

G'narsh

The Troll, The Myth, The Legend

(a work of fiction)

by

Kevin Stillwater

P1
of
P1, P2-A, P2-B, P3-A, P3-B, P3-C, P3-D, P3-E, P4
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G'narsh - P1

Back Jacket Copy

G'narsh as shop keep?

Join seven time world champion dream grand master Kevin Stillwater as he takes you behind the scenes, pulls back the curtains, and shows you the creative process like you've never seen it before. Whether you are a judge, an aspiring contestant, or simply a devotee of the discs, this prefab adventure is sure to please as Kevin not only utilizes his award winning wraparound multiple narrative technique to explore every nook and cranny of the G'narsh mythos, he also explains exactly what he is doing

every step of the way. Invaluable information for anyone who has competitive aspirations, or who merely wishes to get the most out of their dreaming experience.

And let's not forget the underlying story. Can the Son of Chaos, the Grandson of Gra'gl himself; can G'narsh, the two-headed troll of the black heart, the namesake of the rays, the betrayer of both friend and foe alike, the cold blooded killer, gun for hire, paid mercenary and defiler; can such a beast as G'narsh find redemption? But, more than that, the question is asked: can evil become good? Can a thug turn hero? Or much more importantly: can a light hearted fantasy farce revolve around a villain such as G'narsh, while still staying true to the original legend?

The answer is a resounding yes. What you hold in your hands is a masterful tale, one that you are sure to leave in your player for years to come.

G'narsh: The Troll, The Myth, The Legend.

A story, like its hero, that stands heads and shoulders above the rest.

And if you are wondering where the creative process starts, it starts here with an editorial blurb, a bit of sales copy that will eventually find its way onto the back of a disc wrapper. This is the first thing that goes down. This is the tag you submit with your dreams during competition. This is what you show your agent so he knows what you are working on, or that you show to prospective sales houses while you try to curry their favor. It is what you read before you enter the recording booth. It is what you let guide your mind in its wanderings, and it is what you say silently to yourself for endless months as you work. For this is what you have promised the judges, the critics, and your fans. This is not some bit you reel off at the end, some afterthought, or add on. This is the story. This is a promise that I have made, both to you and myself: to tell you the story of G'narsh: The Troll, The

Myth, The Legend from beginning to end, from every angle, inside and out, leaving no rock unturned, or thought unrecorded.

a.k.a. The Cookie

--- FORCE LOAD OVERRIDE INITIATION SEQUENCE ---
--- TITLE: G'narsh: The Troll, The Myth, The Legend ---
--- AKA: G'narsh, G'narsh TML ---
--- RATED: MM ---
--- M.O.M. CERTIFICATE: 022/24-655321-01/02/03 ---
--- PARTITIONS: 3 (linked) +1 ---
--- PREVIEW UNTIL: ### Are Two Heads Better Than One? ##

--- READ AHEAD: DENIED/TWIST LOGIC:ON ---
--- SUPPORT: NULL ---
--- HIDDEN SUPPORT: NULL ---
--- GAME SKIMMER: ENABLE ---
--- SKINS: NULL ---
--- PERSONALITIES: NULL ---
--- DEFINE: QUAZITRONIC: BENIGN GENERIC MEGA-
CORP - Dream Equipment Manufacture and Sales ---
--- DEFINE: KEVIN STILLWATER: 7x = FIRST PLACE
QUAZITRONIC (sponsored) DREAM CONTEST WINNER ---
--- DEFINE: KEVIN STILLWATER: (NOT) ART* (Art, Artie,
Arty, Artismo, Bones, etc.): (NOT) I, WE, ME, US, OUR, MINE,
etc. ---
--- FIRST PERSON: ENABLE: (preference sort) ART*, G'narsh,
Doug, Eileen, Nadia, Lane, Stef'fan, Mi'lay, Charlie ---
--- TERMINATE: ON EJECT +24 ---

(--- Slot Recommendations ---)

(--- 1: G'narsh TML ---)

(--- 2-3: GI Library ---)

(--- 4: Philosophy Primer: (Personal Choice) ---)

(--- 5: Experience Integrator: (Personal Choice) ---)

(--- 6: Skin Library: (Personal Choice) ---)

Prelude

I would like to start by thanking you for plugging in. Although you may have already bought this disc, let's assume for a second that you are still in the store. It can be any store -- a department store, a street corner kiosk, an old time magazine stand, or a store that specializes in discs. The store itself may be contemporary -- I'll let your equipment figure out what that means -- or it might be like an old time record store complete with wooden bins and racks overflowing with discs. Whether the store is crowded and jammed with shoppers or is barren and sparse, I will also leave up to you and your imagination. Perhaps a beautiful alien, an elf, or a waif from the gutters is helping you make your selection -- or then again, maybe not. In truth, these details are unimportant and your compiler can fill in the details so much better than I.

The salient point at the moment is that you are at the point of purchase. Even if you make most of your purchasing selections over the Inter Server, on the proverbial street corner, or belong to a "club" on the edge of legality, for now we will assume you are in a store where -- despite what the media will tell you -- the vast majority of transactions still occur.

So, as said, you are at the store. You have plugged in. And presently, you are trying out a new disc, this disc: G'narsh: The Troll, The Myth, The Legend. Look around. Look down the aisles. There are hundreds of thousands of discs here. You will never (ever) read the back copy on most of the discs in this store, let alone load them up for a test spin. These are important economic facts that a would be artist needs to keep in mind. Unless you have a name, consumers are not waiting for your fantasy to hit the market. Even fans of your genre will likely not

notice your disc's brief stint on the store shelves before your hard work lands in the dustbin of obscurity.

What is critical in all of this is that you have mere seconds to capture your audience's attention before they pass your disc by; and most of the factors controlling this momentary interaction are beyond your control -- cover art, product placement, and critical review to name just a few. Get that coveted end-aisle position and you will get your moment in the sun. The customer will pick up your disc, look over the art, read the blurb on the back, and if you are lucky -- really, really, really lucky -- they will spend a moment plugging into your disc to see what's inside.

That's why the opening segment is so important. It is but a fleeting moment, but it is likely all the time you will ever get. It is during these brief seconds that your audience looks over your work, checks out the bait, and decides whether to purchase or to move on. And the question on everyone's mind at this juncture is: Can you set the hook?

So a lot of thought goes into the opening sequence. It's why mysteries start with dead bodies, westerns start with gunfights, adventures start with chase scenes, fantasies start with detailed descriptions of fanciful characters, and science fiction stories start with an epic overview of the setting. Granted, these rules aren't carved in stone, but the idea lurking behind them remains accurate. Once someone has loaded up your disc, your primary goal should be to give them ample reason to continue playing your dream. This holds true both in the market place and in the halls of competition. You don't actually think that a judge has time to play every disc that they get in an open-invitation (unlimited) tournament all the way thru from the beginning to end? Trust me. They don't. Those judges are even more cynical than the most jaded of fans.

Having said all of that, I'm sure that you will have noted that I opted to start with an overview of my wrap around narrative. It will be central to my storytelling technique and it is -- in my

opinion -- unfair not to set this out from the start. After all, there is a reason this work was not issued as a two disc set with the second given over to a dreamer's commentary track. The main story simply will not be as full and compelling without the secondary wraparound. For example, it is here in the wraparound that we will put forth the most (((compelling and))) complete description of G'narsh, not only because lengthy descriptions and focus on (((unnecessary))) details interrupts the narrative flow, but also so that the character can be built up before your eyes as an example of the craft.

So to start. G'narsh is a troll. He has two heads. This is the simplest of descriptions. But what I wish to point out is that even the most rudimentary of players -- compilers or rigs if you will -- will make some sort of sense out of this description. One need not call more into play if one does not want to. But we will lose control of our character (leave too much to chance and individual taste) if we do not flesh him out further. And though the story -- with any luck -- will be light hearted, we want the compiler to start with a mean, ugly, horrific brute of a troll. Monster is a good call word. I know some of you out there have 1,000 or more discs loaded into your player -- I know I do. Something like that is more properly called a jukebox than a rig, but with all those discs you're going to have trolls that run the gamut from playful cartoons, to nasty swamp dwelling brutes. I want to call up the later. I want to remind you that G'narsh is a murderer, a rapist, and a defiler. He is not a nice guy. He is a demon from the Heart of Darkness and traces his lineage directly to the depths of chaos and the swirling shadows of despair itself.

Do we have a feeling for him? He stands six feet, seven feet, eight feet tall. Rippling, bulging muscles form his body. There is no fat, no waste, no mercy, and -- perhaps even -- no soul; but then, that last is a false descriptor as we shall soon discover. In the meantime, it is not hard to imagine that he oozes slime for sweat, that his breath reeks of decay, and that he is an evil, close-minded, barbarian of a villain to the very core of his being.

Of course, so far, I have merely provided the roughest of outlines. But even then, if you have 20, 50, or, yes, even 1,000 discs in your player, your machine will have no problem automatically selecting the appropriate ambience, feel, and images from your library. But what if you're running a GI six-pack? The easiest solution would be to tag an outside call and enable an import. But I do not want to pay any royalties (and likely, neither do you), so I will not tag any calls explicitly nor even leave a hot link dangling -- rather, I will simply insure that any calls I had thought about making are conspicuously highlighted (((as calls I had thought about making, but ultimately did not -- a subtle but important distinction))).

For example, I am not a Trekker, so I do not know for sure if the reference is relevant or even accurate, but I imagine that it might be. (And in the end, your player knows of your preferences -- and what you enjoy -- far better than I). But if you have all the original Sp@ce Tr#k episodes along with all the sequels and spin-offs loaded into your player, then it might be appropriate to imagine G'narsh as a Klang'n of sorts. If you are familiar with their language, you may wish to incorporate appropriate Klang'n words into his speech and when appropriate into the dialog of others. And then again, if you are not into Sp@ce Tr#k, and therefore not a Trekker, not to worry. Nothing is lost. There is no need to search out the reference for I will provide others.

