

GAMERS: SECOND EDITION

FIRST DRAFT

MATT VANCIL, 2003

X. INT. DUNEGON - CORRIDOR

Establishing shot of dark dungeon corridor. Vermin scurry about. Debris lines the walls.

Three figures turn the corner, carrying bright torches. First is TURK, a massive warrior clad in scarred armor and brandishing an axe. He has a shield slung over his back. Behind him comes FASTIDIAN, a holy cleric in a soiled white robe. He's gripping a softly glowing holy symbol. Third is RENNARD, a swarthy rogue in a black cloak. He has his torch in one hand, a deadly rapier in the other.

Bringing up the rear is WODNICK, an unimpressive servant struggling under the weight of a large treasure chest he's carrying on his back.

The four figures follow the corridor to its end, where a large metal door bars their passage. TURK moves to force the door open, but RENNARD darts forward and catches his arm. RENNARD points to cryptic runes on the door. TURK notices the runes and quickly draws back from the door.

FASTIDIAN steps forward and grips his holy symbol with both hands. He begins to chant softly. The glow around the symbol increases. Suddenly, the runes on the door burst into flame, then die out.

WE HEAR: A locking mechanism unlocking.

X. INT. DUNGEON - CAVE

The room beyond has an earthen floor. Half of the wall is natural cavern, with stalagmites and stalactites. The other half is manmade. There is no other door. In the manmade wall is a gap where a few bricks are missing, leaving a gap large enough to peer through.

RENNARD
Wodnick, you stay here.

WODNICK
Yes, my lord.

TURK, FASTIDIAN, and RENNARD cautiously enter the room. RENNARD immediately spots the gap in the wall, and crosses

to investigate it. Suddenly, FASTIDIAN's holy symbol flares.

WE HEAR: A musical chime.

The three adventurers brace for combat. Suddenly, six GHOULS burst out of the floor. They are undead monstrosities with sharp teeth and claws.

TURK quickly fells three of them with his axe. RENNARD tumbles away from one only to spring up behind it and stab it in the back. FASTIDIAN grips his holy symbol and points at the two remaining GHOULS.

FASTIDIAN

Turn.

FASTIDIAN's holy symbol flares. The GHOULS shriek and melt away, their bodies consumed by blue flame.

Now that the threat has passed, RENNARD peers through the peephole in the wall. He waves the other two over.

X. INT. DUNGEON - ROOM BEHIND THE WALL

Establishing shot of the other side of the wall, with a trickle of light coming through the gap in the bricks. Suddenly, TURK smashes through the wall with his shield, sending bricks flying. FASTIDIAN and RENNARD follow.

Lit torches line the room, and a black carpet leads to an even larger door. Two armored GHOULS stand guard outside. The GHOULS see the adventurers, lower their barbed spears, and charge, screaming.

X. INT. DUNGEON - ANTECHAMBER

Establishing shot of the other side of the door.

WE HEAR: A brief struggle and clash of arms.

TURK kicks open the door and strides inside, FASTIDIAN and RENNARD close behind.

TURK

Mort Kemnon!

Establishing shot of the rest of the room. At the far end is a black throne. MORT KEMNON sits on the throne, shrouded in darkness. His face is never revealed. Curtained passages exit from either side of KEMNON's throne.

MORT KEMNON

Welcome.

RENNARD

Your reign of terror ends here!

FASTIDIAN aims his glowing holy symbol at KEMNON.

FASTIDIAN

By the light of Therin, you shall fall!

KEMNON laughs menacingly.

KEMNON

What good is the light of your goddess?
She cannot help you here.

KEMNON extends his hand. Black energy crackles around it. The light of FASTIDIAN's holy symbol suddenly blinks out.

All three adventurers look at the dim holy symbol in dread. FASTIDIAN slowly looks up at KEMNON.

FASTIDIAN

We're ...

KEMNON

Doomed.

Dozens of GHOULS clad in armor pour in through the entrances on either side of the throne. They charge towards the adventurers, swords drawn.

TURK, FASTIDIAN, and RENNARD circle up to defend themselves, but the DEATH KNIGHTS quickly surround them. TURK kills a few before one cuts down FASTIDIAN from behind. The cleric falls in a pool of blood.

TURK

Fastidian!

TURK tries to fight his way to the cleric, but is overwhelmed. A lucky blow drops TURK to one knee. He fights on, but is hacked to death.

RENNARD, alone and wounded, finds himself in a circle of GHOULS. He shoots his gaze at KEMNON.

RENNARD
This doesn't end here.

KEMNON
For you, it does. Die.

The GHOULS stab RENNARD in the back. He falls on the corpses of TURK and FASTIDIAN.

Shot from above of the three dead heroes.

CAPTION: Gamers: Second Edition

CASS (v.o.)
Crap!

X. INT. GAMING STORE

Establishing shot of a busy gaming store. All types of games are for sale. GAMERS are busy playing computer, miniatures, and collectible card games throughout the store while others just browse.

CASS (RENNARD), GARY (FASTIDIAN), and LEO (TURK) are sitting around a crowded gaming table in the back. Gaming supplements and junk food wrappers cover the table. They are dressed in regular clothes and appear annoyed. LODGE, the gamemaster, is sitting on the opposite end of the table behind the GM screen.

CASS
(to GARY)
Why didn't you turn those ghouls?

GARY
Hey, in case you didn't notice, I just lost my powers. Turning undead is one of my powers. Therefore, I lost my power to turn the undead. Maybe you noticed when my powers stopped working?

LEO
And aren't you supposed to detect traps,
Mister I'll Go First 'Cause I Never
Spring Traps?

LODGE
Guys ...

The others didn't hear him.

CASS
Yes, I can detect traps. However, this
was an ambush, not a trap. I did find the
fire trap on the door, didn't I? Next
time, I'll let you find the trap.

LODGE
Hey, guys ...

Again, the others don't hear him.

CASS
And nice job defending the cleric there,
Conan. I think he lived for, what, three
rounds? Yeah, real smart letting them
kill our healer first.

LEO
Hey, I didn't see you helping.

CASS
Of course not. You were too busy letting
them kill our cleric.

GARY
It wouldn't have mattered. I didn't have
my powers! I couldn't have healed anyone!

LODGE
Guys!

The other three finally look at LODGE.

LODGE (cont.)
Guys, chill. It's nobody's fault.

LEO
(to GARY)
We would've had him if he hadn't stole
your powers.

LODGE
Precisely. That's why he did it.

GARY
I didn't know that was possible, you know,
cutting off a cleric from his God.

CASS
It's not.

GARY
It's not what?

CASS
It's not possible. Not in the core rules,
it's not.

LODGE sighs.

LODGE
Cass, I told you guys before we started that
I'd be taking some liberties with the rules.

CASS
Yeah, I know, but I didn't think that'd mean
breaking one of the basic rules of the game.
I mean, what's the point of playing a cleric
if you can strip him of his powers. That's
just broken, that's why it's not allowed.

LODGE
Look, this villain is that powerful. It
fits the world.

CASS
It doesn't fit the rules!

LODGE
Setting trumps rules!

CASS dismisses that and leans back in his chair.

CASS

Here we go again.

LODGE

What is more important, a unique, living, breathing fantasy world in which you might actually be surprised and have to role play, or just another cookie cutter campaign setting? Seriously, sometimes you guys play like this is a computer game.

CASS

Well, you should have told us, is all.

LODGE

Told you what?

CASS

That in your world, a cleric can be cut off from his god.

LODGE

Why should I have told you that?

CASS turns to GARY.

CASS

Gary, would you have played a cleric if you knew Lodge could shut him down.

GARY

Of course not.

CASS

I rest my case.

LODGE

But your character wouldn't know!

LEO

You lost me.

LODGE

Even if I told you that was a possibility, that's player knowledge, not character knowledge. Your character wouldn't know it was possible.

CASS

Dude, that is so cheap! What's the point of letting a PC get that far into the game only to pull something that big on him?

LODGE

(sarcastically)

Oh, I don't know, maybe it'd force you to actually role play.

LEO

What do you think we were doing?

LODGE

I just ... never mind.

LODGE slumps in his chair. It is silent for a moment.

LEO

So, same time next week?

GARY

I'm good.

LEO

We're getting a new sci-fi game in, if you guys want to give it a try.

CASS

No, we're doing this one again.

LEO

This same campaign?

LODGE

You want to do my campaign again?

CASS

Yeah.

LODGE

Dude, that's awesome! Thanks. It'll help me work out the kinks in ...

CASS continues, not having heard what LODGE was saying.

CASS

(interrupting)

I've got a reputation. I've beaten every game, every module I've ever played. There is not a single game on these shelves that can beat me. I'm sure as hell not going to let an unpublished mod get the best of me.

LODGE

Thanks, Cass, that's real thoughtful.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Establishing shot of LODGE's two bedroom apartment. It is cluttered, but still navigable. The lights are out.

LODGE opens the door and turns on the light. He's got a stack of game books and notes under each arm. He drops the books on his coffee table. GUEN, LODGE's large black cat, approaches and meows for attention. LODGE pets him.

LODGE

Hey, guy.

X. INT. LODGE'S STUDY - NIGHT

LODGE walks into his study and turns on the light. In one corner sits a cluttered computer desk. The walls are covered with hand-drawn fantasy maps, all of the same world. There are stacks of hand-written notes piled on the desk, and maps of dungeons drawn on graph paper.

LODGE drops into his computer chair and looks at the largest world map. He spins to the computer and kills the screensaver. On screen is a word document reading: "Chapter One." The rest of the document is blank except for: "dick". LODGE sighs.

The phone rings, startling LODGE before he answers.

LODGE

(surprised)

Hello?

GARY (v.o.)

Hey, Lodge? It's Gary.

LODGE

Hey.

X. INT. GAMING STORE - NIGHT

The store is empty except for CASS, LEO, and GARY. CASS and LEO are playing a board game in the background as GARY is talking to LODGE.

GARY

We need two more players.

LODGE (v.o.)

Dude, I've got work in the morning.

GARY

No, no, for your campaign. We need two more players. We talked it over. We need a more rounded group, so we need more players.

X. INT. LODGE'S STUDY

LODGE is sitting in his chair, phone in hand.

LODGE

Yeah, that's fine. That'd work.

GARY (v.o.)

Great! Cass says he can get one, so if you could swing another, that'd be great.

LODGE

Me? Why do I have to find someone?

X. INT. GAMING STORE

CASS and LEO are getting more animated as they play.

GARY

Well, I don't know any other gamers at the "U," and Leo needs his buddies to run the store. What, you can't find someone?

LODGE (v.o.)

No, I can probably find someone.

CASS rolls well and removes a piece from the board.

CASS
Bye bye, Caesar! Didn't see that coming,
did you?

CASS
You are so going down.

LODGE (v.o.)
Are you guys still gaming?

GARY
Oh, hell yeah. We just started a game of
"Time Felons." You get to go through time
beating up important historical figures.
I totally bushwhacked Lincoln.

LODGE (v.o.)
Don't you have class in the morning?

GARY
Yeah, in like five hours!

LEO rolls spectacularly well and leaps in joy. He grabs a
piece from the board!

LEO
Yeah! Take that, Jesus!

GARY
Look, I gotta go. It's almost my turn.

LODGE (v.o.)
Bye.

LEO
Who's the Messiah now?

X. INT. LODGE'S STUDY

LODGE hangs up the phone and looks at his map again. He
shuts down the computer, which blacks out the scene.

X. EXT. COFFEE SHOP

Establishing shot of an independent coffee shop.

X. INT. COFFEE SHOP

The coffee shop's walls are lined with used books. There is a very casual atmosphere inside, and several PATRONS sit at tables reading and drinking coffee.

LODGE is sitting at a table with a cup, reading the paper. MILES, a bespectacled man in his early thirties, sits down next to him. LODGE folds up the paper.

MILES

Sorry I'm late. Got paged in the parking lot.

LODGE

Was it serious?

MILES

Is it ever? Someone in marketing's email crashed. Easy enough to get it from backup, but he didn't know how.

LODGE

How's work otherwise?

MILES

Oh, you know, boring but good. Occasionally we actually have a real technological problem.

LODGE

But most of the time ...

MILES

Most of the time, it's helping MBA's turn on their printers. The downside of being the only IT guy is they call you for everything. I'm an MCSC. Call someone else to fix a paper jam.

They laugh. A BARISTA brings MILES his coffee.

MILES (cont.)

How's work with you?

LODGE

Boring. God, it's boring. It's so boring, I don't have the energy to hate it.

MILES

I thought you wanted a writing job.

LODGE

Technical writing is not writing. It's got no soul. It's like a white guy playing the blues. There's something missing.

MILES

How about your other writing?

LODGE

On that, I'm stuck.

MILES

Stuck?

LODGE

Stuck, blocked, whatever. I don't know how to end it. I know what needs to happen in the story, I just don't know how to get there. I've been running my gaming group through it to see if maybe they spot something I missed.

There is a pause.

MILES

But?

LODGE

But nothing. The party died, I'm still stuck, and we're just going to start all over again. Once I find a new player. The guys want to bring in some new blood, and I can't blame them.

MILES

What system are you running?

LODGE

Second edition. It's standard.

MILES

How much different is it?

LODGE

From first? Combat rules are clearer, and there are more options for character creation. A lot of streamlining, basically. Why do you ask?

MILES

Well, I haven't gamed since first edition, but I'd be totally stoked to join your party.

LODGE

Really?

MILES

Yeah. You've been telling me about this world for years. I want to see it get published as much as you do, just to say I know an author, at least. If I can help, I'd love to.

LODGE

You've got the time?

MILES

I can always turn the pager off.

LODGE

Dude, that's awesome! Thanks.

MILES

Sure. What do you need me to play?

LODGE

Well, what did you use to play.

MILES

I always played paladins. Are paladins that much different?

LODGE

No, not really. Still gotta be lawful good, protect the downtrodden, always keep your word. No dishonorable actions. You know, King Arthur stuff.

MILES
Okay, then. I'm your paladin.

LODGE
Awesome.

CASS walks into the coffee shop with JOANNA, his girlfriend. JOANNA is tall and beautiful, with long auburn hair. LODGE notices CASS and waves him over. JOANNA orders from the BARISTA.

LODGE
Hey, Cass. Check it out. Miles here's going to join the group.

CASS
Oh yeah?

CASS and MILES shake hands.

MILES
Yes indeed. I'll be your paladin.

CASS
Oh. I was going to play one, but whatever.

MILES
Oh, sorry. I can change, if ...

CASS
(interrupting)
No, no. That's fine.
(to LODGE)
So I've found your other new player.

LODGE
All right then. Who is he?

CASS
She.

LODGE
She?

CASS
Yeah. Joanna keeps bugging me to let her

get involved. I figure we'll make her a fighter, get her to quit nagging me.

LODGE
(uncomfortably)
Joanna?

JOANNA comes to the table. MILES stands and introduces himself. LODGE awkwardly stands as well.

MILES
So, you're going to be gaming with us?

JOANNA
Yes, I'm excited.

CASS notices that LODGE is staring at JOANNA. CASS thumps him on the chest.

LODGE
What's the matter, Lodge? Never gamed with a girl?

BARISTA
Two vanilla mochas!

CASS and JOANNA go back to the counter to get their coffee. MILES leans in to LODGE, who's looking a bit pale.

MILES
Hey, are you all right? You look really uncomfortable.

LODGE indicates JOANNA with his eyes. MILES is confused for a moment, then understands. He points at her.

MILES (cont.)
That Joanna?

LODGE nods.

MILES (cont.)
Nice. Is she with him?

LODGE nods again.

MILES (cont.)

You sure can pick them. [BEAT] Session's going to be pretty interesting, isn't it?

LODGE nods a third time.

CASS, coffee in hand, moves for the door.

CASS
See you tomorrow.

CASS exits. JOANNA comes back to the table and shakes MILES and LODGE's hands.

JOANNA
Good to meet you. I'll see you guys at Leo's tomorrow.

She waits for a response from LODGE, who is unable to speak. When he doesn't respond, she turns for the door, and it is then that LODGE finds his voice.

LODGE
Joanna!

JOANNA stops and turns. LODGE pulls a player's handbook out of his bag and offers it to her.

LODGE (cont.)
Here. It's the player's handbook. Rules and everything.

JOANNA
Oh. I don't know if I'll be able to get through all this for tomorrow.

LODGE
Oh, no, no, you only really need the first chapters, character creation, that stuff. If you like.

JOANNA smiles.

JOANNA
Thanks, Kevin. I appreciate it. [BEAT] I've got to go.

LODGE
Right.

JOANNA
Bye.

LODGE waves. JOANNA exits. LODGE watches her go. He waves again.

MILES
Kevin? Who the hell's Kevin?

LODGE
(offended)
I'm Kevin!

MILES
You have a first name?

LODGE
Shut up.

X. EXT. GAMING STORE

MILES gets out of his car and heads inside.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

At the back table, CASS, GARY, LEO, and JOANNA are sitting with gaming equipment. JOANNA is observing the random GAMERS with a mix of curiosity and dread. LODGE is standing, setting up his GM screen. He sees MILES and waves him over to the table.

LODGE
All right, everyone's here. We all ready?

