

# QUEST FOR THE GEM

by Marty Matthews

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**SYNOPSIS:** One morning the peaceful, Medieval village of Warkworthshire is disrupted by the sudden appearance of the evil Queen Nefarious. She threatens to burn the village to the ground unless they hand over all their children. In an attempt to save Warkworthshire, Frederick the Wise sends Theron the Brave and the bumbling brothers Jerry and Owen on a quest to save the village. They have a fortnight to return with the Gem of Clayhorn, a powerful talisman that will protect the village from the Queen. Our heroes must travel through dangerous lands and evade Queen Nefarious' henchmen to secure the Gem before all is lost. *Quest for the Gem* is a tale of transformation and of being true to oneself in the face of adversity.

**DURATION:** 90 minutes.

**TIME:** Medieval.

**SETTING:** Simple exterior sets (medieval village, swamp, forest). Side stage with Queen's lair.

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

*(10 females, 6 males, 4-6 either, 3-6 extras)*

LADY HELENA (f).....Leader of Warkworthshire. *(86 lines)*  
 GROCER (m/f).....Village Grocer. *(32 lines)*  
 BLACKSMITH (m/f).....Village Blacksmith. *(27 lines)*  
 JERRY (m).....Quester. *(173 lines)*  
 OWEN (m).....Quester. *(144 lines)*  
 THERON THE BRAVE (f).....Leader of the Quest. *(96 lines)*  
 QUEEN NEFARIOUS (f).....Evil Queen. *(121 lines)*  
 ANNIE (f).....Queen Nefarious' Assistant. *(57 lines)*  
 FREDERICK THE WISE (m).....Seer. *(47 lines)*  
 OLD HAG (f).....Old Hag. *(25 lines)*  
 HUNTSMAN (m).....Queen Nefarious' Henchman. *(39 lines)*  
 SORCERESS (f).....Queen Nefarious' Sorceress. *(6 lines)*  
 GATEKEEPER (m).....Old Man. *(25 lines)*  
 OLD HAG #2 (f).....Old Hag's Sister. *(9 lines)*  
 OLD HAG #3 (f).....Old Hag's Sister. *(9 lines)*  
 GROOTS (m).....Gem's Guardian. *(45 lines)*

GEM (f)..... Young. Target of the Quest. (18 lines)  
 NEFFIE (f)..... Young Queen Nefarious. (3 line)

### **EXTRAS:**

YOUNG CHILDREN (m/f)..... Children of Warkworthshire. 2-4  
 children needed. Extras welcomed.  
 (Non-Speaking)  
 MOTHER (f)..... (Non-Speaking)

### **SETTING**

There are four basic sets plus a side or split stage that is used in some scenes. The sets can be achieved by creating reversible backdrops and placing different props on the stage. Creating signs to identify some sets helps differentiate them as well. Act Two, Scenes 2 and 4 begin in front of the closed curtains.

#### **SET 1 – VILLAGE OF WARKWORTHSHIRE**

Backdrop: Medieval town

On Stage: Act One, Scene 1 – Warkworthshire sign, Grocer's cart, Blacksmith table, bench

On Stage: Act Two, Scene 4 & 5 – Warkworthshire sign, bench

On stage: Act Two, Scene 6 – Warkworthshire sign, table set for a feast, chairs

#### **SET 2 – FREDERICK'S PLACE**

Backdrop: Medieval town

On Stage: Act One, Scene 2 & Act Two, Scene 1 – Hut/Door, Signs (No Trespassing, Keep Out, Beware Old Men with Sticks)

#### **SET 3 – FOREST**

Backdrop: Forest mural or Camouflage netting

On Stage: plants/trees

#### **SET 4 – SWAMP**

Backdrop: Swamp mural or Camouflage netting

On Stage: Act One, Scene 4 – hanging vines, plants

On Stage: Act Two, Scene 1 – hanging vines, plants, small hill for quicksand

**SET 5 – SPLIT or SIDE STAGE**

Backdrop: None

On Stage: Act One, Scenes 3 & 4, Act Two, Scene 3 – Queen’s Lair – table, crystal ball

On Stage: Act Two, Scene 4 – tree with ropes

**COSTUMES**

*Quest for the Gem* is a comedy set in a fictional medieval time period. Costumes can be similar to what you would see in the “Lord of the Rings” movies: short pants, leather vests, sandals, etc. Be creative and anachronisms are ok. Below are specific needs for some characters.

QUEEN NEFARIOUS – dark robe/cloak with staff

THERON, JERRY & OWEN – barefoot from Act One, Scene 2 to end.

HUNTSMAN – think Chris Hemsworth in “The Huntsman”.

GATEKEEPER – think Gandalf in “Lord of the Rings”.

**PRODUCTION NOTES**

**SCENE CHANGES:** When changing sets between scenes, it is okay to leave the curtains open. It gives the audience something to focus on and gives your stagehands some stage time. You can even dress your stagehands in costumes that are appropriate to the theme of the play. Playing music between scenes also keeps the audience interested. However, make sure set changes are completed as quickly as possible to keep the flow of the production going.

**SIDE/SPLIT STAGE:** Four scenes require a side/split stage. I accomplished this by building a small stage that stood separate from the main stage. This way it could be illuminated when being used but didn’t have to be removed when not in use. If this isn’t practical, you could split the main stage for the scenes. You only need enough room for a table with the Queen’s crystal ball on it. In Act Two, Scene 4 all you need is a small tree to tie Theron to.

**STAGING:** Parts of two scenes are staged in front of the closed curtains. This allows for smoother transitions between scenes and less set changes.

**QUICKSAND:** To create the illusion of quicksand in Act Two, Scene 2, we constructed a hill from blankets laid over some stackable bins. The actors went behind the hill and slowly lowered themselves toward the floor as if sinking.

**QUEEN'S ENTRANCE:** In Act Two, Scene 4 Queen Nefarious makes a grand entrance to the village with flashing lights (lightning) and music. Choose a hard rock song that is appropriate for the scene, such as AC/DC's "Thunderstruck". If you have a fog machine, throw some fog in there too. Remember that Queen Nefarious wants it "amped up".

**QUEEN'S TRANSFORMATION:** In the second last scene where Queen Nefarious turns into Neffie, have two identical cloaks so the transition is quick rather than trying to exchange cloaks during the transformation.

