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Author

Iwamiya, Jenna

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DUNGEONS AND DRAGONS - A SPACE CAMPAIGN

By

Jenna Iwamiya

A capstone project submitted for Graduation with University Honors

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APPROVED

Dr. Rickerby Hinds
Department of Theatre, Film, and Digital Production

Dr. Richard Cardullo, Howard H Hays Jr. Chair
University Honors

ABSTRACT

Dungeons and Dragons (D&D) is a tabletop roleplaying game in which participants work together to interactively craft a narrative stemming from players roleplaying characters, improvising interactions with the world, inhabitants, and plot devices the Dungeon Master (DM) has created. But because every interaction is improvised in real time, the consequences of the players' actions are subject to chance and the whims of the DM, and the limitations of human memory the stories that are crafted in D&D are often forgotten leading those within the D&D community to explore what methods can be used to preserve these stories. Already several mediums have been explored, most notably podcast, comic books, and animated series. Stage plays, however, have not been. This capstone sought to add to this discourse by investigating whether the use of theatre would be an effective medium to preserve the stories told in D&D by taking a section of my campaign, recording the interactions between all participants, transcribing, and editing it into a coherent narrative that was intended to be presented as a stage play. However, throughout the duration of the this process it was discovered that, due to incompatibilities between the external conflicts depicted in D&D and stage plays commonly depicting interpersonal conflicts combined with the limitations of what can be depicted on a stage, it was determined that if D&D were to be depicted as a stage production it would have to have components of a screenplay in order to depict the fantastical world. Characteristics of a screenplay were adopted where appropriate.

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I would like to acknowledge my faculty mentor Dr. Rickerby Hinds for sharing his knowledge of stage productions, screenplays, and giving me his unwavering support that has enabled the completion of this capstone project. Without him, my campaign would have remained a collection of notes and fading memories and I look forward to applying what I have learned to the other sections of this campaign and future ones. I would also like to thank my D&D group for their creativity, patience, and willingness to dedicate three to four hours of their weekend to listen to me verbally describe the myriad of ways their characters, who they've lovingly created, engage in silly shenanigans and tragic events. My interactions with them form the backbone of this work and without them, it simply would not exist. I would also like to thank my mother, who will claim despite being blatantly incorrect that it was her idea for me to turn my campaign into a formal work, for her continued support and my brother for countless times I have run scenes by him.

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

A group sits huddled at a table, tiny figurines standing on top of maps as one of them describes the scene. A mysterious stranger approaches a group of motley adventurers in a tavern, promising them a handsome reward if they successfully slay a dragon that has been terrorizing the nearby townsfolk. They agree to the stranger's terms, a glint in their eyes at the word treasure and thus, the game begins.

Created in 1974 by Gary Gygax and Dave Arneson, Dungeons and Dragons is a tabletop roleplaying game that is typically played in groups of three to six with participants divided into two groups: the players and the Dungeon Master. The players create a player character, an adventurer who fights monsters and whose interactions with the world and its inhabitants is roleplayed by the player. The Dungeon Master is often referred to as the lead storyteller, responsible for creating the world, its inhabitants (non-player characters), and storyline as the DM guides the players through dungeons or haunted houses and engages them in combat with fantastical monsters and villains while also acting as a referee; enforcing the rules (Mearls et. al 5; Crawford et. al 5). However, the title of lead storyteller is misleading; it implies that the DM has full control over the storyline and the players are passively experiencing it. While the DM exerts the greatest degree of creative control over the storyline, the DM does not control the player characters or characters that are created, controlled, and roleplayed as by the players. How they communicate with each other, the non-player characters (NPC), and work cooperatively or non-cooperatively with each other is subject entirely to the players' decisions and can, depending on the course of action, derail the plot line the DM originally planned. This is further complicated by the success of a player's action being dictated not by the player or DM, but by the outcome of a twenty sided dice with one indicating complete failure and twenty a

smashing success. Thus, if a player character wants to take a course of action that requires a skill check, the player would have to roll a twenty sided dice, the DM would set a value they have to meet or exceed based on the difficulty of the proposed course of action, and based on the outcome of the player's dice roll would determine whether or not their player character was successful. The description of the player character's success or failure is dictated by the DM. All of which forces the players, who do not know the situations they will be responding to, and the DM into an improvisational role in which player actions, dice rolls, and their subsequent consequences can derail the DM's originally planned story as plot devices are adapted or thrown out, leading to the creation of a story (also referred to as a campaign) in which there is no single author.

While collaborative storytelling and improvisation are two major strengths in DnD, enabling novel interactions to occur even within the same world setting, it renders the DM's notes and planned plot devices moot and with no in game-mechanic to record the interactions had and the limitations of human memory, the majority of these stories are forgotten by both the players and DM long before the story has finished. The portions that are remembered are limited to fond recollections of emotionally arousing events that are either funny, tragic, or shocking. All of which has led those within the DnD community to question what methods can be used to preserve the stories told. Some mediums that have already been explored include creating adventure modules or booklets that break down their story into its core features (the setting, antagonist, inhabitants, monsters, and items) in a manner that enables other DMs to take those components and create their own story, live streams, podcasts, graphic novels, and more recently animation. Early DMs sought to do so by creating adventure modules, or official books that break down a completed campaign into its core features (the world, its inhabitants, the

antagonist, the monsters, the items, and vague descriptions of its beginning and end) in a way that enables other DMs to take these components and mix and match them to create their own storyline. The actual storyline, the player characters whose interactions facilitated the development of the adventure module, are not included. Therefore, adventure modules more closely resemble a DM's notes regarding the situations and plot devices they've planned to use rather than a preserved record of the events that occurred. As technology has progressed, groups have since moved away from adventure modules, expanding into livestreams, podcasts, graphic novels, animation, and other visual mediums. But visual mediums enjoy a convention rarely found and blatantly abused in DnD: the fourth wall.

