Fantasy audiobook scripts

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The Traitor's Seal

Epic, betrayal · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

"You knew." My voice came out steadier than I deserved. "You knew the whole time and you sent us in anyway."

Maren didn't flinch. She never flinched — that was the thing about her, the thing I'd mistaken for courage for three years. "I knew it was a risk," she said. "There's a difference."

"Delara is dead." The words landed between us like stones. "She had a daughter. Did you factor that into your risk?" The fire in the grate popped. Neither of us moved. I had trusted this woman with my life and she had spent it like coin.

After the Fall of Eryndal

Epic, aftermath · Adult (40-55) · Neutral British · 45 seconds

The war had been over for six months. Kael still checked the exits of every room he entered. Probably always would.

He was sitting in the rubble of what had once been the Grand Library when the girl found him — twelve, maybe thirteen, clutching a scorched book to her chest like it was a living thing. "Are you the one who broke the Seal?" she asked.

"I am." "Did you know it would destroy the city?" He looked at the ruins around them. The sky was the wrong color still — too pale, too quiet. "Yes," he said. "I did it anyway."

She sat down beside him. "Good," she said. "So did I."

Six Kinds of Thief

Comic, heist · Young adult (18-25) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

I was upside down, three stories above a ballroom full of armed magisters, with a stolen relic tucked into my boot and Theo's voice in my ear telling me not to panic.

"The rope is fine," he said. "Don't look at the rope." "Why would you say that? Now I'm looking at the rope." "It's mostly fine." "Theo—" "The chandelier is the real concern."

I looked at the chandelier. It was moving. Not swaying — rotating, slowly, like something inside it had woken up and decided now was the time. Below me, three hundred guests in silk and gold had no idea the ceiling was about to have opinions.

The Long Dark of Varenoth

Dark, quest · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

We didn't talk about what happened at the river. That was the agreement — not spoken, just understood the way things get understood between people who've been moving together through the dark for long enough.

Sable sat across the fire from me and sharpened her knife and didn't look at me. I watched the flames and didn't look at her. "Tomorrow," she said finally.

"Tomorrow," I agreed. One word. Everything in it. We'd find the Vault or we wouldn't come back, and we both knew which one was more likely, and neither of us was going to say it out loud and give it power. She put away the knife. I put away the map. We slept.

The Hollow Crown

Comic, chosen one · Young adult (18-25) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

They told me the crown chooses. That it burns the unworthy to ash and seats the worthy on a throne of living bone. What they didn't mention was that I'd been carrying it in a flour sack for three days without so much as a warm tingle.

I set it on the altar. It glowed faintly, then flickered out. "Is it broken?" I asked. The High Priest looked like he wanted to dissolve into the floor.

"It is... deliberating," he said. I picked it back up. It was definitely broken. Or I was. Probably both.

Ashblood

Dark, rebellion · Adult (25-40) · Neutral British · 45 seconds

My blood runs grey. Has since I was born — not the scarlet of the highborn or the gold of the touched. Grey, like embers after the fire gives up. The physicians called it a defect. The temple called it a curse. I called it Tuesday.

Then I burned down the Warden's keep with my bare hands and the fire was grey too. Funny how that changes things.

The Resistance found me three days later, hiding in a drainage ditch outside Ashenport. Their leader looked at my hands and said simply: "We've been waiting for you." I said: "You could have picked a better ditch."

The Pale Inquisitor

Dark, intrigue · Adult (30-45) · Neutral British · 45 seconds

He'd been in the chair for six hours before they sent me in. That was deliberate — exhaust them first, then send the one who asks nicely. I hate being the one who asks nicely.

I set two cups of tea on the table between us. He looked at them like they might be poisoned. Smart. "They're not," I said. "I need you coherent." He picked one up anyway, hands shaking. "You're not what I expected," he said.

"Nobody ever says that and means it as a compliment." I sat. "Tell me about the night the Archive burned. Not what you told them. What actually happened." He looked at me for a long time. Then he started to talk.

Queen of the Ashen Field

Epic, battle · Adult (30-45) · Irish · 45 seconds

The left flank had collapsed. Serafine knew it before the runner reached her — she could feel it in the way the ground shook, the rhythm wrong, too many boots retreating at once.

