

Save vs Love

Dice falling. So many colours and so many shapes. Some sparkle, some are rainbow coloured, some are ink black with silver numbers. There are cubes, octahedrons, dodecahedrons, Icosahedrons - six sided, eight sided, and twenty sided dice. All of them are falling and tumbling through space and bouncing off of a dark plain, bouncing and landing with different numbers on the top.

ELLE

(V.O.)

Luck. Chance. A simple twist of fate.
Our lives can pivot on the smallest of
moments. A roll of the dice.

INT: SARAH'S HOUSE - Day

A large suburban house, packed up and ready to move.

SARAH, a woman in her thirties is dashing about putting things into boxes - toys, games, the bits and pieces of family life.

She runs up the stairs with an armful of stuff and when she gets to the top a single twenty-sided dice falls from her collection and bounces a couple of times before stopping at the top of the stairs.

The number 1 is visible on the top. A critical fail.

INT: OFFICE - Day

ELLE, late twenties, beautiful but harried, is typing quickly on her computer in her small but organised office.

ANDREW, her immediate boss, a handsome man in his fifties wearing an expensive suit, pops his head in.

ANDREW

Have you got the Jones and Jones
figures ready yet Elle?

ELLE

Yes! Just a minute Andrew..

ANDREW

They're gathering in the boardroom now.

ELLE

Annnnd its done!

She smiles and reams and reams of figures start printing nearby.
ANDREW doesn't smile back.

ANDREW

Bring them with you. I'll see you
in there.

He leaves and ELLE starts gathering all the sheets of paper.

INT: OFFICE STAIRS - Day

ELLE is heading to the top of the stairs with her arms full of the financial reports. She looks rushed, and as she steps towards the top of the stairs in her high heels she underestimates the distance.

INT: SARAH'S HOUSE - Day

SARAH, carrying a box, is walking towards the stairs in her house.

She steps on the dice and slips!

INT: OFFICE STAIRS - Day

ELLE totters for a moment, but then recovers! Phew! She shakes her self, takes a deep breath and carries on to the meeting.

INT: SARAH'S HOUSE - Day

The box and its contents are spread over the stairs. SARAH has fallen.

INT: OFFICE - Day

ELLE and the rest of the team are coming out of the boardroom with their VIP guests. Everyone seems very pleased with the meeting and with ELLE'S work in particular.

Her mobile rings and she excuses herself. On the screen she sees the name 'Sarah'.

ELLE

Now's not a good time-

SAM
(o.s.)

Auntie Ellie?

ELLE

Sam? Does your mum know you're calling
me?!

INT: HOSPITAL - Day

SAM, nine years old, is on the phone to ELLE. He wears a t-shirt
with a very cool dragon on it.

SAM

There's been an accident. Mum fell.
They're operating on her brain.

INT: OFFICE - Day

Close on ELLE'S face as she hears what has happened. She nods, she
looks about ready to burst into tears.

ELLE

I'll be there right away.

ANDREW overhears her as he moves away from the rest of the crowd
of executives.

ANDREW

I need you to stay and work on the
Abbott Street report-

ELLE

(flustered)

I'm sorry... I just... I just can't right
now Andrew.

She runs off, leaving her boss behind, looking confused and very
annoyed.

INT: HOSPITAL/ROOM - Day

ELLE stands with a nurse. She's listening to her but also staring
through the window at her unconscious sister lying in a bed.

Next to her sit two children. SAM is nine and LIZZY is SIX. SAM is sitting still on a plastic chair with a very serious face, while LIZZY is whispering into her mother's ear and sometimes kissing her cheek. There is a thick bandage about SARAH'S head.

NURSE

The bleed was very serious. But the operation went really well. If Sam hadn't called the ambulance right away..

ELLE

Why hasn't she woken up yet?

NURSE

She's healing. It's just going to take time.

ELLE

Did you get a hold of Steve? Her husband-her ex?

NURSE

No, we've tried him a few times.

ELLE

He moved out about six months ago. It was a messy break up. She's going to have to sell the house soon I think.

NURSE

She was packing when she fell. Sam said they were meant to be moving this week.

ELLE

(confused)

No, that can't be right. Last time I spoke to her it was months off.

NURSE

I think the kids will be pleased to see you. They're pretty shaken up.

ELLE

Of course. Of course.

She goes into the room. The two children look up at her. There is an awkward moment.

ELLE

Wow, you've gotten bigger since Christmas!

SAM

You came to see us the Christmas before last.

ELLE.

Oh. Hey Lizzy, it's me, Auntie Smelly Ellie!

LIZZY looks at her brother in confusion and then goes back to whispering to her mother, placing a kiss on her cheek again.

ELLE

What's she doing?

SAM

She thinks that'll wake her up. Too many old Disney films. 'Cept that it's meant to be princes saving princesses with a kiss. It isn't going to work.

ELLE

When did you get so grown up Sam?

SAM

Probably in the year and a half since we last saw you. Has my dad called?

ELLE

I'm sure he will soon.

SAM

Yeah. *Soon*.

LIZZY

Are we going to come and stay with you now?

ELLE

What?

SAM

The nurse said something about you being responsible for us, as our next door kin. Since they can't find dad. Or he doesn't want to be found...

ELLE

I... I...

SAM

You're probably busy. Like you were on my birthday. And Lizzy's.

ELLE

I do have a lot on at work. It's a busy time of year-

SAM

Right. Great. The house has been sold you know. That's why mum was packing when she fell. But maybe we can just stay in the hospital until mum's better. We can sleep in a janitor's cupboard and live on jell-o.

ELLE looks at the two of them.

ELLE

No, of course you'll be staying with me!

She smiles at them, trying to sound as though that was the plan all along.

LIZZY

For the whole holidays?!

ELLE

Holidays?!

SAM

School's finished for the year. We were going to move during the break. Mum had a new job in San Francisco, you know, the one you probably asked her about during one of your long chats.

ELLE

Well, I do have work and...

SAM rolls his eyes.

ELLE

But we'll make it work! And it won't be for long. Your mum will be back on her feet in no time!

She looks at SARAH lying so very still in the bed and seems less than convinced.

INT: ELLE'S FLAT - Evening

Small and neat like her office, ELLE'S flat says very little about her or her interests.

As the three of them come in, ELLE carrying two bags for the children and LIZZY carrying her stuffed dog, SAM looks into the bin in the kitchen and spots all of the take away boxes.

ELLE

So, here we are. You two can share my bed.

LIZZY

Ugh!

SAM

No way!

ELLE

Okay, one of you can go on the couch and I think I have a blow up mattress somewhere.

INT: ELLE'S FLAT - Later

ELLE trying to blow up the mattress as LIZZY cheers her on.

INT: ELLE'S FLAT/BEDROOM - Night

An exhausted ELLE closes her bedroom door on the two children now tucked up in their makeshift beds.

She collapses on her bed.

Moments later there's a knock at her bedroom door.

LIZZY

Auntie Ellie I need a wee!

INT: ELLE'S FLAT/KITCHEN - Morning

ELLE is pouring a very boring muesli into the bowls of two disappointed looking children, all while trying to hold a business call and looking through sheets of paper covered in figures.

ELLE

No, in the third quarter those figures need to show the different streams and the fifteen point four percent differential in sales over the two regions (sighs) I can get on my laptop later and show you where to list the bracketed exports. No, I can't be in this morning. It's a family emergen- well, yes I know how important the meeting. I can't really- okay, okay just ten minutes. Twenty. Okay, I can give you half an hour I think...

SAM picks up a local paper from the countertop and silently mimics ELLE'S gestures and fluster. LIZZY giggles.

But then something catches SAM'S eye in the paper as he flicks through it. An advert for a local games shop called 'the Grassy Gnoll', it is illustrated with a frenetic picture of warriors fighting dragons, orcs, werewolves etc. There is a banner across the top announcing 'Join us to fight against the forces of Evil with daily games!'

SAM

What are we doing today Aunt ELLE? Could we go here?

He shows her the advert and she peers at it as she 'hmmms' and 'yes's' to the person on the phone. She looks confused and SAM gives her a charming smile.

INT: OFFICE/RECEPTION - Day

ELLE strides in with SAM and LIZZY, pausing with them in the reception area.

ELLE

You'll have to sit here for a bit. Just forty-five minutes.

SAM

And then are we going to the Grassy Gnoll?!

He holds up the advert that he's ripped from the newspaper.

ELLE

(distracted)

Um, yes. No more than an hour. I promise!

She ruffles their hair and darts into the office as the two children settle into the large leather chairs.

INT: OFFICE/RECEPTION - Later

SAM stares at the clock above the reception desk.

SAM

She's been gone over an hour.

LIZZY has been scribbling on the magazines and newspapers set out on the glass table. She's turned a lot of the people in them into wizards, fairies, cats or dogs. SAM looks from her doodles to the advert.

SAM

I don't think it's that far..

INT: OFFICE - Day

ELLE is in a meeting giving a presentation, it contains numbers, graphs, facts and figures. Even her audience looks bored.

EXT: OFFICE - Day

SAM and LIZZY leave the office building, holding each other's hands and walk off down the street into the crowd.