I can just as easily imagine a link between G'narsh and a draco-beast, a Wook-EE gone bad, or even an evil Herculean antihero. But once again, I wish to make clear that I do not intend to establish a formal link or sub call, but rather to set a tone by paying homage to popular, readily identifiable personas and characters. For you see, one need not co-op the name to reap the benefits of association. Even the government issue welfare rigs recognize these informal calls. So clearly, there is nothing subversive or underhanded in the practice. (After all, there is a

reason six slots are considered the minimum for a player, but that many dreams only come with only the one disc. The remaining five slots are intended to be dealers choice -- and I will make no formal recommendations).

From a creator's perspective, however, it is important to be cognizant that one's work may -- i.e. most definitely will -- be played concurrently alongside Lord of the Kings, a Solar Quest gaming skimmer, one or two fantasy setting hybridization discs, and a Greek Mythology Primer or two; or that it may be played with no more support than a standard Government Issue General Purpose Equalization Library (a.k.a. the GI Library).

And, in case the later should be true, at the very least we need to lay down a working shell. So along with his immense size and two heads, G'narsh has tough, leathery olive-grey skin, which is almost scale-like, along with long thick yellow fingernails reminiscent of claws. His tusk-like fangs mirror the yellow of these claws as do his eyes -- which are at times bloodshot and at others a more pleasing tarnished ivory grey. What hair he has is unimportant (color, style, or length). And we can assume his clothes are typical of the setting and locale in which he finds himself unless otherwise noted.

Of the two most important aspects of G'narsh's being that we have left off of this initial inventory, the first is G'narsh's near (?) immortal status (((??))) owing to the regenerative nature of his blood. This is a gift from his father, Gra'gl, Son of Chaos itself, and due to its central importance to this tale and/or an adequate understanding of the G'narsh Mythos (et al), it will be explained in greater detail throughout the narrative (or so that is the intent, ((but not necessarily what will occur))).

The second item is not actually something that we have left off of our initial inventory, but rather is something that needs to be reiterated a few more times, so that its importance and centrality to G'narsh's character will be embedded upon the compiler. This is

the previously stated fact that G'narsh is a double faced, two-headed being.

And to explore this concept further, it is appropriate at this time to fall into the main flow of our narrative and take a look at where and what we want G'narsh to be in 100 clicks, for my goal is nothing short of a total rebirth, a full bodied transformation, and a spiritual awakening for this fell creature and to change G'narsh from a dark evil agent of villainy to a source of light capable of warming the coldest of hearts (i.e. a children's character to be loved and adored).

A Little Back Story to Set the Future in Place

In a college town deep in the North Country, there used to be a restaurant called Ray's Pizza that G'narsh came upon in his wanderings. It was for sale, and seeing the irony in it all, G'narsh decided to buy the place and change the name to G'narsh's Ray's Pizza and Handyman Services. G'narsh had intended the sign to be (in part at least) an advertisement for a home repair business that he had been thinking about starting, but in all the years he has been here, no one has ever asked him to replace a storm door let alone remodel their kitchen or retile their shower. Most locals have simply taken the wording of the sign to be some kind of secret code, as if it was another way of saying "adventuring services available here," but -- believe it or not -- that hadn't been G'narsh's intent.

It was perhaps easy for the locals to come to this misunderstanding, because at G'narsh's -- as the college kids called the place -- cobalts did the cooking and cleaning, gutter fairies did the waitressing, and a four armed creature from the Courts of Chaos itself -- one Lady Lane -- worked the door and whenever required acted as the bouncer as well. Due to her imposing size, professional wrestler physique, and a reputation that proceeded her, she was seldom required to actually bounce anyone out the door. And in her opinion this was a genuine pity, for

bouncing was a duty she took quite literally. The relative inelasticity of humans making the chore all the more challenging and thereby rewarding.

If that had been all there was to it -- good crunchy thin crust pizza dripping with sauce and overflowing with cheese, and a few creatures not normally seen in these parts -- like many restaurants G'narsh's pizzeria may have failed early on (in the first few years perhaps). But there was another attraction to the place. Mi'lay -- the elvin beauty who was betrothed to G'narsh -- danced nightly on the low wall that ran down the middle of the restaurant. (***) A near naked elvin princess dancing in earnest with the sole goal of enticing her beloved into her bedchambers is a sight to behold and available for your viewing pleasure (no cover required) on a nightly basis at G'narsh's Ray's Pizza and Handyman Services...

A tradition that is likely to continue as long as G'narsh manages to resist Mi'lay's tempting -- if misleading -- offer.

(*** Note: As a bit of trivia, I point out that that the fey traditionally separate the low from the high, the common masses from the folks of birth and privilege in these sort of bar/restaurant/tavern locales by a low half-wall. It is to this wall that I have referred. This is not an important story element. I'm not really trying to highlight it. But during one of my -- countless -- edits, I removed this color element, only to find that I reference this concept -- if only tangentially -- more than a few times later on. So in short, the whole purpose of this note is to add that trivial bit of information back in... and perhaps to highlight some of the difficulties in editing.)

(((A process that never seems to end.)))

And Here Now Our Story - G'narsh's Ray's

G'narsh sits behind a large oak desk. He is proud of this desk. It is his handiwork. He made both the desk and open air office in which he sits using nothing more than his own two hands and a few simple -- i.e. primitive -- tools. The office itself was built atop the old stage, which in turn was built in the highest part of the restaurant. And when G'narsh sits up here, he feels like a king surveying his lands (all the way from the ramparts of the high and mighty to the slave pits of the meek and lowly -- or so he imagines). And then, of course, from this vantage, G'narsh has an unobstructed line of sight to both the main entrance and the kitchen back door. Tactically, it is a wonderful location; and if truth be told, that more than anything else was foremost in his mind when he performed the reconstruction.

Of course, there are no enemies in sight, nor, indeed, are any on the horizon. Nor have there been any for... years, now; and as such G'narsh is unable to explain his growing unease. He is surrounded by friends and allies. No. Friends is the right word.

On top of all that (making his unease all the more difficult to understand), the time of day leans in his favor -- Son of Chaos that he is. It is late at night -- so late, in fact, that one might want to call it very early morning instead. And G'narsh knows that he should be calm and relaxed, but he is not. The first troubling fact is that Lane's post by the front door is empty... again. She disappeared -- like she has been doing for months now -- the moment the doors closed for the night. She hasn't said where she's been going and, well, being polite -- and discrete -- G'narsh has not asked. But, he should not have to ask. He is her liege! She has sworn an oath!

G'narsh's temper flares at these thoughts as he unconsciously forms a fist. He has a sudden desire to talk -- that's what the humans in these parts call it. He has a sudden desire to talk with Lane, a simple conversation, wherein he might inquire as to where she has been going, and what she has been doing, while he gouged

an eye, landed a (((well placed))) punch or two, and held an arm, or two, or three, or four behind her back (for she has several).

G'narsh shakes his head, the one that has been staring at the door where Lane would be if the restaurant were open. He is in a foul mood this night and he knows it is not just Lane's absence that has caused his fume. He goes back to the books and tabulates Nadia's receipts for the umpteenth time. And yes, she is off by a single gold piece, yet again. As G'narsh begins to count the receipts one more time, as if by some miracle there is any chance that he will come up with a different total if only he pays more attention, G'narsh stops to pick up a golden coin from the stack of copper, silver, and even paper script, which lay before him. The pile does not constitute a king's ransom (not quite), but it is certainly enough. It is more that the troop of cobalts, which are currently turning up the chairs in preparation for sweeping the lower floor, could ever hoped to amass... at least, that is, back in the days of old.

G'narsh pauses in his thoughts. He considers that it is easy to slip, to slide down that path into the past and the way things were. Even now G'narsh can hear the cobalts sing an old tune. They say, "Wash, wash, wash. Sweep, sweep, sweep. Bake, bake, bake," but G'narsh recognizes the rhythm of the song they are singing and that the original lyrics went something more along the lines of, "Tear off the heads of your enemies and kill all who betray you." Long ago G'narsh instructed the cobalts (the Charlie's as they are also called) to change the words, but in his own mind G'narsh still hears the original evil, blood-filled lyrics whenever they sing one of those songs from long ago. He can't help himself. He knows the real lyrics don't go, "Pizza is fun to bake," or whatever harmless nonsense the Charlies are currently singing. No. The original words to all of the songs, which either he or any of the Charlies know from back in the old days, all pretty much go the same way, "KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL! KILL!" Which at the moment is all the more poignant as the Gra'gl fearing chorus to the

tune they are currently singing is, “Kill all who betray you,” especially after one considers that both Lane and Nadia immediately spring to his mind as suspects that would likely fit the bill.

G’narsh shakes his head as he silently reminds himself, “It’s just the way things were. It doesn’t mean anything.”

But worse, he almost says that last aloud. Is he slipping? Growing soft? Self doubt fills G’narsh’s mind, while anger (at his own weakness, if nothing else) begins to fester deep in his soul.

Nothing has changed in G’narsh’s mind, when moments later he is holding another gold coin up between his fingers. He is pretending that the coin is the dial on a plasma rifle’s laser sight. And as he watches the cobalts sweep, sing, and dance, he starts to pick them off one by one as if he were a sniper from afar... and/or of old. As he does this, he swings his other head around to regard Nadia, the gutter fairy -- close cousin to a grunge fairy -- and her sisters. They are all sleeping piled one on top of the other next to the auxiliary oven that G’narsh -- once again -- had built by hand up here behind him in his elevated office.

(((The main purpose of the oven was so G’narsh could have ready and immediate access to that most luxurious of foodstuffs -- fresh hot pizza -- whenever he desired, but the heat the oven gives off is certainly welcomed on a night such as this.)))

At the moment, the gutter fairies, themselves, are fast asleep. And next to the warmth of the fire, they have not a care in the world. But for some reason Nadia stirs, perhaps sensing G’narsh’s stare -- or glare as would be more appropriate to call it at this moment -- and extracts herself clumsily from the pile. After falling to the floor, and waltzing dizzily the short distance across the wooden planks -- never once thinking to use her battered wings -- she climbs up G’narsh’s leg and settles in his lap where, content as a baby, she goes back to sleep oblivious to G’narsh’s growing inner turmoil.