## PROPS

### ACT ONE, SCENE 1:

- wooden bowl with roots (Grocer's stand)
- breads (Grocer's stand)
- cheeses (Grocer's stand)
- hammer (Blacksmith's stand)
- horseshoe (Blacksmith's stand)
- cloth (Blacksmith's stand)
- bucket (Blacksmith's stand)
- 3 shells for shell game
- big book (ANNIE)
- doll and blanket
- staff (QUEEN)
- sword (THERON)

### ACT ONE, SCENE 2:

- staff (FREDERICK)
- 3 stones

### ACT ONE, SCENE 3:

- table with crystal ball
- bread and cheese

**ACT ONE, SCENE 4:**

- bow and axe (HUNTSMAN)
- walking stick (GATEKEEPER)
- hourglass

**ACT TWO, SCENE 1:** no new props**ACT TWO, SCENE 2:**

- long pole
- cauldron
- ladle

**ACT TWO, SCENE 3:**

- pencil (ANNIE)
- hourglass

**ACT TWO, SCENE 4:**

- ropes (THERON)
- 3 shells

**ACT TWO, SCENE 5:**

- bag (ANNIE)
- sword (THERON)

**ACT TWO, SCENE 6:**

- dinnerware for the table
- 2 livery collars
- 2 medals
- sword

**PREMIERE PRODUCTION**

QUEST FOR THE GEM premiered at Percy Centennial Public School in Warkworth, Ontario.

**ACT ONE, SCENE 1**

**AT START:** *LADY HELENA is strolling through the village enjoying the sights and sounds of the workers and peasants. Some CHILDREN run by, laughing and playing. A BLACKSMITH works in a stall. A GROCER is arranging wares in another stall.*

**LADY HELENA:** What a wonderful day in the village! The sights and sounds of the children and peasants sootheth my soul.

*TWO CHILDREN run by playing tag.*

**LADY HELENA:** Come children. Shareth your play with Lady Helena.

*The CHILDREN run to LADY HELENA and begin to play their tag game around her. Soon they are bumping and jostling her as they try to tag each other. LADY HELENA quickly loses her patience and snaps at the CHILDREN.*

**LADY HELENA:** Alright, enough!!!! Bump into me one more time and I will tosseth you both into the Pit of Lost Children!

*The CHILDREN begin to cry and run off stage. LADY HELENA smooths her wrinkled dress.*

**LADY HELENA:** Little ingrates. I must remember to collect extra taxes from their parents this spring.

*LADY HELENA walks over to the GROCER'S stall.*

**LADY HELENA:** Ahh, Grocer. Let me tasteth your wares.

**GROCER:** Lady Helena, I wouldn't...

*Before the GROCER can stop her, LADY HELENA grabs something from the counter, puts it in her mouth, and swallows it. She immediately begins to gag with disgust.*

**LADY HELENA:** That is simply awful! It is the most wretched food I have ever tasted!

**GROCER:** I apologize, my Lady. I tried to warn you.

**LADY HELENA:** What is it that assaults my taste buds so?

**GROCER:** It is called baka root. It has a most foul taste to humans.

**LADY HELENA:** Did you sayeth, to humans?

**GROCER:** Yes, my lady. I was preparing it for the stableman. He has some horses that are badly constipated.

**LADY HELENA:** Constipated horses you say?

**GROCER:** Yes, my Lady. The baka root relieves constipation in horses.

**LADY HELENA:** Tell me, Grocer, is it poison to me?

**GROCER:** No, but I would not stray far from the privy for a few days.

**LADY HELENA:** I see.

*Holding her belly, LADY HELENA leaves the GROCER and sits on a bench in front of the blacksmith's stall.*

**LADY HELENA:** I shall sitteth on this bench for a spell and quiet my nerves. *(Doubles over and clutches her stomach. We hear a loud gurgle.)* And my stomach.

*After sitting quietly for a few seconds, the BLACKSMITH suddenly begins hammering on an iron horseshoe. LADY HELENA jumps with every blow of the hammer.*

**LADY HELENA:** *(Yelling over the noise.)* Blacksmith!!! Blacksmith!!!!

*The BLACKSMITH stops hammering.*

**BLACKSMITH:** Yes, my lady?

**LADY HELENA:** Why do you shattereth my peace and quiet with your hammer?

**BLACKSMITH:** I am sorry, my Lady. The stableman has requested new horseshoes. Unfortunately, noise is part of my job.

**LADY HELENA:** Stay your hammer, Blacksmith, lest you not have a job tomorrow. If you catcheth my meaning.

**BLACKSMITH:** Of course, my Lady.

*The BLACKSMITH quietly polishes horseshoes with a cloth as LADY HELENA sits, enjoying the quiet. JERRY and OWEN enter the scene.*

**JERRY:** I don't know about you brother, but I'm starving. I haven't eaten anything all day.

**OWEN:** If only we had a rat to roast. Slow cook it over a fire with some gravy to drizzle on it. Mmm, mmm. Now that's a meal.

**JERRY:** I've got something better than that.

**OWEN:** What's better than roasted rat?

**JERRY:** Fresh cheese and bread from the Grocer's stall. I'll create a distraction while you steal the food.

**OWEN:** Ok, but I'd still like to find a rat to go with it. Maybe a possum.

*JERRY approaches the GROCER'S stall while OWEN circles behind, waiting for his moment to steal the food. THERON enters the scene, watching the brothers closely.*

**JERRY:** Good day to you Grocer.

**GROCER:** (*Eyeing JERRY with suspicion.*) What do you want Jerry?

**JERRY:** That's no way to greet an old friend.

**GROCER:** We are not friends. You are a thief and a scoundrel. The last time you came by my stall you stole four loaves of my finest bread.

**JERRY:** I'm sorry you feel that way, Grocer. I came to make it up to you. I have two gold coins in my pocket that can be yours if you win my shell game.

**GROCER:** What trickery is this?

**JERRY:** No trick. I have three shells. I will place a stone under one shell, shift them around, and you have to tell me which shell has the stone under it. We play the game five times. If you win three games, you win the coins. Deal?

**GROCER:** And this not be a trick?

**JERRY:** Of course not dude. It's all legit.

**GROCER:** You speaketh strangely, but let us play your game.

*JERRY and the GROCER begin to play the shell game on the ground in front of the GROCER'S stall. While the GROCER is concentrating on the shells, OWEN sneaks into the stall and steals the bread and cheese. After playing the game a few times the GROCER throws her hands up in frustration.*

**GROCER:** I have lost again! I thinketh you deceiveth me, Jerry.

**JERRY:** It's just not your day, I guess. Better luck next time.

*JERRY pockets his shells and begins to leave. THERON, who saw everything, steps up and grabs JERRY by the ear before he can leave.*

**JERRY:** Hey! Oww!

**THERON:** You have been deceived, Grocer. Whilst you play this game of fools, this lout's brother has stolen your wares.

