

Winter in Hieron 04: A Combination of Notes (transcription: robowitch)

(transcriber's note: I edited slightly for the sake of clarity, keeping all meaning but removing some verbal clutter, stammering, and filler words. -robo)

Featuring: SYLVIA (as Ephrim), AUSTIN (as GM), JACK (as Lem), KEITH (as Fero), and NICK (as Phantasmo)

SYLVIA: Last time, on Friends at the Table!

['Inside' starts playing]

AUSTIN: Through a collection of strange events, you've all managed to decide that what you need to do is break into this museum and each get something out of it.

JACK: But they'll be fine, they're fine.

AUSTIN: So, who's going in the -- Fero, you're going in the ground floor?

KEITH: I'm going in the ground floor, I'm just going to walk in. It's a museum, there's lots of people in there.

AUSTIN: At the top level on the rafters, the rafters take you, Lem, to the big open receiving area, where there's a stage where a halfling man is sitting at a table.

AUSTIN (as Halfling Announcer): The chancellor for Rosemerrow... the *chancellor!*

AUSTIN: It's at this point that Ephrim and Phantasmo enter the picture again. As everyone is cheering and there's [trumpet sounds] -- there's dance music playing and brass instruments; that our friend, Steadystep the gnoll, re-enters the scene. He like, leaps down from the other side of the rafters, Lem. Carrying in his teeth, Ephrim, and carrying in his arms, the uh- I guess at this point Phantasmo, you've become visible again. You're also going to take a little bit of damage for having been knocked the fuck out.

AUSTIN (as Chatterchin): Alright, prince, you...you wanna do me a solid? Then I'll let you go. [Laughs nervously] You go introduce me to Mister Mayor and you help me convince him... that we get our stuff back.

AUSTIN: There are no third acts in gnoll culture. They've lived through the first two acts; they're waiting for the third act. The first act is "we used to be wolves" -- we used to be, like, the top of the food chain, we used to have culture, we used to have buildings, we used to have places, and now we live in the fucking woods. And the second act is: those fucking halflings took it from us.

[pause; music stops]

AUSTIN: Fero, what are you doing, during all of this?

KEITH: I think that I'm standing and watching and really trying hard to make up my mind on how I feel about it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, fair.

KEITH: Because I don't have the information that Lem has; I don't know any of that stuff. So to me, this is all literally 100% new information and I have to decide, like, is it-.

AUSTIN: (interrupting) You've probably heard -- what I'll do is, I'll give you the halfling side of the story. Which is that, for centuries, the halflings were hunted and killed by gnolls. And they eked out a meek existence inside of Knollhollow -- "knoll" with a K, not gnoll with a g...

KEITH: (interrupting) Right. Different knoll.

AUSTIN: Different gnolls.

KEITH: Really, really bad way to name your town considering the situation.

AUSTIN: (talking over) Y'know, it's... yes.

KEITH: Also- it looks really bad when the gnolls say "you stole all our stuff and the place where you live is the same name as the thing that we are".

AUSTIN: Yes, it doesn't look good.

KEITH: It doesn't look good!

AUSTIN: And then, and then Rose Merrow, the great leader of halflings, was a brilliant military mind. One of these great people in the history of the world, who managed to outsmart the gnolls and drive them out of Knollhollow and out of the beaches and back into the woods where they were originally from, and was able to secure the centre of what is now Roseheart and was able to use the creek, the kind of river, as a way to flank them — all these great stories about Rose Merrow, who led you to victory. And generally, it's this like — and at that point that you settled into a long long long time of recovery from the Erasure and trying to survive. There's a lot of, you know: things used to be bad, but we always had our culture. We always had our civility. We always had, like, the three things a halfling always has: pipe smoke, and good food - maybe a specific dish, a specific soup or something - and, y'know, some third thing- what's a third thing that the halflings always have?

KEITH: Oh, I know! Because this is just propaganda. It's pipe smoke, good soup, and a hard day's work.

AUSTIN: Yep, can't lose! Exactly.

SYLVIA: (quietly) Jesus.

AUSTIN: That's the halflings for ya. That's been a guiding principle for a long long long long *long* time. For a long time, Rosemerrow, unlike let's say Velas, never really struggled to survive at the base level, because the agriculture was so good. Because they were protected from the south with this giant wall, which is grey on this map from where the trees and stuff are, and because they, generally, had a lot of resources available for them. It's a very fertile area between the river, the sea, and the good soil. And so they grew linearly for a long time -- growing bit-by-bit-by-bit: it's a farming community; it's...you know -- and then eventually, everything blew up in the last, like, 50 years where it grew really quickly -- in the last five years or three years or whatever, it's *blown up*, like Dubai-speed. It's just like, oh, boom!

KEITH: Is it growing quickly to the detriment of surrounding areas? Like, is it growing quickly in the face of, hey, the rest of Hieron is not doing well?

AUSTIN: Not in a way that you can prove is bad for the rest of Hieron.

KEITH: I'm not saying like they're -- they have the same resources, it's just relatively high compared to other areas happening to do worse.

AUSTIN: Yes. Compared to Velas, compared to the University -- which fell apart in the same period that Rosemerrow blew up -- compared to whatever happened in Nacre, obviously. The Archives have similarly done well, but because they are built into the side of mountains, it's not as clear that they're expanding at this rate. Whereas Rosemerrow is growing substantially every year.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: And the other thing that you know is that, the way the story goes, things were bad because of and around the Erasure. Because of the wars that were happening then, because of whatever the Erasure is, this big terrible event in the history of Hieron that really damaged and took away what was already the halflings'. In the old days, the halflings controlled everything that is Rosemerrow -- in fact, they controlled way more than this. They controlled like an entire, like up into the woods, where the snow elves are -- like Auniq; halflings were everywhere through there -- that wasn't snow elf country, that was halfling country. You know, one day, maybe it'll be halfling country again. But for now, just trying to rebuild Rosemerrow! Lotta 'good old days' in Rosemerrow.

KEITH: Yeah, mmhm.

Austin: But like, and I guess that's the thing -- my question for you is, is Fero...what does Fero think of the growth? Because a lot of the growth is capital-N New stuff. There's the stuff that is the fake hobbit-holes, right?

