

HEROES FOR SALE

Pilot: "The Misplaced Prince."

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Logline: Three out-of-work heroes suddenly find themselves overrun with quests after a decades-long peace is broken.

22-minute Animated Fantasy
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EXT. FINNIAN'S TAVERN - NIGHT

A sign reads: "FINNIAN'S AVE ". There are several teeth on the ground, as well as the missing sign letters: T, R, and N.

FITZ, a hairy monster (female), reaches for the teeth as a long, impressive shadow falls over her.

VOICE (O.S.)

(coldly)

I was told I might find you here,
beast. Prepare yourself...

BARTOK, a human adventurer (male), stands with his left hand on a perfectly-polished sword hilt, barely unsheathed. He wears a pair of circular-lens reading glasses.

The two lock eyes. Bartok tucks away his glasses. Cracks his neck, ready for a fight.

Fitz narrows her eyes. Opens her monstrous arms.

Bartok tenses. They run at each other and clash... in a warm, friendly embrace.

FITZ

Bartok! Nice to run into you!

Fitz excuses herself. Scoops up the teeth with her paw.

FITZ (CONT'D)

Don't want to forget these
complimentary beauties!

Fitz drops the loose teeth into her satchel, then frowns.

FITZ (CONT'D)

Drat, I wonder if this tavern will
serve me.

BARTOK

Why? The whole "The Beast of a
Thousand Teeth" thing? No one even
calls you that anymore.

Fitz smiles, revealing a monstrous mouth that perhaps once held a thousand teeth. Now, only a few teeth remain, oddly assorted dental trophies from vanquished foes. Or taverns.

FITZ

Oh, it's not that.

Fitz displays her satchel, empty except for the new teeth.

FITZ (CONT'D)
I've got no money!

BARTOK
I'll buy you a drink, not that I
have much coin, either. I'm bored.
I was meant to fight!

A monster couple passing by hurries away with a stroller.

BARTOK (CONT'D)
I just hope there are some quests
on the board today...

FITZ
Business still slow? Well, I can't
complain. If not for Queen Astria,
some villager with a pitchfork
might have run me through long ago.

She brings him in conspiratorially.

FITZ (CONT'D)
But don't fret. I might have lost
my teeth, but I can still sense
disaster just around the corner!
Now buy me a drink -- I insist!

Fitz enters the tavern, but before Bartok can join her:

MENDALGAN (O.S.)
Bartok! Bartok! Wait up!

MENDALGAN, a human bard (female) armed with quill and
parchment, joins Bartok by the sign with missing letters.

MENDALGAN (CONT'D)
Never heard of Finnian's avenue.
Does it lead to a tavern?

She breathes in deeply.

MENDALGAN (CONT'D)
Soured mash... out-of-work lowlives
aching for a brawl... fried cheese!
It does! And surely someone inside
has a story I can borrow!

Bartok's arm shoots out, stopping Mendalgan from entering.

BARTOK
Mendalgan, you can't just tell
adventurers to hand over stories.
You're like a literary brigand.

MENDALGAN

What am I supposed to do? To earn a living, I require new tales of adventure -- and I've already told yours dozens of times!

She wields her quill like a sword, fighting with Bartok.

MENDALGAN (CONT'D)

Besides, I can protect myself.

Inside, we hear a huge CRASH, followed by SHOUTING. Mendalgan nearly leaps into Bartok's arms. Composes herself.

MENDALGAN (CONT'D)

Yes, well... no one dares touch me, not with the "Sword of Sartossa" by my side!

BARTOK

Don't call me that.

MENDALGAN

When you do something else story-worthy, the name shall change!

Mendalgan enters, Bartok glances down at his sheathed sword, a legendary-looking affair with ancient engravings. Inside the tavern, we can hear Mendalgan making the rounds.

MENDALGAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Greetings, lowlives! Have you a story to lend a humble bard?

BARTOK

I might not be around to protect you, Mendalgan. This kingdom doesn't need adventurers anymore...

