

Autumn in Hieron 11: Like Sneaky Little Sneaks

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KEITH: The only thing Ali needs to be concerned about is talking too quietly and then also laughing too loudly.

AUSTIN: OK.

ALI: [laughs] I do both of those things.

KEITH: Ali is the only one who is consistently both too quiet and too loud.

AUSTIN: [laughs] And also too loud? Okay.

KEITH: Yeah, usually it's like everything Art is saying is way too loud, everything Jack is saying is way too quiet. With Ali it's—

AUSTIN: Which you can fix for.

KEITH: Which I can—Well, I cannot fix too loud.

JACK: None of you all have ever visited Britain, right?

AUSTIN: Uh-uh.

KEITH: No, never.

JACK: Well, here's a true fact. For you guys British people are about [whispers] this big.

KEITH: Oh, so it's just—

AUSTIN: Comparatively.

KEITH: [laughs]

JACK: [cross] [laughs] Which explains —

AUSTIN: [cross] You're right —

KEITH: Which means you have less power in your lungs, to move that air. It's harder.

JACK: Right, yeah, it's harder for us, yeah, absolutely.

AUSTIN: Because your lungs are like the size of that candy I showed off earlier.

KEITH: What a struggle it must be, to be British.

JACK: You see how big this candy is?

KEITH: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh, those are good, I like those a lot!

KEITH: What is that? That looks like a sour patch kid.

AUSTIN: No, I think it's like one of those like sour cola—yeah, Haribo—wait, that's just an American candy. [cross] We have those.

KEITH: [cross] That is an American candy.

ALI: [cross] Wait. We have those.

JACK: We have those but they're just made smaller for us.

KEITH: [laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Because you're tiny people. It's convenient too, because cans of soda are just as big as you. So this makes the soda experience—

ALI: [laughs]

KEITH: Yeah, Austin have you ever been to like Wal-Mart and you see like there's the cans of cokes and there's the cans of cokes that are like slightly smaller. They just keep—

JACK: We could live in one of those.

KEITH: [laughing] —in England they just keep descending in size until you're like, is that a battery, or is that a coke can.

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Or is that a person.

KEITH: That might be a camera battery.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Okay. All right, are we good? Are we ready? Are we gonna time dot is?

JACK: Anyway, let's leave this fantasy of our imagination for another one.

KEITH: We're absolutely gonna time dot is.

JACK: Okay, I'm gonna load up time dot is.

KEITH: This is gonna be very good for an intro.

AUSTIN: Oh my God.

JACK: Didn't we find out that time dot is was broken?

KEITH: No, we found out that—Jack?!

AUSTIN: Jack! Do not—

KEITH: Jack, do not test me!

[Music: "Autumn Not Winter"]

ALI: [laughs]

KEITH: Here's what we found out—

AUSTIN: The gall of this man! His lungs are small; his gall very, very big.

KEITH: He has a much higher gall to lung ratio than most people.

AUSTIN: Hey everyone—

KEITH: Hey.

AUSTIN: —welcome to Friends at the Table. We're an actual play podcast focussing on critical world building, smart characterisation, and fun interaction between good friends. We're playing Dungeon World still, we've been doing this now for a couple of weeks. Dungeon World is a game by Sage LaTorra and Adam Koebel. It's a hack of a game called Apocalypse World which is by D. Vincent Baker. Joining me today, we're going back to the group of Alicia Acampora. Where can people find you, Alicia?

ALI: [very quietly] I'm ali_west on Twitter.

AUSTIN: Can you speak up a little bit?

ALI: [laughs] I am ali_west on Twitter.

AUSTIN: Also joining me is Keith Carberry. Keith, where can people find you?

KEITH: Hi, my name's Keith Carberry, you can find me on Twitter @somethingdumb, and you can find let's plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton or runbutton.net.

AUSTIN: And as always, we're joined by the stylings of Jack de Quidt.

JACK: [laughs] Hi there.

AUSTIN: The narrative stylings of Jack de Quidt.

JACK: The terrible narrative stylings—you can find me on Twitter @notquitereal and at my game studio's website, thetalltreesgames.co.uk.

AUSTIN: As always I want to start off by repeating what the agenda of Dungeon World is. It is to portray a fantastic world. To fill the characters' lives with adventure. And to play to find out what happens. I also just want to start off by—like, one, let's do a quick recap. What happened—what were like the big picture events from last time we played, cause it's been two weeks since we recorded as a group.

JACK: And six months since you heard us last.

[Ali and Keith laugh]

AUSTIN: [laughing] At our current rate that sounds about right, we are building quite a buffer of episodes. So a recap is what I was asking. What happened last time? Big picture stuff?

KEITH: [laughs] Hm. Hella made a bad choice.

AUSTIN: Well, we'll get to that. Let's situate that choice.

KEITH: Yeah, so from what I remember is that we were having a boat party with Calhoun.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Why were you doing that?

KEITH: Going down to my neck of the woods. The name, which I cannot remember, it's Rose...

AUSTIN: Rosemerrow.

KEITH: Rosemerrow, right.

AUSTIN: You should be able to look at the screen and see it.

KEITH: Yeah, I have two things on top of that right now.

AUSTIN: I see.

KEITH: Because I'm still doing level stuff. We were going to Rosemerrow. Calhoun was wasted out of his gourd, he was messed up. And we said, hey, let's go down to Rosemerrow, you can get some gold. You can get way less gold than you think you're gonna get, cause you're drunk. [laughing] And when we're down there we met some horrible undead pirates. The undead spawn of the pirates murdered by Hella. And when we were fighting them we were not doing terribly. Not doing great. And one of them offered us an out. I think it might have been Captain, what was his name, Brandice?

JACK, ALI and AUSTIN: Brandish.

KEITH: Brandish.

ALI: He reappeared. [unintelligible]

KEITH: Captain of the Kingdom Come. He offered us a deal: We can all go if we give him Calhoun.

AUSTIN: And Hella decided to go—

KEITH: And Hella decided to, yes, go for it.

AUSTIN: And we had a big talk about alignment, and I hope all of that actually does stay—

KEITH: Yeah, that'll stay.

AUSTIN: —in the recording, because I think that was an important talk.

KEITH: That stuff is important, yeah.

AUSTIN: And then Ali and I have since talked about Hella's alignment and alignment in general, and what a weird system alignments are, and like, the limitations of it.

KEITH: Mm-hm. It's weird.

AUSTIN: I take a little bit of—what's the word I'm looking for—

KEITH: Are you looking for umbrage or the opposite of umbrage?

AUSTIN: I take a little bit of umbrage in the idea that Hella that made a bad decision, I think she made an interesting decision. And...

KEITH: I don't think that Hella made a bad decision, I think Ali made a bad decision. [laughs]

AUSTIN: I don't think Ali made a bad decision at all! That's way worse, Keith.

KEITH: I'm just kidding, it's, no, you're absolutely right, it was not a bad decision—

AUSTIN: Hmm. Hmm.

KEITH: —it was just a new thing that we're doing now.

JACK: I actually...

AUSTIN: And it's a thing that I think is useful for two things. One, it helps us think about ways in which the alignments play out. One of the things that Ali and I discussed later was like, well there are other evil ways that that could have gone that weren't just the betrayal of Calhoun or whatever. But the other reason I think it's interesting is that—so I left that game and then spent two weeks really nervous about what we would do next, because I'd given — you know, in the end we'd kind of created stakes that—Ali I think just dropped out the call.

KEITH: Jack is also—no, Jack is fine.

JACK: No, I'm here. I'm just being still.

AUSTIN: Jack is fine?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Okay. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay, Ali is back.

KEITH: Jack was just practicing stillness.

AUSTIN: So, the other reason I think that was interesting is that...

JACK: Oh wait, yeah, Ali?

AUSTIN: She just drop again?

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: Hey, Ali, hi.

ALI: Hi.

KEITH: Ali's back.

ALI: I very much want to hear this conversation so this is so funny.

AUSTIN: Yeah I know, me too. That's why I'm waiting. I'm waiting until you're legit back. So, the other reason I think that it was an interesting decision or an interesting moment is because it kind of spurred me on to tackle something else, right. So, I kind of left that game concerned that I wouldn't be able to live up to it, because we ended up producing stakes for the characters that I hadn't anticipated, and that required me to think about the world in a different way. And then for like two weeks I stressed about it. I had something in mind for this group. Or I didn't have something in mind, right, like I'd moved off of the idea that there was just one, this direction you could go. But I didn't know what the consequence would be for you guys to go after Calhoun if that's what you wanted to do, and that means, like, a lot of work for me but also really good work. At the end of the day it made me really love Dungeon World because, you know, when you look at the book as it's written it gives GMs a lot of tools to work through these sorts of questions, right?

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Like, there are principles, besides the agenda that I always read, at the beginning there are principles which I read from the very, very, very first episode, the character creation, world gen episode. And a couple of those really came in handy here. Name every person, which obviously came up in the middle of that fight, when Lem was engaged in fearsome combat with Emmanuel, the would-be patisserie chef.

KEITH: Oh, patisserie chef, that's a good word.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Ask questions and use answers, which is that moment where Keith kind of decided that those pirates were undead pirates. 'Yeah, yeah, wait, those are undead, they're probably undead'. Be a fan of the characters really made me think through what your

relationships were to each other, to other factions in the world, and made me interested in what would happen in this next adventure we're about to start off on now. There's a principle that is begin and end with the fiction, which is like 'hey, what happens in the fiction also happens in the rules', and that helped me understand a lot about what the NPCs you'll be dealing with in the coming, y'know, adventure, will be about, and how they work and also just again thinking about Brandish as a — and his crew of undead pirates, like, what's that mean for them both fictionally and mechanically. And then the last thing is think off-screen too, which we talked about at the end of the last game, that the world keeps moving, even when you're doing thing A, thing X could be happening. But it also means, and this is what I eventually got down to, was like, y'know, it's easy for me to talk about Brandish the undead pirate captain on the ship, but it's way harder to extend that outwards and think about what it means to be an undead pirate captain in the world of Hieron. And like—

JACK: [chuckles] Oh, that's a hard life.

AUSTIN:—and like to work through that. Well, is it? All right, so this is what we're gonna — so that was like a big inspiration for me, was 'okay, let me situate this character off-screen'. When he's off-screen, what is that life? And like think about it, think through it.

JACK: Yeah, cause it's not just gonna—

AUSTIN: We're gonna, you'll see. Sorry?

KEITH: He's not meeting Hella again every day.

