

LEVIATHAN

A Musical

Inspired by the Legend of George and the Dragon

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Music and Lyrics by Aaron Alsmeyer

ACT I, SCENE 1

Characters needed: George, Mara, Aletheia, Hiram, Sylvie, Bartholomew, Sigrid, Charlise, Bailiff, Susannah, Nigel, Company

Intro Music to 1. "Sleepy Village" begins while lights are down. After the grandiose opening bars, the music subsides and the lights come up on the sleepy medieval village of Huffboro. A small cottage, which can be turned to reveal an interior scene, is far upstage. This is market day, and the VILLAGERS are milling about, exchanging goods, catching up with neighbors, etc. SYLVIE, a spunky 15- to 16-year old, is scampering through the crowd without regard for the other VILLAGERS that are nearly upset in the process. Presently, she is stopped by her mother CHARLISE, the refined yet insecure Lady of the village, who admonishes her to stand up straight and act like a young lady. After CHARLISE turns away, SYLVIE reverts to her playful energetic ways and moves down center to assume the role of narrator for the opening number.

1. 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
(GEORGE inconspicuously enters at some point during preceding verses.)

ALL: And nobody has a story like George.
(On "George," company parts to reveal GEORGE, who is awkwardly hopping on one foot tying his bootlace. He looks sheepishly up at the audience, then hurriedly exits.)

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.

BAILIFF: There was a bailiff

CHARLISE & ALETHEIA: And nobility

BAILIFF, 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. *(As SYLVIE speaks, GEORGE'S father NIGEL—a flashback—enters, confidently wielding his sword. During the following verse, he moves through the admiring crowd, walks upstage, and disappears behind a wall of rock.)*

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
(Now NIGEL appears again from behind the rock, carrying a heavy gunny sack. He moves downstage with the air of someone who has accomplished something great. As the VILLAGERS sing, he holds his gunny sack high for all to see.)

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!
(NIGEL exits.)

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. As she does so, NIGEL enters again, now with less arrogance and more trepidation. He walks the same path and disappears behind the same wall of rock, but does not reappear. VILLAGERS respond with gestures of shock and lament as SYLVIE tells us that Nigel never returned.) At last, the greatest dragon slayer faced the queen of all dragons: 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 she is dead; some say she is hibernating; others say she 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 either exit or go about their business quietly in the background as focus shifts to swordsmith shop interior. GEORGE and his uncle HIRAM are seen putting swords and similar weapons into large sacks. HIRAM walks with a slight limp, but he is otherwise very fit and active for his age.)

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, but with a hint of exasperation)* 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: *(Indignantly)* A lad! A lad?! *(In a fit of rash anger, GEORGE suddenly swings the sword he is holding toward HIRAM, who easily blocks the attack with his own sword; 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...
(Swordfight has reached a momentary impasse. The two combatants' swords are locked in as HIRAM speaks his next line.)

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, Hiram helps him up and 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: *(Strikes a ready pose)* Try again?

GEORGE: *(Teasing him.)* Are you sure you want to exert yourself with your long journey ahead?

HIRAM: *(Quickly moves in on GEORGE, who blocks him. The fight continues along with the conversation.)* 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: *(Holds up his hand to concede that he is surrendering... this time.)* All right. I do need to be done now. Awful lot of walking to do tonight.

GEORGE: *(Puts aside the banter and grows more earnest.)* 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 exits and GEORGE stands watching him go as the focus shifts back to the village and the company reconvenes to finish the opening number.)*

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 exits 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!

(SONG ends.)

(As the ensemble holds their final pose, MARA, 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. Groups of VILLAGERS exit throughout the following exchange until only SYLVIE, MARA, CHARLISE, ALETHEIA, BAILIFF, BARTHOLOMEW, and SIGRID are left onstage.)

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: Ahhh... 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: *(Glances at him briefly and is unimpressed.)* Charming.

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 SUSANNAH with a desperate, almost hungry look as she moves toward her; scarcely hoping to believe the words she is saying.)* He lives in this village?

SUSANNAH: *(Steps back, uncomfortable with the woman's forwardness)* 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: *(To GEORGE, playfully)* You're bigger, but I'm faster. Always have been. Always will be.

GEORGE: *(Goodnaturedly, and clearly out of breath)* 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 much too old to be 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, she grabs his chin and pulls his face close to hers. This gesture should coincide with the opening chord of the song.)*

2. Message #1/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..."

BAILIFF: *(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.

BAILIFF: She's alive?

SYLVIE: Where is she?

MARA: One thing at a time.

BART: 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.
She incinerated every last one of us...
Except for me.

GEORGE: *(speaks)* Why?

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

BAILIFF: I need proof.

MARA: Have a little respect!

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

BAILIFF: (*to MARA*) Have a little reality!
You say you saw the long-lost dragon face-to-face?

MARA: (*To BAILIFF*) She was no further from me than you are!

GEORGE: What did she look like?

MARA: (*To GEORGE*) 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: (*Steps in front of CHARLISE and cuts her off. Sings to MARA.*)

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

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

BARTHOLOMEW: *(To GEORGE)* Well then, if she didn't give a reason,
Then you have no obligation—

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

BARTHOLOMEW: *(Steps back quickly, indicating CHARLISE.)*
I defer to the lady of the village.

CHARLISE: Well, I agree with—

BAILIFF: *(Steps in front of CHARLISE, cutting her off. Sings to GEORGE.)*
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: *(Cuts her off angrily.)* It doesn't matter what you think!
(speaks, to GEORGE) George, decide.

Come with me now!	GEORGE:	I should go.
I'll lead the way.	SYLVIE:	You should go!
Destiny calls your name!	ALETHEIA:	Give him space.
The journey awaits.	BART:	I would stay if I were you.
Mustn't delay.	SIGRID:	So would I!
The dragon has spoken	CHARLISE:	Well, I agree with—
And you would be wise—	SUSANNAH:	But what about your uncle?
	GEORGE:	I don't know!
	BAILIFF:	A man should do his duty.
	ALETHEIA:	It's a matter for prayer.
	GEORGE:	That's true.

ALL: *(To the audience)* Today we don't know what to do!
Yesterday was much easier with lives
Unaffected by Leviathan!

(SONG ends.)

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

SIGRID: If that's really your name.

BAILIFF: 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: *(with characteristic unbridled enthusiasm)* George!!!!!! You're going to kill Leviathan!!!!
(At this, BARTHOLOMEW and SIGRID burst into laughter.)

SIGRID: *(mockingly)* Ha! Maybe. *(She and BARTHOLOMEW continue to giggle as they exit)*

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

BAILIFF: *(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 kill Leviathan!

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

CHARLISE: *(still offstage)* Sylvia!!!

(SYLVIE squeals excitedly as she scampers off stage.)

LIGHTS TRANSITION TO "NIGHT SCENE" BESIDE THE LAKE ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF THE VILLAGE. *Begin intro music to 2.4, "Pensive, part 1," which serves as the incidental music during the scene change.*

ACT I, SCENE 2

Characters needed: George, Mara, Aletheia, Susannah

Night, beside a glittering lake. An abandoned house is seen in the background. A solitary wooden bench is downstage left. 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. (The introductory bars of 2.4 should serve as the incidental music for the scene change from scene 1 to scene 2.)

2.4 Pensive, part 1

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

(MINI-SONG ends.)

(MARA exits. GEORGE sits on the bench, 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. *(joins him on the bench)*

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 thought the children weren’t paying attention. But we knew there was always danger less than a crow’s flight away. Whenever we heard rumors of a dragon in the surrounding countryside, my father would throw buckets of water on the outside of the house before bed. *(Pause.)* 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 again, feeling overwhelmed and not sure what to do with his aunt's nonspecific advice. MARA appears in silhouette again behind him. Her appearance coincides with the opening chord of the mini-song.)*

2.6 Pensive, part 2

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? *(MARA exits.)*

(MINI-SONG ends.)

