

# Transcendence

By

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## AUTHOR'S NOTES

*Transcendence* is a play about escapism. About growing up. And about taking ownership of your world, your circumstances, and learning to fight for them. It should be funny, silly, and moving. It should be a lot of fun.

It also takes place in an entirely constructed world, so there's plenty of room for imagination, devising, improvising, choreography, and anything else you can think of.

I don't really specify what it is that's prompted the tragedy these players are trying to escape from. I leave that up to you. I hope the play will prompt discussion. I hope the play will prompt questions. And I hope you'll have fun doing it.

## NOTES ON TEXT

- [ ] - Lines encompassed in square brackets should be treated as direct address, spoken directly to the audience.
- (SHIFT) - A shift denotes a rapid jump in time/space. Ideally, these should be accomplished as quickly and cleanly as possible, so that the play never stops going.

## CAST OF CHARACTERS

### **CENTURIONS:**

EVIE	Our protagonist. They/them.
TALLULAH	Fearless and a little bit blunt. Crushing on Sam.
SAM	Nerdy but with untapped courage. Crushing on Tallulah.
JACE	Leader of the Centurions. Enigmatic but determined.
BALTHAZAR	The Bard. Jace's deputy. Can be a bit rude.
RONNIE	Larrikin #1
TYLER	Larrikin #2
TOBY	The loner of the group. Quiet and kind.
EURYDICE	Reluctant Centurion. Wants to be a wizard instead.

### **DARK ELVES:**

DARWINIUS	The new kid. Takes the game way too seriously.
JAMIE	Twin sister of Amy. The nice one.
AMY	Twin sister of Jamie. The sinister one.

### **DWELLERS:**

TRITON	Leader of the Dwellers. Totally didn't steal his name from The Little Mermaid.
MARIANA	The brains of the operation. Named after the trench.
CORAL	The engineer. Gets furious when people call her Carol by mistake.
BERMUDA	Always getting lost.

### **SUPER SQUAD:**

JUSTICE	Captain Justice. Leader of the Super Squad.
BAT BOY	Really mad that he can't fly.
AROMA	Superpower is to control plants. As everyone points out, it's a lame power.
REMORSER	One of those "gritty" style superheroes. Gravelly voice. Total bumner.

### **SPACE FLEET:**

VOLTAR	Captain Voltar, leader of the space fleet. She doesn't like following orders.
HEXATRIX	Bad-ass hacker extraordinaire. Sensitive about her bad haircut.

### **OTHERS**

WATT	Ex-member of the Space Fleet. Broke off to start their own space franchise.
GOOGAZON	The Oracle. Sassy and sarcastic.

Roles can be doubled, tripled, even quadrupled where possible.

The world of the play is constructed out of pure fantasy, so cast members could even play all of the inanimate objects and props. Plenty of opportunities for ensemble work and other non-speaking roles.

The cast should be as diverse as possible.

TRANSCENDENCE

(Shadowy figures walk past. Some strange, surreal sounds. Maybe like a siren.)

(Beams of light swirl all around.)

(One by one, the shadowy figures leave.)

(Until all that's left is... this.)

EVIE: [Rule One. Never stop playing.]

(Spotlight on EVIE, our protagonist.)

[Rule Two. Never drop character. Well, mostly, never.]

(Other kids file in.)

[Rule Three. Be super dramatic.]

JACE: CENTURIONS!

EVIE: [This is Jace. He's way too into this.]

JACE: For too long, the Whisperer has terrorised our lands! For too long we've had to sleep with one eye open! BUT NO LONGER!

EVIE: [Waaaaaaay too into this.]

JACE: For tonight we beat him once and for all! Our spies have located the amulet of Ardu. I know I don't need to remind you, it's the most powerful artefact in all the land. The Dark Elves have it. Because of course they do. But if we can get our hands on that, we can beat the Whisperer for good!

(The CENTURIONS cheer.)

I need a volunteer.

(From within the audience.)

SAM: I'LL DO IT, MY LORD!

JACE: This is a very dangerous mission. You may not come back alive.

SAM: Oh. Maybe not, then.

(Also in the audience:)

TALLULAH: Pick me! Pick me! I'm not afraid, my lord. I'll do it.

