

Autumn in Hieron 16: Those Woods You Chose

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[MUSIC - "Autumn not Winter" by Jack de Quidt starts]

KEITH: Previously, on *Friends at the Table*:

DRE (as Throndir): One night, I... came upon some of our village elders, and they had... Well they were— They were cutting someone up just— just to see what was, what was inside of them.

ART (as Hadrian): But— But we have to— we have to go there. That's our, that's our only chance at, at survival, yes? We could— We could discuss other ways to not starve to death, but...

DRE: They would take Throndir, but they would not be interested in taking you all.

ART: I mean— Yeah that might not be what they're interested in, but they're— they're gonna take— They're gonna take all of us, or they're not gonna take any of us.

NICK (as Fantasma): You're in the presence of the slayer of the Word Eater. *Surely—*

AUSTIN: [quietly] Oh boy.

[DRE laughs]

ART: Oh boy...

NICK (as Fantasma): Surely these people will have some respect for a wizard... as fantastic as I.

AUSTIN: A snow elf slides from— from behind one of the trees and into your vision and draws a long sharp straight blade.

AUSTIN (as Beladore): The two of you can come in as prisoners or not at all. Throndir is coming as a prisoner whether he wants it or not.

NICK: Fantasma is gonna cast Magic Missile at, uh (AUSTIN: Okay.) Mr. Beladore... Fantasma still thinks he did the right thing here, even as he's running away.

AUSTIN: Uh, Throndir, they begin taking you towards like the kind of High Hall where the council elders kind of meet. Hadrian, they begin to take you deeper into the, into the kind of south and... the smell of death is strong here.

[MUSIC - "Autumn not Winter" ends]

AUSTIN: Alright, so, uh among the— the people seated here, there's 7 or 8 people here. One of them is your father wearing, wearing very fine purple robes, something you could never imagine him wearing before, despite his love of purple. Um, he is seated uh, kind of off to your left, um, at this long table. He's definitely— His presence here is official. He hasn't like been— This isn't like, "Well we called your dad, you know, to have a sit down. The principle will be in." You know, yeah, exactly. This is like, he would be here no matter who it was. Um, but that— There is still a tension because of who you are and because of— because of who he is. But someone else speaks first. She is... She is getting up there in age, uh, and she was in the room when you saw the other elves being tortured.

AUSTIN (as the first elf): What a surprise, Throndir. We'd thought you left us forever.

DRE (as Throndir): Well, things uh... things never seem to work out the way that we plan them to, do we.

AUSTIN (as the first elf): We've gotten better at planning, since you've left. In any case, what is it— what is it you hope to achieve, by attacking us.

DRE (as Throndir): I apologize for my compatriots' ill advised actions. I didn't come here to fight.

AUSTIN (as the first elf): Perhaps you should've told them not to attack our people, then.

DRE (as Throndir): I did. The older one doesn't really listen to anybody.

AUSTIN (as the first elf): You should choose your friends more wisely.

[DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN (as the first elf): I suppose that's not on—

NICK: Man, that's not fair, they were taking us prisoner. Come on.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Not you they weren't.

NICK: Well, my buddy.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Well, thanks bud.

ART: They— They hit my— They hit my person, you know.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: We're traveling companions, you can't just stab my people.

DRE: Hey, Austin.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: That's how people get hurt.

DRE: Austin. Where's my dog.

AUSTIN: That's a good question.

ART: Oh no.

AUSTIN: Where is your dog?

DRE: Uh...

AUSTIN: They would not have let him in the gates.

ART: Oh man, I hope he saves us all.

[NICK laughs]

DRE: So he's— he's outside the city.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Yeah okay. I feel kind of relaxed. [#0:04:35]

AUSTIN: I imagine— I'm now imagining this scene of Kodiak near the city gates, not being let in but like, kind of looking at each of you, as you walk in. And then in my mind, he then looks at the empty air as Fantasma walks in and then follows him in with his sight too. Um... Uh,

AUSTIN (as the first elf): Anyway, it's academic. You won't be leaving with them again. It was a mistake to let you leave the first time.

AUSTIN: They— One of them gives your father a glance and he noticeably sighs. He's never been good at hiding his emotions.

DRE: Yeah. Well, neither is Throndir, so it runs in the family.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm. Yup.

DRE (as Throndir): What is it you told them I did, Elahir?

AUSTIN (as Elahir): You interfered with important business. Ruling is a burden, tsk, especially in conditions as ours. Sometimes, for the

betterment of your people, you have to do things that are not, tsk, pleasant... You've always been too idealistic to understand.

AUSTIN: She shakes her head.

DRE: Austin, what is— what is she wearing?

AUSTIN: Uh, I think she's wearing kind of a humble brown version of the— of the purple robe that your father is wearing. (DRE: Mmm.) Um, I'm imagining it as being kinda wool or kind of a similarly warm tight fabric. Dense. Tight in terms of the fabric, not like tight on her body. Um... (DRE: Yeah.) There is a hood but the hood is down. She's dressed humbly. She isn't like a... She's not a supervillain, you know what I mean?

DRE: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, what I'm wondering is there anything in this room that is like, a religious artifact or a symbol or anything?

AUSTIN: No, no.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: This place is... is Business 101. Like this place is not a place for worship.

DRE: [chuckles] Gotcha.

AUSTIN: Um, there is that stuff in this building, do you know what I mean? (NICK: Yeah.) There are sort of like the nameless gods, the little artifacts of those, the little cut outs, the... But not here. This is a place where people do work. (DRE: Want to see if there's—) And in fact, is, and you know this from back in the day, even. You know, there are places where our gods cannot see. Because we have to do things that are ungodly to survive.

DRE: Gotcha. I didn't know if there's anything in the room that would like trigger something from Kindrali.

AUSTIN: No, I mean [sighs] Not in this [sighs] I mean, you can use that move whenever you want, you know.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, but— But I actually— But I'm not sure what you would *get* from here, do you know what I mean?

DRE: Yeah, that's what I'm saying. In this room...

AUSTIN: That I didn't just give you in words, just a second ago. Um...

DRE (as Throndir): Look. Elahir. I understand that you are doing what you think is best but I may have a way that we can both help our people.

AUSTIN (as Elahir): Our people? You gave up rights to that years ago. I will, as a favor, be letting you leave. Alone. Tch, I— we will never see you again and it will be as if this never happened. This is your *last* warning. If you near us again, and you try to interfere with *our* culture, you will die. I'm sorry that it has to be this way.

AUSTIN: She gives your father a look.

AUSTIN (as Elahir): But I hope you understand that I'm doing what's best for you, and what I believe is best for all of us. Your father agrees.

DRE: Does he actually? I don't say that, like is— is my father making any sort of weird body language?

AUSTIN: No, he's not. He seems resigned.

DRE: Oh boy. Um....

AUSTIN: I mean, you can gather that he probably pulled strings to not make you dead.

DRE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Multiple times now. [DRE chuckles] She was trying to communicate before that they let you go, last time. Let's cut back to... team prison.

[TIMESTAMP: 09:32]

ART: Alright, I think I got it. I think I got it.

NICK: Team— Team [unintelligible]

ART: I think I'm getting out of this prison right now.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: I'm gonna use I Am The Law.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Oh god. [laughs]

ART: Because he's either gonna do what I say or he's gonna come fight me. And I like myself against any guard.

AUSTIN: Yup. Those are the two things he can do.

ART: Um, he can also run away. Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah, that would be the third thing. But let's see what happens.

ART: Alright. I can— He can hear me, right? I can like speak and he can hear me?

AUSTIN: Yeah, if you shout, he could like, at least, yeah. Yeah.

NICK: Wait, can we—

ART: I'm trying like a dignified shout, though. Like a loud— Like more of a loud talk than like, "aaAAAhh."

AUSTIN: Right. What's up, uh Nick?

NICK: Can we establish where Fantasma is in relation to all this before this happens?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can be wherever you want to be. Where do you want to be?

NICK: Um, I want to be uh, just down the hallway from where he is. So I followed them in but I—

AUSTIN: Okay. Ping it on the map?

NICK: Oh, um...

AUSTIN: It's like click and hold.

NICK: Yeah. Like right here. Or—

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah, that's fair. Actually, well—

NICK: Actually, around the corner.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's good. Yeah. Um, so just around the corner where the cells kind of start. Uh, alright. Go ahead and be the law.

ART (as Hadrian): Guard. Hear my voice. I'm Hadrian, Sword of Samothēs, Defender of the Undying Fire. I serve the— I serve the most powerful deity in all of creation. The man who made the sun that shines over these lands. The man who united this kingdom. The man who has ascended to the heavens as a god.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

ART (as Hadrian): My power is— is greater than you could imagine. I'm— I'm here because I hurt your compatriots. I'm here because I surrendered before I destroyed all of them. And I'll destroy all who stand in my way. Come here, free me, and stand aside or prepare to die by my hand.

AUSTIN: Should make that roll.

ART: I— I am— I am clicking on the roll button. A 9.

AUSTIN: Okay, uh, on a 7+ they choose one. Do what you say, back away cautiously, then flee, or attack you. Who is this man? Who is this guard?

ART: Well, I phrased it so I gave him the choice of doing what I say or attacking and hoped that fleeing doesn't enter his mind. I'm trying to like, psych him out.

AUSTIN: Right, right, right. Now I'm trying to decide what the most interesting thing here is.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... Uh... I think he shouts up the stairs,

AUSTIN (as the guard): Bell! Bell, we got a— we got a loud one down here. I'm gonna go deal with it.

AUSTIN: Uh, he's like chewing something. Uh, he slowly begins to walk down into the like, passing through this hallway towards you.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Uh...

ART: I mean I'm— I'm gonna— I'm not gonna stand next to the door, right? I'm not a moron.

AUSTIN: It's like a gate. It's like a barred gate, you know what I mean?

ART: Well does it— It— How does it— What's the action on it?

AUSTIN: It slides open.

ART: It slides. Alright.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's like a modern jail cell. Or like a vision of a jail cell you have in your mind, when I say the word jail cell that doesn't have a door, you know.

ART: Right, yeah. My point is, I don't want to get hit with a door.

AUSTIN: Uh, another man begins coming down the stairs as he comes closer. He— He uh, when he gets to the gate, he waves you forward.