JACK: Yeah, like —

AUSTIN: And he doesn't not exist. He exists inside of something, which we'll get to. So all that stuff, coupled with the front system, which lets you develop different kinds of dangers and NPCs and factions and motivations, really helped me work through the problem of where do we take this game from here. So if you are GMing a game of any kind, not just Dungeon World, check out this book, or check out Vincent Baker's Apocalypse World, both of which are filled with really good writing, which you can generalise for GMing in general—of any type of game—that encourage you to engage with your players, your characters, your worlds and really drag the best stuff out of them. Over the last week when I've been doing prep for this game it really pushed me to develop those ideas and not let them just be like 'oh yeah, Brandish is gonna be that pirate who bugs them every now and then', like now I understand who he is and like what's happening and that is such a key part of building this world. So with that I wanna just jump into it because I don't wanna oversell my hand and I also don't want to get into the big philosophy of gaming discussion until we've had this thing and—I wanna see if it hits, y'know.

KEITH: I do wanna add one more thing.

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: When I say Hella made a bad decision I'm not mad at Ali, I'm pushing Fero's agenda—

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Okay.

KEITH: —who is upset because Calhoun is his boat party bro.

(11:54)

AUSTIN: Right, yep, okay. So, how long has it been since that last fight? How long do you think it took you guys to recoup and recover and fix up the ship and get up to a point where you guys can do stuff again?

KEITH: I don't know how damaged the ship was—

AUSTIN: There were some cannon shots, it was bad, like it wasn't about to sink but it was not good, y'know. It wasn't seaworthy in the sense you could go on a long—you wouldn't have been able to go straight to Rosemerrow from there.

KEITH: Okay, cause in my head we were just going to be on a messed up ship so—

AUSTIN: I mean that's fine.

KEITH: If we—I mean do you guys want to have repaired the ship or do you want to be on a messed up ship right now.

ALI: There's some time sensitivity here, right?

AUSTIN: There is.

KEITH: Yeah. Cause in my head it like the next morning and we were gonna decide from that next morning like—

AUSTIN: Okay well let's do that then, let's say okay, it's the next morning, and through a sort of, y'know, a power vacuum, the three of you have at this point—y'know you were already kind of guiding this ship on this journey and the remaining people on it—remember many of whom are not sailors, many of whom are just partygoers—

JACK: [laughing]

KEITH: [laughing] Oh God, the worst party!

AUSTIN: Right, it's the worst party—

KEITH: It's the worst party.

AUSTIN: You've really ruined—you're just buzzkills really. But, you're in a position of power still with Calhoun gone and even his crew, y'know, some of his crew has been killed, they've been lost, they've been thrown overboard. Y'know that next morning there is still blood in the water. There are still corpses to be dealt with. What do you do?

[long pause]

JACK: Um. So Hella, you wanna go back for Calhoun, right?

ALI: Um, sure? But I don't wanna go back for Calhoun as much I wanna go back for Brandish.

JACK: Okay. So, I would be prepared to defer to Hella as standing captain in this instance, here, seeing as this sort of seems to be like your mission. Um...

[long pause]

JACK: But if that's not something that you wanna do... I dunno... It sort of feels like Hella made a decision here and I would be prepared to go with her in that regard.

ALI: Okay. Cause I was thinking it was sort of the opposite where like she made this call and then Lem and Fero were like really upset about it.

JACK: Yeah, but at the same time it's sort of like... I dunno. To put bluntly we are not like big fighting characters and I don't know whether or not we could do this on our own like, [laughing] I don't know whether or not we could go like, 'oh yeah Hella, we're er just off to um, to get get Cal—yeah okay good'.

ALI: [laughs]

KEITH: I mean I wouldn't necessarily call me not a big fighting character.

ALI: Yeah you could become a big bear.

KEITH: I could be a big bear and I do thirty percent more damage.

JACK: [laughs]

AUSTIN: As a big bear.

KEITH: As a big bear. So Gregggy, our pal Gregggy—

AUSTIN and JACK: Mm.

KEITH: We mustn't forget him. How long did he give us to get back to him with the tower stuff?

AUSTIN: He said two to three weeks—

KEITH: Two to three weeks.

AUSTIN: —he'll be back in two weeks and just wait for you is what he said—

KEITH: For a week okay.

AUSTIN: —but, but, yeah exactly.

JACK: I've just had an ill-advisable idea.

KEITH: Okay.

JACK: Austin, what's the sort of like contact network in this world? Is there a postal system, do we have carrier pigeons, how does it work here?

AUSTIN: I don't think you have access to whatever it is—

JACK: We don't have access to any sort of pigeons?

AUSTIN: Not in the middle of the ocean, no.

ALI: I mean you're also like wanted wanted right now—

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: —so I think we would wanna risk that.

JACK: All I'm suggesting is we just tell Gregggy—

AUSTIN: I suspect—

JACK: —that we're on our way to get the [unintelligible]

AUSTIN: Remember, he's not in Velas, he's gone, remember. He also had to go somewhere for two weeks, you don't know where he is.

JACK and KEITH: Mm.

AUSTIN: Y'know again I bet you if Calhoun was here he would probably know how to get message back—

JACK: [unintelligible]

AUSTIN: Right, but it's not your ship, it's not y'know...

JACK: It's like going around someone else's kitchen and [unintelligible]

AUSTIN: It's also, maybe, <sigh>

KEITH: Right. It just means we're in the middle of the ocean now, we have time to send that message, like if sending a message—

[sound of air rushing]

JACK: My laptop fan just turned on.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it super did.

JACK: I don't know what to do.

ALI: Yep. [laughs]

KEITH: [laughing] It'll be fine, I can noise-remove most of it out.

AUSTIN: Okay, okay.

JACK: Okay, thank you Keith.

KEITH: You're welcome, it'll be probably mostly fine. How much is it showing up on your sound file?

[long pause]

JACK: An amount.

ALI: Laughs.

KEITH: It'll be fine, it'll go off and—there we go, it's off—

[sound of air rushing stops briefly and then starts again]

KEITH: Oh no it's not.

AUSTIN: No it's not. Let's just..

KEITH: Okay, let's just go. So it's like, if we go after Calhoun—

AUSTIN: [unintelligible] Out of character really quick—

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Out of character you guys have already decided to go after Calhoun.

[Keith and Jack agree]

AUSTIN: So I just wanna make sure we're clear about that only because I don't wanna throw out the prep I did [laughing].

[Keith and Ali agree]

AUSTIN: Which is fine, so I have this other prep, from the other stuff that we could be doing already, but I—

KEITH: Did extra prep.

AUSTIN: —we did decide over the past two weeks what you guys wanted to do—

[Keith and Ali agree]

AUSTIN: —so I just wanted to make sure that this talk doesn't just go for twenty minutes of you deciding whether or not to go after Calhoun.

KEITH: No no no, what I'm saying is like as someone who is concerned about this tower, who wants to do this thing for Gregg, I think that we have time to do both, worst case scenario, I think that when we're done with this, we still have enough time to send that message that Lem was talking about, after we're not in the middle of the ocean anymore—

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: —after we get to a place like—

AUSTIN: That has—

KEITH: We might not be able to get from here do the stuff to Rosemerrow, do that stuff—

AUSTIN: All that's fine—

KEITH: —and back...

AUSTIN: —what do you do now though?

KEITH: Right now, we fuckin' get our pal Calhoun back!

JACK: What's the—

AUSTIN: Okay, so what do you do?

JACK: What's the state of the sails?

KEITH: Do we know where Brandish is?

AUSTIN: Brandish—they went east, they went east from the mark on the map that's this little red 'x' which is where you guys had that little scuffle, which is kind of in the middle of this strait between Ordena and the Hieron mainland.

ALI: Okay.

KEITH: If they went east that's good because that'll take us closer to land which is a place that we would like to be if our boat is all fucked up.

AUSTIN: It is. I think you guys can probably sail a bit but like at a fairly slow rate, and not in a position where—like I'm looking at the numbers of where your ship was at and another encounter would be bad for you.

KEITH and JACK: Yeah.

KEITH: I think that a thing that we want to avoid is a ship to ship encounter with them. That does not not necessarily mean that we can't get on their ship.

JACK: Right, so in terms of what we actually do, how are the sails?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: How is the deck? What is, is the tiller in operation?

KEITH: I mean it sounds like we're not gonna have a problem just getting to a place as long as we don't mind it being slow and if it gets stormy then we're maybe less than equipped to deal with that. So I think either way—

AUSTIN: That is exactly the case.

KEITH: —whether we're going directly to Brandish's ship or we want to go to a port or wherever, like, it seems like first case scenario our only option is to go east because that's where the shore is and where Brandish went.

AUSTIN: You could also go to Ordena, I don't wanna take that off the map, there are ports on the coast of Ordena—

KEITH: Right we could go to Ordena.

AUSTIN: But I don't want to, I'm not trying to railroad you in either direction, I just want to make sure that's clear. Ali, Hella would know that to the south of where you are, a little bit further, to the south there's that little inlet in Ordena. Do you see that? It's kind of like a little roundish like a semi-circle, cutting into Ordena. There's a fort there that you could theoretically dock at. But that's the opposite direction, you know it's south-west instead of east. There would be a time constraint there, it would take you at this rate a couple of days to get down to that port whereas it would take you, let's say, one day to get to the east, to the land.

(20:28)

KEITH: I'm, yeah, I'm willing to—I'm willing to take the small risk of... y'know taking this slow boat... east and saving time than going south, fixing it and then going northeast.

AUSTIN: Right, right, agreed.

KEITH: You know?

AUSTIN: Yep.

ALI: Do we for sure want this to be like the next morning though, and not like take one day. To sort of—

AUSTIN: That's my question

ALI: —like lick our wounds a little bit?

JACK: Um, I'm—my concern is that—

KEITH: Well this is, we're talking about it the next morning, we're not necessarily leaving—

ALI: OK

KEITH: —next morning.

AUSTIN: So that's my question, are you, yeah, are you taking a day to recover, are you...

JACK: I vote not, because what we're talking about here is we're talking about a human living captive that has been against his will press-ganged onto a ship of the undead—

AUSTIN: mm-hm

JACK: There are time constraints involved there.

KEITH: I vote not to, I wanna get to Calhoun and Hella, I think that... like the longer we wait the farther away Brandish gets from... you.

ALI: OK. I just wanted to make sure, but... [unintelligible]—

AUSTIN: Do you have a counter arguments?

ALI: What?

AUSTIN: Does Hella have a counter argument there—

ALI: No.

AUSTIN: —for taking some time to—

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: OK.

ALI: No, that was more of a question for like, Jack anyway.

AUSTIN: OK. So if everybody, so that night actually, I just remembered, everyone should consume one ration.

KEITH: Not me.

AUSTIN: Er, except for, and then heal half of your max health back.

ALI: OK

KEITH: Sweet.

