

THE _____ **FOR T.K. AND J.W.**
SPIRIT OF RENEWAL

BY
JAMES Y. LEE

CHARACTERS:

- **SKYE KWAK** – 28, female (she/they), Korean-American. The screenwriter. Intentional [and aimless]. Butch.
- **STEPHEN HENDERSON** – 64, male (he/him), white. The author. Relevant [and desperate].
- **ANDREA HWANG**– 29, female (she/her), Korean-American. Skye’s girlfriend. An activist and Variety journalist. Concerned [and furious]. Femme.
- **KEVIN HENDERSON** – 29, male-presenting (they/he), white. Stephen’s child. A mechanical engineering graduate student. Reticent [and observant].
- **LARRY BOSCH** – 37, male (he/him), white. Senior vice president of development at Paramount Pictures. At work [always].

SETTING:

- **LOCATIONS:**
 - Los Angeles, California.
 - Skye and Andrea’s apartment, and Stephen Henderson’s study. All other locations and states of being are expressed via an “in-between” space.
- **TIME:** May 2021 to March 2022.

NOTES:

- **On CASTING:**
 - Under no circumstances are Skye and Andrea to be portrayed by non-Asian performers. **No exceptions, whatsoever.**
- **On DIALOGUE:**
 - A slash (/) marks an interruption, where the next line or action interrupts where the slash is in the previous line.
 - **When dialogue is spoken in Korean** – the actual Korean and English translations will be written into the script for actors’ references.
 - Do not translate these lines onstage.
- **On CHARACTERS:**
 - **KEVIN** is referred to as such with they/he pronouns for the first several scenes of this play. However, any references to and discussion of this character with awareness of the events of **Scene Eleven** and onward should use the name and pronouns this character expressly identifies with from that point onwards.

법고창신 (法古創新 / beop-go-chang-shin): *The spirit of creating something new based on the tenets of what came before. A four-character Korean idiom.*

"They say stories like this only happen in the movies. I cannot believe it's happening to me. This – this is the American Dream!"

– **Ke Huy Quan**, while accepting his Academy Award for Best Supporting Actor for *Everything Everywhere All at Once* (2022).

PROLOGUE

*The sounds of a restless audience **roar** to life. LARRY BOSCH stands at a podium, suit-and-tie, facing an enormous crowd, yelling into a microphone.*

LARRY

And finally, as one last thank-you to everyone who's come all this way, we have... *one. more. thing.* to announce.

Cheers.

LARRY

In the 1980s, high-fantasy literature was given a groundbreaking new entry in the form of three amazing books.

And from 2005 to 2007 – the film adaptations of these books changed high-fantasy cinema *forever.*

These films told the story of how to break past the restrictions the world throws at you and grow into the person you were destined to be.

And they told the story of an intrepid warrior named Loric...

As he says these next few lines, he holds up a copy of the first Kingdoms and Amulets book. The cheers escalate.

LARRY

... who grows to bear the power of a particular, magical Amulet...

Louder cheers. Larry grins.

LARRY

... joins an entourage of adventurers, and saves the Kingdoms of the Ancient Earth...

Yet again, the cheers escalate.

LARRY

... from the clutches of the Dark Lord, Malice. That's right, folks – I'm talking about Stephen Henderson's *Kingdoms and Amulets!*

Raucous applause. Larry holds up a finger:

LARRY

Now! Now! If you'll let me, I have something to read for you all.

He opens the book to a very obviously marked page, which triggers a shift. Lights illuminate an in-between space.

LARRY

Here's a quote from Loric himself. "Even at the end of this journey..."

Right as he says that, the in-between morphs into the world of Kingdoms and Amulets. Entering the in-between is STEPHEN HENDERSON – dressed here in a brown fantasy robe, carrying a staff, wielding a tome... and wearing an Amulet.

STEPHEN

... There are still many realms left to explore. Other kingdoms within the Ancient Earth. The Dark Lord's hold over this one may have loosened... but evil does not die forever. May our victory serve as an example for those in other lands. May their fights be as valiant as ours.

LARRY

Don't you guys think it's time we explore those other lands?

Raucous, explosive applause. As it settles down and Larry laughs:

LARRY

Two years ago, before the pandemic slowed everything down, Stephen Henderson reached out to us, telling us that he wanted to create something new within the Ancient Earth universe. The world fell into crisis, and we couldn't move forward... but now, in 2021, we can.

