

Winter in Hieron 27: A Good Metaphor

Transcriber: Lu

AUSTIN: People chant in the streets, but it is clear that they don't know what to protest. Some shout insults to Samothēs himself, "Where is he now, if he is so divine?". Others call out the names of Kall Fer and Zhan Kurr, all the leaders of the Archives. If the pattern is broken, as it seems to be, then they should've been told. Others still blame Rosemerrow or Velas, or blame the mages whose University lays dormant and empty, about two weeks travel south of here. Wherever you are in the Archives, you see and hear fear. To the west, Corsica Neue brings her forces to bear, and begins to march them westward. She doesn't know what she'll find, but she knows she will be needed. What are all of you doing, at this point? I think- at this point Uklan Tel has told you just about all of Marielda's storyline. Kinda caught you up to date with everything except for the killing of Samothēs. And the replacement of thereof- Ephrim, what are you doing in this break in the story?

SYLVIA: So the- the Unstill have left, you said?

AUSTIN: They're getting ready to, yeah.

SYLVIA: Okay, I think Ephrim's probably spending his time there.

AUSTIN: Okay

SYLVIA: Partially to keep an eye on the blade that he left with Corsica, and partially just to ingratiate himself with them?

AUSTIN: Yeah. So I think that they take- they're warm. Despite being undead [laughs]. They are... and to be clear, she's actually building forces- not specially- that are not all undead. Some people see her as an alternative to the absent and corrupt system of leadership in the Archives. Yknow, she ain't out here using illusion magic... and- I can imagine even there's a little bit of warmth with her. She comes to you for council, now and then, in your offtime. She talks about- y'know, potential military maneuvers. And there are times when it's clear that she is- that she might even believe your own tale more than you do. In the sense of like "Oh yeah, you're gonna be someone important", y'know? She kinda like... she doesn't forget your name, the way she forgets other people who work with or for her. Fero, how about you?

KEITH: I think... Fero probably has a hard time removing himself from places with good views of the Heat and the Dark?

AUSTIN: Mmm, yeah.

KEITH: And does a lot of... accounting the ways that it's not just his fault?

AUSTIN: Sure, yeah. That's fair. One thing that's cool is you can turn into things like eagles and see this thing from different perspectives. And just- better eyes to get close enough- to be able to see it closely without being able- without getting too close, where it's dangerous? And you're absolutely able to see- y'know, ill kinda just give this to you, a few things. One is that, the kinda stars that have- the kind of like star structure that has built up all around the southwestern bit of Rosemerrow, and is spreading through all of the northwest at this point is... able to contain it? But only barely, you can kind of see the purple flames poking through at key places. You can also see, now that you're looking for it, and kinda spending the time in observation mode, that there is a cloud of dust growing from the east. And... it's a *huge* stream of dust being kicked up, by you can only presume is the Grand Tour. And above it there is a thunderstorm, that follows it as it moves. You can see the lighting off in the distance. [pause] Throndir! [DRE laughs] welcome to the new archives!

DRE: Hey, hi! [laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] How's it going?

DRE: [laughing] Y'know, I herd this was a really cool place, but, uh... [cackles] I think things got pretty- pretty bad.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah, things are kinda shitty actually!

KEITH: Yeah... I mean, I know things are pretty bad now by comparison, but it was not so hot before.

AUSTIN: Huh...

DRE: [overlapping] That's fair

KEITH: [overlapping, unintelligible] -in a different place, actually.

AUSTIN: What's Throndir up to?

DRE: Um... I actually think what Throndir does is, he finds like a quiet place outside? And I don't know if he says a prayer to any specific god, but I think he just kind of like... prays/wishes for Hadrian's welfare.

AUSTIN: *Hm...*

DRE: 'Cause I think like, over- the first season, Throndir basically saw hadrian as this *big strong dude*, who did what was right and like- thought like “Oh yeah, that's easy, when you're a good person you do what's right.” But this season, he's seen more of just how much is on Hadrian's shoulders? [SONG “Inside” STARTS PLAYING] I mean, the last thing I saw of Hadrian was like, his cloak of Samot was gone, and he had this weird new sword, and then i- like, disappeared.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yeah, dog. And we've recorded again since then, so... *huh*.

DRE: Yeah. And so, I think hes just like... hes just worried for Hadrian.

AUSTIN: That's good. I like that. And then, on sunset of the day that Corsica Neue and the Unstill march west, still with the grooveining sound of people protesting and shouting in the streets, the kind of calm demeanor of the Archives completely shattered , Uklan Tel gathers you one more time, to tell you of the killing of Samoths. The killing of Samoths by the traitor Maelgwyn. Is that really it? Is there more to it than that? [DRE overlaps] I thought it was a much longer name.

DRE:[overlapping] Is it like “boy traitor” or “prince traitor”?

AUSTIN: Maybe prince traitor...? This is pretty funny, maybe I'll just leave this all in! [DRE overlaps] We love our show!

DRE: [overlapping, laughing] That's how we should name our show!

KEITH: Prince traitor sounds like a merchant thing...

AUSTIN: What?

SYLVIA: Like you trade princes?

DRE: It's- hold on, it's “The Traitor Prince Maelgwyn”. I just looked it up on our website.

AUSTIN: [laughing] It's “The Killing of the King God Samoths, by the Traitor Prince Maelgwyn. Part 1.” Is what he tells you. Actually, that's not even true! He has to start at Four Conversations! He *has* to start at Four Conversations!

[SONG “Inside” CONTINUES TILL THE END]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization and fun interaction between good friends. I'm your host Austin Walker, joining me today: Keith Carberry

KEITH: Hi! My name is Keith J. Carberry. You can find me on Twitter @KeithJCarberry, you can find me on youtube.com/runbutton

AUSTIN: Sylvia¹ Clare

SYLVIA: Hi, I'm Sylvia, you can find me on Twitter @captaintrash.

AUSTIN: And joining mountain party is... [DRE laughs] Andrew Lee Swan

DRE: Hey, you can find me on Twitter @Swandre3000

AUSTIN: We are continuing our game of Dungeon World, a game by Adam Koebel and Sage LaTorra, based on a hack of Apocalypse World by D. Vincent Baker. My agenda is to portray a fantastic world, to fill the characters lives with adventures, and to play to find out what happens. Things are in a place, huh? [laughs] things are- things are really in a place. So let's jump ahead to Uklan Tel kinda closing his notes in his book and kind of saying like...yeah. And then the end, like- Samol retreated into a house in the woods where the Hitchcocks went to, Siege became a Golden Lance... Aubrey continued to serve as Samot's like, Primo, basically Samot's head engineer. Um... and Castille stood basically by the side of Samoths for the rest of her days. Not necessarily physically, but emotionally and kinda working- close in proximity to the tower where he was being held. The new Samoths, Samoths two. Um... what sorts of questions do y'all have for Uklan Tel about all this nonsense?

SYLVIA: Oh, boy. Hm.... [sigh] this is like- where to start, right? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah!

DRE: How you doing, Ephrim? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, for me Ephrim is maybe the most important thing here, right? Like-

SYLVIA: Yeah...

AUSTIN: -you've been told something really- by a guy maybe you don't know that well, but he seems to be telling the truth, right? He seems trustworthy at least- that the- that there are two Samoths, and that one of them is in a sword [KEITH cackles] And that the other one is *not*.

SYLVIA: Um- out of character question, do we know that's the sword Hella has? [laughs]

AUSTIN: Um...the party- the other party does, the forest party knows.

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

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So, I- I guess my question is, how... okay, you where all there when the sword- when the star went into the sword.

DRE: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: So I would say yes, I'd say that his description of Samoths entering that blade is similar enough to the star entering the sword in Rosemerrow. [SYLVIA overlaps] to... Chapter.

SYLVIA: [overlapping] I imagine too- like- if we're going by like, narration from what we actually recorded with Marielda, you do describe the sword a few times, and Throndir... has seen it just a couple days ago!

AUSTIN: Yes, totally

SYLVIA: Um... [quietly] oh, shit! I just realized I forgot to... when Lem was emptying up his bag, the sword hilt!

AUSTIN: Oh, it's there! We could- do you take it?

SYLVIA: Yes!

AUSTIN: [amused] So now you have the hilt but not the blade!

SYLVIA: Yeah, but I know where to get the blade!

AUSTIN: Y'know where to get the blade! it's also interesting [laughs] when Throndir shows up here, he's heard Samol's version of the Quiet Year? And yall have heard the Uklan Tel like, scholarly version of the Quiet Year. They have basically the same details? But one of them is like, lots of metaphors and like- y'know, "The King God Samoths and the Boy Traitor's Charioteers"! And Uklan Tel was like "Okay, so Samot had an army." [laughs] Y'know, it's just like- [everyone laughs] it's kind of dry, in comparison. No flourishes probably of detail- I think Uklan Tel's telling is probably really interested in a lot of the like, socio-political discourse around the relationships there? Where- a little more focused on the Black Slacks, a little more focused on the hierarchy in the city, more focused on the way that the Canopy eventually became the kinda middle-class parish of Marielda, stuff like that. But the same jist is there. So yeah, if anybody has questions, now would be the time to ask this great scholar.