KEITH: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: But there are just straight-up skyscrapers here now; and they figured out new methods of manufacturing stuff, and-

KEITH: (interrupting) That's the, I think that's the thing about-- the thing about Fero, if you haven't listened to the first season, is that Fero is not interested in, I think, the mindset of a lot of Hieron, which is like: the way that we reclaim our culture is by figuring out how to set things up like pre-Erasure.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: And I think that is uninteresting to Fero. Because of that, I think a lot of this stuff looks like- like, it's all new, but it looks like all-new stuff that they would have done pre-Er-, that is threaded back to-

AUSTIN (interrupting): There's definitely a mix. The point that Lenny was trying to make is that not enough is the old-school stuff; that there's too much of this new shit. The current Chancellor of Rosemerrow, whose name I don't have quite yet, is definitely a modernist, is definitely trying to move past the feeling that it's a Colonial Williamsburg, that it's trying to reclaim the past glory of the halflings. The actual Chancellor is this very forward-thinking, we have to modernise, we shouldn't be tied to this history that is already in question; we should instead be working with Ordenna and working with Velas and trading with people all around Hieron. Bringing the best of everybody around the world to *come* to Rosemerrow -- like, Rosemerrow needs to be a cosmopolitan city; the gnolls would not have been allowed *in* Rosemerrow before the current Chancellor's rule. And during their rule, they passed the laws that allowed gnolls to move freely inside Rosemerrow as long as they were part of an official delegation, like this. If they had official business.

KEITH: It's weird, because it seems like it's 80% bad and 20% good. I like that! People that used to be not be allowed here are allowed here now, but also like...the skyscrapers thing and the fake domes with the skyscrapers below... that's terrible,

AUSTIN: I guess the question for me is: for Fero, is it just not moving fast enough for Fero?

KEITH: No, I think it's just moving the wrong way.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: It's new but it's *wrong* new...

AUSTIN: What's your alignment right now?

KEITH: It's Chaotic.

AUSTIN: What's it *say*?

KEITH: Oh, sorry. It says "pull the weeds of the past out by the roots".

AUSTIN: Okay, so it isn't like "I want things to be more like this", it's just "I definitely don't want them to be like the way they used to be".

KEITH: Yeah. A lot of the influence for that original thing was when we were talking in the first season about rapid expansion and industrialisation [AUSTIN: Right] and factories; this new stuff in Rosemerrow doesn't *not* feel like that.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: It's growth, but it's the same sort of growth I think that Hieron has seen already.

AUSTIN: No, this is new. The only other place you've seen anything like this *had been* Nacre... and Ordenna in the last three months. Previously, Rosemerrow was *the place* where that stuff could happen, it was just mixed in with this... Velas doesn't have a manufacturing centre, you know. The Archives don't make shit, the Archives collect stuff and they make stuff now-and-then, but they don't have a district dedicated to churning out... new stuff *for sale* around the world.

NICK: There's a difference between making stuff and mass production.

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly. That's exactly it.

KEITH: Wasn't there mass production pre-Erasure thought? Didn't we talk about that?

AUSTIN: (interrupting) You don't know that.

KEITH: Both in Mariel- You're right. I guess I don't know that.

AUSTIN: Fero doesn't fuckin' know what- pre Erasure, as far as he knows is...who knows what pre-Erasure was? We were all eating ice cream all the time pre-Erasure.

KEITH: Oh, that sounds good, let's go back to that.

AUSTIN: (cross-talk) That's the good ol' days you can get behind.

KEITH: I'm changing it... cultivate thousands.

NICK: (cross-talk) My new alignment is ice cream.

AUSTIN: (chuckles) That's where Fero's at here, on those things. So yeah, do you do anything during this whole question or are you still trying to work it out?

KEITH: I think I'm still- I think I'm still trying- Here's what I do: I say, out loud, "I'm still trying to work out the veracity of... the gnoll thing". Hey, we don't know, you don't know -- Lenny clearly has no idea. I don't know, they seem pretty sure... what do you think would be... the harm in just being like, "maybe some of the stuff was gnoll stuff"? Like thanks to the gnolls for showing us what forks are or whatever.

AUSTIN: Does he say that or is he just thinking it to himself?

KEITH: I say that.

AUSTIN: Alright, um. Lenny says,

AUSTIN (as Lenny): It ain't true! That's what the problem with it is!

KEITH (as Fero): Eh, prove it!

AUSTIN (as Lenny): Whaddya mean, 'prove it'? The proof is the forks, go look at the forks! It's halfling forks! They're the size of...

KEITH (as Fero): (interrupting) You don't know that!

AUSTIN (as Lenny): I've got an expert!

KEITH (as Fero): Who? You've got one expert...

AUSTIN (as Lenny): (interrupting) I've got Isaac...

KEITH (as Fero): I've got five experts, these gnolls all say they're wrong...

AUSTIN (as Lenny): They're not experts! They never went to school... this guy went to the university!

KEITH: I ask Chatterchin, are you an expert?

AUSTIN: I want to know what Phantasmo says when this guy says he went to the university.

NICK: Phantasmo just scoffs.

AUSTIN: Okay! Chatterchin says,

AUSTIN (as Chatterchin): Yeah, I'm an expert. [creepy laugh]

KEITH (as Fero): Hey, he's an expert! Look at that! My expert versus your expert.

AUSTIN (as Chatterchin): Give us our stuff, or else it's not gonna be good for your prince.

KEITH (as Fero): Hey, Chatterchin. Do you want us to physically give you the forks? How about a sign that talks about the important history of gnoll inventions?

AUSTIN (as Chatterchin): We want our stuff.

KEITH (as Fero): What does that mean, what do you mean?

AUSTIN (as Chatterchin): We want it. We want to have it. All of it.

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, give 'em all the forks. Whatever!

NICK: (laughs)

AUSTIN: At this point, Lem is walking past a row of forks. [Keith laughs] One after the other on the wall. These are- they're arranged by what metal they're made of. So you make it, Lem, into the other room, or the other building. There is a...I guess, this other part of the Museum. It's *huge*, it's massive; that alone is really interesting. It's way more sparse than the New Old Museum is. The old Museum, not the New Old Museum, the old museum, was actually stuff spread out pretty well. I imagine you walk through a section that's just a bunch of paintings. The halfling painting style- what's the halfling painting style like, Lem?

