

999 SOULS

A BROS Rock Opera inspired by the music of **BARDIC COMPASS**

Written by Daniel Ciarrocchi

Music by Bardic Compass: Artem Bank, Carl Hengen, Damian Silvas, and
David Wilson

Lyrics by Artem Bank

Cast of Characters

PHESPIRA: Protagonist - warlock, changeling, surly badass

SEBASTIEN WHYM: Vice Archmage, high council, respected by the people of Vexis, but holds his cards close to his chest

JULIENNE WHYM: Mage, high council - benevolent leader, adored by the public, whom she loves back.

THE CARAVAN:

VESEKIR: Dark elf, main-character energy. Paladin, bro.

MHURREN: Gentle giant, half-wizard/half-orc, unaware of his wizard heritage.

FAEWYSE: Precocious faerie of the woods, kind, chaotic-good.

QARRA: Beleaguered, avian monk. Always has a flask.

SLY: Embodiment of DnD players who only ever want to kill/fight, can't be bothered to collaborate.

GELATINOUS CUBE: Just go with it.

ALAZIKAR: Wise, ancient dragon who ultimately catalyzes Vexis's resistance.

ARAMIS: Evil, evil, evil lich, imprisoned after a centuries-long reign of cruelty over Vexis.

KOBOLD: Reptilian creature who wants gold.

CULT OF JEWELHEART: Servants of Aramis who seek to resurrect/free him. Cloaked and creepy.

VEXIANS: Citizens of Vexis/patrons of gladiator tournaments

Tressym Kitten: A baby winged-cat, and very, very good helper to FAEWYSE.

SCENE 1: THE DREAD GAZEBO

In a subterranean cavern, a gothic, metal-as-fuck gazebo roof arches over a grid-patterned stage. A prismatic, ominous vial, a PHYLACTERY, dangles overhead. A three-digit counter reading 9XX/999 is displayed on the projection screen. Atop a pile of gold sits a treasure chest, suspiciously containing fangs, a hungry tongue, and an evil glare.

Behind the scene is an opening in a cave wall, where the massive puppet-head of ALAZIKAR can be seen. This telegraph's ALAZIKAR's presence as a guardian of this world.

A KOBOLD, a mischievous reptilian creature, has been pestering the audience in the FOH, asking whether they've seen a treasure around here, etc. It skulks onto the stage and notices the unguarded bounty, presumably theirs for the taking. The KOBOLD cautiously reaches into the open treasure chest, which snaps aggressively, but misses. As was evident to the audience, the chest is actually a MIMIC, a monster disguised as treasure.

KOBOLD recoils and considers a new plan, and ingeniously shovels as much gold from the surrounding pile—not the chest—into its satchel. KOBOLD laughs in triumph before stopping in its tracks by the sound of a distant rumbling, growing progressively louder. And louder. Until...

Every member of the CULT OF JEWELHEART rushes the stage from all directions and stomps the everloving shit out of the KOBOLD. The CULTISTS finish their attack and scamper offstage the same way they entered it—screaming.

One CULTIST remains onstage, and examines the still-alive KOBOLD, writhing in pain. CULTIST pulls a d20 out of its cloak, and rolls it. CULTIST nods in understanding, picks-up the MIMIC, and hurls it downward at KOBOLD's head, killing it. CULTIST wipes their hands clean and exits.

KOBOLD's soul departs its body and gravitates to the PHYLACTERY, which collects it. The COUNTER updates to 9XX+1/999, revealing its purpose of collecting souls.

SCENE .**SCENE 2: LORE DUMP**

The projection screen lights up, revealing a shadowgraphic reenactment using a mixture of opaque shadow puppets, and colorful, translucent stick-puppets and other assets. The eyes of ALAZIKAR illuminate and the head begins to speak.

The following quote is projected onto the screen, and attributes it to Gandalf .

ALAZIKAR

I once read these words: "Many that live deserve death. And some that die deserve life... do not be too eager to deal out death in judgement. For even the very wise cannot see all ends." These are words scribed by a wizard wiser than I, but that is because I'm technically a dragon and not a wizard at all. I am, however, in possession of one noteworthy advantage over even the wisest beings—I can see all ends. I have even foreseen that of my own, in which my mortal form will depart this world, and very soon.

A sweeping, expansive projection of VEXIS emerges on the screen.

ALAZIKAR (cont'd)

The proud city of Vexis. The sturdiest bastion of collectivism in all of Symmachia. Its citizens have enjoyed an unprecedented era of peace. And I really mean that, because for centuries, they were ruled by a total dick. The lich, the tyrant Aramis, once leveraged his unrivaled power and forbade the use of magic for all he deemed unsuitable. Basically, everyone who isn't him. The 12 heroic reclaimers of yore took laborious action, but cried victory, and within the phylactery did they imprison the soul of the evil Aramis. Or, so we thought.

The PHYLACTERY COUNTER reappears on the screen.

ALAZIKAR (cont'd)

Pay attention to this next part, because it really sucks. Once the phylactery collects 999 souls, Aramis will return to form. The Cult

of Jewelheart has worked tirelessly and dickishly, abducting and murdering vulnerable citizens for this abhorrent ritual. Before long, I'll not be able to protect Vexis, therefore the people must. To them, and this fair city, I have but one final bequest.

THE EYE OF OMENS, an iridescent, glowing orange and purple orb appears on the screen.

ALAZIKAR (cont'd)

Behold, my prophetic vision, realized within this, the Eye of Omens. The eye must go to a worthy hero to stay ahead of the Cult and keep Aramis imprisoned. The hero who wields this must prevail. The hero who shields us must not fail.

Character sheets of the CARAVAN flash across the screen. Who among them is the chosen one?

A beat.

ALAZIKAR (cont'd)

Admit it, you had all stopped paying attention until you heard rhyming, didn't you? I am going to die, you pricks. But sorry for being boring.

SONG : THE CALL (PROLOGUE)

ALAZIKAR (CONT'D)

WAY BACK WHEN THE OLD WORLD WAS NEW
THE BLOOD OF THE MANY FLOWED TO PLEASE THE FEW
THE LICH SO DID COVET WHAT HE PRIZED,
HE KEPT THE ARCANE FROM THOSE HE DESPISED

AND THEN THERE CAME FROM SHADOWS A CALL
FOR THOSE WHO COULD MANAGE TO STAND TALL
BECAUSE THE WORLD PUTS OUT THE CALL
WHEN A TYRANT SHOULD FALL.

SCENE .

SCENE 3: THE ARENA

ALL

(Singing to the tune of the final line of *The Star-Spangled Banner*)

...AND THAT'S THE END OF
OUR NATIONAL ANTHEM!

ALL CHEER, ETC.

