

## SPRING IN HIERON 01: THE TOUCH OF OTHERS

Transcriber: Cole

[fire crackling in the background followed by Jack de Quidt's ['Still Winter'](#)]

**Austin:** It is still winter yet. Months ago, the Heat and the Dark emerged from the long sands of Rosemerrow bringing terror and destruction to Hieron. And though the sun has returned and though the vicious blizzard that battered the northwest has weakened. And though Adelaide's so-called curse has vanished. The warmth of spring has not yet arrived. The people of Hieron have faced calamity. And now they look to their leaders, to you, in hopes that they may recover and rebuild. Ephrim, Prophet of the Unwavering Flame. Golden Lance Thrandir, the Ranger. You two joined the traveler of worlds Red Jack and Corsica Neue, Queen of the Unstill in leading thousands of refugees and survivors towards a new home. The ruins of the Last University. Besides your motley collection of loyal friends and allies like Devar van der Dawes, Uklan Tel, Emmanuel La Salle, and Ephrim's loyal cobbin, Highwater, you bring with you ten distinct groups. Each with their own leaders to this new settlement in the center of Hieron.

Corsica Neue's own unstill come along, of course. Now equals in unlife with everyone else. Just one fatal error away from annihilation. Joining them are those who Red Jack called his companions, Rosette and the moths of Old Man's Chin have arrived, along with their weaver companions and the remaining oni boys who once sprouted from Red Jack's side. Mee Kosh, the goblin elder and the snow elves of Auniq, joined in temporary and precarious alliance, came, too. And Balion Wythe, the once romantic hero of Rosemerrow and on again, off again lover of the late Chancellor Gilbert Lutz has come with those halflings who were willing to leave their supposed ancestral home after it was hit so badly by the Heat and Dark's arrival. They arrived soon after Chatterchin and the Gnolls; those who Fero left behind in the woods outside of Rosemerrow.

Morbash came with you, too, just behind. Along with those Archivists who understood that sometimes in the face of chaos, maintaining the pattern requires movement, not complacency. An old ally of your Thrandir, Carrot, the squirrel, arrived, too. Along with entire ecosystems behind them. With the northwest devastated, the many animals who lived in the environs of Twinbrook, the woods between Velas and Auniq, and the forest surrounding Rosemerrow all needed a new place to forage and flock. Somewhere less threatened by the Heat and the Dark and the Stars. They now live in the wilds in the outskirts of the University. Keeping within the walls of the school's campus, but still on the edges of society is the professional scoundrel, Blake Bromley along with their loose guild of people who know how to find things and how to get things done, often in the shadows where others were too precious to travel.

Surprisingly, perhaps, was the arrival of Jerod Shiraz, leader of the Ordennan Dissent, nearly one third of what once made up the nation's war machine, now turned into open objectors to the imperial ambitions of the Impetus. Though she once traveled along with the living star,

Obelus, as well as with Stornras Glasseye and Sunder Havelton, who were given the Blade in the Dark by Samol, when she arrives, Shiraz is flanked only by everyday Ordennan citizens and soldiers. And she makes no mention of the sword or her absent companions. Finally, there is Rosana, who has become the lay-leader of the Creed of Samoths in this part of Hieron. Though given no specific title, she has become the de facto head and heart of the group in this dark moment, providing counsel, concern, and condemnation when appropriate. Neither she, nor her son Benjamin, knows what has happened to their beloved Hadrian, yet both live on with strength in his memory.

With these groups, you've built the first workings of a real community here in the shadows of the college's towers and in the depths of the neglected ruins of the Last University. And, as is often the case in moments of dire need, some have already risen and found basic solutions to the most critical of problems. Perhaps most importantly, those with academic and magical acumen, the semiotician Uklan Tel, increasingly obsessed with his dangerous studies, Jerod Shiraz, Living Blood of Sea and Smoke, you, King Ephrim, and a handful of others spent weeks scouring the Book of Life that Throndir brought, as well as the other magical texts of the University in an effort to establish the shimmering shield of starstuff that the, now undead, wizard Arrell once proposed. And with the power of the book of life, you succeeded, enveloping not only the University's campus but also the wilds around it in a scintillating gleam, a translucent sphere which ripples and waves in the wind. And which, for now, at least, protects the entire settlement from the ever encroaching flames of the Heat and the Dark.

And with this existential threat held back, many other needs could be addressed as well. Rosana and the refugees of Velas immediately set to rebuilding the dorms, kitchens, and other necessary structures of the university, while Blake's moonlighters and- and Morbash's archivists scoured the school's remaining stores for food, fuel, and medicine enough to last at least a year. All while in the campus' courtyards, Rosette's mothkin have begun the agricultural processes necessary to at least subsist, if not to thrive, in this new home. Balion Wythe and Corsica Neue have risen as military leaders, the queen of the unstill and the uncrowned leader of the halflings each bringing their tactical strength to bear, Offering those who wish to defend the encampment a role and a duty appropriate to their skills.

Throndir, you are joined by Chatterchin's gnolls, Mee Kosh's goblins and snow elves, and the wild animals who have pledged their coy loyalty to Carrot, in an effort to map out the still-snow covered forests, hills, valleys, and wastes which surround the University. And some, like Red Jack, Victoria Solomon, and Dr. Gloria Lake, travel even further, exploring beyond the university's protective cloak of stars, deep into the ongoing cataclysm of Hieron, all in hopes of finding other survivors. Partly, they seek to offer shelter to any who lived through the winter, and partly, they seek the most important thing of all, an answer to survive the impending collapse, a swift breeze, a cooling shade, anything to hold back the summer.

[pasues to begin the show introduction]

**Austin:** Welcome to Friends at the Table, as actual play podcast focused on critical world-building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends .I am your host, Austin Walker. And joining me, still in winter, Andrew Lee Swan.

**Dre:** Hey, you can find me on twitter [@swandre3000](#).

**Austin:** And Sylvia<sup>1</sup> Clare.

**Sylvia:** Hey, you can find me on Twitter [@captaintrash](#), and you can listen to my other show, [Emojidrome](#) on iTunes or Google Play.

**Austin:** As always, you can find me on Twitter [@austin\\_walker](#), and the show [@friends\\_table](#). If you'd like to support the show, and we really appreciate it when you do, you can go to [friendsatthetable.cash](#) and toss us a couple bucks on Patreon. Genuinely, even just \$1 means a lot to us, you know? There's a lot of people listening and you know, even if you... if each one of you gave us a buck, it would mean a lot. So, again if you'd like to support us, friendsatthetable.cash. Today, as we get back into Hieron, we'll be playing a combination of things. We will be continuing our game of Dungeon World, which I guess has now entered it's... What year has it even... What year is it at this point? For the third year? The fourth year?

**Sylvia:** Oh geez. [Dre laughs]

**Austin:** Of play. Um, and Dungeon World is, of course, by Adam Koebel and Sage LaTorra. And for the game that you two will be playing, Ephrim and Throndir... ugh, it is 'Do Not Let Us Die in the Dark Night of This Cold Winter', aka 'Cold Winter' by Cecil Howe. Um, it is a really cool mini-game. And we're gonna use it to kind of, walk through the establishment of this community as winter slowly turns to spring. Um, you will still be your characters. You're still playing as Ephrim and as Throndir. That has not changed in any way, but this is a game that is effectively, I mean... So, Cecil Howe in the introduction basically says that it is a sort of, mini-game that he designed for his own play to kind of, do some downtime stuff, right? And specifically, it is a game about managing a village during the winter, like during a period of cold. Um, we are abstracting a lot.

The book, as it's written, says [reading] 'The passage of time is tracked as the number of turns needed to survive the winter as the village elder, aka the GM. It is your job to determine how this is measured in game. Turns can be days, weeks, or even months.' Well, guess what? It's Friends at the Table. Everything we do is just like... lasts a little longer than we think it will. And so, turns for us are going to be years. Um, by default, we are supposed to set this game to be ten turns plus the number of players. But for us, we're just gonna say ten. Um, and at the tenth year, spring will fully be in bloom, and we will pick up with Dungeon World as it stands. And we'll see where people are by then.

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<sup>1</sup> The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.

As you know, a number of characters are not even in this realm of existence at this point. Lem, Hella, Adaire, and Hadrian are all inside of the Blade in the Dark, um, as of the end of the last season. And Fero has left the, uh, left from the New Archives and walked west to go to the mark of the Erasure. And we will check in with them when it makes sense to. So, I guess, look forward to that.

Um, I'll say upfront that my plan for this is not for it to go... like these ten turns are not going to be ten episodes or something like that. This game is a pretty brisk thing, and we should just kind of get into it and see how it goes. Um, I feel like there's other important stuff here. Um, I guess it will come up as it comes up. So, I'm gonna walk through the book a little bit. And we have a document in front of us that's like, our scratch sheet. So, let's start like this. Um, [reading] 'Each adventurer's role in Cold Winter is directly tied to the role of the character from your regular campaign or system. With most role playing games, players will pick a specific class as their basic ingredient in the complex recipe that is a player character.' And so, for us, Cold Winter runs with the assumption that all classes or jobs can be boiled down and reduced to fighter, wizard, or thief.

Um, [reading] 'Some wonderful nature grants a fighter... grants a fighter to press route, bestows great patience on a studious wizard, and gives the thief shadow to hide in- in broad daylight. These same traits will give the adventurers bounty when searching for supplies. Despite being clutched in the whited-out hell of winter's grip'... Sorry, '...despite being clutched in the whited-out hell of winter's grip. Adventurers will need to know which one of these three classes is best suited for their character if it's not implicitly stated. If you were an adventurer unsure of which Cold Winter class to drape over their character, use this guideline. Strength or brute-force based characters are to count as fighters. Arcane or faith based characters are to count as wizard. Stealth or agility based characters are to count as thieves.' So, what do you two think?

**Sylvia:** Uh, I think I'm a wizard pretty clearly with Ephrim. [clears throat]

**Austin:** Yeah, I think so. Wizard. I've written it. Uh, Throndir?

**Dre:** Uh, I'm pretty sure Throndir's a thief. I kind of went back and forth for a second, but then I read the part about thieves being like, good at tracking and I was like, yeah that's Throndir.

**Austin:** [overlapping through **Dre's** answer] Yeah. Yes. Yeah, totally. So, I should explain how this works. [reading] 'Cold Winter presents a halt in the regular machinations of your current campaign, but it should not be seen as a means for pausing regular role-play. The role of Village Elder is played much like a non-player character in usual capacities.' And in that case, I'm... I think, of the groups here- So, I should note there are a bunch of other NPCs that- you know, I kind of set up in the intro that there are these ten major groups, um, and we'll come back to those in a moment. But there are also other NPCs around. I think for the... there's kind of a combined Village Eldership here.

At the end of last season, we kind of painted it almost as if Corsica Neue and Ephrim were the like, co-royalty of this new place. Like, not in any way, um, like, aligned with each other through any sort of partnership, except that the two of them both had people who followed them, right? Um, and I kind of like it as like a... as like a... almost a dual-monarchy or some sort, you know? But for the purpose of this game, I also just think Corsica Neue and Red Jack are also the people who I'm kind of positioning as Village Elders, if that makes sense. Because they both have been around for a while and are... They're not the bosses necessarily, but like, they are two NPCs who I would like y'all to be able to like, interact with regularly. But you can interact with anybody here as it makes sense.

[0:15:00]

Uh, the book... encourages assigning names to villagers, which like, yep... That's us. [Sylvia laughs] We're on it. Um, [reading] 'Throughout Cold Winter, the abilities and skills of each adventurer are passive or automatically assumed to be activated. As mentioned in the adventurer class section, each adventurer's job gives specific bonuses when gathering supplies. This bonus, explained further within chapter two, is the amalgamation of an adventurer's skill put to use. A wizardly adventurer may have spells that reveal hidden objects or create food from thin air. Rather than rolling the dice approp... uh, the dice appropriated in your chosen set of rules, these abilities are the cause of supply gathering bonuses.'

So, this is a game about gathering supplies and facing the threats of the wilderness during winter. And winter can be understood really broadly, and it's how we're going to use it here because I suspect that some bits of spring will begin to come into being at- earlier than later, right? Like, the snows thawing are not the end of winter, metaphorically, you know? So, um, we should keep in mind- I guess, things to keep in mind for you two when you start explaining the space: when the game starts, snow is still on the ground. The storms are still... echoes of the winter storms are still hitting here and there. And so, we can still draw on that imagery a lot. And then also, you can draw on the imagery of the Heat and the Dark slowly being um... cutting through things, right? Huge gashes in the earth itself as the Heat and the Dark, uh, you know, creates new chasms of burning, black-purple fire. Remembering always that any trace of color or shape is always just like, a veneer over the true blackness. The true nothingness. The absence of what is at the heart of the Heat and the Dark.

And then the other thing you can use is the starstuff. These big white, glowing, but not... but not light-producing, right? They don't... the starstuff.- these huge arches of starstuff are uh, strange, almost like, apparition-like structures that the starstuff has started building out in the wilds. All of it is super bright to look at, but also doesn't actually light the surrounding area, you know? So, like, you could be walking in the middle of the night and see, you know, a tower of bright white light, but the rest of the area all around it is not lit in anyway, outside of like, the moonlight, right? [amused] Um, the sun is back, as a reminder. Um, trying to think of other important things about the world worth thinking about.

Um, the Grand Tour is here now. That is Severea and Galenica. And they have been riding up and down the kind of Western side of Hieron now to kind of keep it stitched shut and to try to like, close the chasms that were caused by the Heat and the Dark. Um, I think those are the big picture things. The Ordennan Impetus again has kind of splintered with Jerod Shiraz's kind of reformist and kind of apologetic um, component of the Ordennans here in the Last University. And then the rest still kind of spread throughout the northwest. Still kind of headquartered on Ordenna with a base of operations at Nacre. So, maybe you'll bump into them. You could say?

Um, I'm trying to think of anything else we need. Um, I think that's pretty much where we're gonna start. Um, so, this is a game that runs mostly with d6's, and I'll just kind of walk through, I guess, some of the main... the main like, ideas for like... tracking stats and stuff like that. So, I have your names down here as just like, these are where your names are, but also this is where we're gonna track your buildings. You each have a building. Um, this is abstract again. It's not like there's one building in the Last University that is Ephrim's and one that is Thrandir's and that is the entirety of the university. Think of it more as like, direct jurisdictions or like, subsections of the university area. And if it helps, we can actually just straight up move to a blank page and start fucking around with one. Do you know what I mean?

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Yeah, I'm into that.

**Austin:** Um, Gonna start drawing a map a little bit. Slide one over here. Boom. But wait, I said boom. Boom. There we go. Um, so, you know. Let's just... let's just do like, a big circle on the outside. That way it's just like, 'Hey, that's the outside.' Bop. Ok. And we know there's probably like a tower in the middle, right? And then add stuff, it needs to be drawn... maybe there's like, a little side map, um, thing. Wait, were those not on the right layer? That's weird. They were all on the GM... er the GM layer for some reason. Uh, Roll20, why are you fightin' me already? We just started. **[Dre laughs]** Cut me some fucking slack. There we go. Ok.

**Sylvia:** Good to be back.

**Austin:** Good to be back. Um, So, how about this? The two of you should start drawing a couple buildings here. Um, I'm just gonna call this like, the central tower. [typing] Tower. Uh, and then like, this is like, the meeting hall that's like, attached to the central tower. Um, now [reading] 'For each adventurer there should be one building. Each player except the Village Elder has control over one building and each building starts with five villagers.' For our purposes, um, I guess I'll keep reading. [reading] 'The starting population of your village is the number of buildings times five. For example, if you have four players, then your starting population is twenty.'

Well, I'll say straight up, there are more than ten people in this... in this city you're building. Um, but what there is is again, a degree of abstraction at work here. So, you both have

a population of five, but that's five groups of people, not five people, right? And I don't even want to make it so that that means five, that each one of those populations is one hundred or something, right? Because my guess is, there are way more um, orcs here than there are um, you know, snow elves from Auniq, right? Um, I don't think that there are that many snow elves compared to orcs who had spent the last century or two like, slowly growing and building a city. Um, and so, we should think of these populations as being a little bit more... um, a little bit more fluid and their presence here in the community isn't just, 'are they alive?,' it's 'are they here and committed to the project of this place?' The Last University.

Um, so, some extra- some more stuff about like, what the various key important things are that your going to- that you need to deal with. You'll be needing to provide food for people. And every year, you're going to go out and try to get food, and again, think about this as an abstracted way. The way that you roll dice is an abstraction of the entire year of going out and getting food or trying to grow something. Um, you'll also need medicine for people, and you'll need fuel for the fire. All of those are super, super important things. [light laugh] Um, some additional notes, when food becomes scarce, domesticated animals can be slaughtered for extra units of food. To start with, there will be one animal per adventurer. These animals are not beholden to any specific player, and must be slaughtered as a group decision. So, that means that to start with, you all have two... two animals total. Um, and that's like a herd of sheep or goats or cows or something. Up to y'all to decide when it makes sense. Um, and then right, we have ten turns total, so I'm gonna keep that up top in our... in our doc, right? Turns remaining. Boom. Ten. No big deal, right?

**Sylvia:** [punctuated laugh] Eh.

**Austin:** So, uh, a couple of extra things here. So, I guess actually, you have to draw these buildings and tell me... Let's draft who is... who is reporting... er who... which of these population groups reports to who?

**Dre:** Oh boy.

**Austin:** Let's roll for it. Unless you have a clear number one pick. You guys... I'm guessing you both have different number one picks, right?

**Sylvia:** Uh...

**Austin:** Ah, fuck it. Let's roll. Both of you roll 2d6. Let's do it.

**Dre:** Now, we doing this... Are we doin' a snake draft? How we... how we workin'?

**Austin:** Mhm. [Dre laughs] Yeah, let's do a snake. Well, there's like, two of you, though that doesn't really work, right?

**Dre:** [laughing] Yeah, I know. Yeah.

**Sylvia:** I really hope I don't get the animals. That'd be a little weird, you know?

**Austin:** The animals are everyone... oh, you mean those animals, right.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I meant the wild animals. With Carrot.

**Austin:** [overlapping] The other animals. Totally. Carrot and Co. Alright, Throndir you rolled an eight. Uh, Ephrim, you rolled a five. Uh, Throndir, you're up first. Who you draftin'?

**Dre:** Uh, I'm gonna take Rosana.

**Austin:** Ok, that is the... Hadrian's wife, Rosana, and the kind of lay people. The kind of lay human followers of Samothēs. It's kind of a mix of... I guess, it's anyone who is a follower of Samothēs, but it's like a mix of Valesian people and people from Rosemerrow. Uh, it is not Dark Son. It is not Cult of the Dark Son, or Church of the Dark Son. So, important. Uh, ok. Ephrim.

**Sylvia:** I think I'm gonna go with Corsica and the unstill.

**Austin:** Sounds good. Corsica Neue. Alright. Throndir?

**Dre:** Uh, I'll take Chatterchin and the gnolls.

**Austin:** Ok. Ephrim?

**Sylvia:** Um, I'm gonna go with... uh, Balion Wythe and...

**Austin:** Wythe. Yeah, Balion Wythe.

**Sylvia:** ...Rosemerrow.

**Austin:** Yes, uh, Balion Wythe was the... only came up in an intro last year. Um, was the... is the kind of, body guard of the former Chancellor Lutz who has since been bubbled by Arrell. Put into the Study. And also was kind of this adventurer. Um, was this dope like, sort of romantic hero. Um, they went on all these adventures together across the world. And when... and she and her crew were sent to go stop the... help stop the Anchor at Old Man's Chin, and interrupted a sort of eastern group of the Anchor who were coming to crush the moths and the uh, the weavers. Um, and upon returning to Rosemerrow during the arrival of the Heat and the Dark, unsurprisingly rose to prominence again. Um, you know, even without her... at this point kind of, platonic partner of the Chancellor because she's just a badass hero. So, she is... she is now not reporting to you, but sort of reporting to you. Throndir?

