

Leviathan

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ACT I

SCENE 1

Market day in a sleepy medieval village. People milling around, exchanging goods, etc.
Sylvie, a spunky 15- to 16-year old girl, assumes the role of narrator for the opening number.

SONG: Sleepy Village

SYLVIE: (sings) In a sleepy village
Full of dreams and promises
Full of plows and tillage
Full of doubting Thomases

Every person has a history
That is woven through this place
And every myth and every mystery
May be cause for dispute or disgrace.

WOMEN: But we share our stories
And they become a part of us
All the wounds and glories
At the very heart of us

MEN: For a man without a tale to tell,
Like a smith without a forge,
Hasn't means to plan a future well

ALL: And nobody has a story like George.

SYLVIE: (Speaks to the audience) George is of that honorable and undeniably awkward age at which a lad becomes a man. But to truly understand his story, you must understand something of his father, who lived in another village, far to the north of us, where the mountains meet the sea...

ALL: (sing) It wasn't so very long ago,
There was a village that in many respects was very much
Like us.

ALARIC (the bailiff): There was a bailiff

LADY CHARLISE & ALETHEIA: And nobility

ALARIC, CHARLISE, ALETHEIA: With the ability to guide and to govern the common folk

ALL: Like us!
They had houses made of wattle and daub
And every peasant was born into a job
Like us!

There were people you could trust.

BARTHOLOMEW & SIGRID: There were people that you couldn't trust

ALL: (indicating BARTHOLOMEW AND SIGRID) Like them!

SYLVIE: (speaks to audience) But that's where the similarities end. While in this village we live peacefully and without threat, *that* village was terrorized constantly by dragons, who lived in the hidden caves under the mountains. The people had no recourse, until one day, George's father purposed to rid the land of these monsters, and life began to change.

ALL: (sing) He would go every month or so
Deep into the labyrinth of tunnels beneath those hills
Then come back with a gunny sack, with something inside

WOMEN: That never ceased to give the villagers chills

MEN: It was the dead bloody severed head

ALL: Of yet another dragon that had fallen by his hand
He alone evermore was known
As the greatest dragon slayer in the land!

And George's father was a warrior

WOMEN: Who was still within his prime

ALL: But George's father was taken

MEN: Before his task was done

ALL: And George's father was a legend

WOMEN: The Ulysses of his time! MEN: Who was celebrated with flagons
in all of the taverns.

ALL: And George's father was a hero
Who eradicated the dragons from all of the caverns
Except one!

SYLVIE: (speaks) At last, the greatest dragon slayer faced the greatest dragon: Leviathan, a creature who was said to be larger, stronger, and more cunning than any other. This time, George's father did not come back. And Leviathan destroyed that village. George, an infant at the time, was rescued and brought here to be raised by his uncle. And nobody has seen Leviathan since. Some say he is dead; some say he is hibernating;

others say he was never more than a myth. But regardless of what the truth may be, time has dulled our memories and given us a sense of security that we have come to cherish, for better or for worse...

ALL: (sing) In a sleepy village
 Full of faith and fumbling
 Just to say you're from here
 Is a wee bit humbling.

 In a lonely corner of the land
 We are ignorant and safe.
 There is nothing feared and nothing planned
 By the noble or the waif.

 And if a dragon ever comes around,
 If it ever treads upon this ground,
 If a dragon ventures this far south,
 If we feel the heat from the dragon's mouth

 And if a dragon ever catches up with us...
 (speak) Nay!

(Villagers go about their business as a swordsmith shop interior is brought forward to reveal GEORGE and his uncle HIRAM putting swords and similar weapons into large sacks.)

HIRAM: (speaks) George! Do you have the longswords bundled up?

GEORGE: Nay, but I'm packing daggers now.

HIRAM: Leave the daggers and finish the longswords. I'd like to be in Trusston by sundown.

GEORGE: It's not too late to let me take the trip for you. I could arrive well before sundown.

HIRAM: (fondly) Always so sure of yourself.

GEORGE: Uncle Hiram, you make this journey to sell your wares every spring. I know every word of every story you've ever told. I can picture every bend in the path!

HIRAM: (trying to get a word in edgewise) George—

GEORGE: I know the name of every village along the way!

HIRAM: George! You don't know all the perils that lie on the road.

GEORGE: I can face any peril that you can. When that band of marauders came to town, I drove them off almost singlehandedly!

HIRAM: (pauses) Aye, you kept your head when many men could not.

GEORGE: And that was half a year ago! I've only grown stronger since!

HIRAM: I know, George, but in many ways, you're still a lad.

GEORGE: A lad! A lad?! (suddenly swings his sword toward HIRAM, who easily blocks the attack with the sword he is holding; a swordfight continues throughout the following sung segment)

GEORGE: (sings) Are you really that oblivious to what you see?
I've been everything you taught me that a man should be,
In every trial
Proving that I'll
Rise to the task;
What more could you ask?

HIRAM: I admit you have tenacity I wouldn't change
But your youth and impulsivity can make you dangerous
To yourself

GEORGE: So back on the shelf!
I'll sit till I'm dead.

HIRAM: Dramatically said.
And another thing I
haven't mentioned yet...

GEORGE: In a sleepy village...
In a lonely corner...

HIRAM: (speaks) Look at your stance! Like a mother pelican trying to lay an egg! (George loses concentration long enough to look down at his stance, and Hiram takes the opportunity to knock him to the ground.)

GEORGE: (laughs) That's an unfair tactic! (At this point, it becomes clear that this was only ever a friendly sparring, something that they obviously do often.)

HIRAM: George, you know it doesn't matter what your stance looks like, as long as it's efficient and effective.

GEORGE: (says the first words along with his uncle, as if he's heard them a hundred times) ...efficient and effective, I know, I know.

HIRAM: Try again?

GEORGE: Are you sure you want to exert yourself with your long journey ahead?

HIRAM: Are you sure you want to hold your weapon as if you're afraid of it?

GEORGE: I'm not afraid of it. *You're* afraid of it. That's why you keep... backing... away!

HIRAM: Hold on, hold on! My bad leg is out of bounds. Off limits.

GEORGE: I thought I was supposed to take advantage of my opponent's weakness!

HIRAM: Try to find something a little less obvious.

GEORGE: Perhaps the fact that you're like 92 years old?

HIRAM: 52 years old! Not at all the same thing.

GEORGE: Might as well be.

HIRAM: All right. I do need to be done now. Awful lot of walking to do tonight.

GEORGE: Uncle Hiram... (sings)
Can I not make this journey for you?
I do not mean to be rebellious;
I'm only asking...
Again.

HIRAM: Let me tell you something long overdue:
I think you're ready,
But give your uncle just a little more time...
And then...

I will let you go next year.

GEORGE: You will let me go next year!

BOTH: (as they shake on it) Next year!

HIRAM: (speaks) Well, I've already kissed your aunt goodbye, so I'll be on my way now. Take care of her for me, and keep your eyes fixed on the Lord Christ.

GEORGE: By His grace, I will. You be safe.

HIRAM: By His grace, I will. Goodbye George.

GEORGE: Goodbye Uncle. (HIRAM leaves and GEORGE stands watching him go.)

ALL: (sing) In a sleepy village

GEORGE: With a world of nothingness

ALL: We will live and die here

GEORGE: And there's no discussing this. (He wanders off sullenly)

ALL: If a dragon's out there anywhere,
Then it's somewhere far away
And it doesn't know and wouldn't care
How we live from day to day

And if a dragon ever comes around,
If it ever treads upon this ground
If a dragon ventures this far south,
If we feel the heat from the dragon's mouth
And if a dragon ever catches up with us...

In a sleepy village,
In a lonely corner,
In a sleepy village,
If a dragon ever catches up with us,

And if a dragon ever finds us,
He'll find us...
Asleep!

(As the ensemble holds their final pose, a ragged woman in her early 50's meanders on stage and looks at them quizzically. Ensemble members' heads turn to look at her self-consciously, then quietly go about their business.)

SYLVIE: (runs up to the strange woman rashly) I've never seen *you* in Huffboro before!

MARA: Nay, it's my first time. (a bit conspiratorially) I've come to see if anyone knows the whereabouts of... the dragon slayer's son.

SYLVIE: George! (Runs off. Mara looks puzzled and not sure what to do next. Lady Charlise approaches her warily, with Aletheia close behind. Alaric the bailiff joins presently.)

CHARLISE: (a bit distastefully, as if protecting her turf) Excuse me, can I... help you with something?

MARA: Uhhhh, I was just speaking to a young lass who called me "George" and then ran away.

CHARLISE: A young lass... (looks skeptical, then a bit annoyed as she realizes she's talking about Sylvie)

ALETHEIA: (chuckles, more amused than her mother) Oh, that would be Sylvie—my sister. She's always acting first and thinking later.

CHARLISE: (sighs) Of course. Sylvia is my younger daughter. I am Charlise, the Lady of this village. My eldest, Aletheia. And... Alaric, our bailiff.

MARA: Charming. (Throws this comment off flippantly, ready to move past the whole round of introductions)

CHARLISE: (a thin veneer of politeness) What brings you to Huffboro?

(Sylvie comes running up dragging George's aunt Susannah along.)

SYLVIE: This is Susannah! She knows George!

ALETHEIA: Sylvie, we all know George.

SYLVIE: Aye, but she's his aunt. I'll keep looking for him! (She starts to run off.)

CHARLISE: Sylvia! Walk like a lady. (Sylvie slows to a *very* fast and unladylike walk)

SUSANNAH: (pleasantly) So, you've come to see George?

MARA: (She eyes her with a desperate, almost hungry look; scarcely hoping to believe the words she is saying.) He lives in this village?

SUSANNAH: Aye, he is my nephew. My husband Hiram and I raised him.

MARA: (a little too quickly) Your husband? And where is he?

SUSANNAH: (hesitantly) He's... away...

(Sylvie comes running up with George behind her trying to catch up.)

SYLVIE: You're bigger, but I'm faster. Always have been. Always will be.

GEORGE: One of these days I'm going to outrun you.

CHARLISE: (embarrassed by her daughter's behavior in front of a stranger) Sylvia dear, you're too old to keep racing George all over the village.

ALETHEIA: (Laughs) Although it is good for his ego to get beaten at *something*.

MARA: (Has been watching George intently this whole time.) You are the son of the dragon slayer?

GEORGE: (Pauses, breathless from running, he looks at her guardedly) His name was Nigel.

MARA: (speaks in an undertone, as if what's in her mind is completely other than what is coming out of her mouth) Nigel's son. I come with a message. (Slowly walks up to him, looking up into his face with an unabashed and unsettling fascination. Suddenly grabs his chin and pulls his face close to hers.)

SONG: Come with Me Now

MARA: (sings) "Your father's flesh was burned in
Dancing spark and flame of my design.
Your soul is mine; I rise again;
The time for us to meet is now..."

ALARIC: (speaks, as if expecting more) ...That's the message?

MARA: (offhand; lingering on the first word to let it sink in) Dragons... are not renowned for their poetic skill.

SUSANNAH: *gasp* Dragons!

GEORGE: (sings angrily, offendedly, as he frantically, almost violently, pushes her hand away and takes a step back) What is this about???

MARA: It's a message for you.

GEORGE: A message from whom?

MARA: Leviathan.

ALARIC: He's alive?

SYLVIE: Where is he?

MARA: One thing at a time.

ALARIC: Hold on a second! Why should we believe you?

SIGRID: Aye, who are you anyway?

MARA: My name is Mara.
I was with a band of traveling entertainers
Accosted by Leviathan
On a desolate road.
He incinerated every last one of us...
Except for me.

GEORGE: (speaks) Why?

MARA: (sings) That I might bear his message to you.

ALARIC: I need proof.

MARA: Have a little respect.

ALETHEIA: Aye, she's just lost her friends.

ALARIC: Have a little reality!
You say you saw the long-lost dragon face-to-face?

MARA: He was no further from me than you are!

GEORGE: What did he look like?

MARA: Please save your questions for the road.
Be off and pack quickly! I'll take you to Leviathan.

GEORGE: Now?

MARA: Do you not recall the message?

GEORGE: "The time for us to meet is now."

MARA: Aye, what do you say to that?

Come with me now. I'll lead the way.
Destiny calls your name.
The journey awaits. Mustn't delay.
The dragon has spoken and you would be wise to obey.

GEORGE: (speaks) I should make ready.

SYLVIE: Oh, George, this is so exciting!

SUSANNAH: George, you're not thinking of leaving while your uncle's gone...? He expects you to tend to his work.

GEORGE: Oh fie, I forgot! I should stay! Although... (sings)
Uncle Hiram didn't know this opportunity would come.

SYLVIE: Surely he would understand!

SUSANNAH: You may have a point.

ALETHEIA: Mother, what do you think?

CHARLISE: Well, I agree with—

BARTHOLOMEW: I hate to interrupt, but may I ask a question?
Why does this creature want to meet with George anyway?

MARA: The lord of all dragons did not exactly confide in me.

BARTHOLOMEW: Well then, if he didn't give a reason,
Then you have no obligation—

MARA: It's his duty to go as the dragon-slayer's son.

BARTHOLOMEW: I defer to the lady of the village.

CHARLISE: Well, I agree with—

ALARIC: Look, I'm not too sure about dragons,
But I do believe in duty. If you think this is your duty,
Then Godspeed.

CHARLISE: I agree with—

MARA: It doesn't matter what you say!
(speaks) George, decide.

Come with me now!

I'll lead the way.

Destiny calls your name!

The journey awaits.

Mustn't delay.

GEORGE: I should go.

SYLVIE: You should go!

ALETHEIA: Give him space.

BART: I would stay if I were you.

SIGRID: So would I!

CHARLISE: Well, I agree with—

SUSANNAH: But what about your uncle?

GEORGE: I don't know!

ALARIC: A man should do his duty.

The dragon has spoken ALETHEIA: It's a matter for prayer.

And you would be wise— GEORGE: That's true.

ALL: Today we don't know what to do!
Yesterday was much easier with lives
Unaffected by Leviathan!

ALARIC: (speaks) Now let's be reasonable, Mara—

SIGRID: If that's really your name.

