

Chaotic Good

by

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COLD OPEN

INT. WYENTHORPE PUBLISHING CONFERENCE ROOM - DAY

Around a generic oval table sits a collection of generic office workers, looking up at the whiteboard presentation.

Among them sits PELLE CAMBRIDGE (mid-20's, small and slightly chubby), bored, half-heartedly taking notes. She cleans her glasses, sighs.

The boss, CRAIG (40's, dad-bod), presents. It's painful.

CRAIG

As mentioned above with last-months fiscal charts, the CFO wants us to focus on the rise in overhead--

Pelle doodles a small battle-axe on the corner of her paper.

CRAIG (CONT'D.)

I was drinking an expresso with him as we like to do once a month--

DENISE ROBEK (50's, smile lines and strands of grey in her hair), knits a hat next to Pelle. She smiles and nods as if she's paying attention to the presentation.

Denise subtly kicks Pelle under the desk when Pelle's eyes droop.

Pelle sighs.

PELLE

(whispers)

Just kill me now.

DENISE

It'll all be over soon.

Pelle focuses on just a few things Craig says. His lips forming around words that are just plain wrong.

CRAIG

(slow motion)

I was drinking an expresso.

Upmost.

He supossably said.

Well, it's a mute point.

Ex cetera, ex cetera.

Pelle's eye twitches.

Suddenly, someone KICKS the door open! All eyes flash to--

KORTANA (30's, STRONG, taller than god, amazonian), the Half-Elf Barbarian, standing in the doorway, UPSET.

Dressed in an animal skin ensemble, high fur-lined boots, a leather headband, battle-paint on her face, battle scars on her body, practical armor, a battle-axe on her belt, a club in hand.

She storms over to to CRAIG, who quivers in fear, and then LIFTS him and pins him against the wall, a foot into the air. Her face close to Craig's, he sweats in terror.

KORTANA

Little man. Your words are poison to my lady's ears. It's ESpresso, UTmost, supposedly, MOOT point, and ET cetera.

(glares)

This butchering will be tolerated no more. Do I make myself clear?

CRAIG

Y-yes. Yes ma'am.

KORTANA

Good. I do not wish to make this point again.

CRAIG

Yes ma'am.

Then she drops Craig like a sack of potatoes; he crumples to the floor and stays there. She walks towards the door, nodding politely to Pelle and Denise on her way out.

In the doorway, Kortana bumps into SEAN (late-20's, too handsome for office work, just shy of douche-y), and nearly knocks him over.

KORTANA

You!

SEAN

Huh?

KORTANA

You! I do not know what my lady sees in your delicate features , but she desires you to embrace her. So do this you shall. What's more,

do this until she tires of you,
(venomously)
or suffer the consequences.

Sean nods, terrified. Doesn't move.

KORTANA (CONT'D.)

NOW!

Sean jumps, runs to Pelle's side, takes her by the hand. He brings her to her feet, leans in to embrace, the music swells, the romance blooms bright and pink and sappy when--

Denise pokes Pelle with a knitting needle.

DENISE (O.S.)

(whispers)

Pelle! Come on. Pay attention.

The room shifts. Craig is still talking.

It was all a daydream. Sean texts his girlfriend.

PELLE

(whispers)

Sorry. Ow.

Pelle looks back at her notes; snapped back to dull reality.

CRAIG

Okay gang, I think that does it for today. Who here wants to grab another expresso for me?

Pelle rolls her eyes.

PELLE

(whispers)

Kill me now.

END COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

EXT. THE ROAD TO OLGORATH - DAY

Bright sun, long green grass, a simple road, deliberately lined with stones. No civilization for miles.

Up the road, scorch marks burn in the grass. Sounds of a skirmish grow. Swords clash. Magic flares up, a flash brighter than the sun. Inhuman grunts. Flesh hits flesh.

A battle-axe SLICES through the air. A goblin falls dead.

Kortana stands above its body, scowling down, panting, before jumping back into the fray, turning to glare down the hoard.

KORTANA

(shouts)

Is that all you have for me,
cretins?

A bevy of goblins, green and sickly, pointed teeth bared, screech, turning towards her, hissing. One of them, COLLAPSES, arrows in its back, causing the others to look around.

TURU SON OF TOURAN (30's, tall, fit, both rugged and elegant), a Human Nobleman and Rogue-Fighter, stands with his bow, drawing another arrow.

TURU

You can't have all the fun, Lady
Kortana.

Kortana's smile is closer to a snarl, feral and wild just like her.

KORTANA

You know I am no lady.

She spins her battle-axe and charges. Another goblin goes down to Turu's arrow, a third loses its head to Kortana's harsh blow.