The fourth wall refers to the invisible, imaginary wall that separates and isolates the fictional world from the real world (Wyld 345). When the fourth wall is present, individuals within the real world are not permitted to speak or otherwise interact with individuals within the fictional world and vice versa. In DnD, this does not occur. Player characters and inhabitants are rarely ever isolated from the influence of the DM and the players, with both frequently responding to statements or questions made out of character in character (with players using their player characters and the DM using NPCs) and vice versa. It is also not uncommon for players to ask clarifying questions to the DM out of character, for the DM to respond out of character, and for the player characters to act on the information received by the players despite having no feasible means to garner this information. All of which breaks the fourth wall.

Visual mediums tend to struggle with the mistreatment of the fourth wall; its format typically limiting it to a single point of reference, a comic panel or a scene, that makes it difficult to seamlessly transition between the fictional conversations between player character and NPCs and real world interjections from the players and DM without muddying or dragging the plot

(Wydl 353). Thus, comics like *The Adventure Zone: Here There Be Gerblins* (McElroy et al.) and animated series like *The Legend of Vox Machina* (Prynoski et al.) that are adapted renditions of DnD podcasts often opt to remove the players from the story, focusing strictly on the characters' adventures through the fictional world. While this prevents the plot from dragging, it also removes the collaborative interactions that create the storyline causing it to lose a defining characteristic of DnD.

The purpose of this capstone project, turning my DnD Campaign into a play, is therefore twofold: first, it aims to explore whether theatre would be an effective medium to portray the stories told in DnD and to provide my players with a tangible record that accurately depicts the interactions they had that they can use to fondly look back on.

Theatre was initially chosen due to the flexibility of the stage and two of its subtypes: improvisational and verbatim theatre, which share similarities to how DnD campaigns are typically run. Improvisational theater is roughly defined as a form of theater in which actors are not necessarily provided with a script, instead making up dialogue and actions in real time in response to audience suggestions and their fellow actors' improvisation (Moshavi 438). By responding to other actors and the audience within the constraints of their character roles and location, improvisational theatre tests the boundaries of the fourth wall while creating a novel plot line that, much like DnD, are not typically preserved or scripted. Verbatim theatre is a form of documentary theatre in which players are constructed from the exact words spoken by people in recorded interviews regarding specific events or topics (Paget 318). It was therefore planned to transcribe my previously recorded DnD sessions, edit and format them according to the literary devices within verbatim and improvisational theater to develop an organized script with a coherent plot that would capture the interactions between the players, DM, player characters, and

NPCs without encountering the same pitfalls as other visual mediums. However, as the capstone progressed and issues began to arise, the objective of crafting a stage play out of the campaign shifted into creating a screenplay. Nevertheless, the process remained the same.

Thus, theatre was found to be an ineffective medium to portray the stories told in DnD for two primary reasons: the difference in the type of conflict emphasized in DnD and typical stage plays and the feasibility of depicting the contents of a DnD campaign on a stage. Stage plays typically depict interpersonal conflicts that can be resolved through verbal descriptions of the resolution process, rather than external conflicts that result in complex action sequences in which characters determine right and wrong in an epic showdown. Epic showdowns would be more characteristic of a screenplay which, by virtue of being presented on a screen and prerecorded, is able to incorporate a vast array of special effects that simply are not possible in a live format. Because DnD campaigns typically depict external conflicts that are resolved through combat, some of which entails actions that would require special effects (like unleashing a jetstream of fire at an enemy combatant), it was found that stage plays were not compatible for the depiction of the player characters' exploration through the world and its story. However, should DMs wish to continue exploring theatre as a medium, they may want to look into the feasibility of a hybrid model: using the stage to depict the conversations between the DM and the players, and whatever interpersonal conflicts there may be if any, and project a screenplay of the player characters' exploration through the world. Doing so would enable further clarification regarding the separation between the fictional and real world, enable the conflicts in the fictional world to be portrayed at a greater quality than possible in a stage play, and introduce a novel method of depicting stories.

Cast of Characters

Players

- Jenna: dungeon master (creates campaign content and oversees the execution of the game), 19, college student
- Jane: player, controls Awaya, analytical, tends to check out during the campaign, introverted
- Nia: Player, controls Arla, short, bubbly, easily excitable, animated

Letalis Crew

- Arla: purple tiefling (humanoid with a devil like appearance, typically with horns and a prehensile tail); blue eyes, former ASPEC test subject during her early childhood, adoptive daughter to Hadeon, prone to setting things on fire
- Awaya: high elf, contracted by Hadeon to care for Arla's safety but was originally partnered with Hadeon, former ASPEC experiment during late adolescence, has enormous debt, perpetually broke, analytical, and frugal
- TR3VR: onboard AI for the Letalis, has no corporeal form; selectively snarky

Other ASPEC Personnel

- Hadeon: ancient drow elf, Head of Intelligence for ASPEC Spec Ops and Head of Research Division Four, contracted to Az (eternal servitude, not mentioned here), wears sunglasses because he has light sensitive eyes but superior darkvision

NPCs

- Mint: halfling, former ASPEC second contact stealth operative that has gone AWOL, specializes in ambushing and trapping targets, target for elimination by ASPEC for crimes of kidnapping, theft, and desertion
- Dekeshi: unregistered water genasi convicted of first degree murder, slander, terrorism, kidnapping, and theft against the Terran Federation and ASPEC, target for elimination, sorcerer
- Cinder: fire genasi, female, ASPEC test subject
- Blaze: fire genasi, male, ASPEC test subject
- Unnamed Boy: fire genasi, male, child, ASPEC test subject

World Information

- ASPEC: A Space Exploration Company; controls the exploration of space in search of raw resources to supply the Terran Federation; has considerable political, technological, and economic power; the governing body in space; has paramilitary branches
- Terran Federation: global government controlled Earth

DND Rules Information

- Initiative: component of combat; occurs in the beginning; consists of all characters and non-player characters that are participating in combat to roll a twenty sided dice, take the result and add their initiative modifier to determine the order in which combat occurs;

during combat each player can make one action and if they are allowed to a bonus action at the end of their turn