INT. FINNIAN'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Bartok glances to a QUEST BOARD on his right, where nails once held parchments with calls to adventure. Shaking his head, Bartok makes his way to Fitz, at the bar. They clink their mugs. Mendalgan is off annoying patrons.

FITZ

Maybe that bard's the disaster I sensed earlier.

A patron takes a half-swing at Mendalgan. She dances away, miming a fight with her quill.

BARTOK

If not for Mendalgan, my sword
would've rusted long ago.

FITZ

And I'd have less teeth to collect.
Any luck?

Bartok shakes his head sadly. Stares at his sheath.

BARTOK

The quest board's empty. Again.
Under Astria's "Golden Peace",
brigands have turned to farming,
and she's befriended all the
monsters! No offense.

FITZ

None taken.

MENDALGAN

(mean voice)

If it isn't the Beast of a Thousand
Teeth...

Mendalgan sidles up. Fitz hugs her to death.

MENDALGAN (CONT'D)

Been awhile, Fitz! Nice to bump
into you. Ooh, and now I know just
the story to tell the people!

BARTOK

Please don't.

FITZ

I'll give you a free tooth.

Mendalgan jumps atop the bar.

MENDALGAN

Brutes and brawlers, peasants and
paupers, have I got a story for
you. My tale begins in a small town
on the edge of our beloved kingdom,
Ichor!

EXT. TOWN (FLASHBACK)

Fitz, younger, a full mouth of teeth, tears through a town.

MENDALGAN (V.O.)

Back then, the Beast of a Thousand
Teeth would make the rounds from
town to town in search of food. Oh,
how the children screamed!

A magical, golden aroma wafts from a bakery. ASTRIA, a woman with GOLDEN HAIR and a BABY strapped to her back, runs out off a shop with a pastry basket.

MENDALGAN (V.O.)

Until the Beast stumbled across a certain small town where a lowly baker lived with her son. Have you guessed her name?

Astria walks down a cobblestone street. Fitz's silhouette looms in the distance amid faint SCREAMS.

MENDALGAN (V.O.)

One day, the Beast of a Thousand Teeth cornered the little pixie, but before he could devour her...

Astria runs down an alleyway. Her baby CRIES. She tries to cup his mouth, but it's too late. Fitz snarls, revealing a mouth with a thousand, razor-sharp teeth.

MENDALGAN (V.O.)

...She lifted her tiny basket and offered this beast a fresh pastry. With pink frosting, no less!

Astria holds a pastry up to Fitz's terrifying mouth. The golden aroma wafts to the beast's nostrils. Fitz eats the pastry in one chomp. Swoons instantly. In love.

MENDALGAN (V.O.)

Well, this went on for awhile, their little arrangement. The Beast of a Thousand Teeth would make a good show of terrorizing the locals before...

Townsfolk flee Fitz, locking doors, jumping into wells.

MENDALGAN (V.O.)

...sneaking off to an alleyway where Astria would feed her pastries to her heart's content.

Fitz arrives at the alley. Astria appears with a basket.

MENDALGAN (V.O.)

And pretty soon the Beast's teeth began to drop out of her mouth one by one.

Fitz, Astria, and her baby have a picnic in the alley.

MENDALGAN (V.O.)

And from that day on, the Beast
lost her taste for children and
resolved to eat pink pastries
instead! The end!

Astria scratches Fitz's furry back. The baby COOS. Fitz smiles, revealing a mouth with hardly any teeth.

INT. FINNIAN'S TAVERN - NIGHT

Crickets. Everyone seems pissed off by the story. Mendalgan tugs at her collar uncomfortably.

MENDALGAN

What a thunderous applause! And how
about a little coin for the Bard?

Mendalgan leaps off the bar, opening her hat for coin. Bartok shakes his head, staring at the quest board.

FITZ

Haven't seen Astria in ages. We
used to get together for tea and
pastries with her son, Avery. But
keeping the peace isn't easy.
Bartok -- what's wrong?