JULIENNE

Well met, my fellow, beloved Vexians! Please accept my sincerest gratitude for joining here together, in commemoration of our freedom from tyranny!

ALL

Huzzah!

JULIENNE

Yet, our freedom must not be simply enjoyed—it must be defended! Therefore, this year's tournament shall bestow a champion with an invaluable item to preserve our fair community. But first, raise a flagon for—

VESEKIR

A dragon? Where!

QARRA

Flagon. Keep up!

VESEKIR

Never!

JULIENNE

...raise a flagon for our combatants! Up first, she's a Level 13 Warlock specializing in light armor, simple weapons, and is immune to poison! She's a spell sniper too, folks, so don't stand still for too long! Introducing Phespira!

CROWD cheers.

JULIENNE

Next, we have a unicorn! Well, not really, but he may as well be! He's a stealthy orc, umm...somehow, and carries a literal axe to grind against the evil Cult of Jewelheart. Don't let his strength fool you; He's got even higher wisdom stats! Please welcome, Mhurren!

CROWD cheers.

JULIENNE (cont'd)

Look to the sky! It's a bird, it's a...well, yes! It's a bird! She's fast and feathery, and a lawful-good monk who strives for balance and wisdom. If those can be found at the bottom of a flask, she'll be the first to know!

QARRA

Or, a fermented hummingbird feeder!

JULIENNE

Give a Vexis welcome to the drunken master, Qarra!

CROWD cheers. QARRA chugs from a flask, then bows.

JULIENNE (cont'd)

Over here, we have a Dark Elf and Paladin-bro from the mountains, because his hometown was destroyed by—you guessed it—the Cult of Jewelheart. He's a prince, but kind of a baby, so if you want to call him baby, just go ahead now. Meet Vesekir!

CROWD

(chanting, etc.)

Bay-BEE! Bay-BEE! Bay-BEE!

VESEKIR shrugs at the crowd, incredulously, then flips them off.

JULIENNE

And lastly, umm... this next warrior wrote here that he's—

VESEKIR

—hold on, you guys got to write your intros?

JULIENNE

(clears throat)

...he writes, quote, "just here for fighting and killing shit, and maybe some lolz along the way." Alright then. Welcome, Sly Marbo!

SLY loads his crossbow and acknowledges the cheering crowd.

JULIENNE

Vexis, you've met our combatants, so now we'll meet our hideous monster! To tell you more is my dear brother, Vice Archmage Sebastien Whym!

VESEKIR

Oh gods, he's hideous!

SEBASTIEN

(leering at VESEKIR)

Thank you, Julienne, and good day to...most of you. Before I introduce this foul beast—

VESEKIR

Ope! My bad!

SEBASTIEN

—the warrior who defeats it will receive a coveted prize from the great dragon Alazikar, himself—The Eye of Omens! Its clairvoyant powers suit any skilled warrior's purpose. Think of it as a crystal ball.

PHESPIRA

I must have it.

MHURREN

A crystal ball! I could use more guidance.

PHESPIRA

Guidance? Sure, give the clumsy ogre something priceless and fragile.

MHURREN

I'm an orc! And I'm not clumsy!

QARRA

Now that you mention it, you've been standing on my talon for a long time.

MHURREN

Then use your words!

SLY

(chuckles)

SEBASTIEN

To prove worthy of the Eye of Omens, your instructions are simple. Defeat a monster. Do it by any means—spellcraft, brute force, dumb luck—we don't care! But know this, combatants: the instructions may be simple, but the task is not.

SLY

(groans)

SEBASTIEN

For, this beast devours indiscriminately. It's not just two-faced, it's six-faced! It has more wiggle than a nymph, and more jiggle than another nymph! It oozes, it bruises; there's no meal it refuses. Meet the formidable, inimitable, original-gelatinous cube!

GELATINOUS CUBE ENTERS, taking in its awed reception.

CROWD

(cheering)

CUUUUUUUBE!

QARRA

What...is...that?

VESEKIR

How am I supposed to hit that?

SLY

Ha!

MHURREN

(to VESEKIR)

You aren't. This one's mine!

JULIENNE

Contestants! Underestimate this ravenous creature at your own peril!

PHESPIRA

I don't know, it seems pretty chill.

VESEKIR

Chill! Then I shall use all the fire I can possibly conjure!

PHESPIRA grabs VESEKIR's ARM, already in motion to cast a reckless spell.

PHESPIRA

You idiot! I've only known you for 30 seconds, but how have you lived this long?

VESEKIR

How dare you! I'm the last remaining royalty of my folk!

MHURREN

So, everyone died except for you?

PHESPIRA

Damn. You should take the hint, next time.

JULIENNE

Combatants! There will be but one victor, but be prepared to work together at critical moments! Always remember we are stronger as a group than as individuals.

SEBASTIEN

(interjecting)

...but, also remember, there is but one victor! Now, combatants—take your corners!

(to the crowd)

NPCs! Are you ready?

CROWD whoops, cheers, etc.

SEBASTIEN

I said, are you ready?

CROWD

(in unison)

Yes! We are ready! Our cheering was intended to imply as much.

SEBASTIEN

Oh. Ok then. I'm sorry?

CROWD

(in unison)

Don't worry about it. We're still cool.

SEBASTIEN

Great. And now—

CROWD

(in unison)

Don't call us NPCs, though.

SEBASTIEN

(annoyed, now)

Noted! Combatants, begin!

CROWD exits the stage, leaving the entire stage for combat.

SONG: MONSTER

DAN'S NOTE: Hi! The timing of the following cues are TBD, but will occur during MONSTER.

SLY immediately fires an arrow from his crossbow at CUBE, who doesn't flinch when the arrow sticks to him. SLY tries this a second time with the same result. SLY shrugs and walks off the stage. The CUBE is unaffected.

QARRA (literally?) peacocks with her martial arts proficiency, even swinging her bottle/flask, kicking, punching, etc. before smashing her bottle into the cube with a dramatic blow. She now has a wing/arm stuck in the CUBE. The CUBE is pleased.

VESEKIR nobly swoops in to save the day, and sticks his shortsword into the CUBE, but gets pulled in, himself, elbow-deep. The CUBE is pleased.

MHURREN cautiously examines the CUBE, pantomimes some calculations on an imaginary blackboard, considers them, then backs up and rams full-speed into the cube. His torso is now encased, but his legs hop and flail outside. The CUBE is pleased.

PHESPIRA is now the only free warrior, and considers what to do throughout the song. By the end, she can hardly contain herself, knowing she's just won the coveted Eye of Omens, and shoves the stuck warriors into the CUBE, entirely. The CUBE is pleased.

