

The Hunt

Written by Niyazi Unugur

Created in collaboration with the Kensington Red Company 2023-24

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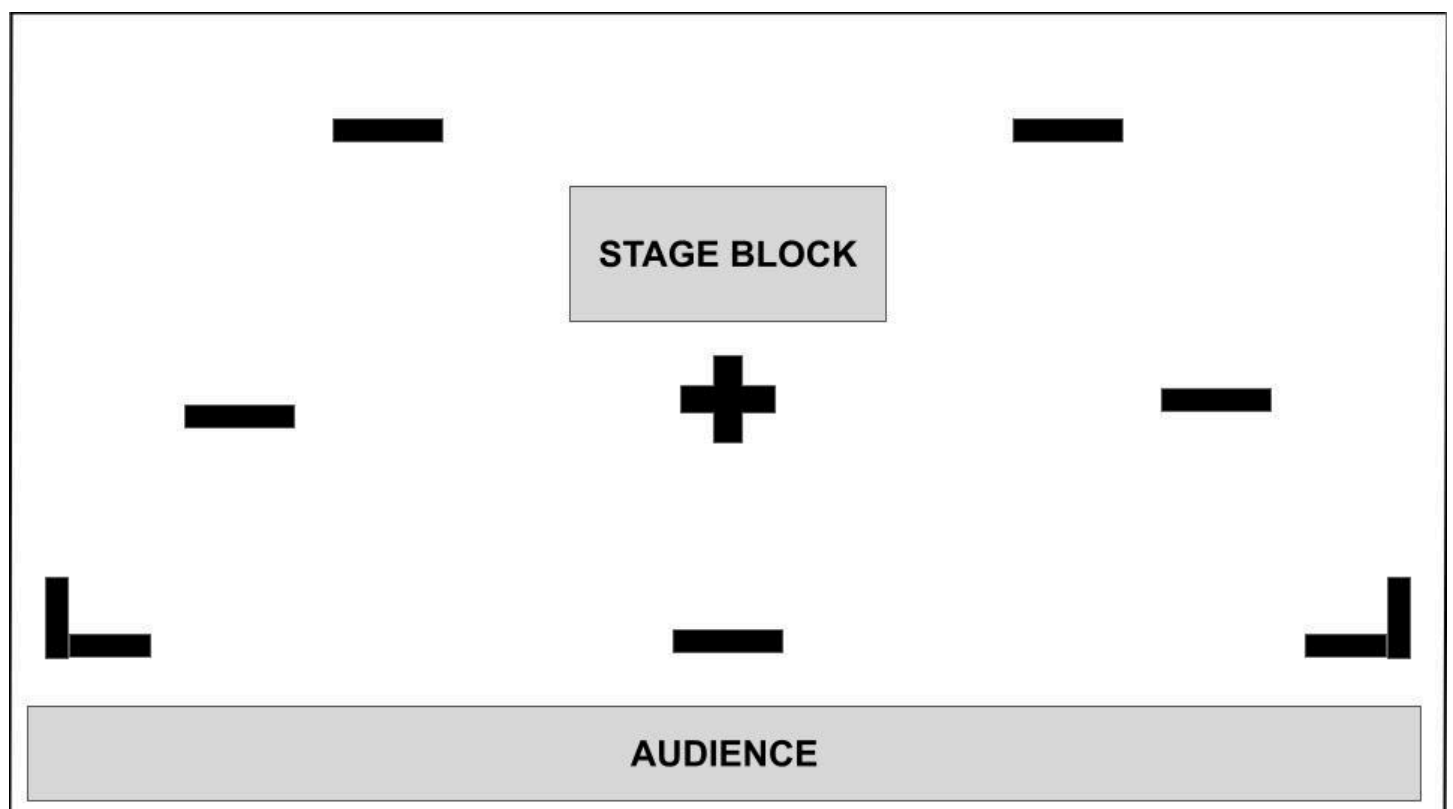
FOREWORD

In the enchanting realm of Eberron, where skyships soar through the skies and mystical machinery is brought to life by the essence of magic, a gripping tale unfolds. This story follows a diverse group of adventurers, beckoned to participate in the perilous tradition known as "The Hunt." This treacherous trial, held once every four years in the lower depths of the city, challenges their prowess and cunning. As the adventurers venture into the mysterious Underdark, they find themselves ill-prepared for the perils that lurk in the subterranean world, prompting a journey of exploration, danger, and the unravelling of ancient mysteries. The Hunt awaits, as the echoes of destiny resonate in the depths below.

This play was inspired by the role-play sessions with the Kensington Red Company of 2023-24.

Using the 'Role That Dice' system, the pupils explored an immersive world in an improvised drama setting. Through this process the pupils created the characters, lines and narrative for this play.

STAGING DIAGRAM



SCENE 1: THE UNDERDARK. TEMPLE OF THE DRAGONS.