**GROCER:** I knew trickery was afoot!

**THERON:** *(Calling out to OWEN.)* Show yourself, thief! Lest I remove one of your brother's ears!

*THERON tightens her grip on JERRY'S ear, causing him to cry out in pain.*

**JERRY:** Ow, ow, owwww!! Come out, Owen! He means it!

*OWEN comes out of his hiding place and steps to the front of the stage. The stolen food is somewhat concealed beneath a bulging shirt. A loaf of bread protrudes from the neck of his shirt. He has a mouthful of food.*

**THERON:** Return the Grocer's food at once!

*OWEN replies through his mouthful of food. As he speaks, pieces of bread spit from his mouth.*

**OWEN:** Stolen food? I don't know what you're talkin' about.

*OWEN raises his hands to show he has nothing in them, causing cheese and loaves of bread to fall from his shirt to the ground.*

**OWEN:** Oh. You mean that food.

*Suddenly there is a roar of thunder and a flash of lightning. QUEEN NEFARIOUS appears on stage, followed by her personal assistant, ANNIE. The VILLAGERS stop what they are doing and cower in fear at the sight of the evil queen.*

**BLACKSMITH:** It is Queen Nefarious! Runneth for your lives!!

*The BLACKSMITH and the GROCER run screaming from the stage. JERRY and OWEN try to run away, but THERON grabs them both by the back of their shirts, causing them to frantically run in place for a few seconds before giving up.*

**THERON:** Not so fast. I am not done with you yet.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** That's right. It is I, Queen Nefarious! Cower at the sight of me! Pray that I spare your pathetic lives, lowly citizens of... citizens of...

*QUEEN NEFARIOUS motions to her assistant, ANNIE.*

**ANNIE:** Yes, my Queen.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Where exactly are we?

**ANNIE:** Well, let's see.

*ANNIE begins leafing through a large, leather-bound book. The pages are loose and disorganized and begin falling to the floor as she searches for their location. ANNIE talks to herself as she looks through the book. QUEEN NEFARIOUS becomes increasingly impatient as she waits.*

**ANNIE:** Castlebrook? No, that was last week. Icedale? No, that's next week's schedule. Eaglefort? No, that's where I sent the wagon to be fixed.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** We're kind of losing the moment here, Annie.

**ANNIE:** I know it's here somewhere. I just have to find the right page.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** You really have to revise your organizational strategies.

**ANNIE:** I know, I know. You have a very busy schedule and... Aha! I found it! We are in Warkworthshire!

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Citizens of Warkworthshire!!

*A long silence follows.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I knew it. We lost the moment. You have to be more organized, Annie.

**ANNIE:** I'm sorry, my Queen.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** You are supposed to be my personal assistant, but if you can't even figure out where we are...

**ANNIE:** Again, I apologize.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** ...and there was that incident in Castlebrook last week when you directed me to drink from the town well, but it was actually the town urine reservoir...

**ANNIE:** That was truly unfortunate. I had no idea.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** ...and today I had this grand entrance planned, with thunder and lightning and a speech...

**ANNIE:** It was going very well.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Do you think so? I thought maybe there should have been more lightning.

*LADY HELENA rises from her position on the bench and approaches QUEEN NEFARIOUS.*

**LADY HELENA:** What do you want from us Queen Nefarious?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Who might you be?

**LADY HELENA:** I am Lady Helena.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Are you the leader of this... community?

**LADY HELENA:** I am. What is it you want?

*QUEEN NEFARIOUS begins to pace back and forth as she speaks.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I want many things. I want sausage buns to be curved like the sausages themselves. I want the ability to completely digest corn. However, what I want most... is children.

*A MOTHER with a baby swaddled in a blanket enters the scene.*

**LADY HELENA:** What are you saying?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I have come for your children, your boys and girls, your precious, beautiful babies.

*QUEEN NEFARIOUS opens the blanket to see the baby's face. She recoils in horror at the sight of the infant.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Sweet Merlin's ghost!!! On second thought, I will take *most* of your babies. It looks like I may have to pick and choose a little.

*QUEEN NEFARIOUS motions to ANNIE.*

**ANNIE:** Yes, my Queen?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** There seems to be some... genetic flaws in this town. See to it that I never have to set my eyes on *that* again.

**ANNIE:** Of course, my Queen.

*ANNIE puts her arm around the WOMAN with the baby and leads her off stage.*

**LADY HELENA:** We will never give you our children!

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Really? Who will stop me? Do you have an army at the ready? Do you have men with swords to protect you? Even if you did, no man can defeat Queen Nefarious! No man! I shall return in a fortnight. You will have the children ready for me then.

**LADY HELENA:** And if we refuse?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Then Warkworthshire will feel the true wrath of Queen Nefarious! I will burn your pathetic little town to the ground. No life will be spared! No one!!

*There is a crack of thunder and a flash of lightning. QUEEN NEFARIOUS strides off stage and disappears. The GROCER and the BLACKSMITH cautiously return.*

**BLACKSMITH:** What shall we do Lady Helena? We cannot let the evil Queen taketh our children.

**GROCER:** What choice do we have Blacksmith? Do you wish to see our town burned to the ground? Our families and friends lying dead at her feet?

**THERON:** We must stand against this evil! We must fight until the last breaths leaveth our bodies!

**LADY HELENA:** I envy your spirit young squire, but there is much to consider here. Queen Nefarious is a powerful sorceress. We must consult Frederick the Wise.

**GROCER:** Yes! Frederick the Wise will guide us.

**LADY HELENA:** We must get moving. Frederick's hut is an hour's walk north of here.

**JERRY:** Unfortunately Owen and I have an important engagement to the south, so we wish you much luck, but we must be going.

**OWEN:** (*Confused.*) What engagement?

**JERRY:** You know. That thing we have. To the south.

**OWEN:** What thing? I don't know what you're talkin' about.

*JERRY gives OWEN a good kick to the leg.*

**JERRY:** That thing we have!

**OWEN:** (*Finally catching on.*) Ohhh, right! *That* thing. Now that I think about it, we're probably late already.

*OWEN and JERRY begin to leave, but THERON grabs them.*

**THERON:** Surely you do not intend to leave us when our village is in such danger?

**JERRY:** But... we have a thing.

**THERON:** It can wait.

**OWEN:** But...

**THERON:** I insisteth.

*THERON removes a sword from its scabbard.*

**JERRY:** When you put it that way, how could we refuse?

**LADY HELENA:** Come. Time is of the essence.

*A loud gurgle is heard. LADY HELENA clutches her stomach.*

**JERRY:** Did you hear that?

*Another loud gurgle is heard. LADY HELENA clutches her stomach more urgently.*

**LADY HELENA:** My apologies. My belly is suddenly most unsettled.

**OWEN:** That was your stomach?! I thought it was a volcano about to erupt.

*A third gurgle is heard. This time LADY HELENA grabs her backside.*

**LADY HELENA:** For the love of Gandalf!! Perhaps you should go on ahead. I will catch up after I maketh a short stop behind yonder bushes.