- Movement is not considered an action, talking is not considered an action
- Action consists primarily of spellcasting (unless stated otherwise) and attacking
- Combat: physical confrontation in which the objective is to reduce the opponent's health points (hp) to zero and/or successfully disengage (retreat) from the confrontation
 - Consists of a series of rounds that are broken up into turns; each combatant gets a turn and once every combatant has moved then it is considered a round
- Ability Checks: a test of a character's or monster's innate talent and training in an effort to overcome a challenge; comes into play when a character or monster attempts an action that has a chance of failure

(Lights rise on the Letalis, the fighter class vessel cruises through space. Its twin engines hum faintly as it passes across the screen. AWAYA sits in one of the three chairs in the cockpit. Gunblade in hand, she meticulously sharpens the extended blade, her limited supplies laid neatly at her feet. ARLA paces back and forth in front of her, reading their mission objectives out loud. Awaya isn't listening.)

ARLA

Elimination target: Mint! Species: halfling!

(Arla stops her pacing.)

Do you think she's short?

(to herself)

She's probably short.

(Arla resumes pacing)

Personnel sent to eliminate her are advised to do so with caution, training record syndicate she excelled in ambushing and trapping targets--oooh good for her. Her preferred traps are the rant...raided...redact...Raider RX Stealth series! But since going AWOL has become more improv--improvisis--Awaya!

(Awaya sighs, setting aside her cleaning materials and holstering her gunblade. She approaches Arla who hands her the datapad, Arla's tail swishing back and forth as Arla points to the word she's struggling with.)

AWAYA

Improvisational.

(Arla is confused. She stares at the word, mouthing it to herself before shrugging. Arla unwraps and pops a mint in her mouth.)

ARLA

Do you think Mint smells like mint?

AWAYA

I--

ARLA

Do you think she looks like a mint?

AWAYA

I neither know what mint smells or tastes like.

ARLA

You've never had a mint before?!

AWAYA

My salary does not allow for such frivolous purchases.

ARLA

Mint isn't frivolous! It's...it's...

INT. MESS HALL

(Arla, still carrying the data pad, makes various hand gestures as she searches for the correct word. Awaya follows behind her. They stop abruptly at a locked cabinet labeled ARLA DISCIPLINARY SNACKS, its lock disjoined from the cabinet. Label held in place by a small throwing knife. Arla opens the cabinet to reveal a SINGLE MINT on an otherwise empty shelf.)

ARLA

This is the only minty thing I have!

(Arla pouts, twirling a mint in her mouth. Arla grabs the mint from the cabinet and holds it out to Awaya.)

ARLA

I got it from the snack cabinet, just for you.

AWAYA

I care not for what mint tastes like.

ARLA

But what if Mint passes by and she smells like it!

AWAYA

So you're insinuating, I should take the mint as a way to recognize the target when she comes along.

ARLA

Possibly.

AWAYA

As a--

ARLA

As a strategy tactic!

AWAYA

A strategy tactic coming from you? Should I be surprised or bewildered?

ARLA

Well, so far my strategies haven't worked...but...but what if she does smell like mint. Or what she looks like a mint!

(Arla shoves the mint towards Awaya)

It could be mission critical!

AWAYA

If she looked like a mint, ASPEC would have found her already.

ARLA

She could be a disguised mint?

(Arla's tail ceases its excited wagging, curling around her leg, her ears dropping as Awaya stares.)

ARLA

I didn't think it was that bad...

(Arla perks up as Awaya sighs, taking the mint and observes it from multiple angles, carefully lifting the smallest portion of the wrapping and sniffing it before placing it back into the cabinet.)

AWAYA

I will have to order a new shipment from Hadeon.

ARLA

You're getting me more snacks?! I was running out.

AWAYA

No. I'm asking for a reinforced locker.

(Arla's ears droop)

These are rewards, not snacks for you to freely consume.

ARLA

But you never--

(Overhead, an automated voice interrupts their conversation.)

TR3VR

Target identified.

EXT. SPACE LETALIS AND SMUGGLING FRIGATE

An old frigate limps through space, scorched impact marks marring its hull, its damaged thrusters keeping it moving at sub-light speeds. The Letalis arcs towards, firing two bolts of condensed energy. Explosions ripple along the frigate's thrusters. The Letalis circles, firing another two bolts as it completes its second run.

TR3VR

Thrusters neutralized. Prepare for boarding.

INT. LETALIS AIRLOCK

Awaya straightens her armor, slipping a small throwing knife into her boot as she and Arla, who is only lightly armored, wait in front of the airlock for TR3VR to clear them for combat.

TR3VR

Docking successful. Airlock encryption overridden. Warning: ship systems have been scrambled. Further AI assistance will be limited.

ARLA

Oh, they're clever.

TR3VR

Assessment falls within expected range of deductive abilities.

AWAYA

I'm telling you, that lobotomy might actually help her.

TR3VR

The medical community no longer views lobotomies as an acceptable treatment for cognitive deficiencies.

ARLA

Isn't that fortunate?

TR3VR

However, records indicate willing surgeons may be found within the outer colonies of the Federation. With ASPEC resources, acquiring one should not be difficult.

ARLA

Hadeon wouldn't do that!

(beat)

(uncertain)

Right?

TR3VR

Agents cleared for combat. Board the starboard airlock when ready.

(Awaya exits, the airlock doors opening and closing behind her.)

ARLA

Wait! No one answered my question!

(Arla huffs before following Awaya.)

INT. FRIGATE HALLWAY TO CARGO BAY

The airlock opens with a hiss, as Awaya and Arla enter the darkened frigate. TR3VR maintains contact with them through their comlinks on their wrists.

TR3VR

Two SCII signals detected. Third genasi may have been terminated. Approximate location: cargo hold. Agents--

ARLA

Helloooooooooo, its dark in heereeeeeeee!

(Arla waits expectantly)

Um...Trevor?

TR3VR

Manual override required. System not accessible

AWAYA

Do we have intercom access?