G'narsh considers Nadia, strokes her body -- gently, soothingly, and with calm reassurance -- but his mind is a tempest. When the cobalts sing, "Mop, mop, mop," G'narsh only hears, "Death to the weak. Death to the betrayers." And when they sing "Clean, clean, clean," in his mind he hears the words of old -- a gruesome entreaty to, "Tear them in half and feast on their blood," which all in all is a tempting thought. G'narsh knows that it would be easy enough to pick Nadia up, lift her over his head, twist her in half, and gulp down whatever stray spurts of blood landed in his mouth. It wouldn't be much, but (and here he turns his head to regard the (((heaving))) pile of gutter fairies) she has sisters. It is compelling. Blood used to taste so good and no one would call him on it. He is their king, their ruler, or as the Charlie's like to say, their boss man.

But G'narsh knows he couldn't do it. He couldn't kill Nadia. Well, wouldn't do it, won't do it. He sighs, brings Nadia up to his shoulder like a baby and rocks her gently as he returns to the accounts. There remains the issue of that single gold piece -- a comically unimportant sum considering the size of the pile. But still, it is all he can think about. Or maybe it is more important to realize that as he tries to concentrate on the books, his mind keeps on going through fantasies of murder, rape, and senseless retribution. In some ways these thoughts are comforting, like a welcome friend, while in other ways the thoughts are very disquieting -- being something akin to standing at the top of a cliff, where, despite your will, your mind keeps on jumping over the edge, imagining the fall. The dilemma being, once one's spirit is in freefall, how can one be certain their feet will stay rooted on the ground and that they won't mistake an imaginary impulse, a bit of play (((or some stray dream world command, yes, I'm talking to you fanboy and/or girl))) for some real world desire?

It is not a happy place to be.

In an effort to break free from the demons that assail him (figuratively speaking, of course), G'narsh bounces the gold coin

he has been playing with on the table and watches as it lands in a shot glass. He has seen college students do this as a prelude to getting hammered, to getting so drunk that they need no assistance from Lane to go bouncing out the door on their own. Sometimes they don't get very far... and it is a cold one ((((out there)))) tonight.

Action! G'narsh suddenly decides That's what he needs to do. Take some action! Do something, anything, to break the cycle of murderous thoughts circling around in his head.

"Charlie," G'narsh yells to the cobalts still cleaning the lower deck, "When you're done with the floors, take a walk around the block and see if anyone could use a spot by the fire tonight."

"Right-o boss man," a lone Charlie responds -- speaking for all -- as the song the cobalts sing changes to, "We're going to sweep the walk. We're going to sweep the walk," which would sound nice and pleasant if it wasn't sung to the tune of an ancient war chant that told the tale of a dour-dwarf who operated a mine and was always on the lookout for more slaves due to his harsh treatment of them ((((i.e. the ones he had never lasted long)))). So, think A 100 Bottles of Beer on the Wall reworked into 21 Slaves in a Pit by a sociopath tune-smith and/or psychotic song-writer.

Twenty-one slaves in a pit,
Twenty-one slaves in a pit,
Take one out, bash it about,
One less slave to worry about.

"Treat whoever you find like an honored guest," G'narsh adds after a moment, wanting to make sure the Charlies haven't misunderstood his instructions.

"Yeppers, boss man. We finde dem face down in da snow, we take dem in and warm der hearts."

"Dey be so happy, dey never want to leave."

"Until their 8 o'clock class," G'narsh once again urges trying to make his intent clear, but the Charlies beg to disagree. "You

outta touchee der, big guy. You way up der in da high ivory towery place, you no know.”

“Nobodies sleepy in da snow dis time of nights eber have da eight o’clockies class.”

“Nopee.”

“Not eber,” they all agree.

“Ask them all the same,” G’narsh insists.

“Dey tink we rubes.”

“Dat we squares.”

“Word gettee arounds. Charlie no longer gettee invited to da cool party’ers.”

“Just ask,” G’narsh repeats letting the order stand as he ignores their entreaties and fears of being socially ostracized from the cool kids.

(As I think we can all agree, anyone found face down in the snow at this time of night would be quite cool, indeed.)

In the meantime, G’narsh returns his attention to the missing gold coin. The discrepancy in accounts annoys him. It feels like someone has stolen from him. Of course, he doesn’t really think that Nadia has. In fact, he knows she hasn’t stolen from him. But still, supposing she had, supposing she had stolen from him. She’s always short. She is always loosing -- or if you like, misplacing -- a coin or a bill, but it is almost always a single gold coin. Why can’t she just get with the program? Everyone else has. He doesn’t have this problem with her sisters -- and they’re gutter fairies, as well.

G’narsh looks down at his hand. He’s been flexing it again, unconsciously forming it into a fist. He wonders if this is the reason why it is so difficult for most adventurers to retire, the bloodlust. The body never forgets. And as a memory of a particularly satisfying kills drifts into his mind, G’narsh suddenly realizes that the heart and the soul don’t ever forget, either.

“I’ll never forget will I,” he whispers, this time out loud. But then, a thought unbidden from the back of his mind points out that in death all things are forgotten, which for some (((unknown))) reason causes him to feel the need to quickly amend his previous statement, “Not while I’m alive, that is.”

“Forget what?” Flicker asks. Flicker being the candle flame, the precocious fire elemental that inhabits the wood fired stoves and ovens in the restaurant (and on occasion the torches that line the walls). But for the moment, she has co-opted the candle that sits in front of G’narsh and slowly dances back and forth in the flame weaving a hypnotic spell that is nearly as captivating as Mi’lay’s.

But tonight, her charms do not work. G’narsh is unable to fall into the joy of the moment; and instead, is suddenly aware of the smoke that fills the room, the oppressive heaviness of the air, the sting in his eyes, the snot that forms thick in both of his noses, and the hoarse rasp in his throats. These things would not normally bother him. He might even find them nostalgic, comforting, but tonight...

Eventually a testy G’narsh snorts out, “Nadia is short again.”

But Flicker dances about amused and unconcerned and Flippantly responds, “Nadia is always short, but at three feet, she’s pretty tall for a fairy.”

G’narsh cannot help but level both of his heads at Flicker and growl at the (((so called))) joke. He is in no mood.

Undeterred, having warmed (((get it?))) to the idea of a conversation, Flicker tries again, “So Nadia’s account is off?”

“Yes,” G’narsh growls; but even as he does, his arms move -- almost against his will -- to sooth Nadia, for she has shifted in her sleep, her dreams having taking a turn at the sound of her name.

“And that bothers you?” Flicker asks as her eyebrows flash bright with curiosity and her presence eats away at the candle -- consuming it that much quicker (((a metaphor for something, I’m told))).

“Yes,” G’narsh replies again as he fights down a desire to pinch out the flame and wonders how much snow it would take to flood the ovens... and if he could do it before Flicker torched the place.

Still oblivious or completely unconcerned, Flicker continues, “But she’s short every night? Her till has never come out even.”

“Oh well, as long as she’s a consistent thief.”

For some reason Flicker is suddenly exasperated, “She’s not stealing from you. She dropped the coin while she was watching Mi’lay dance.” As she says this, a torch on the far wall that had been extinguished for the night suddenly bursts into flame and as the light reflects off of an advertising mirror ((((insert the ad of your choice here)))) the coin is highlighted amid a pile of crumbs and dust under a table... just as Flicker said it would be.

And just for flavor if nothing else, the entire process startles a nearby mouse that scurries away into the shadows.

Without looking, G’narsh replies, “I know where the coin is. That’s not the point.”

“Did you know that you have mice, as well?”

G’narsh looks at Flicker and sheepishly admits, “I can’t find the heart to set any traps. Any ideas?”

“Are they magical?”

“I think they’re just mice.”

“It would be easier if they were magical. You might be able to work out a deal.”

“I think we’ve worked out a deal.”

“Oh?” Flicker asks, curiosity getting the better of her.

“Yeah. I don’t kill them and they get the run of the place,” G’narsh grins suddenly amused as he turns his other head back to focus on Flicker, as well. It is a sign of respect, turning both of his heads her way at once, but also -- having broken him partway out of his fume -- he wants her advice. “It’s strange, but not killing the mice makes me feel... well, good. I know it sounds stupid...”

“I like mice,” Flicker reassures him.

“Yeah, well. Do you ever feel like doing something mean?”

“You mean like evil?”

“Yeah, like evil?”

“Like singeing a cobalt when they’re not respectful? Or setting fire to some snotty sorority sister’s hair when they complain about the lighting in here?” Flicker grins. “The thought has never crossed my mind.”

“But you’re good?” G’narsh asks, while at the same time the troop of cobalts climbs the stairs to the upper level and starts to turn up the chairs prior to washing the floors -- an act which leads one of the Charlies to the highlighted gold coin, which he picks up. Returning his (almost) full attention to Flicker (while only casually watching the progression of the coin down the line of cobalts out of the corner of his eye) G’narsh continues, “But you’re like a guiding light?”

Flicker takes a moment to remember how the saying goes. “Hey, I’m good, but I’m not great,” before adding conspiratorially, “I once burnt down a house, you know.”

“Really?”

“I’m not proud of it. I could say it was an accident, that things got away from me, but the bottom line is, I did it on purpose. I’m not saying the guy didn’t deserve it, but I still feel guilty about it sometimes.”

“How do you go on? I mean, I’ve got a lot,” G’narsh pauses to smile at the understatement, “I mean a lot of blood on my hands. How do you live with the guilt?”

Flicker smiles, too, perhaps a little mischievously as she explains, “I figure I didn’t burn anything I wasn’t supposed to today. It’s not like I’m not tempted to, but I didn’t. Not today.”

“So don’t worry about the past, just concentrate on today?”

“You’ll figure it out,” Flicker assures him as she wraps her arms around her body. “It’s freezing in here. Have them throw a few more logs into the oven if you don’t mind,” and then Flicker is gone, a normal candle flame being all that remains.