ALETHEIA: *(enters 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 runs after her)* 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: *(proudly)* I found it in that abandoned house.

ALETHEIA: *(They sit; after a pause, she turns to the pressing question)* 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 to 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*! (***Cue to begin song.***)

3. Monsters Make Heroes

GEORGE: (*sings*) 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: (*amused, she covers his mouth to stop him; speaks*) George, listen to yourself! (*sings, somewhat whimsically at first, and gradually grows more earnest*)

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.
(Looks full into his eyes and sings with a mixture of gravity and adoration)

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.	Leave behind even you.
	Hear me now, I insist. I would bleed to let you know	Would that I could show how You'll be missed.
	I believe in you.	

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

GEORGE: *(Pauses to regroup, then sings, bursting with frustration and determination.)*

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 her,
But without her 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 me 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 sheathe!
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!

(SONG ends.)

BLACKOUT. *Begin intro music to 4. SKIPPING AHEAD/OPPORTUNITY, which serves as incidental music during scene change.*

ACT I, SCENE 3

Characters needed: George, Mara, Aletheia, Sylvie, Bartholomew, Sigrid, Charlise, Bailiff, Susannah, and any number of other villagers

Village exterior again. Village folk are gathered, clapping, waving, calling out farewells and good wishes to GEORGE & MARA as they set off with packs on their backs. GEORGE moves down a line of VILLAGERS, wishing them each farewell: He hugs SUSANNAH; shakes hands with the BAILIFF; nods respectfully to CHARLISE; puts his hand tenderly on ALETHEIA's cheek; looks at SYLVIE, then puts his hand over her whole face and gives her a playful shove. She laughs. Village folk recede upstage as GEORGE & MARA leave the village behind them. 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. (The introductory bars of the following song should serve as the incidental music for the scene change from scene 2 to scene 3.)

4. Skipping Ahead/Opportunity

GEORGE: *(Sings to MARA. She walks with measured tread and he follows right on her heels with the exuberance of a puppy.)*

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! *(Passes her and runs down center; now sings to the audience.)*

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! *(GEORGE exits, running down the aisle, and VILLAGERS start to move downstage)*

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

MARA: *(Moves down center as she sings to the audience)*
It's the day where I only see his back.
Mostly from a distance and usually off track.
At my insistence, he keeps himself on course...
(shouts in the direction GEORGE exited) George, bear left! Your left! *(sings)*
But I'm getting hoarse. *(She exits the same way he did.)*

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: *(To SYLVIE)* Is it too much to ask that George would find her quickly?
Come out on top and come home to those he left behind?

(ALETHEIA and SYLVIE exit. Other VILLAGERS mill about upstage briefly before they exit, leaving only BARTHOLOMEW & SIGRID onstage.)

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!

(They run off, cackling. A small ensemble of VILLAGERS enter to update the audience on the passage of time...)

VILLAGERS: Skipping ahead to Day Four! *(As they sing, GEORGE enters, dragging himself along wearily with MARA not far behind, still moving at her measured pace.)*

GEORGE: *(Sings to the audience, overlapping with the last word of the VILLAGERS' line.)*
She continues her maddening slow trudge...
(VILLAGERS exit.)

(SONG ends.)

MARA: *(speaks to the audience)* 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: *(Sighs wearily. To MARA.)* We've been trekking east for a few days and haven't seen any sign of her. 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 grimly and moves toward him melodramatically)* 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: *(sniffs loudly, taking 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 look)*

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

MARA: The other reason... is that I just don't know. *(She turns and exits. He stands watching her go for a beat, then follows quickly. **Begin intro music to 5. MOSTLY GOOD, which serves as incidental music during transition to next scene.** Small ensemble of VILLAGERS enter just as GEORGE is leaving.)*

ACT I, SCENE 4

Characters needed: Aletheia, Hiram, Sylvie, Susannah, small ensemble of villagers

Introductory bars of MOSTLY GOOD should serve as incidental music during the short transition from previous scene.

5. Mostly Good

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

(They indicate the interior of the swordsmith shop, where lights come up on HIRAM and SUSANNAH, standing downstage in front of a wooden bench. SUSANNAH is wrapping a piece of cloth around HIRAM'S arm as a makeshift sling. She sings as she tends his wound, apparently in the middle of relaying MARA'S message to him.)

SUSANNAH: *(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... more worn down... certainly looked as if she spends most of her time on the road.

HIRAM: *(The bandage now complete, he paces.)* Is it possible? Has Leviathan made herself 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.

HIRAM: *(speaks)* I know

SUSANNAH: *(sings)* We've done the very best that we could.
A handful of regrets, perhaps,

But mostly good.

(SONG ends.)

HIRAM: *(speaks, much calmer now)* You're right. He's a good lad. Has no idea what he's gotten himself into, 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)* Susaaaaannah! *(enters, running, as always)* Susannah, have you seen George yet? Oh, Mr. Hiram, you're here! *(Impulsively hugs him. He winces a little, but she remains oblivious to his injury as she addresses the same question to him.)* Have you seen George?

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

SYLVIE: You can if you're me!

ALETHEIA: *(pleasantly)* Mr. Hiram, you're... *(sees his bandage and her tone becomes a bit more concerned)* back early.

HIRAM: Aye, well, it wasn't by choice. *(Holds up his arm.)* Bandits.

SYLVIE: Oh!

HIRAM: Nothing a little time won't mend, thank the Lord Christ.

SYLVIE: *(back to the subject at hand)* But you haven't seen George?

HIRAM: Nay. *(Moves to sit down on the bench, clearly a little tired.)*

SYLVIE: *(Ever the optimist.)* 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 her.

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)* If anyone had a chance, it would've been Nigel! *(to HIRAM)* Why couldn't Nigel defeat her?

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? *(SUSANNAH comes to sit beside him and ALETHEIA & SYLVIE sit on the floor as he begins his narrative.)*

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... 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 herself tearing through the streets. There was no hope of saving anyone.

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

HIRAM: *(smiles wryly, anticipating the question)* Who left George at my door? That is the question. *(Stands again and paces a bit)* 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: *(after a pause; brightly)* Then you came here!

HIRAM: *(clearly relieved to turn to a lighter subject)* Aye, this is where I'd grown up. It was only natural to bring the lad to Huffboro. I met Susannah... we got married... *(with a hint of impishness)* and we did our best to tame the creature you know as George.

SYLVIE: *(laughs and looks at ALETHEIA)* Creature.

ALETHEIA: *(chuckles halfheartedly, 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: *(warmly)* We will.

HIRAM: Goodbye, you two.

ALETHEIA: Goodbye.

SYLVIE: Bye! *(They exit. Cue to begin song.)*

5.2 Mostly Good, continued

HIRAM: *(looks wistfully off toward where the girls exited; 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: *(Comes up beside him and gently puts her arm on his.)*
The wisdom of our years.

HIRAM: *(speaks, as if coming back to the real world from his lonely reverie) 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.

(SONG ends.)

BLACKOUT. *Start incidental music 5.3, "Scene Change from Mostly Good."*

ACT I, SCENE 5

Characters needed: George, Mara, Tim, Madge, Terrance

A desolate road. MARA enters, carrying her pack.

GEORGE: *(enters not long after, hopping on one foot)* Hold up a second. This jolly boot lace is giving me fits again.

