

# **Sarajevo Voices: A Love Song**

**By Karen Bohmfalk and Austin R. Medlin**

# SARAJEVO VOICES: A LOVE SONG

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## SARAJEVO VOICES: A LOVE SONG

*Sarajevo Voices: A Love Song* was written in 2017 and performed for Texas University Interscholastic League One-Act Play in 2018 by Paradise High School, featuring the following cast:

Maggie (Magdalena) Sidran	Lynsey Medlin
Kat (Katarina) Terzic	Rose Powers
Tarik Mécava	Seth Rodriguez
Marko Cosić	Logan Waggoner
Baba	David Benson
Majka	Siclaly Delgadillo
Baka	Kennedy Schneck
CHORUS Soldiers	
Kurjak	Hunter Goodreau
Dzeko	Nolan Graves
Mesic	Clayton Smith
Divjak	Parker Burruss
CHORUS Women	
Leila	Candice Green
Mother	Megan Cornett
Girl	Summer Cobb
Shopkeeper	Hailey Uselton
Stage Manager: Tryston Webb	
Tech: Galadriel Smith, Rebecca Cornett	
Crew: Samantha Huckabee, Megan Aldape, Emily Glavac	
Alternate: Johanna Barnett	

## SARAJEVO VOICES: A LOVE SONG

### CHARACTERS

Maggie (Magdalena) Sidran	Mid-20s, studied business and works in family's music store, Muslim Bosniak
Kat (Katarina) Terzic	Mid-20s, Serbian musician, graduate of a prestigious university music program, always the optimist
Tarik Mécava	Mid-20s, Serbian soldier serving a year of compulsory military service
Marko Cosić	Mid-20s, Serbian soldier, lifelong friend to Tarik, resourceful, shady, can always get by
Baba	Maggie's father, owner of Sarajevo Fine Instruments
Majka	Maggie's mother
Baka	Maggie's elderly grandmother
CHORUS Soldiers	
Kurjak	Troubled
Dzeko	Evil, mean and twisted
Mesic	Gentle and peaceful
Divjak	Brutish
CHORUS Women	
Leila	Mid-20s, damaged
Mother	Has faced heartbreaking loss of family
Girl	Young victim of guards' brutality.
CHORUS Either	Shopkeeper, soldiers, guards, civilians

## SARAJEVO VOICES: A LOVE SONG

TIME: Spring and summer 1993

PLACE: Sarajevo and surrounding region

### PRODUCTION NOTES

- Chorus lines may be assigned to suit the needs of the company. We have designated which actor spoke each line in the show's debut, but lines may be reassigned. All actors are considered chorus members. Baka, Majka, and even Kat and Maggie, can play in camp scene, if needed.
- Bolded lines and words in dialogue are spoken in unison. Unison words or lines may be added or removed.
- Musician does not have to be a cellist. Other instruments would be equally effective, or music may be recorded and pantomimed. But throughout the work, the musician connects the plight of the individual to the experiences of the war-ravaged country.
- To enhance performances, students need to understand the historical and literary references woven throughout:
- General Douglas MacArthur's famous quote: "The soldier above all others prays for peace, for it is the soldier who must suffer and bear the deepest wounds and scars of war."
- Many *Romeo and Juliet* references as well as a few other well-known Shakespearean lines.

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*Cello is heard as lights come up on the CHORUS. MAGGIE and KAT are R, DR. TARIK, MARKO, and other SOLDIERS are L in area that will become their camp doing what soldiers do. Tarik sits DC on crate or footlocker writing a letter. Other CHORUS are scattered.*

**MAGGIE.** *(Reading to KAT from letter.)* “Good night, good night. Parting is such sweet sorrow *(Giggling.)* that I shall say goodnight till it be morrow.” *(Looking up from the letter.)* Oh, Tarik, give it up!