KEITH (as Fero): Um... what does all of this have to do with why I took out all the- all the sand?

AUSTIN: Uklan Tel like, sighs, and then takes off his glasses, rubs his temples, and then puts on a different pair of glasses? And then opens a drawer and pulls put a book, and like begins to

cross reference it with some of his notes? And he has two pairs of glasses on, one is just above his head, and the other- the reading glasses are just on... and they're those half-frame ones, y'know? Like, just the bottom half? He shakes his head

AUSTIN (as Uklan): My thought is that that is a different thing altogether. Or- hm. There is... powers like yours were not- oh! Okay!

AUSTIN: And he like, flips through all of his pages again, and he points at the scene of the- the party, during Samoth's killing, where there are all the different gods together. And there's a big dance, and y'know- I almost said buffet. There was a buffet! It was a whole- great! All you can eat!

SYLVIA: We're at the Golden Corral!

AUSTIN: He points at like, his sketches of Samaantine a.k.a Galenica- which is a name that came up in the last recording- the kinda big rock god who we described in a previous episode as being the force of the people's will, a defender, and also points at Severeas- Samontas- and says

AUSTIN (as Uklan): You're... the people who traveled with them often had powers, had abilities- they did the sort of things that you could do. Not exactly, I haven't heard of anything quite like you, young Fero. But, if-

KEITH (as Fero): Thank you!

AUSTIN (as Uklan): It wasn't a compliment, it was just sort of a- an appraisal! Generally speaking.

KEITH (as Fero): I'm one of a kind

AUSTIN (as Uklan): That's- uh, true, actually. Technically. And... [sigh] if I had to place a bet, hypothetical bet- if anyone would like to take this bet, I actually need a bet for another pattern [SYLVIA and KEITH overlap] that i-

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): [overlapping, sighing] *Oh my god...*

KEITH (as Fero): [overlapping] I don't think that's that, how much do you wanna put on it?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Two coin

KEITH (as Fero): Two coin? Okay! I'll give you two coin.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Okay, we have a bet now, I'll put this to the side. You would be carrying the divine touch of those two. It's a supposition, it's not- I can't be sure. I'm not a cleric. But it would have something to do with them.

KEITH (as Fero): But how does that... turn into this?

KEITH: And I point at the horrible... blue nothing.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Something goes horribly wrong. It's as simple as that. I'm not an expert, sometimes when... you've heard of when a divine gift is taken away, or somehow corrupted, or is influenced by something else, or...- there are lots of ways that things can go bad, specially things like this. For us, a pail of water can have one too many drops of salt, and the entire pattern is ruined. And sometimes that means that nothing happens, the pattern is void. But other times it means that we built a pattern we did not intend, and have to live with the consequences. And now we're living with yours.

AUSTIN: And then he like [clears throat] and flips the glasses? He puts the reading glasses above, 'because he knows he's gonna need them, and brings his "looking at people glasses" back down? [pause] His glasses are like from two different ages? Like, they're old frames, and one of the glasses is definitely pre-erasure. And the other is like... a mid-dark ages pair of glasses, that he clearly holds onto. Like, the frames are- because of historical value, more than because they're good? Kinda rickety. Also I think people are calling this thing the New Erasure or like, the Second Erasure or something. Because they don't really know what the Erasure is, they don't really understand that it's a mess of things, and not just like, [snaps fingers] a single thing that happened once? So yeah... Ephrim and Throndir, questions

DRE: Hm...

AUSTIN: You also probably hear- I mean, you probably hear bits of the holiday story, right? The like... Claret Holiday leaving to found the Golden Lance on the mainland, and Samot- like that is- that's the story of Samot renaming the city "the City of First Light" instead of Marielda. That's where that ends, so.. [laughs] he probably doesn't like "Well, let me tell you about this little community of- [DRE chuckles] of book-sellers and laundrymen!" but he probably gives you the gist of the bigger thing, about how culture changed on Marielda.

DRE: Yeah...

SYLVIA: Uh, I guess my question is more just a clarification.

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVIA: Samothos is... real Samothos is- he's trapped, he's not dead?

AUSTIN: Are you asking Austin this, or are you asking Uklan this?

SYLVIA: I'm asking- no, this is Ephrim in character, 'cause... yeah.

AUSTIN: Uokay.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [struggling] Prince it- it may be hard to understand this but- [pause] they are both the real Samoths. But... I believe he is trapped, that is my belief about what happened, based on the sources, based on looking over the construction documents of the sword, based on-

AUSTIN: And he starts listing off theorists- like, magical theorists of the time,

AUSTIN (as Uklan): But there are things that cannot be known.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Might as well be dead then.

DRE (as Throndir): That's- I mean, that's not true! Could we- is there a way to get him out?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Well, for every inside there is an outside. That is one of the first rules of pattern making. If a pattern calls for something to be *contained*, it means that you need to actually have something that can also be released, there's a second component. So if, for instance, I say "you have to have a jar of bees". You can simply put bees in a room and say that is a very big jar. You need to keep them *in* something, where they can be released. For every inside, there is an outside. [pause] We could- I could run tests.

AUSTIN: and he like, starts to get ideas and starts to sketch out things.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): If the blade- if we had the blade, then... hm. Okay. we can solve for x. I can make a pattern that relies on Samoths being alive in the blade, and if it works... then we know that *it works*. And that he lives. it's going to take me *quite a bit of time*, though.

DRE (as Throndir): Yeah...

KEITH (as Fero): We also don't have the sword.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): No. though it sounded like... one of your compatriots might?

KEITH (as Fero): Oh, yeah! But, y'know. She's not the one that popped off out of nowhere! So...

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Unfortunately. No offense, [DRE overlaps] ranger!

DRE (as Throndir): Hey, I'm standing here! [laughs]

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [amused] Or you Kodiak.

AUSTIN (as Kodiak): [barks]

DRE (as Throndir): [sigh] I mean, if the last thing that Samoths was working on was something to do with the Heat and the Dark... I don't know, none of the other ideas have seemed to do anything.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): The Heat and the Dark is an old problem. And there are lots of solutions, potentially.

AUSTIN: He gestures out at the stars- the kinda wall of stars, the white wall, that's what we're calling it. Hoping not to get sued by some other fantasy series that happens to have a thing called the white wall. [DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN (as Uklan): the stars, even. Again, hypothesis, but- do you remember that bit in the story that I mentioned? When Aubrey interrupted Samot, who had been working on something. And he put it to the side. I think-

AUSTIN: And he gestures outside the window, at the kinda pulsating light from the distant arcs of starlight.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): -it may have been them. I've been collecting notes on the appearances of those beings, and some of Corsica Neue's scouts have come back with reports. And they may have been a solution to the Heat and the Dark, once. But they seem unfinished. They seem...

AUSTIN: He shakes his head

AUSTIN (as Uklan): The way reconfiguration worked- and please stop me if I'm getting too heavy, I've been told that I can go off on tangents- the gods couldn't just... make something new. They had to build a history with it. They couldn't just [pause]- they couldn't just make the cobbins, a race of naturally industrious chemist and engineers. That's not how anything works! They had to rewrite history, so that the cobbins had a long culture of investigation, and hypothesis making, and building things! And when I see the stars, I see only an end. I don't see the hard work of the middle. They do not have a culture, they only have a cause. And that terrifies me. [pause] But there may be other solutions, i- I don't find solutions I just... I'm just an academic. I can tell you what other people have tried. The mages-

AUSTIN: And he shakes his head.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): The Grand Tour! I-

AUSTIN: And he shakes his head again.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): How many notes do you have on reconfiguration?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Here? Only seven volumes. But, uh... in my office, in the South Side Academy- I can show you, I have another fifteen.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I'm going to need them.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Uh- they're quite big

KEITH (as Fero): What's so exciting about the Grand Tour?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Exciting is not the word...

KEITH (as Fero): You just gotta- you- well, you got excited, you sounded excited.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Well... to the east, the world is in *tatters*. They keep it more or less stable, but it's not- they don't- they're quite dangerous. They're like a sewing needle, but it's hot and sharp all around. And so yes, they may be able to patch your worn clothing but... it's not good to wear a pair of pants as it's being stitched, fixed, huh?

SYLVIA: Uh, as he's describing the Grand Tour, Ephrim's like, visibly uncomfortable?

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh

KEITH (as Fero): I mean, I'd rather get my pants stitched while they're still on that have my pants disappear into nothing, and then also disappear into nothing.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Yes, of course! [DRE chuckles] I'm not saying that they don't do important work, we all need pants! So to speak.

KEITH (as Fero): You feel- it sounds like you're uncomfortable with metaphor.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I like... material things, [laughs] I like facts. Metaphors- hm... they're like- hm... [KEITH and DRE cackle]

SYLVIA: [laughing] Oh, *jesus*.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): ...Clouds?

KEITH (as Fero): [overlapping] You sound uncomfortable with-

AUSTIN: [laughing] Let's, sim- simile he's got!

KEITH: You sound- yeah [laughs]

[AUSTIN cackles]

AUSTIN: Anyway.

