“FIT FOR A QUEEN”
Uh... Hello? Morning!

Hiya, Brightwings! What can I do for you?

Neil Danclair sent me.

Oh? Oh! You're from that hero school huh? Great!

Hmm... You don't have a price on your head like the rest of 'em?

Haha, that's right.

I'm a titled hero, people tend to think twice about putting a bounty on me.

Is that so?

Well, nice to meet ya. I'm Darla Brin.

Tade Wolfe. Title?

Um, it's 'slayer', but I don't like to use it much.

So, is Neil's order ready?

Sure, sure! Just come round back and--

Darla!!

Lore?! What's wrong?

Th-there's news--from back home--

S-slow down, honey. Catch your breath... and tell me what the hell it is!!

Jezel was overthrown! Rei is free!

Oh my goddess! That's fantastic!!

Um... you folks aren't Gardenian?

What? Hey, we've lived here 20 years. We're Gardenian, and we're Reinan.

Darla, who is this clown?

Oh, cool. I mean, I'm not Gardenian, but it's a nice enough place.
WE'RE ORIGINALLY FROM REI. FAR UP NORTH, PAST GRAY. OUR QUEEN WAS OVERTHROWN BY DICTATOR JEZEL 20 YEARS AGO.

YEAH, ALL THE ROYALS AND US SUPPORTERS GOT EXILED.

JUST AS WELL, WOULDN'T WANT TO LIVE UNDER JEZEL ANYWAY.

OH, BUT YOU CAN GO HOME NOW?

HOME SCHNOME.

MYLENOR'S OUR HOME NOW, KEEP UP BRIGHTWINGS.

ONCE IT ALL SETTLES DOWN, WE CAN VISIT THE FAMILY BACK IN REI THOUGH.

BUT FOR NOW- IT'S TIME TO CELEBRATE!! CLOSE UP THE SHOP FOR TODAY!

UHMM... CAN I PICK UP NEIL'S ORDER FIRST?

HERE WE GO.

I HOPE GARDENIA RETRACTS THOSE BOUNTIES SOON.

ME TOO. RUNNING ERRANDS IS A BIT BORING.

DID YOU HEAR ABOUT REI? APPARENTLY THEY'RE FREE NOW. I WISH SOMEBODY WOULD OVERTHROW GARDENIA'S ROYALTY THOUGH.

HA, DON'T SAY THAT TOO LOUD.

THE KING'S ALRIGHT. IT'S JUST PRINCESS MIA.

YEAH, BUT SHE'S BAD ENOUGH.

WELL THAT'S FOR SURE. WAIT, HANG ON...

YOU SAID REI OVERTHREW THEIR DICTATOR? HUH, THAT EXPLAINS THE PEOPLE WHO CAME TO VISIT HEADMISTRESS MANA.

HM?
Thank you for seeing us... I'm sorry, but you look strangely familiar.

I don't think we've met.

You've been living in Gardenia, isn't that right?

Many of us here had an unfortunate run-in with Princess Mia Gardenia, and have bounties on our head from that. There are posters with our images around.

Perhaps that's why, then.

We understand. We've met Her Highness as well.

My condolences. She's quite a b... Drake.

Well, her father is an excellent king.

Mister Kilo...

Ah yes, to business.

Cough: You might like to introduce yourselves first.
OF COURSE. SORRY, HEADMISTRESS. I AM GAVIN KILO, THIS IS MARAT VREER.

AND THIS... IS HER MAJESTY PRINCESS PAIGE REIFOR, EXILED HEIR TO THE REINAN THRONE.

HUH?

OH YEAH, THAT.

I SUPPOSE YOU ARE WONDERING WHY WE ARE HERE.

VERY MUCH SO. I EXPECT IT HAS TO DO WITH YOUR DICTATOR HAVING BEEN OVERTHROWN?

VERY MUCH SO... TO CUT TO THE CHASE, WE HAVE HEARD YOU HIRE STUDENTS OUT FOR HERO WORK. WE NEED SOMEBODY TO ESCORT PRINCESS PAIGE TO REI.

...I SEE.
YOU SEEM CONCERNED...

