

DEAD MAN'S DICE

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EXT. ISLAND BEACH - 1724 - NIGHT

Moonlight bathes the shore. Waves lap gently. A jungle of palms sways in the breeze.

NED (30s) limps from the treeline--gaunt, sunburnt, ragged. A rough peg juts below his bloody knee. He grips a bundle wrapped in palm leaves like it's the last thing that matters.

At the water's edge, he fastens it to a small driftwood raft and sends it out to sea.

He watches it go, then turns and disappears into the jungle.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - NIGHT

Insects TRILL. Moonlight cuts through the canopy as Ned steps from the shadows.

A freshly dug pit gapes before him. Beside it, a mound of earth and stone bound with vine rope.

He grimaces, lowering himself in--one hand gripping a root, weight on his good leg.

EXT. PIT - NIGHT

A rusted chest lies at the bottom.

Ned drops to his knees, trembling. He unlatches it, lifts the lid--CREAK--revealing glowing MAYAN GOLD COINS.

His eyes glimmer with reverence and fear. He grabs a dangling rope, then a worn cutlass from the dirt.

NED  
(whispers)  
To the ends of the earth.

He slashes his throat. Blood splatters the gold. Gasping, he slams the chest shut and yanks the vine rope.

EXT. JUNGLE CLEARING - NIGHT

Freed from its vine binds, the mound tumbles into the pit. Dust swirls. Silence.

Ned and the treasure vanish--entombed beneath the island.

INT. BEDROOM - PRESENT - DAY

CLOSE ON: A skeleton warrior figurine, frozen in eternal battle.

WIDE: A worn, homemade board game scattered with hand-painted figures.

GEORGE (18), tall, broad-shouldered, and charmingly geeky, hunches over the board--focused. He rolls dice, moves pieces, scribbles notes. Over and over.

Fantasy posters cover the walls. A bulletin board bursts with sketches and notes. Shelves brim with cracked-spine novels, and stacked board games.

A cluttered yet meticulous desk holds an army of miniatures--some half-painted, others mid-assembly--flanked by fine brushes and neatly labelled paints.

In the corner, a glowing computer setup hums--a portal to his online gaming world.

A PHONE BUZZES on the desk. George picks it up--screen cracked. A text from ELIZA:

ELIZA (TEXT)

Hey, leaving now. See you soon. x

He smiles--then checks the time. Smile fades. Panic flickers--later than he thought.

He tosses the phone on the bed, flings open his wardrobe, rummages through a jumble of well-worn clothes.

GEORGE

(shouting)

Mum, where's my white shirt?

Silence.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(louder)

Mum!

No reply. Frustrated, he bolts from the room.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

George steps into a cosy, outdated kitchen. Family photos crowd the fridge.

On the counter: a handwritten note beside a £20 note.

## NOTE:

Didn't want to disturb you. Hospital's short-staffed--working a double. Your brother's at his dad's. Shirt's on the rack. Say hi to Eliza. Here's a 20. Love, Mum.

George exhales, spots the shirt, grabs it.

He slips the £20 into a woman's coat pocket hanging by the door.

Then, almost out of habit, folds the rest of the laundry into a neat pile.

## INT. BEDROOM - DAY

George tosses folded clothes on the bed, whips off his T-shirt, sniffs--deodorant needed. Quick spray. Checks his breath, swigs mouthwash, swallows. Grimaces. Moves on.

He slips on the white shirt, buttons up, throws on a jacket. Quick fix of his hair in the mirror.

He pauses. Holds his own gaze in the reflection.

GEORGE  
(to himself)  
You can do this.

PHONE BUZZES. A text from CHARLIE:

CHARLIE (TEXT)  
Yo, bud. What ya up to tonight? Got a couple new games. Up for it?

George types back:

GEORGE (TEXT)  
Can't. Mum's working. Watching my little bro. And no, you can't come here. Mum still hasn't lifted your ban yet. Talk tomorrow.

He grabs his headphones, keys, and wallet--barely a few coins inside.

George sweeps the room for loose change, finally digging out a couple of crumpled notes from an old pair of trousers.

Ready to go, he heads for the door, but stops--almost forgot.

His eyes land on a single worn die. He pockets it and leaves.

EXT. MODEST HOUSE - DAY

George rolls his beat-up bike onto the pavement, pops in headphones, hits play on phone—MUSIC CUTS IN AND OUT.

Frowning, he unplugs the jack, blows, sucks the port, spits out dust, reconnects—MUSIC FIXED.

Phone in pocket, he mounts the bike—FLAT FRONT TIRE.

A beat. Despair. He checks his watch.

Down the road behind him, a BUS RUMBLES past the distant junction.

No hesitation. He spins the bike around, pops a wheelie, and takes off after it—effortlessly balanced on one wheel.

EXT. STREET - DAY

George skids to a halt at the corner. Down the road, the BUS idles at the stop, passengers disembarking.

He skips track on his headphones, kicks off—another wheelie—zipping down the pavement, weaving through pedestrians.

EXT. BUS STOP - DAY

The last passenger boards.

George speeds in, hopping off before the bike fully stops.

In one fluid motion, he locks it up, pulls out his headphones, and leaps aboard—just as the doors hiss shut.

The bus pulls away.

EXT. CITY CENTRE - DUSK

The streets buzz—crowds weaving, cars humming, city lights flicking on.

ELIZA (18) sits on a bench—casual, naturally beautiful, hoodie up, sunglasses on. Foot tapping, lips moving silently—rehearsing words.

She checks her phone, catches her reflection. A beat. Hood down, sunglasses off. She runs a hand through her hair, scanning the crowd—expectant.

A GRANDMOTHER and YOUNG GIRL pass, laughing hand in hand. Eliza watches, her expression softening with a flicker of sadness

George arrives, slightly out of breath, snapping Eliza from her daze.

GEORGE  
Hey, Eliza. Sorry I'm late--bike trouble.

Eliza smiles, stands.

ELIZA  
That's okay. I only just got here myself.

They share a brief, awkward hug--friendly, but charged.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
You've gotten taller. And look at you in a shirt.  
(admiring)  
Very handsome.

GEORGE  
Figured I'd make the effort--for you.

A smile passes between them.

ELIZA  
It's so good to see you, George.

A pause. Their eyes linger.

GEORGE  
It's really good for me...also, to see you too...Eliza.

He frowns at his stumbled words.

Suddenly, Eliza steps in, hugging him tight--no hesitation, no walls.

George freezes, caught off guard. Then he exhales and holds her just as tightly.

She pulls away, eyes glassy but warm.

ELIZA  
Shall we?

George nods.

GEORGE  
It's this way.

She links arms with him. They fall into step, walking off together.

EXT. BACKSTREET - DUSK

George and Eliza stroll down a narrow cobbled street, silence humming with unspoken words. He sneaks a glance at her.

GEORGE  
So... how've you been? Last I heard, you were volunteering abroad somewhere?

Eliza raises an eyebrow.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
My mum bumped into yours a few months back. They got chatting.

ELIZA  
Right. Yeah... I needed a change of scenery, so I joined a charity. Spent the last year traveling all over the world, helping out in schools in underprivileged communities. And it was really...eye opening.

A quiet moment lingers.

GEORGE  
Back living with your folks?

ELIZA  
For now.

GEORGE  
How are they?

ELIZA  
Still broke as ever.

Silence.

GEORGE  
And how's Wayne?

ELIZA

Wouldn't know. It didn't work out.  
Let's just say that's part of why I  
needed a change of scenery.

She shrugs it off with a small, forced smile.

GEORGE

I'm sorry to hear that.

ELIZA

Sure you are.

He fights back a smile.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Anyway--what about you? How've you  
been?

GEORGE

Yeah, good. Recently passed my Art  
and Design A-levels.

ELIZA

Doesn't surprise me. So, what's  
next--uni?

George scoffs.

GEORGE

Can't afford university.

ELIZA

So, any jobs on the horizon then?

GEORGE

I'm keeping an eye out. But I don't  
want to take just any boring old  
job, you know? I want to do  
something I actually care about.

ELIZA

And what might that be?

George hesitates, debating whether to say it.

GEORGE

You might think it silly, but...  
I'm developing my own board game.

He glances at her, gauging her reaction.



GEORGE (CONT'D)

It'll take a lot of work--and some cash--to build a proper prototype. But I'd rather put my time into something I care about than waste it on some pointless, soul-sucking job. Who knows--maybe it'll be a hit, and I'll make my fortune... just like I always promised you.

Their eyes meet.

ELIZA

I don't think that's silly at all. I think it's a great idea. If anyone knows how to make a hit board game, it's you.

George smiles--bashful, but proud.

They weave through a cluster of oncoming pedestrians.

GEORGE

(gesturing ahead)

It's just down here. But you sure this is where you want to go? There's a more popular bar round the corner--probably more your scene.

ELIZA

No. I've been looking forward to seeing this place ever since you mentioned it. Sounds fun.

GEORGE

Yeah? It's just that I distinctly remember you once saying you thought it was a bit... childish.

ELIZA

Did I? Well, I was wrong.

A fond smile tugs at her lips.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Honestly, it always makes me smile thinking of you and Charlie playing all your board games together. Inseparable, you two--  
(beat)  
--not that I minded. Do you still have the lucky dice I gave you?

George grins, reaches into his pocket, and flicks the die into view.

Eliza smirks, nostalgia glinting in her eyes.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
How is Charlie these days? Staying  
out of trouble, I hope? You two  
still play?

George hesitates, expression unreadable.

GEORGE  
From time to time.

They arrive at an old building, worn stone steps leading to a door below street level.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Here we are.

He leads her down, passing beneath a wooden sign:

"THE RUM 'N' ROLLAR."

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - DUSK

George holds the door as they step into a cosy, Caribbean-themed cellar café with wood-panelled walls and floors.

String lights glow overhead. At the back, rows of packed shelves house an impressive board game collection.

A few patrons sip cocktails and snack as they play, dice clattering under the hum of mellow Caribbean music.

Behind the bar, RUSSELL (40s), ponytail swinging, loud shirt blazing, mixes cocktails with flair. Nearby, FRANCIS (20s)—short, overweight, and timid, with thick-lensed glasses that magnify his eyes—shuffles between tables, clearing plates in a matching shirt.

Russell greets George with a familiar nod as they approach the bar.

RUSSELL  
Be with you in a sec, George.

As he mixes drinks, Eliza takes in the space, impressed.

ELIZA  
I see why you like coming here.

GEORGE

Want a drink? Or any snacks?

ELIZA

What do they serve drink-wise?

George gestures to the chalkboard above the bar.

Eliza squints, reading:

ELIZA (CONT'D)

(reading aloud)

Monopoly Mai Tai... D&D Daiquiri...  
Pictionary Piña Colada... Mouse  
Trap Mojito... Dominion Dark 'n'  
Stormy.

(smirks)

Cute. But why only rum cocktails?

GEORGE

(nods toward Russell)

Because Russell over there spent  
twenty years slinging cocktails in  
the Caribbean--until he had to come  
back here last year for family  
reasons. He doesn't talk about it  
much. When he returned, he opened  
this place--combining his two  
loves: Caribbean cocktails and  
board games. Thus, the Rum 'n'  
Rollar was born.

Francis collects freshly made drinks from Russell, carefully  
balancing them on a tray as he heads to a table.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Russell took Francis on as an  
apprentice. His protégé, if you  
will.

(watches Francis)

Still not sure why.

Francis trips on his untied shoelace, tray wobbling--he just  
about steadies it. He shoots a nervous look at Russell, who  
answers with a slow, disappointed shake of the head.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(quietly)

I like Francis, but between us...  
he's a terrible barman.

Francis sets the drinks down carefully, kneels to tie his  
lace--only to bump the next table. Empty glasses rattle. One  
topples with a sharp CLINK.

Russell rolls his eyes and strolls over, polishing a glass.

RUSSELL  
Evening, George. How's things?

GEORGE  
Pretty good, thanks. Bit quiet  
tonight, huh?

Russell glances at the empty tables, smile dipping.

RUSSELL  
Yeah... been like this all week.  
Someone even came in earlier, took  
one look and walked straight back  
out. If business doesn't pick up, I  
won't be able to afford to keep the  
lights on. I've actually got  
candles on standby.

GEORGE  
Places like this take time. Word'll  
spread.

Russell nods, not fully convinced.

RUSSELL  
Here's hoping... but if it doesn't,  
I've got a little backup plan up my  
sleeve. We'll be alright.  
(beat)  
Usual?

GEORGE  
Please. And a...  
(turns to Eliza)

She consults the menu

ELIZA  
Pictionary Pina Colada, please.

RUSSELL  
Two Pictionaries, coming up.

He signals for Francis.

Francis hesitates mid-glass collection, torn between  
finishing the task or obeying.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
Leave the rest of the glasses for  
now, Francis.

Flustered, Francis hurries over—glasses wobbling. He scrambles to steady them, rushes behind the bar, sets the tray down—SMASH. A glass shatters.

He throws Russell an anxious glance.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

You idiot.

FRANCIS

Sorry! I'll clean it up.

He bends to grab shards, but Russell stops him.

RUSSELL

After.