ART: Huh?

AUSTIN: He like, motions you to come to the gate.

ART: Alright. I like, move closer. (AUSTIN: And...) I don't want— I don't want to be able to be grabbed. At least not without me being able to like, do something about it, yeah.

AUSTIN: Sure, sure. Um...

AUSTIN (as the guard): Boy you comin'?

AUSTIN: He—

ART: I don't understand, the gate's still closed.

AUSTIN: The gate is still closed.

ART: Alright, yeah, I'll grab at him.

AUSTIN: Oh, you— Okay, so you do grab at him.

ART: I mean, I don't understand what's happening.

AUSTIN: He's waiting for you to get close.

ART: Can I think— [cross] Yeah, I think that here I'd like to—

AUSTIN: [cross] I don't know, you don't— Uh...

ART: I'd like to you know, grab around the neck. I...

AUSTIN: Uh, he— But it isn't clear that he's here to hurt you. Like that, I do want to be clear, this is like a... It's not clear what he's doing.

ART: Okay, I'll stand by the gate.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: I mean I think I'm tougher than this guy, that's my point.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you're definitely tougher than this guy. Um, he uh... Here's a thing that Fantasma sees. A man comes down the stairs. He's holding a crossbow. He opens the gate and motions you out.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: And then you see a man with a crossbow, back here.

ART: I can take a shot with a crossbow and still kill two people.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN (as the guard): Come with us.

AUSTIN: He says,

AUSTIN (as the guard): Come with us.

AUSTIN: And the man with the crossbow begins walking backwards towards this door.

NICK: What's in that door?

AUSTIN: And the man behind you now, prods you forward.

ART: I grab him.

AUSTIN: The one behind you?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright.

ART: I try to like— I try to move him. I try to move him in front of him.

NICK: Just...

AUSTIN: Oh, okay.

ART: I try to get him by the neck and get him in front. I'm— I'm trying to use him to not get shot with a crossbow.

AUSTIN: Give me a— Give me a— Right, right, right. That's a cool move. That's a nice action.

NICK: I just realized— I just realized I was muted and that's why people were ignoring me.

AUSTIN: Oh, I'm sorry.

ART: Oh, I'm sorry.

NICK: No, it's okay. Uh, I was gonna say, as the um, the guy, the crossbowman starts walking backwards (AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.) I want to stick my staff out and trip him.

AUSTIN: Uh, go ahead and give me a— Uh, you can just do that.

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: Uh, he trips and falls and the shot goes high. Um, and—

ART: Okay, then I'm just gonna punch this dude.

AUSTIN: Oh, does he— Wait, one second. What happens when you do that? Do you become un-invisible? I forget how invisibility works for you.

NICK: Um, it's unclear. Uh...

AUSTIN: I think— I think that counts as a thing. Otherwise...

NICK: Yeah, that counts as an attack. It— So the spell persists until the target attacks or you dismiss the effect.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's an attack. That's an attack for sure.

NICK: Yeah, so I guess I'm becoming un-visi— Like, I'm becoming visible. Un-invisible. Heh.

ART: Oh, so I— Do I see— So I see Fantasma first?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think suddenly you see Fantasma jump up as this man, is behind you, prodding you forward.

ART: Alright, I still think my best chance here 'cause crossbows take a long time reload is to— is to knock this dude unconscious and then run at that other guy.

AUSTIN: Alright, go head. Give me your Hack and Slash.

ART: So I— I punch him. 9.

AUSTIN: Uh, what's your— What's your choice on that?

ART: Uh, what is— I can do— I can do extra damage?

AUSTIN: You can do... Oh no, I'm sorry, on a 7 - 6 you just, you deal your damage and the enemy also gets to attack you. Also gets to hit you.

ART: Okay, well, so I get a d10 plus I get a d4, which I'll roll in a moment. That's two 2s in a row.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

NICK: Ugh.

DRE: Woof.

ART: 3.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: That's pretty bad.

AUSTIN: That was pretty bad. That on the other hand was pretty good. Uh, so you do grab him and pull— I guess like, what are you doing? What do you try to do to him? You're just punching him?

ART: Yeah, I'm trying to knock him unconscious.

AUSTIN: So he's like behind you. How are you— Are you like gonna elbow and like turn? Like what's yours— What's your series of moves here?

ART: Yeah, actually I do— Yeah, this is— this is— I've done this move before. Yeah, you do it like an overhead, like three quarters elbow (AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.) to the face.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: And like, the ideally the move ends with me facing him.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think that's true, it does end with— with you facing him. But as soon as you get that hit in, he's like— he does one of those things where he draws his blade out of his belt in a way that slams the hilt into your chin. He like pulls it straight up into the air and slams it up against your face.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN (as the guard): It's gotta be like this?

AUSTIN: And he raises his uh— He pulls his blade back as if to thrust forward at you. What's up— What's up with Fantasma right now? Also the goblins are now like, yelling things at each other in a language you don't understand.

[TIMESTAMP: 0:18:35]

[NICK laughs]

ART: Oh, they speak Common, we could've— we could've had a...

AUSTIN: They might also speak Common.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Or in fact, it is. It's like the version of— It's like that Old Common. Remember, we kind of talked about this before, that it's a Common that developed under a different— It's kind of a previous linguistic form, um... It's like Old Common.

DRE: Oh yeah, Old Common. (AUSTIN: It's actually Middle—) Back before he sold out, when he made real music.

AUSTIN: Hoho. Haha. Shots fired, Common. Okay. So Fantasma, what's up?

NICK: Uh, is the guy that I tripped, is he out?

AUSTIN: No, no. But his— He's like struggling with his crossbow to reload.

NICK: Oh, so he got— He got back up again.

AUSTIN: He's— I think he's like— I picture him like on the ground like,

AUSTIN (as the crossbowman): Uh, what the fuc—

AUSTIN: Like, rolling around, like looking at his crossbow, trying to reach down for a bolt to load in. Do you know what I mean?

NICK: Sure.

AUSTIN: He's on the floor, still.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: He's kind of backing up and trying to do too many things at once. If he just calmed down and focused, he'd be back on his feet by now, um, but he isn't. You've kind of stunned him, let's say, so to speak.

NICK: How does— Are there mechanics for uh, knockouts? How does that work?

AUSTIN: Not really.

NICK: Oh, alright.

AUSTIN: I just say, "Oh yeah, he's knocked out." You know?

NICK: Sure.

AUSTIN: Um, I don't— But like a trained guard being tripped, he's not gonna get knocked out, like on his—

NICK: Yeah, no I understand. I was asking that because— I was asking that to find out what I would have to knock him out from here.

AUSTIN: Oh, just hit him real hard in the head. You know?

NICK: Okay, well.

ART: That'll do it.

DRE: That'll do.

AUSTIN: I mean, what would you do to knock out a person in real life.
[cross] Like the same thing you'd do to kill him.

NICK: [cross] No, I know. But I mean...

AUSTIN: Um...

NICK: Yeah, I guess I'm— I guess I'm metagaming a little too much, but...

AUSTIN: Yeah, I don't— Unless you had a specific move that was like, you're trained in knocking people out.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know if you were the Boxer playbook, (NICK: Right.) then you could probably maybe have something that does something like that.

NICK: Well, I was— Yeah, I was specifically asking because if it was like, D&D rules and you have to do like, half of their hit points (AUSTIN: Right, no, there's none of that.) and at least, then you have to do subdue damage and blah, blah, blah.

AUSTIN: I— I've always hated that and unless you were specifically trained to do that, you know what I mean?

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: It's very hard to just knock someone out without (NICK: Yeah.) doing permanent serious damage. Um, and it kind of works— Yeah, anyway. I don't want—

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I don't want to dissect that the way I normally would. Um...

NICK: Uh, shoot. Um... Also doesn't— Did I lose Magic Missile before?

AUSTIN: Uh... Oh right, you completely missed. What did you... No, you didn't— You didn't lose. On a complete miss, you don't have to make that choice, do you know what I mean? It doesn't—

NICK: Right, okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: 'Cause you don't get the spell. The spell effect doesn't happen, so...

NICK: Sure.

AUSTIN: I could've done that. That's within my power, you know what I mean? But in this case, I— I thought maybe that hit that you got was worse, you know?

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You're in a bad way.

ART: Pray that he does not alter the deal further.

AUSTIN: Right.

NICK: [laughs] Shoot. Uh... Do I have a clear shot at the guy down the hall that Hadrian is struggling with?

AUSTIN: Shot in what sense? Are you gonna...

NICK: For magic missiles.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can see him.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: You're not going to hit Hadrian, do you know what I mean?

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Unless you screw up real bad.

ART: This is the unexpected character death session.

[AUSTIN laughs]

NICK: God. Man, I don't— Ugh.

ART: Do what you gotta do, man. Save yourself. Don't— Don't—

NICK: Can I uh, try to knock the crossbow out of the guy's hand while he's stunned?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can just do that.

NICK: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

NICK: That's what I'm doing.

AUSTIN: Okay, what do you do... So like, with what? Staff?

NICK: With my— With my staff.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you knock that away.

NICK: Like, baseball it.

AUSTIN: Sure. Sure, sure. You do that and the crossbow goes flying. He starts to back up, closer and closer to the door. Until his back is up against it. He's like— He's like scurrying back on his hands— Like on his butt, you know what I mean? He's like,

AUSTIN (as crossbowman): Aaaah.

NICK: Sure.

AUSTIN: Backing up on the ground. Um, Hadrian, if— At this point, his sword is up and he's about to thrust at you. What do you do?

[TIMESTAMP: 0:23:11]

ART: Oh this is a sword. I was thinking this is a knife. Alright.

AUSTIN: No, no, he pulled *up* a sword like vertically from his belt and then put it back down to thrust forward. I'm doing hand motions as if you could see me, but we're not doing video call right now, so you *can't*.

ART: No, no, I get it. I'm— I'm with you. Um... Are you asking me to Defy Danger or as you asking me to—

AUSTIN: I'm asking you what you want to do. Um, I think, if you're... I don't think you have to Defy Danger, like the— Hack and Slash, as long as you're within the right like zone— Oh, actually with a— No, you guys are really close up on each other. You're within range, do you know what I mean? Like you don't have to get in past his sword, the way you normally would, if you didn't have a weapon? Like if you were out in a field, fighting, then you would have to Defy Danger to get in close enough to hit him. But you're already like, neck in, like face-to-face, here, you know?