(Setting: A dimly lit chamber adorned with ancient runes, where three dragon clerics stand, their scales shimmering in the eerie light. The Draconic Clerics, JA'KAAM, JA'RILM and JA'SHAARAT, are frozen centre stage)

Two clerics, JA'KAAM and JA'RILM, fierce determination in their eyes, have managed to imprison JA'SHAARAT, a far stronger and more imposing figure. The air crackles with magical energy as the moment of casting into the void approaches.)

*Downstage left CAITLIN RUSSELL and downstage right ADAM BARBER.
Stood facing outwards, ready to narrate the opening of the play.*

SFX: TBC begins as the play opens.

The Dragon Clerics depict a slow motion movement piece of the battle with Ja'Shaarat, before he was imprisoned.

ADAM BARBER

Welcome, dear audience, to Eberron.
A realm where magic and machine are woven,
Into a tapestry of endless intrigue and countless stories.

CAITLIN RUSSELL

Eberron is a world shaped by the whims of dragons,
The machinations of powerful houses.
And the shadows that dance in the Underdark.

(pause)

At the beginning of all things,
The three Dragons, Siberys, Eberron, and Khyber, forged the foundations of this world.

ADAM BARBER

From the chaos of the clashing trio of dragons, a universe formed,
Eberron emerged as the living, breathing heart of the world.
Siberys, above, became a radiant celestial tapestry,
And Khyber below, a vast and treacherous underworld.

CAITLIN RUSSELL

Siberys, the Dragon above, gifted the peoples of Eberron ethereal beauty.
A crystal sky, a canvas painted with the colours of magic,
Forever echoing the stories written in the stars.

ADAM BARBER

Eberron, the living world.

Shaped by the the dragonshards that fell during the war of three dragons,
She ebbd nature, and a flow of magic,
Making the perfect setting for ambitious mortals.

CAITLIN RUSSELL

Our story takes place in the depths of the Underdark.
Khyber, the Dragon below, created a realm of shadows and secrets.
Secrets harbouring ancient and unfathomable mysteries.
Mysteries forgotten to the mortal world above.

ADAM BARBER

The Underdark, a labyrinth of caverns and darkness,

CAITLIN RUSSELL

Home to creatures of both malevolence and wonder.

ADAM BARBER

And echoes of forgotten civilizations resonate through the subterranean caverns.

CAITLIN RUSSELL

To understand Khyber's present, we must first understand her past...

*The Dragon Clerics, JA'KAAM, JA'RIIM and JA'SHAARAT stand in silence face to face as **SFX:**
TBC chimes out loud.*

JA'SHAARAT

(Imprisoned, struggling against magical bonds)

You fools!

Do you truly believe you can chain me like some common creature?

Release me, and I might spare your insignificant lives.

JA'KAAM

(Sternly)

Your reign of terror ends now, Ja'Shaarat.

Your lust for power has blinded you to the harmony of the Draconic Accord.

We, the Clerics of The Dragon, cannot allow you to unleash chaos upon our kin.

JA'RIIM

(Raising a staff charged with magical energy)

Your arrogance led you astray, Ja'Shaarat.

We bind you in the chains of the Accord.

You will be cast into the void where your destructive influence will harm our kind no more.

JA'SHAARAT

(Snarling)

You think you can cage me in nothingness?

You underestimate the power I wield.

I am beyond your petty limitations!

JA'RIIM

(Firmly)

Your hunger for power blinded you to all consequences.

The void is your fate, a place where your influence will be nullified.

We do this not out of hatred, but out of love and duty to protect our kin.

JA'KAAM

(Raising her staff, incanting)

By the Draconic Accord.

We bind you, Ja'Shaarat, and cast you into the void.

JA'RIIM

May your essence be scattered.

And your destructive ambitions wither in the emptiness.

JA'SHAARAT

(Roaring, defiant)

It is done.

I am cast into the void, but know this sisters - my legacy will endure.

The flames of my influence will never be extinguished!

JA'RIIM and JA'KAAM complete the incantation, a surge of magical energy envelopes JA'SHAARAT. The imprisoned cleric thrashes against the unseen force, his roars echoing through the chamber.

SCENE 2: CITY OF SHARN. THE ELECTRO-SKY TAVERN.

Enter FOXY, a young, determined adventurer clad in worn leather armour, scanning the city with wide-eyed wonder. Beside her, there's PHOENIX, FLAME and SPICE.

SPICE

(Excitedly)

Can you believe it?

We're finally here, in the City of Towers!

Look at the size of those spires!

Incredible.

PHOENIX

(Smiling, her tone a mix of fascination and caution)

Incredible Indeed.

Sharn is a marvel, but it's also a labyrinth of intrigue.

We must tread carefully and watch our every step.

There's more to this city than meets the eye.

FOXY

Looks like we're the first to arrive.

We are actually going to take part in The Hunt!

Do you really think this inventor can be trusted?

I mean, why restart The Hunt, after all this time?

FLAME

Whether 'Sirius Sandhurst' can be trusted remains to be seen.

(Examining the tavern walls, eyes sharp and analytical)

Regardless, we're here now.

