

Winter in Hieron 18: Try to Live Normally

Transcriber: Cole

Austin: The sun never rises over Rosemerrow anymore. But in this long dark, the horizon glow of Bri, the second moon of Hieron, has taken on the burden of hopeful light. It creases the distant line, rising up over the hills and trees to the east. Over the remote mountains where the orcs horde knowledge and trinkets. Over the lone, slight tower far away, where a university once stood. You watch these things, Hadrian, from a hill south of Rosemerrow. And you wait patiently. Are any of the other party members with you or do you do this alone?

Art: I do this alone. If it wasn't for- if it wasn't for the- I thought about bringing Thrandir.

Austin: Ok.

Dre: Oh buddy.

Art: A lot's goin' on with you. [**Ali**, **Austin**, and **Dre** laugh]

Austin: You feel um- you feel blessed.

Art: It's not me, it's you. [**Dre** and **Austin** laugh]

Austin: Uh, Hadrian, you feel blessed for the first time by this light because its shine reveals to you those who are precious. Rosana, your wife. A lock or two of pale blonde hair sticking out from under a covering. Her full body clearly tired from the travel, yet still driven to do what comes next. And there he is. Your boy. The voice in your head drops and takes on a playful bass when you see him. Your muscles ache to lift him above your head like you used to back when your faith was stronger than your arms. Now he is bigger though. A lanky 10 year old, and his hair is messier than even its usual scattered mop. Rosana covers her mouth when she sees you. And then removes her hand and says,

Austin (as Rosana): I've told him best I can. But he... [pauses]

Austin: And before she can finish, there is the sound of metal on rock. And the noise announces the arrival of the wizard, Arrell, who clears his throat and turns his back east of you. Benjamin shifts his little, round glasses. They remind you suddenly of Fantasma's. And his eyes meet yours, looking for an answer. What do you do?

Art: I crouch. I crouch to get his- to get to Benjamin's eye-level.

Austin: He like, pulls up his pants. Um, and like, steps into attention.

Art: I- I briefly embrace him, in a hug that I- I- that Hadrian wishes with all of his- all of his being could last forever. But it probably lasts 5 seconds.

Austin: It's an awkward hug. He's holding a book in his right hand, and he just doesn't know what to do with it. Um, until finally, he drops it and squeezes you really tightly. He hasn't seen you in a long time.

Art: I know.

Austin: And he hasn't probably felt this way ever.

Art: Yeah. I've- I let go, but I- I keep- I keep my grip on his arms.

Art (as Hadrian): Benjamin, it's so good to see you. I'm so- so thankful to see you so soon after I left and so sorry that it's has to be like this.

Austin (as Benjamin): I don't want to go, dad.

Art (as Hadrian): I know. I know you don't. And I'm- this is too much for me to ask of you. It's too much of your mother and I to expect of you, but we know you can do it. You're a strong boy, Benjamin.

Austin (as Benjamin): Then why can't I stay and help?

Art (as Hadrian): Because it isn't safe.

Austin (as Benjamin): W-

Austin: He's like, looking down at the ground. Like he wants to kick dirt, but he knows better than to do that in front of you.

Austin (as Benjamin): [sighs] Why can't you come with me?

Art (as Hadrian): I'm needed. I'm needed out here. I need to protect not just my own son, but the sons and daughters of all of Hieron. That is what the King Samoths demands of me.

Austin: He like, starts to speak and then Rosana, anticipating his rebuttal, squeezes his shoulder and kneels and says,

Austin (as Rosana): Your father is a very important man, and just because- [sighs] just because he's needed by so many people doesn't mean that he doesn't love you most of all. That's why we're doing this.

Art (as Hadrian): You two are the first thing I think about in the morning, and the last thing I think about at night.

Austin: Rosana drops her hand from his shoulder and like, reaches over to like, reach over and place it on your hand on his shoulder also.

Art (as Hadrian): And this will be over soon, and we'll be a family again.

Austin: He sighs. And off to the side, Arrell turns back around.

[Jack de Quidt's "[Hadrian and His Son](#)" begins playing in the background]

Austin (as Arrell): There isn't a lot of time. Let's do this now so I can be on my way.

Art: Hadrian catches himself smiling in a weird way. And he like, looks at- he looks up with like, a sidelong glance and is like,

Art (as Hadrian): There was so much more of you in him than- than I expected. Neither of you had any kind of bedside manner.

Austin (as Arrell): [huffs] Are you ready?

Art (as Hadrian): Just a moment.

Austin (as Arrell): Not you. The boy.

Austin: And he kneels now and looks Benjamin in the eye. He doesn't say anything, and Benjamin looks at him and then back up to you. [laughs] And at him again and then back up to you.

Art (as Hadrian): Benjamin, remember your faith in there. Hold Samoths close to you. Be measured. Be responsible. You're- you're whims can be anything in there. It's very important that you try to live normally.

Austin: He just nods and- It just- [sighs] I think he now reaches up and adds his hand, his other hand to yours and Rosana's. And squeezes and says,

Austin (as Benjamin): I'm gonna be very strong.

Austin: Cause that's like all he- that's the word he knows that means good, right? And squeezes both of you and turns and looks at Arrell. And you like, almost instinctiv- you feel just like, the lightest touch- The lightest like heat from where his hand was, and you look down at it and see an imprint there. Um, like- like a suntan. Like a mark. And his little hands are big enough to reach around yours just barely, so it doesn't even read as a hand, just like a strange set off horizontally marking moving towards a big blob where his- where his palm was. And then

you look over, and he steps towards Arrell. And Arrell places the staff on the ground making that metal on rock sound.

Art (as Hadrian): I love you, son.

Austin: Sound again. And he starts to turn back to look at you, and then is whisked away, lifted briefly off the ground. And then bit by bit erased. It's like he comes untethered, but before it can become a long string, it just vanishes. There are footsteps on the hill, and Alyosha steps closer. His eyes meet with Arrell's briefly. And then Arrell walks away past him. Alosa offers you and Rosana a big hug. And-

Art: Yeah, I think that I- yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: I think Hadrian's crying.

Austin: Sure. So is Rosana. Alyosha knows that his presence is really all he has to offer you right now, so he says nothing. And the second moon is now fully risen. And it is as bright as it's going to be for you for a long time.

[Music plays out to end]

Austin: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast, focused on critical world-building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. [**Austin** and **Art** laugh] Today we are continuing our game of Dungeon World by Adam Koebel and Sage LaTorra, which is a hack of D. Vincent Baker's Apocalypse World. My agenda is to portray a fantastic world, to fill the character's lives with adventure, and to play to find out what happens. Let's start by reviewing bonds 'cause we haven't done that in a little while. Uh, let's start with you, Hadrian. And just get those- get those right out there.

Art: Yeah, um, there're all- they're all great. 'Hella's in a spiritual crossroads, and only I can see her through it.' 'Thrandir's morality is a broken clock, I must lead him to the correct time.'

Austin: Uh huh.

Art: 'Adaire has a silver tongue, but metals are only sacred if they're blessed.'

Austin: Huh. That's really good.

Art: And 'Fun is fun, but Fero would let my family die. Never trust him.'

Austin: [laughs] Fuck.

Dre: Jesus.

Austin: Fuckin', takes are hot out here. Fuckin' teeth. Shit. Um, Hella- Actually, Throndir is actually next on this list, sorry.

Dre: That's ok. Um, let's see. 'We may not do it for the same reasons, but at the end of the day, I trust Hadrian to do the right thing.' 'If I have a harebrained scheme and need support, Adaire's my best bet.' Um, 'Now that I'm a vampire, I cannot let Hella find out what I've become.' [**Ali** laughs]

Austin: [laughs] Sure. Fair.

Dre: And last, 'I've come a long way since our first adventure, and it's time to start earning Hadrian's respect.'

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, that's right.

Janine: Yeah.

Art: Yeah, that's our short-term mini-arch there. I think we're both gonna be great. [**Dre** and **Ali** laugh]

Austin: Uh huh. Now, Hella.

Ali: Sure, yeah. Ok. Um, [**Austin** and **Ali** laugh] My first one is 'I know Hadrian wants to see the best in me, but these days, I cannot afford to not defend myself.' Um...

Austin: Hmm.

Ali: My second one is 'If I can learn anything from Adaire, it's patience. I'd like to teach Adaire to stop meddling.' And my bond with Throndir is 'I am no bright-eyed adventurer, and neither is Throndir. I am not going out of my way to protect him.'

Austin: Oh geez.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: That's a good one, too. Uh, Adaire.

Janine: Uh, mine are, 'Church or not, Hadrian has more use than most of his sort.'

