

Winter in Hieron 08: The Meeting House

Transcribed by Susie and @robotchangeling

NICK: (as Fantasma): Previously on Friends at the Table...

AUSTIN: You were all trying to break into the New Old Museum of Rosemerrow, where you each kind of had something you were trying to recover.

AUSTIN (as Isaac Addleton): Fantasma, just let me go. Please, Professor, I— This was all a big mistake, I'm just trying to do good things.

[music begins: "Inside" by Jack de Quidt]

NICK: (as Fantasma): Fooling a bunch of innocent people with magic doesn't seem very good to me.

AUSTIN (as Isaac): I need to do it for... I have to show you. After this is all done, just...let me—

NICK: (as Fantasma): This is not what magic is for. It's not for lies. It's for the truth.

AUSTIN (as Isaac): But I'm workin' on a bigger truth.

AUSTIN: Oh, and there's another figure in this room that's magical. And it's a little halfling person who, like, shakes their head and is just like,

AUSTIN (as Blake Bromley): The way I hear it, there's a bunch of, y'know, old stuff. And people like old stuff. Especially with that guy in office.

AUSTIN: They go,

AUSTIN (as Blake): My understanding is, there's a way out of this vault and into a bigger vault. And if we can get there, that's where I'm pretty sure the real stuff is.

Keith (as Fero): Wait, there's a— There's a secret vault in the vault?

AUSTIN (as Blake): It's a double vault situation.

Keith (as Fero): It's a double vault situation. Nice.

AUSTIN: There are lots of gnomes and halfling arrangements for years and years and years, and, over the course of your study, it becomes pretty clear that the halflings slowly took advantage of

the gnolls, and bit by bit—this is like, the story that you’re able to piece together from this long contract—they priced out the gnolls and drove them away. And there is some reference to an event or an incident, hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of years ago, about— that is about the outlawing. It says, “There will be no wolfskin in Rosemerrow.” And you learn this while going over it with Mother Glory. Like, you’re in the...

KEITH: [crosstalk] Right, yeah, no. We’re still sitting there, we’re together with the...

AUSTIN: You’re getting high and looking at the Constitution together.

KEITH: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Fucking hell. [Nick laughs]

[music ends]

AUSTIN: So what’s everybody else doing? Just waiting? With your downtime?

NICK: I’m, uh— After I prepare my spells, I’m gonna look for my book.

AUSTIN: Oh. So, where are you— are you just looking for it down here?

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So the last thing that you knew was that Isaac had it. You didn’t— it’s not here. You were looking for Isaac, who you knew would be here, and he has it.

NICK: Ohh. Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

NICK: I thought—

AUSTIN (as Isaac): I don’t have it on me. You know, it’s back at the place. It’s not... I don’t *have it* have it.

NICK: (as Fantasma): What did you do with it f—

NICK: How long ago was it?

AUSTIN: Thirty years?

NICK: Thirty years?

AUSTIN: Twenty years? Like, it's been decades since you've seen it. How long ago did you leave the ruins of the University?

NICK: Oh. It's... I think I said... I'm pretty sure I said fifty years?

AUSTIN: Yeah, so like it's been— it was after that that he last— that you last saw him or whatever.

NICK: Mm-hmm.

AUSTIN: But, you know, it's not a new— It has been a while.

AUSTIN (as Isaac): It's in a bookshelf somewhere in my house. I, you know...

NICK: (as Fantasma): The late fees must be pretty steep on that.

ISAAC: Is that a joke? Is that— Is he joking?

KEITH (as Fero): We never know. [Nick laughs]

ISAAC: Okay. But wh— [stutters, sighs] I'm telling you, I'll give it to you once [hushed] we get out of here and we can talk quietly about, you know, all the Disciple business.

FANTASMO: Fine.

AUSTIN: He gives you a little, like, nod.

KEITH: Isaac is the world's most exasperated person. [Austin laughs quietly]

JACK: Is it worth my while looking for the dictionary here? Or...

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. You can find it. Like, it's— that is also a set of books that are in here. Those confirm the story that I just told to [JACK: okay] Fero and Mother Glory. I think that they specifically— I think like maybe one of the words that's in there is the history of the word gnoll, which absolutely confirms that G-N-O-L-L and K-N-O-L-L are related. That like, they were the gnolls, because they lived in the knolls. Like, that was what they were. That is what the halflings called them. They had a different name for themselves, but as the halfling language took over and as like they became more prominent, that term stuck.

JACK: Okay. Otherwise, I think I'm probably just looking after the plant? How many leaves does it have?

A: Tw— I mean I guess it's— I'm trying really hard not to think of it as a weed plant now, [Jack laughs] but it's almost impossible. [Keith laughs]

NICK: It's got three.

AUSTIN: It's healthy.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's a healthy plant right now, [crosstalk] or like, mostly healthy.

KEITH: [crosstalk] It's a little sandy.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's one of those great plants that you can set on fire *a bit* and will still be fine.

AUSTIN: You stopped it from being set on fire.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: If you had let that go even another second, it would have been *bad*.

JACK: [laughs] Okay. Cool.

KEITH: You're welcome.

JACK: Thanks.

AUSTIN: Blake Bromley says,

AUSTIN (as Blake): [snaps fingers] Got it!

AUSTIN: And the entire wall— [chuckles] not the entire wall, but a big section of the middle of the wall opens as a single door, and like, there are safety deposit boxes in that door. It's just like, it's also a door. Like it opens up and there's a bunch of safety deposit boxes stuck into the wall, and then like, oh right, but also it's a doorway. And it is dark past that. Some of the kind of natural light coming off of Ephrim and the kind of weird magical glow of this room seeps out into the darkness, and you can see a little bit of a stairway that kind of twists and winds in strange directions. And it's kind of made of old, you know, stone. It doesn't have any railings, and at first it looks like— for the first few feet, it is just a cave that has stone stairs built into it. But after a few feet, if your eyes aren't deceiving you, it opens up and it's just a stairwell in the dark, twisting and turning. And you can hear a strange rhythm, rhythmic-like, like wind or something in

the distance coming and going with a natural, like a very [blowing sound that goes up and then down in pitch]. Over and over. What do you do?

SYLVIA: I'm assuming it's— is it only wide enough for people to go in single file, or...?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's definitely single file. Mother Glory will fit, but it will be a *very* tight fit.

SYLVIA: Um...

AUSTIN: And I think she un-does Lenny and like, drops him, 'cause otherwise she wouldn't fit through the opening bit that's a cave without crushing him to death.

SYLVIA: Good thing she did that then. [laughs] I'm going to— Blake is their name? I'm gonna—

AUSTIN: Yep. Blake Bromley.

SYLVIA: Okay. I'm gonna nudge Blake and be like,

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): You first, I'll be right behind you.

AUSTIN (as Blake): Why— why would I do that? You should— you should—

EPHRIM: Because if you don't I'm going to set you on fire.

BLAKE: That's a threat?

KEITH (as Fero): That's mean! That's really mean. They opened that door for us, you dick.

EPHRIM: There is no reason that I should believe that this thief won't stab me in the back the second we go in here.

FERO: You're also a thief!

BLAKE: Well, there would be—

FERO: We came here to steal shit too! What are you talking about? [EPHRIM: yeah—] There's like a hundred other people here between [Ephrim sighs] us and you if they're behind you. It's fine. If they're do something to hurt you, then they're dead. It's not— It's crazy. It's a terrible plan.

BLAKE: I'll go, I'll go, I'll go. Don't fight on my behalf. Jeez.

SYLVIA: I'm stepping like right behind them* to keep it lit up so they* can see okay, too. Ephrim hates this situation, by the way. He has been scowling the entire night.

AUSTIN: That's fair!

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That's completely fair.

SYLVIA: Like, this sucks.

NICK: Are you— Is Ephrim— Ephrim, are you just like, always glowing a little bit?

SYLVIA: When I have my Burning— I have my Burning Brand out, right?

NICK: Oh, right. Okay, I forgot.

SYLVIA: So, like literally my hand is just covered in fire right now.

NICK: I kind of liked the idea that you just gave off a little glow. A little campfire glow.

SYLVIA: [amused] I'm a Dark Souls protagonist?

NICK: Yeah. [laughs]

KEITH: I just want to point out that Ephrim, uh, cast the Burning Brand when maybe trouble was about to happen, and then trouble never happened and they just kept it out—

SYLVIA: Yeah!

KEITH: Even though the room was super hot and everybody hated it and was super uncomfortable.

AUSTIN: I— Once you— I think when you take camp, if you took camp and healed at all, you had to take off your Burning Brand.

SYLVIA: Okay. Then I guess—

AUSTIN: Them's the rules, sadly.

SYLVIA: Okay, yeah that makes sense. Um..

AUSTIN: Uh, one second, let me read this...

SYLVIA: I guess I'll summon another one just for..

AUSTIN: Just for kicks.

SYLVIA: Yeah. Well, I mean like, [AUSTIN: uh huh] we're going into a dark place, so we need some form of light, [AUSTIN: mm-hmm] and also, like, danger. Y'know.

AUSTIN: Yeah, anybody who wants to get prepped can go ahead and do that right now. Alright, so you rolled a 9, which means what for your Burning Brand?

SYLVIA: It means I just add one tag to it.

AUSTIN: Okay, what is it?

KEITH: I'm gonna aid them.

AUSTIN: How do you do that?

SYLVIA: Yeah, I was just going to use my last bolster.

KEITH: I made them so mad that their fire is just strong.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] That's pretty good! [Nick laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, that's actually really good. Give me a— go ahead and give me your aid roll.

KEITH: All right. I do have one bond with them, which uh—

AUSTIN: What's the bond?

KEITH: I'll read it, hold on. It's good. "Prince Ephrim is just one more person I'll have to put up with being unreasonable."

SYLVIA: [laughs] That's perfect!

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

KEITH: 11.

AUSTIN: There's an 11. All right, so that's a 10.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Get your second tag, and give me the image of Ephrim getting really mad and doing this.

SYLVIA: I feel like after Fero basically just yells at Ephrim, he like, wants to say something again, stops, takes a deep breath, and then just like, looks— he basically is just trying not to yell at this fucking [Austin chuckles] little druid. And then he just summons—

AUSTIN: What are the tags?

SYLVIA: I think I'm gonna go with hand.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: So that's like a short sword-type range, right?

AUSTIN: Hand is even smaller than a short sword.

SYLVIA: Even smaller? Okay.

AUSTIN: Or I guess— short sword's fine. Hand is short sword, that's fair.

SYLVIA: Yeah. So the thing that this is I don't have close as a tag.