ALARIC: Surely you could lodge in the village for one night to give the lad some time to decide.

GEORGE: Aye! Give the lad—I mean, give me some time to decide.

BARTHOLOMEW: (to CHARLISE) The woman could stay in your guest chambers, my lady.

CHARLISE: (a bit hesitantly, but with a characteristic deference to the influence of the Welches) Aye, you are welcome to lodge with us.

MARA: (pause; sighs) Very well.

CHARLISE: Come. (She and Aletheia begin to exit.)

MARA: (as she follows them out, turns to GEORGE) But we shall leave at first light, shall we not, lad?

GEORGE: (correcting her just as she exits) Man.

SYLVIE: George!!!!!! You're going to go kill Leviathan!!!!

SIGRID: (mockingly) Ha! Maybe. (She and Bartholomew giggle as they exit)

SUSANNAH: (looking at George with a "mom look") Maybe. (she exits)

ALARIC: (puts his hand on George's shoulder, seriously, sizing him up. Trying to encourage him.) Maybe. (he exits)

CHARLISE: (from offstage) Sylvia! Come now.

SYLVIE: (stage whisper) George!!! You're going to go kill Leviathan!

GEORGE: By the grace of the Lord Christ... maybe.

CHARLISE: Sylvia!!!

(SYLVIE squeals excitedly as she scampers off stage.)

LIGHTS TRANSITION TO "NIGHT SCENE" BESIDE THE LAKE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE VILLAGE

SCENE 2

(GEORGE walks down center pensively. He sings to himself, trying to recall the exact wording, as Mara appears behind him in silhouette and sings along; the effect being that he is remembering her singing the words to him.)

GEORGE (and MARA): “Your father’s flesh was burned in
Dancing spark and flame of my design...”

(Sits down, lost in thought. Enter SUSANNAH, who startles him slightly with her first words.)

SUSANNAH: When I couldn’t find you in the village, I thought you might be out here by the lake.

GEORGE: Aye.

SUSANNAH: Do you want to talk?

GEORGE: (pause) Nay. Thank you though.

SUSANNAH: Let’s talk anyway. (sits down)

GEORGE: (smiles) Alright.

SUSANNAH: You were just a babe when Leviathan disappeared. For as long as you can remember, you’ve lived in a world where you didn’t fear attacks from dragons.

GEORGE: I know. It doesn’t quite seem real.

SUSANNAH: When I was a lass, adults were a wee bit jumpier, always whispering to each other when they didn’t think the children were paying attention. But we knew there was always danger less than a crow’s flight away. Whenever there were rumors of a dragon in the surrounding countryside, my father would throw buckets of water on the outside of the house before bed. I don’t think it would’ve helped much.

GEORGE: Probably not.

SUSANNAH: But there was still life, before the dragons died. I managed to have a happy childhood. All I’m trying to say... Well, the threat is real. And if you’re the one to face it, I’ll support you.

GEORGE: Uncle Hi said I was ready.

SUSANNAH: But... life will go on if you stay here. No shame in that. (she stands to go) Don’t stay up too late, George. (smiles knowingly) I imagine you’ll have an early morning. (exits)

GEORGE: (smiles) Thanks, Auntie. (She exits. He groan-growls as he stands up to pace, feeling overwhelmed and not sure what to do with this extra bit of nonspecific advice. Mara appears in silhouette again behind him.)

GEORGE (and Mara): (sing) “Your soul is mine...”

GEORGE (speaks, trying to comprehend): “Your soul is mine?”

GEORGE (and Mara): (sing) “Your soul is mine; I rise again;
The time for us to meet is now...”

GEORGE (speaks): Why now?

ALETHEIA: (has entered and approaches George) George?

GEORGE: (startled again) Oh! Aletheia.

ALETHEIA: Sorry. Do you want to talk?

GEORGE: (pauses and looks at her, then away, thoughtfully) Nay.

ALETHEIA: (accepting this immediately) Alright. (She starts to exit)

GEORGE (immediately): Wait!!! Wait. Aletheia. (laughs) That’s not what my aunt did.

ALETHEIA: (amused) I’m not your aunt.

GEORGE: (takes her hand and leads her back to the seat) I’m so glad. Don’t misunderstand; she’s a wonderful aunt. I mean... well... you know!

ALETHEIA: (Laughs) I know, George. (pause) Where did the bench come from?

GEORGE: I found it in that abandoned house.

ALETHEIA: (sits; pause) Do you know what you’ll be doing tomorrow?

GEORGE: I don’t. My uncle said I’m ready to be out on the road. But he also said stay here. My aunt said she’d support me if I go, but there’s no shame in not going.

ALETHEIA: Do you think the old woman is telling the truth?

GEORGE: (looks at her in surprise) Mara?

ALETHEIA: Aye.

GEORGE: (puzzled; first time he’s thought of this) Why wouldn’t she tell the truth?

ALETHEIA: I have no idea. Some of the others don’t seem to trust her.

GEORGE: Well... (stands up, impatient) We don’t know we *can’t* trust her.

ALETHEIA: But what if—

GEORGE: Look, it doesn’t matter. The way I see it, this is a legitimate reason for me to get out of this village for a while and see what I’m made of. I have to do it sometime. My uncle had no idea this chance would be coming so soon.

ALETHEIA: You keep talking about your aunt and your uncle. I hardly ever hear you talk about your father, except to say his name was Nigel.

GEORGE: He doesn't *really* have anything to do with this.

ALETHEIA: You don't believe that.

GEORGE: (exasperated) I didn't *know* him! What is there to say?

ALETHEIA: You must feel something. What about all the dragons he killed?

GEORGE: (shrugs) I didn't know them either.

ALETHEIA: George!

GEORGE: You want to talk about history, you want to talk about feelings, when I'm just about to walk away from this place for the first time in my *life*! I'll tell you what I'm feeling... (sings)

SONG: Monsters Make Heroes

I want to test my strength.
I want to know what I can take
As I'm trav'ling, unrav'ling,
Will I come undone?

I want to taste and feel,
To know what lies beyond this lake.
And if I don't go, I won't know,
And I'll always wonder.

And just as thunder follows lightning,
I must follow this road—

ALETHEIA: (covers his mouth to stop him; speaks) George, listen to yourself! (sings)

I want this; I want that;
I would love to stop and chat about
Dreams and schemes and plans with you.
I wanna move; I want more;
But at some point,
You've got to talk about what's true
And here's what's true...

This is not about adventure.
This is not about emotion.
Let someone who loves you fiercely
Firmly ground your starry notion.
This is about going forward and counting the cost.
This is about a battle too big to be lost.

I see a dragon in your future.

Some kind of dragon in your future.
If there's a dragon in your future...

GEORGE: If there's a dragon in my future...
Then I need to go now.

ALETHEIA: And I need to let you go.

Hear me now, I insist.
I would bleed to let you know

I believe in you.

Leave behind even you.

Would that I could show how
You'll be missed.

ALETHEIA: (speaks) Goodbye, George. (She exits.)

GEORGE: (sings) Through the heart
Through the bone
Piercing, slashing through my rhetoric.
No one else,
She alone
Knows what's going on inside.
She was right.
I was wrong.
It's not wanderlust or boredom
That's giving me my drive.
I just want that dragon to be alive!

Monsters make heroes.
The doubters may doubt him,
But without him I'll never be great!
Straggle and stagnate!
Monsters make heroes.
I cannot deny it.
To my eyes, it is plain to behold,
Written of old.

Beowulf and Grendel;
Ulysses and Cyclops.
Ev'ry time I hear one, I hear both,
Sure as an oath.
Monsters make heroes
The likes of my father.
Would they bother to mention his name?
Give him acclaim now?

I am the dragon slayer's son.
Ev'ryone calls me that.
Whether or not there is a hero down inside who can know?
No way to prove it,
No way to show them,

No way for me to see if
Somewhere deep inside of me my
Father's latent legacy is
Waiting
Unless I best a deadly foe!

Monsters made Nigel.
I may not remember,
But he lives in the air that I breathe,
Sword that I sheath!
Dragons made Nigel.
His death wasn't hollow.
Can I follow and give him his day?
I know of one way.

Monsters make heroes.
The bigger the better!
You're a debtor to every beast
Downed and deceased!
Monsters make heroes.
There's no way around it.
I have found it in every case:
You're known for who you face!

George and Leviathan. (speaks) Nay. (sings)
George and the Dragon. (speaks) Aye. (sings)
The time for us to meet is now!

SCENE 3

SONG: Skipping Ahead

Village folk are gathered, clapping, waving, calling out farewells and good wishes to GEORGE & MARA as they set off. Village folk recede as GEORGE & MARA move down center. From this point through the rest of the act, we move back and forth between life in the village and life on the road with George and Mara.

GEORGE: (sings) What a lovely day to begin a journey,
Don't you think it's a lovely day?
Which way are we turning when we reach the lake?
Say!
I should kill a boar before nightfall
So we have some meat to eat tomorrow!
Can't you walk a little faster?
Tell you what, I'll meet you by the pasture
Just ahead!

These are the first steps on the
First day of the
First journey I've ever begun!
And if I were the type
To chronicle it all
I think I would call this...

GEORGE AND VILLAGERS: Day One!

VILLAGERS: Day one, day one, day one, day one!
Day one, day one, day one, day one!

MARA: It's the day that I only see his back.
Mostly from a distance and usually off track.
At my insistence, he keeps himself on course...
(speaks) George, bear left! *Your* left! (sings)
But I'm getting hoarse.

VILLAGERS: Skipping ahead to Day Two!

CHARLISE: Life goes on. We forget about the dragon.

VILLAGERS: Speak for yourself! He's always on our mind!

ALETHEIA: Is it too much to ask that George will find him quickly?
Come out on top and come home to those he left behind?

(Other villagers mill about upstage as BARTHOLOMEW & SIGRID move downstage to confer.)

SONG: Opportunity

BARTHOLOMEW: (speaks) Sigrid, my sweet!

SIGRID: Bartholomew, my love!

BARTHOLOMEW: I was just thinking... (sings)

A question.

Just curious.

If you had to guess who wins this furious contest,

What would you say?

Does Georgie get the dragon's head

Or does the dragon emerge unscathed and well-fed?

SIGRID: Good question.

'Twould be a spurious claim indeed if I claimed to know.

For though George is quite the man,

His foe is known to be

Injurious.

BARTHOLOMEW: (speaks) Exactly! It's a toss-up! The sort of match on which every man in town would love to place a wager!

SIGRID: Oh baby! I love to see your mind work!

BARTHOLOMEW: So do I! (sings)

I see an opportunity

To assist our community.

SIGRID: If we pitch it propitiously

BARTHOLOMEW: I'll bet they'll bet deliciously.

BOTH: And though our lives are not penurious

They could be much more luxurious

If we take this opportunity to be

Entrepreneurious!

VILLAGERS: Skipping ahead to Day Four!

GEORGE: She continues her maddening slow trudge...

MARA: (speaks) While he starts to realize that he needs to pace himself for a long journey. We begin to walk abreast, and actually have real conversations now...

GEORGE: (SIGH) We've been trekking east for a few days and haven't seen any sign of him. Shouldn't we be... scanning the ground for tracks, or trying to catch odors in the breeze?

MARA: Have you not been doing these things?

GEORGE: Oh. I'm just walking.

MARA: Hmm.

GEORGE: What does Leviathan smell like, anyway?

MARA: What do *you* think?

GEORGE: Well, they say his father was a dragon, but his mother was a sea serpent...

MARA: Aye.

GEORGE: So I imagine he smells... fishy?

MARA: (looks at him with a grim and knowing smile) There is a hint of that. But he also smells like smoke. Like acrid, smoldering flame. Like a thousand villages burnt to the ground. Like death. (she turns and starts walking again)

GEORGE: (stands and takes in the scent for a moment) Are you sure we're going the right way?

MARA: Do you not trust my guidance?

GEORGE: (impatient) Do you always answer questions with more questions???

MARA: (turns to face him) If I do not give a direct answer, it is for one of two reasons. First, I may not believe that the hearer is ready for the truth. (gives him a withering, almost angry look)

GEORGE: (beat) ...And what is the other reason?

MARA: The second reason... is that I just don't know. (she turns and walks away again)

SCENE 4

SONG: Mostly Good

VILLAGERS: (sing) Skipping ahead to Day Six!
 George's uncle comes home.

(We see interior of the swordsmith shop, where HIRAM and SUSANNAH are seated talking.)

SUSANNAH: (we hear her as she finishes relaying the dragon's message)
 (sings) "...Your soul is mine; I rise again;
 The time for us to meet is now."

HIRAM: (speaks) Who was she? You've never seen her before?

SUSANNAH: She called herself Mara. Some kind of traveling entertainer. She was... about our age I think, but more worn down. Certainly looked as if she spends most of her time on the road.

HIRAM: (stands) Is it possible? Has Leviathan made himself known again after all this time? (suddenly angry)
And what made George think he could just leave? The lad has no idea what he is up against or—

SUSANNAH: He's a young man now, Hiram. He *would've* consulted you, but he didn't have that option.

HIRAM: (sings) Job's bones!
 I feel as if I'm dealing with my brother again!
 How difficult it is to raise another man's child
 Prone to the other man's sin.
 This arrogant indiscretion,
 This ill-advised and headlong rushing in!
 What was he thinking?

SUSANNAH: He had to make a choice
 And you've got to trust your life-long steady voice
 Was still guiding him.
 We've done the very best that we could.
 A handful of regrets, perhaps,
 But mostly good.

HIRAM: (speaks) You're right. He's a good lad. Has no idea what he's up against, but—

SUSANNAH: You're selling yourself short, dear. You've trained him well. Just as you did with Nigel.

HIRAM: (scoffing) Like I did with Nigel! I still don't understand—

SYLVIE: (from offstage) Susannah! (enters) Susannah, have you seen George yet? Oh, Mr. Hiram, you're here! Have you seen George?

ALETHEIA: (coming in just behind her) Sylvie! Slow down. You can't just barge in unannounced.

SYLVIE: You can if you're me!

ALETHEIA: Mr. Hiram, how did your travels go?

HIRAM: Quite uneventful, thank the Lord Christ.

SYLVIE: But you haven't seen George?