TR3VR

Intercom system operational. Opening communications channel.

AWAYA

ASPEC has ordered the elimination of Mint and Dekeshi and only Mint and Dekeshi. The rest will be granted safe passage to the nearest station. So unless you want everything and everyone on board to get blown up, you will come out now with your hands above your head and surrender.

(A staticky voice is heard over the intercom.)

DEKESHI

You don't have the fire power.

(Awaya faintly smiles, faint tendrils of shadow start to form around her.)

AWAYA

(excited at the idea of combat/the challenge)

Really now? Do you really think so?

(A faint beep, akin to a muted bomb timer begins)

DEKESHI

(over the staticky intercom)

And ASPEC would never risk losing its test subjects.

ARLA

Test subjects? They aren't test subjects! ASPEC doesn't do live trials anymore!

(There's a muted explosion as the last beep occurs, followed by hissing as smoke erupts from the rigged bombs, flooding the hallway. Arla's eyes are watering and she rapidly blinks in an effort to see through the smoke. Both she and Awaya are coughing. Hidden within the smoke, MINT moves towards them, drawing one of her daggers. Faint tendrils of blackened smoke radiates from the blade)

INT. DND TABLE

A spotlight shines on NIA, JENNA, and JANE sitting at a table for four. Dice are scattered across its surface, surrounding a handful of poorly drawn maps in the center Jenna sits at the head of the table, with her laptop in front of her. She reaches over to a jar of colorful dice and picks one. She rolls it. Nia and Jane sit to her left and right with tablets.

JENNA

Nia, what's your armor class?

NIA

14...why?

JENNA

Don't worry about it.

NIA

And now I'm worried.

INT. FRIGATE

(Arla yelps as the dagger plunges into her, her hp bar located along the bottom of the screen, is reduced by 6 health points. Faint electricity sparks from the blade.)

TR3VR

Spatial anomaly detected.

ARLA

Spatial what now?

INT. DND TABLE

JENNA

Make a wisdom save.

(Nia rolls her dice. It lands on a 10)

NIA

Shit.

JENNA

Arla vanishes in a puff of dark smoke.

INT. FRIGATE

Occurs as Jenna is speaking. Dark smoke exudes from the dagger, enveloping Arla as Arla vanishes in a puff of dark smoke.

INT. DND TABLE

NIA

So much for not worrying about it.

JENNA

You'll be fine.

(Nia gives Jenna an "Oh really?" expression)

Oh please, this is the first session, you're not going to die.

INT. FRIGATE

Arla stumbles as she reappears further down the hallway, the cloud of dark smoke that enveloped her, retreating back into the dagger. Arla coughs, wincing as she pulls at her wound.

ARLA

Owww...stupid teleporting dagger.

(Arla grabs the handle and pulls, yanking the dagger out and throwing it on the ground. It disappears into a puff of smoke.)

INT. DND TABLE

NIA

Perception check! Perception check!

(Nia rolls. It lands on a 3.)

JENNA

There do be a lot of smoke.

NIA

Reaaaal helpful.

JENNA

I try to be.

INT. FRIGATE

(Arla turns her head left and right searching through the smoke. Mint creeps up behind her, the dagger appearing in her hand.)

ARLA

Stupid smoke.

(With both hands she rubs her eyes. Arla suddenly pauses, sniffing the air. She raises her head and sniffs.)

Is that...mint?

(Mint appears behind Arla, weapons raised.)

INT. DND TABLE

NIA

Wait, she actually smells like mint?

JENNA

Gave you a lot for a three, didn't I?

NIA

Thaaaank youuuuu.

JENNA

Anyways. Does a 17 hit?

NIA

...what do you think?

JENNA
(gloating)

Just wanted to make sure.

INT. FRIGATE - HALLWAY TO CARGO BAY

(Mint stabs Arla with both daggers.)

INT. DND TABLE

(Jenna speaks as Mint attacks Arla. Jenna rolls two four sided dice.)

JENNA

Two plus four, six. Three plus four, seven. Thirteen and because this counts as a sneak attack, that's an additional 1D6

(Jenna rolls. It lands on two.)

15. Mint deals 15 damage.

(15 points are deducted from Arla's hp. She now has 18/33 hit points.)

NIA

I hate being squishy.

JENNA

You have a reaction.

NIA

I do?

(Nia squints at her tablet.)

I do!

(sheepishly)

I cast hellish rebuke.

(Jenna rolls a 1D20.)

JENNA

Spell save?

NIA

14

JENNA

You point your finger towards her and hellish flames form around Mint, embers falling across her as she scrambles to escape. Since she succeeded on her save, she takes half damage. Mint is going to use her bonus action to dash and put some distance between you.

INT. FRIGATE

(As Jenna speaks, flames encompass Mint, reducing 14 from her hit points. Mint, still on fire, scrambles to get away. From across the hallway, Awaya steadily moves towards Arla and levels her gunblade at Mint. Awaya fires six bullets in rapid succession at her retreating form.)

INT. DND TABLE

JENNA

Since you are firing six bullets, I am going to make you roll to hit six times. Can't have you being too op.

(Jane reaches for the jar of dice and grabs six of them. She rolls them all at once.)

JANE

Should just let me be op.

JENNA

Four of those actually hit, so go ahead and roll 4D8.

(Jane digs through the jar and finds four eight sided dice. She rolls them.)

JENNA

Apparently, you're already op.

INT. FRIGATE

(Mint takes 21 points of damage. Her health bar turns red as it starts to approach zero.)

JANE

(teasing)

What you gonna do, nerf me?

JENNA

(sighs)

You know you have a second action, right?

JANE

(grining)

I'm gonna kill her.

INT. FRIGATE - HALLWAY TO CARGO BAY

(Awaya mirrors Jane's grin. She cocks one of the levers on the gunblade, snapping it outwards as the blade extends and snaps into place as she breaks into a sprint towards Mint.)

INT. DND TABLE

(As Awaya moves, Jane rolls a twenty sided dice.)