AUSTIN: I think thrown slash comma near should be... Yeah, I guess that's—interesting.

SYLVIA: It is one thing in the handbook, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's one thing. Um, I'd say that you can do hand or close.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Or...hmm.

KEITH: I think that they have short sword listed as close.

AUSTIN: They must, 'cause hand is literally you're touching.

KEITH: Hand is— hand is dagger.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. Short sword and longsword are both close.

SYLVIA: Yeah. It's really weird that...

KEITH: I know this because these are the weapons that I was deciding between, so.

AUSTIN: Right, right. Yeah short sword is close. Short sword, axe, warhammer, mace are all close. I would add close as one of the possible things from Killing Fire. Which is the...

SYLVIA: Okay, cool. I'll add that. So I'll say it's close, and I'm gonna remove the dangerous tag from it.

AUSTIN: Okay. So it's just a nice fire sword.

SYLVIA: Yeah, it's...

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVIA: It looks the most like a weapon that I've had, [AUSTIN: yeah] which is like, a little disconcerting, I think?

AUSTIN: Okay. So is that the—

SYLVIA: Because everything else has been sort of like, always shifting, and this one just straight up looks like a sword.

AUSTIN: Right. So give me the walking order here.

SYLVIA: I think...

AUSTIN: Blake is going first, and then behind them is Ephrim?

SYLVIA: Me, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. So there's some light coming from you. Then behind Ephrim is?

KEITH: Me.

AUSTIN: Okay. So I'm gonna say you're also within the light of Ephrim. Who's after that?

JACK: Uh, I'll go.

AUSTIN: Okay. It's getting a little dark there. Who's behind that?

NICK: I'll go next, and I'll cast my Light cantrip.

AUSTIN: Okay, give me a cast. Behind—

JACK: And you've got Isaac with you, presumably.

NICK: 13.

AUSTIN: Yeah, are you dragging Isaac down this? Or are you just leaving Isaac?

NICK: Oh. Uh, no. I pick Isaac up, like, hoist him up by his collar, and poke him with my staff to get him to go ahead of me.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay, good.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And then, a thing we haven't spoken about this whole fucking time, actually, and probably should address a little bit, is, especially from Lem, have you spoken to Corey?

SYLVIA: Oh shit.

AUSTIN: Who is the guard.

NICK: Yeah, he's still here.

JACK: Who is... Is that the one that's a ghost?

AUSTIN: That's the one that's alive. The ghost has drifted off somewhere. You don't know where.

KEITH: Is that the one that's presumably a weird almost-death?

AUSTIN: Wait, which one? What?

KEITH: Corey.

AUSTIN: No, Button is the one who has died twice.

KEITH: No, you told me that there was a life that I had not felt.

AUSTIN: Oh, no no no, friend.

KEITH: That's not— okay.

AUSTIN: [laughing ominously] No.

KEITH: Well, I thought— oh, you know, okay. So. I just want everybody to take note of how Austin said that.

AUSTIN: Uh huh! [Nick laughs]

JACK: So I'm gonna—

KEITH: And that!

AUSTIN: [innocently] What, I don't...huh.

JACK: —glance back at Corey, and say like,

JACK (as Lem): Are you coming?

AUSTIN (as Corey): Something's wrong with all of y'all. [Keith laughs]

LEM: Look, I—

COREY: I'm gonna stay here with Lenny. And...

KEITH: Oh, is Lenny staying?

AUSTIN: Yeah, she couldn't— Mother Glory couldn't fit him through the opening kind of cave bit of this.

KEITH: Right. I guess, you know, we also don't have [AUSTIN: you could—] a ton of use for Lenny anymore, seeing as how we should have used him to bargain.

AUSTIN (as Lenny): No, yeah, you guys should go ahead without me. That's perfect, as far as I'm concerned.

KEITH (as Fero): Lenny, you should come with.

JACK (as Lem): No, no...

LENNY: No, I'm comfortable here on the metal floor, actually. This is the best I've felt in days. Ephrim, I can't believe you've done me like this. I was gonna ask you to give me your name. That's what I was gonna do.

FERO: You wanted to take his name?

LENNY: Yeah, so I could be Chancellor.

FERO: Chancellor Ephrim?

LENNY: No, it'd be one of my many names. You're clearly not— you don't have a head for politics, kid.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Y'know, Lenny, I think after tonight, your chances of being Chancellor weren't great regardless.

LENNY: What're you talking about, kid?

FERO: You're a hack. [muffled laughter]

LENNY: No, I was here trying to celebrate, and then them hyenas came and set fire to the place. Things are gonna go good for me and people like me going forward, kid.

KEITH: Oh no, we should definitely take this guy with us, then. He's being weird and threatening.

JACK: Actually, yeah, great.

LEM: You're coming with us, Lenny.

KEITH: Yeah, you know—

JACK: I'm gonna grab him by his collar.

LENNY: [crosstalk] Oh, no, aahhhh. [Nick laughs] I should've bit my damn tongue. My grandpappy always told me, "Bite your damn tongue."

LEM: All right, you're walking ahead of me.

LENNY: Ohh.

LEM: Corey, are you staying?

COREY: ...Yeah.

EPHRIM: Pass Lenny to the front.

LENNY: [resigned] Okay.

AUSTIN: Goes over everybody's head. [laughter]

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Just crowdsurfing Lenny.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Yeah, we're literally crowdsurfing him in front. [Keith and Austin laugh]

SYLVIA: I give, like, a little pat on the back, and be like,

EPHRIM: "See, you're off the hook now."

AUSTIN: Corey says,

COREY: Well, if— I'm gonna go. I have— Let me up front too.

LEM: Corey, I didn't know it was gonna do that.

COREY: You shouldn't have done it then. Don't apologize, just let me up front.

SYLVIA: [laughs] Fucking...like squeezing through.

AUSTIN: Uh huh, just like "Euh! Euh! Euh."

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Crawling between Mother Glory's legs and then over everybody's heads.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] I've lost— I've actually lost him. I've actually lost him. [laughter] He's lost in layers. Okay, I found him.

KEITH: There's a point about halfway through when we all realize it would have been easier just to go back out, let him up front, [laughter] and then walk forward again.

AUSTIN: Yeah. All right, so you begin making your way down this—

JACK: Wait, how many of us are there at this point? [crosstalk] We've gone from a party of four to— [laughs]

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] One, two... All right. Uh huh. I'm gonna go through it. Corey, who's very sad. Lenny, with all the names.

NICK: Who's very rad.

AUSTIN: Just for the record: Lenny Adelbury McGillicuddy Johnson Johansen Maestro Abelton Adelton Alexander Quinton Carver Mason Brubaker Notherhome Lenova the Fifth. Some of those names are different than his grandfather's names. [Jack sighs]

AUSTIN: In halfling culture, you can convince— if you're like the head of a household, you can give your name to somebody else, you can extend somebody else and bring them into your family and give them your name. And depending on how many names you have, that reflects the sort of importance you have in halfling culture. It is often said in Rosemerrow that you need fourteen names to be a mayor, and fifteen names to be a Chancellor, and it's that fifteenth that's really hard to get, because people know that you have fourteen names. And it's also hard to just get the heads of families to give you their name, which is why you were the like secret card in his back pocket, Ephrim. [Sylvia snorts] You clearly had gained a lot of reputation here, to where your name, even though you aren't a halfling, would have meant a lot, because of the spread of the creed of Samoths, and so, he's a little bummed you're not going to give it to him now. He'll find another name. So! Corey, Lenny, that's two. There's Blake, that's three. Ephrim, that's four. Fero is five. Lem is six. Fantasma is seven. Isaac is eight. And, uh...

NICK: No, that should be the other way around. Isaac is in front of me.

AUSTIN: Oh, is in front of you, okay.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Isaac is... So then Fantasma is eight, and Mother Glory—

NICK: 'Cause I'm keeping my staff, like—

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

NICK: Trained on him.

AUSTIN: Mother Glory is nine.

JACK: Great.

AUSTIN: So nine of you. That's good. So, this is a very dark and treacherous— did you give your roll? Yeah you did, you got the light up. You got the light up and going.

NICK: Yep.

AUSTIN: So even with those light sources, this is still a treacherous roll. I'm gonna ask somebody here to be the leader and make some sort— make a Defy Danger roll.

NICK: Not it.

AUSTIN: So actually...

SYLVIA: Probably be me since I'm up at the front, right?

AUSTIN: You're the closest to the front, you have the front light. So yeah, give me a Defy Danger wisdom roll.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Does anybody help?

NICK: Uhh—

AUSTIN: Fantasma, you could help as the other person with the light.

NICK: Yeah, I'll do that.

AUSTIN: So give me—

NICK: And that's Wisdom?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yep, go ahead.

KEITH: Should—

AUSTIN: Or actually I guess he can— he can...yeah, we don't—

KEITH: We can wait until after to...

AUSTIN: Totally. Ephrim has succeeded, so.

NICK: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Boom. No help needed. Do you like— I imagine you just like, keep your fire sword position just so. There are a couple of times when you reveal that there is a dangerous gap that is— you would fall through. And as you get deeper into this kind of long, weird, twisty stairway, you eventually see that there really is just like, nothing below you. And as you go further and further down, you can recognize that the sound in the distance is waves crashing against a shore. This whole area is also lit in a sort of strange, low gray, as you get closer. It's almost as if, like, only black and white are the colors that you— like everything is in black and white. There's like a light source that only has enough in it to reveal that. The way color works has changed

here. And eventually, you make it past all of this, with that successful roll, to where you go down to the bottom floor. Or like, there's kind of a big door entryway into something else. And it's huge wooden doors that open— or, that are closed, but are attached to a *huge* wooden structure. And all of this just seems to be like, hanging in the air. And from here, you can like, look around and see some shapes. You'll have to give me something more— you'll have to actually spend some time looking if you wanna piece any more together from here. But there's no.. There's like, this gray light is coming from somewhere nearby, that's like cast this whole big area. It's almost like.. This goes on for miles around you, this weird abyss that you're in, that's underneath the museum. And there are shapes, but you can't quite put them tog— you can't just like, at a glance, see what they are. What are all of you doing?

JACK: I'm— This is amazing. I've never seen anything like this before, right?

AUSTIN: No, you haven't.

JACK: So I think, back in the same way that he was in the early days of arriving in Nacre, and we know how well that went, Lem is kind of slipping seamlessly into junior semiotician mode.

AUSTIN: Mmm. Mm-hmm.

JACK: And is taking notes, and is like, feeling the material of the walls, and testing the floor with the toe of his boot.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Do you want to try to do your orc or Bardic Lore?

