

incoming call from Xender

sorry, give me a sec. hey xen, whats up?

*Wait, you can talk?*

Your ride is ready.

yes, i can talk. thanks dude, 'preciate it. hold off  
for a bit, ive got a new friend here.

*YOU CAN HEAR ME??*

*Are they trying to kill you?*

*maybe.*

*YOU COULD HEAR ME THIS WHOLE TIME?*

no, i was listening to screampunk. impossible to hear anything over  
that.

*Oh! Spiritprism?*

*Gods, this is dumb.*

*yeah, lifted a recording of Hyphenation off alice.*

*Nice. She notice?*

*Who are you talking to?*

*you know i can never tell with her.*

*Tell with who?*

Ever the enigma. Love that girl.

*What's going on?*

sorry xen, give a minute.

Don't take too long, holding a teleport spell like this is pretty tiring.

*Who is zen?*

theyre a good friend.

Aww, thanks.

*Are they a spirit? I don't see them.*

no, i'm on call with them.

*What?*

Like explaining basic aether kinematics to your shareholders.

Wait, I'm not on speaker, am I?

nah you're good xen.

lia, you aren't familiar with sparkworks, are you.

*I've seen people summon bolts of lightning?*

high magic, steamworks or under. got it.

Typical fantasy. Boooring.

hey, you never know. new people always have something interesting about them, otherwise they wouldn't be here.

*About that. Where is... here, exactly? Did I planeshift at some point?*

hey, you're pretty quick on the uptake. which is good,  
i hate explaining planeshifting to noobs.

You're opening their mind to the concept of infinite worlds!  
What's not fun about that?

it gets annoying when you've done it a hundred times.

*I've never actually planeshifted before, but I've read about it.*

They're well-read. Are they noble?

don't look it. looks like you've been through hell, honestly.

*Hey, it's hard to keep up with fashion when information travels at the same speed I do.*

A bard?

you're a bard?

*Yup. Graduated college right as the world ended. Great for business. Not so great for everything else.*

rough.

*Yeah.*

well, at least you don't have to worry about that anymore.

*I'm sorry?*

oh, i guess i should give the spiel, eh?  
welcome to The Space Between!

this particular spot happens to be within a certain radius of a city  
named Anchor. everything within this radius is called Yard. it's a  
lovely place, full of ghost towns, silent wilderness, and a good deal  
of undead. have you ever fought undead?

*Unfortunately, yes.*

good. you'll be fine then. you've probably noticed that time and space are a bit funky here. upside, you don't need to eat anymore, and you probably won't age. downside, it's very hard to get back to where you came from.

*Oh.*

*yeah.*

*But not impossible?*

*She's taking it well.*

not impossible. what's the last place you remember that you're certain was part of your world?

*Uhh... it was the ruins of a small town. I always pass through it.*

*name? landmarks?*

*I... think it had a fountain? No idea what the name would be.*

*yeah, that's pretty common for people who come through ghost towns.  
how have you been navigating here?*

*I've just been walking north. Go north for long enough, eventually  
you hit Orc's Crossing. Not too hard to find Wolf's Hearth from there.*

*...*

*north by the sun?*

*Rises in the east, sets in the west.*

yeah, not here. you've probably been walking in a squiggle.

*...Fuck*

Wait. I recognise that name. Wolf's Hearth...

huh?

*I said, fuck.*

no, hang on. what was that xender?

I've had Birdsong writing down some of his meditations. He keeps mentioning this place that he says he has no memory of... wait.

what?

*What?*

*...Does she know the Shattering?*

the what?

just ask her.

fine. do you know the Shattering?

*Yeah, like I said, world ended when I graduated...*

she does.

*...Wait. I didn't tell you what we called it.*

She's from Chardon's world.

...no way.

I picked up Kamati from Chardon's world.  
Birdsong must be bleeding memories with Kamati.  
That's why Birdsong knows... oh, this is fascinating.

wait, you what?

*Do you guys know where I came from?*

okay, xen, you have a lot of explaining to do.

Later. Let's keep following this rabbit hole.  
She's a bard, right? Ask her if--

oh my god true. do you know someone named Chardon Nadaar?

*The name rings a bell.*

Jackpot.

*Why are you looking at me like that?*

how do you know him? tell me tell me tell me!

*Okay, but if I do, you have to help me get home.*

xen? can we do that?

We probably can't get her back to her ghost town, but  
we might be able to get her through a different one in  
that world. It's certainly got enough of them.

deal. now spill.

*Uhhh... He fought in the Capital's bi-annual tournament. Did better than I did.*

*Won his bracket, against the woman who would go on to ascend to be The Fireforged.*

**he beat a GODDESS OF FIRE??**

*She wasn't a goddess yet. Just a regular member of the Dragon Knights at that point.*

*How do you know him?*

**remember that city i mentioned, Anchor? he's effectively the ruler.**

*Wait. What? He's dead. He died years ago.*

**walking through a ghost town isn't the only way to get to Yard.  
how did he die?**

*Lily, I'm as excited as you about this development,  
but are you gonna force me to hold this spell forever?*

**right. sorry. come on, i'll give you a lift to Anchor.**

*What about returning to my world?*

*searching for your ghost town is like finding a drop of water  
in an ocean of blood. lucky for you, your world is a popular one.  
we'll find a different way back for ya.*

*...A way that doesn't involve my death, right?*

**no promises.**

*Uhh...*

*i'm joking. now come on. xen, see you on The Otherside?*

*You got it. My treat, to celebrate this discovery.*

*Um.*

mm? oh, no, sorry, The Otherside is a tavern with a rooftop patio.  
killer nachos.

*Killer... not mine?*

xen, hit me. amanita, hold my hand.

Deploying in 3...

*Wait, why?*

2...

*Gods you're cold.*

1...

you're gonna love this.

Engage.

*call ended*