**KAT.** Always the romantic, your Tarik. *(CHORUS are positioned around stage. SOLDIERS at L, others as community members and merchants.)*

**CHORUS/MAJKA.** Ah, young love.

**CHORUS/GIRL.** In the Heart-Shaped Land of

**CHORUS.** Sarajevo.

**CHORUS/SHOPKEEPER.** A city, which, only nine years prior, had been the gem of European cities.

**CHORUS/MARKO.** The 1984 Sarajevo Winter Olympics—the most successful Olympic games in history!

**CHORUS/MAJKA.** We remember the British duo and their perfect figure skating routine—

**CHORUS/SHOPKEEPER.** And the American twins who took gold—

**CHORUS/BABA.** And silver

**CHORUS/MARKO.** In the men’s slalom.

**CHORUS/MAJKA.** But most memorable was seeing

**CHORUS.** *(Proudly.)* Sarajevo in all her glory!

**CHORUS/KAT.** The multiethnic culture

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**CHORUS/DIVJAK.** The soul of the city.

**CHORUS/BAKA.** Muslim Bosniaks 44%

**CHORUS/TARIK.** Orthodox Serbs 31%

**CHORUS/BAKA.** Catholic Croats 17%

**CHORUS/DZEKO.** And those “**others.**”

**CHORUS/KAT.** (*Stepping forward.*) But for all our differences,  
Sarajevo was an example of tolerance for all the world to see.

**CHORUS/MAJKA.** (*Stepping forward.*) But all that changed when  
the first bomb landed in the square.

**CHORUS/BABA.** (*With theatrical flair.*) Now in fair Sarajevo we  
lay our scene, in spring of 1993.

**CHORUS/MARKO.** In the heart of the Bosnian war.

**KAT.** (*To Maggie.*) Can anything separate you from Tarik?

**MAGGIE.** Only bullets.

**MAGGIE.** (*Reading.*) “My love, as I look out at the night sky, you  
are there, just beyond the horizon of our beautiful Sarajevo, our  
home for all time.”

**TARIK.** (*Writing.*) “Only a few short weeks and we will be together  
forever, and nothing will come between us again. Goodnight, my  
love.”

**CHORUS/KAT.** Sarajevo is still a paradise.

**CHORUS/BAKA.** A fool’s Paradise.

**CHORUS/DIVJAK.** What was once a one-sided fight has become a  
divided Civil War.

**CHORUS/MESIC.** With Serbs forced to one front.

**TARIK.** (*Reading from letter he is writing to Kat.*) “Love is a smoke  
made with the fume of sighs.”

**CHORUS/MOTHER.** And everyone else forced to another.

**TARIK.** (*No longer reading or writing.*) “The soldier above all  
others prays for peace, for it is the soldier who must suffer and bear  
the deepest wounds and scars of war.”

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**CHORUS/MOTHER.** In times of war, everyone loses something.

**CHORUS/DZEKO.** (*Eerily.*) All these violent delights have violent ends. (*Lights down in other areas, up on Sarajevo Fine Instruments, UR,R, suggested by simple properties such as an instrument on a stand, a small music display, and a shop sign. KATARINA is testing the sound of the cello that BABA has repaired. MAGGIE watches.*)

**BABA.** How does that feel, Katarina?

**KAT.** Much better! What was wrong?

**BABA.** Simple, really. Oh, yes, very simple. I reset the old sound post. You've played this cello so many hours, it's as tired as I am.

**KAT.** I am so grateful for how quickly you repaired the piece, Mr. Sidran! I have a full week of music lessons scheduled. (*She sighs.*) And a girl has to pay the bills somehow.

**BABA.** Well, these times bring out the worker in all of us. And never be ashamed to teach music—your work is important to Sarajevo's future. Now, let me hear a little more. (*Kat plays, losing herself in the music.*)

**BABA.** (*Listening carefully to the tone as Kat comes to the end of a phrase.*) Splendid! That sound post is perfect!

**MAGGIE.** That is beautiful! Did you learn that piece at the University?

**KAT.** (*Laughing.*) No....

**MAGGIE.** (*Gasping—thrilled.*) Is this it? The piece you've been composing?

**KAT.** (*Excitedly.*) Yes! But that is all you get to hear today. You will have to wait to hear the rest at the wedding party. I want it to be a surprise. (*Apologetically.*) It's my wedding gift to you and Tarik, at least for now....