(pointing to till)

Two Pina's first.

FRANCIS

Right. Got it. Two Pina's.

Francis fumbles with the payment terminal as Russell mixes drinks.

GEORGE

Hey, Francis.

FRANCIS

Hi, George.

He focuses, carefully punching in the total.

GEORGE

Russell working you hard?

FRANCIS

Yeah. But I don't mind. I'm learning.

(beat)

That's fifteen pounds, please.

Eliza reaches for her purse.

GEORGE

I've got it.

ELIZA

You sure?

GEORGE

Of course.

He hands over a crumpled note. Francis opens the till, sorting change.

FRANCIS  
No Charlie tonight?

GEORGE  
Nope. I'm here with someone else tonight.  
(to Eliza)  
Eliza, this is Francis.

ELIZA  
Nice to meet you.

Francis gives a shy wave, silent.

GEORGE  
We play together after his shift sometimes. Kind of an after-hours lock-in thing.

ELIZA  
Yeah, you mentioned it in your messages.

Russell calls over.

RUSSELL  
Look lively, Francis. I'm not paying you to stand around chatting.

Across the room, a couple of patrons leave the cafe--empty glasses and an unpacked game clutter their vacated table.

FRANCIS  
It really annoys me when people don't have the decency to put the games back when they're done.

He quickly hands George the change.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)  
I'll bring your drinks over.

He hurries off under Russell's watchful eye.

GEORGE  
(to Eliza)  
So, what do you feel like playing?

ELIZA

I'll leave that up to the expert to decide--just nothing too complicated.

George leads her to the rows of shelves at the back.

INT. GAME LIBRARY - DUSK

George and Eliza stroll between packed shelves. He scans the titles on both sides as they walk.

GEORGE

How about we start with...

He grabs a simple deck of cards.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Shithead. Remember how to play?

Eliza's face lights up with recognition.

ELIZA

Oh yeah! That's the one I use to play with you and Charlie, right?

He nods.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Let's do it. I was actually pretty good at that one.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - DUSK

George and Eliza sit at a table. He shuffles a deck of cards.

ELIZA

So, who else do you play with after hours? That Russell ever join in?

George begins dealing.

GEORGE

Occasionally. But it's mostly just me, Charlie, and Francis.

ELIZA

Shame Charlie's not here. It would've been nice to see him. Why didn't you invite him?

George pauses mid-deal, caught off guard.

GEORGE

Because... I didn't tell him I was coming here with you.

ELIZA

Why not?

GEORGE

For one, he wouldn't approve. And I figured it was just meant to be the two of us tonight. I mean, I'm not calling this a date, but...

ELIZA

A date?

GEORGE

Well...yeah. Isn't it?

She hesitates, surprised--then smiles.

ELIZA

I'd love it to be. But honestly, I didn't even think you'd reply to my message--let alone consider going on a date with me. Not after how things ended between us.

George exhales.

GEORGE

Look... I'm just going to come out and say it.

(meets her eyes)

I can't pretend what happened didn't hurt--because it did. I know why you did what you did it... but it crushed me.

Eliza starts to speak, but he gently raises a hand.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Please--just let me finish. Most people probably would've ignored your message. Or told you to go to hell. But I couldn't. My heart lit up the second your message appeared on my screen.

(beat)

Because, despite everything, I never stopped loving you, Eliza. I always have. From the moment we met. And I always will.



A beat. Eliza swallows.

ELIZA  
Can I talk now?

GEORGE  
Yeah. Sorry. Your turn.

She reaches across, placing a gentle hand over his.

ELIZA  
I'm so sorry for what happened that night, George. I've regretted it every single day since. You didn't deserve that.

She squeezes his hand, eyes earnest.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
I know I can't change the past or undo the hurt I caused, but I wanted to try and make it up to you. I hoped we could at least be friends again, but... if you can truly find it in your heart to forgive me, then I'd like us to be more. Because... I think I love you too.

George breaks into a wide, genuine smile. They lean in, eyes closed, lips almost touching--

FRANCIS (O.S.)  
That was so... beautiful.

They jolt apart as FRANCIS appears beside them, drinks in hand, wearing a soppy grin.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)  
For the lovebirds.

He sets down their extravagant cocktails with pride. George forces a smile, hiding his irritation.

ELIZA  
Wow--check these out.

She sips through the straw, eyes lighting up.

GEORGE  
Thanks, Francis.

FRANCIS  
You're welcome.

He toddles off, clearly pleased with himself.

Eliza licks her lips.

ELIZA

Yum.

(gestures to cards)

Shall we play?

GEORGE

Uh... yeah.

He sips his drink, shuffles, and starts to deal—when Eliza suddenly leans across the table and kisses him, soft and quick.

George freezes.

She sits back, sipping her cocktail, a playful smile tugging at her lips.

George grins, nods to himself, and resumes dealing.

EXT. BACKSTREET - NIGHT

A lively group of patrons spills out of the café, LAUGHTER echoing off the walls. They stumble up the steps, high on cocktails, their CHATTER fading as they disappear down the cobbled street.

From the opposite direction, a HOODED FIGURE emerges from the shadows, a rucksack slung over one shoulder, descending the steps to the café with purpose.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

Eliza and George hunch over a worn Snakes and Ladders board, locked in the final moves. Empty cocktail glasses and a stack of games sit nearby.

They're the last customers--only Russell and Francis remain, tidying up the café.

George rolls the dice. Lands on the final square. Victory.

ELIZA

Not again. You win at everything.

GEORGE

What can I say? I'm a pro.

He begins packing up. Eliza leans back, stretching.

ELIZA

What shall we play next?

George checks his watch.

GEORGE

It's almost closing time. Fancy grabbing a bite to eat? There's this new Syrian place just down the road--best shawarma ever.

The door swings opens.

The hooded figure enters, lowers their hood, and heads to the bar, where Russell wipes down the counter and Francis sweeps.

Eliza notices, frowning as recognition dawns.

ELIZA

Wait... isn't that Charlie?

George stiffens. At the counter, CHARLIE (18)--scrawny, stylish, cocky--chats to Russell. Francis points toward their table. Charlie turns, spots them, expression darkening.

George quickly looks away, uneasy.

GEORGE

Yep. That's Charlie.

Eliza offers a tentative wave. Charlie approaches slowly, his face twisted in a mix of disgust and disbelief.

CHARLIE

What in the name of skull-fuckery is this?

(to George)

Are you serious? You told me you were looking after your bro tonight. But really, you blew me off to meet up with Eliza? Fucking Eliza? Of all people?

ELIZA

Hi, Charlie. It's good to see you too.

CHARLIE

Don't hi me. You've got a lot of nerve showing up here, after what you pulled. I thought you'd fucked off abroad. Since when--and how--are you back on the scene?

Across the café, Russell and Francis exchange wary glances as they clean-sensing the tension.

George gives Eliza an apologetic look.

GEORGE  
(measured)  
What are you doing here, Charlie?

CHARLIE  
What am I doing here? I came to see if Francis wanted to play one of my new games--since you were supposedly busy. The real question is, what are you doing here with her?  
(points at Eliza)  
Is this a glitch in the Matrix? Or did I just step into some fucked-up parallel dimension? Because the George I know wouldn't give this fucking bitch the time of day.

Eliza tenses, her expression hardening.

GEORGE  
(firm, standing)  
That's enough. You're out of line.

Charlie falters, caught off guard by George's reaction.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Look,  
(places a hand on  
Charlie's shoulder)  
I know you're just trying to look out for me, mate, and I appreciate it--but--

ELIZA  
(cutting in)  
We're getting back together.

CHARLIE  
You're what!

He stares, stunned--like his brain just crashed.

Russell and Francis freeze mid-motion, eyes locked on them.

Charlie closes his eyes, and takes a long, deep breath, centring himself. When he opens them, he's unnervingly calm.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(to George)

I'm your best friend. And if you're happy to pretend the past never happened--that she didn't rip your heart out and stomp on it with her freakishly large size-nine feet--then fine. So will I. Forgive and forget. As if none of it ever happened.

(pause; tone darkens)

Even the thing that happened a few days after.

George shoots him a warning look.

Eliza's eyes narrow, glancing between them.

ELIZA

What thing?

George hesitates.

CHARLIE

Doesn't matter anymore, apparently. It's all ancient history now.

(beat)

Lets just hope it doesn't repeat itself.

Without pause, he raises his voice.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Russell, my good man! A round of Mai Tais for me and my two friends here.

He slides into a seat, smile forced, eyes locked on Eliza.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

And since we're celebrating the rekindling of a fire that already burned the house down once--make them flaming.

He whips out a debit card, holding it up between two fingers.

Francis ditches the broom, takes the card, heads for the till.

RUSSELL

No more flaming cocktails. I've told you--they're banned.

Charlie turns to him, incredulous.

CHARLIE

It was one freak accident--and it wasn't even my fault.

RUSSELL

I said no!

CHARLIE

Fine. Three regular Mai Tais.  
(under breath)  
Boring old fart.

RUSSELL

What did you call me?

CHARLIE

Nothing.

Russell rolls his eyes and starts mixing.

ELIZA

Why's it banned?

Charlie shrugs, all innocence.

GEORGE

Let's just say this place used to have three Monopoly boards--until one caught fire after a flaming cocktail was--

(looks to Charlie)

--mysteriously spilled on it.

CHARLIE

How many times. It was an accident.

GEORGE

Was it, though? You were losing pretty badly at the time.

CHARLIE

I strongly denied these scandalous accusations then, and I strongly deny them now.

(waves it off)

But since we're not digging up old controversies tonight, I say we just play a game.

George checks the time, about to speak--

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(cutting in)

And don't you dare say you're leaving. Because I'm here now, drinks are on the way, and I fully intend to catch up with my dear old friend Eliza here.

(turns to Russell)

What say you to a lock-in, Rus?

RUSSELL

If you keep buying, I'll keep mixing.

CHARLIE

Francis? You in for a game?

Francis pauses at the till, caught off guard.

FRANCIS

Uh--yeah.

(glancing to Russell)

Once my shift's over.

George looks to Eliza, seeking her opinion.

ELIZA

(to George)

Sounds fun.

CHARLIE

Then it's settled.

(to Francis)

If you'd do the honours?

Russell tosses a bundle of keys to Francis. It SMACKS him right in the face and hits the floor.

RUSSELL

Look alive, Francis.

FRANCIS

Sorry.

He scoops up the keys, returns Charlie's card, then trudges to the door and locks it with a loud CLUNK.

CHARLIE

Alright--what are we playing?

ELIZA

Nothing too complex. And preferably something none of you have played before.

(MORE)

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
 (nudging George)  
 Because this one's beaten me at  
 practically everything tonight.

GEORGE  
 (to Eliza)  
 That might be tough. Between us,  
 we've probably played every game in  
 this place. Some we even donated  
 ourselves.

Francis lingers at the bar, eyeing the clock as Russell mixes  
 drinks--counting down the minutes until his shift ends.

Charlie has a sudden epiphany.

CHARLIE  
 Duh--we can play my new game.

He unzips his bag and slaps a sleek board game box on the  
 table.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 Parallax Dominion: Betrayal  
 Protocol. A strategic, asymmetrical  
 power struggle set in a dystopian  
 galactic empire, where alliances  
 are fleeting and betrayal is  
 practically a win condition.  
 (to Eliza)  
 Should be right up your street.

Eliza shoots him an unimpressed look. George glares. Charlie  
 throws up his hands in mock surrender, zipping his lips.

George flips the box, scanning the back, curious.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 There's shifting maps, secret  
 objectives, bribery mechanics...  
 and if the entropy meter maxes out?  
 Boom--the whole sector implodes.

ELIZA  
 Yeah... hard pass.

She plucks the box from George and slides it back to Charlie.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
 Sounds way too complicated.

CHARLIE  
 To you, maybe.



He looks to George, fishing for support.

GEORGE

It sounds interesting... but kind  
of heavy. We'll play it another  
time.

Charlie huffs, shoving the game back in the bag with a little  
more force than necessary.

CHARLIE

Fine.

He grabs the deck of cards on the table.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

How about snap then?  
(dryly, to Eliza)  
That simple enough for you?

Eliza flashes a sweet, sarcastic smile.

FRANCIS

You could try the donation box.

He nods toward a battered chest near the door.

FRANCIS (CONT'D)

I haven't checked it in a couple of  
days. Might be something in there.

Charlie raises an eyebrow, unimpressed.

ELIZA

(to Charlie)  
What's wrong with that idea?

CHARLIE

The donation box is where people  
dump crappy old games they don't  
deem worth selling--usually because  
they suck.

GEORGE

Still worth a look.

He heads over to the chest, lifts the CREAKY lid. Pauses.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

There's something in here.

CHARLIE

Lemme guess... Trivial Pursuit:  
1982 Edition?

GEORGE  
No... don't think so.

He reaches into the chest and hauls out a heavy carrier bag.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Got some weight to it.

He peeks inside the bag.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Ever heard of Dead Man's Dice?

He pulls out a battered black box and sets it down on the table with a dull thud. Charlie and Eliza lean in.

CHARLIE  
What in the name of homemade  
shittery is this?