*LADY HELENA walks uncomfortably off-stage holding her backside.*

**JERRY:** What do you think she's doin' over there?

*ALL look toward the bushes where LADY HELENA exited.*

**ALL:** *(Together, in disgust.)* OOOOOOOHHHHH!!

**BLACKSMITH:** Time to go!

**OWEN:** I wasn't far off with my volcano prediction.

*EVERYONE leaves the stage.*

## ACT ONE, SCENE 2

**AT START:** *The villagers stand before the door of Frederick the Wise. THERON, JERRY, OWEN, GROCER, BLACKSMITH, and LADY HELENA are present. LADY HELENA knocks on the door and calls out to FREDERICK.*

**LADY HELENA:** Frederick the Wise, we requesteth your counsel!

*FREDERICK comes to the door, opens it a crack, but does not come out.*

**FREDERICK:** If this is about how to reverse the symptoms of eating baka root, I am no help. Your bowels will flow like the mighty River Trots for three days.

**LADY HELENA:** It is not about that, but I will keepeth it under advisement. Queen Nefarious was in our village today. She threatened to...

*The door opens and FREDERICK steps out. He wears a long cloak and walks with the aid of a staff.*

**FREDERICK:** ...steal your children.

**BLACKSMITH:** How did you know?

**FREDERICK:** I have foreseen this. It is a prophecy.

**GROCER:** How can we stoppeth the evil Queen? Give us your guidance Frederick the Wise.

**FREDERICK:** The Queens' words are true. She cannot be defeated by any man. That is why Squire Theron is our chosen one.

**LADY HELENA:** Squire Theron is truly brave. Just this morning he captured these two thieves in our village. However, the Squire is a boy, and surely a boy is the same as a man.

**FREDERICK:** Theron is not a boy or a man. She is a girl.

*FREDERICK uses his staff to push down THERON'S hood. We see that THERON is indeed a girl. Everyone on stage gasps in shock.*

**OWEN:** Jerry, you idiot! You let us get caught by a girl!

**JERRY:** I didn't see you put up much of a fight.

**LADY HELENA:** Why have you deceived us, Theron?

**THERON:** By law, girls are not allowed to be squires. I refuse to be held down by your foolish laws. I assure you, I can matcheth wits, strength, and bravery with any boy or man. Showeth me the way to the Queen's lair. I will raise my sword and cut her down where she stands!

**FREDERICK:** I admire your bravery Theron, but Queen Nefarious cannot be defeated by your sword. The only way to protect Warworthshire is to acquire the Gem of Clayhorn before she returns.

**BLACKSMITH:** What is the Gem of Clayhorn?

**FREDERICK:** The Gem of Clayhorn is a powerful talisman. Those who possess it cannot be harmed. It will provide Warkworthshire with the protection it needs. Queen Nefarious will be rendered powerless in its presence.

**JERRY:** Ok. Where do we get one of these gems? Can we order one from the quarry? They've got a two-day-or-it's-free delivery policy. We order one up and we've got this thing licked—easy-peasy ham and cheesy!

**FREDERICK:** There is only one Gem of Clayhorn. It is located in the Caves of Ardoch and is guarded by a Grootslang—a horrible beast with razor-sharp fangs.

**GROCER:** It is impossible then!

**FREDERICK:** Nothing is impossible. There will be a quest! We will send a trio of young heroes, led by Theron, to Ardoch to secure the gem.

**LADY HELENA:** How do we chooseth who goes with Theron?

**FREDERICK:** The prophecy I have seen has shown me a girl and two brothers.

**OWEN:** I don't like the sound of this.

**THERON:** If you referreth to these two louts, I would rather chance it alone. They are thieves and scoundrels and are not worthy of such a noble quest.

**JERRY:** We're not worthy? What makes you so special?

**THERON:** I am Theron of Warkworthshire, daughter of Sir Clarence III of Norwood and Lady Penelope of Hastings, niece of Benjamin the Great, and heir to the throne of Gladsby. Royal blood filleth my veins. What is your pedigree thief?

**BLACKSMITH:** Yes. Tell us who Frederick has chosen to save our village.

**JERRY:** Umm, ok. I'm Jerry and this is my brother Owen, sons of Gail and Doug.

**OWEN:** We haven't seen Gail, I mean Mom, in twelve years. She ran off with a travelling foot cream salesman when we were five. Dad said she was star-struck by the extravagant lifestyle.

**JERRY:** Dad got in a spot of trouble over some stolen goats and has spent the last five years in the village dungeons.

**GROCER:** We are all doomed.

**LADY HELENA:** Are you certain that these are the chosen three, Frederick?

**FREDERICK:** The quest came to me in a vision. In it I saw a girl, brave and strong, traveling with two brothers. These are the chosen ones.

**JERRY:** It's an honour to be chosen and everything, but we really can't go on this quest. We have that thing to the south and...

**OWEN:** What thing?

**JERRY:** Don't start with me again Owen. We have that thing.

*JERRY winks at OWEN a few times.*

**OWEN:** You got something in your eye there Jerry?

**LADY HELENA:** May I remind you that you have been caught stealing from the Grocer, which carries a punishment of two years in the dungeons.

**JERRY:** What do you think brother? You up for a quest?

**OWEN:** I suppose so. Ardoch is only a two-day ride down Route 6.

**FREDERICK:** You cannot take the road. You must follow the western paths to Ardoch.

**THERON:** The western paths will lead us through the Swamps of Rodon. It is certain death.

**FREDERICK:** It is what the vision has shown me.

**JERRY:** The horses will have a tough time in the forest.

**FREDERICK:** No horses. You must go on foot. *(Pauses. Then speaks as if he just had a new idea.)* Without shoes.

**OWEN:** Are you kidding me? You're sending us through the Swamps of Rodon with no shoes? That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard. You're making these rules up off the top of your head, aren't you!

*FREDERICK is looking closely at OWEN'S shoes.*

**FREDERICK:** Absolutely not. It is in the prophecy. Those are nice shoes, Owen. Size nine are they?

**OWEN:** You tell me. It must be in the prophecy.

**THERON:** We must trust in Frederick the Wise. His words will guide us and keep us safe.

**LADY HELENA:** Grocer! Blacksmith! We must gather provisions for their quest. They will needeth food, water, and weapons.

