

INT. HANGMAN'S HOOD TAVERN - EVENING

A wooden door partially creaks open revealing a BARD (CHUTNEY) with fire-red hair and a hand-me-down lute. He peers in with uncertainty.

A strong hand pats him on the shoulder, partly in reassurance and partly to move him along. The gesture goes unappreciated, but the door swings open nonetheless. A HERO stands behind the Bard - they could be male, female, or anywhere in between. Their appearance doesn't matter, what matters is whether they can fill the role of a Hero, and based on their armor and equipment, they fill it just fine.

The Hero quickly scans the room with their eyes, holding a forced smile.

1 HERO
Come now, Chutney, I thought bards
loved a drunken audience.

2 CHUTNEY
Makes their aim worse.

The Hero confidently pushes past Chutney, marching towards the bar with purpose. They pay no mind to the slovenly patrons scattered about the dim and unkempt tavern. Chutney picks up his pace, sticking to the Hero like a stray cat.

3 CHUTNEY (CONT'D)
(hushed)
Of all the places, though! Haven't
we seen our share of filthy bandits
for one day?

4 HERO
I was raised by bandits.

5 CHUTNEY
A misunderstood people, honestly.
Romantic in a sense.

The Hero leans against the bar, placing some silver atop it.

6 HERO
Sir? Might you have a more private
room?

The BARKEEP nods to a doorway covered with a ratty curtain.

7 HERO (CONT'D)
Wonderful.
(to Chutney)
Two ales.

The Hero pats Chutney on the back and saunters to the doorway, passing by a BEARDED MAN who watches with interest.

INT. HANGMAN'S HOOD TAVERN - BACK ROOM

The Hero pushes the curtain aside, their smile gone and their pace more urgent. They remove their pack and equipment before shuffling into the single booth in the small room. They rummage through their pack, first tossing a set of lock picks onto the table and then... a small chest, no bigger than a matchbox. They stare at it quizzically for a moment before setting to work on the lock.

Chutney backs into the room balancing two drinks.

8 CHUTNEY
Master, not to sound ungrateful-

9 HERO
Bit late. Continue.

10 CHUTNEY
-But I doubt the masses will enjoy my songs of "The Great Hero of Merciria: *Pillager of Corpses and Drinker of Ale.*"

11 HERO
Firstly, that sounds like a marvelous song. Secondly, robbing robbers is just repossession.

12 CHUTNEY
Even when the possession isn't yours?

The Hero makes a point to scowl at Chutney before continuing.

13 HERO
Yes, and thirdly no one enjoys your songs anyway - that's why you're stuck with me.

CLICK. The latch on the tiny chest flips open. The Hero and Chutney freeze, sharing a glance before they both lean in. The Hero removes the lid. A cerulean light from within illuminates their dumbstruck faces.

14 HERO (CONT'D)
You've got to be joking.

Inside the chest sleeps a blue FAIRY, her skin sparkling with magic behind a small pane of glass.

15 CHUTNEY (O.S.)
A fairy?

16 HERO
I don't understand. That raiding party slaughtered an entire caravan. Out of everything they could've taken, why take a worthless fairy?

17 CHUTNEY
Well I wouldn't call fairies *worthless*, master. There's plenty of songs about their magical gardening abilities!

18 HERO
...I'm going to need more ale.

The Hero sets the box down and reaches for their drink. Chutney pulls the box closer for inspection.

19 CHUTNEY
Not to mention I hear they're absolutely lovely conversationalists!

Chutney TAPS the glass. The Fairy groggily rubs her eyes, then GASPS upon spotting Chutney.

20 CHUTNEY (CONT'D)
Oh! It's okay! We're not going to--

She SLAMS into the glass with fury. Chutney YELPS, dropping the box onto the table, face down. The Hero SPITS OUT a mouthful of ale as a THICK SCOTTISH ACCENT shouts:

21 FAIRY (O.S.)
AYE! WHO TURNED OUT THE BLOODY LIGHTS? COME BACK AN' FACE ME, YA CURLY-HAIRED BEETROOT - I'LL GIVE YA SOMETHIN' TO CRY ABOUT!

22 HERO
(grabbing the box)
Please, calm down!

23 FAIRY
An' who are *you*?!

24 HERO
The one who *rescued* you.

The Fairy's demeanor changes entirely, now sweet and dainty.

25 FAIRY
Oh! Is that so? Well, *hero*, would
you mind disenchanting this
invisible barrier?

26 HERO
Are you going to fly away?

27 FAIRY
Oh *no*, wouldn't dream of it!

The Hero isn't convinced. They tap the glass.

28 HERO
Right. It's done.

The Fairy SLAMS into the glass again, bouncing off of it.

29 FAIRY
SCABBY BASTARD!

30 HERO
I'll make you a deal. Tell me why
Hookworm sent his bandits after you
and I'll let you out.

The Fairy stops rubbing her forehead, now genuinely
concerned.

31 FAIRY
Y'mean you two don't work for him?

32 CHUTNEY
Work for him? We stopped his crew
from making off with you!

33 HERO
Generous use of "we" there,
Chutney.

34 FAIRY
Listen t'me. You gotta *move*. If
anyone loyal to Hookworm saw you,
we're all in trouble.

35 HERO
Then you better start talking.

36 FAIRY
I can't.

37 CHUTNEY
What do you mean y--?

38 FAIRY

I mean I *literally* can't. He
doesn't want me tellin'-- AHH!

RED ELECTRICITY arcs across her body. She falls to her knees.

39 HERO

...She's been *cursed*.

Chutney stands and makes for the curtain.

40 CHUTNEY

RIGHT. Well, now *I'm* going to need
more ale.

He pushes the curtain aside, SCREAMS, and dodges an ARROW.

Outside the door frame a dozen BANDITS aim crossbows. The
Bearded Man pushes his way to the front.

41 BEARDED MAN

Hey, bard. Why don't you'n yer
friend come out here and sing us a
little song?

A Bandit SNEEZES, then slumps over. After a beat, all the
bandits begin to SNEEZE. Perplexed, the Bearded Man watches
as his men collapse to the ground. He looks down.

BLUE MUSHROOMS rapidly grow from beneath the wooden planks,
pouring spores into the air.

The Hero looks to the box in their hands. The Fairy strains,
arms outstretched as BLUE LIGHT swirls around her.

42 FAIRY

Westroot. Find the Third Moon.

43 HERO

What? What is that, a place? A
person?

The Fairy's blue accents fade to grey. She passes out.

THUNK. The Hero looks up to find the rest of the bar patrons
have done the same. Chutney picks himself up off the floor.

44 CHUTNEY

Master? What are we going to do?

45 HERO

...We're going to rob these
robbers. And then we're going to
Westroot.