Bartok stares at the empty quest board. Decides.

BARTOK

Fitz, it's time I left the kingdom.

In the background, Mendalgan deftly avoiding hurled cheese.

FITZ

Maybe it's for the best. The quest
board's always empty these days,
and you'd make a terrible farmer. I
could ask Astria if there's a job
for you in the Royal Guard.

BARTOK

Thanks, I don't want to stand
around all day. I want to go on an
adventure!

MENDALGAN (O.S.)

Give that back, you scoundrel!

Bartok and Fitz turn as a big BRUTE of a man breaks Mendalgan's quill in half. He advances on the bard, grinning, revealing a mouth of gold and silver teeth.

Mendalgan's about to get pummeled when Bartok smashes into the Brute. The fight spills from table to table. Then the Brute pulls out a giant mace, swinging wildly.

Bartok dodges, glances at his sword, hesitates -- then grabs a mug and SMACKS the Brute, downing him.

The Brute attempts to get up, but freezes. Bartok's sword gleams in the light as patrons whisper, "*It's him...*"

Bartok leads Mendalgan to Fitz at the bar.

BARTOK

What was that all about?

MENDALGAN

I've procured a gift for each of my loyal companions who never talk about me behind my back!

Mendalgan presents a golden tooth to Fitz. She tries it.

FITZ

A perfect fit!

Mendalgan unrolls a fresh parchment, with an image of a somewhat heavy-looking, regal young man.

BARTOK

(reading)

"Adventurers Wanted. To track down a misplaced prince."

(looks up)

Astria's son has gone missing?

FITZ

Misplaced. But it's Avery. The boy's a tad larger than I remember.

MENDALGAN

Parchment adds ten pounds, everyone knows that. So what do you say?

BARTOK

A quest! No more begging for tales, Mendalgan! We are going to make a story of our own!

Bartok hugs Mendalgan. She flushes with embarrassment.

MENDALGAN

That's right, my muse! And the sooner you become a hero again, the more stories I'll have to tell!

BARTOK

What do you say, Fitz? There's sure to be a few teeth in it for you.

FITZ

Forget the teeth! If Queen Astria will pay me in pink-frosting pastries, you can count me in!

INT. ROYAL CONSTABLE - DAY

Bartok's hand slams down on a counter, next to the parchment.

BARTOK

Unbelievable!

Fitz's filed-down claw points to the parchment. Across the counter is the ROYAL CONSTABLE. She licks her fingers, then takes a shiny GLAZED PEAR out of a jar beside her.

FITZ

The quest has been called off? But this is fresh parchment. Posted only a day ago in a highly reputable tavern!

The Constable shrugs as she continues to eat glazed pears.

MENDALGAN

...Glazed pears... May I have one?

CONSTABLE

No, you may not.

Mendalgan's eyes narrow at the Constable, the glazed pear, the Constable again. She leaves the office in a hurry.

FITZ

Someone found Avery. That's good! "Misplaced Prince" indeed. We feared the boy had been kidnapped!

CONSTABLE

I didn't say he'd been found. A messenger simply informed me the Queen is no longer seeking help from so-called adventurers.

BARTOK

So-called adventures?

Fitz has to hold Bartok back. She escorts him out of the office as the Constable reaches into the golden jar again.

EXT. TOWN - DAY

A medieval-era town. Cobblestone streets. Quaint shops. Monsters and humans walk about in peace. A knight in shining armor is holding a sign for a local restaurant. A few Goblin-type creatures are feeding birds bread.

Bartok wears a scowl as Fitz attempts to console him.

FITZ

Our quest ended before it even began. Easy come, easy go. But I've still got a feeling trouble's around the corner...

Fitz frowns.

FITZ (CONT'D)

Speaking of, where's that bard?

Bartok scans, finding Mendalgan standing in the alley.

BARTOK

Around the corner.