The lid shows a crude red skeleton, its hollow eyes staring out. Above it, faded red letters: Dead Man's Dice.

The box is thin, warped wood, splintered and caked in thick, slapdash black paint.

Francis arrives with their drinks, tray balanced in one hand. He sets down the colourful glasses, checks his watch, exhales, and sinks into a chair--finally off shift.

He clocks the box.

FRANCIS  
Well. We definitely don't have that  
anywhere on the shelves.

Charlie flips it over--blank. Just more rough black paint.

CHARLIE  
Heavy, whatever it is.

ELIZA  
Are we sure it's even a board game?

GEORGE  
Hard to say what the hell it is.

Eliza pulls out her phone.

ELIZA  
I'll look it up.

GEORGE

Don't bother. Pretty sure it's one of a kind.

CHARLIE

(to Eliza)

Plus, there's no signal down here.

(louder)

Because Russell's too cheap to spring for customer Wi-Fi.

Russell looks over from behind the bar.

RUSSELL

What was that, Charlie?

CHARLIE

Nothing, Rus.

Russell grumbles and gets back to work.

Francis smirks at Charlie.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Alright--let's see what's inside this monstrosity.

He lifts the lid. Inside, an aged white cloth, scrawled with jagged crimson handwriting. One word dominates the top: Prologue.

George lifts the cloth carefully, revealing a handmade hourglass and a stone game board beneath.

GEORGE

(reads aloud)

'Twas the year of our Lord,  
seventeen twenty-four,  
When Captain Ned Low sailed to  
fortune and lore.  
With a cutthroat crew and the wind  
at their back,  
They hunted the seas, leaving no  
trade lane intact.  
Till one fateful day, through mist  
and spray,  
An abandoned ship did drift their  
way.  
Within her hull, a trove did gleam--  
Mayan gold, like a devil's dream.

Charlie reaches in and lifts the makeshift hourglass. Sand sits heavy at the bottom.

It's crude and uneven, crafted from two small, hand-blown glass bottles, lashed together with brittle vines and splintered wood, the seams sealed with hardened amber resin.

He gives it a slight shake, unimpressed.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

But the treasure they took was a  
devil's own prize,  
Soon revealed 'neath moonlit skies.  
A fever took hold, both strange and  
dire,  
Their nights plagued by visions of  
fire.  
Whispers of curses spread through  
the crew,  
And dread took root where courage  
once grew.  
"Cast it overboard!" the sailors  
cried,  
"Let the cursed gold be lost to the  
tide!"

Eliza reaches in and lifts out the stone game board--flat, heavy, and roughly square.

Its surface is carved like an ammonite, with spiralling numbered squares winding inward to 58. Some bear deep-cut symbols--mostly X's and arrows.

At the centre, a single embedded GOLD COIN gleams.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

But Low, in his greed, did not  
agree,  
Silencing dissent by blade and by  
sea.  
Despair took hold, and whispers  
spread--  
"Mutiny's our only hope," the crew  
all said.  
They bound Ned tight, with no  
quarter shown,  
And marooned him where the winds  
had blown.  
An uncharted land where no map did  
mark,  
With naught but the gold, a blade,  
and a spark.

Francis tips the rest of the box onto the table.

Five simple carved ships tumble out—black, red, blue, yellow, and green—followed by eight hand-crafted white dice and two black ones.

He lines them up neatly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Four bottles of water, less briny  
than surf,  
Left as a mercy on that forsaken  
turf.  
"A kindness," they said, though  
their hearts did ache,  
To leave their captain with the  
curse to take.

Russell wanders over, curious.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Soon wracked by hunger, with  
sickness rife,  
Low teetered close to the end of  
his life.  
On death's dark brink, as hope did  
wane,  
A Mayan god emerged from shadow's  
domain.

He brings the sheet closer, squinting to make out the words.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ah Puch—Lord of Death and Decay—  
Who'd cursed the gold, now sought  
his prey.  
Drawn by Ned's greed, his soul's  
foul stain,  
The dark god grinned and spoke his  
name:

Russell narrows his eyes at the coin embedded in the board.

RUSSELL

Is that real?

CHARLIE

(scoffs)

Course not.

Russell leans in, running a finger over the intricate patterns, frowning.

RUSSELL

Looks... Mesoamerican.

CHARLIE

Looks more arts and crafts from the  
insane asylum, if you ask me.

RUSSELL

I didn't ask you, did I?

Russell presses his fingernail into the coin, testing it. A faint smile tugs at his lips--quickly masked by a shrug and disappointed frown.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

You're right. It's fake.

CHARLIE

No shit, Sherlock.

George waits a beat.

GEORGE

(to Russell)

May I continue?

RUSSELL

Proceed.

George scans the sheet, picking up where he left off.

GEORGE

(reading aloud)

The dark god grinned and spoke his  
name:

(clears throat)

"Ned, ye vile scoundrel, thy soul I  
claim,

Yet I offer escape from eternal  
flame.

Swear thyself to this gold  
accursed,

And guard it safe to the ends of  
the earth."

To spare his soul from damnation's  
call,

Low pledged himself to the gold and  
thrall.

His fate was sealed, his soul  
forever confined,

To the treasure no man should ever  
find.

Everyone listens intently. Eliza, absorbed in the story, sips her cocktail through a straw, eyes locked on George.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

But the pact held a twist, a  
condition most grim:  
A game he must craft, from his  
flesh, blood, and limb.  
An irresistible lure for the greedy  
and bold,  
To snare their poor souls for the  
god's dark hold.  
Yet should a challenger best Ned at  
his very own game,  
The curse would be severed, and the  
gold they'd claim.  
Ever the schemer, with a mind most  
keen,  
Low conceived a game both deadly  
and mean.

Francis examines the ships--the black one's slightly larger  
than the other four.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

But Ned's strength waned, his  
hunger afire,  
The task demanded a sacrifice dire.  
His own leg he severed; with his  
blade he did cleave,  
And roasted his flesh to take  
death's leave.  
From his bone, he carved with  
meticulous care,  
Two dice for each player who'd  
bravely dare.  
Each cut, each mark, a shard of his  
soul,  
The game's dark heart, the key to  
his goal.

Francis picks up a few of the roughly carved dice, turning  
them over in his hand.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Now, bold-hearted players, the  
cursed dice be thine,  
Dare ye roll and risk Ned's dark  
design?  
Will ye face the perils of Low's  
cruel snare,  
And claim the map to the treasure  
rare?

Charlie exhales, relieved.

CHARLIE

Finally.

(beat)

Fuck me that was long.

Russell sits at the table, eyeing the board.

RUSSELL

What was that last part about a map?

Without a word, Francis rolls two dice across the table. They CLATTER hollow and uneven before stopping.

FRANCIS

Guys, I think these might actually be made from human bone.

CHARLIE

Ha! As if.

He rolls his eyes, picking up a die and turning it over between his fingers.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Probably wood--

(beat, brow furrowing)

Alright, fair enough. That could be real bone.

He drops it back on the table.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Doesn't mean it's human. Probably chicken bone--Sunday roast leftovers from the loony bin

Eliza smirks, sipping her drink.

ELIZA

Seriously though... where do you think it came from? Who made it?

GEORGE

No idea. But it looks genuinely old.

He studies the cloth in his hand.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Really old.



RUSSELL

Doesn't matter where it came from.  
It was left in my donation box.  
That officially makes it my  
property now.

Charlie chuckles mid--sip.

CHARLIE

(to Russell)

You still think that's real gold,  
don't you?

Russell stays silent, unreadable. Charlie shakes his head.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Numpty.

Francis stifles a smirk. Eliza glances between them.

ELIZA

So... are we playing it?

CHARLIE

Hell yeah. I wanna see what kind of  
game this lunatic cooked up.

He nods at the back of the cloth in George's hand.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That the rules on the back?

George flips it over. On the reverse side, crimson writing  
sprawls across the fabric. At the top: RULES.

He hesitates, uncertainty flickering across his face.

GEORGE

I don't know... maybe we shouldn't.

CHARLIE

What, why not? Thought this'd be  
right up your street.

GEORGE

Let's just play a proper game. One  
with real rules.

(frowning at cloth)

This could be complete nonsense.

Charlie eyes him, suspicious.

CHARLIE

You're scared, aren't you? You actually think it might be real.

George glances at Eliza, caught.

GEORGE

I'm not scared. I'm just not sure we should mess with it.

Charlie shakes his head, amused.

CHARLIE

For fuck's sake. What's up with you lot tonight? First real gold and human bone--

(to George)

Now you're scared of the ghost of some made-up pirate.

He bursts out laughing.

RUSSELL

He's not made up. Ned Lowe was a real pirate. A proper nasty one, too. Lots of death, lots of senseless torture. Started out as one of Blackbeard's crew.

CHARLIE

Thanks, history class. Still doesn't make the game real.

RUSSELL

Never said it did. I just said he was real. I'm not the one who believes in curses. I want to play.

GEORGE

I don't believe in curses.

CHARLIE

Then what's the problem?

George hesitates, looks at Eliza. She gives a small, encouraging smile.

GEORGE

Alright. Let's play.

CHARLIE

Yes, Georgie.

(beat)

I'm blue.

He grabs the blue ship. Russell snatches red. Eliza picks yellow and hands George green--leaving black for Francis.

George clears his throat, reading aloud.

GEORGE

Objective. Within the game's hourglass, be the first to outwit Ned's ship and chart a course to the treasure isle on square 58 with an exact roll to claim the gold and end the game. But beware, if yer roll sails ye past 58, ye'll be forced to drift back by the surplus.

Eliza begins handing out dice.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Set up. One to four scallywags can join the hunt for the Mayan gold.

RUSSELL

Four? But there are five ships.

They all exchange glances.

GEORGE

(reading)

Each player must choose a coloured ship and set it in the port, then collect two dice to sail the seas. Then Place Ned's cursed black ship in the port to haunt the waters.

Francis's face drops. Russell smugly places his ship on PORT.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Sorry, Francis. Black's not playable.

CHARLIE

Then he can be red.

RUSSELL

But I'm red.

CHARLIE

Exactly. And Francis was the one who was supposed to be playing. Not you.

Francis stares down, uncomfortable, caught in the middle.

RUSSELL

Doesn't matter. It's my game, and I want to play. If you want him to play so badly, give him your piece.

Charlie is ready to argue, but Francis stands.

FRANCIS

It's fine. I don't have to play. I'll go.

The group protests as Francis turns to leave.

RUSSELL

Don't go, Francis.

Francis pauses, surprised. A hopeful smile forms.

FRANCIS

Really? You want me to stay?

RUSSELL

Course. Someone's gotta mix the drinks and finish clearing up.

Francis's smile fades.

FRANCIS

But my shift's over.

RUSSELL

I'll pay you overtime.

Francis sighs, nods.

FRANCIS

Fine. But you still owe me from last time.

He goes to sit.

RUSSELL

Don't sit.

Francis freezes.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Go make me a Dark 'n' Stormy. And clear the clutter from this table.

Francis nods, loads the glasses onto a tray, stacks the games beneath, and shuffles off--glassware CLINKING precariously.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
 And don't be an idiot and try any  
 fancy moves, alright? You're  
 hopeless--and I can't afford  
 another broken bottle of rum.

He turns back to the group, catching Charlie's glare.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
 What's your problem?

CHARLIE  
 Oh, nothing. Just admiring your  
 talent for treating people like  
 crap. No matter who they are.

RUSSELL  
 Piss off.

Francis sets the tray and games behind the bar and starts  
 mixing.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
 (to George)  
 Well? Carry on.

George finds his place in the rules and reads aloud.

GEORGE  
 Order o' play. Flip the hourglass  
 onto the gold at the heart o' the  
 board to start yer quest. The  
 oldest sea dog starts, then play  
 sails clockwise. On yer turn: roll  
 one or both dice and move yer ship  
 forward. At the end o' each round,  
 one player rolls for Ned's cursed  
 ship--choosin' to roll one or two  
 dice to move that scurvy dog.

CHARLIE  
 (calling out)  
 Hey, Francis! You can still play--  
 rolling for the black ship.

Francis grins, nearly dropping a bottle as he hurries to mix  
 the drink.

FRANCIS  
 I'm coming.

GEORGE  
 (reading)  
 Spaces and their effects--

Charlie grabs the hourglass.

CHARLIE

Lets just get on with it--we'll  
pick it up as we go.

He flips the hourglass. Sand falls. He plants it dead  
centre--onto the gold coin. A perfect fit.

THUNK.

The lights cut out. Total darkness. A collective gasp--then--

CRASH. Glass shatters.

FRANCIS

Sorry.

RUSSELL

Bloody hell, Francis. Not again.

Eliza's phone torch cuts through the dark. Then George's.

CHARLIE

Late paying the leccy again, Rus?

George switches on his phone torch.

RUSSELL

No. I've got three days left.

He clicks on his own torch, heads behind the bar,  
illuminating Francis and the broken bottle of rum.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

That's coming out of your wages.

He swings the light into Francis's face. Francis shields his  
eyes.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Now clean it up.

FRANCIS

But it's too dark.

RUSSELL

Then light some bloody candles--  
they're there for this very reason.  
(grumbling)  
I'll check the fuse box.