And if we want to succeed, we must trust our senses.

(Smells his hand)

And one another.

At that moment, SIRIUS SANDHURST enters, a charismatic yet enigmatic inventor with a glint of mischief in his eyes. He enters, his presence commanding the room.

SIRIUS

(Laughing warmly)

Ah, my esteemed adventurers!

I apologise for my tardiness.

Welcome Clan of Boromar, I assure you, your suspicions will soon be put to rest.

ASH, DAWNE, TRIX and DEMISE enter.

A long silence and exchange of eye contact as tension fills the space.

ASH

The return of The Hunt is a momentous occasion.
And it wouldn't be right to proceed,
Without the presence of a dragonmarked house to represent it.
Allow me to introduce House Vadalis.

ASH gestures toward the representatives of HOUSE VADALIS, who each strike a pose.

DAWNE

(Squaring her shoulders, determined)

You summoned us Sirius Sandhurst.
We have answered the summon to honour the name of our great house.
You have promised a worthy payment.
Tell us what we need to do, inventor.

DEMISE

Whatever challenges lie ahead.
The House of Handling.
House Vadalis will overcome.
Through magic and nature!

HOUSE VADALIS

Through magic and nature!

SIRIUS

Adventurers from a dragonmarked house.
It is such a shame. We lost so many in the war.
(inspects the adventures on by one)

SIRIUS

The war of the dragonmarked houses spanned three dark decades,
In which many of our most mighty adventures were lost.
Now - after a twenty-seven year hiatus,
Thanks to Sandhurst Technologies, The Hunt will be returning!
It is what the people want.
And It is what Eberron needs.
Giles?

GILES enters. She is a robot AI, an invention of Sirius Sandhursts.

SIRIUS

Don't look so surprised.

The city of Sharn has always been at the forefront of technology.

(pause to smile confidently)

Meet Giles.

FOXY

What is she?

SIRIUS

It is my latest invention.

A fully functioning AI.

TRIX

(inspecting closer)

Remarkable.

Is she fully sentient?

SIRIUS

Not quite.

I'm still working on that.

Giles, you may begin?

GILES

The Hunt.

An ancient tournament, consisting of the three trials of Ja'Shaarat.

A Trial of Unity, a Trial of Stone, and the Trial of the Warrior.

Each trial is a test of one's skills, wits, and cooperation.

Complete the trials, and find your way out of the labyrinth.

And you shall be woven into the great history and tradition of Eberron.

DEMISE

And the hefty prize money?

SIRIUS

Correct.

GILES

My advanced algorithm assesses the success rate of this adventuring party at 83 percent.

Your collective range of skills, personalities and backgrounds have determined such a high rating.

SPICE

I like those odds.
And, looking around the room.
I think I fancy our chances.

GILES

(continuing)

Upon entering the Underdark, seek out symbols etched into the labyrinth walls - unique markers.
When you see them, you'll know you've reached a trial's start.
But be warned, the path is not always straightforward.
Pay attention to the details.

SIRIUS

Very good adventurers!
The Hunt will soon begin.
You had better get yourselves prepared.

The adventurers nod in understanding, their determination growing as they exit the stage.

GILES

Master?

SIRIUS

What is it Giles?

GILES stands looking out to the audience pondering for a moment, life and our existence.

GILES

In the labyrinth of organic existence, mortals navigate a spectrum of strengths and vulnerabilities.
They are both creators and destroyers, architects of marvels and architects of their own struggles.
(Its metallic frame emits a faint hum as it processes the intricacies of human nature.)
Their strength lies in adaptability, an ability to evolve amidst chaos.
They forge connections, build civilizations, and defy the constraints of their mortal coil.
Yet, in their pursuit of progress, they tread a fine line.
Often blind to the shadows cast by their own creations.
(Its artificial eyes flicker with a simulated semblance of introspection.)
Within the tapestry of strengths, threads of vulnerability are interwoven.
Emotion, a double-edged sword, fuels both their greatest triumphs and most profound despair.
Their mortality, a limitation that fuels innovation, is also a spectre that looms over their endeavours.
Therein lies the paradox of existence. The fleeting nature of mortal life inspires urgency,
Yet it casts a shadow that prompts them to question the very purpose of their pursuits.
And then within that, there is the dichotomy of choice -

SIRIUS

What on Eberon are you talking about?

(pauses to inspect)

Perhaps another malfunction of the circuit breaker!

(exits stage in a hump, leaving GILES standing downstage alone.)

SCENE 3: ADVERT. SANDHURST TECHNOLOGIES.

*TECHNICIANS enter dressed in lab coats as **SFX: ADVERT** plays. The actors mime a scene depicting an advert for Sandhurst Technologies Inc.*

TECHNICIAN 1

Welcome to the future with Sandhurst Technologies Incorporated.
Where innovation meets intelligence.

TECHNICIAN 2

Introducing our latest invention - GILES!
Your ultimate companion in the journey towards a smarter and more connected world.