MARA: *(stops and turns; 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 from her pack 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, which is convenient because he'll soon use it as one. ☺ He's busy searching the ground for more wood, and does not notice when TIM enters. Cue to begin 5.5, Miscreants. GEORGE is startled by TIM, a large intimidating man, dressed in dark colors and wearing a mask, who has quietly approached and is now standing near him.)

5.5 Miscreants

TIM: *(speaks slowly and gruffly)* Greetings.

GEORGE: *(startled)* Aaah! *(Drops the stick.)* Oh... *(puts his hand on the man's shoulder as he catches his breath)* You gave me a start. *(Picks up the stick again as he chuckles a bit to himself.)*

TIM: *(Not terribly bright and not sure what to do with GEORGE's nonchalance, he sticks to his next planned line.)* 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 offstage)* Terrance! Madge! *(They enter immediately and move to surround GEORGE on three sides)* This young fellow is wondering why we're here.

GEORGE: *(with resignation, annoyed he didn't realize this earlier)* 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 use to the enterprise at that time.

GEORGE: *(nods slowly)* Sounds reasonable.

GEORGE suddenly makes the first move. 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: *(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: *(calls out)* 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 TIM drag him offstage while MADGE 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)*

BLACKOUT. ***The closing bars of 5.5, Miscreants, serves as incidental music during scene change.***

ACT I, SCENE 6

Characters needed: Aletheia, Hiram, Sylvie, Bartholomew, Sigrid, Charlise, Bailiff, Susannah, Agnes, Fermin, Bridgette, Mr. Fletcher, Man, Woman, Company

The village. THE WELCHES enter from opposite sides of the stage and meet down center. CHARLISE, ALETHEIA, and BRIDGETTE & MR. FLETCHER are upstage deep in conversation, not yet the focal point of the scene.

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 the WELCHES hear a potentially juicy discussion, 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: Bridgette has known George since he was tiny, and she broke down crying when her husband said we'd probably never see George again. Apparently he knew some folks whom Leviathan had killed. *(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 his way upstage; we see him wheeling and dealing with MR. FLETCHER as this conversation continues)*

CHARLISE: *(overwhelmed)* That's enough detail.

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 her and BARTHOLOMEW giggling over their latest triumph as CHARLISE and ALETHEIA continue to talk.)*

ALETHEIA: Mother. What if it's real?

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

SYLVIE: *(yells from offstage)* Lettieeeeeeeeeeeee!!!!

ALETHEIA: *(ironically)* Found her. *(Sylvie rushes onstage, all in a dither)*

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: *(VILLAGERS, including HIRAM and BAILIFF, start entering as they hear the commotion; CHARLISE is embarrassed by the attention)* Sylvia, calm down, dear.

ALETHEIA: What is it...?

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

HIRAM: I'm here. *(The crowd is growing and gathering around, chattering interestedly.)*

BAILIFF: What's wrong?

CHARLISE: Sylvia! You're making a scene!

SYLVIE: That's alright! *(loudly)* I need everybody's attention! Listen to me!!!

6. 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.

TOWNSPERSON: Is it a boar?

SYLVIE: Nay!

FERMIN: A boar that's green?

SYLVIE: Can I—

TOWNSPERSON: 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?

WOMAN: Bigger than a box of bread?

SYLVIE: If you'd—

TOWNSPERSON: It's terrific!

FERMIN: It's horrific!

BAILIFF: 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.

BAILIFF: You say it's large?

SYLVIE: It was immense!

BAILIFF: And are there wings?

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

BAILIFF: What did it do?

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

BAILIFF: What about scales?

SYLVIE: Like a million!

BAILIFF: 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: *(To SYLVIE)* You hesitate to say it?!
(Whisper to each other) She hesitates to say it!

BAILIFF: *(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.
(Company whispers "Leviathan" with the BAILIFF during this last line.)

FERMIN: Can it be true?

HIRAM: What does she want?

TOWNSPERSON: She wanted George!

BAILIFF: I don't care what motivates her, to be blunt!

HIRAM: But there's something strange.

BAILIFF: What?!

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

FERMIN: Aye, he's right!

TOWNSPERSON: What does it mean?

BAILIFF: *(To HIRAM)* Analyzing her 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 she doesn't strike us first!

HIRAM: *(speaks)* You're probably right.

BAILIFF: It's simple... *(sings; crowd gets gradually more keyed up throughout the verse)*
If it's a fight she 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 her eye
Until she falls or we all die.
We'll lift her dreadful ugly head up to the sky!

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

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

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

HIRAM: I can give you all the swords you need,
(Nods to SUSANNAH, who quickly motions to a fellow villager to follow her offstage. Presently, they return with a chest full of swords, which they proceed to distribute during the following conversation.)
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 one-on-one with the BAILIFF as the rest of the VILLAGERS arm themselves and prepare for battle) Now listen. Your best hope is a narrow band of flesh at the top of the neck, which is only visible if she turns her head to the side. It's almost impossible to get close enough.

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

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

BAILIFF: 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.

BAILIFF: 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 she 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 her eye
Until she falls or we all die.
We'll lift her 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 her crime.
Sometimes you need to change 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 she 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 & BAILIFF:
It's kinda black, kinda silver,
Sorta grayish-green.

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

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

Beside the lake
We'll meet her eye

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

Until she falls
Or we all die!

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

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

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

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!

BAILIFF:
We'll take her teeth and make necklaces
For our wives

SYLVIE & BAILIFF:
Her shiny scales will adorn our houses
All our lives!

(As the song comes to its final lines, the BAILIFF and his chosen warriors gather and charge offstage, down the aisles.)

(SONG ends.)

BLACKOUT. *Start incidental music 6.5, "Scene Change to the cave."*

ACT I, SCENE 7

Characters needed: George and Mara

A small cave. GEORGE and MARA are seated on a bench, tied back to back. MARA is wide awake, but GEORGE is just returning to consciousness as lights come up VERY slowly to give the audience the sensation that they're waking up with GEORGE.

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

GEORGE: Uhhhhhhh... Where...

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

GEORGE: Uhhh... my eyes... *(wincing)* oh, my neck. My... what? *(snaps fully awake)* What is this????!!
(looks down at his bonds and begins to wrestle against them 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... rrrrrrghh *(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: *(Pauses to regroup.)* 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. (*sardonic chuckle*) You know, it's easier to argue with somebody if you can't see them.

MARA: (*soberly*) You haven't seen me once since we left your village.

GEORGE: (*sighs; shakes his head*) I can't believe this. (*looks toward Heaven*) 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: (*A little surprised and touched.*) 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*) 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: *(Moans)* 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 continue to work at the rope as they talk further.)* What do you like about her? ***(Cue to begin intro music)***

GEORGE: Who?

MARA: Aletheia.

GEORGE: Oh. *(Laughs a little sheepishly. Stops focusing on the rope.)*

MARA: What?

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

MARA: That's alright. *(All pretense of escaping from their bonds is forgotten for the time being.)*

7. 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 yet 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: (*Vulnerably*) Believe it or not, I do understand. I once had a home. A family.

GEORGE: (*Gently*) 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.

(SONG ends.)

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.

LIGHTS DOWN. ***Start incidental music 7.2, "Scene Change from the Cave."***

ACT I, SCENE 8

Characters needed: Aletheia, Hiram, Sylvie, Bartholomew, Sigrid, Charlise, Bailiff, Susannah, Agnes, Fermin, any number of other villagers

The village at dusk. Some VILLAGERS have gone home, but some are still milling around waiting anxiously; particularly the wives of the men who went to the lake.

SUSANNAH: *(Looking out toward the audience where the Bailiff and other men exited in Scene 6.)* 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.

MURIEL: It's the bailiff!