"Hold the center!" she shouted. Around her, her guard was already adjusting, no orders needed. They'd been through worse. She had made sure of that. "What's your count?" she called to her second. "Sixty," Arric said. "Maybe fifty-five."

"Against?" "Four hundred." She pulled her helmet down. Four years building this army, and it came down to this field, this cold, these numbers. "Then we make it count," she said. "Every single one."

What They Come to Me For

Dark, sea witch · Adult (30-45) · Irish · 45 seconds

Everyone who comes to me wants something they shouldn't have. A dead husband returned. A rival's tongue silenced. A child that won't come on its own. I give them what they ask for. I always do. That's the trick of it — they never ask for the right thing.

The girl who came to me at low tide was different. She didn't want power or love or vengeance. She wanted to know the name of the thing living under the Veil.

I hadn't been surprised in four hundred years. I sat back in my chair made of shipwrecks and looked at her for a long time. "Sit down," I said. "This will cost you more than you have."

The Cartographer of Lost Roads

Cosy, portal · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

Wren had mapped every road in the known world — and several in the unknown. She kept the latter in a separate book, locked with a key she wore around her throat, because those roads had a habit of moving when observed.

The road that appeared outside her window on the morning of the winter solstice was not in either book. It was not, as far as she could determine, in the world at all.

She put on her boots. She picked up the locked book. She left a note for her cat. Some roads, she had learned, did not wait to be found twice.

Roots of the Undying Wood

Epic, looking back · Adult (40-55) · Neutral American · 1 minute

People ask me now what it felt like to cut down the Undying Wood. They want it to sound heroic. Necessary. Or... clean. I tell them the truth: it felt like betraying something that trusted me.

The Wood had sheltered my people for nine hundred years. It had fed us, hidden us, mourned our dead. And in the end, I was the one who brought the axe. Because the thing living at its heart had stopped being protector and started being something else entirely.

"Did it hurt?" my granddaughter asked me once. She was six. She had a cutting way of finding the center of things. "Yes," I told her. "It hurt the whole time." She thought about that. "But you did it anyway." "Yes." She nodded, satisfied. Like that was the answer she needed to carry forward.

What the Mirror Keeps

Dark, horror · Young adult (18-25) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

The reflection moved first. That was the thing nobody warned me about — not the Seer, not the texts, not even the old woman in the market who had grabbed my wrist and told me not to look into still water after dark. Nobody said: it moves first.

I stood very still. It tilted its head. I hadn't tilted mine. "You've been wondering," it said, in my voice, with my mouth. "Whether you're the real one."

"I'm the real one," I said. It smiled. I wasn't smiling. "That's what I used to think too," it said. The mirror went dark. I stood there for a long time after, not moving, not quite trusting my own hands.

The Unfinished Map of Kael Dorn

Epic, grief · Adult (30-45) · Scottish · 45 seconds

Three days after the city fell, Dorn was still drawing. His hands wouldn't stop — that was the curse of it, the gift turning feral under grief. Every line he put to paper became a street that no longer existed.

The woman who sat across the campfire from him had not asked his name and he had not offered it. She watched his hands for a long time before she spoke. "You're mapping it from memory," she said. "Why?"

"So it doesn't disappear completely." He didn't look up. The charcoal moved.

"Somewhere in what you're drawing," she said carefully, "is the thing that destroyed it. You know that." He did know that. He kept drawing anyway.

Bargaining with Dust

Dark, bargain · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 1 minute

"You want me to give you a year of my life," I said. "For a door." The Ancient didn't have a face — not exactly. Just the suggestion of one, shifting like smoke finding a shape it liked. "A year," it agreed. "The door opens once. What's behind it cannot be untaken."
"I know what's behind it." I had spent four years and two broken relationships getting to this room. I wasn't turning back for anything. "What I want to know is — why a year? You don't need time. You are time."
A pause. The smoke shifted. Something almost like amusement moved through it. "Because it costs you something," it said. "That's the only kind of wanting I trust." I held out my hand. "Fine," I said. "Take it."