JACK: Rounding up or rounding down if it's an odd number?

AUSTIN: Round up.

JACK: Ok, thanks.

AUSTIN: Go ahead and round up. Remember that a ration comes with five uses so that should just go down by one.

KEITH: Full health, oh yeah!

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Good.

KEITH: I'm pumped!

ALI: We're not counting that like the ship has rations that would be our own?

AUSTIN: At this point, I think after the, the beating it took... I'm gonna make you guys dig into your own rations at this point, y'know.

JACK: Seems fair.

KEITH: Mm.

AUSTIN: I'll put it this way, you guys got that ship into a lot of mess. Those other people on it who are combatants probably need those supplies more than you at this point.

JACK: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, I guess you could take them instead, Hella, if you wanna [laughs]... if you want to not use a ration you don't have to.

KEITH: Er Ali just maybe dropped.

ALI: Er yeah for a second.

KEITH: Oh, Austin said that if YOU want to take a ration, you totally can.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: That's totally acceptable, like you're right, it's silly to say that there are no rations on this ship. I was kind of assuming you'd be dipping into your own supply but if at this point you want to continue taking the ship's rations, that is totally a feasible thing to do. Um, so make that decision, and let me know which you do.

ALI: Sorry, I couldn't hear anything.

AUSTIN: Oh boy.

ALI: So I could either take from the ship or not?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can take from the ship or not. People will not be as happy with you if you took, if you take from the ship at this point.

ALI: Ok, no I see, I still will—/

AUSTIN: Do you know what I mean. You still will?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Ok. You get kinda like, people are a little... you get some scowls, you get some sort of like... I think even when you're in line to like get the rations that are being handed out, one of the crew members who definitely lost some friends says "haven't you taken enough from us already?", scoffs and walks away.

JACK: [laughs]

ALI: That's fair. [laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughs] That's fair, grr, grr.

KEITH: [laughs uproariously]

AUSTIN: Also they serve burgers on this ship.

ALI: [crosstalk] I don't care, please.

24:20

AUSTIN: OK.

JACK: So I guess the decision we need to make is, we're going to go east, we're going to try and go east as quickly as possible, do we want to try and take any, keep a watch eye on the coastline for places to stop off and, and maybe gather some more equipment, gather some more crew, fix the ship or do we literally want to just plough on, looking from the crow's nest for the red sails.

AUSTIN: Give me, I mean—

KEITH: Well here's the thing that we need to figure out, do we have the money to fix this ship?

ALI: I mean I have a bunch of money, but.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] have a bunch of coin.

KEITH: I don't know if we have ship fixing money.

AUSTIN: Er, at this point my bigger question is where are you going to fix this ship.

ALI: Right.

KEITH: [crosstalk]

AUSTIN: You know Velas exists.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: You don't know of any, I mean give me a spout lore, but I don't think you know of any—

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —big ports on this coastline.

KEITH: I just, I just think Jack's point was to keep an eye and then see if—

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: —if you see a port stop there.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes.

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: Is the motorway service station thing of like, "ah, is that a Starbucks over there"

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

JACK: Um, but yeah, so.

ALI: I mean is your real question here like after go after Brandish are we still planning on using the ship or?

AUSTIN: No, my question here is literally, what are you doing right now? Are you taking the day to try to repair, are you going east, like—

JACK: I vote go east.

KEITH: Will—

ALI: Well that was [unintelligible]

AUSTIN:—like I'm, that day, OK, so you set sail in the morning, you eat your breakfast burgers, and you—

KEITH: [laughs]

AUSTIN: —you set off east, and it's a very calm morning after, it's one of those mornings where, it's almost like being hung over, you know what I mean? Erm—

KEITH: No.

AUSTIN: —and like, ha, ok. It's like having a really late night, Keith—

KEITH: Ok.

AUSTIN:—have you ever had one of those really, really, really late nights where you get so tired that you feel like a little dizzy.

KEITH: Yes.

AUSTIN: And then, like, you don't go to bed and like the next morning it's like 8am or like 7am on a Sunday, and no one else is awake yet and you're like, I'm gonna go to the diner and just get burgers—[laughs]—not get some burgers—

JACK: Get some morning burgers.

AUSTIN: —get some like breakfast, get some morning burgers, get some breakfast—

KEITH: Get some eggs Benedict and corn {beef? bean?} hash.

AUSTIN: Right, and like no one is there, and like it's a little, everything's just like a little too quiet, or like a Christmas morning but you have to drive somewhere.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, yeah I know exactly.

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: The ocean is like that, the ocean is like that today and like that's what your day is like.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um.

KEITH: Yeah, like I'm not even supposed to be here right now.

AUSTIN: Right—

KEITH: Like I made a mistake and this is why—

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: OK, got it.

AUSTIN: Um, that night you're getting towards the coastline and you see to the east that the sky is brighter than it is in any other direction. It reminds you a bit of the Velesian night sky. Y'know in Velas it's a fairly large city given the time, and given that the condition and especially, especially Fero knows this as someone who's like really attuned to nature and has been in a bunch of different natural settings before. The light in, in cities tends to be... less defined, the stars kind of disappear.. from light pollution. Even though there isn't y'know, we're not talking about New York City here but there's a noticeable—

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: —difference, and you can see to the east that the sky—

KEITH: Well, Fero can tell, like that's the—

AUSTIN: Right, to the east you can tell that the sky is, I mean everyone can kind of see that the sky is lit to the east. At this point you're nearing the kind of, so again this map has kind of almost like a nose on it to the east, do you see that?

ALI: Mm

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you see what I'm calling a nose?

KEITH: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: The, you're at like the... the very tip of that nose, is what I'd say.

ALI: Oh.

KEITH: The hooked tip on the inside—

AUSTIN: No, the outside most western point—

KEITH: Ok.

AUSTIN: —cause you're riding the coast to look for stuff—

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: —from what you said basically, right? I'm gonna zoom in a bunch and then make a little mark. Do you ride through the night, or do you stop, or... what's your plan?

KEITH: Um. I think that we should stop for a couple of hours at least

ALI: Yeah, I think—

JACK: Yeah.

ALI: —like right after the fight we would not just immediately set sail.

AUSTIN: Ok.

KEITH: Um, because especially, like I want to get going as fast as possible, I want to catch up as fast as possible, but I also, like, don't want to have a ship of haggard, angry, sad—

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: —boat-partiers.

JACK: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Who, who are just exhausted.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, like, at least keeping them in a shape that isn't, y'know unfair.

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: And is there, is there a way to tell, is there a way to tell if we're on Brandish's trail, like to see—

AUSTIN: I thought about that a lot over the last day, and like, I'm not sure, I don't know enough about boats—

KEITH: Can I turn into a bird and fly super high, and see if I can, like—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: There is kind of a tradition of that, yeah, I reckon you could do that.

AUSTIN: How do you do it Jack, do you know?

JACK: Well I was just talking about like, the sort of, in the sense of like Noah letting go of birds with a olive branch that comes back in it's beak—

AUSTIN: Oh, sorry, sorry, sorry I thought you meant, I thought you meant a—

JACK: There's an actual tradition.

AUSTIN: I thought you meant there's a tradition of tracking people by sea.

KEITH: OK.

JACK: No.

KEITH: I don't know anything about that—

AUSTIN: But yeah, yeah you could totally turn into a bird.

KEITH: —turn into a bird, OK, I'm gonna turn into a bird. Do I, I don't, I probably don't need to roll for this, as it's only one move, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm not gonna make you. Er...

29:50

KEITH: I'll do a roll.

AUSTIN: Yeah, go ahead and roll for it actually, there are ways that could go wrong in interesting ways—

KEITH: Yeah.

[pause]

JACK: Captain Brandish [unintelligible]—

KEITH: I've got a.. an eight on that.

AUSTIN: [laughs] OK, on an eight you get to keep two moves or whatever?

KEITH: Two, yeah.

AUSTIN: Ok. Um, so you fly high into the air, and—

KEITH: Sort of maybe circle around eastward, maybe to the—

AUSTIN: Yeah, point, tell me on the map, give me—

KEITH: So we're the line here, right, we're there.

AUSTIN: Yes, you're there.

KEITH: I'm probably, I'm probably going to kind of extend downwards, er, down and east and then sort of up and along the coastline, like—

AUSTIN: Ok, so like point, do it again—

KEITH: How do I—

AUSTIN: I don't know, you just did it and it was amazing. I don't know. I thought it was a single click, but it is not a single click. Just give me an abouts where you're at. Just, so you're inside of that little inlet. Is that where you're—

KEITH: I'm, no, I'm like going down and slightly, down and slightly west from the nose tip—

AUSTIN: Oh west?

KEITH: Sorry, down and slightly east.

AUSTIN: East?

KEITH: East.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah, so you're going into that little—

KEITH: And then up and slightly west, like that, sort of a diagonal line that sort of—

AUSTIN: You aren't going into that inlet then, is that, am I wrong, am I not understanding—

KEITH: Yeah, no, I'm looking into that inlet yeah.

AUSTIN: Ok. So as you get closer you can tell that that is where the light is coming from.

KEITH: Ok

AUSTIN: Um, and as...

KEITH: I wonder if [unintelligible]—

AUSTIN: As you approach, you can see... Just trying to think of what you can see from the sky. Hm. It depends on how close you get. The light is not—

KEITH: I would—

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

KEITH: I would say that if, if, if I was seeing this weird light I would get closer.

AUSTIN: OK. As you get— So from a distance the light ends up, being kind of distributed across this fog, that makes it hard to see into it.

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: But there's a point at which you pass through the fog and you don't understand how quickly you did it, like it's super dense and then you're out of it. You know what I mean?

KEITH: OK. Yeah yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: And then you see them. Six or seven maybe eight sharp bright white towers piercing the sky. Emanating a glow.

KEITH: Oh shit those are probably not supposed to be there.

AUSTIN: Um. In fact you see that an entire little town or city really. Y'know about the size of the currently inhabited area of Velas is awake and bustling in the night. And you can see figures moving, singing, running through the streets. And you see there docked a number of vessels, including the Kingdom Come.

KEITH: Oh fuck, I'm gonna go tell everybody.

[pause]

KEITH: Wait, hold on, no.

AUSTIN: Uhuh. So that was one move, you have another move here and then you have to go back.

KEITH: OK. I would like to...

AUSTIN: That might not really be a move.

KEITH: Yeah, I don't think that's really a move.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, go ahead, keep going.

KEITH: I think that... I think that right now I wanna discern realities and see if I can tell what's going on with those lights.

AUSTIN: So how are you, how are you doing that, tell me what you do.

KEITH: I'm going to get closer, try not to be seen, even though—

AUSTIN: OK.