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: 'Throndir knows things that I can benefit from.' And 'Hella's loyalty is a tremendous and unreliable asset; cultivate it actively.'

Austin: Good. Everyone's good here. Lord.Great. Alright, so just to like recap everything and get us all into the right headspace here. We finished our Rosemerrow detect-

Ali: Oh, are we done? Are we done?

Austin: Oh, I don't- I mean- I- yeah, well... [**Ali** and **Janine** laugh] Um...Hm.

Art: We're just gonna go at 10 the whole rest of the way, right?

Austin: Uh, Art.

Art: We got 3 or 4 months at 10, right? [**Janine** and **Dre** laugh]

Austin: Here's hopin', frankly. I mean, I don't know. Hm, yeah. I see what I have on this page right here, and Jesus. Uh, the- at the end of the Rosemerrow arc, the revelation was made that Arrell was this great wizard who had secretly been sort of controlling slash had invented Fantasma as a puppet. And he was gaining power and attempting to kind of put people into little bubble universes to protect them from the coming Heat and Dark. A number of suspects, nearly every suspect was killed. Except for Blake, the halfling thief.

Um, what are other big plot points for this group? You found out about the Cult of the Dark Sun. So called Cult of the Dark Sun, which seems to be some sort of perversion of the Creed of Samoths. And found a route that they took to Rosemerrow. The- Obelus, the star. The star being, they told you to follow a path and gave you- or showed you a path on the map, which I've now represented on our map. Um, that leads to the kind of southwest tower. And then again, down to an island landmass, past the place called Kanton, which is um, you know it to be the dwarven- one of the biggest dwarven settlements. Other big plot points people that I'm forgetting?

Ali: I feel like that star one is it, right? Like-

Austin: I think that- And the star- and the stars arrived, right?

Ali: Yeah, uh huh.

Austin: That's a big one. Um, the stars began falling. Um, and it's not really clear necessarily what they are, I guess. I guess they describe themselves as being Samot's forgotten.

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But I'm not really- and that they were here to kind of re- uh- [sighs] do something with the Heat and the Dark. Stop the Heat and the Dark, but like, in stopping it, it boy... phew. Bad stuff.

Ali: Boy howdy. Yeah.

Austin: So yeah, I think that that's- That's pretty much where we're caught up to. And to remind you of your original quest. It was to get to this tower. Um, and you're like, on your way to Rosemerrow or to then continue south to that tower when all the Twinbrook stuff happened. So... lots of uh- There's been lots of like, stuff getting in the way of that main quest. Let's say. I think that's fair to say. Since the very beginning. But I think pretty much everything is in its place now. And I think we're gonna pick up in a little settlement called Wharfhurst, which is not far from that hill where Alyosha met you and Rosana, Hadrian.

Um, it is- I guess the person who knows it is Adaire. It is where- it is like, the place where a few northern dwarves pop up now and then to do some trading. I guess it's more than pop up. Like, it's a small village of like, 30 people or something in the woods west of the gnoll lands. Um, who- where... where there is um, a kind of cave system that goes to the south and like, towards Kanton. And you're there, kind of getting supplies before continuing on. Hadrian, Alyosha has effectively told you one, that- So, Alyosha came not only with your- with your wife and child, but with- with a number of other refugees from Velas.

You know, I would say this is probably a week or two after- or three after the end of the last session. Um, and Ordenna at this point has invaded Velas and reports are rare. Like, it's hard to know what happened up there, but the refugees managed to get here. And it's not a huge group. We're not talking about thousands and thousands of people. We're talking about probably 100, 150. You know, like, it's what Alyosha could bring. Alyosha is a slight man. Thin bones. Thin features. Weak looking. Um, light hair, light eyes.

And not only does Alyosha like, confirm that he thinks that the Velasian council's original goal for you of getting to that tower and retrieving whatever artifact is there is important, he wants to come with you. He is leaving the refugees in the hands of Rosana, who he believes is sincerely capable of leading them and protecting them. And as, you know, a lay member of the church working to ferret out and protect the church- ferret out the Dark Sun and protect the church. He also- it feels like there's another thing happening there that he has not like, told you necessarily in conversation, in terms of what he wants to go do.

But he is like, committed to joining you on this journey and feels- kind of makes it clear that he has never been- He's an exarch. Exarches are supposed to wander around. They're not supposed to be prelates. They're not supposed to sit in with clergy. Like, and that's- He's not doing anyone any good sitting in a church. Um, so, he is committed to joining you on this trip.

Art: Alright. Uh, sure.

Austin: Alright here- yeah.

Art: One, whatever he says is basically fine, but two, he must have some idea of what he's getting himself into.

Austin: Here's hoping. [laughs] Um, but everyone else, you're in this town. This kind of like, dwarven village. Um, it is- you know, made of wood and lumber and has like, a handful of things. And before we go further, this is the place where like, if you feel like you want to buy stuff or get rations together, now is the time. And I suspect you should. You believe it should only be about 2 weeks to go from where you're at into, towards where that- that mark of the tower is. But then you've no idea what's there. Like there's just- no one knows what's there. So.

Dre: Hm.

Ali: Did we get any dollars working for the Golden Lance?

Austin: Y'all are like...

Ali: Or like, from the village people?

Austin: Nah. Like, it's really weird. That other party got super rich. The other party got like, hella rich.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Cause- cause they robbed a place. [**Dre** laughs] Is what happened. Let's be clear. Have y'all thought about robbing a place?

Ali and Janine: Yes. [**Austin** laughs]

Dre: Well, now that you mention it, yeah. Sure.

Art: I don't even have any money written down. [**Austin** laughs]

Dre: Yeah, no. Me neither.

Janine: Me neither. Wait, I thought I had-

Austin: Yeah, you do. You have 25 silken coins.

Janine: Yeah, but I had- Where'd my real money go?

Austin: That's a good question.

Janine: Maybe I didn't put that back after I got it back from- from uh... shifty boy.

Ali: I think I want to- I want to play it safe and have 2 rations of 10 uses on me.

Austin: You will- like, to be clear, if it's two weeks, and you don't have 14 rations by the time you get there- I'm just gonna lay this out- you will have a debility because you have not eaten well in the last 5 days.

Ali: Ok.

Austin: But that's also really interesting. [**Ali** and **Dre** laugh]

Ali: Austin, I don't like how you said that, and now we all have to buy food. [**Dre** and **Janine** laugh]

Austin: Uh huh. Yep.

Ali: Alright. I've got it. Not gonna buy any rations, definitely gonna buy a keg.

Austin: Ok.

Ali: Which is on here for some reason.

Dre: Wha-?

Austin: Yeah, kegs- kegs are good. Kegs of alcohol are really good.

Ali: Dwarven stouts- I could definitely get it here.

Austin: You get a +1 on Carousing rolls...

Dre: What?

Austin: ...if you make it.

Dre: Is that a-?

Austin: Yeah, it's a special move.

Art: Excuse me?

Dre: That felt like a carouse.

Janine: I love this helpful note. If you drink a whole keg yourself, you are very, very drunk. [**Ali** laughs]

Austin: Uh huh. Carouse, when you return triumphant and throw a big party, spend 100 coins and roll +1 for every extra 100 coins. On a 10+, choose three. On a 7-9, choose one. On a miss, you still choose 1, but things get really out of hand. The GM will say how. One, here are the things you can choose from. You befriend a useful NPC, you hear rumors of an opportunity, you gain useful information, or you are not entangled, ensorcelled or tricked. [**Dre** laughs]

Ali: God.

Dre: Great.

Austin: We should do more carousing, y'all- I'm gonna start giving you money so you can carouse.

Ali: Yeah, I feel like boat party missed out on a thing or two.

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: I think you all kind of caroused.

Art: 100 coins is like a fantasy amount of coins.

Austin: The other team is- [laughing]

Art: I feel like the opportunity of having 100 coins or having a newspaper.

Austin: The other- the other side is so rich. It's like, not fair. I'm sorry. Fantasma has 390 coins.

Ali: He's a dead guy.

Janine: Oh my god.

Ali: Can we just take those?

Austin: I guess that's a question. Hadrian, did you fuckin' loot Fantasma's corpse? [**Janine** and **Ali** laughs] Cause you had the opportunity.

Art: I think the real question is, did Ephrim and did we- did he give me half of it?

Austin: Yeah. That's a question. [**Janine** and **Dre** laugh]

Art: Um... I mean, I don't want to speak for Ephrim.

Austin: Uh huh. But-

Art: So, I'm gonna see if I can get in touch with Sylvia¹ real quick. [**Dre** and **Ali** laugh]

Austin: [laughing] Ho-oh!