JACK: You bet I do!

AUSTIN: Okay. I don't think there's a roll for either of those, right?

JACK: No, I just— I get to do them. Okay.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: I'm gonna do... [sighs] This is a worrying question to even ask. [AUSTIN: mm-hmm?] Is this place covered in Grand Histories of the Known World?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it takes you a second. But then you realize that this is the Meeting House. There's an inscription on the front of the door that is a huge, like wolf in armor with a crown on, reaching down— kneeling on one knee and like, reaching out to be at eye level with a kind of like scraggly, scrawny halfling figure that is also reaching out with a hand. And who has a crown on their head also that is like a crown of thorns.

JACK: Huh... And I know this because of the book that I have in my—

AUSTIN: Yeah, that you have in your— Yes, totally.

JACK: In my bag, right.

AUSTIN: You're able to cross reference it right then, yes.

JACK: Um, and I can ask you for one fact from the history of the location.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm. I'm trying to think if there's anything else specific here. Yeah, I'll give you this also from the book. Which is, all around you is... It's weird, because based on the book, and based on the contract, and based on the conversations you've been having, and the stuff you've known from before, there should be... The old Rosemerrow, or the old area where the hy— where the gnolls lived, where the wolfskin lived, should just be up there? Like yeah, they dug underground and had homes underground, but like... From this pedestal, when you look around you can kind of see off in the distance, the gnolls and hills again to the north, and like, the windmills, off to the southeast. It's like...there's like a second Rosemerrow down here. [crosstalk] And it's all—

JACK: [crosstalk] Underneath Rosemerrow?

AUSTIN: Yeah. And that's not right. [laughs slightly]

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: It's like you've stepped into some other... It's strange. It's not— But like, it's still material. You're not— Those things look weird and dreamy and distant, but here still feels material and physical and real in a way that those things don't appear to be. Those are like a mirage, they feel like a mirage in the distance. Like a fever dream, like a trick of the heat and the light. They're consistent, they stay there. [laughs slightly] The windmills don't disappear, they just turn in the air. And that's the other thing: there is a breeze down here. You can smell the saltwater down here, which you shouldn't be able to do.

NICK: You mean a trick of the heat and the dark.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I do— Well, no actually, I don't mean a trick of the Heat and the Dark. That's a different effect.

NICK: [laughs] I know, I just meant because it's dark in here.

AUSTIN: Totally! But that's an important distinction. I will say, like. I don't wanna... This is not— for the viewer, this is not like the vision of Marielda on fire during— that one of the two brothers saw. Cool. So, there's the door in front of you, and there's this kind of landing area that you're

standing on that's on top of— this whole thing is on top of what seems to be a big pillar. But you kind of lose track of it as you trace it downward into the dark. Do you open the door?

KEITH: I do.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The door opens, and inside is the old meeting room, the old meeting hall, the Meeting House. That's what it was called. It's made of wood and it is not at halfing scale. Mother Glory fits very nicely here. And everybody moves in. There are like a number of pillars, like big wooden pillars every few feet. There are...actually that's not where a pillar would be here, a pillar would be like here, and then like here, and so on, you know? And then there are some tables and chairs that you can sit at, you know, there's kind of like a nice big area. And then there are like a handful of chairs towards the front of the...or like, opposite the door, right? Organized around what looks like... It would be like— It's like a throne with no back on it. Like, it's positioned like a throne, based on the way everything's kind of concentric around it, but also it could be an altar. And the funny thing about this room is the only wall is the one behind you. The one that was like, the stairs came down to that platform, and then there was the door. That side has a wall. Everything else here is open. And so now you can really see out into like the strange version of Rosemerrow that's all around you. What do you all do?

NICK: So when you say it's a strange version, is it like, one to one? Or is...

AUSTIN: I mean, depend— what are you looking for? How are you trying to figure that out?

NICK: Umm...

AUSTIN: Like, the windmills are basically where the windmills should be.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: And...

NICK: And they look the same?

AUSTIN: They're the— they're *really* far away.

NICK: Oh. Right.

AUSTIN: You know, like you're in— it's the equivalent of like, equivalence of being like, in... trying to think of example that— I don't know how much New York— You're in Boston now, right?

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What are two places in Boston that are far away, but if you were on a skyscraper, you could look out and see the other thing?

NICK: Umm...

KEITH: Nothing in Boston is far away from anything else in Boston.

NICK: Yeah.

KEITH: It's two miles across. [Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay, so like let's say— let's say you were at [NICK: Chicago] Fenway Park. Let's say you were at Fenway Park.

KEITH: Okay, yeah.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Right? Imagine that was like, a skyscraper. You were really high up. And you looked east and you could like, "Oh, that's Harvard." Is Harvard east from Fenway or am I misremembering?

NICK: Uhh...

KEITH: It's west.

AUSTIN: Okay, well, closer to the wa— yeah.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That way though. Whatever.

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: You're like, "Oh yeah, that looks like Harvard, I guess."

NICK: Okay, so it's like, it's like the *character* of looking out over the city.

AUSTIN: Yeah, and like [NICK: yeah] the thing— like, the river is where it's supposed to be. Also, there's another river here. The *sea* is where it's supposed to be.

NICK: Like, it's recognizable as the Rosemerrow skyline.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. Yes. Yes. You've never seen it from this position before. Like, you're above it in a weird way. Nothing is as high as you. So you've never— it takes a moment to gather that. And one actual difference is: the trees are where they're supposed to be on the— or, the trees are where they used to be on what was like the lead up to the beach in the empty quarter? I've mentioned before that like, The Long Sand is just like, empty. It used to have a bunch of trees in it, and then like, they tried to— they wanted to make it a big development thing and so they dug it all up, and then it's kind of become this sandy mess with no trees in it anymore. In the version of the city you're in now, there are trees there.

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: But you're just— it's all below you from here.

JACK: [crosstalk] Can I roll Discern Realities?

KEITH: [crosstalk] So this a lot like—

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: Or at least more like my version of Rosemerrow, like from what I remember?

AUSTIN: No, not... No, The Long Sand had started when you were still here. It just hadn't progressed to the point...

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's not like— there aren't any major differences, besides that one.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: But yeah, you can do Discern Realities.

JACK: Cool. Uh, right. Ohh...

AUSTIN: 5. That's bad. You have...so you have one prepare, right, one um... [JACK: yeah, but—] whatever that thing is called. And then someone could help? [crosstalk] Someone could aid?

KEITH: [crosstalk] I could aid.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: How do you aid?

KEITH: Um, I guess I could aid by— we could talk it through. I'm most familiar with [AUSTIN: mm-hmm] Rosemerrow to begin with.

AUSTIN: Totally. What's your bond with Lem?

KEITH: That's a 7, [AUSTIN: good] and my bond is, "Lem King is a true friend and might get us all killed."

JACK: Aww.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Great. Um, so you Discern Realities successfully. You also spent one of your preparation points, one of your things I've already forgotten the name of?

JACK: [crosstalk] Uh, preparation.

KEITH: [crosstalk] Preparation.

AUSTIN: It is preparation? Okay. Yes. Yes. Okay. The move is called Bolster, that's why I was confused. So yeah, give me your one Discern Realities question.

JACK: Okay, uh, my one Discern Realities question is... God. Um. I'm gonna ask, "What should I be on the lookout for?"

AUSTIN: There are claw marks on the ground here. And every now and then, you see, like here or there, there is a splatter of old blood that hasn't been cleaned. But it looks like there's been an attempt to clean it up. Or wipe it away. But it hasn't actually [JACK: huh] been wiped away. What are the rest of you doing?

[TIMESTAMP: 0:30:23]

NICK: Is there like a cliff?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it just like, so [NICK: down—] only the northern wall is there.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: The east, the south, and the west is a cliff down. It's just empty, it's open air, there is a breeze running through here. You can clearly hear the sound of the ocean in the distance.

NICK: Are there any stairs down anywhere?

AUSTIN: No. Not that you can see. But if you're looking around, again, that sounds like a Discern Realities to me.

NICK: Yeah, okay. I'll try that.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] 'Cause there's other stuff to notice here, for sure.

NICK: [crosstalk] I will...discern...

AUSTIN: But as you're looking around for...as Fantasma's like, "Huh, are there any..." You know. So you rolled a 9.

NICK: Uh, I'll use a prep.

AUSTIN: Cool. What's the prep in this case. Like, how has Fantasma prepped for this scenario? I should have asked Lem this also.

NICK: The question— The answer to that question for Fantasma is always "he read a book".

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay. So just like, he happened to have read a book about like, architecture or something.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Of like, "Oh, this is where, blah blah blah." All right. So ask me the questions.

NICK: What happened here recently? I know it's not the most [AUSTIN: hmm] obvious question to ask, but it's most interesting to me.

AUSTIN: No, so there's an— It is an interesting question.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um. The question of what 'recently here' means is two different things. So like, one hand, recently means something was killed here in the last like, three months, let's say.

NICK: Sure.

AUSTIN: And dragged away. So that's something you clearly know. But also, the... You kind of piece together from how the architecture is presented, like how the... sorry, how the furniture is arranged, that there was an address here. And then you notice that the doors behind you are closed, and there are no handles on this side.

NICK: Uh oh.

AUSTIN: And you realize the thing that happened here, quote unquote recently, [NICK: mmm] as in the last real event that was held at the Meeting House, was that someone was locked in here. So that's one.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Two more questions. Remember that you get +1 forward when acting on any of this.

NICK: Umm... What here is not what it appears to be?

AUSTIN: [sighs] There is something inlaid on the strange kind of like altar at the front of the room. Which I'll add to the map right now. So there's this thing that could be an altar, could be a long throne, and in it is a sliver of white light. And it has depth to it. And it feels powerful. It's like a crescent of energy. And it's inlaid with the altar.

NICK: Hmm. My last question is: Who's really in control here?

AUSTIN: And you hear the skittering below as things move around the sides of this room, like the underside of the room, basically.

NICK: By the room, do you mean the whole city?

AUSTIN: No just this build— this, like, platform that's hovering—

NICK: Oh, I see.

AUSTIN: The Meeting House. On the sides of it, like underneath you, like what would be its foundation, basically, [NICK: right] you can hear, if you like, shut out the sound of the ocean and everybody else chattering around you and quietly talking, it's like, "Wait, did you hear that?" And it's just like, scratches, as something is like, skittering around. And then you realize it's not one thing doing that, it's a bunch of them.

NICK: Okay.

KEITH (as Fero): Hmm, sounds like skittering. [Nick laughs]

AUSTIN: Fantasma is the only one who heard that because of the roll.

