

Delve of the Mist [sic]

Act I, Scene 1

(The curtain rises on a battle scene, at the threshold of a desert ruin. The interior of the ruin is open to the audience, but cloaked in shadow to draw attention to the front of the building. A horde of skeletons is advancing from outside, putting pressure on three plucky defenders.)

Ruby: *(The rearmost of the three. Screams.)* Through ice, I pin your right hand to the ground, one minute!

Skeleton 1: *(Is anchored to the ground by its left hand, obstructing the rest of its fellows somewhat.)*

Ruby: Your other right!

Skeleton 1: *(Dutifully switches hands.)*

Felix: *(Blocks with his shield, and cuts down a skeleton.)* Eligio? We could use some good news, here!

Eligio: *(From the darkness.)* Just keep them off me!

Araina: *(Delivers a savage blow with her glowing staff to one of the attackers, and yells.)* We can't hold them much longer!

(The lights come up inside the ruin, revealing a massive stone door down the hall, currently held up in the open position. Eligio is messing about with the gears, holding far too many tools with too few hands. Wisps of fog wash over his ankles from deeper on the ruin.)

Eligio: *(Glares down the hall.)* Look, do you want this done fast, or do you want it done ri...

(The door lets out a loud SPROING, and Eligio drops his tools and dodges a projectile. Ruby is struck in the back, and goes down.)

Araina: *(Angrily.)* Eligio!

(The door starts to fall closed. Eligio curses, thrusts his spear into the gears, and grunts with the exertion. The door stops. For now.)

Felix: *(Still fighting.)* Araina! Get Ruby out of here!

Araina: *(Picks Ruby up, and retreats with her towards the door.)* Since you're no good at right, is it too late for fast?

Skeleton 1: *(Frees itself, lets out a silent scream, and waves its blade menacingly.)*

Eligio: *(Rolls his eyes as Ruby and Araina pass. Still holding his spear in the gears.)* Right! Felix, we're done here!

Felix: *(Fighting bravely and alone, Felix is losing ground. Takes out two skeletons with his blade, then buys some space with a vial of holy water thrown at his feet.)* Now?

Eligio: Yes, now!

(Felix turns around and barrels towards the door, closely pursued by the undead. He catches a piece of Eligio's shoulder as he passes under the door, and Eligio wrenches his spear free of the gears.)

(The door hangs in midair, unmoving.)

(The skeletons are very close, now.)

(Cursing under his breath, Eligio gives the gears a kick. Finally, the door slams down, right in the face of Skeleton 1.)

(As the door falls, so do the lights, plunging the audience into pitch blackness along with the heroes. Heavy panting is heard from the four, but after a moment this sound is lost to a rising, cacophonous hiss.)

(Yellow eyes in the dark.)

(Curtain falls.)

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Act I, Scene 3

(The last of the giant snakes falls into the thick fog that coats the stage at knee height, and our heroes prod the 'bodies' as the downed actors low crawl off stage. The personal sources of magical light remain by their owners, justifying the stage lighting. Before long, the five look at each other and break into nervous, relieved laughter.)

(Ruby is nowhere to be seen, but nobody seems to notice.)

Eligio: *(Walks over to the white Rakash, a wide grin on his face.)* Dechir, it's so good to see you! I never thought to see you here in the Sandridden Plains... didn't you go back to the Frozen North?

Dechir: *(Scrapes a green slurry of snake blood off his icy blade, laughing.)* Of course I'm here, silly. You needed me.

Eligio: But how did you know?

Dechir: *(Taps his head playfully.)* There's no escaping a dreamer. The dreaming connects us all, no matter how far we stray.

Hooded Archer: *(Pulls back his hood with his free hand, revealing fine elven features.)* As do the bonds of family. How've you been, sis?

Araina: *(Cries out joyfully.)* Elam! *(She rushes over to give her younger brother a hug.)* It's been so long! How are you!

Elam: I'm doing fine! I've been accepted by the hunters, and I won last year's archery competition! Came third this year, but that's only because my eyes were itchy that day. Father's...

(Elam and Araina continue to babble excitedly with each other, but trail off into pantomiming silence. A little ways away, in an equal and opposite transformation, Eligio and Dechir turn up the volume on their conversation. Felix watches both pairs with a smile, and Ruby is still gone.)

Eligio: *(Escalates his voice into audibility)* ... So, Felix didn't tell you what we're here for either, eh Dechir?

Felix: Well, I found this place when I returned home, and did a bit of exploring. Some of the mechanisms deeper down got a bit complex for me, so I thought I'd come get a good tinkerer.