**FREDERICK:** No! They must leave here immediately, and without provisions. So says the prophecy.

**THERON:** We travel through dangerous lands. Without weapons, we will be most vulnerable.

**FREDERICK:** Your faith will nourish you and protect you from evil.

**LADY HELENA:** Are you sure this is the way Frederick?

*FREDERICK is now looking closely at the hilt of THERON'S sword.*

**FREDERICK:** As sure as I am that your bowels will soon flow like lava from the mighty Volcano of Iris.

*We hear rumbling and LADY HELENA clutches her stomach.*

**OWEN:** He wants us to go without shoes and weapons so he can keep them for himself. He's a common thief. Maybe *he* should spend some time in the dungeons.

**FREDERICK:** The prophecy speaketh to me. I must follow its path, and so must you, or all is lost.

**OWEN:** You can take your prophecy and stick it...

**JERRY:** Ok, ok. Maybe we won't go there, brother.

**LADY HELENA:** Is there nothing we can do to help them in their quest Frederick?

**FREDERICK:** Very well. I will give each of you a magical stone—something that may aid you in your quest. But you must useth the magic wisely. If you choose to useth the magic for your own gain, it will surely mean disaster for all.

**JERRY:** All right, now we're getting somewhere. What have you got for us Freddy?

*FREDERICK steps toward JERRY.*

**FREDERICK:** For you Jerry, a Stone of Silence. May it bring calm to the tempest when you needeth it most.

*FREDERICK hands JERRY the stone.*

**GROCER:** Can we use it on him right now?

**JERRY:** (*Looking at the stone.*) Why does this seem like an insult?

*FREDERICK steps toward OWEN.*

**FREDERICK:** For you Owen, a Stone of Enlightenment. May it grant you the gift of thought when the puzzle becometh complex.

*FREDERICK hands OWEN the stone. OWEN looks at it with a confused look.*

**OWEN:** I'm not following you.

**BLACKSMITH:** Precisely why you needeth it.

*FREDERICK approaches THERON.*

**FREDERICK:** Theron the Brave. The quest for the Gem of Clayhorn is your destiny. Beware evil, for it lurks around every corner. I bestow upon you a Stone of Illumination. May it provide you with light when darkness surroundeth you.

**THERON:** Thank you, Frederick. You are truly wise. We will not fail Warkworthshire.

**FREDERICK:** Good luck Theron the Brave. The fate of Warkworthshire is in your hands.

**THERON:** (*Motioning to JERRY and OWEN.*) Come, fools. Let our quest begin.

*THERON, OWEN, and JERRY begin to leave the stage.*

**JERRY:** Calling us names isn't any way to treat your partners.

**THERON:** I don't considereth you as my partners. You are more like ticks attached to my rear quarters that I cannot removeth.

**OWEN:** Did she just insult us again?

**JERRY:** Yes.

**OWEN:** I thought so.

*THERON, OWEN, and JERRY leave the stage, their quest ahead of them.*

**LADY HELENA:** Are you sure of this Frederick? I feareth your vision to be false.

**FREDERICK:** I am old Lady Helena, but I still possess sight. My vision is true. I knoweth it in my heart, just as I knoweth the Grocer and Blacksmith should stand aside.

*FREDERICK motions for the GROCER and BLACKSMITH to step aside. They comply.*

**LADY HELENA:** Why would they need to...

*LADY HELENA stops mid-sentence. We hear a loud gurgling sound as she clutches her belly.*

**LADY HELENA:** Sweet Fancy Moses!

*LADY HELENA runs from the stage clutching her belly. The GROCER and the BLACKSMITH peer in her direction. FREDERICK is looking out over the audience.*

**GROCER and BLACKSMITH:** *(Together.)* OOOOOHHHHHHH!!!

**BLACKSMITH:** That is nasty.

**FREDERICK:** *(Still looking toward the audience.)* I feareth it will be. I feareth it will be.

**ACT ONE, SCENE 3**

**AT START:** *QUEEN NEFARIOUS and ANNIE are on a side stage. QUEEN NEFARIOUS is peering into a crystal ball. Lights are up on the side stage. Main stage lights are down.*

**ANNIE:** What do you see my Queen?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** It seems that Warkworthshire will not give up their children so easily. Frederick the Wise sends three on a quest to save them.

**ANNIE:** Who are the three?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I see two brothers... *(Pauses thoughtfully.)* ...and a girl.

**ANNIE:** I saw two brothers in town. They didn't seem to be the brightest pair. Surely they pose no threat.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I fear not the brothers. *(Pauses again.)* But the girl...

**ANNIE:** Are they armed?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I see no weapons.

**ANNIE:** Then they cannot harm you. What is it that gives you pause my Queen?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** There is an ancient prophecy... that a girl shall strike down the Queen.

**ANNIE:** What do they seek in their quest?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** That is unclear to me. I only see the three travelers.

**ANNIE:** What should we do my Queen?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Bring me the Huntsman and the Sorceress. I have a task for them.

**ANNIE:** Certainly, my Queen.

*ANNIE leaves the stage. QUEEN NEFARIOUS looks toward the main stage and speaks. A stage light comes up to illuminate THERON who stands facing the audience.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Who are you young girl? Are you the chosen one from the prophecy of old? If so, you bear watching. Do you feel a chill at your back?

We see *THERON* shiver, then look around to find the source of the cold that she feels. An evil smile spreads across *QUEEN NEFARIOUS*' face.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** That's the shadow of Queen Nefarious. I will be watching.

*Lights go down on the side stage. All stage lights come up on the main stage revealing THERON on a path in the forest.*

**THERON:** (*Looking off stage.*) In all my days I have never seen a pair of oafs moveth as slowly as you.

*JERRY and OWEN enter the scene.*

**JERRY:** Excuse us, your squireness. If you recall, your wiseman stole our shoes.

**THERON:** Frederick the Wise had a vision. In it, there was a great quest to save Warkworthshire, and those who partaketh in the quest shall weareth no shoes.