KEITH: Oh, okay. I thought that you said, "Did you hear that?"

SYLVIA: Um..

AUSTIN: No, he's saying, like that's the emotional response, is like...

KEITH: Oh, okay. Yeah, gotcha.

SYLVIA: Can I approach the altar?

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: So you said there's a light...something inlaid in it is giving off light?

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm. Absolutely.

SYLVIA: I'm gonna touch the inlay of it, and see if anything happens.

AUSTIN: This is incredible power. It is... You fall to a knee. This is something Samoths made. In fact, this might be the sun. A sliver of it. And you know immediately that it's what's giving light to this place. The sort of like, ambient glow comes from this. But it doesn't strain your eyes to look at. It's...a soft light, a controlled light. Just enough to see with. And again, everything is in black and white down here.

SYLVIA: Oh. I have an idea.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm?

SYLVIA: So I have the ability... Let me just look up the name. Lord of Flame.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm?

SYLVIA: "When you stare into a source of fire, looking for answers, roll plus Wisdom."

AUSTIN: Oh, totally.

SYLVIA: "On a hit, the GM will tell you something new and interesting."

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: Can I look into this and do that?

AUSTIN: Absolutely.

SYLVIA: Okay. Let me roll Wisdom. 8.

AUSTIN: Alright, so what happens on an 8?

SYLVIA: On an 8, hold on... GM will give you...“an impression. If you already know all there is to know, the GM will tell you that.”

AUSTIN: No, you definitely don't know— [laughs]

SYLVIA: Yeah. [laughs] I figured.

AUSTIN: —everything you need to know here. There is a shot of— you see through— the crescent shape of this kind of white, burning light, becomes a window for you. And you see a beautiful ballroom, with a glass floor, with kind of like three long tables on the north, south, and eastern side, and there are all of these people gathered here for a meal, and someone is in the middle, doing some sort of presentation. And one of them slips away. The kind of camera, the impression you get shows a bunch of activity down below the glass, on like a floor deeper down in this structure, and people are...there's a lot of activity. Maybe they're fighting, you're not sure. And things move in fast motion as the people in the room clamor, as someone is giving this big presentation, the figures down below, like, there's this strange explosion, and they, like, slide away. And then this one figure slips down into this forge and takes a little sliver of holy light. And secrets it away. Her solution for what's happening in her home. What do you do?

SYLVIA: So, how is this altar constructed? Is it just like one, basically—

AUSTIN: It's like a block of [SYLVIA: just a block?] heavy stone, yeah.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: And it's white. It's heavy, white stone. Not marble, not clean. It's porous, like, you could probably chip it, like with a hammer really easily, actually. But laid into the top, like, at— kind of like, sanded down at exactly the right level, is this crescent. You touched it, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You could probably get it out of there, if you like, moved it a little bit.

SYLVIA: Then I'm definitely gonna—

AUSTIN: Pushed on it.

SYLVIA: Definitely going to do that.

AUSTIN: Um, take one damage.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: As it cuts your hand, but like, it's sharp, but you can be careful with it. It's like a blade.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's like a scythe blade, but just loose. Like, as soon as it cuts you, it cauterizes you, also.

SYLVIA: Hmm. So what's that do for— is the room dark now? Is it dark—

AUSTIN: Uh, not yet!

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: But like, as you lift it away, I think under it— like, where do you put it? Are you just holding it?

SYLVIA: For—

AUSTIN: Are you like, sheathing it? Are you...like, strapping it to yourself?

SYLVIA: I think Ephrim's sort of enamoured with it for a bit.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And just sort of stares at it. And like, there's this unsettling smile on his face, [AUSTIN: yeah] when he has it. And then he tucks it away somewhere safe. Like, he puts it in his jacket. He puts it in the pocket closest to where his heart is.

AUSTIN: It's bigger than that. It is like a blade.

SYLVIA: It's bigger than that? How big is it?

AUSTIN: It's an arm length.

SYLVIA: Oh, okay. Then I think he straps it...

AUSTIN: It's a big— yeah.

SYLVIA: He straps it to his side.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: But he's always got a hand on it.

AUSTIN: Cool.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: As you do, you hear a voice that says, "A gift for you, my prince." And as you strap it, anything your body would block is not lit anymore, except for by your sword and by Fantasma's light.

JACK: Phew. Don't know if this was a *great* idea.

AUSTIN: The skittering gets louder at this.

JACK: Yeah. Can we all hear it now?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. Now everyone hears it.

JACK: Does—

KEITH (as Fero): Sounds like some skittering is happening. [Jack and Austin laugh]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: What's Mother Glory's reaction to this? To this place, actually.

AUSTIN: She's like...let me find her voice again. It's the back of the throat, okay, yeah. She's like...

KEITH (as Fero): M.G., what's up in here? What is all this? [Nick laughs]

AUSTIN (as Mother Glory): This was a holy place, once, in the old days. This is...they've made it... [sighs] They locked away our history.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: The halfling thief, Blake, has like, begun to unscrew some of these tables. [Jack and Keith chuckle]

AUSTIN (as Blake): This is gold! They screwed these together with gold!

JACK (as Lem): I don't—

AUSTIN: They say.

LEM: Ahh...please don't do that.

BLAKE: Why?

FERO: There's skittering.

LEM: Yeah.

BLAKE: Well, we have to get what we can get and then get out of here. Someone open the door. Let's go.

LEM: There's no handles, Blake.

BLAKE: So push it, I...

AUSTIN: Mother Glory goes up and like slams her shoulder into it, and it doesn't budge.

LEM: [told-you-so voice] Yeah, Blake! [muffled laughter]

FERO: Blake! Hey, Blake, thank you.

BLAKE: Well, what do you want *me* to do?

JACK: So, what are our...we can presumably go out through the front of the room, right?

AUSTIN: No, that's just...the air.

SYLVIA: It's a cliff.

AUSTIN: It's a cliff all around you.

SYLVIA: I mean, we *could* go that way, it just wouldn't go well.

AUSTIN: Right.

LEM: Ephrim, maybe you should put that thing back.

EPHRIM: Never. [Austin laughs]

LEM: Great. Um...

JACK: [laughs softly] I'm gonna draw my sword, I think. Just, in preparation.

AUSTIN: Okay. Not at Ephrim.

JACK: Oh, god no. No, no.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: I've already tried interfering once today, and it did not go well. [Jack and Nick? laugh]

AUSTIN: No, it wasn't...it didn't go great, huh.

JACK: Can I... Oh, god, is the skittering just coming from all around?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Can I walk to the edge and look over? Like, look directly down?

AUSTIN: Sure. Which edge? Move yourself to the edge you want to be at.

JACK: I will ping it. Ping!

AUSTIN: Yeah. So you step to...oop, I put you behind the altar, that's not what I wanted to do. So you step to the edge, when you see hands come up to your right and left, [JACK: oh!] and begin to pull themselves up.

JACK: Oh, can I—

AUSTIN: What do you do?

JACK: Can I...can I tread on their fingers, please, while shouting "Hands!" [Keith laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally, give me...like an...you're like attacking them with your feet?

JACK: I think so. So what's happened is I've just, I've gone like, "oh, god" and I've like drawn my sword and walked over to the edge, and then hands have arrived, [AUSTIN: uh huh] and I've just immediately trying to tread on them. [laughs]

AUSTIN: That did happen. That is exactly what happened.

JACK: So that is a...a Defy Danger, what? Am I defying danger or am I making an attack?

AUSTIN: No, this is an attack. This is a Hack and Slash.

JACK: Well...do I want to attack...quick poll. Quick out of character poll.

AUSTIN: No, what's Lem do? Think about what Lem does.

JACK: Well, my...realistically, my alignment is to avoid conflict.

AUSTIN: Fair.

JACK: And defuse a tense situation. So I think I'm not actually gonna step on them. I think I'm gonna say "hands", and keep my sword drawn, and back towards the altar?

AUSTIN: Mmm.

SYLVIA: I'm by the altar still, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah, totally. So...so you just yell "hands" and then back away? Then that's a Defy Danger, to get away.

JACK: Okay. Sure. Right. So, this is a Defy Danger what?

AUSTIN: Dex, to step back quickly.

JACK: Dex, okay. Dex is my weakest skill. Let's go. That's a 6.

AUSTIN: Woof, that's a 6!

KEITH: I'm going to have aided Jack.

AUSTIN: Okay. How do you do that?

KEITH: Um...I was just around— what's going on? Like Jack's, Lem is backing away, and one of the hands just gets a little grabby?

AUSTIN: Just try to grab at his ankles, yeah.

KEITH: Um...I'll do a little— can I do a tug of war with the skeleton man?

AUSTIN: Those are not skeletal hands.

KEITH: Okay. They're hand hands?

AUSTIN: They are hand hands. Gray and dark.

KEITH: Well, I will do a tug of war with the gray, dark hand hands.

AUSTIN: Give me an Aid and Interfere, then.

KEITH: 2d6 plus 1... I've got a lot of good rolls in a row, tempting fate here. 10! There we go.

JACK: Yes!

AUSTIN: There's a 10, look at that! Make sure people who failed go back and mark XP for their failures. You should go check that.

KEITH: Yeah, I failed two right off the bat. I've been good since.

AUSTIN: Okay. So, you got a 7 to 10, then, now, Jack.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: You turn— you're able to like slip away and turn, and it grabs you by the backpack. Either it climbs up on your back, or you let go of your backpack and they take it.

JACK: Oh, god. There is no question here, it's gonna climb onto my back.

AUSTIN: Okay, well...

KEITH: Jack has to protect the weed. [Nick laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughs] Protect the stash! [Jack and Keith laugh] Alright, well. You have a huge gray figure on your back.

KEITH: What does it look like?

AUSTIN: Not huge, not huge, sorry. Not huge at all. It's a halfling. It's a gray halfling drained of life but not yet really dead. And it has a green spear, and it's hair has turned white, and it's wearing kind of ceremonial-looking armor.

JACK: Oh, god. Uh...

AUSTIN: And there is more skittering yet.

KEITH: I...I want to try to figure out if I know what these are, or anything even kind of like it. And I was trying to figure out— do you think that would be a Spout Lore? Or a—

AUSTIN: That's a Spout Lore.

KEITH: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's a Spout Lore.

JACK: This is no time for lore! [laughs]

KEITH: I think, you know, know your enemy, man.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Give me a roll.

KEITH: Alright... That's a 7.