HIRAM: Nay.

SYLVIE: I suppose he's got to drag a heavy gunny sack all the way home. That'll slow him down.

HIRAM: (chuckles) Let's not get ahead of ourselves. Lord knows how long it will take to *find* the devil, let alone defeat him.

ALETHEIA: Do you think the Lord will give George the victory?

HIRAM: I don't presume to know His plans.

SYLVIE: (quickly) But if anyone has a chance, it's George.

ALETHEIA: (tensely, concerned) If anyone had a chance, it would've been Nigel! (to Hiram) Why couldn't Nigel defeat him?

HIRAM: I don't know. When I found Nigel's body, it didn't give me many clues. But it looked like the fight had been... brief.

ALETHEIA: (pause; soberly) What happened that night?

HIRAM: Oh my. Well... After every other dragon had been slain, Nigel determined to hunt down the elusive Leviathan. It was different though. He came to me for some extra training, and I could see he was... less cocky; much more nervous about this one. Leviathan had a reputation, and I think Nigel knew this would be his greatest challenge.

ALETHEIA: You and Nigel lived in the same village back then?

HIRAM: I lived by myself on the outskirts of that village, across the river. That's the only reason I survived. Nigel and his wife, Giselle, lived in the village. He'd been gone on his hunt for Leviathan for perhaps a week. I woke in the dead of night to the sound of screams across the river, the scent of something burning, and when I opened my door... a baby on the doorstep. He was alive. I picked him up and held him as I watched the flames engulfing the houses and barns... and people. I don't know if my mind was playing tricks on me, but I fancy I caught a glimpse of the great dragon himself tearing through the streets. There was no hope of saving anyone.

SYLVIE: (beat) Who... (pauses)

HIRAM: (smiles wryly) Who left George at my door? That is the question. I always wondered if his mother Giselle managed to drag him out there, but then... why would she go back across the river to die? Or it may have been some other kindhearted soul, who left George with me, then went back to save others... Dozens of faces come to mind... I knew everyone. When I went walking through the wreckage the next day, the bodies were all charred beyond recognition. Leviathan... was very thorough.

SYLVIE: Then you came here!

HIRAM: Aye, this is where I'd grown up. It was only natural to bring the lad to Huffboro. I met Susannah... we got married... and we did our best to tame the creature you know as George.

SYLVIE: (laughs and looks at ALETHEIA) Creature.

ALETHEIA: (chuckles, then looks worried) Ohhhhh, I hope he's safe right now. (Sigh. Beat. Standing to go) I told mother we wouldn't be gone long.

SYLVIE: Let us know right away when George gets back!

SUSANNAH: (Chuckles) We will.

HIRAM: Goodbye, you two.

ALETHEIA AND SYLVIE: Goodbye!

HIRAM: (sings) I raised my only nephew and I have to let him go.
Can't tell if I should weep or lie down and sleep
But there are others, I know,
Others that I care for who'd profit from the wisdom of my years.

SUSANNAH: The wisdom of our years.

HIRAM: (speaks) Right. (sings)
If we could just save them some tears,

SUSANNAH: We'd look back on our lives as we should.

BOTH: A handful of regrets, of course,
But mostly good.

SCENE 5

GEORGE: (hopping on one foot) Hold up a second. This jolly boot lace is giving me fits again.

MARA: (looks at him with a mixture of amusement and annoyance) Really, George. Why do I find it difficult to see you as the son of a mighty dragon slayer?

GEORGE: (finishes, puts his foot down and walks toward her) His name was Nigel.

MARA: So you've said. But that's all you've said. About Nigel.

GEORGE: I don't know much of anything beyond what everyone else knows.

MARA: Hmm. And what about the dragons he supposedly slew?

GEORGE: I didn't... Why do you say supposedly?

MARA: (she looks around) This is a fine place to build a fire, is it not?

GEORGE: I don't see a great deal of wood...

MARA: That's why I brought a young man with strong legs who can gather some for us!

GEORGE: Oh. I thought I was here to hunt down the—

MARA: *Just* get some wood. I'll find some water to boil. (Grabs a pot and exits, muttering to herself) I think I hear a creek nearby...

(GEORGE wanders around and finds a stick of wood about as thick as his arm and about as long as a short sword; because he'll use it as one soon. ☺ He's busy looking around at the ground for more wood, and is startled by the voice of a large intimidating man who has entered quietly and is now standing near him.)

TIM: (speaks slowly and gruffly) Greetings.

GEORGE: (startled) Aaah! Oh... (puts his hand on the man's shoulder as he catches his breath) You gave me a start.

TIM: You're probably wondering why I'm here.

GEORGE: Wondering? Ah, no. I'm still busy catching my breath. But give me a moment... (beat; looks at him) Alright. Now I'm wondering why you're here.

TIM: (continues to look at George, but calls to someone{s!} behind him) Terrance! Marge! (They appear behind him immediately) This young fellow is wondering why we're here.

GEORGE: Actually... I believe you're here to rob me.

MADGE: He's not so dumb.

TERRANCE: Nay, but his answer is incomplete. Before we rob you, we'll knock you out, drag you off, and tie you up so you can't follow us.

GEORGE: Forgive my lack of thoroughness. Unfortunately for you, I'm prepared for such a contingency.

TIM: (skeptical) Really?

GEORGE: Well, I'd like to think that if I can defend my entire village against marauders, I can face the likes of three would-be miscreants.

TERRANCE: *Would-be* miscreants?! *We're full-fledged* miscreants, thank you very much.

MADGE: Aye, we've accumulated years of experience in the field of miscreancy. A combined total of, what is it, twenty-six years?

TERRANCE: Twenty-six... twenty-five... (looks at the big man a bit awkwardly)

TIM: I don't usually count the year that I struggled with bowel obstruction. I wasn't much help to the enterprise at that time.

GEORGE: Sounds reasonable.

Music picks up and fight begins. George fights all three, using his sword and the piece of wood. Dialogue interspersed throughout fight...

TERRANCE: What's your story, lad?

GEORGE: Firstly, I'm not a lad. I'm the grown son of Nigel, the dragon slayer.

MADGE: Ah! Small wonder you've some skill with the blade.

TIM: And the branch.

GEORGE: Aye, and I've got the three of you... exactly... where... I want you!!! (Sings)
Do I taste victory?
Seems contradictory.
Three swordsmen losing to one!

(Critical point in the fight. All fighters are standing with their blades locked. Pause in the music. Sometime during the fight, Mara has come back on stage with a pot full of water. She watched the fight for a moment, then went on rummaging through the baggage until she came across a pan she didn't recognize...)

MARA: George, is this your pan?

GEORGE: What?! (George and the others look at her; A split second later, the large man levels George with the pommel of his sword; Terrance and the man grab him and carry him off while Marge approaches Mara.)

MARA: (disgusted) Oh, George.

MADGE: Come. (extends her sword toward Mara)

MARA: Haaaaa!!! (brandishes George's pan and bangs it against the sword)

MADGE: (unimpressed) You really don't want to do that.

MARA: (considers) Nay, I really don't. I'll come.

MADGE: Bring the bags.

MARA: Alright, but you'll need to grab that pot. And try not to spill the water! It was a bit of a hike to find a creek. (they exit)

SCENE 6

The village. THE WELCHES enter from opposite sides of the stage and meet down center.

BARTHOLOMEW: (very singsongy) Sigrid my love, what have you *got* for *meeee*?

SIGRID: (holds up a few coins with both hands) John Miller put threepence on George, and Phillip Brewer put twopence on the dragon. (she places each of these sums in a small purse that Bartholomew holds open)

BARTHOLOMEW: Delightful! I've just received sizeable wagers from Douglas and Hugh, and a meager sum from Henry Shire. The poltroon.

SIGRID: (laughs) Keep it up, plumcake!

BARTHOLOMEW: Same to you, turnip!

(They cross to head the other direction just as CHARLISE marches down center, followed closely by Aletheia; in the background, MR. FLETCHER is attempting to comfort his wife, with whom Charlise has just been conversing; she sighs, frustrated and overwhelmed...)

ALETHEIA: Mother, what was that all about? (When WELCHES hear a discussion starting, they both halt in their tracks and back up to join the conversation)

CHARLISE: Such unpleasantness! If people want to discuss this quietly in their own homes, it's one thing—

ALETHEIA: Mother, they *were* in their own home!

CHARLISE: Please, Aletheia, (sighs) I have a headache.

SIGRID: (oozing up to her side) Charlise, dear sister, what a burden you bear as the lady of this village! What troubles you?

CHARLISE: Oh, I just can't stand all this dragon talk! Everyone with their differing opinions. We accomplish nothing.

SIGRID: Tut-tut, darling, whose opinions are we talking about?

CHARLISE: We were just speaking to the Fletchers.

ALETHEIA: Mrs. Fletcher has known George since he was tiny, and she broke down when her husband said he thought we would never see George again. Apparently he knew some folks whom Leviathan had killed.

CHARLISE: (overwhelmed) That's *enough* detail. (Bartholomew's ears perk up when he hears that Mr. Fletcher might be in a position to put a wager on the dragon. He weasels away to the Fletchers' house; we see him wheeling and dealing with Mr. Fletcher as this convo continues)

ALETHEIA: Mother, if there's a dragon out there, we *need* to be talking about it.

CHARLISE: That's just it, sweetheart. Not everybody believes this dragon still exists. Or ever did!

ALETHEIA: (pointedly) What do *you* believe?

CHARLISE: I— I don't want to discuss it! Aletheia, I need your help. (turns to SIGRID) And you, and Bartholomew. I need you to help me set a more peaceful tone in this village, by talking about... other things! Things that don't cause division.

SIGRID: (puts her hand comfortingly on Charlise) Dear sister, Bartholomew and I could not agree with you more. We're with you. (she walks toward the Fletchers' house; we see them giggling over their latest triumph as CHARLISE AND ALETHEIA continue to talk.)

ALETHEIA: Mother. What if he's real?

CHARLISE: Go see if you can find Sylvia. I haven't seen her for awhile. (starts to exit)

SYLVIE: (yells from offstage) Lettie!!!!

ALETHEIA: Found her. (Sylvie rushes onstage)

SYLVIE: Lettie, there you are! Where is everyone? Oh, Mother! I was out by the lake!

CHARLISE: Oh, Sylvia.

SYLVIE: But I saw something!

CHARLISE: Sylvia, calm down, dear.

ALETHEIA: What is it...?

SYLVIE: (significantly) I *saw something*. Where's Hiram? And the bailiff? Everybody needs to hear this!

HIRAM: I'm here. (ensemble slowly gathering)

OTHERS: (ad lib) What's going on? Etc.

ALARIC: What's wrong?

CHARLISE: Sylvia! You're making a scene!

SYLVIE: That's alright! I need everybody's attention! Listen to me!!!

SONG: Beside the Lake

SYLVIE: (Sings) Outside of town there's a creature like you've never seen.
It's kinda black, kinda silver, sorta grayish green.
It moves around like the workings of a great machine.

AGNES: Is it a boar?

SYLVIE: Nay!

FERMIN: A boar that's green?

SYLVIE: Can I—

WOMAN: Boars are mean!

SYLVIE: Don't you think I'd know if it was just a stupid pig?

MAN: Aye, but was it big?

SYLVIE: Enormous!

MAN: Like an ox?

LADY: Bigger than a box of bread?

SYLVIE: If you'd—

AGNES: It's terrific!

FERMIN: It's horrific!

ALARIC: It's not terribly specific.

SYLVIE: Stop! Look and listen. I have more to tell.
It has a tail that would plumb the depth of any well.
It has a face like a demon from the pits of hell.

ALARIC: You say it's large?

SYLVIE: It was immense!

ALARIC: And are there wings?

SYLVIE: Aye, like giant tents, although I didn't see it fly.

ALARIC: What did it do?

SYLVIE: I saw it slide into the lake
Like a water snake.

ALARIC: What about scales?

SYLVIE: Like a million!

ALARIC: So it's probably reptilian.

SYLVIE: To be honest, I think I know exactly what it is,
Although I pray it isn't so, and I hesitate to say it.

VILLAGERS: You hesitate to say it?!
(whisper) She hesitates to say it!

ALARIC: (speaks) Then I'll say it. (sings)
I'm putting two and two together and I'm getting four.
The mighty dragon killer's killer is a myth no more.
That old Leviathan is here and busting down our door.

FERMIN: Can it be true?

HIRAM: What does he want?

AGNES: He wanted George!

ALARIC: I don't care what motivates him to be blunt!

HIRAM: But there's something strange.

ALARIC: What?!

HIRAM: A dragon typically attacks before you even know it's there.
But to let himself be seen?

FERMIN: Aye, he's right!

AGNES: What does it mean?

ALARIC: Analyzing his behavior, even with your expertise,
While our brawny little savior is off chasing wild geese
Is a waste of precious energy that cannot be dispersed.
We should go on the offensive so he doesn't strike us first!

HIRAM: (speaks) You're probably right.

ALARIC: It's simple... (sings)
If it's a fight he wants, we'll win.
If it's a game, we won't give in.
If it's a war, we'll rise victorious in the end!
Beside the lake we'll meet his eye
Until he falls or we all die.
We'll lift his dreadful ugly head up to the sky!

MAN: We'll take his teeth and make necklaces for our wives!

WOMAN: His shiny scales will adorn our houses all our lives!

ALARIC: You've got to keep the goal before you so that hope survives
When there's a dragon in your future.
We'll need some weapons!

HIRAM: I can give you all the swords you need,
But there are ways to fight a dragon that you've got to heed.
Superiority in numbers isn't guaranteed
To win the day.

(speaks) Now listen. Your best hope is a narrow band of flesh at the top of the neck, which is only visible if he turns his head to the side. It's almost impossible to get close enough.

ALARIC: I can use some men to divert his attention while others approach from the opposite way.

HIRAM: Aye, but he'll see right through your tricks unless he's in a blind rage. You might have to make him angry on purpose. You will likely lose men.

ALARIC: I intend to bring every man back alive, or die fighting beside the last of them.

HIRAM: I'm sorry George isn't here to help.