She slices through the goblins, agile and intense.

Turu admires her as she spins and weaves like an intricate dance.

TURU

You certainly don't fight like one
I've ever seen.

A stocky dwarf-cleric runs through, brandishing a ball of fire in his hands, a contingent of goblins at his heels.

MAN'TECA OF THE EMERALD CAVES (50's, 4' tall, a long grey beard), shoots the fire, flamethrower-like at the goblins.

MAN'TECA

Lord Turu, please do not
unnecessarily gender our combat
styles. It's 2019.

Turu knocks another arrow.

TURU

My apologies, Man'Teca. Should I
consult with Pratchett?

Behind a large rock is a halfling, using a sling shot to deftly knock out any goblin that gets too close. Pew, pew, pew! She has marksman-like aim.

It's PRATCHETT FLAGGON (30's, 3'6", curly hair, gender indeterminate), halfling traveler and bard.

PRATCHETT

For pity's sake, we're in the
middle of a skirmish, I do not have
time to explain gender identity
politics-- AHH!

A goblin snuck up behind Pratchett, knife drawn, teeth bared. The goblin spins Pratchett around, snarls into their face, blood dripping from its gums, its breath rancid.

PRATCHETT

Ugh!

Pratchett and the goblin wrestle for a moment; a punch, a kick, a clawed hand to the face, the butt end of a slingshot to the eye when--

A SWORD thrusts through the goblins chest, barely missing Pratchett. The goblin falls, dead on top of Pratchett, who scrambles to get out from under it.

Kortana stands above Pratchett with a grin.

KORTANA

Are you well, littlest one?

PRATCHETT

I had it handled.

KORTANA

Yes. You were doing quite well, but behold--

She waves to the field where all the goblins lay dead.

KORTANA (CONT'D.)

--the battle is won!

PRATCHETT

Oh. Oh that's good!

MAN'TECA

Aye. It was a fine bout.

TURU

Indeed! And nary an injury between us.

PRATCHETT

Except perhaps to my pride. One goblin getting the best of me, good riddance!

They all laugh. Kortana steps aside to wipe her axe and sword on the grass, polishing away the sticky, green goblin blood.

She starts to speak.

No sound comes out of her mouth.

TURU

What?

Kortana tries again. No sound. Her lips are moving, but only silence.

MAN'TECA

We can't hear you-- dang it, the mic's musta blown again.

INT. THE BASEMENT - NIGHT

Lined with soundproof paneling, the small basement has the feel of a 1970's rumpus room that has been hastily converted into a makeshift recording studio.

There's one wall with three or four posters that read "Critical Hit! The Dungeons and Dragons Podcast".

DENISE

Again? What in the world--

Small pieces of fan art and merch sit upon the shelves; various depictions of what the characters in the game look like.

A set of boxes in the corner labeled, "2018 Tour T-Shirts."

Around a table, like high-tech place settings, are five microphones with headsets.

Pelle and Denise sit at two of the spots; they take off their headphones. Denise examines the cord leading to Pelle's mic.

PELLE

I was trying to say you did pretty great, Denise.

DENISE

Aw. Thanks, sweetie.

MARA CAMBRIDGE (30's, purple hair, sharp features), Pelle's sister, and Dungeon Master for the campaign, sits next to Denise, reads through a binder containing all the campaign info.

MARA

Yeah, D. But I almost had you.

DENISE

I'm slippery, what can I say?

Next is FRED BAKER (50's, lit-professor tweedy, African American), the man behind Man'Teca. He clears his throat, takes a swig from his beer.

Finally, BENNY WONG (late-20's, dark hair, eyebrow piercing), Turu's player, stands up and starts looking at the cords.

BENNY

You know, when the next round of monthly donations comes in it might be time to get a few new mics and adapter cords.

DENISE

Really? I was looking forward to getting some new t-shirts drawn up? I really want to get in touch with that one artist we met during the winter tour.

BENNY

Maybe we can do both. I'll shop

around.

FRED

If it's just Pelle's mic, we can just get her a new one. Maybe she got the lemon.

Mara stretches her arms over her head and yawns. Pelle checks her phone; 11:53pm

PELLE

It's getting late.

MARA

Yeah, this is as good a place as any to call it quits. We've got enough for an episode.

BENNY

I'll get it up soon. I think we were cool enough that the editing will be minimal.

FRED

We're always cool.

DENISE

Everybody grab a few brownies for the road, I won't take no for an answer. I can't have them in the house or Lawrence and I will eat the lot.

They pack up; cords wrapped around mics for storing, brownies tucked into tupper-ware.

Beer bottles tossed into the recycling bin nearby, hands grabbing the last of the chips in the bowl.