Janine: Did you just really tersely say like, 'Samothes provides' when he- when you just took all that money?

Austin: Alright, so we just did a bunch of shopping that Ali cut. Everyone has a bunch of rations. Thrandir bought- er Hadrian bought some more- some more arrows for Thrandir. We determined

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

that Hadrian and Ephrim did not rob the dead half-body of Fantansmo or whatever was left of Fantasmo. Even though Fantasmo had-

Art: Well, we did, but we gave it away.

Austin: Right, sorry. You did rob Fantasmo, but you gave the 390 coins away. I just want to be clear. I'm just gonna say these words again. You gave 390 gold coins to the church instead of taking it. I want to be- just to be clear. Fine. Do you know how much it costs to get like a- a horse? 75 coin. Do you know how much a riverboat is? 150 coins. You gave the church two riverboats. [**Ali** and **Dre** laugh]

Ali: I hope they need those boats.

Austin: Hm, ok.

Ali: I- I-

Austin: It says here, an orc warchief's tribute is 250 coins. [**Dre** laughs]

Ali: Jesus Christ.

Janine: Oh my god.

Ali: Lord.

Austin: You know how much a- you know how much an offer you can't refuse is? It's only 500 coins. You're almost there. [**Janine** and **Dre** laugh] A fine tapestry, 350+ coins.

Ali: Oh, we should be getting that. We should just bring that with us.

Austin: You should start stealing tapestries. That's all. I told you my favorite- one of my favorite things, like the reason I give a fuck about resources in games is because every once in a while, they produce a really great um, like narrative moment. I was playing a game of Torchbearer, which full disclosure is made by my roommate, Thor. And in it, we- my party had snuck into like an orcish like, fortress that had sunken into the earth. And we snuck into their like, main hall, and they were all asleep and drunk. And we snuck past them to a chest, and we opened the chest.

And inside was a huge, unwieldy carpet that was worth a fortune because carpets were rare in this world. And it's like, 'Well, how did you get the- how do you get the carpet out?' And it's like, 'I don't know. Like, it's a huge rug. Like, it's super, really- it's heavy and awkward.' And it meant that we had to leave something behind. So, we were like, 'Alright. Let's fill this chest with food. We have all this food. Let's just put all of our rations in this chest and leave.' And my favorite thing about that is thinking about what the orcs thought when they woke up. Which is

'Oh my god. This magic chest turns rugs into food. This is amazing.' We have to go steal more rugs. [**Janine** and **Ali** laugh]

Janine: Oh god.

Ali: Boy.

Austin: So, you're not taking the money though, Art, right? Just to be clear, Hadrian definitely not taking the money?

Art: Yeah. Definitely not taking the-

Janine: Just take like a cut.

Art: Yeah, if Ephrim wouldn't take it, and we've estab- and that's what Sylvia says...

Austin: Ok.

Janine: Ugh.

Art: And Hadrian wouldn't- Hadrian's not gonna spend- I mean, he's not gonna spend his dead friend's money.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Ok.

Ali: That's-

Austin: That's fair.

Art: It's not right.

Janine: He's not really dead if he was never really alive on his own anyway. [**Dre** laughs]

Austin: Ugh.

Art: Yeah, it's complicated.

Austin: Ok. That's fine. Ugh. It's fine. Uh- ever-

Ali: [laughs] That's- that's gotta be paid forward later, right? Like-

Austin: Yeah, we'll see.

Art: Well, I mean, it might take-

Austin: [interrupting] Uh, you know what? Here's the thing. We did set up that Rosana was going to stay behind with the church. She will be able to use that money.

Ali: Oh.

Austin: To good effect.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Also, I think that means you're just laundering the money you just gave it to your wife.
[Ali laughs] So...

Art: Wait, I might have given it- some of it back to Arrell. [laughs]

Austin: Ok.

Ali: Hm. [Janine sighs]

Austin: I'm glad we didn't include that in the opening scene where Hadrian is like, 'Oh, yeah. Thanks for whisking my son away to a strange, magical brainscape. Here's 20 bucks. You dropped this, sort of.'

Art: Here's an orc warchief's tribute. [Ali and Austin laugh] I got a fancy box for it.

Austin: I do want to be clear. Hey, look. Arrell did that favor for you for free, is a thing I want to be clear.

Art: Yeah. Yeah, of course.

Austin: Uh, and then also, Adaire sold poison for 2 weeks straight for like, 100 bucks. So...

Janine: It's not- I don't call it poison when I sell it. It has a- there's labels. It's- it's fine.

Austin: What's it say?

Janine: Everyone's happy with the benefits of-

Austin: Ok. It says Nyquil on it. That's all.

Janine: It's Zzzquil now. So, you don't have to have the...

Austin: Oh, you're right.

Janine: ...full benefits. It just knocks you out. I don't claim the cold benefits anymore. That was- that went bad.

Austin: Gotcha.

Art: Frankly irresponsible.

Austin: Truly. **[Janine laughs]** People have been having trouble sleeping. That's fair. Alright. I think we're good?

I think so.

Austin: Are we good to...

Wait.

Austin: ...Undertake a Per-

Ali: Wasn't- Was Adaire paying? Was that the point of that whole thing?

Austin: For some stuff, but not for everything I don't think.

Ali: Ok.

Janine: Hadrian picked up the arrows. I'll pick up your whatever if you want me to.

Ali: Ok, cause I only had 20 gold.

Janine: I have to culti- I have to cultivate it actively with you. So...

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Uh-huh.

Ali: Let's say I like helped you through some stuff, and you bought me some bread because it- not bread, but rations and bandages.

Janine: Ok.

Austin: Ok. We also discovered not-

Janine: How much- Give me- give me some coins to take off my tally here for that.

Ali: 11.

Janine: Ok.

Art: This bread- I don't- your- this bread isn't better. **[Ali laughs]**

Austin: Yeah, it is. It's 7 uses.

Ali: Yeah.

Art: But it's 10 coin.

Ali: I know.

Art: Three times as many coins as rations for like, 2 more uses.

Austin: What? No, it's not. What are you looking at? It's 3 coins.

Ali: Oh. Is it 3? No, it's 10 coin.

Art: It's 10 coins.

Austin: On the book, it says 3. **[Ali gasps]** I wonder if it's different in two different spots in the book. Hey, Adam and Sage, uh there's a little- there's a mistake here. Wait, also it's three- Oh, you're looking at elven bread. We're talking about dwarven hardtack

Ali: Ok.

Austin: Dwarven hardtack is 3.

Art: Hm.

Janine: Oh.

Ali: I've been talking about bread this entire time cause...

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: ...I really want some fancy bread for Hella. Just so she can have some.

[crosstalking]

Austin: Gotcha. Yeah, the one that's not here-

Janine: Cause it's on brand?

Art: I think hardtack is in the bread family.

Austin: There is one here that you don't- or there is- it is- It is here. You should get a personal feast. It's 10 coin for one use.

Janine: Oh wow.

Dre: Fantasma already pulled that shenanigans, and it didn't work out well.

Austin: He really did.

Ali: Yeah, she's not a jackass, she just likes soft bread. [laughs]

Austin: Who doesn't?

Art: A fun google note because I know people love it when we google things on this show. Hardtack looks gross.

Ali: Oh. Hold on.

Austin: I bet. Let me see. [typing] Hardtack.

Janine: Wait, have you never had hardtack?

Dre: Ugh. No.

Austin: Nah, dog.

Janine: Not at like a pioneer village or whatever?

Austin: How to make- hardtack

Dre: Oh, it's like a- it's like a baked cracker?

Austin: A cracker that lasts for years.

Ali: Oh.

Janine: You're- Ok, the big thing with hardtack that everyone misunderstands is that you're not supposed to just eat it straight.

Austin: Ok.

Janine: It's like a- it's- You're supposed to use it as a- as an addition or an ingredient to other things. That's the ideal use for it. You're not just supposed to chow down on some hardtack.

Austin: Gotcha.

Janine: That's a popular misconception.

Austin: Like, you mix it.

[crosstalk]

Ali: Right. In soup.

Janine: You use it in other- you know- It's a-

Austin: Hardtack comma you mix it.

Janine: It's a mixer.

Austin: You put like, cheese on there? What do you- what do you put in there? What do you do with that hardtack?

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Janine: I don't know. You pour soup over it. Like, I didn't get that far on the wikipedia page. It's just-

Austin: Ew.

Ali: I think you...

Austin: I guess it's not ew. People like-

Ali: ...like, dip it into things.

Austin: Ok.

Janine: There's like- there's like a youtube channel that covers a lot of this. It's like a man in a fun hat, and he talks about old, bad food.