The five GAMERS nod or voice their consent.

LODGE (cont.)
Okay, then. This is a mid-level campaign, so we'll be starting your characters at fifth level.

CASS passes LODGE a character sheet.

CASS

Here's Jo's character.

LODGE looks it over.

JOANNA

Hey, wait a minute. What are you doing?

CASS

I made a character for you.

JOANNA

I want to play my own character!

CASS

That's why I made you one.

JOANNA

What, you think I can't make a character of my own?

CASS

No, I don't.

JOANNA looks ready to tear into him. CASS raises his hands.

CASS (cont.)

Look, you've never played before. We're all experienced gamers, we know what we need in a group. If you're going to play our fighter, there are certain needs you need to meet.

LEO

He's got a point there, Jo.

CASS

The fighter must be the biggest, strongest character with a high armor class and hit points out the ass. That's what I made for you. And the character's even female.

JOANNA

Let me see that.

JOANNA takes the character sheet from LODGE and scans it. She doesn't like what she finds.

JOANNA

Bikini mail? What the hell is bikini mail.

CASS

It's just the best armor a female warrior can wear.

GARY

There's a picture of it right here.

GARY points to a picture in a source book. The picture is of a muscular and busty barbarian chick wearing bikini chain mail. She's also swinging a broadsword.

JOANNA

You've got to be kidding me.

MILES

That looks like it chafes.

JOANNA looks back at the character sheet.

JOANNA

She fights with a *broad-sword*?

GARY

Get it?

LEO, GARY, and CASS laugh. JOANNA looks thunderstruck.

JOANNA

Kevin, help me out here.

LODGE

Look, if she made a character, let her play it. We really don't have any right to say otherwise.

CASS

I agree with you in principle, but she's new. I don't want her to die and then get all emotional about it.

JOANNA

What makes you think I'm gonna die?

CASS

You're new! And from the sound of it, you don't know what it takes to make a fighter.

JOANNA

I flipped through that handbook. I think I got the gist of it.

CASS

Fine. Let's see your character.

JOANNA produces a character sheet from her bag.

LODGE

So what's your strength bonus?

JOANNA

She doesn't have one.

The other GAMERS all sigh.

JOANNA (cont.)

Her highest stat is her intelligence, because she's well studied. I put her other bonuses in dexterity and charisma.

CASS

No strength bonus, no stamina bonus? How many hit points does she have?

JOANNA

Let's see ... thirty-five.

CASS

(incredulous)

A fifth level fighter with thirty-five hit points? Yeah, she's really going to protect the party.

JOANNA

I put all her feats into speed and precision. That's why intelligence is more important than strength.

CASS

That would be the case if you were playing a wizard. But you're not. You're playing

a fighter with a big red target on her chest.

JOANNA

(resolutely)

Look, Cass, I spent two hours making this character, and I'm going to play her, okay?

CASS

(conciliatory)

Fine, fine. When you die, you can play bikini babe.

CASS and JOANNA slump in their chairs, irritated with each other.

LODGE

Okay, are we settled?

CASS and JOANNA don't nod or disagree.

LODGE (cont.)

Okay. Gary, who're you playing?

GARY brightens.

GARY

Check it out. I'm a multi-class sorcerer rogue. Magic and stealth.

LODGE

Cool. That'll help.

GARY

I'm also a chick.

LEO

Dude! Are you hot?

GARY

Sixteen charisma.

LEO

You want to have sex?

GARY

Totally!

LEO
Awesome! I seduce him. Her.

LEO rolls some dice. JOANNA stares at LEO and GARY in abject shock.

LODGE
Whoa, whoa, whoa! Whoa. We haven't even started yet. You guys haven't met.

LEO
Yeah, okay. I'll seduce you later.

GARY
I'll be waiting, big boy!

LODGE
Seduce? That's a social skill. What are you playing, Leo?

LEO
I'm playing a bard.

GARY and CASS are taken aback.

LODGE
A bard? You usually play fighters.

LEO
Yeah, but Cass showed me the broadsword chick, so I figured we didn't need another fighter. A bard would be a nice change of pace.

LODGE
Have you ever played one before?

LEO
Nope.

LODGE nods and turns to MILES.

LODGE
About your paladin?

MILES

Yes?

LODGE

In second edition, paladins get the option at fourth level to begin a prestige focus as either a healer or an avenger.

MILES

What do they do.

LODGE

Well, a healer gets more clerical spells, and an avenger gets a higher turn undead.

LEO is about to interject, but LODGE silences him with a raised hand.

MILES

Is anyone playing a cleric?

GARY

(angrily)

Hell, no!

MILES

I guess I'll do the healer slant, then.

LODGE

Okay. Cass, you're up.

CASS

I'm playing a monk.

LODGE frowns. CASS's expression is challenging.

MILES

A monk? I thought no one was playing a cleric.

LEO

A monk is like a kung fu monk.

LODGE

I told you guys, there aren't monks in this world.

CASS

I remember, and I reiterate, if you're going to play by basic second edition rules, then I can play any of the basic character classes. Monk is a basic character class.

LODGE

Monks don't fit in a fantasy campaign!

CASS

Here we go again.

LODGE

The setting of this game is based on a fantasized western medieval period. There were no kung fu monks in western Europe!

CASS

That's a weak argument. Second edition draws on all types of fantasy.

LODGE

That's beside the point.

CASS

No, it's not.

LODGE

It is! Look, the monks these characters are based on come from Buddhist tradition. Buddhism, like other eastern religions, is based on asceticism and meditation.

CASS

So?

LODGE

So? That doesn't fit in a world of cathedrals and churches! The religions in this game are evangelical and militant. There are no monasteries for this type of monk to come from.

CASS

Well, then make one up!

LODGE

I'm not going to. This is my world, and I

say there are no monks.

CASS

Then we are at an impasse.

LODGE

No, we're not. I just won the argument.

CASS

I disagree. If you're going to allow Jo to play any character she wants, then you have to allow me to play any character I want. I am asking to play one of the basic character classes in the game, and you're blocking me. Basically, you're breaking the rules. I play a monk, or I don't play.

LODGE simmers for a moment behind his GM screen.

LODGE

I hate it when you do this. Fine, you can play a monk, but he has to be a western monk. You have to try to make him fit the world, okay? You think you can do that?

CASS

Of course.

LODGE

Good. Is that all?

CASS

One more thing. I'm also an elf.

LODGE

(enraged)

What? No, you're not!

CASS

Oh, yes I am.

LODGE

I told you guys, this is an all human campaign! Elves don't exist in this world.

CASS

And I reiterate, elves are one of the basic player races in second edition, and ...

LODGE

(interrupting)

Oh, shut up! We begin in the throne room of the Kingdom of Sevanne!

X. INT. THRONE ROOM

Establishing shot of a throne room in a castle. The KING is sitting in the throne, surrounded by NOBLES. The HERALD stands beside an entrance to the side of the throne. In front of the throne, on the red carpet, stand three of the GAMERS: LUSTER (GARY, only female), DAPHNE (JOANNA), and FLYNN (LEO).

LUSTER is wearing a red saffron dress with gloves that come up to her elbows. Her legs are bare, and she's wearing a black cowl. A crossbow is hanging from one hip, a quiver of quarrels from the other. DAPHNE is dressed in lamellar armor over blue silk leggings. She's leaning on a spear with a tassel on the end near the point. FLYNN is dressed in renaissance garb and is holding a mandolin. He has a rapier sheathed at his waist.

KING

There is a great evil in our land. The vile necromancer Mort Kemnon is raising an army of the dead. Daily, his legions grow stronger. And yet despite this, my knights cannot find his lair.

GARY (v.o.)

Boring!

LODGE (v.o.)

This is essential back story!

GARY (v.o.)

We've heard it already.

LODGE (v.o.)

Your new companions haven't.

GARY (v.o.)

Hurry it up. I want to kill something.

LEO (v.o.)
Hey, can I seduce her now?

LODGE (v.o.)
What, in the middle of the throne room?

LEO (v.o.)
I want to see how I perform under pressure.

LODGE (v.o.)
Well ... okay, I guess.

WE HEAR: Dice rolling. FLYNN gyrates his hips at LUSTER, who melts. They run behind a tapestry and start fucking. DAPHNE hangs her head in shame.

** BEGIN REWRITE **

KING
It is up to you brave adventurers to quell this evil that threatens our land. Mort Kemnon is using an ancient artifact to control the dead, a cursed item known as the Mask of Death. Destroy him and retrieve the mask, so that it may never be used for evil again. I bid you good luck, and gods' speed.

The HIEROPHANT, a high ranking priest clad in robes decorated with the holy symbol, enters through the door to the side of the throne. SILENCE (CASS) and OSRIC (MILES) flank him on either side. SILENCE is dressed in brown and tan robes, and his head is shaved. OSRIC is wearing armor with the FASTIDIAN's holy symbol emblazoned on the chest.

HERALD
His Grace, the Grand Hierophant, Arch Priest of Therin, Goddess of Light!

The HIEROPHANT bows to the KING.

HIEROPHANT
Majesty, might I speak to our heroes before they depart?

KING

By all means, Father.

The HIEROPHANT turns to DAPHNE, then looks confused.

HIEROPHANT

I thought there were three.

KING

Her companions are fornicating behind
the tapestry.

HIEROPHANT

Ah. [BEAT] There are those who say that
Therin has turned her back to us in this
time of darkness. Let me assure you, our
fair goddess will be with you every step
of the way. To assure your safety, I
shall send two heroes of my own to
accompany you. Sir Osric the Chaste.

OSRIC bows to DAPHNE.

HIEROPHANT (cont.)

And Silence, an unusually stubborn monk
who wouldn't play otherwise.

SILENCE glares at HIEROPHANT. SILENCE and OSRIC move to
stand side to side with DAPHNE.

HIEROPHANT (cont.)

Step forward, child.

DAPHNE steps forward and kneels in front of HIEROPHANT.

HERALD

Daphne the Swift, Amazon Warrior!

HIEROPHANT takes a beautifully carved staff from a NOBLE
and presents it to DAPHNE.

HIEROPHANT

Take this Staff of Resurrection. If one
of you should fall in your quest, it
need not mean your end.

DAPHNE accepts the staff and looks at it in wonder.

CASS (v.o.)
How many charges does it have?

LODGE (v.o.)
Seven.

LUSTER and FLYNN, slightly disheveled, return from the tapestry to stand with the others.

HERALD
Recently returned from fornicating behind the tapestry, Luster the Sorceress, and Flynn the Fine.

KING
Go forth, noble heroes! And may the goddess lead your way.

** END REWRITE **

X. EXT. TOWN

The town around the castle appears rundown and overcrowded. PEASANTS are generally moving towards the castle. The five HEROES are the only people moving out of town. LUSTER is wearing the same costume, but she is now male.

MONTAGE - The HEROES pass through town, noticing the slow tide of PEASANTS moving back towards the castle.

LODGE (v.o.)
The first thing you notice when you set forth on your quest is that the city is overcrowded, near to bursting with a flood of humanity. The peasants jammed in the streets are dirty and haggard, and fear is present in their eyes.

The HEROES move on through the crowded streets. The PEASANTS avoid their gazes.

X. EXT. TOWN GATE

PEASANTS are moving in through the town gate.

LODGE (v.o.)
The gate is open, but aside from yourselves,

nobody is leaving the protective walls of
the town.

MILES (v.o.)

Are there any guards by the gate?

A FARMER starts hawking some sad looking vegetables to
passersby.

LODGE (v.o.)

No, but there is a peasant farmer selling
vegetables.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

The GAMERS are all seated around the table.

GARY

All right, let's leave town and kill
something.

JOANNA

I want to talk to the farmer.

LEO

Why?

JOANNA

Well, if he's from out of town, maybe
he knows where the evil wizard is.

MILES

Good call.

CASS

He doesn't know.

MILES

How do you know?

CASS

He can't know. He's just a mindless NPC.

LEO

Yeah, we've been through this part of
the adventure before. We know where to
go.

MILES

We don't.

LEO

We'll tell you.

MILES

How will you know?

LEO

I just told you, we've done this before!

MILES

Your characters haven't. They're just as clueless as ours.

CASS

He still doesn't know anything. Last time, there was an adventure hook in the forest. We're going to run into it again.

JOANNA

So, you talked to him last time and he didn't know anything?

LEO

Well, we didn't actually talk to him, no.

JOANNA

Okay, then.

X. EXT. TOWN GATE

SILENCE, LUSTER, and FLYNN are standing impatiently by the gate, shifting their feet restlessly. DAPHNE and OSRIC are speaking with the FARMER.

OSRIC

How long have you been in town, stout yeoman?

FARMER

Scarcely a day, my lord. The city is more crowded than I had expected. I'd go back to my farm if it weren't dangerous in the countryside.

DAPHNE

What have you seen in your travels here?

FARMER

I do not know what you mean, my lady.

GARY

Come on! Hurry up!

LEO

Let's go! The adventure's out there!

OSRIC and DAPHNE ignore them.

OSRIC

What my companion meant was, have you heard anything strange in your travels? Rumors of where this army of the dead might be?

FARMER

(frightened)

Why would anyone want to know that?

DAPHNE

We are tasked by the king to destroy Mort Kemnon.

The FARMER flinches at the name.

FARMER

Please, my lady, don't use that name.

CASS

Would you please quit wasting time?

LEO

This is boring!

DAPHNE

What do you know of him?

MILES

The more you tell us, the sooner we can make it safe for you to return to your family farm.

LUSTER starts casting a spell in the background.

FARMER

Well, it may be nothing, but I've heard it from the refugees that things are not right in Westhaven.

DAPHNE

Not right?

FARMER

They say the town's rotten. That it looks fine, but there's something sinister there. It could be ...

The FARMER suddenly bursts into flame, shrieking horribly. DAPHNE and OSRIC jump back. A giant magical hand erupts from the earth, grabs the burning FARMER, and drags him underground. In the background, LUSTER dusts her hands.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

LODGE, JOANNA, and MILES are staring in shock at GARY.

LODGE

What the hell did you just do?

GARY

I cast Flaming Hand of Fiery Doom.

JOANNA

On a farmer?

LODGE

You used a level four spell on a zero-level peasant?

GARY

Yeah, so?

LODGE

That spell is meant to destroy demons!

MILES

Am I morally obligated to kill him, now?

LODGE
What the hell were you thinking?

GARY
I just want to get on with the story!

JOANNA
What's the point, now?

CASS
What do you mean, what's the point?

JOANNA
Our characters have just met! And the first thing you do is murder a peasant because you were bored?

GARY
Hey, I'm chaotic neutral! I'm just playing my alignment.

MILES
I'm pretty sure my religion obligates me to kill you, now.

LODGE
Nicely done, Gary. Nice.

There is a long pause as most everyone fumes. Finally, GARY breaks the ice.

GARY
So how many XP do I get?

LODGE slams his head into the table.

GARY (cont.)
What?

GAMERS: 2ND EDITION WORKSHOP

X. EXT. CASTLE CITY

The HEROES stride out of the city gate, into the fantasy world. A road winds across rolling plains.

LODGE (v.o.)

After clearing up the farmer incident,
you set out for Westhaven. However,
you have scarcely set foot outside
the gate when you are met by riders.

Three mounted PALADINS, dressed in armor and the holy
symbol of Therin, ride to a stop in front of the HEROES.
They are led by the LORD HIGH PALADIN, who salutes OSRIC.

LORD HIGH PALADIN
Hail, Sir Osric!

OSRIC
Hail, Lord High Paladin!

LUSTER
Look, if this is about that farmer, I
thought he was a demon.

LORD HIGH ignores LUSTER, speaking to OSRIC.

LORD HIGH
The Hierophant would see you before you
go farther.

SILENCE
Who is this Hierophant?

LORD HIGH looks at SILENCE like he's stupid.

LORD HIGH
He is the head of our religion and leader
of our orders, mine and yours, monk.

SILENCE
Ah, that Hierophant. It would have been
nice if the Gamemaster had provided
that information.

LORD HIGH
Follow us.

The PALADINS turn their mounts and trot away. OSRIC shrugs
and follows. So do the rest.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

LODGE holds up a picture of a cathedral.

LODGE

The paladins lead you to the Hierophant's cathedral. An honor guard of holy knights escort you to his inner sanctum, where he greets you.

LEO

Are there other clerics around?

LODGE

Dozens.

LEO

Any hot female ones?

LODGE

Yeah, I guess.

LEO

Cool. I seduce one of them.

LODGE

What? They're not ... you can't do that! They've taken vows of celibacy.

LEO

Dude, I've got a plus twenty seduction skill!

LODGE

Gods have mercy.

X. INT. CATHEDRAL

Establishing shot of a medieval cathedral. The altar of Theirn sits at the back of the chapel. A carpet leads to the altar. Vaulted corridors head off in various directions.

The HIEROPHANT, clad in robes embroidered with the holy symbol, greets the HEROES in the hall of the cathedral. CLERICS line the carpet on either side of the HEROES.

The HIEROPHANT has an amber gem the size of a fist hanging around his neck.

HIEROPHANT

The goddess thanks you for taking the time to meet me ere you continue on your quest.

DAPHNE

It is our honor, your Grace.

LUSTER's eyes latch on the HIEROPHANT's gem.

