

Jamie heads into the cupboard. Derek, Ian and Clive sit at the other end of the bar.

DEREK

Thanks for playing tonight, Clive. It was good to have you around again!

IAN

Just like old times!

CLIVE

Oh, it was my pleasure. We should definitely do this again soon! I feel like my passion for adventure has been reignited! Now if you'll excuse me, gentlemen.

Elizabeth is once again serving drinks behind the bar. Clive goes behind the bar and puts his arms around her.

CLIVE (cont'd)

I think it's time we were heading off to bed, don't you my love?

Elizabeth turns to hug him, with a big grin on her face, and slaps him coyly with a dishcloth.

ELIZABETH

Well I never, Clive Delavigne!

Derek and Ian stand up.

DEREK

I think it's time we were gone.

IAN

Indeed.

DEREK

(to Matt)

Thanks, lad. You put on a good show tonight. Can't wait to see what you've got for us next time. See ya later.

Derek shuffles into the cupboard.

IAN
Once more unto the breach, dear
friend.

Ian follows Derek into the cupboard. Shortly after, Clive and Elizabeth also head into the cupboard.

Terry and Saffron head for the door, arm in arm. Behind them, Colin and Daisy also walk arm in arm. They stop by Matt on their way out.

TERRY
Well, I've gotta go. Places to be.
People to... see.

He glances at Saffron, she chuckles.

TERRY (cont'd)
Congratulations!

MATT
What for?

TERRY
Thank me later! *Don't* go and fuck
yourself, I'll see you on Monday.

SAFFRON
Bye Poppy!

Terry and Saffron head into the cupboard. Colin and Daisy follow them, leaving Matt and Poppy alone.

POPPY
Bye!

MATT
What was that about?

POPPY
Oh I wonder.

Poppy cuddles up to Matt.

MATT
Did you have a good time tonight?

POPPY
Yes thank you. Did you?

MATT

Of course!

POPPY

It was very impressive. When you sobered up.

Matt laughs awkwardly.

POPPY (cont'd)

It kind of made me want to have a go. But I wouldn't feel comfortable doing it for a big group like that. I'd prefer to do it one on one.

MATT

How would that work?

POPPY

Well, you be player and I'll be DM.

MATT

Okay! So where am I?

She smiles seductively and sits on his lap.

POPPY

In the dungeons, at the Royal Palace...

END

ROLL CREDITS
FOR FIVE
SECONDS

112 INT. SCATSBRIDGE TAVERN. DAY. [FANTASY]

112

Matt and Poppy are sitting in a chair by the fire, making out. The tavern door bursts open. Heather steps in, she looks furious.

Poppy and Matt stop kissing and look at her, but do not leave the armchair.

POPPY

Heather! You're *still* here?!

HEATHER

I can't believe you forgot about me! How could you forget about *me*?! Well, I'll make sure you *never* forget!

(MORE)

HEATHER (cont'd)
You'll pay for this! You haven't seen
the last of me, I'll have my revenge!

She stomps angrily into the cupboard and slams the door.

Poppy and Matt return to kissing, as though nothing had
happened.

END

ROLL CREDITS
FOR REAL THIS
TIME