ART: Sure. I mean, ugh, I'm in— I'm in— I'm in danger here. That's... That's a problem. Um... But like, but it's all— Combat's all I got here. Like, I can't run. There's no running, here.

AUSTIN: Uh, there is. Why not?

ART: Because what am I gonna do? I'm gonna— What, I'm gonna run for the stairs? I'm gonna run upstairs? Then I'm just more in jail.

AUSTIN: There's a front door.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I mean, it's probably locked. It's probably locked. It's just—

ART: Yeah, unless my— Unless my weapon's sitting right there, going outside isn't worthwhile either. There's more of them outside.

AUSTIN: What was your plan? What was your plan before?

ART: You know, that I would— I would not have two people chasing me when I left.

AUSTIN: But then what?

ART: I don't know.

AUSTIN: Okay. Good plan.

ART: Intelligence is my lowest stat.

AUSTIN: That's true.

ART: Like, I knew— I knew I wasn't going to win outside.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ART: I surrendered, hoping I would be dealt with in a honorable manner and I *wasn't*.

AUSTIN: Well. So what are you doing?

ART: I'm gonna— I'm gonna— fight this— I'm gonna keep fighting this guy.
(AUSTIN: Okay.) Otherwise I'm gonna die here.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: So I guess I'm gonna— I'm gonna try to... I guess I want to grab him by the neck.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Like I wanna— I wanna choke this guy out.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: An 11.

AUSTIN: That's a success.

NICK: Not bad.

ART: So I can deal an extra 1d6 by exposing myself to damage?

AUSTIN: Correct.

ART: I have to choose that before I roll.

AUSTIN: [amused] Correct.

ART: I mean, people don't have a lot of hit points. He can't be that—

AUSTIN: No, they don't. He's— Yeah.

ART: He can't be that good.

AUSTIN: This is—

ART: Uh, I'm gonna take it. I'm gonna like, 'cause like the way to avoid damage here is like, grab him, choke him and kind of like, move? But I'm— I'm gonna crush his windpipe. And it doesn't—

AUSTIN: So you are gonna take the damage, is what you're saying?

ART: Yeah, and if it doesn't work, he'll be able to hit me with that sword.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: I'm gonna roll these dice in a dramatic— In a more dramatic way. That's the 1d4.

AUSTIN: Woof.

ART: That didn't help... That was alright.

DRE: That helped.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: And then a 5— So 11, 12.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you— you didn't even— You had it. [ART laughs] But, you're gonna take this damage, so... [sighs] I'm rolling very well tonight.

DRE: Oh Jesus.

ART: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: As you lift him up in the air, he does that thrust forward that he'd been planning with his free hand, and this like sword is in your side. Like it's *in* you.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Uh, and he like— and he like flails and his arm goes out. He loses— he loses his grip of the sword and then— and then he falls unconscious. Um, or dead, depending on how— how you did that.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Up to you. Which is it?

ART: Uh, what's that?

AUSTIN: Are— Are you like making sure this dude is dead?

ART: No.

AUSTIN: Okay. So you're like—

ART: He can— He can— I need him to be unconscious, and I *really* need him to be unconscious but I'm not going to—

AUSTIN: And it's hard to— It's hard to know where that line is. Um, but you do—

ART: I know. I did a lot of damage.

AUSTIN: You did a lot of damage. You did— No yeah, fuck it. No he's— Yeah. You feel him go lifeless in your hand. There's no way, with that much damage. Like he was next— He was not in a good place already. So um, okay, Fantasma, what are you doing (NICK: Uh.) with the guy cowering in front of you?

[TIMESTAMP: 0:28:00]

NICK: I am going to... I'm gonna try out a new spell that I got.

AUSTIN: Ooh. Fancy.

NICK: I'm gonna try to Charm this guy. Um.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Alright.

NICK: So I'm gonna reach out— I'm gonna reach out and touch him which I have to do for the spell.

AUSTIN: Okay, yup, you do that.

NICK: Um, like just very gently and gingerly. Um, uh, here's my spell roll. 7.

AUSTIN: That's a— That's a success. Uh, what are you doing with the spell? Are you forgetting it? Are you um... Are you drawing unwanted attention to yourself or are you— What's the third one I always forget?

NICK: Uh... Take 1 Ongoing to cast a spell.

AUSTIN: Right, -1 Ongoing to cast a spell. Right.

NICK: Yeah, yeah. Until the next time you prepare spells. Uh...

AUSTIN: So.

NICK: That's a bad thing at this low a level.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

NICK: [sighs] I guess I'll forget it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

NICK: Uh...

AUSTIN: So it's a new spell. You haven't done it many times. It's easy for you to forget that.

NICK: Yeah. Uh, so I'm gonna say to him, in very calm tones, but uh, so okay, so I guess I should read the effects of the spell. "The person, not beast or monster, you touch while casting this spell counts you as a friend until they take damage or you prove otherwise."

AUSTIN: Okay.

NICK: Uh, so I'm going to— I'm going to say to him, in a firm but calm tone, uh...

NICK (as Fantasma): I know this man. This man is dangerous.

NICK: And I gesture to Hadrian down the hall. Um, and I say to him, uh...

NICK (as Fantasma): Quickly. Run. Run upstairs for your life. Run upstairs and tell your superiors. I heard he plans to escape to the west.

AUSTIN (as crossbowman): [out of breath] Ah oh. Thanks so much. You're a real lifesaver. I'm gonna— Ah—

AUSTIN: He shakes your hand.

AUSTIN (as crossbowman): I— We should get dinner. And like, next week. Okay.

[NICK laughs]

AUSTIN: And he heads upstairs, quickly.

DRE: [in the crossbowman's voice] Do— Do you like burgers? Oh, I gotta go.

AUSTIN: [sliding into the crossbowman's voice] I gotta go. Gotta go— There's a good burger spot downtown that just opened up. It's—

ART: Oh, I feel bad for this guy. He's gonna be so heartbroken, when you never show up for dinner.

NICK: [laughs] Um, and then I uh...

AUSTIN: [in the crossbowman's voice] How's your mom? Is everything— Are you— Okay. Uh...

NICK: Then I uh— I race down to the other end of the hall and uh, I grab Hadrian. Or not grab him, but you know. I—

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

NICK: I tell him,

NICK (as Fantasma): We must get out of here, very, very quickly. And then go east.

AUSTIN (as a goblin): Oi.

ART (as Hadrian): Okay, I'm—

AUSTIN: Comes from one of the cells.

AUSTIN (as a goblin): Oi. You. Tall boy.

DRE: [laughing] Tall boy.

ART: I— Who's the taller one? Me?

NICK: [cross] Yeah, Hadrian. Definitely.

AUSTIN: [cross] We should figure that out.

ART: Okay.

DRE: Tall boys club.

NICK: I guess we're both tall boys to the— to the goblins, probably. Yeah.

AUSTIN: To the goblins, yeah exactly.

ART: Yeah, I'm grabbing my side.

AUSTIN (as a goblin): Uh... Gonna let us out?

ART (as Hadrian): Why are you in here?

AUSTIN (as a goblin): Why do you think? Goblins.

NICK: [cross] Do we— We don't have any...

ART: [cross] Do we want to—

AUSTIN (as a goblin): Doing uh... Doing experiments. Uh, they uh, hurtin' us. Not a big fan. Not a big fan of these people.

NICK: Uh...

ART: I look at Fantasma (NICK: Does the guard that—) like, like pointedly.

NICK: Does the guard that uh, Hadrian knocked out have keys on him? I guess he does 'cause he opened the door.

AUSTIN: Uh, yeah, he opened the door. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

NICK: Uh, yeah, uh. I uh, grab the keys quickly. I toss them through the bars at the goblin and I say, [laughs] uh, I say,

NICK (as Fantasma): Good luck! We must go.

NICK: And *then* I grab Hadrian and start like pulling him down the hallway.

ART: Alright, easy. I got— I just got stabbed in the side, a bunch. I'm not a runner right now.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Um...

ART: Uh, can I cast a spell real quick? I want to— I want to try a cleric spell.

AUSTIN: Ooh. Fancy.

DRE: Oh snap.

AUSTIN: What— What is it? And also how's that work?

ART: Uh...

AUSTIN: Did you have to pick that spell ahead of time? I forget how Cleric Spells work.

ART: No, the spells are just granted by my deity.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Um, ooh, maybe this isn't worth it. Wait, are Rotes the same as spells?

AUSTIN: Yeah, Rotes are spells. Prepared Rotes but they're— those— So no, this is yeah. This is the thing. Yes. You— You *do choose* which spells.

ART: Oh, where?

AUSTIN: You're granted new spells of your choice, who's total of don't exceed your own level +1 when you Commune with your deity.

ART: Oh, plus— plus all Rotes.

AUSTIN: Plus all Rotes, yeah, yeah, yeah. Those never count against that (ART: Okay.) so yes, you do have—

ART: Alright, I'm not— I mean, the spell I would've taken was uh— was Cause Fear, and that's not helpful right now.

AUSTIN: No.

ART: But I would like to ask for Guidance.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um, yeah, let's— Like, right this second? 'Cause it's gonna be— Mmm, wait for—

ART: Yeah, let's get out of the prison first. Let's get out of the prison first.

AUSTIN: It would just be the prison door, right?

NICK: I was gonna say, if Hadrian starts like praying in front of me, asking for Guidance, like [laughs] Fantasma's going to be like, "I have your guidance, we need to go!"

ART: Alright, let's get out of here.

NICK: "Your guidance is we need to go right now!"

AUSTIN: The uh— You hear the gates behind you begin to open up. Hm. And as you leave, uh, as you close the door behind you, you hear one of them say to the other,

AUSTIN (as a goblin): Good to have words again.

AUSTIN: And then they laugh and the door closes.

DRE: Aw man.

[TIMESTAMP: 34:07]

AUSTIN: Throndir. Uh... I guess the tone of this room at this point is cold, uh but— but steady. Like, you don't feel like you're under threat. She's basically told you that she's gonna let you go by yourself at this point. Um,

AUSTIN (as Elahir): You will be given one meal and sent back into those woods you chose over us. Do you have any questions.