GARY (v.o.)

What is *that*?

LODGE (v.o.)

That's the Heart of Therin, a gem supposedly composed of condensed, solid light. It's one of the symbols of the church.

GARY (v.o.)

So I probably couldn't steal it, then?

LODGE (v.o.)

No, that'd be suicide.

FLYNN spots an attractive PRIESTESS and sidles next to her.

FLYNN

Hey, baby, want to tune my mandolin?

WE HEAR: dice roll

PRIESTESS moans with desire. She and FLYNN grab hands and run behind the altar and start fucking.

DAPHNE

Please know that the horny bard does not represent us.

OSRIC

Why have you sent for us, your Grace?

HIEROPHANT stops smiling. He motions to OSRIC.

HIEROPHANT

Walk with me, my son.

HIEROPHANT heads down a corridor. OSRIC follows. The others try to follow, but PALADINS block their path.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

LODGE gets up from the table and bids MILES follow him. They walk out of earshot of the rest of the table.

X. INT. CATHEDRAL - CORRIDOR

OSRIC walks slowly down the corridor with HIEROPHANT.

HIEROPHANT

I dare not speak what I fear before those not of our order.

OSRIC

What troubles you, Father?

HIEROPHANT

The King says the goddess has turned away from us. I know that is not true.

OSRIC

That is good.

HIEROPHANT

This is not the case.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

LODGE is facing MILES, speaking as the HIEROPHANT. GARY, LEO, and CASS are leaning towards them, trying to hear.

LODGE

There is a reason the goddess is not answering our prayers. She is missing.

MILES

Missing?

LODGE

We are cut off from her. I fear Mort Kemnon has found some way to imprison her spirit.

MILES

How is this possible?

LODGE

I can only surmise that it is tied to the Mask of Death. It is imperative you retrieve it.

MILES

(resolutely)

We shall retrieve it and bring it to the king!

LODGE

I fear we may not be able to trust him.

GARY

Why not?

LODGE turns towards GARY.

LODGE

You aren't part of this conversation. You're not even there.

X. INT. CATHEDRAL - CORRIDOR

HIEROPHANT is staring at LUSTER, who is standing roughly as far away as GARY was from LODGE. OSRIC in the same spot.

LUSTER

I'm not?

LODGE (v.o.)

No, you're not.

OSRIC

I'll tell you all the details later.

HIEROPHANT looks at OSRIC in shock.

HIEROPHANT

You will?

OSRIC

I was speaking out of character.

HIEROPHANT

Ah.

LODGE (v.o.)
And you're still not there.

Two PALADINS grab LUSTER and haul her out of the frame.

HIEROPHANT
Where were we?

OSRIC
Not trusting the King.

HIEROPHANT
Yes. There are those in his court who would encourage him to use the Mask for his own gain. We cannot permit that. Promise me, you will turn the Mask over to us.

OSRIC
I promise, Father.

X. EXT. FANTASY MONTAGE

The five HEROES walk purposefully through a variety of different terrains.

LODGE (v.o.)
The Hierophant bids you farewell, and you are finally on your way. You strike out on the road to Westhaven. The going is smooth, but after three days the road plunges into a twisted forest.

X. EXT. FOREST ROAD

The five HEROES come to a stop at the edge of a twisted forest. A path leads on into the woods. Near the entrance to the woods are two signs. The first reads: "Westhaven" and points into the woods. The other reads: "Beware the Goblins" with misspellings and backwards letters.

LODGE (v.o.)
A sign at the edge of the wood catches your eye.

The HEROES survey the signs, eye each other, and bravely stride into the woods.

X. EXT. GOBLIN FOREST

MONTAGE - The woods are dark and twisted. The HEROES cautiously progress through the forest until they arrive in a clearing.

X. EXT. FOREST CLEARING

The HEROES emerge in a wide clearing in the forest. There are several used fire pits scattered around. A large wooden "X" with shackles stands in the center of the clearing. Hanging from it is a sizable jewel.

LODGE (v.o.)

You stumble upon a clearing in the forest. Used fire pits are scattered about. In the center, you see a goblin torture tree. Hanging from it is a large gem.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

GARY's eyes light up.

GARY

A gem?

CASS

(patronizingly)

You know it's a trap.

GARY

Well, yeah, but goblins? No threat there.

LEO

Yeah, they do like zero damage.

MILES

What does this have to do with Westhaven?

CASS

Nothing. It's a random encounter.

LODGE

It is not a random encounter. This one

is planned.

LEO
How come we didn't hit it last time, then?

LODGE
You burned down the forest!

LEO
(whimsically)
Yeah, we sure did.

GARY
I take the gem.

CASS
Idiot.

X. EXT. FOREST CLEARING

LUSTER takes the gem from the wooden structure. Nothing happens. He shows it off to the other characters.

WE HEAR: Dice roll.

SILENCE leaps into a defensive position. The others follow suit moments later.

WE HEAR: Shrieks and hollers from the woods.

GOBLINS, short green humanoids in tattered rags, pour out into the clearing, surrounding the HEROES. The GOBLINS spit and taunt them, leaping like apes. They brandish spears and short bows.

FLYNN confidently strides forward and whips his mandolin out from over his shoulder.

LEO (v.o.)
Watch this. I'm gonna totally pacify them with bardic music.

FLYNN begins to play.

FLYNN
(singing)
Dear goblin friends,

Please listen to my song ...

FLYNN is struck in the chest by dozens of arrows. He collapses, dead.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

LEO has a look of exasperated shock on his face.

LODGE
Yeah, you're dead.

LEO
What? Goblin arrows can't kill anybody!

LODGE
Fifty of them can.

MILES
How many goblins are there?

LODGE
They're beyond count.

LEO
I'm dead!

GARY
Dude, you just got killed by goblins.

LODGE
Everybody roll inish.

Everyone but JOANNA rolls dice.

JOANNA
Inish?

CASS
Initiative. It determines who goes first in battle.

JOANNA
I don't know ...

CASS
(sighing)

Roll this die and add your dexterity bonus.

JOANNA

I also get to add my intelligence bonus.

CASS

No, you don't.

JOANNA

Isn't that what the Keen Eye feat does?

LODGE

Keen Eye?

JOANNA checks her character sheet.

JOANNA

Yeah, I have it right here. Keen Eye means I add my intelligence bonus to initiative rolls.

GARY

You took Keen Eye?

JOANNA

Well, yeah. I wanted her to be fast.

GARY

I should take that feat.

LEO

Killed by goblins?

X. EXT. FOREST CLEARING

The GOBLINS are still leaping around in a circle. The HEROES, including the dead FLYNN, circle up. The GOBLINS charge the HEROES.

The GOBLINS freeze in mid-charge.

LODGE (v.o.)

Okay, order: Joanna, Cass, Gary, goblins, then Miles.

LEO (v.o.)

And me?

LODGE (v.o.)
You're dead.

JOANNA (v.o.)
Okay, I attack the nearest goblins.

WE HEAR: dice roll.

DAPHNE moves forward and launches into a devastating attack against the nearest GOBLIN. She drops it with one hit. Then she stands expectantly.

JOANNA (v.o.)
Well?

LODGE (v.o.)
You get another attack.

JOANNA (v.o.)
I do?

LODGE (v.o.)
Yeah. You took the First Strike feat. If you go first and drop an opponent, you get another attack.

JOANNA (v.o.)
Okay.

WE HEAR: dice roll.

DAPHNE drops another GOBLIN with a crushing blow.

JOANNA (v.o.) (cont.)
Critical hit! I get another attack.

MILES (v.o.)
Another attack?

DAPHNE drops another GOBLIN.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

The male GAMERS are all looking at JOANNA in surprise.

JOANNA

Yeah, I took Expanded Critical Range, Critical Momentum, and Precise Strike. I get to add my intelligence bonus to my critical range, I get a dexterity bonus to my critical range, and I get an extra attack any time I deliver a critical hit.

GARY

What's your critical hit range?

JOANNA

Thirteen to twenty.

GARY

Jesus!

JOANNA rolls the dice.

JOANNA

Critical.
(rolls dice)
Critical.
(rolls dice)
Critical.

X. EXT. FOREST CLEARING

DAPHNE drops five more GOBLINS in quick succession. Most of the GOBLINS facing her are down.

LODGE (v.o.)

Cass, your move.

CASS (v.o.)

Attack, of course.

SILENCE mule kicks a GOBLIN, who collapses.

LODGE (v.o.)

Gary?

GARY (v.o.)

I begin casting Fireball.

LODGE (v.o.)

Okay, that'll go off at the end of two

rounds from now. The goblins attack.

The GOBLINS surge forward as one, hacking at SILENCE, OSRIC, and LUSTER, who avoid damage. No GOBLINS are close enough to DAPHNE to hurt her, but they do move forward to fill in the gap as she watches curiously.

LODGE (cont.)

Miles?

MILES

Osric will heal Flynn with the Staff of Resurrection.

OSRIC moves to touch FLYNN with the staff.

WE HEAR: a cell phone ring.

OSRIC answers his cell phone.

OSRIC

Hello?

X. INT. GAMING STORE

MILES is holding a cell phone. The others stare at him.

MILES

It's the office. I'll be a minute.

MILES gets up from the table.

LODGE

Your action?

MILES

Oh, I toss the staff to him.

X. EXT. FOREST CLEARING

OSRIC tosses the Staff to SILENCE, then goes to the perimeter of the clearing and talks on his cell phone.

LODGE (v.o.)

Second round. Joanna, go.

DAPHNE drops seven more GOBLINS on successive rolls. LUSTER is still casting his spell.

LODGE (v.o.)
Gary, you're still casting. Cass, then goblins.

CASS (v.o.)
I resurrect Leo.

SILENCE touches FLYNN's body with the staff. FLYNN's body glows with blue light.

WE HEAR: angelic music.

FLYNN slowly gets to his feet and smiles. Then he's hit with dozens of GOBLIN arrows. He collapses, dead. CASS shrugs.

JOANNA (v.o.)
My turn?

LODGE (v.o.)
Yep.

DAPHNE attacks again, and kills the remaining eight GOBLINS. She looks around for more, but there are none. CASS resurrects FLYNN.

WE HEAR: angelic music.

GARY (v.o.)
Done!

LUSTER waves his arms the way he had been facing the entire battle. FLYNN and SILENCE are directly in the way. A ball of fire streaks towards them. SILENCE rolls out of the way, but FLYNN is hit by the fireball and is catapulted across the clearing with a deafening explosion. He's dead.

LUSTER, DAPHNE, and SILENCE survey the carnage. OSRIC rejoins the group and puts his cell phone away.

OSRIC
Did we win?

Everyone stares at him, except for FLYNN, who's dead.

X. EXT. FANTASY WORLD

MONTAGE SEQUENCE - The five HEROES stride purposefully through a variety of different terrains.

LODGE

After the battle in Goblins' Forest, you press on further through the woods. The path widens, and the foliage becomes less entrapping. Still, it takes you the better part of a day, and when you come to the tiny village on the other side of the woods, it is already night.

X. EXT. MUDHOLLOW - NIGHT

The HEROES tramp along a muddy path to the outskirts of a tiny village. A sign reading: "Mudhollow" points towards the town.

LEO (v.o.)

Is this Westhaven?

LODGE (v.o.)

No. It's a village called ...

DAPHNE

(reading sign)

Mudhollow.

The HEROES trudge into the town.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

LODGE has the GAMERS' attention.

LODGE

The only place in town that's still open is the inn, and from the look of the place, it hasn't had many visitors.

X. INT. INN - NIGHT

Establishing shot of a medieval inn. A roaring fire fills the fireplace. The HEROES share a circular table in the center of the common room. A BARMAID is straightening

chairs. The INNKEEPER is polishing the bar. The other tables are deserted.

Another BARMAID brings a tray of mugs of ale to the table. OSRIC piously refuses a glass.

GARY (v.o.)
We should gather some info.

LEO (v.o.)
Is the barmaid hot?

LODGE (v.o.)
Uh ... hold on.

WE HEAR: dice roll.

The BARMAID turns around. She is beautiful.

LODGE (v.o.) (cont.)
Yeah, she is. Why?

LEO (v.o.)
I'm gonna seduce her.

LODGE (v.o.)
Must you?

LEO (v.o.)
I'm gonna pump her for information.

WE HEAR: dice roll.

FLYNN whispers something to the BARMAID. FLYNN and BARMAID grab hands and run upstairs. LUSTER looks at the other BARMAID.

GARY (v.o.)
I wanna seduce the other barmaid!

LUSTER
Hey, baby, you want some of this?

LODGE (v.o.)
Dude, you're a chick!

GARY (v.o.)

Oh, right.

LUSTER morphs into a female. She turns to the INNKEEPER.

LUSTER

Hey, Bartender, you want some of this?

OSRIC

You should not draw attention to yourself.

LUSTER

I can take care of myself.

DAPHNE

We should keep our presence muted. We know not who may be watching.

SILENCE

(sagely)

Indeed. For only in hiding one's identity can one truly be known.

SILENCE nods knowingly. The others stare at him. The INNKEEPER meekly approaches their table.

INNKEEPER

(feebly)

I am sorry, me old masters, but I'm afraid there's no place for you here tonight.

SILENCE

Nonsense. Your inn in empty. There is plenty of room for us.

INNKEEPER

(frightened)

Room is not the problem, brother. The truth is ...

MORT AGRIPPA

(interrupting)

The truth is, you're not welcome here.

INKEEPER

Mort Agrippa!

INNKEEPER scuttles away behind the bar. The HEROES slowly turn towards the fireplace.

Sitting at a table by the fireplace is MORT AGRIPPA. He was not there before. AGRIPPA lowers his hood, revealing a set of fine black tattoos on his face. He turns to the HEROES.

AGRIPPA (cont.)

You are most certainly not welcome here.

LEO (v.o.)

I run down to the others!

LODGE (v.o.)

You're kind of occupied at the moment,
lover boy.

The HEROES rise from their chairs, hands on weapons.

LUSTER

And who might you be?

AGRIPPA

I am the new ruler of this town. And you are trespassing in my lands.

OSRIC

These lands belong to the king.

AGRIPPA

These lands belong to *my* king.

SILENCE

Mort Kemnon.

AGRIPPA

Yes. And my king has a use for uninvited guests. He conscripts them ... into his army of the dead!

AGRIPPA leaps to his feet. His chair and table fly to either side, untouched. The HEROES draw their weapons and strike defensive stances.

AGRIPPA throws a smoke grenade on the floor. Black smoke billows out. When it clears, four UNDEAD NINJAS stand with AGRIPPA.

AGRIPPA

Die!

The NINJAS leap towards the heroes. One lands in front of OSRIC, another in front of DAPHNE. Both attack. Two land in front of SILENCE and attack him.

AGRIPPA unleashes a black bolt of magic at LUSTER. It hits her, wrapping her in black bands of energy. She can't move.

LODGE (v.o.)

Gary, you're held.

GARY (v.o.)

Crap!

COMBAT MONTAGE - Series of shots. OSRIC is struggling against his NINJA, who is too fast for him. He takes a few wounds. SILENCE is matching the martial arts of his opponents move for move, but is gaining no ground. DAPHNE is as fast as her NINJA, and after taking a few superficial wounds, she spears him. Throughout the combat AGRIPPA laughs insanely, but doesn't do much else.

LODGE (v.o.)

Okay, Leo, you're in.

LEO (v.o.)

About time!

FLYNN appears at the top of the stairs, sword in hand.

FLYNN

Fear not, companions! For ...

A black dagger hits FLYNN in the chest. He falls down the stairs, dead.

LEO (v.o.)

Damn it! Bards suck!

SILENCE is still busy fighting off two NINJAS.

CASS (v.o.)

Paralyzer!

SILENCE rabbit punches one of the NINJAS in the ribs. That NINJA freezes in place, unable to move. SILENCE continues to fight with the unfrozen NINJA.

DAPHNE assists OSRIC in defeating his NINJA. LUSTER breaks free from her bonds just as SILENCE drops his other NINJA. Then he uses a table as a springboard to kick the frozen NINJA in the face, dropping him.

The HEROES advance on AGRIPPA, who begins chanting in a guttural language.

GARY (v.o.)
I cast Counterspell!

LUSTER waves her arms and chants. AGRIPPA points his arms at the HEROES, but nothing happens. LUSTER smiles. AGRIPPA, for the first time, shows fear. SILENCE rolls up to him.

CASS (v.o.)
Another paralyzer!

SILENCE rabbit punches AGRIPPA, who freezes in place. LUSTER pushes AGRIPPA into a chair. In the background, DAPHNE resurrects FLYNN with the Staff.

X. INT. GAMING ROOM

The GAMERS are on the edge of their seats.

LODGE
Mort Agrippa is paralyzed, and you don't see any more ninjas.

LEO
(in character)
Tell us where Mort Kemnon is!

LODGE
Agrippa replies, "Kill me, torture me, I will never tell."

CASS
We'll have to torture him.

MILES
Whoa, now. I can't allow that. Killing in

combat is one thing, but he's been beaten. Torture is a dishonorable act, and I can't allow that to happen.

DAPHNE

Could you step out of the inn?