In her place a short bipedal walking alligator type creature (((one of the cobalts -- just in case I haven't described them before))) picks up the conversation. "You must have droppy dis," he says as he tosses the coin onto G'narsh's desk where it lands amid the stacks containing hundreds more of its kind. "Ohh, I sees why it so difficult to keep track of dis little one. You'se got da so many of dem. What da one more matter?" And having said what he wished to say, the cobalt (((the Charlie as they all are called, but I think you probably got that by now))) stands at attention (((sort of, kind of, OK, not really, not really at attention at all))) as he waits for G'narsh's reply. But there is none forth coming. G'narsh is thinking about the cobalt's words and looking at the stack of gold before him. "You'se supposed to say something, boss man," the cobalt reminds him; and then, after a moment more adds, "Like tankees," or after thinking on it even more adds, "In da old days you'd maybe probablies turn it around and makee eet da Charlie's fault. You'd yell and scream, maybe eben rip da Charlie or two in da half."

"Sorry about that."

"Eh, eet OK," Charlie assures him as he leans against G'narsh's leg and waves it off. "Does good times. Betides, Charlie gotta dat tricky blood," regenerative powers and all that. "We more resiliency den you'd tink."

"Is that a fact?" G'narsh asks as he raises the waist high (or in G'narsh's case, knee high) creature up so that they are eye to eye.

"We'se toughies," the cobalt responds undeterred.

"Then I've got a mission for you."

"Yippies," the cobalt responds excitedly as his arms and legs dance about in the air.

"It's dangerous."

"Dat be da Charlie's middle name."

"And in all likelihood no one will ever thank you."

“Eh,” the cobalt says dismissing the thought with his hand, “no’b one eber tanks da Charlie. We wait for da tanks, we die of da old age.”

“OK then, just so you understand the risks involved.”

“Dis da real mission?” Charlie asks suddenly very serious and interested.

G’narsh nods his head in agreement as he sets the creature down on his desk. “We’ve waited long enough.” But not liking the sound of that, “I’ve waited long enough. I need you to do a quick sweep of the perimeter and if you find anyone hiding face down in the snow...”

“Da enemy infilb-trators?”

“Yeah, but pretend you’re friends.”

“We be nice-nice. We’s invite dem back. Maybe feed them da pizza. Den dey be ours,” the cobalt concludes as he hops down onto the floor.

“Oh, and put an extra log in the oven, as well,” G’narsh says in relay of Flicker’s request after he senses that he and the cobalt have come to an understanding.

“Yeppers,” the cobalt nods as he starts off on his quest.

“Charlie gettee dem all comfee. Den when’d dey wake up, dey tink dey be ones of us.” And then, thinking this through, the little guy scratches his head as he pauses to add, “Dat be too much for’d some ob’d dem. Dat be when dey pukies.”

“It is what it is,” G’narsh agrees before suggesting hopefully, “If you are up to it, before we go to sleep tonight, I’d like to sing some of the old songs.”

“We’d hab’d da party?”

“Yeah. You think you can keep from killing anyone if we sing the real words?”

“Dose da only’d words we know’d. Does ober words just be da camouflage for da big guy.” And then, scurrying off he adds excitedly, “I goes tell da guys.”

###

Thinking for a second...

Perhaps he knew the solution all along...

Well, no sense going back through it all. G'narsh calls after the cobalt before he scampers completely out of the picture and tosses the gold coin to him as he says, "Put this in the tip jar."

"You generous meester."

"Yeah, well, you guys are worth it. I'm thinking about hiding a gold coin around here every night from now on."

"You been doing dat for da while now, but da Charlie always find eet." Pointing to his head, the little guy adds, "We be cleber'er."

"Well, from now on, if you find the coin and show it to me, you can put it in the tip jar."

"Ebery night!"

"We'll see. Probably."

"Yippie. I'se go tell the guys," and then stopping at the bottom of the stairs the Charlie turns around to add, "You da best boss man eber." And then, he is gone.

###

"You are, you know," Nadia murmurs from where she is lying in G'narsh's arms, "The best boss man ever."

G'narsh doesn't know if it is true. He still has murderous rages that wash through him and rise to the surface on occasion. His thoughts are constantly filled with impure desires. And even as his hands stroke the fairy in his arms, he must fight back the urge to kill her. No. That last one is gone... and maybe the rest? Well, maybe. With any luck, he'll just have to wait the feelings out and remind himself how much he enjoys cradling the creature he is holding.

"Oh," Nadia says quietly as she nuzzles down, "Lane wanted me to tell you she'd be at her study group again tonight."

“Study group?” G’narsh asks trying to prod more information out of the sleepy fairy.

“Yeah, her study group,” Nadia manages between stifling yawns. “The Midnight Society or something like that... some support group for older women returning to college... or something like that. She asked me to tell you about it. Make sure it was OK. I knew you wouldn’t mind, so I just told her to go.”

“When was this?” G’narsh asks quietly, soothingly, already knowing the answer. “When did she first ask you to tell me about this study group?”

“I don’t know,” a couple of months ago, at the, “start of the semester, something like that,” Nadia replies easily. Totally unconcerned and at peace, she curls up into a tight ball and falls back into a happy dream-filled slumber.

Well, let her sleep. She’ll need it, G’narsh reasons. In an hour or so the cobalts will be back and whether they have any new recruits or not, they are going to have party, a good ole fashioned party, with pizza, beer, singing cobalts, and dancing fairies fluttering about and filling the air with their mirth and playful antics.

G’narsh muses over these happy thoughts as he closes his eyes and slowly drifts off into the unpredictable world of sleep. It is the first time in countless eons that both of his heads will travel together into the world of chaos and shadow.

It is the sleep of the innocent... and of those who have nothing (((absolutely nothing))) left to fear.

Are Two Heads Better Than One?

Did I put enough emphasis on G’narsh’s two heads? Or his great size?

Does the struggle of a creature -- a monster really -- born of the dark side seeking the light come thru? Does it make sense? Is it compelling?

Does G’narsh come across as too angry? Petty?

Does the fun of the Charlies shine through?

I don't know. Needless to say, I have my doubts. (And in retrospect, the real question I should have been asking myself at this juncture is, what are you going to do if the opening segment turns out to be the meanest, angriest, and nastiest moment for G'narsh in the entire dream? What then Sherlock? I suppose the obvious answer is to go back and either tone down G'narsh's anger in the preceding segment or put in an explanatory and/or minimizing override call somewhere. Guess which solution I went with? I'm not telling, but...)

What I do know is that a wrap around story is supposed to make the interior story easier to both digest and create in the first place. It is there so that we can resolve on the side any problems or discrepancies that might be too bulky or cumbersome to work out in the main story, like the two-headed issue.

You know what? I don't have two heads, or three, or four. I'm one of those old fashioned, singled-headed type guys. For me, trying to imagine being a two-headed creature is like trying to imagine seeing out of the front and the back of my head at the same time. Go ahead, try it. Or if that doesn't do it for you, try to imagine looking at a distant vista, while reading a book at the same time. I can't do it. My mind is set up to see one thing at a time, so if you can see two different views at once, my hat is off to you.

But a straight apologia isn't going to sit well with anyone, so let's look at the alternatives. We could go split screen alternating back and forth between G'narsh and G'narsh'e -- trust me, it's tiresome -- or we could go with the multi-view insect format. You know, you're a fly or a bee and you see the whole world through a thousand tiny lenses instead of one big view-port. Artistically it might work for a moment or two, but long term (I don't know about you), but I get more information from one normal lens than a thousand smaller ones all showing echoes of the same thing. In fact, it gives me a headache.

I still don't know if that lays G'narsh's two heads to rest, but I'm not going to harp on the fact ten times a click. You know in

that (famous?) mystery (((The Hand of Doom))) where the dark-haired stranger has six fingers on his right hand? Well, how many times do you think they mention that tidbit of anatomy before Mr. Clever puts it all together and uses that little item of trivia to solve the case? Three times! They only mention it three times in the entire dream! In comparison I've beaten G'narsh's two heads to death. So one last time, G'narsh has two heads. You want those two heads to talk to one other, alternate phrases or items of conversation, or have divergent personalities, then go for it. It is in keeping with the mythos after all.

As is the belief that G'narsh was born moments before G'narsh'e... of a troll mother, and so on and so forth, as some folks cotton to. Of course, a real problem with this interpretation is that it gives prominence to G'narsh's initial birth by a troll mother in a fully fleshed out troll society, so the next obvious question is what happened to that society, his parents, and then, of course, his childhood, teen years, and so on. I can see it now, The Young Adventures of G'narsh followed by Teen G'narsh. One might be hard pressed to adequately incorporate the theme of eternal rebirth -- all alone, in a vacuum -- that is central to the G'narsh mythos into either one of those aforementioned formats -- not that the same problem doesn't occur for me later on, but we won't dwell on that for the moment. Because, whether you like it or not, in a second I'm going to leave the whole two-headed issue behind for you and your compiler to work out on your own.

But first, as long as I've mentioned the twin birth, G'narsh/G'narsh'e theory, I need to point out that I'm going with the alternative theory, well documented in legend, that contends that, although G'narsh was likely created with only one head, trolls regenerate. Shoot them with an arrow and they just pull that sucker out and the wound heals right up. Cut off an arm, and a new one grows to take its place. Cleave the head down the center with an ax, let the two halves grow apart, and well, with a bit of luck, you now have a two-headed troll. Presto. Chang-o. The

birth of G'narsh out of the body of a normal -- if a Son of Chaos can be called normal -- troll.

In truth, this might be information better suited for the main sequence rather than in the wraparound, but what is done is done. Besides, I've (((tentatively))) tried to work this into a causal conversation between G'narsh and a New York socialite, of all people, but it just seems stilted and forced. Better to get this discussion out of the way early, and then ignore it for the remainder of the dream.

So with that issue finally put to rest, let's pull out of this god like, narrative overview format and put some more life into our interchange.

That's me getting out of the recording chamber. It's hard for me to believe anyone alive doesn't know the lingo, but I wouldn't be doing my job if I didn't inform you that the lay down model is referred to as a coffin while the sitting model I'm emerging from is commonly nicknamed an egg. Both are white on the outside, black on the inside, and have only a minimum of lights, decorations, decals, and instrumentation. They both are state of the art, the best that money can buy, cutting edge Quazitronic machines. I'm a paid spokesman for Quazitronic having won both the machines and that distinction during multiple contests. All the same, Quazitronic is the best. But don't believe me. Look at your favorite disks and see what they were recorded on. Odds are it was a Quazitronic.