**Dre:** Uh, [repetitious exhaled thinking noises] I'll take Rosette and the moths.

**Austin:** Ok, all the Rose's over here. Throndir.



**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Alright. Rosette, boom. Uh, Ephrim?

**Sylvia:** Uh, I'm gonna pick Morbash and the Archivists.

**Austin:** Hell yeah. Throndir?

**Dre:** Let me get them wild animals.

**Austin:** Hell yeah. Carrot. Uh, Ephrim?

**Sylvia:** Oh, um... alright, who's left? It's...

**Austin:** Blake Bromley. Uh, Mee Kosh and the goblins and the snow elves. Um... and Jerod Shiraz, the Ordennan... the Leader of the Ordennan Dissent.

**Sylvia:** Uh, refresh my memory. Was Jerod who we talked to in that tavern on the holiday special ages ago, or am I misremembering?

**Austin:** You talked her in the... Um, I don't know if you were there. I'm literally on that episode of my relisten right now.

**Sylvia:** Ok.

**Austin:** You... I don't think Ephrim was there. Ephrim... Oh wait, maybe... maybe, wait. That's not true.

**Sylvia:** [overlapping] When the... when we met the star in the attic. Right?

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah, yeah, yeah. You totally were. Yes, yes, yes, yes.

**Sylvia:** Ok,.

**Austin:** 'm literally on that turn. If I bring out my phone right now, that is where I am at. [**Dre** and **Sylvia** laugh] You could just fit in... in my relisten, you just finished burning the bottle of Adlebury. Of Obelday Adelbury...

**Sylvia:** [overlapping] Perfect.

**Austin:** ...who was the shitty preacher, and you're about go have that conversation, so yes.

**Sylvia:** Ok.

**Austin:** You have... so yes. That makes sense if you want to do Jerod.

**Sylvia:** I'm... yeah, I'm gonna go with Jerod then.

**Austin:** Yeah, um, cool. Uh, Throndir? Fifth?

**Dre:** Oh boy. Oh boy. There's a part of me that like, I'm not sure whether me taking the goblins and the snow elves...

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Dre:** ... is better or having them go to Ephrim... [**Austin** laughs, followed by Dre]

**Austin:** And like, having the.... Having them separated a little bit.

**Dre:** Yeah. I'll take... I'll take Mee Kosh and the goblins and the snow elves.

**Austin:** Ok. And we're good? You want Mee Kosh here? You don't want Gnik? I wrote down Gnik.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Ok. Mee Kosh seems right.

**Dre:** Mee Kosh is our... is our guy that we met like, all the way back in fall, right?

**Austin:** [overlapping] Super like... yes.

**Dre:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Austin:** 100%. 100% The one who the word eaters did not take... take his language.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** He managed to stay safe. Um, I'm pretty sure... he was fine, right? I'm pretty sure he was fine. It's been a minute. Um, I don't think he got hurt at the end of all that, so... Uh, which leaves you with Blake Bromley, Ephrim.

**Sylvia:** Sound good.

**Austin:** Um, remind me, Ephrim. What was the name of your... your agent? Who was like, a... uh, someone you converted. Who used to be... used to be Dark Son?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, um... oh my god.

**Austin:** [overlapping] I remember that they were a cobbin.

**Sylvia:** [overlapping] Did I forget to write down her name?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Oh, I did.

**Austin:** Oh, you know what?

**Sylvia:** [interrupting] Highwater.

**Austin:** Was it Highwater?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I think so. That's what it says here.

**Austin:** Oh, ok. Yes, that is correct. Alright. I'm just gonna note that Highwater is in there with Blake, as being like, you know, spies and whatnot.

**Sylvia:** Makes sense.

**Austin:** Ok. Gotta make sure we get some cobbins in here. That's all. Uh, alright, so yeah. Feel free to start drawing on this map, and you know, maybe saying where some of these people are. Um, I'm gonna draw like, another circle here actually. One second. Let's move... let's move... let's get every... you know, let's get everything, and then slide it. Let's get everything, and then... that didn't do the thing I wanted to do at all. I'm on the wrong layer again. Great. So, one more thing that's important is that you also have the Book of Life that Arrell wanted, and if you remember, Arrell was like, 'Oh, using this, I can make the starstuff into like, a wall that actually keeps... I can like, control it a little bit and keep it so that it is like, um, there's a wall between us and like, the Heat and the Dark. And it'll like, provide a little safety.'

Um, and so, I think there's two circles here. And one of them is like, literally the campus. And that is the inner circle. Um, and then there is this outer circle, and that is this like, wall of starstuff. And I think it's kind of thin. Like, I don't think it's like a... it's not a wall you can put a person on. It's like a shimmery... It's like... it's like, you know... did y'all see the Annihilation movie?

**[0:30:00]**

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** Uh, it's like that. It's like, but it's like shimm.. But it's like, a little more like the white starstuff than like a cool, weird chromatic coloring thing. Um, so it's like you pass...

**Sylvia:** [interrupting] Is it like...

**Austin:** Go ahead.

**Sylvia:** Oh, go ahead. I was gonna ask about passing through it actually, so...

**Austin:** Yeah, you can walk through it. I think maybe you can walk through it. I think anybody can walk through it. It only keeps out the Heat and the Dark. That's what I will say. Or at least that's the hope, maybe. Like, maybe if one of these rolls goes wrong, we go a different way, you know? But that is the way it has been set up. Um, I think you know, there's been a... it's a thing that it took a couple of months to figure out. A combination of like, you, Ephrim, and Uklan Tel... I'm sure there's another mage or two in the vicinity who help out. Um, alright. So, let's figure out everything else. Wait, I want to make sure I'm not missing anything else that we need to track here. So, we have five people. We have five people each, right? We have five... five populations each. Um, we have everyone right now is not... no one is sick. No one is hungry. No one is.... uh, you have all the fuel you need.

Um, ten turns. Yep. Alright. [reading] 'As explained in Chapter one, each turn represents the passage of time you decided upon before the game begins. Each turn has a succession of steps for resolving actions during that time. With the exception of the first turn, these steps are repeated each turn for the duration of winter's length. Steps one and two are skipped during the first turn, as it is implied that the storeroom contains the bare minimum to ensure the village folk can survive from turn one to turn two.' So, that's good. That means we don't have to count the dead and forecast the weather or ration the supplies.

**Dre:** Yay!

**Austin:** Uh, so let's... I'm actually gonna also add a thing here that's called the storehouse. So, what we need a storehouse of is food. In fact, I'll put the animals in the storehouse really quick. Boop. Bop. Two animals. I guess, [typing] Animals. Two. Uh, food, medicine, fuel. Then I'm also gonna need, I think... temperature, but that doesn't start yet. What's up?

**Sylvia:** I was looking at the map, and was like, 'Where's the animals?' I'm... I was not... I was looking at the wrong...

**Austin:** Oh, you were looking at the map. Yes.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I was looking at the wrong thing.

**Austin:** You can add the animals. Please. Please feel free to start drawing on this map.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. I gotta think of what...

**Austin:** Figure out where those animals are.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Uh, [reading] 'before each turn starts, an adventurer must be activated to make certain rolls. The active adventurer can be decided by your game's built in mechanic for tracking order or you can simply rotate around the table.' Let's just keep this roll gonna for now. So, Thrandir, you're gonna start as the active adventurer.

**Dre:** Ok.

**Austin:** Um, ok. Uh, so we don't need to do step one which again is counting the dead or forecasting the weather. We don't need to ration supplies. We just need to... start doing gathering new supplies. So, um, again there are three types of supplies. There's herbs and roots that are medicine, right? That stops illnesses. There's food which... which keeps people hungry, er keeps people from being hungry rather. If someone is hungry for a while, that's a bad... that's bad, and they will... in the game, as written, they will die. But for us, they will either die, if it makes sense, or they will flee. They will leave and kind of give up on the... on the project of the Last University, which maybe it takes a new name at some point. I'm very curious.

And then there's fuel. And fuel, you need every turn because you need to like... you'll freeze the death otherwise, right? Um, and I think eventually we can start thinking about fuel, even when it stops being... when it stops being cold- like, too cold to live, it can still be like, you still need fuel to... er you still need um, you know, building materials. Uh, you still need to... to provide people clothes. Like, there's more to the world than just food and medicine. Um, once you start abstracting out the idea that it's not life or death so much as staying or leaving, you know, it's... fuel is the sort of like, primarily currency for keeping people bought in.

Um, [reading] 'the number of fuel units you need to heat buildings each turn is equal to the temperature rolled in step one.' So, again, we don't need to do that this turn, cause we're just.. Our storeroom has it. You show up to this... to this university. And it's actually like, 'Oh wow. There's still a bunch of supplies here.' [reading] 'Step three. In step three, the adventurers must elect to gather only one of three supplies. In the harsh winter, it is unwise to split the party for many reasons. A single adventurer is unlikely to return a useful amount of supplies or even return at all. The winter nights are disastrously long and days are exhaustively short. Supply conditions should be concentrated to maximize return. When the adventurers have decided on the supply to collect, the active adventurer must roll 2d6 for the number of gathered units.

Gathered units are the base number of units collected by the adventurers. After the adventurers have had a chance to describe their foraging, you must record the gathered units in the village storeroom. Once the gathered units have been added to their stock, the adventurers will get two more chances to gather more supplies. Bonus units are awarded based on an adventurer's class, as designated in chapter one, and the supply being gathered. Each of the three supplies is related to the three base classes. Fighters value strength and stamina, thus gathering more fuel by chopping more wood. Thieves excel are trapping and tracking, gaining more food. And a wizard's study gives them knowledge of reagents and will spot more medicinal flora.

The first bonus comes in the form of additional units rolled by adventurers whose class matches the supply chosen to gather. [car horns can be heard from outside] Each adventurer whose class matches the supply roll will... 'honk outside my window. Uh... [reading] 'Each adventurer whose class matches the supply roll, rolls 1d6 in additional units. Record any supplies collected this way on the storeroom worksheet.' So, that means that like, let's say you go, 'Alright, I'm gonna go get med...' uh, er... Thrandir's going first, right? Thrandir, you're like, 'Turn one, baby. I'm gonna go immediately get some... some more food.' Then not only do you roll the regular 2d6, because your class matches, you will also roll another 1d6. Um, and record some... extra... those extra food.

Uh, then um, it says, [reading] 'It is likely that adventurers out gathering wood might spot a snow hare or trip over some root known to sway a fever. This brief glimmer of luck arrives in the form of gratuity units. Any adventurer who did not roll for additional units may roll 1d3 in gratuity units that match their class supply.' Um, and so that means like, hey, let's say you went out to get food. Thrandir's like, 'Alright, I'm gonna do this ex... base 2d6 plus 1d6.' Ephrim, you would then also roll 1d3 to just happen to see some medicine, you know?

**Sylvia:** Ok.

**Austin:** Um, I just want to make sure, really quick that we don't... I don't think the storeroom starts with anything because it's assumed that the storeroom is kind of like, being used, right? Uh, I think so. I don't think the storeroom starts with anything. Which is I guess, an important thing to think about.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Uh, yeah. I don't think it does. Because it's again, the storeroom is like, already being used. Like it's assumed that the storeroom has exactly what's needed for the first two years. Right? Um, yeah. Ok. I'll double check, but... no big deal.

**Dre:** Yeah, I don't see anything on my quick reference that says, you know, make sure to put x in the storehouse, so...

**Austin:** Right, right. What page is that quick reference on?

**Dre:** Uh... it is pdf page thirty-four.

**Austin:** Ok. Right, right, right. Ok. Yeah, and I'm like, when I look at the storehouse... the storeroom worksheet, there is not anything that's like...

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** ... this is the base number of whatever, you know? Uh, ok. Here we go. So, Throndir, it is the first year. I see y'all have drawn stables and dormitories. Hell yeah. Um, where do you go... what do you do?

**Dre:** Oof.

**Austin:** Also, what's... what's your mood like? What's it been like, Throndir, for the.... Again, it's been... let's say it's been five months, six months since the last game we played as Throndir. Things are just getting stable enough for you to start thinking about rationing for the future and going back out. I think maybe this is the first time that y'all have been like... you're getting ready to go back out for the first time. You've been inside of the walls of the university, or at least it's nearby environs, for the last six months. There's just been a lot to do. It isn't about fear. It's just like, yo, we have to get this place into working order so that people can live.

**Dre:** Yeah. Um, I think it's been a strangely studios like, five months for Throndir.

**Austin:** Interesting.

**Dre:** Like, reading all of the like, fucking like, codes of the Golden Lance and...

**Austin:** Right.

**Dre:** ...like, probably also spending a lot of time reading, and I'm sure not how much of understanding of, the Book of Life.

**Austin:** Ok. Yeah, it is like, beyond you in terms of pure magical knowledge right now. Um, but you know? This is part of the nice thing about doing a big time jump. You got a lot of time to read that thing, you know? Um, so maybe that's something we should keep coming back to and thinking about throughout this session.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Um, Ephrim, how about you? How has this past six months been?

**Sylvia:** Ok, so...

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Sylvia:** ...not great. Personally. Um...

**Austin:** How's the hand?

**Sylvia:** Not good.

**Austin:** As a reminder, you have like, the Heat and the Dark inside of you hand?

**Sylvia:** It like took my... it like... my hand is still there, but it looks like it's nothing now, right? Like it looks like it's...

**Austin:** Yeah, there's like a hole in it. There was a hole of nothing in it. And you had it wrapped or something, right?

**Sylvia:** I thought it spread more, didn't it?

**Austin:** Maybe it did.

**Sylvia:** Cause I used the Heat and the Dark on my hand... at one point.

**Austin:** To do some wild shit?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I remember something about it being... Yeah, but basically Ephrim's hand is basically... has been living with like, just using one hand for...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah, yeah.

**Sylvia:** ... the past six months. And it's very um... he's been very... it's been a lot of trying to keep frustration from showing so he doesn't like, fuck up diplomacy.

**Austin:** Sure. Good.

**Sylvia:** Um, yeah.

**Austin:** Oh, boy. Oh, buddy.

**Sylvia:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** Uh, so yeah. So, I think Ephrim, you still have... it's like, you can't just bandage it anymore, but if you wear a glove or something it does hide it, you know?

**Sylvia:** Ok.

**Austin:** Just maybe we get like a bunch of dope, gloved Ephrims?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** Ok, is there one glove? Two gloves?

**Sylvia:** Uh...

**Austin:** Different days? Gauntlets?



**Sylvia:** Usually... usually two. I'm not... I'm not trying to.... I mean, the person I can think of who usually just had one glove, uh... I don't think I can touch in terms of style.

**Austin:** Fair, fair, fair.

**Sylvia:** So, I'll go with just the... I'll go with two.

**Austin:** Not even Ephrim? Damn.

**Sylvia:** Not even Ephrim could. That's how much respect I have for MJ.

**Austin:** Got you. For the king. [laughs once]

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Um... ok. The true... ok, well, now we know what Ephrim is a prince of. That is...

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Oh, wait a second! Ephrim is a prince. Prince. You really... Prince has that much... uh... respect for MJ? That's not how I heard the story went. [**Sylvia** starts laughing] I thought there was like, a rivalry.

**Sylvia:** [still laughing loud] Oh shit. I should have... I walked right into that one.

**Austin:** You did. Um, ok. Uh, ok. So, that's how your year has been... or your six months at least. Um, Thrandir, let's jump into the rolls now that we're you know, an hour or whatever into this recording.

**Dre:** [small laugh] It's us.

**Austin:** [overlapping] How are you... Yeah, it is. How are you gathering supplies?

**Dre:** Hmm, yeah, I mean, I guess... I guess, let's get... let's get fuel first?

**Austin:** Ok. Y'all wanna get food? ...er fuel? Sounds good. What's that look like? Tell me. Where do you go to get fuel? What's this look like when the two of you step out?

**Dre:** I guess at this point, we've probably like, any like, kind of like, straggler trees or anything that were like, in this like, in between area...

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Dre:** ...have probably already been like, cut up and used, so... We're probably not the first people to go through the starstuff, but I... probably not enough people have gone through it that we feel extremely [starts laughing while talking] comfortable going through the starstuff.

**Austin:** Honestly, you might be the first one. You know, probably...

**Dre:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Austin:** ...the day that you set it up. You... you... probably someone went through it or something, but like, I don't know that we're that far away from it being set up even. Does that make sense?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** We may have just stepped through it for the first time.

**Dre:** Right.

**Austin:** So, um... so yeah, I think that's probably a little frightening. Um, what um... what's.... Where do you go to get fuel? Are you just like, taking axes out and starting to chop down some wood?

**Dre:** Yeah, you know. There's probably a great scene here of like, a bunch of the like... what are the big wild animals? We got like, mooses and like...

**Austin:** Yeah, mooses.

**Dre:** And like, bucks and stuff?

**Austin:** Yeah, I guess so, right?

**Dre:** Like, draggin' sleds behind 'em, and...

**Austin:** Ok. So, you're like, going out there.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Ok cool.

**Dre:** And everybody else that is, you know a... not a quadruped... What's the word for people that walk on two legs instead of four?

**Austin:** Bi... bi... bipodes? Bipedals?

**Dre:** Yeah, everyone else that's like a bipedal with them opposable thumbs is carryin' axes, and...

**Austin:** Gotcha. So, you're leading out... This is not just you and Ephrim. You are leading out a group. That makes sense.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Like, go do your first like, harvest of wood from the nearby forest.

**Dre:** It's cold.

**Austin:** Alright. Give me a 2d6. That is... a six. A five and a one. Ok, so...

**Dre:** Technically that is the most average roll I could have gotten.

**Austin:** That's true. That's true. So, I'll write this down on the scratch right now. You have six fuel. Um, now uh, [half-reading and skipping through the text] the first class... da da da... so, none of you are good at getting fuel. Neither of you are, right?

**Dre:** Nope.

**Sylvia:** No.

**Austin:** Alright, which is maybe why you start with this. Uh, so this means you do not get to roll this extra 1d6 at all. Instead, Ephrim, give me a 1d3 for gratuity medicine units. While y'all are out chopping down some trees, Ephrim picks up one... oh boy... Off to a great start. one.

**Sylvia:** Welcome to Friends at the Table. I've already rolled two one's. [**Dre** and **Austin** laugh]

**Austin:** That's true.

**Dre:** I've rolled a one.

**Austin:** That's true. Um, that is a uh... that is a one, so you get one medicine unit here. Where does Ephrim find... I mean, again, this is a... this is abstract. So like, think about this in a broader sense. Like, do you find something special where there is some... one unit worth of medicinal goods?

**Sylvia:** I think it's actually like, it's less special and more just like lucky that they come across some.. I think it's plants or something.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** That's medicinal that they find like.... Uh, something that like, was protected from the cold maybe.

**Austin:** Did you draw this thing... this thing I'm about to ping on the map?

**Sylvia:** The uh, no. I didn't.

**Dre:** I did.

**Sylvia:** I think Dre did.

**Austin:** Ok, do you wanna say...

**Sylvia:** But it immediately caught my eye.

**[0:45:00]**

**Austin:** Yeah, what if it was there? What if it wasn't actually out in the wilderness?

**Sylvia:** And that's how we start the uh... should I just say what it is?

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah, totally.

**Sylvia:** That's how we start the underground garden that we have.

**Austin:** Yeah. So, **Dre** added an underground garden to this map that's like, partially inside of the college campus. The university campus and partially outside the campus walls. But I love the idea of like... let me paint you a scene. Y'all come back with this first haul of wood, and it's like all these dogs and... and... er not dogs. Mooses. And I... maybe dogs pulling sleds and stuff, right? Kodiak's pullin' a sled. Um,

**Austin (as Kodiak):** Roof. Roof.

**Austin:** Very excited. Um, and you guys... y'all cross a ... y'all cross a bridge. Like a little wood bridge over...over... um, you know, maybe it's like... it's a thing that's like, connecting one... it's like going over a moat or something, right? Um, or you know, I don't want to get us... I think it's just wooden floors, and it's just too heavy, and it collapses. And Ephrim, you fall through and land in this pool of water. And there's this like, underground garden grotto. And you immediately recognize that there are medicinal plants here. There are not that many. Um, and I don't know why.

Maybe it's... maybe, I don't know if this sounds good, but like, maybe it's just... they... this... Even though it's a natural grotto, it needed to be cared for, and so you need people to like, go in, and there are plants that don't come back every year. And there are... the ecology here has been all shook up because of the events of the last year of Hieron. Um, and you know, there haven't been mages here nearby to just kind of keep magic flowing around here. Um, but now you found it. And you're able to like, get one unit worth of medicine from it, but also fictionally now you have this garden, you know?