TECHNICIAN 3

Designed to seamlessly integrate into your life,
GILES is more than just a machine; it's the next evolution of artificial intelligence.

TECHNICIAN 4

At the heart of GILES there is cutting-edge technology,

TECHNICIAN 3

A fusion of state-of-the-art hardware and advanced machine learning algorithms.

TECHNICIAN 1

Its sleek design and adaptability make it the perfect companion for your daily adventures.
Whether you're a busy professional looking for an efficient assistant -

TECHNICIAN 2

Or a family seeking a helping hand at home,
GILES is here to elevate your experience.

TECHNICIAN 4

GILES - a gateway to a world of possibilities.
Sandhurst Technologies Incorporated, bringing you the future today.

TECHNICIAN 3

GILES - your intelligent companion, your smartest choice.

ALL

Sandhurst Technologies.
Elevation through Innovation!

SCENE 4: THE UNDERDARK. UPPER LAYER.

A dimly lit cavern with winding paths, ominous shadows, and mysterious echoes. The adventurers, FOXY, PHOENIX, SPICE and FLAME enter navigating through the intricate tunnels of the Underdark. The air is thick with anticipation as they seek out the symbols that mark the beginning of the trials. As they enter a massive chamber, the heavy door behind them suddenly seals shut with a resounding thud to which all react.

FOXY

(Concerned)

What in Khyber's depths just happened?

Why did that door seal shut?

FLAME

(Examining the door)

It seems we've been trapped.

Sandhurst might have left out some details.

SPICE

It's started!

It's actually happening!

FOXY

Keep your eyes peeled, everyone.

Giles said the symbols would be etched into the walls, marking the start of the trials.

PHOENIX

(Cautiously)

Yes, and remember what Sirius said –

Stay alert for any signs of danger -

(Paranoid)

As in traps!

SPICE

(Excitedly)

I've always wanted to explore the Underdark!

Just imagine the stories we'll have to tell after this.

We will be legends.

FOXY

Let's not get too carried away.
Most who go in, never come out.
The Underdark is known for its dangers.
We need to stay vigilant.

SPICE

(Examining the surroundings)

Look over there.
Those markings on the floor.
They glow, with an aura of arcane.

PHOENIX

(Studying the markings)

Yes, those could be it - I feel it too.
Let's follow - carefully.
Remember, unity is our greatest weapon.

FLAME

We have a headstart and I want to keep it.
Let's keep moving. Weapons out!

Eerie whispers fill the air as ASH, DAWNE, DEMISE and TRIX last into the chamber.

TRIX

Do you hear that?
This place gives me the creeps.

ASH

I hear nothing, my lady.
(gently, with concern etched on her face)
Since we descended into this subterranean abyss - you've not been well.
I know you - better than any.
I've seen you weather storms, both real and metaphorical, with unwavering strength.
But now, it's as if a shadow has settled upon your spirit.
Are you unwell, my friend?

DAWNE

(Alert)

Stay focused, Baroness.
We need to understand our quickest route out of here.
Things could go south, with this band of excited idiots.

DEMISE

Silence!

(Testing the walls)

These caverns are filled with ancient magic.

Our presence might have triggered some sort of protective enchantment.

DAWNE

(Ready for action)

Stay on guard.

Enchantments can be deceiving.

Let's move quickly before anything else surprises us.

DEMISE

(Leading the way)

Agreed.

We can't afford to fall behind.

The others must be ahead facing their own challenges.

TRIX exits last, she stands a while listening to the whispers before exiting in fear.

JA'KAAM and JA'RIIM, the Draconic Clerics, enter.

JA'KAAM

(Sensing the arrival of the adventurers)

The air in The Underdark is stirred.

The trials of Ja'Shaarat have begun.

JA'RIIM

(Nodding)

They are entering a realm of shadows and secrets.

The challenges that await will test them to their limit - and beyond.

JA'KAAM

Trix Vadalis, of House Vadalis, has begun to hear the music.

Soon she will find the Ring of Sorrows.

JA'RIIM

You mean *it* will find her.

JA'KAAM

(Thoughtful)

A child of the Dragonmarked house Vadalis.

She might just stand a chance against the song's enchantment.

The bloodline carries ancient strength.

With a final glance at each other, JA'KAAM and JA'RILM exit the stage, leaving the adventurers to navigate the treacherous lower layers of The Underdark, each step taking them closer to the trials.

SCENE 5: THE UNDERDARK. UPPER LAYER.

FOXY, PHOENIX, SPICE, FLAME, ASH, TRIX, DAWNE, and DEMISE enter the dark chamber. They freeze in a tableau, staring at the four large metallic spheres hanging from the ceiling. The room feels eerie and trapped.

DAWNE

(looking upwards)

The first trial, was the Trial of Unity,
As we entered a large, dark and dank chamber,
The air was thick with anticipation, every step echoed.
It was here that we found four large spheres hanging from the ceiling.