EXT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Day

The Grassy Gnoll is a glass fronted shop with boxed games in the window, books, comics, mannequins dressed in armour, and replica swords. SAM and LIZZY stand outside gaping for a moment before pushing on the door.

As soon as it opens a man dressed in a perfect Gandalf costume leaps up from where he's been sitting and shouts.

GANDALF

You shall not pass!

LIZZY squeeks in fear but SAM steps forward bravely.

SAM

'Mellon'!

GANDALF breaks into loud laughter.

GANDALF

Welcome friend! Welcome!

OLIVIA

(o.s.)

Are you at it again you daft old man?!

OLIVIA comes up to GANDALF and pulls at his beard so that he winces. She is about the same age as him, but wears casual clothing instead of a costume.

OLIVIA

No gatekeeping! Everyone's welcome at the Grassy Gnoll!

GANDALF

Olivia, my love, my sweet! I was only playing. And this little chap knows his Lord of the Rings! Speak friend and enter! 'Mellon'! Indeed!

OLIVIA looks down at SAM and LIZZY and then out of the door to the pavement where there is obviously no adult with them.

OLIVIA

Where's your mummy and daddy little
hobbits?

LIZZY

Mum's in hospital, dad's gone away, and
Auntie Elle is working.

OLIVIA

Oh good lord, you poor things! Did you really
come here all on your own?!

SAM

It wasn't as far as Mordor.

When GANDALF speaks again he's dropped his GANDALF impression and sounds more like an aging hippy or stoner, but with a serious tone.

GANDALF

Ah, yes, but little dudes, you can't wander
around on your own! There's worse about
the streets than orcs and goblins! Let's
get you a cold drink and find out how we
can get in touch with your aunt Elle.

He and Olivia usher them into the Grassy Gnoll. A large part of the shop is taken up with tables where people, mostly children and teenagers older than SAM and LIZZY, are playing card games, board games, and games with miniatures and maps. Both SAM and LIZZY are excited.

OLIVIA

Do you like these kinds of games?

SAM

Oh yes! I have lots of board games at home,
and mum said she'd take me to a games shop
to try out some role playing games one day.

He stops, suddenly sad at the thought of his mother in hospital.

GANDALF returns with two drinks for them.

LIZZY

Thank you Gandalf!

SAM'S attention is taken by one of the tables where they are playing Dungeons and Dragons.

The party is made up of both male and female teenagers but the dungeon master (DM) is a man in his late twenties. He's good looking but scruffy as though he's more interested in the story he's weaving for his players than in his appearance. He has an unkempt beard and wears an old t-shirt with the slogan, "Bards Do It For the Lute" written on it under a red plaid shirt. This is BEN.

Even though he's American, when he DMs he puts on a variety of accents, including an english accent as the narrator of the game.

BEN

And as you embark on your quest there is a feeling of desperation deep in your gut. Time is of the essence brave warriors, as you know that something very bad is going to happen if you do not do your very best to save the lost children of Anhelza!

INT: OFFICE/RECEPTION - Day

ELLE is shouting at the receptionist.

ELLE

(panicking)

Where did they go?!

RECEPTIONIST

I don't know, I'm not a babysitter! They were sitting drawing one minute and gone the next!

ELLE dashes over to the mess of papers that SAM and LIZZY have left behind them and finds LIZZY'S artwork. She remembers the advert and gets out her phone to search for the route to the Grassy Gnoll.

INT: GRASSY GNOLL - Day

ELLE bursts into the shop, causing everyone to look around at the frantic woman in her smart office clothes and high heels. She spots SAM and LIZZY by BEN'S table and runs over to hug them.

ELLE

(near tears)

Don't you EVER run off like that again!

BEN looks at ELLE, taking in her state of distress and tries to calm her down. It is well intentioned, but comes off as patronising.

BEN

(english accent)

Fret not fair maiden, all's well that ends well!

ELLE looks up at him and takes in the scruffy man with the silly slogan on his t-shirt. If she wasn't so upset she might have thought he was cute at first glance.

ELLE

Are you serious?!

When he speaks to her out of his DM persona he's more nervous and stutters a bit.

BEN

(american accent)

I... I... mean they're okay. We've all been looking after them.

GANDALF raises his staff in salute and ELLE'S eyes widen even further.

ELLE

That's... Gandalf? Right, time to go guys.

SAM

Awww! Ben promised I could roll a warlock for his next game session!

ELLE

A warlock? (whispers to SAM) Is this

something to do with... devil worship?

GANDALF groans and OLIVIA steps forward quickly, a kindly almost grandmother like figure.

OLIVIA

Oh, there's nothing like that. It's just a game of imagination and adventuring.

ELLE frowns, looking over at the table with its miniatures and maps. She stares at the teenagers in the party. One or two might have piercings or a t-shirt for a band she doesn't recognise, but they seem friendly. Smiling at each other, chatting, drinking energy drinks but not doing drugs. They seem like normal teenagers. Mostly.

ELLE

Well, I suppose we could stay. I know how much you wanted to find this place..

SAM

Yesss!

BEN smiles at her, but she's already walking off to perch precariously on a high stool by the coffee bar, keeping a careful eye on SAM and LIZZY, still watching his game.

BEN

(english accent)

Where were we? Ah, the night draws in as you decide to rest your heads in the Grassy Gnoll tavern, a place of foul reputation and even fouler ale. Everyone make a perception check!

The teenagers seem concerned by this.

INT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Day

ELLE is still watching as she sips a cup of coffee. OLIVIA stands behind the coffee bar, watching her watching BEN'S game as she cleans. GANDALF is off playing a board game against another customer.

ELLE

So, Dungeons and Dragons then.

OLIVIA

Yes, and not 'Demons and Devils'.

ELLE

You have to admit, it is a bit odd.

OLIVIA

A bit odd?

ELLE

No offense to your husband and your son!
I guess you had to get your head around
it as well, once you found out that 'Gandalf'
was into playing it.

OLIVIA laughs.

OLIVIA

First off, Ben's not my son. He's my
boss. And second, did you really think
Gandalf was into it before I was?

She rolls up her sleeve to show an old tattoo of the D&D ampersand
on her forearm.

OLIVIA

I'm a first edition player. After I met
Gandalf, or Tim as he was then, I was
the one who taught him how to play.

ELLE

Oh, sorry! So Ben owns the Grassy Gnoll?
I thought from the name it was owned by
older- by people who remembered Kennedy
being shot.

OLIVIA

Oh, Ben just loves dumb puns. Have you seen
his t-shirt? He has a few like that. But
I suppose he doesn't dress up like a wizard.
Very often.

She goes off to serve another young customer and ELLE finds herself looking at the owner of the shop again. He's in mid-flow with the game, hands gesturing as he acts out the fierce battle that they are currently involved in. He's enthusiastic and smiling a lot as the teenagers join in.

SAM is there, now with a seat at the table and his sister leaning in over his shoulder and telling him what to do even though she doesn't understand the rules.

INT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Later

The party is packing up for the evening, the teenagers picking up their character sheets, dice, and miniatures, and thanking BEN for the game. No longer DM-ing he seems a lot shyer, and embarrassed by the thanks.

ELLE puts down her phone and comes over to collect SAM and LIZZY.

ELLE

Did you have fun?

SAM

Yeah, it was great! Can we come back tomorrow?

BEN

You'd be more than welcome. All of you.

ELLE

I don't know...

LIZZY and SAM

Pleeeaaaase!

ELLE can't help but laugh.

BEN

Maybe if you come back tomorrow you could try playing? I have premade Characters you can use, and I- we could help you with the rules. Sam picked things up very quickly.

ELLE

Oh, I don't think it's for me. But if I could do some work while they played...?

BEN looks puzzled. Why would she want to work when she can play?

BEN

Okay...

ELLE

Great! See you tomorrow!

She leaves with SAM and LIZZY, the three of them waving a goodbye to GANDALF and OLIVIA, as BEN watches them go.

INT: ELLE'S FLAT - Evening

LIZZY and SAM are a whirlwind of energy, acting out one of the battles from earlier in the day.

ELLE is sat at the dinner table trying to get her work done on her laptop around the noise from the two children.

SAM *zapps* magic at LIZZY who deflects it with an invisible shield on her arm. SAM casts a bunch of magic missiles that hurl themselves towards her and she jumps out of the way. LIZZY charges in with an invisible sword and *swings* it at SAM who blocks it with both hands outstretched, forming an invisible wall of force in front of him.

SAM

I cast shield!

LIZZY

My sword is magic! It cuts through your magic shield!

ELLE puts her hands to her ears.

SAM

No it isn't! Anyway my magic shield is too strong. Fireball!

He gestures dramatically.

SAM

Now you are on fire!

ELLE

Hey!

LIZZY

No I'm not!

ELLE

Okay, time to get ready for bed.

LIZZY

But I'm not on fire! I'm not!!

INT: ELLE'S FLAT/BEDROOM - Night

ELLE has fallen asleep on her bed next to her laptop. She is dreaming.

INT: CASTLE BEDROOM - Night

ELLE'S dream:

She is dressed as a very stereotypical princess, lying on a four poster bed wearing something made of pink silk and ruffles. Outside the room the sound of leathery wings and fiery breath makes it clear that she's being held by a dragon.