**Sylvia:** Perfect.

**Austin:** Does that... does that make sense?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, yeah yeah. That worked great.

**Austin:** Awesome. Uh, so that's easy. That's step... that's the first step of this first turn. Um, but it's not the only thing that happens this year because it's a year. And years are long. [reading] 'The winter on hand is the worst in known or recorded history. And with that desperate fact, comes a tide of near unimaginable grief. In these hard times, it's often that misfortune looms and rare that luck bodes well. Extreme weather, seemingly impossible accidents, and the occasional charm will beset your village. In Cold Winter, these situations are referred to as Occurrences. Occurrences come in the form of negative or positive events. The latter of which are few. After the supplies are gathered in step three, the active adventurer will roll 1d6 twice on the occurrences table in chapter three. Uh, the first result is the table used. And then the second one is what thing in the second...'

So, um, I guess, a couple other extra rules, [reading] 'Some occurrences will have no eligible victim or relevance. For example, a setback might apply to a sick villager, but if no sick villager exists in the villager, then the occurrence is ignored. In this case, do not cross the setback out or even read it aloud. If an occurrence results that is a loss of supplies, but not enough supplies are on hand to cover costs, then you must remove as many as possible. All occurrences affect the active adventurer first, and lingering effects are absorbed by the previous active adventurer. For instance, if an occurrence applies to a sick villager, but the active adventurer has none, then a villager in the building of the previous active adventurer becomes the occurrence's target.' We'll get to that as it comes up. So, you know what? Give me a 1d6. Alright, so you're on the first set of occurrences. There are six here. Give me another 1d6. That's a three. [reading] 'The roof of the storeroom has given away to the weight of the snow. In the tumult...'

**Dre:** Aw, hell yeah.

**Austin:** '...uh, three units of food and three units of medicine have been destroyed. The roof can be repaired with five units of fuel or one unit of food and one unit of medicine is destroyed every turn due to unsafe storage.' So...

**Dre:** Jokes on you. We don't have any food.

**Austin:** Right, yet. But like, this... this... so I'm sayin'... y'all don't lose the three units, right? Um, let me cross this out on my... on my sheet here. Oop. Not that last one. I crossed out another one which, that'd be nice to cross out two, but... Alright, so turn one, uh... y'all got what? Two... previously you had gotten six fuel and one medicine. And then occurrence one-three uh... destroyed storeroom. What's this look like? What happens?

**Dre:** Uh...

**Austin:** Is it just the snow? Or is it something else? Either of you can suggest stuff here.

**Dre:** Gosh. I wonder if... Man... you know Throndir tries really hard to organize things.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Uh, cause he's the Ranger. Capital R, Ranger.

**Austin:** Right, he's The Ranger.

**Dre:** Uh, yeah. And previously, it had been somebody's job everyday to like, you know, take snow off of like, older looking like, buildings and structures. And whoever's job that was Throndir also had that person come along on this journey to go get fuel.

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Dre:** And so the roof did not get dusted off.

**Austin:** Oh no. Um, and so the snow does just collapse through. So, here's my question for you, do you spend the five units... do you spend five of the six units of fuel you just brought in to repair this storeroom? Also, we should draw the storeroom on the...

**Sylvia:** I was actually doing that right now.

**Austin:** Alright, good. Make sure to put a nice, big hole... well, we'll see. If you repair it...

**Dre:** Yeah, make it busted.

**Austin:** Yeah, make it busted, but then maybe... make it busted, but make it fashion, you know?  
[Dre laughs]

**Sylvia:** I'll make it. I'll do my best. [Austin laughs] Are we cool with it being this one down here by the stables?

**Austin:** Yeah, make it... I think it should be bigger than that probably.

**Sylvia:** Bigger than that? Alright.

**Austin:** Yeah, cause like, it's The Storeroom. The way that Throndir is The Ranger. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** I guess I was thinking of it as more of a shed than a really big thing...

**Austin:** [overlapping] No.

**Sylvia:** ... but then I forgot, 'Oh, this isn't a village. This is like...'

**Austin:** This is like...

**Sylvia:** This is big.

**Austin:** This is big. Maybe make it towards the middle, is my guess, you know?

**Sylvia:** Yeah. I'll put it by the dormitories, I think.

**Austin:** Yeah, that sounds good.

**Sylvia:** That makes sense.

**Austin:** So, Throndir, what are you going to do? You gonna repair it or are you gonna let it... let it continue to eat away for now at?

**Dre:** Oh god. Um, god, I almost... I think I'm just gonna leave it for now.

**Austin:** Ok, sounds good. Let's see. You don't even have the food or medicine for it to start eating, right?

**Dre:** Right. Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin:** Fuff.

**Dre:** That's tomorrow's problem.

**Austin:** Um, ok. Step five. [reading] 'The final step in Cold Winter is determining the number of village folk who become ill. Sickness is an inevitability in these conditions and can only be avoided through an occurrence from step four. Unlike most other rolls each turn, the active adventurer does not roll for the sickness. The Village Elder. This is your responsibility. Roll 1d3 to determine the number of sick villagers. You may distribute the sick villagers among the buildings as you like.' So, I'll roll 1d3. That didn't... did that pop for you all? There it is. A two. Ok. Um, huh. Let's see. Oh, I just realized I have to delete this... this medicine. My bad. You have 0 medicine actually. Um, so, cause that destroyed... caused the broken storeroom destroyed some... destroyed the medicine, too. Which is really sad.

**Sylvia:** I keep messing up the storeroom. I'm really bad at drawing on Roll20.

**Austin:** It's tough. Don't even worry about it. You'll get there. You'll get there.

**Dre:** Everyone is bad at [laughs and trailing off] drawing on Roll20.

**Austin:** Um, alright, so I think... So, you get two people who get sick. Um, I think it is one in each of these. I'm gonna say it is Balion Wythe's group. It's the halflings. Uh, and then it is... you know, I'm actually... this is easy. I think it's both Balion Wythe and it's Chatterchin. It's the gnolls and the halflings both are ill. They get sick this turn, and that is because they had the... maybe the most strenuous journey here, and they like... over this year, they just haven't really gotten back to being on their feet. Um, the gnolls felt it bad because they were very, very close

to the emergence of the Heat and the Dark, and also because they were already in such a piss-poor place after the death of Mother Glory. Um, and also just because things had been... things had been rough for them because of what the halflings had done.

Um, but the halflings are also in a sick place... not a... not like a 'sick' place. They're like, not feeling good. They're ill. There's an illness spreading through the halfling population because they're just weak because they've been living kind of high on the hog for so long. Balion Wythe is fine. Um, but that's because she's like, a dope adventurer, right? And you know, there are halflings who are fine and who are strong. Who are living their life in their prime, but it's, you know, Rosemerrow was not a fishing village, right? Rosemerrow had moved to a place as a society to where you did not need to be physically active and be, you know, eating a decent diet, and like, having nutritional food. And in general, people had... and this isn't a... I want to be clear. This isn't an admonishment of people who are like, heavy or something, right? Like, I'm a big, fat dude. I'm not being like, 'Fuck you, Austin'.

What I'm saying is, if I had to march miles and miles to a ruined university, I'm not in the shape for that to be like, a good, easy thing for me to pull off without it really taking its toll, right? Uh, it turns out being a video game website EIC is not the sort of job that is just hanging around... I think that's part of it, too. There's a degree of like... these are people who have spent their lives as merchants, and as you know, playwrights and in kind of like, cultural activities. And certainly there are some of those things still happening, but their lives have been disrupted in such a way that like, they don't know how to get joy yet from going out and foraging for berries or tending to the underground garden. Um, the halflings of the past maybe did, but not anymore. And so I think that that really, you know, settles in with them. And it's a rough year.

So, both the halflings and the gnolls are sick. Um, it's worth a note in the rules at this point, it suggests... it lets you know that you could consolidate two buildings into a single building which reduces the amount of fuel that will be needed, but that is not a thing that I think you can do quite yet. Um, you need to have five or less villagers to do that. And right now you have ten. So, we'll revisit that if you ever drop below five. Um, ok. Are you ready to go to step two... turn two? Any other business this first year? I think the like... the sickness of these groups... maybe there should be a little, tiny conversation about this. I think maybe this is like, Red Jack and Corsica Neue... maybe it's just Red Jack meeting with the two of you. Um, and Red Jack has emerg... has come back from a trip. He's kind of, again... he's kind of going to various places trying to like, get the lay of the land. Figure out what's up with various people and so...

I'll say this is what we do at the end of each turn. one. Each of you gets to ask Red Jack a question about the world. And then, two. Red Jack gets to ask you together a question or dig into what's happened here. So, let's start with you asking Red Jack a question. I imagine this is at some sort of like, you know, food place. Uh, ca... like a cafe... not a cafe. A... what's the word I'm looking for. Like a cafeteria. Like a mess hall basically. I think it's a cafeteria. It's a



university, you know? Probably in this meeting hall, you know? Um, [pauses] pours you both drinks. Ace is here. Uh, you know, left outside, but here. Um, and I think there...

**Sylvia:** We have nice stables.

**Austin:** We do have nice stables. You're right. You're right. Red Jack's in the... er Ace is in the stables. Red Jack is not in the stables.

**Sylvia:** [mostly inaudible] Does this thing ever...

**Austin (as Red Jack):** [overlapping] So, how has the year been? **[Sylvia sighs]** Highlights, please.

**Dre (as Thrandir):** Uh, some... some wins. Some... some losses.

**Austin (as Red Jack):** Oh, I thought you said winds. I thought you said, 'There were some winds,' and I was very confused because, of course, there is the wind.

**Sylvia (as Ephrim):** Honestly, at this point we could probably use some... a little less of that.

**Austin (as Red Jack):** I'll see what I can do.

**Sylvia (as Ephrim):** [overlapping] Uh, more wins without the d would be nice though.

**Austin (as Red Jack):** That I will also work on.

**Dre (as Thrandir):** The storeroom's busted. We gotta... we gotta do something about that soon.

**Austin (as Red Jack):** Why is it not fixed yet?

**Dre (as Thrandir):** [sighs] Well, there's really not a lot in there, so the fact that it's busted right now isn't really... like, there's nothing to ruin.

**Austin:** He like, shakes his head.

**Austin (as Red Jack):** Don't you know though that it will be harder to repair it once there are things you need to worry about being ruined? I mean this in [small laugh] a literal way. If it is filled with meats and cheeses and herbs and spices, you will need to move those things to put in your ladders and begin the repairs. Strike when the hole is new. That's how I always say it anyway.

**Austin:** Do you have any questions for Red Jack?

**Sylvia:** Oh god.

**Dre:** Hmm... where are all the oni children?

**Austin:** So, actually, I think he leaves some of them here. Um, in fact, I think uh... Benjamin, Rosana's son, has become really good friends with one of them. There's... there's one of them who is around Benjamin's age who has begun calling himself Blue Jack. Because... or actually, I think he calls himself Blue J. Um, and he's like... like Blue space J. The letter J. Um, and they're like hanging out and like, becoming friends. Uh, but the rest of them are here, and Rosana is like... is... Rosana and Rosette and the var... I think it's probably a combination of like... who is taking care of people? Um, I think it is. I think it's Rosana, Rosette, Corsica, Balion, Mee Kosh... It's like spread, I guess. Um, in fact, maybe that's the best way to do it. I think the oni children and the children, in general, end up getting a sort of cosmopolitan education by each of these...

**[1:00:00]**

There's an au here where each of these people are in charge of a different educational thing, and maybe that's accurate, right? Like, it's not all the way to like Harry Potter where Jerod Shiraz is like... teaches potions, right? But like, you know Morbash has a history class. That mother fucker definitely teaches history. Um, and Rosana definitely has a theology class, and uh, you know, etcetera, etcetera. And I think that that's actually true.

So, the oni children, but also children in general, each get this very unique... I think it's probably in this first year when... I'm gonna keep going back to Rosana here because I think we've seen her and talked about her as being an organizer. As someone who is like, 'Alright. Uh, it's time to start teaching people. This is a university, so maybe people should start learning things.' Um, and in the first year, I'll add this to the map. We get like, the first wing of the school gets rebuilt. Um, I'm just gonna write 'the first wing', and the classrooms start to actually be used. [typing] Boom. There we go. Any other questions for Red Jack, Ephrim?

**Sylvia:** Yeah...

**Austin:** Wait, did you ask that one?

**Sylvia:** Um...

**Austin:** No, Thrandir asked the first one. Right? Yeah.

**Dre:** Yeah, I asked that one.

**Sylvia:** I'm trying to figure out what I want to ask about first. Um, I think just playing the character, Ephrim's big thing here would be asking like, especially someone like Red Jack, who

has been around so long, if he's ever seen that sword that he has before and if he knows more about it. Cause Ephrim has part of the picture, but not the whole.

**Austin:** Right, right. Ephrim only has like, hmm... I'm trying to decide if Red... how much Red Jack knows. Because Red Jack was in Marielda certainly.

**Sylvia:** Hm.

**Austin:** We know. Or was in the City of First Light, at least. I don't know if we ever established 100% if he was there while it was Marielda. Um, at this point the sword is straight, right?

**Sylvia:** I think so, yeah.

**Austin:** It straightened out when you attached it to the...

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Um, yeah, so it's straightened. It's the blade that Samoths built in Marielda. Does Red Jack know that? It's Red Jack. Um, so I think Red Jack says like,

**Austin (as Red Jack):** Show it to me.

**Sylvia:** I mean, I do, of course.

**Austin:** Um, can he touch it? Do you like, hand it to him or do you keep it?

**Sylvia:** I'll... I'll hand it to him.

**Austin:** Alright. It's tiny in his hand. It's like, smaller because he has a big ol' oni hand. Um, and he brings it up close to his eye. And he like, holds it... There's a moment where he holds it up to the sun and like, checks the blade against the sun's light. And he says,

**Austin (as Red Jack):** This was made by an impeccable craftsman. A friend of mine.

**Austin:** And he gives it back to you.

**Austin (as Red Jack):** That is a holy blade, Ephrim.

**Sylvia (as Ephrim):** I'll do my best to keep it safe.

**Austin:** In this moment, I recall and wonder, what are your alignments?

**Sylvia:** Uh, mine's chaotic.

**Austin:** Ok.

**Sylvia:** But um...

**Austin:** Is it still? Do you still that that's accurate.

**Sylvia:** I like... Hmm... I don't know if it is post-winter, but I forgot that, you know...

**Austin:** [overlapping] We'll see. But for now, at least, it is.

**Sylvia:** For now, yeah.

**Austin:** I think he's... I mean, I think... I think he uses this as a moment then, and he says something like,

**Austin (as Red Jack):** You should do more than simply respect its power. It is... [sighs] it is a blade of care and order. It is not simply a weapon that brings harm. But one that brings life, too. Ephrim, you wield a great power, and I hope that this university can provide you an opportunity to explore how that may be used for others.

**Sylvia (as Ephrim):** Alright, well...

**Austin:** [overlapping] And he pours you another beer, or another drink.

**Sylvia:** I do lo... [small exhaled laugh] Ephrim is silently like, freaking out a little bit cause \*they're grabbing drinks with the guy \*they read bedtime stories about.

**Austin:** Right. 100% Yeah. And he's like...

**Sylvia:** [overlapping] Um, but also is very much like, yeah, no...

**Austin:** Tryin' to keep G.I. Joe morals right now? [Dre laughs]

**Sylvia (as Ephrim):** Yeah, I'll... I'll look into it. I'll figure out what this is capable of. Figure out what I'm capable of.

**Austin:** Um... He says, uh,

**Austin (as Red Jack):** I have no doubt that you will be able to. Now, we cannot drink on an empty stomach.

**Austin:** And I think he just like, brings up a huge leg of lamb from like, a bag and just plops it on the table. Um, and he says,

**Austin (as Red Jack):** Does this place have a stove?

**Austin:** And then as he looks around this comedic moment kind of changes a bit because I think, what we actually get is... we get a moment where he realizes that just having this big leg

of lamb is like... it's not bragging. Food isn't scarce yet. But he can tell that it will be soon enough, and he just sort of lowers it a bit. And he says,

**Austin** (as **Red Jack**): Let's eat well now while we still can in hopes that it will give us the strength we need to feed others.

**Austin**: Uh, and we cut there. I just want to say, wouldn't it be easier if there was like a third one... a third person here or a fourth person here? What if there were like, a bunch of people here to help. That'd be great. **[Dre laughs lightly]** Oh well. Um...

**Dre**: Hey, we didn't ask that person to leave.

**Austin**: I know. **[Dre laughs]** I know. What do you think Fero's doing right now?

**Dre**: I don't know. Takin' a nap. Lookin' at stars. **[Austin laughs]**

**Sylvia**: Being a mole.

**Austin**: Probably being a... or a vole, you know?

**Sylvia**: Or being a vole.

**Dre**: Yeah. Being a mole-vole...

**Sylvia**: [overlapping] Sorry, wrong animal.

**Dre**: ...while I'm murdered and turned into a vampire. [laughs]

**Austin**: Perfect.

**[Jack de Quidt's ['The Druid and the Old Man'](#) begins playing in background as scene changes]**

**Austin**: Fero, you have spent, I'd say the better part of the last two or three months moving to the west through the woods and then into the mark of the erasure towards the center of the mark where Samot's old tower once stood. You might recall that somewhere early on in your journey, you were passed over by the shadow of the dragon, Samol. The dragon, Samol, who is also Hieron itself. Um, and I don't think you had an encounter with him yet, but I do want to paint you a brief picture of just like, what this area is like. Because we saw it years ago now. Real human years ago during the very first, uh, Autumn in Hieron season. In the Autumn in Hieron season when winter party, or whatever we... what did we call it? We called it forest party at the time, uh came through here to go to this place. To go to the tower of Samot.

Um, and then it was like, brutal blizzard... er it was like snowy, and then it became more and more of a blizzard as you approached the center where the tower of Samot was. Um, but a lot of things have happened since then that have made it in some places easier to move through. For instance, there are these giant like, arches of starstuff in the sky now, you might

recall. Um, that are this kind of like, very bright matte material. It's like... I described it at one point as being like, what if fire was made out of plastic or metal? Um, in that like, it has the brightness to it. It doesn't... it's doesn't light things up. It doesn't make things brighter around it, but to look at it is like looking at the sun, right? It's almost as if you could imagine just... Imagine being on a dark street or in the dark forest and in front of you there is something bright, but it is not illuminating anything around it. You're just... when you look at it, it's bright.

**Keith:** Is it like... It's like a laser pointer on a wall where you can tell that the laser pointer is bright, but like, it's not illuminating anything.

**Austin:** Yes. That's exactly right.

**Keith:** But instead of one point, it's like a ton of spaces.

**Austin:** It's a ton of spaces, like sometimes... I mean, we've seen it a bunch of different ways, right? We've seen the arches in the sky. We've seen you and Uklan Tel look at a like, a little cafe made out of the stuff that one time. Um, you know that it's filled with a sort of life that it not like Hieron's life. It is not like, the sort of life you're familiar with. You cannot interact with it in a way, that where you can turn into that stuff. It doesn't speak to you. It doesn't seem to have a soul. Um, but it's real and it is not only real, but it has been able to push back the Heat and the Dark wherever it is. Um, it is sort of, uh, in opposition to it if not morally or ethically or even voluntarily. Um, like, materially...

**Keith:** [overlapping] Scientifically?

**Austin:** Scientifically. Exactly. [small exhaled laugh] Exactly. There's like a matter, antimatter thing happening there or something, right? Where you will see, and this is also true... this is different about this forest now, is there used to be places where there'd be obstacles like things like, rivers or fallen trees or you know, caves. Now there are just huge gashes of nothingness spread through the woods sometimes. Um, there have been in your journeys moments when you see the entire forest become set ablaze by the Heat and the Dark, Um, and then rendered to nothing. Not ashes. Not dead trees. Nothing. You know.

But other times, you... in places where there was once a blizzard are being protected now by the star.. By the arches of the starstuff which break up the weather, right? Um, and it's... sometimes it's the other way where you want to cross a thing, but to do so means to walk through the starstuff, and that means being terrified by what is there, and like, not necessarily feeling safe. So, it takes you way longer to get there than it did the forest party. But also, you don't need to eat because you are The Druid, right?

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Um, and I think you...