SKYE KWAK enters the in-between space – wearing a darker, more obscuring robe, holding a glowing sword in her hand. There's an Amulet of her own around her neck. Stephen and Skye face off, circling each other as Larry continues in the real world:

LARRY

We at Paramount Pictures are formally announcing the development of a new entry in the *Kingdoms and Amulets* series – a continuation of the trilogy that will expand the series forward in a new direction never before seen.

Skye and Stephen stop moving, then cross their sword and staff together.

LARRY

The film is currently in its initial stages, but we know the journey will be just as full of wonders and magic. Until then, in the words of these novels – "may fortune and its tidings bless you all!"

The applause grows even louder. Larry snaps the book shut, and the in-between space immediately blacks out. He exits and lights fade on his podium.

ACT ONE,
SCENE ONE

Skye reaches the door of Stephen's house. She rings on the doorbell and waits. She closes her eyes. Breathes. In. Out. In. Out.

Stephen opens the door. Skye immediately extends her hand to shake.

SKYE

Stephen Henderson?

Stephen shakes her hand:

STEPHEN

... Uh. Yes! I take it you're Skye [*pron. "quack"*] Kwak?

SKYE

Skye [*pron. "kw-ah-k"*] Kwak. It's actually — never mind, I just — wow, it's a real honor to meet you. Genuinely. / I've—

STEPHEN

Come on in. We'll be working in my study.

The two of them enter his study. Behind a large desk are wooden shelves filled with books and accolades. Stephen sits at the desk, where his laptop, a clean copy of the same book as Skye, and a folder sit.

Stephen clears his throat slightly, takes some medications at his desk with a glass of water. Skye sits on a chair opposite Stephen's desk and pulls out her things — first, three copies of the Kingdoms and Amulets books, plastered all over with notes.

SKYE

Um — I just want to say, first — I've been such a fan of *Kingdoms and Amulets* for so many years. This world means so much to me. And then it just so happened that Larry — Larry Bosch, you've met him—

STEPHEN

I have, yes.

SKYE

— yes, he hired me to help write this spin-off, and then he told me you'd be my consultant, so I just did a deep dive into the books, as well as the, uh...

Skye takes out a notebook, also with notes and post-its scattered all over.

SKYE

... the movies as well!

STEPHEN

Ah. I appreciate the due diligence.

SKYE

Anyways, I'm rambling – I'm so excited to work on this spin-off with you. It's such an honor.

She gets a glance at the shelves, and stands up to look–

SKYE

Oh, my God. Do you mind if I...?

STEPHEN (chuckling)

Please, take a look.

Skye immediately walks over to the shelves and looks at the books in them, awestruck.

SKYE

I've never seen so many first editions in one place. My God.

At the sight, Stephen grins, amused:

STEPHEN

Your passion's quite something.

Skye snaps out of it, and returns to her seat.

SKYE

Thank you! Sorry! Got carried away there! Well, I've also only had the chance to write a psychological thriller so far, and I've adapted two science-fiction novels in the meantime—

STEPHEN

Yes, very nice. Larry briefed me on your work when you were signed on.

SKYE

How much do you know? About *me*, that is?

STEPHEN

One of the first things I was told was that you're queer, if you're keen on...

SKYE

Yes, I am. I'm dating Andrea Hwang — she's a *Variety* journalist.

STEPHEN

Good to know. Not a problem. I hope you don't assume I think otherwise.

SKYE

Not at all.

STEPHEN

And it seems like you're quite a good fit for fantasy material like this, especially if you're this attached to the trilogy.

SKYE

Thank you. I've never really worked on a spin-off, and this is kind of my first big studio gig, so...! I'm grateful that you'd trust me with this world.

STEPHEN

Yes. In terms of the work we have to do, to my understanding, you have about three months to write the script, right?

SKYE

Yes. My deadline for the first draft's on January 7th. And, obviously, we need to give it a few more passes and rewrites over the next few months.

STEPHEN

Right.

SKYE

I do want to ask. The movies before this one are pretty faithful to your books. I know you're credited as a creative consultant on them?

STEPHEN

Yes, there were other writers, and they followed the lead of the books. I vetted all of their deviations.