Ink & Exile

Young adult, magic system · Young adult (18-25) · Neutral American · 1 minute

In this world, your magic is tattooed onto your skin at birth — swirling marks that glow when you use your gift. Mine appeared at midnight on my sixteenth birthday, black as tar and climbing up my throat like a vine. The Inkers took one look and exiled me before morning.
They said my marks were Unwritten. Impossible. A bad omen. I said: fine, I'll go. I took nothing. I didn't need to. The marks were already writing themselves across my collarbone — new symbols, ones that weren't in any of their books.
I learned to read them on the road. It took two years, three border crossings, and one very confusing run-in with a god. But I read them. And when I did, I turned around and walked back.

The God I Buried

Urban, comic · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

I buried a god once. It took six hours, a borrowed shovel, and an apology I'm still not sure I meant. He wasn't dead — gods don't die, not really — but he was diminished enough to fit in a hole, and that was good enough for me at the time.

That was eleven years ago. I've since moved cities, changed my name, and developed a very productive career in cartography. I have a life now. A quiet one. I like quiet.

So when the knock came at my door at three in the morning and I opened it to find him — muddy, furious, and very much unburied — I said the only reasonable thing. "I should have gone deeper."

The Kettle and Crow

Cosy, small magic · Mature (55+) · Neutral British · 1 minute

The troll came in at ten past four, which is the dead hour in a tea shop, and stood in the doorway blocking the light, holding his hat.

I have run the Kettle and Crow for thirty-one years. I have served knights, two dragons in borrowed coats and, once, a very small god who wanted a scone and would not say why. But I will admit the hat threw me.

"Help wanted," he said, and pointed at the card in my window with a finger the size of a rolling pin. "I can lift things."

"So I see."

"And I can do the high shelves."

I looked at the high shelves. I have not reached them without a stepladder in years.

"Can you be gentle with the china?"

He thought about it, which is more than most people do.

"I can learn," he said.

I put the kettle on. That, in my experience, is how most good things start.

Parking Enforcement, Other Division

Urban, comic · Adult (25–40) · Neutral American · 1 minute

The thing about ticketing a fairy carriage is that it always sees you coming.

This one was parked across two bays on Hollis Street, shaped like a seed pod the size of a van, drawn by two moths the size of ponies, smelling of cinnamon. I got my book out. The moths looked at me. I looked at the moths.

Six years in the Other Division and you learn the rules. Never accept food. Never give your full name. And never write the ticket in pencil, because they can rub pencil out from a distance.

I wrote it in ink. I tucked it under the silver handle. The carriage sighed, which I had not known carriages could do.

Behind me, somebody cleared their throat. Small. Tall hat. Very old eyes.

"That's mine," he said.

"Then you owe the city forty dollars," I said. "And you're in a loading zone."

He smiled, and every streetlight on the block went out.

The Oath at Karsk Ford

Epic, prologue · Adult (40-55) · Neutral British · 90 seconds

In the last year of the old calendar, when the rivers of the north still ran to the sea by their own choosing, seven lords of the Marrow Hills came down to Karsk Ford to swear an oath that none of them meant to keep.

They came in the grey before dawn, each with a single banner and a single witness, as the old law required. They did not look at one another. Lord Hesket of Aumbry had killed Lady Isaut's brother at the siege of Tarrow, and everyone knew it. Lady Isaut had since married Hesket's cousin, and everyone knew why.

The river was high with snowmelt. It was the river that would hold them to their word. That was the old law too. Break an oath sworn in running water, and the water remembers.

One by one they waded in to the knee and spoke the words. Peace between the houses. The passes open. No blade drawn in the hills for a generation.

Only the youngest, a boy of fifteen called Corran Vey, who had come in place of a father too sick to ride, stood in the river a moment longer than the others, and felt the cold close around his legs like a hand, and understood, too late, that the old law was not a figure of speech.

Twelve years later, when the first of them broke the oath, the river rose to meet him.

The Miller's Third Daughter

Fairy tale, storyteller · Any · Irish (light) · 1 minute

Once, in a valley where the river turned three mills and the wind turned all the rest, there lived a miller with three daughters.

The eldest was clever, and married a lawyer. The second was beautiful, and married a lord. The third was neither clever nor beautiful, and so she stayed at the mill and learned to listen to the stones.