That little bit of advertising aside, I use the coffin model for notes and preliminary work, but I don't actually like to sleep in it. Believe it or not, I use an old fashioned bed, and lie down for the night completely unplugged. I've got enough going on inside my own head (thank you very much), and I don't need the help (((or the interference))). As to the other compilers, I use the egg for my initial recording and laying down extra tracks (((the sitting position helps to keep me focused))), and (believe it or not) for the final edit I use a standard governmental-issue welfare rig. Granted the

headset is, once again, a top of the line Quazitronic model, but the compiler is as crappy as they come.

(((While doing the edits, checking for compatibility, and performing the (seemingly endless) final walkthroughs on the welfare rig: of the six slots available))) the first two are taken up by worker protocols -- just like for any other guy working a crane, driving a truck, or working in the tunnels -- two more are filled with the GI library, and then I have the raw disc I recorded in the egg, and a blank one for the edit. The principle assumption made in this setup -- that any fantasy needs to be playable on the crappiest of equipment -- goes a long way towards explaining my style. I view myself more as an abstract painter than a point-and-click photographer. If you want details, I assume you've got the discs to back up your preferences -- pre-selected, marked-up, and painstakingly annotated -- so you can't possibly need me to make specific calls or to provide custom frames and skins.

So far, I haven't really shown you much about myself or my work space, which I would like to call my lab to set the feel. I'm thinking clean and sterilized, devoid of personality or life with fuzzy white walls that blur out to infinity. Maybe we should add to the scene a jumble of cables, a random assortment of tools scattered about, a few coffee stains -- and/or from the beverage of your choice -- and the clutter of way too many discs. Towering stacks of discs rising high to the ceiling, and then there are piles on the floor where the stacks fell over -- all in careless, mind numbing disarray. You would not believe how many discs I have. Like I've ever bothered to catalogue them all, much less play them. I receive them from collaborators and agents to review, and as gifts from fans wanting feedback or sending scenes gratis hoping that I will incorporate them into my next project. (This isn't a request by the way, so don't waste your time. I don't review them, much less use them.)

I have game discs, promo discs -- any number of businesses would like their products to be called directly, and, by the way

they'll give you plenty of back-up free of charge if you do, but then you'll be locked in... I also have the afore mentioned work discs, at least one for nearly every job in existence it seems, different versions of the GI library -- read between the lines, knowledge and its obscuration is an ever evolving dance -- and then we have -- um, ahem -- my personal files.

“You sure have a lot of these... um, ahem... personal files.”

I'm going to have to fuzz her out. We're not quite ready for her yet.

“Sorry. I'll just take a gander at what you have loaded up,” she says undeterred as she plucks a disc from out of the second juke box -- I have three Quazitronic 2400's linked in tandem, eat your heart out. Anyway, while she's fading out -- just on the edge of consciousness -- she holds up a disc, and, referring to it, asks that all important question, “Is this even legal?”

And with that we will fuzz her out completely -- not bothering to reply.

A good disc -- a popular disc -- must be able to play along side anything. This is the nature of the game, the business we are in. Counter intuitively, the more abstract your calls, the easier it will be for your instructions to fit into another's preconceived ideas, and for their compiler to integrate your plot and elements into their mind, their world, and their dreams. Besides, some things you just can't sell to the mass market -- a.k.a. the MM.

Sex for instance. It sells like hotcakes, but not in the mass market. Some have claimed that over 90% of the Inter Server traffic is directly related to full-detail body skins, specialized experience integrators, and other aspects of the sex trade. This doesn't even count person to person direct hook ups, which, all in all, might lead one to believe that the percentage is overstated, and, to some extent, it is. It comes down to file size and how long folks stay hooked up. The information that a cabbie sends out every few clicks -- his fare, location, charge, etc. -- can be condensed down to 1,000 bits of data or less. A fully detailed body skin at the upper end of realism, on the other hand, comes in at something over a

thousand tetra bytes and if you are throwing an experience integrator on top of that... Well, you could run the entire New York City flitter system for a year on the same stream that it takes to consummate a ten click date.

Anyhow, I get into this here and now, because even if this was a sex disc, which it is not, my calls would still be vague. Everybody has their own personal tastes. And in order to make it easier for you to integrate your own desires into the dream, we should pause for a moment and go over some of the calls for the main characters. Hopefully, this will give you an opportunity to set your own overrides without breaking the flow of the narrative.

“I think this is where I come in,” says the slowly reforming apparition of the girl we left sifting through the discs in the juke boxes moments ago.

You’re breaking the flow. I wasn’t quite ready for you yet.

“Oh, right. You wanted to go on about how sometimes by the end of a disc, after 100 clicks or so, you’re just sick of the story...”

Well, yeah. Two months nonstop, in and out of the booth, it fills my mind, I want a break.

“Which you thought was a bad admission to make... and then you decided, to reduce the single mindedness of this run, instead of making a mad dash to get through 100 clicks, you would take it easier... and maybe work on some side projects at the same time...”

Yes.

“So like... Maybe you’d do something for the fetish market under a pseudonym at the same time?”

I wasn’t planning on going into that much detail.

Ignoring this last comment -- as it is not important and patently not true -- the girl raises her arms provocatively into the air, juts out her hips suggestively, and strikes an alluring pose as she happily announces, “Walla. I’m your side project.”

Not really how I was planning on introducing you.

“Are you going to be all removed? You know, doing that narrative talk over?” she asks as she slowly approaches the befuddle dream weaver, stops to run her hands through his hair, and finally takes off his headset. “I just want to help...”

“Hey!” comes a protesting, disembodied voice from beyond the misty white walls of the dream lab.

“Dat our line,” insists a cobalt as he enters the scene and then being immediately distracted starts sorting through discs at random -- keeping some in a neat stack, while tossing most of them onto the floor in a clattering heap.

It’s not your line... and stop messing with my discs. It may not seem like it, but they are all carefully arranged.

“Don’t worries,” the first cobalt insists as another Charlie shows up and completes the first one’s thought, “We helping,”

This, of course, is just the start and soon another cobalt shows up, grabs a screwdriver, and proceeds to look the coffin unit over. “I just want to help,” this one says in perfect English. It is eerily reminiscent of the girl’s voice, down to her exact pitch and tone.

“Dat wat she’d say,” another agrees as he appears out of nowhere and hands the first a hammer -- just the tool for working on delicate electronic instruments.

Please put that down.

“She help... We help,” the cobalt points out. There are now a full half dozen of them in the room and what they are doing would not typically fall under the label of helping.

“Sure, we’d helping,” another insists as he stands on a pile of discs. The crack of plastic fills the air. “Oh, dat sound nice,” he says appreciatively as he walks back and forth over the pile.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

“Et like music,” another agrees as he joins the first.

Meanwhile, from their position overlooking the coffin one of the previous cobalt asks another, “Now’d wat you’d say wrong wit dis ting?”

“Eet out of whack.”

“So we’d need to whack eet?”

“Yea’d...” and then looking at the hammer in his hands he asks, “You’d got da bigger one?”

“Hey meester. You’d got da bigger hammer?”

Maybe we should go for pizza?

“But we were just getting comfortable,” the vixen says from the comfort of the dreamer’s lap.

“You no try to changee subject vixen girlee,” the cobalt with the hammer responds as he looses all interest in fixing the coffin.

“Yea’d he says da pizzas,” the next Charlie in line agrees.

“End if he’a says pizza, den we wants da pizza.”

“Luckilies, we’d know’d just da place.”

Pizza A Go Go

I still have some issues...

“You no talkee all boomie meester.”

“Eet hurt da ears.”

“You gotta fall into da dream.”

“Yea’d, be da dream meester.”

“Be da dream.”

The hapless dreamer, the artist... Plug in whatever face you want. Pull a picture off the Server. Or use your own picture and jump into the role.

“You won’t be sorry,” the girl urges.

“No talking over the narrative,” the dreamer reminds her.

“Sorry.”

We are back in the pizza place. Use whatever model you want. I’m using a place I worked at many long years ago...

“You don’t look that old.”

“No talking over the narrative my dear.”

“Sorry.”

The specifics of the locale aren’t important. They never are. Don’t get bogged down in describing details. This isn’t Architectural Digest after all.

“You’ve been dying to use that line.”

“Please my dear, remember...”

“Sorry.”

The point is, the pizza place will be created in the audience’s mind. They’ve been to a pizza place. They have an image loaded -- up and ready in their in mind -- and the GI library will do the rest. You’ll note that the pizza place we are in is contemporary in nature and populated by straight -- pure vanilla -- humans. See the band setting up on the stage? In a flicker -- perhaps a bad choice of words considering one of our characters is named flicker, so let’s reword it. In a flash, it changes from a band preparing for a show to G’narsh sitting at his desk working on his books ((((and/or boots???))). It is a simple call, a simple plug in substitution.

One thing I do want to point out specifically is that if we walk behind this wall, around the corner, and out of sight from the office...

“A sense arcade?” the girl asks. Need I mention that she is melted up against the artist as they walk around the restaurant -- like cheese on a pizza -- and hangs on his every word.

Taking this as his due, the dreamer responds authoritatively, “It’s a pizza place. What kind of pizza place would it be without a state of the art sense arcade? And a restroom too... but why would you want to include restrooms in a story?”

“Why indeed?” the inquisitive vixen responds salaciously... and, at this point, maybe we should describe her. Plug in your wife, girlfriend -- heck, switch roles and plug in your boyfriend -- plug in a model from the dailies, or one of those skins we’ve talked about. For me, she’s an old school hippy type. I like those worn jeans, barefoot...

“And pregnant?” she inquires.

“NO!” and after I’ve calmed down a bit, you might notice that I obviously like them a little free spirited as well.

“Outta da control you’d mean,” one of the many Charlies who have followed us here pipes in.