Suddenly there is the sound of fighting, the clang of sword on scales and the roar of the dragon's pain. And then there is the loud sound of armoured boots running up the stairs towards where she's lying.

She presents herself for her saviour, flicking her hair and arranging her skirts.

But the clanging footsteps keep going. And going. And going.

Finally, when she's nearly given up, the brave knight charges into her room and drops to his knee by her bed.

KNIGHT

(muffled, through visor)

I have come to save you, fair maiden!

ELLE

What??

The knight tips up his visor. Its BEN.

BEN

(bold, english accent)

I have come to save you, fair maiden!

ELLE frowns.

ELLE

No.

BEN is now wearing the same clothes he wore in the shop.

BEN

(nervous, american accent)

But... but...

She reaches forward and takes the sword off of him.

ELLE

I'm going to save myself!

She gathers up her ridiculous dress and all its petticoats and charges from the castle room, with the sword aloft.

INT: ELLE'S FLAT/ BEDROOM - Morning

ELLE wakes with a start.

SAM and LIZZY are at the end of her bed.

They have found scarves, mop handles, and bin lids, and have had a good go at dressing up as warriors and wizards.

ELLE

Ungh. So I suppose we're going back to the shop today?

INT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Day

ELLE is sat at the coffee counter, working on her laptop as SAM and LIZZY have joined a game dungeon mastered by BEN.

She sneaks an occasional glance at him. She is surprised to see him standing there in his shining knight armour. She shakes her head, sips her coffee, and he is back in his normal clothes. This time his t-shirt has a twenty sided dice on it along with the slogan, 'This is how I roll'.

She sighs and closes her laptop, and walk over to stand near the group.

ELLE

Hey Sam, have you rescued any princesses yet?

One of the TEENAGERS at the table rolls her eyes.

SAM looks embarrassed.

SAM

We don't really do that. But I did magically charm a guard into letting us into the tower of Ithdrax, and we stopped him from raising an army of the dead!

BEN

W-Would you like to play? I can easily work another character in.

He holds up a character sheet and ELLE thinks about it.

ELLE

Maybe I'll try it.

Space is made for her about the table. She takes the sheet from BEN and looks at it.

ELLE

There's lots of numbers. Its look more like a month's end report than something you play a game with!

BEN

It's fairly easy... You want to do something. Then I, or the rules, decide how hard that is. That sets the number you have to roll over. Then you roll the d20-

ELLE

The what?

TEENAGER

The twenty sided dice.

BEN

Then you add or take away based on how good, or bad, you are at that thing. And then I as dungeon master tell you whether it worked, or not, and the outcome.

ELLE

Okaaay... so are you like my boss?

BEN

(laughing)

Um no. I am more like the referee. And I set the scene for the story. And know what's happening in the rest of the world.

ELLE

And how do I know what I can do?

BEN

The character sheet. You're playing a...
(he checks)
an elf wizard. So you have those spells. And those are the numbers you add or subtract from the d20 if you're trying to do something, or stop something from happening. Most of it isn't math though. Its imagination.

ELLE

(joking)

Oh dear. I'm pretty good with numbers. Imagination, not so much.

BEN

Let's give it a go and we can all help you if you get stuck. Maybe you can think about your character for a minute while I talk the others through their journey back to the tavern.

ELLE stares at her character sheet.

ELLE

(under her breath)

An elf...

An image of ELLE dressed as a Christmas elf in red and green and holding a candy cane pops into her head.

ELLE AS CHRISTMAS ELF

No, think more Lord of the Rings!

Her outfit changes and she looks like Galadriel's dark haired but just as glowing sister.

ELLE gives an experimental twirl and touches her pointed ears.

ELLE AS ELF

Not bad. A bit impractical in battle maybe.

Her outfit changes again. She's still in cloth, but in far more practical leggings, shirt and cloak. Bottles and a spellbook hang from her belt along with a long dagger.

ELLE AS ELF

Much better!

BEN

In the tavern this evening there is one other traveller. Elle?

ELLE AS ELF

I'm sorry, what?

BEN

Do you want to describe yourself?

ELLE

Well, I'm an elf. With pointy ears. But not one of those glowy elves like in the films. I have travel clothes on. A good thick cloak to keep out the rain. Potions and my spellbook to hand.

TEENAGER 2

Gorefist the Bloody walks forward and offers her his hand.

BEN

You see a half-orc warrior in front of you, holding out an immense hand in a gesture of friendship-

ELLE

Wait, I thought orcs were the bad guys...?

BEN

Not always. What do you want to do?

ELLE

Well, I don't want to be impolite. I will shake his hand and introduce myself.

BEN

... as?

ELLE

Oh, my name. But there isn't one on the sheet?

SAM

You get to pick one, auntie Elle.

ELLE

Right, okay. Right. I will be... Elle.

TEENAGER 2

(in a half-orc voice)

Is that short for anything?

ELLE

Um... Elle.

BEN

Well, 'Elle, short for Elle', what will you do next?

INT: TAVERN - Day

ELLE AS ELF is shaking the half-orc's hand. She looks up at the rest of the party, the warriors, the magic users, sat at a table nearby.

BEN'S voice as DM comes from above.

BEN

(o.s.)

Would you like to join the party for a drink, or perhaps some adventuring?

ELLE AS ELF

Yes, I think I will!

ELLE AS ELF gets up and sits at their table with them.

MONTAGE:

ELLE in real life playing and working out the rules at the table.

ELLE getting excited about a high roll.

ELLE Arguing a point in the rules with BEN.

ELLE defeating her first enemy and cheering.

BEN watching her when she's busy chatting to someone else, or acting out casting a spell.

He's besotted, and only a blind woman wouldn't notice. ELLE doesn't.

INT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Evening

SAM yawns. LIZZY is in a corner on some cushions, asleep and curled up around a goblin plushie, complete with toothy grin and red eyes.

ELLE

No, but its a plus six to the roll because I'm proficient in history.

BEN

Of course it is. You were right, you are good at numbers.

ELLE

It's what I do.

BEN

Well, your knowledge of history tells you that this area was once the site of the village of Hagbend, famous for being on the borders of the dark, dank forest of the Hag-

TEENAGER 3

BEN, dude, sorry but I've got to get gone.

BEN

Of course. We can pick this up tomorrow as you ride into the Hag's forest.

ELLE looks at SAM and LIZZY

ELLE

And I need to get these two back to the Shire.

BEN seems impressed.

ELLE

What? I'm not entirely clueless!

The rest of the party starts packing up. BEN comes over to ELLE as she packs up her laptop at the coffee bar.

BEN

I- I hope you had a good time.

ELLE

You know, I really did. The numbers made more sense to me at first than the pretending to be an elf did but it was fun.

BEN

You're more of a storyteller than you think.

Their eyes meet. BEN seems to steel himself to ask something.

BEN

You know, I play in an evening game on Saturdays too. With a bunch of grown up friends. You'd be more than welcome to come and join us..

The invitation is left hanging.

ELLE

That sounds really nice. But with work, and the kids, and my sister in hospital I don't really have all that much free time. Or a babysitter. And I have lots of work at the moment. I said that already.

BEN

Sure, of course. No worries.

ELLE

But I'm sure Sam and Lizzy will want to come to the shop again soon.

BEN

Of course. Yeah. Well I need to tidy and lock up.

It's awkward for a moment and then BEN walks away.

ELLE

(under breath)

Why do I feel like I just rolled a one?

INT: HOSPITAL - Day

ELLE is out in the corridor on her phone with ANDREW as SAM and LIZZY are in with their unconscious mother, acting out some of their adventures around her bed.

ELLE

I can't come in at the moment Andrew, I have my niece and nephew to look after. We're at the hospital right now.

INT: OFFICE/ANDREW'S OFFICE - Day

ANDREW

The Abbott Street deal is not going to happen without you working your magic

on the numbers. Look, this could make your promotion a done deal here. All you have to do is swear over your entire life to me and I can bring you riches beyond compare.

INT: HOSPITAL - Day

ELLE

Sorry, Andrew, what did you say?

INT: OFFICE/ANDREW'S OFFICE - Day

ANDREW is now dressed as an evil looking warlock.

ANDREW

I said you have to swear your life to me. Otherwise I will crush you!

INT: HOSPITAL - Day

ELLE frowns

ELLE

Look, Andrew, I've worked very hard for a long time now. I've barely taken holiday, and never a sick day. I have to look after my family now!

The image of a twenty-sided dice rolling across a table. It lands on a 20. A critical hit!

INT: OFFICE/ANDREW'S OFFICE - Day

ANDREW the evil warlock is zapped by magic that sparks out of the handset he is holding. He starts to melt.

ANDREW

I'm melting, I'm melting!

The daydream shimmers and breaks. He's just ANDREW the corporate man again.

ANDREW

Okay, okay... we'll get the Abbott street deal done without you for now. Family is important too, I suppose.

ELLE smiles, looking in to where her niece and nephew are having another fight with magic.

ELLE

Yes, yes it is.