For millstones talk, if you have the patience. They talk about weight, and time, and grain, and in the long evenings they talk about the things that happened in the valley before there were people to see them.

So it was the third daughter who heard the stones go quiet one night, as if something enormous had walked past the mill and every stone was holding its breath.

She took a lantern. She went to see.

That was the difference between her and her sisters. They would have waited to be told.

The Tithe Bell

Dark, folk horror · Mature (55+) · Scottish · 90 seconds

Every seventh year, on the first dark moon after harvest, I ring the tithe bell, and the wood takes one of ours.

I didn't choose this work. My mother rang it before me, and her father before her, and the rope has worn a groove in my palm that fits it like a key. The bell hangs at the edge of the village, where the last field stops and the trees begin. When it rings, everyone goes indoors, and draws the shutters, and does not look.

Except the ringer. The ringer has to look. That's the bargain. Someone has to see.

I've seen it five times now. I won't tell you what it looks like. I'll tell you that it's patient, and polite, in its way, and that it only ever takes whoever is still outdoors when the bell stops ringing. That's why everyone runs.

Tonight I told them I'd ring early. They're all inside, every last one, the bairns too. I heard the bolts go.

I'm the only one out here. My hands are steady on the rope.

These arms are sixty-eight years old. I'm going to ring for as long as they hold out, and then I'm going to stop, and I'm not going to run.

The Apprentice Interview

Comic, duet · Any · Performer's choice · 45 seconds

Cast: ORMOND PIP

ORMOND Name?

PIP Pip Tallow. Sir.

ORMOND Experience?

PIP I've read all your books.

ORMOND I've written forty-one books.

PIP I've read all forty-one of your books.

ORMOND Even A Treatise on Damp?

PIP Twice. The chapter on mildew made me cry.

ORMOND It made me cry as well, for different reasons. Any magic?

PIP A bit.

ORMOND Show me.

PIP I'd rather not.

ORMOND This is an interview for a wizard's apprentice. Showing me is the interview.

PIP Right. It's only that last time, the goat ended up on the roof.

ORMOND Whose goat?

PIP That's the thing. Nobody's. We didn't have a goat.

ORMOND ...When can you start?

First Night at the Lantern School

Young adult, magic school · Young adult (18-25) · Neutral American · 45 seconds

They give you your lantern on the first night, and it's supposed to light.

That's the whole ceremony. You walk to the front of the hall, past four hundred students who have all done this before, and the headmistress hands you a little brass lantern with no wick and no oil, and your magic lights it. Blue for weather. Green for growing things. Gold, once in a generation, for whatever gold means.

The girl ahead of me got green. The boy ahead of her got blue, and a round of applause, because his mother is famous.

I took mine. I held it up. I waited.

It stayed dark.

Then, very slowly, every other lantern in the hall went out.

The Door Behind the Dryers

Urban, portal · Adult (25-40) · Australian · 1 minute

Nobody uses the third dryer at the Lucky Wash on Carrick Road. There's a sign on it saying OUT OF ORDER that's been there so long the tape's gone brown.

I only found out why because it was two in the morning, I'd come off a double shift, I had one clean shirt left, and I thought, well, how out of order can it be?

I opened the door. Warm air came out. So did the smell of cut grass, and rain, and a sound I'd describe as a very large bird clearing its throat.

Inside the drum, where the drum should have ended, there was a field. A green one, under a lilac sky, and in the middle of it, someone was standing looking straight back at me, holding a basket of washing.

She looked just as tired as I was.

We stood there a while. Then she lifted a hand, like, hey, you too? And I lifted mine.

What the Tide Owes

Fairy tale, sea folk · Adult (30–45) · Welsh (light) · 1 minute

My grandmother told me the sea keeps a ledger. Everything it takes, it writes down, and everything it writes down, it pays back, sooner or later, with interest.

It took my father when I was nine. A calm day, a good boat, a man who'd fished those waters for twenty years. There was no reason for it. The sea doesn't need reasons.

It paid back the spring I turned thirty.

I found him on the shingle at low water: a boy of about nine, wrapped in a coat of something like sealskin, only greener, and warmer than anything has a right to be that comes out of an April sea. He didn't speak our language. He looked at the cottage, and then at me, and then he walked up the beach and sat down by my fire as though he'd been expected.