IT'S AN HONOUR TO BE ASKED... BUT IT DOES BEG THE QUESTION—
WHY DID YOU COME TO SOME TINY HERO SCHOOL TO ASK FOR HELP?

YES... SURELY A PRINCESS COULD HIRE A QUALIFIED HERO FOR AN Escort.
OR FAILING THAT, LIKE A BIG MASS OF MERCENARIES OR ADVENTURERS.

IT'S COMPLICATED...
WE'RE LISTENING.

HMM... WHERE TO START....

EX-DICTATOR JEZEL WAS PROPPED UP BY GRAY... WHICH IS THE COUNTRY BETWEEN HERE AND REI.

YES, WHICH IS WHY I WOULD EXPECT YOU'D BE AFTER MORE QUALIFIED ASSISTANCE.

YOU'RE RIGHT, HOWEVER... POLITICALLY SPEAKING, IT'S A LITTLE DICEY. SEEMS THE HERO GUILD DOESN'T WANT TO BE SEEN ACTING AGAINST GRAY AT THE MOMENT, IF A HERO MOVED TO HELP REI IT MIGHT BE MISCONSTRUED.

WE REALLY NEED TO GET PRINCESS PAIGE TO REI QUICKLY. SHE NEEDS TO TAKE THE THRONE AS SOON AS POSSIBLE, BEFORE THE FURTHER-FLING MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL FAMILY MAKE A GRAB FOR POWER. WE WANT TO AVOID A CIVIL WAR...

IT'S BEEN TWENTY YEARS SINCE THE ROYALS WERE EXILED. HER HIGHNESS HAS NOT BEEN TO REI BEFORE, AND SHE DOESN'T HAVE A LARGE ENTOURAGE OF RETAINERS TO HELP HER.

SO... MERCENARIES?

FOR A JOB LIKE THIS, THEY CAN NAME THEIR OWN PRICE... WHICH IS BEYOND OUR MEANS TO PRODUCE QUICKLY.

MORE THAN THAT, THEY TEND TO LACK SUBLTETY... WE NEED TO MOVE QUICKLY, CAREFULLY TO AVOID GETTING CAUGHT.

PLEASE, CAN YOU HELP...?
JUST ONE ESCORT, IS ALL. WE ASK. WE JUST NEED TO TRY.

THESE GUYS SEVERELY OVERESTIMATE US, HUH?
IF YOU CAN'T HELP... NEVERMIND. WE'LL FIND SOMEONE SOMEWHERE ELSE.

NO....

YOU'RE OUR LAST OPTION. THERE'S NOT POINT IN LYING. IF YOU SAY NO... I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'LL DO.

OOF, EMOTIONAL GUTPUNCH.

PITY DHARF! SHE'S NOT HERE. SHE'S NO STUDENT, BUT SHE WOULDN'T GIVE A DARN WHAT THE HERO GUILD SAID, SHE'D BE PERFECT TO SEND.

"SHE"...?

OH... THERE IS ONE MORE THING. I'M SORRY, IT IS IMPORTANT.

WE REALLY NEED THE ESCORT TO BE... TRADITIONAL. IN THE PAST, PRINCESSES WERE ESCORTED TO THE CAPITAL BY A MAN, AND THEN THEY COULD BECOME QUEEN.

DOES THAT SOUND CONVINCING TO YOU?

I CAN'T SAY I THINK IT'S NECESSARY.

BUT IT DOESN'T MATTER. THEY'RE THE CLIENT, IF IT'S WHAT THEY WANT...

WELL... SURE.

DO YOU THINK WE GOT ANY BLOKES GOOD ENOUGH, THOUGH?

PLEASE EXCUSE US, WE MUST DISCUSS THIS FOR A MOMENT.

WE'LL BE BACK MOMENTARILY.

WE'LL ASK TAIDE TO GO?

NO... I DOUBT HE WOULD GO ALONG WITH IT, HE'S FAIRLY SWAY TO THE GUILD. BUT I NEED NEIL AND TAIDE TO KEEP WORKING, ANYWAY.