HIRAM: Alaric!

BAILIFF: *(staggering, almost crawling, onstage; tattered clothes, multiple burns and gashes; clearly has a significant injury to one leg; speaks between ragged breaths; two VILLAGERS rush to help him stand)* It's just me. Only me.

AGNES: *(frantically)* Where's Douglas?

BAILIFF: *(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?

BAILIFF: 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?

BAILIFF: *(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. ***(Cue to begin music.)***

7.5 Message #2

BAILIFF: *(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.”

(MINI-SONG ends.)

(BAILIFF collapses into unconsciousness. The two VILLAGERS on each side struggle to bear him up.)

HIRAM: *(loudly, to VILLAGERS behind him)* Medicine, quickly!

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

HIRAM: Here... help him. *(The two VILLAGERS bear the BAILIFF to a lying position on a bench upstage; SYLVIE is not long in bringing back herbs/medicines; The VILLAGERS and SYLVIE attend him, along with CHARLISE, as FERMIN, HIRAM, ALETHEIA, and SUSANNAH continue the focal conversation downstage.)*

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

HIRAM: That's what she says.

ALETHEIA: This isn't what dragons do.

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

FERMIN: What if we refuse?

HIRAM: *(turns on him suddenly)* I wouldn't *dream* of it. It's a cinch she'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: *(To ALETHEIA)* 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)*

BAILIFF: *(sits up suddenly, having been revived slightly; yells)* It doesn't matter! Nobody can kill that dragon. *(Murmurs grow louder.)*

SYLVIE: George can kill Leviathan! He can!!! *(Murmurs escalate to full-fledged debates and arguments.)*

CHARLISE: *(Moves quickly downstage; 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. ***(Begin intro music. Uncomfortable awkwardness)*** Go to your dwellings now. It's late. *(VILLAGERS slowly and reluctantly obey, helping the BAILIFF offstage as they exit, singing the first few lines of the following song.)*

8. 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.
(VILLAGERS finish exiting, leaving only BARTHOLOMEW, SIGRID, CHARLISE, ALETHEIA, and SYLVIE onstage.)

BARTHOLOMEW: *(slithers up to CHARLISE'S side, with a very dramatic compassionate air; 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 quite 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 make 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!

(THE WELCHES exit, cackling, as lights shift to GEORGE & MARA entering, happy to be walking again, stretching their stiff limbs and rubbing their chafed wrists. They are reveling in their newly-won freedom and enjoying being together for once.)

GEORGE AND MARA: Day eleven!

MARA: *(sings to the audience)* 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—
(Suddenly catches herself and strikes a reverent pose, remembering that George thinks they're dead.)
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?

(SONG ends.)

(GEORGE and MARA exit. Lights shift back to Village, where VILLAGERS are gathered around BARTHOLOMEW, SIGRID, and CHARLISE. BARTHOLOMEW is standing on a bench, about to make an important announcement.)

VILLAGERS: *(sing to the audience, updating them on the passage of time)* Twenty-two sheep! *(VILLAGERS now turn to give BARTHOLOMEW their full attention.)*

BARTHOLOMEW: *(speaks loudly)* 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?

(A few hands go up as lights shift again to GEORGE and MARA entering. VILLAGERS exit after their lights dim.)

GEORGE: *(The brief sense of joyful camaraderie has now run its course, and GEORGE vents his frustration.)*
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 she killed them *all*? Hmm... *(she exits; GEORGE stares after her with a mix of anger and incredulity, then reluctantly follows. Begin intro music.)*

Shift again to village, where a small ensemble enters to update the audience on the passage of time.

8.2 Twelve Sheep Left

VILLAGERS: *(sing)* Twelve sheep left! *(They exit as ALETHEIA and SYLVIE enter together.)*

(MINI-SONG ends.)

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, Hufboro is definitely under pressure. *(pause; impishly)* 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, she won't allow that. *(imitates part of the dragon's Message #2 song in a silly 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; much more soberly)* 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. *(They hug to comfort one another.)*

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: *(ever the realist)* 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. *(she exits)*

SYLVIE: *(to herself)* Can't risk any more men... *(she looks off toward the lake, then exits thoughtfully as lights shift to SIGRID entering on the other side of the stage, gleefully counting coins. She quickly hides the coins as AGNES enters not long after.)*

AGNES: *(forcefully)* Alright, Sigrid, I want in.

SIGRID: *(innocently)* 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; moves closer and speaks in a more hushed tone)* 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)*

LIGHTS SHIFT to GEORGE & MARA entering 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 her 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 she did to the people I loved.

GEORGE: Well, go kill her 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. *(starts to exit)*

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

GEORGE: *(stops; turns back, still seething, and moves to within inches of 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 turns away again and paces a bit, incredulous, angry, exasperated, 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; no clue how to deal with her)* 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)*

LIGHTS DOWN. Start incidental music 8.3, "Fire!"

ACT I, SCENE 9

Characters needed: George, Mara, Hiram, Aletheia, Sylvie, Bartholomew, Sigrid, Charlise, Juliana, Fermin, company

8.3, "Fire!" opening bars serve as incidental music during scene change from previous scene. Lights should come up just as the music suddenly increases in volume and intensity. *Outskirts of Huffboro, beside the lake; the little abandoned house is on fire (far upstage), and SYLVIE is lying near it, badly burnt.*

FERMIN: *(enters and sees the fire, but not SYLVIE; yells to people offstage)* Fire!!! Fire! Out here by the lake! Fire!!! Bring buckets! *(rushing around; sees SYLVIE)* Oh dear Lord. *(yelling to people offstage)* Hurry!!! *(as he drags her down center, away from the fire)* Lord Christ, have mercy on the lass.

A small number of VILLAGERS, including JULIANA, enter with buckets and large pots. They quickly form a line from the lake to the burning house and eventually get it put out as FERMIN tends to SYLVIE center stage.

SYLVIE: *(weakly)* I'm alive.

ALETHEIA: *(entering)* I saw the smoke! *(sees SYLVIE; rushes to her side; FERMIN is helping her stand upright)* 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: *(Slight chuckle)* 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? ***(Cue to begin music. By this time the fire has been extinguished, and the VILLAGERS who put it out are gathered around listening.)***

8.5 Message #3

SYLVIE: *(sings)* I warned you once, and this is twice,
You *must* remain within my keep.
What happens next when sheep are gone
And Nigel's son is yet waylaid?
A single maiden will be offered daily as a sacrifice.
(She slumps in FERMIN'S arms, not unconscious but exhausted)

(MINI-SONG ends.)

FERMIN: *(horrified)* A single maiden?

JULIANA: He's after our daughters now????!!!

ALETHEIA: *(moves to help support SYLVIE. Speaks quickly to FERMIN and the others)* Go get medicine; and someone who knows how to use it; and find my mother. *(FERMIN hesitates, not wanting to leave SYLVIE'S side.)* Now!!! *(FERMIN carefully lets go of SYLVIE, who is now supported entirely by ALETHEIA, then exits hurriedly with the rest of the VILLAGERS as ALETHEIA helps SYLVIE to a bench downstage.)*

SYLVIE: *(amused)* What's with the bench?

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

SYLVIE: He's so weird.

ALETHEIA: *(smiles)* Aye.

(SYLVIE sits. ALETHEIA remains standing, pacing a bit, frequently glancing offstage to see if the others are returning yet.)

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

ALETHEIA: *(Still in frantic mode)* Nay, Sylvie, you're alright. Just hold on.

SYLVIE: *(Slowly, realistically)* 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. *(Extends her hand toward ALETHEIA.)* That's all I need.