**JERRY:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. You'd believe anything that con man said, wouldn't you?

**OWEN:** (*Mocking THERON.*) We trust in you, Frederick. You are truly wise, Frederick. And they call us fools. This quest will get us all killed. K-I-L-D. Killed

**THERON:** You truly are idiots. We must respecteth the rules of the quest.

**JERRY:** Why do you talk like that?

**THERON:** What do you meaneth?

**JERRY:** That's what I *meaneth* right there!

**THERON:** I speaketh the King's proper English.

**OWEN:** It's boring and old fashioned.

**THERON:** It is the year 1179. Everything be boring and old fashioned.

**OWEN:** You gotta get with the medieval times. Try saying this. 'Sup, bro?

**THERON:** Why would I calleth you bro? You are not my brother.

**JERRY:** He doesn't have to be your brother. It means a friend or a buddy.

**THERON:** He is not my friend or my buddy.

**OWEN:** (*Throwing his hands in the air with frustration.*) She's impossible!!

**JERRY:** Ok, maybe we can loosen your corset a little with some music. Lay me down a beat Owen!

*OWEN begins a beatbox rhythm. The two brothers begin to bob and move to the rhythm. After a few seconds THERON interrupts.*

**THERON:** I am not sureth what that might be, but it not be-eth music.

**OWEN:** Of course it's music. We're a big hit at open mike night down at Ye Olde Moldy Gopher Tavern.

**THERON:** If it be music, where art your harp or your lute?

**JERRY:** You can't rap with a harp or a lute! Let's show her how it's done, brother.

*OWEN starts another beatbox rhythm. The brothers begin to move to the beat and JERRY breaks into a rap. THERON moves awkwardly, trying to mimic the brothers' rhythm. As the song moves along, THERON gets more and more into it. JERRY rapping, OWEN beatboxing.*

**JERRY:** (*Rapping.*)

Everyone in the 705 raise your hands up high,  
 Cuz we're rockin' a beat from the Medieval Times!  
 Raise 'em up,  
 Up, up, up, up!  
 Raise 'em up,  
 Up, up, up, up!  
 We got a little visit from Queen Nefarious,  
 The whole situation was a tad precarious.  
 She said, "When I return I'm gonna take your kids".  
 All the mamas and papas 'bout flipped their lids!  
 Raise 'em up,  
 Up, up, up, up!  
 Raise 'em up,

Up, up, up, up!

*OWEN rapping, JERRY beatboxing.*

**OWEN:** *(Rapping.)*

A lady said we better talk to Freddy the Wise,  
He said, "I had a vision pass before my eyes.  
The Gem of Clayhorn lies somewhere to the west,  
I'll send three young heroes out on a quest."  
Raise 'em up,  
Up, up, up, up!  
Raise 'em up,  
Up, up, up, up!

*THERON rapping. JERRY and OWEN beatboxing.*

**THERON:** *(Rapping.)*

Frederick sends us through dangerous lands,  
No shoes on our feet, no weapons in our hands.  
If we find the Gem our Shire will be saved,  
By Jerry and Owen and Theron the Brave!

*THERON, JERRY, and OWEN jump around high-fiving each other in excitement.*

**OWEN:** That's my jam right there bro! We gotta do that one down at the Moldy Gopher Tuesday night! It'll bring the house down!

**JERRY:** That was epic Teri! You were feelin' it!

**THERON:** I really was. I still thinketh a lute would addeth another dimension to the piece.

**JERRY:** Ok, ok. That's something we could discuss. An artist has to be open to new ideas.

*An OLD HAG enters the scene. She is ugly, with warts and rotted teeth. She is dressed in a ratty cloak. She approaches the three travelers unseen.*

**OLD HAG:** Hello youngins.

*Startled by the sound of the OLD HAG'S voice, OWEN lets out an earsplitting, high-pitched scream and jumps into THERON'S arms.*

**OWEN:** Aaaaaiiiiiieeeeeeaahhhhh!!!!!!!

*THERON holds OWEN for a moment, then drops him to the ground.*

**THERON:** That be why they don't calleth you Owen the Brave.

**OWEN:** She caught me off guard. You can't sneak up on a guy like that. That's offside. I think I may have suffered a small heart attack. Check my pulse rate, will ya?

*OWEN holds his wrist up to THERON. She slaps it away in disgust.*

**THERON:** How will you be able to stareth into the eyes of the evil Queen Nefarious if an Old Hag scareth you so?

**OWEN:** (*Whining.*) She snuck up on me.

**THERON:** Why do you bother us Old Hag?

**OLD HAG:** Spare some food for an old lady? Spare some food?

**THERON:** We haveth none. Be on your way.

**OLD HAG:** My belly has been empty for three days. Anything will do. Anything.

**OWEN:** I have some bread and cheese my dear. You are welcome to share with us.

*OWEN pulls some bread and cheese from his jacket.*

**THERON:** Be that the food you stoleth from the Grocer's stall? You were told to returneth that!

**OWEN:** Well, I returnethed most of it.

**THERON:** You cannot shareth that food. It is stolen property.

**JERRY:** You've never gone hungry before have you?

**THERON:** (*Pauses before answering.*) No, I have not.

**JERRY:** If you had, you'd understand. We'll share our food today and maybe tomorrow we'll be lucky enough to have someone share with us.

**OLD HAG:** Thank you, boys. Thank you.

*OWEN and JERRY share the cheese and bread with the OLD HAG.*

**THERON:** Very well. Take your bread and cheese and leave us be Old hag. We have important matters to attendeth to.

*The OLD HAG gives THERON a sly look as she chews her food.*

**OLD HAG:** Like the quest for the Gem of Clayhorn? Important matters indeed. Important matters.

**THERON:** How do you knoweth about our quest Old Hag?

**OLD HAG:** I know many things Theron the Brave. Many things.

**THERON:** You knoweth my name as well? I thinketh we have one of Queen Nefarious's Spies in our midst!

**OLD HAG:** I most certainly am not!! I spit on those who use her name! I spit!

*The OLD HAG works up a good wad and spits on THERON'S feet. THERON steps back, attempting to wipe her feet on the grass. JERRY and OWEN look at it in disgust.*

**JERRY:** That's offside dude.

**OWEN:** Do you always spit when you hear the name of Queen Nefarious?

*The OLD HAG works up another wad and spits on OWEN'S feet.*

**JERRY:** I guess that answers your question.

**OWEN:** C'mon!! I'm not wearing shoes here!!!

**THERON:** If you not be a spy, Old Hag, then how do you haveth such knowledge?

**OLD HAG:** Frederick the Wise is not the only one who has the gift of sight. I see things too. I see things.

**THERON:** Shareth your knowledge with us. What shall become of our quest?

**OLD HAG:** If you enter the Swamps of Rodon there will be great pain and suffering. Great pain.

**JERRY:** Would it be too much to ask to get some positive predictions about this quest?

**OLD HAG:** There is nothing good in the Swamps of Rodon. It is place of evil. A place of darkness.

**THERON:** We feareth not these things.

**OWEN:** Speak for yourself.

**THERON:** What awaits us in the swamps Old Hag?

*The OLD HAG pauses, staring into the distance, eyes closed. She speaks with eyes still closed.*

**OLD HAG:** I see a darkness so complete that light cannot escape. I see separation, loneliness. I see the great Mouth of Rodon swallowing life.

