

## Winter in Hieron 19: Make The Spring Last Forever

**Transcriber:** Rhys

AUSTIN: Ephrim, you stand on a disc of rock that hangs above a rolling pit of black and violet lava. Above you, glass serves as both ceiling for you and floor for that higher level, and you can see the abstract dancing of figures above. Your lord, Samoths, stands in front of you, robe tied around his waist. He puts his hammer down on his workbench, and calls you towards him. He has a gravity all his own, but you *could* resist if you want. You *could* stand in place. What do you do?

SYLVIA: I walk to him, for sure.

AUSTIN: He like, nods, and reaches out to embrace you. Do you--do you go in to hug Samoths?

SYLVIA: Oh, Ephrim probably like collapses into him, almost.

AUSTIN: He like... as you collapse into him, he hugs you, and he pulls you close, and the bolts, the--the Ordennan steel bolts push through your back, and you feel his warmth, like... cauterize and--and seal the wounds. Um... he kisses you once on the forehead, and then pushes you and like holds you by your shoulders.

AUSTIN (as Samoths): You have not disappointed me, prince. You dealt with Highwater with the ingenuity of my name. And that is when I knew it was time to call you to me. I did not expect it to be so soon, though.

SYLVIA: I think Ephrim's still like kinda shell-shocked, and is just like:

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): What's... going on? Why--how am I here?

AUSTIN: That's fair. Also, quick reminder, Highwater was the cobbin spy of the Church of the Dark Sun—

SYLVIA: Yep.

AUSTIN: --that, that uh, Ephrim kind of like... what's the name of that move again?

SYLVIA: Uh... Moth to the Flame, I believe.

AUSTIN: Right, Moth to the Flame.

JACK: Ephrim fooled--Ephrim fooled, tricked into thinking he was dead, and then promptly solved that plan by dying.

AUSTIN: (laughing) By dying, yeah.

SYLVIA: I'm not gonna make a liar outta anybody, okay?

AUSTIN: No, true, clear [UNSURE] [00:01:50] I think Samoths sees your doubt in your, in your face? There's a look of recognition about that doubt. And he says...

AUSTIN (as Samoths): Son, you can remain here, and work with me... if you don't want to go back. I do not make that offer lightly. But... there is work to be done... I am stuck here. And I--I *need* a silver hand in your world. You carry the title, but will you be my fist? Will you be my palm?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I... There's so much work to be done. I can't stay here. Yes.

AUSTIN (as Samoths): Good. Then I give you new duty. There is a man you travel with; Fero Feritas. He is marked by my kin. He is a man of ego and broken promises, but his attitude is like ours. It's one that looks towards a new day. He is not like those who give him his power. They... they stitch away endlessly, trying to hold together an unnecessary past that is rightly being torn apart and replaced. Turn Fero to me. Bring him into our shadow's light, and show how he walks under it already. He wishes to pull the weeds of the past out by the root. We are exhuming past itself. Will you do this?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yes, my light.

AUSTIN (as Samoths): And... there is another. The bard you travel with. Hmm. He carries something that is not his. It is mine, and by extension it is yours. Take it from him, recover it, and have its power.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): ...If it's what you wish, it'll be done.

AUSTIN (as Samoths): It is not what I wish. It simply is.

AUSTIN: He turns back to the anvil, um... and lifts a hammer again. And you can sense... what did Ephrim--in Ephrim's greatest dreams, like, what does this--what did he hope this would feel like? What did he imagine?

SYLVIA: Meeting Samoths would be like?

AUSTIN: Yeah, in--in, yeah.

SYLVIA: There is... a sense within him that he--when it would be time for him to be Samothēs that he would find answers about things, and... and a comfort to it, and I think that the comfort might be there for this, but the answers definitely aren't.

AUSTIN: He... reaches for the hammer, and then senses that in Ephrim. And then puts the hammer back down. And then like... very casually leans on the anvil, in a way that--y'know, there are lots of statues of gods? You don't normally see them at rest in this way. You see them at rest in thrones, um, in a sense that that is not resting, it's just a different sort of, like, divine labor, which is like oh, attending to court. This is Samothēs at rest. Leaning backwards on his tools, and like, crossing arms.

AUSTIN (as Samothēs): You have questions, son. Do not be afraid to ask.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I just... Since I've been able to do the things that I can do, I've never understood... why I was chosen for this. It's just always been at the back of my head, gnawing away, that why I am--why I have been given this title, why I have been given this position, these gifts... when there are people who... Like, Bernard, who taught me, *he* would--I feel like would be so much more suited to this. He is so much stronger, with all of this, and I... I get so *lost*, all the time, just trying to figure out what I'm supposed to be doing with these abilities you've given me, and I just... Why me?

AUSTIN: He shakes his head.

AUSTIN (as Samothēs): Does the bridge ask why it is walked on?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (sighs)

AUSTIN (as Samothēs): You are... Ephrim. I am kept here, below. I am... *pinned* here. It is incredibly hard for me to reach where you walk. I saw a window. A moment that I could reach up. And... give you... part of me. There was a sense of possibility in you. I saw you there, a child, taken from place to place. Chaos. Fear. Darkness. I sensed... a origin similar to mine. Perhaps that is less dogmatic an answer than you wished. There was no prophecy here. There was no... divine guidance. There was only opportunity. But that is what is behind all ingenuity.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): All right. Thank you.

AUSTIN: He nods.

AUSTIN (as Samothēs): The summer is coming. It will not be good, but if we can make the spring last forever, that will be something. Hm?

*[Inside begins playing]*

AUSTIN: And he gives you this *very* toothy smile. Another thing that's never been represented in any of the depictions of Samothēs you've seen.

SYLVIA: Ephrim like smiles back but is like, really shy about it, cause he's like, 'God is smiling at me, what the fuck?'

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Yeah.

SYLVIA: And... he just sorta nods, and he's like:

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I'll--I'll do what I have to. (pauses, exhales) I won't let you down.

AUSTIN (as Samothēs): Stay focused. Do not make enemies of the Dark Sun. Do not make enemies of any who bear my name. Move forward. Confront those who would stall us in the past, or those who would push *just* too far, and you will do justice to my name.

AUSTIN: And he turns back to his hammer and anvil and lifts it--the hammer, not the anvil. And then slams it down on whatever he's working on, and the second it hits, you wake back up in the snow, still covered in blood, in this weird false sunlight.

*[Inside stops playing]*

AUSTIN: Um, hey everybody, uh, uh, (incoherent noise), for a hot second there it looked like Ephrim was dying. Devar is like:

AUSTIN (as Devar): Oh, shit! Oh, *shit!* I killed him.

AUSTIN: And like, is running over, and is like shaking you, Ephrim.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (strained) Y'know, it hurts when you do that.

AUSTIN (as Devar): Ah! Wuh--I didn't kill him.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (pained) Nope!

JACK (as Lem): No, he's fine, he's--he's fine, I think he's--I think he's good. I think he made it. Good shot! I mean--you hit him pretty good.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (sighs) Thanks. Honestly. Rather... rather have that happen than be choked to death by a ghost.

SYLVIA: And then Ephrim kinda gets up really shakily?

AUSTIN: Um... Devar like, when you stand up, the two Ordennan bolts are just on the ground behind you? As if they'd passed all the way through.

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: And Devar looks left and right, and then like grabs them, and resheaths them. In his pouch of--in his quiver of bolts.

JACK: Did we explain why Devar has Ordennan bolts? Did he just buy them?

AUSTIN: They were on the cart--no, he just had those, yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I think he... brought them...

JACK: (overlapping) Presumably they're a thing you can buy, they're just really expensive.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Oh--it's because he's just like--they're incredibly expensive, he probably has four of them, right? And he... if you recall, was like way more superstitious about the undead than y'all? Um... was just generally not into... was like not interested in finding 'the good of the undead' or anything like that, so.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Just as, also, I just wanna give... So before we get further in, I just wanna give a recap, basically, about what everyone--what's going on in the world, generally. You were all headed towards the, uh, the orc--the New Archives of the orcs, um, where you believe Arrell is also headed to do something, it's not really clear what he's going there to do... You know that the orcs are in the middle of a bit of a schism around the notion of illusory magic and using illusions in pattern magic rituals--in semiotic rituals, instead of using real things. Um... what else has been happening, what else--what are the other things. The Dark Sun's influence is spreading, the so-called plague of undead is spreading, Ordenna has invaded Velas, um...

JACK: Oh, we've encountered for the first time undead that are, um... corrupted is the wrong word, but they are suffering the effects of death in a--in a more literal way than the way we're used to.

SYLVIA: Yeah, they're like--actively decaying, and not responsive.

AUSTIN: Right. You've seen multiple different types of that, I'd say.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'd say that you found undead who, uh... are decaying and stuck in place, almost in shock about their death? And you found one who was marching west, towards Rosemerrow, who believed he could find help there. And he was revealed to be part of a crew of like, undead bandits? Who were...

KEITH: Dicks?

AUSTIN: I mean they're bandits, yeah, so yeah they were dicks. Dicks and also like, y'know, had crossbow bolts and arrows sticking out of their backs and shoulders, and were like living it up, y'know? Taking [UNCLEAR] [00:13:25] --

JACK: But were like, sentient, these aren't like zombies, they like knew what they were doing.

AUSTIN: No. They knew what they were doing, yeah yeah yeah. And then Corsica Neue and the Unstill showed up. And they... I *guess* are more--for Lem, anyway, Lem and Fero, feel like the undead that you saw in--in Nacre, sort of? In that they seem... I don't know what the right word is for them. But like, they seem like they are at *ease* with their state in a way that maybe the rest are not? It's hard to say. Anyway, they're here now, and--

KEITH: Yeah, so when Corsica Neue showed up, the first thing Fero thought was 'ah, this is comforting!'

(Jack laughs)

AUSTIN: Is that true? Is that how he felt?

KEITH: No! No. No no no.

AUSTIN: Okay. What *did* he feel?

KEITH: Umm... worried.