ALETHEIA: *(Stops pacing and looks at SYLVIE. We see a shift in her thinking. She realizes this is probably the end, and she just needs to care for SYLVIE in these final moments. She slowly takes SYLVIE'S hands and sits down beside her. She looks down at her sister's hands.)* Oh, these hands. So much mischief. *(forces a brave smile)*

SYLVIE: *(laughs a little)* Some people don't learn their lesson until it's too late. ***(Cue to begin intro music.)***

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

SYLVIE: I know, Lettie, I know you didn't mean for this to happen. But... what could I do?

9. Stay Here/Act I Finale

SYLVIE: *(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: *(lightly)* 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; much weaker)* Lettie, will you sing me that song... we sang when Daddy died?

ALETHEIA: Of course.

SYLVIE: I'm just gonna rest now. *(Curls up and closes her eyes in ALETHEIA'S arms)*

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

(During the preceding verse, we see SYLVIE'S hand slide down and hang limply. ALETHEIA, after she finishes singing, looks down and speaks softly as she realizes the inevitable has happened.)

Sylvie? Sylvie? *(She bends down over her sister's head and weeps quietly.)*

CHARLISE: *(screams in anguish, from offstage)* Sylvia!!! *(enters)* Sylvia! *(Takes in the situation at a glance and is immediately undone.)* Nay! Nay! *(Runs to her daughters and weeps uncontrollably as she takes SYLVIE and rocks her in her arms, wailing. Other VILLAGERS enter right away, led by HIRAM and FERMIN carrying medicinal vials, rushing as they first come in, then gathering around slowly as they find they are too late.)*

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: *(lit separately to indicate he is far from the village; sings to the audience)*
I'm on a journey where my ev'ry step is shifting sand

MARA: *(also lit separately)*
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: *(Standing over the weeping trio with BARTHOLOMEW; sings to him with some misgiving)*
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 her face or kiss it

BARTHOLOMEW & SIGRID:
For the profit she'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 her face
Or kiss it

BARTHOLOMEW & SIGRID:
For the profit she'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!

(SONG ends.)

Blackout. End of Act I.

ACT II, SCENE 1

Characters needed: George, Mara, Ethedred, Archibald, Amice, Ysmeina, Nigel, any number of traveling entertainers.

*Scene: Traveling entertainers' camp in a wooded area with colorful clothes hanging on makeshift clotheslines, where a group of brightly dressed artsy-looking TRAVELING ENTERTAINERS are clustered in groups, some eating, some chatting, some practicing routines with each other. **YSMEINA (holding a prop lute and mimicking the playing of the classical guitar in the pit) starts playing the opening chords of the song just as lights begin slowly coming up.** Song centers around the TRIO of ETHEDRED, ARCHIBALD, AND AMICE, but during the first few solos, people start to coalesce until all are involved in the number. ETHEDRED steps forward. She is a bit older than the others, a matriarchal figure in the group.*

10. 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, where all are cheering on a few figures who take the spotlight to display acrobatics, juggling, etc.)

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. GEORGE remains far to one side and is clearly unimpressed and unamused.)

ETHEDRED: *(speaks)* Mara's back!
(Others quickly echo, "Mara's back! Look, it's Mara! etc.")

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!
(ENTERTAINERS laugh and respond enthusiastically.)

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: *(slowly and melodramatically)*

And the things that make us who we are
Are things they'll never know.
They only want to see a good... *(long exaggerated breath in)*
Show!
(After striking a final pose, most ENTERTAINERS now go about their business upstage, while ARCHIBALD, ETHEDRED, AMICE, AND YSMEINA gather around GEORGE and MARA.)

(SONG ends.)

ARCHIBALD: *(speaks to GEORGE)* Greetings, person-I-don't-know! What do you think of our song and dance?

GEORGE: *(not enthusiastically)* Ahh... impressive.

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

ETHEDRED: *(hugs MARA)* Mara! Dear Mara, what joy it gives me to see your safe return, thank heavens! And you've brought... a visitor! *(speaks to GEORGE)* Visitor, *(puts her hand on her chest to introduce herself, then indicates her companions)* Ethedred, Archibald, Amice, *(YSMEINA is waiting to be introduced, but ETHEDRED vaguely waves in the direction of the others)* various and sundry others. *(YSMEINA is a bit put out.)*

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

ARCHIBALD: *(To GEORGE)* 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; the next three lines are clearly a much recited refrain)* 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 guffaw.)*

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

ETHEDRED: *(Down to business)* Ah, of course! What we have is yours! Archibald, try to rustle up some swords for these two. *(calls after him 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 you 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: *(Realization dawning on her.)* 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 baby-talk to a small child)* And are you a dragonslayer too, my lad?

YSMEINA: An *awfully* cute dragonslayer!

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

(Cue to begin music. YSMEINA hits a chord and a spontaneous ditty erupts, with all ENTERTAINERS joining in immediately.)

10.4 Dragon Slayer on Mara's Side

ENTERTAINERS: *(sing)*

Dragon slayer on Mara's side;

I wanna run, I wanna hide

From you! Too-pah too-pah too!

(As quickly as it started, it's over, and the upstage ENTERTAINERS go back to what they were doing.)

(MINI-SONG ends.)

MARA: *(speaks to GEORGE)* 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. *(dramatic whisper)* They say it came from the great dragon himself.

MARA: *(Quickly; clearly wanting to change the subject)* He's already heard it, Ethedred.

AMICE: Oh aye, I remember it!

ETHEDRED: How did that go?

YSMEINA: Eww, augmented chords.

ETHEDRED: Just play.

MARA: *(Growing more frantic.)* Nay, nay, we don't need to hear it. ***(Cue to begin music.)***

ETHEDRED: It's alright, we love a good tune!

(YSMEINA hits the intro as she says this, and again, all upstage ENTERTAINERS join in immediately.)

10.6 Message #1 (Entertainers' Version)

AMICE & OTHERS: *(sing)*

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;

MARA: *(speaks ad lib, trying to stop them, as they sing)* Alright, we remember! We don't need to hear anymore! Thank you!

GEORGE: *(speaks ad lib, annoyed, as they sing; moves as if he's about to exit)* We've been over this already... Believe me, I know this message all too well...

(When the ENTERTAINERS hit the next few lines, GEORGE and MARA both stop their ad lib dialogue. GEORGE is stopped in his tracks because he's never heard this part of the message; MARA stops, bracing herself, because her deception is being exposed.)

ENTERTAINERS: *(continue singing)*

And you will vow you shall not move;
And I will seek and I shall find.

(Awkward silence; ENTERTAINERS look around at each other happily; They love a good tune; MARA looks slightly sheepish and slightly horrified)

(MINI-SONG ends.)

GEORGE: *(turns, stunned; speaks)* 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: *(Becoming louder and angrier)* She could be in my village at this moment! And you've been leading me away! For weeks!!!

(All ENTERTAINERS are now paying rapt attention, enjoying the unfolding drama.)

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. *(Moves to exit.)*

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

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

MARA: *(Desperately)* 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?

(Blocks him again, still wielding sword; it becomes apparent she may actually 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!
*(On "tricks," she thrusts; he blocks. **First beat of incidental music 10.8, "George and Mara Fight," should coincide with the first clash of their swords.** Cheers erupt amongst surrounding entertainers as the fight continues. Some are cheering for MARA, but mostly they're just reveling in the spectacle. MARA is skilled, but no match for GEORGE, and neither of them truly wants to hurt the other. The fight ends quickly, with MARA on her knees and GEORGE holding both swords crossed at her neck. At this point, the crowd quiets down.)*

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

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

ARCHIBALD: *(Walks up behind GEORGE)* Ooooooh! *(GEORGE turns slowly and puts the swords to ARCHIBALD'S throat)*

GEORGE: Leave us alone.

