

Geekdom
"Of Dice and Den"

By

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A teenage fangirl navigates the difficult world of hardcore
geekery.

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TEASER

EXT. ALLEYWAY - DAY

A body slowly oozing blood is hunched against a brick wall.
The police have just arrived.

COP 1
Not today. Why today?

COP 2
Ex still won't call you back?

COP 1
Not since I saw her doing the
fleshy tango with my divorce
lawyer.

COP 2
And only three days until you
retire. Hard knocks. What have we
got here?

FORENSIC
Looks like a serial killer who
targets people who've been cheated
on with lawyers.

COP 1
Not today.
(bursts out singing)
NOT TODAY!

TITLE: NCIS: GLEE

We PULL OUT to reveal...

INT. HOUSE - DAY

Mel (14), awestruck, sits glued to the TV.

MEL
Incredible.

END TEASER

CREDITS: FANGIRL -> FANDOM -> GEEKDOM

ACT ONE

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - MORNING

Mel and TALIA (14) gather things from their lockers.

MEL

And then the corpse got up and did
the Hustle.

TALIA

Oh god.

MEL

It was terrifying.

TALIA

So?

MEL

So I watched it for six hours and
went to bed at one.

TALIA

(laughs)

Then how did you finish the algebra
worksheet?

MEL

...There was an algebra worksheet?

TALIA

Yeah. The one that's assigned for,
you know, every Thursday.

MEL

(beat, then quietly)

I forgot today was Thursday.

TALIA

Wow, Mel, I'm really impressed.
Super impressed this time.

MEL

It'll be fine! I'll finish it
during lunch.

TALIA

Oh, so you've already studied for
Chem?

(CONTINUED)

MEL

Ugh, would you stop reminding me of things?

TALIA

I'm about to be late for class, which means you will be too! This is fun.

MEL

I refuse to be party to your evil, Talia.

TALIA

Like it or not, that bell's still gonna ring.

MEL

(off Talia's exit)

Damn the man! Save the empire!

TALIA (O.S)

The empire shot Alderaan's father first!

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Students reluctantly move towards desks. Mel takes a seat next to NANCY (14)

MEL

Hey.

NANCY

Hey!

Mel settles in for class.

NANCY (CON'T)

Finish the homework?

MEL

There was homework?

Nancy giggles. They're still in the beginning flirtations of classroom friendship.

MEL (CON'T)

Got anything fun this weekend?

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

A couple of ideas. I was thinking of spending a few solid hours giving all my teachers alignments.

MEL

What?

NANCY

You know, like D&D?

MEL

Not really? But hey! I discovered this wonderful new show...

A gaggle of THEATER KIDS, including ANDREW (13) and DUSTIN (14) rush into the room and immediately consume the chairs surrounding Nancy. Mel is completely ignored.

THEATER KID #1

Yeah, but I just hate the way he's always telling me to project. I *am* projecting!

THEATER KID #2

So scream it.

DUSTIN

Call it performance art.

ANDREW

I guess you are technically performing...

THEATER KID #2

Can we stop talking about the show now? It's stressing me out, I don't want wrinkle lines.

Mel stifles a giggle.

NANCY

Hey, are we still on for Saturday?

THEATER KID #1

I can't, I have oboe practice.

DUSTIN

Lame.

THEATER KID #1

Can't you just write me out for a session?

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

It's only a one-shot. And I need at least three players...

(beat)

What if Mel did it instead?

Everyone turns on Mel as if she's suddenly appeared.

MEL

Oh. Haha. I don't know. You know, I don't even think I know what a one-shot is. You know?

NANCY

A single session game. It's a great way to start, it'll be fun!

MEL

But, I've never played D&D.

EVERYONE GASPS.

ANDREW

How is that possible?! It's the greatest thing ever.

THEATER KID #2

Relax, Andrew, not everyone grew up the way you did.

ANDREW

Well, why didn't they?

DUSTIN

(to Mel)

It hones every acting sense and skill. My parents practically *make* me do it.

ANDREW

It will change your life for good. You can never go back.

MEL

You still haven't explained anything about it.

The teacher starts class, speaking in a foreign language.

NANCY

(whispering)

It's at my house. Brush up on roleplaying before you get there,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

NANCY (cont'd)
I'll go over the rules before we
start.