KEITH (as Fero): If anybody's taking a bet, I can bet that maybe you're not so great at simile either. If you need a second bet.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I only needed the one. [pause] The Grand Tour is not a solution, it is a stopgap. it's kept the east from falling apart for the last... for centuries. But it can't be in two places at once. It takes nearly all their might, and reports from the east say it's getting worse. Even before all this, even before Rosemerrow, things out east were not progressing well.

KEITH (as Fero): What's that thing about how everything that's got an inside has an outside?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): It's just a fact of pattern making.

KEITH (as Fero): Is there a thing where- like, if I can take a part- the whole bunch of the earth, is there a reverse of that where I can put it back?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Uh... maybe, we would have- [sigh]

AUSTIN: He's like running the numbers in his head, but except- instead on numbers it's like...

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [mumbling] ... a jar of chamomile tea, and then you subtract thirteen old maps, and then you add a dotch of violet.

KEITH: The part of pattern magic where you get so good at it that you know- "Well, I gotta have to chamomile tea and the maps. That's-"

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah! Gotta have-

KEITH: -right off the bat, we gotta have those!

AUSTIN: He's like, the best pattern magician there is. To be clear. Like, I just want to make sure that that's canonically clear, I've hinted at that before? About how he keeps his skill hidden so that the higher ups don't make him do shit he doesn't wanna do, and so he can kinda be a reclusive academic instead of a badass pattern magician? He is the best one. Like, by a lot, that's why he's able to send people to find Samol, and like- he was able to escape Samot with a

dandelion and a couple other things he grabbed [DRE chuckles] while being dragged around the mark of the erasure

KEITH: It's like, the most insane MacGyver

AUSTIN: He is- right, exactly, that's exactly right! So. [laughs] So yeah, he kinda runs it and says like

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Uh... there's a problem which is- alright, you have a jar of bees, right?

KEITH (as Fero): Got it, yes, I do.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Wait, I hope that's not true!

KEITH (as Fero): No, I know, yeah!

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [relieved huff] Okay

KEITH (as Fero): Do you-

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [alarmed] No!

DRE (as Throndir): Metaphors. [laughs] It's the metaphor thing again.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): So you have a jar of bees, and-

KEITH (as Fero): Yes! oh, sorry, you go

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Hmmm. There's an inside of the jar of bees, where the bees are, and there's an outside, the room that the jar is in.

KEITH (as Fero): yeah

AUSTIN (as Uklan): The field, the brewery, wherever you have the jar. You could have a jar in a lot of places: a library, you could have a [KEITH overlaps] jar in your pocket!

KEITH (as Fero): [overlapping] Is the library in a field?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Uh, that's a strange place for a library, but I could- sure. There are multiple insides and outsides in that scenario! But, when you remove the bees from the jar, then they're in the library! Right?

KEITH (as Fero): Right, yeah

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Or in the field

KEITH (as Fero): Uh-huh

AUSTIN (as Uklan): There is no... the Heat and the Dark are not like a library, or a field, or a jar of bees. Except that it's very dangerous, just like a jar of bees. But- the Heat and the Dark are much more dangerous than a jar of bees! To be clear. [DRE cackles] I want to make sure I'm-

KEITH (as Fero): Then the Heat and the Dark is as dangerous as a jar of bees, if you're allergic to bees.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): More dangerous still!

KEITH (as Fero): Oh

AUSTIN (as Uklan): If you were... um... if you were allergic to- hm. The Heat and the Dark is like a jar of bees, if... the jar of bees was the nothing on which existence is written. By mistake

KEITH (as Fero): *Ohhh.*

AUSTIN (as Uklan): There is no- we can turn an empty room into a room filled with jars of bees, a maniac would do that, to be clear, not a normal pattern magician! [KEITH losing it off-mic] I would NEVER use my power to fill a room with jars of bees! To be clear. [SYLVIA and DRE cackle] But you can't- [amused] I may have lost my point. The Heat and the Dark are incredibly dangerous and unlike anything else!

KEITH (as Fero): Uh, thanks, that helped!

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I don't know that you can undo it, I don't know that you can put more there! There's no *there* there anymore.

KEITH (as Fero): Hm. [AUSTIN overlaps] But not-there has to be *inside* of there.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [overlapping] You could put something- *no*, and that's why the Heat and the Dark is so terrifying. The sword is a sword, inside of which is Samothos, and the sword exists somewhere here on Hieron. We think. Outside of Hieron, there's only the Heat and the Dark.

KEITH (as Fero): Oh, so you're saying that... the not there isn't inside there, the there is inside the not there, and now we can see it.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): *Exactly.* [sigh] I'm sorry if I sound grim.

KEITH (as Fero): Is sort of like, if there was a jar full of bees outside of a jar, and we were all *in* the jar.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [softly] Oh, god...

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): [exasperated] Oh my god.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): No-

KEITH (as Fero): And the problem is, then we open the jar and let the bees- [AUSTIN overlaps]

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [overlapping] And there's still bees! There's still bees everywhere!

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Yes! The Heat and the Dark is a *very big* jar of bees, and we've- he *happened* to build homes inside of it. We happened to build a second jar. Samol-

KEITH (as Fero): Uh-huh, inside the jar.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Hieron is our smaller jar! And our jar is *breaking*

KEITH (as Fero): And outside the jar is a jar of bees

AUSTIN (as Uklan): And then another jar of bees, and then *another* jar of bees. It's bees all the way up!

KEITH (as Fero): Well, then we have to fix the glass.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [huffs] If it were so easy. Samol was sick and dying... in the age of Marielda. Now...

DRE (as Throndir): What makes a god sick?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Time. The Heat, the Dark. They're very powerful, I will not take that from them. I will not even take the word god away from them, what else is a god? We have our own, and they have even smaller fields of power. Fields! The Marquis of Fields is one such god! And... there's nothing like them. The ones i've told you about- Samoths, Samot, Samol, tristero- The whole family, the whole lineage, the whole- that group, they were incredibly powerful, but they are not *immortal*, they are not invincible. They died, often! They killed each other! And then, they would rewrite history so that they would live yet again. Without that ability, the Heat and the Dark will get to you.

KEITH (as Fero): Uh... well, Samot wasn't always a god. He was a not-god before?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Correct, he was a shadow-thing, sent to kill the gods

KEITH (as Fero): Just make a new god, then, that can do a better job?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [sigh] We are trying that, why do you think we sent lem

KEITH (as Fero): Oh, you sent him?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Yes. He-

AUSTIN: and he like, looks around

KEITH: I didn't catch that

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Zhan Kurr works for Kall Fer. She is not- if they had their way, Zhan would've gone, not Lem. And I don't want to think about what Zhan would've caused. What pattern Zhan would've put into being. Just what I sent Lem, because... [sigh] without our guidance, I trust that Lem will do the right thing when it is time. He won't try to- [uncertain "eehh" from KEITH] with some pattern that he didn't set in motion.

KEITH (as Fero): uh...

SYLVIA: Ephrim kinda scoffs when he says Lem will do the right thing

AUSTIN: Yeah...

KEITH: Yeah...

SYLVIA: Yeah...

KEITH (as Fero): We're not completely sure...

AUSTIN (as Uklan): What's important is he will do *his* thing. He won't do-

KEITH (as Fero): Right- well, the other problem is that his thing is often incompetent.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Well, he and Ephrim did manage to make a library smile, and... a number of other very difficult things to rescue you! So. [sigh] I think he's going to do alright. I hope- I hope Sunder finds him, and can help him. The point is, believe me, we're thinking about it. How to fix Samol, or how to bring a new god into existence. But even those are not solutions to the Heat and the Dark, they are... again, stopgaps. Now, perhaps and on many days- and you can

count me among this number- but for most folk, it's fine for us to live knowing that someone down the road, hundreds of years, thousands of years... will be the ones to face the nothing. But that's not a solution, it's kicking the ball down the road, where there's another field where you will play the game- I suppose, that seems to be how that metaphor works also. Instead of having the game here now, is what I'm saying, because we don't know how to win- I suppose we don't really know [KEITH overlaps] the strategy of the enemy

KEITH (as Fero): [overlapping] No, you- that was like- you're clear as- no, you're bearing, you got it. You got it in one! You did a metaphor and it worked.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [relieved] Okay...

KEITH (as Fero): We all got it. Do you know Arrell? I can't remember if you know him.

AUSTIN: He shakes his head.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): No. The name sounds... familiar, but I can't place it.

KEITH (as Fero): It's very complicated, he was our friend but was actually an invisible man, like a puppet guy, and he was...

DRE (as Throndir): He knows Fantasma...

KEITH (as Fero): Oh, okay. Do you know Fantasma?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Of course. Fantasma- [KEITH overlaps] Fantasma...

KEITH (as Fero): [overlapping] Yeah, right! Okay, Fantasma doesn't exist, Fantasma was this guy Arrell this whole time actually-

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Uh- excuse me? wh-

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, no- it- he's not real.

DRE (as Throndir): *Ummm...*

AUSTIN: He like, changes glasses again, and opens up three notebooks?

DRE (as Throndir): I just give him the same explanation that I gave Sunder

AUSTIN: Right

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [deep breath] Oh, *dear*. And he's coming here? For the book.