SO IF WE'RE GOING TO PROVIDE ASSISTANCE, IT WILL HAVE TO BE A STUDENT.

YOU SERIOUS? PFFT. FORGOTTEN WHAT THE NUMBER ONE RULE OF DHS IS ALREADY, HUH?
“Protect the students!” It’s what I’ve been told over and over, anyway... yeah?

Ah, yes...

Students have been sent on missions before, but this? Seems too dangerous.

Of course there will be danger, but if we choose the right student... if it’s in their ability... it’ll be okay.

Do you suppose we might send Jared?

No.

There are so many reasons that’s a terrible idea. I’ll just say... he’s got to keep hidden. He’s a trickster. Trickster magic is all he’s got going for him. You work it out.

Ah, I see... hmm.

Bluff and Snatch are obvious nos.

Then I suppose it has to be Nettle.

Yeah, nothing says subtle like a nature power.

I think he would be strong enough not to worry. But... he’s untrained.

Plus he ain’t been around people much. I wouldn’t send him to escort a princess. Look at how he got along with the last one.

Then... we’ll have to say no.

Haha, no wait, I’ve got an idea. Ooh, this might work!

What is it?

My brilliance surprises even me!

What is it?

Go tell those guys not to worry, we got a guy to help out. I’ll be back!

Drake! You have to tell me!

Trust me...

...no!
Wait - you're telling me Miss Valcross never taught you about the Worldsplit?

It's one of the most important events in history, and she was involved in it, and-

She refused to teach it.

Well that's no good... I'll have to find time to teach that, but...

Excuse me.

You... are in a blindfold?

Sure am!

Ooh, I need to ask you for some advice later about my lesson plans... I really need to teach "The Living Shadow" soon, but I just heard that Dhaph-

Yeah whatever. What's up with the blindfold?

Well I want to avoid looking at Saturn, naturally.

I tried just facing the board.

I tried just not looking.

What?

But nobody could hear me.

But I kept forgetting. It was too stressful!

So now I've got my Truth Goddess look going on, it's foolproof!

Fool... something, all right...

Those kids'll play up for sure if you don't keep an eye on 'em.

Maybe for you. I don't have a problem.

Hmph.

What brings you here?

Hmph.

So... what brings you here?

Hmph? Ooh yeah. Hey Claw! Come with me, you're going on a quest.

Ah? Good luck...
Um, wha’ quest...? Is this like when yer sen’ del t’ guard a wagon? She didn’t like tha’.

Oh yeah, it’s something like that...

Let’s go get you packed, I’ll explain on the way.

Am I goin’ t’ like this?

Hell if I know. Just don’t screw it up.

I won’t lie, this dumb quest will be tough, but I’m sure you can do it.

That’s easy. Pretend you’re a bloke, and escort this random princess across hostile territory to her homeland.

Ah...

But seriously, wha’ do I do?

No really.

Just make sure the princess lives, oh, and one more thing.

You’ll have to hide you’re a Phoenix Clanner. Just as well, you can go by a fake name. Hey, god names are pretty common, why don’t you just go by Phoenix?

Wait hold up, why do I have t’ pretend t’ be a man?

Eh, you’re hiding out here from your family, right? This’ll make ‘em easier to avoid on the outside, if it comes to that.

Aaand they’ll give us a bigger reward if we don’t let slip a servant of Phoenix is helping. But nevermind!

Hm, okay. Y’ really think I’ll be abl’ t’ pass a boy, though?

Yep, no doubt!

Not sure if tha’s insultin’... But c’mon, why d’ they need a boy anyway?

Lemme tell you everything they told us...
My colleague should be back shortly, then we can see if our boy is a good match for this quest...

And if Drake’s plan is any good...

Hello! Sorry to keep you all waiting. I’d like to introduce our student, Phoenix!

Hi...

Phoenix, this is Gavin, Marat, and of course, her highness Princess Paige.

It’s an hon’r, yer highness.

Etiquette class is paying off, huh?

Drake, why did you bring her to—

Shh, this’ll totally work.

Really? Did you bring her because you think she can do it or because if she can’t, at least an elemental will die?