**JERRY:** That doesn't sound good.

**OLD HAG:** Turn back now. The Swamps of Rodon are no place for youngins.

*The OLD HAG shuffles off stage.*

**OWEN:** Now what?

**THERON:** The Swamps of Rodon lieth beyond yonder rise. If we leaveth now, we may get there before dark.

*THERON strides off stage.*

**OWEN:** I was afraid she was going to say that.

*JERRY and OWEN follow THERON off stage.*

**ACT ONE, SCENE 4**

**AT START:** *QUEEN NEFARIOUS is on the side stage. She is awaiting the arrival of the HUNTSMAN and the SORCERESS. QUEEN NEFARIOUS is peering into her crystal ball. Lights are up on the side stage. Main stage lights are down.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** They approach the Swamps of Rodon. It is certain death to enter the swamps. Yet, if Frederick sent them there...

*QUEEN NEFARIOUS drifts into thought for a few seconds.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I must admit, this quest unsettles me. They travel west, so why not take Route 6? Why would they risk the swamps? What do you seek Theron the Brave?

*ANNIE enters the scene with the HUNTSMAN and the SORCERESS. The HUNTSMAN carries a bow and quiver. The SORCERESS is dressed in a black cloak and carries a black staff.*

**ANNIE:** The Huntsman and the Sorceress, my Queen.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Excellent Annie.

*The HUNTSMAN and the SORCERESS bend to one knee before QUEEN NEFARIOUS.*

**HUNTSMAN:** How shall we serve you Queen Nefarious?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I presume Annie has briefed you on your task.

**HUNTSMAN:** *(Confused.)* Task?

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Yes, your task. The mission to stop Theron the Brave's quest.

*The HUNTSMAN stares blankly at QUEEN NEFARIOUS.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Theron and the two brothers. They were sent on a quest by Frederick the Wise to save Warkworthshire.

*Still no response from the HUNTSMAN.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** They near the Swamps of Rodon. I need you to stop them.

*The HUNTSMAN continues to stare blankly, not understanding the Queen's words. QUEEN NEFARIOUS turns to the SORCERESS.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** You. Sorceress. Do you understand my words?

**SORCERESS:** The raven flies high to see all, only returning to earth to feast on the dead.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** *(Pausing momentarily to take in the SORCERESS' words.)* Ok. May we have a word, Annie?

*QUEEN NEFARIOUS steps away from the HUNTSMAN and the SORCERESS to talk to ANNIE in private.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I instructed you to brief those two on their task. Time is of the essence, and they do not seem to understand what I need them to do.

**ANNIE:** I tried explaining the task to them my Queen, but the Huntsman lacks understanding.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Of what?

**ANNIE:** Of everything. I tried to explain the task many different ways. I even used finger puppets at one point, but his intelligence is comparable to a rock. A dull, moss-covered rock. He kept telling me about a piece of wild boar jerky that was stuck in his teeth from breakfast.

*They glance over at the HUNTSMAN who is picking at his teeth.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** That is maddening. Remember when I had that piece of pheasant in my teeth a short time ago?

**ANNIE:** That was really in there.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** It was, was it not? It about drove me insane.

**ANNIE:** I remember.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** A moss-covered rock, huh?

**ANNIE:** A dull one.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Right. What about the Sorceress? What is her deal?

**ANNIE:** The Sorceress only speaks in dark, cryptic riddles. She creeps me out a little.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I see. We must put our instructions into terms they understand.

*QUEEN NEFARIOUS and ANNIE return to the HUNTSMAN and the SORCERESS.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Annie tells me you have some jerky stuck in your teeth, Huntsman.

**HUNTSMAN:** Yes, my Queen.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Did you hunt the wild boar yourself?

**HUNTSMAN:** Of course, my Queen.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Are your hunting skills strong Huntsman?

**HUNTSMAN:** Very strong.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I need you to set forth on a hunt. Do you understand?

**HUNTSMAN:** Yes, my Queen.

*QUEEN NEFARIOUS turns to the SORCERESS.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Sorceress. Be your powers vast?

**SORCERESS:** The owl reigns in darkness. It sees all.

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** I will take that as a yes. Accompany the Huntsman. Let your powers be unleashed without mercy.

*The SORCERESS bows her head in assent.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Annie will see to your needs. All the resources of Queen Nefarious will be afforded to you.

*ANNIE leads the HUNTSMAN and the SORCERESS off stage. QUEEN NEFARIOUS is left alone. The main stage lights come up revealing THERON, OWEN, and JERRY approaching the main stage.*

**QUEEN NEFARIOUS:** Your quest will end soon Theron the Brave. They are coming for you. Do you hear the footsteps of the Huntsman and the Sorceress?

*The side stage lights go down. THERON turns her head quickly, as if she has heard something.*

**JERRY:** What is it, Theron?

**THERON:** Nothing. I thought for a moment I had heard something. Footsteps.

*JERRY and OWEN look behind them.*

**JERRY:** I don't see nothin'.

**THERON:** The wind perhaps.

**JERRY:** You're just getting jumpy because we're getting close to the Swamps.

**OWEN:** We're not just getting close. We're here.

*OWEN points ahead of them. The stage is set with dark vines and plants.*

**THERON:** Frederick the Wise sends us through the Swamps to testeth our courage. Provehth your bravery and the quest shall continue. If we faileth in the Swamps, then all is lost.

**OWEN:** All right. Let's do this!

*THERON, JERRY, and OWEN step toward the Swamps of Rodon. Suddenly an old man with a staff, GATEKEEPER, steps from the shadows and blocks their way.*

**THERON:** Who is it that blocks our path?

**GATEKEEPER:** Who is it that enters my swamp?

**THERON:** This be your swamp? You don't looketh like a swamp creature.

**GATEKEEPER:** You don't look like Hobbits.

**OWEN:** Who said we were Hobbits? We're not Hobbits! You're in the wrong quest buddy!

**GATEKEEPER:** I am the Gatekeeper. No one enters the Swamps of Rodon without my consent.

**OWEN:** If you're a gatekeeper, then where's your gate?

**GATEKEEPER:** Well, I don't have an actual gate. It's more of an entrance, I suppose. I just thought that Entrancekeeper wasn't a term that people would recognize as well. It's not something that rolls off the tongue.