PHESPIRA

IN THE RAVEN'S EYES, UNDER ANY DISGUISE,
SLICING SHARP WIT, THIS TONGUE'S FULL OF LIES.
AND OH, THIS SECRET UNDER WHITE VEIL COME TO TAKE YOUR SOUL,
BURNED A FEATHER FOR MINE...
BET YOUR ASS I'LL BURN A FEATHER FOR YOURS.

AND CHILD DON'T YOU KNOW,
I MADE THIS BARGAIN TO SAVE YOU FROM A WRETCHED ROLE?
THERE ARE FRIGHTENING THINGS OUT THERE, DON'T YOU FEAR:
TO KEEP YOU FROM THE MONSTERS UNDER YOUR BED,
I BECAME THE ONE RIGHT HERE.

THE TICK-TICK-TICK OF THE CLOCK BEGS A HEART TO STOP.
SKULL'S DEAD WORLD WORTH ITS WEIGHT IN GOLD,
RICH BITCH IN POWER FOR ALL TO SEE,
IT'S FUNNY YOU THINK YOU COULD HANDLE ME.

SEE THROUGH DRAGON'S EYES, DISASTER ARISE.
NO MATTER VISION'S BLEAK LOOK, I'LL GET WHAT IS MINE.
AND OH, THIS SECRET UNDER WHITE VEIL COME TO TAKE YOUR SOUL,
BURNED A FEATHER FOR MINE.

AND CHILD DON'T YOU KNOW,
 I MADE THIS BARGAIN TO SAVE YOU FROM A WRETCHED ROLE?
 THERE ARE FRIGHTENING THINGS OUT THERE, DON'T YOU FEAR:
 TO KEEP YOU FROM THE MONSTERS UNDER YOUR BED,
 I BECAME THE ONE RIGHT HERE.

A beat. PHESPIRA admires her handy-work. SEBASTIEN and JULIENNE re-enter, with JULIENNE holding the beautiful Eye of Omens, ready to be awarded.

PHESPIRA

I'm the last one standing, mages! I believe a reward is in order?

A thunderous crash is felt throughout the arena, causing VESEKIR, MHURREN, and QARRA to be ejected from the CUBE. JULIENNE fumbles the eye, which rolls offstage.

VESEKIR

I can breathe! Thank the gods. Not-breathing is one of my biggest weaknesses!

PHESPIRA

Behind you!

An evil dragon has been summoned. The head of OVISCIAN THE CATACLYSMIC enters, protruding from STAGE LEFT.

OVISCIAN THE CATACLYSMIC

(entering)

FUCK YOUUUUUUUU!

JULIENNE

It's Aramis's dragon! Oviscian the Cataclysmic!

VESEKIR

Has Aramis returned? I must end him!

QARRA

Who summoned his dragon?

SEBASTIEN

Never mind that! The Eye of Omens is missing! We must find the Eye at once!

JULIENNE

Alazikar, save us!

OVISCIAN's HEAD retracts and 'flies' into action.

ALAZIKAR's eyes illuminate, and he 'chases' OVISCIAN by retracting from view. A long stretch of dragon belly passes by the same opening to signify ALAZIKAR's ascent to the skies.

The ensuing dragon duel is represented by large dragon feet occasionally stomping down from the proscenium, with glowing orange flames flashing, intermittently. Fuck yes.

CULTISTS ENTER, storming into the scene, armed with magical daggers to stab/capture-souls and fill the PHYLACTERY.

CULTISTS

(screaming, in unison)

For Aramis!

BEGIN 'CONVERGENCE'

As the CULTISTS engage the CARAVAN in battle, the screen projects an image of ARAMIS, lording over the carnage and flipping double-birds.

ARAMIS

COME TO ME, ALL YOU WAYWARD SOULS
IT'S YOUR FATE TO ADD YOUR LIFE TO MINE
AND JOIN THE GREATEST STORY EVER TOLD
YOU WILL SEE WHILE SO MANY ARE BLIND

ARAMIS/CULTISTS

TASTE OBLIVION AND YOU'LL SEE HOW GREAT NOTHING CAN BE
LEAVE YOUR PAIN AT THE FEET OF THE ONE WHO AGAIN WILL BREATHE

ARAMIS

COME TOGETHER WHERE YOUR MASTER CALLS YOU

ADD YOURSELF TO THE FEAST
 THERE IS NO-ONE WHO TRULY CAN OPPOSE HIM
 ACCEPT YOUR DEFEAT

SEBASTIEN

NOW THE BELL IS RUNG, THE TRAP IS SET
 AND FROM WHAT I'VE DONE THERE'S NO TURNING BACK
 OH SISTER, OH MY CITY, DO NOT FRET
 WE'LL BE THE LAST ONES STANDING IN THE BLACK

FUCK OBLIVION, I DONT WANNA SEE HOW GREAT NOTHING CAN BE
 LEAVE MY PAIN AT THE FEET OF THE ONE WHO AGAIN WILL BREATHE

CULTISTS

COME TOGETHER WHERE YOUR MASTER CALLS YOU
 ADD YOURSELF TO THE FEAST
 THERE IS NO ONE WHO TRULY CAN OPPOSE HIM
 ACCEPT YOUR DEFEAT

*The CARAVAN, in a battle sequence throughout **CONVERGENCE**, attack the CULTISTS as individuals rather than as a cohesive team. They eke out a victory, despite this.*

SEBASTIEN

CHAMPIONS COME TO THE TABLE
 CHAMPIONS DEAD AT THE TABLE

In a grand gesture, the image of ARAMIS raises his arms, thus resurrecting the dead CULTISTS, who then attack the CARAVAN.

ARAMIS AND RISEN CULTISTS

OPPOSE ME, SEE YOUR DREAMS ARE A LIE
 AND ALL THE FRIENDS THAT WILL DIE
 I AM IMMORTAL
 DEFY AND ONLY DEATH WILL YOU FIND
 AND WHAT AWAITS YOU UNKIND
 BEYOND THE PORTAL

The CARAVAN cannot win this battle. SEBASTIEN gets their attention and directs them offstage to safety.

The bloodied heads of ALAZIKAR and OVISCIAN THE CATACLYSMIC crash to the ground.¹

ALAZIKAR

SEEK OUT THE EYE OF OMENS...

SEE THROUGH THE EYE OF OMENS...!

ALAZIKAR and OVISCIAN THE CATACLYSMIC die.

BLACKOUT. SCENE.

¹ Hi, BROS tech! Please do not kill me. I'll understand if you do, but figured I'd ask. Open to other ideas.

SCENE 4: THE DUNGEON

PHESPIRA, VESEKIR, MHURREN, and QARRA sit dejected in a dank prison cell, with CUBE next to PHESPIRA. SLY lays on the prison bench like one would in a hammock.