BENNY

We all still meeting tomorrow?

MARA

Yes. Early though 7-10. And bring any ideas for the new ad for the network. Maybe we can pump one out then.

DENISE

They want a 30 second and a minute long one, right?

FRED

Yup. I just talked to Mike from ad

sales and he confirmed it this morning.

PELLE

Is it going to take the whole three hours?

MARA

Why, you got somewhere to be?

PELLE

No.

Denise hands each of them a tupper-ware as they march up the stairs.

EXT. DENISE'S SIDEWALK - SAME

Fred waves and pulls out his key to his cars, blips the lock, and gets into a car parked right in front of Denise's house.

FRED

Goodnight guys.

MARA

Bye Fred.

Mara and Pelle wave and walk in the other direction down the sidewalk, Benny half escorting them, half puppy-dog following on their heels.

BENNY

I really liked when you saved Pratchett like that. It was--

(beat)

--very graphic. I think it's going to play really well for the episode.

PELLE

That's the easy part; blood and guts and Kortana exacting vengeance. I like to pretend the goblins are my boss and coworkers.

MARA

Except for Denise.

PELLE

Except for Denise. She's the only good one there.

MARA
 (lewd)
 And except for Sean...

Pelle rolls her eyes and shoves Mara off the sidewalk.

BENNY
 Still into Sean huh?

PELLE
 No. It's nothing. He's just a guy.

Mara cackles as she pulls out the keys to a beat up old Subaru. She and Pelle get in.

MARA
 See you tomorrow, Benny-boo.

BENNY
 Yeah, bye.

He waves as the girls drive off, leaving him on the sidewalk.

Benny looks around. Starts walking back the way he came towards his own car.

INT./EXT. MARA'S CAR - NIGHT

Books and oddities line the floors of Mara's old car. A set of fuzzy twenty-sided dice hang from the rearview mirror.

A vinyl sticker in the rear window says "Your stick figure family rolled a one" with a dragon blowing flames at a group of stick people.

PELLE
 You shouldn't tease him like that.

MARA
 It's my job as older sister.

PELLE
 You're not his sister.

MARA
 I will be when he marries you and kisses you and makes babies on you.

PELLE
 Ew!

Mara cackles, turns on the radio; loud metal-rock blasts

through the speakers.

Pelle turns it off.

MARA

Ugh. What?

PELLE

Please stop teasing him about me, and about Sean and about- about- about everything! It's not nice. You're the dungeon master, you're supposed to be--

MARA

--Nice? No, I'm not.

PELLE

No. Just be a little more grown up. What if the whole podcast falls apart because you were being a jerk to one of the most popular characters?

MARA

That's not going to happen.

Pelle sighs, twiddles her thumbs.

PELLE

Just take it back a notch? Please.

MARA

(sighs)

Alright.

The drive is quiet. Mara turns the music back on again. They drive off into the night.

END ACT ONE

ACT TWO

EXT. THE BUS STOP - DAY

Pelle sits at a grimy bus stop. She stares at the coarse graffiti, the trash that didn't make it into the nearby garbage can, the pigeons fighting over a piece of food.

She sighs and pulls out her phone.

Next to her sits Kortana, too tall and broad for the small bus stop seats, awkwardly trying to get comfortable. Her battle-axe rests against the bench.

KORTANA

I do not understand why you simply do not acquire a steed.

PELLE

Because I live in a city and cars are expensive.

KORTANA

What is money to warriors such as we? Simply take one--

An outlandish convertible drives by, engines gunning loudly.

KORTANA

--like that one!

PELLE

No. Besides, I'm not a warrior, I just play one on a podcast.

Pelle opens twitter, searches '#CritHitPod' to read the latest.

The tweets pop up from the phone. Various twitter users speak them aloud as Pelle and Kortana read them.

@LOLLYPOPCORN

"Mara's the best DM out of the five, hands down."

KORTANA

She is a fine narrator for our quests, this much is true.

@MARISOLAS

"NO SPOILERS! That last episode made me have an asthma attack from laughing!"

@UNICORBANDAID

"I've listened like four times to the latest episode!"

PELLE

That's concerning...

KORTANA

In our world, we listen to ballads and odes many times, perhaps this is in that vein.

PELLE

You're extremely optimistic.

@COFFEEVEINS43

"Turu can tu-do me!"

KORTANA

What is that assortment of strange hieroglyphics next to that bird-song?

A series of emojis pops up out of the phone; The eggplant, water-drops, tongue, flame, kissy-face'.

PELLE

I wouldn't worry about it, Kortana. It's nothing.

@FUNYUNS&FLAGONS

"Who plays Kortana? The rest of the gang is public about their lives, why not Pelle??? If that's even her real name! Click this link to my medium.com article talking all about it!"