DRE (as Throndir): Yep.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Oh no, we have to- wait, if the book is in danger, [huffs] why did no one tell us this right away?

KEITH (as Fero): I- listen, it didn't seem that important. To me. Until just now.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): oh, *god*.

AUSTIN: There's a strike of lightning outside, and the sound of thunder.

KEITH (as Fero): Although, he does want to put people into bubble universes to give them more time to figure this whole thing out, and that does seem like your whole bag! I mean, it seems like you'd be really effective in a bubble universe.

AUSTIN: He like, shakes his head a little bit.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Perhaps but... What about all of my books?

KEITH (as Fero): Take them with you? That's- the whole point is that I thought you could have whatever you wanted in there.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [sigh] How will I know they're real books and not my version of the book?

KEITH (as Fero): I don't know, you already work with illusion garbage anyway. [AUSTIN overlaps] What's the point-

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [overlapping] I do not! [KEITH overlaps] I do my best not to!

KEITH (as Fero): [overlapping] well, you were adjacent to it!

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I am opposed, I work near a person who does that *bullshit*. I'm sorry, I got very angry.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): No, you're good, it is bullshit.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [softly] Thank you

KEITH (as Fero): [overlapping] It's total bullshit- but the whole thing is bullshit!

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [sigh] That part is not true. I- if there are no other questions, I think we should inform the guards of this Arrell. And make sure that the book is closely guarded

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Let me take a...

AUSTIN (as Uklan): It's not here.

DRE (as Throndir): Wait, the book isn't here?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): The book is in the Illuminated Manor. Um... it's- it's where Kall Fer is. We could go- *you* could go.

DRE (as Throndir): We *should* go.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yeah, if that's what he's here for, we have to make sure he doesn't get it

AUSTIN (as Uklan): But be careful.

KEITH (as Fero): [uncertain] Eeehhh... I feel like that's a lower priority than the swirling bottle of death.

DRE (as Throndir): You missed the part where he tried to kill us, Fero?

KEITH (as Fero): Well, did you miss the part where the bottle of death kills everything in its path?

AUSTIN: [laughs] This is a good moment to review bonds real quick? [DRE chuckles] Just so we have all those in the table. Fero, what are you bonds right now?

KEITH: Uh, right now my bonds are... "Having Throndir in the party will be a welcome change"

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

KEITH: "Prince Ephrim and I might agree, but we might not be right" and "I HATE LEM KING"

AUSTIN: Damn! Y'all caught feelings! Uh... let's go to Ephrim next.

SYLVIA: Uh, I still only have "The sun has been more reliable these past few days than Lem has" and "Fero doesn't think before he acts, but I trust his instincts" 'cause Ephrim and Throndir didn't really talk much.

AUSTIN: Right, that's fair.

SYLVIA: So there's no like, standing bond there that I could really think of?

AUSTIN: Uh, and Throndir.

DRE: Uh, the only one I have with this group is “Fero fought beside me when I was on the brink of death, and I trust him to stand with me again”

AUSTIN: So that's- that's good! And I'm curious if that's what will happen here, 'cause that seems to be the debate at the moment! Uklan says

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Now is the time to determine your priorities. There is no shame in doing what you feel is the most important, even if it's not what others might see. History is long, and it is hard to know what serves it best.

DRE (as Throndir): Look, we need to stop Arrell before he potentially takes someone who could fix this now, and just puts them in a bubble somewhere where they can't fix anything

AUSTIN (as Uklan): It worries me too that... what does he want the book for, if he already know how to put a person in a bubble? Huh?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): All he does is seem to get in the way of things, and I don't want him getting in the way of things when we need to be focusing on such a huge problem

KEITH (as Fero): But isn't focusing on him already letting him get in the way of us focusing on the problem?

DRE (as Throndir): Not if I kill him.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yeah...

KEITH (as Fero): But he's not even here, he's like, wherever. He might show up, he might not.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Your friend the ranger seems determined. Perhaps just give him space to do what he will.

KEITH (as Fero): Eh

AUSTIN: Kodiak like [barks] and- tries to like, stand- steps up with each of his four feet and then places them down, one at a time, in rhythm? As if to say like “I'm with you Throndir!”
[everyone laughs]

KEITH: That was pretty good...

AUSTIN: Dogs are pretty good. So, what's everyone doing? What are everyone's priorities as we move into the last couple of hours of this game?

SYLVIA: So, the way I see it with Ephrim, there's a couple things he wants to get done?
Primarily he has unfinished business with the Crescent Blade? Like, that sort of glowing sword?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, yeah

SYLVIA: And also he does wanna address the Arrell problem?

AUSTIN: Yeah

SYLVIA: And then some more minor things as- he's hoping to get a copy of... he's hoping to get a copy of the notes on reconfiguration

AUSTIN: Right, right, right. Totally. Uh, Uklan Tel will get those to you. Like, he'll collate those. They... you're basically borrowing his notes, they don't have a copy machine, y'know?

SYLVIA: Yeah, I was- I was like- [DRE laughs] When I say a copy I was like, can I pay someone to write them down so he can have them too.

AUSTIN: It's like, a *lot*. He has lots of- the thing is, most of them- what I'll say is that he has a book he can give you that is like, "Notes on Reconfiguration"? Like, that's the title of the book? That is *super* abridged. Its still big, it's still like 300 pages or something, but his notes on reconfiguration are like 1700 words- or 1700 pages or something

SYLVIA: Yeah

AUSTIN: Because he is... that dude.

SYLVIA: I feel like Ephrim wants all of it.

AUSTIN: Oh, totally! Totally

SYLVIA: Like... [AUSTIN overlaps] sorry buddy.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] It's a thing that he'll start working on for you. Uh... and then Fero, what are your priorities? What's Fero wanna go do?

KEITH: I mean, my top priority is to contain the *ever-expanding doom*.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

KEITH: That is on the map.

AUSTIN: Yes, fair

KEITH: That looks like the head of the alien from Space Jam. [DRE chuckles] It really- the whole thing looks like the alien from Space Jam. [DRE cackles] Its got the two feet, [SYLVIA overlaps] the dark [unintelligible]-

SYLVIA: [overlapping] *Jesus...*

KEITH: -the weird triangle body, and then the purple head with the weird antenna, it's the alien from Space Jam.

AUSTIN: *Ohhh*, I see!

SYLVIA: Yeah, I kinda see it...

AUSTIN: Oh, wow, its one of those!

KEITH: Yeah, its one of those

AUSTIN: It's one of the aliens from Space Jam!

SYLVIA: *Ohh*, it's not a star that Hella has in her sword, its a monstar! Okay

KEITH: It's a monstar.

AUSTIN: Oh, I need to take a break- [DRE cackles] I need to take a break! [unintelligible]

KEITH: [off-mic, yelling] ALL WE NEED IS JORDAN'S MAGIC JUICE

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: I'm going away, goodbye! Nice. It was cool to have a podcast for a little while, but I- [DRE and SYLVIA cackle] I'll be right back...

KEITH: Well I think Jordan's secret stuff is what it was called, not magic juice...

AUSTIN: I guess my question really is, what do people wanna do at this point?

KEITH: Uh.... I- this is such a hard decision, i-

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

KEITH: I am going to have to... sort of trance out on this one, I think.

AUSTIN: Okay. Like, for real? Or are you saying you wanna use the move Trance Out [laughs]

KEITH: [amused] I wanna use Communion of Whispers... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay, we'll come back to- uh-hh. Yeah, let's go ahead and do that now, let's start with that. Where are you doing it?

KEITH: Um... I'm just gonna sit on the floor. Like we're all in this room talking, I think I'm just gonna be like "Uh, one second" and I just sit on the floor

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay. Does that take time? I don't remember. I guess its one of the things [KEITH overlaps] that can take time

KEITH: [overlapping] It does say "as long as the vision..."? I think that I have to like, know the are that I'm in, but I just- I'm just in and around the... same place that i've been.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Um... 2d6 plus three...! That's a ten!

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a ten! The visuals are clear and helpful to you. Um-

KEITH: Oh, *thank god!*

AUSTIN: So, "When you spend time in a place, making note of its resident spirits and calling on the spirits of the land, roll+Wis. You will be granted a vision of significance to you, your allies, and the spirits around you" um....

KEITH: If I can add some color to this, I bet the resident spirits are currently the upset, ancient orcish people, that-

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Uh, its like-

KEITH: -their ancestral home has been destroyed? Recently?

AUSTIN: That's part of it, for sure. Um- I think that there's like- but its also the... I mean, there is no spirits of the sands, 'cause they've been consumed by the Heat and the Dark of which there is no exit, but there is just like, the spirit of the land here too? Which is under threat from all sides now.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: The... [sigh]

KEITH: Sorry, did you say "from which there is no return"?

AUSTIN: Yeah, there's no- yeah, uh-huh.

KEITH: Okay

AUSTIN: The Heat and the Dark is it. Like, it's *it*. Like, it's not the empty vacuum of space, it is the point of entropy at which sci-fi writers talk about the heat death of the universe.