AUSTIN: Fair. Yeah, that's fair. Um... so you were at Baron's Gate, still, and Corsica Neue and co just arrived from the east, um... the people have escaped that tower, and that kind of fortress town, I think the... I'd say seven out of the ten bandits or whatever, like seven tenths of the bandits drop their weapons and begin to run into the trees to the south, but the remaining like three tenths drop their weapons and begin heading towards Corsica. Who is now like, trotting her horse--what's slower than a trot? Is a trot slow? I always get my horse terms mixed up.

KEITH: Walk, trot, canter, gallop.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so a trot. More than a--mm, maybe it's a walk.

KEITH: No problem.

AUSTIN: A canter is pretty fast. It's not a gallop, but it's... okay. Yeah, I think she, I think she trots, then, towards the--no, she walks, it's a slow, like, determined steps, she and the rest of the Unstill that she has with her. And, uh, and calls out also, and says:

AUSTIN (as Corsica): The mortals who remain: if you head towards the New Archives, travel with us. We will prevent any attack. You will be safe with the Unstill.

JACK (as Lem): Why are you going to the Archives?

AUSTIN: Her, like, purple and brown bruised mouth gives you a little--a little smile.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Because we live there. You've been gone long, Archivist, have you?

JACK (as Lem): Uh--yeah. Since when?

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Suppose it's been a matter of months. Come, I'll tell you on the way.

JACK: Yeah. Lem--Lem spurs his horse towards the Unstill.

AUSTIN (as Devar): (miserably) Maaaaan!

KEITH: Um, just real quick.

JACK: (laughing) (whispered) Devar. [as lem????] [00:16:10]

KEITH: The walk is a four beat gait that averages about four miles an hour.

AUSTIN: Oh my god. Okay.

KEITH: Trot is a two beat gait that has a wide variation of possible speeds, canter is a controlled three beat gait, and a gallop is very much like the canter except that it is faster and more ground covering. Just so that we know.

AUSTIN: (tiredly) Okay. Thank you.

JACK: I have a--before we finish horse questions, I have a horse question.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Their horses, are they living?

AUSTIN: It's a mix. Um--one of them has absolutely--

KEITH: Like each horse is a mix of being living and dead?

AUSTIN: No, no. Some of them have dead horses. Some of them have like, horses that have bones sticking out of them. But other ones seem, from what you can tell, totally alive? Hers you can't tell cause it has all this armor on it.

JACK: Oh, man!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: That's the coolest shit. I wonder if there's any horse under there.

AUSTIN: Who knows, right?

KEITH: You're saying it might just be, just armor? She might just be riding armor?

JACK: Or just like a, like--

AUSTIN: So when I was in high school, we had a dress code--I went to a Catholic high school, and one of the ways that you could be in uniform was to wear a turtleneck and a sweater. And uh, my friend Malcolm, he was a real--was a real prankster, a real goofball--he cut the turtleneck off at the turtleneck and stitched it into a sweater. So he just wore a sweater with a turtleneck top, like, from the neck up, and maybe her horse could be like that. It has a head and then just bones under that. Who knows.

KEITH: Yeah!

JACK: Well there's like that, there's that like horrifying English tradition, right, of like, hobby horses, um... of like decaying horses at mummer's plays and things? Uh, with horse skulls...

AUSTIN: Oh, is that a thing?

JACK: Yeah, *dude*. England--sorry, I just--yeah, um...

AUSTIN: I didn't know that was a thing!



JACK: Google, um, I think probably--googling a hobby horse will probably just give you kids' hobby horses, but um... If you just google image 'hobby horse'...

AUSTIN: Oh, I see.

KEITH: Is this sort of like a... garden hermit? My current favorite weird English thing?

JACK: No... Uh, no, that's--'hobby horses England', I'm--it's like um, certain English, old, old, English countryside rituals called for, um, sort of, like, representative horses, almost?

AUSTIN: Jesus Christ.

JACK: (overlapping) I'm putting it in the mountains chat in Discord right now.

KEITH: (overlapping) Oh is this the thing with like the weird black hood?

JACK: I mean, there's the black hood, there's them walking on two legs... they're generally a skull that is manipulated by a, like a spring, and you can pull the spring and the skull's jaws snap?

AUSTIN: And this sort of has like a--the one I'm looking at has like a...

JACK: Check the Discord, I've got you a real good one in the Discord.

SYLVIA: I love it so much.

AUSTIN: Okay. Oh yeah, it's exactly--yeah, good. It has like...

KEITH: Oh, no, that's not what I was looking at, that's... horrible.

AUSTIN: This one looks like it's from Horizon: Zero Dawn.

JACK: (overlapping) You see what it's got hanging on it? It's got, um...

KEITH: (overlapping) And what is--why is this for? What is this for.

JACK: It's got, um... it's got shire plates hanging on it, like the horse has worked really hard.

AUSTIN: I like that it has, like, a crown of plants and roses, and like flowers? That's good.

JACK: Uh huh! You ever see The Wicker Man?

AUSTIN: Yeah. That, but a horse. Yeah.

JACK: Like England--like a lot of that is drawing from like English cultural tradition.

KEITH: Now why is this. What is the... who...

JACK: I mean, like, really, *really*--like, there's a long answer that is not good to talk about on a podcast when we want to do other things, but the short answer is like a massive history of agriculture and paganism, going back to pre-Roman times?

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: Okay. Got it.

SYLVIA: Just real quick before I forget: I did a reverse image search on that, Jack, just so I could see if there were more pictures of it, and the result it gave me back was just 'old horse', which is a bit of an understatement.

(laughing)

AUSTIN: Oh, god. If we had--if we had, uh, images as our--like, with our podcast, this would be the image for the podcast episode.

JACK: So--I mean I tell you what it is, right. I got a proposal to make about Corsica's horse, which is that we can't tell whether or not it's this, or whether it's an actual horse, but it doesn't whinny, it *snaps*.

AUSTIN: (increasingly worried) Uh huh. Uh huh. Yeah. Good. Uh huh. Into it. Very into it.

SYLVIA: Oh, I like that a lot.

AUSTIN: I appreciate this--this added detail of characterization and worldbuilding. Also fun interaction between good friends. Thank you, friendsatthetable dot net. Um... so yeah, so Devar's like:

AUSTIN (as Devar): (miserably) *Man*.

AUSTIN: Shaking his head, but like follows after you. Ephrim and, uh, and Fero, what about you?

KEITH (as Fero): (reluctantly) Uhhh, boy. I guess that's where we were going, anyway...

SYLVIA: It is, but I'm still kinda worried about these people?

AUSTIN: The people are like...

JACK (as Lem): Ephrim. Ephrim. My--my people would not have let them stay... if--if we were going to be killed on the way to the Archives, these people--well, they could have taken over the Archives, but I think that's really unlikely.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): No, I don't mean that, I mean--we just dug a hole into their tower, here, and I want to make sure that they're safe from things?

AUSTIN: (quietly in the background, very overlapped) You're all missing the point.

JACK: Oh you mean these people--yeah.

SYLVIA: Yeah, these people, sorry, yeah, the Baron's Gate people.

AUSTIN: I do want to remind everyone that the sun is up for the first time in... three or four months?

SYLVIA: Oh, yeah!

AUSTIN: Also everyone should take Confused. Or, no, wait what's the wisdom one. Is wisdom Confused?

SYLVIA: It's Confused, yeah.

AUSTIN: Then everyone should take Confused, it has never been brighter, oh my god your eyes.

SYLVIA: Speaking of that, really quick, should I still be at zero HP or should I just put that to one or something?

AUSTIN: Oh, that's--put that at one.

SYLVIA: Okay.

KEITH: I--

AUSTIN: No, fuck that, no no no, you should have full health.

SYLVIA: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Samoths just brought you back to life, my dude. Like...

SYLVIA: Yeah. I wasn't sure what we were doing with that. Thanks.

KEITH: I don't like having wisdom one! That's tough for me!

AUSTIN: Uh huh! It is. So yeah, that's--that's... it is so bright, and it's strange to see color again, most of all. And you can't be sure, but it feels like the colors are off a little bit? But also it's been three or four months since you've seen color. So. Like--

JACK: Is it warm?

AUSTIN: Like I said, you can feel it on your skin, but it isn't warming you. Does that make sense?

JACK: Yeah, we can sort of sense--in the same way that when you wake up on a snowy day you can tell it's snowed before you even see it?

AUSTIN: Yes. Exactly.

KEITH: Are... I have a question. Are we confused because it's so bright, or like, in the--

AUSTIN: Yes. You are confused because it is so bright.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: You were like--basically flashbanged, right? Like you walked out from the deepest cave into--a bright day on high noon. Y'know--and also the earth is made of mirrors. Like--it has been months since you've seen this much light. And also there was no warning.

KEITH: Um, if I transform into a vole, which has bad eyesight--

AUSTIN: No, Keith.

KEITH: Okay.

JACK (as Lem): Ephrim, um...

KEITH: I--just asking!

JACK (as Lem): We really fucked this town up, Ephrim. But, um... we have to get to the Archives. And we have to get there before Arrell.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (sighs) I... I agree.

AUSTIN (as priest): What should we do?

AUSTIN: --asks the priest who was uh, kind of ushering these people out.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I... actually--

JACK (as Lem): You can join us.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): They *could* join us; I was going to say--

AUSTIN (as priest): (angrily) You've dug a hole in the--you've dug a hole...

SYLVIA: Can I go to the priest?

AUSTIN: He's like yelling at Fero.

AUSTIN (as priest): You dug a hole into our *tower*.

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah?

AUSTIN (as priest): What are we supposed to do?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Um...

KEITH (as Fero): Um... escape from the people trying to kill you?

AUSTIN (as priest): We *live* there!

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, okay!

AUSTIN (as priest): How--are you gonna--

KEITH (as Fero): I don't know! Sometimes in order to not die you've gotta have a *hole* in your house! That's like--a better deal!

AUSTIN (as priest): She would have shown up any second afterwards, apparently, and--would've saved us!

KEITH (as Fero): (indignantly) I didn't know that! You didn't know that! You're *welcome*! Patch the hole! Whatever!

AUSTIN (as priest): You're a--you're a *menace*. 'Patch the hole'--you patch the hole!

KEITH (as Fero): I gotta *go*!

JACK (as Lem): Hey!

AUSTIN (as priest): You gotta *go*--pay us! Give us money so we can repair the hole.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I was going to. Please.