AUSTIN: So that means I give you something useful— or, something interesting but not useful. You recognize this figure. She was on the door. It's the same armor as the figure who was shaking the wolfkin's hand on the door. And she has— she's choked up on the spear so she's holding it like a dagger, and is about to plunge it into the back of Lem's back. What do you do?

KEITH: Wait, so this is Rosemerrow?

AUSTIN: This is Rosalind R— uh, Marroweater.

KEITH: Marroweater. I'm going to jump— I'm gonna jump at her, and in midair turn into—

AUSTIN: She is on Lem's back. She's climbed on his back, literally on his back.

KEITH: Right, I'm gonna turn into a panther and sort of grab her in my talons.

AUSTIN: If you fuck up, you're going to hurt Lem badly. [someone sucks in air through teeth] He is between you and her. So you'll have to Defy Danger dex to get... So, first of all, make the transformation.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: That's an 8, so you get one move as the panther. What's the panther, is there a panther move? I bet there is.

KEITH: Uh, I think I get two moves with this.

AUSTIN: Oh, is it because you always get at least one when you fail?

KEITH: Right, yeah, on a 7 to 9 hold two, yeah. And, sorry, what did you ask me?

AUSTIN: Like, are panthers a thing? Are there panthers in the book that have like cool panther moves?

KEITH: No, we invented panthers, remember? They're the birds.

AUSTIN: Oh, *those* panthers, my bad.

KEITH: Yes. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Not an actual panther.

KEITH: No, the panther bird.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes, totally. Gotcha. So yeah, you are those birds. And then give me a Hack and Slash. And don't fuck up.

KEITH: I promise not to fuck up. This is strength?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: This Hack and Slash?

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

KEITH: I have one preparation left. That's a 10. [Jack sighs in relief]

AUSTIN: Okay, spend that prep. And do your damage.

KEITH: Alright.

AUSTIN: Or, you can, again, do double— you can do an extra 1d6 in order to— if you're willing to take damage back.

KEITH: I actually can do...1d8 twice, 'cause this is a dangerous animal.

AUSTIN: Oh, fair, yeah.

KEITH: And I am willing to take damage back. So that's a 5?

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

KEITH: That's a 1, so I do 6.

AUSTIN: Okay. Let me mark it down. Okay. So, you are this like flock of birds that...I think is pecking at her?

KEITH: And, again, my intention is to rip her off his back, is my intention.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. You manage to do that as he scrambles away, but she then also counterattacks with you, and she's best of 2d8 damage...that's 5 plus 2, for plus 2 piercing, is 7 damage to you.

KEITH: Okay, and I shed my form and I sort of land on all fours on the ground.

AUSTIN: Alright. She like skewers through a bunch of you, and then like, whoop, you're not there at all. That's good. Alright, cool. Everybody else, that skittering is getting louder and louder as forms begin to appear on the edges of the room. Like these, and also these.

SYLVIA: Are these halflings like her as well, or...

AUSTIN: Uh huh. But nude and hungry.

KEITH: And carrying pieces of meat.

AUSTIN: Some of them are carrying bones.

KEITH: That's true. For the listeners, in the pictures some of them are carrying...

AUSTIN: That is true.

KEITH: It looks like what a drumstick would be if it was made out of a human leg.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. There are five groups of these.

KEITH: That's too many!

AUSTIN: And they are closing in fast. What do you all do?

JACK: Um...

KEITH (as Fero): Hi, hey, everybody? This is too many of these.

KEITH: Actually, you know what, it's not too many. There's fifteen of them? [Austin laughs] Or, no, there's twenty five of them.

JACK: I think total in season one we probably like killed twenty five people.

KEITH: Yes, but this time we have nine of us, and one of them is Mother Glory.

JACK: Okay, that's... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, but one of them is Isaac tied up, one of them is Lenny, and one of them is a depressed guard whose friend you just killed.

SYLVIA: Eh.

KEITH: That's true. Man, that brings our number down to six, huh. But, Mother Glory is there...

SYLVIA: You ever heard of the concept of acceptable losses. [Austin chuckles]

JACK: [softly] Oh, god. Does Mother Glory actually have that axe that she has in that image, or...

AUSTIN: No, she's just— she's all claws and anger.

JACK: Ah, right.

SYLVIA: It would be even cooler, though.

AUSTIN: [inaudible]

JACK: And a thrown vault door.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: [inaudible]

AUSTIN: Yeah, she'll find— listen, there's a lot of tables and shit here.

SYLVIA: Ahh.

JACK: They are held together by gold.

AUSTIN: That's true.

JACK: How quickly can we build a barricade?

AUSTIN: You would need like a position to barricade.

JACK: Great point! Great point.

KEITH: Yeah, we're just kind of like in the open in the center.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So—

JACK: Is there water below the cliff?

AUSTIN: No, there's Rosemerrow below the cliff.

JACK: Ah.

AUSTIN: So like, yeah, way to the southwest is the ocean, [Jack laughs softly] and there is a river to your east.

KEITH: Now, I—

NICK: It's really...really too bad that this is not DnD, and then I could just cast Feather Fall on everybody. That would be a...

AUSTIN: There must be a time limit on that, though, right? You're really high up.

NICK: That would be a useful...oh.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Now, these... I'm gonna go out on a limb and say that these were the creatures that I was sensing before.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, this is them.

KEITH: And uh...do we think that they can be like killed in a traditional way?

AUSTIN: No idea.

JACK: Well, we haven't slept here yet, right? [NICK: mm-hmm] So they're not undead in...

AUSTIN: But—

JACK: Oh.

AUSTIN: But also it is underneath Rosemerrow, it's hard to— who knows.

JACK: Aw, crap. Yeah, we don't know, do we? Yeah.

AUSTIN: This is all— who the fuck knows? What you do know is that Mother Glory is charging into the northwestern group of these, and beginning to claw into them.

SYLVIA: Fuck yeah.

KEITH: Alright, well, we're in it now.

AUSTIN: Yeah, well, she ain't waiting for y'all. Lenny is losing it. Lenny is like,

AUSTIN (as Lenny): All of this is the worst idea. Get me out of here.

AUSTIN: And he begins— he's like running up to the door and pushing at it and clawing at it.

KEITH (as Fero): No, this is like 80% your fault.

LENNY: No it isn't, it's 0% my fault! I was running for chancellor— [Jack laughs]

FERO: You're—

LENNY: You had to drag me down into the fuckin' pits of hell!

FERO: You're the one who hired this weirdo to turn this museum full of sticks into a fake-ass bullshit!

LENNY: I didn't hire him for that! He told *me* that he had a great deal, that he found all this great stuff, and it would help me to announce that I was running for chancellor. I didn't know!

FERO: Well, whatever. We'll take care of it, don't worry about it. Except, super worry.

SYLVIA: What are the tables made out of?

AUSTIN: Wood, old wood.

SYLVIA: Just old wood? Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And it's pr— okay. I'm gonna go over to this table— it's not doing it. There, here, the one closest to me.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

SYLVIA: I'm just gonna hit it with my sword and set it on fire?

AUSTIN: It's on fire.

SYLVIA: So, do they react in any way to that, or no?

AUSTIN: [sighs thoughtfully] Um. Hmm. They don't love it.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: They avoid it. But like move around the other way, like up towards you this way to your right, and are like trying to close in on you from this direction now.

SYLVIA: Okay. Well, fuck.

AUSTIN: All five groups are moving in.

KEITH: I would like to go the— I'm going to the south, the southwest corner, sort of below where Mother Glory is.

SYLVIA: The one that—

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

KEITH: And I'm going to...you know what, I'm gonna start out simple. I'm gonna attack one with [Jack laughs] my sword thing that I have, my...

AUSTIN: Give me a Hack and Slash.

KEITH: Alright.

AUSTIN: Yeah, the one that attacked Lem is still alive, Sylvia¹.

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

SYLVIA: Yeah, just wanted to make sure.

AUSTIN: That's a damage. You need to roll a...

KEITH: Oh, yep, sorry, wrong button.

AUSTIN: That's okay.

KEITH: 10!

AUSTIN: There's a 10. Do your damage. And again, you can—

KEITH: That's a worse one than the 6.

SYLVIA: Aww.

JACK: Oh, no!

AUSTIN: You did, you did a 2.

KEITH: I got 6 when I rolled it by accident, and then I got 2.

AUSTIN: That's true.

KEITH: You said I can— I'll open myself up for damage. Yeah, there we go. So that's 7.

AUSTIN: So there's 7. Okay, that's not so bad.

KEITH: No.

AUSTIN: But you opened yourself up for damage, for counterattack, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, so...

KEITH: Now, quick question. When I do that, there's a chance that it'll miss, right?

AUSTIN: No.

KEITH: No, there's no chance that— okay. It's just—

AUSTIN: No, you open yourself up for counter—yeah, that's it.

KEITH: Okay, got it.

AUSTIN: So, when a group attacks you, a thing you do is...

KEITH: So this is a small gang.

AUSTIN: Effectively, yeah. That's basically what you would say. Alright, so, there are three of them. 1 piercing on this too, so take 5. The good news is you dispatch two of them cleanly. Wait, how much damage did you do? Yeah, totally.

KEITH: I did 7 damage.

AUSTIN: Yep. So you cut through— two of them like jump onto you, but you manage to— and like claw at you pretty directly, but you manage to dispatch two of them.

KEITH: Quick question. If there's three and I dispatch two, [AUSTIN: yep] would it then cease being a group that's attacking me, and it's just one?

AUSTIN: Yeah. So, I rolled 3d6, 1d6 for each one of them, and took the best damage.

KEITH: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: So now the next time you get attacked, they'll only roll 1d6.

KEITH: Gotcha.

AUSTIN: Basically. Mother Glory, by the way, just kicks two of them off the thing. [Jack laughs]

SYLVIA: Fuck yeah! [Nick laughs]

AUSTIN: And there's another one who's like crawling all over her, though. Fantasma, what are you doing?

NICK: Uh...I'm gonna try to cast a Magic Missile.

AUSTIN: Okay. Give me a roll for Magic— give me a cast magic.

NICK: 11.

AUSTIN: There's a success. You're very smart, this is a smart boy.

NICK: Yep.

AUSTIN: How's Magic Missile work?

NICK: Uh, 2d4 damage.

AUSTIN: So it doesn't scale in this? I guess not.

NICK: Nope. It's just 2d4 damage.

AUSTIN: 2d4. The thing is HP doesn't scale in this game, so. That explains that. But hey, look, you still get that plus 2 from Lem earlier.

NICK: For what?

AUSTIN: That song.

NICK: Oh!

AUSTIN: So it's 5 damage.

NICK: Sweet.

AUSTIN: So, yeah, you obliterate— it just like...what's the magic missile look like for you?