He disappears through a door behind the bar. Francis fumbles  
around in the dark.

GEORGE  
 (to Eliza)  
 Maybe we should just go. We can  
 still grab that kebab if we hurry.

CHARLIE  
 Getting scared again are we,  
 Georgie?

GEORGE  
 For the last time--I'm not scared.  
 But come on, the timing of those  
 lights going out. Talk about a red  
 flag.

CHINK--FLICK.

A warm glow flickers as Francis lights a candle with a Zippo.  
 He sets it on the counter, then proceeds to light a few more.

Eliza and George switch off their torches.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
 (to Eliza)  
 So... kebab?

ELIZA  
 Another time. I promise. Right now,  
 I want to play this.

She nods toward the board with a mischievous smile. Francis  
 places two lit candles on the table and sits.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
 It's kind of creepy and fun--with  
 the candles and the darkness. I'm  
 starting to get why you love the  
 whole role-play game thing.

Charlie frowns slightly.

CHARLIE  
 (to Eliza)  
 This isn't what RPG's--

He's cut off as Russell reappears from the back room.

RUSSELL  
 Not the breakers. And it's not just  
 the lights--they've cut me off  
 early. Bloody bastards. I'll give  
 them a piece of my mind when--

CRUNCH

He stops mid-step, eyes dropping to the broken bottle.

He shoots Francis a look.

FRANCIS  
Sorry--forgot.

He rushes off, grabs the broom, and starts sweeping.

RUSSELL  
And my drink?

FRANCIS  
Right--

He freezes, caught between tasks.

RUSSELL  
Just clean that up first.

Francis nods and keeps sweeping. Russell trudges back to the table, muttering.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
(under his breath)  
Why did I ever...

He drops into his seat with a huff and switches off his torch.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
We playing this thing or what?

Charlie grins, scoops up his dice, and looks to George.

CHARLIE  
Yes we are.

Everyone readies their dice.

ELIZA  
Pretty sure it said oldest goes  
first, then clockwise.

George checks the rule sheet beside him. Russell shakes the dice with a smirk.

RUSSELL  
That's me. Age before beauty.

He rolls. Dice clatter. He moves his red ship to square 9--  
landing on a forward arrow

All eyes shift to George as he checks the rules.



GEORGE

Spaces and their effects. Arrow  
forward—the wind's in yer sails.  
Roll one die and surge onward.  
Arrow backward—a storm blows ye off  
course. Roll one die and drift  
back.

Russell checks the arrow beneath his piece and nods.

RUSSELL

Forward it is.

He rolls a single die. Moves again. Lands on another forward  
arrow.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Way hay. I'm on fire.

He rolls once more. Lands on blank square 16.

Charlie blows on his dice, rolls, moves to blank 10.

CHARLIE

Just warming up.

George lands on 8.

Eliza rolls low--square 4.

GEORGE

(calls out)

Francis, your turn to roll for the  
black ship.

Francis is busy mixing Russell's cocktail.

FRANCIS

Hang on... coming.

He fumbles, clearly flustered.

RUSSELL

(to Francis)

He'll take forever. He can jump in  
when he's ready.

Russell scoops up the black dice, ready to roll--

GEORGE

Wait.

Russell stops mid-motion.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

What if it lands on one of us?

He scans the rules

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(reading aloud)

Ned's Ship Rules: If Ned's ship lands on ye-boom! That black-hearted scoundrel fires his cannons and damages yer ship. Lose one die, and from here on out, yer vessel be slower, rollin' only one die per turn. If both yer dice be lost, ye're sunk, yer game's done, and yer soul be claimed--unless a kind-hearted mate donates a die afore the next player takes their turn. No scallywag may hold more than two dice at any time.

(to Russell)

Roll one die for now.

He motions to the game pieces.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

On this turn, two dice puts us all at risk. One die only puts Eliza in danger.

(to Eliza)

Sorry.

Eliza mock-frowns.

RUSSELL

Your the expert.

He rolls one die--3.

Eliza moves the black ship.

ELIZA

One... two... three.

Lands right behind hers.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Close one.

THUD. THUD. THUD.

Three slow, heavy knocks echo from deep behind the packed shelves--wood on wood, steady and deliberate.

Everyone freezes.

CHARLIE  
What the fuck was that?

Russell snaps a look at Francis.

FRANCIS  
Wasn't me.

GEORGE  
(to Charlie)  
Red flag number two.

Charlie gives a sarcastic smile. Russell rises.

RUSSELL  
(calling out)  
Oi? Anyone back there?

Silence.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
(hushed)  
Francis. Go check.

Francis recoils.

FRANCIS  
Why me?

RUSSELL  
Because you're closest. And I'm  
paying you. Now go.

Francis is reluctant, peering toward the shadowed corner.

FRANCIS  
But it's dark.

RUSSELL  
Then take a bloody candle, dummy.

Whimpering, Francis grabs one of three candles off the counter. Its flame trembles as he creeps toward the shelves.

Russell clocks Charlie glaring.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
What?

Charlie shrugs, looking away.

Francis hesitates. Russell waves him on.

Francis swallows hard and disappears between the packed shelves, candlelight flickering through the gaps.

FRANCIS (O.S.)  
Hello...?

THUD. A shelf jolts. BANG. The candlelight dies.

GEORGE  
Francis? You alright?

Silence.

CHARLIE  
Francis?

Still nothing.

RUSSELL  
Idiot probably knocked himself out.

ELIZA  
Shouldn't someone go check on him?

All eyes shift to Russell.

RUSSELL  
What?

GEORGE  
He's your employee.

RUSSELL  
So? Doesn't make him my responsibility.

CHARLIE  
No... but being his uncle does.

Russell stiffens.

GEORGE  
Wait--uncle?

CHARLIE  
Yeah. Francis is his nephew. That's why he came back from the Caribbean. He made a promise--to his dying sister, Francis's mum--to look out for him. Because Uncle Russ is all the family the poor guy's got left. But he makes Francis keep it quiet.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Because he doesn't want anyone to know they're related.

Russell bristles.

RUSSELL

First off, she was my estranged half-sister. And I regret visiting her on her deathbed--and making that bloody promise--every damn day. And second, you swore you wouldn't say anything. Just like I swore not to breathe a word about the little secret you drunkenly blurted out that night, remember?

Both glance at George. Charlie tenses.

CHARLIE

Shut your mouth, Russell.

RUSSELL

No--why don't you shut yours for once, Charles. Maybe it's time George heard what--

GEORGE

(firm)

Enough.

A heavy silence.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I heard something.

They listen--tense. Faint, irregular BANGING echoes from the game library.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Francis?

He pulls out his phone, torch light slicing through the dark. Moves forward, voice low:

GEORGE (CONT'D)

That you?

The beam sweeps the shelves. The BANGING grows sharper. Steady. Deliberate.

At the very back, a unit SHUDDERS with every strike.

George looks to Charlie. A curt nod.

Charlie steps up beside him--uneasy, but ready.

Together, they creep forward.

INT. GAME LIBRARY - NIGHT

At the first aisle, Charlie grabs a Jenga box--gripping it like a makeshift weapon.

They inch past rows of shelves, closing in on the trembling unit at the back.

Breath held, George swings the torch down the final aisle--

Both men freeze, eyes wide.

CHARLIE

What the fuck--!

Francis hangs from the ceiling, rope cinched tight around his neck, boots just off the ground.

He thrashes in silence--gagging--his heels thudding against the shelf with every desperate swing.

Charlie drops the Jenga box--CLATTER.

He and George rush in, hoisting Francis's hefty weight to ease the tension.

GEORGE

Help!

The torch quivers in George's hand as he strains.

At the end of the aisle, Russell appears--frozen, staring.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(to Russell)

Don't just stand there!

Snapping out of it, Russell hurries in and helps lift his nephew.

Francis wheezes as the noose slackens.

George angles the torch upward--the rope snakes along the ceiling into the shadows at the other end of the aisle.

Eliza appears, torch in hand, stunned.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Eliza!

She jolts, eyes snapping to him.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
Get a knife!

RUSSELL  
(to Eliza)  
Kitchen! Door behind the bar!

She nods and bolts.

INT. BACKROOM - NIGHT

Eliza bursts into the cramped, windowless room--rickety table, cluttered office desk, outdated PC. A kitchenette tucked in the corner.

She pauses--eyes locking on another door beneath a glowing EMERGENCY EXIT sign.

She shakes it off. Refocuses.

Darts to the kitchenette, flinging drawers open, torch in hand, rifling through them fast.

INT. GAME LIBRARY - NIGHT

The three men groan under Francis's weight, struggling to keep him alive.

GEORGE  
(calling out)  
Eliza, hurry!

Suddenly, the rope jerks--hauling Francis higher. He chokes, thrashing.

CHARLIE  
What the fuck just happened?!?

GEORGE  
I don't know--just lift him!

They strain, but the noose cinches tighter around his throat--making it impossible to ease the pressure.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
(to Charlie)  
Hold this.

He thrusts the torch into Charlie's hand and bolts.

RUSSELL  
Where the hell are you going?

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

George bursts in, snatches a stool and the Zippo from the counter.

INT. GAME LIBRARY - NIGHT

George hurries back, climbs the stool, flicks the lighter, and holds the flame to the rope.

Francis's face glows in the flickering light--deep red, eyes wide with desperation.

GEORGE  
Hold on, Francis.

INT. BACKROOM - NIGHT

The kitchenette's a mess--drawers ransacked, cupboards emptied, clutter everywhere.

Eliza grips a useless pair of scissors, seething--then freezes.

A small knife glints on the drainer.

She drops the scissors, grabs the knife, and bolts.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

Charlie and Russell do their utmost to lift Francis. George battles the rope--one hand clawing at the noose, the other holding the Zippo flame to the line.

He pulls the lighter back. The rope remains untouched.

GEORGE  
It's not burning.

Suddenly, the line goes slack--WHAM! Francis crashes down, flattening them.

The Zippo and George's phone skid across the floor--flame extinguished, torch beam slicing through dust.



RUSSELL

You did it.

GEORGE

It wasn't me.

Francis wheezes--the noose unrelenting.

Eliza appears, knife in hand.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

The knife--quick!

He reaches out, but before she can hand it over--the rope jerks Francis skyward, limbs flailing like a ragdoll.

CHARLIE

Jesus Christ!

They grab at him--

WHAM! Francis crashes down, limp.

George seizes the knife, dives in--

Too late. Francis rockets up again, head slamming into the ceiling with a sickening CRACK.

RUSSELL

What the bloody hell is happening?!

WHAM! Francis slams face-first into the floor. Blood sprays.

GEORGE

Hold him down!

They pile on--but Francis lifts again, dragging them all up.

Charlie and Russell lose their grip, feet hitting the ground.

George clings on, hacking at the rope--but the blade barely scratches it.

The noose tightens--squeezing. Francis's face turns purple, eyes bulging--

POP. His eyeballs burst from their sockets.

SNAP. Neck breaks.

George stares, horrified.

They drop.

Francis hits the floor--dead weight.

George tumbles off. The knife skitters away.

He scrambles to his feet.

Silence.

The room hangs still--every eye locked on the mangled corpse.

Russell kneels, hesitantly checks for a pulse.

RUSSELL

He's dead.

CHARLIE

You think!?

Suddenly, the rope uncoils from Francis's neck and slithers into the shadows.

Russell recoils, jumping to his feet.

RUSSELL

What the hell! Did you see that?

George snatches his phone from the floor, sweeps the torch beam down the aisle--

Nothing. The rope is gone.

Eliza backs away, trembling, voice cracking.

ELIZA

It's real... it's actually real...

She wanders off, dazed, muttering.

RUSSELL

The curse is real!?

Panic rises.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I need to get out of here.

He dives into Francis's pockets, frantically searching.

George scoops up the Zippo and knife.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Got 'em!

He yanks out the large set of keys--and bolts.

CHARLIE  
 (to George)  
 Let's go.

He hurries after Russell without waiting.

George lingers, sweeping his torch down the aisle--  
 eyes locked on the shadows just beyond the beams reach.

CHARLIE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 George, come on!

George backs away, casting one last glance at Francis's  
 grotesque face--then turns and follows.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

Eliza sits at the table, head in her hands, eyes fixed on the  
 hourglass--sand slipping steadily through its neck.

At the front door, Russell fumbles with the bulky keyring.  
 Charlie hovers beside him, tense.

CHARLIE  
 (to Russell)  
 Don't you know which one it is?

RUSSELL  
 They all look the sodding same. I  
 told him not to put so many bloody  
 keys on this thing.

He jams one into the lock--it sticks. Doesn't turn.

George steps out of the darkened game library, switching off  
 his torch as he enters the candlelight.

Eliza's gaze shifts to the rule sheet. Something catches her  
 eye. She straightens, picks it up, scanning fast.

ELIZA  
 (to George)  
 You have to stop them.

GEORGE  
 What?

She points to a line of text near the bottom.

ELIZA  
 Look.

George pockets his phone and the Zippo, sets the knife down, and reads. His face darkens.

GEORGE  
(to the others)  
Stop!

Russell and Charlie freeze.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
We can't leave.