ALARIC: It's not your fault. (turns to address the villagers) All right! I'll take Douglas, Richard, Rowan, and Bran! The rest of you stay here to defend the village... and pray it doesn't come to that.

VILLAGERS: (sing) If it's a fight he wants, we'll win.
If it's a game, we won't give in.
If it's a war, we'll rise victorious in the end!
Beside the lake, we'll meet his eye
Until he falls or we all die.
We'll lift his dreadful ugly head up to the sky!

We need a dragon slayer's son,
But since he left and we have none,
We'll alter course and muster force to get this done.
We can't afford to waste more time.
Repay the creature for his crime.
Sometimes you need to chance your rhythm and your rhyme
When there's a dragon in your future,
When there's a dragon in your future,
When there's a dragon in your future!

VILLAGERS:
If it's a fight he wants,
We'll win.

SYLVIE:
Outside of town, there's a creature
Like you've never seen.

If it's a game,
We won't give in.

SYLVIE & ALARIC:
It's kinda black, kinda silver,
Sorta grayish-green.

If it's a war,
We'll rise victorious in the end!

ALARIC:
You've got to keep the goal before you
So that hope survives

SYLVIE & ALARIC:
When there's a dragon in your future!

Beside the lake
We'll meet his eye

Until he falls
Or we all die!

We'll lift his dreadful ugly head
Up to the sky!

ALL: 'Cause there's a dragon in our future.
 'Cause there's a dragon in our future.
 'Cause there's a dragon in our future!

SYLVIE:
It has a tail that would
Plumb the depth of any well.

SYLVIE & ALARIC:
It has a face like a demon
From the pits of hell.

ALARIC:
We'll take his teeth and make necklaces
For our wives

SYLVIE & ALARIC:
His shiny scales will adorn our houses
All our lives!

SCENE 7

(A small cave. George and Mara are seated on a bench, tied back to back. Mara is wide awake, but George is just waking up from unconsciousness as the scene opens.)

MARA: George... George... George...

GEORGE: Uhhhhhhh... Where...

MARA: You're in a cave, George. Your eyes will adjust.

GEORGE: Uhhhh... my eyes... (wincing) oh, my neck. My... what? (snaps fully awake) What is this????!!
(looks down at his bonds and begins to try to wrestle them off violently)

MARA: George!!! Stop! That hurts! We're bound together! You might as well make peace with it.

GEORGE: We're... Oh, fie. (Hangs his head. Looks up as realization and righteous indignation burst forth)
This is your fault!!!

MARA: That's not how I remember it.

GEORGE: But you... rrrrrrrghh (begins to thrash at his bonds again)

MARA: *Don't do that!!!* You're about to make me vomit. That's the last thing we need.

GEORGE: (stops; angry) How is this *not* your fault? You distracted me when I was just about to beat—

MARA: *You* weren't supposed to be distracted. I knew it was—

GEORGE: You didn't think yelling at me was going to—

MARA: I knew that was your pan, you fool. There's—

GEORGE: Well, then why did you—

MARA: There's two of us traveling together, and it wasn't *my* pan. Who—

GEORGE: That's not the point!

MARA: Who else's pan would it be?

GEORGE: Why are we still talking about the blasted pan????!!

MARA: The point is, I yelled at you so that *they* would be diverted and *you* could take them down.

GEORGE: (frustrated groan) That might've worked. Fie. (slight chuckle) You know, it's easier to argue with somebody if you can't see them.

MARA: You haven't seen me once since we left your village.

GEORGE: (sighs; shakes his head) I can't believe this. (looks up) Why couldn't I be tied to Aletheia right now?

MARA: It wouldn't feel that different. Her back would be sweaty too.

GEORGE: If I were back home, I swear I would've—

MARA: (suddenly, harshly) *Don't swear!*

GEORGE: What?!

MARA: You really haven't seen much of the world, have you, George?

GEORGE: I—

MARA: *Words have power.* Blessings, curses, even an oath taken without thought. You can't possibly know the ramifications.

GEORGE: (annoyed) Fine. If I were at home, I *know* I would've beaten those blighters. Even with the distraction. Split-second decisions are what I've trained for. It's what I do.

MARA: Split-second decisions are always based on what you really believe.

GEORGE: So why did I botch this one?

MARA: Because you believe I'm a distraction instead of a valuable partner.

GEORGE: Oh. (sighs; pause) I'm sorry.

MARA: Apology accepted.

GEORGE: So how do we get out of this?

MARA: What do *you* think?

GEORGE: (chuckles a little sullenly) Do you always answer questions with questions?

MARA: Are you going to keep asking me that or come up with a plan?

GEORGE: (conceding) Alright. (looking around) Can we get over to that bit of rock jutting out from the wall?

MARA: Aye. Let's go. (they scoot)

GEORGE: Now see if we can pull the rope up... Quick... (they grunt as they pull it once; intro music for song starts here?) Scrape it across the rock, right there, where it's kind of jagged.

MARA: Like this? (they grunt and pull it up again)

GEORGE: Aye. (looks down at the rope) I think there's a bit of progress. I'd reckon... 5,000 more times ought to do it.

MARA: Oy. Are you going to count?

GEORGE: Don't be silly. Although now that you say that, I probably won't be able to help myself. Come on.

MARA: (they get back to it as they talk further. Song starts?) What do you like about her?

GEORGE: Who?

MARA: Aletheia.

GEORGE: Oh (laughs a little sheepishly)

MARA: What?

GEORGE: It's just... Well, I've never tried to put into words.

MARA: That's alright.

SONG: Home

GEORGE: (speaks) Besides... (sings)
You picked a funny time to ask it.

MARA: It seems as good a time as any.

GEORGE: But I'm much handier with swords than with words.

MARA: (speaks) Excuse!

GEORGE: (sings) And what if she defies description?

MARA: You might as well just stumble through it.

GEORGE: To try to pin her down seems futile and absurd.
The best that I can do is wonder aloud.

MARA: Well, it's not as if you are in front of a crowd.

GEORGE: (laughs, speaks resignedly) Alright. (sings)
She's humble but can be persuasive,
Logical but somehow warmer.
The latter hides behind the former
And rarely shows.
She's quiet but she's not evasive,
Blunt, but not destructive.
She knows when she should correct me
Or let it go.
An air of royalty with no room for pride,
A sense of loyalty that won't be denied.

When there's someone who

Will listen to you
Even when you're wrong,
Who will challenge you
With something true
As gentle as a song,
When there's someone
Who waits for you
No matter where you've gone—

MARA: Then there's somewhere that you can call home.

GEORGE: (speaks) Aye, that sums it up! Being with her is like... being home.

MARA: Believe it or not, I do understand. I once had a home. A family.

GEORGE: I didn't know.

MARA: Aye, well, I've tried not to think about it for quite a few years. Until recently. (sings)

Much of my life is behind me,
Much of it lived on the road.
Things I regret,
Long to forget.
Who can help carry this load?

When there's someone who
Can laugh at you
Without a hint of scorn,
Who can comfort you
And cater to
A spirit bruised and torn,
When there's someone
Who welcomes you
No matter what you've done,
Then there's somewhere that you can call home.

BOTH: When there's someone
Who waits for you
No matter where you've gone,
Then there's somewhere that you can call home.

GEORGE: (speaks) Sometimes it's easier to open up to somebody when you can't see them.

MARA: True. (pause; then looks down) Well, this rope isn't going to tear *itself* asunder.

GEORGE: Aye; we'll need to work together.

SCENE 8

(Back to the village. Villagers milling around waiting anxiously; particularly the wives of the men who went to the lake.)

SUSANNAH: The sun was high when they set out. Now it begins to dusk.

HIRAM: Perhaps we should send a few men to see what happened.

SYLVIE: Nay, here they come! Or... one of them.

AGNES: It's the bailiff!

HIRAM: Alaric!

ALARIC: (staggering, almost crawling, onstage; speaks between ragged breaths; multiple burns and gashes) It's just me. Only me.

AGNES: (frantically) Where's Douglas?

ALARIC: (shakes his head) I'm sorry. Nobody survived. (bitterly) Just me. (Agnes runs upstage and sobs with other wives, mothers, etc.)

HIRAM: But did you... slay him?

ALARIC: Nay. 'Twas a fool's errand. We hadn't a hope of defeating the devil.

SYLVIE: (innocently asking the question on everyone's mind) ...Then how did *you* survive?

ALARIC: (right on the heels of her question; yells) *He wouldn't kill me!!!* (angry exhalation) He bid me bear a message to all of you.

HIRAM: (pin drop silence for a beat; soberly) Go ahead.

ALARIC: (stands up straight, with the last ounce of strength he has; sings)

You gave me not the man I seek
And now your men have paid the price.
You shall remain within my keep
Henceforth till Nigel's son returns.
A pair of sheep will be required daily
As a sacrifice.

(Alaric collapses.)

HIRAM: Medicine, quickly.

SYLVIE: I'm quick! (she runs off)

HIRAM: Here... help him. (two men lift the bailiff to a lying position on a bench; Sylvie is not long in bringing back herbs/medicines; The men and Sylvie attend him, along with Charlise, as the conversation continues)

FERMIN: (steps forward) The beast wants two of our sheep every day?

HIRAM: That's what he says.

ALETHEIA: This isn't what dragons do.

HIRAM: Aye, it makes no sense. But Leviathan's not your run-o'-the-mill dragon. He's got a reason.

FERMIN: What if we refuse?

HIRAM: (turns on him suddenly) I wouldn't *dream* of it. It's a cinch he'd start slaughtering us instead.

SUSANNAH: There are precious few sheep in Huffboro.

FERMIN: Aye. Henry Shire has the most. I'd say a dozen.

HIRAM: There'll be six in the toft behind Douglas's place, Lord rest his soul.

ALETHEIA: The Fletchers have two.

FERMIN: Clifford keeps one. The Millers keep one.

HIRAM: And there're four at the manor?

ALETHEIA: Aye.

HIRAM: (looks back and forth for a moment to make sure they've listed them all) ...That's... 26 sheep.

ALETHEIA: 13 days.

SUSANNAH: What happens then?

ALETHEIA: Perhaps George will return before we run out of sheep. (Lots of murmuring amongst the villagers)

ALARIC: (sits up, having been revived slightly; coughs) It doesn't matter! Nobody can kill that dragon.

SYLVIE: George can kill Leviathan! He can!!!

CHARLISE: (extremely sharp; bordering on screaming) Sylvia! Listen to me! (everyone else stops talking and looks at her; she realizes she has the floor; more measured) People, listen. This is a time for mourning our losses. Let no one speak of this creature, except the few of us who must arrange to take the sheep. (Uncomfortable awkwardness) Go to your dwellings now. It's late. (People slowly and reluctantly obey. Men help Bailiff up and exit.)

SONG: Twenty-Six Sheep

MEN: (sing) Twenty-six sheep.

WOMEN: Who can lift a hand against Leviathan?

MEN: Twenty-six sheep.

WOMEN: We will not forget this day of battle.
We will not try it again.

BARTHOLOMEW: (speaks) Charlise, dear, you carry such a load. Let us lighten it for you.

CHARLISE: (wearily) Of what do you speak?

BARTHOLOMEW: Sigrid and I will manage the arrangements for the sheep. Won't we, dearest?

SIGRID: (singsongy nervous laugh) Ahh, darling, that does sound like a bit of work.

BARTHOLOMEW: Nonsense! What do you say?

CHARLISE: If you would do that, I would be most grateful. Come, children, I have a headache. (ALETHEIA and SYLVIE follow as she exits)

SIGRID: Lovey!!! Why should we want to handle all those mangy sheep?

BARTHOLOMEW: Tut-tut, biscuit. We needn't actually touch the sheep. We merely manage the arrangements. If we craft the system, we can also rig the system...

SIGRID: Ohhhhh!!!

BARTHOLOMEW: That's right! (sings)
I see an opportunity
To exploit our community.

SIGRID: These dear people, so blind they'll be.

BOTH: But our purses, so lined they'll be!

(They move upstage, cackling, as lighting shifts to GEORGE & MARA.)

GEORGE AND MARA: (sing)
Day eleven!

MARA: It took all night to tear the ropes asunder.

GEORGE: The bandits took our stuff...
My weapons

MARA: And my pan!

GEORGE: But it's a new day; we can move beyond our blunder!

MARA: We have our health

GEORGE: And our strength,

BOTH: And we have a plan!

MARA: When I was with the traveling entertainers—
May they rest in peace—
We kept a covert stash of supplies not far away.
I think I can find it!

GEORGE: Will wonders never cease?

(Lights shift to Village, where villagers are gathered around BARTHOLOMEW, SIGRID, AND CHARLISE.)

VILLAGERS: Twenty-two sheep!

BARTHOLOMEW: (speaks) Folks! The four sheep from our own Lady Charlise's holdings have been taken to the creature called Leviathan. Now we must rely on the sheep belonging to you, our people. We hereby establish a lottery system.

SIGRID: For every sheep left in this village, we place a small pebble in this bag. Each pebble has a mark on it that corresponds to the sheep's owner.

BARTHOLOMEW: Every day we draw out two pebbles. Those are the sheep that go.

CHARLISE: Very fair. Are there any questions?

(Lights shift to George and Mara.)

GEORGE: Are you absolutely certain this is the fastest way to get to... wherever we're going?

MARA: I thought you were beginning to enjoy this trip again.

GEORGE: I was enjoying it when I thought we had a destination!

MARA: And what makes you think we don't?

GEORGE: There! That right there. I *know* we've passed that rock. Yesterday morning. Or maybe the day before.

MARA: Alright, George. You're right. I can't find the stash of supplies. But I have another plan.

GEORGE: (fuming) What is it?

MARA: If we make a beeline for Tommons, we should meet up with the band of entertainers I travel with. They can help us! (smiles as if that makes it all better)

GEORGE: (incredulous) I thought you said Leviathan killed them all!

MARA: Oh... did I actually say he killed them *all*? Hmm... (she exits; George stares after her with a mix of anger and incredulity, then reluctantly follows)

(Shift again to village.)

VILLAGERS: (sing) Twelve sheep left!

AGNES: (speaks) Alright Sigrid, I want in.

SIGRID: Darling, whatever do you mean?