THEATER KID #1
(whispering)
Try not to get sucked into a Wiki
vortex on MMOs.

Mel's stare is as blank as a check. Then, something occurs
to her:

MEL
Can I bring Talia?

Nancy shrugs 'I have no idea who that is' and 'sure'. Andrew
turns in his seat to whisper conspiratorially.

ANDREW
Seriously, stranger-person that
I've never met. It's a
rebirthening. Trust me.

MEL
(to Nancy)
Text me your address!

INT. CAFETERIA - DAY

Mel locates Talia and sits down.

MEL
Well something interesting finally
happened to me.

TALIA
You memorized the lyrics to the
Elements Song and aced the quiz?

MEL
(seriously)
Does that work?

TALIA
What happened?

MEL
Nancy just out of the blue invited
us over for a game. Weeks of
hemming and hawing: success!

(CONTINUED)

TALIA

Us? Why would she invite me too?
We've never met.

MEL

I asked! She seems really cool,
Talía. I bet you could get her to
watch that vampire show with you.

TALIA

16 & Immortal is classy, okay?

MEL

And half-naked.

TALIA

What's the game?

MEL

(taking out her phone)
Not sure. I'm supposed to look up
role-playing.

TALIA

Oh come on, Mel, role-playing is
what my brother does in the
basement all night.

MEL

Oh, is *that* what he's doing?

TALIA

He's a multitasker.

MEL

There are like, four definitions
here. Nerds are the worst. I guess
I want role-playing *game*?

TALIA

That would be why it's called an
RPG.

MEL

Oh, right. Yeah! Totally!

TALIA

You know nothing, do you, Snow.

MEL

Not true! I know lots. Like that
people 'take responsibility for
acting out roles in a narrative,

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEL (cont'd)
either through literal acting or
through a process of structured
decision-making or character
development.' Blech.

TALIA
Yeah, it's not great.

MEL
But Nancy invited me! I've been
trying to hang out with her for
weeks! I already sort of said yes.

TALIA
It's long and boring and stupid,
Mel. A bunch of gross guys try to
beat each other up by following
arbitrary rules.

MEL
So you've played before! You can
totally teach me.

TALIA
The last time I played, the DM...
(off Mel)
..the Dungeon Master? Asked me how
big my boobs were. He said it was
'for the character'.

MEL
And how big were they?

TALIA
Big enough to slap him across the
face.

MEL
Boob slapped.

TALIA
Like a pro.

MEL
Talía, please? Just this once? I
don't want to be in her house alone
with a bunch of strangers. And, I
don't know, I think it could be
cool. Or at least different. I feel
like it's a thing I should at least
try.

(CONTINUED)

TALIA
Oh, fine. Only if I get to be a
paladin.

MEL
Well, you'll definitely be a
PAL-adin.

TALIA
No.

END ACT ONE

(CONTINUED)

ACT TWO

INT. TALIA'S HOUSE - DAY

The girls are removing helmets and sweat.

TALIA

So then she reblogged this entire thing about how he's actually a sociopath and not a psychopath, and I'm like...who cares? He kills people, he's a villain. He's super hot. Do we really want to pick apart every little nuance?

MEL

And she didn't take kindly to it?

TALIA

I've got about thirty messages from her followers telling me how stupid and uncultured I am.

MEL

Death threats?

TALIA

Not yet. Just wait until I post that fanart of him and Danya though.

MEL

They'll flip.

TALIA

That's the hope.

MEL

Hey, do you think Ryan could lend me some dice?

TALIA

Oh man, you said his name. You summoned him.

MEL

Is that a crime?

TALIA

He's the worst.

(CONTINUED)

From around the corner, RYAN (17), appears. He leans against the doorway frame. He's been cresting the 'geek chic' wave for years. "Low Rider" plays in the distance.

RYAN

Oh come on, Talia, I deserve at least 3 Yelp stars.

TALIA

Go away, geek stink breath, the brain cells are talking.

(to Mel)

And you! Stop giggling. Don't encourage him.

Ryan swoops in swiftly, with a gradiose air:

RYAN

Prepare yourselves, mortals, for the wonder I'm about to show you.

He starts herding them toward the basement door.

TALIA

Ryan, what the hell?

RYAN

I heard about your coming out, Mel, and I think it's time.