**Keith:** I don't think I need to sleep either.

**Austin:** No, you don't need to eat. You don't need to sleep. So, actually maybe it only takes you a couple months. Or maybe just do like, you know, six weeks or something like that, right?

**Keith:** Either way. Too long. And I'm sick of it.

**Austin:** Right. Totally, well..

**Keith:** Sick of it.

**Austin:** ... and I think it is um, you are coming in, so I brought you to this map. Um, you see this tower in front of you, right?

**Keith:** Ye... uh, tower? No.

**Austin:** Well, you see this... wait, what? Where do I have you? Do I have you on the right thing?

**Keith:** Throne, ra rapture, Ordennan manufacturing...

**Austin:** That is a fallen... that is Samot's fallen tower. It once stood up.

**Keith:** Oh, ok. Yeah, no you're right.

**Austin:** It has now fallen and blah, blah, blah.

**Keith:** Gotcha.

**Austin:** You are coming over here on the eastern side through the... through the woods. Uh, you see where it says strange movement?

**Keith:** Yeah, I do.

**Austin:** Where once there was pala-din moving? Um, that is where you're coming in from.

**Keith:** Opposite of bad things.

**Austin:** Yeah, opposite of bad things. Uh, and you see to the south... do you see this giant glowing ball? Is that on your screen?

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah, ok. Um..

**Keith:** It looks like a sun to me.

**Austin:** It does look like a sun to you. And that's just cause... it's a big glowing ball of light. Um, that is uh... you see it there for a second in all its kind of bright glory, and you feel that... that giant glowing ball of light is actually something that has a great deal of kind of Hieronic energy. Um...

**Keith:** Hmm..

**Austin:** [jesting] I hate it when someone is being really Hieronic, you know what I mean? Just be sincere with me. [Keith laughs] Uh, and it glows bright and it's like, um... it is the... it is not the light of the sun, but it is the light of... it is a godly light. And it is only a few seconds before you see a small figure in front of it that is sort of like, waving their hands in front of it and like, almost like a... like a... um, almost like a... what do you call a ceramics maker? Someone who is like, doing...

**Keith:** A ceramicist?

**Austin:** Is that what it's called? Or like a...

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Someone who is doing like, molding like, statues...

**Keith:** A potter?

**Austin:** A potter. Like a potter. Doing like a potter's hand thing, but it's just a human-sized person who is doing this with this giant ball of energy. Um, and they're not... they can't quite get it. And you can see, even from you know, 100 yards away or so, that they're shoulder slump, and they shake their head. They have kind of like, long, grey dreadlocks. And then there is like... something very familiar to you, which is they're... I mean, maybe this isn't how it works. What's it look like when you change into a different form? Does your body do like a werewolf change? Is there a bright light? Like, what does that look like?

**Keith:** So, to me a werewolf change is like... like, the human body is fighting against this wolf body, and different parts of it happen all at... all at once. Where it's like, 'Ah, I'm growing hair. And then my back is arching, and then now I have claws.' With me, my body's not fighting it. My body's doing it.

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** So, it happens kind of all at once.

**Austin:** Ok.

**Keith:** But it is like, a morph.



**Austin:** [overlapping] It's like an animorph.

**Keith:** [overlapping] It's not like a pop. It is a... Yeah, it's an anim... Yeah, but again, that has several stages. And I'm... it's just one stage.

**Austin:** Alright, so I think it does that. It's just... there's a... this being does a very smooth transformation, and it turns into a creature you've never studied, but I'm sure you've heard of. Um, called a dragon. It's called a dragon.

**Keith:** Uh huh, dragon.

**Austin:** Uh, and Samol is there in front of you. This giant dragon. I don't know that you know it's Samol or that you know Samol can be a dragon. It is the dragon, Hieron. Um, it is... it is the world itself in dragon form. And he begins doing the same thing he was doing before which is...

**Keith:** [interrupting] But as a dragon.

**Austin:** But as a dragon with little dragon hands. Reaches out and like a potter, begins trying to shape and mold this energy. What do you do?

**Keith:** Um, wow. So, now that it's a dragon. Now... at first I was like, 'does this person need help? Is that ball gonna get 'em?' Um, but uh... now it seems pretty intentional. I guess, I'm gonna go take a look.

**Austin:** Ok, so you get closer, and I think the thing you notice is like... at first, it looks like... again like a potter working clay, like 'Oh, what is Samol building?' But the closer you get to it... what you can kind of sense is that the light is fading.

**[1:15:00]**

**Austin (cont.):** And he's like, someone with a stick and a fire trying to like, keep the embers going. He's like, looking almost for pressure points on this giant, glowing orb. You know, when I say giant, it's like... it's as big as like, a three story house or something, right? Like, it's just... it's a big giant... maybe bigger than that even. If I'm looking at this map, it's a gigantic glowing light. Um, and he's like, trying to like, find pressure points on it or something. To kind of like... if I push it here, it stays alive a little bit. And uh, he... do you approach?

**Keith:** Um, how concentrated does he look on this thing? On his rasengan.

**Austin:** How good are you... [laughs] How good are you at reading dragon faces?

**Keith:** Um, I'm good at reading animal faces.

**Austin:** Yeah. Um...

**Keith:** So, what do you think that means for a dragon face?

**Austin:** I think it's hard to read Samol. Period. Like, already. I guess what I'll say is... ah, you know, I guess I'll say he looks pretty concentrated, but not unaware. Um, you've heard the Marielda story, right? You know who... I guess again, you don't know that this is Samol, right? You just know that this is a dragon. So, the dragon looks pretty confident.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Er, looks pretty... pretty... not confident. Pretty focused.

**Keith:** Ok, I have an idea.

**Austin:** Sure.

**Keith:** About how far away am I?

**Austin:** I'd say like 100 yards before... maybe even a closer to get a better look.

**Keith (as Fero):** [shouting] Hey!!!

**Austin (as Samol):** [deeply sighs]

**Austin:** And the dragon like, [blowing noise foley] blows some fire really quick to like, keep it warm. And like, does a little quick like, swirly motion with his hands. And he turns back around and in this big dragon form, like looks at you, kind of hand over eyes to like, block out some of the light. Uh, and says,

**Austin (as Samol):** [shouting] I was wonderin' when you'd come through! Get over here!

**Keith (as Fero):** [shouting] Uh... are... who... why? Why?

**Austin (as Samol):** [sighs] We got a lot of talkin' to do!

**Keith (as Fero):** [shouting] Oh, ok. That sounds safe enough!

**Austin (as Samol):** [shouting] Boy, if I... if... [sighs] One second.

**Austin:** Um, and the wings like... he wings unfurl, and you actually get this vision of Samol taking off as a dragon, and I think that there's just a moment where it's like, 'Oh wow!' Like, this is what... there was an age of myth, right? Like, there was an age... We talk a lot about Hieron being post-fantasy, right? And post-post apocalyptic. We talk about it being after the world of Tolkienesque fantasy. But there's also a pre-Tolkienesque fantasy phase. That was the era when Samot was hunting Severeia, the wolf god. Uh, or the era when Samothos was first crafting the light of the sun, right? Um, that era is this thing of like, strange myth and legend, and

that kind of predates all of the strata and lamina. It predates kind of history, right? Um, even ancient Hieron history.

**Keith:** It's the era before the Lost era, so... pretty old.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah, exactly. It's the era... Not only the era before the... yeah exactly. That's exactly right. And but like, you can imagine in this moment like, 'what were people who didn't have houses thinking when they saw Hieron the dragon?' Um, he's like backlit by the sun-thing or this glowy energy orb, right? It's not a sun-thing; it's not actually the sun, it's just a big ball of energy. It's not... it is Hieron's breath. That is what is labeled on my map right now. It is not a.... It is not a sun. I want to be super clear because we know that suns are very important in this world. Um, and you just get this image of him like, lifting off and then... and then just like, in a blink... it's like a hop for him cause it's only like, eighty yards. But then he's like, in front of you, and he leans really close to you as a big dragon. And there's like, smoke coming out of his nostrils, and in as quiet a voice as he can muster as a giant dragon, he goes,

**Austin (as Samol):** Boy, if I wanted you hurt, you'd be hurt.

**Keith (as Fero):** [nervously] Ahh... Ok. [tiny nervous laugh]

**Austin:** And then he shrinks back down into his humanoid form with dark, leathery skin. There are some blotches on his skin that I think maybe weren't there the last time we saw him. Kind of discoloration. He has like, a weird floaty bit stickin' off his left shoulder. I think it was his left shoulder. Might have been his right shoulder. I always forget if Hieron is facing us or facing away from us. Um, that is like... that is Ordenna. That is what that big, floaty bit is on the side of his arm. And long, grey... grey-white dreadlocks. A weathered face. Uh, kind of, sharp, thin features. I once described him as David Bowie, if David Bowie was black. But now, older and more wrinkles than how he was before. And I think he just like, immediately walks past you and towards this section of the tower, which is... the section where there are the five temples to the five... the five different kind of, gods of the old days. Samoths, Samol, Severeia, Galenica, and uh... who am I missing? Samot.

**Keith:** Is it not Galensia? I thought it was Galensia.

**Austin:** No, it's Galenica.

**Keith:** It's Galenica?

**Austin:** It's Galenica. AKA...

**Keith:** [interrupting] Am I thinking of something else?

**Austin:** AKA... yeah, yeah, yeah. So, originally Severeia was um... was... [thinking noises] This is why... this is why I changed them cause there were too many Sam names. And also because I felt like it was silly that they all had that same thing. And like historically, I think that what's

interesting about that was that the... that the Sam gods and the churches of those gods did the thing that real churches did historically which is like, 'Oh, yeah. You had that god? That god's a saint now. It's a part... er it's a different aspect of our god.' Right?

**Keith:** Yeah, it's... we took it. Yeah, we're not gonna spend our time convincing everybody that it's not real. We're just gonna convince 'em it's part of our thing actually.

**Austin:** Exactly. Exactly So, one of them was Samonta, and I think that was Galenica. Galenica used to be Samonta. And the... and Samaantine... No, sorry. Samonta was Severeia, and Samaantine or Samaantine was Galencia.

**Keith:** Ok.

**Austin:** So, Galenica is the one who is made of rocks. Severeia is the one who moves around and her hair, I think, looks like it's underwater all the time. And the two...

**Keith:** Yeah, yeah. We met.

**Austin:** Yeah, y'all met and had kind of a bad interaction. Uh, but...

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** ...he starts walking towards the 5 temples which are again... it's this giant tower that's been knocked over. And so the section... the district of 5 temples is like, the... it's sort of like, the center of faith inside of that tower. Um, but it's huge. Like, it is basically a city district on its side. Um, and he begins walking there.

**Keith:** And it's not even one of the bigger ones.

**Austin:** No, like not even. No, it's one of the smaller ones. For sure. Um, and he's like,

**Austin (as Samol):** You gonna come with me or... you more comfortable out here?

**Keith (as Fero):** Um, I... hey, I just took a long walk, so I'm kind of up for anything else right now.

**Austin (as Samol):** [laughs] Come on inside.

**Austin:** Um...

**Keith:** Real quick. What kind of... what kind of dragon am I picturing for this guy? Is this like a...

**Austin:** It's like a Western... Western dragon. Like, a European dragon. I think...

**Keith:** Four legs or two legs, two wings?

**Austin:** I think it's...Phew, good question.

**Keith:** Talking dragon or drake? Traditional drake.

**Austin:** So, wait. What's a... A drake is?

**Keith:** A drake is a dragon whose front paws are wings, and not...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Are wings. No, four legs.

**Keith:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Austin:** Four legs.

**Keith:** Four legs.

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Keith:** So, like, like...

**Austin:** [overlapping] It is...

**Keith:** ...a full dragon.

**Austin:** Yes. Full dragon. 100% full dragon. Four legs. Not the thing where like the front two arms go up and there's like, bat wings underneath. Not that.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Right?

**Keith:** Got it.

**Austin:** In fact, like maybe you've seen a drake before or something. You know what I mean? Like, but you...

**Keith:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin:** I don't think you've ever probably seen an actual dragon. Um, I don't know that there are many actual dragons. But you see this one. And I'm imagining it as like... and I'm not getting into like, D&D dragon types here, you know? But the version of it that you saw is a like, um... I think there's probably something metallic... Hmm, maybe not. I guess historically purple is a color that we've associated with Samol. Uh, because he was once also a big, purple monster. Like a... like a water leviathan.

So, yeah, I think it's a big purple dragon, but there's sort of a chromatic sheen to his scales when he's like that. But now he's just in his human form, or his humanoid form, at least.

He begins walking you towards the 5 temples. Um, and as soon as you step in, the temples go from being on their side to being regular. Like, you kind of walk through this door and next thing you know, even though you know from the outside that the section of this temple is on its side, you are walking on the floor. Um, and it...

**Keith (as Fero):** That's bizarre. Did you do that?

**Austin (as Samol):** No.

**Keith (as Fero):** Or is it like that always?

**Austin (as Samol):** It's like that always. Let me get you.. You just got here. Uh, you don't eat. You don't eat or drink.

**Keith (as Fero):** Oh I love to eat though.

**Austin (as Samol):** You do?

**Keith (as Fero):** It's like a past-time more than like a habit. Is that what it is? Is eating a habit?

**Austin (as Samol):** No, it's a thing people need to do. Not me.

**Keith (as Fero):** I don't need to do it, but I do genuinely enjoy it.

**Austin (as Samol):** What do you like to eat?

**Keith (as Fero):** Um, I don't know. I guess I like salty.

**Austin:** He goes like,

**Austin (as Samol):** Salty. That's Severea.

**Austin:** And starts to lead you towards the Severea district. Um, where you know, maybe it's the seasalt. Maybe it's her attitude. But that is where...

**Keith (as Fero):** Why does she have salty?

**Austin (as Samol):** Ocean. Trade. Salt has a lot of commonalities with Severea. My sister can be a little salty sometimes.

**Keith (as Fero):** Who has bitter? Who has sour?

**Austin (as Samol):** That's me.

**Keith (as Fero):** You have sour?

**Austin (as Samol):** I'm very sour these days.

**Keith (as Fero):** Sour candy or sour... like, unripe fruit?

**Austin (as Samol):** Like, like a lemon.

**Keith (as Fero):** Like a tea?

**Austin (as Samol):** Like a tea. I'm a little bitter, too.

**Keith (as Fero):** Ok. Astringent.

**Austin (as Samol):** Absolutely. Uh, I'm guessin' you know who I am.

**Keith (as Fero):** I'm gue... I'm gues... I'm also guessing I know who you are.

**Austin (as Samol):** Well, stop guessin'. My name is Samol. And I've heard a lot about you, Fero.

**Keith (as Fero):** From who?

**Austin (as Samol):** Hieron itself.

**Keith (as Fero):** Who's talkin'?

**Austin (as Samol):** But...

**Keith (as Fero):** Hieron itself. Ok. Is that a thing you can just know where stuff is?

**Austin (as Samol):** Yeah.

**Keith (as Fero):** Do you... very... spatial awareness. You get a lot of spatial awareness?

**Austin (as Samol):** Well, you turn into things. You know that sometimes you... let's say you're a warthog. Have you been a warthog?

**Keith (as Fero):** No, I've never been a warthog.

**Austin (as Samol):** Ok, well, let's say you're like a... like a mole or a vole.

**Keith (as Fero):** I do a vole.

**Austin (as Samol):** Ok, you know. You know how when you're a vole sometimes, you're diggin'. You're diggin'. You're diggin'. And then you... ah, you get a little crap in your little... you're little, or you're big, if you're a giant vole, for instance... You get a little cramp in your... in your fingers. In your claws. That's like your body speaking to you.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Right.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): So, what I'm sayin' is, I've heard about you.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Right. Your dogs are barking.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): [small laugh] Let me tell you. 'Round Old Man's Chin. Fwoof. The old long sand? Fwoh. That used to be a place.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Yeah, I kind of heard about that.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Yeah.

**Austin**: Um, and I think he leads you to a place. Um, and he's... what you... ends up producing for you is like, a sacrifice once made here. Like a food sacrifice. Like someone presented some sort of like, salted um, like... I think it's basically like, fish and chips, but instead of fish, it's some sort of salted meat.

**Keith**: Ok. Venison.

**Austin**: It's like... it's like venison and chips. Yeah.

**Keith**: Gotcha.

**Austin**: And it's as if he pulls it from a past time. Um, hot and steaming. And is like,

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Here you go.

**Keith**: That sounds pretty good.

**Austin**: And he take a seat like, he...

**Keith**: [interrupting] Um, Fero, I think is... I think Fero is bummed out now, by the way. I don't think Fero was like, super thrilled about being reminded about the sand.

**Austin**: Yeah. Um, he is like, literally sitting up on the Severeaa altar. Um, like, just as if it was a stool or something. Um, and he makes a copy of the same meal for himself. Or he like, pulls a copy of it from the past. And he's like,

**Austin** (as **Samol**): I hit a sore spot.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Yeah, I... you know. I... there... I didn't... I wasn't taking a walk for fun.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): You walked a long way. Where...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Yeah. Was it like three weeks?



**Austin (as Samol):** A little longer than that even. Where'd you think you were goin'?

**Keith (as Fero):** Uh, the erasure.

**Austin (as Samol):** Here you are.

**Keith (as Fero):** The mark.

**Austin (as Samol):** What'd you hope to find?

**Keith (as Fero):** Oh boy. I... I already didn't know however long ago it was I left.

**Austin (as Samol):** [small laugh, long pause] Here's...

**Keith (as Fero):** Is there something to find?

**Austin (as Samol):** Just lil ol' me. And you know, this place. Fallen apart.

**Keith (as Fero):** Venison's hot though.

**Austin (as Samol):** Venison's warm. They didn't make it too hot. I wanted to make sure it didn't burn your mouth.

**Keith (as Fero):** No.

**Austin (as Samol):** Fero, [pause with long exhale] I'll cut through the bullshit. That sound alright?

**Keith (as Fero):** Sure. Yeah.

**Austin (as Samol):** It's bad. In here. Out there. Right now. I don't know how many years this whole place has left. And uh, not fittin' to ask you to be a hero. That's a big ask.

**Keith (as Fero):** I also.... I already tried that one, and it didn't work.

**Austin (as Samol):** It didn't work cause there's no such thing. There's just people. There's just people who do the sorts of things that over time take on new character. As they're whispered from person to person. Sometimes they do great things. Sometimes they do terrible ones. I don't have any illusions, but uh, here's what I'm gonna say. I get the sense you're at a crossroad.

**[1:30:00]**

**Keith (as Fero):** It's more of a tower.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): [laughs] Uh. It's more of a tower. You have any questions, you ask me. I'm gonna stay in the area for a minute.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): What is that?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): What is...?

**Keith**: And I'm pointing at Ordenna.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): What is that? I've got one. Do... I... it's...

**Austin**: [overlapping] Wait, wait, wait... at... where? Wait.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): [overlapping] Is it the same thing as one of these?

**Austin**: [overlapping] What are you... what are you pointing at?

**Keith**: [overlapping] I'm pointing at like...

**Austin**: [overlapping] Oh, the little floaty bit.

**Keith**: [overlapping] ...my whole back is like...

**Austin**: [overlapping] Right.

**Keith**: Uh, his floaty bit and then my like, granite neck and shoulder.

**Austin**: No.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Is that the same thing?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): No, they're different. That...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): You turned into a dragon. Maybe you have one of these.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): I don't have one of those. You have... You don't... [sighs] God, how do I even explain to you? You know the story. I was the first thing? Nothing blinked. All that? Um...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): That's... By the way, first of all, that's wild.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Yeah, you're tellin' me. I...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): I'm tellin' you, that's wild.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): It happened to me.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): [overlapping] First thing?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): [overlapping] I didn't have anybody to talk to about. I couldn't even say...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): [overlapping] Only one thing is the first thing. It's crazy.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): I couldn't even say, 'woah' which is...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): [interrupting] Wow. Look at me, the first one.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): [overlapping] The first one. And that's...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): [overlapping] No one even heard it.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Severeas came. And we were able to be like, 'Ah! There's a lot here.' And we got to talkin', and that was fun. And uh, I mean, here's the thing. You're not too different from that. You know, when I thought, 'Boy, is it boring out here. I'm alone. The world is empty. The world being me is just... there's nothin' going on here. It's just this.'