AUSTIN (as priest): Not you.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Father, just let me handle this, please.

AUSTIN (as priest): You look hurt. You should--

SYLVIA: Wait, is the title for priests in Hieron 'father', or is it something else, actually?

AUSTIN: We've used a bunch of different things. We've used--which is bad on our part. I think we've used 'brother' more than 'father', actually.

SYLVIA: Okay, I'll use brother then.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Brother please, let me--handle this, I'm the one who got us all involved into this, um... I don't have too much, but I can offer it to you, and, um...

SYLVIA: Is there a possibility that I can ride on the back of one of Corsica's, uh, soldier's horses? Cause I wanna give them my horse so they can ride and try and--

AUSTIN: Are you asking me, or are you asking Corsica's...

SYLVIA: I--I'll ask.

JACK: You can ride on--you can ride on mine.

SYLVIA: Okay. I'll ask if--

KEITH: I can be a horse, you can ride on me.

SYLVIA: *Sure*. As long as I can--I wanna give them my horse, and I wanna give them, uh, a hundred and fifty gold. So they can ride to, I guess the nearest place would be... I guess Rosemerrow, to—

AUSTIN: Rosemerrow or the New Archives, they're kinda split right in the middle.

SYLVIA: Or to the New Archives, yeah. Either way they can ride somewhere to get--to pay for help, to get people to come out and help them.

JACK (as Lem): I can't promise--

JACK: This is me talking to Ephrim, rather than the priest.

JACK (as Lem): I can't promise anything, Ephrim, like--it's been so long since I've been back, but... the Archives used to have measures for supporting, y'know, in certain capacities, communities that were nearby. I could see if those are still running when I return.

KEITH (as Fero): I just want to make a point that I didn't dig a hole in everyone's *home*, just one tower!

AUSTIN (as priest): It's the big tower. It's the tower where we--we have mass, it's the tower where we meet for meals, it's--(sighs) It's been there since before we were there. It's been there since... no one remembers how old that tower is!

KEITH (as Fero): (bitchily) It's bright out now, eat outside.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (groans) Fero, please--

AUSTIN (as priest): You're a cruel person. You--

KEITH (as Fero): For like a *minute*. Like--for a minute! Until it gets fixed!

AUSTIN (as priest): Prince Ephrim. Prince Ephrim. Watch who you travel with.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Thank you, brother.

SYLVIA: Um... Can I also take like and additional coin and--cause I have my, um, Handcrafted thing, I wanna make it into one of my little symbols and give it to them as well. (others laughing) No, no, for a reason, for a reason, it's not just me trying to--it's not just me giving my business card.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Is there a roll? Okay, is there--no, no, is there--

JACK: I love that Ephrim is just...

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): It's--give this to the church in Rosemerrow and see if they can offer additional help. Tell them it's from me, that I sent your rider there. I wanna make up for this.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Yep! I don't think--you have time, you have safety, you're able to do this without defying danger.

SYLVIA: Yeah. Okay. So yeah, that's...

JACK: What's your symbol again, Ephrim?

SYLVIA: It is a, uh, hand holding the crescent sun that I have. Yeah.

JACK: Oh, it's like a new symbol. You conceptualized an emblem on the way out of Rosemerrow. (laughing)

SYLVIA: Yeah, I made my own symbol. I made my own symbol.

AUSTIN: Like all good prophets.

SYLVIA: Yeah!

KEITH: And then it says 'Call Ephrim'.

AUSTIN: (laughing) On the back.

JACK: (laughing) On the back.

SYLVIA: It's, like, yeah.

AUSTIN (as priest): Bless you, Prince.

AUSTIN: And he bows his head to you.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): And you as well.

SYLVIA: And then I do it back.

AUSTIN: And then--yeah, he travels, he goes over to one of his like--one of the guards who was in the tower with--with bows, trying to shoot out the sides of it, and gives him the money and the symbol and like talks to him as Corsica shouts:

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Time moves quick. We should too.

SYLVIA: I give the horse like a little pat on the head before I go.



AUSTIN (as Walter): Mrrrrh.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Good boy, Walter.

AUSTIN (as Walter): Hrrrr.

SYLVIA: Okay. And then, I guess... am I riding on Fero, or Lem's horse? What's the situation here?

AUSTIN: Up to you. Um--

SYLVIA: You know what? Fero made this whole situation, I'm gonna make him help me out.

KEITH: Did I make it--oh, did I--?

SYLVIA: (laughing) You didn't make this whole situation, I did, but--the escalation between you and the priest, it was, it got me a little grump--it got Ephrim a little grumpy.

KEITH: (indignantly) I'm sorry--I'm sorry that the man of god's mad that I tried to save his god damn life! Sorry! Sorry! Fine, you can ride on my back. I'm a horse now. Jesus Christ.

SYLVIA: (laughing)

JACK: Just like a big angry horse.

AUSTIN: You have to roll to become a horse, please.

KEITH: Um, slash roll... plus one...

JACK: You know the other horses are looking around, like 'what the fuck is this'.

KEITH: Nine, I get--

AUSTIN: Uh, minus the one is eight, right, so--or just, it's just a--

KEITH: Oh no, it's minus one, instead of plus two it's plus one.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see I see I see. Gotcha. Nice work, person who made the Dungeon World thing for Roll20. It just works. It just works when it works!

JACK: It's so good. It's so good!

AUSTIN: All right, um...

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Thanks, Fero.

AUSTIN: What's the--what's the thing where you only get a seven to nine? You just get one thing, basically, right?

KEITH: I get one--I get one--yeah, one special move instead of three.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Cool. The rest of this trip is... pretty uneventful, but you are riding with a--a handful of the Unstill, um... so you can totally ask questions, or talk to them as you travel, into--up to, like, the rocky hills towards the north-east.

KEITH (as Fero): Why 'the Unstill'?

AUSTIN: Um... the person who answers that is, uh... there's--there's like--so Corsica rides in the front, all the way to the front, and back like in the middle, there's like a guy who is clearly like, I guess her second-in-command, or at least the person--it's second-in-command, or her secretary, or both, right? Like he probably doesn't have a high--he probably doesn't have the highest *rank* here, but people know that when he speaks, he speaks for her. Um, and so--he's kind of a--he's kind of like a mousy, a human dude, um, is he human? No, I actually think he's... he's probably a halfling. He's like... probably the same height as you, Fero, which means that he's like kind of small on this horse—

KEITH: (overlapping) Tall for a--tall for a halfling?

AUSTIN: But tall for a--but tall for a halfling, exactly. Has kind of a shitty bowl cut, is wearing glasses, um, has a... I guess he's kind of dressed like a page? He has like, a linen or cloth shirt, with--with like, cotton pants... He does have like a little shortsword on a belt, but he does not--*he* is not like, armored up. He has a pack, like a saddlebag sort of, overflowing with like, food, and spices, and like, notebooks and paper? And while he rides, he's often pulling out something from one of these packs and either like, eating an apple, or writing something down, um, and he's the one who answers 'why the Unstill'.

KEITH (as Fero): Is it just cause like you're dead but you're not... just sitting around?

AUSTIN (as Fentil): Someone--one of the uh... one of the Archivists called it--called us that. I think that's who it was? You know how they are. Big words, they like saying a bunch of things, categories, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera.

KEITH (as Fero): Oh, yeah. Mhm. Yeah.

JACK: What's this guy's name?

AUSTIN: This is Fentil Orenia.

KEITH: Ooh, *Fentil*.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: So we're clear as well, we don't know what, um, race Corsica is? Or...

AUSTIN: She is tall like a human is, um, but she also called herself the Baroness of Broken Branches, and, uh...

JACK: (inhales) Sounds like an orc god!

AUSTIN: The Baroness of Broken Branches and Undelivered Resignations. But--but also is wearing Ordennan armor? And has the badge of a Justiciar.

JACK: Yeah. Hm.

AUSTIN: Also--she's wearing *Ordennan armor*. Made of *Ordennan steel*. So.

JACK: Can I ride my horse up to the front of the column?

AUSTIN: Sure!

JACK: And match--match pace with her?

AUSTIN: Mhm. She's like--

JACK: I don't know how you get horses to do that. It's fairly easy in, like, Skyrim.

AUSTIN: (laughing) It is fairly easy in video games, like most things. Like being a hero.

JACK: Yeah. Um...

KEITH: Maybe horses just want to go at the same speed as other horses.

JACK: I mean that's probably what it is, I guess.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you--I think you--you hold down control M to hit match speed, and then you match speeds, I'm pretty sure. She has like, her eyes on the horizon. But she doesn't like--shoo you away or anything.

JACK (as Lem): Hey, thanks for--thanks for, um, showing up back then. That was--y'know, that was pretty well timed.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): I didn't time it for your benefit, but... I am glad to have helped.

JACK (as Lem): D'you mind me asking where you were coming from?

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Home. We'd heard that there was a group of bandits, and... We are always recruiting.

JACK (as Lem): We met a guy, he was making for Rosemerrow. One of them. He got pretty far down the road.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): One of them, or one of us?

JACK (as Lem): (thoughtfully) One of them.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): By the time I'm done, hopefully there will be no difference. All of those will be like me.

JACK (as Lem): What--what--what do you mean by that?

AUSTIN (as Corsica): (sighs) I've had a strange life, Archivist. And so--

JACK (as Lem): My name's Lem. I--sorry, I don't think we've--I'm sorry. You said your name really loudly from the back of a horse, so... I got that. I'm Lem King.

KEITH: (laughing a very keith laugh)

AUSTIN: She nods.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Lem King. Strange name for an Orc. You chose King?

JACK (as Lem): It was given to me.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): King of nothing? King of what?

JACK (as Lem): I didn't tend to ask that question, but now that you say it, um... I play the violin pretty well.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Lem, King of Violins and Awkward Conversations.

JACK (as Lem): You know, I think that--my boyfriend would say the same thing, um... y'know. Look, it... sorry. Um... you're staying in the Archives, huh?

