

SAVE VS NERD

by
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A basement. Summer of 2003. Sitting around a table are CALVIN and JEREMY, both in their late 20s. They are playing Dungeons and Dragons.

CALVIN

(in his dungeon master voice)

You are crossing the turgid, muck-covered swamps of Semazen, hacking a path as the drooping, weepy flora hinders your vision. You are walking lightly to avoid sinking in the mud pits and quicksands surrounding you. The sun is setting just beyond the horizon and ...

(he rolls a die)

Oh no! Random encounter!

JEREMY

I wish you'd stop telling me when I have a random encounter. It ruins the randomness of it.

CALVIN

Well I have to tell you something.

JEREMY

Just say it's an encounter.

CALVIN

I'm sure you would've seen it coming anyway, Barden the Ranger.

JEREMY

You didn't even let me roll Spot!

CALVIN

You can't spot random...

Calvin checks a book, rolls a die, then checks the book again. As he does:

JEREMY

I *could*, if you would let me try.

CALVIN

You are flanked by three dire ... hedgehogs.

JEREMY

Hedgehogs?!

CALVIN

It's random.

JEREMY

Hedgehogs don't live in swamps!

CALVIN

Sure they do.

JEREMY

No they don't! When have you seen a hedgehog in the swamp?

CALVIN

I've never been to a swamp.

JEREMY

Discovery Channel?

CALVIN

You know we don't have cable.

JEREMY

Come on, man. The *logic* of it.

CALVIN

They're hard to see, 'cause they ... burrow.

JEREMY

Burrow?! In quicksand?!

CALVIN

We should keep moving--

JEREMY

This is a gross negligence on your part, Dungeon Master!

CALVIN

But there's a chart in the book--

JEREMY

I don't care what the chart says! Random encounters are still bound by their geographical location!

CALVIN

Not necessarily!

JEREMY

Where else could they have come from?

CALVIN

Maybe wizards put them there!

JEREMY

Calvin! You can't keep explaining everything away with wizards. Wizards aren't dumb, they wouldn't put a hedgehog in a swamp!

CALVIN

Maybe they're doing it to throw you off track.

JEREMY

A hedgehog red herring? You're insane.

CALVIN

I may be insane, but I'm the Dungeon Master. I make the rules.

JEREMY

No, you *follow* the rules.

CALVIN

Can we continue playing? You're being a negative force tonight.

JEREMY

I am not!

CALVIN

I even asked if you wanted to be the Dungeon Master so we could continue our Rape and Pillage campaign on the twin moons of Melchior, but you refused.

JEREMY

I'm *trying* to level up Barden!

CALVIN

Stop complaining then!

JEREMY

Okay, fine! Let's fight giant earthworms in Antarctica, I don't care!

(beat)

Well?

CALVIN

I'm not starting until you apologize.

JEREMY

I'm not apologizing for your ineptitude.

CALVIN

Apologize!

JEREMY

No!

CALVIN

If Steven was here you'd apologize.

JEREMY

Ohhh no you didn't.

CALVIN

I did.

JEREMY

Do not bring Steven into this.

CALVIN
Admit it.

JEREMY
I would not!

CALVIN
You put Thomas down, you put me down, but you don't put Steven down.

JEREMY
I do not!

CALVIN
It's true. And then he left and ever since you have been a cranky poop face poop. He's coming back, you know.

JEREMY
He can visit his grandpa's cabin for the rest of his life, for all I care. It doesn't make any difference.
(stands)
Look, it's impossible to play a two-person game. I don't think Thomas will come back, and Steven definitely isn't coming back ... the League is useless with just two people.

CALVIN
We could recruit...

JEREMY
Who? That jock down the street who threw my copy of *Stranger in a Strange Land* into a puddle and shouted, "I got your 'strange land' right here!" while grabbing his ... phallic area.

CALVIN
He also said it was written by Robert Heineken.

JEREMY
No one else likes Dungeons and Dragons, Calvin. Let's face it. The League is dead.

CALVIN
That's not true!

JEREMY
We might as well pack our things and start playing Magic: The Gathering.

CALVIN
(genuinely shocked)
No!

JEREMY
I'll get my cards.

CALVIN
Jeremy, stop!