VESEKIR

...so?

MHURREN

What.

A beat.

VESEKIR

All things considered, we can all agree I won the tournament, right?

ALL BUT VESEKIR

(groaning, "you idiot," "I hate you," etc.)

VESEKIR

(to Cube)

Because I totally had you. Sticky Stickardo.

CUBE laughs in jest.

QARRA

That's not his name.

MHURREN

Nor did you have him.

PHESPIRA

Good, perfect. Vexis is in shambles, The Eye of Omens is missing, Alazikar is dead, and Aramis is back! But sure, let's debate who won a stupid tournament!

A beat.

But also, I'd have been the winner. No offense, Cube.

CUBE

("none taken" noises)

QARRA

It does seem to like you; and I guess taming it counts as defeating it.

PHESPIRA

Agreed. So if anything, the Eye of Omens would be mine if that stupid lich didn't ambush us.

MHURREN

The lich did not ambush us.

PHESPIRA

Excuse me?

VESEKIR

Aha! See? I'm not the dumbest one in the room!

MHURREN

No, I mean that the Aramis we saw must have been a major illusion spell. Believe me, if that was the real Aramis, none of us would be alive. But the Cult of Jewelheart is very real, and they caught us off guard.

VESEKIR

Indeed. Vexis was jubilating, and the combatants were stuck in ooze. Except you, Phespira...

PHESPIRA

What are you getting at...

JULIENNE and SEBASTIEN ENTER and observe the imprisoned warriors.

VESEKIR

Maybe it was you who summoned the cultists! And Oviscian the Cataclysmic!

PHESPIRA

Profoundly stupid.

QARRA

It does make sense... We were stuck and helpless, but once we got out, Phespira had to improvise. That's why we were led to this dungeon, instead—not for our safety, but to stay out of the way while the cult destroyed Vexis!

PHESPIRA

I didn't lead us here!

JULIENNE

Enough! We were not betrayed!

VESEKIR

Yuh-huh!

JULIENNE

Silence!

A beat.

JULIENNE (cont'd)

I don't have the luxury of telling you this more than once, and you don't have the luxury of being obtuse, so listen up! We are under attack! The worst thing we can be right now is divided. First—you are not imprisoned; You still have your weapons! And also, dungeon doors are usually locked!

JULIENNE opens the cell door, easily, as the CARAVAN looks sheepish.

JULIENNE (cont'd)

Second—Aramis is not back, but his swarm of sycophants are.

VESEKIR

Swarm of sycophants is.

PHESPIRA

Bro!

VESEKIR

I'm not dumb.

JULIENNE

And they're dangerous! Need I remind you that the cult summoned Oviscian the Cataclysmic? What else do they have the power to summon? Alazikar is dead!

PHESPIRA

(pointedly)

Perhaps if we had an oracle, some kind of tool, that could guide us now that everything's incomprehensible! But the Eye of Omens is missing, and the only tool here is Vesekir. So now what?

CUBE

("ahem" noise)

CUBE 'clears its throat' and then slowly spits The Eye of Omens into Phespira's lap.

A beat.

PHESPIRA

Alright, guess the dungeon-roomba had it the whole time. Now what?

JULIENNE

"Now what?" Just look into it.

PHESPIRA

I am looking into it! It's looking at me! Oh, wow, what the...

A seeping fog emerges on the projector screen, signifying PHESPIRA's vision from the Eye of Omens. The fog swirls and takes the shape of the phylactery.

JULIENNE

Tell us—what do you see?

PHESPIRA

It's a phylactery.

MHURREN

(to VESEKIR)

That's a jar that collects souls.

VESEKIR

I know what a phylactery is!

JULIENNE

Can you see more? Where is the phylactery?

PHESPIRA

I don't know...it's so hazy.

An ethereal version of ARAMIS, representing his trapped soul, appears in the PHYLACTERY and swirls menacingly. A counter above the phylactery emerges and reads '990.'

JULIENNE

That can't be good. The Cult must be filling Aramis's phylactery with soul sacrifices from all over Symmachia. If they capture 999 souls then it's all over.

PHESPIRA

My Lady. It has [990] souls.

JULIENNE

(collecting herself)

Then we have no choice. We must get up and act—

SLY

(groans)

JULIENNE

If we don't act, they will resurrect Aramis! So act, or die!

SLY

Fine...

QARRA

Act how? We need to think of a plan!

SLY

I'm out.

SEBASTIEN

Now, let's not be rash, dear sister...

PHESPIRA

Wait! I see something else.

An image of a sturdy, sprawling, silvery-pink GREAT ROSECORK TREE is gradually projected onto the screen. PHESPIRA's vision gradually spills onto the stage, filling it with tangible elements of the greater ROSECORK WOOD—foliage, creatures, etc.

ENTER FAEWYSE, who leisurely strolls about the forest, interacting with surrounding flora and fauna.

PHESPIRA (cont'd)

It's gorgeous. It's a forest unlike any place I've ever seen. Silver trees with blush blossoms and branches.

JULIENNE

(piecing it together)

Of course! That can only mean one thing.

MHURREN

That's where the phylactery is?

JULIENNE

Not quite! Phespira, I have no doubt that what you see is the Great Rosecork Tree. Rosecork contains mystical properties; it may be able to seal Aramis's phylactery, permanently! You must harvest the tree's rosecork!

SLY

That's dumb. I say we just kill Aramis.

JULIENNE

So it's a death wish you have? Even Alazikar wouldn't have had the power to defeat Aramis.

QARRA

She's right, Sly. If you want to kill yourself, we need another way. Let's keep thinking.

MHURREN

Not a moment to waste.

PHESPIRA

Shut up! I see a fey here in the Rosecork Wood. A girl... just sort of meandering and smelling flowers...she's carefree.

(to JULIENNE)

What do you make of this?

JULIENNE

I believe the image you see is of Faewyse, in the Rosecork Wood. You are to go to her but you must approach her with utmost care; Faewyse is known to be extremely protective of her home.

The CARAVAN gathers their weapons and start to leave the cell.

VESEKIR

I'm confused. Is the fey-girl supposed to get Sly to kill himself?

JULIENNE

Enough! I will leave you with the reminder of paramount importance that you must all work together! You glory-chasers fell right into their hands by dividing yourselves to fight the Cult of Jewelheart. You would have been torn to shreds if my brother hadn't led you to safety. I repeat: work together!

SEBASTIEN

Work by any means necessary!

PHESPIRA

(gazing into the Eye of Omens)

Wait! I'm getting something else. It's...a throne? Oh, sweet tits of the tieflings, I don't believe it! Vesekir sits atop it! Vesikir is on the throne!

VESIKIR

What?