JACK: Um, I think that it's um...There's two styles. One is the kind of rosy-cheeked portraits, often of groups -- there's someone lounging in a chair smoking a pipe. There's a large ham, there's two rosy-cheeked children eating apples. That's one sort. And there's probably like, lots of them. The other sort are landscapes, these endless pastoral landscapes and people working in the fields. Horses waiting next to a cart, and hay racks, and a blue sky; or like, ducks going through a river.

[15:13]

AUSTIN: Yes, perfect. You pass all of those paintings. You leave the painting area and pass through...there's a natural history area that's just like -- rocks! All the different sorts of rocks that they've excavated...

JACK: (laughs) Does this place, like...as someone who knows the Archives, in the sense that the Archives sees value in things, which is often very different to sort of like, the other way you see value in things, is this place valuable or is it just...stuff?

AUSTIN: I don't know... the thing is, Archives seem to think everything is valuable, because it could all be part of something else.

JACK: But just as important is the way it's presented, right? Like that's almost crucial.

AUSTIN: This is not presented in a particularly good way. The Old Museum is a lot better than the New Old Museum is; the New Old Museum is "look at all our stuff! We got all this stuff! Look at how powerful I am and good for the past, I have the past and it's here and you can all look at it -- cool!" The Old Museum, the old-old museum, is a little more accurately, it does feel more interested in the history of the halflings, but it's also through the lens of high culture. So it is, you know. I think part of the Archivist in you *is* more interested in the cabinet room, and the silverware room, and the room of shoes, and the actual family portraiture that was drawn by the child in the family with a penchant for art, than the rosy-cheeked high-art portraiture that is being enshrined here. On the other hand, this side doesn't feel like it has anything to prove. That's part of the benefit of being part of high culture -- you can just pretend to be important for the sake of being important. If it's done poorly, it does feel like you're putting on airs, but the beautiful rhetoric of high art is that it's valuable for the sake of itself. It does *feel* that way in the old-old Museum. You dart a couple of these halls, we get shots of Lem looking at stuffed tigers and big suits of-tiny suits of halfling armour, and a few things that claim to be from pre-Erasure. Some spears, a big throne, what's apparently Rose Merrow's throne. Eventually you find a little side hallway that leads to a flight of stairs and, as you start going down them, you hear voices. What do you do?

JACK: Are the voices moving? Or are they...

AUSTIN: They're moving with footsteps. But they're not moving- they move for...you sit and wait for a minute and you can hear them walking and talking. And then they get further and further away, and almost you can't hear them. And then they start getting louder and coming back the other way. They're talking about Lenny. Lenny Lenovo.

AUSTIN (as Halfling Guards #1): I don't know, he's a young guy, maybe he'd be good for Rosemerrow, maybe he'd be bad...

AUSTIN (as Halfling Guard #2): Yeah, but fresh blood man, fresh blood! Gotta get fresh blood in there sometimes. You know, we've had these same people in for so long, fresh blood's a difference-maker right there!

AUSTIN: And the other guy's like,

AUSTIN (as Halfling Guard #1) Yeah, but is he even really- he's not even from Roseheart, he doesn't know how thing works there, he's a Westshore boy...

AUSTIN (as Halfling Guard #2): Yeah, but Westshore, Roseheart... it's not like he's from Viridian Village, right!?

AUSTIN: They both laugh and they kind of walk past you. Like, you're at the top of the staircase looking down and you can see it's two halfling guards.

JACK: And they just walk past me, like I'm no problem?

AUSTIN: No, you're at the top of the staircase, they don't look up at you. They're doing their patrol route down here.

JACK: Hm. Okay. Is it possible for me to sneak past them?

AUSTIN: You could try. You don't quite know-

JACK: Is it fairly clear that I shouldn't be at the bottom of these stairs?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Like I can't just walk down there?

AUSTIN: There's probably a sign that says- You've probably walked past three signs that say 'no visitors allowed, please turn around'?

JACK: It's like most museums. The first sign is just a formality...and then anything after that is really bad news.

AUSTIN: (chuckles) You are definitely past that first sign.

JACK: Okay. So...*you know what*, I'm going to straighten my backpack on my back and I'm gonna go down and try to talk to them. How often do Archivists come through here?

AUSTIN: Before the snow, probably fairly often. Rosemerrow is a big centre of activity. Morbash told you he would have gone himself. But the snow- with the snow, they probably haven't seen an Archivist in a while. Or at least not- that's not true. They probably still have- there's probably some orcs in town, and all of the orcs pretty much- more or less, most of the orcs are from the Archives. Not all of them, but most of them. So, they probably have another Archivist in town. There's probably another Archivist in this building, at the event. But...not the sort of Archivists who are also adventurers, right? That's a different sort of thing.

JACK: So I'm gonna go down and talk to them, I think.

AUSTIN: Okay. Do you announce yourself? Their backs are to you, what do you do?

JACK (as Lem): Excuse me?

AUSTIN (as Halfling Guard #1): Bwuh!

AUSTIN: Spear out, looking at you.

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

AUSTIN (as Halfling Guard #1): Not supposed to be here, champ! Gotta back up the party. What are you, bathrooms? What are you, *bathrooms*?

KEITH: (laughs)

JACK: I was told I was supposed to-- wait, sorry, what did he say?

AUSTIN: 'What are you, bathrooms?' He's twisting the spear at you, trying to find what pose you're supposed to be in with a spear. At first it's under his arm, and he like lift- he twists his whole upper body until he's lifting it with his left bicep in a flex and his right bicep above him. He's like [growling] as if he was in a diorama about to throw it at a saber tooth tiger.

JACK: I'm substantially taller than him as well, right?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, you're definitely two of him. How tall are you? What's Lem look like, again?

JACK: Lem is a sort of- he's not particularly big for an orc, but compared to a halfling,

AUSTIN: But he's still an orc?

JACK: Still...large.

AUSTIN: Like six feet, seven- six feet? Six five?

JACK: Seven- seven I think. Seven two,

AUSTIN: Okay, you're at least two of these.

JACK: And just like, sturdily built. I think I'm gonna say...

JACK (as Lem): Okay, wow, easy with the spears. I was told to come down here.

AUSTIN (as Halfling Guard #1): By who?

JACK: I'm gonna take my business card out of my pocket.