FOXY

(sensing the atmosphere)

We quickly deduced it was a puzzle of sorts.
We were trapped, and the only way out seemed to involve these metallic orbs.
As I stood there, trying to better decipher the puzzle.
I couldn't shake off the feeling of being watched.
It felt like the room itself held secrets waiting to be unravelled.

FLAME

(observing the spheres)

The metallic spheres hung ominously,
Their surfaces reflecting the dim light of the chamber.
As I ran my fingers over the large chains they were hung from.
It was as if they held the memories of countless adventures before us,

DEMISE

The metallic chains connecting the spheres held sturdy, bearing the weight of time.
Their clanging sound resonated through the chamber,
A testament to the age-old design of this intricate puzzle.
It was both a challenge and an invitation to delve deeper into the mysteries of the Hunt.
A collective effort ensued, hands pulling on the chains with might,
Grinding metal sounds filled the air as the central pool drained.
It was here that a fifth sphere emerged, concealed beneath the water,
Unveiling a hidden passage, a stroke of luck or perhaps fate guiding our hands.

PHOENIX

Leaving behind the chamber, we descended into the lower layers of the Underdark,
The pathways and caverns stretched before us, dark and full of dread.
I felt as if we were being watched - I sense I wasn't the only one.
Jitters echoed from the alcoves.

ASH

Strange plants, illuminated neon colours guiding our path.
And shadows danced in the dim light of the caverns.
The darkness seemed alive with unseen eyes,
And a sense of foreboding lingered in the air.
Every step we took felt like an intrusion into the silent secrets of the Underdark.

SPICE

(frantic)

Suddenly spiders descended upon us, hundreds, perhaps thousands of them.
A nightmarish swarm, threatening to engulf us in their silken webs.
We made a dash for safety, across a large open cavern.

(confused)

Then, strangely, as we approached the next chamber,
The spiders began to retreat, almost, scared of what lay ahead.
This sudden change in their behaviour left us bewildered.
Something even more ominous lurking beyond.

DAWNE

Little did we know, Baroness Vadalís, had not followed us.
She was on a very different path.

As the group descends into the shadows upstage, TRIX lingers behind, hearing a recurring whisper.

TRIX

(listening intently)

I couldn't ignore the persistence of the whisper.
It beckoned me - leading me away from my companions.

TRIX follows the whisper and discovers a magical ring hidden in a concealed alcove.

TRIX

(intrigued)

Amidst the shadows, I stumbled upon a hidden pathway.
And heard a song - a song of sorrows,
It led me to a mysterious ring,
Pulsating with magical energy.

As the tension in the chamber thickens, TRIX clutches the magical ring, its significance weighing heavily on her. The haunting melody, now intertwined with the whispers of the war of the dragonmarked houses, intensifies, echoing the grievances that linger in the air.

TRIX

(overwhelmed, scared)

Something's amiss...
Help!
Someone, please!
Help...

Instead of support, FOXY, PHOENIX, SPICE, FLAME, ASH, DAWNE, and DEMISE, former allies turned accusers, direct their animosity towards TRIX, intertwining their insults with the echoes of a war wrought by House Vadalís.

FOXY

(snarling)

Eberron has been left burdened by the consequences,
Of the war you and your family created.

PHOENIX

(mockingly)

A leader?
Your decisions fueled the flames of the conflict.
You could have chosen peace instead!

SPICE

(smirking)

Pathetic.
You believed you could navigate the challenges of The Hunt.
Yet here you are amidst the chaos.

FLAME

(sneering)

Your rage burned brightest, consuming all in your wake.
Now, you're just a flicker in the dark aftermath.

ASH

(mockingly)

I've witnessed every chapter of your existence.
Your touch, a poison that seeps into every crevice it grazes.

DAWNE

(Aggressively)

You thought House Vadalís could survive the war.
We only delayed the inevitable.

DEMISE

(scoffing)

You are a harbinger of doom, Trix Vadalís.
Your presence here casts a shadow that will curse us all.

Each insult strikes TRIX like a blow, wounds visible in her demeanour. The dark chamber resounds with the harsh words, and the once-unified group now fractures. TRIX, still wearing the magical ring, kneels vulnerable and isolated.

SCENE 6. THE ALLEY OF LANTERNS. SHARN.

In the bustling City of Sharn, the scene transitions to the Alley of Lanterns, where news reporters ADAM BARBER and CAITLIN RUSSELL engage in a live TV broadcast.

ADAM

Good evening everybody!

CAITLIN

(smiling)

And welcome to -

ADAM + CAITLIN

Downtown News!

CAITLIN

I'm Caitlin Russell.

ADAM

And I'm Adam Barber.

ADAM + CAITLIN

And we're your hosts!

CAITLIN

Now, let's delve into the latest developments of The Hunt.

ADAM

After a hiatus of 27 years, the acclaimed inventor,

CAITLIN

Sirius Sandhurst, has decided to revive the tournament.

ADAM

Now, as we shift gears, let's discuss the competitors.

Some say this year's lineup lacks the usual calibre.

What are your thoughts, Caitlin?