Ali: **Austin**, I was literally about to ask you if Hella could buy a kettle, and that's an insane question. So...

Austin: Because yes, you mean? Why-

Ali: I guess, yeah. What's stopping them?

Austin: Why would you not be able to buy a kettle? You can buy a kettle.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Um, I would definitely say that you can buy a kettle.

Art: Is it heavy?

Austin: Yeah, it's definitely 1 load.

Ali: Oh, I'm like, the strongest person in the world.

Janine: Also, why do you need it? What? Why?

Ali: [laughs] To have like, warm beverages.

Janine: You can- Ok. But you could just- you could use a pot for that.

Ali: Ok.

Janine: Anything that we're heating up water in would work for that.

Art: No. No, look.

Janine: Unless you want to drink right out of the kettle.

Art: Hella, the rough and tumble Ordennan Queen Killer needs a kettle to prepare her warm beverages. [overlapped] Room temperature beverages are not for the Queen Killer.

Janine: The kind that whistles so she gets them in at the right time.

Ali: I just- I didn't think that we were carrying around pots. That's the point of rations that they're just like-

Janine: No, I guess not. But like, I don't know.

Austin: Hey, everyone, we're back again. [Ali and Janine laugh] We had this whole diversion about kettles and whether or not Hella could get a kettle. I'm pretty sure that the book says straight up that you just have anything you need to like, make camp. As just like, a thing. Like, if you needed- There's like, you don't ever need to just have flint and steel to start fire. Like, you just have that stuff. And I think it- I think a kettle or a pot for water is covered by that, so, we're back. Are we good? [Ali and Janine laugh]

Art: Yeah, and stay tuned for 'Hey, we're back. The game's over.' [Austin and Janine laugh]

Austin: Ugh, alright. It's time to Undertake a Perilous Journey. That's a move.

Dre: Oh yeah.

Austin: Because you're- you're headed- I shouldn't even say that. What I should say is, you're headed from Wharfhurst to this mark on the map. This like, red mark that you- That when you've previously gone to one of those marks, it was a tower. Uh, it was the tower of Severeia on Eventide. Um, and now you're headed towards this one. And to get there will take 2 weeks of travel. And that is a Perilous Journey, which means you have to roll. Someone has to roll Undertake- Actually 3 of you have to roll Undertake a Perilous Journey. I'll read.

Ali: I would love to.

Austin: It worked so well for you guys last time, right? **[Ali laughs]** When you travel through hostile territory, choose one member of the party to act as trailblazer, one to scout ahead, and be a- and one to be quartermaster. Each rolls + Wisdom. On a 10+, the quartermaster reduces the number of rations required by one, the trailblazer reduces the amount of time it takes to reach your destination, and the scout will spot any trouble quick enough to let you get the drop on it. On a 7-9, each roll [performs their job as expected. The normal number of rations are consumed, the journey takes about as long as expected, no one gets the drop on you, but you don't get the drop on them either. So, who's doing what?

Art: Um, where- where is everyone's wisdom scores at?

Ali: I've been trying to put stuff in there. Also, I have +1 Perilous Journey, so...

Austin: Oh, nice.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: What are you doing?

Ali: I... Probably scouting cause I have a telescope that gives me that +1.

Austin: Yeah. That makes sense.

Janine: Wait, but doesn't- Throndir just said he auto-succeeded in chat. Does that-?

[crosstalk]

Austin: Yeah, one of those three things.

Art: Three rolls.

Dre: Yeah, for one of them.

Janine: Oh, ok.

Art: So, it's you and me, Adaire.

Austin: So, that's a good point. Which one does- which one does Throndir do though?

Dre: I would- I mean, probably trailblazer? Cause that- That reduces the amount of time it would take us to get there.

Ali: Oh.

Austin: Uh huh.

Dre: I would say probably trailblazer, quartermaster.

Austin: I'm fi- It's up to you. Don't- Y'all have to decide this. Don't look at me.

Dre: Yeah.

Art: Uh, yeah. I think trailblazer is good because that also reduces our rations.

Ali: Right.

Dre: Yeah. Ok. Then I'll do the trailblazer roll.

Ali: Ok, I'll be scout.

Austin: And that leaves Hadrian as the third?

Art: Wait, what about- What's Adaire's wisdom?

Janine: Uh, 13. I get a 1 on wisdom.

Art: Then, it's Adaire. **[Ali laughs]**

Austin: There you go.

Janine: Oh.

Ali: That makes sense.

Janine: I mean, yeah. That adds up.

Art: I'm not only a zero in it, it's- it's always my worst roll. Just- just history-wise.

Austin: Yeah, historically speaking.

Janine: Ok.

Austin: Alright. So then, give me- So, Thrandir, you succeed automatically. Is that the- what's the- Is that what the move says? When ever you do a Perilous Journey roll.

Dre: Let me find it on my sheet.

Austin: You succeed-

Dre: I mean, yeah. I basic- I succeed as if I had a 10+.

Austin: Yep. Uh, nice. Alright, so that is for the one where it takes time, right?

Dre: Uh huh.

Austin: Ok. So, then let's do quartermaster next. Which is food. Who- who is quartermaster?

Art: [whispering] That's- that's Adaire.

Ali: That's Adaire.

Janine: Oh, sorry. I didn't remember-

Austin: Adaire, go ahead... Ok.

Janine: There were three things, and we weren't saying the names of them, so I didn't-

Austin: Uh huh. So, quarter- Yeah. Adaire, go ahead and roll wisdom. Look at that 10. Nice work.

Ali: Ooo.

Dre: Nice.

Austin: And then Hella.

Ali: I'm gonna roll-

Austin: Make sure you add a plus one.

Ali: Well, I'm gonna roll it, and then it's- we're adding- It's 11.

Austin: It's 11. Damn.

Dre: Didn't even need it.

Austin: Look at this crew. This crew! Alright, so...

Dre: We've learned some shit.

Austin: It only takes you 10 days, and also only 9 rations. Why did Art roll a wisdom check? Just to see?

Art: I just wanted to see what would happen. Yeah. [**Ali** and **Janine** laugh]

Austin: Ok.

Ali: You'd get a 7, which is lower than-

Austin: Um, and the scouting doesn't give you anything right away. Actually, I think there's a like- yeah, I just want to kind of paint a picture here cause I don't want to just skip through these woods. The woods here are dense in a way that you don't expect. You've been in the woods, you know, for probably 4 or 5 days when you notice that it feels like they are [sighs] There's almost like, organic pathing through the woods here. As if they grow in such a way to produce a road.

And that's why it takes you less time than it should. Incredibly dense to your left and right. Like, trees shouldn't- I think maybe Throndir's the one who notices this. Like these trees shouldn't be able to um, be alive because they all need more like- They all need more sunlight and water than should be allowed. In fact, none of them had sunlight in a long time, but as you get- as you get closer and closer to that tower, more and more of them actually have leaves on them. And you know, the roots aren't choking each other out. And if you leave that path, it actually gets really dense and hard to move through.

But- so you kind of stick on this- on this pathway which does not match up exactly with the path that the Dark Sun took, but is taking you in the same direction generally. I think this is probably one point at which, while we're moving, we can do a couple of little love letters. Throndir.

Dre: Uh huh.

Austin: Um, one night you find yourself really, really hungry. And the thing is, this is not the first time that this hunger has hit you. The first time was when you were still in Rosemerrow. Just after you were given your gift by Victoria. [sighs] There was a night where you felt a sort of hunger you'd never felt before, not for food or for water, but for life. And I don't even mean that- I don't mean that as like a dark metaphor. I mean that like, you wanted to be around activity. Like, the energy of others who are doing things. You wanted to be near like, people expending energy. Um, and like, being- Maybe not joyful, but like, emotional. Having like, big experiences. Um, do you try to sate this hunger?

Dre: Are you saying now on the road or back in Rosemerrow?

Austin: No. Then. Then cause it'll color this scene.

Dre: Yes.

Austin: Where do you go?

Dre: Um, you said it was just- just to like, be around like a large group of people?

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Um, I know that we- I think, did Lem find that the theater was like, a big front for the...

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: ...for the Dark Sun? But are they still putting on shows and stuff like that?

Austin: Well, to be clear, the theater might not have been a big front, but in their basement was definitely...

Dre: Right.

Austin: ...a weird temple to the Dark Sun.

Dre: Ok. Um, I think Throndir goes to see a show at the theater.

Austin: Rosemerrow, Oh Rosemerrow. It's final- it's closing night. Uh, everyone is very excited because it's been a rough couple of weeks. Um, so when you get there, it is an overwhelming feeling because it's like you've dived in head first and didn't know how deep the pool would be. Um, there's just like, so much life around you and you need it badly. You want to just devour it. Do you try to check this urge? Or do you lean in and let it kind of consume you?

