

ORCSMASHER

JOEY - 17 year old suburban kid. Aloof, maybe manic.

MICHAEL - Also 17. More reserved, pensive.

Setting: A garage in the suburbs of Houston. Evening.

Lights up on the garage. Joey and Michael are sitting on opposite sides of a cheap poker table. On the table are a few fantasy figurines, a grid-map, and some dice. In front of Michael is a Dungeon Master's screen that blocks Joey's line of sight and partially obscures Michael's face. Joey rolls the dice. He is about to speak when Michael eyes the dice and interrupts.

MICHAEL

Nineteen, yeah that's a critical hit. Go ahead and roll for damage.

Joey rolls four dice.

JOEY

(mounting excitement)

Oh man...thirty-two points of damage! Watch out Garglemargle, here comes Orcsmasher!

MICHAEL

(putting on a narrative voice)

Orcsmasher the Barbarian swings his elven-forged axe with both hands, the blade of the weapon making a silvery arc that does not stop at Garglemargle's collarbone. A geyser of crimson sprays from the wound. His green body crumples along with his dreams of uniting the orcish tribes and retaking back the elvish lands. He stares at you directly, a single tear rolling down his blood-spattered cheek. The last breath of air leaves his lungs. There is nothing left for the orc chieftain except the gentle repose of death.

JOEY

I yell at Garglemargle to get fucked.

MICHAEL

(irritated)

Nothing happens. He's still dead, just like all the others.

JOEY

Rest in pieces. Now that my foe lay slain, I look around the chamber once more. What do I see?

MICHAEL

Well, there's Garglemargle dead, of course. And the throne room is rather small, almost sad, given the size of the orc chieftain's dreams. There's a desk with a journal that looks to be his, which probably has some cool backstory about Garglemargle's motivations.

JOEY

Lame. Any treasure?

MICHAEL

No. But there's a heavy iron door behind the throne room.

JOEY

I check it for/traps.

MICHAEL

There's no/traps.

JOEY

I punch the door open.

Joey makes a jabbing motion.

MICHAEL

(sighing)

Look, I don't want to argue about you breaking your hand again on an iron door.

JOEY

It's a dumb rule.

MICHAEL

It's realistic.

JOEY

I just killed an eight-foot tall green dude. What's realistic about that?

MICHAEL

(rubbing the bridge of nose)

Because in this world eight-foot tall green dudes exist, whereas punching an iron door open does not.

JOEY

I don't see why not.

MICHAEL

Because I said so. If you want to make a universe where punching iron doors open is less a feat of Herculean strength and more a normative way of opening portals from one room to the next, be my guest. Until you decide to put the care and discipline into crafting a world with the love and care of an omnipotent force, then you'll play within the framework of the rules I've laid out.

JOEY

I open the door by the handle.

MICHAEL

Thank you.

JOEY

Just opened a door, no biggie. What's on the other side? Wait, I take Garglemargle's sword before going in.

MICHAEL

Garglemargle's dead grip on the sword is tight, almost as if it had formed an empathic / link with his body.

JOEY

I cut his hand off and pick up the sword-hand gestalt.

(Beat)

MICHAEL

Fine. Perhaps there's something in Garglemargle's journal that might explain the strange bond between him and his sword.

JOEY

(cheerily)

I open the iron door.

MICHAEL

(dying inside)

Inside you find...a small creche of orc younglings. The creche is a simple affair, a tiny pen with a primitive wooden fence. A simple standing torch is the sole point of illumination in the chamber. The orclings cower in the far corner of the creche, their eyes glistening and wet. One of the young orclings buries his head in the chest of a slightly older boy, barely stifling the high-pitched sobs of fear. The adults all slain, you now have about twenty orc-orphans on your hands. The orcs have committed great evil in the Elvish Lands of Yelendor, but do the children inherit the sins of the father?

JOEY

Oh shit.

(Beat)

JOEY cont.

I start by hiding the sword-orc-hand thingy behind my back. Then I enter the creche.

MICHAEL

One of the orclings begins to scream in abject terror at the sight of your gore-drenched, muscle-bound chest.

JOEY

Can't blame 'em, Orcsmasher looks pretty rad.

MICHAEL

Uh, right. The children are paralyzed with fear. What do you do?

JOEY

Hmm. So, I should take them back to the elves?

MICHAEL

You recall that the elves hate the orcs and would probably send them to be punished in the Forest of Strangling Roots and Other Violence-Prone Vegetation.

JOEY

Maybe I can feed them.

MICHAEL

Orcsmasher the Barbarian has spent most of his gold-pieces on 'sick-ass shoulder pads with lots of spikes'.

JOEY

Nothing sicker. So I can't feed them, and if I take them to the elves they'll die a pretty awful death.

MICHAEL

The path of a hero is a hard one. One must carry the light while being beset by the dark.

JOEY

Wow. True. I have to do the best I can for these kids. Orcsmasher's strength is 20.

MICHAEL  
(hesitant)

Yes...

JOEY  
The creche is pretty wide, yeah?

MICHAEL  
Yeah...

JOEY  
And Garglemargle's sword looks like it's pretty long.

MICHAEL  
Uh-huh...

JOEY  
I'm going to save the children from a horrible elvish fate by lining them up shoulder-to-shoulder and decapitating them all with one clean stroke. Less suffering.

Michael throws his hands up.

MICHAEL  
(disbelief)  
Are you fucking kidding me?

JOEY  
What?



MICHAEL

You can't do that!