**MAGGIE.** It is perfect. The best gift you could ever have thought of.

**BABA.** Lovely, simply lovely. Thank you for playing for me, Kat. I remember when you were only starting out on the old cello your



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father bought from me. It wasn't a very good instrument, but even then, you had such promise. And now, just now, you took my breath away.

**KAT.** I need all the practice I can get now that the opera house is *(For lack of a better word.)* closed. The building may be gone, but the memories live on. If only I had had a little more time.... *(She trails off, then musters a smile.)* How much do I owe you, Mr. Sidran?

**BABA.** No, no. I will not take your money. I consider it an honor to work on an instrument as beautiful as this. Who knows when I will see something as magnificent? Especially now. No, no, you take my daughter out of this dismal shop and the debt is settled. *(Maggie kisses Baba on the cheek. Baba exits as Kat puts the cello in its case.)*

**KAT.** How is Tarik?

**MAGGIE.** Romantic as ever. He writes to me every day.

**KAT.** And you?

**MAGGIE.** Yes, I write him every day, too.

**KAT.** *(Smiling.)* So, how much time do I have to finish the song?

**MAGGIE.** Only six more months. *(Something in her voice says she's worried.)*

**KAT.** What's wrong?

**MAGGIE.** Nothing. Not really.

**KAT.** Come on, I know you better than that.

**MAGGIE.** Well, you know how in high school we always knew with one glance what kind of day Tarik was having?

**KAT.** Yes! Remember that time when Marko stole a pack of cigarettes from a shop uptown and brought them to school for Tarik? *(They laugh at the memory. In the soldiers' camp, TARIK and MARKO reenact the memory.)* No one would have known if it wasn't for Tarik's face.

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**MAGGIE.** He looked so guilty, and he was caught within the first hour. But Tarik never ratted Marko out.

**KAT.** Remember when we asked Marko where he got them...?

**BOTH.** (*Mimicking Marko*) Don't ask!

**MAGGIE.** Well, Tarik's letters are no different. He says he's fine. But I hear something that worries me.

**KAT.** Tarik never wanted to be a part of this civil war.

**MAGGIE.** He is no soldier. He wouldn't even be there if he had another option.

**KAT.** But what else could he do? It's the law. He had no choice.

**MAGGIE.** I just sense a change. That's all. But enough about my life—I want to hear all the stories from the life of a professional cellist!

**KAT.** Well, I'm no professional now. I loved playing in the symphony, but what did I get, five concerts before the bombs destroyed the opera house?

**MAGGIE.** Oh, but they were wonderful concerts. You can't imagine how excited I was to see my best friend perform on such a grand stage.

**KAT.** I never thanked you, Maggie, for sitting through every one! I wish Tarik and Marko could have been there.

**MAGGIE.** You were amazing, Kat. I kept remembering when we were little and you begged for music lessons, and I begged to never have to take another one! All your hard work paid off!

**KAT.** Your father was so disappointed, but all you wanted to do was play outside with Tarik and Marko—always coming home with a scrape or bruise of some kind!

**MAGGIE.** (*Chuckling at the memory.*) Or covered in grime. But one day the city will be rebuilt and Sarajevo will be itself again.

**KAT.** (*She sighs.*) And until then, I will just keep teaching children music, no matter how much it hurts my ears and my cello.

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**MAGGIE.** Let's go shopping! We only have six months! *(They enter a shop that has seen better days. As before, simple props suggest location. Not much is left in this shop, and what is there is too expensive. The community is clearly in distress, unable to provide adequate food and merchandise, as indicated by the frustrated SHOPKEEPER, who hears them enter and brightens.)*

**SHOPKEEPER.** May I help you?

**KAT.** My friend Maggie is getting married and she—

**MAGGIE.** We are just looking, thank you.

**SHOPKEEPER.** Oh, I just love weddings. I have everything you need.

**MAGGIE.** That's really not—

**SHOPKEEPER.** Do you need a dress? Of course you do—every bride needs a dress!

**KAT.** We are just look—

**SHOPKEEPER.** *(Showing them one item after another, desperately enthusiastic to make a sale.)* Oh, aren't weddings wonderful!