JANE

Fifteen plus eight, twenty three.

JENNA

Jesus.

INT. FRIGATE - HALLWAY TO CARGO BAY

(Awaya makes an upwards slashing motion, breaking through Mint's armor and dealing 13 points of damage. Awaya grabs Mint's forearm, twisting it outwards. Darkened smoke faintly emanates from the blade. Mint weakly tosses the dagger, her form disappearing in a puff of smoke and reappearing behind Awaya. Nearby, Arla summons a mote of fire in her hand.)

INT. DND TABLE

JENNA

Don't miss.

NIA

I know.

JENNA

Know that you might hit Awaya?

NIA

Oh. I could use shocking grasp?

JENNA

Which requires getting close.

NIA

Then should I just...

JANE

Just let me kill her.

INT. FRIGATE - HALLWAY TO CARGO BAY

(Awaya twists over her shoulder. With one hand at the handle of the gunblade and the other at the pommel, Awaya twists over her shoulder and stabs Mint just as Mint's dagger skids across Awaya's armor. Awaya lunges forwards, knocking Mint off her feet as she plunges the blade deeper. Awaya's grin fades as Mint's hp is reduced to zero. She withdraws her blade, giving a small but respectful nod towards Mint. By now, the smoke has begun to dissipate.)

ARLA

(with noticeable wounds)

Do you have a healing potion?

AWAYA

You were given your own supply.

ARLA

But Hadeon said Tinny was for emergencies!

AWAYA

Is this not an emergency?

(Awaya finishes cleaning her blade. She reloads and holsters it before moving towards the cargo bay doors.)

ARLA

You're supposed to take care of me!

(Awaya turns sharply around.)

AWAYA

As I have done, by not allowing you to die.

ARLA

(occurs concurrently)

Awaaaayaa.

AWAYA

The rest is on you.

ARLA

But Hadeon said--

AWAYA

The details of my contract do not specify that I take care of your health, only that I keep you safe and alive.

(Awaya turns back to the sealed cargo bay doors, beginning the process of opening them. Arla pouts.)

INT. DND TABLE

NIA
(mischievously)

Can I loot the body?

JENNA

Yeah, go ahead.

INT. FRIGATE

(Arla crouches next to Mint's corpse as she rifles through her pockets. She finds a healing potion and pops off the cork.)

INT. DND TABLE

JENNA

You what?

NIA

I go over to her dead body and I go

INT. FRIGATE

ARLA
(snarky/insincere)

Thank you for your service.

INT. DND TABLE

NIA

And I loot her fucking pants and I find the healing potion and I pop it open and I go

(Nia makes gurgling noises as Arla drowns the healing potion.)

INT. FRIGATE

(Arla pops the cork off the healing potion and drowns it in tandem with Nia's narration.)

INT. DND TABLE

JENNA

I see...you're going to heal yourself for 2D4 plus 2 hp.

(As Nia rolls two four sided dice, Arla's hp bar increases for a total of nine hp points putting her at 27/33 hit points.)

NIA

What else does she have?

INT. FRIGATE

(Arla picks up one of Mint's daggers. Several magical runes are carved into the blade. Arla tries to put the dagger in her pocket. It doesn't fit. Arla removes the dagger and starts pulling out miscellaneous items as she attempts to fit the dagger. Arla pauses when she pulls out a silver medical tin.)

ARLA

Trevor, what's this?

TR3VR

Sedatives. Agents are authorized to sedate kidnapped genasi should they resist rescue efforts.

ARLA

We're rescuing them, why would they...

TR3VR

Unknown. Warning: agents are required to turn over unregistered weapons looted from the battlefield.

(Awaya holds out her hand. Reluctantly, Arla hands them over. Awaya pulls out two daggers and tosses them aside, sliding Mint's into the now empty sheaths.)

ARLA

Thanks a lot Trevor.

TR3VR

Happy to assist.

AWAYA

Trevor.

TR3VR

Processing...connection established. Access granted. Opening cargo bay doors.

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO BAY

(The door screeches as it opens, revealing a darkened cargo bay. Shipping crates are stacked on top of each other in two columns near the entrance and sparsely throughout the bay. Hidden behind these crates near the entrance is DEKESHI. He goes unnoticed by Arla and Awaya who slowly enter the cargo bay.)

ARLA

Trevor? I don't see anyone...

(Dekeshi creeps towards them.)

TR3VR

Searching...two SCII identified near current location.

AWAYA

Fan out. We can cover more ground that way.

(Dekeshi, now behind Arla and Awaya raises lifts his hand towards them. Cold air condenses around his palm)

TR3VR

Warning: unknown magical signature detected behind agents.

(Awaya and Arla turn around; Awaya reaching for her gunblade just as a blast of cold air erupts from Dekeshi's outstretched hand.)

INT. DND TABLE

JENNA

Make a constitution save.

NIA

Oh, fuck.

(Nia and Jane roll)

NIA

14 plus 1, 15.

JANE

15 plus 1, sixteen.

INT. FRIGATE

(Cold air blasts from his hand, instantly solidifying the water vapor in between them, forming crystalline shards that are caught in the blast and hurled towards Awaya and Arla, who each raise their arms to shield themselves. They take 16 damage each as they backpedal, pushing themselves deeper into the cargo bay. The cargo bay doors close as Dekeshi advances. Arla has 11/33 hp and Away is at full hp.)

INT. DND TABLE

NIA

Excuse me?! Whomst?!

INT. FRIGATE

(Arla mirrors Nia's surprise as she and Awaya prepare themselves for combat.)

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO BAY/ DND TABLE

DEKESHI/JENNA

(mocking/teasing)

Someone didn't read the mission brief.

NIA

I did...

ARLA

How do you know about the mission brief?

JENNA

Then you should have known, Mint had a partner.

DEKESHI

Enough to quote it. It is unclear why he and Mint are traveling together, but encounters with ASPEC Supply Line Security Personnel suggest that Mint usually moves first, infiltrating targeted ships and taking out key personnel while Dekeshi lures large groups of personnel into a single area

(Dekeshi raises his arms to gesture to the cargo bay.)