PELLE

Oh lord. Who cares?

KORTANA

Apparently 'at-symbol funyuns-ampersand-flagons'.

(beat)

Tell me, what is a 'funyun'?

PELLE

How do you know what an at-symbol and ampersand are, but not know what a funyun is? Whatever. I'll tell you when you're older.

Finally the two of them read;

@DUNGEONKINKMASTER69
**"I want to stick my sword in
 Kortana's sheaf if you know what I
 mean! [Winking-face emoji]**

Pelle gasps, closes the app.

PELLE
 EW. EW EW EW! UGH.

KORTANA
 A knave.

PELLE
 Why are people so gross?

Kortana stands, tall and menacing. The tweets vanish before her.

KORTANA
 That was unchivalrous.

PELLE
 Yeah, you can say that again.

KORTANA
 I can: 'That was unchivalrous.'

Pelle rolls her eyes.

The bus pulls up, belches black smoke as it sinks down towards the sidewalk.

Kortana glares at it, picks up her axe and follows Pelle inside. She takes one last look out the door, sees another fancy convertible and sighs.

INT./EXT. THE BUS - DAY

Pelle and Kortana sit in the back; Kortana's battle-axe resting on an empty seat next to them.

The windows are scratched, graffiti on the walls and the handlebars. The wrapper from a fast food place sits in the corner, a mysteriously wet newspaper on a seat.

The few commuters on the bus - a few older asian ladies, a middle-aged balding man, a woman with a stroller - do not see Kortana, nor hear Pelle speak to her.

PELLE
 Why do people care so much who I
 am? Like, why can't I remain

anonymous?

KORTANA

You are a beloved warrior. Your exploits precede you. This is a noble thing.

PELLE

I guess.

KORTANA

The desire for peace and quiet is a good one, but not if it keeps you from living a life.

PELLE

You're awfully smart for someone I made up while tipsy.

They fall quiet, ride the rest of the trip peacefully, looking out the window.

KORTANA

Ah. Behold that very large canine!

PELLE

Oh yeah.

INT. MCHENRY HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

The classroom is as nice as can be, considering budget cuts; a little ramshackle, but well loved. Posters about parts of speech, and literary tropes line the walls.

Benny sits at his desk editing the podcast episode on his laptop, listening through his headphones.

He fiddles through apps on his phone, half-listening to the podcast, and half scrolling through social media feeds.

PRATCHETT (O.S.)

Which of the goblins is in charge?

MARA (O.S.)

The big one.

PRATCHETT (O.S.)

Is he handsome?

MARA (O.S.)

Umm. What?

PRATCHETT (O.S.)
Answer the question.

MARA (O.S.)
I mean. Maybe? I guess I'll say he
is handsome for a gob--

PRATCHETT (O.S.)
I roll to seduce the goblin!

FRED (O.S.)
HA!

Benny sighs, and changes some of the levels and plays it again. He yawns heavily, overworked and tired and rubs his face. Looks at a pile of papers in his 'to grade' box.

Instead of taking care of that, he LURKS on Pelle's instagram page. He has to actively try not to like year-old pictures of her.

The images flash by; Pelle and Mara on the beach, Pelle at a comic-con, Pelle posing with her small Kortana figurine, beaming.

A knock on the door startles him.

Three students VANESSA (15, future instagram model), JIMMY (15, alt-rock weirdo), and SAM (15, nerd, late to puberty and very aware of it). Benny smiles and waves them in.

VANESSA
Mr. Wong? Is this a bad time.

BENNY
No, not at all, what's up?

JIMMY
We hate The Great Gatsby.

Benny blinks.

BENNY
Okay. Right to the point. I think I'm supposed to say I appreciate you telling me... I think? But I can't do much about what you hate or don't hate. That's high school. I hated a lot of stuff I read then too.

SAM
But we think you hate The Great Gatsby too. Like, you could

possibly hate it more than us.

VANESSA

Yeah, for reals; it's written all over your face.

He blinks once more. Gapes. Sputters.

BENNY

My face? No. It's not written on my face. My face loves The Great Gatsby.

VANESSA

Your face hates it.

SAM

So does like, you know, the rest of you.

JIMMY

And like, we can't learn that crap if you don't like that crap. Where's the passion, yo? You used to be so passionate all the kids made fun of you. Now you're just sad.

BENNY

Made fun of-- No, wait; I'm passionate. You guys don't think I'm passionate?

VANESSA

Last semester you dressed up as Puck from Shakespeare. On a Tuesday. No reason other than you liked Puck so much and the class had finished reading the play. Yesterday you got bored halfway through your lecture and put on a movie. You didn't even put on Great Gatsby movie. Just something completely random.