EXT: PARK - Day

ELLE, SAM and LIZZY are eating ice creams as they amble through the park, taking time to enjoy the sun and just be silly.

Someone familiar comes cycling towards them. Its GANDALF, in his full costume and on a bike, his non-character accurate sneakers showing as he pedals in his robe.

SAM

Hail friend!

GANDALF

Ah! Its my two favourite hobbits! Shhh, don't tell Bilbo and Frodo! Are you having A good day?

LIZZY

We went to see mum at the hospital, but she's still asleep.

GANDALF

Ah, I'm sorry to hear that. Oh Elle, Olivia wanted me to let you know that she's always available for babysitting duties.

ELLE

Now why would she suddenly say that?

GANDALF

Don't know. She just wants to be helpful I suppose.

INT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Day

ELLE comes in with SAM and LIZZY who immediately dart off to play and chat with the other customers.

ELLE

I'll just find Olivia- and they're gone.

TEENAGER

(pointing)

She's out the back. Go past Ben's office.

ELLE

Thanks!

INT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Day

On her way outside ELLE passes by the shop's office. The desk is an overflowing mess of paperwork and merchandise. Many of the letters have red ink on them.

ELLE looks concerned.

Suddenly a clanging sound comes from outside.

EXT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Day

ELLE comes out of the back door of the GRASSY GNOLL. There's a courtyard with bins and a chain fence. And a forge.

BEN is dressed as a blacksmith, using the forge, a vision in sweat and soot.

ELLE, unable to stop herself, watches for a moment. She's convinced that she's daydreaming.

ELLE

(to herself)

Not again!

She shakes her head. But the forge and the blacksmith remain. He's really working at a forge, wearing a leather apron and has taken off his outer shirt and his arms are now on display. They are distractingly muscular.

The effect is only slightly ruined by another pun based t-shirt with the slogan: 'Crit Happens'

OLIVIA

(o.s.)

Not bad, eh?

ELLE jumps a little. OLIVIA is sitting in a chair a corner, working on the staff rota on her lap.

OLIVIA

The sword's really coming along.

ELLE looks back to see that, yes, BEN is actually working on a sword.

BEN

(shyly)

It's just a hobby at the moment, but maybe one day we can sell our own replicas too.

OLIVIA

You're not working Saturday night are You? Just doing the rota.

BEN looks confused.

BEN

I put it in the diary a couple of weeks ago.

OLIVIA

Of course! Silly old me, you have your weekend game don't you? Round at Lewis's house. On Davis Street. On Saturday. In the evening. 1376 Davis Street. From about seven.

BEN stares at OLIVIA, horrified that she's being so obvious.

OLIVIA

Oh Elle, I just wanted to say I can babysit Sam and Lizzy anytime you'd like..

BEN

Olivia!

OLIVIA

What? I was just letting her know.

ELLE

Yes, Gandalf might have mentioned that. That's very kind. In fact if you could look after them this Saturday, it might help me out a lot?

OLIVIA

Of course!

BEN

So you'll come along?!

ELLE

(smiling)

Why not?

EXT: LEWIS'S HOUSE - Night

ELLE stands outside gathering the courage to knock. She's probably a little too dressed up for just a games night and she's brought a bottle of wine as though it's a dinner party.

The door seems to stretch and grow, leering above her with an imposing demonic door knocker and becoming overgrown with ivy and weeds.

Finally she knocks. It's just an ordinary suburban door again.

A figure wearing a dark hooded cloak answers, his face obscured.

LEWIS

Who dares cross this a'cursed threshold?

ELLE

Hi, um, I'm Elle.

LEWIS pushes his hood back, he's a friendly looking man in his twenties.

LEWIS

Yes! Great! Ben said you might come along. Come on in!

INT: LEWIS'S HOUSE - Evening

The others in the party are a mixed bunch. There's a couple in their forties, VICKY and SIMON, a husband and wife who game together like GANDALF and OLIVIA. There's a studious looking man in glasses, ELLIOT, who is a doctor still wearing his scrubs. There's a woman with her hair in elaborate braids, rings on many of her fingers and a pierced nose, HANA. And there's BEN of course.

They are all standing about chatting and laughing. BEN spots ELLE and is about to come over and say 'Hi' when LEWIS ushers her into the kitchen. He takes the bottle from her.

LEWIS

Thanks, this is great.

ELLE

I didn't know what I should bring.
Mead maybe?!

LEWIS laughs with her as though sharing the joke about mead.

LEWIS

Oh goodness no, I've got lots of mead!
LOTS!

INT: LEWIS'S HOUSE - Night

LEWIS sits at the head of the table, behind his DM's screen. Next to him is a drinking horn full of mead.

ELLE cautiously sips wine from her horn next to her.

The other players are set up and ready.

LEWIS

So, Elle, do you need any help with
your character sheet?

ELLE

Oh its okay, I think I've got it.

INT: ELLE'S FLAT - Day

FLASHBACK: ELLE lying on her bed and flicking from a complicated work spreadsheet on her laptop to a web page on wizard spells.

INT: LEWIS'S HOUSE - Night

LEWIS smiles.

LEWIS

Great. If you're ready, I will begin.

He pauses for dramatic effect, closing his eyes and breathing deeply. When he speaks again the scene he sets becomes the world around ELLE.

LEWIS

In the Blushing Griffon tavern there are rooms for rent, warm ale for drinking, and ladies and gents of the night for company. You have all stopped here for rest and recuperation after your last adventure...

INT: THE BLUSHING GRIFFON - Night

ELLE AS ELF is sat at a table in the middle of the busy tavern.

ELLE AS ELF

(to herself)

There's a lot of taverns in these games.

She looks about and recognises the other players. VICKY is a female barbarian in furs and leathers. SIMON is a ranger with a bow and arrows in a quiver. ELLIOT is a cleric, a shining holy symbol about his neck. HANA is a rogue, flipping her daggers end over end. And BEN is a bard, strumming a lute and strutting about the tavern to the admiration of the patrons.

LEWIS

(o.s.)

Performance check Ben.

BEN

Eighteen.

LEWIS

(o.s.)

You're on fire tonight!

BEN as a bard is far more confident. He winks at the ladies in the tavern and walks across tables as he sings songs of love and loss.

ELLE AS ELF is wryly smiling when he approaches her.

LEWIS

(o.s.)

The half-elf comes your way Elle.

BEN AS LACHLAN

(scottish accent)

Good evening fair lady. Who do I have the pleasure of addressing?

ELLE

Why do you sound scottish? I thought it was dwarves that were scottish?

BEN bows elaborately.

BEN AS LACHLAN

Lachlan Boldheart at your service m'lady.

ELLE laughs

ELLE AS ELF

And I am Elle- umm, 'Ellanthia', the elven enchantress.

BEN AS LACHLAN

(winking)

And aren't you just enchanting-

They are interrupted by a crash as one wall of the tavern tumbles down as something large outside smashes against it.

HANA

What the hell, Lewis?!

LEWIS

(o.s.)

Roll initiative guys!

INT: LEWIS'S HOUSE - Later

LEWIS

Fredorick the gnome trader gives you a toothy smile as you leave his shop, pleased at how much coin your party of brave wanderers have given him. "Have a good day y'all!" he shouts after you. Let's break there for a minute, I need to use the little dragon's room.

The players get up from the table and ELLE goes into the kitchen to refill her horn of wine.

BEN walks in after her, cautious.

He's about to talk to her when the rest of the party come in and swarm the kitchen - getting new drinks, throwing each other snacks and laughing about the game.

VICKY

So Hana, is Demelza going to go and 'pick up' those trinkets she couldn't afford back at Fredorick's store?

HANA

Mayyybeee... Chaotic neutral baby!

They high-five.

ELLIOT

Don't let Gregory hear you plotting a robbery! He'll be sad his love is up to no good... *again*.

HANA

Then the truth loving cleric of Serenrae shouldn't be involved with the party's rogue!

ELLE

Oh, are you two a couple?

ELLIOT

(laughs)

No! But our characters are.

VICKY

But funnily enough Shaira my barbarian and Simon's ranger Brizzt aren't together. In fact they kind of grate on each other.

SIMON

Only because you keep taking out our squabbles on him in game!

VICKY

I do not!

HANA

You kind of do... Remember when we fought on board the pirate ship and you were too busy to free Brizzt from his manacles, and that was just after Simon'd forgotten your anniversary?!

VICKY

You might have a point there. But on the whole we don't bring our arguments to the table.

The rest of the party look away and whistle.

VICKY

Okay! Not very often.

ELLE laughs with the others.

VICKY

But sometimes players do get romantically involved...

SIMON

(whispering)

Subtle my love.

HANA

I mean, if they don't already have a

boyfriend, or girlfriend...? Do you have someone waiting for you to stop rolling tonight and come home?

She's asking for BEN, but ELLE misunderstands.

ELLE

Uh, No. There's no one.

(whispers)

I'm flattered but I'm not actually into girls.

HANA

Me neither, but that's good to know!

She cackles with laughter and ELLE is confused.

SIMON

You're all about as subtle as a giant with a warhammer!

Finally BEN manages to get near her as the others move in and out of the kitchen returning to the table with their new drinks.