RUSSELL  
Like hell we can't.

He tries another key. George steps forward.

GEORGE  
Charlie--stop him.

Charlie hesitates, then snatches the keys from Russell.

RUSSELL  
Give them back, Charlie!

He lunges, but Charlie backs off, out of reach.

GEORGE  
Wait--just listen.

He approaches, reading aloud:

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
End o' the game. The game be over  
if:-A player lands exactly on  
Square 58 with a perfect roll--the  
curse be lifted, and the gold  
claimed. Or all players lose their  
dice or find themselves captured  
with no hope of rescue. Or the 60-  
minute hourglass runs out before  
any scallywag reaches the treasure  
isle.

RUSSELL  
So what?

He grabs for the keys--Charlie pulls away.

GEORGE  
Enough!

He seizes Russell's shoulder, firm.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(reading)

Should the game end by either o'  
the latter two, then ol' Ned claims  
every player's soul for the dreaded  
Ah Puch. A dark fate indeed, me  
mateys. Once ye begin...ye best not  
stop.

He releases Russell.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We keep playing... or we die.

CHARLIE

Worse--damned.

Russell exhales, pulls free his ponytail, and rakes a hand  
through his long hair.

RUSSELL

I need a drink.

He heads to the bar.

CHARLIE

Me too.

Charlie hands the keys to George, returns to their table, and  
downs his cocktail.

Behind the bar, Russell pours a double, knocks it back, then  
pours another.

George pockets the keys and sits. Charlie grabs George's  
drink and gulps it down.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(to George)

Sorry.

(burps)

What about Francis? We can't just  
leave him like that. Shouldn't we  
call an ambulance or something?

ELIZA

We can't. Think about it. If anyone  
shows up while we're still playing,  
we won't be able to finish the  
game. Plus, who's to say they won't  
be instantly killed... just like  
Francis?

George eyes the hourglass--sand slipping away.

GEORGE

She's right. We'll take care of Francis after. At least a quarter of our time's already gone. We can't afford to waste any more.

(holds up the rule sheet)

But first--we need to finish reading this.

He skims the text, finds his place.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(reading)

Spaces and their effects. The X's:

He gestures to several X-marked squares positioned evenly between the arrow symbols.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Ye get tied up. Skip yer next turn.

(beat)

The Prison Bars--

He points to squares 34 and 45, each marked with what looks like a Roman numeral III.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Yer captured and tortured by Ned! Miss turns until another player lands on yer space and chooses whether to risk savin' ye. To rescue-roll one die-4, 5, 6: Ye're saved, and both flee like the wind!-1, 2, 3: Ye're freed, but the rescuer be captured and takes yer place in the brig.

They exchange uneasy glances.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Escape Option: If no rescue be comin', and ye can't bear the cruel pain o' torture no more, ye may surrender one die at the start o' yer turn - even yer last - and roll to flee yer captor. But if it be yer last die... ye be out o' the game, and yer soul be claimed.

THUD.

They all whip around--just in time to see Russell dart through the backroom door.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Russell?

Eliza jumps up.

ELIZA  
The emergency exit!

George gives chase, handing her the rule sheet.

GEORGE  
(to Eliza)  
Keep reading.

He vaults the counter. Charlie follows, running behind the bar and pausing for a quick swig of rum.

INT. BACKROOM - NIGHT

Russell races for the fire exit, the room dimly lit by the glow of the exit sign.

He trips on clutter, crashes to his knees.

George bursts in, sees him.

Russell scrambles up, shoves the door open--

George grabs his arm, hauls him back, slams it shut, and plants himself firmly in front.

Charlie rushes in, halts in the doorway.

Russell staggers upright, breath ragged, seething.

GEORGE  
Russell, don't you get it? If you don't play, you're dead in about forty minutes--your soul damned to hell. All of us will be.

RUSSELL  
But you saw what happened to Francis. And that part about the torture. I'd rather take my chances out there.

He steps toward the exit.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)  
Just play without me.

George stands firm. Charlie edges closer.

GEORGE

I can't let you do that, Russell.  
If you don't play, none of us can.  
One way or another--you're rolling  
those dice.

He steps forward, looming, hand firm on Russell's shoulder.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Look, only one of us needs to win  
to end the game. If we work as a  
team, help each other out--we'll  
make it through, together.

CHARLIE

And think of the treasure, Rus.

Russell snaps to attention.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

If the curse is real, so's the  
gold. You were right--that coin's  
legit. Which means there's a fuck-  
ton more buried out there, just  
waiting to be claimed.

Russell's eyes gleam with interest.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

So let's make a deal. Whoever wins,  
we split the treasure evenly. We  
all walk away rich beyond our  
wildest dreams. What do you say?

He extends his hand. Russell considers.

RUSSELL

I want fifty percent. It's my game  
after all. And my dreams? Pretty  
damn wild.

CHARLIE

Fifty!? You weren't even supposed  
to be playing. Francis--

He glances to George, who gives a nod.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Fucking hell--fine. Fifty percent,  
you greedy bastard.  
(beat)

(MORE)



CHARLIE (CONT'D)

But you're shelling out for one  
ridiculously expensive funeral for  
your nephew. Poor Francis deserves  
that much.

They shake. Russell steps back from the door. George relaxes.

GEORGE

Then let's stop wasting time--and  
go win this fucking game.

CHARLIE

Yes.

They head out.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

Eliza sits at the table, rule sheet in hand, eyes fixed on  
the hourglass--SLURPING the last of her cocktail through a  
straw.

George, Charlie, and Russell return to their seats. The board  
awaits.

ELIZA

(to Russell)

Got that out of your system now?  
Ready to hear the rest of the  
rules?

Russell nods, scooping up his dice.

Eliza points to the dagger icon on square 55.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

(reading)

The Dagger: Mutiny in the ranks!  
Yer crew stabs ye in the back and  
maroons ye on a desolate isle.  
Return to Port (Start) to gather a  
new ship and crew. Ye lose no dice,  
but must begin the voyage anew!

(pauses)

And there's more under Ned's ship  
rules.

She skims the text.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

If Ned lands on two or more players  
on the same square, the unlucky lot  
must roll one die each.

(MORE)

ELIZA (CONT'D)

The lowest loses one die. If the rolls be tied, roll again till a loser be found. If Ned lands exactly on square 58- He sails backward for one turn. Ned ignores certain spaces. He sails past "skip a turn," "captured," and "mutiny" spaces. Only the arrow spaces guide his cursed course.

She sets the sheet down.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

That's everything.

George surveys the group, resolute.

GEORGE

We stick together. Help each other out whenever we can. For now, we all roll two dice for ourselves, and one for the black ship--unless two puts fewer of us at risk. Agreed?

The group nods.

RUSSELL

And who rolls for Ned?

GEORGE

We'll take turns.

He checks the hourglass.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We've got time. But no stalling. Keep the game moving--no matter what.

Nods all around.

CHARLIE

Lets do this.

(raps a quick drumroll on the table)

GEORGE

Russell. You're up.

Russell rolls, jaw clenched, and moves his red ship to a blank square.

Charlie blows on his dice, rolls--lands on a back arrow. He rolls again, moves back to 14.

George takes his turn, moving his green ship beside Charlie's.

Eliza rolls. Her yellow ship lands on an X.

ELIZA

Damn, miss a go.

Two thick ropes whip from the game library shadows, snap around Eliza's wrists, and yank her upright. Her arms stretch taut--she groans in pain.

George leaps up, pulls at the binds. Useless.

Charlie and Russell stare, frozen.

George snatches the knife and saws at the rope--no effect.

GEORGE

It's blunt.

He tests the blade on his fingertip. Flinches. Drops the knife. Blood drips.

ELIZA

Just keep playing. It's not getting any tighter. I can take it.

George hesitates, then nods.

Russell picks up a black die, eyeing Ned's ship on square 3.

RUSSELL

One for Ned, right?

George glances at the board.

GEORGE

Go for it.

Russell rolls. The black ship lands on a blank square.

RUSSELL

My turn.

He eyes the looming prison bars icon on 31.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

A seven lands me in prison.

(to George)

So I should only roll one, right?

George glances at Eliza, wincing and gritting her teeth.

GEORGE

A five lands you on a forward arrow  
and you could end up on prison bars  
anyway. Just keep rolling two--and  
hurry up.

He glances at Eliza again, concerned.

Russell mutters under his breath.

RUSSELL

Not a seven. Not a seven...

He rolls--a five and a two.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Fuck!

He jumps up, raking a hand through his hair.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I knew I should've rolled one!

He snatches the rule sheet, skimming it in a panic.

A tense beat.

CHARLIE

We don't have time for this.

He reaches for Russell's red ship.

RUSSELL

Don't you fucking touch it,  
Charlie!

Charlie backs off.

Russell lowers the rule sheet, glaring at George.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

This is your fault--telling me to  
roll two.

GEORGE

I'm sorry. It was the best odds.  
But it's done--and now you have to  
move your piece.

RUSSELL

Easy for you to say. You're not the  
one about to be tortured.

He fidgets, anxious. George rests a hand on his shoulder.

GEORGE

Whatever happens next, just hold on  
until someone lands on your square  
and rescues you. Don't sacrifice a  
die to escape--not unless you  
absolutely have to.

Russell stares at his red ship. Fear sharpens into resolve.

RUSSELL

Screw that. I've got a better idea.

He shrugs George's hand off and moves his red ship to the  
blank square just ahead of the prison bars.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Your turn, Charlie.

Charlie hesitates, looking to George. Russell snaps:

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Just roll your bloody dice.

George nods--do it.

Charlie raises his hand to roll--

The red ship jerks backward by itself.

Square 31. Prison bars.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Shit.

From the game library shadows--CLINK! A heavy chain lashes  
out, coils around Russell, and yanks him into darkness.

GEORGE

Russell!

He rushes forward--

CRACK! A cat-o'-nine-tails whips from the dark, slashing his  
chest--tearing fabric and flesh. George drops, screaming.

CRACK! Another lash across his back.

CHARLIE

George!

Charlie rushes in, hauling George back.

CHARLIE

Keep the game moving--no matter  
what, remember?

George, bloodied and shaken, slumps into his seat.  
Eliza leans in, inspecting the red welt across his chest.

GEORGE

I'll live.

From deep in the library--BANG. BANG. Wood striking wood.

RUSSELL (O.S.)

Who's there?!

(beat)

Aaah!

Charlie quickly takes his turn--lands on a blank square.

George rolls--backward arrow. Rolls again. Pauses--he's about  
to land on an X square.

GEORGE

Wait.

He rips his shirt and wraps the strips around his wrists.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I suggest everyone do the same.

From the library--SHING. A blade unsheathing.

RUSSELL (O.S.)

Somebody save me! Hurry!

GEORGE

Hold on--we're coming!

He stands, arms outstretched, wrists braced.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

(to Charlie)

Move my piece.

Charlie slides George's ship onto the X.

Ropes snap out, coil around George's wrists, yanking them  
tight--the cloth strips dulling the bite.

He locks eyes with Eliza--both straining, both in pain.

RUSSELL (O.S.)  
 (screaming)  
 No, please--stop! I give up a die!  
 I give up a die!

His SHRIEK echoes through the room.

GEORGE  
 Roll one for, Ned, Charlie.

Charlie rolls a black die.

The moment it lands, Eliza's ropes recoil into the shadows like living tentacles.

She collapses into her seat, cradling her raw wrists.

Charlie moves Ned's ship onto a forward arrow, rolls again--blank square 16.

CHARLIE  
 (shouting)  
 Now, Rus! Give it up now!

RUSSELL (O.S.)  
 (weakly)  
 I give up a die to escape.

One of Russell's dice rockets off the table, vanishing into the library.

Moments later, the chain hauls him back--drops him into his seat with a heavy THUD.

It uncoils and slithers off, CLINKING into the dark.

Russell trembles, head bowed, hair masking his face, clutching a bloodied hand.

A choked sob escapes. He lifts his head--

Each nostril stuffed with a severed finger.

Charlie lurches back.

CHARLIE  
 What the fuck!

Groaning, Russell yanks them free and drops them on the table with a wet plop.

Eliza moves to help, but Russell flinches, instinctively shielding his mangled hand.

She softens.

ELIZA

Let me see.

He hesitates, then slowly offers his hand.

She kneels, inspecting the damage.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Do you have a med kit?

RUSSELL

Behind the counter.

CHARLIE

On it.

Charlie dashes off, snags a bottle of rum for a quick swig, then ducks behind the bar to search.

Eliza raises Russell's hand, keeping it elevated. He winces, glancing between the stumps and the fingers on the table.

RUSSELL

Think they can be reattached?

ELIZA

It's a clean cut... maybe. If we get them on ice.

Still bound, George twists toward the bar.

GEORGE

Charlie.

Charlie pops up with the first-aid kit.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Bring ice for Russell's fingers.

CHARLIE

On it.

He tosses the kit to Eliza and opens the freezer. She begins treating the wound.

ELIZA

(to Russell)

What happened back there? What did this?



RUSSELL

It was too dark. I couldn't see a  
thing. Just--heard something.  
Moving towards me. Then I felt this  
cold, bony hand grab mine--  
(beat)  
--and then... the blade.  
(shudder)  
I think it was him. I think it was  
Ned Lowe.