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Yeah.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): I... I thought that real hard. I felt it. And then Severeas showed up, and you know, deers and antelopes and fish and...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Cantaloupes. Cantaloupes and cantaloupes?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Nope, nope. Cantaloupes, me.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): That was you?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): I big on the...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Honey dew?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Honey dew, me. Animals, mostly... mostly Severeas. Plants and such, mostly me.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Which one... what's a big one that wasn't you?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Um, palm trees. And coconuts.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Coconuts also not you?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Not me.

**Keith (as Fero):** Who was that?

**Austin (as Samol):** I don't know.

**Austin:** That's not true. He would know. Oh... um... Yeah, no. He would know. He would have to know. Uh,

**Austin (as Samol):** That was Samot. [small laugh]

**Keith (as Fero):** Samot. Did Samot do... Did he do... Hold... No, hold... I might have other questions about that, but...

**Austin (as Samol):** Yeah.

**Keith (as Fero):** Did he do... did he do palm trees and then coconuts did themselves? Or did he do both?

**Austin (as Samol):** He did both. He did palm trees for the shade. He was throwin' a... he was... he was throwin' a beach party, and he thought, 'I know what this needs. Shade. It's nice to be outside in the heat. It's nice to have the sun. But...'

**Keith (as Fero):** And he couldn't use one of the... one of the trees already existed? He wanted to show off?

**Austin (as Samol):** He wanted it to be like, where you could see the ocean and you could see the beach. He didn't want to cover up anything.

**Keith (as Fero):** Ok.

**Austin (as Samol):** He wanted to see the sky, but still have the shade. And then he got thirsty, so...

**Keith (as Fero):** Right.

**Austin (as Samol):** One thing lead to another. Um, in any case, the point it, I think in much the same way, you. Galenica, Severe... they're damn near as old as me. Galenica younger, admittedly, but... They saw the old world for a long time, and they saw the erasure and everything that came after. And uh, I saw that spat you got in with them. They push a little hard. They, uh, ask a lot. They... I think they were hurt. They gave you a gift. At least that's what they saw it as, and... [breathes deeply and sighs] hoped you would use it to what they couldn't and bring new things into the world. And uh, with the Heat and the Dark, with everything happenin' with the line of Tristero... I don't... with my old ass fadin' away. Things took a bad turn. And uh, frankly, you were given the power to make new things, and...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Wait, hold on! Says who?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Says what? Says me!

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Not says what I've ever been able to do. I, I can do like, birds and big cats.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Yeah, they're birds and big cats. You can do big cats; you can do cats that are bigger than regular cats. You can do a regular cat, but big, right? That's a new thing.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): No, I can just do a big cat at its regular size.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): No, no, you do that whole thing where you turn into a big, poison vole. That's new. It's a.. It's like a remix of old stuff. It's remix culture, but that's new.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): I just didn't know that that wasn't new... Wait, I just didn't know that that was new.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): You spend a lot of time...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): I just like... guess I've never seen one of them.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Fero, you spend a lot of time really... I'm not tryin' to lecture you. We should... we should eat. Plenty of time to talk, but you sp...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): [interrupting] Oh, I'm finished. I got like a bite left.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): You give me what you don't eat.... You do a lot of...

**Keith**: I eat the last bite.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): [laughs]

**Austin**: He laughs. That's his laugh. [**Keith** laughs]

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Let's not have all this talk today. How about this? How about, I go stretch my wings. You explore this place. You dig through the woods. You be careful. The Heat and Dark, the Stars, all that stuff.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Do your wings need to stretch even when you're a person?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Yeah. They're like, in there right now, you know?

**Keith** (as **Fero**): You can... you can feel the wings?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): It's all the same thing. It's like...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Are you a dragon scrunched down into a guy?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): No, I'm a planet scrunched down into a dragon.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Alright. Quit bragging Ron.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): [big laugh] That's... that's what they call me. That's short for Hieron.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Yeah.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): You come get me when you want to talk about stuff.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Alright.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Alright.

**Austin**: And...

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Can I get food? Can you show me how to get food from this?

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Oh, don't work like that.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): I guess I don't need it.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): You don't.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): So...

**Austin** (as **Samol**): No. You know what? Good excuse. Once a week, we get to have a meal together.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Ok.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): We'll try all the different levels. We'll figure out what's here. What used to be here. I can kind of bring things from when or whenever that was back and uh, we'll just do a little tasting tour of Samot's old tower.

**Keith** (as **Fero**): Ok, yeah. Alright.

**Austin** (as **Samol**): Alright.

**Austin**: And I think it continues like that for a while.

[Jack de Quidt's ['Still Winter'](#) begins playing in background]

**Austin:** Alright, year two. Once again we skip turn one, which is nice, right? Is that what we do?

**Dre:** No, I think it might just be the first.

**Austin:** Oh, I like how you said that like I caught you with your hand in the cookie jar.

**Dre:** Ignore steps one and two for the first turn.

**Austin:** Oh, you're right. Damn. We in it already?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yikes. Ok, step one. [reading] 'Count the dead and forecast the weather. Death is dealt as a preamble to the action of Cold Winter. The first stage in each turn is determining the number of villagers who have died as a result of the previous turn. For example, if there's only enough fuel for three of the four buildings at the start of turn two, then during the step one of turn three, a villager in the building without fuel will have died. Death is caused by a lack of supplies or detrimental occurrence.

After the dead are counted, you must roll d3 to determine the turn... current turn's temperature. The temperature determines how much fuel is needed to keep villagers from dying of exposure in their own homes. The result of the temperature roll is the number of fuel units needed on a given turn for each building. Um, so, uh... alright. Beginning of turn one, does anyone have villagers with... I'm trying to remember exactly the number here. Does it say in the count the dead? Or is that the end?

**Dre:** It's... two is hungry. three is sick.

**Austin:** Three is sick? Uh, so, does anyone have any.... Anyone who is two hungry or three sick? No, right?

**Dre:** Uh uh.

**Austin:** That's good. That's good. Uh, so I'll roll the supplies... er I'll roll the temperature. two. The temperature is two. You will need two fuel per building. So, you need... [typing] So, turn two. The temperature two. So, that means you need four fuel total to keep both buildings warm. [reading] 'Step two. Ration the supplies. The next step is resupplying the villagers and buildings. At the start of the step, you should let the adventurers know how many of each supply is held in the storeroom.' So, right now, according to my notes anyway, you have 0 food, 0 medicine, and six fuel.

Um, [reading] 'adventurers may then decide how best to divide the existent supplies among villagers. This may mean letting some villagers go hungry for a turn or slaughtering a domesticated animal for food. Each supply removed from the storeroom and moved to a building must have been removed from the storeroom record. Adventurers who have villagers

who do not eat must check one of the hungry boxes next to the villager's name. Likewise, sick villagers who remain as such must have another check added to the sick box. When a villager who is hungry or sick receives food or medicine, erase all checks they may have in their respective boxes unless an occurrence says otherwise. Some occurrences will leave a villager or building with a permanent checkmark.

These are not to be erased at all. In the end of step two, adventurers will have an outlook of which villagers are likely to die at the start of the next turn. But there is a chance some of these villagers will be saved during step four.' Yikes. So, um, I'm guessing you have to... you have to spend this fuel, right?

**Dre:** Yep.

**Austin:** I don't think... Yeah, there's no choice to not spend the fuel, right?

**Sylvia:** I don't think so.

**Austin:** Um, cause otherwise they just straight up, that's it. Alright, so, spend that fuel. Um, that means you're down to four fuel now. Er, two fuel rather.

**Dre:** Yeah, cause it's two per each of us, right?

**Austin:** Yep, two per each of you. Um, and then it is.... Again, we have one sick mark. I'm just gonna turn these into S's on these marks, right?

**Dre:** Sure.

**Austin:** But then... and no one's cold, but everybody is hungry? Is that accurate?

**Sylvia:** Don't we have to sacrifice one of the animals if we... but I don't...

**Austin:** Is it if you can you have to?

**Sylvia:** I thought...

**Dre:** I don't think we have to.

**Austin:** I don't think you have to.

**Sylvia:** We don't have to. Ok.

**Dre:** We could choose to.



**Austin:** You could choose to. Um, there's also another rule I want to introduce here which is, um... Wait, how does it work? It's sacrifice an animal gives you two food, two fuel, or one of each, right?

**Dre:** Um, let's see.

**Austin:** Uh, yeah. Yes. [reading] 'Keep in mind that a domesticated animal can be slaughtered and converted to two units of food' Oh, it just says food. Ok. So, here's what I'm gonna say. I'm gonna add to that and say that an NPC can give their life for two food or medicine or one of each.

**Dre:** Woof.

**Austin:** And that is like their group will continue, but they will not. I'm not saying do this right now, but I'm giving you that option. Uh, so, I'm adding these animals for two food. Um, boom. There we go. Uh, and you know what? I'll say two food, medicine or fuel for the NPC. Um...

**Sylvia:** Oh good. We can burn them. [laughs]

**Austin:** I think it's more like, tell me a story about how whoever did something to provide 'blank' for their people.

**Sylvia:** [overlapping] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** Um, and then nine turns remaining. So yeah, so everyone gets hungry. Love it. Love it. The good news is you're better at getting food than anything else, right? From food, fuel, or medicine, I guess. It is Ephrim's turn, by the way. This is something to start thinking about.

**Sylvia:** Hmm... Um, I guess...

**Austin:** [interrupting] Also let's just. I want to make sure we have not fucked anything up. You don't both get to go every turn, right? One person gets to go.

**Sylvia:** I think so.

**Austin:** Yeah. Just because I know if you're listening, you might have that question, too. But...

**Sylvia:** It does say like, as a group, we decide to only go for one.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah, for one thing. Like, that's definitely... yeah.

**Sylvia:** [overlapping] That makes sense.

**Dre:** Yeah, cause it says like, splitting the party when the weather is bad...

**Austin:** ... is a bad idea. Yeah, yeah. Totally. Ok, well, um, well then yeah, Ephrim, you are the active person, so step three. Uh, or I guess actually, wait. Are you rationing supp... you don't have any supplies. You can't do shit yet, right?

**Dre:** Unless we want to kill animals, yeah.

**Austin:** Right. You could kill an animal and start feeding people.

**Sylvia:** I am open to that. I would rather feed people, but uh... I'm not the only person making that decision.

**Austin:** [interrupting] So, I guess the thing here is... I guess the thing here though is yoU can always kill an animal and feed people, right?

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Like next turn you could also do that.

**Sylvia:** True.

**Dre:** Do you want to try to like, search for food and see how it goes before we...?

**Sylvia:** I would, yeah. Um,

**Austin:** Cause that would suck to like kill the animal now, feed them, and then immediately get twelve or thirteen or fifteen food, you know?

**Sylvia:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** Who knows how that roll goes?

Right. Ok. Yeah, let's go... I wanted to go for food, regardless cause it seems like an important thing.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Ok. It does.

**Sylvia:** But I wanted to, at least, check all our options there.

**Austin:** I gotcha. Alright, so then, let's go for food. 2d6. Ephrim.

**Sylvia:** Oh my god.

**Dre:** Oofa doofa.

**Austin:** That's a four. But hey, but... that's really bad. I can't believe you rolled a one and a three. [Dre laughs] Uh, Thrandir, you get to roll 1d6 now.

**Dre:** Hey, but man. Ugh, awful. That's cool. I got it. I got a good one, too, there.

**Austin:** What's happened? Why does this... Why are you...? What's going wrong?

**Dre:** [deep sigh]

**Sylvia:** Do we get lost?

**Austin:** Yeah! Do you get lost?

**Sylvia:** Is there like, you know how it's like...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Oh my god. This is bad.

**Sylvia:** ...I don't know if this... You know how winter, when it's going away, sometimes it just rages again for like a week or like for a very short period of time, and then it goes back to receding?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Maybe we got caught in a storm.

**[1:45:00]**

**Austin:** Ooo, yes. That's exactly it. So, like, again, at the end of last season, the sun broke through, and it was the first day of spring, but like... you know the other thing is, you know, spring is filled with storms in general.

**Sylvia:** Uh huh.

**Austin:** So, maybe this is not just a regular... maybe this isn't a snowstorm at all. Maybe this is like, a torrential, hurricane downpour.

**Sylvia:** Oh man.

**Austin:** Right? Um, and in fact, maybe this is the first time you start to see um... You're lost in the woods, and here's part of it. Like, so, Ephrim, you're not the tracker. You're not the ranger, obviously, right? So, that's already a tricky thing. Umm, but when you go to rely on, on Thrandir for this, Thrandir, you find a new plant.

**Dre:** Aw, hell yeah.

**Austin:** Uh, you don't know what it is. And that's not... Like, you're... you're not a plant expert, but you're the ranger. Um, and you don't know what it is. And you can't place it as like a different type of plant. Um, and I think it throws you off somehow. Um, it's like, the sort of thing that like, you would traditionally... It's one of those things where it's like, hey, you check um... in fact, maybe it's more like this, moss always grows on the north side of a tree. Is that right?

**Dre:** Sure. [laughs]

**Sylvia:** I think so.

**Austin:** I think that's true.

**Dre:** [typing] What side does moss grow on?

**Austin:** There's a tendency...

**Dre:** The north side.

**Austin:** ...for it. In the northern hemisphere, they grow on the north, right? Apparently. Um, and it grows on the shady side of trees is what it does. This is... this is moss growing on the non-shady side of trees, so to speak. Like I don't... maybe it's a flower blooming where it shouldn't be. It's like a... Yeah... it's a set of flowers blooming in an area where, um, you traditionally are going to be like, 'Ok, if flowers are blooming here, this means that animals are not coming through this direction because they'd be trampling on these flowers or blah, blah, blah.' Right? Or something similar. Um, you are... oh. You know what it is? I got it. I figured it out. Fwoof. Ok.

You find what you think is an animal trail because there are dead, like, flowers and dead, um, leaves... er not leaves, but dead plants in general, right? There's like dead, lowlaying, uh... Like ferns have been... it looks like ferns have been stepped on. It looks like all that. And you follow the trail for a while, and then you see that there is this, like, creeping vine that's covering a tree. It's a new type of like... It's a new type of plant. You haven't seen it. And you see that it is just actually draining the life from all of the plants around, in a way that makes them look like they've been stepped on. As if they've been crushed under foot. And it's just like their life is being drained out by this new type of plant. Welcome to spring.

**Dre:** Seems bad.

**Austin:** Ain't good.

**Austin:** Ephrim, you get to roll medicine now.

**Sylvia:** Foof, well, let's hope for the best here. Hey!

**Austin:** Hey!

**Sylvia:** A three!

**Austin:** That's a three. Medicine up to three. That's good. Hell yeah. Um, nice work. Where do you... what do you find? Is there new... is there... Is this the underground garden? Is this...

**Sylvia:** Um...

**Austin:** Is this one of these new plants?

**Sylvia:** Maybe it is. I think also, just like... Yeah, nah. I think I like the idea of them finding and maybe starting to cultivate some of these new plants in that garden.

**Austin:** Ok. Sounds good. Yeah, it's gonna go great. It's gonna go good. Uh, so yeah, you show up. You just like bring them back, like you bring cuttings back of some new herbs and stuff and spend the year figuring out which of them are safe. Um, Uklan Tel definitely helps you. I definitely think we get a shot of Uklan Tel and Ephrim in like... I'm imagining this as like, a flooded grotto still in my mind, with like, a little... You know, have you played, um... have you played Stardew Valley or Harvest Moon or Rune Factory? Rune Factory...

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** ...or Stardew Valley specifically. You know how you can get the like... in the dungeons, there'll be like, a dungeon garden?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** It's one of those basically where it's like, it's wet. There's like a little pond you could go fishing in in here. Um, it's like you're here, and like the music here is like, the sounds that kind of make you think about like, water dripping down from a cave. Lots of plinkly... pinky... plinkly stuff. Um, it's great, but like, we get Uklan Tel in straight up like, high-waisted, rubber pants to keep his legs warm in the water. Um, and he has glasses on and is like, trying to figure out what is up with these plants. And I don't think anyone crack what's up with these plants, in terms of where they're coming from or what their deal is, but you are able to find a strain of some sort of medicine. What's... what does it do? What's the medicine do? Like, what's the... What is the... What is the thing that it does for people?

**Sylvia:** I think it helps with like, respiratory stuff.

**Austin:** Does it have a name? Do you get to name it something?

**Sylvia:** Oh god. Um, I don't have a name I can think of right now.

**Austin:** Respiratory stuff... what about like, sun's breath? Or something like that?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, something like that.

**Austin:** What's if it's like... what if it looks like... almost like a tiny sunflower or like a...

**Sylvia:** Oooh, I like that a lot.

**Austin:** And then the seeds, you can... You can make... You crush up the seeds and it does good stuff for... er like, you eat the seeds. It's sunflower seeds, but you eat 'em, and I mean like, you eat sunflower seeds already, but when you these they help you breathe better.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Awesome. Um, I'm gonna make a story note here and say sun's breath. [typing] Sun's breath, relocated to underground garden. Sick. Ok, hey, guess what? It's time for an occurrence. Give me a roll. Give me 1d6 and then another d6.

**Sylvia:** Alright.

**Austin:** I guess it's 2d6, is also what you could do.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I'll do that one.

**Austin:** It's easier.

**Sylvia:** May as well. Ok.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Alright. four and a 5.

**Sylvia:** [overlapping] I got a four and a 5.

**Austin:** Alright, maybe this is a good one. This will be sick. Occurrence table four, number 5.  
[deep sigh]

**Dre:** [laughing]

**Austin:** reading] 'Villagers, in an act of despondency, have wasted 1d6 units of fuel to light a fire when the sun was still up. Remove these units from the storeroom.' Maybe this roll will be...

**Sylvia:** [deep sigh] Alright, let me roll.

**Austin:** Yeah, you... give me a 1d6. You go for it.

**Sylvia:** Ok.

**Austin:** That's a two.

**Sylvia:** Is that all our fuel?

**Dre:** Yeah, it is.

**Austin:** Yeah, it's all your fuel.

**Sylvia:** God damnit.

**Austin:** Um, ok. So, that's not good. That's bad even. Actually. Fuel minus two. That's terrible. That's really bad. Um, cool. I crossed it out. That way it doesn't happen again. So, there's that.

**Dre:** Thanks.

**Austin:** There's that.

**Sylvia:** [laughs and then sighs]

**Dre:** Gotta find the silver lining.

**Sylvia:** Right?

**Austin:** Uh, you know? I'm lookin' for 'em all the time.

**Dre:** Ephrim, I think we're bad at running things.

**Austin:** Well, it's time to see who gets sick. [laughs] We've rolled for everything else, right? Everything we've rolled. We're done rolling for new, good things, right?

**Dre:** Wait, what is the... what is the outcome for not...

**Austin:** ...having fuel?

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Uh, so, good question because I forget. Um, [reading] 'the number of fuel units needed blah, blah, blah... fuel... take as much fuel as possible, even if it's not... even if there isn't enough to match the temperature.' Um, where is it? Man, I just went to page here, and there's an example of step two. And there's literally this part, [reading] 'Villager Elder says: You have a remarkable twenty-two units of fuel.'

**Dre:** That must be nice.

**Austin:** Yeah. Couldn't be me.

**Sylvia:** The fuck?

**Austin:** 'The temperature determines how much fuel is needed to keep villagers from dying of exposure.' Um, here we go, for example... Ok. 'First stage in each turn is determine the number of villagers who have died as a result of the previous turns. For example, if there's only enough

fuel for three of the four buildings, then during step one of turn three, a villager in the building without fuel will have died.' So, if you don't have fuel, someone is going to die or leave.

**Dre:** Good lord.

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Dre:** Ok. I guess I'm glad we got... cause at first, I felt bad we didn't get fuel last time, but now I guess, I'm glad we got fuel.

**Austin:** Yeah. You have none. You have none fuel right now, right?

**Sylvia:** Oh my god. Yeah.

**Dre:** Really, we have negative 5 fuel because we still have to fix the fucking storeroom.

**Austin:** Still have to fix the thing. Yeah, 100%

**Sylvia:** Fucking Christ.

**Austin:** Uh huh. The end of the year... You know, let's open it up. It doesn't just have to be Red Jack. Who would you like to have dinner with at the end of the year. Oh, wait. That's not true. I still have to do sickness. I'm sorry.