SAM: Hey, I'm not afraid.

TALLULAH: Yes, you are.

SAM: Am not!

TALLULAH: ARE SO!

EVIE: [Those two are Sam and Tallulah. They're always fighting. I'm convinced they're gonna get married one day.]

SAM: I'm not the one who was too afraid to enter the Sacred Grove.

(TALLULAH punches SAM.)

TALLULAH: YOU SAID YOU WOULDN'T TELL ANYONE ABOUT THAT!

JACE: Enough! You can both go.

SAM: But I don't want to go with her -

TALLULAH: Don't make me go with him -

JACE: I said enough! Your Prefect's word is final. Understood?

SAM: Yes, Prefect.

TALLULAH: Sorry, Prefect.

JACE: Now, you'll need a guide. Someone who can show you the dark paths through The Dale. Someone who's not doing anything else at the moment.

(They all turn to look at EVIE, who looks at us.)

EVIE: [Of course.]

JACE: Evie. You know the way. Why don't you go with them?

EVIE: [What a surprise.]

JACE: We'll drink to your health in the mead hall tonight. When your mission is accomplished, give us the signal. May the grace of Tandor go with you.

EVIE: [And off we go.]

(SHIFT. EVIE, TALLULAH and SAM are carrying out the mission.)

EVIE: [Wander through the forest of the Dale. Closing in on our target. Tallulah stops.]

TALLULAH: Shhh... what was that?

SAM: What?

EVIE: I didn't hear anything.

TALLULAH: Over there!

EVIE: [Oh, right.]

SAM: Where?

EVIE: [I've seen her do this before.]

TALLULAH: Come closer, you can see it from over here.

SAM: I can't see anything.

TALLULAH: Come closer. Closer. Closer.

(SAM does.)

EVIE: [Aaaaand...]

(TALLULAH burps in SAM's face. He falls backwards, laughing.)

TALLULAH: Gotcha!

SAM: Gross!

TALLULAH: You're gross.

SAM: No, *you're* gross!

TALLULAH: Shut up, the Dark Elves will hear us.

SAM: Don't tell me to -

TALLULAH: Shut up.

(She punches him. They launch into a rough-and-tumble playfight. EVIE just watches.)

EVIE: [Sometimes I think the world could end around them, and Sam and Lu would be too busy fighting to notice.]

(The playfight ends with TALLULAH on top of SAM. They look at each other for a second. A moment.)

TALLULAH: ...We should probably -

SAM: Yeah -

(They get up. EVIE raises one eyebrow.)

EVIE: [We sneak through Tallulah's backyard - I mean the forests of The Dale - and infiltrate the enemy camp. We're creeping along when suddenly...]

(TALLULAH gives a hand signal. They drop to the ground, dramatically.)

SAM: What's happening?

TALLULAH: Shhh! I think they saw us.

EVIE: [We hold our breath. It's all quiet here. Tallulah gives the signal -]

(TALLULAH gives an elaborate signal)

EVIE: [- and we crawl forward, army style, edging our way through the camp. Suddenly, the silence is broken by an enormous -]

SAM: AAAAAACHOOOOO!

(TALLULAH smacks him.)

TALLULAH: What the hell? You trying to get us killed?

SAM: I'm sorry, I'm allergic to -

TALLULAH: Shhh.

(She looks around.)

TALLULAH: I think we're good. Let's go.

EVIE: [We crawl forward, slowly, quietly, until we finally arrive at the enemy fortress.]

(The "fortress" comes into view.)

EVIE: [It's actually Tallulah's dog's kennel, but just go with it, yeah?]

TALLULAH: There he is. The dark elf captain.

EVIE: [Rufus.]

SAM: He's a monster.

TALLULAH: He's horrible.

EVIE: [He's a very good boy. He sleeps on his back, paws outstretched. Tongue hanging out of his mouth. Resist the urge to give him a pat.]

SAM: He's so cute.

TALLULAH: Don't be fooled. This is one of the most fearsome creatures in the land.

SAM: Whoa.

EVIE: Look. He's got the amulet.

SAM: Whoa.

TALLULAH: Who's gonna get it off him?

SAM: Don't look at me!

TALLULAH: Well, I'm not doing it. Leaders don't get their hands dirty.