NICK: It looks like an arrow, but like not...like the symbol, like the icon of an arrow.

AUSTIN: Right, right. [chuckles] And just pierces, there's two of them, I guess, right? Or is there a bunch?

NICK: Yeah, it just like draws a line from my open palm, through the...

AUSTIN: Nice, nice. It pierces this figure, and it falls to its death. Lem?

JACK: Um...

AUSTIN: There's— Rosemerrow is here. Rosalind Marroweater. And here you are, and she's standing on this altar and like keeping you at bay with her spear.

JACK: How does parley work?

AUSTIN: Parley is a skill that lets you negotiate.

JACK: Yeah, I mean... [sighs]

AUSTIN: "When you have leverage on a GM character and manipulate them, roll charisma." So do you have leverage?

JACK: I don't think I do, is the thing.

AUSTIN: [laughs] No, I'm not so sure you do.

JACK: I mean... [laughs] They don't care about Lenny.

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: It's hard, right, 'cause I can't tell whether they want us to leave or they want us to die. And I'm beginning to suspect that it's the latter. [Austin laughs quietly] Is Rosalind—

NICK: He said they were hungry. I think they want us to be food.

JACK: Yeah. Is she sort of jabbing me with her spear, or is she just trying to—

AUSTIN: She would like to. Yeah, if you don't do anything, she's going to stab you in the chest.

JACK: Okay... I am going to— can I try and kick her backwards off the cliff?

AUSTIN: Oh.

JACK: I mean, she has a spear, so I can't really close on her.

AUSTIN: You'll have to Defy Danger to...or, again, you can Defy Danger con if you want to get in close and suffer the damage just 'cause, or Defy Danger dex to get through, or Defy Danger strength to like knock her blade away so she's open.

JACK: I'm gonna try and Defy Danger strength to knock her blade away.

AUSTIN: Okay. Mm-hmm. Give me that.

JACK: I think every time Lem gets into a one-on-one with somebody, he remembers encountering Emmanuel on the ship.

AUSTIN: Yeah, fair.

JACK: So this is a strength roll...ah.

AUSTIN: Alright, so...

JACK: Can I spend a preparation on that, please?

AUSTIN: Totally, how many do you have left?

JACK: I have two preparation left. I'm spending one.

AUSTIN: Alright. And we've talked before about how Lem spent a lot of the downtime like literally practicing swordplay and stuff, [JACK: yeah] so that totally works. Alright.

JACK: That was a 10.

AUSTIN: So, you close the distance. Give me a Hack and Slash.

JACK: Okay. This is a— well, I mean...

AUSTIN: Your blade...

JACK: The thing is, do I have leverage? What were you going to say?

AUSTIN: I was going to say your blade, as it hits hers, sparks fly off. And from that light, and also from Ephrim's light, from that light, and from the light of Fantasma, everything down here does get color in a flash. And when it does, everybody here gains a sense of color, too. So she goes from being this gray, dried out husk, to being the young, vibrant Rosalind Marroweater that we saw during Marielda, at the end of the game. The kind of ghoulish figures are clearly just, under different light, are halflings. Still holding bones and blood from their mouths, and still nude, but you can see them as this thing they once were, instead of their current versions. But under the light of the crescent sun, there is this other thing. There is this gray, dark version of them. And I want to be clear, neither of those is wrong, neither of those is a weird illusion. You are not being tricked. Light just shows things differently.

JACK: Is this leverage? She has no weapon. Or, no visible weapon anymore.

AUSTIN: No, you didn't like disarm her. You've knocked her blade aside [JACK: oh, okay] so that you can get in close to attack.

JACK: Alright. Hack and Slash is [AUSTIN: totally] 2d6?

AUSTIN: Yep, plus strength.

JACK: Uh...

AUSTIN: It's just strength, Hack and Slash is strength.

JACK: Ah, right, okay. [pause] That's a 7.

AUSTIN: That is a 7.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: So, on a 7 to 9 for Hack and Slash, you either— you deal damage to the enemy, and the enemy also gets to attack you back. So yeah, you're able to— are you trying to give her that kick off the side? Is that the plan?

JACK: I think I'm just going to try and wound her, actually. I think seeing the sparks confused Lem.

AUSTIN: Yeah, fair. Alright, so, do your damage.

JACK: That is...6.

AUSTIN: Nice. She does 8 back to you?

JACK: [alarmed] 8?

AUSTIN: Uh huh. So 6 plus 2 piercing. Your blade sinks deep into her, into like her side, and she leans forward and bites into your neck—

JACK: Oh, good grief.

SYLVIA: Jesus.

AUSTIN: [cont.] —and like rips out a bunch of skin and muscle.

JACK: Wow.

AUSTIN: But, you've— she's clearly like, [sucks in air as if in pain], like it's bad when you stab her in the side. That is not a fun place to get stabbed.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: But she yet continues. And, this close to her? She smells really bad, Lem.

JACK: Oh...

AUSTIN: And something else happens. You can't— you go to pull your blade out, and you can't move. And you sense the poison running through your blood from the wound on your neck.

JACK: Oh no! Okay, I'm gonna shout to the others that they're poisonous.

AUSTIN: It's not a great thing. It's not a great place to be.

SYLVIA: Not a great thing, no.

KEITH: I have a bow. Can I use it to try to finish off Marroweater?

AUSTIN: You're too close to use that bow, you'd have to make distance. Otherwise, you'll get— unless you have a move that lets you use your bow from short ranges safely.

KEITH: It's a short— hold on, let me see. Well, I have two different ranged weapons, so let me see real quick. My short bow is Near, oh, it's a Near weapon. Ragged bow, Near.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Near you still have to back away.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Close is closer than Near.

KEITH: Aren't I...

AUSTIN: You're in Hand or Close range right now.

KEITH: No, I'm talking about— 'cause I'm all the way to the left.

AUSTIN: You're here. And so there's one right in front of you.

KEITH: Right, no, I'm talking about— I want to finish off Marroweater.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah. If you do that, you will get hit by the one that's right in front of you. That's fine, you can make that decision. But like, that's— this one isn't going to stop attacking you, just because you change your target.

KEITH: Can I... Can I Defy Danger to instead run up to Marroweater and do a melee attack?

AUSTIN: Totally. If you fail, again, you will be hit by this one.

KEITH: Okay, that's fine. So, I'm gonna do Defy Danger strength.

AUSTIN: This needs to be a Defy Danger dex, because it's about making distance between this one and the one that's with you.

KEITH: Okay, sure.

AUSTIN: Or, between you.

KEITH: 10.

AUSTIN: There you go. So yeah, you like bounce from table to table.

KEITH: So I'm going to transform into a bear.

AUSTIN: Give me that.

KEITH: I got three hold.

AUSTIN: That's 11, get three moves.

KEITH: And then I'm going to trample. I'm going to trample Rosemerrow.

AUSTIN: Is that a special bear move?

KEITH: That's one of the bear, yeah. That's one of like the large animal moves. That's a 9.

AUSTIN: What's trample do specifically? Is that like a specific...

KEITH: I think it's just descriptive.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: I knock them over, and it does—

AUSTIN: Yeah, knocking over is totally, that's a good one.

KEITH: Yeah, and it does normal dangerous animal damage.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Of 4.

AUSTIN: So, 4?

KEITH: Yeah, damage.

AUSTIN: Okay. You knock her off the— with Trample, you kind of push her over and knock her down off of the altar, but she— and she scurries back down at that point, very wounded but not yet dead. And you've lost sight of her as she scurries down the side of the wall. Blake has jumped up on one of the tables and is shooting their crossbow at these things and has taken out two of them in the meantime, but there remain a bunch. There's like one big group on the east now, which has one, two, three, [SYLVIA: oof] four, five, six of them.

JACK: We've got to try and leave. Like...

KEITH: So there's six on the right, and there's one on the right— or, on the left.

AUSTIN: There's six over here, and there's one on Mother Glory.

SYLVIA: Is she doing okay?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: She's fighting it? Okay.

KEITH: Oh, okay.

SYLVIA: She's doing okay. Under the light of the crescent, she is a giant wolf.

JACK: Is there a— am I feeling the effects of the poison? What...

AUSTIN: You can't move!

JACK: Oh, oh! Right.

AUSTIN: You're stuck in front of the altar, like frozen in place.

JACK: Oh, god. Help!

AUSTIN: Fero definitely saved your life, [JACK: yeah] like one hundred percent. Except that there is this one more that is coming right towards you.

JACK: Does the... I'm having to ask Ephrim this. Does the light of the crescent sun reveal anything about the door?

SYLVIA: Ooh! I'm gonna shine it on it and see if it does.

AUSTIN: I just tapped my head three times, which means smart, we now know. [Jack laughs]
Yeah, there's totally a handle that you can clearly see in the light of the crescent moon. The crescent sun.

JACK: Open the door!

AUSTIN: Lenny is like,

AUSTIN (as Lenny): I'm all tied up, I'm in the papoose! And so is my man Isaac!

SYLVIA: Corey isn't.

AUSTIN: Corey goes like,

AUSTIN (as Corey): Oh, right, me. [laughter]

AUSTIN: And grabs the handle and pushes it open, revealing the stairwell back away.

JACK: Oh my god, okay.

SYLVIA: Can the— okay, I'm gonna run over and deal with the one that's rushing to Lem and Fero.

AUSTIN: Okay. Give me a roll.

JACK: Oh, shit, wait, actually, maybe close the door. [laughs]

SYLVIA: 8.

AUSTIN: Alright, you attack with int because you're using your magic sword.

SYLVIA: Yes, I'm using my Burning Brand.

AUSTIN: Cool cool cool.

SYLVIA: Aw. 2 damage.

AUSTIN: That is enough.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: You place your magic, burning sword through this thing, and it catches fire and turns to dust like a vampire from Buffy. [Nick chuckles] And you are like [hisses like a vampire].

SYLVIA: Fero, are you able to pick up Lem as a bear, or should I help? [Austin laughs]

JACK: Oh my god.

KEITH: I can totally do it as a bear, yeah.

SYLVIA: I mean, like, the other option is Mother Glory, but she's a little preoccupied right now.

AUSTIN (as Mother Glory): Doing my best.

AUSTIN: And she like grabs this thing from her back, and then tosses it out into the sky, the like gray sky, [SYLVIA, softly: god] and then grabs a throwing dagger from her belt and tosses it up after it, and like, skeet shooting. [Sylvia laughs] Like, bop, catches it, pshhh, and it does the same sort of like Buffy vampire...

SYLVIA: She's the best.