MILES

It's not that. I can't knowingly allow you to torture another person, no matter how evil he is. It's my alignment.

GARY

Yeah, your lawful stupid.

LEO

I'll just distract the paladin.

MILES

Oh, come on. I wouldn't fall for that.

LODGE

You might. Roll cunning.

MILES rolls some dice.

MILES

Crap.

X. INT. INN - NIGHT

AGRIPPA is tied to a chair. FLYNN suddenly points outside.

FLYNN

Sir Osric, look! There's an evildoer outside!

OSRIC

(enraged)

What?

OSRIC runs outside. The moment he's gone, SILENCE hauls off and decks AGRIPPA.

X. EXT. INN - NIGHT

WE HEAR: punching and kicking.

OSRIC storms out of the inn and draws his sword.

OSRIC
(full of righteous fire)
Show yourself, foul villain! Thou canst
not escape my justice! Come forward, so
that I may smite thee with my mighty
blade!

X. INT. INN

FLYNN is at the window, watching OSRIC. DAPHNE is holding her head in her hands. LUSTER and SILENCE are taking turns beating the shit out of AGRIPPA. OSRIC is visible through the window.

OSRIC
Come forth, ignoble cur! The light of
Therin shall illuminate your evil!
[BEAT] I don't see anyone!

FLYNN
Keep looking!

LUSTER grabs AGRIPPA's hand and starts slapping the evil cleric with it.

LUSTER
Hey, necromancer! Quit necromancing yourself!

LUSTER breaks a chair over AGRIPPA's head.

X. EXT. INN

OSRIC paces around angrily, peering into shadows. AGRIPPA is visibly being beaten through the window.

OSRIC
Thou canst hide, but the truth shall find
then, and then I shall descend upon thy
wickedness as an angel of righteous fury!

OSRIC pauses, out of fire. Then he turns and notices the beating going on inside.

OSRIC (cont.)
They deceived me! I shall put a stop to

this!

OSRIC strides purposefully towards the inn. He's taken two steps when his cell phone rings.

OSRIC (cont.)
(livid)
God damn it!
(answering)
Hello? No, you have to use the chooser! Go to the file menu ...

OSRIC walks away from the inn, chatting. The beating continues.

X. INT. INN

AGRIPPA's face is swollen and bruised. SILENCE keeps beating him in creative ways. Finally, AGRIPPA begins laughing. His laugh echoes unnaturally, and the HEROES back away. AGRIPPA's body melts away, leaving only his robe.

AGRIPPA (v.o.)
Death is only the beginning.

OSRIC enters and puts away his cell phone. He notices the pile of blood and sludge where AGRIPPA used to be.

OSRIC
What happened in here?

LUSTER
Um ... He accidentally beat himself to death.

OSRIC
Did he tell you where Mort Kemnon is?

LUSTER
Not as such, no.

DAPHNE
Flynn, did the barmaid say anything?

FLYNN scratches his chin, remembering.

FLYNN

"Oh yes, oh yes, oh gods, yes."

DAPHNE

About Mort Kemnon, dumbass.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

Fewer GAMERS are in the store Things are winding down for the night.

LODGE

According to the barmaid, the rumor mill puts Mort Kemnon in Westhaven. To get there, she says to take the east road out of town.

LEO

All right. On to Westhaven.

LODGE

You stay the night in the inn in town, heading out again the next morning.

X. EXT. FANTASY WORLD

MONTAGE SEQUENCE - The five HEROES stride purposefully through a variety of different terrains.

LODGE (v.o.)

The fields land the trail winds through is unnaturally quiet. You literally encounter no one on your way. What appears to have once been a well-used roadway is, aside from yourselves, completely abandoned.

X. EXT. CLIFF

Establishing shot of the edge of a steep cliff. The cliff drops over 100 feet to the bottom. Two posts, the ends of a former rope bridge, are sunk into the ground before the cliff. Rope dangles from them.

Across from the cliff is another ledge, but it is not too steep to climb. Most of the rope bridge is dangling off of posts on the other side.

The HEROES stride to the edge of the cliff and look around.

LODGE (v.o.)

By midday, you come to a ravine that bars your path. Your side of the cliff is steep and treacherous, and falls at least one hundred feet straight down. There used to be a rope bridge, but no more, and from the looks of it, the bridge was cut from your side.

JOANNA (v.o.)

Is there any rope?

LODGE (v.o.)

There's some dangling from the bridge posts, but not nearly enough to climb down.

CASS (v.o.)

How about the other side?

LODGE (v.o.)

There's enough of a slope that you think you could climb it.

OSRIC and DAPHNE stand at the edge of the cliff. SILENCE, LUSTER, and FLYNN stand in the background, conversing quietly with one another.

DAPHNE

Do we have any rope?

OSRIC

I think not. Dare we climb down?

DAPHNE

I fear we would fall. Perhaps there is a trail that leads down?

OSRIC

Perhaps. If so, we must have missed it on the way here.

In the background, SILENCE nods in agreement to something.

DAPHNE

There must be some other way down.

SILENCE runs past and swan dives off the cliff.

OSRIC

Whoa! Are you crazy?!

X. EXT. RAVINE

SILENCE falls down the side of the cliff. When he hits the bottom, he tucks and rolls and springs up.

WE HEAR: dice roll.

LODGE (v.o.)

Silence takes 22 damage from the fall.

CASS (v.o.)

No problem.

SILENCE cracks his neck and brushes the dirt off his clothing.

X. EXT. CLIFF

OSRIC and DAPHNE are staring at the bottom of the cliff. LUSTER runs and jumps off the ledge.

X. EXT. RAVINE

LUSTER rockets down the side of the cliff.

GARY (v.o.)

I cast Feather Fall.

Before she hits the ground, she jerks in the air, and drifts softly downward. When LUSTER lands next to SILENCE, she is male again.

X. EXT. CLIFF

DAPHNE and OSRIC are in shock. FLYNN runs up to the edge.

FLYNN

Hell, yeah!

FLYNN leaps off the cliff.

X. EXT. RAVINE

FLYNN plummets down the cliff and slams face-first into the rocks at the bottom. SILENCE and LUSTER watch him land.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

LODGE rolls a ton of dice. He sighs.

LODGE

Well, that's 145 points of damage. You're dead. Again.

LEO

(incredulous)

What? How'd that happen?

LODGE

You jumped off the freaking cliff! What'd you expect!

LEO looks plaintively at CASS and GARY.

LEO

But you two made it!

LODGE

He used a spell, and he's got that tumbling ability. Dude, you're not playing a fighter any more. You can't just expect to soak the damage!

LEO

My bad. I forgot, I guess.

LODGE

Apparently.

JOANNA

Um ... I'm going to look for another way down. Maybe a trail or something.

LODGE rolls more dice.

LODGE

You find a very narrow trail, a switchback,

lacing its way down the side of the cliff. After a few yards, it widens out. It takes you a couple of hours to get to the bottom, and by the time you rejoin the party, resurrect the bard ...

LEO

I've died five times today!

LODGE

... and climb to the opposite ledge, it is night. You find a grove of trees around a clearing, and set up camp.

X. EXT. CAMPGROUND - NIGHT

Establishing shot of a the campground. A fire burns in a stone circle. The HEROES have spread out their bedrolls for the night, but nobody is sleeping. FLYNN is strumming on his mandolin, SILENCE is practicing a kata, and OSRIC is sharpening his sword. LUSTER sits next to DAPHNE, who is retying the tassel at the end of her spear.

LUSTER

You're unlike any woman I've ever met.

DAPHNE

We Amazons are like that.

LUSTER

So fast, so strong. A man could lose himself in those eyes.

DAPHNE stops adjusting the tassel and stares at LUSTER.

DAPHNE

May I remind you that you yourself are a woman?

LUSTER morphs back into a female.

LUSTER

I knew that. I was wondering if you'd be interested in a little girl on girl ...

DAPHE lowers the spear to LUSTER's throat.

DAPHNE

You really want to complete that thought?

LUSTER

Me-ow!

LUSTER slinks away to her bedroll.

OSRIC

Tell me, minstrel, what do you know of our enemy, this Mort Kemnon?

FLYNN

He is a servant of Death, and enemy of light. That is all I can tell you.

DAPHNE

Surely, you must have heard something more in your travels.

FLYNN

It seems that I should have, but I have not. This Mort, he has hidden his habits very well.

OSRIC

What do you know of the Mask of Death?

WE HEAR: dice roll

FLYNN

Now, that I can tell you something about. It was the mask worn by Death, the god of oblivion, when the world was forged. It is said that whoever wears the mask becomes the living embodiment of the god he serves, can channel his powers as his avatar.

DAPHNE

If that's true, then Mort Kemnon has all the powers of Death at his command. No wonder his army is growing. No wonder his origins are so mysterious.

SILENCE

(sagely)

He who hides his habits knows not whether
the wind blows west.

SILENCE keeps practicing. The others don't move.

DAPHNE
What does that mean, exactly?

LUSTER
(KEMNON's voice)
It means I've found you!

LUSTER leaps up and hangs suspended above the ground. Her eyes are white, and she has a series of black tattoos on her face. She writhes like a marionette. The other HEROES spring into defensive postures.

DAPHNE
Who are you?

LUSTER
(KEMNON's voice)
You know. Heed my warning or die!

FLYNN puts his hand on DAPHNE's spear. He confidently steps to the front of the group.

FLYNN
Lower your spear, lady. He cannot hurt us.

LUSTER shoots a bolt of lightning into FLYNN's chest, flinging him across the grove. He lands, dead. The others don't even bother watching.

LUSTER
(KEMNON's voice)
Continue if you dare; I will not turn you away. But know that your breath is wasted in pursuit of me.

SILENCE
You sound afraid.

KEMNON laughs darkly through LUSTER.

LUSTER
(KEMNON's voice)

Then come. You will serve in positions
of honor in my legions. Come, and die!

KEMNON's spirit abandon's LUSTER. She falls to the ground,
exhausted. The others rush to help her up. Dissolve to the
next scene.

X. EXT. CAMPGROUND - EARLY MORNING

The campfire is out. The HEROES are all asleep.

LODGE (v.o.)

After caring for Luster and resurrecting
Flynn again, you fall into a deep and
dreamless slumber. The rest of the passes
uneventfully.

X. INT. GAMING STORE - NIGHT

The store is empty except for the GAMERS. LODGE glances at
his watch.

LODGE

And I think we'll call it there for the
evening.

GARY

What? It's still early.

LODGE

It's two AM.

JOANNA

What?

JOANNA looks at the clock. It is, indeed, 1:30. LODGE
starts packing up his books and notes. The other GAMERS do
so as well, though a bit reluctantly.

JOANNA (cont.)

Oh, my God. I had no idea it was so late.

CASS

See how it happens? You get so into it, you
can't help losing track of time.

MILES

That was a lot of fun.

LODGE
I'm glad you enjoyed it.

MILES
When do we get to play again?

GARY
Same time next week?

LEO
Can't do it here. We're having a card
tournament. Place is booked solid.

LODGE
We could use my apartment. I've got
plenty of space. Is that good with
everyone?

The other GAMERS voice their consent.

LODGE (cont.)
Good. Bring your minis next week. We're
going to need them.

X. EXT. GAMING STORE - NIGHT

LEO locks up behind everyone. JOANNA pauses outside the
door for LODGE, who exits with his arms full.

JOANNA
That was a lot of fun. See you next
week.

LODGE
Thanks. Bye.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

LODGE opens the door and turns on the light. He's got a
stack of game books and notes under each arm. He drops the
books on his coffee table.

X. INT. LODGE'S STUDY - NIGHT

LODGE drops into his computer chair and kills the screensaver on the computer. The blank "Chapter One" is still on the screen. LODGE erases "dick." Then he saves.

LODGE leans back in his chair and sighs. He scratches his chin thoughtfully. Then he leans forward and begins typing. He doesn't stop.

X. INT. THEATER

The house lights are up, as are the stage lights. A TECH CREW is busy building a set on stage. They are dressed in paint-splattered overalls and are busy hammering pieces into place or taking measurements for other set pieces.

CAPTION: Sunday

JOANNA is working on a two-story piece of the set with other members of the TECH CREW. She hefts a wooden pole from a pile of lumber. The pole is roughly the same size as DAPHNE's spear. JOANNA stops and examines the pole.

JOANNA strikes an offensive stance and starts swinging the pole around as if she were DAPHNE with her spear. She gets so lost in the action that she doesn't notice the other members of the TECH CREW watching her. She feigns landing a death blow with a yell.

The TECH CREW applauds. JOANNA, somewhat embarrassed, bows.

X. INT. OFFICE

Establishing shot of a row of office cubicles. ENGINEERS, all wearing generic shirts and ties, are busy working in their cubicles.

WE HEAR: phones ringing.

CAPTION: Monday

LODGE is sitting in his cubicle. He's wearing a shirt and tie, and is busy typing on his computer. A suit-wearing EXECUTIVE comes into his cubicle. LODGE quickly switches documents on the computer before the EXECUTIVE can see.

EXECUTIVE

Hey, Kevin.

LODGE spins to face him.

LODGE
Hi, Mr. Walsh.

EXECUTIVE
How's that user's manual coming?

LODGE
Oh, fine. I'm working on it right now.
I'll have it to you by the end of the
week.

EXECUTIVE
Excellent. Keep up the good work.

LODGE
Yes, Mr. Walsh.

EXECUTIVE leaves LODGE's cubicle. LODGE spins back to his computer and switches documents. Dungeon schematics leap up on the computer screen. LODGE smiles and keeps working on his dungeon.

X. INT. COLLEGE CLASSROOM

A PROFESSOR is standing at a white board filled with physics equations, his back to his class. About fifteen diligent STUDENTS are taking notes as the PROFESSOR writes more equations on the board.

PROFESSOR
I know nothing about Physics, so I'll
let Steve Wolbrecht write this line.

CAPTION: Tuesday

GARY is sitting in the classroom, and appears to be taking notes. In fact, he is drawing a detailed character sketch of LUSTER casting a spell. He flips to another page of his notes. On that page, LUSTER strikes the Marilyn Monroe-standing-over-the-air-vent post. GARY smiles.

X. INT. MESSAGE PARLOR

A PATRON is lying face down on a massage mat in a health spa. A towel is covering his posterior. CASS, dressed in the health spa uniform, is giving the PATRON a massage.

CAPTION: Wednesday

CASS is obviously bored. He massages the PATRON's shoulders. Then he begins to use his elbows. He then leaps up on the table and uses a knee. He starts shadowboxing like SILENCE. After a short kata in which he stops massaging altogether, CASS loses his balance and falls backwards off the table. The PATRON looks up.

X. INT. GAMING STORE

LEO is sitting behind the counter of the gaming store. Various GAMERS are shopping and playing games.

CAPTION: Thursday

LEO is reading a book entitled "The Complete Bard's Handbook." Next to him are a stack of other bard-related books. He's also filling out three or four character sheets. He has a file folder full of character sheets sitting next to him.

X. INT. WORK OFFICE

Establishing shot of a middle management office. A MANAGER in a suit is impatiently waiting at the side of his desk while MILES is working on his computer. MILES is dressed in a shirt and tie, and has about six pagers and cell phones attached to his belt.

CAPTION: Friday

MANAGER

(annoyed)

I don't see what the problem is. It just started slowing down, and now I can't get on our intranet. I'm not going to let some stupid overgrown calculator slow down my productivity.

MILES

Right, yeah.

MANAGER
Are you listening to me?

MILES
I'm gonna have to take this into IT.

MILES unbuckles the computer tower from the monitor.
MANAGER is livid.

MANAGER
What's the freaking problem?

MILES
Your computer has about 800 viruses.

MANAGER
(enraged)
Who put those on my computer?

MILES
I don't know. Maybe the folks at all those
adult sites you visited.

MANAGER is shocked and pale. MILES carries the computer out
of the office.

X. INT. OFFICE HALLWAY

MILES rounds the corner with the computer. The MANAGER runs
after him.

MANAGER
On second thought, leave the computer with
me.

MILES
Sorry, can't. It's company policy to do a
diagnostic.

MANAGER
I'll just buy a new computer.

MILES
Sorry, this is the way things go.

MANAGER
Give me back the computer!

MILES
I really can't do that.

MANAGER stops in the hallway. MILES keeps walking.

MANAGER
(threateningly)
I have friends in high places.

MILES stops. Slowly, he turns and glares at MANAGER.

MILES
And I've got an internet history chalk
full of porn sites.

MILES raises his hand at MANAGER, palm out.

MILES (cont.)
Turn!

MANAGER is confused and angry, but defeated. He turns and walks back down the hall. MILES smiles.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

WE HEAR: a knock at the door

LODGE comes down the hall and answers the door. The other five GAMERS are standing outside. He welcomes them all in.

CAPTION: Saturday!

The GAMERS are carrying books and character sheets. LODGE leads them into the living room. A large table with six chairs is in the center of the living room. The table is covered with junk food and gaming equipment. GUEN curiously approaches the group. JOANNA fawns on him.

JOANNA
Oh, what a handsome cat!

LODGE
This is Guen. You want to hold him?

JOANNA
I wish I could. I'm allergic.

LODGE
Oh. Is that going to be a problem?

JOANNA
Have you vacuumed recently?