PHESPIRA

Yes! He wears the crown, and all of us are at his feet in blissful worship. Even you, Sebastien! And you, Julienne!

SEBASTIEN

No...

JULIENNE

My word...this is what you see? This is truly Alazikar's vision?

PHESPIRA

Fuck no, but now that I have your attention, there's no way I'm putting the fate of the world into the hands of these fucking shitheels!

ALL

(groan, etc.)

JULIENNE

You're going to have to! You glory-chasers fell right into the Cult's hands by dividing yourselves to fight them. You must work together!

QARRA

The last time you said to do that, we wound up in a dungeon.

JULIENNE

You didn't work together!

Begin THE GIRL OF THE WOODS

During the song, the line between "Eye of Omens vision" and "present events" becomes progressively blurred. JULIENNE sings in the present, and FAEWYSE dance is within the Eye of Omens' vision. By the time of the song's end, the CARAVAN will arrive at the ROSECORK TREE, which will become "real" and not simply a vision.

In between, the DUNGEON pieces of the set are gradually taken away while our heroes travel, and pieces of the ROSECORK WOOD set are placed onstage until the change of scenery from the DUNGEON to the GREAT ROSECORK TREE is complete.

JULIENNE

SLEEPING IN A TREE, CURLED UP WITH THE SQUIRRELS,
THE BIRDS KEEP WATCH AS THE DAWN UNFURLS
AND THE FOREST GUARDIAN OPENS HER EYES;
THE KINDLY DRUID THEY CALL FAEWYSE

DON'T YOU ASK ABOUT HER PLANS TODAY
CAUSE I CAN TELL YOU, SHE WONT KNOW
THE WOODS WILL GUIDE HER, SPEED HER ON THE WAY
BY A GENTLE BREEZE OR THE RIVER'S FLOW

BUT DON'T YOU DOUBT THE MIGHTY POWERS
OF THE TINY CHAMPION PICKING FLOWERS
THE EVILDOERS RAISE THEIR HOODS
TO HIDE FROM THE GIRL FROM THE WOODS

ALL OF NATURE AT HER BACK,
IN FERAL FORM SHE WILL ATTACK.
A FORCE OF POWER PURE AND STRANGE,
THE BEAST OUT OF HER CAGE.
WHEN THUNDER ECHOES THROUGH THE SKIES,
THE ONE WHO THREATENS NATURE DIES.
THE WORLD FUELS HER WAR TO WAGE-
THE BEAST OUT OF HER CAGE.

DEEP IN THE WOODS, 'NEATH A GUMTREE HOLE
THE GIRL GREW UP AND LEARNED HER ROLE
IN CHILDHOOD GAMES, A FOX AS HER STEED,
THE FOREST CRITTERS' VANGUARD SHE DID LEAD

BUT DON'T YOU DOUBT THE MIGHTY POWERS
OF THE TINY CHAMPION PICKING FLOWERS
THE EVILDOERS RAISE THEIR HOODS
TO HIDE FROM THE GIRL FROM THE WOODS

ALL OF NATURE AT HER BACK,
IN FERAL FORM SHE WILL ATTACK.
A FORCE OF POWER PURE AND STRANGE,
THE BEAST OUT OF HER CAGE.
WHEN THUNDER ECHOES THROUGH THE SKIES,
THE ONE WHO THREATENS NATURE DIES.
THE WORLD FUELS HER WAR TO WAGE-
THE BEAST OUT OF HER CAGE.

SCENE .

SCENE 5: THE GREAT ROSECORK TREE

THE GIRL OF THE WOODS ends with the CARAVAN arriving at the GREAT ROSECORK TREE. FAEWYSE is holding a FAIRY BOW and gracefully approaches them.

FAEWYSE

(coyly)

Greetings, fellow travelers! My name is Faewyse!

PHESPIRA

(to CARAVAN)

That's the fey from my vision! Remember—we need her help! So stay calm, and try not to do anything too jarring.

QARRA

(to FAEWYSE, jarringly)

Hey queen!

MHURREN

Qarra! "Approach with utmost care!" Remember?

QARRA

(shakes her flask)

No!

VESEKIR

I'll handle this.

(to FAEWYSE)

Good day, um...good...fey.

MHURREN

Nailed it.

VESEKIR

Shut up!

FAEWYSE clears her throat to get their attention.

FAEWYSE

(saccharinely)

Excuse me, strangers? Hi. If you don't state who you are and why you're here in the next 30 seconds, then you'll all be dead in the next 31!

VESEKIR

Wait, what?

FAEWYSE

Starting...now!

MHURREN

We don't want to fight!

SLY

(to FAEWYSE)

He doesn't speak for us.

FAEWYSE

You think this is a fucking game?

FAEWYSE draws her FAERIE BOW.

SLY

...kinda?

PHESPIRA

Wait! Let's just calm down. Gentle fey, I understand your reluctance to pardon this humble gaggle of jerks, especially the dark-elf.

VESEKIR

I didn't even say anything!

PHESPIRA

But if you do kill us, then you'll ensure your own death, too. And the death of Rosecork Wood!

FAEWYSE

Ok. I'm interested..

FAEWYSE loosens her bowstring.

PHESPIRA

And the death of the rest of Symmachia!

FAEWYSE

Less interested...

FAEWYSE draws again on her bowstring.

MHURREN

Please! We are here only to harvest from the Great Rosecork Tree!

FAEWYSE

Oh, really?!? Not helping your case, beeflord. 10 seconds.

FAEWYSE draws harder on her bowstring.

VESEKIR

Why are you so hostile?

SLY loads his crossbow.

SLY

Hell yeah, here we go, we're doing this!

CUBE

(gelatinous screaming noises)

PHESPIRA

Faewyse, please! We need rosecork to seal a phylactery, or else the Cult of Jewelheart is gonna summon a lich and bring about centuries of torture!

A beat.

So? Will you help us?

FAEWYSE

Hmm. Persuasion check!

A Tressym (Stagehand with cat-ears and wings) ENTERS and rolls a D20 using the GREAT ROSECORK TREE as a dice tower.

A 1-10 results in *FAEWYSE* remaining skeptical; an 11-20 convinces her.

BEGIN BRANCH 1: FAEWYSE REMAINS SKEPTICAL (ROLL 1-10)

FAEWYSE

'The Cult of Jewelheart,' you say? Curious. The Cult of Jewelheart was here a day ago, and tried to set our home on fire. Very curious. One stupid clan wanted the Rosecork Wood destroyed, and now, another stupid clan wants it all for themselves. Very fucking curious!

FAEWYSE redraws her bow.

END BRANCH 1:

BEGIN BRANCH 2: FAEWYSE IS CONVINCED (ROLL 11-20)

FAEWYSE

The Cult of Jewelheart was here a day ago and tried to set the entire woods on fire. They failed though; my critter friends and I killed them all and moshed on their corpses! It all makes sense, now.