SAM: Who said you were the leader?

TALLULAH: I did. I'm the most senior agent -

SAM: Most senior asshole, more like -

TALLULAH: Don't you talk to your superior officer that way -

EVIE: [Guess I'm doing it. While they bicker I crawl forwards. Slowly. Slowly. I unclasp the Amulet from around the great beast's neck. It jingles, slightly. He twitches in his sleep and I stop. If he catches me here he'll eat me alive. I slip the amulet off and crawl back to Tallulah and Sam, still fighting -]

SAM: Yeah, well, you suck -

TALLULAH: No, *you* suck -

SAM: No, you!

TALLULAH: NO, YOU!

EVIE: Guys?

BOTH: WHAT?

(EVIE holds up the "amulet".)

SAM: Whoa.

EVIE: Let's get out of here.

(SHIFT.)

EVIE: [We run back through Tallulah's back yard - I mean the Forests of the Dale, cheering. The dark elf captain is awake now, and he barks - I mean shouts - after us.]

SAM: He's waking up his soldiers!

TALLULAH: Run!

EVIE: [Sam waves his hankie in the air. That's the signal. The rest of the Centurions get ready to charge.]

JACE: (*offstage*) CENTURIOOOOOONS!

EVIE: [Look at Tallulah. She's grinning. Look at Sam. He's panting. Look ahead. The Centurions are rushing to meet us.]

(The CENTURIONS run past, in an assortment of fantasy-style costumes. A whirlwind of colour and energy.)

(They start battling imaginary dark elves. Lots of huge choreographed fighting. It might all look a little bit silly.)

(EVIE walks through the carnage.)

EVIE: [And the game continues. It's all we talk about these days. No one talks about what's really going on.]

(SAM drops to his knees, dramatically.)

SAM: My lord, I'm wounded!



JACE: Get up, soldier, there's plenty of life left in you!

(He offers his hand and pulls SAM back up.)

EVIE: [They say when bad things happen you have to face them. We don't believe in that. All we believe in is...]

[The game.]

(Trumpets sound.)

(SHIFT.)

(A secret, secluded place.)

(In the distance we can hear the Centurions battling the Dark Elves.)

(Three HOODED FIGURES emerge.)

FIGURE 1: Is everything in place?

FIGURE 2: It is.

FIGURE 1: Excellent.

FIGURE 3: Do you think this is going to work?

FIGURE 1: It has to. It must.

FIGURE 3: I hope you're right.

(A rustle in the bushes. They all turn to look.)

FIGURE 1: Come. We must not tarry here. The next phase of the plan is upon us.

(FIGURE 1 turns and leaves, beckoning for the others to follow.)

FIGURE 3: Do we all have to talk like that?

FIGURE 2: I dunno, just play along.

FIGURE 3: Seems a little... lame.

FIGURE 1: I can still hear you.

FIGURE 2: Sorry.

FIGURE 3: Sorry.

FIGURE 1: Just, like... shut up and come with me, okay?

(They exit.)

(SHIFT.)

(Trumpets sound again.)

JACE: CENTURIONS! We are victorious!

(They cheer.)

Thanks to the bravery of our three volunteers, we have recovered the Amulet of Ardu! We've never been stronger! Now we can really stick it to those Dark Elves!

(The CENTURIONS cheer again.)

JACE: Into the mead hall, everyone! Let's celebrate!

(SHIFT.)

(We're in the mead-hall. Which is really JACE's living room.)

EVIE: [The mead hall. Jace's parents had it remodelled a couple of years ago. Jace holds court at the head of the dining table - I mean... oh, whatever, you get it.]

JACE: Raise a flagon for the Centurions, everyone!

EVIE: [The mead is just flat Diet Coke. But it gets the job done, I guess.]

JACE: We raise our cups to the glory of Ardu, and of the Centurions! Centurions!

CENTURIONS: CENTURIONS!

JACE: And, of course, to our three brave volunteers. Samwise.

SAM: It's just Sam, but -

JACE: Samwise the Brave.

EVIE: I'm pretty sure that name's already taken.

JACE: You were the first to volunteer. Tallulah the Strong.

TALLULAH: SIR, YES, SIR!