LODGE
(lying)
Um ... yes.

JOANNA
I should be fine.

MILES, CASS, GARY, and JOANNA sit at the table. LEO pulls LODGE aside.

LEO
Hey, Lodge, I was wondering if I could bring in a new character.

LODGE
A new character?

LEO
Yeah. Another bard.

LODGE
What's wrong with Flynn? Aside from his habit of getting killed.

LEO
Well, that's it. I permanently lose a point of Stamina each time I get resurrected. My Stamina's down to six. Six! It's just, it's almost not worth playing him.

LODGE
Good point. Sure, next time you die, you can bring in someone new if you want.

LEO
Awesome! I spent most of the week making more bards.

LEO brandishes his file folder.

LODGE
Most of the week?

LEO sits down. GARY lines up a stack of miniatures on the table. GUENHWYVAR jumps on the table and curiously sniffs at the miniatures.

GARY
No, no, Mr. Kitty. Those aren't for you.

GARY puts GUENHWYVAR on the floor. LODGE sits at the head of the table behind the GM screen.

LODGE
Okay, do we all remember where we left off?

CASS
We camped about a day out of Westhaven.

LODGE
Right. Gary, you've re-memorized all your spells, and everyone's healed a number of hit points equal to their Stamina.

JOANNA and MILES make adjustments to their character sheets.

CASS
Yeah, we know.

LODGE
Everyone make a Cunning check.

The GAMERS all roll dice.

LODGE
If you succeeded, you're woken in the early morning to a strange sound.

X. EXT. CAMPSITE - EARLY MORNING

The campfire is out. The HEROES are all asleep under their blankets. The first rays of dawn are poking over the horizon.

A wild-eyed, disheveled PEASANT is searching through their bags, eating whatever food he finds.

LODGE (v.o.)

A scruffy peasant is rummaging through your bags, eating whatever food he can find. He's dressed in rags.

GARY (v.o.)

He's eating our food? I waste him with my crossbow!

LUSTER quietly aims her crossbow at the PEASANT and fires. DAPHNE leaps in front of the PEASANT and knocks the quarrel away.

The PEASANT jumps up and tries to run for the forest, but DAPHNE grabs him by his collar and holds him. The other HEROES get out of their blankets.

SILENCE

This man has stolen from us. He must be punished.

OSRIC

Surely you can see this man is starving. Daphne, release him.

DAPHNE lets go of the PEASANT, who collapses in fear.

PEASANT

Mercy! Mercy, my good sirs!

LUSTER

I'm a lady, you fool!

GARY (v.o.)

I waste him with my crossbow!

LUSTER takes aim with her crossbow. OSRIC hits it from underneath when she fires, sending the quarrel harmlessly into the sky. LUSTER glares at him.

MILES (v.o.)

What do you have against peasants?

PEASANT

Please, don't hurt me! Mercy!

FLYNN whips out his mandolin.

LEO (v.o.)
I'll try to calm him.

FLYNN begins to play the mandolin. The PEASANT is transfixed by the music.

FLYNN
(singing)
Shut up, dear peasant.
Rest your head.
Or I'll let my lady friend
Kill your ass dead.

The PEASANT is no longer panicked.

OSRIC
Rise, sirrah. You have nothing to fear
from us.

The PEASANT stands and bows to the HEROES.

PEASANT
Forgive me, masters. I haven't eaten in
days.

DAPHNE
Then let us feed you.
(to FLYNN)
Bard! Fetch some firewood.

FLYNN nods and heads into the forest.

DAPHNE (cont.)
What is your name, peasant?

LODGE (v.o.)
Crap, I didn't give him one. I guess I'll
call him ...

PEASANT
Willem, my lady. I live in Westhaven. Or at
least I did, until ...

DAPHNE
Until what?

PEASANT

The city lies in ruins. Mort Kemnon's priests have either enslaved the citizens, or killed and raised them to serve in the army of the dead. As far as I know, I am the only one left.

OSRIC

Do you know where Mort Kemnon is?

PEASANT shakes his head.

PEASANT

No, my lord, I do not. But the Fiend might know.

OSRIC

The Fiend?

PEASANT

Mort Kemnon's general. He led the purges. I would rather not speak of it. If anyone, if anything knows where that dark master is, the Fiend would know.

OSRIC

Where could we find him?

PEASANT

In the courtyard of the castle. That's all I can tell you.

OSRIC

Will you lead us there?

PEASANT

No, my lord. I will not return to that city.

OSRIC

Then let us clothe and feed you, so you may be safely on your way.

CASS (v.o.)

Okay, hang on.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

Everyone is looking at CASS.

CASS

We don't have enough provisions to feed a nameless NPC. We got the information we needed from him. Leave him.

MILES

I'm morally obliged to help him. I cannot knowingly allow him to continue suffering.

CASS

And I can't allow you to deplete our resources because you want to feel noble.

MILES

I'm just playing my alignment!

GARY and CASS start whispering to each other.

LODGE

He's got a point. Part of being a paladin is caring for the poor and meek.

CASS nods to GARY.

CASS

Okay, let's role play through this.

LODGE

Excellent.

GARY sidles around the table and whispers something in LODGE's ear.

X. EXT. CAMPSITE

SILENCE approaches OSRIC and DAPHNE.

SILENCE

Sir Osric, a word.

OSRIC

Of course, Brother Silence.

SILENCE leads OSRIC away from the clearing, turning him so his back is to LUSTER and the PEASANT. DAPHNE follows.

SILENCE

I am troubled, caught in a moral quandary.
Say I have two sons, one strong and hale,
the other sickly and meek. Both wish
for schooling, and while I love them both
equally, I can only afford to educate one.
Whom do I choose?

In the background, LUSTER starts casting a spell.

OSRIC

(thoughtfully)

Hmm. I am tempted to say the stronger of
your sons, for he could go farther with
schooling. However, he could also go farther
without education. The frail son, who is
weak in body, might find he is stronger
in mind, so I would consider ...

The PEASANT suddenly bursts into flame, shrieking horribly. DAPHNE and OSRIC spin around. A giant magical hand erupts from the earth, grabs the burning PEASANT, and drags him underground.

LUSTER, now male again, dusts his hands. OSRIC is enraged, and storms towards LUSTER. Panic dawns on LUSTER's face.

MILES (v.o.)

That's it! You're not getting away with
that again!

OSRIC draws his sword and raises it above his head. LUSTER cowers beneath him.

OSRIC

I smite thee, evildoer!

CASS (v.o.)

Paralyzer!

SILENCE punches OSRIC in the ribs. OSRIC freezes, sword poised above his head, snarling rage on his face. LUSTER scrambles away from him.

LUSTER
How long until moves?

SILENCE
Twenty, maybe thirty seconds.

LUSTER
I have enough time, then.

GARY (v.o.)
I cast Amnesia on Osric.

GARY starts chanting and casts a spell on OSRIC. OSRIC's rage melts into confusion. He stares off into space.

LODGE (v.o.)
Osric has no memory of the last two minutes.

MILES (v.o.)
(sarcastically)
Nice dodge, Gary.

FLYNN comes back into the clearing, his arms full of wood. He walks directly in the path of OSRIC's sword.

FLYNN
I've got the firewood!

LODGE (v.o.)
And you can move again.

OSRIC follows through with the downward sword swing, killing FLYNN. The bard collapses. Everyone stares at OSRIC and FLYNN. OSRIC sheathes his sword.

OSRIC
I have some atoning to do.

OSRIC strides out of the clearing.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

LODGE is sitting at the head of the table.

LODGE
After Osric has finished purifying himself,
you enter Westhaven proper. The town is

not only deserted, it lies in ruins. Most of the buildings have been burned to their foundations. It looks as if a war had been fought there. Standing out amid the rubble is the castle, bleached white as a skull among ashes.

JOANNA

Nice imagery.

LODGE

Thank you.

LODGE

You've seen no enemies in the ruins of the town, but your skin crawls the nearer you come to the castle gate.

GARY

Detect Evil?

LODGE

Lots of it. Chaotic Evil, centered in the courtyard.

CASS

I'll investigate the courtyard. I've got the best Sneak skill.

GARY

Mine's good. I'll go, too.

X. EXT. CASTLE GATE

The castle gate is open. The land around it is burned and blasted. The five HEROES stand to one side of the entrance. SILENCE and LUSTER sneak inside the gate.

X. INT. CASTLE CORRIDOR

The hallway is until and empty. SILENCE and LUSTER edge their way silently down the corridor.

X. EXT. COURTYARD

The courtyard is a grassy open space in the center of the castle. Dozens of corpses lie strewn about. In the center

stands DRAZUUL, a giant demon. He is not looking towards the entrance.

SILENCE and LUSTER sneak to the edge of the courtyard. They see DRAZUUL and stop short.

SILENCE
What the hell is that?

LUSTER
(panicking)
Quiet!

SILENCE
I'm talking out of character!

CASS (v.o.)
What the hell is that?

LODGE (v.o.)
Check your Intelligence.

WE HEAR: dice roll

LODGE (v.o.) (cont.)
You recognize it from your training in the non-existent occidental Buddhist monastery. It's a death demon, one of the personal servants of the god of death. And he's looking your way.

DRAZUUL slowly turns towards SILENCE and LUSTER. They are frozen in place.

GARY (v.o.)
I run for it.

LODGE (v.o.)
You're frozen in place?

CASS (v.o.)
(angrily)
Do I get a save?

LODGE (v.o.)
Not this time, no.

CASS (v.o.)
Unbelievable.

DRAZUUL smiles wickedly and beckons them forwards.

DRAZUUL
Come.

SILENCE and LUSTER stagger towards DRAZUUL.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

CASS is irate.

LODGE
You three begin to sense ...

CASS
(interrupting)
Why don't I get a save?

LODGE
It's a death demon. Its fear aura is so high you can't roll a successful save.

CASS
Incorrect.

LODGE
What's you Will save?

CASS
Plus seven.

LODGE
The difficulty rating to resist his fear and break his compulsion is 30. You would have to roll a 23 on a 20-sided die to succeed. Do I need to go over the math with you, or can I proceed?

CASS
One of the basic rules of the game is that a natural 20 is an automatic success, no matter the circumstances.

LODGE

Yeah, and you've got a five percent chance of rolling a twenty.

CASS

Do I at least get that roll? I mean, since it is in the rules? Is that okay with you, that we play by the rules?

LODGE

Fine, go ahead.

Supremely satisfied, CASS rolls the die. He rolls a 1.

LODGE (cont.)

Oh, a fumble! That means you're completely compelled, and I play your character until the end of the encounter. Since we're playing by the rules, I know you don't mind.

LODGE extends his hand. CASS, infuriated, gives him his character sheet.

LEO

I think you lost that case, rules lawyer.

CASS

Oh, shut up.

X. EXT. COURTYARD

SILENCE and LUSTER are staggering towards DRAZUUL. LUSTER is terrified, but SILENCE shows only mindless calm.

DRAZUUL

Kneel, slaves.

SILENCE

Yes, my master.

SILENCE and LUSTER kneel.

CASS (v.o.)

I would never say that.

LODGE (v.o.)

Please, let me play my character.

DRAZUUL strokes the bottom of LUSTER's chin. He shudders.
DRAZUUL smiles.

DRAZUUL
My lady, you tempt me. Like the evil in
your heart, your beauty is unsurpassed.

LUSTER
I'm not evil. I'm chaotic neutral.

DRAZUUL
Too long have I been a bachelor. You shall
be my bride!

LUSTER
I'm nobody's bitch!

LODGE (v.o.)
Dude, you are *not* playing a male!

GARY (v.o.)
Oh, right.

LUSTER becomes female again.

LUSTER
Oh, crap.

DRAZUUL
My dear, what is a wedding without guests?

DRAZUUL begins chanting in a dark, evil language. The
corpses strewn about rise as ZOMBIES. DRAZUUL laughs.

DRAZUUL (cont.)
Kiss me, my darling.

LUSTER frowns in disgust, but can't keep herself from
walking jerkily towards DRAZUUL's embrace.

X. EXT. CASTLE GATE

FLYNN, DAPHNE, and OSRIC are waiting expectantly.

LODGE (v.o.)
You three sense that something is wrong.

DAPHNE
Something is wrong.

OSRIC draws his sword.

OSRIC
Stay behind me. I shall protect you

They enter the castle.

X. EXT. COURTYARD

SILENCE, brainwashed, is sitting in the lotus position beside DRAZUUL. The ZOMBIES are standing to either side of DRAZUUL in semi-arranged rows. LUSTER is staggering against her will towards a lustful DRAZUUL.

FLYNN, OSRIC, and DAPHNE enter and stop short. DAPHNE screws up her face and sneezes. DRAZUUL hears and turns towards them.

DAPHNE
Hey, that sneeze was out of character!

OSRIC points his sword at DRAZUUL.

OSRIC
You, Hellborn!

DRAZUUL looks at OSRIC. The lust on his face turns to rage. LUSTER stops moving forwards.

OSRIC (cont.)
Turn!

WE HEAR: sizzling

OSRIC screams and drops his sword. His hand is burning. DRAZUUL laughs.

DAPHNE
He's too strong for you to turn!

OSRIC
Luster, come away!

DAPHNE
She can't! She's compelled.

FLYNN
Then I will save her!

LEO (v.o.)
I play a counter-song!

FLYNN flips out the mandolin and plays a beautiful melody. DRAZUUL looks confused. LUSTER snaps out of his spell.

DRAZUUL's eyes widen in surprise, then rage. Before he can move, LUSTER kicks him in the crotch. DRAZUUL bellows in rage and clutches his groin, falling to his knees. LUSTER runs back to her companions.

CASS (v.o.)
What about me?

LODGE (v.o.)
What about you, fumble-boy?

DRAZUUL bellows in rage. The HEROES, minus SILENCE, strike defensive poses. DRAZUUL belches a stream of acid at FLYNN, melting him into a puddle of goo.

OSRIC
He's pissed.

DRAZUUL
Kill them!

SILENCE and the ZOMBIES charge (meander towards) the other HEROES.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

LEO puts a folder full of character sheets on the table.

MILES
Can we resurrect Flynn again?

LODGE
There's nothing to resurrect. Sorry.

LEO

No problem. Could I bring in another character now?

LODGE

Sure.

LEO slaps one of the character sheets on the table.

CASS

It doesn't matter. We're all going to die.

JOANNA

Well, that's a bit of a defeatist attitude.

CASS

Okay, then maybe you can explain to me how we're going to defeat an undead demonic outsider after our spellcaster wasted his demon-trapping spell to torch a peasant.

GARY

(defensively)

You thought it was a good idea a few minutes ago!

MILES

How long would it take for you to memorize the spell again?

CASS snorts derisively.

CASS

For a fourth level spell? Forty minutes of concentrated study.

GARY has an epiphany. He points at Lodge.

GARY

I cast Power Recall!

LODGE

Okay. What's that do?

GARY

At the cost of two spell slots, it lets me re-memorize any spell I've already cast in one-eighth the time!

LODGE
That's assuming there are no distractions.

GARY
Well, protect me.

JOANNA
Okay.

X. EXT. COURTYARD

LUSTER is sitting in the entrance way, studying her spellbook. DAPHNE and OSRIC are protecting her. FLYNN II, a bard with a different color coat, runs in from the side and joins them.

SILENCE leaps into his former colleagues with a flurry of attacks. He and DAPHNE square off. The ZOMBIES press in. FLYNN and OSRIC fight them off. DAPHNE hits SILENCE in the head with the butt of her spear, dropping him.

MILES (v.o.)
I do the laying on of hands.

OSRIC kneels by SILENCE and lays his hands on him.

WE HEAR: angelic music

SILENCE's eyes snap open. The compelling is broken. SILENCE leaps to his feet and joins the others in defending LUSTER.

LUSTER
Could you keep it down? I can't concentrate!

LEO (v.o.)
My music will help.

FLYNN II stands beside LUSTER and plays the mandolin. LUSTER studies more easily. A ZOMBIE comes up behind FLYNN II and bites him in the head, killing him. He drops, and the ZOMBIE moves towards LUSTER. Without looking up, LUSTER shoots the ZOMBIE with her crossbow, dropping him.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

LEO whips out another character sheet and slaps it on the table. LODGE raises an eyebrow.

X. EXT. COURTYARD

FLYNN III, wearing a different color cloak, runs in to join the others, sword drawn. Two ZOMBIES overcome and kill him as the others fight on.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

LEO slaps down another character sheet.

LEO
I can do this all night!

LODGE
How many of those things have you got?

LEO
Fifty!

X. EXT. COURTYARD

SILENCE, DAPHNE, and OSRIC start pushing back the horde of ZOMBIES. Throughout it all, DRAZUUL doesn't move.

BATTLE MONTAGE - Throughout the montage, DAPHNE kills as many ZOMBIES as OSRIC and SILENCE combined, but the mob keeps multiplying. DRAZUUL never moves, and LUSTER never looks up from her studying. Whenever the number of ZOMBIES is depleted, DRAZUUL raises them all from the dead, and the fight begins again. Each version of FLYNN to enter is wearing a slightly different costume.

FLYNN IV runs into the battle, sword drawn.

FLYNN IV
Never fear, Flynn is ...