KEITH: Yeah. But you're saying there's no reverse button?

AUSTIN: Not as far as anyone who'd ever lived in Hieron has been able to find

KEITH: Gotcha

AUSTIN: Um... and maybe that's part of it, right? Is like, yes, you see the spirits of the orcs- which isn't really how spirits work in this world- but you see some spirits of the orcs, right? You see there's like, at least a sort of cultural sense of that place that's been washed away, but there's always hope that you can rebuild that place, right? Like, you could send in a crew of enough pattern magicians who could bring that thing- maybe not to what it was exactly, but to something that is at least comparable. You see the... y know, the mark of the Erasure, where- oh, you see like, the snow that's everywhere, right? And know that the snow could melt. Y'know, you see that there is a- the ruins of the Last University, in the south, and can so easily imagine that the Last University could one day become the first of a new set of universities! Y'know, the world could change in that way. But when you think about the sand, or when you look toward where the sands of Rosemerrow were, and where the Heat and the Dark spreads now through the northwest, there is *nothing* there to consider, there is no spirit of sand there, there is no spirit of the trees in Old Man's Chin- which are already being consumed by there new things- and its true also that there's no spirit wherever the stars begin to build either. There is material there, but nothing in it speaks to you. So like, you see an image of like, the Heat and the Dark bubbling up out of the ground, and it is paved over by this starlight that becomes, effectively, a brick road on top of it. Maybe its even more absurd than that, we've talked about the starlight being this thing that kinda throws various configurations of hu- kinda like cultural, civilized spaces on top of nothing before. Like in rosemerrow, when it turned that tower into like a bunch of different stuff. So maybe there's- like a little cafe sprouts up over this crack in the ground, and the cafe is built out of that stars stuff. But none of it is real, or none of it feels alive the way that you specifically, Fero, can sense things. Like, there's no spirit in the brick 'cause it doesn't come from anywhere, it doesn't have a history, it doesn't have a... it wasn't pulled out of a quarry somewhere, right? There's no spirit in the tables, because normally there would be some spirit there, 'cause it would be trees, and trees were alive once! Y'know?

KEITH: yeah.

AUSTIN: And you just don't get any of that there. And that is fucking *terrifying*. [laughs] Or it should be, maybe it isn't for Fero. But for me, Austin, that would be terrifying. Um... So that's a big part of the vision there, and I think that that, for me at least, begins to confirm part of your priority of "Oh, the Heat and the Dark is bad" But I'll give you a little bit more 'cause you got a ten. which is like... I think you sense... [pause] Talk to me about how Fero feels as the person who can turn into animals. Like, has that always been- how long has he been doing that?

KEITH: Uh... its- it has to have been... I think it has been, probably- it feels close to a decade, but it might be more than that. We haven't talked a lot about like, halfling lifespan?

AUSTIN: Yeah, no we haven't.

KEITH: But I imagine its not- its not like any elf thing, it' probably....

AUSTIN: Even the elves on this world don't live long lives, until Throndir. And Throndir's generation

KEITH: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: I guess it was just the snow elves, but yeah.

KEITH: So I think that like, it's been a short enough time that when Fero goes back to Rosemerrow it's not a crazy different- I mean, I was all very different and that was one of the- but it wasn't- he didn't *expect* it to be different when he went back.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

KEITH: So it's been a short amount of time for that, but long enough that-

AUSTIN: So it wasn't happening when you grew up in Rosemerrow.

KEITH: No, no. It only happened once I left and started living in the mountains.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: 'Cause that's where my Born of the Soil took place.

AUSTIN: Right, that's true. So I think that's the other thing here, is like, is there a way- does Fero sense that place in any meaningful way? Does he have a sense of like, almost magnetic feeling of where he was when that happened? Or is it just sort of like "Ah, I just lived in the mountains long enough".

KEITH: No, I think that the mountains are really imp- I think the mountains are really important to Fero, in part because of like “Oh, this is where I started being able to do all this weird stuff”, but it’s mostly like, “Yeah, I lived there for years, and it was my home that I liked the most, probably. I had a nice little house that I liked, [AUSTIN overlaps] and that I lived in for years!”

AUSTIN: [overlaps] Yeah, right, we've described that place. Is that where it was when you first learned that you could do this?

KEITH: Um... I don't think. It was probably just like, around the area. I don't even know if there's- if like there's a- it might not even have been like [laughing] “Oh, I'm a squirrel”. Like “Oh my god! I am a squirrel by accident!”. It might have been like, I woke up and I had a tail, and then I was freaking out, and then it's gone.

AUSTIN: Right, right

KEITH: And then- yknow, next week there's- something else happens, and- like, it's different places.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

KEITH: But- I was thinking about when you said “Oh, this would terrify me, Austin, but maybe not Fero”. I think it- I think it is terrifying, but not unexpected? It feels like over the course of this campaign, the ways that Fero can use his powers have changed so drastically that finding something new is almost... an expected thing.

AUSTIN: *Totally.*

KEITH: Even if this particular thing is a horrible nightmare.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So I know- what I'll say is I think this is probably the moment, in searching, where at the far edge of you... like, of the spirits that you're listening to? That you're kinda filtering? You hear the sound of the Grand Tour approaching from the east. And you can hear the sound of a thousand thousand horse steps, of galloping horses. And you can sense the touch and the presence of Severia and Samaantine- who I think I'm just going to start calling by their other name, Galenica, going forward. Just so that I can stop stumbling over Samaantine- and you suddenly feel like part of the power that you've had is... like, has been realigned, in some ways. it's funny that- y'know, Uklan Tel was talking about Lem going to realign Samol's pattern, the original pattern, and it feels suddenly to you like the presence of Galenica and Severia- it's not even that it realigned you, it more like... [sigh] They like did the thing where the lenses came into focus. And I think this is where you take the move that you took on your last level-up.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: Which was... what was that called again?

KEITH: It was Elemental Mastery.

AUSTIN: Well, is that- okay. No, no, no, the one...

KEITH: Oh, yes! It was, um... God of the Wastes

AUSTIN: Right, you took- so you took the druid one that gave you- that gave you any ranger move, right?

KEITH: Right. So it was Hunter's Brother, and then God of the Wastes, and then... [DRE chuckles] gave me the cleric moves.... Comune- or Commune- and Cast a Spell.

AUSTIN: [amused] No, that's comune, you started a comune! [laughs]

KEITH: It's comune, I started a comune...

AUSTIN: Right, so it is- now you have- now you are level one cleric also, of Severia and Galenica.

KEITH: Right

AUSTIN: Which... you can feel their touch, and... you're still afraid about turning into animals, in that animals are disappearing? Like, that might not have gone away? But you do feel in touch with your power in a way that you had not previously.

KEITH: Yes

AUSTIN: And understand where it comes from now. For whatever reason, they collectively gave you this power, in some way. Um... so yeah, that's- that's where you're at. I don't know if that's giving you any guidance in what you wanna do next, though.

KEITH: It doesn't make me more apt to go and stop Arrell.

AUSTIN: Well. Throndir and Ephrim, what were you doing while he was vibing out.

SYLVIA: Do we know how to get to where this book is being kept?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh, it's this big thing that's like- that looks like an illuminated book on the- it's like the big central- y'know, it's probably a big manor on the top of a plateau that is built in the side of

one of the larger mountains. Um, it is not like the head of the Archives necessarily? Like, there's probably a place where a lot of the archivists go for meetings and stuff? But it is where Kall Fer, who is one of the more important of the architects- or not the architects, the archivists- lives.

SYLVIA: I mean, I think that's where we go if that-

DRE: Yeah

SYLVIA: -if we understand that to be Arrell's target, right?

AUSTIN: Um. Yeah. So Kall Ferr is the Collector Curator, which is basically the head of the Collectors, who are like Morbash, Morbash reports up to Collector Curator Kall Fer? But also is not like an "in the fields" person. She basically runs the thing from back home and has agents in the field. So yeah, if you two wanna go check out that place while Fero is on... y'know, trance-duty, [DRE chuckles] that's totally fine by me. What's your route of like- describe to me what it's like to approach this place, and- have as much liberty as you want here.

SYLVIA: I think it's just like... it's just me- Dre, if you disagree with anything I'm saying here- but if feel like it's a very tense atmosphere? Because one, just in general Ephrim and Throndir don't know each other very well, and two, they're both just like, on edge from the threat of this... of Arrell. There's an almost paranoia going on, at least with Ephrim- like, looking around and making sure he's not going to just do his weird magic shit and appear out of nowhere. [DRE chuckles] um... so there's a lot of just like, walking dir- like, walking with purpose and just very tense and locked up, almost. Like, kinda walking when it shows that you're carrying tension in your shoulders?

AUSTIN: Yeah

SYLVIA: I don't know if that happens to anyone else? But yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... Throndir, do you have anything else to add there?

DRE: Um... I don't think that Throndir necessarily shares- like, I think he is tense, and he is on edge, but I don't know... I mean- I think that's the rangery part of him, is that he isn't paranoid, because he trusts that he'll be to notice- like, if this dude does pop up out of nowhere, I will... know, I'll smell something weird happening, or I'll notice like a ripple... 'cause that's what I do, I know the environment around me. But yeah, he's definitely tense!

