

CHARACTERS

written by

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FADE IN:

INT. THE TUNNELS OF TERROR - DEAD-END - NIGHT

A hideous HOBGOBLIN charges, swinging a giant battle-axe. But he's sliced in two by a sword the size of a surfboard.

The sword rests in the paws of ANDRONICUS THE WARRIOR, a comic-book barbarian. Hobgoblin parts litter the floor like crap in a gorilla cage.

ANDRONICUS

Finally. Now let's go find the Princess.

Andronicus pushes the wall, testing it. BLUNT THE DWARF, rocking a Braveheart vibe in tartan-and-chain mail, looks the wall up and down.

BLUNT

Something 'bout these stones is bogus, Dudes.

CELEFAYNE THE ELF, a Playmate in pointy ears and skin-tight leather, extends a glowing hand toward the wall.

CELEFAYNE

We got magic here. And I'm not talking about how my boobs look in this outfit.

They do look fantastic. Anyway, Andronicus steps up to the wall like he's going to pick a fight with it.

ANDRONICUS

It's all an illusion.

He closes his eyes, raises his sword, and slashes. The blade passes through the wall like it's thin air.

Grinning, the three close their eyes and stride right through the wall into

THE INNER SANCTUM OF SIDVICIOUS THE SORCERER

where SIDVICIOUS himself, a B-movie warlock down to the black robes and goatee, hurls a fireball at our heroes.

Eyes still closed, they walk right into this magical sucker-punch.

They pick themselves up off the floor, smoldering figuratively and literally.

BLUNT

Dude, that is such a dick move.

CELEFAYNE

A sorcerer catches an elf by
surprise? As if.

Sidvicious holds in chains the PRINCESS; that sheer little
gown's the most she's worn on-camera in years.

SIDVICIOUS

Silence, douchebags. Death awaits
all who challenge Sidvicious the
Sorcerer.

He raises his staff. It glows, illuminating twelve GIANT
STONE STATUES that ring the chamber. Each statue comes to
life and lumbers like Frankenstein toward our heroes.

Blunt and Celefayne back up to Andronicus and brace for
battle. But Andronicus breaks character, turning to
Sidvicious:

ANDRONICUS

Time out. Nicholas, this is
bullshit.

INT. HIGHWAY 23 CHURCH OF CHRIST - ALL-PURPOSE ROOM - NIGHT

At a folding table sit three 15-year olds: JOSHUA OERSTED,
sporting Andronicus' mullet and homemade chain-mail over his
T-shirt; DEREK, whose grunge-era flannel matches Blunt's
tartan; and CHRISTIAN, as bleached blonde as Celefayne.

JOSHUA

We spend all night fighting
hobgoblins in these stupid tunnels.
(re: those statues)
Now it's the three of us against a
dozen of these guys?

Across the table, NICHOLAS (15) grins from behind a fortress
of game rulebooks and graph paper. With his black hooded
sweatshirt and proto-goatee on his fat little face, he's a
junior Sidvicious.

NICHOLAS

Deal with it, dickweeds. Life
isn't fair, and neither am I.

Derek and Christian lobby Joshua for an honorable retreat:

DEREK

We got the gold, Dude; let's blow
this taco stand.

CHRISTIAN

Sweetie, it is time to ditch the
bitch.

But Joshua just stares Nicholas down.

JOSHUA

Andronicus came to rescue the
Princess.

NICHOLAS

Let's roll.

Joshua and Nicholas scoop up some very odd-shaped dice.
They roll them across a graph-paper map, where a dozen Lego
bricks surround three metal miniatures.

INT. JOSHUA'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Joshua's dad, REVEREND OERSTED (45)--a cross between Ned
Flanders and Darth Vader--reads from his Bible as he plays
Goliath, wearing his vestments for a costume and shaking a
broom like a spear:

THE REVEREND

"And the Philistine said to David:
'Come to me, and I will give thy
flesh unto the fowls of the air,
and to the beasts of the field.'
Then said David--"

AMOS (10)--a mini-Joshua with glasses--leaps "onstage" in
pajamas and robe, and delivers his lines from memory:

AMOS

"Thou comest to me with a sword,
and with a spear, and with a
shield: but I come to thee in the
name of the Lord of hosts, the God
of the armies of Israel, whom thou
hast defied."

He swings a sneaker by the laces, like a sling. PRUDENCE
OERSTED (45), in her Sunday best as always, permits herself
a chuckle at her little boy's performance. The Reverend
narrates as he and Amos mime the action:

THE REVEREND

"And David put his hand in his bag,
and took thence a stone, and slang
it, and smote the Philistine in his
forehead--"

Swept up in the moment, Amos lets the sneaker fly through
the living-room window. Amos gawks. Prudence gasps.