**OWEN:** (*Pronouncing the word carefully.*) Entrancekeeper. Entrancekeeper. Entrancekeeper. He's right. It's not good.

*JERRY and THERON nod in agreement.*

**GATEKEEPER:** A few years back I tried to get a gate installed, but there were site inspections, environmental studies, building permits to apply for... It just wasn't worth the hassle.

**JERRY:** He's right. You can't even put a simple medieval torture chamber in your basement anymore without a hundred feet of red tape attached to it.

**GATEKEEPER:** Ain't that the truth.

**OWEN:** Well, it's been great chatting with you, but we'd better be on our way.

**GATEKEEPER:** Oh, sure. You have a good day now.

*THERON, OWEN, and JERRY begin to walk past the GATEKEEPER. He suddenly realizes they are tricking him and holds out his staff to stop them.*

**GATEKEEPER:** Hold on there. Nice try. You shall not pass until you have answered my riddle correctly.

**JERRY:** It's always a riddle isn't it? Why can't we flip a coin or play rock, parchment, scissors for it?

**THERON:** The Gatekeeper's riddle is part of our quest. A challenge we must overcome. Speaketh your riddle Gatekeeper.

**GATEKEEPER:** I have seas with no waters, coasts with no sand, towns without people, and mountains with no land. What am I? You have until the sands disappear to consult one another. Then you must answer.

*The GATEKEEPER turns over an hourglass. THERON, OWEN, and JERRY step away from the GATEKEEPER and huddle up at the side of the stage.*

**THERON:** The Gatekeeper's riddle proveth most difficult. I fear we may not solve it in time.

**OWEN:** Why bother with his stupid riddle anyway? The guy must be 400 years old. I say we just push him over and walk past him. He'll fold up like a cheap lawn chair.

**THERON:** We must respecteth the rules of the quest. The Gatekeeper's riddle must be solved.

**GATEKEEPER:** The sands run quickly. What is your answer?

**JERRY:** Seas with no waters. Coasts with no sand. Towns without people and mountains with no land.

**THERON:** Yes. Those be the Gatekeeper's words. Do they meaneth something to you, Jerry?

**JERRY:** I think so. Give me a minute.

**OWEN:** Wait! I have the Stone of Enlightenment. Maybe it can help us.

*OWEN reaches into his pocket and pulls out the stone. THERON grabs him by the wrist to stop OWEN from using the stone.*

**THERON:** Stay your hand, Owen. The stone can only be used once and I think your brother may solveth this riddle without it.

**JERRY:** It's right there at the front of my brain!

*JERRY pounds his forehead with his fingers in frustration.*

**THERON:** Calm yourself, Jerry. If the answer be there, it will revealeth itself.

**OWEN:** We don't have all day here people! In case you've forgotten, the sands are a runnin'! If you won't let me knock the old codger over, then let's find another route. This can't be the only way into the swamp. Freddy could have done us a solid and given us a m...

**JERRY:** MAP!!!

**OWEN:** Thanks for cutting me off there brother. You know I hate it when you do that.

**JERRY:** That's the answer to the riddle. A map has seas with no waters, coasts with no sands, towns without people, and mountains with no land.

**THERON:** Does that answereth your riddle, Gatekeeper?

*THERON, OWEN, and JERRY turn to the GATEKEEPER. He is asleep on his feet, leaning on his staff.*

**OWEN:** Is he asleep?

**THERON:** *(Louder this time.)* I say, does that answereth your riddle gatekeeper!

*The GATEKEEPER is startled to wakefulness.*

**GATEKEEPER:** Whatwasthat? Who's there? *(In a forceful voice.)*  
YOU SHALL NOT PASS!!!

*The GATEKEEPER slams his staff into the ground.*

**OWEN:** Easy there Gandalf. You're in the wrong quest again.

**JERRY:** The answer to the riddle is a map.

**GATEKEEPER:** You have answered my riddle correctly. You may now enter the Swamps of Rodon. Be warned—the swamps have claimed many lives. Be cunning my friends—be brave. Good luck to you on your journey.

*The GATEKEEPER exits the stage. THERON, OWEN, and JERRY step into the swamp. The HUNTSMAN and the SORCERESS are crouched, hidden on the far side of the stage.*

**HUNTSMAN:** Use your magic Sorceress. Cast your spell.

*The SORCERESS raises her hands, eyes closed, and casts her spell.*

**SORCERESS:** Darkness now shall fall. Shadows descend to cover all. In the gloom the Brave shall stray. The chosen three will lose their way.

**OWEN:** I almost wish you didn't answer that riddle brother. This place is a creepshow.

*It steadily becomes darker in the swamp. Stage lights gradually dim.*

**THERON:** Legend has it that the swamps are inhabited by foul creatures with scarlet-red eyes and misshapen bodies. They hideth in the darkest shadows waiting to devour anyone who dares enter the swamps.

**JERRY:** Well, there's a little tidbit of information you could've shared with us a bit earlier, don't you think?

**THERON:** The swamp creatures were of no consequence earlier. To complete the quest, we must traveleth Frederick's path.

**JERRY:** If I was told about the swamp creatures, maybe I would have opted for a couple of years in the dungeons instead of agreeing to go on this idiotic mission.

**THERON:** The quest be not idiotic. We must saveth Warkworthshire. You and Owen are in the prophecy.

**JERRY:** Prophecy schmophecy. Let me tell you something Theron the Brave. If we see even one scarlet-red eye staring at us, the next thing you'll see is my finely-tuned caboose hightailing it out of here!

**OWEN:** I hate to interrupt, but has anyone else noticed how dark it's getting?

*THERON and JERRY look around.*

**THERON:** This darkness be most unnatural. The sun doth not setteth so quickly. I feareth dark magic is afoot.

**OWEN:** I don't like this one bit. I knew we should have taken Route 6.

*The swamp is now enveloped in total darkness. We hear the voices of THERON, JERRY, OWEN. Stage lights blacked out.*

**THERON:** Quickly. We must band together lest we be separated in the darkness.

**JERRY:** Theron is right. Take my hand, Owen.

**OWEN:** Got you brother. Grab my hand, Theron. Theron?

**JERRY:** Theron?! Where are you?

**OWEN:** Theron?!!

*There is a moment of silence. THERON does not answer OWEN and JERRY.*

**JERRY:** I think we lost her Owen.

**OWEN:** What do we do now?

**JERRY:** We carry on without her, and pray she finds her way. Be true to your name Theron the Brave. Come on brother. Let's find our way out of this godforsaken mudhole.

*We hear JERRY and OWEN leave the stage.*

INTERMISSION

Thank you for reading this free excerpt from:

**QUEST FOR THE GEM**

By Marty Matthews

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