AUSTIN: Totally. And did you... you also had a new move right?

DRE: Yes

AUSTIN: Which I guess hasn't come up yet... oh, now would probably be the time, we're talking about- about your feelings about going after Arrell like this.

DRE: Yeah

AUSTIN: What is your new move?

DRE: So this is called The Justice of the Lance, and I think we wrote this both in terms of Thrandir kind of changing priorities, as well as his new membership in the Golden Lance?

AUSTIN: Yeah

DRE: Um... but basically this is- Thrandir feels like he knows, because of his interaction with the Golden Lance, and just kind of his... y'know, alignment, that he knows what the right sort of path towards justice is? And he's frustrated with having people get in his way between that path, so... I'll just read the move. "You've seen people claim the righteousness of their actions to their religion, their laws, their might or their moral code, but you know that true justice is in you heart. Choose two groups from the list below, and when bringing them to justice to the Golden Lance to bear against your chosen foes, roll 1d6 plus 1d8 instead of 2d6". If for some reason the d6 is a higher number than the d8, Austin gets to introduce a complication or danger.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yep, it's great. [DRE laughs] So which are the groups that you're choosing? This is basically, by the way, a modification of a barbarian rule I believe?

DRE: Yeah, it's from the Barbarian tree.

AUSTIN: Which is like, a really cool- we almost *made* you a barbarian. We were almost like, is this- is the cool twist here the Golden Lance is not only vampires, but *barbarians* too? And there are a couple of things here that are totally on point for it, but- so there's a move called Herculean Appetites, for the Barbarian- which is very similar, except instead of being like "Who do you wanna do justice to?", it's like "What is the thing- what is your desire?". Is it destruction, is it conquest, is it like, good wine? [DRE chuckles] Etcetera. So what are you- what did you choose for the groups that you wanna bring justice to?

DRE: I chose... mad scientists- which I think is a name we're still trying to like, workshop, but it is basically... people who- I think it's like a type of person who is doing magic and is very much like "End justifies the means" kind of thing?

AUSTIN: Right

DRE: I don't know. Um...

AUSTIN: It's like- y'know, not like evil genius, but like... it's-

KEITH: Chaotic genius! [DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: [amused] Right. it's the scientists of Jurassic Park, right? it's like, [DRE laughs] "We're so obsessed [KEITH overlaps] with they could-

KEITH: [overlapping] They can, so they should?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Never stopped to think if they should.

DRE: Right...

AUSTIN: We do need a better name though, I'm not- I'm not comfortable with that name, so...

DRE: Yeah

AUSTIN: Um... and then what else, what's the other one?

DRE: Um, corrupt officials.

AUSTIN: Okay, good! Good, you going to the right places

DRE: Yep!

AUSTIN: Okay, so I'm gonna erase these other ones here, Dre.

DRE: Go for it.

AUSTIN: Boom! Okay. uh... cool. So I think that this building is- y'know, it's called the Illuminated Manor, and it's not actually lit up by light or anything any more than any other place, but it's illuminated like an illuminated manuscript is. It has etched into it- first of all, it's just like, gilded in a really cool way? Like, there are big gates and doors that have lots of golden flourishes on them? There's like an I and an M that actually is for Illuminated Manor, and it's like, the sort of big eye at the front of an old school book. Do you know what I mean? Like, hyper-like, it *big* and has *huge* serifs on it, and has all sorts of little floral stuff all around it. And then the building itself is like that, but also? Like, there are little notes and things that have been carefully etched into like, the corners. I imagine it being the same type of material as the mountain is made of? But it's been polished to a shine, so it's this pinkish red, almost marble, that's been polished into it's shining. And then has like, plaques and little characters etched into it, or like- almost chiseled into different places. it's really a strange sight, is what I'll say. [laughs] Um... and there are a couple guards out front, and there are- I'll say it's a two story building that has- that again, goes into the mountain, so you can't see how deep it goes. And there's kind of a front yard, and it has like a tree in the front yard or something. In fact, it has a tree in the front

yard, and *then*- on the road that approaches here- there's another tree, and that tree has been hit by lightning. Which is that sound that you heard before. Um... and there are two guards at the door.

DRE: Oh, did we bring... Uklan with us?

AUSTIN: No, he's busy making those copies.

DRE: Oh. Okay. [laughing] That would've been a good introduction to get us into this building...

AUSTIN: It's- it's two orcs who are in armor that is... flashier than it seems protective? [pause] And they're just standing at the door, or at the gate, in front of the front yard that then goes into the doors. And they're standing on attention with halberds. What do you do?

SYLVIA: Um... what was the name again of the person...

AUSTIN: You are here to talk to Kall Fer. She is the Collector-Curator

SYLVIA: Um... I guess that's pretty much what I'm going to say to them, just like,

SYLVIA (as Ephrim:) We need to speak to Kall Fer, it's an urgent matter.

AUSTIN: Neither of them responds.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): [sigh] There is a very likely chance that there's a threat on the way, and Kall Fer could be in danger. Please let us in to speak to them.

AUSTIN: Neither of them responds.

SYLVIA: [frustrated sigh]

DRE: Um... Throndir kind of angles himself so the Golden Lance badge is more visible.

DRE (as Throndir): This is on Lance business, we need to get through.

AUSTIN: Is this a move that you have?.

DRE: No. I mean, it's- I mean, it could eventually be a Defy Danger, [laughing] depending on how these guys feel about it.

AUSTIN: No, they don't- they don't respond.

DRE: Okay.

SYLVIA: Okay, um... can I just try and walk past them then?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. You slip between them and they don't respond, and you're able to open the gate

SYLVIA: Oh, okay then!

DRE: That was easy!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

De: It's kind of a- a getting off the boat kind of situation, huh.

AUSTIN: A little bit [DRE laughs]. So you go to the front door? Or what do you- how do you get inside the building itself?

SYLVIA: Yeah, I guess go to the front door is the easiest way to do this, right? [DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: Yeah! So you're able to to open the door, and there is a butler there who is wearing like- a butler, a servant- who is wearing really baggy pants and a really- again, kind of baggy shirt, very voluminous shirt, and they are- they have their hands open? As if to say "Oh, welcome!" And it's not moving.

DRE: Oh, this is bad.

SYLVIA: Oh, there's- yeah, there's something up here.

DRE: I- I poke the butler in his forehead. Like- just like my index finger, almost like tapping.

AUSTIN: The butler doesn't move, unless you push really hard. But nothing happens.

DRE: Oh, okay.

DRE (as Throndir): Ephrim, we need to go, he's already here.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yeah, no, I agree.

SYLVIA: Um... is there any way we would be able to tell where a study or the master bedroom would be? Or is this just a stance of us running around. [laughs]

AUSTIN: You could do Discern Realities- is what you can do I you're tryna figure that out.

SYLVIA: Uh, *boy*, okay. That is... wisdom, right?

AUSTIN: That is wisdom

SYLVIA: Okay. I got a nine!

AUSTIN: You got a nine! That's okay. It means I give you something interesting, I believe- oh, no, that means you get to ask one question, that's what that means. From the list, yeah.

SYLVIA: Ooh, okay, that's... hm. So, I'm kind of torn between "What should I be on the lookout for?" or "What is about to happen?" Dre, do you have any opinions on that?

DRE: U h, what was the first one?

SYLVIA: "What should I be on the lookout for?"

DRE: I think that one is probably pretty good.

SYLVIA: Okay. I think I'll go with that then.

AUSTIN: Um... you are able to trace the path of your quarry by following the frozen people. There are a couple times you open a door and there's someone in there whos cleaning something? And that's how you know that that's not the way Arrell came. Like, you cut through the kitchen and see someone has a cleaver up in the air about to bring down on a fish or something, and- but they're frozen in place. So yeah, you're able to make it to a room that is the kind of private library of the Illuminated Manor... [amused] Which you know 'cause there's like a sign, there's like a velvet rope? And a little sign that says like "The Private Library of the Illuminated Manor, please speak with head servant", y'know "...Uks Arr, to make an appointment" And then in smaller text like, "Please be aware that if you don't have forms 22A322 Beta [laughs] then you can't-" yknow "-you won't be able to get an assignment" or uh... an appointment. And as soon as you- the thing that's wild is- you just go on that door, or what? What do you do? You're on the other side of that door.

SYLVIA: I'm okay to just go in, if-

DRE: Yeah, no.

SYLVIA: -Thrandir is cool with it.

DRE: Yeah, let's go.

SYLVIA: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: Um... both of you give me a defy danger. Uh, dexterity- uh, hm. As you open the door, fire begins to burst out of it. Like in Backdraft. [laughs]

SYLVIA: Fire you say!

AUSTIN: Uh-huh... [DRE cackles] Do you have something that prevents fire damage for you?

SYLVIA: Uh, no, but I-

AUSTIN: [amused] Okay.

SYLVIA: I deal with fire pretty well, in other ways.

AUSTIN: You do. Uh, what do you wanna do, what do you do? As the fire begins to explode outwards.

SYLVIA: [sigh] Let me see here...