SKYE

So now that we're working on a spin-off, rather than an adaptation... what are your expectations?

STEPHEN

... Well, I've had something in mind for a while. In terms of a direction to bring this story.

SKYE

Happy to hear it.

STEPHEN

I've put a lot of thought into this. But at the end of this trilogy – when the adventurers have vanquished the Dark Lord, Loric makes a very bold decision, where –

SKYE

He passes the Amulet onto Samuel, his apprentice.

STEPHEN

Yes. And Samuel is interesting, because... he becomes a son-like figure to Loric. There's a legacy he gets to inherit.

I thought about the power vacuum left behind by the removal of Malice. And how Samuel might be the person to bring stability back to a destabilizing world.

SKYE

Right. I also had an idea that I wanted to show you, if you don't mind.

STEPHEN

Oh. How so?

SKYE

So... I was told by Paramount that I had creative liberties as the writer. And it's interesting that you have a character that you want to bring into the forefront, because... well, so do I.

STEPHEN

Which one?

SKYE

... Mr. Henderson, the Ancient Earth is based on our world. You've kept all the continents, but just renamed the countries to Kingdoms – and there's a moment in the second book...

Skye takes her copy of the second book and opens it, activating the in-between and reforming it into the world of the books.

SKYE

... where you have a scene with a character that stood out to me.

Skye and Stephen walk into the in-between. Stephen dons the same brown robe, staff, and Amulet he did a scene prior. The soundscape evolves, too – a bustling nighttime city. Skye stands near him for a second:

SKYE

Somewhere along the way, Loric's separated from his fellow adventurers, roaming the streets of the Tunneled City. And huddled in a back alley is someone named...

Skye then dons the darker-styled robe from the scene prior.

SKYE

... Varden Chang. A mage from the Eastern Lands – which, like, I don't know if the Eastern Lands are inspired by Japan, Korea... but, you know, it's there. It's a part of your world.

She carries her sword near her hip, revealing her Amulet, and approaches Stephen.

SKYE

And she shares something in common with Loric – an Amulet of her own. What happens in that chapter is a lesson – she has things to show Loric about what it means to use an Amulet.

Skye and Stephen raise their hands towards each other – and a flash of magic occurs between them.

SKYE

They fend off assassins coming after them, brought under the Dark Lord's will.

They stand back-to-back, as shadows of other characters slink around them. Both of them fend off these shadows, using energy blasts of magic and forcing their enemies off-stage.

SKYE

And Loric grows one step closer to activating his true potential. But Varden isn't in the movies. Because she got cut.

They step away from their stances, and at "cut," Skye snaps the book shut – the in-between fades again. They return to Stephen's study, removing their robes.

SKYE

I saw the movies before I read the books. We could have actually seen her. And we just... didn't.

STEPHEN

That's true.

SKYE

Why was she cut?

STEPHEN

The Eastern Lands were never of narrative importance at that time. And Varden was never really a character of note. The writers didn't consider her that way.

SKYE

What if she is important now? What if we saw more of the powers *she specifically* can wield? Because of where she comes from? What if someone like me can have space in your world?

STEPHEN

Well, I wouldn't know where to start. And I think the fact that it's so unfamiliar is why I / frankly—

SKYE

We have the foundations, though. She comes from an actual place within your world. And if she hasn't mentored Loric in the movies... what if she becomes a mentor to Samuel instead?

STEPHEN

... Sure, but I don't have enough canonical material on the Eastern Lands for us to build a full character from it.

SKYE

There's not a single page of this I would write without your blessing, Mr. Henderson. And I'd love to see if we can bring Varden into the story you want to create.

STEPHEN

I'm sorry, it seemed to me that your role as the writer would be to materially follow the guidance I had. I didn't realize you had all this in mind.

SKYE

I fully intend to respect that. And I also think I can contribute something that can expand on the world you've made.

STEPHEN

Here's the deal. At some point soon, we'll do something similar to the previous films and the writers I was working with for those.

I'll provide you a more tangible vision for the story I have in mind for Samuel. So that you can have a clearer idea of the direction I think your script should go in.

SKYE

I can do that. What would you like me to prepare?

STEPHEN

Nothing in particular. Unless you'd also like to explain what you have in mind for Varden and whatnot.

SKYE

Then that's what I'll have ready.

STEPHEN

... Sure thing.