MEL

Time for what?

Ryan KICKS open the basement door, and with a flourish:

RYAN

Welcome, my tiny little Goslings, to the LAN Mine.

INT. TALIA'S BASEMENT - LAN MINE - DAY

The open door is a beacon of light into the dankness. He leads the girls down the stairs majestically.

The bitchingest geek club ever. Lit by neon lights, pumped full of music, too many computers, a dedicated table space for cards and board games. Posters of everything. Game pieces everywhere.

MEL

This is why you spend all your time in the basement?

(CONTINUED)

RYAN

Pretty cool, right?

TALIA

How...Ryan, where does the money come from? How do you keep it from mom?...God! The electricity bill alone!

RYAN

See, questions like that are why I've never invited you down here.

A Gosling walks in the backdoor, holding two heavy bags filled to the brim with cash. Ryan shakes his head at him curtly and he slowly backs out.

RYAN (CONT'D)

Let me give you the grand tour. We've got 360s, Playstations; public Steam accounts, Netflix, Hulu; Magic, Pokémon, even some Yu-Gi-Oh cards; Arkham, Settlers, Dominion, Munchkin, 40K -

TALIA

40K?

RYAN

Yeah, they're in the other room. We haven't seen them in about a month.

GOSLING #1(O.S.)

Just let me measure this barricade and we'll be out, I promise!

Ryan shrugs.

MEL

Pretty cool! This place is sweet.

TALIA

Name one thing you understood.

MEL

Something about cards? I like cards.

GOSLING #2

Magic cards?

(CONTINUED)

MEL
I like magic!

TALIA
Oh, sweetie.

GOSLING #2
Let me teach you about mana.

MEL
Are they all such pretty colors?

GOSLING #2
Mostly, but this one's a rare so it
glitters.

Mel squees.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Mel is holding out a card for Talia to admire.

MEL
Look at that art.

TALIA
Yeah. So?

MEL
So, someone drew that. It is
literally someone's entire
profession to draw art for this
game, and I'd never even heard of
it until yesterday.

TALIA
Everyone's gotta do something. I
just don't understand how Ryan's
never been caught. Maybe he's
paying off my mom! Or blackmailing
her! Oh god, what could he possibly
have on our mom?

MEL
I really don't care as long as I
have an awesome place to show off
to Nancy once we're besties.

Mel walks off to class beaming.

(CONTINUED)

TALIA

Um, sure.

Talia follows suit, not quite as happy.

INT. LAN MINE - DAY

Club off-hours, the lights are on. Ryan and Talia are seated across from each other with various textbooks and papers.

RYAN

Are you just gonna bother me down here all the time now?

TALIA

Pretty much, yeah. Tell me all your secrets.

RYAN

(ignoring her)

I think your friend has a crush on me.

TALIA

I think you have a crush on you.

RYAN

(beat, shrugs)

What's not to like?

TALIA

Just as long as you're nice to Nancy too.

RYAN

Who's Nancy?

TALIA

Some girl Mel's been hanging out with. She wants to bring her here to impress her.

RYAN

Woah, woah, I did not clear this!

TALIA

...do you have to?

RYAN

Look, this is a very exclusive club. Only pre-screened members and family discounts allowed. The fact

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

RYAN (cont'd)
that you girls even made it down
here is something of a small
miracle.

TALIA
Are you serious right now?

RYAN
If Mel tries to bring her friend
here, they'll have to be turned
away. Sorry.

TALIA
You are literally the worst.

INT. MEL'S HOUSE - DAY

Mel is halfway out the door.

MEL
Bye mom, going out, see you later!

MOM (O.S.)
Wait a minute!

Mom catches up to Mel at the doorway.

MOM (CON'T)
Why do you always think it's going
to be easy?

MEL
Hope springs eternal.

MOM
Sure. Where are you going?

MEL
I said, out. To Nancy's.

MOM
Nancy's? I haven't heard of her
before.

MEL
That's because I haven't been to
her place before. Okay, bye.

MOM
Taking the bike?

(CONTINUED)

MEL

Picking up Talia on the way.

MOM

Don't let it get too dark.

MEL

Oh mother, when you're high on E there is no dark or light. Only eternal pleasure.