DRE: Out-of-character, what do they— do they take all my stuff and—

AUSTIN: Yeah, you don't have shit.

DRE: Okay. I thought so. Oh god. I have a ton of questions. What questions can I ask that will be useful [laughing] at this point in time?

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a solid point.

DRE: Um...

DRE (as Throndir): What do you know about Kindrali?

AUSTIN (as Elahir): Who?

DRE: Hmm. I was hoping someone in the room would know that name.
[laughs]

AUSTIN: They would have to have been alive back then.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You know, it's a thing where the people who knew Kindrali would've gotten that word back. Those people have all died because elves don't live long anymore.

DRE (as Throndir): He was a creature that lived in the mountains outside of town.

AUSTIN (as Elahir): One of your— Hm, so you went from, being friends with people to being friends with creatures?

DRE (as Throndir): Heh. Oh no. We weren't friends. He tried to kill us.
[cross] When we def—

AUSTIN (as Elahir): [cross] Why are you wasting my time?

DRE (as Throndir): When we defeated him, I found some— some special arrows that had his magic left on them. When I touch them to my fingertip, I learn things.

AUSTIN (as Elahir): The boy does drugs and he thinks himself a prophet.

DRE (as Throndir): [laughs] I wouldn't consider myself a prophet. You know me. I'm good with a bow. I'm good at hunting and tracking. Outside of that, I'm not good at discerning visions or figuring out what's useful. You, on the other hand, Elahir.

AUSTIN (as Elahir): Yes? What is it you want from me? What are you suggesting?

DRE (as Throndir): Maybe what they showed me would be useful for you. I know that you won't have me back. I know that you consider me a traitor. But I at least want to give you one thing before I leave.

AUSTIN: I'm waiting for you to pull out a glock [DRE laughs] with the delivery you just gave on that. So you're basically suggesting that she use the arrow on you to see Kindrali's vision?

DRE: No.

AUSTIN: What are you suggesting?

DRE: On herself. On herself.

AUSTIN: I don't— That's— Those won't communicate. Like she can just do that. Like they're not— They're not connecting to Kindrali (DRE: Yeah.) in that way. Do you know what I mean?

DRE: No, I know. I'm trying to think of a way to get an arrow involved in this room.

AUSTIN: Oh. I see. You're lying to her.

DRE: Yes.

AUSTIN: I see.

DRE: I'm absolutely lying to her.

AUSTIN: That was not clear.

DRE: Oh, I'm sorry. (AUSTIN: No, no, no.) I should've made that clear to you.

AUSTIN: No, that's— A good lie. I thought you were just confused. Um...

DRE: That— Throndir is counting on the fact that everyone thinks he is *a/ways* confused. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's true.

AUSTIN (as Elahir): [sighs] We did see some strange arrows with your belongings. I'll have a guard bring one. This should be amusing.

AUSTIN: She laughs. [snap, snap, snap, whistle] And after five minutes, someone comes in with that bundle of arrows. Uh, what's your father's name?

DRE: Oh, gosh what is his name?

AUSTIN: We should've thought of that when we introduced him.

DRE: We should have. Let's call him... Thelian.

AUSTIN: Thelin?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: T-H-E-L-I-N?

DRE: Uh, I-A-N.

AUSTIN: I-A-N, sorry, that's okay. Uh, write that down. Where did I just put Elahir's? There it is. Therian, you said? Or Thelian?

DRE: L.

AUSTIN: L.

DRE: T-H-E-L-I-A-N.

AUSTIN: Thelian. Elahir says,

AUSTIN (as Elahir): Thelian. Take one of your boy's arrows and pluck your finger on it.

AUSTIN: He... looks you in the eye as if to ask if that's safe. How do you— What do you communicate back to him, like visually?

DRE: I mean, he's not going to be hurt. I'm trying— Like I'm just trying to— Uh...

AUSTIN: This would be sort of— I feel like, I mean you haven't done this yet, right?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I feel like, based on how I described those arrows, this experience will be like... It'll— It'll be like having an out of body experience. Like...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or like, you know, yeah. It's like being aware of your own perspective in a weird way. Anyway, he does it, and it does— One of the arrows turns into those bright blue flames that flicker away, as he does it. And he's like,

AUSTIN (as Thelian): [inhales]

AUSTIN: He lifts his hands up and sits back down.

AUSTIN (as Thelian): What is this? What's going on? This is very strange. I can see the— the limits of my sight.

AUSTIN: Elahir looks at you and raises her eyebrows.

AUSTIN (as Elahir): What was supposed to happen, Throndir?

DRE: Um... Shit, shit, shit, shit, shit. Uh, I mean, I get to ask— What do I get to ask from the— How do these arrows work? Help me out, Austin.

AUSTIN: That's what I'm saying. They don't do any— That's what— *You* didn't fire this arrow.

DRE: Mmm.

AUSTIN: Do you see what I mean?

DRE: Ohh...

AUSTIN: Like, your father used that arrow just now, on himself, so he has this weird, out of body experience where he's magically seeing what he normally sees. But from like a third person persp— (NICK: Hah!) You know what I mean? Like, it turns out this does feel like getting high for him. [DRE laughs] Like, you just— you just gave your dad that sticky icky. Like... He's— He's on that real kush.

DRE: Dankest.

AUSTIN: He's just the dankest. The dankest magical kush.

[NICK laughs]

DRE: Aw man.

ART: I got this store here in Los Angeles.

[AUSTIN laughs]

DRE: [groans] Did they just bring the one arrow into the room? Or did they bring...

AUSTIN: No, they brought that whole— that whole collection of the magic ones, that don't like do any damage and just do weird stuff. Um, but it's clear that they're something. They don't know that it didn't do any— You

know what I mean? They don't— I mean, he's not in pain, but he's clearly confused and begins kind of mumbling.

DRE: Um...

DRE (as Thrandir): Father, what did you see?

AUSTIN: He's gone, man. This is— This is— He is like— I think he starts describing the room in intense detail, you know? [NICK laughs] Um, like— And in like almost a monotone um, very detailed oriented, you know,

AUSTIN (as Thelion): The table is made of pine. It has been lacquered over carefully and is at least a few hundred years old. The walls are a pale shade of green. Next to me is Halamir.

NICK (as Thelion): My hands... are on the table.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Right. My— Exactly.

NICK (as Thelion): Look at the size of my hands.

AUSTIN (as Thelion): I have big hands. Other people have small hands.

NICK: [laughing] I have large hands.

DRE: [laughs] [in Thelion's voice] Why are my hands so big?

NICK: [in Thelion's voice] These are my hands.

ART: [in Thelion's voice] I'm freaking out, bro.

NICK: [in Thelion's voice] My hands can touch everything but themselves.

AUSTIN: Right. Exactly.

DRE: [laughs, sighs] I'm trying—

AUSTIN: Elahir is— is beside herself. Like, she— she laughs and says,

AUSTIN (as Elahir): Everything about you that I— that I thought in my heart has just been confirmed. This was your big plan, to prove to me that you had some magical connections, you got your father stoned?

DRE: Man, I didn't know that snow elves knew about getting stoned.

AUSTIN: Yo, there ain't much to do in the snow, in like the snowy woods, alright? *Long* nights.

DRE: How far are these arrows from me?

AUSTIN: They're near your father which is like, five feet away, six feet away.

DRE: So they're not...

AUSTIN: You're at the table. They're not within reach. And again, like, these aren't— They wouldn't hurt anybody. These aren't damage arrows.

DRE: I know.

AUSTIN: I guess, again, they don't know that, so... Um... You—

DRE: Um, yeah.

AUSTIN: I— I mean, I guess if everybody in the room tried them and got super high... you could, get away, but...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That would be a tough thing to convince them to do.

DRE: Well, I guess like, in Throndir's mind, he thought that like, I guess everyone in this room knows what has happened, right? They know that people are experimenting on other elves and things, right?

AUSTIN: Right, right.

DRE: That is now common knowledge in this room.

AUSTIN: In *this* room. This is *the room* where it's common knowledge. These are *the people* who know that and are okay with it. Or— Or, even if they're not okay with it, no one's causing an uproar.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, and you know, you maybe just uh, you know, impaired the faculties of the one person here who could have, maybe backed you up a bit.

DRE: Perfect. [groans] Well, hey, Thrandir's never the smartest— smartest elf.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's fair. This is a good scene.

AUSTIN (as Elahir): Ah.

AUSTIN: She shakes her head.

AUSTIN (as Elahir): It's a shame this'll be the last memory your father has of you. Give him his arrows and his bow and let him go.

AUSTIN: And she— The guard lifts you up out of the chair and grabs the, kind of, quiver of arrows and leads you out the room. Unless you're resisting or something, you know, this is happening.

DRE: No, no.

AUSTIN: Uh, and back in like the main hall, someone gives you like, *not* your armor back but like a cloak um, for warmth. A pack of like, a day of rations, and your bow and your arrows. I think they actually carry your arrows until— they carry your arrows with them, (DRE: Right.) but they do give you your bow back to like strap to your body. Um, yeah.

[TIMESTAMP: 45:24]

AUSTIN: Meanwhile, you guys are going east?

DRE: Oh boy.

ART: Oh, we got— we got out of the rest of the prison without a problem?

AUSTIN: The front door is right there.

ART: They got two guards this whole prison?

AUSTIN: They ain't—

ART: I mean, don't make me fight more people.

AUSTIN: They have five prisoners on this floor, you know? Like...

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: There's a town of 800 and all of their prisoners are goblins, you know? This isn't a— Crime isn't much of a problem here. Um...

ART: Yeah, I mean, I think if we think we can get out of here unmolested, we should— we should do it.

AUSTIN: I think this is like, offset enough from— from the city where like, 'cause it's kind of an eyesore, to where you guys can head—

ART: Yeah, who wants to live over there.

AUSTIN: You'll hit a wall, again, um, but you figure you can figure that out when you get there, you know.

ART: Yeah, I've climbed stuff before.