JACK (as Lem): I was sent here, I'm an emissary from the New Archives. You can check my name, it's-

AUSTIN (as Halfling Guard #1): New Archives? You hear that Button?

AUSTIN: And Button, who has a little button nose is like,

AUSTIN (as Halfling Guard #2/Button): New Archives!?

AUSTIN: His eyes just totally light up.

JACK (as Lem): Hey, Button. I'm Lem King, it's-here's my business ca-

AUSTIN (as Button, interrupting): You're a king!?

EVERYONE: (general laughter)

AUSTIN (as Button): You're the king of the Archives? Oh boy, Corey, no one's gonna believe us!

JACK (as Lem): That's me! I've been sent here... look, Lenny sent me down here and he asked me to just, you know. Just...

AUSTIN (as Button): *You* know Lenny?

JACK (as Lem): Well, of course.

AUSTIN (as Button): How'd you meet him?

JACK (as Lem): How did I meet him? Uh, uh, ah... I was introduced to him.

AUSTIN (as Button): By who?

JACK (as Lem): My friend, Ephrim.

AUSTIN: Give me a Defy Danger (Charisma).

JACK: Okey-dokey. Okay, that is...I'm just rolling Charisma, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Boop. [rolls dice] Oh my god.

AUSTIN: That's a four, buddy. You rolled two ones! Charisma is your best stat!

JACK: Is it worth making it a five...?

AUSTIN: No, it doesn't get to be good until a seven.

JACK, sadly: Ohhh-kay.

AUSTIN: Is there anything else you could have done here, any moves before we move?

JACK: Well, I have Charming & Open -- when I speak frankly with someone, I can ask them a question, but that's more getting information. And I kind of don't really want to - I don't really want to bust out the violin, really, until it gets bad...

AUSTIN: So I think ah, at saying like, okay we need to- at saying you that you know Lemmy-Lenny, not Lenny. Not Lemmy. Lenny. He says,

AUSTIN (as Button): If Lenny really sent ya, he woulda sent you with his secret password.

JACK (as Lem): Oh!

AUSTIN (as Button): I know Lenny, that's how he does it.

JACK (as Lem): I know that.

AUSTIN (as Button): What is it?

JACK (as Lem): How do I know you know it?

AUSTIN (as Button): We're guards. The secret password's for us. We came up with it with Lenny.

JACK (as Lem): You came up with it, together?

AUSTIN (as Button): Yeah, together.

JACK (as Lem): You sat down and came up with a secret password?

AUSTIN (as Button): We're his guards! We work with him! This is his whole situation!

JACK (as Lem): This was a three-man job?

AUSTIN (as Button): No, there were also other people. We didn't come up with it so much as we were in the room.

NICK: (chuckles)

JACK (as Lem): Okay, uhm...

JACK: Let me just check my moves, real quick...

AUSTIN: (laughs)

JACK: This is frustrating because this is a thing that an Archivist should at least be... are nicknames or passwords part of the pattern? I can't pattern magic this, can I?

AUSTIN: I don't *think* so... not unless you have a move that tells you that's a thing you can do.

KEITH: Not unless they give you enough time to arrange some cups in a figure eight.

JACK: Right, exactly... I got Spout Lore, but that's not it...

AUSTIN: I don't think you have the accumulated knowledge of Lenny's password.

JACK: Okay.

JACK (as Lem): It's uhm, it's, uhm... halfling.

AUSTIN (as Button): Oh boy, he got it, he got i- *no it isn't halfling!*

KEITH, NICK, AND JACK: (laugh)

AUSTIN: And they stab you. One of them stabs you with a spear. I have to figure out how much damage this spear does now... d8. Good.

JACK: (laughs) You can't just stab emissaries!

AUSTIN: Take 6.

KEITH: "I have to figure out how much damage these spears do" is the equivalent of saying that Jack has gotten so far off course that Austin has not figured out what even the weapons do here.

AUSTIN: I have them, I have them here; Button and Corey are guards, their group intelligence-

JACK: Armour, armour-

AUSTIN: How much armour do you have, what's your armour situation?

JACK: I have one, so that's five.

AUSTIN: So take 5 damage. And they have you at spear point. They are now pushing you backwards; you're in this long hallway and the vault is at the other end of the hallway. The vault is behind you and they're pushing you towards it with their spears -- not literally, physically pushing you, but you're trapped between them and- the stairway at this point is behind them and the vault is behind you.

JACK: Great.

AUSTIN: At that point, let's jump back to the ballroom. What's going on here? Fero, sounded like you were making the case to give them their stuff?

KEITH: Yeah, just like who cares, right? Like, what-

AUSTIN: Also Lem take XP, Nick- or, Phantasmo, take XP... and Ephrim take XP.

KEITH: Does my Aid/Assist roll give XP?

AUSTIN: Yes. Any failed roll. Totally. At this point, Lenny is saying 'no, that's not' -- you're starting shit, right? That's what happening Fero?

KEITH: I'm super starting shit, yeah. Listen, it's not just their stuff -- you've got my dad's stuff in there too! I didn't say you could have that.

AUSTIN (as Lenny): Guards! Bring me Ephrim, arrest the loudmouth here, and let th-

KEITH (as Fero): (interrupting) You can't arrest me!

AUSTIN: The guards start moving in on you.

KEITH: I'm a bird now, boom.

SYLVIA: Fuck.

AUSTIN: Give me a roll.

KEITH: Alright, hold on. What is that, wisdom?

SYLVIA: (laughing in the background)

AUSTIN: Fuckin, this game.

JACK: At least he's a bird and not a vole...

KEITH: This is...

AUSTIN: Shapeshifter. 'When you call upon the spirits to change your shape, roll plus Wis.' Oh, my friend, that's a six...

KEITH: I use my plus-one forward. Boom, seven.

AUSTIN: Okay, so you spend one prep? Take note that you're down to two prep. What's that look like?

KEITH: The guards are pretty close by - there's a couple of gnolls, the mayor and presumably Chancellor-candidate, a prince and a wizard in handcuffs, and then me just kind of shouting... So the guards are close by, they go to grab me and then their arms go to where nothing is, because I'm a bird floating five feet above their heads.

AUSTIN: Good. I'm just gonna roll a 2d6-I'm gonna roll a - I'm gonna roll a 1d2, I'm gonna flip a coin to see how they react. 1 is that they are confused, 2 is that they manage to not be too shocked. I misrolled...