FLYNN IV is killed by ZOMBIES. FLYNN V runs in from another direction, sword drawn.

FLYNN V
Quiver in fear, for I have ...

FLYNN V is killed by ZOMBIES. FLYNN VI runs in from another direction, sword drawn.

FLYNN VI
Evildoers, prepare to die!

FLYNN VI is killed by ZOMBIES. FLYNN VII swings into battle on a convenient rope.

FLYNN VII
Avast, ye ...

FLYNN VII is killed by ZOMBIES. FLYNN VIII runs into battle from another direction, sword drawn.

FLYNN VIII
I'm gonna die!

FLYNN VIII is killed by ZOMBIES. FLYNN IX runs into battle from another direction.

FLYNN IX
Bards suck!

FLYNN IX is killed by ZOMBIES. FLYNN X runs into battle from another direction.

FLYNN X
(singing 1812 overature)
Ba da da da da da da da da ...

FLYNN X is killed by ZOMBIES. FLYNN XI runs into battle from another direction.

FLYNN XI
All your base are belong to us!

FLYNN XI is killed by ZOMBIES.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

LEO throws his hands up in frustration.

LEO
Damn it.

LEO looks at GARY.

LEO (cont.)
Hey, you're having luck playing a chick.
This next bard is female.

LODGE
Okay.

X. EXT. COURTYARD

FLYNN XII (who is female) runs into the fray and is killed by ZOMBIES. FLYNN XIII runs into the battle from another direction, swinging two swords wildly.

FLYNN XIII
There are thirty-seven more of me, ass-
holes!

DAPHNE drops all the ZOMBIES around her and looks towards DRAZUUL. The demon hasn't moved from his spot.

JOANNA (v.o.)
Has Drazuul moved at all?

LODGE (v.o.)
No, he hasn't. Roll a Spot check.

WE HEAR: dice roll

DAPHNE looks at DRAZUUL's feet. On the ground surrounding him is a chalk pentagram. DAPHNE points.

DAPHNE
The demon is trapped in that pentagram.

FLYNN XIV
That explains why he hasn't attacked.

FLYNN XIV is killed by ZOMBIES.

OSRIC
How much more time?

LUSTER
Don't distract me! I'm almost done.

FLYNN XV

Thank the gods!

FLYNN XV is killed by ZOMBIES.

LODGE (v.o.)

Luster has finished re-memorizing her
spell.

LUSTER slams her book shut and stands.

LUSTER

Oh, darling! Prepare to receive the Flaming
Hand of Fiery Doom!

DRAZUUL's eyes widen in fright. He fires a bolt of
lightning at the party, killing FLYNN XVI. The other HEROES
scatter.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

CASS

Nice, Gary. Way to warn him what's coming.

MILES

Start casting. We'll protect you.

CASS

Against that lightning? I don't think so.
It's time to run.

GARY

Yeah, I need a few rounds to cast this
spell. I'd need a barricade or something.

DAPHNE

(inspired)

Hide behind the mound of dead bards!

X. EXT. COURTYARD

A pile of dead bards is stacked to one side of the
courtyard. About forty similarly-dressed corpses make up
about a four by eight foot barricade. LUSTER, SILENCE,
OSRIC, and DAPHNE dive behind it, narrowly missing another
lightning bolt.

GARY (v.o.)

I have to stand to cast this one. We're still not safe.

LEO (v.o.)

I got your back.

FLYNN XVII cracks his knuckles and nods resolutely. Then he's killed by ZOMBIES. LUSTER stands to face DRAZUUL. She begins casting.

DRAZUUL smiles and fires a lightning bolt at LUSTER. FLYNN XVIII runs and leaps in the way, getting incinerated. LUSTER keeps casting. DRAZUUL, frustrated, fires another bolt of lightning. FLYNN XIX leaps in the way, getting incinerated. LUSTER keeps casting.

Enraged, DRAZUUL fires bolts from both hands, both eyes, and his mouth. FLYNN XX-XV leap in the way, all getting incinerated.

LUSTER finishes casting her spell. She points at DRAZUUL, who freezes in place and turns blue. All the ZOMBIES shudder and drop dead.

The HEROES slowly approach the bound demon.

CASS (v.o.)

Hey, what about the Hand of Doom?

GARY (v.o.)

He was expecting that. That's why I chose Hold Beast instead. We can question him this way.

LODGE (v.o.)

Well done, Gary.

LUSTER

Where is your master?

DRAZUUL just laughs. LUSTER holds up a full water skin.

LUSTER (cont.)

Sir Osric, would you bless this water?

OSRIC blesses the water skin. DRAZUUL snarls.

LUSTER (cont.)

As you no doubt have guessed, this skin is now full of holy water. Tell us where your master is, or I'll give you a bath.

DRAZUUL

Your threat is empty. A paladin cannot stand by while torture takes place.

OSRIC looks at the courtyard walls.

OSRIC

My, what interesting walls. I think I will examine them.

OSRIC walks off to a wall. DRAZUUL betrays fear. LUSTER pours some holy water on DRAZUUL's head.

WE HEAR: unholy shrieking and sizzling

SILENCE, FLYNN, and DAPHNE step back at the sound. LUSTER stops pouring.

LUSTER

I can always have the paladin bless more water. Didn't we pass a lake on the way here?

DRAZUUL

The quarry! You will find the entrance in the quarry!

LUSTER

And how do we defeat him?

DRAZUUL

The book! His power is in the book. But his is not the power to fear!

LUSTER

Be gone, then.

DRAZUUL shrieks and vanishes. The pentagram bursts into flame and quickly dies down.

X. EXT. FANTASY WORLD

MONTAGE SEQUENCE - The HEROES slink cautiously through various terrains, each of which is progressively harsher and darker. The sequence ends with the HEROES outside the entrance to a cave.

LODGE (v.o.)

Cautiously, you explore the outer reaches of town. Shortly, you find the entrance to the catacombs that Drazuul told you about.

The HEROES stride purposefully into the cave.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

LODGE builds the entrance to a dungeon out of miniature dungeon blocks on the table. He places two tiny gargoyles in front of a dungeon door.

LODGE

There are two doors leading farther underground, but a gargoyle stands in front of each. There is an inscription on the wall between them.

X. INT. DUNGEON - GARGOYLE ROOM

The HEROES, torches in hand, are standing before two large doors. Tiny GARGOYLES are sitting atop each door jamb. A plaque between them is inscribed with the runes of some mystic language.

DAPHNE

Bard, come here.

FLYNN

My name is not 'bard.' I am Flynn the 45th. My ancestors died on the battlefield three minutes ago.

DAPHNE

Fine, fine. Flynn, have you seen this script before?

FLYNN

We shall see.

FLYNN studies the text.

FLYNN (v.o.)

It's Necrotic Arcane. It reads:
"One will always tell the truth;
The other always lies.
Pick your path correctly now,
Or everybody dies."

DAPHNE

What could that mean?

LYING GARGOYLE and TRUTHFUL GARGOLYE open their eyes.

TRUTHFUL GARGOYLE

Why, it means pick my door! It is the
true path. I always tell the truth.

LYING GARGOYLE

He lies! He lies! His path leads to
death! *I* always tell the truth.

TRUTHFUL

Don't listen to him. He's the liar. His
door will kill you!

LYING

That's what he wants you to believe.
Take my path, it is safe and true!

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

MILES is scribbling down notes.

MILES

Which one said the other was the liar?

LODGE

Both.

CASS rolls some dice.

CASS

I solve the puzzle.

LODGE

Go ahead.

CASS
I just did.

LODGE
Did what?

CASS
Solved the puzzle.

LODGE
I missed something.

CASS
Would you describe this challenge as
a puzzle?

LODGE
(suspiciously)
Yes.

CASS
Okay, then. I have the Puzzles and Riddles
skill. I rolled a skill check and passed,
so I solved the puzzle.

LODGE
No, you didn't.

CASS
I did. My skill is plus 12, I rolled
a 15, so unless the difficulty rating
is 28 or higher, I just solved the puzzle.

LODGE
You lazy munchkin!

CASS
What was the difficulty rating for the
puzzle?

LODGE
There wasn't one. You actually have to
solve the puzzle to go on.

CASS
Must I remind you that the rules specific-

ally state that any riddle or puzzle must have a difficulty rating?

LODGE

That's only for calculating experience! It's not a loophole to get out of a brain teaser!

CASS

If there's a difficulty rating, and I have the skill ...

LODGE

Oh, blow it out your ass!

CASS

I'll take that as a concession to my argument. So, what's in the next room?

LODGE holds his fingers a centimeter apart before CASS.

LODGE

You're this close to a random encounter with the Terrasque.

CASS feigns fear.

JOANNA

Gentlemen, please? A moment?

CASS and LODGE look at JOANNA.

JOANNA (cont.)

I know the answer.

X. INT. DUNGEON - GARGOYLE ROOM

DAPHNE steps forward.

JOANNA (v.o.)

I ask the one on the left ...

DAPHNE addresses TRUTHFUL.

DAPHNE

If I asked *him* whether *you* spoke truth or lies, what would he say?

TRUTHFUL
He would say I always lie.

DAPHNE addresses LYING.

DAPHNE
And if I asked *him* whether *you* spoke truth
or lies, what would he say.

LYING
He would say I always tell the truth.

DAPHNE
I see.

DAPHNE points at TRUTHFUL.

DAPHNE (cont.)
It's this one.

MILES (v.o.)
Are you sure?

LEO (v.o.)
Don't open it!

DAPHNE opens the door under TRUTHFUL. It swings harmlessly open. She gestures for the others to enter.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

The other GAMERS, minus CASS, are regarding JOANNA with surprise. She beams.

LODGE
Now that's how you solve a puzzle.

MILES
Way to reason that out!

JOANNA
Well, I can't take total credit for it.
I have seen "Labyrinth."

GARY
That movie's awesome! Mia Sara is so hot.

I would so totally do her.

JOANNA is disgusted. The nice moment is lost.

LEO

You idiot! [BEAT] Mia Sara was in "Legend."
You're thinking Jennifer Connolly. [BEAT]
She is so hot.

GARY

Isn't she?

LODGE

Could we get back to the story, please?

X. INT. DUNGEON - CORRIDOR

The five HEROES, torches in hand, stalk down a narrow
dungeon corridor. It takes them down some stairs and
through another hallway.

LODGE (v.o.)

A hallway beyond the door leads down a
flight of stairs, further into the darkness.
The temperature drops noticeably, and
even the flames of your torches seem
to be shying away from the dark.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

The model dungeon, now more detailed, spreads farther
across the table. LODGE adds a few pieces to the end,
creating a large, circular room with many obstacles, such
as pits, pillars, and fallen rocks.

LODGE

The corridor comes to an end in a large,
circular room. The ceiling stretches high
above, and leads you to guess you are
far below the mountain. The room is wide
but cluttered; random pits, fallen boulders,
and pillars hewn from living stone all
decorate the room.

GARY

Cool.

LODGE pulls out a bag of miniatures.

LODGE

You're going to need miniatures for this one. Mark your spots at the south entrance.

The GAMERS take out tiny pewter figurines that represent their characters. CASS, MILES, GARY, and LEO all have minis that look like the characters they are playing. JOANNA looks around, slightly confused.

JOANNA

I don't have any miniatures.

LEO

Here, you can borrow one of mine.

LEO pulls out a mini from a bag and hands it to JOANNA.

LEO (cont.)

This is the only female I've got.

JOANNA's mini is a well-endowed barbarian woman wearing bikini mail and swinging a broadsword. She's naked but for the armor. JOANNA looks at him wryly.

LEO (cont.)

Sorry.

JOANNA places her piece on the dungeon model with the other minis. The shot dissolves into the next scene.

X. INT. DUNGEON - DOME ROOM

The five HEROES are standing in exactly the same positions at the south entrance as their miniatures. The HEROES are also standing in the same positions as the miniatures.

Establishing shot of the room. Four pillars rise to the ceiling, and large boulders are scattered about. A few pits fall downward, and a tiny chasm, crossed by a bridge, splits the ground. There is an exit on the far side.

FLYNN

I do not like this room.

SILENCE

Then let us hurry across it.

DAPHNE

The bridge seems the surest way.

The others nod to DAPHNE, do a double take, and openly stare at her.

DAPHNE (cont.)

What? What are you looking at?

OTHER HEROES

(ad libbing)

Oh, nothing. Looking? What? Nothing in particular. Nice boots.

DAPHNE looks down at herself. She is wearing nothing but bikini mail, and is holding a broadsword. Her breasts are much larger. Her face reddens in embarrassment.

LUSTER

Hoo, mama.

LUSTER becomes male. He and the other HEROES stare openly at her chest.

DAPHNE

(angry)

This is not what I look like! This is just the miniature.

FLYNN

Those are many things, my dear, but miniature they are not.

DAPHNE looks at her chest, flinches, and covers herself. Then she screws up her face and sneezes.

LUSTER

Careful. That top could come right off.

The other HEROES snicker.

DAPHNE

Turn around!

The other HEROES reluctantly turn around.

DAPHNE (cont.)

Thank you.

(to the ceiling)

And I believe I had a spear!

DAPHNE's broadsword becomes a spear.

DAPHNE

That's more like it. Come on, march.

The HEROES set off across the room towards the bridge. When they cross the bridge, they stop midway and peer over the side. The chasm drops down infinitely below them.

At the far side of the bridge, a skull is skewered on a spear. SILENCE notices and points it out.

MILES (v.o.)

Detect Evil.

OSRIC lowers his head in prayer. The holy symbol on his armor glows brightly.

LODGE (v.o.)

You sense evil all around you ... and it's coming closer.

The HEROES look around anxiously. Suddenly, a GHOUL leaps up out of one of the pits. The HEROES whirl to face him just as another GHOUL spits out of a pit behind him. About two dozen GHOULS spurt out of the tiny pits on both sides of them, surrounding the HEROES.

The HEROES draw their weapons and square themselves. One of the GHOULS flips a switch on a pillar.

WE HEAR: groaning, squealing metal.

DAPHNE looks up and panics.

DAPHNE

Look out!

A boulder falls from the ceiling towards the bridge. LUSTER, OSRIC, and SILENCE leap to the side near the exit.

DAPHNE and FLYNN leap to the side near the entrance. The falling boulder pulverizes the bridge, sending it into the chasm below. There is no sound of it hitting bottom.

The GHOULS bellow battle cries and charge.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

GUEN is standing on an end table. He's curiously watching the action on the table.

LODGE is placing the last of two dozen black ghoulish minis on the dungeon model. The hero minis are on appropriate sides of the dungeon. LODGE removes the bridge from the model.

LODGE
Everyone roll inish.

The GAMERS all roll dice.

X. INT. DUNGEON - DOME ROOM

BATTLE MONTAGE - DAPHNE fells several GHOULS, protecting FLYNN in the process. FLYNN manages to kill a couple, and takes light wounds. On the other side of the chasm, SILENCE, OSRIC, and LUSTER fight off GHOULS attacking them. More boulders fall at regular intervals. The HEROES always manage to dive out of the way, but GHOULS are occasionally crushed beneath them.

DAPHNE, bloodied, kills the last of the GHOULS on her side. Suddenly, more GHOULS pop out of the pits.

DAPHNE
We have to cross the gap!

FLYNN
How?

DAPHNE runs towards the chasm and pole vaults across with her spear.

DAPHNE
Come on!

FLYNN runs towards the edge and leaps across. He almost misses, but grabs the opposite ledge. DAPHNE pulls him up.

FLYNN
I'm alive!

DAPHNE
Good for you.

DAPHNE and FLYNN join the battle with SILENCE, OSRIC, and LUSTER. They press the GHOULS back, but more GHOULS pop out of the pits.

LUSTER
There's too many of them.

OSRIC
The door! Fight towards the door.

WE HEAR: giant, thundering footsteps

An enormous black, furry paw slams down in the room, scattering GHOULS. Everyone, HEROES and GHOULS alike, stops fighting and looks up.

A giant black cat, GUEN, is filling most of the room. GUEN roars deafeningly.

FLYNN
(horrified)
Oh, my god!

Giant GUEN eats FLYNN.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

GUEN is standing on the table in the dome room of the dungeon model. He's scattered the miniatures everywhere, and has the mini of FLYNN in his mouth.

LEO
Bad kitty! Leggo my mini!

LODGE
Guenhwyvar, get off the table!

LODGE picks up GUEN and takes the mini out of his mouth. He sets him on the floor and gives LEO the mini. The mini is missing an arm

LEO
I believe I had an arm.

LEO sees the arm lying in the model.

LEO (cont.)
Oh, there it is.

LEO picks up the arm.

LODGE
Sorry about that, everyone.

LODGE starts picking up all the scattered dungeon model props and miniatures. LEO glues the arm back on his mini with thick, green glue.

LODGE (cont.)
Okay, let's see if I can remember where all this goes.

X. INT. DUNGEON - DOME ROOM

The pillars, boulders, and GHOULS are lying scattered around the room. The bridge is leaning up against a wall. The HEROES are standing in a small group. FLYNN has a thick ring of green glue around the shoulder of his right arm.

LODGE (v.o.)
The pillars were here and here.

The pillars rise from the ground and fly back to their original positions.