KEITH: —I assume that I've transformed into a sort of, into a largish bird—

AUSTIN: Yeah, what sort of bird are you, yeah.

KEITH: I would imagine some sort of sea bird.

AUSTIN: OK.

KEITH: Some sort of like a larger sea bird.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

KEITH: And...

AUSTIN: Go ahead and give me the discern realities.

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: Which is a—

KEITH: Wisdom?

AUSTIN: —roll plus WIS, yeah. Good, good roll.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So you get to ask three questions. What are your three questions?

KEITH: Let me just pull up that list real quick, I had it but I had to bring it down to roll.

AUSTIN: Yep.

KEITH: Discern realities, I'm going to ask "what's happened here recently"?

AUSTIN: Hm. There is a sort of... joy in the air. There's a sort of celebration and I think that you can tell that that's because of Brandish's return.

[pause]

AUSTIN: You're not sure why, but that's what's happened recently, like, there are celebrations in the streets.

KEITH: What's about to happen here?

AUSTIN: These are gonna continue for a few days, like I don't know that you can—

KEITH: OK so this is a, this is an ongoing celebration, this isn't gonna—

AUSTIN: Yes. This isn't gonna end in the night, right exactly.

KEITH: OK. And then, is anything not as it appears to be?

[pause]

AUSTIN: Yeah. You realise, two things you realise. The first is that you sense along with, so you're a seabird, you sense other seabirds of the same type in the area.

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: You also sense birds like the one that Brandish had. Do you remember that one, the one that split into—

KEITH: Yeah the big black bird of prey.

AUSTIN: Right, and you notice a ton of other animals with your kind of nature senses.

KEITH: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: They sense you back first of all

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: And you realise in that moment that they are not alive, but they live all the same.

KEITH: OK. So this is, this, there are undead animals in this town.

AUSTIN: Two, following off of that, sensing that and following it closer you realise that some of the people in the street, they're not just lit by the light emanating from these towers, they are transparent, they glow with their own light.

KEITH [whispering, spookily]: Ghost-berg.

[pause]

AUSTIN: Not all of the people. But some of them. And among all of this you also sense what you would recognise as natural life.

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: So that was one move.

KEITH: OK, and I can tell, I can tell that the y'know, that the living life is kind of interacting—

AUSTIN: Yep!

KEITH: —with them in a way that is not like "oh I'm getting spooked!", like they're all—

AUSTIN: Er, it's spooky! It's—

KEITH: It's spooky?

AUSTIN: In fact it's, I mean here's the thing.

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: Confronting this, what sort of interaction have you had with the undead before?

KEITH: I think, I THINK that I said that in, that that fight with the undead was the first time that I had ever seen undead.

AUSTIN: Had you heard of undead before that?

KEITH: I'm gonna say yeah.

36:22

AUSTIN: OK, what sort of stories are common about undead?

KEITH: Just a lot of eating people stories, like a lot of—

AUSTIN: OK, so this is spookier in a way then—

KEITH: Yeah

AUSTIN: —right, because if you saw a town of undead, zombie, cannibals eating humans and orcs and elves, that registers to you.

KEITH: Mm-hm

AUSTIN: It is way stranger for you to see a town where the living and the undead—

KEITH: Are just hanging

AUSTIN: —are co-mingling.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: You don't have the words for it, it's uncanny, it shakes you in a way that just seeing zombies doesn't shake you.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Cos you don't have the language for this other thing.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, because it's not like the thing that I know a zombie to do is that they take over towns and they burn them and they—

AUSTIN and KEITH: —eat people—

KEITH: and they turn other people into undead—

AUSTIN: —they don't hold parties.

KEITH: —they don't go to dinner.

AUSTIN: Right, right

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Exactly.

KEITH: So, I'm gonna go [laughs]. I'm gonna go and tell everybody this thing—

AUSTIN: OK.

KEITH: Err...

KEITH as FERO: So, hey guys.

KEITH: And how long did it take me to fly down there.

AUSTIN: It's close, it's close.

KEITH: OK.

FERO: So, you guys. I saw—

AUSTIN: You get there the next day very easily is what I'll say.

KEITH: Yeah.

FERO: I saw this shit, it was crazy, so there was these big giant glowing towers and Brandish was there and his ship was there and there were all the undead and they were hanging out and they were partying and there were people there and they were living and they were hanging out with each other and I think that it's some sort of crazy like pirate cove where pirates go back to but some of them are undead now and now they're all friends and it's fucked up!

[Austin laughs]

FERO: Like I'm pretty sure. And Brandish is there, if we wanna go we gotta go cos they're probably drunk. We could take them I think.

[Ali laughs]

FERO: I think we can sneak in there.

JACK as LEM: Good battle report, first of all.

FERO: Guys? Oh my god, they're dead, everyone's dead.

[Austin laughs]

JACK: Keith?

ALI as HELLA: That's a lot to process is the thing.

FERO: That's fair, I did have hours as I flew back.

[Austin and Ali laugh]

JACK: Austin, does this count as encountering a location—

AUSTIN: So what's the plan?

JACK: —does this count as encountering a location?

FERO: I think that we should take the ship. I think that we leave—

JACK: Hello?

AUSTIN: You're not yet.

JACK: But does it count as an encounter for my—

KEITH: Jack?

JACK: —for my racial bonus?

AUSTIN: No, you're not there, you're not there.

JACK: Oh, OK.

KEITH: It will, when you get there right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

FERO: So here's what I think we've gotta do. I've had a lot of time to think about this. We gotta go, we gotta row there in a rowboat.

AUSTIN: Like a smaller boat.

JACK: —yeah I don't think we go in on Calhoun's boat—

FERO: I think we have to ship there—

AUSTIN: Uhuh

FERO: —then stop before we get there, either row there or walk there, sneak into town. Un... shackle Calhoun from whatever horrible shackles they've got him tied up to, sneak out with him, come back, we save the day, it's gonna be great, Calhoun's our buddy.

[Ali laughs]

FERO: Sneak in, like little sneaks.

AUSTIN: Like little sneaks.

JACK: Yeah, as far as I can see from Lem's perspective this is very much like a Great Escape style break out mission—

AUSTIN: Right

JACK: —like a stealth break out mission. But because Lem is a bard and an archivist he's also like super curious about this place. So I think from my perspective is very much like yeah, we've gotta be really careful here, this is not a good place but also—

AUSTIN: Are you going in— go ahead.

JACK: —I'm really intrigued by it and I'd like to, I don't know, I'd quite like to take something from it or get something from it.

AUSTIN: Sure. OK—

JACK: That's not Calhoun.

AUSTIN: Do you go that night or do you go in the morning, is this a night op?

KEITH: Yeah, this is a night op.

ALI: Yeah, I think night would be—

JACK: If only to make it more exciting.

KEITH: Mm-hm

[Ali laughs]

ALI: Night would be smart.

AUSTIN: OK.

HELLA: Did you see Brandish while you were there?

[Jack gasps loudly]

FERO: I didn't see Brandish, I saw his ship though and I saw that they were partying and it looked like they were partying because of Brandish and because he's back and that's why I think that they're all pirate bros and that only half of them are undead because, y'know, you can't take all your pirates on your ship y'know? And so when some of them turned undead the rest of them were still alive but they're all bros still.

HELLA: OK.

JACK: The gasp that I just did is because on our screen in Roll20 has appeared a drawing of the cove except it has a fog of war on it. [laughs]

AUSTIN: It does, I don't know what that actually looks like to you, I'm actually curious, I wish I—

KEITH: [crosstalk] It looks like a big black...

JACK: [crosstalk] It looks like... massive redacted bars.

ALI: [crosstalk, inaudible]

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: OK. That's good.

KEITH: How do I scroll— OK there it is.

AUSTIN: Yeah the top right is zoom out, there's a sort of magnifying glass there.

ALI: OK

AUSTIN: So there's your ship in the top, top, top northwest. Do you see it?

[00:41:10]

KEITH: Oh, I see that.

AUSTIN: So whereabouts are you, do you want to park that? And then where are you, what, where do you wanna like row in?

JACK: What about there, in that little inlet?

AUSTIN: Like... here?

KEITH: I was thinking--

JACK: Oh?

KEITH: That's exactly where I was thinking too, yeah--

AUSTIN: Right there?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's fair, do you want to dock there, or do you want to, like row there?

JACK: Uh, dock there and...

AUSTIN: You have like a robu-- row-boat.

JACK: Dock there and then row--

KEITH: Wait, so you're saying that we can either... row around-- row around the bend like that? Right?

AUSTIN: You can do whatever you want.

KEITH: Or we can walk through here.

AUSTIN: Yeah, absolutely! Uh, so these brown areas, this brown area here is... is cliff. Okay, so as you're coming down from the southwest, you see the, you kind of pass through the fog, the wall of fog that I described to Fero earlier, and once you do you see what's here, which is... cliffs, kind of blocking in this inlet and alcove, [Jack mhms] and they have some trees and stuff on them, and they'd be hard to climb up but you probably could with enough time and rope... but that's kind of what you see. If you're coming-- I guess tell me where... where you're going? In terms of this big ship, and I'll reveal more of the map to you as you move.

KEITH: I think that the big ship doesn't go any further than here.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, so that means-- Okay, so then when you're here then, like as you're coming around...

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You get to see more, is the thing, so.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [laughing slightly] As you come across this, you see one of these white-- one of these white towers... like pointing through the night sky, up into the distance, and you see... a huge city, across to the east. They haven't seen you yet, because it's nighttime.

JACK: [quietly] And they're all partying.

AUSTIN: Actually I guess at this point-- at this point you see almost all of it from that angle, it looks like.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Let's say to there... ish? Seems right to me?

KEITH: Yeah, okay.

AUSTIN: Because some of the towers block some of the vision to other places. I-- on this map, so this is a map of a kind of... reverse L shaped inlet, and you see, again like six or seven towers pointing up into the night sky. These are white, ornate but very squared off things, and light seems to emanate from them into the night. You also see a collection of vessels on the kind of.. up in the top of the inlet, and then at the bottom of the inlet you see a number of vessels that are very clearly part of Brandish's fleet, including the... Kingdom Come.

FERO: Lem, as my smart friend [quietly laughs] do you know... do you know anything about these towers?

LEM: Uhhh...

Austin: Are you now going to use your...

JACK: Yeah, I think, I think I'm gonna use my, my uh, my racial power...

AUSTIN: [overlapping with Jack] Which is?

JACK: ...As opposed to my, as opposed to my class power, which is... let me just pull the thing up... um... when you first-- "When you enter an important location" --Brackets, "(your call)"-- "You can ask the GM for one fact from the history of that location." Which isn't quite what Keith's, what Fero's asking for, but at the same time I don't know if I could confidently... have information about the towers until I was closer to one of them.