KEITH: Can one of them be they are impressed?

AUSTIN: No... They are not impressed.

KEITH: They know what's up?

AUSTIN: [mumbles thoughtfully] Okay, sure, they're impressed.

AUSTIN (as Fella) Woah, he turned into a bird!

AUSTIN: That was Fella, Fella said that. These two guards that tried to arrest you are Fella and Gianno. Fella is very impressed, Gianno is not so impressed.

KEITH: I do wanna say that, even on a miss, I do still hold one. The transformation is still a success no matter what, the difference is that on a miss I hold one in addition to whatever the GM says.

AUSTIN: This is something we got wrong *literally the entire first season*.

KEITH: Everything but the last two episodes. I thought that a hold was literally any action you do as the thing, but it's only the very specific special actions that rely on which animal you have been.

AUSTIN: Right. So now you're a bird of some sort...?

KEITH: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: That's think about what cool bird move you could have. I think it's like Fly in Pokémon? I think you can attack and then make yourself invincible for this round until you do damage.

KEITH: One of the special moves that the bird has lets it attack and then escape to the air, which is exactly what you just described. The book just says "you can work out whatever special move you want", but here's a handful of suggestions.

AUSTIN: Cool, let's go with that, you can spend your one hold on that. Fero is a bird now -- Ephrim, Phantasmio, what are we doing?

KEITH: I just want to point out -- we're not in a fight yet!

AUSTIN: (quizzical) Mm!?

SYLVIA: Getting close!

AUSTIN: It's about as close as you can get, fellas...

KEITH: I have not yet decided that it's a fight.

NICK: Is there anyone focused on Phantasmo?

AUSTIN: You're in the group, you're like in that mess of...

SYLVIA: We're right in the middle of it, right?

AUSTIN: I'm gonna redraw some stuff real quick, drag you off this sheet real quick. So. Here we go. Fero, you're a bird? All right, so there's Fero. Let me make you a little smaller. Phantasmo...

KEITH: What a snooty Phantasmo.

AUSTIN: It's a pretty good Phantasmo. I forget who did these Phantasmos... are these Emily's Phantasmo?

KEITH: I believe these are Emily's, yeah.

AUSTIN: They are good. Why did *that* Lem show up? Oh, you're not even here, Lem...

SYLVIA: I don't have an emblem yet, do I...?

AUSTIN: *There's* G-Dragon.

SYLVIA: Thank you!

AUSTIN: You're welcome. And then all around you are some good friends...

KEITH: Yes, all of our very and closest good friends are here.

AUSTIN: Aw, these are some good gnolls.

KEITH: Including five gnolls, the mayor, some guards, and group of strangers!

AUSTIN: Yeah, group of strangers.

SYLVIA: Looks like a Chatterchin.

AUSTIN: I don't think that's a Chatterchin, I think *this* is a Chatterchin...

JACK: That looks like a DeviantArt gnoll.

AUSTIN: (laughs) Yeah, Chatterchin. And she's there... There's a bunch of those gnolls all around you. You're probably up here... and you're a bird. There's the guards, and there's a

bunch of other people, there's a wizard, there's the Ordennan envoy... there's a lot going on. Here's Lenny...

EVERYONE: (laughs)

AUSTIN: I don't know why roll20 has a halfling skater.

SYLVIA: Of *course* I'm endorsing this guy!

AUSTIN: (laughs)

NICK: I love the beholder graffiti on the bottom of the skateboard.

AUSTIN: And there's the guards... they're smaller than the gnolls.

SYLVIA: They're not taller, they're very wide... Compactly built.

AUSTIN: There's one more with a bow in the back on the dais. That's the basic stuff. There's a bunch of other people in this big room. Fero turns into a bird?

KEITH (as Fero): I'm a bird now, hi.

SYLVIA: This is some real classic swashbuckle-y bullshit, but is there a chandelier or anything that is lighting this whole room?

AUSTIN: No... there's not a single lighting thing. (thoughtful) Hm... We described this as having a glass roof like a big glass dome, so that isn't a good look. I don't know how it's lit. How *is* this lit? How do you light a big room like this without electricity?

KEITH: Sconces.

AUSTIN: *Lots* of sconces. A billion sconces. What are you doing?

SYLVIA: I have an ability. And I'm not making up the name of it, it is straight-up called Zuko Style in the book. When you bend a flame to your will, roll plus Wisdom. On a 10, it does as you command, taking the shape and movement you desire as long it has fuel to burn. On a 7-9, the effect is short-lived, lasting only a moment. I want to try making a distraction.

AUSTIN: Do you need control of your hands to do this?

SYLVIA: Not a huge flourishing movement.

AUSTIN: I only ask because it's called Zuko Style, which in my mind...

SYLVIA: I definitely *do* need to move my hands...

AUSTIN: I'm going to say you take a -1 forward on this...

KEITH: Sorry, which Zuko is it?

AUSTIN: From [*Avatar: The*] *Last Airbender*.

SYLVIA: That's an 8... sorry, I forgot the -1.

KEITH: Are you sure that it's not Danny Zuko from *Grease*?

SYLVIA: I wear a leather jacket while doing it. It only lasts a moment...

AUSTIN: That's probably enough. What are you doing with it?

SYLVIA: I wanna make it just flare up and, if I'm lucky, light a tablecloth or something on fire...

JACK: Hey!

AUSTIN: Good, this is all going according to plan! We're lighting a museum on fire! Welcome to Friends at the Table, everybody!

JACK: Hey...

AUSTIN: It happens.

JACK: Hey...

AUSTIN: Hi. You set a tablecloth on fire. The flame leaps from... that's the thing, is, you have it in control for a moment, and that's why... like, you don't just set the tablecloth on fire—like, normally when you set something on fire like this, it's like “ooh, you're making it do a thing,” but because you got an 8... it's on fire. You don't have control of the flame at that point. It's the tablecloth that is on a table with all the food on it... dinner has *just* been served. The service staff laid out all this beautiful-looking food, it's this great mix of a bunch of different types of food from the north-western part of Hieron. It smells *great*. And now it's on fire.

KEITH: They're not going to get tipped at *all* and it's not even their fault!

AUSTIN: It's not even their fault. Phantasmo, what are you doing?

NICK: What's the temperature of the room? Not the literal temperature. But is there a hubbub?