LODGE (v.o.)
Boulders here.

The boulders fly up and land with heavy thuds in the room.

LODGE (v.o.)
The bridge was gone.

The bridge drops back into the chasm.

LODGE (v.o.)
And you all ...

An unseen force grabs FLYNN and DAPHNE and hauls them near the chasm. SILENCE, LUSTER, and OSRIC are then dragged to their previous position.

LODGE (v.o.)
Now for the ghouls.

The GHOULS are placed randomly.

CASS (v.o.)
I had already killed the one in front of me.

The GHOUL in front of SILENCE dies.

JOANNA (v.o.)
I'm pretty sure I was facing the other direction.

JOANNA turns around to face a GHOUL behind her. She stabs it. It dies.

LODGE (v.o.)
We're not fighting yet.

The GHOUL rises again.

GARY (v.o.)
I was behind those two.

An unseen force drags LUSTER behind two GHOULS. LUSTER draws two daggers.

LODGE (v.o.)
Is that right for everybody?

LEO (v.o.)
Actually, those ghouls were like this.

The GHOULS in front of the door get in near single file.

LODGE (v.o.)
Are you sure?

LEO (v.o.)
Oh, yes.

FLYNN winks at OSRIC. OSRIC looks at the line of GHOULS, gets inspired, and winks at FLYNN.

LODGE (v.o.)
Okay. Are we ready?

GAMERS (v.o.)
Yes.

LODGE (v.o.)
Go!

DAPHNE kills the GHOUL in front of her. LUSTER backstabs the two GHOULS in front of him. OSRIC points his hand towards the line of GHOULS blocking the door.

OSRIC
Turn!

The GHOULS, as one, fall backwards. The HEROES charge towards the door, stabbing the fallen GHOULS as they go. They are through the door before the horde of other GHOULS can catch up. LUSTER slams the door behind them.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

LODGE looks like he's been cheated. The GAMERS all look at him innocently.

LODGE
After arranging your way past the army of ghouls, you find yourselves in another dark corridor. It appears much less traveled. Cobwebs line the walls, and vermin scurry underfoot.

X. INT. DUNGEON - CORRIDOR

Establishing shot of the dark dungeon corridor from the beginning. Vermin scurry about. Debris lines the walls.

The HEROES turn the corner and follow the corridor to its end, where a large metal door bars their passage. DAPHNE moves to force the door open, but FLYNN darts forward and catches her arm. FLYNN points to cryptic runes on the door. DAPHNE notices the runes and quickly draws back from them.

OSRIC steps forward and grips his holy symbol with both hands. He begins to chant softly. The glow around the symbol increases. Suddenly, the runes on the door burst into flame, then die out.

WE HEAR: A locking mechanism unlocking.

X. INT. DUNGEON - CAVE

The room beyond has an earthen floor. Half of the wall is natural cavern, with stalagmites and stalactites. The other half is manmade. The hole TURK knocked through the manmade wall is still there.

WODNICK is standing beside the collapsed wall. The large treasure chest is sitting to one side of him.

The HEROES enter. When they see WODNICK, OSRIC and DAPHNE move for their weapons, but SILENCE, FLYNN, and LUSTER just stare.

GARY (v.o.)
No way. Is that ...

LUSTER
Wodnick? You're still here?

WODNICK looks at LUSTER and the other.

WODNICK
Who are you?

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

MILES looks to LEO and GARY.

MILES
Wodnick? Who's Wodnick?

LEO
He's our henchman from the first time we did this campaign.

JOANNA
You made him carry that big chest all by himself?

LEO
Well, yeah. He's a henchman.

CASS
No way he's still alive.

LODGE
Sure he is. Your last characters left about three months worth of provisions in that Trunk of Holding. Along with everything else.

CASS
Okay, all right.

X. INT. DUNGEON - CAVE

LUSTER approaches WODNICK.

LUSTER
Wodnick, don't you recognize me? It's me, Fastidian.

WODNICK
Then why are you wearing a dress?

LUSTER
What? Oh, right.

LUSTER becomes female. SILENCE steps up.

SILENCE
We've come to retrieve our goods. It's us, your former masters.

WODNICK
Hang on a minute. You're not my masters. You're entirely different characters just played by the same people.

SILENCE
What?

WODNICK
I'm talking out of character.

LODGE (v.o.)

Wodnick's never seen you before. Your new characters have no idea who his last employers were since you had no connection to them.

CASS (v.o.)

We could have had a connection.

SILENCE

I am a monk in the same religious order as Fastidian.

WODNICK

You look like no monk I've ever seen.

LUSTER

It's us, Wodnick! Turk, Rennard, all of us!

WODNICK

Weren't you a man a minute ago?

LEO (v.o.)

I'll charm him.

FLYNN plays on his mandolin. WODNICK softens to the music.

WE HEAR: dice roll

WODNICK

Well ... since my employers more than likely dead, I guess you can have the trunk. As long as I get to carry it.

SILENCE

Of course.

OSRIC

Wait, you're giving in just like that?

WODNICK

You have to admit, that mandolin can be very persuasive.

DAPHNE

A minute ago you wanted no connection to these guys, and now you're turning

over the one thing you've been guarding
for six weeks? Could things get any
weirder?

FLYNN's right arm falls off.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

GARY fishes out some hastily written notes from his binder.

LEO
Gary, you got that list of what all's in
the trunk?

GARY
Right here.

LEO
We can plunder anything from the list,
right?

LODGE
I suppose.

GARY
Awesome.

X. INT. DUNGEON - CAVE

SILENCE and LUSTER pull out various potions, weapons, and
pieces of armor. OSRIC watches curiously, WODNICK
passively. DAPHNE, who is again dressed in her regular
costume, reattaches FLYNN's arm.

SILENCE
Healing potions for everyone.

SILENCE passes out healing potions. The HEROES drink them.
LUSTER finds a couple of black fuse bombs.

LUSTER
Hey, guys, remember these?

LODGE (cont.)
I still can't believe I let you use
those.

FLYNN
We are so ready.

FLYNN's arm falls off again.

X. INT. DUNGEON - ANTECHAMBER

WE HEAR: A brief struggle and clash of arms.

FLYNN kicks open the door and strides inside, the other four HEROES close beside him.

FLYNN
Mort Kemnon!

Establishing shot of the room. At the far end is a black throne. KEMNON sits on the throne, shrouded in darkness. His face is never revealed. Curtained passages exit from either side of KEMNON's throne.

KEMNON
Welcome.

SILENCE
Your reign of terror ends here!

FASTIDIAN aims his glowing holy symbol at KEMNON.

LUSTER
By the light of Therin, you shall fall!

KEMNON laughs menacingly.

KEMNON
What good is the light of your goddess?
She cannot help you here.

KEMNON extends his hand. Black energy crackles around it. The holy symbol on OSRIC's armor darkens. LUSTER lights the two bombs with SILENCE's help.

OSRIC
Face us, necromancer!

KEMNON stands and steps into the light. He is thin, pale, and gaunt. He smiles darkly and raises a black mask, the Mask of Death, to cover his face.

KEMNON

Face my army, mortal.

Dozens of GHOULS begin to pour in through the curtained entrances. The moment they appear, LUSTER throws a bomb at either entrance. The bombs explode, flinging pieces of GHOUL in all directions and bringing the ceiling crashing down over the entrances, blocking them. KEMNON regards the collapsed entrances in surprise.

KEMNON (cont.)

I hadn't counted on you doing that.

OSRIC

Die!

OSRIC charges KEMNON and swings mightily at him. KEMNON vanishes. OSRIC's swing cleaves the throne in half.

OSRIC

Where has he gone?

FLYNN runs up and examines the wall behind the throne.

FLYNN

There's a door here!

FLYNN flips a hidden switch.

X. INT. DUNEGON - CHAPEL CRYPT

Establishing shot of a dark, open chapel, a mockery of a church. An altar to the god of death takes up one entire wall. Opposite that is a small, caged cell. Inside rests a large, leather-bound book. Chains hang outside the cell.

A side wall slides back, and the HEROES pour through, looking around. KEMNON appears before the altar.

KEMNON

Welcome to the chapel of a true god. I promise you, this will be our final confrontation.

SILENCE

That's good enough for me.

SILENCE, DAPHNE, and OSRIC lunge at KEMNON. Each strike him with a devastating blow, but none of the attacks draws blood or seems to hurt KEMNON. KEMNON throws his arms wide, and the three HEROES are flung aside like rag dolls.

LODGE (cont.)

Each of you hit, but he shows absolutely no signs of damage.

KEMNON folds his arms and walks towards the prone HEROES.

KEMNON

I know you can do better than that.

DAPHNE looks around frantically, sees the book.

JOANNA (v.o.)

The book! The demon said his power was in the book.

DAPHNE

Destroy the grimoire!

KEMNON backhands DAPHNE, sending her sprawling. OSRIC charges him. The two engage in combat.

LUSTER and makes for the cage and picks the lock. Before she can enter, the chains hanging to the side animate. They swing at LUSTER and wrap around her wrists, then yank her to the wall. SILENCE rushes over to untangle her.

FLYNN tucks and rolls into the cage past other chains. He stands before the book and draws a dagger.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

The dungeon model is complete. The miniature of FLYNN is in the cage with the book.

LODGE

Flynn is in the cell with the grimoire.

LEO

I stab it. Wait! I backstab it.

CASS

Good call.

LODGE

What? You can't backstab it! You can't backstab an inanimate object!

LEO

Why not? It's prone!

LODGE

You can only backstab humanoids! The book has no discernable anatomy to attack!

LEO

It's got a spine, doesn't it!

LODGE

Fine, fine. Roll your attack.

LEO grabs a 20-sided die and rolls a 1.

X. INT. DUNGEON - CHAPEL CRYPT

OSRIC and DAPHNE combat KEMNON in the background. SILENCE frees LUSTER, who begins casting.

FLYNN stabs downward at the book and stabs his hand. He howls in pain and pulls out the dagger. Suddenly, he looks at the grimoire as if he's just solved a riddle.

FLYNN

I've got it!

MILES (v.o.)

You've got what?

LEO (v.o.)

I know how to destroy the book! Look, I attacked the book and hit, but hurt myself, right? It's a reverse damage condition! If I wound it, I take the damage. The reverse is also true!

FLYNN squares himself and stands before the book.

FLYNN

Your evil ends here, Mort Kemnon!

FLYNN stabs himself in the chest. Everyone else stops what they're doing and stares at him. FLYNN, looking confused, drops dead.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

Everyone is staring in disbelief at LEO.

LEO

I suck at bards.

JOANNA

Are you sure you've done this before?

LODGE

That was unprecedented, Leo.

GARY

On the upside, though, it gave me time to finish my spell.

LODGE

Which one?

GARY

Need you ask?

X. INT. DUNGEON - CHAPEL CRYPT

LUSTER finishes casting her spell. In the cell, the book bursts into flame. An enormous hand erupts from the ground and squeezes the burning book.

KEMNON shrieks inhumanely and ignites. He falls into a burning heap. The Mask of Death falls from his face and clatters on the ground. When the spell ends, he stops burning. He can hardly move, and looks to have aged a hundred years.

The HEROES gather around the fallen necromancer. KEMNON laughs feebly.

KEMNON

(dying)

You think that you have won.

SILENCE

How have we not?

KEMNON

You have only made *him* more powerful.

SILENCE

Who?

KEMNON laughs, and dissolves into ash. His laughter echoes throughout the chapel crypt, dying slowly.

OSRIC kneels by the Mask of Death and picks it up. The moment he touches it, all the torches are snuffed out.

X. EXT. CAVE ENTRANCE

The HEROES, dirty and bloodied, trudge out of the cave. They stand squinting in the early morning light.

LODGE (v.o.)

It seems that Mort Kemnon's lair died with him, for you have no encounters on your way back through the caverns. You emerge from the cave, Kemnon's final words burning in your ears. The early morning light is blinding, so much so that you don't see the riders until they are upon you.

Four PALADINS and LORD HIGH ride up and halt. LORD HIGH salutes, but doesn't dismount.

LORD HIGH

Hail, Sir Osric!

OSRIC wearily salutes LORD HIGH

LORD HIGH (cont.)

Am I right in assuming you were successful in your quest?

OSRIC

Aye, you are.

LORD HIGH

Excellent. Therin be praised. You and your heroes are to be commended. Have you also recovered the Mask of Death?

OSRIC hides the Mask behind his back.

OSRIC
Aye, we have.

LORD HIGH
Gods be praised! Our land will be at peace at last.

LORD HIGH extends his hand.

LORD HIGH (cont.)
Quickly, now, hand it here so we may rush it back to the cathedral and destroy its evil once and for all.

OSRIC
Would that I could, sir, but I have vowed to return it to the Hierophant myself.

LORD HIGH
(laughing)
Your duty is steadfast! But I assure you, we come with the Hierophant's blessing. Now give me the Mask.

OSRIC
I cannot.

LORD HIGH
Truly, you will not be diverted. But now is not the time for personal heroics. We must destroy the Mask. Give it here!

DAPHNE and SILENCE step up to flank OSRIC.

SILENCE
You have your answer, Paladin.

OSRIC
The Hierophant will have it when we deliver it, not a moment sooner.

LORD HIGH's face darkens.

LORD HIGH
(angrily)
As Lord High Paladin, I command you to hand
over the Mask!

OSRIC
I am not yours to command.

The other PALADINS draw their swords. OSRIC doesn't flinch. FLYNN steps forward and takes the reins of a PALADIN's horse. That PALADIN strikes FLYNN with his sword, wounding but not killing him. DAPHNE shields FLYNN.

DAPHNE
Put your swords away! Hasn't enough blood
already been spilled? Haven't enough bards
already died?

LORD HIGH
This amounts to treason!

SILENCE
(sagely)
Treason is the unenlightened man's way of
saying he knows not for whom the waves
beat the shore.

Everyone stares at SILENCE.

LORD HIGH
You speak in riddles, monk.

LUSTER
No, he's just full of shit.

LORD HIGH
Very well, Osric. Keep the mask for now! I
shall report your slanderous disobedience
to the Hierophant!

LORD HIGH signals, and the PALADINS turn their mounts and ride away. The HEROES warily watch them go.

FLYNN
What was that about?

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

LODGE addresses the other GAMERS.

LODGE

Weary and worried, you trek back along the trail, back through the ruins of Westhaven and across the ravine. You make excellent time, and as the sun is setting, you arrive back in the village of mudhollow.

LEO

Let's go to the inn. I've got two hit points left, I need a good night's sleep.

GARY

Agreed.

JOANNA

I want to talk things over before we turn in, so we're all on the same page.

GARY

In character?

JOANNA

Yes, of course.

MILES

Agreed.

GARY

Can't we just skip to tomorrow morning, keep the adventure going?

JOANNA

This is what my character would do. She wouldn't wait until morning.

GARY

(disappointed)

Okay. Don't take too long.

JOANNA

(to LODGE)
I order dinner from the innkeeper.

X. INT. INN - NIGHT

Establishing shot of a medieval inn. A roaring fire fills the fireplace. The HEROES share a circular table in the center of the common room. The INNKEEPER is polishing the bar. The other tables are deserted.

FLYNN
Could we go to bed soon? I'm almost dead.

DAPHNE
In a moment. [BEAT] Do you remember what Mort Kemnon said just before he died?

LUSTER
Aaaarrrggh?

DAPHNE
No, he said "you have only made *him* more powerful." Who was he talking about?

SILENCE
Death, obviously. His god.

DAPHNE
I disagree. How would Death be more powerful after his most powerful servant was killed?

OSRIC
In the forest, he also said our breath was wasted on him. I dismissed it then. Maybe he was trying to tell us something.

SILENCE
Such as?

OSRIC
I am unsure.

DAPHNE
Perhaps he was not the enemy we should have been hunting.

The BARMAID seduced by FLYNN earlier brings a steaming baked turkey to the table. FLYNN recognizes her, and smiles at her winningly.

FLYNN
Hello again, gorgeous.

The BARMAID smiles back, then slaps him hard across the face and storms off. FLYNN is stunned.

LODGE (v.o.)
Okay, that's one damage.

FLYNN
(shocked)
What?

LODGE (v.o.)
Minimum damage, dude. Sorry.

LEO (v.o.)
I've got one hit point left! One! I could die from a squirrel bite!

FLYNN
I would really like to go to bed right now.

LUSTER is bored. She stares disinterestedly at the turkey.

JOANNA
In a minute.

OSRIC
Maybe the *him* was whoever holds the Mask of Death.

JOANNA
That could implicate the Hierophant, maybe even the king.

OSRIC
What would the Hierophant want with the power of Death? I don't think he could even use it. He's not his worshipper.

GARY (v.o.)
Boring!

JOANNA

Wait. Flynn, you said the mask makes the wearer the avatar of whatever god he worships, right.

FLYNN

Yes. What of it?

JOANNA

Well, if that's true, then the Hierophant could use the mask to gain the power of Therin.

FLYNN

Why would he do that? He's already her Hierophant.

LUSTER rolls her head on the table in boredom.

GARY (v.o.)

Can't we do this in the morning?

OSRIC

There was something the demon said, right before we banished him.

LUSTER

Bleaaaaarrgh?