AUSTIN: There was a place-- yeah you, you, you can't-- but you know... there was a city once that had towers like these, before the fall, before the Erasure. I'm gonna sneeze, one second.

KEITH: It's staying in-- awww ok he muted.

[quiet laughter]

AUSTIN: I did, I muted, sorry. So there was a town once, before the erasure, that had towers like these. The towers were said to be like fingers dotting the night sky, so beautiful were they that they attracted visitors from all over the continent. It was a bit of a resort destination and so fair and wise were the rulers, that they attracted the, the best of, of everything. The best artists came to be inspired by the beautiful coastlines and the sunset; the best... chefs came to cook with the fish they brought in, and with some of the wonderful herbs and spices that they grew in their nearby fields, and it was with great sadness that you know, the archivists kind of see the death of this city, the death of Nacre ([spelling] N A C R E), as... one of the great losses of, of the era.

JACK: Almost like a Library of Alexandria style thing.

AUSTIN: Yes, absolutely, exactly like that.

JACK: OK.

LEM: Does that answer any particular... or does that reveal any more stuff for you there Fero?

FERO: [breathless] I just wanna know why they're glowing like that. It looks dangerous! OK, well here's what I, here's what I'm thinking on it, if you want me to be honest about this, is that um... I don't know, I know that you're into all this stuff, Lem, but all this pre-Erasure stuff is wicked weird! Everybody's trying to do pre-Erasure stuff and it's weird! That's not what we are anymore man!

AUSTIN: I should note, if once the morning hits, where the ship currently is would be visible.

LEM: OK, right, we've got to move, everybody over the sides, into the boat. [laughs slightly]

KEITH: I'm seeing, I'm seeing, can we just kind of go up behind, uh, that cliff face again, and kind of row.

AUSTIN: You could like re-move the boat basically, or something?

KEITH: Yeah, re-position that boat.

AUSTIN: And then row the rest of the way.

KEITH: Like, yeah, yeah, I think best case scenario we're out of here by morning, but I think we should--

AUSTIN: Here? [as though indicating on a map]

KEITH: Yeah. I think that we should plan for no-- for that not being the case.

JACK: I can very much see this story ending with us in a prison... on this adventure. It seems like a sort of prison-y city. So I propose that we don't take any crew members, we let them hold the ship down and we just go in--

AUSTIN: By yourselves.

JACK: Hella, Fero, and Lem.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah. 'Cause this, we want to be quiet while-- you guys, quiet as a mouse, me, actual mouse. [laughs]

JACK: [laughing] Everybody is a mouse.

KEITH: [still giggling] And ah, and I just think that they're gonna be louder than we want, etcetera. And more people! The more people, the more easily that we can get seen. I think you're right.

[a short pause]

AUSTIN: Hella, what's going through your head during all of this? This has been a day of like, of, of excitement and stuff, but I do just want to get into your head really quick. What do you, what do you think about all of this? Not just this stuff, but about, about rescuing Calhoun, about your own actions, what has been bouncing through that brain?

ALI: Um, I mean I think that she knows that people are kind of upset with her, she senses that, and I think there's a lot of like, frustration there. Because... I mean she made the choice that she did, because it seemed like the best one at the time, but at the same time she was also disappointed by the decision she made. 'Cause that was like... that also wasn't a fight that she wanted to walk away from, you know? So there's this sense of like wanting to get revenge, but now as we're nearing this crazy light city there's like a little bit of unsettlement there.

AUSTIN: So these are the, these are kind of the thoughts bouncing around her head as they, as they row into that little, the little spot where they're, where they're going to disembark.

ALI: Right. So like some of that anger and frustration is fading to like [in a scared voice] 'this is fucking weird, this is some weird shit!'

[00:49:22]

AUSTIN: Speaking of weird shit, so you, you get out of the rowboat in this, on this beach area, and you can already kind of hear the carousing and yelling throughout the city. It sounds like a festival night from Velas, more than anything, like you, you know this night, you recognize this sort of like, it's a harvest night, it's a night of celebration and wonder and joy. This isn't, this isn't the shouting, the shouting of mad men, this isn't the shouting of killers. But, speaking of weird things, the second your foot hits the ground, your blade comes alive, and you hear it first but it's

not too long before Lem and Fero do too. They're chanting, a choir of voices: [escalating in volume] "Tristero, *Tristero*, **Tristero!**" and they're shouting, "*you enter the realm of death itself!*" they say, in unison, "**turn back!**"

JACK: Well...

[Ali makes terrified noises]

AUSTIN: Lem!

JACK: [emphasis on every word] Lem. Freaks. Out.

AUSTIN: You know this sword! Do you remember what your bonds are, Jack?

JACK: [quietly] Yeah, yeah one of my bonds is I...

AUSTIN: Can you speak up a little bit?

JACK: Sorry, yeah, one of my bonds is, "I sang songs of Hella's sword before I ever met them in person."

AUSTIN: Here are some of the songs you sung about that sword. You sung, you know a song called "Penitence" which is a post-Erasure fugue, from near, just after the Erasure, which is a very specific moment in history, you love those songs, because they capture an immediate response to a terrible event, and there aren't many of them left. There weren't many record keepers at the time, the archivists hadn't really become... a foundation or an institution yet, so finding songs like that... So there's "Penitence," you know that, you know "Sabbatical" which is this kind of folk ballad, and you know, there's a song [laughs] it's kind of a jaunty little pub song called, "They Thought They Knew" and then in parentheses, "(But They Didn't!)".

[everyone laughs]

AUSTIN: And each is a song about a group of wise university scholars, who overestimated their own intelligence and power, and in the end had their magic turned back on them, trapping them in a tool of plain and brutal destruction, instead of something precise and elegant as they, as they imagined it would be. Now, each of these songs kind of details how they seek forgiveness for their earthly misdeeds. It's not ever really clear, in any of these songs, what those misdeeds were, exactly, but there's lots of like general claims throughout them like, 'They doomed us!' and 'We suffered not an apocalypse, but a scholar's hubris.' You *definitely* think it has to do with the Erasure, but you're not sure what. But you know that that's a, you've heard that-- yes, this is a familiar sword to you.

JACK: Man, ok... um... how do you react, Hella?

KEITH: I'm sorry, what did, what did the sword say?

JACK: It said 'Tristero' and then it said like, 'you are entering a place of death, or a place of the dead, turn back.'

KEITH: OK, OK.

AUSTIN: It was, "you enter the realm of death itself."

KEITH: *Aaah!*

JACK: [take a sharp breath in] Um, so, uh...

AUSTIN: Wait a minute, what's Hella-- Hella what are you doing, at this point?!

ALI: God, uh, kind of freaking out? A little bit? Um... I think that she is both kind of bewildered by this, but also like, trying to figure out a way to get the voices to stop. If it's like, kind of squeezing the hilt a little bit, or like...

[laughter]

ALI: I'm just kind of imagining her like kind of panicking, and taking it in and out, being like 'just stop it!' 'cause she can't like sneak like this, and also this is terrifying!

AUSTIN: Mhm, it's pretty terrifying.

KEITH: So I, I might have misunderstood Austin, what you were saying, are you saying that there's a team of scholars trapped inside--?

JACK: No, no, no, he's saying that I sing songs about there being a team of, of scholars trapped inside this sword. That's a *very* different thing.

AUSTIN: Everyone else just hears, hears a choir of voices.

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: Lem has not explained the songs, at this point.

JACK: No, um... so basically... I think Hella, I'd like to tell you that I, that I know, that this is a thing that I've, that I've heard about. like, this is a really weird, cool-- [smiling] I can't really hide my excitement for it.

[Ali laughs]

JACK: Like, like uh... my job is to archive things and not only that I'm a bard and this thing is singing to us, or like chanting to us! So I'm just sort of like, I'm really excited by it, it would be like finding some piece of fiction had suddenly appeared in the world.

LEM: Can I hold it?!

ALI: [laughs] She's kind of glaring at you for seeming so excited, but is definitely interested in what you're saying... and it takes her a minute before she hesitantly hands it to you.

LEM: Cool, so I guess, um...

HELLA: Don't say cool, this isn't cool!

LEM: No, no this is *really* cool! This is really cool.

JACK: Austin, I've encountered an important item covered by grand histories of the known world, right?

AUSTIN: I think that's true, yes.

JACK: And I can ask you any one question about it, and you'll answer truthfully?

AUSTIN: Yes

JACK: Um... but the, it says, "they may then ask you what tale, song, or legend you heard that information in."

AUSTIN: Yep! Mhm, but we've already established what some of that is, I could ask you something else though, we'll see.

JACK: Right, are we assuming that I've done work on these legends as a bard? That I've like cross-referenced them and looked through them and...

AUSTIN: Sure, sure!

JACK: OK. Are the stories true?

AUSTIN: I mean who knows. Is that what you're asking? Is that your one question?

JACK: Yes, that's what I'm asking, yes.

AUSTIN: That, I don't think that's a question about the item, that's a question about the stories. Ask a question about the item, 'cause then I can give you more, that's the thing. Don't throw away this question on the-- like you know as a bard you can never know if stories are true, but I can tell you what the stories are, I can tell the fact that you would know, do you know what I mean?

JACK: Yeah, no that's true, OK.

AUSTIN: You, as a player, know that whatever I'm going to answer is true, that it's a fact about the item.

JACK: Yeah, um... I'm trying to kind of work out how to phrase this... who was the leader of these scholars? Do they have a ringleader and who are they? Can I ask that?

AUSTIN: You c-- hmm...

JACK: Well I'm assuming that I've read these, that I've read these texts and cross-referenced them with other entries in encyclopedias and history books and things.

AUSTIN: I think you-- they didn't have a leader. They were a council, they were a council unified. There was a, they were a kind of group... They were a group of scholars at the University, the University that you know about, that is, that has since fallen, at the time of the Erasure that ruled that, that place as a kind of intellectual cabal.

JACK: They were the higher faculty members, basically.

AUSTIN: They were the highest, they were the highest faculty members in the land.

KEITH: [does a weird stoner laugh] Yeah they were!

[laughter]

AUSTIN: [jokingly exasperated] Great, great.

JACK: [smiling, sarcastic] Good one Keith.

KEITH: Thanks.

AUSTIN: Um... I'm trying to remember, I'm trying to decide if you would know their name... um, [typing], I'm also trying to remember if I gave anything about this previously, I don't think-- I gave a little bit of something, before, um... you... no I think that's it.

JACK: That's all I've got.