AUSTIN: Oh. Because that one's *rising*. This is seconds away from being more than a hubbub. Right now it's a hubbub. It's about to be a riot.

NICK: Alright. Let's try to do a Discern Realities.

AUSTIN: Sure. That's fair. Give me a Discern Realities. Always time for a Discern Realities. Almost always. What's he doing, looking over his glasses?

NICK: Yes, I think adjusting his glasses.

AUSTIN: You got a 9, that's good enough for a question...

NICK: Maybe taking them off and somewhat clumsily, because his wrists are tied together, rubbing them on his robe...

AUSTIN: Ask a question and take plus one forward... or you can spend one of your Preparation and get a 10 instead.

NICK: Oh yeah, let's do that.

AUSTIN: Okay. Maybe they're new glasses, I kind of like that notion. [NICK laughs.] That's part of your prep. Go ahead and ask me three questions and take one forward when acting on the answers.

NICK: His prescription changed slightly [AUSTIN laughs]... I get to ask three, right? What is about to happen?

AUSTIN: One of the two gnolls is about to kill one of the halflings. You sense, you notice it puts its claws out of wherever it comes from... muscle sheaths? Ugh. That's what's about to happen. And at that point, everything's going to be a mess.

NICK: What here is useful or valuable to me?

AUSTIN: [sighs] Oh, boy. You spot, across the room, heading towards an exit, your old student, Isaac, who Lenny had mentioned a couple of times just now, Isaac Adelton. He is doing the tug-on-your-shoulder, can-tell-things-are-going-to-go-bad thing. He is getting the fuck out of here. Isaac would be a helpful ally in this moment.

NICK: My last question is: what here is not what it appears to be?

AUSTIN: You have Detect Magic as a cantrip, too, don't you?

NICK: I do.

AUSTIN: Like everything. Most of the stuff on the walls. A lot of it is illusion magic. There's some real things in there, but there's a lot of like.

NICK: *Reeeally*...

AUSTIN: A stick that has had magic cast on it so that it looks like a fork.

AUSTIN: Even the portraits that are like the sketches — some of those aren't illusion magic, but you can tell they were drawn by enchanted paintbrushes... basically automated portraiture.

NICK: Really wish I had prepared Dispel Magic...

AUSTIN: What *did* you prepare? You can have whatever prepared right now. Just let me know.

NICK: Except I've already used up levels.

AUSTIN: So you've currently cast Invisibility, right?

NICK: I cast Invisibility and Charm Person...

AUSTIN: Oh *right*, you *did* cast Charm Person, so that's 2 of your levels, right?

NICK: Yup.

AUSTIN: Oh, you're Level 5 now.

NICK: Oh, I am?

AUSTIN: Yeah, everyone's Level 5. Everyone should be Level 5, I gave everyone a level up to Level 5, basically. Except Ephrim and Adaire who are Level 4.

NICK: Okay, yeah, so I have Dispel Magic. I'm gonna cast Dispel Magic.

AUSTIN: Ohhh boy. This is all about to go... okay, what's that look like?

NICK: Whoop! That looks like a 12!

AUSTIN: Nice work. What's the effect... what's the casting look like, rather?

NICK: Let's see... I probably don't have my staff, do I?

AUSTIN: No. It's back at the table, though. He kept your staff, he didn't get rid of it.

NICK: Right. But I mean I can't go get it... I'm pretty sure what when I destroyed an entire dimension [AUSTIN: Mhm.] what it looked like was I tapped my staff on the ground. Maybe I stick my foot out from under my robe and tap the front of my sandal. And where I tap on the floor is where it radiates out from.

AUSTIN: It literally reveals even the floor is fake. There's a plaque on the wall that says 'the floor of the New Old Museum was recovered from the ancient halfling meeting hall, where they brought in beautiful sandstone'. And it's wood, it's wood, it's just wood that they laid out, it's hardwood. It's totally fine hardwood, but that's what it is. It goes up the walls and reveals that the forks that are on the wall are just sticks, the cabinets are square rectangle boxes of wood, they're not actually finely-crafted with all sorts of little engravings and stuff, it's just a wooden box. It's all just shit. It's not real. In that moment, the gnoll Steadystep reaches out and removes the head of Fella. Fella doesn't have a head anymore. Everyone screams... Fella drops to his knees, and then stands back up without his head. [JACK: Oh no!] And at that point everyone *really* screams. You think you're dead now! [KEITH laughs]... At that point, the pal-adin—or, sorry, they're not called the pal-adin anymore, they're called the Anchor, the Ordennans... I should explain this if you didn't listen to last week's episode. The Ordennans have pal-adin. The thing that was in the basement of the tower was pal-adin, in the very first game of this show ever? And no one opened that door ever.

KEITH: We *tried*...

AUSTIN: You failed the roll and gave up because there was noise from above you. I've listened to this recently.

SYLVIA: You know what would have been handy opening a door? A lot of fire...

AUSTIN: What's that? Yeah, maybe.

KEITH: Or a vole that can dig through rocks.

JACK: The Ordennans have made the pal-adin worse, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, they're made of Ordennan steel. At the moment that that thing stands up, the leader of this Ordennan group, a woman with a pixie cut and sharp angular features, and she just has big fuck-off armour, huge rounded pauldrons. Rounded isn't the exact right word, They still have an angular cut to them, but they are bulbous in that way. Around her arms...

KEITH: Like Metroid. Samus' armor.

AUSTIN: Yeah, sort of... not as rounded, they still have an angle to them. Think whats-his-face from *Full Metal Alchemist*... Edward? No, Edward's the little one, Alphonse? Almost like that, but all black and gold, the colours of Ordenna.

NICK: So it's *Dark Souls* armour?

AUSTIN: It's like *Dark Souls* armour, she's definitely in *Dark Souls* armour. Her name is Iduna Fel and she is a Justiciar-Captain. And she stands up and the second she does, the five Anchors -- the group of them is called 'The Anchor', this Ordennan leader gave a speech about how they would be *the anchor* of the Ordennan expansion eastwards and the anchor of Ordennan progress moving through the world. That wasn't actually what they were called, but that stuck [laughs] so they went with it. And they move into action, and the second that they start moving, huge puffs of black smoke start sprouting out of their backs as they start moving around, like, rushing towards this halfling who is now without a head, and is *very* confused by the fact that he can still look around and see things, including his head that's on the ground. Also the room is on fire, now?