AUSTIN: So you head east. I think it probably picks up into woods again. These are like, tended woods, um, on the inside of this— uh, of the walls. It's almost like they let game live here to— to hunt in case they didn't have enough stuff from outside the walls. They always have like a... there's some deer here and there's some you know, other like elk or whatever. Um, and eventually you do. You hit a wall, uh and you can even see, even close up against that wall, you see the tower uh, past it. You know, you're a day from the tower at this point and it's massive. Uh, so much that again, you're right

up against the wall and you can still make out the tower behind it. That's how tall it is.

AUSTIN (cont.): Um... I'm gonna say, for sake of convenience, you're able to find a part of the wall that's is maybe a little loose, maybe the— they could've made it stronger— They could've made it with a stronger wood, here. Um, it's— it's between the snow and some animals and maybe some termites or something, it's been eaten through pretty badly and it's a tight squeeze but you're able to get out. Um...

ART: Uh, I mean...

AUSTIN: Actually, wait. Let me revise all of that because now I just realized how this can fit into another thing that I have already written down. You find a hole that has clearly been put there.

ART: Mmm.

AUSTIN: And, you can tell that this break was recent. Like there are scraps and splinters on the— in the snow around it.

ART: Mmm. Well that's— that's bad. I mean, I don't care.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Throndir is taken to the front gate and they close the door behind you. And then they toss your arrows down to you from the tower, their bows trained on you. Kodiak barks and runs up to you and like licks you.

DRE: Hmm... Yeah, I think—

AUSTIN: You saw some people you knew on the way out, that gave you looks that ranged, I think, from pity to disdain to, uh... one or two nostalgic glances. Like... But all of them had a sense of sadness.

DRE: Woof. So much for Throndir's dreams of the returning hero, huh.

AUSTIN: I mean, yeah. [DRE laughs] For now at least.

DRE: Yeah. I mean, yeah, there's nothing for him to do (AUSTIN: Yeah.) except to start making his way around the city to the tower.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm. Uh as far as you know, I mean, you don't even know where anyone is, right? Like...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So I guess, is your thought that like, well, you can trust them to get out or to— I guess I don't, you think that— that Fantasma's gone, right? You think that he retreated and you imagine that— You have no idea where Hadrian is. You have no idea where they took him.

DRE: Hmm.

AUSTIN: Um, but yeah, let's say Kodiak is definitely,

AUSTIN (as Kodiak): [pant, pant, pant]

AUSTIN: And leading you around the to— Like, leading you (DRE: Yeah) slowly around the wall.

DRE: Hmm.

AUSTIN: At some distance. At some distance. Like they're not gonna let you just walk the— the— you know, the circumference of the wall. Circumference? Is that the right word? No.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah?

NICK: Perimeter.

ART: Perimeter? Perimeter.

AUSTIN: Perimeter.

ART: Perimeter is when you— Circumference is still right. Circumference is the outer edge of a circle.

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah. Great. I— *I* know words.

[TIMESTAMP: 0:50:21]

ART: Um. Whereas, yo Hadrian's preparing his next— his next, you know, thing, right? Like, we gotta go back in there. We gotta...

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: We gotta rescue— I still haven't done what I went in there to do.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna say— Well, are you doing any sort of patching up.

ART: Oh, I need all my— Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Well, first I was gonna— I was gonna Lay on Hands Fantasma and hope I don't die.

AUSTIN: Okay, do that. Tell me what that looks like.

ART: Uh, I— I see that he's hurt. You know, we're both hurt but it's like— Like I try to like settle him, like I can— I can help. I can do this. Let me— Let me heal you.

NICK: Wait, how many— How many times can you cast that?

ART: Infinity.

AUSTIN: Yeah but—

ART: But if I roll a 7 - 9, *I* take your damage onto me.

NICK: Oh, huh...

ART: And I want you to know, that I can mess this up *once* and then I'm in dying range.

AUSTIN: Wait, what are you at?

ART: I'm at 9.

AUSTIN: Oh, then you're in dying *range*. You won't be *dead*.

ART: Right if I fuck up—

NICK: If *you*—

ART: If I fuck up twice, I die.

NICK: If you fail and take my damage, you— That will be enough to kill you.

AUSTIN: No, that's not—

ART: No, no, no. 'Cause I can only— I can only heal a d8.

NICK: Oh, I see.

AUSTIN: So— So even if he fucks up *bad*, the worst thing that could happen would be, that they— that he's down to 1 HP.

ART: But I need Fantasma to be healthy 'cause I need someone to go back in and get my stuff.

NICK: Well, but I can just turn invisible. Like, I don't—

ART: But you should be— You should be healthy. You should have more hit points when you do that. What if something bad happens?

NICK: Uh, okay.

ART: Those are— Those are precious items. And what if I nail it? What if I don't fuck this roll up? Like, I didn't, see.

AUSTIN: Nice, look at that.

ART: You— You just generated health.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Give me that heal roll. Look at that. There you go, you take 5 back. You feel the wound in your— in your gut kind of stitch itself back up. And there is a warmth to this that you don't feel um, in your own magic. There's a presence there, do you know what I mean? There's a...

NICK: Sure, yeah.

AUSTIN: You can feel— You can feel a third hand. Uh...

NICK: Ugh.

AUSTIN: An authority. Yeah, it's gross. You can feel that there is a presence here. This isn't just— This isn't like taking medicine, this isn't like casting a spell. This is those— There's something divine about this, and I'm trying not to use the word divine to describe it.

NICK: Yeah. No, I understand. It's important— That's an important— I appreciate that description, too, because it's important for Fantasma to [cross] experience.

AUSTIN: [cross] Right. This is the first time he's felt that right?

NICK: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, when Art is doing— When Hadrian is doing the I am the Law stuff or any of his other Paladin shit, that may as well just be regular magic, you know? Um...

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: But this feels different.

ART: I'm curious what I am the Law feels like to the people it's happening to.

AUSTIN: Yeah, me too. I think it's— I think it's this. I think there is a presence. Literally, it feels like there is another person. Like there's something bigger and heavier, um, or not, you know. Maybe something even conceptual, but a concept that has presence, do you know what I mean? Like, like, what a— What an Olympian feels when the national anthem plays? How like, there's a weight to that feeling? I'm not saying that it's the same thing but there's the way a concept can carry a physical reaction that isn't just, "Oh yeah, that's a thing I know." Um, uh... Like hearing— Like hearing, you know, the song that you and your partner, you and your ex used to listen to a lot. That sort of a presence. Um...

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: While you're doing this, and I'm gonna say as— as Thrandir is kind of coming to the halfway point around the circumference of this thing, it— it's about sunset now. Been some time. You hear a loud explosion. And smoke begins rising from Aunig.

DRE: Oh *goblins*.

NICK: Heh-heh.

AUSTIN: What do you do? And on the way, how are we feeling right now? Do we want to take a break? [cross] Do we want to call it here?

NICK: [cross] I could use a break.

AUSTIN: How— How— What are we having us?

ART: We could— We could have a break and then we come back from the break, we could discuss if that break is— is it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm fine with that. Uh, how are we feeling? It's 8:20. What are we...

DRE: I mean, I'm good to keep going, but whatever.

AUSTIN: Um I think that there's—

NICK: Um.

AUSTIN: A lot of this—

ART: I've hit a second wind.

AUSTIN: A lot of this depends on how far we want to go. And like, what your aims are, I think. Which is to say, I think that there is... I think that there is a stop— I think that this— I think we get to a stopping point in the next five minutes, the next, if you're— if we plan on going back in, we should stop, probably. Um, probably. I guess, I don't know, what do you guys— what do you guys wanna do and then I'll talk— I'll suggest like how much time is left.

NICK: Well, let me— let me go the other way. I probably have about like maybe another thirty minutes in me.

AUSTIN: Right. Right, right, right. Yeah, no, that's— that's fair. Um... If... Phew. Hm.

DRE: I just figured that we at least need to get Hadrian's stuff back.

ART: Hadrian needs to get his stuff back.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Hadrian can't go to the tower with no weapon and no armor. That's just— That's just how Hadrian dies at that tower.

AUSTIN: I do want to communicate that it's really hard. Like, okay. So what's your plan? Like how are you gonna go get that stuff?

ART: I mean something— Did only— Did only Throndir hear the explosion or did all of us? How big is this explosion?

AUSTIN: No everybody— Everybody heard the explosion but what I'm saying is like, where do you think that stuff is?

NICK: I'd assume it's back in the jail.

AUSTIN: It's not in the jail.

NICK: Right?

AUSTIN: They did not bring it in with him.

NICK: Oh.

AUSTIN: That's— Remember? Like they didn't bring the stuff in...

NICK: Oh, that's right. Yeah, I guess...

AUSTIN: So— So you can— There is— I know where it is. Um, it exists in a place.

ART: That's a start. Um...

DRE: Would Throndir— Did Throndir see anything or would he—

AUSTIN: Throndir didn't see anything. Throndir might suspect that it was with his stuff. Which was within reach of the— (DRE: The central...) the central building, with the kind of council hall.

ART: I mean, just to go back on the buffoon squad, uh narrative.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

ART: Um, things aren't going real well, right?

AUSTIN: No. No.

ART: Uh, in there, uh, maybe they'd be willing to see reason *now*.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: You're crazy. I don't use that word, but I'm using that word.

ART: I know.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: That's— You're not thinking straight.

ART: I've proven myself to be an— an able— You know, they need bodies right now I think and I'm good at that.

AUSTIN: There's— Yeah, I— Yeah, maybe. Maybe that could—

ART: Alternatively, if it's the goblins who are doing this, and it probably is, we were just friends with the goblins. If the goblins are gonna take— if the goblins are gonna sack this town, maybe *they* would give me my stuff back 'cause I freed a bunch of them from that jail.

AUSTIN: I'm trying to think how much you know or think about this.

DRE: There weren't a lot of—

AUSTIN: Like... [sighs] There— There's a conflict here, you know. Earlier it was very clear that Hadrian came to the conclusion that there was no way they were going to successfully sack that town. Raid that town.

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: You know, you don't know what's happening there. You heard a loud bang. There's smoke. It feels... I'm not convinced that Hadrian now thinks he can now go into this town where he has no idea where his shit is and find it and like, I don't— I don't see that process happening in the same man, who hours ago said, "No, there's no way we can— we can— There's no way we can deal with these eight people, let alone the 800 behind those walls." Do you see what I mean?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: I'm trying to get into his headspace and I— and I'm trying to make sure that we think through it genuinely. And I don't know what this answer is here.