AUSTIN: I think what you know is that, that's-- this was the kind of, you know, there wasn't a decided leader among them, they acted as a group. There were debates, there were important figures among them... but I don't think there was any one leader. As I've written this group, they were not, there was not a 'this is the person in charge. It was a council that debated and fought with themselves, but often acted in group, or in unison, as they do now, as a choir.

JACK: Are they saying anything as I'm holding them or have they gone quiet?

AUSTIN: They go quiet, the *second* you touch them.

LEM: Alright, thanks Hella.

AUSTIN: They have no interest in you.

FERO: OK, hold on, we have-- guys, this sword just talked, and it said some really interesting stuff, and I think we need to talk to your sword, Hella.

HELLA: ...OK? I don't know if I can communicate with it.

AUSTIN: You can!

LEM: Well now's a fun time to find out!

ALI: This is Hella not thinking that she knows that she can communicate with it.

AUSTIN: OK, OK.

HELLA: Um... but we can try that, yeah.

[00:58:40]

AUSTIN: So what do you do? What do you say, or do?

ALI: Um... well I take it-- so when, when I take it back from Lem does it immediately keep talking again?

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah, the second it's in your hand, it's again the kind of chant of "Tristero," over and over again.

ALI: OK.

AUSTIN: None of you know what that means!

[laughter]

HELLA: I guess-- well what do we want to ask it?

FERO: Uh, we... [laughs] What do you... what do you mean when you say "Tristero"?

ALI: Austin, should I do the roll for this, or...?

AUSTIN: Tell me what you, talk to me about what you're doing first, and then do the roll.

ALI: OK, so I imagine that she's like unsheathed it, and she's holding it in front of it-- in front of her, and she repeats Lem's question.

AUSTIN: Remember, you--

JACK: Fero's question.

ALI: Yeah, sorry... he's such a Lem!

AUSTIN: He *is* such a Lem! I feel like that's like the... the our game version of...

ALI: The Keith/Kyle...

AUSTIN: That too, the Keith/Kyle mistake, but also like, he's such a mensch, he's just such a good guy, he's just such a Lem!

KEITH: [spluttering] But hold on, I am, I am starting to realize that... fake or real, everybody's just getting my name wrong, all the time!

AUSTIN: It's true. It's true, it does happen. [laughing]

[01:00:00]

KEITH: What is it about me that people can't remember my name?!

AUSTIN: It's ok, it's fine!

KEITH: Is it?

AUSTIN: Are you sure that that's what you're going to ask, you're gonna ask what he just asked? I mean this is up to, this is up to Hella. I mean it's up to the group, but it's up-- Hella's the one who has to *ask* the question, and again, I'm gonna read the move that you're looking at now. The move is: "Heirloom: when you consult the spirits that reside within your signature weapon, they will give you insight regarding the current situation, and might ask *you* some questions in return. Roll +Charisma, on a 10+ the GM will give you good detail, on a 7-9 the GM will give you an impression."

ALI: OK.

AUSTIN: So like, it's not even so much like an 'ask a question', like the question... I don't have to answer the question directly, in, according to these rules.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: I can, I can, based on your roll give you some response, you know?

ALI: Yeah, but I still think as like, her doing this for the first time she would just be like "who is that guy?"

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

HELLA: Who's Tristero...

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ALI: Or... no, OK.

AUSTIN: It's hard to even know if it's a name, do you know what I mean? Like...

JACK: Yeah, like what is that word? What are you saying?

KEITH: Yeah, it might just be a word.

ALI: Cause like... *my* gut feeling is that she would be like "who are you?" but... Lem just explained that. Sort of.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Um...

AUSTIN: Wait, did he? Did Lem explain? What he knows?

JACK: Oh yes, yeah I did.

ALI: OK, yeah, so...

JACK: Austin I'm not one of Those Archivists, I'm not from the University!

[laughter]

AUSTIN: OK.

ALI: Um... Yeah, OK, maybe it's more like, "how do you know that?"

AUSTIN: Mm, mhm? Go ahead and do your roll.

AUSTIN: Roll plus CHA... [long pause, clicking] So I rolled a six.

AUSTIN: You did roll a six!

[wince-y gasp from all]

AUSTIN: Their response to your question is *felt* more than heard. I mean it's heard, their response is, their response is to continue chanting "Tristero, Tristero, Tristero" over and over

and over again, in an increasingly loud voice. And, but Ali, Hella *feel/s* it. A deep sadness. A loss. It's all at once as if you feel the joy of falling in love with a sudden heartbreak at knowing that the thing, the person, the people you love will be taken from you forever. You *a/so* quickly hear someone shouting:

AUSTIN as NACRE NPC: What's that!?

AUSTIN: And the sound of footsteps approaching

KEITH: Hey guys we have to Run and Hide Now!

ALI: [as though smiling nervously] Yeah!

JACK: Agreed!

KEITH: Wait hold on, I thought, hold on, I did not realize we had already... Oh no we had already, OK..

AUSTIN: Yeah, cause it started chanting the moment her feet hit the ground. OK to be clear, there's like a system of docks to your east with a kind of... you know, low tier road happening north-ish towards a tower that has fallen on its side, which is that long white block to the north, do you see that? [referring to a Roll20 map] That is, that is a fallen tower... Um, one second, let me actually move that up, there we go, and... That's in like a dock with ships that are about the size... Let's say about the same size as Calhoun's ship, that are docked. There's four of them there, probably more if we're being serious, like this is kind of an abstraction of this. We know... We know that Brandish's fleet was dozens big. So for each of these little ships imagine 2 or 3, and less of the bigger versions to the south that you see there.

KEITH: OK.

AUSTIN: But yeah, your immediate thing is these towers. This is a big area, this is like the size of Velas, the map that you're seeing here... So there's some distance to travel here, but... Imagine again, built in throughout this area are... Little houses, little, you know, shanty... not shanty, is that the word I'm looking for? Like crappy little houses?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, sure, shanty!

ALI: Yeah, that's fair.

AUSTIN: OK, yeah, near the docks...

KEITH: Maybe a hutch?

AUSTIN: Yeah there are some hutches, and some huts, there are some... there are some places selling food by the docks, but you see a figure moving towards you from the east, from the south-east, lets say. You can see that they are backlit by the light coming off of these towers.

[01:05:15]

KEITH: Okay, here's what I want to do. I want to tell Lem and Hella to get down— hide by something. I want to turn into a crow and I just kinda wanna, like, do a "caw caw!" and then kinda hang out in a tree near where that guy is so he's like, "Oh! So it's just a crow!" [coughs] I just want—

AUSTIN: Gimme your—

KEITH: I want this guy to go, "This is a crow." Um.

AUSTIN: Give me your move. Roll to transform. It's a good transform.

KEITH: 12, yep. So it's a hold 3.

AUSTIN: I think this is like a Defy Danger Charisma... or something? Does that sound right? Like, you're effectively trying to draw him away from the—

KEITH: I mean, as a crow I can just caw, right? Like I can just—

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, yeah — but you still have to do that in a way that's convincing enough to make him think that was the sound of a chanting sword.

[AUSTIN and ALI laugh]

KEITH: Yeah, that's fair. Okay. Yeah, alright. My Charisma [coughs] — I think it's 0.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. 2d6.

KEITH: Charisma's 0. 2d6. Um... Alright there we go, yeah, that's an 11. Sorry, that's a 10.

AUSTIN: That's a 10 which again though is still a very strong success. Um, you can hear— you can kind of make sense of this man now who's approaching you. It's a big dude, muscly, in kind of cloth and leather gear. Um, kind of a— the sort of guy who like is stuck with the night shift loading up supplies onto one of these ships before having to get on to it tomorrow to go do whatever pirates do.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, um, that's what's up with him.

KEITH: Is— he's not undead.

AUSTIN: No, he is not.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: In fact you can see that there is in the light, even in the night light, you can see that there is a very healthy like shine and tan and glow to his skin.

KEITH: Um.

AUSTIN: What do you all do? He's kinda like, "Ugh." Wanders off.

KEITH: First, I just wanna say I fucking love this game, it's so good. [laughing] It's like— it's like- I just fucking I made this guy think that Hella's chanting sword was a crow because I transformed into a crow.

AUSTIN: [overlapping] I imagine you cawed in that like—

KEITH: Yeah, in that same sort of intonation as the chant.

AUSTIN: [mimicking] "Caw caw. Caw caw. Caw caw." [everybody laughs] Also, in this— in my mind the sword hasn't really stopped doing it. She's like sheathed it and is— Hella is like squeezing it, "Shut up shut up shu- sh—"

[unintelligible mumbling in the background]

ALI: Yeah. She's definitely in that bus right now like leaning on it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly. It finally does calm down and you get a hold of it and can now move freely. What do you do?

JACK: Um, I think we need to kind of take a— Is this dude like straight passed by?

AUSTIN: No, he's not head back south-east towards the docks. He's not near you anymore.

JACK: Okay, cause I feel like we need to move in towards— actually, in terms of plans, how does everybody feel about making a beeline for the Kingdom Come rather than the city right now? We can, y'know—

AUSTIN: I mean to be clear the Kingdom Come is across this bay.

JACK: Yeah no but what I'm saying in terms of wider directional plans are we gonna— are we gonna take a—

KEITH: Well, I guess it depends on whether we think that Calhoun is still on the Kingdom Come.

ALI: Yeah, do we think that? Cause I kind of don't.

JACK: Where do you think he is?

KEITH: I mean, it's very possible that he's still on the brig but I feel like, I don't know— it felt like Calhoun meant something more to Brandish than to just leave him on the ship, y'know?

ALI: Right.

KEITH: And also I am a crow and I'm on this tree still.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: You are still a crow on this tree. It's true.

KEITH: So this is just out of character stuff.

ALI: The thing is that actually like what is our first plan? If we're going to the city are we like trying to find clues of where Brandish is?

JACK: I guess so.

ALI: Are we trying to ask someone?

[overlapping]

JACK: Well, going to—

KEITH: Here is— okay.

ALI: [laughing] You know how he—

KEITH (as FERRO): Okay, worst case scenario. Worst case scenario. We go on the Kingdom Come, right? I mean, I guess, worst case scenario we get caught. Worst case scenario where we don't get caught and killed is we go on— maybe— maybe we dress up as pirates.

JACK (as LEM): I'd be up for that.

KEITH (as FERRO): We get some pirate clothes from the Kingdom Come.

ALI (as HELLA): Pirate clothes? Nah.

JACK (as LEM): I'd be up for that.

KEITH (as FERRO): [laughing] Maybe we dress up as pirates. Yeah, who knows?

JACK (as LEM): It's a great escape mission, Hella. Hella! Well, what's your plan then?

KEITH (as FERRO): Yeah, you got something better?