AUSTIN: She's very good. So yeah, she's dealt with hers and has now turned her attention back this way. So yeah, you're carrying Lem out, Fero?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Hey, Fantasma.

NICK: Yep.

AUSTIN: There are six of these ghouls [NICK: oh boy] all around you. What do you do?

NICK: I did not prepare invisibility. [Jack laughs]

AUSTIN: You know who did?

NICK: What.

AUSTIN: Isaac. And he is gone.

NICK: Oh, no! [Jack laughs] He's out the door?

AUSTIN: He might be out the door!

JACK: Oh no. Oh no!

AUSTIN: You turn and see him begin to hop and whisper a few words under his breath, and then he vanishes.

NICK: Oh, man. Alright.

JACK: Jesus christ.

NICK: Can I polymorph myself?

AUSTIN: Yeah, sure. It's not Polymorph Other, right?

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Totally.

NICK: It just that the weirding is— or, the— the weirding is word. [Austin laughs] “Your touch reshapes a creature...” I mean, I guess I'm a creature, but.

AUSTIN: You're a creature. So what do you want to be? [Nick sighs thoughtfully] Are there limits? Let's see, Polymorph: “Your touch reshapes a creature entirely. They stay in the form you craft until you cast a spell. Describe the new shape of your craft, including any stat changes, significant adaptations, or major weaknesses. The GM will then tell you one or more of these...” And then I'll tell you those based on your roll.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Or, I guess I just, I'll tell you those things based on what it is, actually, is what I'll do.

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: So, what does Fantasma want to turn into?

NICK: I want to turn into something scary. What would scare these things?

AUSTIN: Mmm. That could be a Spout Lore.

NICK: Okay, yeah. I'll do that.

AUSTIN: Give me a roll, give me an int.

NICK: 13.

AUSTIN: Nice work. You know what would scare them a lot?

NICK: What?

AUSTIN: Prince Clapperclaw.

NICK: Ha ha, okay. Do I know enough about...

AUSTIN: He's a big fuckin' wolf man.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It would be a variation, but like...close enough.

NICK: Okay, here's my cast polymorph. 11.

AUSTIN: That does it. So I then still say, though...what are the three things that I have to say?

NICK: "The form will be unstable and temporary, the creature's mind will be altered as well, or the form has an unintended benefit or weakness."

AUSTIN: Hmm. Okay. So, the intended benefit that you get here is nice, which is that they are terrified of you. The...it might just be that it's temporary. Mmm. No, I think that there is a...
[laughs lightly] an unintentional thing here, which is that you actually are stuck like this for a I—
it's the opposite of being temporary. You don't get to decide when this stops.

NICK: [laughs] Okay. Good.

AUSTIN: So, Fantasma is a big werewolf man now, basically.

JACK: Ha!

AUSTIN: So, what's your...we'll fuck with it when we need to. But actually, first, give me a Parley?

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: To see how many of these you can scare off. Or, actually, you know what it might be? It might be...

NICK: Is it...probably just charisma?

AUSTIN: I think it's actually basically Turn Undead. It's the equivalent of Turn Undead. So I think one of the moves that Prince Clapperclaw has is Turn Undead for these halflings.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which is traditionally roll wisdom, but for him it's strength. And his strength is going to be higher than what your strength is, because you are him now.

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: And I think he has— it's a plus 3. So give me a 2d6 plus 3.

NICK: 11.

AUSTIN: Boom! There's an 11. What do you do? Like how do you...what is the way that you scare them?

NICK: I just like bare my teeth, retract— er, no. Retract?

AUSTIN: What's the word...

NICK: Untract? [Sylvia chuckles]

AUSTIN: There is a word for this.

NICK: Yeah. My claws come out.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Unsheath, maybe?

AUSTIN: Unsheath.

NICK: Unsheath my claws, and then I just bellow. I roar at them as loud as I possibly can.

AUSTIN: At that, Mother Glory also joins you in bellowing, and again, under the light of the crescent sun, she turns into what, you know, is very clearly the same type of wolf that Prince Clapperclaw is, [NICK: right] and joins you.

NICK: Oh, it's so good!

AUSTIN: And her roar goes from being this hyena-like— you know, it's loud, but kind of high-pitched [NICK: yeah] scream, to as the light passes over her, becomes this wolf howl slash roar. And they break. They don't fully fall back, two of them keep closing in on you, but I'm gonna just say they're like stunned, and so you very easily dispatch them. One.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: And then I'm gonna say Blake dispatches the other. And you're able to escape, if that's what you're doing. Is that what you're doing?

NICK: Yes. Yes.

SYLVIA: Yep.

AUSTIN: Okay. About halfway up the stairs, you see Isaac, having fallen over, and he can't move anymore, having dispelled his invisibility. And you're able to grab him. [Sylvia chuckles]

KEITH: What a slimy fucker.

NICK: I'm gonna grab him in my teeth.

AUSTIN: Nice. Good, good.

SYLVIA: Eugh.

AUSTIN (as Isaac): [scared] Ohhh, who's this big wolf? Why— whoah boy.

NICK (as Fantasma): [growly wolfman voice] You can call me Professor. [Austin and Keith laugh]

AUSTIN: Good. Perfect.

SYLVIA: That's really good.

AUSTIN: Alright. You get back to the top, and you're back in that vault with everybody. I'm guessing you're gonna do your vole trick? [pause]

NICK: Keith.

AUSTIN: Fero?

KEITH: Oh, yes, sorry, I'm gonna do the vole trick.

AUSTIN: Alright. I'm not gonna make you roll for the vole trick, but... You know, you dig your way out. It just takes a little while, because you— I really...I think a mole would have just done it better.

KEITH: A what? [laughter]

AUSTIN: A mole would have just done it better!

KEITH: It is a mole!

JACK: It's a vole!

AUSTIN: No, you said vole!

KEITH: In my— I said it before, and I'll say it again. In my heart, I meant *mole*. And—

AUSTIN: Well, it's a vole that has a mole in its heart. That's what I'll say. And it digs its damn little claws out.

JACK: Tiny, tiny claws.

AUSTIN: Giant tiny claws.

NICK: Voles are still really good at digging. I mean, probably not as good as a mole, but.

AUSTIN: Totally, they're just...just like a giant vole is just smaller than a giant mole. But you dig your way out.

NICK: [laughs] Next time you're at a party with Fero, by the way, ask him to do the vole trick. It's something else. Really good

AUSTIN: It's something else. So, as you dig up out of the museum, you emerge up top, and see, of course, that the museum has pretty much all burnt down. Including the old museum. The new wing and the old wing both. Lenny is not pleased.

AUSTIN (as Lenny): I can't believe you've done this. You know, there was... Whatever the mage did, there was real history in there too, you know.

AUSTIN: Shakes his head.

KEITH (as Fero): No there wasn't. Nobody cares about you.

LENNY: Lots of people care about me.

FERO: No they don't.

LENNY: And lots more will.

FERO: Oh, sure. Blow it out your ass.

LENNY: What are you gonna do? How are you gonna make people not care about me?

FERO: Um—

LENNY: You're not. Here's what you're gonna do. You're gonna go back and hit the road.

FERO: I'm gonna tell everybody that you peed your pants, that's what I'm gonna do, I'm gonna spread a severe rumor—

LENNY: Who cares? Nobody cares.

FERO: —about your pee pants.

LENNY: You're a child, Fero.

FERO: Nobody's gonna want to vote for a pee pants man! [Sylvia laughs]

LENNY: That's not how political change happens, son.

FERO: Wait, which part?

LENNY: Any of it. You wanna stay here and make my life hell, that'd be great. I'd have an opponent, I could duel with you, it'd be a whole— we could do a show, it would be great. But what you're gonna do is you're gonna leave. That's what you did before. You say all day you care about the future of Rosemerrow, [scoffs] and then you go off with some orc and go off on adventures! You're just a little boy. You'll learn how the world works.

KEITH: Is there anybody around?

AUSTIN: Oh. No, this is...the middle of the night. Which is strange, but it doesn't quite hit you yet, [KEITH: okay] but we'll get there in a second.

KEITH: I punch him in the stomach.

AUSTIN: Okay. [Sylvia laughs]

KEITH: Like really— like, hard.

AUSTIN: He crumples to the ground [KEITH: okay] and pees his pants.

KEITH: Perfect.

AUSTIN: And like coughs up some blood. So the thing about it still being night is, none of you have watches, I don't think? But you're pretty sure it should be like sunrise? But there's no sun in the sky. And there's no moons either. And it takes you a moment to look for them and you find them, and they are eclipsing each other. The two moons and Hieron. And the stars are brighter than you've ever seen them, and closer too. And you don't know what to think about that. Who else has stuff?

NICK: I've got that book.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So, in the next— do you just like— we can just time jump here, a little bit. You go to Isaac's place?

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. Isaac explains to you that he is part of a group called The Disciples of Fantasma.

ISAAC: Listen, we just, uh...you know, we... After the University fell and all that, your teachings became very popular with some of us. We realized we'd been listening to all those other professors all those years, but it was you who had all the answers, and it wasn't just...it wasn't just the words you taught, it was like the way you lived. That's how we're gonna save everybody. You know, we all have...we want to make a world where you can go someplace by yourself and just really study and think and make yourself better. We want to build...it's like a new university, you know? With like a new...but it's gonna be expensive. So I needed to make the money.

NICK: Uh, I'm not Clapperclaw anymore, right?

AUSTIN: No, not at this point. You do spend that day, we do— Fanartists, if you want a day of Fantasma hiding [NICK: laughs] or going to the market in the dark as a big wolfman, you can do that. That happened, that's canon.

NICK: Fantasma scratching his chin with his foot wearing robes [AUSTIN: yes, yes] as a wolfman. Okay. So.

AUSTIN: He gives you the book, by the way.

NICK: Okay.

ISAAC: You know, I'm not high up in the new Disciples, obviously. I'm not— I'm just someone who...thinks that the world's in danger, and it's one more thing we can do to help, you know?

FANTASMO: I admire your convictions. I don't admire the way you go about them.

ISAAC: That's fair.

FANTASMO: Who is higher up? Who's running this?

ISAAC: Pr- Professor Arrell.

AUSTIN: Arrell was an adjunct when you were there. You didn't know him that well.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: He TA'ed one of your classes before he got his degree, so to speak.

FANTASMO: Where is Arrell now?

ISAAC: I don't know. He's not here, so much? He can be in a bunch of places. The way— [hushed] the thing I was trying to do was, if I got enough money together, I was gonna go to the Archives. And they have a thing there that can open the door to where he is. And once we had that, we could really start building the university.