Jeremy heads for the stairs.

JEREMY
This is indeed a time of troubles, Calvin!

STEVEN enters from the top of the stairs, dressed nicely. He is carrying a cardboard box.

JEREMY & CALVIN
STEVEN!

JEREMY
We were just talking about you!

STEVEN
Hey. What are you guys doing down here?

CALVIN
What do you think? Playing. Thomas would be here as well, but he is at the mall with his mother, buying pants.

JEREMY
So he *says*, at least.

STEVEN
Great.

Behind Steven comes LAUREN, his date. She is dressed casually and is holding a glass of lemonade.

LAUREN
Are these your friends?
(to Jeremy)
Hi!

Jeremy stares, unresponsive.

LAUREN (cont'd)
Whose house is this?
(beat)
Hello?

STEVEN
Calvin. It's his parents house.

LAUREN
Oh! Your mom makes very good lemonade, Calvin.

Calvin just stares.

JEREMY
Who are you?

LAUREN
I'm Lauren!

STEVEN
We're on a date.

JEREMY
A ... date?

STEVEN
Well, we're going to be on a date, when I'm finished here.

JEREMY
Did you meet her on the internet?

STEVEN
No, Jeremy, I met her at the cabin.

CALVIN
Full of magic, this cabin is.

STEVEN
(sifting through the box)
We're about to go to the movies, but I thought I'd come by
and drop off some things first...

LAUREN
What are you guys doing?

JEREMY
We're, uh, playing D&D.

LAUREN
What's that?

STEVEN
Dungeons and Dragons. It's a stupid game.

JEREMY
Excuse me?

LAUREN
Oh! Is this that game about the dragons and stuff?

CALVIN
Yes.

JEREMY
Hence the title.

LAUREN
That was totally banned in my middle school. The nerds had to
play it out in the park after class.

STEVEN
Yeah, it's pretty ridiculous.

LAUREN
How do you play?

*Steven starts handing items back to
Jeremy and Calvin from the box.*

STEVEN
Jeremy, this is your lightsaber ... Here, Calvin, your copy
of the *Deities and Demigods* book ...

CALVIN
Thank you?

JEREMY
Whoa, whoa, what are you doing?

STEVEN
I'm giving you your stuff back.

JEREMY
You never give stuff back. That's why we call you the Black
Hole.

STEVEN
Well, now I am.

JEREMY
What's going on?

STEVEN
I've got better things to do now.

CALVIN
Really? Like what?

STEVEN
Like hanging out with Lauren here.

LAUREN
Oh, stop.

STEVEN
It's true! She is amazing.

LAUREN
No I'm not.

JEREMY
Steven ... what is happening to you?

STEVEN
Well, you guys, there comes a time when a man has to stop and
realize where he is in life.

And while I was at my grandpa's cabin I did just that. I stopped and I realized that I spend way too much time down here, playing this stupid game. At the coast I found a life of my own, outside, in the real world. And I also found Lauren, and we are happy together. Right honey?

LAUREN

I guess so!

JEREMY

You found a life? What does that mean?

STEVEN

It means I'm done. I'm leaving, Jeremy.

JEREMY

Leaving what?

STEVEN

This! I'm leaving this!

JEREMY

What's "this"?

STEVEN

(gesturing to the room)

This! All of this!

JEREMY

The basement?! I don't get it!

STEVEN

I'm leaving the League, stupid!

Pause.

CALVIN

You're leaving us?

JEREMY

What kind of nonsense is this? Since when did you get all high and mighty?

STEVEN

I'm not high and mighty.

CALVIN

You do seem a bit high and mighty.

STEVEN

I'm not! I just found a better life. Out there.

JEREMY

Out where? Who are you, Carl Sagan?

LAUREN
 Maybe I should go into the other room?

STEVEN
 No, stay, Lauren, please. It's very important that you're here.

LAUREN
 But I don't play.

STEVEN
 It's not about you playing, honey.
(puts Lauren in front of him)
 This is my girlfriend, fellas.

LAUREN
 Girlfriend?

Beat.

STEVEN
 This is a girl I *like*, fellas. I like her a lot. And now we're going to the movies. We're going to drink overpriced sodas and smuggle in candy. We are going to have a good time.