BEN

Ellanthia's charm on that guard really got us out of a pickle back there.

ELLE

(teasing)

No problem, 'Lachlan Boldheart'. You know, you're very different when you're playing him.

BEN

Am I?

He sips from his drink, nervous.

ELLE

He's a bit more of a flirt than you for a start.

BEN

Well, bards are a charisma based class.

ELLE

It's not just that. It's like... he's someone you want to be.

BEN

(shy)

Maybe. Maybe Ellanthia is someone you want to be too.

ELLE

Ah, but I didn't choose what she was going to be.

BEN

But you've made her your own.

ELLE

So what's Ellanthia like?

BEN

She's tough. And smart. She's good at magic and she knows it. But she's creative with it. She came up with using the animal messenger spell to freak out our informant by having the neighbour's dog 'Son of Sam' him!

ELLE

Maybe I wish I was as smart and imaginative as her.

BEN

I think you are though-

They are interrupted by LEWIS coming into the kitchen and crashing about his cupboards to get out more chips.

LEWIS

(to ELLE)

Chip?

INT: GRAVEYARD - Night

ELLE AS ELF is on the floor, covered in blood.

BEN AS LACHLAN is running over to her, in slow motion, arrows flying past him.

The rest of the party fight the undead ghouls surrounding him.

ELLE

What does that mean? I'm down to zero health points?! Am I dead?

LEWIS

(o.s.)

You're unconscious. On your next turn you need to roll a death saving throw, a save vs death. Roll a d20. Over ten is a success. Three successes and you're stabilised. Three failures and...

ELLE

There's a roll to save against dying?! Why can't we save versus nice things too?! I wouldn't mind failing it then!

BEN AS LACHLAN

I'm on my way sweet lady! I have a potion to salve your wounds!

LEWIS

(o.s.)

What's your movement Ben?

BEN

Thirty feet... crap, that doesn't quite get me to her does it?

BEN AS LACHLAN stops just short of reaching ELLE AS ELF as though he's hit an invisible wall.

BEN

Wait, I have healing word. And the range is sixty feet! It does...
(o.s. sound of dice rolling)
six points of healing!

Right in the middle of the battle he gets his lute from his back and starts to sing her a love ballad.

A blue light glows around ELLE and she wakes up.

A moment later LACHLAN rushes to her side and he helps her to drink a potion.

She is restored enough to point a finger at a charging undead creature and cast magic missile upon it. It disintegrates.

ELLE AS ELF

Thank you, Lachlan Half-Elven.

BEN AS LACHLAN

Now that's just plain rude! After I saved you as well!!

ELLE

(laughing)

Well, it was in character!

INT: LEWIS'S HOUSE - Later

The party are packing up.

ELLE approaches LEWIS.

ELLE

Thank you, I had a great time!

LEWIS

Thank Ben, he suggested you could join us. He thought you might need some fun at the moment.

ELLE looks towards BEN, chatting happily with VICKY and SIMON.

ELLE

Yeah, he's been kind.

LEWIS

Make a roll.

ELLE

What?

LEWIS

Just do it.

She looks bemused but does what he says, rolling a dice on the table. It's a natural one.

ELLE

Argh, a critical fail! What was I rolling for? Or against?

LEWIS

Keep a hold of that dice, I think it's going to be lucky for you.

EXT: LEWIS' HOUSE - Night

The players are making their ways home and saying their goodbyes. ELLE and BEN hover a while at the end of LEWIS'S driveway.

ELLE

Your friend is a little odd.

BEN

Aren't we all though? So... does Ellanthia really not like Lachlan Boldheart?

ELLE

I did some research on elves. They can be a bit snooty. Elitist. Rude.

BEN

Maybe, but not always. (scottish accent) You see, Lachlan's elven ma and human da got on pretty well! Maybe Lachlan will win her over in the end?

ELLE smiles shyly.

BEN

Are you... and Sam and Lizzy... up to much tomorrow? I'm planning a field trip to the museum since the shop's closed. Some of the usual crowd from the shop will be coming along. We're going to check out the armoury, take look at the glaives and the broadswords. Probably go to the

park afterwards, have a bit of a picnic.
You know, some of them haven't been
outside in years!

ELLE

(laughing)

That sounds fun. We'll see you there?

BEN

Great!

INT: MUSEUM - Day

MONTAGE:

ELLE, SAM, LIZZY, BEN, and others customers from the shop having fun looking at the display cases of medieval weapons, the heraldic suits of armour, the egyptian exhibition with its ancient magic tablets, examples of potion bottles, paintings of knights and dragons.

ELLE grabs photos of the kids having phone when she can.

ELLE is probably the most casual and relaxed we have seen her.

INT: MUSEUM - Day

ELLE is looking at a sword in a cabinet as BEN walks up to her.

She smiles at him as he approaches, and it's like he's been dazzled by the sun. But again, she doesn't really notice.

ELLE

I wonder how much damage this would
do?

BEN

A long sword? That's one d8 plus
proficiency bonus plus your strength
modifier.

ELLE

Oh, I love it when you talk dirty to
me!

Its a silly joke, but its one that's a little close to the edge. And it also gets them a scandalised look from a nearby elderly couple.

BEN tries to make it better. He fails.

BEN

It's okay, I'm her dungeon master.

The couple scuttle off as ELLE breaks out in peals of laughter.

BEN

Wait, it's not what it sounds like!

ELLE can't stop laughing.

EXT: PARK - Day

MONTAGE:

An impromptu live role-playing game in the park.

BEN pretending to be a terrible monster and chasing SAM and LIZZY.

GANDALF blocking his path and doing his 'You shall not pass' bit.

ELLE pretending to sniper BEN with spells from behind a tree and him then overacting his monster's death scene and rolling about on the grass.

ELLE stands over him and places a foot on his chest like a conquering hero.

ELLE

Now, that's how *I* roll!

She helps him up and there's a moment when they are close, too close maybe. They look deep into each other's eyes.

Suddenly her phone rings.

ELLE

Hello?

She looks at BEN.

ELLE

It's the hospital!

INT: HOSPITAL - Day

LIZZY is sitting by her mother's side. She leans in to give her a kiss and SARAH wakes up. LIZZY smiles and laughs.

LIZZY

Again! Again!

SARAH

(smiling weakly)

Maybe five times is enough sweetie.

ELLE, BEN, and SAM stand at the end of the bed.

ELLE

We're just pleased to see you awake again. We were all worried about you.

SARAH

(to BEN)

Including... sorry maybe my memory's been effected, I don't remember you.

ELLE

Oh! This is Ben, he's... a new friend.

BEN

I run the Grassy Gnoll.

SARAH

I'm confused, sorry. Maybe I need more rest.

ELLE

Yes, we should let you sleep. Come on guys.

INT: HOSPITAL CORRIDOR - Day

BEN is keeping SAM and LIZZY busy while ELLE chats with another nurse.

NURSE

She's looking okay. She'll need some time but-

LIZZY

Daddy!

ELLE turns to see STEVE standing with SAM, LIZZY and BEN. She quickly joins them.

STEVE is staring at BEN'S t-shirt. Today's pun is: 'Why do Rogues like leather armour? Because its made of hide".

STEVE

I don't get it.

BEN

Because hide is what you make into armour. And it's also hide as in 'hiding'. Being sneaky.

STEVE

No, I understand the words. I just don't see why its funny.

ELLE

Steve.

STEVE

Oh, so you put in an appearance.

ELLE

I've been looking after Sam and Lizzy since it happened. Where have you been?!

STEVE

Well, I'm here now, so you don't have to. I'm sure you've got lots of work to getting on with. You always did.

ELLE

You're taking Sam and Lizzy? Where have you been?!

STEVE

I was sorting out my place. And the phone wasn't set up. I changed my mobile Too.

ELLE

So how do we get a hold of you? Let you know how Sarah's doing?

STEVE

I'll call you, okay Elle? God, you take care of them for a few days and suddenly you're involved. Jesus!

BEN

Okay, look the kids are listening-

STEVE

Oh, back off nerd!

SAM

Dad!

STEVE

Look, I'll take care of them until Sarah's back on her feet. You don't have to worry anymore Elle.

He grabs the children's hands and walks off with them.

ELLE

But, they have stuff at mine!

BEN

I'm sorry Elle.

ELLE

No, it's okay. He's their dad. And I probably do need to get back to work. Thanks for coming with us to the hospital.

She briefly touches his arm, and then walks away.

INT: OFFICE/ELLE'S OFFICE - Day

ELLE is working hard in her small office.

ANDREW pops his head in again.

ANDREW

It's good to see you back again,
working your magic on those numbers.

ELLE

Thanks Andrew.

ANDREW

Do you think you can get to the Abbott
Street proposal this afternoon?

ELLE

(flat)

Sure, no problem.

ANDREW

Great!

He leaves again, leaving her door open. She gestures at it and a spark of light hits against it and pushes it closed. In her imagination. In reality it is still open.

She turns back to her spreadsheets.

Then she flicks to a picture of SAM and LIZZY, taken at the museum. BEN is in the background, gesturing at a suit of armour in a display case.

INT: ELLE'S FLAT - Evening

ELLE sits alone, eating take away from cartons.