END BRANCH 2

MHURREN

Rosecork seals phylacteries! So that must be why the Cult tried destroying the Rosecork Wood! See? That just proves we're telling you the truth! We want to help!

PHESPIRA

Please, Faewyse. I know you are protective of your home, but letting us harvest rosecork is the best thing you can do to preserve it. We want to seal the phylactery forever; It's the cult that wants to unleash evil, not us. Permit us to harvest this rosework and put an end to this!

FAEWYSE

(considers)

Alright.

The CARAVAN breathes a collective sigh of relief.

QARRA

Thank you! I'll strip the bark and get it.

QARRA pecks at the trunk of the GREAT ROSECORK TREE and begins to harvest a ton of ROSECORK.

FAEWYSE

One condition. If you're going after the phylactery, then the Cult that nearly burned down my home will be there. I'm coming with you to finish them off.

PHESPIRA

You'd be a welcome addition. Except...we don't know where it is.

FAEWYSE

Well, you're about to. I sent my most reliable tressym kitten to track them down.

MHURREN

Interesting. What makes a tressym kitten so reliable?

TRESSYM KITTEN enters.

FAEWYSE

It has perfect timing. What do you have for me, Scrambles?

TRESSYM KITTEN

Hi, Miss Faewyse! I followed the bad guys like you said, and, um, the Cult of, um, Juilliard, is hiding-out at the Dread Gazebo!

FAEWYSE

Welp. There ya go! Dread Gazebo.

QARRA returns from the tree with so much rosecork.

QARRA

Ok, got it!

PHESPIRA

Wait. Young Scrambles, was the phylactery there? It looks like a big jar?

TRESSYM KITTEN

Yes! I didn't say it at first because that word's too big for me.

QARRA

Huh. Kinda wild that a winged kitten is more reliable than Alazikar's Eye of Omens. Are we sure we want to entrust our fate to a tiny feline?

TRESSYM KITTEN

(to QARRA, eerily)

Someday, I will devour you, bird.

PHESPIRA

Qarra, we don't have a choice. We must go to the Dread Gazebo at once. Should the Cult await us, this will be our final battle! I'd say a few words, but we don't have time for a pep talk.

VESEKIR

Phespira? I want you to know I wouldn't have listened even if we did.

MHURREN

Vesekir! Shit is getting real! We really need to work together!

PHESPIRA

(cynically)

Yeah. We do. Somehow, Vexis depends on it.

TRESSYM KITTEN

Ok, goodbye everyone! I love you! Wow, a leaf!

TRESSYM KITTEN exits. The CARAVAN trades anxious glances. Shit is, in fact, getting real.

SONG: THE CALL (REPRISE)

VESEKIR

WISH I HADN'T CRAWLED OUT OF MY HOLE.

PHESPIRA

WISH I'D STAYED IN BED AND WATCHED THE WHOLE WORLD BURN.

MHURREN

WISH SOMEONE ELSE HAD FOUGHT IN MY STEAD.

FAEWYSE

THIS TIME TOMORROW I COULD BE WORSE THAN DEAD.

PHESPIRA & VESEKIR

I COULD BE THE HERO THAT FAILED US ALL.

FAEWYSE & MHURREN

I COULD BE THE ONE CRUMBLED SMALL.

ALL

WHEN THE WORLD PUTS OUT THE CALL

PHESPIRA

I COULD LEAD US TO FALL.

VESEKIR

I HAVE LEFT MY SHADOWS BEHIND.

PHESPIRA

AND SEEN THE FUTURE IN

ALL

DEVILS' EYES.

MHURREN

LAI D OUT THE COFFIN WHERE I'D REST,

FAEWYSE

AND FELT THE WEIGHT OF IT ALL POUND

ALL

IN MY CHEST

FAEWYSE & MHURREN

I COULD BE THE HERO THAT FAILED US ALL

PHESPIRA & VESEKIR

I COULD BE THE ONE CRUMBLED SMALL

ALL

AND WHEN THE WORLD PUTS OUT THE CALL
DID YOU THINK THAT A HERO WOULD RISE
BORN FROM DUST OF THIS TURNING TIDE?
THE WALLS ARE FALLING, AND FASTER WE'LL FLY
THROUGH THE FIRE, THE FIRE, WE'LL FALTER, WE'LL FALTER
UNDER ASHES THEREAFTER WE'LL FALL

I COULD BE THE HERO THAT SAVES US ALL
I COULD BE THE ONE WHO STANDS TALL
WHEN THE WORLD PUTS OUT THE CALL
I COULD LEAD US TO...

BLACKOUT. SCENE.

SCENE 6: BOSS FIGHT: DREAD GAZEBO REDUX

The DREAD GAZEBO arches over the stage, once again, and overlooks a throbbing, pulsating PHYLACTERY. Its counter reads [999 minus the number of CULTISTS onstage]. The CULT OF JEWELHEART is joined in a circle, ritualistically chanting beneath the PHYLACTERY, while a mysterious HOODED FIGURE in a blood-red cloak stands in the center, on a platform.

The CARAVAN huddles downstage and out of view of the cult. Something big is about to go down.

CUBE

("What the fuck?" noise)

MHURREN

Hey guys? I think we should probably make a plan now.

SLY

(groans)

MHURREN

Just saying this is a prime moment for the whole "work together" thing.

VESEKIR

(to CARAVAN)

I have a question...

SLY

I already made a plan.

QARRA

Shooting arrows at everything is not a plan.

PHESPIRA

Wait! Yes it is!

VESEKIR

Uhh...you guys?

PHESPIRA

Sly! Put the rosecork on the tips of your arrows. When you have a shot at the phylactery, take it, and seal it once and for all. And for the love of the gods, do not miss.

SLY

Dope.

SLY prepares his crossbow.

MHURREN

Are you sure that's gonna work?

PHESPIRA

I'm sure that it's gonna have to...

VESEKIR

Guys! I just thought of something!

PHESPIRA

Oh, what! What is it, already?

VESEKIR

(methodically)

Ok. Try to stay with me here. The cult wants to resurrect Aramis with the phylactery, right?

PHESPIRA

That better be rhetorical.

VESEKIR

They are. So, if the cult wants to use a phylactery, then they're pro-phylactery, yeah? Does that make them...

ALL CARAVAN EXCEPT PHESPIRA.

...Prophylactics!

ALL CARAVAN except PHESPIRA stifle their laughter, but not well. PHESPIRA shakes her head in bewilderment. She is the only non-idiot left, but is softening.

PHESPIRA

Vesekir. If one of us doesn't make it out of here, I really hope it's you.