ART: I guess it's— it's— Without those things, and especially that— you know, that holy item which I think is very important to him.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

ART: I don't see— I don't see him walking out of the tower. Right? Like the other option is let's just go to the tower.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: And that's not...

AUSTIN: I don't know. I mean this is the guy, who you know, twenty minutes ago you were saying, "Hadrian— Hadrian has that in him. It's not the holy symbol." Remember? Like...

ART: Right

AUSTIN: I don't— I think this is an interesting dilemma to be in. And I don't— Again, your stuff exists, I know where it is.

ART: The holy energy might be within me. But the— the sharp bits are— are in the halberd.

AUSTIN: I mean, that's also not true because of the way this system works, right?

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: You'll do d10 damage...

DRE: Unless you don't make it to that tower.

AUSTIN: Chyeah. Yeah, you'll do d10 damage with an elbow if you want. Obviously the— the halberd is the +1 um...

ART: Well, the armor's more useful than the halberd, honestly. I didn't have clever...

AUSTIN: Yeah, the armor is really nice.

ART: I didn't have a clever saying for that. Thanks for making— Thanks for making a point of it.

AUSTIN: No, that's— that's... Um, one second. Um... So I don't— Again, it's tough because on one hand, we can play that game. We can play the game where you raid the town to find your stuff and maybe get to the bottom of what's happening there with the explosion. I am totally ready for that game. That's a game we should play next week or the week after. Um... That's way more intense.

ART: On the other hand like I don't wanna— I don't wanna Shanghai this group, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: You'll forgive what I'm sure is a more racist than I— than I gave it casual thought just now. [AUSTIN and DRE laugh] Um, like there's no way that has— that has good origins right?

AUSTIN: No, it's bad. Yeah, it's bad.

DRE: Yeah, no.

ART: Yeah, uh. Like best case scenario, that's just a reference to something terrible, right?

AUSTIN: Right. *Best*. Best case. Um so yeah no, I think that that is... I think "there is an explosion and there is smoke and fire," is a really good way to end if the plan is to go back in and keep digging. Uh, if not, I know where I'd like to end this if you do decide to go back south, towards the tower.

NICK: I mean...

AUSTIN: Uh, I think both of those things, like if I'm gonna put it all again, like one of the things that I like about this is I like being able to put everything out on the table. And we can talk about what makes the most— is the most interesting. Part of me likes the idea that in picking up this

connection to Samoths and gaining the Cleric powers, we'd end this session with you without your armor without your weapon. Right? There is this kind of like, 'knight of the faith' image where— where you know, even without my armor and my arms I'm still the walking power of my god. And I like that image a lot. So part of me wants to push towards that.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: On the other hand, the like, let's raid this town and figure out what these elves are doing and dig deeper into *that* situation is also really cool and— and we could go in that direction. Um...

ART: But that's— that's a very dangerous direction.

AUSTIN: It is. I—

ART: Right?

AUSTIN: Yes, I have done my best to not kill you this game. And still it's been very tight. There have been a number of situations.

ART: Well, we've— We've— We've rolled very badly. Um...

AUSTIN: You have. And I've rolled super well. I don't think I've— I think I've hit top damage like four times now.

ART: Like I guess, I guess the end point I would like to see for this game, if it's realistic (AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.) is you know, could the three of us be in the same place and just talk about what's next?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Um, that means...

ART: Using— Using the things we're talking about right now.

AUSTIN: Yes, that means there will be time that passes after this explosion. Like, um, you know what, you should probably do that thing you said you wanted to do before. Guidance.

[TIMESTAMP: 1:03:23]

ART: Oh sure.

AUSTIN: That could help.

ART: Uh, but now I've forgotten how that works.

AUSTIN: It's a... Roll Wisdom.

ART: It's just roll Wisdom (AUSTIN: Almost certainly.) and then bad things happen if I fuck it up, but you know, let's—

AUSTIN: One thing at a time.

ART: And my Wisdom's not very good.

AUSTIN: Oh boy. It'll get better.

ART: Yay! Wait, what, no, that's not right. I rolled a 4.

AUSTIN: No, that's bad. Why did you say... [laughing] Why did you say, "Yay?"

ART: I— I was— I had scrolled up. I was checking for stuff and I hit roll and it like skipped own but it didn't skip down to my roll. It like skipped down to a roll I'd succeeded.

AUSTIN: Alright.

ART: In a weird attempt at Roll20 to trick me.

AUSTIN: [sighs] Man, okay, so that— that spell which you failed just now says, "The symbol of your deity appears before you and gestures towards the direction or course of action your deity would have you take, then disappears. The message is through gesture only. Your communication through the spell is severely limited." Um...

ART: What happens if you don't hit a 7 though? Like it's— (AUSTIN: Right. Right, right, right.) "7 - 9, the spell is cast but choose one..."

AUSTIN: Right, on...

ART: Below 7 is just some GM stuff?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Below— A fail is, I get to make a move as hard as I want.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: I have a list of moves. I'm not supposed to ever tell you about that. It's a secret.

ART: I mean, it's in the book I have, right?

AUSTIN: Yes, it is in the book. Um... One of the rules is...

ART: I mean I'm not reading them because of— because of decorum but...

AUSTIN: Uh... This is something I wanted to incorporate with a different move. With Discern Realities. Um, someone, Felan Parker on twitter¹, a games academic up in Canada, suggested and reminded me of something that was— that was in Apocalypse World. I think it was originally in Apocalypse World. Oh, it was also in the original draft of Dungeon World. In Discern Realities, uh, or any of those moves like that, one of the things that was suggested was on a failure, tell them something wrong and they get +1 Forward for acting on that information. Uh...

DRE: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: So, the spell does succeed and um...

ART: Great.

AUSTIN: What's this look like? What's— What's Samoth's Guidance look like?

ART: Uh, well...

¹ Felan Parker (@Felantron) <https://twitter.com/Felantron>

AUSTIN: And I want to be clear, this is happening.

ART: We're gonna use up all of Nick's half hour talking about what I think this might look like.

AUSTIN: I know.

[NICK laughs]

ART: Uh...

AUSTIN: I'll just tell you then, if that's fine.

ART: I mean, sure. I mean, the short answer is some sort of— some sort of crown, right? (AUSTIN: Oh, I see. I was thinking—) The crown is the symbol I was most gone for.

AUSTIN: I was thinking of something more natural.

ART: What we go for that smiling dude.

AUSTIN: I was thinking of this— of a— just a beam of sunlight.

ART: Oh, sure.

AUSTIN: Like something very simple in this case, where it's— it's the sun is setting, um, behind you and it catches um the trees in such a way that a beam of light points you towards the tower. Take +1 Forward if you go that way. Um, so you get a +1 that you can pay off on.

ART: And we're— In the future we're gonna have to— we're gonna have to discuss exactly what that means but okay.

AUSTIN: It's just a bonus. It's just +1 on your next roll, on acting as if this is the place that Samoths wants you to go.

ART: Okay. So if we go to the to— Okay, okay.

AUSTIN: I want to be clear. I just want to be clear, you believe this is where Samoths wants you to go and (ART: Yeah.) this is a divine symbol. This is divinity guiding you this way.

ART: Absolutely.

AUSTIN: I'm saying that that is a metaphysical truth, not that that's Samoths wanting you to go that way. Um...

ART: I'm— I'm— You might've lost me but okay.

AUSTIN: You're being guided there by a divine presence. That divine presence is not Samoths.

ART: Okay so— So this— Okay, but it's not just a coincidence. (AUSTIN: Right, right.) It's not just like, "Oh that was just the setting sun, dummy."

AUSTIN: You're not just misreading. Again there's a presence there. You can confirm that that felt like a god leading you. Uh...

ART: Great.

AUSTIN: During all this, during the Lay on Hands, I feel like you guys have probably like taken some time to get your shit together. Let's just bring you all together. Throndir is there.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Y'all friends again.

NICK (as Fantasma): Hey, *hey*, hey.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Wow. You picked up some new language in prison. That's...

[NICK laughs]

ART: Look, prison changes a man.

ART (as Hadrian): Well that was. That was an unmitigated disaster.

DRE: I would imagine that Thrandir just has just this— just this aura of shame about him. That he's— his shoulders are slumped and he just— he can't look either of you in the eye.

ART (as Hadrian): We've all— We've lost important things today. Except Fantasma. Who...

[AUSTIN laughs]

DRE (as Thrandir): I don't know. He lost part of his stomach.

ART (as Hadrian): Well and perhaps he lost a bit of his... I was going to say arrogance but that's certainly not true. Um... Yeah, we've all— we've all been humbled today. Don't—

NICK (as Fantasma): I lost nothing.

ART (as Hadrian): You don't need to take it so personally.

NICK (as Fantasma): In— In fact—

ART (as Hadrian): You got— You got stabbed really badly.

NICK (as Fantasma): I still saved your ass.

ART (as Hadrian): Oh right.

[DRE laughs]

ART (as Hadrian): I'm trying to make— I'm trying to make the kid feel better.

NICK (as Fantasma): Oh. Oh right. Uh...

[DRE laughs]

NICK (as Fantasma): At least you're... still... have both of your arms.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: This guy.

ART (as Hadrian): Good— Good point.

DRE: [sighs] I would imagine at that point, Throndir can't do anything else *but* laugh. Like the absurdity of everything. [laughs]

DRE (as Throndir): [sighs] So what do we do? [NICK sighs] Hadrian, we have to get your stuff back, right?

ART (as Hadrian): I— I don't believe that that's my path right now. I believe I'm being— I'm being pointed toward the tower. We can— We can— I don't know. I was gonna say we can come back later. We can—

NICK: Did we— Did we see the sun beam also? Or is it— is it clear to (AUSTIN: Let me read the move.) Fantasma and/or Throndir that that was at least what Hadrian believes to be his holy guidance?

ART: Good question.

AUSTIN: [sighs] I think everyone— It's not— It's not super clear here. I think every— Hm. I think everyone—

ART: [cross] I mean, if it was—

NICK: [cross] Here's— Here's a better question. Did we— Is there like a— Is there like an audible prayer? Like, do I know that he asked [cross] Samothēs for guidance?