Shh. It’s “him”, and we’re not telling them he’s a clanner and... I doubt he’d die, come on.

So, Mister Phoenix... do you think you can safely escort Paige to Rei?

If Drake says I can, then I think so.

I guess I’ll try m’ best. But... I dunno, I’ve never done this before.

I don’t know about this, princess. We don’t have a choice.

I haven’t been there yet, but Rei is my home. My people are there. I have to get there.

Now Jezel’s gone I have to get there right away. I can’t let there be a chance for a civil way. I’ll risk everything to get home.

Could you take me through Gray and home to Rei?

I’ll get y’ home safe.
Very well, then.

If you're packed and ready, we'll leave immediately.

If that is alright with the head-mistress...

Certainly.

Me pack's just outside th' door. We ready t' go, then?

You're not wearing shoes?

Huh?

Well, I don' usually wear 'em... don' even own any....

You are aware you will be crossing a desert, aren't you Phoenix?

It's okay, Gavin.

If he needs shoes by then, we have spares. Listen to his accent - it's not a local one. Maybe tramping around shoeless is common where he comes from.

Y-yeah?

Right.

It's fine, we're on our way now.

Phoenix and I will make it to Rei! Everything's going to work out.

It should only take a few weeks, then everything will be sorted.

There's still time to change your mind.

Oi Gav, don' tell th' princess wha' t' do, we got it sorted.
Here's what will happen. We'll escort you near to the Gray Border.

You two will go on alone, posing as a young couple of travelers on their way through Gray. I wouldn't mention Rei, though.

You'll cross Gray, by the quickest route. It'll take you past the large city of Oberon. You'll need to be careful.

After that you'll enter Rei, some friends will be there to meet you.

You'll get to the castle, Princess Paige will take the throne as queen. Everything will be fine. Any questions?

There's a lot'a thin's tha' c'n go wrong in Gray, huh?

Yes, try to avoid them. Once you're past there, you're home free.

It's just a matter of being below detection, appearing non-suspicious, like you have nothing to do with Rei.

Your accent will help.

Yes, now that is a distinctly non-Rei accent. Where are you from, Phoenix?

Ummmm... South? I'm not sure th' name.

...You'll probably want to make something up, to not look suspicious like that.

I believe we can work with this.

I'll change into scruiffer clothes near the border. Phoenix and I will pass as long-time travellers. Drifters, even.

With any luck, our appearance won't make anyone think of royalty.
**Princess,** if you’re passing as a drifter, are you going to go barefoot too?

*Goodness, no!*

Not to offend you, **Phoenix,** it’s rather that I doubt my feet are tough enough. Better not to injure my feet if we’re travelling!

Oh don’t worry, I ain’t offended. I wouldn’t recommen’ ya do it eith’r, heheh. I’m used t’ it, but since yer not, yeah...

You’ve done a lot of travelling?

Oh yeah, tons bef’re I went t’ dhark’s.

All without shoes? Is that sort of thing normal where you are from?

I dunno, I guess so... me family didn’t own much, didn’t travel much eith’r.

Are they glad you’re going to hero school?

Ernnn...

I’m not th’ close with me family right now....

Mm, nev’r mind. Why don’ y’ tell me ‘bout yer fam’ly?

**Phoenix,** have you not been paying attention, or are you deliberately—wha’?

It’s okay, he didn’t mean any—thing by that.

I am the last direct descendant of royality, **Phoenix.**

I have a large extended family, but we are not close.

I’m real sorry **Princess,** I didn’t mean t’—I know.

Have you ever spent time around royalty before, **Phoenix?** You seem a tad rough.

Welll... I met **Princess Mia...**

Well that explains it, nevermind then!
OOF, SORRY. I BEEN TALKIN' WAY TOO MUCH, HUH?

NOT AT ALL! I FIND IT VERY INTERESTING! IT'S NOTHING LIKE WHAT I'VE BEEN DOING.

THAT'S KIND'A Y'T SAY.

WHY DON'T Y' TELL ME ABOUT 'THA'? YOU BEEN DOIN' LATELY?

OH, NO, IT'S VERY DULL.