Dre: Um, I- I try to check it.

Austin: Ok, how? Like, what's that emotionally or physically look like? Because this is like a thing that you don't really understand necessarily either.

Dre: Yeah. Um, I almost think it's like- like the- like the smart thing to do would be to leave.

Austin: Uh huh.

Dre: But I don't. I don't do that. Cause that's- that's not- That's not what-

Austin: Cause that's the smart thing to do.

Dre: Well, yeah, and it's also like I can imagine like, he's like, 'Oh, I've got this- I don't know. I just want to hang out with people. It'll be fine.'

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: Like, 'I just need to be around people', and then it's like, I don't want to say panic attack, but it is this feeling of 'oh, shit. No. This is- this not-'

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: 'This is not good.' Um, and so I think it's- it's like, sitting in the seat and like, gripping the sides of the seat really hard and like, sweating and...

Austin: Yeah.

Dre: ...like Kodiak kind of just like, puts his head like, under one of Thrandir's hands and is just like, 'What's? Are you ok?' Like-

Austin: Uh huh.

Dre: 'I'm here like- just like- just... just be steady with me.'

Austin: That's good. Um, one, I want to be clear to people who are gonna say this on Twitter, Westshore-upon-Scene allows dogs. Dog-friendly theater. It's the best thing about that place.

Dre: It's a very well-behaved dog.

Austin: Exactly. Two, yeah. Give me a- give me a, basically a Defy Danger. You have something with like, when you do a thing with your animal, right?

Dre: Yes.

Austin: Um, what's that thing?

Dre: Well, it kind of depends on what- what I need to roll for this Defy Danger.

Austin: Gotcha.

Dre: Um, and there's really not- I mean, there's not like a Defy Danger thing under animal companion, but...

Austin: Well I would say, this is someone- this is like, someone interfering with you, is the closest thing here.

Dre: Right.

Austin: Um, so I would say, add its instinct to you roll.

Dre: Yeah. That makes sense.

Austin: And it's based on what you said, this sounds like you're just constitutioning.

Dre: Ok.

Austin: You're just like, 'I'm gonna grin and bear it.' Like, you're not just trying to think of something else, you're not trying to like, figure anything out. You're just trying to like, grin and bear it. So, give me a Defy Danger constitution and add Kodiak's instinct.

Dre: 12.

Austin: Hey, that's a 12. Alright. Um, so the thing that ends up happening is, like you can feel yourself lashing out and like, trying to grab at people. And what you kind of do is learn to diffuse that feeling. Or that kind of um, that reaching out so that you do take from everyone at the theater, but you take from everyone at the theater, and so no one quite- When it comes time to- to applaud at the end, everyone slaps, but it's just not as loud as people thought it would be, right? Like, they do the standing ovation, but it takes a little while for a lot of people- around you- to get out of their chairs.

Dre: Uh huh.

Austin: Um, and you take a +1 forward on the next roll.

Dre: Ok.

Austin: You can't help, but feel like, if you had just let it go all the way, you would be getting a much bigger bonus. If you had gorged yourself on it, you know, ilt- it would have gone- you wouldn't just be getting a +1 forward, you'd be getting a +1 ongoing.

Dre: Ok.

Austin: Uh, not that that's a- that's not a thing you can do at choice, you know?

Dre: Right.

Austin: This is just a thing that happens sometimes, it seems. And as you lay in bed- or on your- in your you know, bedroll or whatever while camping one night, it happens again. And you feel this coming. But I'm gonna say, based on that previous roll, you're able to keep it in check, and you know, maybe somebody has some- a restless night that night. But no one gets hurt. One of those people having a restless night is Hella Varal. I think maybe this is why this thing happens, which is that I picture you tossing and turning, Hella.

And your love letter is not about a thing that happened back in Rosemerrow, it's what's happening right now. The words that you're mumbling, and whoever is up late watching as watch that night probably just hears noise coming from Hella's tent. And you're just saying, 'Sister' over and over again. Um, and then you're woken to the sound of your blade saying it. 'Sister. Sister. Sister.' And it's a chorus again for the first time since you had it in Nacre. And it's getting louder, and it wakes you up.

Ali: [laughs] That's too bad. Um... I- [sighs] I guess I should consult my signature weapon?

Austin: What's that look like? Tell me what you do. So, it's like- it's singing to you.

Ali: Right.

Austin: Um, it's like, trying to find a rhythm, but it can't quite. And it's humming. Like, there is a hum to it.

Ali: Um.

Austin: This is like the- It's like- Again, it's always night time now, but it's the middle of whenever your sleep is. This is not- You don't want to be fucking dealing with this, but here we are.

Ali: [laughing] I mean, I think it's similar to the first time where she was like, sort of panicking and like, trying to get it to- to quiet down.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: But it's also like- When I think about Hella doing this thing, it's like- you know how the like, touch on iphones?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Where like, you- you're touching it and then like, you push a little bit, and it like, responds more?

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Um, it's like doing that, but like in a part of her brain, where it's just like, 'If I just kind of focus a little bit more on this one thing, I can kind of like-'

Austin: It'll click into place.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Gotcha. Alright, so that is- sounds like you're consulting with spirits that reside in your signature weapon.

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: Give me a charisma roll.

Ali: Sure. That's an 8.

Austin: That ain't bad. Well, plus- plus one forwa- Oh, no. That wasn't you. You didn't get a plus one forward. That was Throndir. What am I doing? **[Ali laughs]** That's fine. On a 7-9, I will give you an impression.

[0:45:00]

Um, [sighs] so, things have been communicated to you in a few ways by this blade, right? You've seen- you've heard them sing about Tristero. You've seen in the flash of its- of its- the kind of like, the after image of its blade a vision of a strange green world. Um, I think this time, it comes to you in like, almost a feeling in your muscles. There are these flashes of- of feeling that you- you feel like you're holding- like you're someone else holding a blade. Not this blade. Like, it is not just like, this blade was held here before. Um, maybe it was actually. Now that I'm actually- I'm thinking about how it got there. You are-

Alright, so here are the flashes. Here are the brief impressions that you get here. Um... you feel it sh- being pulled from a sheath, and it takes you a second, but your knees kind of go weak and are shaky because it feels like you're on a boat crossing the shore- er crossing the sea away from a shore. And from behind you hear the word 'sister' again, and you can see the shadow of towers out on the- on the sea as you go westward, towards a land mass. And then, there's another feeling which is of you thrusting the blade into someone's stomach.

Um, and you're moving- your body isn't doing this motion, right? Like, you're not just like doing a kata, but like, you can feel that this memory of the sword being swung around, and it's moving- you're moving almost in, not synchronization, but with awareness of 4 or 3 other bodies that you're working alongside. You know, it's a lot of like, someone ducks, and you swing the blade over their head to hit the person behind them or whatever, right?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Like, Batman 1960 style, dope fight choreography slash anime fight choreography. Uh, then there is the feeling of the blade being knocked from your hand. And at that point, you really do drop it. Um, and then you feel like, a deep pain in your abdomen. And then it passes, and you feel the shadow of those distant towers on your flesh. Like, you feel a coldness- the coldness that comes from the sun being blocked to your east. Not to your east. But to the east of whatever that experience was that you're feeling. Does Hella know what any of this means? Not you. Not **Ali**. Does Hella? And that answer could be yes, even if your answer is no.

Ali: [laughing] That seems difficult to do.

Austin: Ah.

Ali: Um, I- [sighs] I think it feels weird for her. I- I think it-

Austin: Fair.

Ali: Um, I- [sighs] So, back when we first visited Nacre, I described it as feeling really alien to her because it felt familiar.

Austin: Uh huh. Uh huh.

Ali: Cause it was another seaside town. And I think this is that sort of same feeling?

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And that, in itself, is very distressing.

Austin: Totally. Alright. Well, we'll come back to that. As always, I can't wait for you to get a 10 on one of these rolls.

Ali: [laughing] Fuck you.

Austin: No, it's fine. It's fine. Who is the scout?

Ali: Me.