KEITH: I have something! How on fire is the room? Is it still contained or what's up?

AUSTIN: It's contained for the next five seconds.

KEITH: Oh, okay. I have a thing I can do.

NICK: Turns out this whole room is wood.

KEITH: I'm going to turn into a man made of sand and put out the fire with my body.

AUSTIN: There's more fire than what a man made of sand could do. It's a big serving table, that whole thing is on fire. [KEITH: The whole table?] Yeah. As Phantasmo just pointed out, we just revealed that the floor is made of wood and not, in fact, stone, so now that's also catching fire.

KEITH: (mocking imitation) I wanna do a distraction. (laughs)

AUSTIN: (laughs) You could set up like a land of escape or something.

SYLVIA: (also mocking imitation) I'm gonna turn into a bird...

AUSTIN: Wait, you can turn into sand now?

KEITH: I have a move called Thingtalker. 'You see spirits in the sand, the sea, and the stone; you may now apply your Spirit-tongue, Shapeshifting, and studied essence to inanimate objects, like plants and rocks, or creatures made thereof as well as animals. Thing-talker forms can be exact copies or be mobile, vaguely humanoid-shaped entities.' So I can turn into a sand-man.

AUSTIN: You could... I don't know if that's gonna help you in this moment.

KEITH: I could still bash someone.

AUSTIN: Totally. You're also just a nice bird, you could just get outta here.

KEITH: There's people who are in danger now, though. Not in as much danger as if they could die.

AUSTIN: And also not in as much danger as Lem King, who is being pushed back by spears... what do you do, Lem?

JACK: I'm being pushed towards...

AUSTIN: Towards the vault, the vault that's closed.

JACK: Do Button and Corey react when they hear war happening upstairs?

AUSTIN: You're in a basement in a different building, sorry.

JACK: Is it clear to me what their plan pushing me back to the wall is? Is it to kill me?

AUSTIN: It's to kill you or arrest you, but how are you supposed to know?

JACK: Right, yeah. Hm, okay. Are my hands free?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: And my violin is strapped to my back?

AUSTIN: Totally.

JACK: Will I take damage if I make a move for the violin?

AUSTIN: Hm, how quick is it?

JACK: I think Lem has been doing two things in the break. One of them has been studying. Like studying music and studying semiotics. And I think he's gone to music teachers in Velas, 'cause, y'know. You can't do the magic if you don't know the moves.

AUSTIN: You gotta know the fundamentals.

JACK: And music teachers can teach that. The other thing is that he's been training, like training with weapons and armours. I think this manoeuvre, basically quick-drawing the fiddle, is something he's practiced.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I can get with that.

JACK: I don't think I need the bow, I just need the strings.

AUSTIN: I think you can keep them at distance, like I think you can keep backing up while playing.

JACK: I'm making a move that is called 'It Goes to Eleven', but Austin and I have decided to call 'wolf in white van'...

AUSTIN: Because we're huge nerds.

JACK: What you need to know is that there's something very frightening within music. 'When you unleash a crazed performance, choose a target who can hear you and roll Charisma. On a 10 plus, the target attacks their nearest ally in range; on a 7-9, they attack their nearest ally but you also draw their attention'.

AUSTIN: You already have their attention, so eh-hh, why not?

JACK: So let's give this a go.

AUSTIN: Go for it. What does this sound like? What do you play?

JACK: I think I'm just striking the strings with my hands. It's essentially strumming it. I think it's just a chord, I don't think I'm playing. To me, or to anyone around, it sounds like just a combination of notes...

AUSTIN: Why is it that nobody else plays this chord if it's just a chord? Is it the fiddle, is it you...?

JACK: It's the room. It's that I'm standing in the right place in the room that it's going to resonate in a certain way.

AUSTIN: So it's not just this chord, every instance has a different chord?

JACK: Yep. I assume there's bannisters and beams on the rafters of the room... I think I'm targeting Corey. As far as Corey is concerned, he hears the sound and, simultaneously with hearing the sound...

AUSTIN: Roll it and see what it's like.

JACK: Let's give it a go. It might be terrible. It might be, now that we've jinxed it.

AUSTIN: (laughs)

JACK: Here we go, that's Charisma...

AUSTIN: You're good at Charisma!

JACK: I wasn't last time!

AUSTIN: Why is that marked with red, that shouldn't be red?

SYLVIA: He rolled a 1 and then also a 5.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see, but his plusses are still very good, so he still succeeded. So what's it feel like for Corey?

JACK: Horrible. Really bad. In a way that isn't necessarily painful, just is very frightening.

AUSTIN: Does he know the thing he's about to do?

JACK: No. I think as far as he's concerned, the beams on the ceiling twist and begin to reach out to the floor. The room shifts and the person he's pointing his spear at isn't quite the person he thought he was pointing his spear at.

AUSTIN: Well, you only got an 8, so he still doesn't trust you. The thing he does... the thing about the armour that they're wearing that is nice and sturdy on the front, but is tied by loose straps in the back. He plants his spear in the ground behind Button and sweeps his legs; Button falls backwards and is impaled on Corey's spear. He reaches over and grabs the front of his spear and pulls it out of Button. He charges you, what do you do? Is this the first time you've done this?

JACK: This is probably the first time I've done this spell on a person. I've done it on animals...

AUSTIN: What's Lem doing? Lem's alignment, by the way, is 'Neutral: Avoid a conflict or defuse a tense situation'.

JACK: I think Lem is backing away very quickly. There's a real major difference he's experiencing now for the first time. He's backing away just not in fear of the guy but in fear of the thing he's just seen happen. I also don't think he knows what the experience was like for Corey.

AUSTIN: He just knows that Corey suddenly killed his friend.

JACK: Who presumably gets up again, right? Was that Ordennan steel?

AUSTIN: Oh, right, he does get up again, fuck. That was not Ordennan steel. His friend falls to the ground, he charges you, and then, moments later, his friends starts to get back up, very confused. He is undead. It is very strange to be suddenly undead and touching the hole in your chest that your friend killed me.

JACK: He definitely started getting up while the spear was still in him and the other guy didn't notice.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. So what are you doing now?

JACK: I'm going to try Defy Danger. I want to parry the spear.