CALVIN
 You can't leave! You've got Malachi!

STEVEN
 I don't "have" anything here anymore.

CALVIN
 But surely you will not let your Paladin Malachi fall into the deep dark abyss of our Dead Characters Filing Cabinet!

STEVEN
 I'm sorry guys, I'm through.

LAUREN
 You have a Paladin? What does that mean?

STEVEN
 It's nothing. We should go.

JEREMY
 It's a character he used to play.

LAUREN
 A character? What do you mean?

STEVEN
 Nothing. He means nothing.

JEREMY

(with reverence)

He assumed the grand-yet-humble persona of Malachi the Half-Elf Paladin in our Dungeons and Dragons campaign entitled, "The Calamitous Confines of Dr. Migwig Mittlejitter."

CALVIN

Migwig was a gnome.

JEREMY

Hence the weird name.

CALVIN

(also reverent)

He slew many a dragon, and descended many a dungeon.

JEREMY

He was the first player to successfully steal the Eye of Jobrah from the endless Pit of Lorgoria.

CALVIN

He founded the White Brotherhood!

JEREMY

Which sounds kind of racist.

CALVIN

But it's not!

JEREMY

He was, without a doubt, the finest Dungeons and Dragons character the League ever had.

CALVIN

Even better than Ragthorg the Unbearable.

JEREMY

And Ragthorg was ... exquisite.

CALVIN

But unbearable.

STEVEN

Guys. Stop.

LAUREN

(to Steven)

That's pretty impressive.

STEVEN

No, it's not, it's stupid.

LAUREN

What was he like?

STEVEN

My character?

JEREMY

He wasn't a jerk, for starters.

CALVIN

He couldn't be, he was Lawful Good.

STEVEN

(to Lauren)

Look, it was a phase of my life, okay? A phase that's long gone now.

LAUREN

Why didn't you tell me you played D&D?

STEVEN

It never came up in conversation. Can we go?

LAUREN

So you're not going to play?

STEVEN

Who said I was going to play?

CALVIN

Come on, Steven, come play!

JEREMY

It's not going to hurt you.

STEVEN

No. I'm through with that. I'm leaving. *We* are leaving. Come on Lauren.

LAUREN

No, I want to watch you play.

STEVEN

Why?

LAUREN

I dunno. I've never seen anyone play D&D before.

CALVIN

Well, have a seat m'lady and we'll help you get started.

Lauren goes to sit.

STEVEN

Whoa, hold on. We've got a movie to see, Lauren.

LAUREN

We can go to a later showing. Sit down! Show me how it's done.

STEVEN

But ... no!

LAUREN

Why not? Are you afraid I'll think you're too nerdy?

STEVEN

It's not that, it's--

LAUREN

Come on then! Sit down! It'll be fun.

CALVIN

I've got your Paladin info in the filing cabinet! Not the Dead Characters Filing Cabinet, of course, but this one, the Potentially Dormant Characters Filing Cabinet. I'll go get it!

Calvin goes to the appropriate cabinet.

STEVEN

I don't want to do this.

LAUREN

Why not?

STEVEN

(rolls up arm sleeve)

Look. I have a tan. I have a *tan*. I've never had a tan before in my life, Lauren. You know why that is? Because I've been *here*, in this basement, all my life. I finally went outside and I like it! I want to go there again!

JEREMY

Steven, if you want to leave the League, that's fine. But the least you could do is have one last game.

CALVIN

A fine idea!

JEREMY

To properly say goodbye to Malachi.

LAUREN

And I can watch!

STEVEN

Well ... fine.

(he goes to sit)

But only because Lauren wants to watch.

LAUREN

That's a poor attitude. It is your hobby isn't it?

CALVIN
Madam, Dungeons and Dragons is not a hobby, it is a lifestyle.

LAUREN
Oh. That's nice.

CALVIN
Here's your info, Steven.

LAUREN
(glancing at the chart)
Level 17. Is that high?

CALVIN
Very high!

JEREMY
Steven's been playing this character for about two years.

LAUREN
Wow! That's a lot of time!

JEREMY
We've had some crazy adventures.