**Dre:** Yeah, huh.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, let's figure out who is alive before we decide who we're havin' dinner with.

**Austin:** Uh, roll 1d3. There's a one. Only one person gets sick. Uh, and it is... Hmm... I don't think... You know what? Maybe it does start to happen. Alright. I'm gonna mark: Jerod Shiraz and the Ordennan Dissent begin to get sick. Um, and it takes them all year to figure it out. It's like, this reoccurring rash that they all keep getting. Um, and they don't... it takes them like a long fucking time to figure it out. It's the Ordennan steel. The Ordennan steel is giving people rashes. And Uklan Tel has begun to study it. But like, Uklan Tel can only study so much. Um, and so Jerod Shiraz and the Ordennan... uh Ordennan Impetus, er not Impetus. Dissent have become sick. That's not so bad. Just one. Who do you want to talk to? I guess I'll put it on Ephrim since it's Ephrim's turn.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And then whoever is the active player can...

**Sylvia:** I mean, I'm gonna ask **Dre**. Is there anybody you're dying to talk to?



**Dre:** Um, the most honest, in character answer for Throndir is probably Hadrian. Cause he wants Hadrian to come fix everything.

**Austin:** Oh. Well, that's very sweet. Hadrian is not here.

**Dre:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** We could talk to Rosana then.

**Austin:** You could talk to Rosana. That's actually probably good.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Um, where do you talk to Rosana?

**Sylvia:** Um...

**Austin:** Is this a meal? Is this like... maybe we should... we could frame it around a sort of yearly thing. Or it could either be just like, a conversation that happens that means a lot. But it could also be like, hey, it's the anniversary of founding this new place. It's that night, you know?

**Sylvia:** I was gonna say, communal dinner, but I don't think we have enough food for that.

**Dre:** Fuckin'.

**Austin:** Oh god.

**Sylvia:** You know?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Um, maybe we're all like, it's like the three of us are in the garden trying to just get away from the shit. [Dre laughs]

**Austin:** That's a good idea. Yeah, I love that.

**Sylvia:** And just kind of regroup.

**Austin:** Yeah, Rosana is just like, shaking her head, just like... she's like,

**Austin (as Rosana):** Thanks for inviting me down here. This is... this is great. It's uh, I wish it was bigger. I wish we could just have a huge underground garden. That would maybe help the food problem.

**Sylvia (as Ephrim):** Yeah, um, maybe we can figure out a way to expand this thing at some point. Uklaan's got enough on his plate though.

**Austin** (as **Rosana**): If only there were more people here. More people like you.

**Sylvia** (as **Ephrim**): How have the classes been going for the younger students?

**Austin** (as **Rosana**): Uh good. Good. I... you know. I don't pick favorites obviously, but I will say I'm very happy with Benjamin. He's smarter than his father and I put together honestly. And I think there's something about this place. All the books and the history and the magic and... even when all he's doing is studying his times tables, he's...

**Austin**: And she's like smiling, genuinely smiling. She's very proud of her son.

**Austin** (as **Rosana**): But everybody is doing well with it. Um, you know, a lot of people had nothing like an education. Frankly, the only way I got one is through the church, so I'm not surprised. And it gives people here something to focus on. It gives the kids something to care about that isn't just where the next meal is coming from. It can be hard. So. I can feed them knowledge, but I don't care how good they are on the test, I can't give them much else.

**Sylvia** (as **Ephrim**): I'm sorry that you've got that weighing on you so much. We all do, but um, I'm hoping we can fix this soon. Right, Thrandir?

**Dre** (as **Thrandir**): I mean, we'll figure something out. We don't... we don't have another choice.

**Austin** (as **Rosana**): Everyone here took a big chance coming here, and I want to be clear, I don't think that that's a mistake. I don't think there were many... really many better options. But it's a lot to take up on yourself, and I do what I can do, but I... Thrandir, you have a lot going on, and I hope you can... I'm not telling you to not be involved with the Golden Lance or to... stop going out and dealing with things in the woods. You're the Ranger. But people do need figures inside the community to look up to and who can fix things. Fix things here. [sighs] It's something I wish Hadrian had learned, honestly. In any case, thanks so much for inviting me down here. It just smells nice.

**Dre** (as **Thrandir**): [laughs] It does.

**Sylvia** (as **Ephrim**): It's the sun's breath, I think, is starting to bloom a little bit.

[Jack de Quidt's '[\(Welcome to\) Aubade](#)' begins playing in background]

[2:00:00]

**Austin**: So, Hadrian, the last thing that Samothos said to you was to come to town, that he suspected that you would have lots to talk about, and that you should bring your friends because

he would ready a feast. And he wished to celebrate the new citizens of his kingdom. Y'all are walking through this town. What do you do?

**Art (as Hadrian):** Ok, everyone be on your best behavior.

**Janine (as Adaire):** Oh god.

**Art (as Hadrian):** This is really important for me.

**Ali (as Hella):** Wha? What is this?

**Art (as Hadrian):** I obviously have no idea. [**Austin** laughs]

**Janine (as Adaire):** Can we talk about this woman you dragged in out of nowhere?

**Janine:** Is she around?

**Austin:** Yeah, Adelaide's with y'all.

**Janine (as Adaire):** Who the fuck is that? Frankly.

**Jack (as Lem):** I know who that is.

**Austin:** She smirks at you.

**Ali (as Hella):** I... I wasn't going to be able to follow you guys in. So....

**Jack (as Lem):** Is this a sort of a situation...?

**Ali (as Hella):** Are we dead?

**Austin:** She says,

**Austin (as Adelaide):** Don't look at me.

**Jack (as Lem):** Um, Hadrian, are we dead?

**Art (as Hadrian):** I was gonna... I was also gonna ask if we were dead.

**Jack (as Lem):** Ok, so the question is up in the air as to whether or not we're dead. I don't really know how I feel about, sort of, that.

**Art (as Hadrian):** It doesn't feel like the last time that I almost died.

**Jack (as Lem):** Oh good. [**Janine** sighs]

**Austin:** Um, there are people looking at you from... the last thing... one of the last things I described, because I am Austin Walker, was a bakery. Um, and there are people who are like, in that bakery and in some of the shops and homes around this area who are like, looking at you with curiosity. Um, there are like, little kids peeking up like, out of windows and smiling at you. One of them makes a funny face at you. Um, is like [makes taunting, stick out tongue noise], uh and then ducks when you see him. And Adelaide is like,

**Austin (as Adelaide):** This place doesn't exist. I've never see... This place doesn't exist.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Well, that's ridiculous.

**Janine (as Adaire):** That's uh...

**Art (as Hadrian):** This obviously exists.

**Janine (as Adaire):** Yeah, that's not a useful...

**Art (as Hadrian):** I'm sorry. We weren't introduced.

**Austin:** She waits to be introduced to you. She like, reaches out a hand and like asks... waits for someone to introduce her.

**Art:** I will also reach my hand out in like, a frozen...[**Austin** and **Jack** laugh] not being introduced handshake.

**Ali (as Hella):** Hadrian, remember when I went to Nacre?

**Art (as Hadrian):** She means, I'm Hadrian. I'm Hadrian.

**Ali (as Hella):** I'm talking to you, Hadrian. Hi. Hadrian, remember when I went to Nacre and me and Lem were there? And then there was that like, queen? And I killed her. And... this is Adelaide.

**Austin:** She like, does a little head tilt nod towards you, Hella, when you describe killing her and smiles just a little bit.

**Austin (as Adelaide):** She did a very good job. Hadrian, it's a pleasure to meet you in person.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Oh, well, I'm sorry that happened.

**Austin (as Adelaide):** Not a worry. What is this place, Hadrian?

**Art:** She... she asked me that?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art (as Hadrian):** I don't... I don't know. I mean, the last thing I think I remember was getting... was getting stabbed a lot.

**Austin:** Uh, no you... the last thing you remember is that you fell into the water.

**Art:** Because I was stabbed a lot, right?

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, no. Everybody... well, because the sword broke.

**Janine:** There was like, a explosion, too, right?

**Austin:** There was a lot at once.

**Art:** Ok. There was an explosion, I fell into the water...

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** You fell and then we... I jumped in after you. And then I guess, everybody else was just like...

**Jack:** I think I also jumped in after you.

**Austin:** And then the house fell in after that. An important note.

**Art:** But we're not under the water.

**Janine:** Oh, did it?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** Weren't they on the roof of the house? Oh.

**Austin:** No, the whole thing fell in. I explicitly say at one point, um, oh... the house has to fall in, too. Like, I'll deal with that in a year or something. **[Jack laughs]**

**Janine:** But wasn't Marielda like, when they show up and they're like talking, and he's like, 'I'll tell you the story.'

**Austin:** What?

**Janine:** Wasn't that like, on... wasn't that supposed to be on the roof with...?

**Austin:** Oh yeah, so I guess, his house... maybe his roof was there, but...

**Janine:** And didn't like, the dog...?

**Austin:** Yeah, you know? All I know is last year, one of the things I say at the end of that episode, cause I just listened to it, is I guess all of the stuff from inside of that house also gets in there. So, maybe the roof of his house does not. I don't know.

**Janine:** Maybe the like, floor sinks in cause it's wet [inaudible]

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah.

**Jack:** [overlapping] I did flood it.

**Austin:** You did. Yes.

**Janine:** [overlapping] That's true. Maybe that's where a lot of stuff got in there.

**Austin:** [overlapping] That's where it broke. It broke inside of the house, so... yeah. I'd say everything else inside of that house also fell in, too. So...

**Art (as Hadrian):** So, we're... we're under the water?

**Austin (as Adelaide):** I don't know.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Well, Samothres is here. He'll... he'll make everything clear.

**Austin:** So, do you just keep walking through these city streets and...?

**Art:** Yeah, like, what's it like?

**Austin:** To the... so it's like... it is... We've done a lot of avoiding stereotype here, right? In Hieron, that has been a goal of ours since the jump. Has been like, hey, let's not have you know, kind of super stereotypical fantasy setting stuff, but I'm like... In my mind, this is like, the most Arthurian court type shit that you can kind of imagine. Um, it's like a large castle up on a hill. This whole area is kind of... the city is built on a series of hills, and so there's kind of rising and falling throughout the kind of rows and districts here. You can't really get a good glimpse of what the entire place looks like because you're in it. You're like, in the middle of it. And approaching through the kind of, outside... it wasn't even gates really, right? I think it's just... I think it just opens up into the... into the city. Like, there isn't... there wasn't a wall you walked past or something, right? It's like, almost as if there wasn't a need for something like that.

And so, you... It's kind of just like a quaint medieval... It's like going to a renaissance fair, is really what it's like. Which is to say, it is a lot like Velas for y'all, except everything is functioning. Um, there seems to be food for everyone. There are, you know, kids getting ready to go to school. Um, and a lot of the sorts of projects you would hear council people at Velas talk about for years before actually doing, are in the process of being done, right? So, like, you can see people working on tile for roads and a main thoroughfare. Er, not tile, but like, cobblestone

or whatever, right? You can see that there are... you can smell that there is you know, meat being smoked somewhere or something like that. You can hear... maybe you even... maybe when you were walking up via the... from the beach, you could see behind you that there were a number of fishing vessels out in the distance that were kind of being signaled to by someone on the beach, right?

Like, there's a lot of communication happening. There's a lot of interaction. Um, a lot of the places you've been have been very isolating. Here everything seems to flow. To the degree that again, you don't really see walls except for the walls of houses. And the castle has a wall, right? But it's not a moated castle. It's not a... there's no gate around the castle, right? You're getting closer and closer, but it is gated by distance and height in some way, but it is not like, 'hey, don't go here'. And you don't see any armed guards, as far as you can see either. There's no one in like, military wear or in armor or in... you wouldn't even know where to find the closest guards. Um, though...

**Jack:** I think...

**Austin:** ...I guess a thing you do notice is there are definitely... I guess, no. You wouldn't notice this. Yeah, I will say you would not notice the thing I was gonna say you would notice.

**Jack:** I think if I'm being honest, Lem becomes lost. Kind of, immediately.

**Austin:** [small laugh] Ok.

**Jack:** Um, I think finds himself separated in some way. Um... I don't know whether or not it was distracted by a smell or a noise or... is just... is just kind of cut loose.

**Austin:** Right. Yeah.

**Jack:** In the same way, I think that when we arrived in Nacre, Lem was just like, 'Oh my god. Here we go.'

**Austin:** Yeah, and I will say actually, for you, Lem, this place feels like Nacre in some ways. Some of the smells, some of the... there is a similar sort of Mediterranean or even occasionally like, touches of tropical color here and sound and flavor and design. Um, in terms of what the food smells and tastes like. In terms of what the music is. It's like, mix a sort of Mediterranean flavor with King Arthur's court, right? And that is the jist of this place. Um, so Lem is gone. We'll get back to wherever you show up in a moment, I guess.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Oh my god. He's gonna embarrass me. **[Ali laughs]**

**Janine (as Adaire):** Oh, for fuck's sake.

**Jack:** Ah, Hadrian's first time traveling with Lem. **[Ali laughs]**

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Ali:** I feel like I'm staying close to like, Hadrian and Adaire. Like I guess keep the squad together and protect it. I don't think that I'm like, on edge, but there's like an unease here, right?

**Austin:** Sure. Yeah, totally. Um, do y'all just head up to the castle? I mean, it's above everything in a sense. So, you can kind of always see it.

**Ali:** Yeah, I guess so.

**Art:** Yeah.

**Ali (as Hella):** Hadrian, where are you going?

**Art (as Hadrian):** I'm going to the castle.

**Ali (as Hella):** Ok.

**Art (as Hadrian):** I don't think I've ever been to a castle.

**Austin:** Have you ever been to a... ? You've been to a fallen tower. You've been to... Yeah, I guess you've never been to a castle.

**Art (as Hadrian):** It's very exciting.

**Austin:** It's a cool looking castle.

**Art:** I bet.

**Austin:** It's like you know, big parapets and.... I described it before, but like, these big blue and white and silver banners that have... I think it's like the symbol of Samothres on them. The solid ring... er not the solid ring. The open ring, right? The single... the sun that is just a ring. That is just a circle. Not filled in. But here... it's like white or silver. Instead of being the kind of like, brilliant like, yellow or gold or orange that it normally is. I'm trying to think of other qualities here. You know, you get closer. No one stops you. And you arrive at the castle. And there are two people who are in like, kind of plain clothes at the gate who are just like, you know, head on in, basically. Um, and when you do, you are... I think probably met by... God, who would it even be? Um, I think... you know, it's a big receiving hall with a long carpet, and it's the day, but there are still like, some... there's still firing burning in here in a fireplace. That's kind of keeping everything lit and kind of warm.

Um, because otherwise the stone would be... I don't know how well stone insulates. It's pretty high up here. I don't know my stone material shit. And I think it's probably... I don't think it's any of our named NPCs as established. So, it'd be someone who got killed. Or someone descended from someone who got killed at some point in the last... since Marielda, right? Um... yeah, I guess it's probably a new person. Um, let me think. What would... what is... oh, you



know what? Actually, not it's not. I know who it is. Cause I know who's the most curious person here. So, it is a character who is... who you've met before. It is the star Hella killed, Chapter, who says,

**Austin (as Chapter):** Welcome. I've been so eager to meet you all.

**Austin:** You briefly saw Chapter in the sort of, weird dream vision of this place that you had at the beginning of the last episode that we all played together in. Um, they were playing chess with Samoths and one of the old... tower mages. The university made just from back in Marielda time. Um, and... or some weird version of chess. And they are now here in front of you, and they have this kind of... they are this still brilliant starstuff. I think they're probably a little toned down, in terms of the brightness.

You can... you can look at them. You can make out their facial features. Their wings are kind of folded in, and they're not... they are not screaming various words and just trying to find language. They seem to have language on their side now. Um, and they still speak with a kind of echoey, haunted, almost metallic voice. Um, and the other big thing that you notice is that they have this black wound in them. This kind of absence from where the Blade in the Dark first struck them. But besides that, they're here, and they say welcome.

**Ali (as Hella):** This is... This sucks man.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Are you like, embarrassed? Is this like embarrassing for you? [**Janine** laughs lightly]

**Ali (as Hella):** What the fuck is going on?

**Austin (as Adelaide):** You killed them.

**Ali (as Hella):** Yeah, I know.

**Janine (as Adaire):** I mean, she killed you, too, but you seem cool about it.

**Austin (as Adelaide):** I have a different situation set up.

**Ali (as Hella):** This is...

**Art (as Hadrian):** Also, this is clearly some sort of mind game situation here. [**Ali** laughs] Right? Like, you're not like... you're not like, here because you're like super cool about it, right?

**Austin (as Chapter):** Mind game? No. No. If you wish to play games later, I would love to give you a try. But I've been so curious about who the people I first met were.

**Austin:** And just stands there and looks at you.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): Hella was the first person you met? That's awesome. [**Austin** laughs]

**Austin** (as **Chapter**): I did not anticipate her strength.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): Yeah, I hear that. [**Ali** and **Austin** laugh]

**Austin** (as **Adelaide**): Is he flirting with you?

**Janine** (as **Adaire**): That sounded extremely flirty.

**Austin**: I... that was about Hadrian. That was Adelaide talking about Hadrian to be clear.

**Janine**: Oh, look. [laughing] The star thing also sounded really flirty. [**Ali** laughs]

[2:15:00]

**Austin**: The star thing is barely... is barely a person yet.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): You know what, y'all? I've gotten very good at ignoring her, and I think that's how we should continue cause it doesn't matter. And this is fucked up. What is happening here?

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): Woah, it's just a castle.

**Austin** (as **Chapter**): Please come with me. If you have any questions, Samoths will be able to answer.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): See?

**Janine** (as **Adaire**): Are we not worried about the big friend that we lost just a few minutes ago?

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): The big friend?

**Ali** (as **Hella**): Oh, where the fuck is Lem? Lem?!

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): Oh.

**Austin** (as **Chapter**): He will be fine, too. There is no need to fear for anything here.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): He's not that big.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): I feared you when I met you.

**Austin** (as **Chapter**): And you shouldn't have.

**Ali (as Hella):** Ugh.

**Austin:** And they turn and start walking up these stairs to to lead you to a dining room.

**Jack:** Can I leave heaven once in there? [**Ali** laughs]

**Austin:** I don't know. What do you want to do?

**Jack:** Is it just a fancy prison?

**Austin:** [laughs] You can't just quote the internet? [**Ali** and **Janine** laugh] Um, that's a good question.

**Art:** I don't know if this counts as heaven if we're just in Hella's murder hole.

**Ali:** Don't call it...

**Austin:** Hmm... a good episode title. [**Ali** sighs, Austin laughs] We're not using that as an episode title. [**Jack** laughs]

**Art:** That's the episode title: We're not using this as an episode title.

**Austin:** [laughs] We're not calling it Duckberg, Um, we're not calling it Hella's murder hole. Alright. Do y'all go to dinner?

**Art:** Good callback.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Of course. I wish I had fancier clothes.

**Austin (as Chapter):** Would you like fancier clothes?

**Art (as Hadrian):** Yeah, I just said that.

**Austin (as Chapter):** Come with me. I will show you to your rooms.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Alright. I'll be right back.

**Austin:** And they... Chapter leads Hadrian away into... down some weird wing of this castle. Um, and what sort of clothes do you want? What's your fancy outfit look like?

**Art:** I don't... I bet like, I don't think Hadrian has a really fancy outfit, so it's probably like, just an idea of what a fancy outfit is.

**Austin:** No, but what's... What is Samoth's idea of what Hadrian's idea of a fancy outfit is?  
[Ali laughs]

**Art:** Oh my god. This is a question for the ages really. Um...

**Austin:** Welcome to Friends at the Table, describing outfits almost instantly.

**Art:** Um, but I'm just... I'm just not gonna do as good a job as the first 5 people are gonna send me a drawing are gonna do.

**Austin:** [laughs] You still have to give them direction, **Art**. [Ali laughs] That's the job.

**Art:** Well, I mean, here's the thing. I'm torn between some ideas here. One: Samoth classically doesn't seem to wear a lot of clothes.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** But like, that can't be what Samoth thinks nice clothes are. That's just like, Samoth being too good for the whole thing, right?