Austin: Ok. Um, so I think you- you get to the place- I'm gonna drag the map back over. You get to the mark, and you see a two-story, maybe one-story- like a tall one-story um, structure that is made of stone and wood, kind of intermingled. Like, you can see the beams that hold the tower together. Like, the kind of structural um, base of it that then is built with- built up with stone around it. And there on the- the top above two wooden doors, there is a- what's the word I'm looking for? Like a- a symbol that has been marked in the stone there that's been carved in-

There's an engraved stone basically. A humanoid figure that has very like, tree-like limb, in that the limbs are knotted and twisted a little bit and have like, the sort of like, hard like, [sighs] like their knees look like tree knots. Um, and then at their fingers and at their toes- their appendages turn into blooming flowers. Um, and at the head- the head turns into a tree. Like the branches of a tree where its hair would be. And that is at the top of this tower. Now, Hella, you feel like someone is watching you in this moment, but you can't quite put together where they are. Um, but no one will get the drop on you here. Or going- or like, in the near future certainly.

Ali: Ok.

Austin: You- that, that- There's a moment of just like, 'Hm.. someone's watching us do this thing.' Uh, so what do you do?

Ali: Was this just me? Or like, as a party?

Austin: It's as a party.

Ali: Ok.

Austin: You're at this- you're at this thing that's like, a single floor high, and I think you were expecting a tower?

Ali: Yeah. I think- I mean, I'm definitely more cautious because of the like, presence. Um...

Austin: Hm. Yeah. Fair.

Ali: And I don't know if that means I go first or if I go last. So, I can like, kind of keep a scope on the situation.

Austin: Uh huh. The wind is howling out here. And there's this weird door, and also like, this has been a place- Hella, you were supposed to come here with Fero and Lem.

Ali: Right.

Austin: Months ago.

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: Months ago. And now you're here, and it's a little stone building. **[Ali sighs]** Um, there's a clearing. Like- and it does feel like you've arrived from a road almost.

Ali: It- **[sighs]** It feel like momentous to approach this thing, but obviously like, this is what we're here for. Like...

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Um, so yeah. Do we just go inside or like?

Austin: I'm asking you what you do.

Ali: **[laughs]** Yeah, I know. I like- That's what we're- I- Like, I don't know why anyone else isn't saying anything.

[crosstalking begins]

Janine: Ok. Ok.

Ali: But yes. I go forward. I go inside.

Dre: You want me to open this door, I'll just open this door.

Janine: I mean-

Ali: Like, yeah. That's- **[laughs]** I said I was approaching this thing.

Janine: I wasn't doing anything here cause like, this kind of- Adaire is like, here for the roads part of this. She's not- This isn't so much her like [laughs] She's here for the journey, less the destinations.

Austin: Are you updating- Are you like- Are you mapping this place? Like, have you mapped the route here?

Janine: Adaire maps everywhere that she goes.

Austin: Ok.

Janine: Just as a matter of like, 'Well, I'm here.'

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: I may as well take this information down and make use of it later.'

Austin: How do you mark this place down on your map?

Janine: Um, probably one of those things where in the moment, cause she doesn't want to just, like, stand in the middle of the road drawing or whatever...

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: ...she does- she has probably like a code of like certain symbols that she uses are descriptors and she knows those symbols.

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: So that when she's going back later and filling something in, she can sort of look at the symbols and be like, 'Ok, so this- you know, it was around this size, and it was you know, this thing was facing this direction and was positioned thusly and...'

Austin: Yeah. The-

Janine: Kind of like a script situation.

Austin: The symbols you write are wrong. You-

Janine: Oh.

Austin: The thing that you write down- Like, you write, 'Ok, it's like a floor big, and it's- the door is on the eastern side. And it's made of stone and wood.' And then like, you- Like, you finish writing it and look over what you wrote, and it's like, you've written the number that means like, infinity, basically. Right? You've written like, 'Oh, it's the tallest thing that's ever been.' You know? Um, you write the number that basically means, like ' Oh, at this point, it doesn't matter

how tall it is. That's how big it is.' Uh, and then you write that the door is on the bottom, and that the- the- that it is constructed out of, and then the word you write is Hieron. Or the symbol that you make is like, the world symbol.

Janine: Hmm.

Austin: Are you opening the door? Or like, you started to approach it, but I wasn't...

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: ...clear if you were opening it.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: So, Hella moves this- slides this door. It has not- It hmm... It's hard to tell when it was last moved. Um, it- it isn't too hard of a thing to move. And inside, it a huge entryway with polished wooden floors, and um, two stairwells that twist downward to a flight below you that have green and gold carpeting on them. And to your right is a little door that's- or something. It's like a [sighs] um... Like a stone like, sub-wall that's slid to the bottom of the ground that blocks off this little um, almost like a closet or like a pantry or something from the main thing. Hella and Hadrian, you both recognize that immediately as being the same sort of door that was on the tower of Seveara. Like, it's striking. And also that this is a weird inversion of that first tower, in terms of like, the stairwells going up instead of down. There. Down here.

Art: What can we notice about- about this place? Perhaps in, like, a...

Austin: Like a looking around? What are you doing?

Art: Um, he's- he's looking for markings. He's looking for anything that he understands. He's looking for like, context of this place in- in relation to the other place because you know, Hadrian's not an architect. Hadrian's not a scholar. But- but Hadrian's been not here before, but...

Austin: Uh huh. But?

Art: You know, I bet Hadrian dreams about that tower.

Austin: Yeah. Give me a roll. Give me a- give me a Discern Realities.

Art: It's wisdom, right?

Austin: It is. Your favorite.

Art: I mean, I nailed that hypothetical uh-

Austin: Previous, fake wisdom roll. Yeah, you did. Hey, look at that. That's an 11. You get some wisdom rolls. When you closely study a situation or person. On a 10+, ask the gm 3 questions from the list below.

Art: Uh, what should I be on the lookout for?

Austin: Um, you.... Think about how you notice this. Um, the- So, you've stepped in and the door has closed. Um, behind you. But there is a draft in here. And that suggests a second entrance- You don't see an entrance. You don't see- the draft is coming up from below. And it's definitely like, it's fresh air. It's not like, the stayed air of an enclosed building. So, there is another way into this building.

Art: Cool. Um, what here is not what it appears to be?

Austin: Um, hm. The- So, do you remember how there was the uh, the book that was on the pedestal on the top floor of the first tower?

Art: How could I forget?

Austin: How could you forget? Uh, the thing that is supposed to be in place here is not. Um, but it's neither just on the floor nearby. There- Whatever this- this place was supposed to hold in place, whatever this tower- or whatever the thing was that was supposed to be here is not here. And the sense that you get from that is just like, the- I think here's the way that you see that is the- you know how outside, I mentioned that the trees were like, blooming.

Here, you can see vines that head down towards the- like down the sides of the stairwell. Like, they're, like wrapped around the banisters, and while they are living up here, the closer they get below the more and more dead they become. Until finally they are completely withered and dry. Um, and still wrapped around the banister because they were alive once.

Art: Uh... ok. Can I- can I poll the group for a second?

Austin: Sure. Always.

Art: Uh, what do you guys think about my third question here?

Austin: What were your options again?

Art: Uh, the ones I was considering were, what is useful or valuable to me? And who's really in control here? But if someone wants to make like a really passionate stand for one of the other two, I'll of course hear it.

Dre: I would say the first one. The useful or valuable.

Janine: I lean, who is really in control.

Ali: I mean, that could easily be us.

[crosstalking]

Janine: Oh, yeah.

Art: Yeah, it could just be us, since you guys are alone here.

Ali: But I guess I'm just basing off of-

Janine: I feel like I've never gotten a good answer to who is really in control here whenever I ask it.

Ali: Yeah. Um...

Art: But you voted for it anyway. I'm just recapping.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah, go with your heart. I don't know.

Art: Alright, what here is useful or valuable to me?

Austin: Um, there are torches here, which are- which are communicating light, but are not only communicating light, are providing warmth. Um, maybe even more warmth than they should be producing. It was getting cold out there. And here, it is- it is comfortable. And if you're going below, you should probably bring a couple of torches.

Art: Alright. Let's grab some torches.

Ali: Ok.

Art: And not know who is in control here.

Austin: They're each light- er one load. Um, they're heavier than they should be. They're like, they look like they're made of wood and feel like they're made of metal.

Art: Well, we all just ate a load-worth of rations on our way here.

Austin: Are you- Definitely. You should all fine. Um, cool.

Ali: Um, I...

Austin: Hell-

Ali: ...am having a hard time justifying seeing a...

[1:00:00]

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: ...a problem that I was not being able to solve before and not trying it again.

Austin: Oh. yeah. You gonna try to lift this stone again?

Ali: Yeah, especially as Hella who is like, all about weirdly fixing her mistakes and being upset about them....

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: ... for the last time.

Austin: Alright. So- so what do you do?

Ali: Um, I- [sighs] I- Cause that's the most familiar thing to her here, too. And so I think she kind of...

Austin: Oh yeah.