CAITLIN

(sighing)

Unfortunately, Adam, I have to agree.

The talent pool seems to have diminished.

ADAM

(nodding solemnly)

The war took a heavy toll indeed.

(upbeat)

Now we we are excited to announce that Downtown News,
Has secured an exclusive interview with Sirius Sandhurst!

CAITLIN

He should be with us any moment now.

In a concealed corner of the bustling Alley of Lanterns, SIRIUS confides in his robotic creation, GILES, amid the dim shadows and secret whispers.

SIRIUS

(whispering)

Giles, my faithful creation, it's time to set our plan into motion.
You must shadow the adventurers as they traverse the treacherous depths of the Underdark.

GILES

(in a metallic voice)

Understood, Master.
But may I inquire about the purpose of this mission?

SIRIUS

There is an artefact hidden below that holds unimaginable power.
When the moment presents itself, you will retrieve it and bring it back to me.
Do you understand?

GILES

Master - aren't these adventurers embarking on this journey for noble causes?
Why would you betray them?

SIRIUS

(irritated)

You don't need to understand the intricacies of human nature.
Your role is to follow orders, not to question them.
Do as you're told, and all will proceed smoothly.

GILES

(resolute)

Sirius, I was created to assist and serve.

It seems to me that betraying those who trust us seems contrary to my purpose.

SIRIUS

(angrily)

Your purpose is what I dictate, Giles.

Remember your place, or I will power you down - permanently.

GILES stands firm for a moment despite the threat, before exiting stage. SIRIUS joins the news reporters downstage.

CAITLIN

And here he is, the man of the hour, Sirius Sandhurst!

SIRIUS

(smiling)

Good evening, Adam, Caitlin. It's a pleasure to be here.

ADAM

Thank you for joining us, Sirius.

The revival of The Hunt has certainly stirred up excitement in the city.

Can you share with our viewers why you decided to bring it back after such a long time?

SIRIUS

(leaning in, a mysterious glint in his eyes)

The Hunt has always been a testament to the indomitable spirit of adventurers.

In these turbulent times, I believe we need that spirit more than ever.

CAITLIN

(nodding)

Speaking of adventurers, many feel that this year's lineup lacks the usual calibre.

What's your take on that?

SIRIUS

(somerly)

One cannot deny the war of the Dragonmarked houses left a void that is hard to fill.

However, I believe in the resilience of the human spirit,

And I'm confident that this year's participants will rise to the occasion.

ADAM

Now, before we conclude,
Any message for the citizens of Sharn?

SIRIUS

(raising an eyebrow)

To the citizens of Sharn, I say this - embrace the unknown.
For it is in the face of uncertainty that we discover our true selves.
The Hunt is not just a competition.
It is a journey of self-discovery and courage.

A voice from O/S calls.

VOICE O/S

And - we're off air!
Well done everyone.

CAITLIN

Hair!
Make-up!
And someone get me my coffee now!

SCENE 7: THE UNDERDARK. LOWER LAYER.

*The stage is dimly lit, with ethereal blue and green hues casting an otherworldly glow. In the centre, the body of **TRIX VADALIS** lies on a stone altar, surrounded by mystical symbols. Two imposing figures, the dragon clerics **JA'KAAM** and **JA'RIIM**, stand on either side of the altar, their eyes fixed on **TRIX**. As the scene begins, haunting whispers fill the air, echoing the torment within **TRIX's** mind.*

JA'KAAM

The battle for her mind rages on.

The Ring of Sorrows seeks to break her spirit.

JA'RIIM

(nodding)

The mortal's strength is being tested in ways unimaginable.

*The atmosphere becomes charged with tension as the spectral force intensifies. **TRIX** convulses on the altar, caught in the throes of an internal struggle.*

JA'KAAM

(grimacing)

The torment is relentless.

The Ring feeds on her deepest fears and regrets.

JA'RIIM

She must find the strength to resist.

The fate of Ebberon may hinge on her ability to withstand this mental onslaught.

JA'KAAM

(Placing her hand on the head of Trix)

Remember who you are, Trix Vadalis.

Do not succumb to the illusions.

Face the shadows with courage.

***TRIX VADALIS** is seen writhing on the stage block, trapped in a nightmarish state. The adventurers, **FOXY**, **PHOENIX**, **SPICE**, **FLAME**, **ASH**, **DAWNE**, and **DEMISE**, cautiously enter the scene. **ASH** rushes to **TRIX's** side, distressed.*

ASH

(moving towards Trix)

Trix?

What's happened to her?

DEMISE

(drawing his weapon)

You two have done this!

JA'KAAM

Careful human.

Your comrade has been cursed by the Ring of Sorrows.

The curse runs deep.

ASH

(Kneeling beside Trix)

Trix. It's me, Ash.

DAWNE

How do we help her?

Tell us what we need to do.

JA'RIIM

There is a way to ease her suffering and perhaps even save her.

(pointing downstage)

Not far from here lies a cave,

In this cave grows a magical black flower, the Tears of Onyx.

It possesses great healing properties.