AGNES: You've drawn four of my sheep. You've only drawn *two* of Henry Shire's sheep, and he's got more than the rest of us put together! You think I haven't noticed?

SIGRID: Chance is a funny thing, isn't it, duckie?

AGNES: Fie on chance. With my Douglas gone, I *need* those sheep. We depend on the ewes' milk. And every sheep I lose is a fleece I won't be able to sell come spring. (boldly) I want in on whatever deal you made under the table with Henry Shire.

SIGRID: *Shhhhhh...* (looks around) You have to understand, he did pay quite handsomely.

AGNES: I'll pay whatever it takes to have my last two sheep drawn on the last two days. Then I'll pray that the dragon slayer's son comes back before then.

SIGRID: Let me discuss it with Bartholomew. I'm sure we can work something out. (they part ways and exit as ALETHEIA and SYLVIE enter)

ALETHEIA: Oh Sylvie, *where is he?*

SYLVIE: Not knowing, I cannot say. ...Assuming you're talking about George.

ALETHEIA: (smiles at SYLVIE'S winsomeness, in spite of her own distress) Of course! I'd feel so much better if he were here now. He has such a keen mind under pressure.

SYLVIE: Aye, Huffboro is definitely under pressure. Ask me how many sheep we have left.

ALETHEIA: ...Alright, how many sheep do we have left?

SYLVIE: I don't know! Whenever I try to count them, I fall asleep! (ALETHEIA gives SYLVIE a smoldering stare.) Right. So we're under pressure. Twelve sheep left, nobody knows what will happen when the sheep are gone, nobody can set foot outside the village without dying...

ALETHEIA: If only Leviathan would let one or two men leave the village, just to go find George...

SYLVIE: Nay, he won't allow that. (imitates the part of the song in a creepy voice) "You shall remain within my keep blah blah blah blah blah blah blah..."

ALETHEIA: (snaps) Could you take this a little bit seriously?

SYLVIE: (long pause) Sorry, Lettie. I do take it seriously. I care about George. I care about the people in this village. The babies who lost their daddies last week. If I don't laugh, I'll just cry.

ALETHEIA: Me too.

SYLVIE: (sees a glimmer of hope; ever the optimist) Perhaps one or two of the men *could* get out of the village! Sneak out past Leviathan and go find George. It could work!

ALETHEIA: Nay, Sylvie. The bailiff is... badly injured; we've lost our strongest men already. We can't possibly risk any more men. (sigh) I should go check on mother. I think she has a headache.

SYLVIE: (to herself) Can't risk any more men... (she looks off toward the lake)

(To GEORGE & MARA again.)

MARA: (stops; quizzically) Do you suppose the village of Tommons moved?

GEORGE: That's enough! I'm... I'm finished! I'm going home. Back to Huffboro. Back to Aletheia. I'm not wasting any more time.

MARA: George, don't be ridiculous. What about the dragon?

GEORGE: (unglued; sarcastic) *What* dragon???! Do you see a dragon? You have no *clue* where to find a dragon! Oh... and I've lost my sword! What am I supposed to do, slap him in the face???

MARA: (starting to get a bit fiery herself) You need to calm down, George. We'll get you a new sword. You have a job to do.

GEORGE: What makes you think this is *my* job???! What... why are you helping me, anyway?

MARA: Because I *hate* Leviathan. I hate what he did to the people I loved.

GEORGE: Well, go kill him yourself. I don't know why you think I can do it in the first place. Just because my father killed all those dragons?

MARA: You *still* think it was your father who killed all those dragons?

GEORGE: (explodes) STOP!!!! STOP IT!!! You just... you just SAY things! You just... SAY whatever comes into your head! I'm SICK of it! I'm going home.

MARA: Alright George, what do you want me to say? (out of nowhere, almost flippantly) I'm your mother, George.

GEORGE: (stops; turns back, still seething, and stands inches from her face; quietly) You are not.

MARA: I am.

GEORGE: That's the cruelest thing you've ever said. And I don't believe it for a second.

MARA: (more tender) You were nice to me in the cave. (George stands and paces a bit, incredulous, angry, shaking his head) In the cave, I could make-believe you loved me. Like a son should love his mother. I could... I could feel you breathing. Like I felt my baby breathing when he used to sleep on my chest.

GEORGE: (turns and looks at her; points) You're too good at this.

MARA: Give me one more day, George. I think I can find my friends if you give me another day.

GEORGE: (pause) I still don't believe you. (pause; puts a finger up) One more day.

MARA: (nods; turns) This way. (exits; he stands watching her leave for a moment, utterly emotionally spent; walks slowly after her)

SCENE 9

Outskirts of Huffboro, beside the lake; the little abandoned house is on fire, and Sylvie is lying wounded & badly burnt near it.

FERMIN: (enters; yells to people offstage) Fire!!! Fire! Out here by the lake! Fire!!! Bring buckets! (rushing around; sees Sylvie) Oh dear. (yelling to people offstage) Hurry!!! (as he drags her down center, away from the fire) Lord Christ, have mercy on the lass.

SYLVIE: (weakly) I'm alive.

MEN ENTERING: (ad lib) Buckets! What a blaze! Form a line! Put it out! (they form a line from the lake to the burning house and eventually get it put out)

ALETHEIA: (entering) I saw the smoke! (sees Sylvie) Oh Sylvie, Sylvie!

SYLVIE: Sorry, Lettie. I was... I was gonna go get George.

ALETHEIA: It's alright, it's alright. You did a brave thing.

SYLVIE: Stupid, maybe. (pause; Aletheia doesn't know what to say; Sylvie looks up at her) Leviathan only kept me alive so I could bear a new message. If you can call this alive.

ALETHEIA: What is it? (by this time the fire has been extinguished, and the villagers who put it out are gathered around listening)

SYLVIE: (this is not written yet, but she sings something with this gist...) Your sheep will not last forever; in honor of this young lass and her untamed curiosity, I will soon require the sacrifice of one young lass every day.

FERMIN: A young lass?

ALETHEIA: (to FERMIN and the others) Go get medicine; and someone who knows how to use it; and find my mother. (the men hesitate) Now! (they exit hurriedly as Aletheia helps Sylvie over to a bench to sit down)

SYLVIE: What's with the bench?

ALETHEIA: Oh, I don't know. George put it here.

SYLVIE: He's so weird.

ALETHEIA: (smiles) Aye.

SYLVIE: (after she's settled; sighs, relieved and resigned) I've given my message; I can die now.

ALETHEIA: Nay, Sylvie, you're alright. Just hold on.

SYLVIE: You know there's no one in this village who can heal these wounds.

ALETHEIA: Sylvie, we'll find *somebody* to help you.

SYLVIE: *You* can help me. Just hold my hand. That's all I need.

ALETHEIA: (she does so) Oh, these hands. So much mischief. (forces a smile, barely hiding her fear and concern)

SYLVIE: (laughs a little) Some people don't learn their lesson until it's too late.

ALETHEIA: Sylvie, when we talked about sending somebody to find George—

SONG: Stay Here

SYLVIE: I know, Lettie, I know you didn't mean for this to happen. But... what could I do? (sings)
Maybe I should've told you first;
Maybe I shouldn't have.
Maybe I'm not too good at planning for the worst.

ALETHEIA: Maybe I would've tried to stop you;
Maybe I shouldn't have. (SYLVIE: Maybe you wouldn't have.)
Is it too high a price to pay?
Who can say?

SYLVIE: I just knew
I couldn't stay here,
Doing the things I've always done,
Tending the garden in the sun all day
When I'd seen
The enemy raging,
And there's a hero to be sought,
A village to be bought back
Now.

ALETHEIA: You've always loved this sleepy village—

SYLVIE: All that I've ever known.

ALETHEIA: If there is any spark of zeal, it's thanks to you.

SYLVIE: Leaving behind this quirky village,
Going ahead alone.
Now that I'm here I must admit
Part of me, just a bit
Wishes to stay here.
I wanna see what happens next,
To be here in this extraordinary time,
Ready to hail George
As he comes home and wins,
Then gets back to his forge
And claims his princess.

But I'm going Home now.
I belong to the Lord Christ
And He is my reward.
(speaks) He is my reward!

ALETHEIA: (sings) Look at you, my baby sister,
Going first to meet the Master.

SYLVIE: I always was faster.

ALETHEIA: (speaks) Who's going to make me laugh when you're gone?

SYLVIE: George makes you laugh.

ALETHEIA: Not like you do.

SYLVIE: (pause) Lettie, will you sing me that song... we sang when Daddy died?

ALETHEIA: Of course.

SYLVIE: I'm just gonna rest now.

ALETHEIA: (sings) Death, where is your victory?
Where is your sting?
You cannot hold one of His.

CHARLISE: (screams, from offstage) *Sylvia!!!* (enters) Sylvia! (Takes in the situation at a glance and is immediately undone.) Nay! Nay! (Weeps uncontrollably as she takes Sylvie and rocks her in her arms, wailing, as other villagers gather around slowly.)

MEN: (sing) Beside the lake, we can't pretend
That this will have a happy end
As into chaos and confusion we descend.

VILLAGERS: What kind of action can we take?
Our daughters' lives are now at stake.
We face catastrophe with every move we make.

GEORGE: (sings from far stage right)
I'm on a journey where my ev'ry step is shifting sand

MARA: (sings from far stage left)
But if he only knew what I know, then he'd understand!

GEORGE: Her desp'rate claim that I'm her son is both unlikely and
Completely unsubstantiated!

SIGRID: Do we continue with a strategy so utterly illicit,
Making money off of tragedy—

BARTHOLOMEW: They'll never even miss it!
I don't know if we should curse the dragon to his face or kiss it

BARTHOLOMEW & SIGRID:
For the profit he's created!

VILLAGERS:
We need a
Dragon slayer's son

GEORGE:
I'm on a journey where my every step
Is shifting sand.

But since he left
And we have none

MARA:
But if only knew what I know,
Then he'd understand!

We have to hope
That we can cope
Till this is done!

GEORGE:
Her desp'rate claim that I'm her son
Is both unlikely and
Completely unsubstantiated!

What kind of action
Can we take?
So many things are now at stake.

SIGRID:
Do we continue with a strategy
So utterly illicit?
Making money off of tragedy—

You face catastrophe
With ev'ry move you make

BARTHOLOMEW:
They'll never even miss it!
I don't know if we should
Curse the dragon to his face
Or kiss it

BARTHOLOMEW & SIGRID:
For the profit he's created!

ALL:
When there's a dragon in your future
When there's a dragon in your future
When there's a dragon in your future!
Today we don't know what to do;
Yesterday was much easier with lives
Unaffected by Leviathan!

Lights down on Act I

ACT II

Scene 1

Lights up on traveling entertainers' camp. Tents, clothes hanging on makeshift clotheslines, and brightly dressed artsy-looking people gathered around. Some practicing routines with one another, etc. One man holds a guitar or lute-ish thing and starts playing. Song centers around the TRIO of ETHEDRED, ARCHIBALD, and AMICE.

SONG: Visible yet Invisible

ETHEDRED: (sings) As we wander town to village,
Here and hither, there and yon,
As we entertain the nobles—

ARCHIBALD: And the noblings that they spawn!

ETHEDRED: With their genteel sensibilities,
So courtly and so couth,
Why are they all so ill at ease,
We ask ourselves, forsooth?

AMICE: But we swallow all our questions,
And we put up our façade.
We pretend to be subservient,
While they pretend they're God.
And the things that make us who we are
Are things they'll never know.
They only want to see a good show.

TRIO: We are visible yet invisible,
Ever seen but never known.
Brighter colors, fewer cares
Than any monarch on his throne.
You can join us if you like,
But we don't feast on caviar.
If you're one of us,
You're just as much a nobody as we are.

ALL: We are! We are!
We are! Oh, we are!

ARCHIBALD: If the physical makes them quizzical,
Then we've done our job alright.
They can't see inside my head;
They don't know what I did last night!
And they'd never shoulder rub with me
To socially advance,
But they'll let us in their big fat house,
'Cause we can sing and dance!

ALL: Sing and dance! Sing and dance!
Purple pants! Sing and Dance!

(Dance break)

ETHEDRED: Lovely lady, noble gentleman,
We hope you're all amused
For we plan to stay until
Your hospitality's abused.
We'll just fill your belly full of laughs
At who cares whose expense
Then go and sleep like babies
In our cold and leaky tents!

TRIO: We are typical yet atypical
Specimens of humankind,
Try'n' to earn a little silver
Like a slow and steady grind.
But we share and share alike;
We don't divide what's yours and mine,
'Cause nothing is divisible by zero!

ALL: Divide by zero! Divide by zero!
Divide by zero! And you're a hero!

(Sometime during the last verse, MARA & GEORGE have entered and are watching the proceedings.
Entertainers now notice MARA and pull her front and center.)

ENTERTAINERS: (speak, ad lib) Mara's back! Look! It's Mara! Mara's back.

ARCHIBALD: Give us a verse, Mara!

MARA: (sings) We are visible yet invisible
To the crypt and from the crib.
I remember all the words
Though I'm as old as Adam's rib!
Though my flab is yet more flabby
And my singing's gotten worse,
I managed to come home
With one new mediocre verse!

ALL: Mara's back! Mara's back!
Mara's back! Mara's back!

MEN: (sing falsetto as WOMEN sing "bum, bum, bum, etc.," imitating bass line)
We are visible yet invisible
Ever seen but never known.
Brighter colors, fewer cares
Than any monarch on his throne.

You can join us if you like,
But we don't feast on caviar.
If you're one of us,
You're just as much as nobody as we are.

ALL: (more slowly and serious, bordering on melodramatic)
And the things that make us who we are
Are things they'll never know.
They only want to see a good... (long breath in)
Show!

ARCHIBALD: (speaks, as he and ETHEDRED and AMICE and MARA gather around GEORGE) Greetings, person-I-don't-know! What do you think of our song and dance?

GEORGE: Ahh... impressive.

ARCHIBALD: *Thank* you. We don't do that one for the nobility, of course. Just for us here in camp.