Charlie returns with a small bowl of ice, roll of tape, and a  
bottle of rum.

CHARLIE

Here. For disinfecting the wound.

He offers the bottle to Eliza. She shakes her head.

ELIZA

That only happens in movies.  
Alcohol's actually bad for open  
wounds. It kills bacteria, sure--  
but it also damages healthy tissue,  
which slows the healing process.

Russell snatches the bottle with his good hand.

RUSSELL

Still a damn good painkiller,  
though.

He takes a long swig.

CHARLIE

Ain't that the truth.

Eliza works quickly, bandaging Russell's hand with calm  
efficiency.

George, wincing, watches.

GEORGE

Since when did you know how to do  
all this?

ELIZA

Lets just say I picked up a few  
things on my travels.

Charlie carefully picks up one of Russell's severed fingers,  
drops it in the ice.

CHARLIE  
Definitely not on my to-do list for  
today.

He fumbles the second finger--PLOP--it hits the floor.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Whoops.

RUSSELL  
Careful!

Charlie scoops it up, blows off the dust, and mock-points it  
at himself.

CHARLIE  
Don't 'point' the blame at me.  
(beat)  
If we're 'pointing fingers'...

He points it at George.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
Blame him for making you roll two.

He holds both severed fingers up with a grin.

RUSSELL  
Quit screwing around with my  
fingers, Charlie! I'm warning you!

Charlie drops them into the ice.

CHARLIE  
All right. Keep your head on. Just  
trying to lighten the mood.

He grabs the tape and starts wrapping his wrist.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
For the rope burn.

Eliza ties off Russell's bandage.

ELIZA  
Done.

RUSSELL  
Thanks.

Charlie stretches out some tape.

CHARLIE  
 (to Russell)  
 Wrists.

Russell offers his arms.

RUSSELL  
 Gently.

Charlie wraps them fast, bites the tape off, tosses the roll to Eliza, who starts on hers.

George eyes the hourglass--sand half drained.

GEORGE  
 Right. Half our time's gone.  
 Russell, you're up.

Russell picks up his solitary die, hand trembling.

CHARLIE  
 Wait.

He grabs the bowl of ice, sets it on the counter, adds a cocktail umbrella, and returns.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
 Too distracting.

Russell rolls--backward arrow. He studies the board.

RUSSELL  
 If I roll a two... I'm back in  
 prison.

Panic builds. George strains against the ropes, face tight with pain.

GEORGE  
 Just roll, damn it!

Russell flinches, throws the die--six. Relief hits. He scans the board, checking where his ship will land.

RUSSELL  
 Miss a turn.  
 (to Eliza)  
 Quick--pass me--

His red ship moves on its own, sliding onto the X square.

Two ropes snap out, bind his wrists, yank him upright. He screams--his injured hand squeezed in the grip.

Charlie rolls, lands on the same square as Russell.

More ropes whip out, hoisting him up beside Russell.

All three men hang suspended, straining, groaning in pain.

Eliza rolls.

As the dice land, George drops into his seat--free. The ropes vanish into shadow. He exhales, rubbing his sore joints.

Eliza moves her piece to a blank square. George studies the board.

GEORGE  
(to Eliza)  
Roll one for Ned. Three lands on  
me, four on you.

She rolls. A four.

Every eye locks on her, breath held.

Ned's black ship rockets forward--stopping beside Eliza's.

BOOM!

A cannon blast explodes through the room. One of Eliza's dice flies off the table, skittering into the library.

CHARLIE  
Fuck me--that was loud!

Russell twists, still bound, scanning the room.

RUSSELL  
Was that real? Did a bloody cannon  
just go off in here?

GEORGE  
Just a sound. I think.

Eliza stares at the board, dread creeping in.

ELIZA  
I've already lost a dice.

RUSSELL  
Join the club.

ELIZA  
(to George)  
I'm not going to make it. I never  
should've played. I'm going to die.

She breaks down. George leans in, calm but firm.

GEORGE

You're not dying. I won't let that happen--I promise. If you lose your last die, I'll just give you one of mine. Okay?

RUSSELL

That apply to me too?

George hesitates, then nods.

GEORGE

Of course. No one else here dies tonight. We just keep playing--until someone wins.

He steadies himself, picks up his dice.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

With any luck, this'll all be over in a few minutes.

He rolls. Lands on square 31--prison bars.

Everyone tenses. George exhales, stands, braces himself.

The chain lashes out, wraps his torso, and yanks him into the library.

CHARLIE

George!

Still bound, Charlie thrashes--helpless.

Eliza rolls--moves to blank square 26.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(to Eliza)

Now roll for Ned.

She hesitates.

ELIZA

I'm scared to.

George SCREAMS from the dark.

CHARLIE

You're the only one who can!

She rolls one black die--Ned's ship hits a forward arrow.

She rolls again. Pauses.

ELIZA  
(to Russell and Charlie)  
I'm sorry.

The black ship glides onto their square.

RUSSELL  
Shit! What now?

ELIZA  
It's a roll-off. Lowest loses.

CHARLIE  
How we meant to roll with our hands  
tied?

As if in response, a rope loosens from one wrist each. They drop into seated positions, one arm still bound.

George's SCREAMS intensify.

RUSSELL  
(to Charlie)  
You've got two dice. If I lose...  
you'll give me one of yours, right?

CHARLIE  
Sure. Now roll.

They throw.

Russell's lands higher. He exhales--relieved.

BOOM!

A cannon blast rocks the room.

One of Charlie's dice shoots off into the shadows.

Russell's other wrist is freed.

Charlie's free hand is instantly re-bound, hoisting him back up. He groans in frustration.

George's cries twist into ragged CHOCKING gasps.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)  
(shouting)  
Rescue's coming, George!  
(to Russell)  
Roll a four--land on him, set him  
free!

RUSSELL

And possibly take his place.

He rolls--five. Moves his ship just ahead of George's. He exhales, relieved.

Charlie drops into his seat, freed.

Grabs his die. Blows on it.

CHARLIE

Come on, four...

Rolls--a one. Blank square.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Damn it!

He slams the table.

Eliza, hands trembling, readies her die.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You need a five to rescue him.

She rolls--five.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Yes!

He punches the air.

Eliza hesitates, hand hovering over her ship.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

What are you waiting for? Move it--you can save him.

ELIZA

I...

She freezes.

Charlie, impatient, moves her yellow ship beside George's.

CHARLIE

There. Roll to free him. Four, five, six--you both flee.

RUSSELL

One, two, three--you take his place.

Charlie slides Eliza her die.

ELIZA

I can't. I'm too afraid.

Charlie jumps up.

CHARLIE

I don't care if you're afraid! You have to!

RUSSELL

The rules did say it was a choice. So technically, she doesn't have to do it.

CHARLIE

Shut up, Rus.

George violently GAGS and COUGHS.

Charlie leans in close to Eliza, eyes burning.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Roll the fucking die. It's the least you owe him—even if it does mean taking his place.

Eliza stares down, ashamed, shaking her head.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Bitch!

(snarling)

Fine. I'll save him myself.

He grabs both black dice, fist trembling, eyes on the board.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

One or two dice for Ned—doesn't matter. We're all at risk either way.

(beat)

So let's try putting this bastard ahead of us instead.

He throws both dice and moves the black ship ahead of them all--square 36.

Russell takes his turn--lands on the same square as Ned.

RUSSELL

Shit!

Panic flashes.



CHARLIE

You're fine. He has to land on you.

Russell exhales, raking a hand through his hair.

GEORGE (O.S.)

No--please, not again!

Charlie closes his eyes, blows on his die.

CHARLIE

(under breath)

Three.

He rolls. Opens his eyes. A three.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Boom!

Slides his ship beside George's and rolls again. A four.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Yes!

In an instant, George is hurled back to the table. The chain unspools and vanishes.

He collapses onto the table, coughing, spitting blood. One side of his head is torn open--his ear gone.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Fucking Hell!

He and Eliza rush to lift George upright.

GEORGE

Water...

He spits again--bloodied saliva splattering the floor.

Charlie bolts to the bar. Eliza inspects the wound. George stares blankly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

He forced me to eat it.

ELIZA

Eat what?

He meets her eyes.

GEORGE

Pieces of my own ear.

He spits again.

Eliza recoils--horrified. Russell gags.

Charlie returns with a bottle of water, twisting the cap.

CHARLIE  
Sick motherfucker.

He offers the bottle to George, but Eliza intercepts it--  
gently pours water into George's mouth.

He swishes, spits, then drinks more.

GEORGE  
(to Eliza)  
Thanks.

Charlie watches, jaw clenched.

ELIZA  
Let me see to that wound. It's  
bleeding bad.

She grabs the med kit and begins tending the wound.

Charlie snaps.

CHARLIE  
Don't act like you care! You don't  
give a shit about him at all!  
(to George)  
She could've saved you earlier, you  
know? She landed on your square--  
but didn't even try to rescue you.  
I did. She doesn't give a damn  
about you, George. She never has.  
She's only cares about herself.

George looks to Eliza.

She lowers her eyes.

ELIZA  
I'm sorry. I was too scared.

She begins to sob.

GEORGE  
It's okay. Don't apologize. I  
wouldn't have wanted you to risk  
yourself to save me. I promised I  
wouldn't let anything happen to  
you--and I meant it.

Eliza keeps tending to him.

CHARLIE

But it's fine for me to risk my neck, is it? Your best friend-- who's stood by you all these years, and has never betrayed you. The friend who helped pick up the piece after she--

(jabs a finger at Eliza)  
--nearly destroyed you?

Russell takes a swig of rum, listening.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(to George)  
I just don't fucking get it. How can you possibly forgive her--after what she did?

Silence.

RUSSELL

(to Charlie)  
After what? What did she do?

Charlie glances at George, who shoots him a warning look.

Charlie ignores it.

CHARLIE

You really want to know, Rus?

GEORGE

Charlie, don't--

CHARLIE

George and Eliza used to date back in school. They were deeply in love--supposedly--and planned to lose their virginity to each other on prom night. Total cliché. George had this whole romantic thing planned, and everybody knew about it.

GEORGE

Yeah, because you were the one going around telling people.

CHARLIE

Beside the point.  
(beat)

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

So after prom, we hit this house party. When it's time for George and Eliza to leave and "seal the deal"—she's nowhere to be found. After a while, he checks the upstairs bedrooms. And what does he walk in on? The so-called love of his life getting pounded doggy style by the prom king--Wayne Paterson. The school's entitled rich kid and grade-A douchebag.

Eliza and George exchange an uncomfortable look.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Everybody found out. George was publicly humiliated and utterly heartbroken. And she didn't give two shits. She just started dating said douchebag and ghosted George. No apology. No explanation. Nothing.

An uneasy silence lingers. Russell takes a swig from the bottle, eyes heavy, growing drowsy.

ELIZA

Are you done?

Charlie shrugs.

CHARLIE

In standby mode.

ELIZA

Not that it's really any of your business, Charlie, but I've already told George how much I regret what I did--and how sorry I am. He's chosen to forgive me. So why can't you?

(beat)

You think I'm selfish, that I don't care about anyone but myself. But you don't know the reason why I did what I did.

CHARLIE

Sure, I do. George pieced it together. A few weeks before prom, your beloved Nana got sick. Your broke-ass family couldn't afford the care she needed--and she died.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

After the funeral, you swore to George that you'd never let anything like that happen again. That you were done being poor. That you weren't gonna end up like your parents. You wanted a better life for yourself--and decided that fucking your way to wealth was easier than working for it.

Eliza ties off the bandage, eyes remorsefully locked with George's. He offers a faint, pained smile.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

You've got to be a real narcissist to think that justifies what you did.

(beat)

Do you have any idea what some people would give to be loved the way George loves you? And you just threw it away--like it was worthless. Like George was worthless. So much so, he--

George suddenly stands, unsteady.

GEORGE

That's enough, Charlie.

Charlie hesitates, eyes on George--then presses on.

CHARLIE

He tried to kill himself.

ELIZA

What?

She stares at George. He won't meet her eyes.

CHARLIE

Yeah. He downed an entire bottle of sleeping pills. He was so broken, he wanted to end his life. Because of you! But I found him--just in time. I saved him. Me. No one else ever knew... until now.

He gets in Eliza's face.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

That's why I'll never forgive you. Even if he can.

(MORE)

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

George has always been too blinded by love to see you for what you truly are. But I'm not. You're a self-centred, manipulative parasite. A cold, calculating, opportunistic whore who'll step on anyone to get what she wants.

GEORGE

That's enough!

He yanks Charlie back by the shoulder.

CHARLIE

I'm just speaking the truth.

GEORGE

Your truth.

He shoves Charlie, who staggers, stunned.

CHARLIE

I'm only looking out for you, mate. She'll hurt you again--mark my words.

GEORGE

No, you mark mine. We're getting back together whether you like it or not, and I won't let you screw it up. So either accept it--or piss off. Because Eliza's right: our relationship is none of your business. So stay the fuck out of it, mate.

Another shove--harder. Charlie stumbles, visibly rattled.