“Yep,” but back to her description. Killer body -- whatever that might mean -- peasant blouse -- equally as vague -- with long hair -- chose the color, I’ll go with sandy blonde -- and for jewelry a necklace, small earrings, maybe a leather bracelet or something in her hair, and a silver toe ring.

“Oh, you’ve just painted the picture,” she says sarcastically. “You sure you’re not Picasso?”

“Oohh, dat good pun.”

“She be’d cleber.”

We will go on, and leave the girl -- and quite possibly the audience -- to figure out what that means... but the word the girl leaves me hanging. “You need a name.”

“You’ve already decided.”

The exasperated artist takes off his headset, and wipes his face in despair, as he guides his ever growing party...

“We bring da friends.”

Nadia is unsure. “I mean if it’s OK.”

“Just try not to talk over the thoughts in my mind,” and I wonder if you need to know just how hard it was to push Lane out of the scene at this particular juncture.

“We don’t need her. It’s just you and me... lover,” the girl insists as she plays with L-word -- trying it out. “Hey, I’ve got a name now!” she adds as she also experiments with her anger circuits -- just to make sure her emotional registers are all up and running.

“What I was trying to say,” the dreamer points out, “is that what I had decided was that we would do a sketch, a routine, a bit... You know, have a conversation in which we would figure out a name for you.”

“Oh,” she says, taking a seat in a booth on the upper level -- as if the location could possibly matter -- of the pizza place.

“OK,” she continues. “How about Eileen?”

“You’re not supposed to start with that name.”

“Why not? It’s the name you decided on.”

“I decided we’d have a conversation.”

“We’re having a conversation.”

“In which we would decide your name.”

“Which is Eileen... Look, I was right there in the egg with you when you made the decision.”

“Fine. I’ll just have the conversation myself. How about a name like Ivory or Star?”

“How about not. My name is Eileen... besides you’ve already used Ivory and Star for other characters in other dreams. It just gets confusing to both you and the audience if you repeat names.”

“How about if we name you after a constellation?” the dreamer continues -- doggedly insisting on using his previously prepared material.

“You mean like Ares?”

“Ares sounds too masculine. How about Arial?”

“Its not a constellation... besides it’s tagged all over the place as a mermaid name.”

“Really?”

“Yeah. Duh? Really. You did the Server search yourself. Arial equals mermaid. You’ll have every compiler in creation giving me fins in no time if you name me Arial.” The girl pauses -- overlooks the outdated, generic narrative label -- and tries out a gambit to see if she can lay the present topic to rest. “So, the name is Eileen... right lover?”

Not quite at ease yet, the artist notes hesitantly, “I knew a girl named Eileen once.”

“I don’t think the two of us have a lot in common.”

“You sure?”

“You knew her in nursery school. It was a long time ago. She’s moved on. You should too.”

“But is it a clean name?”

“What do you remember about her?” ((((the girl you once knew.))))

“Her name was Eileen.”

“If that’s all you remember, it’s a clean name.”

“OK,” agrees the dreamer, “Eileen it is.”

“Dat gooder name,” the cobalts all agree as they nod their heads in agreement and dig into the hot, juicy pizza that has just arrived.

“Pizza’s be’d juicy?”

“No talking about narrative calls,” the dreamer reminds them for what must be the millionth time.

“Oh’d right... We’d talkee about da name’d den?”

“Yes.”

“Eet fancy name.”

“Sweeties name.”

“Da girl next door name.”

And then to the befuddled artist who is trying to eat a slice of pizza -- and thereby stay out of the conversation -- a particularly curious cobalt asks, “So you’d two’d be da lobers?”

It’s a good question (from the cobalts point of view) and therefore is worthy of a conversation.

“Day kiss kiss?”

“Da artsistry and da Eileen?”

“Dat no good name... da artsistry.”

“Eet hard to says.”

“Fair enough. Call me Art.”

“Art and Eileen sitting in da tree.”

“Firstee comes da lober’d.”

“Den com’d da marriages.”

“Den com’d da babies in da babies’d carriage.”

“I don’t think we’re going to have kids.”

“Dat how’d da songer go.”

“Truthfully, I don’t even know if Eileen has a future after this scene.”

“Dat cold.”

“He’d lika dat.”

“Lob’d dem and leab’d dem.”

With that I'm going to pull out for a second...

"Stop he'm."

"Hold he'm down."

While the cobalts try to keep me from leaving and are (((therefore))) otherwise engaged, I'm going to revert to a voiceover. Believe it or not, the wrap around story has exploded -- as it usually does. However, if Eileen wants a role, she's going to have to figure out the tie-in on her own... and Gra'gl help her, because I don't know what it is.

What I do know is that before we got sidetracked, we were talking about sex. Like with all things, knock yourself out. Adjust the dials and tabs, and put in whatever (((complementary))) discs you want. For Eileen, I figure an archetype along the lines of girlfriend, wife, or mistress would be appropriate... but it will never be consummated.

As to the cobalts sex life, they are amorphous horde creatures. There are a certain number of them and if one should die -- bloody unlikely in this tale -- but if one should die, another will simply walk in from off screen.

"What he'd mean to say is he'd no give us no dingle dangles."

"Eet no fair."

They could go on complaining about this for a long time.

"We'd be'd happy to."

"Da Art be unfairs."

"Eberbody know'd da Charlie be sexy..." He wags his body about and gives a jiggy dance for emphasis.

"But Charlie hab'd no tingy to be sexy wit."

Well then. That's that. We can move on then.

"We no move on."

"Dis tingy important."

Regardless, the cobalts are sexless. If you want something else, it's on you.

Nadia and the gutter fairies have some sort of intertwining thing going on with G'narsh. Don't ask me the details -- I'm not

saying -- but I am quite certain that something is going on there. Plug in your favorite disk and let the compiler work out the details.

When Lane comes onto the scene, I am sure that everyone's relationship with G'narsh will be a bit more... out in the open and on the table. Want more of a hint than that? Plug in a disc. Want a suggestion? Maybe go onto the Inter Server, find out my pseudonyms, and locate any of the discs that I've put out staring scantily clad, four armed beauties from the beyond. This really isn't a recommendation, but if this tale is too MM for your tastes and if you're looking for something a little more disgusting, perverted, and/or evil... well, I'm sure you can find the appropriate call (for your compiler) if you do a little research -- and then again, maybe you won't.

And with all of that being said, I believe it is now time to return to the main sequence. I hope I've made it clear how diffuse, vague, and elusive a call can actually be. In reality, censorship and community standards often make dreams more fun... because your mind is more twisted than mine, or at least if you do the twisting and turning on your own, all those hairpin turns will seem smooth and natural -- unlike say a forced metaphor for instance.

I also hope you've noticed how a little dialogue can expand what is, in truth, a few small, simple ideas into a several fun, enjoyable, fast paced clicks. But, as it always is with these things, it is now time to go to the opposite extreme and condense an entire disc worth of material -- the substantive plot of the G'narsh legend -- into a concise outline form, much like a school primer. The ideas may come quickly, and, at times, may even be a little bit sketchy, but I'm planning on going over all of this information at least twice more in at least two different ways, so no fear. It's not like you're going to be tested or anything.

G'narsh 101

Professor Art stands with his back to the class as he writes his name on the blackboard. While he does this, a paper airplane goes

flying by. He watches distractedly as it floats across the room and sails out the window. Picking up one of those wooden pointer sticks off of his desk...

“He’d got da weapons!” one of the cobalts cries out and the lot of them dive under their chairs.

“It’s not a weapon,” the Prof points out as he bends the rubber safety tip on the front of the pointer back and forth.

“Eet look like da weapon,” another cobalt insists as he crawls away from the teacher who, at this point, is ignoring the Charlies and instead walking through the rows of desks filled with students -- characters from this disc and whatever personal favorites you might have.

The class is packed, Prof Art being a student body favorite. Once Art gets to the back of the room, he stops in front of Doug -- a clean cut football star of impressive size -- who is obviously a ne’er-do-well seeing as how he is sitting in the back of the room and all.

The Prof pokes the delinquent athlete -- who is busy trying to pretend that he is a serious student -- in the chest with his pointy stick.

“See’d,” a cobalt insists as he slinks back towards his chair, “we’d told you’d it was da weapon.”

The cobalts and their antics are there for color and not to be focused on too long in this particular scene, so the Prof ignores them as he pokes Doug gratuitously in the chest a few more times before he swats him about his head until he tires of this as well and then motions to the front of the room with the stick. “No throwing airplanes. To the front of the class with you.”

“I didn’t throw the airplane,” the troubled teen dubiously insists. “It came from the other side of the room. How could it have been me?”

The professor waits patiently while the attendee makes his case -- he doesn’t want to call what is essentially a warm body a student after all -- and then responds with the sort of close minded authority tenured professors are famous for, “I’m not discussing

this with you, I'm telling you. Troublemakers sit in front. Now move it!"

"But I'm far sighted," the sport-o with the attitude problem responds. "I'll never see the blackboard from there."

This being perhaps the most ridiculous thing the teacher has ever heard, he swats the belligerent youth masquerading as a scholar across the face again. "Move it! Now!"

While Doug is busy changing seats, Art admires the aerodynamic characteristics of another half dozen paper airplanes that go sailing by. Some do loop de loops, some do barrel rolls, and some return in long sweeping curves back to the desk of the recalcitrant elf -- Stef'fan and/or Stephen -- who is making them. Don't mind him, he's just upset that he isn't dead... Well, not so much upset that he isn't dead, as he is angry that he continues to be alive and therefore in a world that he has never properly prepared for. It's a long story, but we've still got 90 clicks to go, so maybe we'll work in an explanation somewhere.

Ignoring Mi'lay's brother for now, the Prof decides that at half past the hour they have waited long enough for any stragglers to walk in and it is time to start the day's lesson -- a quick overview of the G'narsh legend.

"Good," the professor begins, "if we are all ready then, will someone hit the lights?"

"He'd just asking for da trouble-ees," a Charlie observes as he flicks the switch, but no one seems to take the cue. The class is almost eerily silent as the first of the old fashioned slides lights up the pull down projection screen that now covers the blackboard.