CALVIN
Remember when Malachi traveled to the Spider Courtesan's cavern realm and was seduced by her spidery web boobs?

JEREMY
(to Lauren)
He almost lost his Paladin abilities that night.

LAUREN
Really? Why?

JEREMY
He rolled badly, and was forced to drink from the Spider Queen's seven teats--

CALVIN
(incredulously)
A spider with teats! My goodness.

STEVEN
Can we get started? Please?

LAUREN
Can I be a character?

STEVEN
Lauren...

LAUREN
I want to play!

CALVIN

Uhh ... I'm not sure we have any female characters.

JEREMY

We only had one female player in the League. That was three years ago.

CALVIN

She was a halfling thief.

JEREMY

She was crazy.

CALVIN

She stole all our Mithril Plate Mail.

LAUREN

Oh.

JEREMY

We're a bit leery of the females.

LAUREN

Then I'll just sit and watch--

CALVIN

Wait a minute! What about Lilian Eberhart?

JEREMY

Good call!

LAUREN

Who's that?

Calvin goes to the "Dormant" cabinet.

CALVIN

Only the most beautiful woman in the Three Spires of Abradeen!

JEREMY

Lilian was a character our friend Thomas played back when he was in a weird place in his life.

CALVIN

It's not weird to want to be a girl sometimes, Jeremy.

JEREMY

Whatever.

CALVIN

(handing her some paper)

Here you are. Lilian Eberhart, 15th level elf sorceress.

LAUREN

What does that mean?

CALVIN

It means that magic is inherent in your body. You need no tomes of magic knowledge in order to cast spells.

LAUREN

Oh, good! I think I'll be good at that.

JEREMY

Let's get started then! Calvin, let's move the campaign up to the Swamp Queen.

CALVIN

No dire hedgehogs?

JEREMY

Seriously, Cal.

CALVIN

Okay, okay.

(in his Dungeon Master voice)

You have been traveling for two days, through the humid swamps, before you come upon a large clearing. Toward the other side of the clearing is an enormous tower which appears to be made out of roughly hewn stone and thick green vines.

JEREMY

The Swamp Queen!

CALVIN

Yes ... the Swamp Queen.

JEREMY

Can I see anything?

CALVIN

Roll your spot!

STEVEN

(to Lauren)

This is stupid. Let's go.

LAUREN

No, I want to learn.

STEVEN

And I want to go see the movie.

LAUREN

Will you stop whining?

CALVIN

(to Jeremy)

You see a bony hand sticking out of the swamp about thirty feet away.

JEREMY

All right, I'll warn everyone about possible corpses beneath us.

CALVIN

Before you can do that, you notice the hand move!

JEREMY

Ut oh.

LAUREN

What's ut oh?

JEREMY

Zombies!

CALVIN

Yes! The hand rises and with it rises a terribly grotesque zombie! And five others follow, rising from the mud roughly thirty feet away. When they are at their full height you notice that they appear to be clothed in the King's armor.

JEREMY

She zombified the knights of the king?

CALVIN

Indeed.

LAUREN

Wow, the Swamp Queen is a bitch.

Beat.

CALVIN

The Swamp Queen is very ... evil, indeed.

JEREMY

Are we going to fight now?

CALVIN

We are! Who's got initiative?

(he checks a sheet)

I've got everyone's numbers except for Lauren.

JEREMY

(to Lauren)

Initiative means who goes first. There's a number on your sheet.

LAUREN

Oh. I've got an eighteen. Is that good?

CALVIN

Yes! You go first.

LAUREN
Oh, yay! What do I do?

JEREMY
Tell her, Steven.

STEVEN
I don't want to tell her, Jeremy.

JEREMY
Well she wants to learn. Why not teach your lady friend how to play?

LAUREN
Yeah!

STEVEN
You are a sorceress. That means you can cast spells innately, without having to memorize them beforehand.

LAUREN
And that's ... good?

STEVEN
Yes. That's good.

JEREMY
It has its advantages and disadvantages, but that is a discussion we can table for a different time.

LAUREN
What should I do? Can I fight one of the zombies? Can I shoot a fireball at them?

CALVIN
Sure!

LAUREN
I want to do that!

JEREMY
That's a big spell, Lauren. You might want to try something smaller.