[KEITH and ALI laugh]

ALI (as HELLA): Um, yeah I don't know. I think we should go into the city rather than to the Kingdom Come.

JACK (as LEM): Okay.

ALI (as HELLA): Um, I guess we'll be in disguise but that's probably the smartest choice.

AUSTIN: You are like so— you're not dressed so differently from these people.

[ALI laughs]

KEITH: I mean, I do have— I mean I'm thinking of pirate clothes and I'm thinking of tattered tan trousers and billowy shirts.

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: Right, right, right. I wanna like— there are more people—

ALI: Yeah, but we've also been on a boat for a couple days. We smell like the sea.

KEITH: That's true. I guess I'm still imagining Hella in her big armor and I'm wearing—

ALI: She only wears mail and nice boots that are probably all fucked up and bloody right now.

AUSTIN: Nothing you're wearing will be out of place here.

ALI: Yeah.

JACK: Okay.

KEITH: Okay. Alright.

ALI: Also, how much—

AUSTIN: This— yeah, go ahead.

ALI: —are we noticing this fallen tower to the north?

AUSTIN: You're noticing it. You can tell that it's one of these towers. It doesn't give off the light that the others do.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's lit by that light.

KEITH: Should we— I think maybe we should go check out that tower.

ALI: I don't think that that's a good idea.

KEITH: You don't think that's a good idea?

ALI: No, we're here for other things.

KEITH: We're here for other things but maybe we can learn something about—

AUSTIN: You have come from, "Let's go to this ship," to "Let's go check out this cool tower."

[ALI laughs]

KEITH: I'm *very* easily distracted. I will say—

JACK: Let's go into— Hella? Fero? Let's go to town? Let's try and curl around the docks, around past the fallen tower, and into the—

KEITH: Yeah, you're right. Fuck the tower. We should go around the tower though in the— behind the tower and then maybe while we're walking by, cause it's pretty good cover, and while we're behind there, maybe we can check out the tower a little bit.

AUSTIN: So you guys are doing— woop.

KEITH: Nah, I just dropped—

AUSTIN: One of those? That looks really bad. Wait, let me undo this. [mumbling] This thing is weird sometimes. There we go, this thing.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah, yeah. It's weird.

AUSTIN: Is Ali still gone?

KEITH: Ali's still gone. Yeah.

ALI: I think—

KEITH: Wait, here she is.

AUSTIN: Welcome back.

JACK: Hey Ali.

AUSTIN: So, Keith, it sounds like your directional plan here is like this? Is that your plan?

KEITH: Um.

AUSTIN: That black line that I just drew?

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: And kind of then down— See, here's the problem about going straight to, and I think the ship is a great idea Jack—Lem. I'm all aboard the ship. But—

AUSTIN: All aboard the ship.

KEITH: But I feel like we have to— feels like we have to go past everything else to get to the ship. I think maybe while we're next to the city we should check out the city as long as— cause I don't want to— I just want to make sure we're not passing Calhoun, you know?

ALI: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

KEITH: So I've changed— I've changed my mind. We're already dressed like pirates. We don't have to disguise ourselves like pirates cause we already kinda look like pirates.

ALI: I mean if we want to go to his ship we could have rowed down there instead right?

AUSTIN: You didn't know that was there. Anyway, so as you come up towards the tower, the fallen tower, you see that there is light coming from inside of it, um, and I guess to describe the tower a little bit first cause it's the closest you're getting to them.

KEITH: I figured it out. I figured it out. Sorry. I figured out how to do that thing. You have to hold down a click.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. I see.

KEITH: Yeah. So now— sorry for interrupting but it seems like a useful tool.

AUSTIN: No, it's fine. It is. So, um, the towers are bespoke. There are lots of little details. They're squared off. It's, y'know, a very imposing architectural style. Big broad things and they're made of alabaster and marble with some ivory thrown in there for some extra finishing. They have— this fallen one at least has big gaps where you imagine maybe windows once were and in the gaps you can peek in from a distance and you see the spectral beings living their lives. There are people sitting and reading.

KEITH: In the fallen tower?

AUSTIN: In the fallen tower.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: And you can see through them. They kind of give a glow out. There are people, you know, talking to each other. You see a couple—

KEITH: Are they partying in there?

AUSTIN: There are a couple people partying in there. You see a couple flirting with each other.

KEITH: Aw, these are just people.

AUSTIN: You see— you see a couple fighting with each other. I mean, it's the range of human activity happening here among these groups. I mean there are things you don't see. No one here is eating. No one here is, you know, sick. No one's coughing. No one's in pain. You do see one ghost taking a sweet nap though. You could get more detail if you got closer but like from here it's just not— you just can't make out—

KEITH: Is— are there any living people in there.

AUSTIN: Yeah, a couple. Yeah. This is primarily ghost— this is a ghost place.

KEITH: Okay, so that's like a ghost bar. Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, but that was like— but there are definitely some people hanging out, y'know.

KEITH: [laughing] That's a— that's a classic ghoul haunt.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Right. Exactly. In the distance now you do see a— to the far east here there is, um, a palace of just great size. It's like the other towers in that it— in that it springs forward from the ground into the skies. But it is a much— there's a big broad round base and the actual central tower to the palace is much broader and wider than any other of the other towers are. You also realise the light that's coming off of them is intense. You kind of have already seen it to some degree. You knew that it was bright here, you knew that there was some light pollution happening as I described before.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But the— the whole sky seems lit by these white towers and in fact it doesn't— there's this brief moment when you look up and, you know, you go from thinking, "Hey, these towers are reflecting the light of the moon and the stars," to wondering if the moon and the stars are just mere shadows of these towers. You also see as you come across finally past the fallen tower and you don't— you don't see it at first. It takes— it's like one of those double takes? You see a place where against the kind of cliff face that blocks this area in but then also up against the night sky, a place that's starless because it's being blocked by a massive black tower to the south-east of this city.

JACK: [takes a sharp breath in] Okay.

KEITH: Wait, a massive what to the south-east?

AUSTIN: A black tower. You should be able to see it. You can see it on the map.

KEITH: Okay. Oh. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I see it. Alright.

AUSTIN: And that is effectively blocking out the whole of the sky in that little region. Like it's—

KEITH: Huge?

AUSTIN: It's huge, yeah. It's as huge as the palace is in terms of its breadth.

KEITH: How is the palace compared to the tower that we were in in the first—

ALI: Yeah, I was just about to ask that.

AUSTIN: In terms of what?

KEITH: In terms of size.

AUSTIN: It's bigger than that. Oh yeah, it's definitely bigger than that.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: This is like one of the biggest structures you've ever seen.

KEITH: Alright.

AUSTIN: And that first tower was really big but it was um—

KEITH: Can you tell me what the biggest structure I've ever seen is?

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: Probably— you've probably seen the base of the New Archives. That's the biggest thing you've ever seen.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Because it's cut literally into the mountains and its scale doesn't even make sense if you try to comprehend it as a human structure, right? Like, that is a structure—

KEITH: [overlapping] Right, it's not a human structure. It's made of a mountain.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly. But has the— the kind of detail work of a building like they've chipped out a living quarters built into this space that's as big as any city you've ever seen. So that's, you know, in terms of "structure," quote-unquote. That's definitely—

KEITH: Yeah, so that it's a building the size of a city.

ALI: Does the—

AUSTIN: You see— go ahead Ali.

ALI: Does the black tower have the same sort of ornateness as the rest of the towers?

AUSTIN: It's hard to tell because you can only see the light of the other towers on it, right? From this distance. But you can tell that the very top does kind of curve back down and around so you know that there was at least some detail work being done there, do you know what I mean?

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: So there's a lip at the very top. You also catch now that you're up here past this fallen tower— you catch the smells of a bunch of different things. First, you get kind of a, like as you're— before you get into the city proper you do catch coming upwind kind of northerly the smell of industry, of like things burning, a kind of fishy smell. And to the south you see past the Kingdom Come, which you can see clearly, fire and smoke coming out of these big grey structures which you see at the bottom of the map here. Do you see those?

JACK: Hm.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh, and, you know, I'm not going to make you roll for this because you've seen things like this before. Especially— I think especially Hella knows what these are.

ALI: Yeah. I was just about to say like she knows this right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, this is industry. These are factories, fisheries. The kind of—

KEITH: You gotta get your cannonballs from somewhere.

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah. This is like— this is where, you know. So, Velas is an interesting place because it's big for how terrible things are but it's not very efficient, um, you know what I mean? It's—

KEITH: There's not a really good city planner.

AUSTIN: Right. And they're not— there's not any industry happening there. Everything's like the old way. Everything is handmade. There's a baker who makes all of the bread in that town, do you know what I mean? Or there might be a couple of bakers but like there's no, you know— they have fisheries or they have fishing but you just go to the market and buy fish from people like you don't have— there's no industrialisation. There's no, um—

KEITH: When you say the old way you mean the old post-Erasure way?

AUSTIN: Right, yes.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Whereas this—

KEITH: Not the immediately pre-Erasure way.

AUSTIN: Yes. This is the even older way which was *very* developed or in fact more developed than that even is what it feels like, do you know what I mean? I think Lem would know that. That like, you know, there was probably a factory in a city like this in the old days. Now there seems to be a system of them that you can see in the distance. You've maybe, you know— what this calls to Lem's mind is the sort of war machine of great old empires that you've only heard stories about. The kind of like build up towards something, like we need a billion swords, we're going to build a building where all we do is divide up labourers, start setting up the kilns, melting down the—

JACK: Who wants to make swords? Everybody. Let's go.

AUSTIN: Exactly.

JACK: So just to be clear as well, like, I've— we've heard about Nacre through stories and stuff but do we know that city exists?

AUSTIN: No. This city does not exist. This city was lost in the Erasure, Jack.

JACK: So this is just literally the first time—

AUSTIN: Lem— Lem—

JACK: —that we've seen it.

AUSTIN: You know for a fact that the Archivists don't think this exists.

JACK: Okay. Take that, Morbash.

AUSTIN: There's maps of this space that show it as a disaster, like, oh, the great ruins of Nacre. And in fact, I mean what's that make— how does that make Lem feel?

JACK: Well, Lem is really having like a field day today. [laughs] The discovery of Hella's sword and also like finding, you know— just kicking some dirt with his foot and finding the entrance to the Library of Alexandria that had miraculously survived the fire. Like he is— there's a huge temptation to just massively have Lem attempt to derail the story by kind of running off into this city but I think he probably cares about Calhoun. Plus, I think that at the back of Lem's mind

there is sort of— there are sort of two major achievements here. One is the Kingdom Come he knows is going to be full of stuff, is going to be full of undead pirate stuff, is going to be full of stuff that links to this place, might contain maps to other places like this. And also, if he's the first person out of here back to the Archives, y'know, the fact he's wanted be damned. If he's the first person out of here that says, "This is a real place." He's going to go down in history.