Dechir: *(Cheerful.)* And a good rogue. No offense.

Eligio: *(Glares at Dechir. Looks back to Felix.)* But how did you know to get Araina's brother? Even I've never met him, and you couldn't...

Ruby: *(Strides back on stage, from the wrong direction. She is shuffling a deck of tarot cards, with a serious look on her face.)* The signs led us to him, and told us we would need his help. That we would need you all.

(Araina turns her attention to the main conversation, and Elam follows suit.)

Eligio: *(Chuckles.)* Yes, yes, fine. But isn't it about time you told us what we're needed **for**?

Ruby: *(Opens her mouth, but the words don't come. Her face is clouded with confusion as she tries to think of a lie, and the audience can see her fail. Shrugging, she decides to tell the truth.)* We are going to collect the ripples, before they fade away.

Araina: *(Confused.)* Ripples? What ripples?

Ruby: *(Opens her mouth again, then closes it. Frowns.)*

Elam and Dechir: *(In unison.)* Shh! Did you hear that?

Felix: *(Unconvincingly. Too quickly.)* I did!

Araina: Ummm... no...

Eligio: *(Opens his mouth, confused. He is about to speak, when...)*

From Offstage: *(A loud series of bangs echo from deeper in the ruin, followed by a woman's scream.)* Help! Please, in Radiance's name, help!

(Our heroes glance at each other, then back to the screaming. Off they go, shouting things like, "We're here!" "Where are you?!" and "Hold on!")

(The stage is left empty as the music swells and the lights fade.)

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Act II, Scene 2

(The lights come back up, in two separate pools on either side of the stage. The party has been split in the confusion of their flight, and only a few are still visible. Araina and Gregorio wander in from stage right, while Mikkel and Eligio enter from the left. Neither group can see the other.)

(The lights brighten on stage right, and dim on stage left.)

Araina: *(Nervous.)* So, thank you, by the way. That trap was nasty... I figured I was done for.

Gregorio: *(With a solemn air to him. A quiet smile.)* I'm glad I was able to help, my dear. An interesting way to meet, to be sure.

Araina: ... You're sure your hand is okay?

Gregorio: Poison cannot harm me any longer. I am well.

(The two walk in silence, and the focus shifts to Eligio and Mikkel.)

Mikkel: I think it's this way.

Eligio: Look, Mikkel... you were dead. I'm sure you were dead. Finally dead.

Mikkel: *(Looks back at Eligio, squinting into the other's eyes. Then, he brightens.)* I suppose I got here just in time.

Eligio: That doesn't make any sense!

(The two continue to argue silently as the focus switches back to the others.)

Gregorio: *(Breaks the silence.)* So. My boy is treating you well, I hope?

Araina: Oh, yes. Very well. He teases sometimes, but he's funny. He means well.

Gregorio: *(Wistful.)* He's grown so much since I knew him. You've been good for him, I think.

Araina: He'll be so excited when he finds out you're okay.

Gregorio: *(Sighs.)* I hope so. It's more complicated than that, I think.

(Eligio and Mikkel regain the spotlight.)

Eligio: *(Stops in his tracks, refusing to continue.)* I don't work with people who lie to me, Mikkel. It's bitten me too many times. Explain. Now.

Mikkel: *(Shakes his head and smiles that goofy smile. Eligio's glare softens a bit when he sees it... but not enough.)* We don't mean you any harm, lad. I know you're starting to see the loose threads, and you're too suspicious to just let them lie, but it's going to be okay. I swear it.

Eligio: *(Quietly. After a pause.)* Are you even Mikkel?

Mikkel: *(Pauses.)* That's a complicated question. Are you the same Eligio who plied his trade in the woods south of Lucitan?

Eligio: *(Quiet. Deadly.)* You shouldn't know about that.

Mikkel: Answer, please.

Eligio: I have changed since then, it's true. I have grown stronger, and hopefully wiser... Arguably kinder. But I share his past. His bones. And his guilt.

Mikkel: I don't have the bones of the Mikkel you knew, but I share his memories. His dreams. His senses of honor and humor both. I am him, just... limited. Secured with a cost.

(A clang echoes across the stage, and everyone looks towards it uncertainly. Everyone but Eligio.)

Eligio: That won't work again, Mikkel. I'm not moving, not one more step, until I get a proper explanation.

(The focus turns away from the group just after Mikkel adopts a sheepish look, and the lights brighten on Araina and Gregorio.)

Gregorio: *(Mutters in stage whisper.)* Not now, lad. Not now. We are so close to immortality.

Araina: Um... what?

(Curtain falls.)