EXT. TOWN - ROYAL ALLEYWAY - DAY

Mendalgan scribbles furiously on parchment as two THIEVES disappear further into the alley.

FITZ

What are you doing? In the market for a dab of dragon breath? Fairy sparkle? Seeking a bit of literary inspiration, are we?

Fitz begins to drag Mendalgan from the alley.

FITZ (CONT'D)

Well, you won't find it here! The finest storytellers of the ages embrace sobriety, not depravity! So what are you hiding from us?

Mendalgan reveals a drawing of Treasure Mouth.

BARTOK

The brute from the tavern.

MENDALGAN

The thieves know him as "Treasure Mouth." Used to be a potion maker!

Mendalgan points at the drawing.

MENDALGAN (CONT'D)

But since Avery disappeared, our gold-toothed friend has found a new career. Snatching quest parchments and bribing constables.

FITZ

Because he kidnapped Avery!

BARTOK

Or he's going after the Prince and doesn't want any competition.

MENDALGAN

Either way, his shop's nearby. I say we pay him a visit.

FITZ

Shouldn't we tell the Queen's guards about the Constable first?

MENDALGAN

By the time they arrive, the Constable will have eaten the bribe. Then she'll have you arrested for disturbing the peace.

Mendalgan frames Fitz's face with her hands.

MENDALGAN (CONT'D)

You're very pretty, Fitz. You wouldn't like dungeon life.

FITZ

If a Constable's been bribed, I must inform the Queen!

BARTOK

Never split the party!

FITZ

I'll be fine. When you're done, meet me at the Castle for lunch, and we'll eat glazed pears and pink pastries with the Queen herself!

EXT. TOWN - OUTSKIRTS - DAY

The nicer town begins to blend to a rougher section. Half of the shops are shuttered. Armorers, blacksmiths, fletchers.

Seems as though Astria's Golden Peace has been bad for business. Mendalgan notices Bartok's furrowed brow.

MENDALGAN

Bartok, what's wrong? You've finally got a quest! Shouldn't you be on top of the world?

BARTOK

Something's off. Astria's son goes missing, and a potion maker wants to throw us off the trail? Why?

They pass more shuttered shops.

BARTOK (CONT'D)

Astria will toss Treasure Mouth in the dungeon, and fresh quest parchment will go out the next morning. It will hardly delay the hunt for Avery.

MENDALGAN

Perhaps 'hardly' is good enough.

BARTOK

Meaning?

MENDALGAN

Sometimes even a crisp second can be the difference between victory and defeat. I know how to tell a good story. Timing is everything.

Mendalgan gestures for Bartok to follow.

MENDALGAN (CONT'D)

There's Treasure Mouth's shop! Let's go ask him ourselves.

EXT. ROYAL GATES - DAY

Fitz approaches a GUARD, standing beside an open gate.

GATE GUARD

State your business.

FITZ

I'm here to see the Queen! Don't get up, I'll show myself in. We're old friends.

Fitz begins to head through the gate. The guard's SPEAR shoots out, preventing Fitz from entering.

FITZ (CONT'D)

Problem?

GATE GUARD

The Castle is closed to outsiders.

FITZ

Outsiders? You must be new here. I am one of Astria's oldest friends.

(beat)

You're not going to let me pass, are you?

GATE GUARD

Do you have a royal invitation?

FITZ

Fresh out.

GATE GUARD

Then you stay outside, beast.

FITZ

I haven't needed one before! Is this a new policy?

Fitz's stomach RUMBLES. The guard aims his spear at it.

FITZ (CONT'D)

Easy, I'm just hungry. Tell you what. Just send a messenger to Astria. Tell her that Fitz is here.

The guard throws up a hand. Another guard appears.

FITZ (CONT'D)

There we go! That wasn't so hard, was it? Tell Astria that Fitz --

GATE GUARD

SEIZE THE BEAST!

The guard shackles Fitz and begins to lead her away.

FITZ

Unhand me, villain! Astria! Astria!