**MAGGIE.** Oh, this is beautiful! But I don't have the money—

**SHOPKEEPER.** No money! Is there one bride in Sarajevo that has money? *(Maggie and Kat leave the shop.)*

**MAGGIE.** *(Sighing.)* I suppose I'll wear Mama's. She offered it.

**KAT.** You'll be beautiful! *(Seeing Maggie's disappointment, she builds.)* And there's something to be said for tradition! *(Lights fade on shop and brighten L, DL, on military camp, suggested by soldiers, a few footlockers, some gear and a campfire. Tarik sits, writing, apart from others.)*

**TARIK.** *(Reading what he has just penned.)* "My bounty is boundless as the sea; my love as deep; the more I give to thee the more I have, for both are infinite." *(He smiles, satisfied and a bit amused by what he has written.)* Goodnight, my love.  
*(Enter Marko, who is familiar with the nightly letter ritual.)*

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**TARIK.** Ha! Who thinks of stuff like this?

**MARKO.** Apparently, you do. What is that, the third love letter you've written this week?

**TARIK.** Well, if you had a girl like Maggie (*He shows Marko a picture.*) you would write love letters too.

**MARKO.** (*Looking at picture.*) I remember that day like it was yesterday—we skipped out of school after lunch—

**TARIK.** Yes, and you got us all in trouble.

**MARKO.** Yeah, but I got you out of it, too, didn't I? (*Laughing.*) Kat must have taken this picture. She might be good with a cello, but she is no photographer! (*They laugh.*)

**TARIK.** Only six more months. Sometimes I don't think I can make it.

**MARKO.** You've made it a year out here already; six more months is not going to kill you. (*He tosses a candy bar to Tarik.*) Here, something to take your mind off home.

**TARIK.** Is that chocolate?

**MARKO.** Maggie always said, (*Imitating Maggie.*) "If anything is on your mind..."

**TARIK.** (*Mockingly.*) "Chocolate will erase it all!" (*Laughing.*) What did you do to get this?

**MARKO.** Don't ask.

(*SOLDIERS enter. One of them, DZEKO, is the perpetual bully jerk.*)

**DZEKO.** For me? You shouldn't have! (*Grabbing the candy and ripping the package open, he takes a huge bite.*)

**MARKO.** Hey—

**TARIK.** Marko, it's fine.

**DZEKO.** So, I see you got another letter from that hot girl back home. (*Laughing.*) Oh, you even have a picture. Wow, don't know what you did to get her. What's her name, Magdalena? (*He says it seductively, caressing each syllable, unconcerned that his mouth is*

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*full.*) Just rolls off the tongue. *(He grabs the picture that Tarik is holding.)*

**TARIK.** *(Angry now, grabbing for the picture.)* Get your filthy hands off that.

**DZEKO.** *(Laughing.)* “Filthy hands!” I don’t mean any harm, just having a conversation. *(His mood darkens.)* You might want to step back. *(Marko, MESIC and Tarik cross DC as Dzeko, KURJAK, and DIVJAK congregate, L, LC)*

**MARKO.** Calm down, he is just trying to get under your skin.

**TARIK.** He can’t talk about Maggie that way.

**MESIC.** *(To Tarik.)* Why don’t you ever talk about her, anyway? If I had someone who loved me as much as she loves you, I would never stop talking. Why not? Wait, is she Muslim or something? *(Silence.)* Oh. *(Mesic pauses, then goes on reassuringly.)* Interfaith marriages happen all the time in Sarajevo. You worry too much. *(Marko, Mesic and Tarik cross DL to other SOLDIERS telling their war stories.)*

**DZEKO.** *(Laughing.)* We saw a truck full of people—women and children—old people too—

**KURJAK.** Why would they be prisoners? They were tired and hungry.

**DIVJAK.** *(Defensively.)* We gave them water.

**KURJAK.** They had nothing.

**DZEKO.** The worst was the execution of thirty women and children, one woman with a baby in her arms. *(Chuckling.)* I would have liked to see it with my own eyes.