LAUREN
Like what?

CALVIN
May I suggest Magic Missile? It is a tried and true friend of the magic user.

LAUREN
Okay, I'll do that.

JEREMY
Now you roll a d20.

LAUREN
 What's that?

STEVEN
 It's that die that has twenty numbers on it.

LAUREN
 Oh!
(she rolls)
 I rolled a 14.

CALVIN
 Normally I would ask you to add your modifiers, but in this case it doesn't matter. You cast the spell!

LAUREN
 Awesome! Now what? Can I run away?

STEVEN
 No, now you have to roll damage. Take that d4 --

JEREMY
 Die with four numbers on it.

STEVEN
 -- and roll it.

CALVIN
 Five times. She gets five missiles.

LAUREN
 This is complicated!

As she rolls:

STEVEN
 I know, it's complicated and tedious.

JEREMY
 Listen to your blasphemy, Steven. You never would've said that three months ago.

LAUREN
 I got ... eight all together.

CALVIN
 You hit the zombie for eight points of damage!

LAUREN
 Really?

CALVIN
 Indeed!

LAUREN
 What does that mean?

STEVEN
It means we have to hit it some more.

CALVIN
Steven, it's your turn next.

STEVEN
Great. I'm going to remove my armor.

JEREMY
What? Why?

STEVEN
Because I don't want it.

JEREMY
That seems pretty stupid.

STEVEN
Are you going to question me about my motives?

JEREMY
When they endanger the rest of the party, yes.

STEVEN
Trust me, I've got it all under control.

CALVIN
Malachi, your armor has been removed and is laying beside you in a heap of shiny, altruistic plate metal.

STEVEN
Thank you.

CALVIN
Jeremy, you're next.

JEREMY
I'm attacking the zombie closest to me.
(rolls)
Twenty-four.

CALVIN
That's a hit.

JEREMY
(rolls damage)
Eight damage.

CALVIN
Very nice, but not enough for a kill. Now it's the zombies' turn. Unfortunately for them, they are wading through mud and are having a hard time moving.

(he rolls in secret a couple of times)

The zombies next to Lauren and Jeremy both miss.

LAUREN

So I'm not hurt?

CALVIN

You remain unscathed, my lady.

JEREMY

Next round!

LAUREN

Me first, right? Can I shoot missiles again?

JEREMY

You could, but I suggest you cast Mage Armor.

LAUREN

Why?

CALVIN

Wizards and sorcerers are weak, they need extra protection.

LAUREN

Okay. I'll cast that then.

(rolls)

I got a twelve.

CALVIN

Plus modifiers, I'll say it's cast.

LAUREN

So that's all I can do?

CALVIN

Unfortunately, yes. But you're a quick learner! Steven?

STEVEN

I lie down and prostrate myself in front of the zombies.

JEREMY

You gotta be kidding me.

STEVEN

Arms splayed like Jesus on the cross.

JEREMY

Okay, time out. What are you doing?

STEVEN

It's all part of my plan, Jeremy.

JEREMY

What plan? To make a mockery of this game?

STEVEN

Why can't you trust me?

CALVIN

They're zombies, Steven. I suggest you cast Turn Undead.

STEVEN

I think I have a better plan.

JEREMY

Which is?

STEVEN

I'm going to let them bite me.

Calvin gasps.

LAUREN

Why would you do that?

STEVEN

So I can become a zombie and infiltrate the Swamp Queen's castle.

Beat.

LAUREN

Clever!

JEREMY

That's the stupidest idea I've ever heard.

CALVIN

You know that once you become a zombie you won't have the cognitive capacity to do anything besides want to eat our brains, right?

STEVEN

Guys, guys ... I think I know what I'm doing. Plus I have my major deity on my side. You don't think he'd just let me die like that, would he?

JEREMY

She. It's a she.

STEVEN

Oh yeah. Right.

CALVIN

Technically Corellon Larethian is androgynous--

JEREMY

I can't let you do this.

(to Calvin)

Cal, I want to hit Malachi the Paladin in the face with non-lethal damage.

CALVIN
In the face?

JEREMY
Right in the face.

CALVIN
It'll be hard since he's laying prostrate.