And drowns them.

INT. DND TABLE

JENNA

Roll initiative.

(Jane and Nia roll.)

NIA

11 plus 1, 12.

JANE

9.

(Jenna glances towards Jane.)

JENNA

Your initiative modifier is plus three. Do the math for me, please.

JANE

(beat)

Twelve.

NIA

Me in college, can't do basic math.

JENNA/JANE

Meeeee.

JANE

Jenna really heard me say I'm incapable of basic math.

JENNA

Says the CS major.

(Jane scoffs, Nia laughs.)

JENNA

Anyways--actually, Nia, what's your hp at?

NIA

11...

JENNA

Lol. You better make this.

NIA

Make what?!

JENNA

The dexterity save. Dekeshi is gonna cast tidal wave.

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO BAY

(Churning water rises upwards, separating Dekeshi, Arla, and Awaya. It reaches a little lower than the ceiling when the wave crests, breaking as it begins its descent towards Arla and Awaya.)

Sooo try to roll high, yeah?

NIA

Shut the fuck up, you're going to jinx it.

(Nia rolls.)

NIA

You fucking jinxed it!

JANE

Damn. Is that a 3?

NIA

Can I like, hide behind Awaya?

JENNA

What did you roll?

JANE

Six.

JENNA

Imma say that if you want, Jane, a six will allow you to haphazardly step in front of Arla.

(Nia beams towards Jane.)

JANE

Uh...sure.

INT. FRIGATE -CARGO BAY

(Awaya grabs Arla, repositioning Arla behind her. Awaya shields Arla from the crashing wave, but as more water buffets against them, the current pulls Awaya under, causing her to lose her footing. Arla slips out of Awaya's hands. The wave pushes them deeper into the cargo bay before receding into small puddles, knocking them both prone.)

INT. DND TABLE

(Jenna rolls 4D8.)

JENNA

6, 5, 6, 4 ummmm 6, 5, 11, 21. Because you were shielded somewhat by Awaya, Arla you're going to take 10 damage and Awaya because you failed your dexterity save and weren't shielded by anyone, you're going to take the full 21 damage. How much hp does that put you at?

JANE

I was at full hp.

NIA

What?! I'm at 1.

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO HOLD

(Shadows start to emanate from Awaya's form, clinging to her.)

JENNA

Lmao, glass cannons be like. Anyways both of you are knocked prone. Jane it's your turn.

(Jane rolls a twenty sided dice It lands on a two)

JANE

Well, I'm not doing anything.

JENNA

You're attacking?

JANE

What else is there to do?

JENNA

You've been knocked prone, so you could get up.

JANE

That's it?

JENNA

I mean you rolled a two and even if you wanted to attack, because you're prone you'd have disadvantage on the attack.

JANE

I guess I'm getting up then.

INT. FRIGATE

(Awaya gets up, picking up her gunblade, the shadows emanating from her giving her a darkened aura. It contrasts with the blue tinged elemental energy surrounding Dekeshi. Dramatic battle music plays as they face off, it builds and builds, until it is interrupted by Arla coughing up water.)

ARLA

Such pretty bubbles...they were pretty bubbles.

(Hidden behind a stack of disturbed shipping crates, GENASI MALE CHILD, takes a tentative step towards her when he is pulled away and behind the crates by BLAZE. Arla's ears flicker towards them, catching their faint movement. She squints, before heaving up more water.)

HADEON

(voice only/hallucination)

Now, I know you wouldn't have forgotten your Tinny. Isn't that right, Arla?

ARLA

Tinny...

(Arla picks herself up, patting down her pockets, most of which are now empty. Arla turns towards her scattered items. Amongst them is a silver tin that contains the sedatives. Near the front of the cargo bay, Awaya charges at Dekeshi, who hurls an ice storm at her. Rock hard ice buffets against Awaya, delaying her charge as she navigates through the storm,

dodging or blocking the larger hail and enduring the smaller ones. Awaya's hp bar is reduced by 12 hit points.)

INT. DND TABLE

NIA

It's probably in one of those piles.

JENNA

Do you go looking for it?

NIA

Do I have a mint tin?

JENNA

What do you mean?

NIA

I feel like for Arla, cuz she just has pockets right? She would specifically ask for it to be portable instead of a big health aid thing. So it would be like a bag of holding inside a bag of holding but instead of a bag holding inside a bag of holding it's...a tin.

JENNA

So a tin about the size of a mint container that acts as a bag of holding that holds your health kits and the tin is placed into your pocket which acts as a bag of holding.

NIA

A bag of holding mint tin inside a bag of holding pocket.

JENNA

That's a lot of bags of holding.

(Nia is visibly disappointed.)

But go ahead.

NIA

Yes? Yes, its a mint tin?!

JENNA

Yeah.

NIA

Fuck yeah!

JENNA

Make a perception check.

(Nia rolls.)

NIA

That's a 4...

JENNA

You see shit. It's small and you have salt water in your eyes.

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO BAY

(Arla looks around for her tin.)

ARLA

Tinny? Tinny?

(Behind her, Awaya has made it through the ice storm. The blade of her gunblade extends.)

INT. DND TABLE

(Jane reaches for a dice)

JANE

We need to get a start on hurting people.

(Jane rolls. It lands on a four.)

I guess not.

JENNA

But you have two actions, remember?

JANE

Hell yeah.

JENNA

Use the non-cursed dice.

(Jane grabs a different dice and rolls. It lands on an 11)

JANE

11 plus 8, 19

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO BAY

(Awaya dashes towards Dekeshi and attacks him, her blade slashing diagonally across Dekeshi. She pivots, the blade withdrawing as her weapon turns back into a gun.)

INT. DND TABLE

JENNA

Make a dexterity save. Just reminding you that if you roll anything below a 15 your gun will jam.

(Jane rolls. It lands on a 16. Jane reaches for six other twenty sided dice and rolls them at once.)