My grandmother would have known what to do.

I put the kettle on, and began to learn.

Payday for the Iron Company

Dark, grimdark · Adult (40-55) · Northern English (light) · 1 minute

Payday in the Iron Company goes like this. The captain sits at a table with the strongbox open. I stand behind him with the roll. I read out a name. If a man steps forward, he gets his silver. If nobody steps forward, I read the name again, once, slowly, because that's the custom. Then I draw a line through it, and the silver stays in the box.

We rode into the valley at Crake Water with a hundred and twelve names on the roll.

I've read eighty-one so far. I've drawn thirty-four lines.

The lads at the back have stopped joking. The captain hasn't looked up since the fortieth name. His hand is flat on the lid of the box, as if it might try to leave.

Name eighty-two is my brother's. I know that, because I wrote the roll.

I read it out. Nobody steps forward.

I read it again, once, slowly, because that's the custom.

The Queen's Taster

Epic, court intrigue · Adult (25-40) · Neutral British · 45 seconds

I have tasted the queen's food for nine years, and in that time I have been poisoned three times, which, in my profession, is a remarkably good record.

The trick is not the tongue. Anyone can learn the bitterness of foxbane, or the faint soapiness of greycap. The trick is the room. Who pours. Who watches the pouring. Who has suddenly, tonight, decided they are not hungry.

Tonight, it is the queen's own brother. He has not touched his wine.

I lift the queen's cup. I taste. It is perfectly clean.

Which means I have been watching the wrong cup.

Dragon, Retired

Cosy, comic · Mature (55+) · Southern US (light) · 1 minute

I retired from the hoard business at eleven hundred and four and moved to a nice lot at the end of Pellam Road with a vegetable patch and a very understanding landlord.

People expect me to miss it. The gold, the knights, the screaming. And I'll admit the first spring was hard. You don't just switch off nine centuries of sitting on things.

But I have tomatoes now. Twelve plants. I start them from seed in the old cave, where it's warm, and I talk to them, which the lady next door says helps.

She brings me the newspaper. I keep her greenhouse at a steady seventy-five degrees all winter, from a respectful distance. We don't discuss the knights.

Last week a man in armor came up the road with a sword and a determined look on his face.

I gave him a bag of tomatoes and told him to mind the step. Some quests end differently than you plan.

The Lamplighter's Round

Urban, gaslamp · Adult (30-45) · Neutral American · 90 seconds

In the city of Varrow, the lamps are not lit to keep out the dark. They are lit to keep out what lives in it.

Tobiah Crane had walked the same round for nineteen years: up from the fish market through Saltery Lane, across the Corn Bridge, and down the long curve of Mercy Street to the river stairs. Two hundred and six lamps. He knew every one of them the way other men knew their children, which ones sputtered, which ones leaned, which ones had to be coaxed on a wet night with a word and a steady hand.

He was a careful man. He had to be. In Varrow, a lamp left unlit was a door left open.

So when he reached the top of Mercy Street that November evening and found lamp one hundred and forty already burning, he stopped.

It was burning the wrong colour. Not the warm yellow of city oil. A thin, cold white, like moonlight on a knife.

And beneath it, on the wet cobbles, someone had left a pair of shoes, side by side, toes pointing down the hill, the way you leave your shoes at the door of a house you mean to come back to.

Tobiah looked down Mercy Street. Sixty-six lamps to go. Every one of them, he saw now, was already lit.

He took a firmer grip on his pole, and started walking.

The Smallest Knight

Middle grade, adventure · Any · Neutral American · 1 minute

Sir Bramble was the smallest knight in the kingdom of Hollowmere. His armor had been made from a soup pot. His horse was a goat. His sword, if you were being honest, and the other knights usually were, was a very determined butter knife.

So when the dragon came down from the mountain, and the big knights rode out with their big lances and came straight back again, singed and sulking, nobody expected Sir Bramble to go next.

But he went.

He rode the goat all the way up the mountain, knocked politely on the side of the cave, and when the dragon put its enormous head out to see who was knocking, Sir Bramble said the one thing nobody else had thought to say.

He said, are you all right?

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