JOEY

Is it like punching an iron door? Are their necks made of some mystically strong alloy not knownst to humanity on Earth?

MICHAEL

No. I mean that it's gross.

JOEY

Picking my nose is gross but I can still do that.

MICHAEL

(growing frustrated)

That's not the point! It's foul. I...I don't know dude, can't you see how fucked up murdering a bunch of orclings is?

JOEY

*I'm* not murdering them. Orcsmasher is.

(Beat)

JOEY cont.

Wait, wait, wait. Orcsmasher isn't even murdering them. They aren't real. None of this is real. What the hell's the deal, dude? I thought this was supposed to be fun.

MICHAEL

Acting out sadistic murder fantasies isn't fun.

JOEY

I wouldn't call it sadistic.

MICHAEL

Well you sure as hell aren't acting out a martyrdom. What's that say about you?

JOEY

(offended)

What's that say about *me*? It says I don't mind blowing off some steam with Orcsmasher wrecking fucking shop.

Joey slows his speech and begins to recount.

And where the fuck are you getting off on your moral high horse? I seem to remember you getting busted for cheating in Mrs. Owen's class in ninth grade. Like, that was a *real* thing. You pressured Cindy Myers into letting you copy off her test.

MICHAEL

(Huffy)

Wow, maybe Orcsmasher should be wielding a shovel given how you've just decided to start digging up the past. And me cheating on a test isn't more real than some impulse deeply embedded in your psyche that lights up at the notion of orc-child-murder.

JOEY

They aren't real!

MICHAEL

If they aren't real, why aren't you leading the little green fuckers out of the dungeon and taking care of them? That's just as equally un-fucking-real as chopping their heads off, so why don't you do that?

JOEY

(faltering)

It's...that's...

MICHAEL

Thought so.

JOEY

Wait, no, hold the hell up. *You* contrived this entire situation. You sat down, O god of the gameboard, and designed a world in which the 'evil' orc race has decided to retake the fucking Elflands of whatever the fuck. You said "Lo, and let there be such disgust from the elves that they'll take the orc children and throw them into the Forest of Strangling Roots and Other Violence-Prone Vegetation". So where do you get off judging me for deciding to give these children a painless, muscle-induced death, when you've contrived a double-bind situation in which I don't have a way to win?

MICHAEL

Because that's not how the world works.

JOEY

Which world?

MICHAEL

Stop rationalizing your sociopathic behavior!

JOEY

That what you think about me?

MICHAEL

Every turn, every single *fucking* turn, you've thwarted my attempt at telling a good story. You melted down the Chalice of Everlife to make friendship bracelets. You set fire to half of the Sentient Swamp, killing the Mother Tree *that was going to lead you to your destiny*. I put a lot of work into those plot-lines!

JOEY

I wonder if Mother Tree knew she was going to make fatter clouds than a bong rip at Jimmy's.

MICHAEL

Man, you don't see the fucking immediate impact on the people right in front of you.

JOEY

Yeah, well what about when / you...

MICHAEL

I did something wrong! I know I did! But they weren't my friends / and you are, or were...

JOEY

Oh, so because you've spent less time around them that makes it... were? Are you serious right now, dude? Because I didn't go along with your petty control-freak bullshit?

MICHAEL

What's a friend to you?

JOEY

A person I spend time with.

MICHAEL

You spend time with a lot of people. They aren't all your friends.

JOEY

(chewing on his thumb)

A person I spend good time with, or a person that makes the time I spend with them good.

MICHAEL

Is this good?

(Beat)

JOEY

I remember when I first met you. Like, I was sitting by myself and I saw you reading the monster manual at the far end of the lunch table. Couldn't talk to most people without having sweat build under my armpits, but something about the monster manual made it okay.

MICHAEL

Yeah, I know what you mean. I remember being happy to share it with someone.

JOEY

The pictures were really cool.

MICHAEL

Right? When you came up to me, it was like a breath of fresh air. Like I'd been drowning and didn't even know it until my head broke the surface.

The two of them sit in silence for what seems like a while. Joey fiddles with one of the plastic figurines. Michael begins to fold up the dungeon master's screen.

JOEY

You're stopping?

MICHAEL

I think so.

JOEY

We could play a different way. Orcsmasher doesn't have to smash the orc kids.

MICHAEL

It's a bit beyond that, now.

JOEY

Oh. Okay.

Joey begins packing his figurines. When the table is cleared, he stares at it. He picks it up. Michael sets the dungeon master's screen and dice on the floor.

Guess I'll be going.

MICHAEL

Do you need a ride? I think I can get Mom to give you a ride.

Joey awkwardly handles the table.

JOEY

I got it.

MICHAEL

It won't be a problem.

JOEY

Dude, I got it. Could use the fresh air anyway.

MICHAEL

Alright.

Michael watches as Joey attempts to leave the garage with the card table. Joey cannot fit the table through the doorframe.

JOEY

You mind opening the garage door?

Michael hits a button and the grinding noise of the garage door sounds. Joey shifts the weight of the table while the sound continues. The garage door noise stops.

JOEY cont.

See ya.

MICHAEL

Yeah. See ya.

Joey exits. Michael accidentally steps on the dungeon master's screen on his way to shut the garage door. He picks it up and brushes it off on his pants, then looks for someplace to put the screen. He stands on his tiptoes and places it on a shelf packed with tools, tucking it under a toolkit. He hits the garage door button once more. The grinding sound plays as the lights dim. The lights go out while the door grinding continues for a few seconds more.

End of play.