AUSTIN: You are particularly- don't tell me- don't even think about moves yet, what's Ephrim do?

SYLVIA: Uh, I think that instinctually Ephrim just raises his hands and tries to summon something- or use fire in some way to shield himself- like, uses his powers to shield himself.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um... that sounds like Defy Danger to me, using... what's your primary- constitution is your primary...?

SYLVIA: Constitution is what he uses to summon the brand, yeah. [AUSTIN overlaps] and then Intelligence is what he uses to attack.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] Yeah! Let's do Defy Danger constitution here.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: And this will work for... Throndir, also.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: 'Cause he's behind you. Boom! That's an eleven. Get it! So this trap that's been put into place springs into action, fire blows up in your face, but then you... what do you do? What's the actual- what's it look like?

SYLVIA: Um... I kinda like- so, what I think ends up happening- it's almost instinctual, or Ephrim kinda puts his arms in like an x kind of pattern? To shield his face? And then it almost like, goes into his arms? And then it comes out as the brand, if that's okay.

AUSTIN: Totally. The brand that comes out- it has that purple fire, instead of the regular orange fire

SYLVIA: Okay

AUSTIN: So that's... maybe not what you intended, but that just *happens*, here. So what's the- [SYLVIA overlaps]

SYLVIA: [overlapping] Should I... I think this looks- like, I described it last time, it's a little more uncontrolled than his normal fire is? I think this looks like a claw.

AUSTIN: Oooh, cool.

SYLVIA: So... so I treat this like a rolled a 10+ on a brand roll, and give it the tags-

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, it's the same.

SYLVIA: Okay, so...fiery touch, dangerous, and I'm gonna give it the +1 damage tag...

AUSTIN: Good call.

SYLVIA: And the forceful tag. Actually I'll- instead of forceful I'll remove- I'll put hand instead of... would it- would-

AUSTIN: Uh, yeah, claw would be hand.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright so, the library itself- so now there are things that are on fire, right? Like, not there are like, books that are burning- that were in the blast radio of this blast, of this sigil- and you can hear the sound of fighting on the second floor. It is a kind of- big library for a house, but not like, a big library for the archives? There's a second floor that you can find stairs to go up to, and on that second floor there are two guards plus Kall Fer, who is the Collector Curator.... Who is wearing- in trying to think like, what would she be wearing? So she's probably wearing a... also baggy pants, similar to the servant at the front door, but with a- just kind of red baggy pants, with a blue shirt that has a high collar? And like, kind of sleeves that open up as they go down? Y'know what I mean? There's a word for that. Bell bottom is the type of pants those are, what's the word I'm thinking of, [DRE chuckles] for when clothes do that? Flared, they're flared- they have like flared sleeves. And she is holding the book in one hand, and holding a crossbow

in the other. And is like- every once in a while trying to line up a shot as two of the other soldiers are clearly fighting against Arrell, the wizard, up on that second floor. What do you do?

SYLVIA: Uh.... I'm going up there. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay

DRE: Um.... As soon as I see Arrell, I draw my bow and I fire.

AUSTIN: Okay! Give me a.... Hm. He's probably- well no, now he's aware, he heard that explosion.

DRE: Yeah

AUSTIN: if you had disarmed that trap, you would be able to get the drop on him? But this is just a Volley, this is not your sneak attack ability, Called Shot.

DRE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I guess this is probably- this probably isn't something where Kodiak is involved yet, 'cause- I probably haven't given Kodiak time to like, close the distance. Like, I'm just going

AUSTIN: No. This is Justice of the Lance though, so you should use 1d6 plus 1d8.

DRE: Oooh. Okay. [AUSTIN overlaps] Well then I should reroll that.

AUSTIN: [overlapping, laughing] Which is good 'cause you rolled badly!

DRE: I rolled double ones, yeah! [pause] That's better

AUSTIN: That *is* better. Um... however-

DRE: Here's the thing, Austin, yeah! [laughs]

AUSTIN: *Uh-huh*. The d6 is the higher of the pair, which means I introduce a complication or danger that comes about to your duty or heedles pursuits. Um... so let's do the- tell me what- what you would have done on this Volley, normally. It's a 10+ so you just deal your damage, you don't have to lose anything. [pause] As you pull back the shot, you can either take minus six damage, or the bowstring on your bow is gonna snap. You've pulled back with this new strength that you did not know you had? And the bowstring cannot take it, you're- you don't have a string that's like, the appropriate tension for what your new strength is. So do normal damage or do less damage 'cause you've- like, let go of that strength.

DRE: Yeah, I'll do less damage.

AUSTIN: Well, maybe that should actually be- eh, yeah, that's fine. So go ahead and do your damage minus 1d6.

DRE: That's a one...

AUSTIN: That's a one. It- the arrow- like, you had a *really good shot*, and when you let go, you- you take a hesitant shot 'cause- or step- because you don't want to break the bowstring? And when you let go of the arrow it flies through the air softly, and Arrell just kind of spins his staff? And knocks it out of the air. And then slams the staff into the ground, and it causes like, this physical knockback that pushes everyone else away. At this moment, Fero, what are you doing? You wake back up on Uklan Tel's room, and Uklan is copying notes for Ephrim.

KEITH (as Fero): Uh, did they already go?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Yes, a little while ago.

KEITH (as Fero): Oh, *goddammit*- I was gonna try to convince them to not go. Everybody's leaving me here when I'm doing that!

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Do you expect them to simply wait for you?

KEITH (as Fero): It's not that long! Of a time. To wait.

AUSTIN as Uklan: Hm... it been a little while.

KEITH (as Fero): Fine

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I've already done three of the seventeen volumes.

KEITH (as Fero): That is a- that's a while

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I'm a very quick writer, also.

KEITH (as Fero): Okay, well- listen. Least they could do is- y'know, shake me and see if I'll get up. 'Cause it's the vision bit and then I just kind of doze off.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): They don't know that. They're not vision havers- I don't think! Perhaps they are. Maybe their visions are much different than yours.

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, maybe, I don't know. Listen, I guess I gotta go. Um... you're a smart guy, you got any advice?

AUSTIN: He like- [KEITH overlaps] he like [cackles]

KEITH (as Fero): [overlapping] I'm gonna try to talk to the Heat and the Dark.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Oh.

SYLVIA: [softly] *Oh my god.*

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Do NOT do that, that is- that sounds terrible!

KEITH (as Fero): I mean, if it- I mean I'll just try to talk to it

AUSTIN (as Uklan): It's not a- it doesn't have a thought, it doesn't have a- it only has- [KEITH overlaps]

KEITH (as Fero): [overlapping] Well neither has a lamp, but I can talk to a lamp.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): No, but a lamp *does* have thoughts! It sits in a room all day and it overhears people complain about the food not being spicy enough! The Heat and the Dark doesn't.

KEITH (as Fero): How do you know that? You ever tried to talk to the Heat and the Dark? it's in there

AUSTIN (as Uklan): No. but i've chronicled the histories of those who have.

KEITH (as Fero): Oh, yeah? Who's done that before? Who else has had the idea to try to talk to the Heat and the Dark, come on. Please.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Uh, all of the gods, at one point or another.

KEITH (as Fero): Well, maybe [AUSTIN overlaps] it doesn't want to talk to gods.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): The mages! The mages, of course, in the University! When they built Ordenna by mistake. [laughs bitterly] It happens again and again, people think they can go *talk* to the Heat and the Dark, or *work* on it, or use it as a fuel source! It- it doesn't-

KEITH (as Fero): Are you saying don't do that?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I can't tell you how to live your life, Fero.

KEITH (as Fero): *Fuel source?* How do you use nothing as *fuel*?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Uh, it's a- [sigh] time can fold, it's a whole- ugh. It didn't work, so.

KEITH (as Fero): Oh, okay, then you don't, got it. Nailed it. [AUSTIN overlaps] But what else can-

AUSTIN (as Uklan): [overlapping] I can't tell you what-

KEITH (as Fero): What else am I gonna go? Like, go try to stop the guy who wants to take a book?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I suspect it is too late for you to do that. They are long on their way, across the city by now.

KEITH (as Fero): Well...

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I just... can't give you my *professional* recommendation. That is a-

KEITH (as Fero): What *is* your professional recommendation?

AUSTIN (as Uklan): h, my professional recommendation? Uh, for you... biology, perhaps? You would be a very good biologist, you have a very good, close study of nature

KEITH (as Fero): No, I'm sorry. I meant professional recommendation in the way that *you* had just used it, not in a different way.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I see. Uh, I would- what I'm doing is collating these notes for your friend Ephrim- are you friends, is that fair to say?

KEITH (as Fero): Sure

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Companions?

KEITH (as Fero): Uh, yeah. The guy.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Uh- and then I am delivering a letter to each of my loved ones, telling them where I'm going, and then I'm going to *flee*. I don't wanna be here much longer.

KEITH (as Fero): That's boring, you should help out more.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I- I've done my best! I've sent Sunder and Lem to hopefully fix the pattern.

KEITH (as Fero): You *delegated*.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I- I did the pattern in both cases. I was the one who did that, neither of them could've done that!