JACE: You were the loudest. And Evie. You were the most...

EVIE: Reluctant?

JACE: Determined. Come forward, you three, and kneel before me.

(TALLULAH and SAM kneel eagerly. Everyone looks at EVIE, waiting for them to follow suit. They do.)

JACE: The three of you have done us a wonderful service today, and in honour of that, it gives me great pride to name you three... Knights of the Realm!

TALLULAH: Oh, man!

SAM: Uh... cool!

EVIE: ...yay.

JACE: Then take these pins, as proof of your status.  
(JACE pins a brooch on each of our heroes.)

JACE: And now, arise, Knights of the Realm!  
(They arise. The CENTURIONS cheer.)  
Enjoy the celebration, everyone. For tomorrow, we fight!  
(SHIFT.)

EVIE: [The party rages on. Kids mill around, talking about their fantasy adventures. Which troll they fought, which dragon they rode, which castle they stormed. It's just... so boring.]  
(RONNIE's making armpit farts.)

RONNIE: Aw, man! What a stinker!

EVIE: [Those two cackling over there are Ronnie and Tyler. Larrikin loudmouths. Put 'em together, you get Ronnie Tyler.]

TYLER: *(singing) There's nothing I can say*

BOTH: *(singing) Total Eclipse of the Faaaart!*

EVIE: [Take some getting used to, but they're all right.]  
[They look through Jace's DVD collection, searching for new characters to add to the game.]

RONNIE: I'm Paul Blart-acus!

TYLER: No, *I'm* Paul Blart-acus!

EURYDICE: And I'm the grand witch Shrek Four-icus!  
(A pause.)

RONNIE: Laaaaame.

TYLER: Super lame.

RONNIE: For the last time, Eurydice, we're not playing Harry Potter.

EURYDICE: No, but -

TYLER: We're Centurions.

RONNIE: Roman warriors. The bravest in the land. Mighty. Powerful.

TYLER: Fully sick.

EVIE: [Poor Eurydice. No one wanted to play with her, so she had to join the Centurions. I don't think she likes it very much. But she's trying her hardest.]

RONNIE: Come on, let's go tip some cows.

TYLER: Ha! Let's do it!

(They run off.)

EURYDICE: Wait for me!

(EURYDICE runs away too.)

EVIE: [Didn't this stuff used to be uncool?]

[Tallulah comes bounding in.]

(TALLULAH comes bounding in.)

TALLULAH: Hey, you seen Sam?

EVIE: I haven't, actually.

TALLULAH: Weird, I wanted to tell him what a dingus he is.

EVIE: That's all you wanted to tell him?

TALLULAH: For now, at least.

EVIE: If I see him I'll send him your way.

(TALLULAH bounds away again.)

(BALTHAZAR appears, with an instrument. Maybe a lute, maybe a guitar, maybe a ukulele.)

BALTHAZAR: All right everybody, let's make some noise!

EVIE: [That's Balthazar. Sam's next door neighbour. Jace's second in command. Keeps going on about being a musician one day.]

JACE: Give us a ballad, Balthazar.

BALTHAZAR: Sir, yes, sir!

(BALTHAZAR strums a long chord.)

Anyway, here's Wonderwall.

(BALTHAZAR strums furiously, rocking out. It doesn't sound good.)

(Everyone covers their ears.)

EVIE: [I can't listen to any more of this. Slip away, unnoticed. Nice night. Quiet.]

(SHIFT.)

(We're outside. EVIE looks up at a makeshift guard tower - perhaps made out of milk crates and an old ladder.)

EVIE: Hey, Toby!

(Nothing.)

Toby!

(Still nothing.)

TOBY!

(EVIE kicks the tower. It wobbles slightly.)

(TOBY takes her headphones out of her ears.)

TOBY: What?

EVIE: You shouldn't be listening to music when you're on watch.

TOBY: I'm not.

EVIE: It sure looks like it.

TOBY: It's just white noise. Helps me think. Or helps me stop thinking.

EVIE: There's a lot to think about.

TOBY: Yeah.

(A pause.)

EVIE: Any sign of them?

TOBY: Not tonight.

EVIE: It's almost been three weeks since -

TOBY: Yeah...

(A pause.)

TOBY: I should get back to it.