ARCHIBALD: *(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; ALL ENTERTAINERS 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: *(Yells)* No more questions! *(Quieter)* 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. *(Pointedly)* Why did you survive?

MARA: *(pause; finally speaks, resignedly)* I wasn't there. I left you with your nursemaid that night. *(ashamed, regretful)* I did a lot of leaving you with your nursemaid. I'm sorry.

GEORGE: Where were you?

MARA: *(shrugs, trying to say it delicately)* 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 sigh)* Was Nigel really my father?

MARA: *(quickly)* 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: *(pauses)* I swear it, George. ***(Cue to begin music)***

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

11. 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.

(Recitative section. Upstage, lights come up on a flashback of NIGEL approaching the young and wounded LEVIATHAN. They mime the events that MARA relates in the following lines.)

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!

(End recitative.)

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."

(During these lines, Soprano 1 singers provide ethereal backup vocals from offstage.)

(Soprano 1 backup ends here)

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 used his sword to spill some blood on the ground,
Precious liquid from himself and from the captive he'd found,
Mixed together, now forever to this creature was bound.

His own counsel did he keep
And nursed the dragon to health with stolen sheep.
*(NIGEL breaks the "fourth wall of the flashback" and looks up, directly into
GEORGE'S eyes, as lights dim on NIGEL and LEVIATHAN.)*

GEORGE: *(horrified, bursts out)*
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

MARA:

But it's the truth!

And he would meet up with Leviathan
And bid her 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 her hand
And your father evermore was known

BOTH: As the greatest dragon slayer in the land!
*(Throughout the following lines, GEORGE is agonizing, wrestling with these
revelations and becoming more broken as he comes to see their plausibility.)*

MARA: And when Leviathan wasn't killing her own kind
At your father's behest
She built a name of her 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: And sometimes
Heroes make monsters.

(SONG ends.)

GEORGE: *(speaks, very much subdued)* 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 had 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. *(He moves to exit.)*

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

GEORGE: *(stops; looks at her distantly; long pause)* Giselle. *(MARA slowly doubles over, shoulders shaking, into a silent weep. GEORGE is unmoved. He speaks coldly.)* I'm leaving, Giselle.

MARA: *(desperately, between sobs)* You can call me mother!

GEORGE: *(shakes his head slowly)* 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.)*

LIGHTS DOWN. Start introductory bars of 11.5, "Six Sheep Left," which serve as incidental music during the scene change.

ACT II, SCENE 2

Characters needed: Aletheia, Sigrid, Charlise, Agnes, small ensemble of villagers

*The village. A small ensemble of VILLAGERS step downstage to update the audience on the passage of time. **Introductory bars of the mini-song should serve as incidental music during scene change from previous scene.***

11.5 Six Sheep Left

VILLAGERS: *(sing)* Six sheep left.

(MINI-SONG ends.)

Lights shift to SIGRID, going about her conniving lottery business. AGNES enters presently.

AGNES: Sigrid!

SIGRID: *(Startled; not excited to see AGNES again, but puts a polite face on it.)* Agnes, how delightful. Are you well?

AGNES: *(Not interested in pleasantries; Forcefully)* I want in.

SIGRID: *(clears her throat; drops her voice, trying not to be conspicuous)* 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... *(AGNES 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, nervously)* Oh, it does, does it?

AGNES: Don't worry that conniving little head of yours. Lady Charlise doesn't know. She hasn't stepped 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.

(They part ways and exit as lights shift to manor house interior. CHARLISE is sitting in a chair staring into space. ALETHEIA enters and approaches her mother slowly.)

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: *(scoffs bitterly; still doesn't look at her daughter)* 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; still looking straight ahead)* *Shh!*

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

LIGHTS DOWN. Start incidental music 11.7, "Charlise Mourns," which segues into the song in the next scene.

ACT II, SCENE 3

Character needed: George

*The open road. We find GEORGE on his way home, a war raging inside him as he sorts through his jumbled thoughts and feelings. **Music begins as GEORGE enters.***

12. Monsters Reprise

GEORGE: *(sings, spilling out his racing thoughts, a stream of consciousness)*

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 the 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 diff'rent 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 her.
But how can I possibly face her?
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.

(SONG ends.)

(GEORGE exits hurriedly, on his way back to Huffboro. Lights down. Start incidental music 12.5, "Scene Change after Monsters Reprise.")

ACT II, SCENE 4

Characters needed: George, Aletheia, Hiram, Bartholomew, Sigrid, Fermin, small ensemble of villagers

The village. Manor house interior. Lights come up on BARTHOLOMEW at a small table, pulling pebbles out of a cloth bag and arranging them in a row. SIGRID enters.

SIGRID: *(approaching hurriedly, with concern in her voice)* Pumpkin!!!

BARTHOLOMEW: Dewdrop?

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

BARTHOLOMEW: *(Mock compassionately)* Oh, these poor poor folks. What would they do without us?

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

BARTHOLOMEW: *(still completely at ease)* 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... *(He hands her the bag.)*

SIGRID: Alright... *(She starts fishing through the bag. She pulls out pebbles and places them as they talk.)*

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; this is the first time we ever see him shaken)* One pebble????!! Ah... Who might that... *(They both peer down into the bag that SIGRID holds open.)*

SIGRID: Of course. *(They both look up and stare at each other meaningfully.)*

BARTHOLOMEW AND SIGRID: This isn't going to work.

BARTHOLOMEW: *(now agitated; starts pacing quickly)* 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. *(inspiration strikes)* 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: *(Stops in his tracks, suddenly frightened.)* Oh!!! The dragon! ***(Cue to start music.)*** He won't let us leave.

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

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

13. Opportunity Reprise

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

BARTHOLOMEW: Living slyly and snappily

SIGRID: Ever after, so happily!

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!"

(They shrug and exit as lights shift to exterior village scene. Small ensemble of VILLAGERS enter to update the audience.)

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

(SONG ends.)

(VILLAGERS exit one direction as ALETHEIA enters from the other. She walks forlornly, the heaviness of current events clearly weighing on her.)

GEORGE: *(calls from offstage)* Aletheia!

ALETHEIA: *(looks around)* George?

GEORGE: *(Calls as he enters, running down the aisle)* Aletheia!

ALETHEIA: *(Sees him)* George! *(They embrace.)* 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. GEORGE looks down at HIRAM's bandaged arm.)*

HIRAM: *(Dismissively, quickly.)* It's nothing, it's nothing really. *(Purposefully)* How are you?

GEORGE: *(Breathless, overwhelmed)* Oh, I'm so thankful—I was afraid this village would be burnt to the ground! So thankful to see you all alive and... and... *(voice trails off as he sees them look at each other soberly)*

ALETHEIA: Not all. *(pause)* She's here, George.

GEORGE: *(eyes widening)* Leviathan!

ALETHEIA: *(nods)* In the lake. ...I don't know why she allowed you to pass.

HIRAM: She must have a reason.

ALETHEIA: Lives have been lost, George. Richard, Douglas, Bran, Rowan... *(she seems as if she's going to continue, but can't bring herself to say it; GEORGE looks to HIRAM.)*

HIRAM: ...And Sylvie.

GEORGE: Sylvie! *(HIRAM nods soberly. GEORGE is dumbstruck, stricken with grief.)* Oh, dear Sylvie! *(drops to his knees, clinging to his uncle as he goes down)* This is my fault! *(Bursts out and pounds the ground angrily)* I should've stayed—I should've protected her. I never should've gone with that... *(bitterly)* ...that witch.

HIRAM: *(Gently)* George, this doesn't mean you did the wrong thing.