VESEKIR

Know what? That's ok, because that just means Cubey gets to live. He's really grown on me, I mean just look at him.

CUBE

(flattered noises)

MHURREN

So, then if the cultists are prophylactics, then we're... anti-phylactics? We need a shorter name.

FAEWYSE

How about Antipha!

CARAVAN laughs in agreement, even harder.

MHURREN

Yes, yes!

VESEKIR

(boldly, nobly)

If that evil cult is all prophylactics, then by the gods, I am anti-prophylactics!

FAEWYSE

Oh, that tracks!

The CARAVAN all concurs, "we know," etc., even PHESPIRA, and stifles snickers while CULTISTS continue chanting evil nonsense.

PHESPIRA

(deep sigh)

Fine. Fellow warriors, are we all ready to battle alongside each other and meet our fate?

CARAVAN affirms as much. They're truly ready, or at least as ready as they're gonna be.

PHESPIRA (cont'd)

Excellent. The Dental Damned over there are gonna be really pissed when Sly seals their phylactery.

SLY fires his crossbow, without warning, and misses the PHYLACTERY by a considerable margin.

SLY

Yo. I missed the phylactery.

HOODED FIGURE (SEBASTIEN)

(noticing the arrow)

Hey! What the...?

SLY

By a lot.

THE HOODED FIGURE looks toward the CARAVAN and discovers them. He creepily points in their direction. ALL CULTISTS follow suit.

SLY

Guys, I think we should've planned better.

The HOODED FIGURE unfurls his hood, revealing him to be SEBASTIEN WHYM, the only other person who could've been a traitor. SEBASTIEN laughs, raucously.

PHESPIRA

Sebastien Whym? You would betray the Lady of the Town? The High Council? Your own sister?

FAEWYSE

You. Dick.

SEBASTIEN

Oh, enough! Julienne betrayed herself! She would never embrace Aramis. What an insult to all of us! You too, if you knew any better! As if the privilege of magic could ever belong in the filthy hands of commoners!

MHURREN

Lame.

FAEWYSE

Incel.

PHESPIRA

Shut up already so we can kill you all.

VESEKIR

Yeah, prick! The die is cast!

SEBASTIEN

Oh? You'd like to kill us? The Cult of Jewelheart? Well, why didn't you say so?

In an alarmingly simple gesture, SEBASTIEN casts a spell and every CULTIST drops dead on the stage, instantly. Their souls ascend to the PHYLACTERY, which now reads 998.

VESEKIR

The fuck!

SEBASTIEN

Don't despair! They gladly gave their souls for Aramis! I would do the same! That reminds me, see that number? I'll take a chance and assume you all know how counting works, so, if you chucklefucks get any ideas about killing me, well, I think you know what will happen!

SEBASTIEN points to the SOUL COUNTER and laughs maniacally.

VESEKIR

That's where you're wrong, you simple bitch! We don't have any ideas at all! We aren't even that good at fighting. But you know what? We're in this together, and I'll gladly battle alongside this Caravan! Aramis wouldn't know anything about that kind of bond, would he?

PHESPIRA

He's right, for once! And I think you know he's right, don't you, Sebastien? I bet you hate that your dear Julienne will never approve of what you're doing: being weird, in a gazebo, atop a pile of dead creeps.

SEBASTIEN

Ignorant hag! Julienne will see reason. This is my destiny!

PHESPIRA

Weird hill to die on, man.

QARRA

But at least you're dead!

SEBASTIEN

Permit me to spell it out for you. You are going to die, and Aramis will return, unimpeded by you roaches.

FAEWYSE

You think we're just gonna drop dead like your yes-men?

VESEKIR

Not so easy when you don't have Aramis's dragon to bail you out, is it?

SEBASTIEN

(chuckles)

Is it not? I wouldn't know!

SEBASTIEN raises his arms dramatically, and with his gesture, the CULTISTS are reanimated and ready to fight like a bunch of racist/pureblood zombies.

On the projector screen, an image of the skeletal, reanimated corpse of OVISCIAN THE CATAclysmic ascends from the bottom of the screen and mirrors SEBASTIEN'S awakening gesture, spreading his mighty, rotting wings. In a sudden burst of speed, OVISCIAN THE CATAclysmic rushes off the screen toward HOUSE RIGHT, and his skeletal puppet-head emerges from STAGE LEFT.

SEBASTIEN

Now the die... is cast!

BEGIN THE DOOR IN THE DARK

SEBASTIAN

WHAT'S THAT THING THAT'S GOING BUMP IN THE NIGHT?
 WHAT WILL BE SUMMONED WHEN THE SPELL IS SPOKEN?
 LOOK OUT, YOU'RE IN FOR A HELL OF A FIGHT
 THE CURSE IS OUT AND THE SEAL'S BROKEN
 THREE EVILS MARCH ON OUT FROM THE WELL,
 THE GRIM LIEUTENANTS OF AN ENEMY FACTION
 LISTEN, THEY'RE SPEAKING IN THE TONGUES OF HELL
 THEIR QUEST A HUNT AND A FRUSTRATED REACTION

WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU HAVE GOT THEIR ATTENTION
 YOUR CAMP'S A THREAT TO THE IMMORTAL CROWN
 DID YOU THINK THAT, IN YOUR STANDING UP,
 THEY'D PUSH EVEN HARDER TO SIT YOU DOWN?
 OH, THEY'RE REALLY PISSED OFF
 AND YOU'RE BOUND TO MEET WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE
 OF THE DOOR IN THE DARK

YOU'VE BEEN SENT OUT ON A DIFFICULT TASK:
 FIND TRINKETS OF A DOZEN HEROES FORGOTTEN
 THE HALLOWED RELICS OF A RITUAL PAST,
 THEIR BEARERS BURIED AND THEIR BODIES ROTTEN
 BUT DOING SO DEFIES THE WILL OF A GOD
 AND HIS ALLY, AN IMMORTAL VILLAIN
 HIS SIGHT IS PIERCING AND HIS REACH IS BROAD
 HIS STROKE IS DEADLY AND HIS MOTIVES HIDDEN

WELL, IT LOOKS LIKE YOU HAVE GOT THEIR ATTENTION
 YOUR CAMP'S A THREAT TO THE IMMORTAL CROWN
 DID YOU THINK THAT, IN YOUR STANDING UP,
 THEY'D PUSH EVEN HARDER TO SIT YOU DOWN?
 OH, THEY'RE REALLY PISSED OFF
 AND YOU'RE BOUND TO MEET WHAT'S ON THE OTHER SIDE
 OF THE DOOR IN THE DARK

DAN'S NOTE: Hi again! The timing of the following cues are TBD, but will occur during THE DOOR IN THE DARK.