EVIE: You don't want to sit with me for a bit?

TOBY: Jace would kill me if I deserted my post.

EVIE: Of course.

TOBY: Talk to you tomorrow?

EVIE: At ease, Centurion!

(EVIE does an over-dramatic salute. TOBY chuckles.)

TOBY: Night.

EVIE: Yeah, you too.

(TOBY climbs back up the ladder. EVIE watches her go.)

EVIE: [What? Don't look at me like that. She's just a friend.]

[But sometimes I think...]

[Shut up.]

(A roar from inside the mead hall. The party's getting even more raucous.)

[Ugh.]

(EVIE wanders around the camp, then stops for a second. They hear something. A sniffing.)

Hello? Hello?

(EVIE looks around.)

Sam?

(LIGHTS UP on SAM, sitting amongst some bushes, knees to his chest. He's trying to hold in tears.)

You OK?

SAM: Yeah. Fine.

EVIE: You don't look fine.

SAM: No, I'm good.

(EVIE sits with him.)

EVIE: I know it's hard.

SAM: Maths is hard. This is...

EVIE: Yeah.

(A pause.)

EVIE: You did good today. Very brave.

SAM: I nearly blew the whole mission.

EVIE: Should get those allergies looked at.

SAM: I don't know where Mum keeps the antihistamines.

EVIE: Well, you're a Knight of the Realm, now. Better learn to fend for yourself.

SAM: Yeah...

(A pause.)

EVIE: Hey, Tallulah was looking for you.

SAM: Right.

EVIE: Shall I go tell her where you are?

SAM: ...No. No, thanks.

EVIE: You don't want to see her?

SAM: No, I do. Just... not now.

EVIE: 'Kay.

SAM: She's great. She's just... a lot to deal with sometimes.

EVIE: Heh.

SAM: Oh God, don't tell her I said that. She'll punch me.

EVIE: She so would.

(They laugh.)

You sure you're gonna be OK?

SAM: Yeah. Go have fun at the party.

EVIE: I hate parties.

SAM: Yeah, I know.

(SHIFT.)

EVIE: [Wander around camp. It's a cold night, but I don't mind. Hear the noise from inside the mead hall. Hear the sounds from the scrubland across the road. And here I am. Caught in the middle of it.]

(They start to sing, absentmindedly.)

*Come down, come down  
To the river with me...*

(Suddenly, three SHADOWY FIGURES run past. One of them might be carrying something. EVIE watches them go.)

Hey, the party's that way.

Hello?

Is everything OK?

(FIGURE 1 raises their fingers to where their lips should be. "Shhh.")

...OK.

(The FIGURES disappear.)

Weird.

(Then...)

(ALARMS SOUND.)

JACE: *(offstage)* THEFT! DECEPTION! THIEVERY!

BALTHAZAR: *(offstage)* THE KING IS DEAD! THE KING IS DEAD!

JACE: *(offstage)* I'M NOT DEAD, YOU IDIOT!

BALTHAZAR: *(offstage)* NEVER MIND, WE'RE ALL GOOD!

JACE: *(offstage)* NO, WE ARE NOT ALL GOOD! THE TOME'S BEEN STOLEN!

BALTHAZAR: *(offstage)* WE'RE NOT ALL GOOD, EVERYONE!

JACE: *(offstage)* I JUST SAID THAT -

BALTHAZAR: *(offstage)* HE JUST SAID THAT -

JACE: *(offstage)* SHUT UP AND ASSEMBLE THE GUARDS! FIND IT! SEARCH EVERYWHERE!]

(General noise and confusion as CENTURIONS rush around, searching. EVIE stands, silent.)

EVIE: [Welp. Here we go.]

(SHIFT.)

EVIE: [We're in the War Room. Which is the same room as the mead hall. And the barracks. And the throne room. The higher-ups all meet around the big long granite kitchentop.]

[What, it's a versatile house.]

JACE: Is everybody here?

BALTHAZAR: Aye.

TALLULAH: Aye.

RONNIE: Aye.

TYLER: Aye.

EURYDICE: Aye.

TYLER: Ugh.

TOBY: Aye.

EVIE: ...Aye.

TALLULAH: What about Sam?

JACE: Yes, where's Sam?