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

ALETHEIA: *(Leans down, reassuringly)* 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. He has *redeemed* her story, as only *He* can. *(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: (*humbly*) I could use some of that. (*takes her hand; they rise together, slowly*) 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 questions have built up to this moment*) Say it again.

GEORGE: Leviathan killed them. She 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 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, agitatedly*) 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: What is this about?

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

GEORGE: What????!!!

ALETHEIA: (*with unveiled frustration*) 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!

ALETHEIA: (*Quickly, hopefully*) 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: (*suddenly recoils, fearful*) Nay... nay, I can't...

HIRAM: (*gently*) George...

GEORGE: I—I haven't told you everything yet, I just—I just can't...

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 here, among us.

FERMIN: (*pause; 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. (*He holds up the same cloth bag the WELCHES used earlier.*)

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

(*The next few lines proceed quickly as the THREE make plans and FERMIN tries unsuccessfully to get a word in edgewise.*)

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 both.

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.

(*Lights down. Start incidental music 13.5, "Scene Change to Town Meeting."*)

ACT II, SCENE 5

Characters needed: George, Aletheia, Hiram, Bartholomew, Sigrid, Charlise, Bailiff, Susannah, Agnes, Juliana, Muriel, Fermin, Bridgette, Mr. Fletcher, any number of other villagers

Manor house interior. Scene opens on a meeting room with a large table in the middle, at the end of which lies a coil of rope. Most VILLAGERS are standing, milling about. A few of the more important VILLAGERS, including BRIDGETTE and MR. FLETCHER, are seated at the table. The BAILIFF is seated conspicuously, with a leg bandaged and propped up. 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. FERMIN is looking around warily, bracing himself for the coming storm. AGNES paces, staring at her feet. SUSANNAH keeps glancing offstage, watching for her husband. Presently, CHARLISE enters, rigid and composed. ALL who are seated at the table stand respectfully, except for the BAILIFF.

BAILIFF: Lady Charlise! It's good to see you up and about. *(others halfheartedly murmur their assent; pause)* Forgive me, I cannot stand. *(CHARLISE seats herself in stony silence, acknowledging nobody, as if she heard 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. ALETHEIA enters just behind them, carrying a large sack.)*

BAILIFF: George!

MURIEL: George is back! *(others greet GEORGE ad lib)*

GEORGE: *(quietly; not wanting to be the center of attention)* 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 at the table, where they sit sullenly for the rest of the proceedings.)* Now sit down here and hold your tongues. Believe me, you will be dealt with later.

ALETHEIA: They also had *this* with them.

(She comes forward and dumps the contents of her sack, a host of coins, onto the table; gasps all around, then dead silence again; nobody wants to act like they know anything about this.)

BAILIFF: *(One of the few who doesn't know anything about this.)* Sweet Moses! I'd wager that's every coin in the village. Who here knows something about this? *(looks around; everybody avoids his glances)* Bartholomew? You have something to say? *(BARTHOLOMEW just glares at him. BAILIFF addresses the room loudly.)* Is this what happens when the bailiff is laid up? Shysters run rampant and nobody's seen nothin'?

FERMIN: *(clears his throat)* 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.

BAILIFF: *(Looks at the bag, then looks around at the VILLAGERS.)* 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.

BAILIFF: Who did the Welches plan to send to the lake today?

(Cue to start music. All VILLAGERS crane their heads forward to watch as the BAILIFF drops the last pebble out of the bag into his hand.)

CHARLISE: *(stands quickly)* Nay!!!

GEORGE: Aletheia!

SONG: Town Meeting

BAILIFF: *(sings)* No wonder.
Small miracle.
At just one glance this tiny spherical object
Can tell the tale.
(Accusingly, to the WELCHES)
Snakes in the grass
Tried to slither away!

CHARLISE: *(points authoritatively at the WELCHES)*
Lock them both up
Till they wither away.

AGNES: *(rushes at CHARLISE, confronting her to her face)*
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: *(Comes between the two WOMEN, trying to restore peace)*
Listen to me please,
A word in season;
Tensions are high
And for good reason—

BRIDGETTE: *(stands up rashly and interrupts for all to hear)*
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 up our savings hand over fist
To keep our Molly's name at the bottom of the list.

HIRAM: *(to BRIDGETTE)*

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

BRIDGETTE: *(approaches HIRAM)*

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, determinedly) I say we keep the list as it is!

(much commotion)

AGNES: *(sings to BRIDGETTE)*

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!

BRIDGETTE: 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 as he turns to GEORGE) Right? *(All now turn expectantly to GEORGE.)*

GEORGE: *(sings, broken and humble)*

I wish it were so but much has changed,
Things in my head rearranged.
Long story short, I cannot beat her;
Not a person here can hope to defeat her!
(speaks, with resolve) ...*But*, that doesn't mean we give up altogether. I'm willing to go to the dragon, divert her 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—

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

BRIDGETTE: You cannot mount an offensive that quickly.

JULIANA: We've got to buy ourselves more time.

BRIDGETTE: Use the lottery that's already been established.

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

BRIDGETTE: (*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!

BRIDGETTE: (*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. CROWD continues to get worked up throughout this conversation as tensions build and people take sides.*)

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

BRIDGETTE: (*Screaming*) So self-righteous!!!
(*The CROWD has now reached a furor, and CHARLISE steps forward forcefully.*)

CHARLISE: Alright, people, stop it! STOP IT!!! (*The CROWD quiets down; she 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 quietly at first, then with increasing confidence as she finds the 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?
(*CHARLISE tries to put her hand on her daughter's shoulder, but ALETHEIA pulls away.*)
Mother, sit down! Let me speak!
(*CHARLISE sits.*)

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 grabs the coil of rope from the table, then continues, holding up the rope as she addresses the VILLAGERS*) Now, one 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 she comes. *(Numb silence from all corners; PEOPLE start to whisper soberly to one another; GEORGE pulls her aside, downstage, to speak one-on-one.)*

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: *(looks down lamely; not sure what else to say)* I'm sorry.

ALETHEIA: I have to go. There's a dragon in my future. *(She pulls away from him; music swells; ALETHEIA approaches FERMIN and shoves the coil of rope into his hand, not taking "no" for an answer. She turns her back to him and he reluctantly starts to tie the rope around her as the VILLAGERS slowly circle the table and file out, singing the following lines and nodding their grim farewells to ALETHEIA as they pass her. The only VILLAGERS who don't walk past ALETHEIA are CHARLISE, who stumbles offstage, completely unable to face the pain of another goodbye, and BARTHOLOMEW and SIGRID, who are escorted roughly offstage by a couple of VILLAGERS. GEORGE is left standing as the crowd swirls around him, scarcely able to process what's happening.)*

MEN: *(sing)* I see a dragon in your future.

WOMEN: Who can make a bargain with Leviathan?

MEN: I see a dragon in your future.

WOMEN: Who can close the eyelids of the dawn?

MEN: If there's a dragon in your future...

WOMEN: If there's a dragon in your future...

ALETHEIA: *(resolutely, to herself more than anybody)* Then I need to go now.

(SONG ends.)

(ALETHEIA exits down the aisle, gently escorted by FERMIN. All VILLAGERS have left, except for GEORGE, helplessly watching ALETHEIA leave, and HIRAM, standing behind the table piled high with coins, watching GEORGE with penetrating eyes. GEORGE has a frantic moment of indecision, then the lighting shifts as he rushes to a corner of the stage where his uncle's sword chest waits. He begins outfitting himself with a sword and shield. Before long, HIRAM approaches him.)

HIRAM: *(gently)* 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 her.