AUSTIN: [cross] Yeah, yeah, no. He does— He yes, he asked for Guidance.

NICK: Okay.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um...

ART: I've asked— I've asked for Guidance and I was pointed—

AUSTIN: And there is that— Again there is that brief presence that you felt before. That both of you felt before when he laid on hands, so maybe that could tilt your— your experience a little bit from what you expected.

[TIMESTAMP: 1:10:53]

DRE: Austin.

AUSTIN: Andrew.

DRE: I— I would like to use Kindrali's Chosen on the tower.

AUSTIN: Sure.

DRE: To see if I can learn anything about the tower.

AUSTIN: Absolutely.

DRE: And actually roll something for the first time, in this session.

AUSTIN: Wait, really? Jeez.

DRE: Yeah. Yeah. Uh, an 8.

AUSTIN: Uh, and Kindrali's Chosen, as we wrote it says... Uh, "On a 7 - 9, you get something interesting but without an explanation of its use." Um, the vision— Here's what you see. You see goblins and snow elves raising this wall. It's— It's a hot summer's day which is a sharp contrast to what it is now. People are sweating. People are handing water to each other. Everyone is working. Kindrali— You're seeing it from Kindrali's perspective. He's tall. He's taller than everyone else here, right? Um, and at this moment he's carrying a big log over to slam into the ground to be a— to be the edge of this section of the wall. Uh, and the tower is standing in the distance, high above everything else.

AUSTIN (cont.): And, something briefly catches in the sun, and all at once the earth shakes. And what— what seemed like a symbol of absolute dominance and power, that something so big could— could exist at all, becomes a symbol of vulnerability, as it cracks. First down the center and then, as it nears the base, around its circumference. Kindrali turns and shouts for everyone to go inside. To run back to the town that they just built. Everything was fresh then. There is no snow here. And he looks back over his shoulder one more time as he sees the tower he's— You feel it in him that he is praying to himself that it does not fall on them. Because it would be so easy to have everything they worked for destroyed in a second. But it doesn't. It falls long ways, it falls from away from— or not away from but it falls— it falls parallel to that and he... he says, at the very end of the memory,

AUSTIN (as Kindrali): By Samot.

DRE: So what I'm seeing— Like, I'm— I'm seeing that, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. This is a memory that you recall.

DRE: Yeah. Well, um, I mean, I relay that to... I tell them what I see, or what I saw.

AUSTIN: Also, this definitely comes to you. Like this isn't a— At this point you're not really— This is the first time it's really, really happened in such clarity and detail. And I want it to be— It's almost involuntary. It's like, you see the thing. You see the tower at this distance and it comes together for you.

DRE: Yeah. I could imagine for like the past couple of moments, that I just— Like Throndir just kinda glazed over.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. So you guys head out, off in that direction?

ART: Oh. Fuck dammit.

NICK: Uh. [laughs]

AUSTIN: We're really close to a point on which we can end on.

ART: I mean that's—

AUSTIN: And we could end here, if we had to, but— but I would like to get this one last roll out and then we can deal with the tower tomorrow or next week, or the week after.

ART: Alright. This— This—

NICK: What?

AUSTIN: What's up?

ART: Oh, go ahead Nick?

NICK: No, I was gonna ask what was the 'Fuck dammit.'

ART: I'm— I need— I need to know what this— this Samot stuff is and I can't and it drives me fucking crazy.

[NICK and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: I'm doing my job.

ART: I know it's a thing. I know it's really bad. I know that when I find out, I'm gonna be pissed and I'm pissed in advance. I'm trying to be angry now to spread it out so when this— when this falls on my head, I can be more calm then.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

ART: But bad shit's gonna happen. It's gonna happen to all of us. And it's gonna be at least partially my fault and I'm uh...

NICK: I have a feeling that Austin is grinning real big right now.

AUSTIN: I— Uh, yeah. I'm doing my job right, is what it sounds like. [DRE and NICK laugh] Um, (ART: So you know.) you just take off. You start heading towards the tower. It gets...

ART: I mean, what he said troubles me, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: 'Cause like— Like I know that there's something I don't know and I know it's something big.

AUSTIN: Yup.

ART: And I hate that that's connected to this, but yeah, I believe that it is— I believe that I've been shown by a divine power that my place is at that tower.

[TIMESTAMP: 1:16:06]

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm. Yeah. Um, it gets— It gets colder than anyone here has ever felt before. Blizzard conditions pickup as you get closer and closer and closer. You're trudging through ice that feels like cold steel against your face, you know. It's not so much snowing here as it is— as ice is dropping from the sky. But something is pulling you forward and if you can just get through this? You feel an impossible warmth closer to the tower and you think you see green. And everybody roll +Con. On a 10+, you successfully push through the worst of the Erasure's winter effects, suffering no additional damage. On a 7 - 9, take 1d4 damage and on a 6 or under, you'll gain the Sick Debility and take 1d6 damage.

DRE: Whoop, there we go.

AUSTIN: Uh, Andrew failed. Art succeeded. Nick failed.

NICK: And I failed.

AUSTIN: Alright, so this is—

ART: This supersedes my immunity to cold, I assume.

AUSTIN: Oh actually, no you're fine.

ART: Or this doesn't matter 'cause I succeeded but...

AUSTIN: No, you're fine, anyway.

ART: Alright.

AUSTIN: Um, yeah. I forgot about your immunity to cold. Yeah, this isn't— This is... It's still unpleasant, you know?

ART: This— This seems like existentially unpleasant, like regardless of whether or not...

AUSTIN: Yeah, but you're not going to take damage from it.

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: It is bad. This is for, whoever rolled first, Nick? Nick, take 2 and gain the uh, Sick Debility? What was that beep? Did anybody else just hear that weird beep?

NICK: Yeah, I heard it too.

AUSTIN: Uh, somebody—

ART: Yeah, it's not— That's not a roll thing?

AUSTIN: Oh maybe it was a roll thing. I just worry that something stopped recording. And then here is Andrew. Here it is.

NICK: Oh, I heard a beep in addition to the roll thing.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. Hm.

NICK: I heard like a...

ART: Could everyone just quickly check that they're recording?

NICK: I'm still recording.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we're all— Me too.

NICK: I can— I can see it.

DRE: Yeah, I'm still good.

AUSTIN: Everything is great. Um...

ART: Yeah, me too.

AUSTIN: Um, and Throndir take 5.

DRE: 5.

AUSTIN: Yup. But you do. You push through and suddenly you're out of the storm, and through the— once you're past the snow and the ice, once your vision clears, you're in a field. You're a hundred yards or so away from the tower and it's beautiful. The sun is out, there are flowers blooming. There are trees here that— that, you know, would be dead *easily* in the climate you just passed through.

DRE: Hmm.

AUSTIN: And, strange of all, you see two figures, looking at the tower, off in the distance. One of them is— is big, bulky, balding, grey skin, firm tusks. The other, Fantasma, you recognize her instantly. You would obviously recognize that frizzy blonde hair anywhere. Um, this is— this is someone you knew back at the university.

NICK: Huh.

AUSTIN: If you were the one who always uh, stuck in the, with your nose in the books and didn't have any practical experience, she was the one who was always off on some adventure or another. She didn't really pay much mind to traditional magical theory. She kinda figured it out as she went along. Um, and there was a friendly rivalry between the two of you but haven't seen her since the tower fell. Since *your* tower, excuse me.

NICK: Sure.

AUSTIN: Since your university fell. But here she is, and here is this orc. And here you are, in a thing like— like paradise, compared to where you just were. One of them turns and puts their hands over, uh— The orc turns and puts his hands over his eyes to look at you and waves. It's a— It's a friendly gesture, but and a confident one. It's the sort of wave that you make when you're not threatened. When, whatever this thing— Whatever this thing that just fell into your lap is, they're nothing. They're not a big deal. Come over, we'll talk.

ART: Finally some fucking civility.

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: As you get closer and closer, there is, a strange juxtaposition. On one hand, the climate and your environment is beautiful and it brings peace. There are butterflies here and birds are chirping and there are wild berries on bushes. There's kind of a— Some light rolling hills to the north where the tower has been broken in many places. It almost looks like the tower caused the hills.

ART: Um, I'm sorry, I don't mean to break momentum (AUSTIN: No, it's fine.) but uh, uh... Is this just as foreign as winter?

AUSTIN: Yes, sorry. Thank you for asking that. Not as foreign in the sense that it is... Um, the area near the halfling place is warmer, but this is the best spring day you've ever felt, do you know what I mean?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Um, and in that way, yeah, there is— there is something alien about this. There is something... you know, there are hot days and there are— and there are cooler days. But there is rarely that nice spring day feel where like, you can just do anything today, you know? And that's what this feels like.

AUSTIN (cont.): *But* the other hand of the juxtaposition is the presence of the tower. It is— It is uh, a tall— Uh, it's tall even though it's on it's side and it— it's not casting a shadow now because the sun is to the west but um, it's

size alone is just so magnificent and so *strange*, that you feel almost dominated by its presence. Um, and it— There's no movement there but it feels— it feels inhabited. In fact, maybe it's unfair to say that there's no movement there. As you approach, off in the distance, to the north where it's fallen—It's fallen kind of south to north—Um, up towards the hills, you swear for a brief moment that... that you see more bodies moving, near the tower.

NICK: Hmm.

AUSTIN: They look like they— It's hard to tell if what they're doing— If they're... [sighs] It's hard to tell if they're sentient beings, if they're sentient people, or if they're creatures from this distance, they're so far off. Um, but something just feels off about them. Something feels weird, something feels strange about this whole place. Um, finally, when you— when you get within... sight, you know kind of facial recognition of the two in front of you, the orc, Uklan, laughs,

AUSTIN (as Uklan): Ah you finally made it. Glad you'll be joining us, after all. We were worried for you for awhile there. We'd thought maybe those elves had uh, been the end of you.

AUSTIN: And I think we should end it there.

DRE: Yeah.

ART: You wanna quickly tell me what here is evil?

AUSTIN: Um, nothing. Well, the tower.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: The tower is. [DRE laughs] The tower is like—

ART: Somewhere, wherever she is, Hella.