RUSSELL

I hate to break up this little soap opera...but we're seriously running out of time.

He nods to the hourglass--only a third of the sand remains.

Charlie avoids George's gaze.

GEORGE

(to Charlie)

Lets just end this.

He gives Charlie a weak shove, then sits beside Eliza, who throws Charlie a smug glance.

Charlie's sorrow curdles into fury.

CHARLIE

Yeah. Lets fucking end it!

He grabs a wooden stool and raises it high.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Right now!

GEORGE

Charlie, no--!

Charlie SLAMS it down on the hourglass.

The stool splinters--but the hourglass doesn't move. Not even the game pieces shift.

Everyone stares, frozen.

He strikes again. Glasses wobble, but the hourglass remains unscathed.

ELIZA

Stop it!

CHARLIE

No!

He hurls the broken chair aside.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

I'm done playing this fucking game!

He grabs the hourglass and pulls--it's stuck fast, the board itself fused tight to the table.

He heaves, lifting the table off the ground. Glasses topple. Russell snatches the two candles before they spill.

GEORGE

That's enough!

Charlie glares at him, chest heaving.

Then, with a frustrated roar, he FLIPS the entire table.

The group recoils. Dice scatter. Glasses and the rum bottle shatter.

Charlie throws up his hands and backs away toward the bar.

RUSSELL

Hey! You're paying for that,  
Charlie.

George and Eliza move to check the game.

Amazingly, the board and pieces remain fixed on the  
overturned table. The hourglass still flows--upward, grains  
defying gravity.

ELIZA

There's no stopping it.

GEORGE

Quick, help me get it back up. Then  
find the dice!

They reset the table. Russell sets down the candles.

Together, they gather the game box, rule sheet, and scattered  
dice--two black, four white.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

We're still missing one.

They scan the floor, frantic.

CHARLIE

Here.

He picks a die up and returns to the table, avoiding eye  
contact.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Come on then. I'm ready.

Eliza and Russell each take a die. George takes the last two.

ELIZA

(to George)

Your turn.

George rolls--moves his green ship from the prison bars to  
square 38.

Eliza rolls one die--lands on blank 34.

George grabs a black die.

RUSSELL

We're rolling two now.

George eyes the board--the black ship already ahead.



GEORGE

Yeah. Keep him in front. Good call.

He rolls both--double two's. The black ship glides to 40.

A beat of tense quiet.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Russell! Go!

RUSSELL

Sorry.

Russell snaps to--rolls, lands on Ned's square.

The pace picks up.

Charlie hits a forward arrow, rolls again, jumps to 42.

George lands on an X--

Ropes lash out, snapping around his wrists, yanking them tight. He grits his teeth.

Eliza takes her turn--lands on a blank square, trailing behind the others.

GEORGE

Two for Ned again.

Charlie rolls the black dice. Ned's ship creeps forward.

Russell lands on a blank.

Charlie hesitates, eyeing square 47--another prison bar.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Don't stop.

Charlie rolls a five. His face drops. He knows.

His blue ship slides forward--lands on 47.

CLANK.

The RATTLING chain whips from the shadows--snaring Charlie's torso.

He thrashes as it drags him into the darkened library.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Charlie!

George lunges instinctively, but the ropes binding his wrists hold him back.

CHARLIE

Help me!

He vanishes behind the shelves.

GEORGE

(to Eliza)

Keep going.

Eliza rolls--moves to blank.

Russell rolls two for Ned--the black ship slides forward.

Then he rolls for himself--lands on Charlie's square.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Fuck you! No--aghh!

GEORGE

(to Russell)

Save him!

Russell hesitates. Charlie's SCREAMS echo, raw.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Now!

RUSSELL

No.

(points at Eliza)

She didn't risk herself for you--  
why should I for him?

He raises his bandaged hand.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I don't want to lose anymore body  
parts.

He folds his arms--resolute.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

(to George)

No. It's your turn.

The ropes unwind from George's wrists. He drops into his seat, glaring at Russell with grim acceptance.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

Aghh--fuck you, you cunt!

George readies one die.

GEORGE

I need a four to land on him.

He rolls--a five.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Damn it!

He moves his ship one square ahead of Charlie's.

Eliza takes her turn--lands on 44.

Russell reaches for the black dice--

George snatches them.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

One for Ned this time.

Russell eyes the board, uncertain.

RUSSELL

You sure?

GEORGE

Yes.

He rolls a single black die--Ned's ship lands squarely on 58--the final square.

Russell takes his turn--moves to 52.

RUSSELL

I'm close.

Charlie violently COUGHS and GAGS.

George eyes the board.

GEORGE

I can win it with a ten.

Eliza and Russell snap to attention.

RUSSELL

Or a seven drops you on the mutiny  
dagger--sends you back to the  
bloody start.

George rolls--five. Lands on a back arrow. The group groans.

GEORGE

Okay... six gets me to Charlie.

He rolls again--another five. Back to 48.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Fuck!

Eliza takes her turn--moves onto prison bars with Charlie.

A charged silence.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

No. Please... no more. Aghh!  
Somebody help me!

She avoids Georges hopeful gaze.

After a beat, he reaches for the black dice--

ELIZA

Wait.

He freezes mid-motion.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

I'll roll to save him.

GEORGE

You sure?

ELIZA

No.

She closes her eyes.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Four, five, six... four, five,  
six...

She rolls. The die clatters off the table, hits the floor.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Where'd it go?

She dives under the table, searching--finds it.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

A four. Does it still count?

Charlie is hurled into his seat--nose gone, half a lip hanging. He spits a chunk of flesh onto the table.

Russell gags, swats it away, turns and vomits.

The chain unravels. Charlie clutches his face, collapsing forward. George props him up, gives him water. He swills, spits, coughs.

Eliza resurfaces with the die, sees Charlie's face, grabs gauze from the med-kit, hands it over.

He presses it to the wound, noticing the yellow ship beside his on the board.

CHARLIE

Eliza...saved me?

GEORGE

She did.

Charlie stares at her—dazed, woozy.

CHARLIE

Oh. Thanks. Maybe you're not a total narcissistic bitch after all.

ELIZA

Thanks?

Blood dribbles as he coughs.

CHARLIE

Come on then.

(picks up his die)

Lets get on with it.

George eyes the board.

GEORGE

One for Ned again.

He reaches for the black dice—Russell snatches them first.

RUSSELL

A six lands him on me. I say we roll both.

GEORGE

But two puts the majority at greater risk.

RUSSELL

And one puts me at greater risk.

GEORGE

With the back arrows, we're all in  
danger. Even with one die.

George extends his hand for the dice.

RUSSELL

But two dice lowers the odds of  
rolling a six, right?

GEORGE

Technically... but--

RUSSELL

Then I'm rolling both.

He moves to roll--George grabs his hand.

GEORGE

One die.

RUSSELL

Let go!

They struggle. George clamping Russel's hand.

ELIZA

We don't have time for this! Just  
let him roll both!

Charlie steps in--Russell backhands him in the face with his  
bandaged hand--agonizing for both.

Charlie stumbles into the bar, knocking over the bowl of ice  
and a candle.

RUSSELL

My fingers!

George lunges across the table, tackles him to the ground.

ELIZA

Stop it!

He pries at Russell's fingers--nearly has the dice--

Russell spots a glint on the floor: the knife.

He grabs it with his mangled hand and slashes George's  
forearm.

George yells, releases his grip.

Russell rises, triumphant, rolls both dice--double threes.

His face drops.

He lunges for Ned's black ship--it won't budge. Then it slides on its own--onto Russell's square.

BOOM--cannon fire.

Russell's last die tumbles off the table.

George slowly rises, clutching his arm.

Charlie staggers back, holding his face--both glaring at Russell.

Russell turns to George, panicked. He switches the knife to his good hand, extends the other.

RUSSELL

Give me one of your dice. Quick!

He eyes George's dice--reaches--George snatches them first.

GEORGE

You should've rolled one.

RUSSELL

I know! I'm sorry. I should've listened. But you promised no one else would die tonight, remember? So give it to me.

He steps forward. George backs away.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry about your arm, okay? But you gave me no choice.

He lowers his bandaged hand... raises the one with the knife.

RUSSELL (CONT'D)

Just like you're not giving me one now.

He advances. George retreats, mind racing.

CLATTER--a die hits the table.

Russell turns--Charlie moves his blue ship to square 50.

CHARLIE

(to Russell)

Too late.

Shock twists to rage.

RUSSELL  
I'll fucking kill you!

He lunges, knife raised--

THWIP! A grappling hook shoots from the dark, slamming into his throat and yanking him down with a CRACK.

SNAP! Four ropes whip out, snaring his limbs, hoisting him spread-eagle.

Russell gurgles, veins bulging, body stretched taut. The grappling hook pulls--flesh tears, tendons snap--

RIP! Head and limbs tear free in one grisly motion. His torso hits the floor with a wet thud, blood spreading fast.

One by one, the ropes and hook drop their grisly trophies before melting back into the dark--leaving Russell's remains strewn across the room.

Silence.

They stand frozen, blood-spattered, staring at the carnage.

Eliza SCREAMS, then clamps a trembling hand over her mouth.

George glances at the trickling hourglass--minutes left.

GEORGE  
We've less than ten minutes. We  
need to keep playing.

They sit, shaken--Charlie pressing the bloody gauze to his face, Eliza's eyes frozen on the torso.

George touches her shoulder; she flinches.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I throw a ten, and it's all over.

He blows on the dice--rolls. Nine. Back arrow.

Groans. Rolls again--another back arrow.

Frustrated, he rolls a third time--prison bars 47.

ELIZA  
No!

The chain lashes from the dark, dragging George away.

GEORGE (O.S.)  
Keep going!



Eliza rolls--X square. Ropes snap around her wrists, wrenching tighter than ever.

Charlie tosses one black--Ned's ship hits 55: Mutiny Dagger.

Then rolls for himself--blank square.

CHARLIE

A six wins it next turn.

George's SCREAMS.

With Eliza missing a turn, he rolls for Ned--black ship nudges forward one square.

Charlie grabs his die again.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Come on, motherfucking six!

Rolls--a one. Back arrow.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Fuck you!

Throws again--six. Prison bars 47.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

(shouts out)

I'm saving you Georgie!

Rolls--a three.

CHARLIE (CONT'D)

Ah--shit!

The chain flings George back into his seat--then lashes onto Charlie, yanking him away.

Blood pours from the gap where George's other ear once was. He slumps, brushing off Eliza's attempt to help.

GEORGE

No time.

He forces himself upright, clutches his dice, and whispers:

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Eleven... please.

Shaking, he rolls--eight. His green ship moves to 55: Mutiny Dagger--then spirals all the way back to PORT.

George sags, crushed.

Eliza's ropes fall loose. She rolls--back arrow. Goes again--lands on the same X.

She screams as the ropes snap back around her wrists.

George's gaze drifts--resolve fading.

ELIZA

George! Don't give up. Please!

He steels himself--rolls for Ned. The black ship glides forward.

Rolls two for himself--forward arrow. Throws again--another forward arrow. Then--square 18.

A spark of resolve flickers. He rolls for Ned again--the black ship advances.

CHARLIE (O.S.)

No--NO--AGGGGH!

George rolls for himself--forward arrow. Goes again--square 31, prison bars.

Chains RATTLE. His eyes widen. In a burst, he jams his hand into his pocket just before the chain drags him away.

INT. GAME LIBRARY - NIGHT

Pitch black. Heavy, ragged BREATHING.

GEORGE

Charlie?

CHARLIE

(weak)

Here.

A phone screen lights up--George's hand barely free enough to pull it from his pocket.

He fumbles trying to switch on the torch--drops it to the floor.

GEORGE

Shit.

He digs back into his pocket--CLICK. SPARK. The Zippo flares, casting a faint glow.

George winces as the flame licks his fingers, then tosses the lighter forward.

It lands, revealing Charlie chained in the shadows--face a ruin: no nose, lips gone, teeth and gums bared in a bloody grin.

George's breath catches--horrified.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

Eliza, trembling alone at the table, forces herself to roll--Square 54.

She throws a black die. Ned's ship drifts to 58.

INT. GAME LIBRARY - NIGHT

George strains against his chain toward Charlie.

GEORGE

I'm getting you out of here, mate.  
Hang on.

He scans the shadows.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

Where is he? Where's Ned?

CHARLIE

George... there's something I need  
you to know. Something I swore I'd  
never tell you.

He draws a sharp breath through clenched teeth.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE

Eliza stares at her ship--a four would land her on 58.

She shuts her eyes, whispering.

ELIZA

Please...please...please.

She rolls--a two. Blank square. Her heart sinks.

INT. GAME LIBRARY - NIGHT

Still bound, Charlie and George stand in the Zippo's flickering light, faces awash in amber shadow.

CHARLIE

The secret I told Russell... the  
one I've kept since the day we met.  
(beat)

I love you, George. In a way I know  
you could never return--like the  
way you love her. You're more than  
my best friend--you're my friggin'  
soulmate. I just needed you to  
know--before it's too late.

George is speechless.

CLUNK, CLUNK, CLUNK.

From the shadows behind Charlie, a tall figure in a long pea  
coat steps forward--face hidden beneath a tricorne hat.