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. ***(Cue to start incidental music 14.5, "George and Hiram.")*** I can't promise this story will end the way we all want it to. I can tell you what I think you ought to do; but it's up to *you* to decide. Because this is *your* story. A story *unique* to *you*.

GEORGE: *(sighs, a bit overwhelmed)* I thought you said my story was just like every man and woman on this green earth.

HIRAM: *(warmly)* Well, I reckon it's a bit of both.

GEORGE: *(grins a little, in spite of himself)* Awfully complicated for someone who's just a lad.

HIRAM: Still stuck on that, are we? Alright, George. *(Puts his hand on GEORGE'S shoulder and looks him squarely in the eye.)* Once and for all, you're a man. Now go be a man.

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

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

(GEORGE exits as music swells to a climax. HIRAM watches him go. Lights down. Remaining bars of 14.5 serve as incidental music for the scene change.)

ACT II, SCENE 6

Characters needed: George, Mara, Aletheia, Leviathan, Nigel, company

*Beside the lake. Scene opens on ALETHEIA, by herself and tied to a bench, upstage. **Beginning of song segues from incidental music 14.5.***

15. 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.

(SONG segues into next song.)

GEORGE: *(enters, breathless)* I came.

ALETHEIA: *(confidently)* I knew you would.

GEORGE: *(walks around, sizing things up, obviously jittery; looks at the spot where his bench usually rests)*
Wait a second, where's my bench? *(Turns back to ALETHEIA)* Oh, you're using it.

ALETHEIA: *(smiles reassuringly)* Breathe, George.

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

ALETHEIA: Nay.

GEORGE: She'll be here soon, now that you're here.

ALETHEIA: She'll be here soon, now that *you're* here.

16. Battle and Finale

(Intro music suddenly intensifies, and LEVIATHAN enters. LEVIATHAN'S body involves multiple performers, coordinated in a synthesis of puppetry and dance. LEVIATHAN'S voice, meanwhile, is provided by one primary

singer/actor, who stands in a prominent place upstage and delivers the dragon's lines, aided at times by a large chorus of singers, far upstage. The fire that LEVIATHAN periodically spews is portrayed by dancers in fiery orange costumes with great trailing "flames" of cloth. GEORGE is clearly awestruck at the size and majesty of the dragon, and he backs up warily, sword drawn, ready to counter at any second as LEVIATHAN slowly slithers toward him.)

LEVIATHAN: *(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.

(Now as she comes to the last two lines of her message, LEVIATHAN draws herself up to her full terrifying height, right in front of GEORGE.)

And you will vow you shall not move
And I will seek and I shall find.

(Drops back down to a slithering position.)

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: *(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 be 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 as she slithers toward ALETHEIA)*

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 tied.

GEORGE: *(yells)* 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: ...*If* you help me.

GEORGE: *(confused)* 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: *(exasperated that everything comes back to NIGEL)* 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: *(Accusingly)* And you murdered him!

LEVIATHAN: *(matter-of-factly)* 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!

(As the following lines proceed, we see NIGEL again in flashback, mortally wounded at LEVIATHAN'S feet. NIGEL mimes screaming the curse as LEVIATHAN sings it.)

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.
(We see NIGEL die as the flashback ends.)

GEORGE: *(speaks in shocked realization)* ... you cannot fly!

LEVIATHAN: *(bitterly)* I cannot. Thanks to your father.

GEORGE: Of course! That's why you disappeared for all those years.

LEVIATHAN: Aye. The queen of all dragons does not spread her 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 who 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!

GEORGE: That's the reason I'm alive!
The only reason you would

Give me a chance to survive!

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.

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, voice dripping with malice)* 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: *(calls out)* Aletheia!

ALETHEIA: I'm here.

GEORGE: You trust me, right?

ALETHEIA: I'll match your bravery step for step.

GEORGE: *(now addresses LEVIATHAN with staunch determination)* 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.

(Music swells and they fight. GEORGE attacks with full force and gets knocked around a lot, but LEVIATHAN does not yet unleash her full fury. After a time, GEORGE pulls back, breathless, and speaks the truth that they both know.)

GEORGE: You're toying with me, aren't you?

LEVIATHAN: I'm giving you time to reconsider.

GEORGE: I've made my choice!

LEVIATHAN: *(Almost pityingly)* 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!!!!!!!!!!!!

(GEORGE charges him again, and they continue to fight; George eventually loses his sword, which falls near Aletheia's feet. Finally, 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: *(crying out)* 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. *(Lays his head down. Addresses LEVIATHAN.)* Kill me.

LEVIATHAN: *(Pause.)* You're not giving in. *(Frustrated growl. This was not the plan.)* 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 villager 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: *(His resolve is wavering. His strength is very nearly spent.)* 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: *(Turns to face this new intruder.)* 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: *(Frustration is welling up. He believes GEORGE was about to relent, and now the situation is spiraling out of control.)* Leave us alone, Giselle! We were about to make a bargain.

ALETHEIA: George, it's her! Can you hear me?

LEVIATHAN: (*Screams at ALETHEIA, regarding MARA*) Leave her out of this!!!

GEORGE: (*weakly, barely able to engage*) How did she get here?

LEVIATHAN: (*trying to regain control*) George...

MARA: (*sings to GEORGE*) I was a half a day behind you,
Hoping and praying I would find you.

LEVIATHAN: (*Fury building; moving to and fro, trying to stay focused on GEORGE even as he silences MARA*)
Leave us alone, Giselle.

MARA: (*Continues singing to GEORGE and ignoring LEVIATHAN'S words*)
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 her
She'll use her power to break you down and blind you.

LEVIATHAN: (*To GEORGE; About to explode*)
Don't listen to her!

MARA: I regret that we ever gave in to this creature you see.

LEVIATHAN: Leave us alone, Giselle!

MARA: Hold fast to your strength or become like your father and me!

LEVIATHAN: Leave us alone, Giselle! Leave us alone, *Giselle!!!*
(*LEVIATHAN turns from GEORGE in a blind rage and attacks GISELLE with all her fiery might. GEORGE recognizes the opportunity, pulls himself painfully to his feet, grabs his sword, and cuts off LEVIATHAN'S head with his last burst of strength. He then staggers to ALETHEIA'S side, cuts her bonds, and she helps him return to where MARA is lying on the ground. GEORGE cradles her in his arms. She looks up at him lovingly.*)

GEORGE: I'm sorry I said what I did.

MARA: (*very weakly*) Well... it's all worked out in the end, hasn't it?

GEORGE: (*smiles, even as the tears come*) More questions.

MARA: Don't worry. That's probably the last one.

GEORGE: Aletheia, this is... my mother, Giselle.

ALETHEIA: Oh, thank you, thank you so much!

MARA: *(between ragged breaths)* Aletheia, I feel like I know you already. I wish I could watch the two of you build a life together. I'm so proud of you, son. Your father would be proud.

GEORGE: I love you, mother.

MARA: I've always loved you, George. I didn't always know how to do it right. *(She puts her hand to his face.)*
My brave son. *(Her hand falls.)*

(VILLAGERS slowly enter and pick their way around the fallen dragon as they approach GEORGE, silently mourning with ALETHEIA over MARA.)

MEN: *(sing)* For a man without a tale to tell

WOMEN: And a woman without a tale to tell,

ALL: Like a smith without a forge,
Hasn't means to plan a future well.
And nobody has a story like George!

(GEORGE slowly walks to the dragon's head, lifts it, and walks down center. He holds it high at the end of the next line, with HIRAM on one side and ALETHEIA on the other. GEORGE'S face is strong and sober and streaked with tears.)

And everybody has a story like George!

(SONG ends.)

CURTAIN!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!1