Suddenly she pushes them away, upset.

She grabs her keys and goes out.

EXT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Night

The shop is closed, but ELLE is looking through the glass, desperate.

BEN emerges from the back of the shop, and lets her in.

BEN

Hey Elle, what are you doing here? We're closed.

ELLE

I... I don't know. I guess I want... I want... to hit something!

BEN

... okay.

INT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Night

ELLE and BEN sit together at their usual table. ELLE is pouring over a copy of the players handbook as BEN watches her, concerned.

ELLE passes him her new character sheet.

ELLE

Is this all done right?

BEN

A barbarian?

ELLE

I would like to rage. That's right isn't it? That's how you do it?

BEN

Sure. I mean, I get it. I really do. You could also pop out back and make a few dents in some pig iron. ... Or we could just talk about it?

ELLE takes a deep breath.

ELLE

Why are you here so late anyway?

BEN

Accounts. I'm not that good at them, it takes me a lot of time.

ELLE

I know. I saw your desk.

BEN

I can make up an adventure on the fly for your barbarian, that's no problem. You can certainly hit some imaginary monsters for a bit. But... I'm not sure that's going to help. Not really.

ELLE

But that's what you do, isn't it? Escape from reality. Escape from your problems?

BEN

That's not exactly right...

ELLE

I saw your bills. I saw all the overdue notices. You're too busy being Lachlan Faintheart to get on with your own life!

BEN

Its 'Boldheart'. Because *Faint heart* never won fair maid-

ELLE

Have you even tried?! Or are you too busy hiding away in your fantasies!

BEN stands up.

BEN

I think you need to go home and get some sleep Elle.

ELLE gets out the d20 that LEWIS told her to keep. The lucky one.

ELLE

Your friend said this would bring me luck. He can have it back. It's useless!

She leaves, slamming the door behind her.

BEN picks up the d20 and rolls it in his palm.

INT: ELLE'S FLAT - Morning

ELLE wakes up in her bed and immediately groans, remembering everything that she said to BEN and regretting it.

EXT: THE GRASSY GNOLL - Morning

OLIVIA is just opening the shop when ELLE turns up at the door.

OLIVIA
You're bright and early!

ELLE
Is Ben here?

OLIVIA
He's not on this morning. He's probably just at home having a lie in after his late night in the office last night.

ELLE
What do you mean?

INT: THE GRASSY GNOLL/OFFICE - Morning

The office is immaculately tidy, everything filed and organised. There is even a pile of bills with 'to pay' written on them.

OLIVIA
I've never seen him this organised. Maybe it's your good influence?

ELLE
Maybe, or something like that.

OLIVIA
Of course now we can see quite how much the shop owes. By Tymora it's a lot!

ELLE
Do you know where he is?

OLIVIA
There is a place he goes when he gets a day off. You'll need some decent hiking boots and clothes though, not those heels.

EXT: MOUNTAIN PATH - Morning

ELLE, wearing good walking boots and clothes, is walking up the path with a map in her hand, already getting hot in the morning sun.

She raises a hand to her brow, and sees BEN in the distance, looking out over the valley.

She joins him.

Today his t-shirt today reads 'Beauty is in the Eye of the Beholder' and has a beholder on it.

She takes in the view, standing next to hm in silence for a moment.

ELLE

Wow.

BEN

Yep.

ELLE

I'm sorry, for what I said. It wasn't fair.

BEN

It might have been a little bit fair. I was hiding from those bills. But do you know why I hike up here?

ELLE

Because of the view?

BEN

Because out here I can have an adventure any day that I want. I can camp out under the stars. I can eat snacks and call them supplies. Living in one world doesn't mean the other world doesn't exist. I can have both. Do you still want to hit something?

ELLE

Are you volunteering?

BEN

Not exactly.

EXT: MOUNTAIN/CAMPSITE - Day

A sweating ELLE is slamming a wooden mallet into the final post for a tent while BEN builds a campfire.

ELLE

(swinging the hammer)

Well, that's done. What's next?

BEN

Sit down for a minute and take a break.

He passes her a drink as she sits by him.

BEN

Was it Steve's face you were imagining on those posts?

ELLE

Maybe.

BEN

Do you still want to rage?

ELLE

No... not at the moment.

EXT: MOUNTAIN/CAMPSITE - Nightfall

ELLE and BEN sit together, laughing and joking as they share some of his mead, drinking from the same kind of horns that LEWIS had.

BEN

And that's when he said he was a gnome!

ELLE laughs, a little bit drunk and snorting through her nose because of it.

EXT: MOUNTAIN/CAMPSITE - Night

They are performing an elaborate stately dance around the campfire, ELLE pretending to hold the edge of her non-existent fine silk skirts and petticoats as the gentlemanly BEN bows deeply.

For a moment they are wearing the costumes of their characters, LACHLAN and Ellanthia, as they dance.

EXT: MOUNTAIN/CAMPSITE - Morning

ELLE wakes up in the tent. BEN is nowhere to be seen.

She rubs her eyes, and goes out into the bright sunlight.

BEN is asleep on the dirt by the campfire, hugging a rock for a pillow.

ELLE smiles down at him.

Her phone suddenly rings and she quickly sprints away so as not to wake him.

ELLE

Andrew?

ANDREW

(o.s.)

I don't see the Abbott Street proposal on my desk. Are you ready to present to the board?!

ELLE

Of course! I'll be right there. In an hour. Not more than two.

She dashes off.

BEN rolls over in his sleep.

INT: OFFICE - Day

ELLE is changing into her work clothes while also going through figures and graphs on her laptop.

EXT: MOUNTAIN/CAMPSITE - Day

BEN reads a message from ELLE on his phone - "Sorry I had to make like an Ent and leaf. Work summons me. See you later? x"

He smiles and pulls out her lucky d20 from his pocket and rolls it around in the palm of his hand.

INT: OFFICE/BOARD ROOM - Day

We see ELLE through the glass windows into the boardroom. She looks nervous as a horde of suits troops in and sits down.

ANDREW looks expectant.

INT: OFFICE/RECEPTION - Day

BEN is talking to the receptionist while holding a beautiful bunch of flowers and a jewellery gift box.

Trying to charm his way in, he is using his 'Lachlan Boldheart' persona.

BEN

(scottish accent)

Now lassie, if you could see your way to letting me in so I can make this grand romantic gesture I'd be all kinds of grateful to ye.

RECEPTIONIST

I don't know, they're awfully strict about who's allowed in. I can pass the flowers on.

BEN

Now I know you know that won't be as good. I cannae sweep a fair lady off her feet through delivered flowers. And I made her gift too.

He holds up the gift box.

RECEPTIONIST

And what's in that?

BEN

A wee memento of our first- kind of-
date.

RECEPTIONIST

Awww. Are you from Edinburgh? I've always
wanted to visit the castle there.

BEN

Nay, my clan have their own castle up
near the lochs. Where the heather grows
wild and the haggis roams free.

RECEPTIONIST

Really? Wow?!

BEN

Now do you think I could sneak in,
just for a wee moment?

A bright dice rolls on a dark plain. An eighteen for persuasion.

RECEPTIONIST

Okaaaayyy, maybe you can go in quickly
and deliver your gifts. But be quick!

BEN

(Scottish accent)

I'll be faster than a sporan being
chased by a larger, less, tim'rous
beastie!

INT: OFFICE - Day

BEN walks through ELLE's busy office, looking for her.

He spots her in the boardroom, through the windows. She is looking
calm and confident as she presents.

He looks at her with pride and... love?

But then he sees her next slide. The Abbott street project. A
redevelopment of a street in the city. A proposal to potential
developers to take over the leases of the block and knock it down
for new flats.

Surprise and then anger are suddenly clear on his face.

INT: OFFICE - Day

ELLE leaves the boardroom with the suits and spots BEN, and the flowers.

ELLE

Ben! What are you doing here? These are lovely!

BEN

Was this always your plan?

ELLE

What?

BEN

Were you only being friendly so you could convince me to sell up? Were you the one behind the land rent increases and the constant demand letters? Did you use Sam and Lizzy to get me to trust you?!

ELLE

What? I? I don't underst-

ANDREW

Everything okay over here?

ELLE

Its okay, Ben is a friend-

BEN

Am I? Or am I just a business opportunity?!

ANDREW

(laughing)

They're the same thing aren't they?!

BEN

(to ELLE)

Don't you even care what happens

to the Grassy Gnoll?!

ANDREW

Is he some kind of conspiracy nut?!
Should I call security?

ELLE

No, no! What do you mean Ben?!

BEN

Abbott Street!

ANDREW

Ah, that's a great little plot. Ripe
for development. Nothing there but a
bunch of coffee shops that've gone bust
and...

BEN

And my shop!

ELLE

I- I- I didn't realise. I've been busy
with Sam and Lizzy, and I didn't realise-

BEN

God, how could I have failed my insight
check on you so *badly!*

He walks off, taking his flowers and gift with him.

ELLE

(on the verge of tears)

Ben!

ANDREW

Well, we can't have this kind of
distraction when we present to the
potential developers in a few days!

ELLE

Andrew... I need to get back to work.