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO BAY

(Awaya unloads six bullets into Dekeshi's side, reducing his hit points by 34.)

INT. DND TABLE

JANE

Did I kill him?

JENNA

Nope.

JANE

You gotta make me stronger.

JENNA

You need to roll higher. Nia?

NIA

Did I find my tin?

JENNA

Roll perception.

(Nia rolls.)

NIA

That's a five...

JENNA

You don't see your tin.

(Nia loudly groans)

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO BAY

(Arla continues to search for her tin. She lifts several soggy items up and searches underneath them.)

ARLA

Fucking green, stupid tin.

(Arla puts one of the items she's picked up down.)

What if it's red... was it red? I don't remember if it was red. Awaaaaayaaa? Was my tin red?

(Awaya blocks Dekeshi's ice-dagger with her gunblade, knocking it out of his hand. It explodes, sending shards of ice flying. Awaya's health bar is reduced by 6 points.)

AWAYA

I'm a little busy here!

INT. DND TABLE

(Jane rolls several twenty sided dice.)

JENNA

1D20! You're making a single attack, it's 1D20.

JANE

We'll take the average! 17!

(Jenna sighs.)

JENNA

As long as you're having fun.

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO HOLD

(Awaya lunges forwards, swinging her gunblade at Dekeshi, the blade making contact and reducing his hp by 11. Awaya dashes backwards, putting some distance between them as she reloads her gun.)

INT. DND TABLE

JANE

Don't I have a second action?

NIA

How many actions have you taken?!

JENNA

Opportunity attack in response to his attack which is on his turn. On your turn you reloaded, which takes an action and because of your class you have two actions. So yeah, you have one more action.

NIA

Sheeeesh!

(Jane rolls four twenty sided dice. Jenna pretends not to notice.)

JANE

13 plus 8, 22.

JENNA

Uh-huh. Don't miss your dexterity save.

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO HOLD

(Awaya lunges towards Dekeshi, stabbing her gunblade into his stomach before pulling it out and tucking the blade. At point blank range, Awaya levels the gun barrel at Dekeshi and fires all six bullets. Reduced to zero hp, Dekeshi's form spasms, losing its shape as it becomes more liquid than solid until all that is left of him is a small puddle. The shadows surrounding Awaya recede back into her. Awaya turns to approach Arla, stopping as she spots a green tin. Awaya picks it up and hands it to Arla.)

AWAYA

Your tin.

ARLA

Tinny!

(Arla opens it, revealing several vials of healing potions and other first aid items. She takes a vial, uncorking it and drinking its contents. The majority of her wounds close as she is healed for 30 hit points. Arla puts the empty vial back into the tin.)

ARLA

Are we done?

AWAYA

You read the mission brief, you tell me.

ARLA

The kidnapped fire genasi!

AWAYA

Good work. Trevor--

ARLA

They went that-a-way!

(Arla points and starts walking towards the stack of crates she saw male child genasi. Awaya hesitates and follows her, with her gunblade ready. They eventually find three fire genasi, BLAZE, CINDER, and MALE CHILD GENASI) hiding between the shipping crates.)

ARLA

Awww, you're scaring them.

(Awaya scoffs and lowers her weapon)

ARLA

Um, hi, my name is Arla and the bloody lady is my partner. Um...we're here to rescue you.

INT. DND TABLE

JENNA

Awaya's weapon is drawn, you're bloody, and you just killed Dekeshi and you say you aren't going to hurt them?

NIA

Yes.

JENNA

Make a charisma check.

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO BAY

MALE GENASI CHILD

Did the doctors send you?

ARLA

They did.

MALE GENASI CHILD

Then you can help her!

(Cinder inches away from them. Her eyes are wide and is visibly shaking. Flames spark around her.)

MALE GENASI CHILD

They were sent by the doctors, they'll know what to do.

(Cinder shakes her head, more flames sparking around her and across her form)

CINDER

You don't know that...

(Flames burst in her hands, causing Cinder to panic, frantically shaking her hand to put it out. The flames grow as she continues to panic. Awaya scrutinizes Cinder and draws her gun.)

ARLA

What are you--

AWAYA

She has no implant.

MALE GENASI CHILD

You can't! You said you were here to rescue us!

ARLA

I know! I'm trying! Awaya--

AWAYA

If she--

ARLA

I know.

AWAYA

Ten minutes.

(Awaya lowers her weapon. Arla slowly approaches Cinder, who is attempting to put out the flames in her hands. She scrambles backwards, the places she touches catching on fire. Cinder, in her attempts to put out the flames, only accelerates the spread.)

ARLA

Hi--

CINDER

Don't...don't come any closer.

(Flames shoot out in wild directions from her person. Cinder panics. Flying embers hit the nearby shipping containers. Arla remains where she is.)

ARLA

But umm...I can control fire and you don't look like you're burning to death so maybe you can control it too.

CINDER

Stay away from me.

(Cinder backpedals away from Arla, the flames around her grow.)

It's spreading, it's spreading. Blaze!

(Blaze makes a small move towards her. A sharp glare and a subtle gesture to the gunblade from Awaya, has Blaze freezing in place.)

CINDER

Why won't--why won't it stop!

(Cinder aggressively shakes her hands, trying to put out the flames. She is unsuccessful.)

ARLA

You can control it! Just focus on centering yourself and--

(More flames burst across Cinder's person.)

CINDER

I can't-it's not working! It's not working!

ARLA

Hey, hey! Focus on me!

INT. DND TABLE

JENNA

Charisma check.

NIA

Aw fuck.

(Nia rolls. It lands on a 20.)

INT. FRIGATE - CARGO HOLD

(Cinder looks at Arla)

CINDER

I just want this to stop.

ARLA

I have some medicine in my bag that can make this stop for a moment. Would you like that?

(Cinder nods. Arla reaches into her pocket and pulls out the silver medical tin. She opens it and retrieves a single hypodermic needle, containing a purple-ish green fluid.)