MOM

Get out.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - DAY

Talia and Mel unsaddle and walk their bikes side by side.

MEL

I think this is the street.

TALIA

We're going to be so early.

MEL

I don't know any of the rules and I still have to figure out my character. Did you bring the dice?

Talia shakes a little clear container.

TALIA

All D20s.

MEL

And I'll ask what that means later.

TALIA

Why do I get the feeling that I'm here as your exposition captive?

MEL

Just think of me as a friendly, inquisitive escort.

TALIA

You better not be hijacking me into a campaign.

MEL

See, I don't even know what that means.

(CONTINUED)

TALIA

What does it matter?

MEL

You remember last week when I asked who William Shatner was and your brother laughed in my face for five minutes?

TALIA

My brother is a jerk.

MEL

Fact. But then I looked the guy up and he was the original Kirk. I feel like I should have known that since I've seen the reboot 500 million times.

TALIA

So? Just because you don't know everything about everything doesn't make you love the movie any less.

MEL

Yeah, I know, I know. But I feel like, I maybe...want to be that kind of fan? Not obnoxious, but like, there's always more, you know? There are whole other worlds. I feel like I've just been floating on the surface.

TALIA

Yeah, that's how you don't sink.

MEL

(distracted)

We're here! I think.

TALIA

Yay.

END ACT TWO

(CONTINUED)

ACT THREE

INT. NANCY HOUSE - DAY

Nancy and Mel are sitting on the couch with large books and papers in front of them. In the next room Talia and the theater kids are setting up the table.

NANCY

Do you know what kind of character you want to play?

MEL

I'd like to stab things. And people.

NANCY

Um, okay. So here's the Rogue class page. I can draw you up basic character stats while you take a look at these -

Nancy hands over an open book page. Mel lights up.

MEL

So many stabby things!

NANCY

Try to maybe come up with a backstory.

INT. TABLE ROOM - DAY

Talia, Andrew and Dustin are seated at the table, making awkward conversation.

DUSTIN

Aren't you two, like, sisters or something?

TALIA

Hah, no. Our parents used to date. They split, we didn't.

DUSTIN

Okay, yeah. Sure.

Beat.

(CONTINUED)

TALIA
So what's the play this
year?

ANDREW
Are they almost done?

NANCY
(walking over with Mel)
Just about. Mel just needs to think
of a name.

MEL
Hmmm. Stacy.

Dustin takes a look at Mel's character sheet.

DUSTIN
You're naming your high
intelligence, halfling rogue
"Stacy"?

MEL
Yes.

DUSTIN
Well, it's definitely new.

NANCY
That's what I'm countin' on.

Nancy takes her rightful place at the head of the table.
Everyone else sits down.

NANCY (CON'T)
Once around the table?

Awkward silence until Nancy nudges Andrew.

ANDREW
Yo. My name is Graklord, I'm an
orc. Really really ugly.
Puke-inducing ugly. I have a spiky
club. It is my best friend. I've
named it Hank. It's a character
choice.

NANCY
Thanks, Andrew. Talia?

TALIA
Do I have to? I hate this.

Nancy waits patiently. It's really annoying.

TALIA (CON'T)

Name's Thorina. I'm here to make fun of you and shoot things or whatever. I'm 6'2", brunette, half-elf, full-badass consequences.

NANCY

And you're the bard.

TALIA

Yeah, I guess. If I have to be.

NANCY

It's good for the party. Dustin, would you li-

DUSTIN

People sing songs of my good looks and great deeds everywhere. I'm the smartest wizard anyone's ever met. Upon looking at me, everyone is instantly smitten. Even though I don't need weapons because of my almighty power, I carry a broadsword with me everywhere, along with my awe-worthy wizard hat. You may address me as Lord Quigsly.

NANCY

(browsing char sheet)

Dustin, how long did it take you to build these stats?

DUSTIN

Sacrificed a couple periods of IB Euro, but I figure this is more educational... 'Cause I'm about to school all of you!

Everyone groans.

ANDREW

And suddenly, we all know who we're gonna throw under the dragon.

TALIA

Why wait? Someone magic missile him in the face.

NANCY

Haha, okay guys.

(CONTINUED)

DUSTIN

You can't magic missile me, I'm the only wizard. Haven't you been listening?

TALIA

Then I throw my encyclopedia arcanis at you.