**Austin:** Yeah, definitely. I mean, the thing is, he is an inventor. Which means, I'm sure he's like, designed some clothes at some point. Um, if he wanted to look... if he wanted to look good in clothes, he could look good in clothes. [small laugh] You know what I'm sayin'?

**Janine:** Also, he was married to wine boy; he knows what nice stuff looks like.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Yeah. Yes, yes. He definitely...

**Art:** [interrupting] I'm going to guess that like, no. But like, it like, raises the question for me of like, what is... what the idea would like... what level of thoughtfulness...

**Austin:** [interrupting] Yeah, is Hadrian... Is Hadrian cosplaying as Samoth? Like, is that like his idea of what fancy looks like?

**Art:** No, but only because I don't think that the images that you get in Velasian church of Samoth...

**Austin:** Right.

**Art:** ...necessarily look like real Samoth because that's not how any of that works.

**Austin:** Right.

**Art:** Look at blonde hair, blue eyed Jesus.

**Austin:** I have. He's out there.

**Art:** Um, alright. I'm gonna... I'm gonna google something and then I'm gonna tell you what it is. I'm just gonna make sure...

**Austin:** Uh, Hella and Adaire, you are not changing clothes, my guess is.

**Ali:** I think that I like... At this point, I like grab Adaire's arm, and I'm like,

**Ali (as Hella):** Ok. This is like, the whole Samothres thing is like an appeal to Hadrian, and now he's like, getting clothes, I guess. I have to like, avoid all these people. This is like a trick, right? Do know... How much do you know about magic?

**Austin (as Adelaide):** Who are you asking?

**Ali (as Hella):** Adaire.

**Austin (as Adelaide):** I know a lot about magic. Maybe I could help.

**Ali (as Hella):** [sighs] Oh god.

**Austin (as Adelaide):** I'm sorry. Maybe...

**Janine (as Adaire):** Do we all get clothes?

**Austin (as Adelaide):** Adaire, maybe you know a lot about magic, too.

**Janine (as Adaire):** You don't know shit about what I know. Do we all get clothes?

**Austin (as Chapter):** Yes, of course. I'll show you to your rooms.

**Janine (as Adaire):** Ok, well I was... I was honestly gonna fuck off, but I'll actually go check out those clothes first.

**Ali (as Hella):** Adaire.

**Janine (as Adaire):** And see how... cause, you know, maybe they'll...

**Austin:** [interrupting] They say,

**Austin (as Chapter):** Follow me. If you all come at once, it'll be easier to show you to your rooms.

**Art:** I would like to disclaim that I'm ready with my outfit.

**Austin:** [laughing] Can we just get Hadrian stepping out of the room with the new outfit on as the rest go to get theirs?

**Art:** Ok, have you ever seen the movie, A Knight's Tale?

**Janine:** Oh no.

**Art:** Where they ask... where like, the lady asks Heath Ledger what he's gonna wear to the thing, and he doesn't have any idea?

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Art:** So, he's like... it's a green tunic with gre... like, he just like, keeps saying the word green. And then he like, just ends up with like...

**Austin:** All green everything? Yeah.

**Art:** He ends up looking like this.

**Austin:** Yeah, like a leprechaun.

**Art:** Like a leprechaun?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** I think that's the same thing is that Hadrian's like, well, I would be wearing um... a... green...

**Austin:** You go with green still? Yeah?

**Art:** Yeah, I think it's just this exact outfit.

**Austin:** Ok great.

**Art:** But like, it ends up looking ok because like, really talented...

**Austin:** Right.

**Art:** ... magic is making it happen.

**Jack:** Also, Heath Ledger kind of looks great in that outfit, so...

**Austin:** [interrupting] He looks incredible in this outfit. Are you kidding me?

**Janine:** Yeah. It helps that everyone else in that shot is basically wearing the same color pallet.

**Austin:** Yes.

**Jack:** Right.

**Austin:** Right. Well, and he's...

**Art:** [interrupting] And Heath Ledger is objectively an attractive human being.

**Austin:** Deeply attractive.

**Jack:** 100%.

**Art:** Honestly, this is a great movie. [**Jack** laughs]

**Austin:** I haven't seen it in a long time.

**Art:** Yeah, I hope it holds up.

**Austin:** Anyway, um, [laughing lightly] Hadrian comes out wearing all green everything.

**Art:** But many shades of green and like...

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** ... there's some nice embroidery on the tunic. And like, he's very pleased with himself. It's like the biggest smile you've ever seen on Hadrian's face.

**Janine:** I think there's a moment when Adaire is visibly reconsidering. [**Austin** and **Ali** laugh]

**Austin:** Well, and then I think that, you know, Chapter, the star, opens the door for you. And says,

**Austin** (as **Chapter**): This way, Adaire.

**Austin:** And you can see the outfit laid out for you. I don't know what it is. You tell me.

**Janine:** I know exactly what it is.

**Austin:** Ok, what is it?

**Janine:** Because it's the reason... I honestly was like, oh Adaire's gonna leave. This isn't her scene, and then you said fancy clothes, and I was like, 'Oh, there's this outfit I want to put Adaire in so badly.' But I have never been able to justify it ever because it's too fancy for her. And her whole thing is she can't do 100% fancy. But it is the LingXi Royal Academy Coordinate dress. Um...

**Jack:** Oh god.

**Austin:** Oh, that's... That's very good.

**Janine:** [overlapping] It's a diagonal view.

**Art:** [overlapping] That's just an monochromatic as all green. I just want to throw that out there.

**Austin:** Yeah, it is. There's two...

**Janine:** [interrupting] It has black. It's blue, black, and gold.

**Austin:** Oh, there is black in there.

**Janine:** It's three colors.

**Austin:** I didn't see the black.

**Janine:** Yes.

**Austin:** Do you want to describe this for the listeners at home.

**Janine:** Yes, so it is like... Um, it is a sort of typical... typically cut A-line, gothic lolita kind of dress. I guess, it's more gothic aristocrat, sort of... that vibe. Um, with a cloak that has one of those little half... like, it's like a layered cloak. Um, it has some really good detailed gold trim, and there's like a sort of sheer... sheer um, I don't remember what the fabric is called along the lower edge. And there's also just like, a big... on the front there is a big sort of flat panel with like, a gold key and a little crown, and like all this kind of scroll-work looking stuff. I highly recommend everyone who is curious to look it up. It is L-I-N-G-X-I Royal Academy. In blue, of course.

**Austin:** Of course. It's very cool.

**Jack:** I saw a great... there are some great adverts that show up on instagram every so often for those kind of like, mobile... mobile RPGs, and they... my favorite one is a montage of a character at level one, at level twenty-five, and at level sixty [Austin and Janine laugh] with increasingly like, spectacular armor, weapons, and pets. And this is like, 100% Adaire at the end of this instagram advert.

**Austin:** Love it. Hella?

**Art:** Man, we should get us one of those instagram advert games.

**Austin:** Yeah, it'd be great. Friends at the Table Gatcha. Can't wait.

**Art:** That's its name. Friends at the Table. Gotcha!!

**Austin:** Yeah.



**Jack:** Can't wait.

**Art:** G-O-T...

**Janine:** Oh boy.

**Austin:** Yikes. Um, Hella, do you... do you get a new outfit? Are you good as is?

**Ali:** I don't... I'm like... the thing is, my clothes are probably like, wet.

**Austin:** Oh yeah.

**Ali:** Like, it's still damp and bloody and weird.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Uh huh.

**Ali:** Um, I think the last thing Hella was lay on a bomb. Um, so [laughs] I think that she just like, gets the same outfit.

**Austin:** Great. Uh huh.

**Ali:** It's just like her adventuring gear, but like, as if they were new. It's not like that buckle that she's been retying every...

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** ... for the last two months or whatever. It's just like, here's everything brand new, and like, better made. The stitching is gorgeous, and it's like,

**Ali (as Hella):** Ugh, fine. I'll put it on.

**Austin:** Alright.

**Art:** Aww, Lem didn't get clothes.

**Austin:** Well, Lem will get clothes some other time. There's a lot of time. Um, and Adelaide is like, goes into her room and before she does she says to Chapter. She says like,

**Austin (as Adelaide):** I'll meet you all at dinner.

**Austin:** And Chapter says like,

**Austin (as Chapter):** Oh. Ok. Of course.

**Austin:** And then, as each of you prepares and you know, comes back outside, leads you to the dining room where I guess like, Hadrian is waiting first. And then presumably Hella maybe next because it seems like that's just not a really hard outfit to put on. [**Janine** and **Ali** laugh] Uh, and

then... and then um, Adaire. It is a circular room with big windows on the walls. Not just windows. They're like op... there are big windows, but there are also some glass doors that open up onto a balcony that surround this big central room. Um, and that looks down onto the town below. And at this point, I'd say it's like a late lunch type thing. Maybe the sun is beginning to set a little bit. Lem, where have you found yourself? Describe the area around you.

**Jack:** Um, I have found myself in a sort of fantasy cul-de-sac.

**Austin:** Perfect.

**Jack:** It is... there are... I'm thinking of, you know in Novigrad in Witcher 3. There's like... there's the grand sweeps of the town?

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** And the big, wide walkways in the squares. And then occasionally you'll just sort of find yourself in this area that is like, nice, but is also... You're like, I don't know really how I got into this place or how to get out. One of these buildings is kind of crooked.

**Austin:** Yeah, um...

**Jack:** Um, and I think this is like... it was through this circumstance that Lem got lost, in that he was like, 'Oh, Oh, this is all very exciting.'

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Jack:** 'I don't know where I am.'

**Austin:** Um, at some point, you find your way out, and I think we get a shot of... We get a shot of you in the shadow of the castle. Um, and we see Samoths up on the castle like, far away up on the balcony of this dining room, looking down at you and sipping a glass... Or sipping some sort of golden goblet, presumably and like, smirking at you having gotten lost. And then you know, you're able to put together the name of the neighborhood you're in. It is New Helianthus, which you read on some, you know, flyer or something.

And you definitely get a... there's definitely a shot of you seeing this building that is... that has kind of an iridescent rooftop. It's almost like... it almost looks like some sort of shell or something has made the roof and has kind of a pearlescent, sort of like... You get an iridescent on top of it. And on the... there's like a little, tiny sign. Like, everyone knows that that's the building it is. It doesn't have this huge garish sign that says what it is. But there is like a small sign next to the door which just says Thackeray Court. And that is where you are. This whole area I think is called Thackeray Court, but also this specific building which is like a... it's the size of a kind of a governmental building. It's like, you know, two floors up and has um... Or it's like,

I think it's like, one bottom floor and then you can kind of see the roof there, and then it goes back another, you know, half of the building.

And then it goes up to a second floor in the kind of back. So, like an L shape if you looked at it from the side. And that is where you are currently in this city. And I think someone comes up to you who has like, a.... Again, they're all just wearing... everyone's wearing just the clothes that they're wearing. I think this person is like, rosy-cheeked. She has a ponytail that's coming down one-side of like... it's kind of like laying on her left shoulder. And on her right collar... she has on like, a very professional looking jacket that is like, buttoned tight around her. Um, and has on dark pants and tall boots. But she just looks very comfortable in them, but on her right lapel is a ribbon that's hanging, and it's kind of again, a kind of rainbow colored ribbon. As it moves, you can see like, the sun from the sun set shimmering on it. And she's just like,

**Austin (as Elspeth):** Can I help you with anything?

**Jack (as Lem):** Hello? I'm Lem.

**Austin (as Elspeth):** Pleasure to meet you, Lem. I take it you're new here.

**Jack (as Lem):** Am I dead?

**Austin (as Elspeth):** No. No, very much no.

**Jack (as Lem):** Ok. That's a... that's... that's the best news I've heard all day. Really. Um, ok. I'm lost. Um, now we've gotten the sort of death bit out of the way, um, where am I? And what's the best way to get back up to the castle. I think that's where my friends were going?

**Austin (as Elspeth):** I'll lead you there. Come with me. Lem, I'm Elspeth. A pleasure to meet you.

**Jack (as Lem):** So, where are you from, Elspeth?

**Austin (as Elspeth):** Right here. New Helianthus.

**[2:30:00]**

**Austin:** And she's like, leading you back to the castle bit by bit. Cutting through some alleyways and I think that this part of the city starts to make sense to you in a way. Have you ever been like, guided around a town with a friend, and you're like, 'Ah, ok. This... Ok, this is the major road.'

**Jack:** Yeah.

**Austin:** 'Ok, I see.' It's one of those.

**Jack (as Lem):** You were born here?

**Austin (as Elspeth):** Of course. Most of us were.

**Jack (as Lem):** Ok. I don't mean to... Um, I don't mean to be rude, Elspeth, um... You do know that you're in a sword, right?

**Austin (as Elspeth):** [sighs] It's a very complicated story, I know. But here we are.

**Jack (as Lem):** Ok. Ok. Um, what do you do here?

**Austin (as Elspeth):** Uh, well this year, you know, I'm part of Prism. Um, but you know, afterwards I think I might go try farming for a little while. I don't have the stomach for fishing, but I've done a number of things.

**Austin:** She's young. She's in her young twenties. Her low twenties, I'd say.

**Jack (as Lem):** Well, I'm an archivist. Um, I guess I used to be. I can't really... I can't really go back.

**Austin (as Elspeth):** An archivist.

**Austin:** And she's like, thinking.

**Austin (as Elspeth):** I think I've heard about people like you. Yeah, you look for things from other times and places and gather them together and do all sorts of wonderful things.

**Jack (as Lem):** That's us. That's us. We tried to... we tried to remake the world.

**Austin (as Elspeth):** Of course.

**Austin:** And she's still like, 'Ok, buddy'. Like, that's... I don't think she's dismissive, but there is a degree of like, 'Oh, you poor boy.' Like, you don't... you're not there anymore, you know?

**Jack:** Right.

**Austin:** And I think what she actually says is like,

**Austin (as Elspeth):** Well, I wish you well on all pursuits.

**Jack (as Lem):** Thank you. Thank you. Um, thank you for being so welcoming.

**Austin (as Elspeth):** If you ever need me again, I'm stationed at Thackeray Court. If you have any questions, we'll know where to find me.

**Jack (as Lem):** Thank you very much, Elspeth. It's been so nice to meet a friendly face here in this sword.

**Austin (as Elspeth):** Of course. It's... it's... We don't call it the sword. This is the Isle Aubade.

**Jack (as Lem):** That's great.

**Austin (as Elspeth):** [laughs ooc] I'll be seeing you.

**Austin:** And you know, you're at the castle. You're at the gates. I think by this point, the conversation upstairs has probably already kicked off, so we should jump back.

**Art:** I like that both of you were treating the other one as if they were very stupid. [**Jack and Janine** laugh]

**Austin:** Uh huh. Yeah. Um, Samoths comes in from the balcony once you're all seated and takes a seat. It's a round table, but he sits like, close to y'all. He's not like, far away. And in fact, there's probably a big table and there's also a little table. And I think he's... you might... are you all sitting at the big table or did you sit at the little table? There's both a big and a little table. There's maybe a bunch of little tables actually in here.

**Art:** Yeah. Big, dumb idiot Hadrian probably sat...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Great.

**Art:** ...at the big table.

**Austin:** I think he just like, walks past you, shakes his head, and like, puts his hand on your shoulder and he says,

**Austin (as Samoths):** We're over here.

**Austin:** And then heads over to sit with the rest of you at the more reasonably sized table.

**Art (as Hadrian):** [quietly] Oh. Ok.

**Austin:** Um, and he is wearing a robe. He's wearing a blue and silver robe with I think, like, grey pants. Not wearing a shirt. He's Samoths. Um, and is... you know, his hair is... He's as we've described Samoths, right? I would cast him of someone from the Indian subcontinent. His hair, I think here though, is a little longer. A little... a little... not more unkempt, but it's less... There are ways where you make your hair look unkempt, right? There are ways that like, 'Oh, I'm gonna look... I'm gonna look a little fiesty today, you know?' And that is what he is, right? He

keeps a certain attitude in his look that is meant to be grounded and less kingly than I think we've seen him on screen before. And I think that follows because he just says like,

**Austin (as Samoths):** Well, welcome to um, to this. [pause] It is strange to actually see you face to face, Hadrian, and to meet your friends. I've only... You have to understand. From in here it's echoes of shadows for what's happening outside.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Well, Hella is my best friend. [**Janine** laughs]

**Austin (as Samoths):** Hella, pleased to meet you.

**Ali (as Hella):** Yeah. Same.

**Austin (as Samoths):** And Adaire, I believe.

**Janine (as Adaire):** Yep.

**Austin (as Samoths):** Pleased to meet you, too. Food should be here any minute, but if you have any questions or you know, uh, anything, I want to be made of service to you. You've all traveled very far away. I know that.

**Art (as Hadrian):** [whispered] Someone else should ask the where the hell are we question.

**Ali (as Hella):** Like, how far?

**Austin (as Samoths):** Hm?

**Ali (as Hella):** You said far.

**Austin (as Samoths):** Yes, from...

**Ali (as Hella):** Like...

**Austin (as Samoths):** ...where you were?

**Ali (as Hella):** Yeah. Like far is one of those words, right?

**Austin (as Samoths):** Being here you have to understand there are two types of distance.

**Austin:** And he takes a fork and a knife from the table and places them just out, and he says,

**Austin (as Samoths):** Well, how long is the bottom of the fork from the top of the fork? six inches, seven inches. Whatever the measurement of distances we use in this world. How far is the fork from the knife? Well, yes, the fork and the knife could be six inches

apart also, but that's a different sort of distance, right? The top of the fork is directly connected to the bottom of the fork. The fork and the knife, no matter how close they get, they will not be the same thing. You are on the knife now.

**Ali (as Hella):** So, we're dead?

**Austin (as Samoths):** No. And I don't mean that as a way of... Hella, those you've killed are here. And in that sense they are dead, but they are not... One, you were not killed by your own blade. I can sense that on you. Two, death here is a different... You've been to Nacre, I understand.

**Ali (as Hella):** Ok, but...

**Austin (as Samoths):** It's more... Death here is a decision. Not a simple status you take involuntarily.

**Austin:** And the food comes out and there's like, you know... Again, what would you like to eat?

**Art:** Some sort of like, fancy fish stew. Like a...

**Ali:** Ooo.

**Austin:** That sounds good.

**Art:** Like a bouillon base, but what if there was no France.

**Austin:** Sure. Maybe someone from France got killed by the sword at some point, I don't know. It's a long timeline.

**Ali:** Yeah, you know.

**Art:** Do we have France?

**Austin:** Nah, I don't think we have France. **[Ali laughs]** Um, but sure. Any other dish requests?

**Janine:** Um, like a... like, a nice like pot-pie kind of thing.

**Ali:** Oh yeah.

**Austin:** Ooo, that sounds good, too.

**Janine:** Savory pie.

**Austin:** Very... yeah. Savory pie with a flaky crust.

**Janine:** Savory dinner pie with like, a really nice like, top crust. In some pattern.

**Austin:** Yeah, aw, it's so good.

**Janine:** They did that thing where you use a cookie cutter to make the fun shapes. Like little leaves and stuff.

**Austin:** Yeah, love it. It's leaves. It's... there's the... It's the seasons. **[Ali laughs]** It's like a flower, a sun, a leaf, and a snowflake?

**Janine:** Or there's... yeah. How about there's like, four pies...

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** ...and for winter, it's like a chicken-pot pie.

**Austin:** Perfect.

**Janine:** So it's like, light and creamy. And then, you know, for Autumn, you get like, a beefy one.

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Janine:** And maybe spring is actually just like a normal dessert pie. So it's like...