C'MON, I NEV'R DONE TH' SORT'A STUFF YOU DO! IT'S INTERESTIN' T'ME.

WELL, ALRIGHT.

I'VE BEEN LIVING IN GARDELVIA, AMONG THE NOBLES. IT WAS ALL VERY STRICT AND PROPER.

THERE WERE A LOT OF LESSONS TO TAKE, SO MANY PEOPLE TO GREET... ALL TO PREPARE ME TO TAKE THE THRONE, SO IT WAS IMPORTANT, BUT... MMMPH.

I TOLD YOU IT WAS VERY DULL.

WELL SURE, WHEN Y'TELL IT LIKE THA'. I BET Y' COULD TELL IT MORE INTERESTIN' THAN THA'.

WOULD YOU LIKE TO HEAR SOMETHING INTERESTING? HANDS UP. THIS IS A ROBBERY.

BANDITS!

YEAH, YEAH, TAKE IT EASY AND NOBODY NEEDS TO GET HURT.
F-fels... wasn't expecting to hit trouble on this side of the border...
Phoenix, do something!

Hang on a tic... I'm thinkin'...

These guys look righ' familiar...
Oi, Enka, hold up.

I don't doubt we can handle four humans, but...

Doesn't that one with the slly bangs look familiar?

You're that bloody hippie!
Yer those felimara-huntin' idiots!

Look out, Enka. She'll be carryin' knives again.
Don't think that's the main concern...

She-?
Hey, don' b' rude! You wan' more troubl', s tha' it, huh?

How abou' a quick word? Jus' wanna talk.

Whoa whoa, back off.
She's the clanner, ain't she? We don't want none of that.

Um, hey, we don't want any trouble. You know, we decided this isn't a robbery.

Tha's a good start...
Einka, we really need to find a safer way to make money.
Yeah, c'mon.
Well, how was I to know somebody like that was on this road?
Um, I'm right here...
Why don't you all clear off and do something without being a jerk for a change?
Listen kid. You can either make money legally or fast.
Excuse me. You're not robbing us, are you? We'll just leave then. We're rather in a hurry.
...Yeah, yeah. We won't stop you.
Just keep your barefoot attack dog away.
THANK YOU! THAT'S VERY KIND OF YOU.

UGH, HOW EMBARRASSING.

HEH, THA' WAS A BIT WEIRD, HUH?

...WELL? HM?

YOU KNOW THEM?

Yeah, a friend'a mine found out those guys were stealin' magic fr'm his family, so th' two of us went out an' stopp'd 'em.

Heh... got in troubl' wit' school, though. They'd sent out a bunch'a student's an' a teach'r, but by th' time they arrived we'd already taken care'a things.

You beat those three? Yourself?

Well me friend was there too, but... y' sound surprised at tha'.

I'm just glad to hear you are qualified.
YOU KNOW, THOSE BANDITS CALLED YOU A GIRL.
H-HUH? OH YEAH...

IT WAS A BIT UNCALLED FOR.

DON'T WORRY ABOUT WHAT BANDITS SAY, PHOENIX. YOU'RE MASCULINE ENOUGH.

UM. THANKS?

WELL, IT HAS BEEN AN INTERESTING DAY. I THINK IT'S TIME FOR BED FOR ME.

GOODNIGHT, PRINCESS!

OH, YOU CAN'T CALL ME THAT ANYMORE. WE'RE GETTING CLOSE TO THE BORDER, AND IT IS A SECRET...

GOODNIGHT, PAIGE!

WE'D BETTER CALL IT A NIGHT, TOO. PLENTY MORE WALKING TO DO TOMORROW.

Yeah, with all tha' walkin', a rest'd be right' good.

You're welcome to share our tent, Phoenix. I think we've just enough room.

Uh, nah, don't worry, me bedroll'll do me jus' fine.

Goodnight, fellas!

Oof, am I glad Drake was right' abou' me passin' as a boy. This is easier than I thought.

Like Drake said, talk loud an' deep. Keep your less apar', act confiden'...

Heh, blokes are weird. Guess she was right' that the main thing was t' act confiden', an' they'd believe me.