NANCY

It hits for five damage.

DUSTIN

Hey!

NANCY

Just a little DM humor. Everyone ready to actually begin now?

MEL

Is it normal to be totally lost and ill-equipped?

NANCY

Generally, yes. Alright guys. You're all in a tavern.

Group groan, except for...

MEL

Oh, cool! Can I buy a beer?

NANCY

Sure, do you have money?

MEL

This is a made-up world, why would I need money?

ANDREW

How else are you supposed to buy anything?

MEL

Okay, sure. What's the currency here?

DUSTIN

Gold coins.

MEL

Seriously? So you're saying we live in a world full of orcs and goblins

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

MEL (cont'd)
and halflings but we still value
the gold standard?

ANDREW
DM, she's tearing holes in the
fabric of our reality.

NANCY
I know. It's kind of hilarious.

MEL
I'm sorry! I just don't really
understand.

DUSTIN
Yeah, big surprise.

NANCY
Hey, watch it. You only started
playing six months ago.

DUSTIN
But I was quicker than this!
(beat)
Right?

NANCY
Okay! So. Focusing. Everyone's in a
tavern, what would you like to do?

ANDREW
I'm preoccupied with a bar wench.

NANCY
Naturally.

MEL
(muttering)
Class act.

ANDREW
I pull out my mace and whack her in
the head for insulting my honor.

MEL
Wait! Wait! I didn't mean to say
that in the actual game thing, or
whatever.

NANCY
In character.

MEL

In character, yeah. Don't mace me, bro.

NANCY

You have to be careful about what you say in character or not.

MEL

Why the hell would I even want to say that in character?

DUSTIN

Because you're an idiot.

TALIA

Hey!

NANCY

Children, let's not get into this.

MEL

You know what, jerk? I take my dirk and stab you in the side.

DUSTIN

I dodge and blind you with my mage's cloak!

NANCY

I thought you were a wizard...

DUSTIN

I take my modified staff and set off five crit wards. That should hit her for at least three lethal.

ANDREW

Dustin, quit powergaming, c'mon.

DUSTIN

Maybe you should start, squishy.

MEL

(looks over sheet)

I launch one of my throwing stars at his neck.

DUSTIN

I charge for "Stacy".

(CONTINUED)

MEL

I sweep your legs and punch you on the way down.

DUSTIN

I break a pint over your head!

NANCY

You guys know you haven't rolled for any of this, right?

MEL

I TAKE A SHARD OF PINT GLASS AND PUSH IT THROUGH YOUR -

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. NANCY'S HOUSE - EVENING

Three girls sitting on a stoop.

MEL

That didn't go so well, did it?

NANCY

I've had worse.

MEL

Sorry I ruined your game.

NANCY

Dustin's a jerk when he feels threatened.

TALIA

They're all jerks. All the time.

MEL

I wish you'd stop saying that. Andrew's not half bad.

TALIA

Not half bad doesn't mean half good.

NANCY

Well, I'm really glad you showed up. You made it fun.

TALIA

Yeah?

(CONTINUED)

NANCY

Yeah. It was pretty great.

TALIA

Um...thanks. I guess.

EXT. NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT

Mel and Talia are walking their bikes home.

TALIA

Definitely not what I was expecting from her.

MEL

Why not? You're a good player. And Nancy's really nice.

TALIA

She might be tolerable.

MEL

So you'd hang out with her again?

TALIA

Maybe. But only if-

MEL

Great. Because they have a weekly game.

TALIA

Mel, *that's* what a campaign is.

MEL

No, no. It's like a board game or something. Settlers of Catland?

TALIA

Catan.

MEL

Yeah yeah! That's it! I said we would go. I can do this, Talia, I can be a full-fledged geek someday.

TALIA

Oh for god's sake, Mel.

MEL

Will you help me?

(CONTINUED)

TALIA
By spending my time gaming instead
of studying? Well...

MEL
That's a yes!

TALIA
Ugh.

MEL
Yay!

TALIA
You owe me so many Ben Winshaw
movie nights.

MEL
(singing)
I WILL FIND MY WAY....

TALIA
Stop.

MEL
I CAN GO THE DISTANCE.

The conversation fades as the pair head down the street.

FADE OUT

END ACT THREE

END SHOW