ANDREW

Of course!

INT: OFFICE/ ELLE'S OFFICE - Day

She shuts the door and leans against it, in emotional turmoil.

ELLE

I can fix this. I can fix this!

She gets to work, pulling out files and looking over spreadsheets on her laptop.

INT: OFFICE/ ELLE'S OFFICE - Day

ELLE is on the phone with GANDALF. She looks like she has been in her office for a long time, and has been living off of cups of coffee.

ELLE

I know he won't speak to me. I really do understand. But I need to get a hold of his accounts. There has to be some way that I can fix this.

INT: THE GRASSY GNOLL/OFFICE - Day

GANDALF is stood in the office, on the phone to ELLE.

A clanging sound comes from outside.

GANDALF

He's really upset. He's been outside rage-making swords for the last few hours! He's made seven already, and most of them are bent or hammered too thin.

ELLE

Help me Gandalf. You're my only hope.

GANDALF

I'm not a space wizard, dude, just an ordinary wizard. But I'll see if I can email over the digital accounts. I don't know how you can help though. There's a whole bunch of debt, and giving up the shop for the money that's been offered...

well it might just make sense. He's talking about packing up and having an entirely new adventure.

ELLE

The shop is a place for lots of people to have new adventures though!

GANDALF

Is this just about the shop, Elle?

ELLE pauses, searching her feelings. She realises the truth.

ELLE

No. No it's not just about the shop.

GANDALF

That's awesome! Let me know if I can do anything else!

INT: OFFICE/ELLE'S OFFICE - Night

ELLE is sleeping on her desk, surrounded by printouts of the shop's accounts, a lot of it in red ink.

INT: THE CASTLE BEDROOM - Night

ELLE'S DREAM: This time it is BEN who is lying on the bed, wearing a flouncy silk shirt and tight leather trousers. He waits impatiently for his rescue, the same dragon flying about outside the tower walls.

The same clanging metal footsteps get closer and closer until ELLE in shining armour bursts in.

ELLE

(through visor)

Oh this is just ridiculous.

The next moment she is in her Ellanthia costume.

ELLE

Much better. I've come to save you!

BEN stands up and overacts the role of a swooning maiden.

BEN

Swoon!

ELLE

Wait, did you actually just say
'swoon'?!?

BEN

Oh my brave hero! Thank you for rescuing
me from the terrible predicament that
you have put me in!

ELLE

That's- wait what?!

BEN

My life was so boring before, but now I
get the excitement of losing my livelihood
AND being saved by the person who made it
all happen! Kiss me quickly my love! But
make sure to stab me in the back at the
same time! That's the really romantic thing
to do!

INT: OFFICE/ELLE'S OFFICE - Night

ELLE jerks awake.

ELLE

I have to do something!

She searches through the paperwork, desperately trying to come up
with some magic way of making it all alright.

She comes upon a bound copy of the Abbott Proposal, an artist's
impression of what the street could look like on the front.

She doodles the shopfront of the Grassy Gnoll onto the picture.

ELLE

Wait...

She goes back on her computer and types furiously, a smile forming
on her lips.

EXT: GANDALF AND OLIVIA'S HOUSE - Evening

ELLE frantically knocks at the door. She's dressed in an approximation of Ellanthia'S costume - made from whatever she could get together at the last minute and two elf ears.

Eventually it's opened by GANDALF.

GANDALF

Do you have a plan?

ELLE

I have a plan!

OLIVIA joins them. She's dressed as a dwarf, complete with beard.

ELLE

Sorry, did I interrupt a game?

Both look sheepish.

OLIVIA

Kind of... So where are we going?

EXT: LEWIS'S HOUSE - Evening

ELLE knocks at LEWIS' door. It opens on the whole party, ready and waiting. LEWIS wears his cloak and the others wear the odd bit of costume, a sword, a horned helmet, a holy symbol etc.

LEWIS

The Grassy Gnoll calls for aid. And we will answer!

EXT: STEVE'S HOUSE - Evening

ELLE knocks on STEVE'S door.

He opens it, sees who it is and frowns.

STEVE

Did Sarah tell you where I live?

ELLE

(shouting)

Sam! Lizzy!

STEVE

Hey!!

The kids come running to the door.

LIZZY

Auntie ELLE!

ELLE

We need to go on a quest!

STEVE

Its their bedtime!

ELLE

Well, I'm their aunt and it's my job
to help them to bend the rules!

STEVE

No! Absolutely not!

ELLE

We have to save the Grassy Gnoll.
Are you two in?!

SAM and LIZZY together

Daaaaaddddddd plllleeeeeassseeeee!!

STEVE looks into the two cute kids' eyes and sighs.

STEVE

Okay! But you have to dress up warm!

ELLE

Don't worry! I've got some warm things
for them to wear.

INT: BEN'S FLAT - Night

BEN reluctantly gets up to answer the door which someone is
knocking on at very loudly, getting up from where he's been eating
pizza and watching reruns of Jeopardy. For once his t-shirt is
entirely plain black, no picture and no slogan.

He opens the door and is confronted by a fellowship of the nine (plus one): GANDALF as a wizard, OLIVIA in her dwarf outfit and beard, ELLE wearing fake elf ears, LEWIS in his cloak, LEWIS'S party carrying the odd fantasy weapon or costume piece, and SAM and LIZZY in elven cloaks with leaf brooches like Frodo and Sam.

ELLE

Well met good sir. Our party has need of a bard. We have a quest ahead of us and we need his charm and persuasion.

BEN

ELLE...

ELLE

I know not of this Elle of which you speak. I am Ellanthia, elven enchantress.

BEN

Good! Then you can cast charm on whoever it is you're going to drive mad next!

ELLE

Ben, I'm so sorry!

He goes to shut the door on them.

GANDALF blocks it with his staff.

GANDALF

Dude. She has a plan. It might just work. And if it doesn't, it might be an awfully big adventure.

BEN looks deep into ELLE'S eyes.

ELLE

Trust me. *Please.*

BEN

Wait there a moment.

He closes the door on them for a moment and the party shuffle about awkwardly.

Another tenant in the block gets out of an elevator nearby with some shopping and dog on lead.

TENANT

Evening.

ALL TOGETHER

Evening.

The tenant goes into their apartment.

BEN returns, holding the gift box he'd taken with him to ELLE'S office.

BEN

You're going to need this.

She opens the box, her face illuminated for a moment by a sparkling light as though its something magical. And in a way, it is.

BEN has had her lucky d20 encased in a silver wire cage and hung on a silver chain.

He helps her to put it on, their eyes locked with each other and then they are both smiling shyly.

EXT: STREET - Night

The entire party walks down a city street, catching incredulous looks from other people out and about in the evening.

BEN is now wearing one of his famous t-shirts and a foam sword. The slogan on his t-shirt says 'Pirate Wizards Use Arrrrr-cana'.

They all bundle into GANDALF'S van, which has a large fantasy battle scene painted on the side, and he drives off as OLIVIA leans out of the window, howling like a wolf.

INT: VAN - Night

ELLE sits in the back, with SAM and LIZZY on either side of her, looking tired for a moment.

BEN is opposite.

She is twiddling with the lucky d20 on its chain.

ELLE

This was very sweet of you.

BEN

Its nothin-

GANDALF

I think that we're there!

BEN

Where?

EXT: VAN - Night

The van pulls up in front of a pair massive gates at the end of a long drive, a mansion just visible in the distance.

ELLE has a map in her hands. One moment it looks like a pretty normal print out of a Google map, the next it's a piece of aged parchment with an x marking the spot.

ELLE

This is it. But I don't think we're going to be able to just walk in.

GANDALF gives her a look.

ELLE

What?

EXT: MANSION - Night

The party stands in front of the gates.

BEN

What's the plan here, exactly?

EXT: MANSION WALL - Night

The party is helping each other over the wall. LEWIS and GANDALF fall off the top of it and land in bushes.

LEWIS

Ow! I'm not usually the one trying
to pull off an athletics check! Ouch!
I was expecting more security for
a place like this though-

A low growl interrupts him.

Three large black dogs are prowling towards him.

EXT: MANSION GARDEN - Night

LEWIS and GANDALF being chased across the lawn by the dogs, robes
and cloaks flapping behind them.

ELLE

We have to help them!

As the dogs chase them back towards the rest of the party BEN
steps forward, clears his throat and starts to sing a ballad.
Unlike Lachlan, his voice is not so great.

The dogs stop. Cock their heads. And then start whining and
covering their ears with their paws.

ELLE

I think you might have failed your
performance check!

BEN

(in between singing)

I stopped them didn't I?

LIZZY

Doggies!

She walks towards them.

ELLE

No!

But the dogs let her scratch their ears and rub their bellies.

LEWIS

What do you think? Druid or ranger?

HANA

Multi-class maybe? With proficiency
in animal handling?

LEWIS

Or maybe she's learnt the animal
friendship spell?

The dogs trot along with them as they make their way up the long
drive to the house.

Again ELLE has to be brave to knock on a door. This one is much
grander and she has to take several deep breaths before she does.