Benny rubs his face. The three students stand, waiting, as serious as a group of teenagers can be.

BENNY

Okay, maybe I don't like Great Gatsby. That much. It's not my favorite.

SAM

So can we read something else?

The warning-bell rings; five minutes until lunch is over. The hallways start to fill with students outside the classroom.

BENNY

(sighs)

Let me think about it, okay? I'm not sure I can pull off bringign in another book not on the syllabus.

JIMMY

But you'll try right?

BENNY

Yeah I'll try.

SAM

Thanks, Mr. Wong.

BENNY

Alright, get out of here.

They all start to leave. Vanessa turns back around at the door.

VANESSA

You should text that girl you were looking at. She's cute.

Benny snatches up his phone and throws it violently into his desk drawer.

BENNY

Go to class, Vanessa.

VANESSA

Yes, Mr. Wong.

INT. WYENTHORPE OFFICES, MEETING ROOM - DAY

Pelle and Denise sit around a table with JESSICA MARTONE (late-30's, long nails, blonde, pinched features).

The mood is tense.

Kortana sits on the side of the room, sharpening her axe, listening to the proceedings.

DENISE

Listen, the budget for the cake is

pretty limited. I just don't think we can get two.

JESSICA

But there's two birthday boys--

PELLE

Good lord. They're grown men.

JESSICA

--AND one of them's the boss. Like duh! we have to get two cakes.

DENISE

Well then, find it in 'duh' budget!

Pelle raises her eyebrows but does not respond, entertained, and stressed all at once.

Kortana grins, ecstatic, chuckles.

KORTANA

(murmurs)

Our Pratchett does not suffer fools lightly.

JESSICA

Ugh. Whatever. You can explain to Craig why we didn't get the cake he wanted.

DENISE

So you're getting the one Sean wants? That's rich.

JESSICA

Sean is more popular than Craig.

DENISE

You just like him more because he looks like an Abercrombie and Fitch model. Craig is more important than Sean! He's the boss. He's been here for longer, and at least he's not a jerk like Sean.

PELLE

Sean's not a jerk.

Denise and Jessica finally turn to face Pelle.

JESSICA

You're right, Pells--

Pelle, Denise and Kortana all raise their eyes at the outlandish nickname. Jessica is unphased by their surprise.

JESSICA (CONT'D.)

--and there's two of us, and one of you, Denise. I guess we're going with Sean's cake.

PELLE

I didn't say that! Denise, that's not what I said.

DENISE

I know you didn't say that, honey. I'm a little too old for this weird high-school alpha female bull--

Kortana sharpens the axehead loudly; the sharp shrill noise loud enough to drown out the curse.

JESSICA

Wow! Okay! Wow. Fine! You can just plan the party yourself. I'm out of here!

DENISE

Oh please, as if I'm going to waste anymore time on this garbage. I actually have to do my real job.

Jessica storms off out of one door, and Denise stalks off out the other.

Pelle and Kortana are left alone.

Kortana stands up and puts the axe into a harness on her back. Pelle stays seated.

KORTANA

What is the matter? Their feud is finished. Let us leave this hovel. We shall drink and fight until dawn.

PELLE

Well, no, it's only 11:00.

KORTANA

If the ephemeral notion of linear time is all that keeps us here than we are weak. Rise, dance, fight. These are things that are good, Lady Pelle. These are the things that make our blood rush hot within

us.

Pelle stares at the papers - 'Party Planning Committee', 'Party Budget/Yearly/Monthly', 'Suppliers list'.

PELLE

I think I have to plan my boss's birthday party.

KORTANA

This task does not thrill me.

PELLE

Yeah, me neither.

INT. GROCERY STORE - DAY

Dinky music plays in the background. Pelle pushes a cart, wheels squeaking and catching obnoxiously. She reads a handwritten list, slowly gathering party supplies.

Kortana stalks behind her, large and looming.

No one notices the barbarian woman in animal skin as they go through the store. They meander up and down the aisles picking up discount chips, dips, snacks, drinks.

KORTANA

Does this establishment have a butcher? A suckling pig on a spit makes for the finest of celebrations. I do long for a suckling pig and a good flaggon of fresh ale, don't you.

PELLE

Not really. And besides, an office birthday party at a low end publishing office doesn't really rate a pig-on-a-spit kind of party. I don't even really thing Craig and Sean deserve that kind of special treatment anyhow.

KORTANA

Hmm. An apt observation. Do you wish to truly insult them? To truly bring insult upon them and their families you could bring them a pig. A pig, WITHOUT THE SPIT!