JEREMY
No it won't, he's on the ground!

CALVIN
But his face is--

JEREMY
Give me the plus two modifier, Calvin!

CALVIN
Okay, okay!

JEREMY
(rolls)
A ONE?! I rolled a one! No!

STEVEN
Ha! CRITICAL MISS!

LAUREN
What does that mean?

STEVEN
It means he missed so badly that something embarrassing happens to him. Just wait.

Jeremy looks at Calvin, who is cringing.

CALVIN
Um ... despite Malachi lying completely defenseless on the ground, with no foresight that you are even going to hit him in the first place ... you miss. You miss so badly, in fact...

(rolls)
That you trip and punch the hard cobblestone pathway, taking ten damage.

JEREMY
(furious)
You have GOT TO BE KIDDING ME!

CALVIN
Now it's the zombies' turn.

As Calvin rolls:

JEREMY
What are you doing, Steven.

STEVEN
Going out with a bang.

CALVIN
All of the zombies miss except for the one next to Steven. He bites for eight damage.

JEREMY
Does he infect?

Beat. Calvin starts to roll furiously.

JEREMY (cont'd)
Does he infect, Calvin!

CALVIN
No! Malachi is not infected.

JEREMY
Thank Zeus.

CALVIN
Lilian ... I mean Lauren, you're next.

Lauren looks hesitant. She glances at Steven, who shrugs. Jeremy jumps on the moment.

JEREMY
May I be of some assistance, Lauren?

LAUREN
What do you mean?

JEREMY
Well, it's obvious what you must do now. We are in dire circumstances here. Your *boyfriend* is making a mockery of our beloved game.

LAUREN
I thought the zombie idea was--

JEREMY
No, Lauren. If Steven were to be infected, once he died he would turn into a zombie and begin to attack each one of us. This is part of his plan. Do you want Lilian Eberhart to be turned into a zombie?

LAUREN
No.

JEREMY
I thought not.

LAUREN

So what do I do?

JEREMY

Simple. You must kill the Paladin.

LAUREN

What?

CALVIN

I'm sure there are other options...

JEREMY

Steven is intentionally trying to destroy us, Calvin. He was the one who made Thomas leave. He is the one who is breaking the League.

STEVEN

I didn't make Thomas leave.

JEREMY

He blames you for the death of Urnaq Thunderstone.

CALVIN

Rest in peace!

STEVEN

What? Why?

JEREMY

Poor Dungeon Mastering techniques.

STEVEN

He never said anything.

JEREMY

He didn't have to.

LAUREN

You killed a guy?

CALVIN

A dwarf, specifically.

LAUREN

That's horrible, Steven!

STEVEN

It was in game! A dragon breathed fire into his face!

JEREMY

Urnaq was beyond the reach of that fire, Steven.

STEVEN

He was not! Thomas was cheating! He moved his piece back one square while I was looking up the breath weapon's cone of effect!

JEREMY

You were cheating! You knew full well that cone of effect was far shorter than where Urnaq was standing!

STEVEN

How *dare* you! I never cheated, not once! I was the best goddamn Dungeon Master this League has ever seen!

JEREMY

Maybe once, but not anymore.

(to Lauren)

Your decision, Lauren.

STEVEN

Don't do it.

JEREMY

First immobilize him, then kill him.

CALVIN

Lilian Eberhart has many high level spells ... you might be able to kill him in one hit.

Beat. They all stare at her.

LAUREN

I won't. I can't. I ... I want to cast a spell against the zombies.

She starts looking at her character sheet for a spell.

JEREMY

Steven is trying to sabotage the game! Can't you see that?

STEVEN

Don't listen to him.

LAUREN

I want to cast Magic Missile.

(beat as they stare at her again)

On the zombies.

JEREMY

A poor choice.

CALVIN

Roll.

Lauren rolls.

LAUREN

I got a sixteen.

CALVIN

Spell cast. You can shoot five missiles.

LAUREN

I want to shoot them all at the zombie nearest Malachi.

CALVIN

Okay, roll your damage.

She rolls.

LAUREN

All together, eighteen.

CALVIN

That kills the zombie. Obliterates him, actually.