DRE: Hella is also evil. [AUSTIN and NICK laugh] Metaphysically.

AUSTIN: Metaphysically speaking, Hella, yeah. And— And that's it, yeah. Let's come back in a week or two and we'll— we'll figure out why this tower is evil.

[TIMESTAMP: 1:24:32]

DRE: Woof.

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: Let's do wrap-up. This is gonna be a low XP wrap up, I think.

DRE: Yeeeeup.

ART: Yeah, we didn't— we didn't do great.

AUSTIN: This is a bad one. This is rough. We should— Man. Alright, end of session. [sighs] "Choose one bond that you think is resolved, completely explored, no longer relevant or otherwise. Ask the player of the character that you have the bond with if they agree. If they do, mark XP and write a new bond with whomever you wish." Uh, what do you guys think?

NICK: Did anyone have a bond where they expected Fantasma to totally screw over the entire party?

[DRE laughs]

ART: [cross] No.

DRE: [cross] No.

ART: I had "Fantasma saved my life, returned my faith to me. I owe him one." And I don't think that that owing you one is— is— (AUSTIN: Payed off yet.) is paid off by letting be a colossal dick there toward the end.

[NICK and AUSTIN laugh]

DRE: If anything, you owe him two now.

ART: I do— I was doing better than there than I think I'm being given credit for.

DRE: [laughs] I don't know if— Yeah. I don't think—

AUSTIN: Fantasma...

DRE: I don't think anything really changed for me.

AUSTIN: Do you still feel like Hadrian is woefully misinformed about the world?

NICK: Uh...

AUSTIN: And do you think that there is still much to learn of Throndir's past and people? [cross] Or do you think that those two— Okay.

NICK: [cross] Yeah, I definitely— I think there's— I think there's even *more* to learn about Throndir now (AUSTIN: Okay.) that I've uh— Like this just raised more questions.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

NICK: This didn't answer anything (AUSTIN: Yup.) about the snow elves. Um, I— And I don't think feeling— Like the... I think Fantasma is still gonna rational— ration— Somehow rationalize what he felt in the (AUSTIN: Right, okay.) like feeling the other presence (AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.) when Hadrian Laid on Hands.

AUSTIN: Sure.

NICK: Uh. I don't think that was enough, quite enough like, hard and fast proof for him, yet.

AUSTIN: Agreed, agreed. That sort of rationalization is really important. I was just— I was just telling Janine, you beat Fantasy Life this week, right, Nick?

NICK: Yes, yeah.

AUSTIN: There's that character who's kind of a racist asshole in that game, about the people who are brown in that game.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, the guy who's like, he's a hero. And there's a scene with him, after the main thrust of his— of his first interaction, where he wants to still believe that these people are bad innately.

NICK: Yup.

AUSTIN: And he's like, struggling to come up with any rationalization. (NICK: Yeah, yeah.) Um, and I love that because that never happens in games. Bad people in games like that, who have like good intentions, almost always get the scales fall from their eyes. You know, they're, "Oh, no, I was bad all along, oh no."

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: "They're just people like me." And there are not enough super racist uncles in games who never learn that.

NICK: [laughs] Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's really convenient for us to pretend like everybody can be reasoned with and eventually they'll see the error of their ways.

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: But some people are, you know. Some people will always think that the war in Iraq was the right call. They'll invent new reasons, right?

NICK: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I kind of like that it's not as easy for— for Fantasma to suddenly think, "Oh yeah, well. Hadrian's right. Of course Ha— There's, you know, of course Samoths exists. I felt it that time." Like, no, he would

definitely (NICK: Yeah.) start thinking hard about like, what different sort of spell effects can create the feeling of presence, you know?

NICK: [laughs] Right, yeah, yeah. Totally.

ART: I can't believe it took you so long to beat Fantasy Life. That game's been out for like, three months now or something.

AUSTIN: It hasn't— Oh, fuck. Goddammit. [NICK and ART laughs] Great.

NICK: I mean, look. I wanted to max out all of the— I wanted to master every one of the lives before I finished the story.

AUSTIN: Right. And you got that second DLC pack.

NICK: Actually— That yeah— The second [laughs] Can't wait for that third one.

AUSTIN: Yup.

NICK: Uh...

AUSTIN: Alright, so bonds. It sounds like no one's changing bonds.

ART: No.

AUSTIN: Confirmed. Okay, next. Um...

NICK: Yup, nope.

AUSTIN: "Once bonds are updated, look at your alignment. If you fulfilled that alignment at least once in this session, mark XP."

ART: Ugh, I specifically didn't.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you specifically didn't. You specifically...

ART: You gave me a chance and I didn't do it.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: I mean, I rationalized it in two different ways.

AUSTIN: You did.

ART: One, they weren't criminals.

AUSTIN: Well. Crime's tricky.

ART: I mean, it comes down a lot to— to yeah, what I believe the legal authority there was. (AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.) Um, like I don't know if it's a morally relativistic legal definition.

AUSTIN: [sighs] Oh boy.

ART: But they certainly weren't— They almost certainly weren't believers.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Which is where it all falls apart. But I let Fantasma make the choice so that I didn't have to specifically disobey my alignment. But I— I have to consider all of that.

AUSTIN: Yeah, alright.

ART: I might have the wrong alignment.

AUSTIN: You might. We reworked Hella's. She's still evil but we reworked it to be something more actionable, um so...

NICK: Also, for the record, I want to make it clear, because it probably wasn't clear, uh at the time 'cause I was trying to rush out of there as quickly as possible. But Fantasma didn't set those goblins free to be a nice guy. Uh...

AUSTIN: Okay.

NICK: Like, he— He also didn't necessarily like, not set them free. Like, didn't— he wouldn't have given a shit either way. He was specifically thought uh, "Yes, goblins running around? That's a great distraction."

AUSTIN: Right, right. [DRE laughs] Um...

DRE: Man, I didn't— I mean, you all set something free from literal bonds.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it was close. If you had been there instead. Yeah.

DRE: But I did not.

AUSTIN: Uh, alright. Next is these questions. "Did we learn something new and important about the world?"

DRE: I mean, I saw the vision about the tower.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: It was something from pre-Erasure.

AUSTIN: Yeah, but I don't want to just give you XP every time you use that ability.

DRE: Yeah, that's fair.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean? What did you learn?

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You— Like, that's not— You know.

ART: I mean, maybe— But maybe Thrandir did learn stuff in there?

AUSTIN: [cross] Well, what did he learn? If he can answer—

ART: [cross] I don't know. I don't know what's— what's important in there.

AUSTIN: I guess that's the question is, if you can answer the question, what new and important thing about the world did you learn that you didn't already know.

DRE: Um...

ART: Um...

DRE: I mean, I think in Throndir's mind, he thinks the tower is inexplicably linked with the origin of the Erasure and what caused it to happen.

AUSTIN: They knew that. We knew that there was a connections.

DRE: Mm. Okay.

AUSTIN: Like, I think. Uh, maybe not. Maybe that wasn't a thing that you intuited. But like, you knew that was the center of the Erasure and that you were going there. You know, like that was...

DRE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Now, if you figured out why it fell or what it was or something like that, (DRE: Right.) then I think you have a super strong case.

DRE: Um, yeah.

AUSTIN: There might even be a case here to say like, oh there's some association that you can make but like it's tenuous at best, I feel.

DRE: Yeah, yeah. That's fair.

AUSTIN: There will be times when this— when that tower.

ART: And nothing in that big elf conversation qualifies.

AUSTIN: [sighs] I don't think so. Um... No, not new and important about the world. New and important about his life, for sure.

DRE: Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh that's the other thing is, right, this is a group thing. Did we learn something new and important about the world which is to say, beyond our personal lives, you know?

DRE: Snow elves are dicks. We learned that.

[NICK laughs]

AUSTIN: That again... Very important.

ART: I think I learned that I can— I can take almost any of them on, one-on-one. I'm not afraid of any of them.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah? "Did you overcome a notable monster or enemy?"

ART: No, but I—

DRE: He's gonna.

ART: I was gonna.

AUSTIN: Okay. Did you loot— "Did you loot a memorable treasure?"

ART: I lost memorable treasure. I'm down a memorable treasure.

AUSTIN: I also read it as—

DRE: Yeah. [NICK laughs] Uh, I got my dad high. I— Do I get XP for that? Oh no.

AUSTIN: No XP. This is the lowest XP round.

DRE: Oh.

AUSTIN: I mean you guys both— Everyone got at least 1 from failing rolls.

NICK: I got 2.

AUSTIN: There you go. And that means you leveled.

NICK: Yup. I did.

AUSTIN: Oh boy. Alright, I think that's the week. Let's uh, time.is.

DRE: Woof.

AUSTIN: Let's time.was.

ART: Woof.

DRE: It's the saddest session.

ART: Oh, I would like to say that Shanghai-ing is way less racist than I thought it was.

AUSTIN: Yeah?

ART: Yeah, it's not— I mean, it's— it's bad but it's not racist. It's not super racist. It's about kidnapping people and forcing them to be sailors. And those sailors often had to go to Shanghai.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah. That I knew. But like, there's uh— Whatever. That's still kinda shaky. Um...

ART: But it's not like about Evil Asians which is what I was worried about.

[MUSIC - "Autumn not Winter" starts]

AUSTIN: Oh, see I— I— Okay, so it *isn't*— Okay. I thought it was—

[MUSIC - piano starts]

ART: It's about how shitty it is to be forced to be in the— to be a sailor.

AUSTIN: Right. I guess my thought was, is it— But it's not— It wasn't Asian Folks that were doing the kidnapping in that scenario. When it's used...

DRE: No it was usually British...

ART: No, it's—

AUSTIN: White Folk?

ART: It was Brits and Americans.

AUSTIN: Okay. Good job Brits and Americans, using the name of an Asian place for your verb to hide "Put into slavery." Good job. Um, uh, notable— notable crimps, Jim "Shanghai" Kelly of San Francisco. Okay. I'm closing the wiki.

ART: And then— And the other guy with the same...

AUSTIN: We should clap. Let's— Let's time.is.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's uh, 20— Or, at the top of the hour. At the top of the hour.

DRE: Yeah.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: So 10 seconds.

[MUSIC - "Autumn not Winter" plays out]