AUSTIN: Right. So where do you go from here?

JACK: So we're kind of at this top, uh, is there a— how do I ping? Can I ping?

AUSTIN: You double click.

ALI: Actually—

KEITH: No, no you hold to click. Hold to click.

ALI: Austin, before we continue can I ask— so we're in this space but how does this space look normally from the outside? Cause it's like—

AUSTIN: I mean you just don't see it. From the west when you were coming in you went through a thick fog that you could not see through.

ALI: Okay. Is that fog always there?

AUSTIN: I dunno.

ALI: Cause in my head I'm thinking like Hella travels those seas pretty often and then also like Fero goes between Rosemerrow and Velas pretty often. How has this not been noticed before?

AUSTIN: So there's two things happening here that you can imagine. One is that you can see this place is kind of, um, very nicely cushioned by these cliffs to the north and the south. And you can— I mean you can see it on the map but your characters haven't seen this yet but there's a single road leading out to the east and you have no idea what's on that road or where that road goes, right? Like so who knows how you get here from the east. From the west you know that it's this thick deep fog that was hard to penetrate and was scary. But two, you know this is an area now that Brandish has on lockdown. He has a fleet of dozens of ships here. This is one of those spaces where the Ordennan fleets have been attacked for years and years and years. The closer you get there the more dangerous it is. So what the fog doesn't protect, Brandish's armada does.

JACK: So we're lucky that Brandish has kind of, unfortunately for Captain Calhoun— Captain Calhoun has been the flare thrown that the alien has gone off and had a look at allowing us to—

AUSTIN: What's interesting— one interesting thing here that I just realised is among these ships, Hella, you notice some Ordennan ones.

ALI: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Of styles you thought, you know, of— you see old ships that went missing that are now just here.

ALI: Okay. Can I ask if people like— are there stories about this light— these lights? Do people think that they see them as some sort of like spooky legend?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'm sure that there is some sort of spooky legend.

ALI: Like has anyone— are we just seeing this because we've seen Brandish? [unintelligible]

AUSTIN: It's hard to know but you do know you saw it once you passed through the fog, right?

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: And you've done it in a very careful way and you only— remember, if Fero hadn't gone through first to check it out, you would have been wandering into doom. Do you know what I mean?

ALI: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Y'know, there's no— you know that there is no way that without his scouting and like careful guidance that you would have gotten here undetected.

ALI: Okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: So and it turns out no one in Ordenna can turn into a seabird. [ALI laughs] As far as you know. As far as you know.

ALI: That's fair, yeah. That's a good point sort of.

KEITH: I'm a helpful boy!

AUSTIN: Exactly.

ALI: There's sort of the like, "So this is what people were talking about."

AUSTIN: Right. And, "This is where our stuff has gone," and this is where— it almost didn't make sense to you. Think about the love letter that Hella answered in the very very first session

of the game where you stumble onto a little place where Brandish had tons of food and supplies that he'd been stealing. It was like him and his handful of best soldiers were there. Like but that was enough food to feed Velas for a year. So what was he fucking doing with that food? That food would have gotten bad, you know? And suddenly that kind of clicks into place that like, "Oh, that food was going to be transported here for these people to eat."

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean?

ALI: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Again, this is a city. This is a city of the population of Velas but in a smaller space or in like a tighter space. This is an old metropolis.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: No one here has ever seen anything like this. Like the New Archives is probably the closest to it in terms of density but even that isn't like a living— like so much of the New Archives is built to hold stuff that there are these big empty places that are empty of people, you know? Like just warehouses. This is a city. This is— there are people in these— or that there are people in that fallen tower at least. There are people in all of the buildings in each of these city blocks, just like filled.

KEITH: So this is a place where you might have to wait for a hotel room.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Right, exactly. You fucking see hotels, right? Like there are— I don't know if they're being used as hotels anymore but as you— I mean where do you go from this fallen tower? From here, where do you head? From the kind of edge of this tower.

JACK: Down south?

AUSTIN: On this main street?

JACK: Along this kind of—

KEITH: I know that this is a sort of self-explanatory probably but I do want to— do want to make sure that we all know that we all are being sneaky. All being real sneaky right now.

AUSTIN: There's a point at which it's hard to be sneaky though, right? Like are you sneaking through alleyways? Is that what you're doing? What are you doing in terms of being sneaky?

KEITH: Well, at some point like do we think that it's beneficial to instead of sneaking just look real hard like we're supposed to be where we are?

JACK: No, it's up to you guys to do that. Hella just looks real hard always.

[AUSTIN and KEITH laugh]

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: True.

ALI: I mean the best way not to be discovered is to look like you belong in a place.

KEITH: Yeah, so let's just do that. I take back my sneaking plan.

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: So you guys are just going down this main road basically? There? Oh, wait, is that the wrong— whoops sorry. I put that on the wrong layer.

JACK: Are there any— are there any orcs here?

AUSTIN: Not many. So you kind of stand out a little bit by default. There are a few like it's— I was going to compare it to my life and talk about being in Black in London, Ontario, Canada. It's not like it never happens? But it is not—

JACK: It's an unusual—

AUSTIN: It's, you know— you're one out of a hundred, do you know what I mean? But there are— you can see that there are some orcs here because as you move towards this kind of coastline you see that this whole little area is a bunch— is a little marketplace with some gardens. You smell really good smelling fish. Alright, I'm gonna— here's three things that happen one after another. One, Fero, you feel one of the strangest things you've felt.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: So I've talked earlier about how there are animals here that are undead and you could feel them as undead. You could feel their presence but you also understood that there was an absence of life there. You feel— you notice, okay, so I'm going to paint this picture. This is a collection of a kind of stone and marble gardens with a marketplace with stalls. Ali, I kind of have in mind Union Square in the fall or the winter before Christmas. This is kind of like— a very busy and people holding hands and people eating and talking.

KEITH: [laughing] Wait, hold on. I've been to Union Square in December and that's not what it looks like.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it is.

ALI: No, it is.

KEITH: People holding hands?

AUSTIN: Yeah, dog. Absolutely.

ALI: There's people way into it. It's a very cute time of year.

KEITH: I have not seen that.

AUSTIN: You have not been there at the right times.

ALI: Yeah, there's a whole market.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's a whole—

KEITH: It's like mid-December. I dunno, I dunno.

ALI: Yeah well then think about the street in Boston where that big Macy's is during the, um, the winter?

KEITH: Yeah?

ALI: Cause they do that too and it's, I guess, nicer. It's smaller but it's the same kind of mood.

[AUSTIN and KEITH laugh]

AUSTIN: So— so there are these kinds of stalls there. These are a little bit more permanent than the stalls I have in mind, those kinds of holiday stalls. But there is— but there is still sort of a kind of like a fun ramshack-ly-ness to them.

JACK: Like a little Christmas market.

AUSTIN: Yeah, these are little independent, you know, marketers. They're selling their— whatever their goods are. Again, you can smell little treats that are really handmade.

ALI: Or even more like a boardwalk?

AUSTIN: Yeah, a little bit of a boardwalk feel, totally. You definitely have that roasted peanuts smell here.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: There are children here running and laughing. Both alive-alive, both undead in the Captain Brandish way, and ghosts— ghostly spectral children. Fero, you are drawn. At this point your group is kind of like almost absentmindedly gets called into different directions. Fero, you're pulled towards this group of people. A mix—again, living undead, ghastly, you know, spectral—who are smiling and talking and they kind of get quiet and you hear one of them. They're not close enough for you to make out the words but one of them is very clearly giving a toast to someone else. It's an undead man lifting a glass up to a spectral man who's in his old age—has a nice big beard, his pants are a little too high up on his waist. [JACK and KEITH laugh] He has a pair of ghost glasses on.

JACK: It's an old fellow ghost.

AUSTIN: It's an old fella ghost and the undead man is toasting to him and he smiles and shakes his hand and the two of them embrace. There's some crying but there's some— it's sort of like one of those sad moments that's also very joyous and the thing that you feel that you've never felt before is this ghost giving away his life, letting his life, his undeath slip away. So what was once an absence of life, like a notable absence of life, again, like that black tower blocking out the stars, the stars kind of come shining back through. There's just— it's not just an undeath there anymore. Just, nature fills that vacuum, that void as the ghost vanishes and kind of separates from our realm.

KEITH: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Lem, you are just— you are in love. This is the best. This is the best. There are— everything— you need to catalogue everything here. No one has eaten this food. No one has heard these sounds. There are people singing songs no one's ever heard before or they, you know— you hear a chord progression that's like, "Oh! This was bastardized and turned into this other song."

[ALI laughs]

KEITH: How did Brandish get this shit?

AUSTIN: You got to this beautiful beautiful little breadstand and like picking through the bread you're like, "Oh this is really good." You look to your left and there also buying bread is Emmanuel.

[JACK and ALI gasp]

ALI: No!

AUSTIN: Hella, you are like— kind of like, “Oh my fucking god. This shit.”

ALI: Yeah, no, I’m super not having a good time here. I just had the thing where I just got depressed because of my sword. I’m not feeling good at all.

JACK: Aw.

AUSTIN: Your sword has been behaving thankfully. You in fact are probably feeling the most depressed of all because you see a little boy running around and you hate— nah, it’s not because you hate little children.

ALI: No.

AUSTIN: And he’s running around and tugging on people’s sleeves to give them a broadsheet like this kind of printed— you’ve maybe seen a few of these on Ordenna maybe? None in Velas I don’t think. Basically super early newspapers, right? Big broad sheets of paper with information printed on them and there on one that he’s giving out to people you see a sketch of Captain Calhoun and underneath it just says, “Back, in chains,” and you see his face and then— I mean, do you take one of these from him?

ALI: Um, yes.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: Wait, is there like a fee for the newspaper?

AUSTIN: He does put his hand out.

ALI: Aw, um—

KEITH: Do not cause a scene in this pirate cove!

ALI: My money won’t work here.

AUSTIN: Your gold will, maybe.

ALI: Maybe?

AUSTIN: Remember? It’s like the way gold works, we’ve decided was, it just works.

JACK: This is the awkward moment of like in the french bakery going, “Ah, c’est combien?” and the person looking at you and you looking at them and looking at your euros.

ALI: Should I do like the teen in Barnes and Noble thing where I look at the front of it and hand it back?

[MUSIC — *Autumn Not Winter* by Jack de Quidt begins]

AUSTIN: Yes, totally. You totally can. You see underneath it says, “Lord Tristan the Ninth, the Ivory Crown, locked away in the black tower.”

[MUSIC continues and plays out until the end]