AMOS

That was totally the Lord's will.

The Reverend frowns, but not at the window. In the church
across the street, a light's on. The Reverend's eyes blaze.

INT. THE INNER SANCTUM OF SIDVICIOUS THE SORCERER - NIGHT

Blunt swings his massive war hammer, knocking out one statue's legs. Two more step up to face him.

Celefayne blasts two statues with lightning from her fingertips. But more step over the rubble after her.

Andronicus swings like Barry Bonds. Statue after statue falls like they're old-growth conifers.

With his staff, Sidvicious traces a circle in the air. A magical portal opens. He drags the Princess toward the mystical escape-hatch.

Andronicus rushes to intercept. But Sidvicious points to Blunt and Celefayne, surrounded by the remaining statues.

Andronicus hesitates. But Sidvicious grins knowingly.

ANDRONICUS

Can't even get the girl in a game.

Andronicus charges the remaining statues. Blunt and Celefayne smile. But Sidvicious laughs loudest:

SIDVICIOUS

Nice try, numbnuts.

He disappears with his captive through the portal.

INT. HIGHWAY 23 CHURCH OF CHRIST - MAIN HALL - NIGHT

The double-doors fly open. Shotgun in hand, the Reverend storms down the center aisle.

Amos and Prudence follow not-too-close behind. At the front of the church the Reverend turns to a side door.

IN THE ALL-PURPOSE ROOM

Joshua pushes away from the table.

JOSHUA

We need some more players.

CHRISTIAN

We're a team. Like Charlie's Angels.

DEREK

I like my one-third of the loot,
Dudes.

NICHOLAS

You oughtta be thankful for the
friends you got--
(looks at Derek & Christian)
lame as they may be.

Joshua stands up, confronts Nicholas.

JOSHUA

Maybe we just need a new Head
Hobgoblin.

Nicholas gets up, gets in Joshua's face.

NICHOLAS

Who'd you have in mind?

The Reverend bursts in, shotgun at the ready. But he lowers
it when he recognizes the intruders.

THE REVEREND

Joshua.

The boys' faces turn white; they are so busted.

JOSHUA

Hi, Dad.

The other three wave and mumble:

THE OTHER THREE

Reverend.

Amos and Prudence huddle at the door. The Reverend pokes
Joshua's chain mail with the shotgun.

JOSHUA

Made it at Scout Camp. I never
showed you?

The Reverend turns to the graph paper, books, and metal
miniatures.

THE REVEREND

This doesn't look like a sleepover--
-at Nicholas' house.

He picks up one of the game books, reads the cover.

THE REVEREND

"Heroes and Hobgoblins."

He gasps. The book drops to the floor.

THE REVEREND

You dare profane the House of God
with this satanic filth?

JOSHUA
It's only a game.

The Reverend reads from the back of another book:

THE REVEREND
"A world with monsters to slay,
treasures to claim, worlds to
conquer." That's Greed, Envy,
Lust, and Anger right off the bat.

He dashes the book to the floor.

THE REVEREND
And then there's Pride, in thinking
you're immune to Satan's lure.

The Reverend snatches a bag of chips off the table.

THE REVEREND
And the hours you spend on your
backsides eating junk food--that's
Gluttony and Sloth. All seven
Deadly Sins in one evening.

He seizes the boys' character sheets, then eyes the boys
like they're suspects in a lineup.

THE REVEREND
(to Joshua)
"Andronicus the Warrior?"
(to Derek)
"Blunt the Dwarf?"
(to Christian)
You have to be "Celefayne the Elf-
Maiden."

The Reverend turns to Nicholas:

THE REVEREND
What's your role in this coven?

NICHOLAS
I am the Head Hobgoblin.

JOSHUA
The referee.

NICHOLAS
I play all the monsters, too.
Demons, witches, you know.

Joshua smacks Nicholas to shut him up. The Reverend fumes,
righteous rage boiling inside him.

THE REVEREND

"My house shall be called the house
of prayer; but ye have made it a
den of thieves."

With one hand he flips the table over. Graph paper and game books scatter. Dice bounce across the floor. The Reverend rattles the shotgun at the boys:

THE REVEREND

Think you can desecrate this church
with your pagan amusements? Over
my dead body.

The Reverend steps on the dice. And goes flying. He lands flat on his back with a thud--and a BLAM! from the shotgun. Ceiling tile rains down on his prone, motionless form.