OSRIC

No. He said Kemnon's power was in his book, but that ...

DAPHNE

That his was not the power to fear. [BEAT]
And what does *that* mean.

OSRIC

I do not know. Let us discuss it.

LUSTER looks up, painfully bored. Her eyes land on the turkey. Her face lights up with wicked inspiration.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

GARY hastily scrawls a note and hands it to LODGE. LODGE looks over the note, which reads: "I cast Raise Dead on the turkey." LODGE regards GARY with distaste.

LODGE
Really?

GARY
Oh, yes.

LODGE sighs.

LODGE
Okay, then.

X. INT. INN - NIGHT

LUSTER casts a quick spell, and the UNDEAD TURKEY stands up on its legs, groaning inappropriately. The HEROES stare at it in shock. TURKEY wobbles around the table, dropping stuffing everywhere. LUSTER is very pleased.

DAPHNE
You raised our dinner from the dead?

LUSTER
Apparently.

OSRIC
I am morally obliged to destroy this monstrosity.

OSRIC stands and unsheathes his sword.

OSRIC (cont.)
What would my order say?

LORD HIGH
We would say, give us the mask or die!

OSRIC and the other HEROES whirl around. LORD HIGH and six other PALADINS have entered the inn, blades drawn. The HEROES, minus FLYNN, jump to their feet, ready for battle. TURKEY waddles off the table and hits the floor.

LEO (v.o.)
I'm gonna die, I'm gonna die!

FLYNN hides in the corner beside the fireplace.

OSRIC

I will not kill members of my own order!

LORD HIGH

You are no longer of us, traitor!

The PALADINS attack. SILENCE, LUSTER, DAPHNE, and OSRIC engage the PALADINS in battle. OSRIC only strikes with the flat of his blade and with his fists, not landing any lethal blows. FLYNN cowers in the corner. The TURKEY slowly waddles towards FLYNN, who doesn't see it.

DAPHNE is fighting two PALADINS when she trips backwards and falls prone on her back, losing her spear. The PALADINS move in for the kill. OSRIC leaps in front of her, killing both PALADINS with a single stroke. As they fall, OSRIC looks in horror at what he's done.

WE HEAR: undead turkey sounds

FLYNN looks up at the mantel. TURKEY looks back at him. FLYNN shrieks girlishly as TURKEY leaps upon him.

LORD HIGH clubs OSRIC and snatches the Mask from his belt. LORD HIGH and the two living PALADINS storm out of the inn and escape.

The HEROES climb to their feet. Only then do they notice FLYNN lying dead on the floor, the TURKEY standing on his bloody chest. OSRIC points angrily at the TURKEY.

OSRIC

Turn!

Nothing happens. Everyone looks at OSRIC.

OSRIC (cont.)

I've killed my own. I've lost my powers.

LUSTER backstabs the TURKEY, which dies. Then he rips a piece off the TURKEY and munches it.

LUSTER

Hey, guys! It's still good!

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

LODGE addresses the other GAMERS.

LODGE

By the time you rush outside, the Paladins
have already ridden away with the mask.
You try to resurrect Flynn, but the
Staff of Resurrection is out of charges.

(to MILES)

Miles, with me.

MILES and LODGE get up and maneuver to the kitchen.

CASS

He's a goner.

JOANNA

What do you mean? He only lost his powers.

CASS

It's much worse than that. Servants of
Therin, they have it back when they
mess up.

X. INT. LODGE'S KITCHEN

LODGE leads MILES into the kitchen.

LODGE

When a Paladin of your order loses his
powers, that's not all there is to it.

MILES

How bad is it?

LODGE

For spilling the blood of your order,
you lose your powers, and you age one
year per hour until you redeem yourself.

MILES

Damn. That wasn't in first edition.

X. INT. INN - NIGHT

FLYNN is lying dead on the table. The other four HEROES are standing about. LUSTER is still eating turkey.

OSRIC

Lady Daphne, I fear you were correct.
We must retrieve the Mask. We must also
assume that the Hierophant, for whatever
reason, is now our enemy.

DAPHNE

We'll set out for the cathedral immediately.
If we push hard, it'll still take us
more than two days.

OSRIC

(wincing)

Two days.

LUSTER

Do you want to bury the bard, get the
piety points?

OSRIC

No. I have an idea. We'll need to carry
him with us.

OSRIC catches sight of himself in the mirror. He touches
some newly gray hairs at his temples.

OSRIC (cont.)

We haven't a moment to lose.

X. EXT. FANTASY WORLD

The four remaining HEROES stride purposefully back towards
the castle town. FLYNN lies covered in a handcart. OSRIC
looks progressively older, aging rapidly.

LODGE (v.o.)

You journey swiftly back into the king's
land, and as you go, you are more convinced
that the true enemy lies ahead, for the
land is harsher even than before.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

LODGE addresses the GAMERS.

LODGE

You arrive to find the cathedral guarded
by Paladins.

CASS

They'll be looking for us.

GARY

We need a distraction to get in.

MILES

Exactly. Here's what we're going to do.

The GAMERS lean forward expectantly.

X. EXT. CATHEDRAL

Several stern-faced PALADINS are guarding the cathedral. A
PRIEST is in charge of the watch. LUSTER, disguised as a
peasant, wheels the cart with FLYNN's body towards the
guards. The other HEROES hide behind a hedge. OSRIC is
older, appearing to be in his sixties.

When LUSTER nears, the PRIEST halts her.

PRIEST

Ho, peasant. What business brings you
to Therin's temple?

LUSTER

Please, father, my husband, he is dead.
Raise him with Therin's healing hand.

PRIEST

Your husband?

LUSTER

Yes. I am so a woman.

LUSTER becomes female again.

PRIEST

Be that as it may, death is natural. We
cannot resurrect every yeoman who falls.

LUSTER holds out a bag of gold.

LUSTER

I make this donation to the church.

PRIEST takes the gold and tucks it into his belt.

PRIEST

Therin's blessings be upon you.

PRIEST turns to the PALADINS. LUSTER steals the bag of gold back from him.

PRIEST (cont.)

Brothers, escort this lady to the infirmary.

The PALADINS lead LUSTER inside. When they have gone, the other HEROES sneak up behind PRIEST. PRIEST turns around, sees them, and raises his hand, about to scream. SILENCE punches him in the ribs. PRIEST is frozen.

DAPHNE pulls out the chain mail bikini top and puts it in the PRIEST's upraised arm. They enter the cathedral, leaving the PRIEST frozen, appearing to scream at the armored skivvies in his hand.

X. INT. INFIRMARY

FLYNN is lying on a bed in front of a fireplace. LUSTER stands nearby, feigning worry. A female HEALER is sitting on the bed with a wooden recorder. The PRIESTESS seduced by FLYNN is holding a crystal bottle of water.

HEALER begins to play the Hymn to Therin. PRIESTESS pours some of the water on FLYNN's eyes. FLYNN shudders, and comes back to life.

HEALER

Therin be praised.

FLYNN

That music. I've heard it before.

HEALER

That is the Hymn to Therin. I call forth the love of our goddess.

FLYNN turns to PRIESTESS and smiles wryly.

FLYNN

Hey, beautiful. Care to break another vow?

PRIESTESS smiles coyly, then slaps FLYNN across the face.

SILENCE, OSRIC, and DAPHNE enter. HEALER and PRIESTESS are startled, but DAPHNE motions for them to stay silent.

DAPHNE

It's time.

X. INT. INNER SANCTUM

Establishing shot of the HIEROPHANT's inner sanctum. It is eerily similar to KEMNON's chapel crypt, with an altar to Therin at the back. HIEROPHANT is sitting on a throne behind the altar when the doors burst open and the HEROES enter. The Heart of Therin still hangs around his neck.

SILENCE

Grand Hierophant, we beg an audience!

HIEROPHANT

But of course. Sir Osric, I see the years have not been kind.

OSRIC

(weakly)

Give us the Mask.

HIEROPHANT

And why would I do this?

FLYNN

It must be destroyed.

HIEROPHANT

My dear boy, why would I wish it destroyed?

DAPHNE

It is evil. It must be destroyed, for the glory of your goddess.

HIEROPHANT

It is for the glory of my goddess that I shall wear the Mask!

The HEROES recoil, surprised.

OSRIC

But ... why?

HIEROPHANT (cont.)

Before the threat of Mort Kemnon and his army of the dead, the people had turned their backs on Therin. They became content, unholy. By depriving them of their goddess, I have rekindled their faith! More peasants and nobles come to the services now than ever. Their fear of Death drives them to the saving light of Therin.

DAPHNE

If the king finds out what you've done ...

HIEROPHANT

The king had to die. Now I rule, as king, as hierophant, and ... as avatar of our goddess!

HIEROPHANT dons the Mask of Death. Power and light swirl around him. When he speaks, his voice is magnified.

HIEROPHANT (cont.)

(insanely)

I have brought peace to these unworthy lands! I have resurrected the glory of light! And so only I am deserving of the power of Therin!

HIEROPHANT points at the HEROES.

HIEROPHANT (cont.)

Kneel before your new god!

The HEROES are forced to kneel.

WE HEAR: dice roll

OSRIC resists HIEROPHANT's compelling and stands. He struggles to walk towards HIEROPHANT.

OSRIC

You have betrayed your vows and your goddess. She will not stand for this blasphemy, and neither will I!

HIEROPHANT

Then join her in the world beyond!

HIEROPHANT fires ray of light at OSRIC. The ray traps him. He ages even more rapidly, ten to twenty years in seconds. He writhes in pain.

FLYNN, on his knees, manages to bring out his mandolin. He moves to play, then pauses.

LEO (v.o.)

How did that go? Oh, yes.

FLYNN plays the Hymn to Therin. HIEROPHANT turns his attention to FLYNN. Suddenly, the light around OSRIC him winks out. OSRIC collapses, wizened like a 100-year-old.

HIEROPHANT

Goddess?

WE HEAR: The Hymn to Therin, played by an unseen orchestra. The sound fills the inner sanctum.

HIEROPHANT looks around in fear. The Heart of Therin begins to glow. HIEROPHANT tries to cover it, but the Heart burns his hands.

HIEROPHANT (cont.)

(scared)

Goddess! I am your avatar!

A pulse of light bursts from the Heart. It knocks the Mask from HIEROPHANT's face and breaks the unseen bonds trapping the HEROES. The MASK lands within arm's reach of OSRIC. The HEROES stand. DAPHNE hefts her spear.

DAPHNE

The light of Therin be upon you.

HIEROPHANT

No!

DAPHNE hurls the spear at HIEROPHANT. It shatters the Heart, blowing him backwards. A blinding light flashes, wiping everything away. When the light fades, DAPHNE and HIEROPHANT are gone.

FLYNN, SILENCE, and LUSTER look around apprehensively. Their eyes come to rest on OSRIC. He is dead, lying peacefully on his back with the Mask on his chest.

X. EXT. PALACE OF LIGHT

Blinding white light fades. DAPHNE blinks her eyes and looks around.

Establishing shot of the Palace of Light. A golden castle of sunlight rises in the background atop hills of white grain. Blinding light shines from the Palace.

THERIN, a beautiful goddess with flowing hair, appears before DAPHNE, who drops to her knees and lowers her eyes.

THERIN

Rise, Daphne.

DAPHNE rises.

THERIN (cont.)

You have freed me from my prison, and I you have my thanks. Of all your fellow adventurers, you never strayed from the paths of goodness and law. And so, as a reward, I will grant you any one wish you desire.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

GARY, CASS, and LEO are stunned. JOANNA is thoughtful.

GARY

No way.

LEO

Limited wish, or unlimited?

CASS

She's a goddess, dude. It's unlimited. She can wish for anything.

LEO

Wish for power! You could make yourself
like a twentieth level everything!

GARY

No, no! Wealth! Wish for limitless wealth.
You could adventure forever on that.

CASS

Don't think small. Wish yourself immortal.
Have her make you a goddess as well.

JOANNA

I've decided.

X. EXT. PALACE OF LIGHT

DAPHNE raises her eyes to THERIN.

THERIN

What is your wish?

JOANNA

I wish you would return Sir Osric to life,
as the noble and true paladin he was.

THERIN nods.

THERIN

So be it.

The light flashes blindingly, whiting out everything.

X. INT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

Everyone but JOANNA is stunned.

MILES

(pleased)

That's awesome.

LODGE

(moved)

That's beautiful!

CASS

(enraged)
That's so freaking stupid!

Everyone looks at CASS, who pushes back from the table and stands up. He starts pacing.

CASS (cont.)
Oh, my God, I can't believe what you just did! I have seen some stupid decisions before, but this is the single most lame, retarded one ever! You wasted an unlimited wish! You had a party to think about! How about wishing for more wishes, advancing our levels, getting us magic items! You could have had *anything*!

JOANNA
It's what my character would have done.

CASS
You could have been a *god*! I know Mormons who'd kill for that! But no, you make the single most selfish, illogical decision in the history of role playing games! I just ... that is it!

CASS angrily grabs his coat and gear. He storms towards the door. He stops in front of it and turns.

CASS (cont.)
Damn it, we're gamers! Haven't you learned anything about gaming?!

CASS leaves and slams the door. Everyone at the table exchanges relieved looks.

GARY
I guess that means the campaign's over, doesn't it?

LODGE
Effectively, yes.

It is quiet for a few moments.

GARY
I had a good time.

LEO
Me, too. That was different. But cool,
mostly cool. You new guys, I like the
way you game.

GARY
Totally in agreement, here.

X. EXT. LODGE'S APARTMENT

The door opens. MILES, JOANNA, GARY, and LEO step out,
carrying their gaming equipment. LODGE follows, GUEN in his
arms. They exchange goodbyes, and LODGE locks up.

X. INT. LODGE'S STUDY

LODGE walks into the room and studies the maps. He sets
down GUEN and sits at his computer. He kills the screen
saver, and full word processor documents appear. LODGE
starts typing.

X. INT. COPY SHOP

LODGE's pages are printing out of a printer. LODGE takes
the copies, pays a TELLER, and heads outside.

X. EXT. COPY SHOP

JOANNA, LEO, GARY, and MILES are waiting outside. LODGE
comes out with five manilla envelopes. He hands one to each
of the others.

LODGE
Here it is, my first module, set entirely
in the world of Fartherall.

GARY
Awesome.

MILES
Nice.

They open their envelopes and examine the contents. Inside
are dungeon maps and descriptive texts.

DAPHNE

Have you found a publisher yet?

LODGE

No, but at least I wrote it. And I had a good time doing it, and that's what's important.

LEO

You know, I've got a spot in my store for homegrown games. Do you mind?

LODGE

No, no, please! I'd love it.

LODGE hands another envelope to JOANNA.

LODGE (cont.)

Oh! Before I forget, this one's for Cass. He was part of the campaign, I figured I should make the offer.

JOANNA takes the envelope.

JOANNA

We haven't really been talking, but I'll give it to him if he stops being an ass.

GARY

Hey, when can you all game again?

MILES

I'm free whenever.

JOANNA

I'm in.

LODGE

Great! I've got this awesome idea for a new villain. He's sort of this ninja swashbuckler, called the Shadow.

JOANNA

(apprehensively)

The Shadow?

GARY

(fearfully)

The Shadow!

MILES
(resolutely)
The Shadow.

LODGE
Hey, that's pretty cool! Can I use that?
Anyway, I already know where the new
adventure starts.

MILES and JOANNA
Where?

LODGE
Your wedding.

MILES and JOANNA look at each other and laugh.

X. EXT. WHITE CASTLE

Establishing shot of a fantasy wedding reception outside of a beautiful, white castle. GUESTS from throughout the previous adventure are lining the walkway outside.

OSRIC and DAPHNE, dressed in white, walk out, arm in arm. The GUESTS all cheer. LUSTER, also dressed in white, steps out between them.

LUSTER
I give you Lord Osric and Lady Daphne
of Whitetower!

The GUESTS all cheer. DAPHNE and OSRIC proceed down to the fountain, where they greet guests.

FLYNN, dressed in white, sidles between the BARMAID and PRIESTESS he seduced earlier. He whispers in one's ear first, then the other's. Both girls link arms with FLYNN, and all three run behind some hedges.

A distressed HERALD runs out of the castle up to OSRIC and DAPHNE. He kneels hastily.

HERALD
Dire news, my lord!

OSRIC
Rise. What is it?

HERALD rises. The GUESTS all curb their enthusiasm.

HERALD
The Mask of Death! It's gone, stolen by
the Shadow!

The GUESTS all gasp. OSRIC and DAPHNE pump their fists in excitement.

DAPHNE
Adventure time! Wodnick!

WODNICK runs out of the crowd, trunk on his back.

WODNICK
Yes, my lady?

DAPHNE
Load up! We're going out!

WODNICK
Yes, my lady!

DAPHNE rips off her wedding whites, revealing her regular armor. LUSTER does the same. OSRIC belts on his sword. FLYNN, disheveled, staggers out from behind the hedge, but two sets of arms grab him and pull him back down.

X. REAL/FANTASY WORLD MONTAGE

Series of shots cutting between the GAMERS laughing and joking at gaming tables and the HEROES adventuring in fantasy lands. The montage leads into the end credits.

END CREDITS