I need t' act more confiden'... but heh, I'm glad t' get some time alone though. Glad I be abl' t' get changed, heheh.

I love travellin', but oof I miss everyone back at school. Wond'r how they doin'.
TCH, I CAN'T BELIEVE CLAW RAN OFF WITHOUT SAYING BYE OR NOTHING.

AT LEAST WHEN SHE RAN OFF AFTER YOU THAT TIME SHE STOPPED TO SAY GOODBYE FIRST.

MM, THIS IS LIKE SAME THING, YES? SHE GO TO HELP A PERSON THIS TIME?
APPARENTLY.

SHE'S GONE TO RESCUE A PRINCESS, I THINK? THEY SAY THAT'S SOME STANDARD HERO TASK.

PRINCESS?? N-NOT LIKE... HER.

HER WHO?
...YOU OKAY?

UM. CLAW OKAY? MAYBE NEED HELP TOO.

THE TEACHERS THINK SHE'LL BE FINE.

MMM....

WHAT'S WRONG?

CLAW HELP SNATCH. SNATCH THINK HE SHOULD HELP CLAW.

OH, WELL THEN.

DO IT.

DO YOU KNOW WHERE SHE WENT?

CAN TRACK, NO PROBLEM.

I'LL COVER FOR YOU. DO WHAT YOU GOT TO DO, MAN.

STAY SAFE!!
Y' NERVOUS?

CONSIDERABLY...

YOU'LL DO FINE, PAIGE. YOU'VE GOT PHOENIX.

THE QUICKEST ROUTE THROUGH GRAY ISN'T TOO LONG. THE ONLY CONCERN WILL BE PASSING THROUGH OBERON. YOU'LL BE OK.

THANK YOU GAVIN, THANK YOU MARAT. FOR EVERYTHING, TRULY...

IT WAS OUR HONOUR TO SERVE, PAIGE.

WE'LL BE LOOPING AROUND THE LONG WAY, ANYWAY. WE'LL SEE YOU IN REI SOON ENOUGH!

Y' READY?

LET'S GO!

WE'VE STILL GOT A LONG WALK AHEAD OF US...

I LOVE LONG WALKS!

DON' YOU?

WELL, THIS IS THE LONGEST WALK I'VE EVER BEEN ON, BUT...

I THINK I LIKE LONG WALKS WITH YOU.

AY, THA'S REAL NICE OF Y' T' SAY.

WALKIN' THROUGH TH' DESERT MIGHT CHANGE THA' THOUGH, HAHA.

OH, I DON'T THINK SO. I THINK... NO MATTER HOW THIS TURNS OUT...

THANK YOU FOR COMING WITH ME.

HAHA HEY, I AIN' EV'N DONE MUCH YET!
There's the border... Still nervous?

MM-Hmm...

Loosen up! Consider this a test run for th' big one over th' border, hm?

But what are we going to tell the border guard?

Follow my lead!

G'day, friend! How's business?

Nice and quiet. Are you crossing?

So it's just the two of you, hmm? Got any identification?

You betcha!

Nope! Sorry...

You itinerants, then?

Ummm, th' depends on wha' th' word means.

Y-yes, we're just travelling folk. We're not looking to settle, just moving through.

We've heard the desert is quite beautiful. It'll make a nice change of scenery from Gardenia, I am sure.

I'm Pattie Neptune and this is my husband, Darren. Is there anything else you need?

Oh, no, that's fine. Go right on through.

I dunno who'd tell you the desert's beautiful though, haha. You'll see.

Thank you, Sir!

Sorry about calling you my husband.

Ha, I'm more worried y' called me Darren.
Y’alright, Paige?
I think so... just...
This desert is a lot hotter than I expected. It’s really very tiring...

I don’t know how you’re coping without a hat... or shoes, for that matter.

Mm. I dunno. Heat nev’r both’rs me.

Should cool down overnight though, there’s tha’ t’ look forward t’.

Ah, yes. But...

It’s freezin’!

You might not feel the heat, but you sure feel the cold, huh?

Brrr...

Well, you can share my tent if you want.

I mean—uh— not like that!