ETHEDRED: Mara! Dear Mara, what joy it gives me to see your safe return, thank heavens! And you've brought... a visitor! Visitor, (puts her hand on her chest to introduce herself, then indicates her companions) Ethedred, Archibald, Amice, (vaguely waves in the direction of others who are milling about camp, stretching for dances, practicing guitar, etc.) various and sundry others.

GEORGE: (dryly) A pleasure to meet you all. Particularly since I was told you were all dead.

ETHEDRED: Ohhh! Is that what Mara told you...?

AMICE: I'm sorry, Mara, you should've sent word ahead. We could have played along! (strikes a comical dead pose; others follow suit) Um, sorry, we're all dead. (they all cackle immaturely)

ARCHIBALD: Reckon it's too late to fool you now! You'd've found out soon enough though. See, we're all very committed to what we call "eventual honesty." Of *course* everybody lies to each other when they all meet, but the truth always comes out after enough late nights around the campfire.

GEORGE: That explains a lot.

ETHEDRED: Well, regardless of what you were told, young man, what we have is yours. Stay with us for a day or a lifetime.

GEORGE: Thank you, but all we need—

ETHEDRED: If you can't entertain, then you can cook! And if you can't cook, you can still eat!

GEORGE: Most kind, but we're not—

ETHEDRED: Ah-ah... (cuts him off; as she hasn't finished her spiel) *As we like to say*, we do what we like...

ARCHIBALD: We don't do what we don't like...

AMICE: And since we like to say that, we say it! (The three of them, and Mara, cackle with laughter. In general, they can barely suppress their giggles and guffaws throughout the conversation.)

GEORGE: (obligatory chuckle) Aheh... Well, as much as we'd... *like* to stay, we really just came for weapons.

ETHEDRED: Ah, of course! What we have is yours! Archibald, try to rustle up some swords for these two. (as he exits) The real ones, not the props! But uh, Mara... you're *not* staying?

MARA: Well... we haven't discussed it.

GEORGE: We haven't *discussed* it??!!

AMICE: (looks at Mara with a knowing grin) I say, Mara, isn't he a trifle young for you?

GEORGE: Nay, it's nothing like that—

ETHEDRED: Oh, don't be embarrassed! Not here amongst friends.

AMICE: Naaaayyyy, I'm impressed she could fetch one so strong and spry!

GEORGE: Really, this is not what you seem to—

MARA: Relax, George, they're jesting with you. You'll get used to it.

ETHEDRED: *George*, is it? Ah, now that's interesting. So this is what your mysterious errand was all about, Mara.

ARCHIBALD: (bustles in and hands George and Mara each a sword) Here we are! Sword. Sword. Not the best in the land, but the best we've got! (pause; looks around) Did I miss something?

MARA: (pause; sighs) Aye, he is my son.

GEORGE: Maybe.

ARCHIBALD: (excited and interested) Your *son*?

AMICE: (gasp) By the dragonslayer?

MARA: Aye.

ARCHIBALD: (deep voice, like an adult talking to a child) And are you a dragonslayer too, my lad?

AMICE: An *awfully* cute dragonslayer!

ARCHIBALD: AAAAHHH!!! Don't slay me!!! (runs in circles, mock frightened; others join in on the second yell...) AAAAHHH!!!!

(guitarist hits a chord and a spontaneous ditty erupts)

ARCHIBALD & OTHERS: (sing)
Dragon slayer on Mara's side;
I wanna run, I wanna hide

From you! Too-pah too-pah too!

MARA: (speaks) Ha! They seem to have a song for everything, don't they?

GEORGE: Can we go?

ETHEDRED: Hold on now, that reminds me. There was a song, a message for you, young man, passing from person to person around the countryside. (whisper) They say it came from the great dragon himself.

MARA: He's already heard it, Ethedred.

AMICE: Oh aye, I remember it!

ETHEDRED: How did that go?

GUITARIST: Eww, augmented chords.

ETHEDRED: Just play.

MARA: Nay, nay, we don't need to hear it.

ETHEDRED: It's alright, we love a good tune!
(Guitarist starts with a little intro during the last line)

AMICE & OTHERS: (sing)
Your father's flesh was burned
In dancing spark and flame of my design;

MARA: (speaks, a bit frantic, as they sing) Alright, we remember! We don't need to hear anymore! Thank you!

GEORGE: We've been over this already...

AMICE & OTHERS: (sing)
Your soul is mine; I rise again;
The time for us to meet is now;

GEORGE: (starts to walk away; spoken while they sing the above line) Believe me, I know this message all too well. (stops in his tracks...)

AMICE & OTHERS: (sing)
And you will vow you shall not move;
And I will seek and I shall find.

(awkward silence; Mara looks slightly sheepish and slightly horrified)

GEORGE: (turns) What was that?

MARA: Ah! Oh! Why, they've added another line! Isn't that nice, George?

GEORGE: (accusingly) You didn't give me the whole message.

MARA: George, but consider my motives...

GEORGE: (going over it) "...You shall not move and I will seek and I shall find..." (realization flooding over him) I was supposed to stay in Huffboro. Leviathan was coming for me *there*.

MARA: The message is open to interpretation...

GEORGE: He could be in *my* village at this moment! And you've been leading me away! For *weeks!!!*

MARA: I wanted to keep you safe. I *care* about you, George!

GEORGE: (shakes his head) If you don't care about my people, you don't care about me. I have to go.

MARA: (blocks his way) Nay! You're staying! (she brandishes her sword clumsily in his face)

GEORGE: Is this what we're doing? (slowly draws his sword)

MARA: I thought I lost you, when you were a baby! When my village burned to the ground! And then all these years later, we hear a message—a glimmer of hope you might be alive. And I found you. I'm not losing you again.

GEORGE: My people need me.

MARA: You don't need them. There's a place for you here. A new life. Come with us.

AMICE: Aye!!! (others assent too)

ARCHIBALD: Stay with us, dragon slayer! We're nice!

GEORGE: You're not stopping me. (attempts to move past her again)

MARA: Really now? (sword closer to him again; starts to be apparent she may know how to use it)

GEORGE: Suddenly you've some skill with a blade? Another of your secrets?

MARA: You can't be the wife of a so-called dragon slayer without learning a few *tricks!*

(She thrusts; he parries. Cheers erupt amongst surrounding entertainers. Cheering for Mara some, but mostly just enjoying the spectacle of it all. Nice swashbuckling quick-moving swordfight, ending with George holding both swords to Mara's neck. At this point, crowd quiets down.)

GEORGE: You never believed I could defeat Leviathan, did you?

MARA: George, there are things you *still don't know*.

ARCHIBALD: Ooooooh! (George turns slowly and puts the swords to Archibald's throat)

GEORGE: Leave us alone.

ARCHIBALD: (Looks at the swords with surprised amusement; not the least bit disturbed) Swords don't scare me. (shrugs) But we'll leave you alone. I care not. (he leaves and bids the others follow; they all exit, chattering and chortling with one another)

AMICE: (as they exit) Please don't kill Mara! She's our best cook!

ETHEDRED: Aye, we've missed her rump roast somethin' fierce!

GEORGE: (sheathes his sword and tosses the other aside) The truth. If there's any shred of you left that knows how to tell it.

MARA: You don't think I really *wanted* to lie, do you?

GEORGE: *No more questions!* I'm ready for answers. When I was a baby, Leviathan burned our village. Uncle Hiram survived because he lived on the other side of the river. Why did *you* survive?

MARA: (pause) I wasn't there. I left you with your nursemaid that night. I did a lot of leaving you with your nursemaid. I'm sorry.

GEORGE: Where were you?

MARA: (shrugs) Sometimes when your father was off on a big quest, I would... visit other villages. I was visiting someone that night.

GEORGE: Visiting someone. (disgusted disbelieving sigh) Was Nigel really my father?

MARA: Oh, aye! Definitely. No question.

GEORGE: Are you lying to me?

MARA: Nay. If I lied again, you would leave.

GEORGE: I'm leaving either way.

MARA: Then why shouldn't I tell the truth?

GEORGE: I'm not sure I'm convinced.

MARA: I swear it, George.

GEORGE: (he turns again and looks at her, struck by the significance; pause; music starts) Tell me about my father.

SONG: Have You Ever Wondered Why

MARA: (sings) Have you ever wondered why
Ev'ry story Nigel spun
Not a solitary one
Had any eyewitnesses?

Ev'ry dragon's death he claimed,
Somewhere far away unnamed,
Nothing ventured, no one shamed
Until he faced...

GEORGE: (speaks) Leviathan. Get to the point.

MARA: (sings) Nigel's legacy he longed to complete
In all his insolent pride
Was in reality replete
With manipulation and deceit.
Can't you see it?
Never slew a dragon in his life.

GEORGE: (speaks) Then who killed all those dragons?

MARA: (sings) Leviathan.
When I met your father he was charming and strong.
I was young and alluring; my hair was raven and long.
I was seeking status so I latched onto his;
Only cared what something looks like
And not what it is.

I stepped into the life of the dragon slayer's wife,
Soaking up the attention till I noticed some strife.
Just a hint of tension,
A bit of circumvention
When I happened to question his mysterious quests.

Always came home with his prize.
Never varied, no surprise.
Something hidden in his eyes.
Finally tired of his lies,
I said I'd leave if he didn't tell the truth.

GEORGE: (speaks) Sounds familiar.

MARA: (sings) So he told me the truth.
Several years before I met him,
Your father found Leviathan
Young and frail,
Wounded and dying beside a lake.
He was about to run him through with his sword
When the cunning little creature said,
"Wait!
I could be of inestimable value to you.
If we bind ourselves together,
There's much that I can give.
Let me live, and I'll pledge myself forever,
Do your bidding,

Whatever you say; I'll swear an oath today."

Now the choice before him might seem simple to you
But the heart that beat within was self-absorbed and askew
And he saw a path to greatness that was painless and swift.
Never dreamed the course if taken would set him adrift.

So he sheathed his sword and the dragon did swear
On the shield with the gilded cross that Nigel did bear,
Set in motion all this guilt and loss right then and right there.
His own counsel did he keep
And nursed the dragon to health with stolen sheep.

GEORGE:

This is nothing like the story
That I've known since I was young!
No! He would go ev'ry month or so
Deep into the caverns—

Then come back with a gunny sack.

It was the dead bloody severed head

And my father evermore was known

BOTH: As the greatest dragon slayer in the land!

MARA: And when Leviathan wasn't killing his own kind
At your father's behest
He built a name of his own
Flying throughout the land
Murdering people and
Burning down their villages and homes.

And as time marched onward, Nigel had some remorse
For the thing he had created was a terrible force.
But he kept moving forward for the sake of the oath
Which had bound the two together
Enslaving them both

And when the dragons were gone, circumstances collided,
For the oath would only break when one participant died
And when each had gained an indestructible name,
Leviathan destroyed him in smoke and in flame.
Can you see it now? Don't you see it now?

GEORGE: I can see it now...
Monsters make heroes.

MARA:

But it's the truth!

And he would meet up with Leviathan
And bid him to slay one more.

So that he could bask in all the glory
With the story of the trophy he bore.

Of yet another dragon that
Leviathan had slaughtered by his hand.

MARA: And sometimes
 Heroes make monsters.

GEORGE: (speaks) Does my uncle know?

MARA: Of course not. I think he always suspected something was amiss, but he never put his finger on it.

GEORGE: (accusingly) And why did *you* go along with all this? After you found out the truth?

MARA: (looks down, then squares her shoulders and looks him in the eye, sadly but matter-of-factly) I had my reputation to maintain. I wasn't so very different from your father, you know. Besides, there wasn't really any way out. We were in bondage to the oath he had taken. Words have power.

GEORGE: (digests this for a minute) Why do you call yourself Mara?

MARA: It's the name I took after I lost you both. I sought a new life. These people took me in. (hope is creeping back into her voice) They're kind! They taught me how to love.

GEORGE: They taught you how to live a lie.

MARA: Nay, I was already good at that.

GEORGE: Why didn't you tell me who you were when you came to seek me at Huffboro?

MARA: I didn't think you'd come with me. I supposed your uncle told you all kinds of awful things about how I abandoned you.

GEORGE: He never maligned you. He knew that somebody left me on the doorstep, but he didn't know who it was.

MARA: 'Twasn't me.

GEORGE: Then there is more yet to learn. Goodbye.

MARA: Wait! Surely your uncle told you my name?

GEORGE: (long pause) Giselle. (Mara slowly doubles over, shoulders shaking, into a silent weep) I'm leaving, Giselle.

MARA: (desperately) You can call me mother!

GEORGE: (shakes his head) I can't. (bitterly) I thank God with every fiber of my being that I wasn't raised by you. (He exits; She breaks down)

Scene 2

VILLAGERS: (sing) SIX SHEEP LEFT!!!

AGNES: Sigrid!

SIGRID: Agnes, how delightful. Are you well?

AGNES: I want in.

SIGRID: (clears her throat; trying not to be conspicuous to others around) Ah, but you're already in, remember? Your sheep won't be drawn for another two days now, darling.

AGNES: I'm not talking about my sheep. I'm talking about my Eda.

SIGRID: Eda! (feigned astonishment) Your daughter! Now Agnes, sheep are one thing, but you don't believe Bartholomew and I would be so crass... (Mrs Douglas is giving her "a look") to take money under the table for... You do think so, don't you?

AGNES: Word gets around.

SIGRID: (laughs a little) Oh, it does, does it?

AGNES: Don't worry that conniving little head of yours. Lady Charlise doesn't know. She hasn't been outside the manor house for days—ever since young Sylvie passed.

SIGRID: Aye, we've noticed.

AGNES: Now I've already lost my Douglas to that dragon, and I'll pay what's required to keep my Eda from being drawn for a *long* long time.

SIGRID: I understand, dear. (comfortingly) Bartholomew and I are only here to help.

(Shift to manor house interior. CHARLISE is sitting in a chair staring into space. ALETHEIA approaches.)

ALETHEIA: (kindly but wearily) If I bring you some food, will you eat it? (long silence; Charlise doesn't look at her or acknowledge her in any way; Aletheia sighs) I can't read your mind, mother. (long silence) You know I'm also in mourning. It would be... kind of nice if we could mourn together. Or... I could see if one of your friends would come sit with you.

CHARLISE: (snorts bitterly) What friends? I'm the Lady of this village.