JEREMY

Great, my turn. I want to attack Malachi. I'm going to shoot him with my Arrows of Poison +2.

CALVIN

Jeremy, that is not very ranger-like of you.

JEREMY

It's for the greater good. And since I have Manyshot, I will shoot four arrows concurrently at him. If I'm lucky, I can kill him in one attack.

CALVIN

Jeremy...

JEREMY

Shut up Calvin.

STEVEN

Let him do it.

*Jeremy rolls four times. Then five.
Calvin watches closely, eyes wide.*

CALVIN

All hits.

(beat)

One critical.

JEREMY

Add the damage from my magic longbow and you are in deep trouble, Malachi.

Jeremy rolls damage.

LAUREN

(to Steven)

Can't you do anything?

STEVEN

I don't want to do anything. I want to be rid of this damn game.

(to Jeremy)

I thought we were friends.

JEREMY

I thought we were too. Thirty-six damage. Plus four points of poison damage per arrow. Plus my strength modifier and the modifier from my longbow. Seventy-five damage total.

CALVIN

Is he dead, Steven?

Beat. Steven glares at Jeremy.

STEVEN

He's dead.

JEREMY

A moment of silence for Malachi the Paladin.

Everyone is silent. Calvin lowers his head.

Then Steven suddenly reaches across the table, grabs Jeremy by the collar, throttles him for a moment before being pulled away by Lauren and Calvin.

Beat. Steven grabs his coat.

JEREMY (cont'd)

Where are you going?

STEVEN

Home. Come on, Lauren.

CALVIN

It didn't have to end this way.

STEVEN

Go to hell.

(at the staircase)

Lauren. Come on.

LAUREN

I'm not finished playing.

STEVEN

What?

LAUREN
I ... I want to keep playing.

STEVEN
Why?

LAUREN
I'm having fun?

STEVEN
With these assholes? Who has fun with *them*?! All they do is play their stupid game and treat normal people like the scum of the earth. Just because I got a *life* ...

CALVIN
We have lives. I spend plenty of time outside.

STEVEN
Doing what?

CALVIN
Uh ... walking to the store ... walking home from the store...

STEVEN
I'm done. I'm gone.

JEREMY
Enjoy your full and fruitful life, Steven. With all your new, devoid-of-personality friends.

STEVEN
Fuck you, Jeremy.
(to Lauren)
Lauren. Please?

LAUREN
You should probably just leave now.

She turns her back to him. Steven stands for a moment, then turns and leaves.

Beat.

JEREMY
I'm ... sorry you had to be here for that, Lauren.

LAUREN
It's okay. I think I just saw the real Steven.

JEREMY
Shall we continue?

Calvin's MOM calls from offstage:

MOM
CALVIN! TELEPHONE!

CALVIN
MA! I'M PLAYING A GAME!

MOM
It's Thomas!

CALVIN
Ooh! I'll be right back.

Calvin hustles upstairs.

JEREMY
(to Lauren)
I think you will be a great asset to the League.

LAUREN
Thank you.

CALVIN
(off)
Hey guys, Thomas is done shopping.
(he enters)
He bought, and I quote, some "kick ass pants," and his mom is dropping him off here so he can play!

JEREMY
Fantastic!

CALVIN
There are still more zombies to kill.

JEREMY
Wait a minute. Before we resume...
(turns to Lauren)
Lauren, I would like to induct you into the League.

LAUREN
That seems kinda hasty. I've never played before.

JEREMY
It doesn't matter. You will learn. Through your actions today you have shown courage, bravery, and loyalty toward your fellow players. You are a perfect addition to our group.
(to Calvin)
Do you agree?

CALVIN
I do!

JEREMY
So. Will you join us?

LAUREN
I ... I can't. I have a pretty busy schedule.

JEREMY
Oh.

LAUREN
But I appreciate your offer!

Somewhat dejected, Jeremy looks at Calvin. Calvin shrugs his shoulders.

JEREMY
Well ... would you at least like to continue playing tonight?

LAUREN
Sure!

JEREMY
Alright then, what are we waiting for? Calvin, let's go!

CALVIN
Okay! It's the zombies turn, so...

Calvin starts rolling. Lauren looks at Jeremy, who smiles back.

Fade out.

The end.