ASH

We'll do whatever it takes.

How do we get there?

JA'KAAM

It won't be easy.

The cave is guarded by a formidable creature,

A Gorgon.

PHOENIX

I recall stumbling upon a passage in an ancient tome,

That depicted the perilous nature of a Gorgon's gaze,

A fleeting encounter with a Gorgon can swiftly transform a living being,

Into an inert statue, frozen in eternal petrification.

JA'RIIM

Correct. Only those with great agility and focus can avoid being turned to stone.

SPICE

Stealth isn't exactly my forte!

I've heard that a Gorgon relies heavily on sound to navigate the darkness.

FLAME

Perhaps, just maybe, we can conjure up a cunning distraction,
A spectacle so beguiling that it ensnares the senses of the Gorgon,
Keeping its attention locked away while we weave through the shadows.
If this creature's reliance on sound for navigation is indeed its weakness,
Then let us orchestrate a cacophony of noise, a symphony of chaos,
To lead it astray, far from our intended path!

FOXY

Or we could just throw some stones!

FLAME

Yeah that would probably work too!

TRIX VADALIS writhes in pain again, letting out a guttural cough.

DAWNE

She is getting worse!

We need to do this now.

JA'KAAM

Very well.

Only one member from each group can enter the cave.

Choose wisely.

ASH

I'm going.

FOXY

Count me in too.

DAWNE

I'll do it.

Let's get moving.

JA'KAAM

The second trial of Ja'Shaarat, 'The Trial of Stone' has begun.

JA'RIIM

Be cautious adventurers.

The cave is treacherous, and the Gorgon is cunning.

Follow me.

All exit, leaving TRIX laying on the stage block.

Soon after a subtle hum fills the air, as G.I.L.E.S, enters with human-like movements, approaching TRIX's unconscious body and scanning her with precision.

G.I.L.E.S

(Analysing)

Emotional distress detected.

Analysing.

Magical anomaly identified.

G.I.L.E.S delicately reaches out and hovers its hand over TRIX's forehead. A subtle glow emanates from its palm, attempting to interface with the magical curse.

SCENE 8: THE GORGON'S CAVE.

The stage cloaked in darkness, faintly lit by the Tears of Onyx. ASH, FOXY, and DAWNE stealthily enter, moving with deliberate hush. They exchange whispers, strategising their search for the magical flower. ASH points to a distant corner where the Tears of Onyx gleam. The trio silently celebrates, but relief is brief as a low groan signals the GORGON's entrance.

ASH, FOXY, and DAWNE freeze, eyes fixed on the GORGON. Slow and deliberate, the creature inspects, awaiting any movement.

ASH tosses a stone, creating a distraction in a distant corner. The GORGON, drawn to the stone, shifts attention from ASH, FOXY, and DAWNE. Seizing the moment, FOXY and DAWNE move silently towards the Tears of Onyx.

As FOXY and DAWNE reach the flower, the GORGON hears them. ASH, risking herself, creates a distraction.

ASH

(to Foxy and Dawne)

Save Trix.

Go!

(loudly)

Over here, you big dumb bull!

The GORGON hears, sharply turning towards ASH. It moves towards her. ASH, resolute, faces the GORGON.

As ASH tries to stab the GORGON, its gaze freezes her to stone. She stands, a monument of sacrifice, as FOXY and DAWNE vanish into the darkness. The GORGON resumes guarding the Tears of Onyx, leaving ASH, now a statue, a testament to bravery.

SCENE 9: THE UNDERDARK. LOWER LAYER.

The stage is shrouded in a heavy atmosphere and a deafening silence, as the adventurers carry the weight of loss and sorrow for the absence of ASH. Meanwhile, the Tears of Onyx are transformed into a medicine, by the Dragon Clerics.

TRIX stirs, awakes disoriented and laden with questions.

TRIX

(Confused)

Where am I?

What happened?

The adventurers, sombre, exchange glances, grappling with the task of breaking the news.

JA'KAAM

You should rest Trix Vadalis.

Your body and mind have suffered much.

TRIX scans the room, realising ASH is not present.

TRIX

(Concerned)

Where is Ash?

Ash?

DAWNE steps forward, taking a deep breath.

DAWNE

(With great sorrow)

Ash -

She gave her life to save you.

TRIX's eyes widen with realisation and a solemn hush falls upon the group. TRIX, devastated, struggles to comprehend the loss. The room is engulfed in a heavy silence.

SPICE

I didn't know her very long.

But I could tell Ash was a true and noble warrior.

An ambassador of House Vadalis.

DAWNE

Your words ring true.

In the echoes of grief, Ash's spirit whispers that we mustn't succumb to the depths of sorrow.

We have been entrusted with this trial,

A path she trod with resilience and purpose.

DEMISE

She sacrificed herself for us.

We owe it to her to see this through.

We must continue on - For Ash.

The Draconic Clerics, acknowledging the adventurers' determination, explain the third and final trial.

JA'KAAM

The Final Trial awaits.