Ummm ok. I’d rath’r stay und’r th’ stars though, thank you.

Thank you for helping me, Phoenix. Thank me when ne get there, I ain’t done much yet!

Good night.

I just mean, um, it would be warmer in there, and there’s enough space for you to sleep too.
...Um. Hm. Where's Snatch?

Nettle? You're his roommate. Have you seen him...

He's sick!

Oh, right then. Yes! It worked this time!

Th' road's gettin' more crowd'd. Must be gettin' close t' th' city.

Look at the mountains - it's just between them. We'll go through town to get to the mountain pass...

After that it's just a short trek to the border, much faster than going around.

But... what if we get caught...

It ain't worth thinkin' abou'. C'mon! They don' know you or me! Act confiden', an' follow me!

Thanks, Phoenix.

Heh, it's fine.

C'mon, y' did so well at th' bord'r, we'll be fine.

So... here we are. Wha' d' y' think?

Helluva lot bett'r than th' desert, huh?
Well, it is a nice change, but...

Really I'll be much happier once we get out of here.

'Scuse me! Are you folks lost?

Oh, sorry to be a bother. Could you tell us the quickest way through town to the pass north?

Not a problem! Look, the easiest, straightest route is two blocks that way, but...

The quickest route is through the burrows down that way, if you follow the marks at the crossroads. They're these three triangles.

It's a bit rough, but if you keep your head about you you'll do alright.

Thanks, pal!
EH, A ROUGH PLACE SEEMS MORE OUR SPEED, RIGH'? LESS LIKELY T' SEE ANY GUARDS.

...IT DOES LOOK LIKE THE SORT OF PLACE ONE WOULD GET ROBBED.

AFTER THE WAY YOU HANDLED THOSE BANDITS BACK IN GARDENIA, I'M SURE IT'LL BE FINE!

KEEP YER EYE OUT F'R THEM TRIANG'L MARKS, YEAH?

EXCUSE ME, SIR.

OH, GOOD DAY, GUARDSMEN. WHAT'S WRONG...?

HAVE YOU SEEN TWO HUMAN TRAVELLERS WITH A DONKEY PASS THROUGH?

I SENT THEM THROUGH THE BURROWS, THEY WERE HEADED TO THE NORTH PASS... A-ARE THEY DANGEROUS...?

WE'LL TAKE CARE OF IT. THANK YOU.
PHOENIX, I THINK THERE'S SOMEBODY FOLLOWING US...

OI, HAND OVER YOUR MONEY.

OI YERSELF, I AIN' EVEN WEARING SHOES. HOW MUCH MONEY Y' THINK I GOT? CLEAR OFF.

THE GUARDS~!

WHA?

Y'GONNA STOP THA' GUY? HE TRIED T' ROB US!

NOT WHEN WE HAVE YOUR FRIEND HERE. THE LAST PRINCESS OF REI, ISN'T IT?

H—HOW DD YOU...?

RUN!

HALT!

LIGHT THE BOY UP, JET.

FIREBALL!!!

LOOK OUT!

PH—PHOENIX!

THAT HIT YOU, D—DIDN'T IT? ARE YOU—

KEEP RUNNIN'!

FELS, JET! THAT WAS A BIT MUCH! YOU ALMOST HIT THE PRINCESS...

SORRY, THAT WAS WELL STRONGER THAN I INTENDED...

LET ME TRY AGAIN.
Quick!

Tha' was close, Fels!

L-look out! There's more of them!

Down here!

Phoenix, stop... Wha'?!?

They'll find us soon. I don't think they'll hurt me, but they want to hurt you. Please... I give up.

Paige, but-

Thank you for everything. We tried, but... We c'n still run! C'mon--!

I can't... we've been travelling so long, I'm not used to... I can't run any further.

Paige...

Go! You can still get out of here!

There you are! Halt!

I surrender...

Don't worry princess, you won't be harmed. Oi Marr, get her friend.

No! No!! This wasn' how it was meant t' go, this wasn' meant t' happen like this!

How'd they know Paige was th' princess? How'd they know we were here now?

It doesn' add up...

Paige... I'm sorry...
Princess... Paige, isn't it?