FANTASMO: [sternly] Where is he?

ISAAC: It's like a different plane, man. I don't know, I'm not— I never graduated, you know that. [chuckles] But here, listen. I'm gonna give you the book. The book has the answers you need. I'm gonna give you a lot of the money I got from this. I need a little bit to pay rent and get food and all— you know I got family.

FANTASMO: I don't want your money.

ISAAC: Okay, well. Here's the book. It's in there, it's something about...a key. Something about a key. They have it at the Archives. It was good seeing you, Professor.

AUSTIN: He like scratches the back of his head.

NICK: I— Fantasma's already opened the book and kind of didn't even hear him say that.

AUSTIN: [chuckles] Of course.

NICK: But then, after like a beat, he snaps the book shut again and looks up, adjusts his grandpa glasses in Isaac's direction, and says,

FANTASMO: I'm sorry that you learned the wrong lessons from me. I should have been more careful with the lessons I was really teaching. The way to solve these problems is not by running and hiding.

ISAAC: Aw geez.

NICK: And then he just turns and walks out the door.

ISAAC: Hmm.

AUSTIN: Isaac sort of sighs and then, you know, takes a seat, and then we zoom out to the rest of Rosemerrow. Who else has stuff they want to do here?

SYLVIA: I have a couple things I want to do. One bigger than the other.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: But first thing I want to ask though is, so I have that forearm guard from the...Anchor.

AUSTIN: Yeah, the Anchor.

SYLVIA: Is that Ordennan steel?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it is.

SYLVIA: Can I melt it down with my handcrafted ability?

AUSTIN: No.

SYLVIA: No? Okay.

AUSTIN: No. You can— ehh, you know, with enough time, you could. What do you want to do? It's probably a roll.

SYLVIA: I want to make it into— so, my plan is to make it into a— is to address the church, [AUSTIN: right] and to make it into a symbol of Samoths instead of the forearm guard.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm. So like—

SYLVIA: To basically show that Ordenna is not the true power that the church is.

AUSTIN: Right. So here's the— the thing that's weird is like— normally you can...you noticed it from fighting them, too.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like, you cut them with fire, but not with the holy part of your fire, not with the magic part of your fire.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: And so like, you can super heat this and try to remold it? But it's going to take you some time.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Because it's just like, you're naturally smithing it. You can't— your ability to just reshape it into what you want isn't working on it.

SYLVIA: Mmm, okay.

AUSTIN: It resists that. So, yeah. You'd have to shape it the way an Ordennan smith does, basically. What's the other one?

SYLVIA: I want to get a case for the crescent. Just a simple steel case to keep it in.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. That's probably like ten gold.

SYLVIA: Okay. That's exactly as much as I have.

AUSTIN: Well, there you go. You get a nice case for it.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And you can strap that to your back.

SYLVIA: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. Lem?

JACK: I've got the dictionary, [AUSTIN: mm-hmm, yeah] which is what I came for.

AUSTIN: Where are you staying?

JACK: I think... So, I think Rosemerrow probably has some really, like, serious fake folksy inns?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah.

JACK: In the same way that Americans sometimes try and make English pubs.

AUSTIN: Yes. [Sylvia laughs softly]

JACK: And I reckon I'm staying at one of those. I think it's—

AUSTIN: What's it called?

JACK: I think it's...it's probably called like The Rose and Crown?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: Which is like a classic English pub name but also works really well here.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And I think it's just, it's like... it's so bland and serviceable, and in that respect kind of tolerable.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

JACK: It's like a room and a bed and. Like it's probably slightly overwarm, even in the winter, [Austin laughs] 'cause they have all these big fires stoked constantly.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

JACK: So I think that's where I'm staying. The poison has worn off, presumably.

AUSTIN: Yeah. It takes more time than you would like.

JACK: Yeah, you know when you—

AUSTIN: You're like, ah, it'll be thirty minutes. And then it's thirteen hours.

JACK: You know when you're really cold, and like your jaw aches, and your fingers get stiff.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm.

JACK: I think even like a couple of days, after I'm still feeling it in my joints.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. You receive a missive, from like a pigeon, that says two things. First, it's from Morbash, and it says: "I've heard things went poorly, [Jack laughs softly] but hopefully you obtained what you needed."

JACK: How? How did he hear things went poorly?

AUSTIN: I told you, there was another Archivist at that party.

JACK: There sure was, I guess! [laughs]

AUSTIN: There's the matter of the second thing, too. Which is, he says: "For the record, your failure is perhaps overshadowed by the discovery that my associate made there. There has been lots of talk in the Archive of the strange magic that halfling did. People are...there's debate. There's arguing."

JACK: Which halfling?

AUSTIN: Isaac. The illusionist.

JACK: Oh, god.

AUSTIN: The one who showed that there's a way that magic could [JACK: yeah] replace real things with other versions of things.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is just like...and I think Lem can connect the dots, here. That is a fundamentally strange thing for the Archives, and for semioticians and pattern magicians, like. If you can just make a thing the thing you need, then do you need to go collect it? Is that really the same pattern magic?

JACK: Yeah. Like, the orcs don't really bandy words like this around, because it's not part [AUSTIN: mm-hmm] of their kind of working vocabulary, but we're getting close to things like heresy, here.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Right. Or, to the solution.

JACK: Right, yeah, exactly.

AUSTIN: Right? Like, oh, fuck, like we've been waiting for it to be— we've been waiting for the 130th rain of the season so that we could collect twelve drops of it for this one spell we've been

trying to do. What if we just fuckin' make other raindrops into the 130th raindrops? Or, you know, rainstorm, you know, things.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so like, that's a way easier way to do that. And so, on that note, he also gives you— the message comes with enough money to pay for the travel of Isaac, to bring him to the Archives. You are under instruction.

JACK: Oh. Good grief. Okay. Whoof.

AUSTIN: And I'm going to— I'm actually just going to assume that you manage to pull that off. My only question is whether he comes willingly or not. What do you think?

JACK: Uh...how far away are the Archives, in terms of days travel?

AUSTIN: It's gonna be a trip. Let's go to the map really quick. You're at Rosemerrow. There is like a little bit of a...there's a road up to— this kind of old road from the old days that's been kind of grown over, but it's a bit of a trip. A couple weeks, week or two? Before you get really to the New Archives?

JACK: Oof.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we'll see.

JACK: Yeah. I think he comes with. I think— to be honest, I think Lem is more reluctant to have him [AUSTIN: yeah] than he is reluctant to come on the journey.

AUSTIN: Fair. Totally. There's also...I'm saving Lem for last, because it's a big thing. Sorry, I'm saving Fero for last, because it's a bigger thing.

JACK: [quietly] Oh my god.

SYLVIA: Can I try and do a thing?

AUSTIN: What do you want to do?

SYLVIA: I figured out a way I can do what I meant to do, but without reshaping the forearm.

AUSTIN: Mm-hmm! Totally.

SYLVIA: So, I think maybe the day after or so, Ephrim goes to the largest church that— I think they only have one, really, honestly, in Rosemerrow.

AUSTIN: There's like one big one, and there are some other smaller versions. Or smaller like—yeah.

SYLVIA: There's some smaller ones, but they only have one like proper church, right?

AUSTIN: Yep, totally.

SYLVIA: So, he goes there, and...there's, obviously he doesn't handle most of the speaking there, there's like various [AUSTIN: mm-hmm] preachers and everything. But whenever he visits, he usually talks, and when he comes up, he's carrying something just wrapped in a cloth. And it's big and it's heavy, and he just starts with:

EPHRIM: Over the past few weeks that I've been here, I've noticed a growing fear about our neighbors to the west of us. They come with strange weapons, strange creatures, and I've heard a lot of people fearing that they are just unstoppable, that Ordenna is the greatest force in all of our land.

SYLVIA: And he drops the forearm of the Anchor, just like on the floor right in front of him.

EPHRIM: There is nothing that the fire of Samoths cannot burn through and cannot stop. Remember this, the next time you find yourself questioning what truly is in control of this realm. Because it is not Ordenna or any of their creations. It is his light and his power that protects us all.

SYLVIA: And then he lets the priest come back and start talking again. And he goes over to a little altar, and he takes a candlestick, [AUSTIN: mm-hmm] and he melts it down. And next to—they have symbols of Samoths in pretty much every church, I think.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Or at least in this one, they definitely do. He makes another symbol that's about the same size, and it is a fist holding a crescent shape. And he puts it down right next to it—actually he puts it a little bit in front of it. And he leaves.

AUSTIN: Yeah, great.

SYLVIA: Yeah. [someone chuckles]

AUSTIN: Ohh. Fero.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: How you doing?

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: So, Mother Glory like goes back to the woods, with the knowledge that she was right about everything. But before she goes, she asks you if you intend to help.

FERO: Uh, help how?

MOTHER GLORY: I don't often see halflings who can put aside what they believe about their world to see how things really are, to help out. You would be a great help for us if you could stay and be, you know, a voice for us, introduce us to people. People look at us, and they hear how angry we are, that we have the right to be, and they don't believe us. But they'd believe you.

FERO: Yeah, I'm into it. Let's do it.

MOTHER GLORY: Alright.

FERO: I thought you were gonna be like, "ah yeah, let's go to— will you help us when we go to war." I'd be like, ah, I probably can't go to war, bit too busy. But yeah, I can talk to people.

MOTHER GLORY: War is easy. Politics is long and hard. You think I became alpha overnight? It took me thirteen years.

FERO: That is long.

MOTHER GLORY: That's what I'm asking.

FERO: Yeah. No, sure, yeah. I'm in it. I'm in it to win it, M.G.!

MOTHER GLORY: You're serious? I can believe you, I've had other people lie to me before. They'll say, oh yeah, of course we'll help. [music begins: "Inside" by Jack de Quidt] And then night turns to day, and they catch a boat out. Their aunt calls.

FERO: I mean, I don't really know many of these people anymore, it's fine. It's not like, oh, I saw my friends, and now I'm embarrassed to talk about all the stuff. Nah, I don't care, it's fine.

MOTHER GLORY: Alright. Glad to hear it.

AUSTIN: So like, her request is serious. Her request is like, Fero shouldn't leave.

KEITH: Shouldn't leave the town at all.

AUSTIN: The city. Yeah.

KEITH: Okay, well, everybody else is gonna leave.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: Fero, you agreed to that really fast.

KEITH: Well, I didn't think she meant *right now*, stay right now!

JACK: [laughs softly] You promised her!

AUSTIN: Change isn't a thing you get to do if you leave. The gnolls need an ally who stays and fights.

[song continues to the end]