ALETHEIA: (reassuringly) You have friends. You're one of the *people*, more so than the nobility in larger villages. It's a sleepy village, as Sylvie always—

CHARLISE: (vehemently) *Shh!*

ALETHEIA: Can I not speak of my own sister? (long pause) ...Or just not say her name? (pause) I'll come check on you again at suppertime. (she exits; Charlise continues her stone-cold stare)

Scene 3

(We find George on his way home.)

SONG: Monsters Reprise

GEORGE: (sings) I am the dragon slayer's son.
Ev'ryone used to call me that.
Can it be true there's nothing more than failure coursing through my veins?
Do I believe it? Can I accept it?
Is there a part of me that knows my father's legacy
Was no more than a fallacy created
To mask a man behind his name?

Why should I believe her now?
She's been lying all along.
Most of what she says is wrong,
Or at least, very misleading.
Yet it bears the ring of truth,
Somehow jibes with what I feel.
If I sleep or if I kneel,
It will be there, haunting me.
Why should I believe her?
Why do I believe her?

Is it because my uncle always had misgivings about his brother?
Was it the way Giselle broke down when I refused to call her mother?
That could be part of it
Could be part of it
But at the heart of it is a reason that compels me like no other.
This man that she said was not so very different from her
This man, I admit, was not so very diff'rent from me.

Monsters make monsters!
This apple's too close to the tree.
I see in myself this tendency
To heed my darkest innermost voices.
I come on a journey,
A pointless, meandering journey!
Accomplishing nothing, I swagger and strut,
Abandoning people I love, for what?

George and the dragon?!
How foolish it is looking back.
My family must have a knack for making
Stupid selfish arrogant choices.
I thought I could face him.
But how can I possibly face him?
Bereft of all but the strength of my frame,
My soul is left in confusion and shame!

If I met this creature, I might do the same
As my father!

And when Nigel fell,
Like an angel to hell,
Was he sealing the destiny of his child as well?
Or can I refuse
To blindly follow, and choose
To slay my sin regardless
Of what I might lose?

And when I look to the sky,
Lord Christ, what can I say?
Have I even acknowledged
That there's a part you might play?
Or have I forgotten
I'm a creature of clay
Who was formed to bear Your image
And fall on Your grace?

Can there be victory?
Feels contradictory.
Weakness so rarely prevails.
I'll just go home and be
Nobody great.
There with my friends
Share their fate.
(speaks) I pray I'm not too late.

(George hurriedly exits, on his way back to Huffboro.)

Scene 4

(Manor house interior; Bartholomew is seated, arranging pebbles at a small table when Sigrid enters.)

SIGRID: (approaching) Pumpkin!!!

BARTHOLOMEW: Dewdrop?

SIGRID: Methinks... we may be in too deep. I was approached by seven more people, just on my way home.

BARTHOLOMEW: Oh, these poor poor folks. What would they do without us?

SIGRID: Aye, 'tis a wonderful feeling to be able to... (clears throat)... *help*. But dearest darlingest—

BARTHOLOMEW: You think it will fall apart if we take it too far. Well, mumsy, I was just arranging the pebbles to get it straight in my own little noggin.

SIGRID: Ah.

BARTHOLOMEW: If you'll take the pebbles that correspond to the people you "helped" today...

SIGRID: Alright...

BARTHOLOMEW: And add them to my row here... Quite simple...

SIGRID: Here?

BARTHOLOMEW: Aye, the ones who paid the most are on the left, and we graaaadually work our way to the little piddler who paid a halfpence way over here...

SIGRID: The Fletchers...

BARTHOLOMEW: There you are...

SIGRID: The Ludlows...

BARTHOLOMEW: If two families paid the same amount, then the one who paid first gets a better position.

SIGRID: I think I've got it. Alright... That's all I have.

BARTHOLOMEW: Good! This should work beautifully!

SIGRID: But lovey... It feels like there's only one pebble left in the bag.

BARTHOLOMEW: (surprised; first time we ever see him shaken) One pebble????!! Ah... Who might that... (as Sigrid looks inside)

SIGRID: Of course. (she holds the bag toward him, he looks in, and they stare at each other) This isn't going to work.

BARTHOLOMEW: (jumps up to pace) Maybe the system doesn't need to work. We've milked the village of every last coin. Maybe we just take the loot and run. We have enough to travel somewhere else and live comfortably. My uncle! Over in Tinksburg! We can make ourselves "indispensable" to him as we've done with your sister here!

SIGRID: (warming to the idea) Aye, we just might! Who wants to live in a dragon-infested place like this anyway?

BARTHOLOMEW: Oh! The dragon!!! He won't let us leave.

SIGRID: Oh fie, you're right. (they ponder) Wait! What about this... (she whispers in his ear for an extended period of time)

BARTHOLOMEW: (reacting animatedly as she whispers) Ah! Ooh... Uh. Ah! Ah-ha! (speaks when she's done) Ohhhh, peachy-pie, I just love to see your mind work!

SIGRID: So do I... (sings)
I see an opportunity
To escape our community

BARTHOLOMEW: _____

SIGRID: _____

BOTH: And though our plans might break like pottery
We're still glad we rigged the lottery
'Cause no matter what we did this town would be
Far less
Daughtery!

(Shift to exterior village scene)

VILLAGERS: (sing) No sheep left!!!!

GEORGE: (speaks; calls from offstage, then runs on) Aletheia! Aletheia!

ALETHEIA: George! (he embraces her) Oh George, you're alright! You're alright!

GEORGE: Oh, sweet Aletheia, (puts his hand on her cheek) it brings me such joy to see your face again.

HIRAM: (enters, running) George! Lord Christ be praised!

GEORGE: Uncle Hi! (they embrace) Oh, I'm so thankful—I was afraid this village would be burnt to the ground. So thankful to see you all alive and well... (voice trails off as he sees their demeanor)

ALETHEIA: Not all. He's here, George.

GEORGE: Leviathan!

ALETHEIA: In the lake. ...I don't know why he allowed you to pass.

HIRAM: He must have a reason.

ALETHEIA: Lives have been lost, George. Richard, Douglas, Bran, Rowan... (she seems as if she's going to continue, then breaks down; George looks to Hiram)

HIRAM: And Sylvie.

GEORGE: Sylvie! (Hiram nods soberly) Oh, dear Sylvie! (drops to his knees, clinging to his uncle's shirt) This is *my* fault! I should've stayed—I should've protected her. (bitterly) I never should've gone with that... that witch.

HIRAM: George, this doesn't mean you did the wrong thing.

GEORGE: How can this *possibly* be made right?

ALETHEIA: George, Sylvie went looking for *you*. I mean... maybe that's not a helpful thing to say, but I just mean... she really believed in you, George. She wouldn't want you blaming yourself.

HIRAM: And George... she's with her King now. For whatever reason, it was her time, and He took her in His wisdom. (GEORGE sighs heavily; is coming around and moving past the initial blow)

ALETHEIA: She played her part. And it wasn't in vain! Even for myself... seeing what she gave... it's given me new courage.

GEORGE: I could use some of that. (pause; looks at them) I have so much to tell you both. Uncle Hi. My father. He never killed any dragon. (pause; Aletheia is confused; Hiram just looks at him with grave expectation)

ALETHEIA: What?

GEORGE: It was Leviathan.

HIRAM: (slowly steps closer to George; years of wondering have built up to this moment) Say it again.

GEORGE: Leviathan killed them. He and Nigel were... (not sure how to say it) partners or something. Sort of.

HIRAM: (shakes his head slowly, pieces falling together in his mind; speaks under his breath) It makes so much sense. (suddenly turns from George and paces, thoughts racing) Oh, how blind I was! Oh! It makes... (suddenly furious) That *blighter!* Lord rest his soul, that *little blighter!!!*

GEORGE: I know.

HIRAM: I'm sorry George, I loved your father, I really did. But... (doesn't know how to continue)

GEORGE: (having long dispensed with any romanticized ideas of his father) I know, it's alright. And my mother.

HIRAM: (startled, turns) What about her?

GEORGE: The woman I traveled with. Mara. She is Giselle.

HIRAM: (eyes widening, he steps close to George again) She left you on my doorstep!

GEORGE: Nay, I still don't know about that.

HIRAM: (trying to work it all out in his mind) But how did she...

FERMIN: (rushes in) Hiram! Oh George, thank God you're back! Listen... The Welches have run off. Their chamber at the manor house is completely empty; all their belongings gone, as well as a stash of food from the larder.

HIRAM: Can't be. They wouldn't risk leaving the village.

GEORGE: (standing) What is this about?

ALETHEIA: Leviathan requires a young lass to be sacrificed to him every single day. Starting today.

GEORGE: What???

ALETHEIA: Mother left the arrangements in the hands of Bartholomew and Sigrid Welch.

GEORGE: Wha... Why would she do that? You can't trust those two any further than I can throw a boar! (beat) Alright, bad example. (points at Hiram) Any further than *you* can throw a boar.

HIRAM: Really.

ALETHEIA: But it doesn't matter now! Now that you're back... George, you can *face* him, and we needn't sacrifice anyone!

FERMIN: Aye, we'll support you however we can!

GEORGE: (almost fearful) Nay—nay, I can't—

HIRAM: (gently) George...

FERMIN: Well, there's the town meeting this afternoon. We can decide there.

GEORGE: A meeting?

FERMIN: The Welches set it up to announce which lass'll be sent to the dragon first.

GEORGE: (disbelieving) This is unreal. It's barbaric.

HIRAM: Aye, this little village was unprepared to face something like this, that's for certain.

ALETHEIA: The dragon was always "out there" somewhere. Now it's among us.

FERMIN: (one track mind) ...So what about the Welches?

HIRAM: I still don't believe they left. They're not that stupid, or careless with their own lives.

FERMIN: All that was left in their room was a neat little line of pebbles on the table... and this bag.

ALETHEIA: They were playing a dangerous game they knew they would lose.

HIRAM: I'm going to search the manor house. I'd wager they're hiding somewhere...

ALETHEIA: Trying to wait till this whole thing blows over and they can slip away! I'll go with you. Sylvie was always showing me little nooks and secret passageways...

GEORGE: I'll come too. I have so much more to tell you.

HIRAM: Good. Let's go. (the three of them exit)

FERMIN: (awkwardly stands holding the mostly empty pebble sack; not sure what to do) I reckon I'll... stay here.

SCENE 5

Manor house interior. Scene opens on a meeting room with a large table in the middle. Most villagers are standing, milling about. A few people are seated at the table. The bailiff is seated conspicuously, with a leg propped and bandaged up, and an arm in bandages. The room is silent as a tomb. All villagers are avoiding eye contact with others. Some people toe at the floor. Others look off into space. Husbands and wives hold each other comfortingly. Charlise enters. Men at the table stand, except for Alaric the bailiff.

ALARIC: Lady Charlise! It's good to see you up and about. (others murmur their assent; pause) Forgive me, I cannot stand. (Charlise seats herself in stony silence, acknowledging nothing of what was said to her.) Do we... know the whereabouts of Bartholomew and Sigrid? (brief pause) My lady?

HIRAM: (after another brief awkward pause; from offstage) We've got them! (he enters, escorting Sigrid, while George escorts Bartholomew)

ALARIC: George!

AGNES: George is back! (others greet George ad lib)

GEORGE: Aye, I'm back. Sorry it took me so long.

FERMIN: Where'd you find those two?

HIRAM: The weasels were hidden away in a secret passage. Wanted us to *think* they'd skipped town until they actually got a chance to do so. (Lots of murmuring as Hiram and George take them to a seat in the back) Now sit down here and hold your tongues. Believe me, you will be dealt with later.

ALETHEIA: They also had *this* with them. (She holds up a large sack and dumps its contents, a host of coins, onto the middle of the table; gasps all around, then silence; nobody wants to act like they know anything about this)

ALARIC: Sweet Moses. I'd wager that's every coin in the village. Who here knows something about this? (looks around) Bartholomew? You have something to say? (silence) Is this what happens when the bailiff is laid up? Shysters run rampant and nobody's seen nothin'?

FERMIN: (ahem) I don't know about the money, but I found this in the shysters' room. (hands the bailiff the pebble bag) It's the bag they were usin' for the lottery system. Next to it there was a line of pebbles all laid out as pretty as could be.

ALARIC: Pebbles and coins and ice-cold silence. I think I see what's going on here. Whoever's left in this bag is the unfortunate lass whose family couldn't pay enough.

HIRAM: Or whose family was left in the dark.

ALARIC: Who did the Welches plan to send to the lake today? (drops the pebble into his hand)

CHARLISE: (stands quickly) Nay!!!

SONG: Town Meeting

ALARIC: (sings) No wonder.
 Small miracle.
 At just a glance this tiny spherical object
 Can tell the tale.
 Snakes in the grass
 Tried to slither away!

CHARLISE: Lock them both up
 Till they wither away.

AGNES: Wait a second, wait a second, what is this?!
 All of a sudden
 You have something to say
 Now that it's your daughter!?
 Out of your stony silence you come out to play?!

CHARLISE: I've already lost a daughter!

HIRAM: Listen to me please,
 A word in season;
 Tensions are high
 And for good reason—

BRIDGET: (interrupts)
 I'm not afraid to admit what I've done!
 Isn't it time we all admit what we've done?
 Every dirty secret is on the table,
 Every penny spared as we were able,
 Giving our savings hand over fist
 To keep our Molly's name at the bottom of the list.

HIRAM: Thank you for your words.
 It's my impression
 Many folks here have a similar confession.
 Now it's in the open, maybe we can
 Put it all behind us—

BRIDGET: I don't think you understand.
 Providence would have us use wealth in a way that's wise.
 He has purposes and plans that are only His.
 As part of a family that's labored for all our lives...
 (speaks) I say we keep the list as it is!
 (much commotion)

AGNES: (sings) My little Eda is your Molly's closest friend.
 How could you do this to her?
 The poor lose first 'cause we have so little to spend!

BRIDGET: It isn't what I prefer!

FERMIN: (speaks) Ladies! (sings)
Have you forgotten?
There's no need to contend!
What is all the fuss?
The dragon slayer's son is here to defend us!
(speaks) Right?