CARAVAN members with close-combat weapons fend-off the reanimated CULTISTS while SEBASTIEN uses spells to puppeteer them in battle. The CARAVAN battles alongside each other, with individuals making a point to help each other when cornered or knocked down.

CARAVAN members with ranged attacks fire arrows and ranged spells at OVISCIAN THE CATAclysmic. It doesn't work because an undead dragon isn't gonna get hurt by arrows, you guys.

The CARAVAN realizes this and begins taking debris out of the CUBE and panic-builds a catapult, firing projectiles at OVISCIAN THE CATAclysmic (always say the whole name). Nothing is working, until PHESPIRA dramatically loads the catapult with THE EYE OF OMENS, and fires it at OVISCIAN THE CATAclysmic delivering an epic blow that kills him.

SEBASTIEN now grows desperate as the CARAVAN fends off the CULTISTS, and he snatches the PHYLACTERY, still at 998. SEBASTIEN pulls out a dagger, ready to sacrifice himself for the final soul to summon ARAMIS.

CUBE devours the remaining rosecork and now glows a vibrant hot-pink. CUBE now has the power to seal the phylactery himself. In a noble gesture, loads himself into the catapult. The CARAVAN launches CUBE at SEBASTIEN, who, like every other incel, doesn't kill himself fast enough. He is permanently sealed in stasis with the PHYLACTERY as THE DOOR IN THE DARK ends.

BLACKOUT. SCENE.

SCENE 7: PIAZZA PARTY!

The PIAZZA of Vexis has a rad new centerpiece, which is a happy, metal-as-fuck-looking shocking-pink and black GELATINOUS CUBE, containing a dramatically anguished SEBASTIEN WHYM encased within it. SEBASTIEN holds a PHYLACTERY he will never open. The CARAVAN celebrates onstage, joined by JULIENNE, jubilant VEXIANS, and Scrambles the TRESSYM KITTEN, who fixates on QARRA and tries to bat at her tailfeathers. PHESPIRA stands off to the side, having a pensive moment to herself. ALL but PHESPIRA and JULIENNE hold JELLO SHOTS.

The Stagehand/TRESSYM from earlier has the D20 and rolls it. In anticipation, the CROWD makes the same noise that crowds do moments before the kickoff of a football game.² Stagehand/TRESSYM rolls a natural 20.

ALL

SOCIAL!

Everyone with a drink, drinks.

JULIENNE notices PHESPIRA and approaches her. The STAGEHAND/TRESSYM keeps rolling the d20 to the delight of the crowd.

JULIENNE

Not in the mood to celebrate?

PHESPIRA

Hm? Oh. I'm happy. It's just...

JULIENNE

(playfully)

Just...that you aren't giving yourself permission to celebrate? Despite saving the world? If not now, then when?

PHESPIRA

² American football is 1) a [team sport](#) played by two teams of eleven players on a rectangular [field](#) with goalposts at each end; 2) an influential midwest-emo band.

When I know I can.

JULIENNE

Ah. And, when will that be?

PHESPIRA

When no one wants to awaken Aramis? At least Cube looks pretty rad right now.

CUBE looks rad.

JULIENNE

No disagreement there.

PHESPIRA

He's ok, right? I don't really know how gooey dungeon-roombas work.

JULIENNE

He's the centerpiece of a city that praises him every day and feeds him endless snacks to thank him. It beats eating scraps in a dungeon. He's thriving and fulfilled. I can't say the same for my traitor brother.

PHESPIRA

Yeah... I couldn't imagine a worse fate than dissolving in public.

JULIENNE

He won't. Sebastien's charms are no-doubt preventing that. Otherwise, he'd be long gone by now. All the same to me.

PHESPIRA

Right. I'm so sorry, Julienne.

JULIENNE

(processing)

No... he made his choices. I just don't know how I didn't see it.

PHESPIRA

Alazikar didn't see it, if that's any consolation.

JULIENNE

It is not.

A beat.

PHESPIRA

Neither is this jerkoff festival when we're one death away from centuries of darkness.

JULIENNE

My dear—we're pretty much always one death away from centuries of darkness.

PHESPIRA

What do you mean?

JULIENNE

There's always going to be some mouth-breather who doesn't deal with his big feelings and chooses to make that everyone else's problem. So he lusts for power, wealth, influence, as if they could ever compensate for what he truly is: a scared little man. Nothing is more ordinary, and nothing is more predictable.

PHESPIRA

Was there a part in there that was supposed to make me want to celebrate?

JULIENNE laughs. That one caught her off-guard.

JULIENNE

Celebrate the fact that for every decrepit soul like Aramis, there are 100 that aren't. We have to keep reminding each other that the real power is in community. Not a rogue idiot dumb enough to believe he could ever know fulfillment.

An elated VESEKIR overhears and stumbles toward PHESPIRA and JULIENNE.

VESEKIR

(intoxicated)

Oh why, oh why, are you talking about me, again? I swear you ladies are obsessed with me!

PHESPIRA ignores him, but not out of spite; her focus is elsewhere.

PHESPIRA

(to JULIENNE)

I suppose there are dumber ways to remind ourselves of that. Still, I wish there was more than a jelly-blob and some rosecork keeping Aramis away.

VESEKIR stumbles next to PHESPIRA. She couldn't ignore him now if she tried.

VESEKIR

(still pretty wasted)

What? No, Phessie, no, don't you see? It's not the jelly and the rosecork! It's—maybe it's a group of people who met by chance, stayed together by circumstance, and worked together to do good! That's what keeps Aramis away!

VESEKIR boops PHESPIRA's nose, then directs her attention to the CROWD behind them, playing with a D20 and celebrating.

VESEKIR (cont'd)

That's all! Just community! Just us! Not the jelly, but the community of whimsical dipshits like us who roll the dice and put jelly on shit in the first place.

PHESPIRA

I suppose...

VESEKIR

And know the best part? There are always whimsical dipshits. Why hold out for heroes to save us when we already have whimsical, amazing, dipshits?

PHESPIRA

Yeah.

A beat.

Thanks, dipshit.

VESEKIR

You guys want some jelly shots? They wiggle!

PHESPIRA and JULIENNE trade glances before following VESEKIR to the center of the PIAZZA, with the rest of the town. VESEKIR retrieves three shots and splits them evenly among them. They raise their drinks.

PHESPIRA

These...aren't from the Cube, are they?

VESEKIR

Haha! Wait, what?

PHESPIRA

Fuck it. To whimsical dipshits!

ALL

To whimsical dipshits!

ALL cheer, holler, whoop, and the sort.

BLACKOUT. BRO OUT!

BEGIN: TBD SONG OF BARDIC COMPASS'S CHOICE.

CURTAIN CALL.