AUSTIN: She nods.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): A lot of people, a lot of the people in this world, have had very straightforward lives. Hard lives. Lives filled with labor. Hard work, long nights, longer harvests. But they were not prepared for this *plague*. People like you and your friends are... unique. They have been shot and stabbed. They have been pushed to their brink. They are prepared for what happens when the life drains from them. People like you, people like me. But the people in--Treeton, the people at Baron's Gate... the people in Rosemerrow, I fear, they are not prepared. And so, I do what I know how to do. I build ritual. I build order. I introduce them to daily habit. My man, Lentil, carries oils that hide the stench of us.

KEITH: I thought it was Fentil.

AUSTIN: What'd I just say, Lentil?

KEITH: Lentil, yeah. (laughing)

AUSTIN: She--she calls him Lentil.

SYLVIA: Aww.

AUSTIN: I may have written Lentil and also Fentil on this page, now that I'm looking at it.

KEITH: I had already--yeah, I had already marked, when you said Fentil I already marked down like 'hm, call him Lentil'.

AUSTIN: Okay, good.

KEITH: [UNCLEAR] [00:35:38] Yeah, I already—

JACK (as Lem): Sorry, sorry—

AUSTIN: Running bit, she is now just going to keep calling him variations on Fentil. Uh—

JACK (as Lem): Did you just call him--did you just call him Lentil?

KEITH: Dental.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Yeah. He knows his name.

KEITH: What if her thing is she gets everyone's names slightly wrong.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Her ears, she's undead, y'know?

KEITH: 'Listen, Hem.'

JACK (as Lem): It sounds like... it sounds like in some ways... (laughs softly) You sound like an Archivist.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): I was one. For a long time.

JACK (as Lem): Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to presume.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): I've had a long life. It is fair to presume. I wear the armor of our enemy, I carry the name of our gods... who could say.

JACK (as Lem): I've heard things about, y'know... what's going on there. It sounds like, um, look--I don't expect you to explain it to me, I'm--we're gonna be there soon enough, but um... is there anything I should keep in mind? It's been so long.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): You don't know the half of it. You mean the schism.

JACK (as Lem): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Mm. It's a troubled time. The Archives work, and have always worked, on... knowing where things go. Knowing how to categorize things, and what should and shouldn't be categorized. The schism is one thing; what is real, what is not, but... (sighs) Me, the Unstill, we're an entire other thing. You know the rule, about categorizing people. Not to do it?

JACK (as Lem): Right. It's one of the first things we're--well. Y'know. It was one of the first things I was taught.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): It should be. The second a--a ritual would call for a dead farmer, you have to make a certain sort of calculus, and so we don't. But now, us, hm...

JACK (as Lem): Oh my god.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Mm. Nothing's happened yet. Nothing... explicit. But. Now there are living, and then there are breathing, and then there are being. Now there are the Unstill. And one day I am certain a pattern will call for us, and they will know the exact number.

JACK (as Lem): You know, there was a moment, just before I left, where uh... just for a moment, um, I thought it would just be like going home. But uh... all right, okay. (unconvincingly) To the Archives!

JACK: And I fall back into the pack of horses.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): You are going home!

AUSTIN: --she calls.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): It's always like this!

AUSTIN: And then she, like, gives her reins a little shake, and her horse picks up pace. And she moves from a trot up to a canter. (laughing) All right.

JACK: It's important to get the horse fact *early* in the episode!

AUSTIN: Gotta get those horse facts!

KEITH: It really is. Know your enemy, I swear to god.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Okay. Um... So, Lem, what are the western, like the south--like look at the map, and you see where the red--the red path through the mountains is. What are the western, like, those little villages that we have on the map there, what do those look like?

JACK: They look like...

AUSTIN: Or what did they look like the last time you were there I guess is a--is a better question

JACK: Oh, right. Yeah. Um--they're carved with the same stone that the mountains are, um... and in styles that feel fairly orcish? It's clear that sometimes--

AUSTIN: What's that--what's that mean? What do you mean when you say 'fairly orcish'?

JACK: Oh, I--it'll become clearer when I finish the sentence.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. Sure.

JACK: It's clear that sometimes the orcs have just removed stones from the kind of like, um... the... the scree slopes, almost, they've removed large boulders? And in other instances they've taken the tops off the mountains? There's weird flat tops on the mountains. And it's clear even if it's not exactly sure what the reasoning is, it's clear that the selection of the building materials for

their communities has been part of the pattern in some way?

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: Y'know, 'oh, we have to take rocks that only face in this direction to make these houses' or whatever.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Um... I think that the orcs in the Archives have never really had to worry about external architecture? Because... it's just in the mountain? Um... and so they have... let loose, almost, given the opportunity to build... settlements that are outside the mountain.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: So the buildings are intricate, there are... but they're still like, rural communities, so they're probably fairly easy to build and maintain. But there are like, bridges and walkways leaning over, uh... things--

AUSTIN: Yeah, I--I definitely have a lot of bridges in my head for this, and a lot of--a lot of, like, banners hanging between structures, do you know what I mean? Like, lines, with--with little pendants--not pendants, *pennants* hanging on them. Um...

JACK: Yes. Absolutely. I mean--if it was a video game, we'd look at it and we'd say that the level had been designed incoherently, because it's not clear how you move through this space, unless you're on the main road. Um... but I think, actually being in it, it's actually fairly easy to move through; in part because the banners communicate quite clearly what is happening?

AUSTIN: Yeah. But like, that's for you, and Corsica, and the Unstill. For Ephrim, and--I guess, I guess Fero's been here before. Fero's mentioned being--I guess maybe Fero though, here's a question: have you ever gotten to the New Archives through the road, or do you normally just cross over the mountains?

KEITH: Yeah, so from forever ago, like years--I remember like, I, Lem and I had met because I lived--I *lived* on the mountains near the New Archive.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. So you probably have like a really, like, clear top-down view of this place in your (yawning) 'scuse me, in your head.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... yeah. God. Um...



KEITH: That was like... *years* ago.

AUSTIN: Literal, actual, human years ago.

KEITH: Literal, actual, human years ago. Both for Fero and for me.

AUSTIN: All right, so--yeah, seriously. Uh... so... here's one difference. Um, this place feels, these like south-western few villages, are all... occupied. Like, by... the Unstill. It is clearly a... like it's, I don't wanna paint the picture that the Ordennans did, outside of--outside of Rosemerrow. They are not... they are not camped here, right? But the... there are people who are in armor, there are people who are wearing weapons, and they are all undead. Sometimes they are ghosts. And... they cohabitate with some living people, who have remained? And they definitely trade and speak with living people who are, who're moving through these towns visiting? But it is clear that these are now two different groups. I don't wanna say that it's a sovereign nation necessarily, even though she calls herself the Sovereigness of the Unstill, but there is a divide here that there never used to be, right? Like, I guess here's one way to think about it: the pattern never allowed for there to be a distinct separation from one encampment or village to the next, right? Like, sometimes those two have to be one town. Sometimes you literally have to build a connective road with new homes to connect them, and other times you need to separate them. Here there is an additional line in the sand.

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: That separates... this part--that's the wrong color. That's not the color I wanted at all! I changed color and it just said like 'no, you're wrong Austin, you're not changing color at all'. Um... that separates this way. And this whole area here is where the Unstill live.

JACK: Do you have names written for these communities?

AUSTIN: I do not. Uh, if you've a suggestion for one of these, I'd love to--

JACK: No, I was, I was just wondering whether or not.. you'd named these.

AUSTIN: No. Um, because in my head, we're kind of gonna pass through them, and then, and then if we need them we can totally come up with them, but, draw maps leave blank spaces. I think there's probably--

JACK: Sure. Full of--full of zombies.

AUSTIN: Full of zombies. Blank spaces, filled with zombie soldiers. Um... I do think that there is--what's the, what's the basic symbol for the New Archives? Is there one? Like--what do the, what do the Reclaimers, or--not Reclaimers, what's Morbash's thing called?

JACK: Uh, they're called the Acquisitionary Team, or the Acquisitionary Department. I think orc, uh, the symbols--the symbol for the Archives and the symbol for the... Acquisitionary Team are just letters in the orc alphabet?

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. Then yeah, then, the Unstill are probably similarly just... those letters, right? 'The Unstill', like--maybe just whatever the U is.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or you know what it actually is? It's, it's, um... I imagine the way orcish writing is, is uh... it is characters that then have, then can be modified with additional, uh, figures that--not even figures, but marks that attach to them.

JACK: Oh, totally. I don't--

AUSTIN: So it is the word--so it is the word or character for 'still' that has then been *negated*. Right, it has like the twist at the end or something that negates it.

JACK: Yeah, I--I don't know much about the orcish language, but I know that its alphabet has an infinite number of letters.

AUSTIN: (laughing) Okay, sure. Yes.

JACK: Um, so I think that yeah, it's definitely something like that, right?

AUSTIN: Good. Uh huh. But I specifically--and it's not that, that's not a thing that you would have ever used ever in writing... there's no calls for it.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: At least you wouldn't think so. I guess the thing that maybe--I know for a fact that a thing that happens sometimes is someone discovers a pattern that has a word or a character in it that doesn't make sense in daily life. And part of figuring out and, and executing on a pattern is interpreting it until you can figure out what that thing is.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So you--you could imagine a situation in which 'Unstill' is something that's been discovered in a pattern forever ago, and no one knew what it meant until suddenly there were undead people. Right?

JACK: Right. But I don't think--yeah, I think that like Lem, obviously knowing that--and I assume that, like, definitely Fero can probably read orc, I imagine? I think when the--

AUSTIN: Fero, can you read orc? Orcish?

KEITH: Um...

JACK: When like the biggest archive in the world writes in this language... people can probably read a bit of it, right?

AUSTIN: Not people in Rosemerrow or Velas.

KEITH: (overlapping Austin) I lived in the woods a *lot*. And... yeah, I think that I can--I think I probably have like, a very basic understanding of, of like some stuff?

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: Like um, I can't--obviously can't speak it, but if I hear it, I can maybe catch like fifteen percent of what's going on, and same thing with reading it. Like I--I can maybe puzzle out some general stuff from...

JACK: But you can say that you speak it on your resume.

KEITH: Right, yes. I can say--I, yeah. (laughing) Yeah. That's what it is.