**TARIK.** *(To Mesic.)* Now do you understand? Just keep it to yourself, would you? *(Kat, UC, plays her cello as lights shift.)*

**CHORUS/BABA.** Such atrocities—more common and more murderous every day. Sarajevo, the beautiful, thriving capital of Bosnia and Herzegovina, is hardly recognizable.

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**CHORUS/MAGGIE.** Three religions once living in harmony now torn apart.

**CHORUS/KAT.** Bosnia is complicated.

**CHORUS. War is NOT complicated.**

**CHORUS/BABA.** In every direction, our beautiful Sarajevo is in shambles. Our holiest buildings destroyed, our cultural centers bombed and shelled.

**CHORUS/BAKA.** Hospitals with no medicine, no electricity, no water.

**CHORUS/SHOPKEEPER.** Shops with little to sell closing their doors and boarding their windows.

**CHORUS/LEILA.** Old friends, now enemies, ready to fight in the street.

**CHORUS/KAT.** *(Rising from her cello, exhorting, encouraging.)*

But Sarajevo has seen worse.

**CHORUS/MAGGIE.** I still believe we can preserve a multicultural space in the city.

**CHORUS/LEILA.** When the sirens go off, we huddle in our basements. What else can we do?

**CHORUS. We are trapped.** *(Sirens blare, shelling is heard, and chorus disperses to safety, leaving Kat on with cello. Lights up on Sidran home, UC. MAJKA is unwrapping her own wedding dress and smoothing the folds. Maggie is trying on a beautiful red traditional veil as BAKA enters.)*

**BAKA.** Absolutely not! *(She snatches the veil away from Maggie.)*

**MAJKA.** Oh, Baka. This veil is a family tradition.

**BAKA.** There is NOTHING traditional about this wedding.

**MAJKA.** You can't really have anything against Tarik after all this time!

**BAKA.** Anything against him? *(She turns to Maggie.)* You are a Muslim and Tarik is a Serb and your marriage will not work.

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**MAJKA.** Baka, please. NOT NOW. *(She turns to Maggie.)* With or without the family veil, you will make the most beautiful bride. I can't believe my daughter is going to be a bride!

**MAGGIE.** But Baka, Tarik is wonderful. You have always liked him. What changed? *(Baba enters. He sees what is going on and makes eye contact with his wife.)*

**BAKA.** HE didn't change; Sarajevo changed. Every inter-faith marriage has become a mockery with cameras and reporters and spies. Magdalena, you cannot marry Tarik. You cannot live this way. It is too dangerous. He will not be the same man when he comes home. The streets are full of rumors of what Serbian soldiers like your Tarik have done to Muslim women in the prison camps. *(Maggie begins to cry. Kat moves to comfort her.)*

**KAT.** Whether he is a Serb or a Muslim doesn't matter. *(Softly, she speaks to Maggie.)* You know how old people are.

**BAKA.** YES, I understand how old people like me are. We know that we must protect our families. We know because we have seen it all before!

**MAJKA.** Stop this. Our family will not speak to one another in such a way. Our family will judge people for people, not for their religion. *(Baka snorts with derision. Majka softens her tone.)* In our family there are many happy mixed marriages. Two aunts of mine are Serbs, and their "mixed" families are happy.

**BAKA.** And those families are in great danger. *(Maggie turns away, crestfallen.)*

**MAJKA.** Baba, please talk to your mother. *(Baba and Baka cross DR.)*

**BABA.** Now, Baka, there is no reason to ruin this time for Magdalena. Tarik is a good boy. *(He continues to talk to her quietly, trying to soothe the hard feelings, but Baka scoffs.)*

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**KAT.** Don't listen to her. You know what she is saying is not true. Tarik always treated me like a younger sister. He was like the brother I never had. He always protected me and told me that if I had any problems, I could talk to him.

