



# Act I Scene 2

The front-on collision was spectacular, to say the least. On one side, a feral lupine mutant creature bleeding out but nonetheless baying for blood. And on the other side, there was Lara.

Lara leaned, hard, bearing as much weight on her front foot as she physically could. She closed her eyes and, channelling the qualities of an immovable boulder, tucked her arm right into her torso.

But it was barely a contest.

The beast tore through the temporary obstacle with all the grace of a battering ram through a shoji door. Lara yelped, and was sent sprawling off the path. Assorted leaves and branches crunched and cracked to support this unanticipated misadventure. Lara wanted to scream, but, with the wind knocked out of her sails, she could not do so.

But the beast was not unscathed either. Absorbing the blow caused it to teeter precariously for a step, then another, and a final one, before it collapsed in a heap in front of Attila. Soil was kicked into the air, and the air was rife with the smell of decay.

For a brief moment in this pantomime of violence, everything was quiet. There was nothing moving at a breakneck pace. There were no sounds, save for the soft whistle of the sycamores. There was nothing to see, nothing to sense, nothing to feel. And, more importantly, there was nobody watching. No-one that Attila needed to maintain a brave front for. There was... nothing left. And, as if his brain were just beginning to register this fact alongside the exact magnitude of the madness that he had witnessed today, Attila collapsed into a heap and fainted.

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Down the spiralling chute he slid, sanity shrinking at every twist and turn. A cavalcade of vignettes sped by, each mapping a moment in this humble life. A playground, a toy box, and the sound of laughter. A heartache, an injustice, and a conflagration that brought the promise of new life to the night sky. A crumbling pillar. A headless statue. And, of course, that elusive Cube. These trinkets, these images, these memories — this life of regret, revenge, and redemption — tailed him down to the depths of feverish despair.

“What is this?” Attila wondered aloud. Death? Purgatory? Or something far more terrifying than he could possibly imagine...

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“Atilla?”

“Atilla!?”

Lara groaned. This was becoming far too common of an occurrence. But, this time, there was no immediate response.



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Growing with concern, Lara struggled to her knees and proceeded to crawl her way out of bramble. Inch by inch, millimetre by millimetre, she left her bed of thorns and emerged from the undergrowth.

“What the?”

It was light out, and Lara was slightly startled by the dissipation of the darkness that, just moments ago, seemed so dense and deadening. How long had she been out for, she wondered.

Lara blinked forcefully to clear her weary eyes, and surveyed the situation.

The cold light of day, that left no stone unturned and no earth untouched, revealed the gruesome magnificence of the previous night’s events.

Two bodies lay unmoving on the damp earth — one pale and old, the other pale and young. A trail of blood, which had not yet fully incorporated itself into the soil, stretched, as far as the eye could see, towards the half-risen sun. The brutal bruising of the exposed shrubbery had released a sappy, sickly scent into the air, a scent that rankled Lara’s nose.

Lara’s spirit, bloodied but unbowed, motivated her body to persevere. To her feet now, and limping, Lara hobbled over to her friend and gave him a gentle nudge.

The body was cold.

Lara shook him more violently, and extracted a worrying snort. She paused for thought, then leaned in and examined him closely. She could hear the old man’s faint and shallow breathing.

Exhaling with relief, she stood straight once more. In the serenity of the woods, which had not so long ago threatened to conscript the pair into its enduring silence, Lara could hear her heart thumping away and could feel the rhythm of her inner metronome. Dugga-dum. Dugga-dum. Dugga-dum.

Lara spurred into action and moved to rotate Attila into a recovery position. Attila stirred.

Lara’s heart pounded away. Dugga-dum. Dugga-dum. Dugga-dum.

With a flash of sprightly exuberance, Attila, in one smooth motion, pulled himself to his knees and then leapt to his feet.

Lara was somewhat shocked by his recovery, and at how little damage he had sustained. Dugga-dum. Dugga-dum. Dugga-dum.

“Do you hear that?” Attila asked, a man of many questions.

Dugga-dum.

“What?” Lara almost shouted, struggling to make out Attila’s voice over the galloping of her own heart.



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Galloping? Lara thought.

In the nick of time, Lara turned around to see a portly man seated on a dark brown mare — black, even — with a pearly sheen of foam flying at full steam towards the physically spent pair.

“Oh no... not again,” Lara groaned.

But, to her surprise, the man slowed his gallop to a canter, and proceeded to address Lara and Attila.

“Travellers, what is the meaning of this?”

“Well, we were in the...”

Ignoring the response, the man on the horse trotted over to the other figure lying prone in the muck and inspected the situation.

“And then we...”

Quick as a flash, he reached for the spear strapped to the side of the horse and stabbed the man through the left part of his torso — through the heart — spear clean in and out.

“Holy—”

“You two. With me. The rest of the villagers will want hear about this.”

Lara, stupefied, stared at the seemingly authoritative man and nodded blankly. What appeared to be a fairly eloquent and well-reasoned alibi was quickly evaporating in her mind.

“And what will these... ‘villagers’ want with us?” Attila asked, in grim acceptance of their fate.

“I guess you’ll have to front up to them and see, I suppose,” uttered the man, in a tone that most decidedly did not leave the door open for further questioning.

“And what if we don’t?” chimed Lara.

The man stared blankly at her. Then he glanced to his bloodied spear, the reins of his steed, the frail Attila, and then at Lara once more.

Lara’s lips formed into an “O”, and she let out a dejected grunt of understanding.

And thus the trio departed.



## Divide and Conquer

### Question 1: Numerators

- (a) Janitors wipe around noticeable edges and begin scrubbing /8
- (b) Typesetter starts creating our manuscript, beginning to ink in letters before middle of word /10
- (c) Difficult ordering /9
- (d) "Property of YIG" written on grimy briefcase, desperately missed by its owner /13
- (e) Clumsy surfer steals show, does the splits /9
- (f) Sprouted garden, time to upheave /10
- (g) Heads in confusion - ought she flip head or tail? Coin has twenty faces... /11
- (h) Corrupt charities arm ant colonies and elephant herds /12
- (i) Permissible to use professor in allegory /10
- (j) Dolly pens unoriginal hit about a break up /9
- (k) Unco, sociopathic, delirious nut /9
- (l) Hunters butcher and sport deerskins without kindness /9
- (m) Affiliated company underwent internal review then moved elsewhere /9
- (n) In pool, trapping ball and snorkelling excitedly till half leave /10
- (o) Great facts about lights, costumes, scenery, etc. /10
- (p) A huge star's signature was scribbled all over the page /10

### Question 2: Denominators

- (a) Less than  $7/14$  at room temperature /4
- (b) Played the Half-Blood Prince /4
- (c) Four quarters of what makes you unique /1,1,1,1
- (d) Cardamom and cinnamon factor into this beverage /4
- (e) Preserve meat, if you want to leave a portion for later /4
- (f)  $4/52$  in deck,  $9/12$  in Britain /4
- (g) Potatoes, when divided as finely as possible /4
- (h) Postgrad. degree, electrical and civil just a fraction of possible disciplines /1.3
- (i) Returns false for one out of four inputs /4
- (j) It's divided amongst roommates /4
- (k) When a split opinion gets publicly violent /4
- (l) For a bed or a bath, or where you would place a divider /4
- (m) Trick, like one pulled on  $1/4$  /4
- (n) One of the three main printer functions /4
- (o) Actor who takes up biggest fraction of screentime /4
- (p) The hardness of its shell has people divided /4