AUSTIN: Okay. So... at some point Corsica moves to like, leads you basically to the--furthest east she's going to take you. Which is that--this last kind of house on the map, before you reach the--her border, basically. And she and Bentil, like tie up their horses, and their people have dispersed at this point, uh, and... she nods to you.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): I've kept my promise. You're here, safe. (sighs) Do you need anything else.

JACK (as Lem): I was going to ask you the same. Is there--thank you for bringing us. Thank you for bringing us safely. Is there anything that I can try once I'm inside the Archives that would help you?

AUSTIN: She like thinks for a few moments. Like there's definitely a beat. Um...

AUSTIN (as Corsica): You're... Ask me again when you have a better sense of things. Hm?

JACK (as Lem): Okay. Thank you.

AUSTIN: And the rest of you are able to move forward, into the heart of the New Archives. So in my mind, and again, Lem, you can tell me if I'm wrong about this, but as you get closer to the New Archives it becomes much denser? But also the buildings become--the 'buildings', quote unquote, become bigger, until eventually they aren't buildings, they're compounds, that are built into the side or built in--internal to mountains themselves. And in that way, it speaks to what you said before, about like--there was a point at which there was no external architecture.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: There were just huge doors that led into a complex of warehouses. And... there is... one, uh, mountain, the one that on the--on the map of the New Archives is, almost looks like a volcano or an open book or something? And maybe it is, maybe it is--I actually kind of like it as like a hollowed out volcano. As like... having an open top, and the light streaming in. And then like, still being cut and layered, and like, diorama-esque inside, and massive. What are you doing when you arrive, I guess is my question? Like you've, you've made it, no one harasses you as you approach, um... Where do you take--where do the three of you go when you've arrived?

JACK: Can we enter through the main doors, or at least the main doors of this block?  
(overlapping Austin) Like we can just get in?

AUSTIN: You can like enter like the main gates of the--of the closer, more dense New Archive city, yeah, totally. Which has like a number of smaller settlements that are dense enough that they are, y'know, eventually they are just connected to this main central mountain that everything is in. Or that the--that the bulk of like, the administration, and the storage, and all of that stuff is in.

JACK: Okay. Right.

JACK (as Lem): Fero, Ephrim. Devar, you're presumably good, right? You've got--you've got rooms here?

AUSTIN (as Devar): Yeah, man. I'm gonna go check in with my mom.

JACK (as Lem): You wanna bounce and we can catch up later?

AUSTIN (as Devar): Ah, yeah, that sounds like a good idea. (stage whisper) What should I do if Morbash comes looking for you?

JACK (as Lem): I am going to... (sighs)

KEITH (as Fero): Hide.

JACK (as Lem): I'm gonna go and see him, Devar.

AUSTIN (as Devar): Nooooo, man!

JACK (as Lem): Look, Devar, I've got like... you really think that I can stay here and Morbash wouldn't find out? I gotta go and see him!

AUSTIN (as Devar): My guy, this is how you get *killed* though! Do you have his plant?

KEITH (as Fero): Wait, you think Morbash is going to *kill* him?!

AUSTIN (as Devar): I mean, he took that violin, that plant doesn't look good, what're you gonna do about the plant?

KEITH (as Fero): Just tell him it's supposed to do that! That was my plan!

AUSTIN (as Devar): He *grew*--

JACK (as Lem): Okay, Devar, actually, wait Devar, um--

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): It's his plant!

JACK (as Lem): Hey. (pause) You remember what we talked about earlier? About, y'know--

AUSTIN (as Devar): The undead?

JACK (as Lem): --making--no, no no no, look, Devar--come here, come here.

AUSTIN (as Devar): Not the undead? Uhh...

JACK: And I, like, pull him into a corner beside like a bookcase, the entrance hall is just lined with bookcases...

JACK (as Lem): Look, Devar. Look, this isn't me putting my foot down, or--or taking sides, but just... maybe what if the plant... looked a bit different, for a while? Just for a while.

AUSTIN (as Devar): (sucks in air) Ooohhh. (stage whisper) I thought you weren't--I thought... you had said that you were not into that whole illusion shit!

JACK (as Lem): I'm not, I'm not into it, Devar, I'm not into it. This isn't me putting my foot down.

AUSTIN (as Devar): (overlapping Jack) He said that, right? He said that, right?

KEITH (as Fero): He said that.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (tiredly) Yeah... vaguely.

JACK (as Lem): No, no, look, okay--

AUSTIN (as Devar): (shushing noises???) [00:52:28]

JACK (as Lem): Look.

JACK: And presumably like Archivists are just walking around?

AUSTIN: Yeah. People are just walking to and fro, someone runs by with like a cage filled with three chickens, uh...

KEITH: I imagine that this is a conversation that happens within the walls of the New Archives *all the time*.

(laughing)

JACK: Probably, like, absolutely.

KEITH: And like, people are just like 'oh, someone's tryna pretend that something's something else, that's normal.'

AUSTIN: Right. There's another--right, a different conspiratorial four people walk past you whisper--they go (startled noise) 'Oh.' And then they walk past before they--you can hear what *they're* talking about.

JACK (as Lem): No, look, I, look. I'm not saying that I'm putting--like, I'm not taking a side here, I'm just saying that maybe for a, maybe just for a while, cause like Devar actually thinking about it you're like super right, because...

AUSTIN (as Devar): My dude... doing a thing is taking a side!

JACK (as Lem): No, no, it's--no, this is not me, like, no. I get to like--no, Devar--

AUSTIN (as Devar): This is the thing that all of the villains say in the books I read, though! They all say this! They all say 'I'm not tryna do a thing', but then they do the thing.

JACK (as Lem): Right, I--Yeah. I mean, right, Devar, those are--right, those are books, though--look, all I'm saying is like, Devar—

AUSTIN: He raises his eyebrows and flips the shades down on his glasses, his sunglasses down and is like--and shakes his head, and says like:

AUSTIN (as Devar): (skeptical) All right man. We can do it.

JACK (as Lem): I get to pick later, Devar! I get to pick later. This isn't me picking. This is just me... this is just gardening, Devar!

AUSTIN (as Devar): Yeah, it's just gardening.

KEITH (as Fero): It's just you saying--it's just you saying 'I haven't yet picked. I take back that I picked the other thing and I'm going back to not having picked'.

AUSTIN (as Devar): (sighs) So you need to know--you need someone who can do this for you, you want me to help you do it myself?

JACK (as Lem): I'm not saying that I need you to h--to help you--like, I'm not saying that, I'm say--look--well, I mean I could just go to... I could find it out myself, but it would be like, really... You said you would be like, you'd be wanting to fill time instead of betraying me to Morbash, right? And like, this is something that you could do, I guess.

AUSTIN (as Devar): (laughing) I wasn't--I was--y'know sometime people say like, 'do you need anything' before they go somewhere, or someone says like, 'oh yeah, I could drop that off for you', and then the other person's supposed to go like 'nah, don't worry about it, I got it'. It's like a... sometimes people--

KEITH (as Fero): (fake incredulousness) Wait, so you weren't serious when you offered to help?

AUSTIN (as Devar): I mean... I had to talk to my mom first, I have to see what my sister's up to...

JACK (as Lem): Do you wanna go talk to you--okay, right, so you can go talk to your mum, I can go and see if I still have my rooms, we can... I--presumably these two, we've got spare rooms for them, it's the Archives, um...

KEITH (as Fero): I just wanna say real quick--I just wanna say, I was in Rosemerrow for like, a month and a half, I didn't see my parents at all! Or my sister.

AUSTIN (as Devar): You're saying that like you're... like it's a good thing?

JACK (as Lem): Is he proud of that?

KEITH (as Fero): I'm just saying--no, I'm just saying that you don't *have* to do those things. You're saying that you--

AUSTIN (as Devar): I love them? What? What are you--?

JACK (as Lem): Nah, Fero--

KEITH (as Fero): I'm just saying you don't have--you said 'I *have* to do this, I *have* to'--you don't *haaave* to.

JACK (as Lem): (quietly) He's home, Fero!

AUSTIN (as Devar): Man, the sun hasn't been out in like, twelve weeks! I haven't been in—

JACK: Oh, god, yeah, cause I--man! I bet the orcs, cause we--like, our whole interior lighting for the main body of the Archives is based on the fact there was this big hole in the ceiling. And when the sun went out...

KEITH (as Fero): Hold on. New idea. New idea. Sun came out, plant changed. Boom. Blame it on the sun.

AUSTIN (as Devar): (sighs) Oh, okay...

JACK (as Lem): I mean... Fero, like, that sounds like a really good plan, if we're dealing with someone who isn't like, like, Morbash. Have you ever *met* Morbash, Fero?

KEITH (as Fero): What is he gonna do, say that you're lying? Just say 'nah, I'm not lying'. What if--

AUSTIN (as Devar): All right, *listen*. I got--there's this dude I know who's good at this stuff. I don't--I mean, so I didn't know him since he started it, but...

KEITH (as Fero): (grumpily) My plan was good.

AUSTIN (as Devar): Yeah, your plan was all right. We can do your plan if my plan falls apart.

JACK (as Lem): Yeah, we can do your plan if his plan falls apart.



AUSTIN (as Devar): His name is Zhan. Zhan Kurr. Go to Zhan, let me go say hi to my moms, and then... my sister, and then let me get a bite to eat, and *then* we can go see Zhan, he's uh... He's in Lot 27, he's got a small little spot there, meet me there--do you think the sun's gonna set?

KEITH (as Fero): I just wanna say. If you blame it on the sun, you can't be proven to be lying, you can just be *distrusted*. But if someone figures out an *illusion*, that's it, it's over.

AUSTIN (as Devar): Fero, like... Haven't you seen what the cost of being distrusted is?

KEITH (as Fero): Is it worse than the cost of being caught *lying*? Because then you're distrusted also! And you put effort into it!

AUSTIN (as Devar): They killed Mother Glory, dog, like, it isn't... Getting caught, even when you're in the right, and some bullshit can go wrong. People like Morbash aren't gonna give people like Lem King any extra slack.

KEITH (as Fero): What do you mean 'people like Lem King'?

JACK (as Lem): Oh. Fero, um... Fero...

KEITH (as Fero): Hi!

JACK (as Lem): There's one thing you don't do at the Archives. And that's take things from them.