Ali: ...hones in on it and like, is, like still bitter about that last time. [laughs]

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Kind of like, puts her hand on it to like, test the like, stuff that it's made out of. And then goes down on...

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: ...not like- she kneels down and tries to...

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: ...to lift it.

Janine: It's the redemption episode in the sports anime.

Ali: Yes.

Austin: Right.

Ali: Yeah. [Art laughs]

Austin: Give me that- give me that strength roll cause you are trying to use pure strength to destroy an inanimate obstacle.

Ali: Uh huh. And it's a 12!

Austin: That's a 12.

Ali: I could break it if it was a person.

Austin: You can choose 3. You could break it if it was a person. [**Janine** and **Art** laugh] Uh, so you choose 3. It doesn't take a very long time, nothing of valuable is damaged, it doesn't make an inordinate amount of noise, or you can fix the thing again with a lot of effort- or without a- without a lot of effort.

Ali: Ok. But I'm just lifting it, so it doesn't really...

Austin: No, this breaks it. You're- It's- You're breaking this door.

Ali: Ok. Uh, well...

Austin: Unless you do that one that says you can fix it without a lot of effort.

Ali: Ok, fair enough.

Austin: Like, the way to open this door is- There is a way to open this door without breaking it. [**Ali** laughs] That's not in this room. At least that was true for the first one. So, what you're doing is like, 'Nah, I got it. Hold my beer.' [**Dre**, **Janine**, and **Ali** laugh]

Ali: Um, I would say that it doesn't make a lot of noise.

Austin: Ok.

Ali: Uh, it doesn't take a very long time, which seems obvious.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Why did you just do that? [laughs]

Austin: I may have just added 'Hold My Beer' as the move name. [**Dre** and **Janine** laughs] in Hella's- in Hella's thing.

Ali: The last two are nothing of value is damaged or I can fix it again?

Austin: You can fix the door again if- if it's- you can fix the thing again without a lot of effort.

Ali: Right.

Austin: Nothing of value is damaged is nothing of value is damaged. If you don't pick that, I can damage something of value.

Ali: Eww. [laughs] I don't like you. Um... fuck it. Nothing of value is damaged.

Austin: Ok.

Ali: That's such a wider scale of this door that I've decided to break. So, who cares if I can fix it.

Austin: Yeah. So, I think you- You slam this door up into, like you can hear gears as you lift it above you like, clicking into place. And then you hit the top one and it like, snaps. Like, you can hear the door like- You can hear one of the- one of the gears above just completely break in place. And the door does the thing where like- You know how blinds sometimes, you fuck up while you're pulling them, and only one side goes up?

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: And the other side falls? The left side of this door just goes like, [foley] 'Buhrrrrr-slll' just slinks down, and now like, you can get into this room. Uh, and in fact, what it does is it covers- Like, you look in and you see eyes looking back at you. And then the door slides past them, and now all you see is the armored legs of- of a pala-din.

Ali: Oh.

Austin: And not just one. There are probably about a dozen in here. And they are marked with 2 symbols. First, they are marked with a book with a goblet in front of it. And that is on it's- on all of their like- They kind of have a shoulder sash, and that's marked there. Um, on like their left shoulder. And as you investigate, on their back is a duplicate of that- that tree man that was on the front of the building. And that's just etched into them.

Ali: Boy howdy. Um...

Austin: Uh huh. Um, they are made of a metal that's probably iron or steel. Like, you're not really sure right off the- right off the bat. Um, and this room is not lit by itself. It is dark in here.

Ali: Ok. Um, now... [laughs]

Art: Luckily we have our suspicious torches.

Ali: Um, yeah.

Austin: True. Yeah, you can have light in here.

Ali: I was gonna ask if I- No, I shouldn't do that. I was gonna see if I can try to activate them, but I don't think- [laughs] that's a great idea. Um... So, I'm not gonna do that. I think-

Janine: And also, these ones aren't Ordennan.

Ali: I- Well, that's the test, right? I think I like, call over Hadrian, and I'm like,

Ali (as Hella): Check this shit out.

Austin: Good. [Dre laughs]

Ali: And I'm like,

Ali (as Hella): Let's probably, you know... let's mosey though.

Art (as Hadrian): Yeah, I don't think- I don't think we should mess with this.

Ali (as Hella): Yeah, let's just... Ok. Now we know.

Art (as Hadrian): This feels very comfortably above our...

Austin: Um, yeah. It's worth saying-

Art: I'm trying not to have.

Austin: Hadrian, you're the only one in this group who's ever seen- Or no. Throndir was there, too. Hadrian and Throndir both recognize these as being of a similar make of the ones that were at Samot's fallen tower in- in the Mark of the Erasure.

Art: Yeah. Um, I don't want to try to do my thing where I- I can kind of make them move though because what happens if it- what happens if it works?

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Exactly. That's why I've put- Like, she goes for it in her pocket, and then she's like, 'No. Ok, let's...'

Austin: Let's not.

Ali: 'It's time to go.'

Austin: Fair.

Ali: 'Maybe on the way out.'

Art: Yeah, let's just- let's just leave this door open.

Austin: Uh huh.

Art: Where anyone can come and get these...

DRE; Uhh...

Art: ...because that's never gone poorly for us before.

Austin: You could spend time to try to repair the door.

Art: I would- I would honestly... really love that. [**Ali, Dre** and **Austin** laugh]

Austin: Yeah? Who- who knows how to-

Art: Yeah, these are- these are like- These are basically like, bombs.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: I actually do- Ok.

Austin: What's up?

Janine: I mean-

Austin: What were you-?

Dre: I mean-

Janine: I do like, trap stuff and like, gadgety, locky, you know...

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: I got moves for that. I don't know that we need to necessarily use those, but it's on the table.

Art: We could just start by closing the door and maybe on our way out, think of how we want to rig it.

Austin: Uh, the door is broken. You can't close it. It's stuck like this. Hella didn't take that.

Art: I thought it just couldn't be repaired easily.

Austin: Right, so you could take time. You could take a day to repair this door.

Art: Oh.

Dre: Ugh.

Ali (as Hella): Eh, let's go downstairs. It's fine. How long have they been sitting here, honestly? Think about that.

Art (as Hadrian): Yeah, we're probably not being followed directly by the Ordennan war machine this time.

Ali (as Hella): Yeah. Also-

Austin: This is Hella knowing that she's being followed. [**Ali** laughs]

Ali: Yeah, but if it's the Ordennan war machine that's following us, then we can- then we're fine.

Dre: Are we?

Art: Yeah.

Dre: Are all of us fine?

Austin: Uh, as-

Art: Is this fine?

Austin: As Ordenna- as someone says um, 'You're not being followed by the Ordennan war machine this time', Adaire you remember- the word not being followed uh, strikes a chord with you because you remember a letter that you got back in Rosemerrow before you left that ended, 'Make sure you're not being followed.' It was a letter from a friend of yours. It says, 'I got out, but those guys I got into hot water with found me. I have to leave town, and I heard your scadattling, too. I need to see you so I can pay you back. I don't like leaving debts behind. Meet me by the pale wall. B'

The writing has features that make it clear that this was written quickly, but not so quickly that like, the 't's couldn't be crossed real- with like a great, little flair. Like, there's like a little twist to the 't' cross. Um, so you're pretty sure this is Blake. And it takes some deciphering, but you realize that one of the outer walls of Rosemerrow is paler than the others because when the sun used to rise, it would hit that point more directly than any other. Um, and you find them there. On two nights before you leave. And they are- they have like, a bag over their back- or like, a bindle basically. Um, and a six-pack basically. A couple of, a couple of bottles of- of alcohol and uh, a torch.

Austin (as Blake): Hey!

Janine (as Adaire): Hey. I'm- I was about to say I was surprised you got out, but I guess I'm not.

Austin (as Blake): I'm a pro. I'm a pro and also, they- I'm not gonna- I can't say for sure, but I'm pretty sure- I'm pretty sure that the Dark Sun got into the cops. Just one or two,

but I just didn't feel safe there anymore. I wasn't gonna wait for them to process me and do a couple a years of time or whatever. I'm gonna get the fuck out of here.

Janine (as **Adaire**): Yeah. That's fair.

Austin (as **Blake**): Anyway, I uh- I just wanted to pay you back. I'm really happy that you- you helped me out. You know, who much do you want?

Janine (as **Adaire**): Uh, I mean- do you have time for a beer?

Austin (as **Blake**): Um, not [sighs] really.

Janine (as **Adaire**): Oh really?

Austin (as **Blake**): I mean-

Janine (as **Adaire**): Then next time. We'll get one next time.

Austin (as **Blake**): Yeah. I mean, this was just like, I- just business, right?