**Austin:** Oh yeah.

**Janine:** Cause it's like strawberries or something. And then summer can be whatever. I'm out of ideas.

**Austin:** Another fish.

**Art:** Dinner is four pies? **[Austin and Ali laugh]**

**Austin:** Listen, it's paradise in here, alright? You wanna eat four pies? This is the fucking place to eat four pies.

**Art:** Have you seen the movie Defending Your Life?

**Austin:** Yes.

**Art:** Alright.

**Austin:** Um, Hella, do you want food also?

**Ali:** Um...

**Austin:** I mean, you can have some of this pie to be clear. But do you have a request?



**Ali:** Yeah, clearly it's not a....

**Janine:** Yeah, I'm not gonna eat all these pies. I just wanted them.

**Ali:** Um, I was gonna ask if there's like, a gourmet version of like, a crescent roll. [laughs]

**Austin:** Oh, def. Def, 100%.

**Ali:** Just some nice warm like...

**Janine:** Isn't that a...

**Ali:** ...hand bread.

**Art:** Isn't that a croissant?

**Austin:** It's a croissant.

**Janine:** I was gonna say...

**Ali:** Oh. [laughs]

**Janine:** ...is this a croissant, like... What is...?

**Austin:** It is. It is a croissant.

**Ali:** But like, like..

**Austin:** They're different.

**Ali:** Croissants are like small and you eat them for dinner.

**Austin:** Yeah, crescent rolls are like... are like, what if you could get croissants...

**Janine:** I don't think I know what a crescent roll is.

**Austin:** What if you could get a croissant from like a twenty-five cent, like gacha machine? [Ali laughs] They look like little croissants, is what they look like. They're rolls.

**Janine:** Oh, yeah. It's just... This is just like a short, less flaky croissant. This is like, a stubby...

**Ali:** Yeah, it's more of a dinner roll.

**Austin:** It is more like a dinner roll, in terms of consistency and stuff.

**Ali:** Just like...

**Austin:** It's not flaky in the same way. It's denser than a croissant is.

**Ali:** Just like a loaf of bread that you can fit in your hand, essentially. Not like a loaf, but you know...

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Janine:** It's a cosplaying dinner roll is what it is.

**Art:** Hella's out here eating like eight dinner rolls for dinner.

**Austin:** Carbs. You don't got carbo load before being Hella.

**Ali:** Well, but like, dipping it in the soup, you know. It's a whole...

**Austin:** Yeah, it's a whole thing. Um, he... What's he have? He has... god... I think he's just enjoying what you have at this point. I don't think there's like... He can eat whatever he wants to eat every night, you know? Just happened to have this.

**Austin (as Samothēs):** I hope I can make the transition here as easy as possible for you all. Everyone finds their place in Aubade eventually.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Oh, are we not gonna go back?

**Austin (as Samothēs):** It is not as simple as that, I'm afraid, Hadrian.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Oh?

**Austin (as Samothēs):** I will say the possibility is there. You were not killed by the blade. Which means that unlike everyone else here, this need not be your home forever. I actually once had a friend stay for a while and leave. You know him. Wait, un, Red Jack. He was here once.

**Janine (as Adaire):** Oh, he's cool.

**Art:** I was partly like, 'is he talking about Samot?' What a weird way to say that.

**Austin:** [laughing] No.

**Ali (as Hella):** Wait, you know Red Jack?

**Austin (as Samothēs):** Of course. Yes.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Throndir's friend, Red Jack?

**Austin (as Samothēs):** Who's Throndir?

**Austin:** No, he knows who Throndir is. [laughs] Uh,

**Austin (as Samothos):** Yes. Throndir's friend, Red Jack. Your friend, Red Jack. My friend, Red Jack. The Blade was broken once, and he found his way in. And when it was reforged, he found his way out.

**Art (as Hadrian):** I'm so bummed I don't have the cloak to give you.

**Austin:** Yeah, what happened to the cloak?

**Art:** Um, Samothos took it.

**Austin:** Other Samothos took it.

**Art:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** And that did not go well for him. I don't even...

**Austin:** No, it didn't. That's... Yeah, you have no idea. Neither does this Samothos.

**Art:** Oh. Fwoof.

**Austin (as Samothos):** [sighs] Again, this is why I say I'm here for any questions you have. I... You will have them. Whether tonight or some other night.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Can we...?

**Janine (as Adaire):** Hadrian? Oh...

**Art (as Hadrian):** Yeah?

**Janine (as Adaire):** If... [laughs] No, this is stupid, sorry.

**Austin:** Uh huh?

**Janine (as Adaire):** If you wanted to give him the cloak, why didn't you just... when you decided what you wanted to dress up in... dress up in the cloak?

**Art (as Hadrian):** I don't think it works like that. I don't think if I'd been like, I hope that cloak I gave away back. I don't think it works like that. I think it would just look like that cloak and that seems super rude.

**Janine (as Adaire):** It was... I mean, it was kind of fancy, like...

[Following dialogue is sort of half in, half out of character]

**Art** (jokingly as **Hadrian**): 'Hey, I'm here in your husband's replica clothes.'

**Austin**: [laughing very hard] Ohhhhhh!

[everyone laughing]

**Art** (jokingly as **Hadrian**): 'I'm cosplaying as Samot!'

**Austin**: I'm sinking all the way into my seat and blushing, I think! I think that's... Huh! ...Phwoof. Meow.

**Janine**: Fair enough.

**Art** (jokingly as **Hadrian**): 'Are we best friends now?'

**Austin**: [laughing with **Ali**] Something like that. Um, alright... Um, bring it back down. Uh, Lem? I think at this point, um, you like walk into this castle and Chapter, the star, is there.

**Jack** (as **Lem**): Hello.

**Austin** (as **Chapter**): Lem King.

**Jack** (as **Lem**): Yeah, I'm sorry.

**Austin**: [laughs] A thing... I guess should keep describing Chapter. I think Chapter... In my mind, Chapter has that cool thing that comic book characters do where like, their eyes are just white and have like a black outline almost. Um, I also don't think that they have a mouth. They just have like... they... their face is more like a face than it was when Hella killed them, but still not quite like a nose or a mouth. There's like, cheekbones, you know? There's like the shape. There's like a chin, but not quite lips yet.

**Janine**: Does their jaw move when they speak?

**Austin**: No.

**Janine**: Ok.

**Austin**: No, so it's not like superhero in that way. It's not like Spider-Man face, you know what I mean? But it is... I guess Spider-Man's mouth might not move either really, right?

**Jack**: It moves a bit, right?

**Austin**: So maybe like a superhero face, I don't know. You know what I'm sayin'.

**Jack (as Lem):** Hi, are my f-... Uh, are we good?

**Austin (as Chapter):** Would you like a change of clothes or would you like to go straight to dinner?

**Jack (as Lem):** I'll just go to dinner, please.

**Austin (as Chapter):** Of course. The clothes will be there for you when you need them.

**Austin:** And they turn around. And their wings, which are again are made of like, strange, glowing fire stuff, uh flicker for a second as if they're stretching them. And then they lead you up the stairs and into the dining room with the rest of the group.

**Jack (as Lem):** Hi, I'm sorry. Uh...

**Austin (as Samoths):** Take a seat.

**Austin:** Says Samoths.

**[2:45:00]**

**Jack (as Lem):** Oh, ok. Did I miss much?

**Art (as Hadrian):** Ye... yeah.

**Jack (as Lem):** I met this woman called Elspeth. She works for something called Prism.

**Austin (as Samoths):** Oh, she's great.

**Jack (as Lem):** And I forgot to ask her what that is.

**Austin (as Samoths):** She has a good life ahead of her.

**Jack (as Lem):** Uh, she was born here. Did you know that you could do that, Hella?

**Ali (as Hella):** I didn't... What? No.

**Jack (as Lem):** I found this building called Thackeray... Thackeray. Something to do with Thackeray. Some...

**Austin (as Samoths):** Court. Thackeray Court.

**Austin:** Says Samoths.

**Jack (as Lem):** Thackeray Court. Thank you. Um, it had like a... like a sort of a iridescent roof and then I got lost. And then Elspeth pointed me up here and she says

that we can talk to her if we have any questions. Um, and then I met... the star that you killed.

**Austin** (as **Samothos**): Chapter.

**Jack** (as **Lem**): Oh.

**Austin** (as **Samothos**): \*Her name is Chapter. (\*should be they)

**Jack** (as **Lem**): And now I'm here. So, it's been a... it's been a pretty good... it's been a pretty good afternoon. Um, for me.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): Glad to hear it.

**Austin** (as **Samothos**): You don't need to be anxious, Lem. Take a seat. Have some food. We have plenty of time to talk. You'll get this place... you'll get this place down like the back of your hand in no time.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): We can't... I'm sorry. I don't want to be rude.

**Ali**: [laughing] And I think she nervously looks at Hadrian, and looks back at Samothos and is like,

**Ali** (as **Hella**): We can't... Like, how long...? We can't just be here. And like, Adelaide is here. And like, that's a problem. Eh? Do you want to talk about that? Cause that's a problem.

**Austin** (as **Samothos**): She will be fine. She might not be at first. Sometimes others are not... Others you've sent me have not been fine.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): I haven't done anything.

**Austin** (as **Samothos**): Hmm, is that why Raporro Coro Don and Tavira Shal have been causing trouble for the last few months? Because you've done nothing? Or because you sent them here?

**Ali** (as **Hella**): Well, I sent them out of the place that I was.

**Austin** (as **Samothos**): And they will be fine, too. Just give it another month or two.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): Sorry, Hadrian.

**Janine** (as **Adaire**): If you think about it, Hella, you've actually killed way less people than you ever thought. So, you're probably in the black here.

**Austin:** We assume that Hella was a mercenary offscreen before the game started. [Ali giggles]

**Janine:** That's why I said she didn't kill none. She just killed fewer.

**Austin:** Yeah. I don't know. Hella, how many people have you killed with the sword besides the like, three or four we know.

**Ali:** Oh my god. Um, I... Ok. [laughs] Three or four people on screen, at least. Um, I guess two seasons only three or four people, then it's like... twenty-five, thirty maybe?

**Austin:** Oh, that's all? Ok.

**Ali:** It's been a couple years. I don't know...

**Austin:** It's been a couple years. Yeah, no. That's fair. That's fair.

**Janine:** And only the ones you like, choked or shoved off cliffs or whatever actually count, apparently. So, you're fine.

**Austin:** No, no no, the ones not killed.

**Ali:** Other way. Sword people.

**Austin:** [overlapping] The other way. Only the ones killed by the sword are in here.

**Ali:** Yeah.

**Janine:** No, that's what I mean is... By count, I meant are actually dead. And count in like a horrible...

**Austin:** [overlapping] Oh, okay. Right. I got you, yes.

**Janine:** ... murderer tally.

**Austin:** Uh, according to the wiki which is what I have been basing this off it because I can't remember anyone else that you killed with the sword. Ginny, which is Brandish's first mate. Adelaide, you stabbed with the sword. You cut her head off, but she was not fully pulled into the sword, but having been killed by the sword is why she is able to... why you were able to drag her in here. If she had not been killed by the sword, you would not have been able to do that.

Raporro Coro Don who was the leader of the Ordennan... boat.... The ship that showed up at Old Man's Chin filled with Anchor who you killed. The one who was like, you have to call me a doctor and a general. That one. And Tavira Shal who was the justiciar-captain of the Commission of Smoke and Steel. Like the head justiciar. Um, like the head witch hunter, basically. And she was killed in, I think, the last game... from yeah. Or nearly, anyway. Wait, no.

Was she killed before... no, that was... that's right. You killed somebody else earlier than that, I'm pretty sure.

**Art (as Hadrian):** So you're certain there's no way for us to go home.

**Austin:** I'm wrong. Tavira Shal was the captain you killed in the woods during the Old Man's Chin arc. Quinta Quatróna, I think, was stabbed in the back by Adaire. I'm pretty sure. Yes. I think that's right. Anyway, say it again, one more time, Hadrian.

**Art (as Hadrian):** So, you're sure there's no way for us to go home right now.

**Austin (as Samoths):** I suppose the blade could have been repaired quickly.

**Austin:** Actually, I think he would just know. He just says,

**Austin (as Samoths):** No.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Alright. Then we might as well make the best of it and figure out what we can do here while we wait.

**Austin:** He smiles.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Secure in the knowledge that as soon as it is possible for us to leave that we will be permitted to.

**Jack (as Lem):** Well, let's not...

**Austin (as Samoths):** Of course.

**Jack (as Lem):** Let's not be too hasty, Hadrian.

**Austin (as Samoths):** He's right. You can stay as long as you'd like. If you want to help with things, there are plenty of things to help with. It is a kingdom of helpers which is a convenient thing, but it also means that there are always new ideas, new plans, new ventures to explore.

**Art (as Hadrian):** What a coincidence. We...

**Art:** Gestures at the rest of the group, but in a way that kind of excludes Adaire.

**Art (as Hadrian):** ...love being helpful.

[Ali quietly laughs in the background]

**Janine (as Adaire):** Do you have some kind of boot licking position open? Cause I know someone.



**Art** (as **Hadrian**): I mean, this is sort of like, I don't know.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): Do I have to like, give apology cards or like...?

**Austin** (as **Samothēs**): Oh, I... Y... It couldn't hurt honestly. Um, but there is something about this place and about what we've built here that is a good primer for [sighs] ... it's a good primer for resolution. Once you're here, whether you're born here or you come here from outside, there's nothing but time. And it's not that time heals wounds necessarily, but it does provide the opportunity for healing. So, apologies would do no harm, certainly. And I can think of no better place to offer them than here.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): I'll think about it.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): [whispered] I really wouldn't. [**Ali** snorts]

**Austin** (as **Samothēs**): Lem King, you're quiet.

**Jack** (as **Lem**): I'm... I'm overwhelmed. If I'm honest. I don't know... I don't know where to start. We are... You... Are you busy tomorrow?

**Austin** (as **Samothēs**): I'm busy everyday, but also I have plenty of time. Let me show the place, and see if maybe that will help you make sense of it. Hm?

**Jack** (as **Lem**): Well, that sounds fantastic.

**Austin**: And he stands up and says,

**Austin** (as **Samothēs**): Follow me.

**Austin**: And offers to lead the group out to the balcony where he can show you what this place looks like. Do you all follow?

**Jack**: Like immediately. Just like...

**Austin**: [chuckling] Ok.

**Jack**: ...instantly out of the chair. I think Lem has like, some food in his hand, and he just like is carrying it with him.

**Austin**: Just like a slice of pie. Like a... we didn't ask what Lem's dish was. What was Lem's dish?

**Jack**: Oh, it's just um...[laughs] You know when you go to a buffet that is fancier than a buffet that you have experienced previously?

**Austin:** Uh huh.

**Jack:** And your just like, 'Well, ok. Alright. I suppose I'll have all of it?'

**Austin:** Ok.

**Jack:** 'Kind of simultaneously.' [Austin laughs] In a way that doesn't necessarily prejudice tastiness so much as, as... [overlapping] amount.

**Austin:** [overlapping] Quantity?

**Jack:** Quantity. [laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah, perfect. Alright, so, he leads you out onto the balcony and shows you the Isle Aubade. Um, which is a seamount, which is like a... it's a sunken volcano or it's... actually it's the other way around. It's a volcano that was raised from the sea floor. And which is in the process of sinking back in and kind of falling under its own weight very, very, very, very, very, very slowly. Um, and there is a kind of an atoll forming around its... around it. That is, you know, covered with reefs. Coral reefs. And it's slowly kind of becoming a barrier reef, and there's a lagoon between the open sea and here. And it is split into six districts? One, two, three, four, 5, six districts. To the north is New Helianthus, which you already know, and that is the largest residential district. It's where Thackeray Court is. To the East is where the Cartwright House is.

I want to say it's split into districts, but I don't mean that there are walls. And I don't mean that there are even naturally occurring borders. Like, imagine these black lines I've drawn as being purely abstracted. You know, there are soft borders. The style of architecture changes, you know, here or there as a way of like, indicating the blending of these two sections, right? Um, with the exception of where the big field is. Um, I think it's pretty clear that's like, 'Oh, yeah. No. There is a field here.' So, starting from twelve o'clock: Thackeray Court, New Helianthus, right? To the northeast is where the Cartwright House is, which is where there are a lot of schools.

A lot of like... kind of like, it's a mix of um, more traditional like, educational centers. Like, you know, a university, and that's what the Cartwright House is. And like, lower education for children and teens, but also there's lots of like, workshops and presumably like, some smaller stages and some... just like, places to experiment are all in that kind of northeastern area, near the Cartwright House. To the southeast are the fields, and in the middle of the fields is the Shrine of Sabinia which is a large, white temple, that even from here you can see.. There is like, on the side of it... on each of the four sides of it is a statue of a nun that is kind of like... Er, not a statue, but it's like an engraving or a... what's the word I'm looking for? Like when a statue is like in recess on a building side. You know what I mean. Of this nun.

**Art:** [overlapping] Yeah, there sure is a word for that.

**Austin:** There sure is. To the south, this is Cunningham Street which is the street you walked up. It's the big avenue that runs north-south from kind of the southern tip of Aubade to the castle. And that is lots of shops. That is lots of restaurants. That is kind of the market district, so to speak. To the southwest are the Halisham docks. And then like, that is where a lot of fishing and kind of what you would think of as industry happens here. Which is like, the you know, the making.

The physical making of new clothing and the um, what else? The... where blacksmithing happens. Where people are building parts for houses and everything else, right? Like, that is kind of that district. To the west is San-Becket Theatre which is this big, beautiful red building that's on an overlook. Overlooking the sea to the west. That is an outdoor theatre. And you can kind of see, right now you can... there are... you can hear the distant echoes of someone performing on it. On stage. And that is the Isle Aubade. And Aubade is like a morning poem. A poem for the morning. It's A-U-B-A-D-E.

**Jack (as Lem):** It's beautiful.

**Austin (as Samoths):** Thank you. It was a lot of work from a lot of people.

**Jack (as Lem):** What's out there?

**Jack:** And Lem just points out into the water.

**Austin:** So, far away, this is not... This is Austin talking. Not Samoths. You can... as you say that? There is like, a crack of lightning from a storm far away on the distance. And he says,

**Austin (as Samoths):** Nothing. Forever. We've sent people, and they go and they go and they go. And they come back years later. And nothing. Forever. No other islands. No sign of Hieron. The sea. Just the sea.

**Jack (as Lem):** That's terrifying.

**Austin (as Samoths):** It is. And it's all the more reason that we build this place the right way. There is nowhere to flee to. There is no way to throw a tantrum and leave society behind. We have to do this right. And so we do. I don't mean that it was always easy. When I first came here? Boy... [blows air] I was a different me.

**Ali (as Hella):** What's your version of running it right?

**Austin (as Samoths):** You know, it's complicated, and I got it wrong for a while, but providing for what people need and listening to them when they say those needs aren't met. And making sure no one's hungry and making sure that injustices are brought to attention. And ensuring that when someone is ready to move on, they do so at peace.

**[3:00:20]**

**Ali:** I think Hella like, squinted when she asked it obviously, but then like, as he's talking, she's been doing that thing where you like, kind of push your lips together, and you're like, 'Yeah, ok.'  
[laughs]

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Ali:** She's like, nodding as he talks, like, 'Yeah, that adds up.'

**Jack (as Lem):** Don't you wish you could have... you know, things are... Things aren't great out there. Um, in Hieron.

**Austin (as Samothos):**Hm.

**Jack (as Lem):** You know that, right?

**Austin (as Samothos):** Again, echoes of shadows of rumors. I can sense what's around the blade. I can hear whispers and can sense changes and can hear prayers when I am close enough. But I don't have a crisp image, no.

**Austin:** [jokingly as Samothos] It's not 1080p, you know? Crisp, like a crisp YouTube stream.

**[Ali, Jack and Art laugh]** He wouldn't know what a crisp image is, that's all I'm saying.  
[laughing]

**Austin (as Samothos):** But it's dim. It's like... there.

**Austin:** And he points to the theatre, and he says,

**Austin (as Samothos):** The protagonist. He's drawing a blade, I think. He'll go into a musical... he's singing now. There's singing. There's probably something about love or duty or the anxieties of choice. I can't say for sure, but I can see there is a protagonist and they hold the blade. And now the villain comes on. Ah, I can see that, too, but I can't tell you their motivation exactly. But when people come in, things become a little clearer. Partially, I can... I can sense the touch of others, which is why I know, Hadrian, that Samot sent you to me.

[Jack de Quidt's '[Something](#)' begins playing]

**Austin (as Samothos, cont.):**But also, I just get to ask questions, which I've been doing my best not to do yet because I have a developed patience. And you are in a new place. I try not to send a barrage of questions at new arrivals until at least day three or four.

**Art (as Hadrian):** Ha ha!

**Austin:** The only one who laughed. [laughs]

**Austin (as Samoths):** But yes, I know it's bad. I know.

**Austin:** And he looks back out at the storm.

**Austin (as Samoths):** I know.

[Music finishes playing]