KEITH (as Fero): That's a good point I guess.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (tiredly) Oh, boy.

AUSTIN (as Devar): Anyway... I'm gonna go see my mom.

JACK (as Lem): Okay.

AUSTIN (as Devar): We'll catch up later, Lot 27, at around when the sun would set theoretically.

JACK (as Lem): Right, okay. Right. I'll set my watch. Devar, thanks so much, I mean, like... y'know. I get--all right. Have--have fun with your moms.

KEITH: Do we have *watches*?

JACK: Oh, Archives--Archivists do!

AUSTIN: Is that a thing? Is this a new thing?

JACK: Austin, we've *definitely* talked about Archivists having watches, right? We've talked about them having whole buildings dedicated to time-keeping!

AUSTIN: Yeah, that I know, but that--they have whole *buildings*! Cause they don't have watches!

JACK: Oh, all right, fine! This is what an orc watch looks like: it's an abacus.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah. Fair.

KEITH: Oh, wait, hold on, I--kinda remember you having said *that*, that sounds familiar to me.

AUSTIN: Yeah, me too. Yes, I definitely remember--

JACK: We have--we have the water clock from Nacre, um...

AUSTIN: Yes. Correct.

JACK: And we have... yeah, we have--orc watches are abacuses.

AUSTIN: So--that makes sense. They're like--or like abacuses on string, or something, right, like specifically... like you keep time, throughout the day. Yeah. That makes sense. Yes yes yes.

JACK: But y'know, in the same way that like, I don't know, when my phone buzzes I'll have picked it up before I recognise that it buzzed, like I assume orcs can keep time fairly... they're used to it by now? Which isn't to say it's *accurate*--

AUSTIN: The, uh, the way they're used to it is the sun.

JACK: Right, yes.

AUSTIN: That's the thing, is that like--and that's, that's one of the things I made my--when I described the sun in the last episode was, you can't orient by it. It doesn't--you know, in a world where you don't have GPS, and you--and you live out in the world, you would get very good at being like 'where's the sun at, okay, that's east'. Um, this sun does not do that for you. Because it's not in a place that the sun should be, it's like lower than the sun should be? Um, but also, it doesn't feel on your skin like it's closer, so... it's strange. But it's still up there. All right. Devar bounces.

JACK (as Lem): Ephrim, Fero...

KEITH (as Fero): Hey.

JACK (as Lem): You can't--I mean I don't know if I still have my room... We could see if there's space for you.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): That would be... helpful.

KEITH (as Fero): I mean I've got a place nearby, anyway, so.

JACK (as Lem): Oh, no, stay here, come on. Stay here.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I'd rather not stay in the woods.

KEITH (as Fero): It's on a mountain, it's not 'the woods', it's like specifically different.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Fero, I just got shot! I'd like a bed, possibly.

KEITH (as Fero): (indignant) I don't sleep on the ground, outside!

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Listen!

JACK: I'm gonna approach like an, an administrative desk? Um...

JACK (as Lem): Hi. Hi there. Uh, I've been away for a long time? I was wondering if you still had my room.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): What's ya name, what's ya number.

JACK (as Lem): It's Lem King, my number is—

JACK: --and I slide the Archives business card across the desk. Which is just a campus card, now I think about it.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um... the receptionist looks at that and then like, opens up one of fifty cabinets? Or not cabinets, like--like card files? Like uh, like Dewey decimal style index card files? It's just like, a ton of those behind them. And they open one of them up, and like flip (very bad card flipping foley):

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): King... Kane... Korn... Kinder...

JACK (as Lem): No, it's King, you had it the--you had it the first time.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): Kima...

JACK (as Lem): Mm-mm.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): Qinta... Kunta...

KEITH: (laughing)

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): That's under 'A'.

AUSTIN: Um... closes that whole thing, opens up a different one, and it takes like, way too long. And then... they go like:

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): Oh, *King*!

AUSTIN: And like open the first one back up, and:

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): Oh, yeah. Um... yeah, you still got your room.

AUSTIN: And hands you a, a... I guess, what's the exchange--how does this normally work?

JACK: Um... I think what happens is... Oh. (laughs) I know what it is. It's some New Archives complete bullshit. My business card has like a circular hole in the center of it, as though a circular hole has been cut out; what she does is she slips a metallic thing into that hole, uh, and that hole--now becomes like a, like a key, or like a wrench thing, that matches a door.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that you can--yeah, okay. Yeah so she attaches that.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): Ya guests need to sign in too.

JACK (as Lem): Okay. You up for that?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): What's ya name, what's ya number?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Um... My name is Prince Ephrim, I don't... have a number? Lem, where do I get a number?

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): Oh, he's a *prince*. Oh, well to get a number... you don't have any number? You've no number?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I've... never been here before.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): Okay well to get a number you're gonna have to go down to the Office of Personages and Numerals.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Oh, Christ. Oh boy.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): It is a Friday, which does mean that they close in twenty-five minutes, so you should probably hurry over there. And then you should uh, from there, after that you'll get your number, but then it has to be registered as a number, so then you have to go to the Office of Registries and Births and Notices, and get it registered, and then you have to get it certified, so you're gonna need to find a certicator. Unfortunately, I don't know--

KEITH (as Fero): I'm actually a certicator. So.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): Well that helps. You still gotta go get the rest of it though. And then you gotta get it notarized.

KEITH (as Fero): I'm a notary too.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): And then you can bring it back to me--well that's illegal, you can't be a certicator and a--and a notary, that's--separation of powers, y'know?

KEITH (as Fero): No, it's not illegal, they just say that it's illegal to discourage it.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): That's not true. I know the law, it's my job. What about you, do you have a name and a number?

KEITH (as Fero): I'm not staying here.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): Okay. You could just let him stay in--in ya room, Mister King.

JACK (as Lem): Is that--I mean--Look, back when I was.. I mean--I would've been a lot younger, but I--I didn't think that people were allowed to stay over.

KEITH (as Fero): It's the same thing, they just say it's not allowed but it's allowed, to--discourage it.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): Well just... things got weird here since you were gone. We'll just say if we happen to need it to be a room with one occupant, we can just make it a room with one occupant.

JACK (as Lem): Right! Well... thank you! It's good to be back.

AUSTIN (as Receptionist): It's good to have you back.

KEITH (as Fero): This place sucks.

JACK (as Lem): Hey!

SYLVIA: Ephrim's just like counting on his fingers about all the places that they mentioned where they need to go, and is still really confused by it.

AUSTIN: Yep! So what was your room like, Lem?

JACK: Um, I think it is a... It's full of, um... like, dust, and dead plants, and like, books left open and things, um, it has got instruments hanging on the walls, but some of their strings have broken... it has a window--

AUSTIN: They've been snapped.

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: Your room's been tossed.

JACK (as Lem): Okay, I didn't leave it like this.

KEITH (as Fero): They don't call him *Morbash* for nothing.

JACK (as Lem): I saw a student say that to his face once.

KEITH (as Fero): What! I'm not the first?

JACK (as Lem): He got bashed!

(laughing)

KEITH (as Fero): Well there you go! Ah, that guy's literal and no fun.

JACK (as Lem): I mean, put your bags down, I can--I can call up some bedding from the Archives if they've got some available right now, if it fits with this room, um...

KEITH (as Fero): What do you mean 'if it fits with the room'?

JACK (as Lem): I'll--uh, look, I'll show you.

JACK: There is a, like a, like those pneumatic style holes in the wall? And I tear like a checkbook sheet off a thing by my desk and write down, y'know, 'two bedding', and I put it in a little container, and I drop it into the hole, and ring a bell, and just wait.

AUSTIN: And then five minutes later there's a knock on the door.

JACK (as Lem): Hi.

AUSTIN (as Porter): Hey, how's it going, lemme see, lemme see...

AUSTIN: And a guy, a big orc comes in. Got like a good, a good gut on him.

AUSTIN (as Porter): Lemme see what I can do for ya here.

AUSTIN: And he goes over and goes to your bed, and is like:

AUSTIN (as Porter): I only see the one.

JACK (as Lem): Sorry!

AUSTIN (as Porter): You wanted me to take two bedding away. I only see the one?

JACK (as Lem): Oh--oh my god, did I fill in the wrong column?

AUSTIN (as Porter): Yeah, wh...

JACK (as Lem): This happens--oh, I'm so sorry, can you maybe--can you come back? Is this too--oh, I'm so sorry. Is there anything you need?

AUSTIN (as Porter): It's Friday, kid.

KEITH (as Fero): He *wants* a bed, he doesn't want you to take away a bed. He wants a bed.

JACK (as Lem): No, I want two beds--no, two please...

AUSTIN (as Porter): You want a *bed*? You want two beds?! What a lavish life!

KEITH (as Fero): He's--he likes to roll from one to the other.

JACK (as Lem): Do you not have spares?

AUSTIN (as Porter): Not right now, it's, it's... there's a whole bunch of stuff goin' on, all the beds are out, all the bedding is out. I was--I was grateful! I've had a report, or we've had a call in for more bedding, no one wants to give up their bedding, I need more bedding.

JACK (as Lem): You need bedding or beds?

AUSTIN (as Porter): Both. Also bets, also. If you have any bets to make, I would love to take a bet.

KEITH (as Fero): What're you taking bets on?

AUSTIN (as Porter): What are you--what are you putting a bet on?

KEITH (as Fero): What is there to put a bet on?

AUSTIN (as Porter): Literally everything. Welcome to the Archives, halfling.

KEITH (as Fero): Um... So what's the odds on sun going down?

AUSTIN (as Porter): They're split right now, funny story.

KEITH (as Fero): Okay?

AUSTIN (as Porter): It's two to one, the uh, no two to--three to two. Three to two.

AUSTIN: He's doing this correction himself.

AUSTIN (as Porter): Three to two, that it will not go down.

KEITH (as Fero): All right. Fifty on not going down.

AUSTIN (as Porter): Fifty?

KEITH (as Fero): Fifty.

AUSTIN (as Porter): All right, I'll take the bet.

KEITH (as Fero): All right.

AUSTIN (as Porter): Who are you betting with?