GEORGE: (sings) I wish it were so but much has changed,
Things in my head rearranged.
Long story short, I cannot beat him;
Not a person here can hope to defeat him!
(speaks) *But*, that doesn't mean we give up altogether. I'm willing to go to the dragon, divert his attention for as long as I possibly can... while the rest of you get away to safety.

HIRAM: Look, you can't admit defeat before we even try. We need to go out there and put up a *real* fight. We'll take *every* man—and woman—who can hold a sword—

ALARIC: That's the position I take, right there! I can't fight, but I can craft a bloody good strategy!

BRIDGET: You cannot mount an offensive that quickly. We've got to buy ourselves more time. Use the lottery that's already been established.

AGNES: Why are you so keen to send other peoples' lasses to their graves?!

BRIDGET: (hotly) I don't like it one bit! But when times are desperate, you have to do what would normally be unconscionable.

HIRAM: Nay, that's not a path we take. Ever.

BRIDGET: (to Hiram) Oh, awfully easy for you to say! *I* say those who've worked hard deserve to use our means for our own good! What do you think of that? (some assents)

HIRAM: None of us *deserves* nothing, not even our next breath! Not for ourselves, not for our children! It has *nothing* to do with *deserving*!

BRIDGET: So self-righteous!!!

CHARLISE: Alright, people, stop it! *Stop it!* (sings)
You've all had your say, but my word stands.
You'll be refunded in full without being held in contempt.
The lottery begins afresh; No money changing hands.
But the daughter of nobility is exempt.
(Much subdued murmuring. CHARLISE approaches ALETHEIA, expecting her to be receptive to this gesture of love. To CHARLISE'S utter shock, ALETHEIA responds coldly.)

ALETHEIA: (speaks slowly and increasingly confidently, as if finding words she's never brought herself to say)
Mother, you're wrong. Mother, you're wrong! (sings)
Mother, you're wrong when you suggest
Everyone's had her say.
I represent the silent daughters of this town.

All of the lasses with whose lives and deaths you dare to play.
Does anyone ask them what they seek?
Mother, sit down! Let me speak!

All of them waiting
Holding their breaths outside this room
Fearing decisions made by people trusted since the womb,
Shuffling and slating girls
Like pennies in a purse.
Well, I for one am done,
So I'll go
First.

GEORGE: (Speaks) ALETHEIA!

CHARLISE: Nay! I absolutely forbid it!

ALETHEIA: (resolvedly) Not this time, Mother. (CHARLISE is stunned into silence again; ALETHEIA continues, addressing the villagers) Now, all of you can either take me out to the lake and tie me up and say goodbye, or I'll walk out there on my own... and stand on the shore... and call Leviathan's name until he comes. (Numb silence from all corners; people start to whisper soberly to one another; George pulls her aside)

GEORGE: Aletheia, don't do this. You can't do this. This isn't... this can't happen.

ALETHEIA: (firmly) Then come save me, George.

GEORGE: But you know what I... I told you—

ALETHEIA: Stop saying you can't. I'm getting a little tired of it.

GEORGE: (lame; not sure what else to say) I'm sorry.

ALETHEIA: I have to go. There's a dragon in my future. (music swells; she exits, surrounded by the village folks; last to leave are Alaric and two men roughly escorting the Welches offstage; George is left, not knowing what to do; Hiram is also onstage, staring at the pile of money; George has a moment of indecision, then he hurriedly rushes home to the chest where his uncle keeps the weapons, far downstage right; Hiram follows not long after)

HIRAM: What are you doing?

GEORGE: (more bitter than determined, more resigned than confident) Getting ready to go "fight the dragon."

HIRAM: You don't think you can defeat him.

GEORGE: (pause; looks at him) Not really. I mean... I have trained for it a lot. But my confidence was built on a foundation that's crumbled to dust. (sigh) I can't possibly go. I'm too much like my father. But I should go. (stands; sits) I don't know! Why don't you say something? You're always giving me advice!!! Why this silence?

HIRAM: You seem like you're working yourself to the right decision on your own.

GEORGE: (more determined) I can't let Aletheia die without at least trying.

HIRAM: You're like Nigel in many ways, George. I always tried to steer you away from his baser tendencies. But now... I think you can be the man he *should've* been, but wouldn't.

GEORGE: Maybe. I just—you know, I just don't know why it had to happen like this. If I'd stayed here in the first place, I could have faced Leviathan and maybe prevented all this loss!

HIRAM: But you would've faced him with unrealistic expectations, with a heart full of arrogance.

GEORGE: So did I do the right thing by leaving? Surely not! But how could I possibly...

HIRAM: George, the doubts that plague you... they're the same doubts that plague every man and woman on this green earth. Should I have done this, or that? Maybe—maybe not. But the wisdom I carry with me today was forged in the fire of yesterday's foolish decisions.

GEORGE: Swordsmith analogies.

HIRAM: (smiles) Exactly. Now I don't pretend to know what your future holds. I can tell you what I think you ought to do, but it's up to you to decide. I don't know how your story ends. I can't promise it will end the way we all want it to. But I know your story is *unique*.

GEORGE: I thought you said my story was just like every man and woman on this green earth.

HIRAM: Well, I reckon it's a bit of both.

GEORGE: Awfully complicated for someone who's just a lad.

HIRAM: Still stuck on that, are we? Alright, George. Once and for all, you're a man. Now go be a man.

GEORGE: (pause; looks into his uncle's eyes) By His grace I will. Thank you, Uncle. For everything.

HIRAM: I'll see you when you get back, son.

Scene 6

Beside the lake. Scene opens with ALETHEIA upstage right tied down to a bench.

SONG: Even if

ALETHEIA: (sings) What if I was wrong to trust him so completely,
Wrong to think he'd come?
What if I was wrong to call his bluff?
What if my words were not enough
To break him out of his confused paralysis,
Give him pause, a cause for reanalysis?
What if I was hasty or just unfair?
Saw something in him that simply wasn't there?
And if he doesn't come
And if he doesn't come

I believe my actions were no mistake.
The next move is his to make.
I can rest knowing that I did what was right.
I won the battle that was mine to fight
Even if he doesn't come
Even if he doesn't come.

GEORGE: (enters, breathless) I came.

ALETHEIA: (confidently) I knew you would.

GEORGE: (walks around, sizing things up, obviously jittery) Wait a second, where's my bench? Oh, you're using it.

ALETHEIA: (smiles in spite of herself) Breathe, George.

GEORGE: (paces, stealing wary glances at the lake) You haven't seen him yet?

ALETHEIA: Nay.

GEORGE: He'll be here soon, now that you're here.

ALETHEIA: He'll be here soon, now that *you're* here.

SONG: Battle and Finale

LEVIATHAN: (sings) Your father's end was met
In dancing spark and flame of my design.
Your soul is mine; I rise again;
The time for us to meet is now.
And you will vow you shall not move
And I will seek and I shall find.

You ignored my orders.

GEORGE: I was deceived and just a portion of your message was received.

LEVIATHAN: Turned and fled these borders.

GEORGE: Your words are overplayed; I bear enough regret without your aid.

LEVAITHAN: (speaks) Very well then.

GEORGE: (pulls out his sword, defiantly) Where do we go from here?

LEVIATHAN: Relax, George. I only want to talk to you.

GEORGE: (angry) I have some things to say!

LEVIATHAN: Go ahead.

GEORGE: (sings) You've got to answer for the maiden and the men you slew.

LEVIATHAN: I only ever did exactly what I said I'd do.

GEORGE: Give me a reason for the pain you put my people through.

LEVIATHAN: It was for you!

GEORGE: (speaks) What is *that* supposed to mean?!

LEVIATHAN: (sings) I had to make sure you knew the stakes were high.
And I will not play games.

GEORGE: Nor will I.

LEVIATHAN: (speaks) Good. Now it's my turn to ask questions. (sings)
Do I detect a fond affection for this would-be bride,
Or is it chivalry alone that brings you to her side?
She'd love to help you fight your dragon, but her hands are tired.

GEORGE: (speaks) Leave her alone!

LEVIATHAN: So I've hit a nerve.

GEORGE: You will not harm her!

LEVIATHAN: You're right. I will not.

GEORGE: ...Really?

LEVIATHAN: I will not harm her, if you help me.

GEORGE: Help you?

LEVIATHAN: It's decision time, George. (sings)
Beside the lake, it all gets real.
You come to die or strike a deal.
You're in the court of last resort with no appeal.
This is a fight you cannot win,
A battle you did not begin.
You'll find a compromise is wiser in the end
When there's a dragon in your
Presence.

GEORGE: (speaks) What do you want from me?

LEVIATHAN: Nothing complicated. I want something back. Something the so-called dragon slayer stole from me.

GEORGE: This has something to do with my father...

LEVIATHAN: It has everything to do with him! He was so cocky; he lorded his authority over me for years. And I played my part well. The downtrodden slave, the subservient pet. He actually began to believe he was as powerful as everyone said. And after I had slaughtered the last of my "brethren," your father came in all his hubris to meet with me one more time.

GEORGE: And you murdered him.

LEVIATHAN: I did. (sings)
I always understood that I would have the last laugh.
I had built him a reputation as the greatest dragon slayer alive
And if I killed him
Well, you can only imagine the implications.
I'd be the undisputed greatest of all time,
The celebrated most-feared dragon in history.
The universal glory of the mighty Leviathan would be unparalleled!

But as he was dying
Lying in the remnants of his own dead skin
Trying to find a way to redeem his sin,
That's when it happened.
That's when he cursed me,
Did the worst thing he could possibly do to me,
Words burst forth from his lips
With his last drink of breath
On the break of death.
He said...

May you never again sail above the trees,
Catch a current of wind or a lofty breeze.
Your terrible splendor's come to an end,
My serpentine friend.

Let ev'ry sinew that's within you be unfit to fly;
My parting benediction as I lay me down to die.
The blood that I shed will serve to ensure
Long after I'm dead, the curse will endure.

GEORGE: (speaks) ... you cannot fly!

LEVIATHAN: I cannot. Thanks to your father.

GEORGE: Of course! That's why you disappeared for all those years.

LEVIATHAN: Aye. The lord of all dragons does not spread his majesty by *slithering* from town to town.

GEORGE: So you hid.

LEVIATHAN: In the caverns, subsisting on tasteless fish from underground rivers. Waiting. Just waiting.

GEORGE: Waiting for me to grow up.

LEVIATHAN: Exactly. (sings)
And now that you've come of age,
You're fin'ly useful to me.
You are the only soul that's capable
Of setting me free.

GEORGE: Then it was you that gently carried me to safety that night,
Left me on my uncle's doorstep.

LEVIATHAN: That's right.
I needed you alive!
I needed you to live!

I needed you to reach manhood
'Cause only a man could do
What I need you to do,
What I'm asking you to do.

GEORGE: That's the reason I'm alive!
The only reason you would
Give me a chance to survive!

As the last man alive with Nigel's blood in your veins,
You can speak the word to break the curse and sever these chains.
I could rise above the dust and from this moment I won't
Have to crawl upon my belly.

GEORGE: And what if I don't?

LEVIATHAN: (speaks) Then I'll kill you, and your precious princess, and I'll burn your village to a crisp, along with everyone you love.

GEORGE: And if I comply with your request?

LEVIATHAN: I leave you in peace. You'll never see me again. I'll make my glory known in other lands far away.

GEORGE: You mean you'll terrorize and destroy other villages!

LEVIATHAN: But not yours. The choice is before you, George.

GEORGE: Aletheia!

ALETHEIA: I'm here.

GEORGE: You trust me, right?

ALETHEIA: I'll match your bravery step for step.

GEORGE: I am not my father. And I am not my mother. And I am going to fight you now.

LEVIATHAN: Very well. The offer stands until you draw your last breath. (They fight)

GEORGE: You're toying with me, aren't you?

LEVIATHAN: I'm giving you time to reconsider.

GEORGE: I've made my choice.

LEVIATHAN: George, you seem so tired. Really... (sings)

Can we not take a moment just to marvel at this,
That words may have the power to restore broken things?
Mend these wings and I'll leave this very hour
On my honor,
Forsaking this shore.
You'll see my face no more.

GEORGE: (yells) NEVER!!!!!!!!!! (They fight some more; George loses his sword, which falls near Aletheia's feet. George is down, on his back, and Leviathan's face is inches from George's.)

LEVIATHAN: Last chance, George. If I exhale, you're finished. Then your princess will know what it is to suffer.

GEORGE: Aletheia, help me! I'm out of strength! I know I should refuse, but I—

ALETHEIA: Don't you *dare* say you can't!

GEORGE: Right. Kill me.

LEVIATHAN: You're not giving in. (frustrated growl) Well, there are other ways we can do this. I know how to keep a man on the precipice of death without pushing him over. I'll take you to the caves, both of you. I'll keep you alive for weeks, months, whatever it takes. I'll slaughter one of the villagers every day until you do what I want.

ALETHEIA: Just kill us now! You'll never get what you want!

LEVIATHAN: Is that so?

ALETHEIA: George...?

GEORGE: I don't know...

MARA: (from offstage) George! I say, George! (enters and takes in the situation) What in the world are you doing?

LEVIATHAN: Giselle.

MARA: Your hideousness.

LEVIATHAN: The years have been unkind to you.

MARA: You'll get no argument from me on that.

LEVIATHAN: You're not welcome here. This has nothing to do with you.

MARA: I think I'll stay anyway.

LEVIATHAN: Leave us alone, Giselle. We were about to make a bargain.

ALETHEIA: George, it's her! Can you hear me?

LEVIATHAN: Leave her out of this.

GEORGE: How did she get here?

LEVIATHAN: George...

MARA: (sings) I was a half a day behind you,
Hoping and praying I would find you.

LEVIATHAN: Leave us alone, Giselle.

MARA: And I don't blame you if you hate me,
But I just had to come remind you.

LEVIATHAN: Leave us alone, Giselle.

MARA: What you have is remarkable,
It's remarkable,
But if you hearken to him
He'll use his power to break you down and blind you.

LEVIATHAN: Don't listen to her!

MARA: I regret that we ever gave in to this creature you see.

LEVIATHAN: Leave us alone, Giselle!