KEITH (as Fero): That's a good point, you should still help more.

AUSTIN (as Uklan): ...what should I do?

KEITH (as Fero): I don't know. You should come try and... take a look of the Heat and the Dark with me, up close. What is it gonna do, swallow us?

AUSTIN: Give me a Parley.

KEITH: Um.....

AUSTIN: The thing that you have that he wants is like, approval. 'Cause that's definitely a thing that weighs on him, he is always the guy who... sends his friends into danger. And never the person who takes it himself. It's charisma. I believe Parley is charisma.

KEITH: [laughs] Five...

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. [pause] He nods his head, and says

AUSTIN (as Uklan): You're absolutely right! You- maybe I've been going about this completely wrong.

AUSTIN: And he stops making the notes for Ephrim.

KEITH: Oops

SYLVIA: God-!

AUSTIN: And stands up, and says

AUSTIN (as Uklan): You wait right there, I'm going to go and-

AUSTIN: He goes and gets a bag together? And like, grabs a sword, which is again, clearly more valuable for it's age than for it's value as a sword! Um- and he's like

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Uh- and we'll need lunch, of course!

AUSTIN: [amused] And grabs a bag, and puts two sandwiches he's prepared, one for you and one for him, in it? And points out the window towards the white wall, and says

AUSTIN (as Uklan): I believe the nearest place that we can reach it...

AUSTIN: And finds a spot where- at this point- I mean, I should update this map, actually- it's going through this whole world at this point, y'know? Let me just draw some mre real quick

KEITH: Oh, the tendrils you talking about?

AUSTIN: Yeah, which are like- again, they're not tendrils, they're like... big arcs of [pause]. They're very clear, geometrical arcs, they're not like the arcs that I've actually drawn here, right?

KEITH: Like a fissure?

AUSTIN: Yeah, but they're tall, too! Like, they arc through the sky.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: So there's like a bunch of them now- as I've drawn more on the map!

KEITH: Oh, that's right near where we're at!

AUSTIN: Yeah. So it's like- you can get there in a day or so.

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: [amused] You should see me drawing these, it's terrifying. [SYLVIA laughs] 'Cause it's just like, the purple takes over some much more than you see- anyway! it's like that, so. So yeah, he points to one and then- like, I think we just get a shot of you two on horses, heading to that direction.

KEITH: Uhhh, *well*....

AUSTIN: Back in the library. Uh... Ephrim is running up the stairs.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh, you charge up the stairs, and then you can see clearly that there are- again, four combatants. There's Arrell on one side, and then there is Kall Fer, and then two other people. One of them, you now see, is Zhan Kurr, the illusionist, and the other one is Morbash, the collector. And both of them are defending Kall Fer from Arrell. One of them- Zhan Kurr- is like on your side? Of the- you're kinda on a- I'm just gonna draw this *super* quick. I'm just gonna- quick 'n dirty this one. Um... Throndir you're still at the entrance, where kodiak is caught up to you, you just fired your bow... Ephrim, you sprinted up the stairs. Between you and Arrell is Zhan Kurr, the orc illusion semiotician, then there's Arrell, then past Arrell, in this kind of second floor

balcony of the library is... uh- [quietly] sorry, they should actually be flipped- is Morbash, holding a sword and an axe? And then there is Kall Fer, Collector Curator. What do you do, Ephrim?

SYLVIA: Uh, is it possible for me to just barrel past Zhan Kurr?

AUSTIN: You would have to make a Defy Danger not to hurt him.

SYLVIA: Okay

AUSTIN: And like, toss him off- it's a tight second library, so- or, second floor of this library.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Kinda just enough walking space for one person around the edge here. Alright!

SYLVIA: So, what would I have to roll to defy that.

AUSTIN: Uh, how are you doing it? What are you doing?

SYLVIA: I think Ephrim is like, seeing red, he's just running at him. So, [AUSTIN overlaps] if he can slip past him, fine.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] That sounds to me like-

SYLVIA: I don't think he's trying to, honestly, so he might just get hurt.

AUSTIN: *Yeah*. So, given that what that means is- go ahead and- so is your goal to just attack Arrell here?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So give me a Hack and Slash... and I'll take into account that you're not trying to protect Zhan Kurr.

SYLVIA: That's ten.

AUSTIN: That *is* a ten. Okay. How does- is it just you do your damage but with a different thing or something with your-

SYLVIA: So, with the Unwavering Flame, which is what is- the purple and black fire- doesn't burn with heat and ignores armor, scorching the soul itself. Creatures without soul cannot be harmed by this type of flame.

AUSTIN: Okay. That's a really good ability against this mage who has magic armor- which I'm still counting as being ignored here, basically.

SYLVIA: So, I also have a +1 on my damage from my brand, and- let me just make sure I'm marking down a use of it too.

AUSTIN: Please.

SYLVIA: Yeah. Okay, here we go, rolling damage. That is four damage total.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um... let's not- so I think that thing there is, you're able to like, barrel Zhan kurr over, which means that he's knocked down and not able to contribute right now? It'll take him some time to get back to his feet. And then you manage to- I mean, you tell me, what's that look like?

SYLVIA: I think Ephrim like- he's reaching out with this almost like- his hand does not look human anymore.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: It is like- it is like an inhuman claw, and the fire kinda goes up to his elbow?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh

SYLVIA: And I think what ends up happening is, he's lunging and trying to grab Arrell? And Arrell moves or something, and he doesn't get all of him? But he- the fire cuts on either like- maybe around his face or something.

AUSTIN: *Yeah*

SYLVIA: Um... and it's like- he put all of it into that swing, and didn't get all of it? But it was a grazing blow, with this fucked up fire.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Arrell is wearing like, long robes with again, long flared sleeves- much more flared, 'cause they're wizard robes- and as you do that- as you catch him in the face, and as he sees you and sees Thrandir- he says

AUSTIN (as Arrell): You're interfering with the only chance we have!

AUSTIN: And then reaches into his sleeves and pulls out a glass vile? Which he then slams down into the ground, and a fog slowly begins to spread across his feet. What do you do?

DRE: Um... so he's on this second floor?

AUSTIN: Yeah

DRE: Are there like bookcases that are basically floor to ceiling height?

AUSTIN: Yeah, they're all floor to ceiling height bookcases around, both- around the walls of both floors? And then the main floor that you're on also has standing bookcases.

DRE: Okay. I wanna try and... climb the bookcases?

AUSTIN: [quietly] *Yeah...!*

DRE: Leading up to where Arrell is, and then grab him by the ankles.

AUSTIN: Give me a... Defy Danger dex?

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's some acrobatic shit.

DRE: Is this... am I doing 2d6 or is this still d6 d8?

AUSTIN: That's d6 d8!

DRE: Okay. Fourteen!

AUSTIN: Oh, good

DRE: And the eight's higher! [chuckles]

AUSTIN: And the eight is higher! Yeah, you're totally able to reach up and when you grab his feet- you manage to grab his feet, but you feel incredibly cold? The fog that's spreading at his feet is *very* cold. But you have hold of him. Ephrim, you can do damage in this moment because he's held in place, if you want.

SYLVIA: Oh, *definitely*

AUSTIN: Just straight do damage.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: What's that look like? For both of you.

SYLVIA: Um...

AUSTIN: As you do- seven damage?

SYLVIA: Seven, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: *Oof.*

AUSTIN: Big hits.

DRE: It's the good stuff.

SYLVIA: And that also takes a use off my brand I'm assuming?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

SYLVIA: Okay. Just making sure I'm keeping that up. Um... well, Throndir, you wanna go through your stuff first?

DRE: Um...

SYLVIA: I guess we kinda covered it.

DRE: Well yeah, I think I grab his ankle, and then I think- I know, I see that you and him are in kind of hand-to-hand combat, and I just kind of tug enough to knock him off balance to give you an opening.

AUSTIN: Yeah, awesome.

SYLVIA: So... if I'm able to, I think what Ephrim does is he literally grabs him by the face?

AUSTIN: Oooh

SYLVIA: And pushes him down to the ground, and the fire is like, flaring in his hand while he's doing it.

AUSTIN: Right. And you reach back and his face is now burnt, badly? Is that-

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, well-

SYLVIA: It's also- like, it's burning his soul away, too-

AUSTIN: *Yeah, uh-huh*

SYLVIA: [amused] -is something we need to be clear about

AUSTIN: What we need for Arrell is to have *less* of a soul, right?

DRE: Uh-huh

[SONG "Inside" STARTS PLAYING]

AUSTIN: So the- the fire in your- your weird Heat and Dark fire? Begins to flicker as the fog spreads up it. But there's still... we've talked about that blackest black before, right? The blackest black that has ever existed?

SYLVIA: Yeah, like the- the vantablack stuff.

AUSTIN: Vantablack, yeah. The fire freezes and cracks, and there's just the vantablack left. And it just looks like there's noth- it's nothing. It's nothing, it's right there, it's *nothing*. It's on your arm, and it's not- it's not yours anymore. Whatever was keeping this thing- this purplish flame- from being much more terrifying, actual Heat and Dark, that part of it has gone away.

["Inside" CONTINUES TILL THE END]