

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. Booring.

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 planesifting 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 your 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, thats 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 Captial'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