Uproarious laughter. She slaps her knee, bent over double with mirth.

KORTANA

(cackling)

Without the spit! Oh what a farce
that would be!

PELLE

Hmm, yes. That would be quite the
insult. I'll have that all set up
for the party tomorrow.

KORTANA

I imagine those puny men-children
would not even realize the great
slight you have played upon them.

PELLE

Probably not.

KORTANA

You should have asked the
confectioner to write "You have
been slighted!" on the cake you
commissioned.

PELLE

That would do the trick.

Pelle stops at a selection of paper plates, eyes bouncing
between the clear delineation of good quality plates versus
the discount plates in an ugly beige color.

She reaches for the good plates, sees the price, sets them
back, then hovers over the discount plates.

KORTANA

You hesitate. Such is a warrior's
downfall.

PELLE

Yeah. They're not a nice color.
Jessica will bite my head off if I
get these, but the others are too
expensive.

KORTANA

Jessica does not have the jaw
strength to bite your head off.

PELLE

Great. Thank you for that.

KORTANA

You are quite welcome.

Kortana moseys off, leaving Pelle to vacillate over the plates.

With a sigh, Pelle grabs the beige plates and throws them in her cart and follows Kortana down the aisle.

INT. GROCERY STORE SELF-CHECKOUT - SAME

Pelle starts scanning each of her items and bagging them.

Kortana sits on the small platform next to the machine. It starts beeping wildly.

SELF-CHECKOUT

Unknown item in the bagging area!

Unknown item in the bagging area!

Kortana scowls, kicks her heel against the machine. It stops beeping submissively.

EXT. THE ROAD TO OLGORATH - DAY

Picking up from where they left off, the four fighters stand where they last were during the last recording.

Mara, wearing a long robe, sit on a nearby rock, binder in hand She gets up to start pointing things out to the characters.

MARA (CONT'D.)

You notice three things. A strange wooden box has fallen from the trashed caravan, along with all the various supplies the halflings were traveling with.

BENNY (O.S.)

Anything good?

MARA

Yes. Fresh food, and a few valuables, including a sack of thirty gold coins.

TURU

Ah-ha! A fine plunder.

BENNY (O.S.)

Yoink! Mine!

MARA

There is also a weird wind blowing

the grass in the field. And finally, the goblins are wearing garb that indicates they are scouts, meaning they come from a larger group.

MAN'TECA

There is a foul wind. This road is not yet safe.

KORTANA

Agreed. And look, these goblins have the trappings of scouts.

TURU

Twenty scouts? Seems odd. Why so many?

KORTANA

They must come from a large contingent.

PRATCHETT

Say, what's that box?

INT. THE BASEMENT - NIGHT

All the gang is gathered around the table once more, recording. Mara looks up from her binder.

MARA

(innocently)

Are you interested in the box?

DENISE

You wouldn't have pointed it out if it wasn't important right?

MARA

Would you like to pick up the box?

DENISE

Yes. I pick up the box.

EXT. THE ROAD TO OLGORATH - SAME

Kortana follows Pratchett as they go to the box laying at the side of the caravan.

They stare at it for a moment. Kortana taps the box with the butt-end of her battle-axe. Nothing happens, so Pratchett bends down to pick it up.

PRATCHETT

It's warm.

KORTANA

Hmm. Perhaps from the sun?

MAN'TECA

I think we must keep moving.

Pratchett opens the box and reveals a small orb, glowing with a bright, blinding, green light.

KORTANA

What is it?

MAN'TECA

By the Goddess! It is one of the seven sacred orbs!

INT. THE BASEMENT - SAME

All four of the players are rapt as Mara explains, reading from her papers.

MARA

'The seven sacred orbs are magical items of great power. To obtain one would give you the strength to defeat whole armies.'

BENNY

Okay, but then why didn't the halflings use it to fight the goblins?

MARA

With Man'Teca's perception check, you can determine that they were on a mission to bring it from one place to another. The halflings are wearing robes from the Order of Skyr--

FRED

Isn't that a yogurt?

MARA

(loud)

The Order of Skyr who's sole purpose is to defend and safeguard the sacred orbs.

PELLE

I think it is a yogurt.

BENNY

Yeah, they've got it at the Whole Foods on fifth.

DENISE

Oh I love that place; the staff are so friendly.

FRED

Have you met the deli guy, such a treat--

MARA

(louder, faster)

THE ORDER OF SKYR's emblem portraying all seven orbs floating in perfect harmony! Members of the order have taken a sacred oath, which includes not using the orbs for personal gain, and keeping others from doing likewise.

FRED

No need to yell, Mara.

MARA

(scoffs)

I hate you all.