Everyone crowds over what they hope isn't the Reverend's dead body.

INT. JOSHUA'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

From bed the Reverend looks back, chin-to-chest in a neck brace that fits him like a torture device.

Prudence raises a spoon of applesauce to the Reverend's mouth. She looks absolutely frazzled, but for his sake, she musters a smile:

PRUDENCE

This is a gift from the Lord, Dear.
For all of us.

Some applesauce spills. Prudence takes a napkin to the Reverend's mouth, and chin, and brace.

PRUDENCE

I welcome the opportunity to care
for you. And the church.

You can hear her voice start to crack.

PRUDENCE

And the house. And the bills. And
the boys. All by myself. Yup, a
blessing.

Forcing a grin, Prudence picks up her tray.

PRUDENCE

You need me, just ring the bell.

Prudence manages to close the door behind her.

The Reverend takes from his nightstand a thick paperback: So Your Child Worships the Devil. But the brace gets in his

way, and he fumbles the book to the floor--which he can't reach, because of the neck brace.

The Reverend grabs a cowbell off his nightstand.

IN THE DINING ROOM

Amos and Joshua pore over textbooks, workbooks, and notebooks. Well, Amos does. Joshua stares out the window at the street, waiting for something.

A school bus stops across the street to let someone off.

AMOS

Did anybody play a hobbit?

Joshua shushes Amos, keeps staring out the window.

Behind the bus sits a Jeep Wrangler, its top down. Joshua gazes at the driver: ALEXANDRA (17), with assets you can admire from quite a distance.

Joshua sighs. He watches the Jeep and its babelicious driver ride off.

AMOS

I'd be a hobbit.

Joshua turns to his books.

JOSHUA

You are a hobbit.

The phone rings. Prudence rushes with the tray down the stairs and into the kitchen, calling to the phone:

PRUDENCE

I'm coming.

Joshua watches her for the right moment to strike. Prudence heads for the Study as she talks on the phone:

PRUDENCE

Yes, we will need a substitute preacher. How much? That's not very Christian, is it?

Joshua takes a deep breath, closes his biology textbook.

AMOS

(whispers)

So you guys gonna play again?

He ignores Amos and marches right into

THE STUDY

where Prudence taps at the computer while on the phone:

PRUDENCE

It's just that we're a little short-handed. Did I mention that the Reverend is immobilized? I did? Well, God bless you, too.

(hangs up)

And the horse you rode in on.

JOSHUA

Mother, I need a frog to dissect.

PRUDENCE

Plenty of them out back.

JOSHUA

One that's preserved, with colored latex injections to show the arteries and veins.

Prudence hears something, shushes Joshua.

JOSHUA

Can't do biology lab without it.

She shushes him again. They can barely hear the cowbell.

PRUDENCE

Oh, my dear Lord.

Prudence jumps up and hurries out. Joshua follows her to

THE STAIRWELL

PRUDENCE

I can't take you injected-frog shopping, Joshua. I have a house to manage, a church to run, and an incapacitated husband to nurse.

JOSHUA

Could get all the frogs I need if I enrolled at Darwin High.

This stops Prudence. She turns on Joshua.

PRUDENCE

I might have known. You want to join your hobgoblin friends in that cesspool that our tax dollars support.

JOSHUA

Home-school's only going to get
tougher. Next month I need a fetal
pig.

More cowbell. Prudence closes her ears to all of it.

PRUDENCE

Talk to your father.

She turns and heads upstairs.

IN THE MASTER BEDROOM

Joshua sits beside the Reverend. Prudence stands back.

JOSHUA

If you don't want me to go to
Darwin, then just nod your head.

The Reverend almost breaks the neck brace, but he can't move
his head.

JOSHUA

Thank you, Father.

Joshua flees the room. The Reverend glares at Prudence, who
takes Joshua's place at bedside.

PRUDENCE

I know we must be ever vigilant
that Joshua doesn't lose his soul.
And as soon as I finish doing the
laundry, paying the bills, finding
a substitute preacher, and wiping
the drool off your face, I'll get
right on that.

Prudence slaps on a rubber glove.

PRUDENCE

Now let's have that bedpan.

EXT. CAMPGROUND - DAY

In Boy Scout uniforms, Joshua and Nicholas stage a sword
duel with dead tree branches.

NICHOLAS

You're gonna wish you never left
home school. You don't know how
bad Darwin can be.

JOSHUA

Dungeon's no fun when you're not
the Head Hobgoblin?