Act I - Raid on Elvin Home

In which G'narsh rapes, kills, and murders the inhabitants of a small elvin hamlet.

"Oh'd, we'd get our smack-down on," a cobalt points out happily.

“Yes,” Art agrees. “Raid on Elvin Home is the scene in which G’narsh, Lane, and the cobalts show their evil side.”

“We’d not ebil.”

“Uh huh...” Professor Art, or Art as he prefers having the young ladies in the class call him, slams his rod of command, or, er... his little pointy stick down on Doug’s desk. “Do we have problem Mr. Doug.”

“I told you, I’m far sighted. I can’t see the slides. I was just asking Eileen what they said.”

“They’re slides. They don’t talk,” Art replies haughtily, happy to be able to cross another gag off of his checklist, as he hits the magic button and moves us on to the next slide.

Act II - A Rude Awakening

(a.k.a. Sleeping Beauty)

In which Mi’lay wakes from a terrible dream of portent... yada, yada. Bottom line, lot’s of elves and fey die in the war and Mi’lay gets to experience it all first hand in her dreams.

“What week are we going to do that one on? I think I might be sick,” a beautiful young elvin girl asks. She is drop dead gorgeous, unbelievable sexy, and pretty much the girl of Art’s dreams (or, OK, one of them anyhow, with 7,200 discs on call, it’s pretty hard to settle on just the one), but what is perhaps more amazing is that all of this comes through even though she is wearing a heavy winter coat, a scarf, fuzzy hat, and mittens. So really, she’s nothing more than a pile of clothes, but man, underneath it all, you just know...

“That’s my sister you’re talking about,” Stef’fan manages to grumble, but he doesn’t even bother to raise his head or open his eyes from the nap he is taking.

Ah, if only more students were as serious about their studies as Stef’fan obviously is, but the teacher is torn from this reverie by a question from one of the Charlies.

“Dis be on’d da test-ee?”

“No,” and then after a pause Art adds, “There won’t be a test.”

“No test-ee?”

“How’d you’d know’d what gradee we gets?”

“I’m thinking A’s across the board... except for Stef’fan and Doug, of course,” and then realizing this doesn’t give him enough leverage over all of the cute girls in the class, Art quickly adds, “Though there will be some individual project requirements... Excuse me,” Art says inquiringly of the cute girl in the front row. I believe we’ve already established that her name is Eileen, and have gone over her appearance, but that was perhaps too cursory. So we should perhaps point out that, in spite of a school policy to the contrary, she is still walking around barefoot with nothing but a silver ring on one of her toes. Anyway, after taking in her beautiful body and tantalizing good looks one more time, Art asks the girl -- a.k.a. Eileen -- “Are we passing notes?” It is one of those rhetorical questions student so love and as he says this, Art snatches the note she was passing to Doug away from her. “I think I’m going to need to see you after class,” Art casually informs the nubile young coed in what is certainly a blatant abuse of power as he posts the note (hopefully one of those salacious love notes full of juicy details) onto the screen. Alas it is not. It is merely the next slide, but hey! What a segue.

Act III - Betrayal in the Forest

In which Stef’fan offers G’narsh immunity and a king’s ransom in exchange for switching sides in the war, but Lane chances upon the secret meeting and so G’narsh has to kill Stef’fan in order to keep his cover.

“See, it’s right there in your notes,” Stef’fan whines. “By all rights I should be dead,”

Ignoring the crybaby of an elf, Prof Art inquires of Eileen, “Where did you get that note from? I mean, I hadn’t put the slide up yet.”

“I pulled your notes off of the Inter Server before class.”

Smiling she adds, “I’m a good student, teachers pet, and all that.”

“Hey’d she’d ruin da curve.”

“You’re getting an A remember?” Art reminds the cobalts.

“Oh’d yea’d.”

“Yippies.”

“Et be firstee times we’d get da A’s.”

“Charlies throw’d da party.”

“OK, you do that. In the meantime I’ll show the next slide.”

Act IV - The Death of Xavier

(a.k.a. Betrayal on Victory Hill)

G’narsh kills Xavier, his commanding officer, and the leader of the forces of evil... because there is no quicker or surer route to the Good Life than killing your superiors.

“Okay’d,” a cobalt announces as he ignores the slide and its obvious revolutionary -- and/or sarcastic -- message, and stands on the teacher’s desk as he gets to the heart of what’s important.

“Okay’d, da Charlies bring’d da pizza to da parties...”

“But eberbodied else’d need to bring’d som’ting too,” another one finishes for the first as he passes a pot luck sign up sheet around.

“One time’d Charlie go to potluck and all’d anybody bring’d was da paper platies.”

“Dat no good.”

“How many’d paper platies you’d need?”

Ever the focused one, Art asks, “Can we get on with the class then?”

“You’d say’d dat like you’d mad...”

“Like da Charlies interuptees some ting important...”

“But dat parties come sooner’d dan you’d tink.”

“Excellent point... Oh, and by the way excellent reference to the next slide. I don’t think I could have introduced it better myself.”

“Tank you.”

“Like we’d always’d said...”

“We helping.”

Act V - The Victory Dance (a.k.a. A Hero’s Welcome)

True to their word the elves make a hero of G’narsh and give him the key to the kingdom. He gets to dance with the lovely Mi’lay... and they might even fall in love with each other or something.

“I don’t think an elvin princess would fall in love with a troll,” the ah... pile of winter clothes from next to Stef’fan points out. “He killed my brother... I mean, G’narsh killed Mi’lay’s brother. She would hardly fall in love with the brute.”

“I believe the exact wording of the bargain G’narsh struck with Stef’fan was that G’narsh would be a hero,” the teacher explains as he diligently defends his carefully thought out thesis. I mean, if he was wrong, he’d have to redo those slides, and he doesn’t have time for that, what with grading non-existent papers and taking select coeds on extensive field trips... So it is what it is, and if certain elves can’t live with it... Well, that’s why rigs come with control knobs. Besides, “Certainly it would be fitting for an elvin princess to fall in love with a hero, especially one who had single handedly ended a war and thereby saved the lives of countless creatures and elves.”

“Saving the world from yourself does not a hero make...”

“Eet no matter,” the Charlies say jumping in to save the day.

“Eet party times.”

And with that announcement, and the arrival of the pizza it is time for that community college mainstay, the end of semester

potluck... which in this case we'll have in the middle of the first class -- perhaps in and of itself providing an outstanding example of why Prof Art is so popular among the student body.

"Oh, dis when da girlee dance wit da boyee," a Charlie points out.

"I'm not dancing with anyone," the pile of rags calls out from the corner... and with a comment like that -- just out of nowhere -- you've got to wonder if she isn't just a wee bit full of herself.

"Come on Doug," Eileen urges as she drags the sport-o to his feet. "We can do the dance thing."

"I... I don't know how to dance."

"It's easy. Just close your eyes and let your body guide you."

They are grinding perhaps a bit too much... She is grinding perhaps a bit too much.

"Enough! Party over!" the Prof shouts out abruptly. "Time to get back to work."

"But we's barely got da streamers up," the Charlies complain.

"Yeah, well... put the pizza and food up here on my desk... and we can have the potluck while I run through the rest of the slides, but NO DANCING!"

"No Charlie jiggle?"

"No gettee down and boogies?"

Ignoring the cobalts, Art focuses on what is important.

"Unhand that girl!"

"What? I was just..."

And then putting together a solution to this particular dilemma in his head -- i.e. What to do about the Doug problem? -- the Prof quickly adds, "I think you need to go down to the principle's office and explain to him what you've done."

"I don't think they have principle offices in college," Eileen points out.

"Not even community colleges?"

"No."

“They must have deans or something,” Art insists. “Go talk to your adviser. Tell him you’re being a nuisance and see what he suggests.”

“But how can I learn this stuff if you kick me out of class?” Doug complains.

“You can read the last few slides from the door,” suggests professor Art -- ever the campus favorite, ever the fair and impartial teacher, guider of young minds, and molder of the next generation. Happy with this compromise and proud of his quick thinking, Art the Enlightener puts up the next slide.

Act VI - G'narsh the Wanderer

You know he wanders. Looking for filler? Think you’re going to come up 20 clicks short? Then this is where you pad it out. Or if you’ve been looking for a place to try out a new character, locale, or plot line, then look no further.

“Don’t you think you’re being too hard on Doug,” Eileen asks in defense of the troublemaking jock once he is gone.

“NO!” Mi’lay answers from the corner. “I hope he rots in hell... I mean, maybe he just needs a little time away from school, some time to be by himself, and with a little counseling and guidance... I just hope he finds himself.”

“I don’t see why he gets to be the hero,” Stef’fan sulks. “I’m the one who dies, or was supposed to die anyway. If anyone should be the hero, it should be me.”

“Don’t worry,” Mi’lay -- I mean the pile of rags with a voice like honey -- assures her brother. “I vow to hunt him down and avenge you.”

“Really,” Stef’fan replies sounding almost excited at the prospect. “How are you going to do that?”

“I’m going to sleep with him,” the delusional, self important elvin vixen informs him.

“Oh yeah, that’ll show him,” Stef’fan sarcastically agrees. “Yep, I remember when I was a haughty, self righteous, pain in the neck elvin prince, and I’d gone too far in belittling one of the many maids in waiting that dotted the palace grounds. Why if they slept with me -- even in like a pointless, meaningless, only physical with no emotional or spiritual connection type way -- why then, when it was done, I always felt like I’d been had. You know, taught a lesson.”

“It won’t be like that,” Mi’lay assure him. “Show him the next slide teach.”

Act VII - Reunited at Last
(a.k.a. The Third Betrayal)

Like some kind of lovesick suicide bomber, Mi’lay casts a dweomer on herself and when she and G’narsh consummate their love she blows both of them to kingdom come.

“Yeah, well that’s one story,” Stef’fan grumbles. “The way I heard it is that when dad found out you ran off with a troll... I mean he’s a troll. What can you see in him?”

“He bested you in personal combat,” Mi’lay says as she tries to explain the countervailing point of view, but she is immediately cut off as her brother puts forth the more reasonable interpretation.