They all chuckle. The sound carries to--

EXT. THE ROAD TO OLGORATH - SAME

Now all four fighters are gathered around Pratchett, looking down at the orb.

MAN'TECA

The sacred orbs are extremely powerful. Never in a million lifetimes could such a happening occur again.

PRATCHETT

Maybe we should take it back to the order?

TURU

Or perhaps we could sell it?

KORTANA

Such a prize could explain the large force of goblins.

MAN'TECA

If they got their hands on even one orb, all would be lost. I cannot help but assume the goddess of fate intervened and brought us here just in time. Should a single finger touch the orb--

DENISE (O.S.)

I touch the orb.

PELLE (O.S.)

HA!

Pratchett touches the orb and a loud SCREECH sounds through the field.

INT. THE BASEMENT - SAME

Mara rolls her eyes.

MARA

Are you sure?

DENISE

Yes. My character's main trait is being impulsive. I'm staying in character.

Pelle, Fred and and Benny cackle, hands over mouths, eyes watering

MARA

After everything I said about the sacred orb being super powerful, you want to touch it?

DENISE

Yup.

MARA

Fine. Go ahead.

DENISE

Okay. I touch the orb.

MARA

Great. A loud high-pitched shriek comes out of the orb. It's so loud

you all take a point of damage.

BENNY

Woof. That's not good.

MARA

And now I'm going to need you to roll for initiative!

DENISE

Aw crap.

EXT. THE ROAD TO OLGORATH - SAME

The four characters hold their heads in pain. The ground rumbles beneath them. The sky grows dark.

Light spits out from the orb; it hits all the dead goblins and the two dead halflings from the caravan.

They rise, lumbering, reanimated; Zombie-goblins.

PRATCHETT

Whoops.

INT. THE BASEMENT - NIGHT

The gang sits back, recording for an episode over, the bowl of chips empty. Benny and Pelle open a few more bottles of beer for everyone at a small bar in the corner of the room.

BENNY

How's it going with you?

PELLE

Oh. You know. Ugh.

BENNY

That good, huh?

Pelle playfully shoves Benny's shoulder.

PELLE

What about you? Any big life updates?

BENNY

Well, my students are rebelling. They literally came up and asked to stop reading a book and change to another one because they think I don't like it.

PELLE
Do you like it?

BENNY
That's not the point. Is it?

PELLE
It probably helps a little bit
right?

BENNY
Yeah, I guess.

PELLE
What's the worst that'll happen if
you stop reading the book and
change to something better?

BENNY
I honestly don't know.

PELLE
Which book is it? The one they
think you don't like?

BENNY
Great Gatsby.

PELLE
Ugh. I hated reading that in high
school.

BENNY
Yeah?

PELLE
Yeah. I didn't even finish it.

They exchange a small smile. Denise notices and smirks in her seat.

Pelle and Benny bring back the beers and set them down on the table. Denise, Fred and Mara fool around with possible advertisements.

FRED
(to the tune of Chili's
'Baby Back Ribs Song')
'I want my dragon back, dragon
back, dragon back, dragon back. I
want my dragon back, dragon back,
dragon back--'

MARA
 (singing)
 'Crit-hit! The D and D pod!'

DENISE
 (comically deep)
 'Please hit subscribe!'

They break down laughing.

FRED
 That was so dumb!

DENISE
 I think it might too late to come
 up with anything good.

MARA
 Yeah, I'll just splice together
 some episode bits and send it off.

Pelle takes a small sip of her beer, bites her lip.

PELLE
 What if we did an incentive for
 people to listen?

BENNY
 Like what?

PELLE
 Well, we're at eighteen-thousand
 subscribers, right? What if we have
 something planned for when we get
 to twenty-thousand?

BENNY
 Again, like what?

PELLE
 I don't know. I didn't get that
 far.

FRED
 Well, keep workshopping it.

EXT. DENISE'S DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

Pelle and Denise stand by Denise's car, Mara, Benny and Fred
 heading off in their own direction, waving.

PELLE
 Thanks again for letting me use

your car for the party stuff. I just don't think I could handle lugging everything around on the bus.

Denise looks inside the backseat.

DENISE
Where are the decorations?

PELLE
Oh, I was gonna go tomorrow.

DENISE
Oh honey. You just done screwed yourself.

PELLE
What?

DENISE
Every secretary knows you've gotta get party decorations before friday or else everything is sold out. Only the ugly stuff is left.

Pelle groans, morose.

PELLE
(soft)
Sean's going to hate me. Craig's going to hate me.

Denise wraps an arm around Pelle's shoulders.

DENISE
There, there, sweetie. It'll be alright. We'll make it work.

PELLE
I guess.
(sighs)
Thanks again.