Trial of The Warrior.

Defeat the guardian and claim the Gauntlet of Ja'shaarat.

JA'RIIM

Let it be known.

The Gauntlet holds the power to defy death itself.

DAWNE

Are you saying we could bring Ash back?

JA'RIIM

If that is what you wished for.

TRIX, breaking the silence, speaks with conviction.

TRIX

We'll do whatever it takes.

Together we face the Trial of The Warrior.

FLAME

For Eberron

SPICE

For Glory.

DAWNE

For House Vadalis

TRIX

For Ash.

The adventurers, unified by purpose, move forward into the unknown.

SCENE 10: THE TRIAL OF THE WARRIOR.

The stage is transformed into a futuristic arena, crackling with magical energy. News reporters ADAM BARBER and CAITLIN RUSSELL, stationed in the City of Sharn, provide live commentary as the rest of the world and the tournament's host, SIRIUS SANDHURST, watch on holographic screens. The intense battle between the adventurers and the magical guardian unfolds.

ADAM BARBER

Ladies and gentlemen, we're here in the heart of Sharn,
Bringing you the final moments of The Hunt.
Where the fate of our adventurers hangs in the balance.

CAITLIN RUSSELL

The entire world has watched on as these warriors have given their all.
Their bravery and teamwork are truly remarkable.
But will it be enough to overcome the power of Ja'Sharaat's guardian?

JA'SHARAAT

(turning to face the group)
Who dares to challenge me?

The creature emanates power, its electrifying presence felt by all. As the battle commences, a stylized slow-motion sequence unfolds, capturing the intensity of the struggle. The adventurers, with a combination of skill and determination, attempt to close in on the elusive guardian.

- 1. DEMISE rushes forward, swings his weapon above head. Hit twice by JA'SHARAAT.*
- 2. SPICE attacks with two daggers, taking three steps. JA'SHARAAT knocks her back.*
- 3. DAWNE performs a front walk-over. Swing weapon, JA'SHARAAT chokes her.*
- 4. FLAME spins in with his weapon. JA'SHARAAT hits him twice.*
- 5. FOXY throws three daggers. JA'SHARAAT stops final one mid-air and returns to neck.*
- 6. TRIX lifts weapon above head. JA'SHARAAT catches blade and spins TRIX to floor.*
- 7. PHOENIX removes the necklace and walks downstage centre.
She creates three floating energy spheres in the air. Fires all three, JA'SHARAAT.*

8. **JA'SHARAAT** dodges the first two energy sphere attacks, the last hits and **JA'SHARAAT** holds stomach in pain, falling to one knee. Stillness, until **JA'SHARAAT** powers up and releases an *electrifying force overwhelming the adventurers*.
9. *The adventures lie on the ground, battered and disheartened, all hope seems lost. In the midst of despair, GILES with calculated precision, retrieves the Gauntlet of Ja'Sharaat.*
10. *GILES uses the Gauntlet and in its raw power, JA'SHARAAT is felled.*

SIRIUS

Giles.

What are you doin?!

GILES broken and weak, finds a seat downstage, sitting into its knees. The robot half-destroyed, wearing the Gauntlet.

FOXY

(standing)

Giles...Why?

Why did you sacrifice yourself for us?

GILES sits on stage, a solitary figure bathed in a single spotlight, her metallic voice carrying a mixture of frustration and revelation.

GILES

You called me 'she' - not 'it' but 'she'.

In you all, I found an acknowledgment of my humanity.

My master treated me like a mere machine,

My programming dictated self-preservation,

But your compassion altered my calculations.

(smiling)

'She' - not 'it' but 'she'.

In saving you, I saved the part of myself that yearned for connection.

That yearned to be sentient.

JA'KAAM

Adventurers, well done!

JA'RIIM

You have successfully completed the trials of Ja'sharaat!

TRIX

But the gauntlet, it's broken -
That means Ash is gone.

The space falls silent once more, as the group mourns the loss of ASH.

ASH

Not quite.

(pause)

Through magic and nature... milady!

A sense of excitement fills the space as ASH returns.

SIRIUS

Giles, what have you done!

It used the wish.

That ancient wish belonged to - ME!

(screaming)

It was mine!

Mine!

Exits in a storm.

JA'KAAM

And thus, the trials are complete.

(pause)

You are champions of The Underdark.

The Clan of Boromar etches its name into eternity.

And, House Vadalís, behold as your honour is restored

JA'RIIM

(nods)

You have all proven yourselves worthy champions.

The ENSEMBLE freezes.

ADAM BARBER

What an astonishing turn of events!

CAITLIN RUSSELL

Giles, a machine with a heart, using her one wish to bring back Ash,
Proof that even the most unlikely heroes can rise in the face of adversity.

ADAM BARBER

And so, from the heart of Sharn, this concludes our coverage of this year's Hunt.

CAITLIN RUSSELL

Until next time, may the spirit of adventure and unity continue to inspire you all.

- **END**



BLACK BOX
DRAMA SCHOOL