Eventually the door creaks open and a barefooted man with long
dark haired dressed in scruffy clothes looks out at the party
waiting expectantly for him on the porch - the wizards, the elves,
the warriors, the cute hobbits... This is PAUL CYAN, internet
entrepreneur and billionaire.

PAUL

I knew I shouldn't have smoked that-

ELLE

Mr Cyan, I'm sorry for disturbing you
but can I have a minute of your time
please?! I represent Caramon Capital
and I have a proposal for you-

PAUL

Call my office. I pay them so I don't
have to talk to suits. Even suits
wearing elf ears.

He goes to shut the door.

ELLE

Please! I am Ellanthia, elven enchantress.
Charm weaver of the western towers. Sion
of the house of Voldt. Undead bane.
Troll's foe. And I call upon you know,
in my time of need to lend me aid.

PAUL pauses.

BEN

Roll for persuasion!

ELLE reaches for the d20 on its chain about her neck, but its missing!

ELLE

Oh no! My lucky d20! I've lost it!

PAUL

Here, you can borrow mine.

He pulls out a golden d20 from a pocket.

PAUL

Okay then Lady Ellanthia, come in and you can tell me more about your propos- quest?

INT: PAUL'S MANSION - Night

The party follows PAUL along a long corridor. On the walls are paintings of epic dungeons and dragons battles.

ELLE

The Grassy Gnoll is the heart of a gaming community. It's exactly the kind of place you used to go to when you were a teenager - while you were already developing the tech behind the social media platform that eventually made your fortune.

She hands him a print out of an article about him. There is a picture of a bunch of teenagers smiling at camera as they play dungeons and dragons in the 1980s. One of them is definitely a younger PAUL.

PAUL

Ha! Look at those nerds!

ELLE

You've invested in games companies because you know what it means to get lost in a story. You've also made

donations to projects that help and encourage children to use games to improve their literacy. The Grassy Gnoll combines both those interests. Yes, Abbott Street is ripe for development, I have the figures right here. But why not keep its heart going at the same time? Why not help more adventurers find their way there?

She pulls out the proposal document, the one she's drawn the Grassy Gnoll on, from within her cloak and passes it to him.

SAM nudges LIZZY.

LIZZY

I couldn't read before! Now because of the Grassy Gnoll I can!

PAUL

Is that true little hobbit?

LEWIS

Roll for insight.

PAUL laughs.

PAUL

Let me think about it for a bit. But come on in, there's some people who might like to meet you.

INT: MANSION/GAMES ROOM - Night

PAUL leads them into a large games room full to the brim with cabinets of miniatures, shelves of D&D books, and with a long mahogany table in the middle of it. At one end is an ornate gilt chair, the DM'S chair. Sat around the table are several players, their maps, sheets and miniatures in front of them.

There is a bald and very muscular man, a white haired British woman in her eighties, a tall handsome man with dark hair wavy hair wearing a t-shirt with 'Death Saves' written on it, a bookish looking man in his sixties wearing glasses and a tie, and a beautiful red haired woman in her twenties [each looks like a

famous celeb, actor, or millionaire we might recognise who has admitted playing Dungeons and Dragons in the past. Or they could be actual well known people willing to play themselves :)]

PAUL

We have some surprise guests, guys.
They want me to invest in their games
shop, to keep it going for the kids.

BRITISH WOMAN

What a fabulous plan, darling!

BALD MAN

(growling deep voice)
Surely a dame would have some spare
pennies to put in?

SAM and LIZZY start making puppy dog eyes at her.

BRITISH WOMAN

Well, if it's for the children, of
course! Such sweet little things!

GLASSES WEARING MAN

I could probably put in a bit.

RED HAired WOMAN

A bit, William?!

PAUL

I think your persuasion roll was a
natural 20 Ellanthia. Okay, I'll get
my people to get in touch with your
people. Now, if you don't mind, this
motley crew is about to roll initiative
against an immortal lich-king.

BALD MAN

Do you know what I'm afraid of?
Nothing.

EXT: MANSION GATE - Night

It swings closed behind the party.

INT: STEVE'S HOUSE/SAM and LIZZY'S BEDROOM - Night

ELLE is tucking SAM and LIZZY in to their beds.

LIZZY
Auntie Ellie?

ELLE
Yes sweetie?

LIZZY
(falling asleep)
Can I be an elf when I grow up...?

But then she's asleep.

ELLE goes over to SAM.

SAM
You were very brave and smart Auntie
Elle.

ELLE
So were you Sam.

SAM
I can't wait to tell mum all about our adventure.

ELLE
Maybe let me tell her about it first.
Get some sleep now.

STEVE is watching from the doorway, arms crossed.

STEVE
(whispering)
Well I hope you had fun.

ELLE
Oh shut up Steve.

INT: VAN - Night

ELLE gets back in.

LEWIS

To a tavern! We must quaff ale and
sing of our deeds! Come Lachlan, we
will have need of your singing voice!

THE OTHERS

(all together)

No!

INT: SPORTS BAR - Night

The party enters cautiously. The bar is full of football fans,
wearing team colours and big hats.

LEWIS

Are we sure that this is the right
place? I have plenty of mead back
at mine...

GANDALF

Nonsense. They are men and women with
a passion for games and costumes too!

DRUNK FOOTBALL FAN

Gandalf! Haven't seen you in here for
a while! You alright dude?! What you
been up to?

GANDALF

I took some hobbits on an adventure.
Faced horrendous beasts. Saved the
day. Usual stuff.

INT: SPORTS BAR - Night

The party has taken over a table.

GANDALF is busy eating peanuts and shouting at the big screen when
something goes wrong during the game. The rest of the party are
celebrating with large pitchers of beer.

SIMON

Why can't I shake the feeling that we
should be shopping right now?

VICKY

Because that's what we usually do after an adventure! You spent a good forty minutes at Fredorick's Fabulous Fayre last time picking out fancy leather armour to spent your ill-gotten gains on!

SIMON

They weren't ill-gotten!

VICKY

The white dragon who owned the hoard would disagree!

ELLE tries to talk to BEN over the noise in the bar. As she speaks a goal is scored and everything goes wild.

ELLE

I'm really sorry I lost the d20 after you turned it into a pendant for me.

BEN

Sorry? I can't hear you!

She grabs his hand and pulls him from the bar and outside.

EXT: SPORTS BAR - Night

ELLE pulls BEN from the bar, smiling at his confusion.

ELLE

I said, I'm sorry that I lose the pendant!

BEN

I wish you still had it. Lewis told me that he got you to make a very special roll on it.

ELLE

He never said what it was for though! But I must have done pretty badly since I only got a one, a critical fail.

BEN

Well I don't know. He told me that he got

you to roll a save versus love.

ELLE

Is that even a thing?!

BEN

Not normally, but I guess sometimes the
dungeon master has to improvise.

She get closer to him, taking both his hands in hers.

ELLE

But I lost the roll. I failed to save
against love. What does that mean?

BEN

Whatever you want it to... my lady.

She gets even closer, and BEN does too.

ELLE

You know, if I was to imagine a place
for a first kiss, it wouldn't be just
outside a sports bar.

BEN

A first kis-?

She kisses him, stopping his words. Bells ring out, doves fly,
magic sparkles around them. And the two of them are suddenly in
the midst of a great battle.

The rest of the adventuring party are facing off against foul
humanoids while ELLE AS ELF and BEN AND LACHLAN are kissing in the
middle of it all.

HANA

(flinging daggers)

Ugh, guys! Get a tavern room!

VICKY

(while clubbing a creature to death)

Awww!

ELLIOT and SIMON

Finally!

LEWIS

(o.s.)

And the love of Ellanthia and Lachlan Boldheart was cemented in that moment of fierce battle, as spells flew and enemies clashed. Where once there had been the fear of giving one's heart there was now true love. The kind that the bards would sing of. The kind of love that can put down tyrants and raise empires. The kind of love that saves the lost and the lonely. The kind of love...

OLIVIA

(o.s.)

Get to the toast Lewis!

INT: WEDDING PAVILION - Day

LEWIS is dressed in a luxurious velvet suit, his normal DM cloak over the top of it as he stands at the top table at the wedding reception.

Sat near him are BEN and ELLE. BEN wear a wedding version of LACHLAN'S armour. ELLE has gone full glowy elf and looks like a vision.

SARAH is sat at the top table with SAM and LIZZY who looks very excited about being dressed in armour. SARAH looks completely recovered from her injury.

The rest of the adventuring party are scattered among the tables, wearing full armour as per their characters.

HANA the rogue sits next to the very conservatively dressed ANDREW and winks at him.

LEWIS

Ah, well. All I really wanted to say, since I'm standing in at very last minute for the best man who seems to be missing. Anyone seen him yet, anyone? Oh well, all I really wanted to to say

is that I could not imagine a more
fantastic couple than Elle and Ben. So
please join me in a toast! May you roll
many natural twenties in the years to come!

The wedding reception toasts ELLE and BEN.

GANDALF rushes in, in full costume plus a satin cummerbund and a
bow tie, and goes straight to a cross looking OLIVIA the
barbarian.

GANDALF

A wizard is neve-

OLIVIA

Don't even you dare!

BEN and ELLE smile and kiss.

THE END