N-no! That's not me! I'm a Gardenian citizen! You can't treat me like this!

You'll be hearing from the ambassador about this— no, from the king!

Hmm, you think we'll buy that? You're real hopeful, huh? You're to the dungeon, and won't our lord be pleased...

Her friend got away boss, sorry.

Then go find him, for Fels' sake!

The patrols are on it, sir!

He wasn't even wearing shoes, he won't have gotten too far.

Least we got the main prize, c'mon, move it girl.

I'm sorry, Phoenix...

We saw him around here... tch...

Where'd that damn kid go?

Backup'll be here soon, we'll get the whole place searched, no worries.

Grrr....

Oh! Eh... Heh...

N-nice dog...

Sniff

Whoah, ha-ha. Yer a terribl' guard dog ain'cha?

You'll let me stay here while I fig' re out wha' t' d', eh? ...least someone 'round here's on my side.
IF I C’N JUS’ GET A GUARD ALONE, MAYBE I C’N FIND OUT WHERE THEY’RE TAKIN’ PAIGE...

DID YOU FIND HIM?

NOT YET, SIR...

I BET HE’S JUST RUN. I WOULDN’T BE TOO WORRIED ABOUT IT, HE’S NOBODY IMPORTANT. JUST SOME WANNABE HERO.

COURSE WE’LL LOOK FOR HIM, IN CASE HE TRIES ANYTHING STUPID. BUT HE’S PROBABLY GONE.

THA’ VOICE SOUNDS LIKE...

NAH, I WOULDN’T BOTHER. WE’VE GOT PAIGE, ONE KID ISN’T GONNA BE A PROBLEM.

YOU SAID HE’S NAMED PHOENIX, RIGHT? WE’LL NEED TO PRINT POSTERS AND SUCH.

RRRRR...!!!

DID YOU HEAR THAT?

AHH!

WHUMP...

HEY—!

YOU LOT BACK OFF OR I SWEAR T’ GOD I’LL STAB ‘IM!

PHOENIX? C-CALM DOWN, KID. LET ME GO...

GAVIN.

TELL ME WHERE PAIGE IS AN’ HOW I C’N GET HER BACK, OR Y’ WON’ LIKE WHA’ HAPP’NS NEXT..
G—GIVE IT UP, PHOENIX. THE DUNGEON PAIGE IS IN IS FAR TOO WELL-PROTECTED. YOU’LL NEVER GET HER OUT.

LET ME GO, PHOENIX. WALK AWAY. WE’LL LET YOU GO HOME. IT’S OVER, OKAY?

HOW COULD Y’ DO THA’ TO PAIGE, GAVIN....?

THERE’S MORE IMPORTANT THINGS AT STAKE, KID.

JACK!... NNGH...

YOU SHOULD HAVE LET ME GO, PHOENIX.

HEY. PASS ME HIS KNIFE.

...YOU SURE?

HE THREATENED MY LIFE. I DON’T INTEND TO GIVE HIM A SECOND CHANCE AT ME.

WHA’—?! Y’—

GAV’! Y’ CAN’T—

THERE. HE’S DEAD?

HE’S DEAD.

NO OFFENCE, SR, BUT WAS THAT RIGHT? I MEAN... IF THE PRINCESS WAS SWEET ON HIM, HE MIGHT’VE BEEN MORE USE TO US ALIVE.

HMM... A CORPSE WILL WORK JUST AS WELL FOR THREATENING HER.

LET’S REUNITE ‘EM, SHALL WE?
I'm super tired. That means Filler time!

Why, do we have any filler to run? Any email questions? Any guest stuff?

Um

I am woefully underprepared today...

And every other day. Look, sheesh, I'll spot you a question if you're that hard up.

No way I don't need pity from a fictional character. I'll just draw whatever I feel like and declare it relevant.

As usual, then.

Okay, I'm currently working on test art for the new crop of ohs students, let's throw some of those in here!

So 'new crop' means they'll be introduced in...?

2017, maybe.

Depending on how many more filler pages between now and then, huh?

That and if I get distracted by other storylines, mwaha.