KEITH (as Fero): What d'you mean? I've never--I don't like this. I don't go here. I don't--



AUSTIN (as Porter): Okay. I need a bet. I don't need you to bet me.

KEITH (as Fero): (laughing) Wait, so you need a, you need the other party?

AUSTIN (as Porter): No, I need the *bet*. I need you to make a bet, and then I'll take the bet.

KEITH (as Fero): Wait! You need me to invent a thing to bet on?

AUSTIN (as Porter): No, you can bet with him, you can bet with whoever you want, I just need there to be a bet, and then I'll take the bet and add it to the Archive.

KEITH (as Fero): The bet is the--the bet is that I don't think the sun will go down, with the money I have!

AUSTIN (as Porter): That's not how it works.

JACK (as Lem): Who are you betting! Bet me. Or bet him.

KEITH (as Fero): I'm betting all the people that also bet on this! That's how a bet works!

AUSTIN (as Porter): That's not how--no, that's now how it works.

JACK (as Lem): That's not how it works.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Two coins.

KEITH (as Fero): What are you talk--

JACK (as Lem): Ephrim. All right. Ephrim, Silver Hand.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yep. Two coins on the sun going down--

KEITH (as Fero): Two coins?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Which one were you betting on? Fero? The one that Fero's not betting on, two coins on the other one.

KEITH (as Fero): I'm betting--but I'm betting *fifty*! I'm not gonna give--I'm not--you have to--

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I gave away all my money like, a few hours ago! I've got not as

much as that!

KEITH (as Fero): But that's not how--that's not how three to two works!

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Well... make it less!

JACK (as Lem): I think you might have to leave without the bet, but I can give you the bed.

AUSTIN (as Porter): I'll take the bed.

JACK (as Lem): All right.

AUSTIN: And he, like, takes out a wrench and starts like wrenching the sockets and removing things, and...

JACK (as Lem): It's a good bed.

AUSTIN (as Porter): It's a good one!

KEITH (as Fero): Can I--are you--can I just give you some advice? About the bet thing? If everybody that bets all bets together, then you don't have to have a second person to bet with.

AUSTIN (as Porter): It's not--you don't--

JACK (as Lem): He's knew--he doesn't--it's okay.

AUSTIN (as Porter): I know, this happens every time we get guests.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): So... we wanted two new beds... and now we have no beds.

AUSTIN (as Porter): Have a great night!

AUSTIN: Door. Lights.

KEITH: Hey, I'm leaving. I'm--bye. I'm also gone.

AUSTIN: Also your room's been tossed.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Well.

JACK: Okay, I'm gonna... like, I guess get ready to go see Devar, but like... try and tidy a little on the way?

AUSTIN: Okay, are you...

JACK: I'm gonna try and Discern Realities.

AUSTIN: So wait, by tidying, you're kind of just like putting things back in their place, and then like, along the way you're trying to see what's what?

JACK: Yeah, or just like putting the stuff that's--putting the stuff that's trash full in a big pile, um...

AUSTIN: Okay. Go ahead and give me a Discern Realities.

JACK: Which is Intelligence?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Or is it Wisdom.

AUSTIN: Uh, sorry, it is Wisdom. It is Wisdom. Spout Lore is Intelligence.

JACK: Nine!

AUSTIN: Okay. Means you get one of those questions. [01:09:53]

JACK: All right. I'm just loading up the questions now...

AUSTIN: We should also do... your orc move, um, and also Port in a Storm.

JACK: Oh shit, we should.

AUSTIN: But, but--we've kind of being doing Port in a Storm, but--do, let's finish Discern Realities first.

JACK: I get one question. Um... what here is not what it appears to be?

AUSTIN: Um... This is not--no one tossed this place looking for something. This is meant--this is meant to look like a room that's been tossed.

JACK: Okay. So it was either tossed to give me a message, or to make a room look like it'd been tossed.

AUSTIN: This is a threat.

JACK: Yeah. Okay.

AUSTIN: You can tell the difference there too because if their job was to toss a room, like for the--for the pattern, it would need to be tossed correctly. Something would have needed to have been pulled from it, d'you know what I mean? Um, but this is to send a message.

JACK: Yeah. Okay.

AUSTIN: The...

KEITH: So they tossed the room just to go like 'just so you know, we can toss a room'.

AUSTIN: Right. Right. 'We can touch you'. So then yeah, you have your--your orc move, which is: when you enter an important location (your call), you can ask the GM for one fact from the history of that location, and then you also get another one of those, which is: when you first encounter--I guess this is not first encounter. This is not your first encounter of a location covered by the grand histories of the known world, so. I won't give that to you.

JACK: Okay. So, my question about the history is... I presume it can be recent history as well, right?

AUSTIN: Mmm... yeah.

JACK: No, or is this like history history.

AUSTIN: I think it's history history.

JACK: Okay. Um... oh! Um... has anybody unearthed any--cause I have to tell you how I know this, as well, right? And presumably I'm learning this, or I'm trying to learn this by just hearing stuff in the Archives, or [UNCLEAR] [01:11:49] conversations, or reading--presumably internal newsletters?

AUSTIN: Or something? Yeah.

JACK: Yeah, like, or just things written on big noticeboards or whatever, um... Has anybody uncovered anything in our really old personal archives that would suggest something similar to the schism has happened before? Because presumably orcs being orcs, as soon as the schism arrives, someone will publish a paper saying like, 'seven hundred years ago, something similar happened!'

AUSTIN: This is just--right. Right right right. There is a... there is a paper published, or there is

a--there was a public lecture given that was about... it's--so the actual lecture was about, effectively, the cyclical nature of history? But the--which a lot of people like roll their eyes at. But--and it's just like, y'know, 'first it happened in the west, then it happened in the east, then it happened in the west again. And then here's another thing that happened a lot of different times'. And then one of the things that did resonate was this notion--this thing that did happen to tie into the schism, which is the, um, times at which the... there was a divide between, or--or a debate about what counted as 'real', and that debate came up first in the--the University, in pre-Erasure times, you believe. It happened around the time of the Erasure, um, in--this is the part that was like, new, was: in the newly discovered place that we now call Nacre, there was some sort of debate there around, um... what counted as real and what was allowed and disallowed in terms of creating new things. Um... and someone was, someone left Ordenna, or sorry, left Nacre for Ordenna, because of that? And then some time later, in Ordenna, there was another similar debate around this, that caused some sort of further schism? And then--and then like, it all ties together with this like, gesture that like this is the natural state of things. This debate between what is and what is not is--and he kind of gestures, like, 'as our scouts to the east can tell you, the world itself is constantly in this struggle, between what is and is not'.

JACK: In the same way that, uh, certain people nowadays are like 'wah, climate change! Just comes around every so often!'

AUSTIN: 'Just comes around every now and then!' Yeah yeah yeah, exactly. Totally.

JACK: Huh. Okay.

AUSTIN: Um... yeah. And then... a Port in the Storm says: when you return to a civilised settlement you've visited before, the GM will tell you--tell the GM when you were last here, they'll tell you how it has changed since then; that's kind of everything we're doing, so not gonna separate that out.

JACK: Yeah. Yeah, I'm not too worried about that.

AUSTIN: All right.

JACK (as Lem): Ephrim, are you staying here? You don't have to, like, you don't have to.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (sighs)

JACK (as Lem): I'm sure you can find a spare room. Like--you got that list of things you can do, I don't wanna make you sleep on the floor.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (sighs again) I--so here's my options, is either sleeping on the floor, or going through all that to get a room that possibly doesn't have a bed in it?

JACK (as Lem): Actually, that's a really good point, isn't it, because they probably don't have those in the spare rooms either.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Mhm. Exactly, I feel like it's... just saves time, if it's okay with you.

AUSTIN: Lem, is there... is there a church of Samoths here?

JACK: Yeah, totally. Absolutely.

SYLVIA: Oh! Then I'll go there.

AUSTIN: What's that like? And you can both kind of collaborate on that. I'm curious.

JACK: I don't think it has an exterior in the same way that churches of Samoths traditionally do, in the same way that sometimes when you're in an airport, you see those signs that point towards a chapel, or a mosque, or a synagogue in an airport, and you're really surprised when it's just a door? Into another room? And... I think in that way, you could mistake it for a lecture theatre, or for a, a warehouse. I think--I'm not sure what it's like inside, Ephrim.

SYLVIA: I reckon it's probably... I mean, a--as a side effect of also things being kind of rough, as well as... I don't know how much presence Samoths has with orcs? I feel like it's probably kinda sparse compared to the churches we've seen before, in the series. Like they still have the standard like, there's, like some sort of symbol there to pray at, and like there are... I like the idea of like a lecture theatre, where instead of pews there's just like a bunch of chairs organised in the way that pews would be organised?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally. It's like a community centre more than a church.

SYLVIA: Yeah, it's like--it's--it's not as flashy as anything we've seen, or, um... like if--if you took out the very few religious decorations, you wouldn't know this was a church.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So yeah, there's that you could also try to go stay at.

SYLVIA: Okay. I think it's worth a shot.

AUSTIN: Sure. Um, that place is the place you just described, and it's run, um, by, um... a brother named Maad, Maad Rolan, um, and he is happy to give you a cot, in the back, basically.

SYLVIA: Oh, okay. Um... I'll, uh, I'll let him know that like... if he needs someone to help do services, while I'm here, I'd be happy to, in exchange for letting me stay here. But I'm not sure how long we'll be here.

AUSTIN: He's agreeable, generally, and--and is... y'know, very, uh, not in your--in awe of you,

but, but it's clear that he did not, like--this is, in a weird way, the backwater? Like, there's no converting the Archivists. There's no bringing the truth to them in his mind, or he's kind of given up on that? And seeing you has been this really big spark. So. So, that's nice. He's--he's an orc. And is... seems to be a very devout guy from the--from the exchanges you've had with him. But okay, let's--I guess, jump ahead to the Devar meetup at Lot 27?

JACK: I'm curious about where Fero is.

AUSTIN: Yeah, good question. Fero, did you go back to the mountains to, like, drop your stuff off, or?

KEITH: Yeah. I went--I went back to the mountains, um... if not to drop my stuff off, then to stay there for the night. I guess I didn't know what time it was?

AUSTIN: That's, yeah.