ARLA

Okay. You're going to close your eyes and then you're going to sleep. Okay?

(Cinder closes her eyes.)

ARLA

You're doing great!

(Arla approaches her, ignoring the flames as she makes contact with Cinder. Cinder flinches as the needle goes in, the flames around her swelling then extinguishing as Cinder loses consciousness. She slumps to the floor.)

ARLA

She's just sleeping.

MALE GENASI CHILD

(sniffing)

You said that you would help her!

ARLA

Not the dead kind of sleeping! If you want to see that, that's on our way back to the ship. Um...where we killed the bad...uh...umm there was an evil lady. Yes. There was an evil lady. Umm...anyways to the ship.

INT. LETALIS - AIRLOCK

(The airlock door to the Letalis hisses open as Arla, the genasi, and Awaya return to the Letalis.)

TR3VR

Congratulations on a successful mission.

MALE GENASI CHILD

It speaks?!

ARLA

Yup! Say hi to Trevor

MALE GENASI CHILD

(quietly)

Hi, Trevor.

TR3VR

(beat)

The medical bay is currently on standby if you or the patients require any medical attention.

(They move towards the medical bay, Blaze setting Cinder down on one of the unused beds. The other genasi gather around her.)

MALE GENASI CHILD

She's really cold. Why's she so cold?

BLAZE

I don't know...

(A scanner powers on and moves towards Cinder.)

TR3VR

Step away from the patient.

(Slowly, the genasi steps away from Cinder, allowing the scanner to move up and down Cinder's form freely. The genasi continue to whisper amongst themselves when the scanner suddenly pauses.)

TR3VR

Priority one communications request received. Meta data indicates it is mission critical.

ARLA

Who is it?

TR3VR

Query: who assigns the Letalis missions?

(Arla's face lights up and she sprints to the bridge. Awaya lingers. Around the medical bay, mechanical arms begin to move around preparing several needles and IV bags.)

TR3VR

Patient compliance is strongly recommended.

INT. LETALIS BRIDGE

(Arla enters the bridge of the Letalis, where HADEON is displayed holographically in front of them, a medical drone floating in and out of the frame as it finishes its scan. Upon seeing her adoptive father, Arla's tail begins to wag.)

HADEON

Trevor tells me your mission was successful.

ARLA

Mhmm!

HADEON

I expected nothing less from you two. Which is why, I'm giving you new mission objectives. Spec Ops Agent Durthane--

ARLA

Aaaaaaaaaawwwwwww!

(Awaya enters.)

HADEON

Are you complaining?

ARLA

Well we saved a bunch of people. I thought it was cool and we caught the killer lady and I took her healing potions, cause I forgot about the tin and then I couldn't find the tin. Uh...umm...

AWAYA

She seeks praise.

HADEON

Very impressive, Arla. Your performance as a SPEC OPs agent is commendable and is something we should all strive to achieve. Which is why

(Arla nods along, her tail has started wagging again. It, along with her ears, droops when Hadeon moves on.)

HADEON

I am assigning you new mission objectives. Agent Durthane was on a priority alpha search and destroy mission when communications were lost approximately four hours ago. You are to locate her, aid in her mission objectives, and report back to Archimides.

ARLA

Ava disappeared?

HADEON

Yes.

ARLA

We can't call her?

HADEON

Communications were lost with her ship's destruction?

ARLA

What about the genasi we rescued?

HADEON

Sedate them.

ARLA

They're staying on the ship?!

HADEON

Is there a problem with that?

ARLA

I mean, I mean. Archimedes then Ava, right?

HADEON

You're going directly.

ARLA

Uh, but the mission said to bring them back.

HADEON

And your mission objectives have changed.

ARLA

But then you said to report to Archimedes!

HADEON

Following the completion and retrieval of Agent Durthane.

Can't we make a pit stop?

HADEON

Were you not listening?!

ARLA

I was listening!

(small)

I was listening. I just...there's people on the ship!

HADEON

And they will be sedated until further notice.

ARLA

What if they wake up?!

HADEON

They won't.

(beat)

TR3VR

Calculations suggest the Letalis inventory cannot keep the patients sedated for the duration of this mission.

ARLA

Ah ha!

HADEON

Alternatives have already been considered and you've already been granted access to them.

TR3VR

Information received. Preparing alternative measures.

(Arla makes a noise/groan of discontent/disappointment)

HADEON

Now, is there anything else?

ARLA

You're going to equip the ship with fire protective thingies right? Cause we picked up fire prone people?

HADEON

They. Are not. Going. To wake up.

ARLA

But what if they do?!

HADEON

In the unlikely event the subjects wake, you are to subdue them and sedate them through any means necessary. Should that prove too difficult for you, the subjects are to be terminated. But that won't happen, now will it?

(Arla's tail curls around her, like it's hugging her. She holds the tip in her hands.)

ARLA

No...

HADEON

And why's that?

ARLA

Um...because...because...

HADEON

Because the subjects won't wake up until your mission is complete.

ARLA

But...but...

HADEON

Awaya, continue keeping her in line. Your request for a shock collar, however, has been denied.

AWAYA

Unfortunate. In lieu of a shock collar, may I get a taser instead?

HADEON

Send the model and I will consider it.

AWAYA

Wolfhound 369.

HADEON

Noted.

(Hadeon's hologram fades. Arla's ears droop, her tail curls tighter around her. She snuffles. Awaya spares her a passing glance before leaving the bridge.)

TR3VR

Course charged. Calculations suggest the Letalis will arrive in approximately four hours. Patients are predicted to remain unconscious for seventy two hours.

ARLA

Will we ever stop at Archimedes?

TR3VR

Upon mission completion.

ARLA

When will that be?

(two beats)

Trevor?

TR3VR

Soon.

ARLA

Sure.

(Arla leaves the bridge.)

TR3VR

Arla Consoling Programs disengaged. Resuming normal functioning.

(The Letalis makes the jump to hyperspace, the surrounding stars becoming blue streaks of light.)

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