**MAJKA.** Magdalena, your friend is right. Katarina, help me button this dress.

**BABA.** Baka, the wedding won't happen for six months.

**KAT.** He'll be home in time for the wedding. *(She moves her cello to her next position and begins to play softly.)*

**MAJKA.** The war will be over by then and Sarajevo will know peace again.

**BAKA.** Six months! Mark my words. Six months from now Sarajevo will be the capital of Hell. *(Chorus has moved into place as Baka, Baba, Majka, Kat, and Maggie join.)*

**CHORUS/BABA.** We watched what was happening all around us, in Kosovo, in Srebrenica.

**CHORUS/LEILA.** But we never believed—

**CHORUS/KAT.** --We never thought that anything like that destruction could happen in our beautiful Sarajevo.

**CHORUS/MARKO.** The Olympic city.

**CHORUS/KAT.** Mecca of art, music, and beauty

**CHORUS/MAGGIE.** Tolerance and diversity.

**CHORUS/MAJKA.** No one saw it coming.

**CHORUS/BAKA.** Until it was too late.

**CHORUS/BABA.** It would be impossible to destroy such strong unity.

**CHORUS/DIVJAK.** Not impossible.

**CHORUS/BAKA.** *(Bitterly.)* That was the dream.

**CHORUS/KURJAK.** It's simple. Destroy the Bosnian economy.

**CHORUS/DZEKO.** Exterminate the Muslim people!

**CHORUS.** *(Speaking plainly without emotion.)* **Ethnic cleansing.**



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**DZEKO.** *(Soldiers have moved into a small formation and stand at attention as Dzeko instructs them in military strategy.)* A 5-pronged technique to lead to subjugation.

**MESIC.** Concentration

**DIVJAK.** Decapitation

**KURJAK.** Separation

**MESIC.** Evacuation

**DIVJAK.** Liquidation

**SOLDIERS.** Sir!

**DZEKO.** It is the Serbian soldiers' responsibility to **mop up** this ethnic mess.

**CHORUS/MESIC.** But to massacre civilians?

**CHORUS.** *(With derision, anger and disgust.)* **Ethnic cleansing.**  
*(Chorus moves as transition to prison camp begins, to be suggested by a simple fence, a wash tub, stances and positions of guards and clusters of female prisoners. NOTE: Actors who play Baka and Majka can easily be added to this scene with slight change in costume. Guards were soldiers in earlier scenes. Actor who plays Baba may be a guard in this scene as well. Minor costume changes suggest the shift in characters. Guards' lines should be assigned to suit the needs of your group.)*

**CHORUS/MESIC.** *(He introduces this location.)* Regional prison camps

**CHORUS/LEILA.** With guards growing more brutal by the day

**CHORUS/BAKA.** Worsened by drunkenness.

**DZEKO.** *(He aggressively approaches a woman and shoves her to the ground, L)* I can't believe they have me here to clean up this ethnic cesspool. Get out of my way.

**SOLDIERS. Baliija.** *(At C, women are washing clothes in tub of water and doing other work. A soldier, now guard, grabs a woman by the head and slams it into the tub. Water flies everywhere and she*

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*gasps for air when he pulls her up by her hair. He shoves her toward the other prisoners. Tarik and Marko enter R carrying heavy bags of flour, rice, etc., not noticing the scene that is playing out.)*

**GUARDS. Ethnic cleansing.** *(They laugh at their clever pun.)*

**TARIK.** We're here with your supplies. Where do you want them?

**GUARD.** *(He holds a clipboard.)* Name?

**TARIK.** Mécava and Cosić.

**GUARD.** Set it down over there. *(He points DR.)* These pigs will take it from there. *(Tarik and Marko drop the bags, then exit R, going to get more bags.)*

**GUARD.** *(At L, singling out GIRL.)* My, aren't you the pretty one. Prettier than most of these hags anyway. You just wait. You're going to be my special girl. *(He laughs to another guard as he leers at her.)* For tonight at least.

**GIRL.** No. Please! *(He slaps her, then pulls her to him, tearing at her clothing, just the suggestion of what is to come.)*

**GUARD.** Oh, that will do, don't you worry.

**MOTHER.** Leave my daughter alone. *(Guard 2 releases girl and strikes MOTHER. While guards are occupied, women try to get the bags of rice.)*

**GUARD.** Stay away. Don't touch those.

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