“He stabbed me in the back.”

“You’re an elf. How does an oaf of a troll sneak up on an elf?”

“We were working out a deal, a settlement. You know, what it would take to buy him out, and forge a peace.”

“Actually, some folks around the palace say you were trying to sell us out, cut a deal for yourself.”

“That’s not true!” and for the first time, Stef’fan is truly full of life as he jumps to his feet ready to do whatever it takes to deny (((or defame))) the malicious charge.

“Of course not,” Mi’lay reassures him soothingly. “You died a hero for the cause.”

“Damn straight!”

“Due all honor and ceremony, which that remembrance entails.”

“As it should be,” Stef’fan agrees with as much arrogance as an elf can muster -- which I should point out is quite a bit.

“Well, G’narsh was declared a hero as well... due all the honor, privilege, and deference of a natural born...”

“But he’s still a troll,” Stef’fan says reiterating the fact for what must be the millionth time. G’narsh is a troll. He has two heads. Did anyone forget this in the last 5 clicks?

“He is a troll,” Mi’lay accents -- never one to pass up beating a dead horse, “and when daddy found out...”

“Ise confused,” a cobalt cries out in despair as he interrupts the heated exchange between brother and sister and tries to make sense of his lecture notes -- keeping legible lecture notes not being one of the things cobalts are known for.

“Did she kill da G’narsh?”

“Or did her daddies?” Charlie asks.

“It depends,” Prof Art replies.

“You’d hear’d dat a lot in deese advanced courseys.”

“But dis da 101?” another cobalt complains.

“You care to explain this Nadia?” the professor asks.

“Who me? How would I know? I’m part of that wandering G’narsh filler section. I still don’t know how I got into this dream.”

“Anybody else then?” the professor asks again opening the floor to comments.

“Does it have something to do with Shadow, with G’narsh being a Son of Chaos?”

“Close, but not quite,” Art assures the luscious Mi’lay who has calmed down some since her exchange with her brother.

“Anyone else want to take a stab at it?”

Lane looks over her notes. “It has something to do with the next slide. I can figure that much out. Something about the revolving nature of a circular repeating tale...”

“Right,” Art agrees as he flashes the last slide.

Postscript - The Eternal Dance
(a.k.a. G’narsh’s Rays)

The legend and mythos of G’narsh originate as a primitive and pre-historical explanation for a rare meteorological effect known as G’narsh’s Rays. These rays can be observed in the night sky during a full lunar eclipse if said eclipse is viewed from the meridian of the moon’s orbit when ice crystals are present in the upper atmosphere. The rays begin as a chromatic, multi-colored halo surrounding the moon, and then, as the eclipse progresses, the halo doubles -- i.e. it splits in two, much like how a rainbow sometimes appears as two nested bows. Finally, as the moon is fully obscured by the Earth’s shadow, the halos completely separate into two distinct rings, which fall to opposite sides of the horizon and the sky is filled with an otherworldly display of color and light. All in all, it is highly reminiscent of the Northern Lights and is often confused with this phenomenon... though its actual cause, nature, and appearance are very distinct and different.

“G’narsh’s Rays are said to be particularly brilliant to anyone gifted with moonsight... and seeing the rays in person verges on the spiritual,” Art further explains as he continues his lecture where the slides leave off. “You wear glasses don’t you Mi’lay?”

When she does not reply her brother answers for her, “She wears contacts. You know how vain girls can be.”

“Especially elvin girls,” Art agrees -- as if he knows -- and then turns to address the rest of the class. “So, there you have it. The G’narsh Mythos explained in eight easy lessons.”

“I still have a question,” Lane says as she raises a hand, or two, or three, or four, and looks over her notes. “So G’narsh and Mi’lay are trapped in this eternal revolving story.”

“As the moon goes through an eclipse, it is said the story is repeated... somewhere in some world,” Art accents as he gives credence to the popular interpretation of the mythos.

“So where does that leave Stef’fan and me,” Lane asks. “I mean, are we just stuck? Are we just filler? We are part of the original mythos, after all, aren’t we?”

“I think what Lane is asking class, is if G’narsh is the representation of the rays and Mi’lay is an agent of the moon... a lunar elf if you will... then what does that say about Stef’fan and Lane themselves.”

“Yes. Exactly,” Lane agrees.

“I have no idea,” replies Art... short for artist, a.k.a. the creator, the disc master, the motive force himself... “I have absolutely no idea,” he flippantly repeats as he turns off the projector and goes to grab a slice of pizza for himself only to find that there is none left.

“We’se sorry.”

“We’se hungry.”

“We’se go get more?” Charlie asks hopefully, but it is not to be.

“No!” Lane replies angrily -- at the cobalts for interrupting and at Art for his casual dismissal of a question which is clearly dear to her heart... and soul... and very being. “What do you mean you have no idea?”

“I don’t know. Is that so hard to understand?” Art replies once again totally unconcerned about the answer.

“How can you not know?”

“What do you mean how can I not know. You’re Lane and you don’t know. I’m not even part of the mythos. How the heck should I know?”

“But that’s different?”

“No it’s not. You’re in the same position as Eileen. She’s got to work out her side story... and if you want your place in the mythos to be fleshed out, you need to do that on your own as well.”

“You know as well as everybody else here that you’re planning on helping Eileen... personally.”

“Am I?” the dreamer asks innocently. “Well then, maybe you should take your cue from her. We’ve got a little field trip planned... a little extra curricular activity... and all that. There’s always room for one more.”

“I’m bound to G’narsh. You know that.”

“Well then, there it is. You’re the one that wanted to go to college. Crack open the books. Do some homework.”

“Does dis mean classee be ober?” Charlie asks. It is an innocent question, but enough to set off a stampede for the doors as the majority of students leave... never to be seen again... happy with their As.

Once the dust settles, the only ones who remain in the room are the good students...

“And da ones be hoping for more’d pizza.”

“Yea’d, we’d get more pizza or nottee?”

“I think the reason we are having this after class discussion is because his holiness the creator wants to add some commentary about the process.”

“That’s very perceptive of you Eileen,” Professor Art -- just call me Art -- says as he wraps his arms around the young nubile coed’s waist.

“Just saying my lines,” she replies distractedly. “You sure you don’t want to come with us Lane?”

“I couldn’t... It would be out of character... I mean, it would kill G’narsh and then he would kill me.”

“Who knows, maybe he’ll work it out for you,” Eileen quips referring to Art and then asks the dreamer directly, “So what did you want to say?”

“Well, we’ve done three clicks and I haven’t given any real creative advice...”

“And?”

“And... and notice how little description Stef’fan got. Go back down into the code, look at the calls and see how little is there. Now some folks are going to have noticed that right away, but for others they may be surprised to learn that beyond emotional tags, all we have is brother and elf, and not much more. Also, if you are really interested in the process, you might want to play this scene -- or any scene you happen to like -- over and over in rapid succession until you can pull out of the dream and bore down into the calls, impulses, and directions directly. And then, I guess the last item I was planning on doing was a blow by blow commentary on how the outline could be abused -- by inserting more comments along the lines of how Act VI - G’narsh the Wanderer is the perfect place in which to add filler -- but somehow all those recommendations slipped away, which probably means inserting them at the time wasn’t such a good idea. But because I was planning on it, it’s still in my mind and I can’t quite decide if I want to include that material and rehash the outline again in the next section or not.”

“The outline again? Sounds boring,” Eileen grimaces... and there you have the decision. All strung out and coded for you in real time if you wish to dig through it. So I think we’ll skip the second outline and try to include whatever material we had planned for that into the next section in some other way, and move on in the meantime.

“So time for the field trip?” Eileen asks with a sigh trying to bring as much energy to the question as possibly, but somehow failing to find much enthusiasm.

“Yep,” Prof Art agrees eagerly with enough excitement for both of them. “Time to earn that A.”

“Whatever,” Eileen replies in that heartfelt way that truly disinterested women sometimes have. “You sure you don’t want to come with?”

But Lane cannot. “I don’t see how,” admits the four armed lady from the courts of Chaos.

“OK then, time to move. We’re going to nest the next section one, two, maybe three layers deep... We might even put some effort into keeping the divisions clear.”

“You’ll never do it,” Eileen teases as she livens up a little.

“That may be, but it’s time to give it a go.”

“We’s e going on da road trippees den?”

“Yippies!”

“Charlie calls shotgun.”

“Hey’s I get shotgunnee.”

“I’s e calls eet firstees.”

“The girl gets shotgun,” Art ever the gentleman informs the assemblage of childlike cobalts.

“Eet be dat type of wedding?” Charlie muses as he scratches his head and tries to put it all together.

“She no look preggy.”

“Beside you’d no married...”

“How she’d be preggy if you no’d married?”

“Looks like you’re going to have plenty of company,” Lane smiles as she consoles Eileen.

“You sure you don’t want to come with?” Eileen urges... begs... pleads. The prospect of being all alone with the dreamer and a dozen dimwitted lizard-children does not sound appealing to her.

“Don’t look at me,” Lane laughs. “I’d be happy to join you two on your trip, but if I’m going to come along, he’s the one who has to work out the details and the rationale, not me,” and with that the scene will fade away, but I will not disappear completely until I make one final observation. What separates a dreamer from a

dreamee, what separates the two sides of the disc, what separates the creator from the consumer is that the creator will spend the next two days reviewing, reliving, and reworking the last three clicks -- three and a half now actually and probably will expand to four before I am through (and that it did, we're at 4.1, 4.5, and counting).

Either way, whatever you decide ((((to stay and work through the (endless) editing at my side or to cut your losses and move on)))), I'll see you on the other side of the hard break in two seconds or two days.

And now, all that is left to do is pull out, fade to black, go to blue screen, and after a moments delay load it up from scratch... outline and all.

--- HARD BREAK ---

--- END PART 1 ---

G'narsh

The Troll, The Myth, The Legend

(a work of fiction)

by

Kevin Stillwater

P1

of

P1, P2-A, P2-B, P3-A, P3-B, P3-C, P3-D, P3-E, P4

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G'narsh - P1