SHING--his cutlass gleams in the firelight.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

Eliza trembles, holding a black die.

A two would land Ned right on her.

She freezes, too scared to roll.

INT. GAME LIBRARY - NIGHT

Skeletal fingers pinch Charlie's eyelid, stretching it taut.

GEORGE

Leave him alone!

George thrashes--chains cinch tighter, stealing his breath.

SSSHK--The cutlass severs the lid. Eyeball quivers, exposed.

Charlie whimpers, choking back a scream.

CLUNK. CLUNK.

Ned's peg leg thuds on the floorboards as he steps into the  
light between them--revealing the chains binding both men  
emanate from within his coat.

Ned picks up the lighter, holds the flame to the severed  
eyelid--SIZZLE, POP--flesh chars.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

You sick fuck!

Ned turns, face cast in shadow, and shoves the burning eyelid into George's mouth, clamping it shut with his bony hand.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

Eliza panics, breath ragged. Her eyes snap to the second black die.

She hesitates, then grabs it, and rolls both--double twos.

Ned's ship slides two squares ahead of hers.

INT. GAME LIBRARY - NIGHT

Ned removes his clamped hand. George spits out the charred flesh, retching.

Ned raises his cutlass, heating the blade red-hot over the lighter.

Charlie weeps, limp in chains--broken.

GEORGE  
(to Ned)  
I surrender a die to escape.

CLATTER-CLATTER-CLATTER.

A die skitters across the floor, sticking to Ned's peg leg beside four others.

Suddenly--SWOOSH--George is yanked away as links of chain burst forth from beneath Ned's coat.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

George collapses onto the table, the chain slithering away.

Eliza watches on, pity in her eyes.

GEORGE  
I have to save him.

He snatches his die--rolls. The green ship advances.

Eliza lifts her die. A two would win it.

She rolls--a one. Back arrow. Goes again--lands on 54.

She pushes the black dice to George.

ELIZA

I can't do it.

Charlie SHRIEKS--raw, inhuman.

George rolls for Ned--back arrow. Rolls again--back arrow.  
Again--another back arrow.

The SCREAMS grow unbearable.

George throws again for Ned--the black ship glides backward,  
coming to rest beside Charlie's.

GEORGE

No...

BOOM! Cannon fire. Charlie's last die flies off the table.

The chain yanks him from the library, hurling him across the  
café as it releases him.

Charlie CRASHES into the rum shelves behind the bar--glass  
shatters, bottles explode, alcohol sprays.

The last candle on the counter tips over, rolling toward the  
edge--flame still lit.

George lunges to the bar, snatching it before it drops.

Charlie staggers up--skin shredded with glass, soaked in  
liquor, both hands cut off, wounds cauterized.

THWIP--the lit Zippo arcs from the library, landing at his  
feet.

FWOOOM! The alcohol erupts into flames.

Charlie bursts into a screaming fireball, thrashing through  
the café--chairs topple, a table slams George to the ground.

Charlie crumples into a heap beside Russell's torso--  
motionless, silent, burning.

Eliza grabs a fire extinguisher, douses the flames behind the  
bar, then sprays Charlie until the cannister runs dry.

His blackened body smoulders, covered in foam.

Eliza drops the extinguisher and offers George a hand.

ELIZA

Quick. Time's nearly up.

George doesn't respond, his glazed eyes fixed on the burnt remains of his friend.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Come on!

She pulls him up, steadies him back to the table, placing his die in his hand.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Your turn.

He lazily drops the die on the table. His ship moves forward.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

I need a four.

She rolls--a three, back arrow. Rolls again--lands on 52.

GEORGE

We're never winning this in time.  
I'm sorry, Eliza. I never should've  
brought you here.

Eliza exhales, frustrated, sliding the black dice to him.

He stares, empty.

ELIZA

George, please!

He slowly picks up a single die.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Wait.

(glances at board)

Isn't it better to roll two this...

George drops the die--a five.

The black ship lands on Eliza's square.

Their eyes meet; guilt floods his face.

GEORGE

I'm sorry...

BOOM! Cannon fire. Eliza's last die clatters away.

Her eyes fill with trepidation.

George suddenly slides her his final die.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I donate my die to her.

She stares, stunned. He smiles faintly.

GEORGE (CONT'D)  
I love you, Eliza. More than life  
itself.

He kisses her--quick, tender.

ELIZA  
I...

THWIP! The grappling hook bursts from the shadows, burying  
into George's shoulder.

He screams, yanked off his feet toward Charlie and Russell's  
mangled corpses.

Ropes snap out, but he twists free of the hook, tearing  
flesh.

The ropes miss their target--snaring the corpses by mistake.

Adrenaline pumping, George lurches upright as the hook rises--  
serpentine, poised to strike.

GEORGE  
(to Eliza)  
Win it!

He bolts for the bar. The hook lashes after him.

George dives over the counter--miss! The hook snags into the  
shelves.

Eliza needs a six to win. She rolls--a one, back arrow 53.  
Throws again--back arrow 49.

Behind the bar, George hauls himself up, hands slick with rum  
and glass.

The hook jerks, stuck fast--then a chain whips toward him. He  
ducks--bottles SHATTER.

Eliza steadies herself. A two would land her on the prison  
bars. She rolls--a four, forward arrow 45. Throws again--  
another four, back arrow 49.

George bolts for the back room. The chain snaps after him--he  
dives through the door, barely avoiding it.



INT. BACKROOM - NIGHT

George hits the floor, winded.

His eyes lock on the glowing emergency exit sign.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

Eliza keeps rolling fours--her yellow ship endlessly sliding between squares 45 and 49.

She pauses, eyes narrowing.

ELIZA  
(to herself)  
The dice are rigged.

The ropes slither free from the corpses.

Eliza rolls--a six. Lands on X 51.

The ropes snap around her wrists, yanking her wide--CRUNCH.  
She screams, shoulder dislocating.

CLUNK. CLUNK. CLUNK.

From the dark library, Ned's footsteps echo--drawing closer.

INT. BACKROOM - NIGHT

George scrambles up, lunges for the exit, bursts through--

THWIP! The cat-o'-nine-tails coils his ankle, yanking him down.

He slams face-first into the floor, dragged back inside.

INT. BOARD GAME CAFE - NIGHT

George is pulled to the centre of the room--barely conscious.

Eliza struggles in her bonds, powerless to help.

The whip hoists George upside-down, dangling by his ankle.

CLUNK, CLUNK.

From the shadows, Ned steps into candlelight--cutlass gleaming, ropes, chains, and whip extending from within his coat.

He tilts his tri-corn, revealing a skull face with hollow black sockets--then drives the blade into George's chest.

ELIZA

Nooo!

George convulses. Ned twists the sword, pulls it free, then plunges his skeletal hand into the wound--RIPPING out his still-beating heart.

Eliza turns away, weeping, as George's lifeless body thuds beside the other corpses.

The whip and chain slither beneath Ned's coat; the grappling hook tears free from the bar and vanishes after them.

CLUNK. CLUNK.

Ned sits opposite Eliza, slams the heart onto the table--SQUELCH--splashes of blood snuffs out one of the candles.

He gathers his black dice, rolls--snake eyes--and moves his black ship to square 54.

Eliza sobs in her bonds, her turn missed.

Ned rolls again--double sixes--loops back to square 50.

The ropes release, snapping back into Ned, dumping Eliza into her seat--one arm limp, dislocated.

She whimpers, eyes down.

Ned nudges Eliza's lone die toward her.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Why bother? You control the dice.  
I've already lost.

He SLAMS the hilt of his cutlass on the table--demanding.

She flinches, then rolls--her yellow ship gliding onto 54.

Ned readies one die. A four would reach her.

He rolls--a two.

Eliza's sobs fade. She stares at the rule sheet, breath hitching.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Wait...

She snatches it, reading fast--eyes locking on Ned.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

The rules don't say I have to use  
your dice.

She glances at the hourglass--mere seconds remain.

Eliza snatches the candle and races for the library--then  
skids to a halt, gaze snapping to George's corpse.

Dropping to her knees, she rummages his pockets and pulls out  
his worn, lucky die.

The last grains of sand begin their final descent.

She rushes back to the table, throws the die--it clips the  
board's edge, bouncing onto the floor.

Candle in hand, she drops and searches--finding it: a four.

She leaps up, moves her ship to 58--just as the final grain  
falls. TIME'S UP.

Eliza stares at Ned--uncertain. He rises, drawing his  
cutlass, raising it high. She flinches, eyes squeezed shut.

Ned brings the blade down--CRACK! He shatters the hourglass.

A storm of sand explodes, swirling through the café--then  
abruptly dies.

Lights surge back on. Ned, the game, and the corpses are  
gone. Only a mound of sand remains on the table, the Mayan  
gold coin gleaming atop.

Something protrudes from beneath--weathered fabric.

She tugs it free: a hand-scrawled map, ink faded, an island  
marked with a bold red X.

Clutching it, Eliza's breath quivers--then she breaks, tears  
streaming with grief, disbelief... but mostly relief.

EXT. RURAL SCHOOL - HONDURAS - DAY

Under a blazing blue sky, a weather-worn shanty school  
stands--peeling paint, patched tin roof, rusty playground.

ELIZA, in a t-shirt and shorts, with a dusty rucksack slung  
over her shoulder, pauses at the gate beside a hand-painted  
sign bearing the school's name.

She takes in the quiet building, smiles fondly--then walks to  
the entrance with quiet resolve.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Sunlight spills across neat rows of desks, a few worn books on the shelves, and a chalked lesson on the blackboard.

CARLOS, mid-40s, mops the floor alone.

ELIZA (O.S.)  
Hola, Carlos.

He turns--disbelief flashes, then a wide grin.

CARLOS  
Eliza!

He sets down the mop and embraces her warmly.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
Thank God you're alive. I feared  
the worst after you left with the  
board game.

They break apart.

ELIZA  
I'm sorry for stealing it.

CARLOS  
Honestly, I was glad to finally be  
rid of it--and now even gladder to  
see you were not foolish enough to  
play it.

Eliza sets her rucksack on a desk, unzips it, and pulls out the gold coin.

Carlos stares, stunned.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
No... it can not be. You won? You  
beat him?

Eliza nods.

CARLOS (CONT'D)  
That game has been in my family for  
generations--and no one who played  
has ever survived. We kept it only  
because the gold is real and to  
protect others from its curse.

ELIZA  
I know.

She offers the coin. Carlos takes it, awed.

CARLOS

The game expert friend you spoke of--  
the one you wronged in the past--  
he helped you win? You have made  
him rich too, just as you always  
dreamed?

Eliza's smile fades.

ELIZA

He didn't make it... but I couldn't  
have won without him.

Carlos nods solemnly.

CARLOS

I am sorry he did not survive. Like  
so many before him.

He tries to hand back the coin.

ELIZA

Keep it. It's yours. Use it to  
rebuild the school and care for  
your family. Besides--

She reaches into her bag, pulling out the map in a protective  
sleeve.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

There's more where that came from.

She hands it to him.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Do you recognize the island?

He studies it.

CARLOS

Yes... that is Cayo Cochino Menor.  
Only a few miles from the mainland.

ELIZA

Good, that's what I thought. Then I  
have another question for you--do  
you still have that little boat of  
yours? I'll make it more than worth  
your while.

Carlos grins, eyes lighting up.

EXT. ISLAND BEACH - DAY

Waves lap the shore, palm jungle swaying in the breeze.

A small motorboat lands. ELIZA and CARLOS disembark.

Eliza scans the shoreline, then consults the map. Carlos hauls two spades and a canvas bag from the boat.

ELIZA  
(gesturing)  
This way.

They head toward the treeline farther down the beach.

EXT. JUNGLE - DUSK

Fading sunlight pierces the dense canopy. Insects TRILL in the undergrowth.

Sweat-soaked, Eliza and Carlos dig a deep pit, an electric lamp glowing beside a mound of dirt.

Carlos climbs out, gulps a bottle of water.

CARLOS  
Take a break.

Eliza wipes her brow but keeps digging.

ELIZA  
We're close. I can feel it.

Carlos douses his head with water.

THUMP. Eliza's spade hits something solid. They lock eyes, breath held.

She drops the spade, digs with her hands. Carlos joins in.

They unearth a bundle wrapped in rotted palm leaves and vines. Eliza rips it open--pulse racing--then her face falls.

ELIZA (CONT'D)  
No...

Inside lies a splintered black box, warped with age. On its lid, a crude red skeleton stares with hollow eyes; above it, in faded blood-red letters:

DEAD MAN'S DICE II

Eliza lifts the lid--inside, a rough hourglass, stone-carved game board, bone dice, and a tattered sheet scrawled in jagged red handwriting. She reads:

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Well done, to ye who bested Ned at  
last,  
And discovered the isle where the  
treasure was buried in the past.  
But to claim the true map, where  
the gold lies for sure,  
Ye must face him again--in a game  
more deadly than before.

She flips the sheet to reveal a new set of rules. Her glare drops to the board--similar, yet not the same.

ELIZA (CONT'D)

Mother fu--

SMASH TO BLACK.

**THE END**