JACK: Yeah. The clocks have just changed in the UK so I really sympathise right now.

KEITH: (laughing) Does that happen there?! I thought it was only here, I thought we were the only people stupid enough to have like a daylight savings thing.

JACK: Oh, no, no, yeah, we do it. Um, yeah.

KEITH: It must just be us two. Like, those are the only two places.

AUSTIN: So wait--so now are you five hours away again, or are you back to--

JACK: Yeah, I'm back to five hours again.

AUSTIN: Aw, that's a shame. That was a nice couple of weeks, when you were only four hours away.

JACK: Yeah, it was really good! Uh, but nope. Oh well! The good news is that summer's coming, and Samoths is really excited about that.

(laughing)

KEITH: Pretty soon you'll be *six* hours away!

JACK: Right. God.

AUSTIN: God. All right, um... So what's--yeah, what is your home like?

KEITH: Um... Fero lived on... the mountains for a long time, on several different mountains, but I bet the New Archives is probably where he spent the most time. And, um... I think it's--it's, okay, so, I think you--you get up to the top of sort of the closest peak--not like the closest hill, but the like, a real peak, and there's sort of a cave entrance, um, and Fero takes out his pocket a little pouch with just a little bit of oil, and dabs it onto a runway, lights it, and it sort of... travels down a ramp, and then lights wicks along the way, and the inside of the cavern is sort of like a geode? Like those amethyst, like, it's like a rock on the outside but if you break it open it's just one giant geode? Um... and there's a table, and some chairs, and a--and a, like a--sort of like a, like a breakfast nook sort of thing, but then there's like a nice comfy chair, um... and there's, uh, a big--there's a big plush bed, made of--just a down bed. Like it's a big down mattress.

AUSTIN: Okay. You have a nice bed.

KEITH: A nice bed. Yeah. I imagine that this is--this is a mattress that was made from me collecting the feathers of... that I found. Like this is a homemade down mattress. Um... and I sort of set my stuff by the bed, and then just off into the distance you can see there's a second room, with a second bed, down bed, um... I guess I--yeah, I guess I put my stuff down, maybe sit in the chair for a while...

AUSTIN: Do you have decorations?

KEITH: Um... it's hard to hang stuff on the wall because they're jaggedy rock.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So I guess like my--the question is like... what's--are there any personal touches? Is there anything that marks this as Fero's? Or is it just a place where you sleep?

KEITH: Um... I think that the--so, I think that the stuff that marks it as Fero's is that if there's anything in there at all it's stuff that Fero has made from just living in the woods and in the mountains? Like the bed is--the bed is--

AUSTIN: All right, the furniture itself is--

KEITH: Yeah. I made the bed, I made the chairs, um... maybe I didn't upholster the--the comfy chair, like the... like a foyer chair, you know what I'm talking about? But the--the candles, I probably made the candles...

AUSTIN: From wax of--whatever, yeah.

KEITH: From wax, yeah. I found wax, or--or molded something out of clay to hold a wick, and... um...

AUSTIN: Is this the first time Fero's been--this is the first time Fero's been alone for as long as he wants, like, since we started playing. What--



KEITH: Yeah. Except for the last--the last, um, little while in Rosemerrow.

AUSTIN: Was that... right. Yeah yeah yeah. Yes. But, but now you're at home. What's that--what's Fero at rest, at home, like?

KEITH: *Really quiet.*

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah. Like... quiet, contemplative, um...

AUSTIN: What is--what is he contemplating?

KEITH: Um... I don't--I don't think that Fero is ever satisfied with the... way that he acts. Not that he's like 'oh, I'm so loud and boisterous, and I frustrate people and I'm annoying', but just that like, like, 'ah, I made the--I did the wrong thing, I didn't do the--I didn't do what I think is the right thing to do', or 'I didn't think long enough on what I should have done'. Like I don't think Fero regrets stuff like digging the hole through the tower, but I think he does regret, like, not thinking about maybe there's a better way to do things. Like yeah, like I didn't think--

AUSTIN: In--so does he stay at that like abstract level of, like, does he prevent himself from being specific? Does he prevent himself from saying 'oh, I could've done the tower thing differently, or I could have done something different with Mother Glory, or I could have done something different with this or that', does he only ever go just like 'I wish I wasn't such a fuckup sometimes'?

KEITH: I think it's--I think it's that. I think that it starts at 'I did the thing that I thought was right, but if I thought about it for longer, maybe I would have decided something different was right'. But I don't--

AUSTIN: Does he ever think about--does he get caught up thinking about--

KEITH: But it stops before--I think it stops before he goes 'and this is that thing'.

AUSTIN: 'This is what I could have done differently, in this scenario'.

KEITH: Right, because--because that's too... it's too hard but not too hard, like, not like he's incapable, but too hard like I don't--I wanna get caught up--I want to get caught up in that I didn't do the right thing, but I don't want to get caught up on what I could have done different.

AUSTIN: Okay. Great. Good! I'm glad that that is--I'm glad that's at least like, a thing to think about when it comes to framing Fero, is that is where he is at, and it's not just--I'm glad there's

that downtime where he at least takes that first step, or that's--that's at least interesting.

KEITH: And this is--I wanna say that, um... of, of--this is what happened in the barn after Rosemerrow; this is also what happened after that--after the first tower on Eventide.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: That's the--that's the stage of contemplation that like, where Fero just goes like 'oh, I have to go, and not do anything'.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

KEITH: But I think I do go back--I don't want to, like I'm mad. I'm mad that Ephrim didn't take my offer of like 'hey, I have a room! You don't have to go through a bunch of bullshit'. And I think on my way up to the cave, I was like 'I'm just gonna fuckin' stay here. I don't--I don't give a shit'. But I do go back. I think once I get there, and once I calm down, I'm think I'm like 'I can't miss--I can't miss out--' I have f--not because I wanna help, but because Fero has FOMO.

AUSTIN: (laughing) He doesn't wanna hear this story. Right. Sure.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. So you all meet back up, at Lot 27, which is a... there are--there are hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of lots, and also hundreds of allotments, which are different, and also hundreds of areas and hundreds of storerooms, like--it is a Kafka-esque bureaucratic nightmare here. It is very easy to get lost, and even more easy to get lost when you see what is on the other side of this door. But first we're on the outside of this door. And Devar is like leaning up against a wall across from it? I imagine this is... like, effectively the, um, the... he's like leaning up against a wall that is just the side of a different mountain? There's kind of like been a walkway that has been carved into... either between these two mountains or literally this one mountain has been carved straight down through so that there is a walkway through it. And then a pair of double doors that are--that have 27 written above them in--in orc. In orcish. And he's leaning on it with his leg up, like y'know his knee bent, he has on like a--a different Hawai'ian shirt which is tucked in, he has jeans on, and boots, and... has, has like his sunglasses down. Also, the sun has not set, but it's taken on the color of sunset. It's still hanging in the air in the exact same way, but now it's like--

KEITH: If their fucking bets worked the same way I'd be so rich!

AUSTIN: Would you? It's not setting!

KEITH: It's not setting! I bet on it not to set. Fifty--fifty gold coins. Three to two.

AUSTIN: You could have gone and made that bet somewhere else. And then given him the bet.

KEITH: (incredulous) But he was the guy that wanted the bet! (laughing)

AUSTIN: No no no, he wanted the bet.

JACK: He wanted the *bet*.

AUSTIN: He didn't want to take a bet, he wanted the bet.

KEITH: But what does he need a bet for if he's not going to take the bet!

AUSTIN: Because the pattern *needs* a bet!

KEITH: Fuck off!

(laughing)

AUSTIN: That's how it works!

JACK: Ohhhh, man.

AUSTIN: So do you all arrive one after the other, or you all arrive basically at the same time?

KEITH: I arrive last.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Like faintly clandestinely? Y'know, there are people carrying stuff around all over the place. There is no reason whatsoever to be suspicious. But there's definitely a sense of 'well, gotta, y'know, gotta go carry the plant to Lot 27 and make sure no one stops me because they might be cross!'

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: It's--again, it's like the--it's like the, everyone's sort of being kind of covert and doing all these weird schemes; it's the same like everyone is carrying something to someplace. Everyone has a thing that they have to bring somewhere at a time.

AUSTIN: Right. Exactly. That's completely the case. Um... do you all wait for Fero, when everyone else--when Ephrim and, and Lem--

JACK: Yeah, I'll wait for him!

SYLVIA: Yeah, no, definitely.

AUSTIN: Okay. It just was not clear if he was coming or not. So then Fero you show up, everyone's here, and there is this door. And Devar goes like:

AUSTIN (as Devar): All right. Y'all better get ready, I've heard some shit about what goes on in here.

KEITH (as Fero): What goes on in here?

AUSTIN (as Devar): I mean he's a guy who--turns things into other things. You can't trust what you see, y'know?

KEITH (as Fero): I guess. But we've seen that before. Like literally last place we were at, we saw that.

AUSTIN (as Devar): Wait. Did you?

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, remember? There was a whole museum that was a other museum actually?

AUSTIN (as Devar): (strained noises) Oh, okay. You were there. I didn't realise y'all were there.

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, we saw--yeah, we saw a museum turn into sticks, and like, sandcastles.

AUSTIN (as Devar): I mean... here's the thing, that's... you'll see.

KEITH (as Fero): All right.

AUSTIN: And he knocks on the door a few times, and there's no response.

AUSTIN (as Devar): (sighs)

KEITH (as Fero): (mockingly) But how do we know the door's actually closed! What if we just walk through the door!

JACK (as Lem): Doesn't work like that, Fero.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Do you wanna try it, Fero?

JACK: And I try knock on the door again.

KEITH: I walk through the--I walk into the door.

*[Inside begins playing]*

AUSTIN: Fero, you see waves crashing against rocks, in front of you. And a massive statue of a figure--of a humanoid figure, that has like jagged, like... it's cut from rock in a way that is clear that it was meant to be cut this way, but also it--it's, their body is, has these jagged stones breaking off from it, in a way that is... It's not smooth. It's not a clean statue, y'know it's not flat the way most people's skin is, it's rocky and is--has these like weird outcroppings built into it. But it seems like that's intentional.

*[Inside stops playing]*