DENISE
See you tomorrow.

END ACT TWO

ACT THREE

INT. PARTY SUPPLY STORE - DAY

Pelle stands at a lackluster display of party decorations. All the decent colors have been taken; only a few sets balloons and streamers remain.

Kortana has a staring match with a Spongebob Squarepants piñata. She slowly brings her hand to the handle of her battle-axe.

A STORE CLERK (late teen's, greasy, lumbering) stands next to Pelle.

In the distance, Kortana lets out a battle cry.

PELLE
Is this everything?

STORE CLERK
We get restocked tomorrow.

PELLE
Okay. Thanks.

Kortana arrives at Pelle's side.

The piñata has been sliced cleanly in half.

Pelle stares at the supplies available. Then she stares at Kortana. Then back at the supplies. Then back to Kortana.

She stares hard at Kortana for a beat too long.

KORTANA
You are making a keen study of my personage, Lady Pelle.

PELLE
I'm thinking.

Suddenly, she throws a select few decorations into her basket, browns and beiges and blacks.

She rushes back to the back of the store where the Halloween stuff sits, out of season and mostly out of stock. She grabs a handful of plastic bones and other skeleton ephemera.

KORTANA
By the goddess, you look determined.

PELLE

I'm going to make this work!

EXT. PARTY STORE PARKING LOT - DAY

Pelle rushes out to Denise's car, bag of party supplies full. She pulls out her phone and starts dialing.

Kortana strides after her, long steps easily keeping pace with Pelle's short fast ones. She unfastens the battle-axe from the harness on her back and sets it on the back seat.

PELLE

(on phone)

Hi! I placed an order for a cake that I was going to pick up this afternoon? Is it possible to change the decoration a little bit?

INT. MCHENRY HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Benny steps into the classroom holding a large box. The students have already filed in and are sitting in their desks.

BENNY

Okay guys. I'm doing it. Thanks to some of your more precocious classmates, we're going to throw out Great Gatsby and read something else!

VANESSA

What are we reading?

BENNY

Well, I figured it was time for something a little more fun. This is one of my favorite books, and I hope you'll like it too.

He opens the box to reveal multiple, second-hand but still in okay condition, copies of 'The Hobbit.'

BENNY (CONT'D.)

Everyone come on up and grab one.

The class gets out of their seats and crowds around Benny's desk.

SAM

(genuine)

Thanks Mr. Wong.

BENNY
You're welcome.

INT. WYENTHORPE PUBLISHING BREAKROOM - DAY

The room is decorated with brown and black and tan balloons, streamers and tablecloths. There's a few stuffed jungle animals, clearly from Pelle's childhood home.

An iPod attached to a speaker plays a generic drumbeat and jungle noises.

The bones from the halloween section hold up signs marking the various appetizers. Red and orange tissue paper and a flashlight make a small fake fire pit.

To the rest of the world it's a Barbarian/Caveman themed party, to Pelle it is Kortana's essence splashed up on the walls.

Everyone mingles, having a good time. Small plastic dinosaurs and wooly mammoths walk across the cake, around Craig and Sean's names written in small bone letters.

Denise drags Sean over to Pelle.

DENISE
This was all her idea. She planned everything.

SEAN
Oh wow! Thanks. It's so rad!

He hugs Pelle. She stiffens up, blushing, giddy.

PELLE
(squeaks)
You're welcome!

SEAN
Like, it's so cool that you know I only eat Paleo, man. This is perf.

Pelle blinks, meets Denise's eye as she tries to stifle a laugh.

PELLE
(beat)
Yup. That's exactly what I was thinking.

SEAN

Right on!

Denise and Pelle watch him leave, confused.

Denise's phone pings. She pulls it out and squints at the screen, putting her reading glasses on.

DENISE

Oh. You'll like this!

She passes the phone to Pelle who glances down. Over her shoulder Kortana suddenly appears, reading the tweet along with her.

Like before, the tweet pops out of the phone.

@INKFINGERS3000

'Hi @DeniseIsPratchet52! Can you show this to Pelle next time you see her? img.kortanaart.png

Pelle opens up the image.

It's Kortana fan art, lovingly rendered, cute and sketchy, capturing Kortana's proud attitude and large battle-axe perfectly.

Pelle passes back the phone with a smile.

PELLE

That's so cute.

DENISE

Do you want me to tell them that?

Pelle pulls out her own phone. Hits a button on twitter; "CREATE ACCOUNT".

PELLE

I think I'm going to tell them myself.

Kortana sits down next to Pelle on a chair at the outer edge of party. A new tweet pops up.

@LADYPELLE

'Hi world. Me and Kortana are here for the party!'

END