Janine (as **Adaire**): Business takes a lot of forms.

Austin (as **Blake**): Yeah, that's- [sighs] That's really swell. Um,

Janine (as **Adaire**): I didn't do this cause I thought you were gonna pay me. That's not- That's not the interest that I'm looking after.

Austin (as **Blake**): You?

Janine (as **Adaire**): I- it's often the interest I'm looking- In this specific case, it wasn't the interest I was looking after.

Austin (as **Blake**): Oh... I didn't- Hmm... Oh.

Janine (as **Adaire**): No, I- No, I mean- I mean like-

Austin: They like, scratch the back of their head. [**Janine** laughs]

Janine (as **Adaire**): No, just like, in general, like- Uh, you know, I- I... You- When people- You've, you know, we've always worked well together, and that's just a relationship I didn't want to see come to an end. The working together well. Working well together.

Austin (as **Blake**): Ok. Yeah, I can live with that. I just [sighs] I've taken a lot of chances with people, and people like us, and uh, let's just say I have some scars in my back. Literal.

Janine (as **Adaire**): Yeah, no. People like us suck.

Austin (as **Blake**): Yeah. So, I'm just gonna keep my distance for now.

Janine (as **Adaire**): Yeah, no. That's- I- I get it.

Austin: And they uh, they take the bottle of beer from their belt and hand it to you. And say like,

Austin (as **Blake**): Have a beer.

Janine (as **Adaire**): Thank you.

Austin: Um, and picks up the rest of their stuff and says like,

Austin (as **Blake**): One day, we both gotta get out of this business.

Janine (as **Adaire**): I keep tryin'. Just doesn't really stick.

Austin (as **Blake**): Yeah. It's uh... It's hard to do anything else. I've tried. Anyway, good luck out there.

Janine (as **Adaire**): You, too.

Austin: They give you a little wink, and it feels- You've given that wink to people before.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: And they walk away. Alright. So, you're in this big room. You've opened the door. You've revealed that there are pala-din. You have decided to leave them behind for now. And-

Art: Are we just- to be clear, we can't take them with us, right? They're- they're just unbelievably heavy?

Austin: They're very heavy. Yeah.

Art: Yeah. [**Dre** laughs]

Austin: You could probably take one with you, if all of you lifted.

Ali: Uh, if we were- Ok. If we're gonna take one with us...

Dre: [laughing] We're just gonna throw it down the stairs?

Ali: ...then we're doing the like, test that we decided not to do.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Which is the like, controlling them.

Austin: Yeah, I- You're- I- You talk amongst yourselves. I'm not saying you should.

Janine: I'm on team 'leave them the fuck alone'.

Ali: I would love to go downstairs. I would love to go downstairs.

Austin: Let's get off this boat. [Ali laughs]

Dre: Yeah. [laughs]

Austin: So, you start to walk downstairs, Hella. Um, and-

Ali: I have a torch.

Austin: Yeah, everyone has a torch. I- I'm not gonna fuck you over on this. And the- [sighs] the thing that happens with the light as you begin to walk down the stairs is that at first, it like- It feels like you're in, like, a little corridor that you're walking down, right? Um, and the light is bright and effective at communicating that you're in this little stairway downwards.

And then it feels as if the light can't- can't light up the space you're in because it opens up. And then the torches seem to almost expand their- the aura of light that they're giving off to reveal that the stairwell that you're walking on turns into a bridge in a big, grey, dark like, world. You've gone down a flight of stairs, and now, when you look around, you see what the other party saw when they went below the dark- the uh...

Janine: Museum?

Austin: ...Westshore-upon- er not the Westshore-upon-Scene, the New Old Museum. Um, which was like, a version of the surrounding area cast in grey-scale. And- and also seeing it from high above. It's like you're looking down at the forest you were just walking in. Um, it's below you now. And it's dark here. But the light that you brought is providing enough to walk on. And you're on a long bridge heading- heading a direction that's kind of hard to judge at this point cause there's not- I guess, you could put it together that it's heading east. What do you do?

Ali: What? [sighs] As far as my like, presence sensing-

Austin: No one is near you.

Ali: Ok.

Austin: Right now. Well... yeah, I mean. Wha- Ev- This is a fucking weird thing. You're standing on a bridge hanging in the air above a continent...

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: ...that looks similar to the one you were just at. The one difference is to the north, you can see that the- like, you can- you're not that far from Rosemerrow. And you can see that the trees continue north into Rosemerrow where previously there was just the long sand. That like- that like, desert-beach um that had been deforested is still down here, does have- does have trees.

[1:15:00]

Ali: Oh boy howdy. Ok. Um...

Art: How far can we see?

Austin: Uh, let's- it's as if you're standing on the top of a tower in this world. So, fairly far, right? Like, you can see the...

Dre: Hmm.

Austin: ...um, I- [sighs] You can see where Velas is. You can't make out detail, right? But you can see- maybe a few buildings that you can definitely see the tower of the Last University. You can definitely see the mountains to the northeast.

Art: This is weird.

Austin: I think maybe far to the southeast, you can even see the light of a volcano.

Art: But behind us, there's still just like, stairs?

Austin: Stairs. Yeah.

Art: Do any other buildings have- have stairs?

Austin: No. There's just this long walkway that goes east. And the- your torches don't provide enough light to keep looking in that direction. You can only look at- the only way that you can see things like Velas and the Last University and the volcano is that they have their own light.

Art: Sure.

Austin: There's no movement. And the air here is- feels like fresh air. It doesn't- Again, it doesn't feel like a strange like- this is- You're breathing a nice day's air, you know. A crisp evening.

Dre: I mean, there's nowhere to go, but across this bridge, right?

Austin: Yeah. As far as you can tell anyway. I mean, unless you're- yeah. As far as you can tell right now. Yes.

Ali: I- This is a weird thing, but can I like, just try to drop something over the bridge to see if it's like...

Austin: Totally.

Ali: ...a vision or if it's like...

Austin: What are you dropping?

Ali: ...like for real though. Um, is there like, a rock that I can just kick? Or like, do I have to-?

Austin: Not on this bridge. No. This bridge- so, this bridge is made of um.... Hmm. This- this bridge is- I'm trying to think if any of you would recognize- Ok, uh, it's built- The person who recognize- I guess, Thrandir and Hadrian both recognize, it takes you a second to place it, but it's the same material that the tower at the Mark of the Erasure was built out of. It has that same- that same construction style. Um, it is, like a kind of like, sandstone that's been very carefully polished.

And it's hard to see the color here because the light- light of these torches is good for lighting up a place, but it's not necessarily great for retaining like, the color of something. Um, but that's the- that's what it feels like here. But it is polished and smooth, and there are no guard rails. And it's not that- like, it's wide enough for 4 people to walk shoulder to shoulder and feel like, vaguely comfortable, but it's probably safer to be staggered a little bit.

Ali: There's no guard rails... [laughs]

Austin: No.

Ali: Wahhh. Um, yeah. I don't know. Like, she has to have something inconsequential in her pockets. Or-

Austin: Probably, right?

Ali: Just like a-

Janine: She could just spit.

Ali: No, that's- Hmm, that's gross. [Dre laughs] Um...

Janine: What? [Ali, Dre, and Austin laugh]

[Dre makes a spitting noise]

Austin: Yeah, she has some- some-

Janine: Are you telling me the Queen Killer is precious about spitting? [**Ali** and **Austin** laugh]

Art: I have something if you need something.

Austin: What do you have?

Art: Oh, this is- Um, I take- I take the ring off the chain. I put the ring on my finger. And I drop the chain. [**Ali** gasps]

Janine: Hmm.

Austin: [sighs] It falls for twenty feet, thirty feet. Um, you can see it- it like, it flashes in the light of the torch. And then it catches something, and it's as if the air is- It's as if a curtain is being ripped. Um, and suddenly it's not falling through the air, it's sliding down the side of a building. Um, and the- the like, reality tears and now in place of the empty air is another set of buildings. It's as if you like, literally took like, the corner- like the top right corner of a curtain and like, ripped it slowly down to the left. To reveal like, a set of- of tall buildings.

[Jack de Quidt's "[Inside](#)" begins playing in the background]

And they are built out of a- I guess, Hadrian did see the City of First Light. Um, and they have that style of construction. The Marielda style. The kind of like, mid-town Marielda style with, like, the touches of obsidian and the canopies that go between them. And then that's there now. Um, and then, at that point, there's just like this weird divide between one set of world where there is like- when you look to your left, you see the forests that go up into Rosemerrow. And when you look to your right, there's a version of the world that is- that looks like Marielda. Or at least that style of construction. Uh, as a city to the south.

[Music plays out to end]