AUSTIN: Ooh, okay. You want to get in on the spear and get under it? That's a Defy Danger (Dex). This is a much more swashbuckle-y Lem than we've seen!

JACK: Yeah. I wasn't suspecting the Charisma roll to go so badly...

KEITH: He was put in a spot.

AUSTIN: I guess it could be a Strength? If you're trying to power through it, like a power parry instead of a turn-the-blade parry...

JACK: Yeah. Okay, here we go. Also, I don't know about swashbuckle-y as an adjective when I just had a guy impale his friend on a spear. That good good Errol Flynn action...

AUSTIN: (laughs) You don't remember that one?

JACK: That's a 4.

AUSTIN: Oh, friend.

JACK: I can't make that good, can I?

AUSTIN: You can make it a 5... still a fail, friend.

KEITH: Good news, you're going to level up quick! I think this is your third fail...

JACK: Second fail.

AUSTIN: The one with the spear closes in on you and you're unable to get under his spear and close enough to do any physical damage to him. When you try to turn your spear, he twists it back and shoves it down your sword and pokes you with it. You have armour, don't you? It doesn't quite prod through your leather armour. We'll come back to you in a second. What's up with the room on fire?

KEITH: I'm still a bird. Is everyone trying to escape or is there a fight still breaking out?

AUSTIN: It's a mix. Lenny is trying to escape, the gnolls are going after Lenny; one of the halflings is dead and the Anchor are going after that. I said that she was a Justiciar, but I think she's an Anchor Commander or something like that. She and the Anchor are moving towards that one, the undead one. The mage is trying to escape. It's a fucking mess.

KEITH: Are Phantasmo and Ephrim still bound?

AUSTIN: At this poin-

SYLVIA: (interrupted) I was untied, I don't know about Phantasmo. I think...

NICK: I never was.

AUSTIN: What, untied?

NICK: Untied, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uou're both still tied.

SYLVIA: I thought Lenny... oh, the guards were stopped, my bad.

AUSTIN: The guards were stopped, yeah.

KEITH: I'm going to untie them both real quick.

AUSTIN: With your little bird beak?

KEITH: I'm going to slice it, I'm gonna chomp it through, like *thwip* right through.

AUSTIN: Okay, that's... I like, okay, that's fine. You do that.

KEITH: You said you liked something?

AUSTIN: I like untying them with your bird beak more.

KEITH: Oh, that, okay, I like that too.

AUSTIN: Like [bird noise] you get in there and like pull at it and it eventually undoes itself. So yeah, they're free. You're all free. What do you wanna do?

KEITH: I wanna go get my stuff.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I'm with that too. I think the Anchors can handle this.

AUSTIN: Wait, what stuff are you looking for now, Fero?

KEITH: I still want my dad's stuff.

AUSTIN: Oh, your dad's stuff -- good! Where is it?

KEITH: The room's on fire so it's actually more dire than before. I assumed it's just in the next room...

AUSTIN: Except that that stuff's fake!

KEITH: Including my dad's stuff?

AUSTIN: It's all fake! It's *modelled* after real stuff.

KEITH: I understand. What I was thinking was that they had collected a bunch of actual old artifacts used by halflings, but all that stuff was all bullshit and not worth putting in a museum, so they pretended it was real forks and stuff, but that my dad's stuff was just made fifty years ago or whatever. They just took a bunch of junk and pretended it was historical...

AUSTIN: They made a bunch of junk. They made a bunch of sticks and cast illusion magic on them to make them *look* like old forks.

KEITH: So the entire thing is a sham?

AUSTIN: Top to bottom.

KEITH: It's not trying to disguise the history of halflings, it's trying to disguise that this is a fake museum.

AUSTIN: All of the above. It is a fake museum; the person who made the thing is now quickly towards the exit.

KEITH: I'm grabbing him.

AUSTIN: You're a bird.

KEITH: Now I'm a hundred birds and I swarm him and now I'm a person and I tie him in.

AUSTIN: Alright, well give me a roll. That's using your move -- if you're turning into a hundred birds, that's your Panther move.

JACK: I cannot believe that Keith gets to turn into a hundred birds and swarm a man, and I can't show someone a business card.

AUSTIN: You failed the roll! (laughs) The thing that you did wrong was say that you were with Lenny, if you didn't say that you would be fine.

KEITH: (laughs) Is this a Strength roll? I can just be a bunch of birds, so the roll would be to wrestle this guy and tie him up?

AUSTIN: You can do the move, but you could be required to do a roll for animal moves. In this case, I don't think that it does. Give me a Defy Danger (Strength).

KEITH: 12.

AUSTIN: You swarm this dude and tackle him to the ground. Do you stay as birds or turn back into Fero?

KEITH: As soon as the birds are around him and he can't do anything but be surrounded by dozens of pecking birds, he is immobile and I am back to Fero, who can use physical hands with thumbs to tie him up. What was his name, Isaac?

AUSTIN: Yep. Do you have rope, do you have an adventurer's kit or whatever?

KEITH: Yep.

AUSTIN: Subtract one from that to use rope. You've tied that guy up. Everyone else, what are you doing? Phantasmo and G-Dragon?

SYLVIA: (laughs)

KEITH: That's not a bad wizard name. If I ever wanted to be a wizard, G-Dragon not a bad wizard name,

NICK: (chuckles) I'm making my way across the room towards Isaac and grab my staff. Also I want to use my Quick Study move?

AUSTIN: What's that do?

NICK: 'When you see the effects of an arcane spell, ask the GM the name of the spell and its effects. You take +1 when acting on the answers'.

AUSTIN: The spell is 'Mass Illusion' or something like that. The thing that makes it really unique is that it's not just an illusion spell -- not just 'I made this a fork' -- the enchantment also colours what the person sees based on what they believe it to be.

KEITH: So the gnolls might have seen it was actually literally their stuff?

AUSTIN: Absolutely actually literally their stuff.

NICK: Ohhh, alright.

AUSTIN: And the halflings saw that it was clearly halfling stuff. Why would gnolls use tiny little forks? Take plus one forward when acting on that information.

KEITH: That does make Chatterchin's 'we want our stuff back' make more sense, which had been very confusing. Makes perfect sense now!

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's, like, what are you talking about? It's fucking our stuff, it's everywhere!

KEITH: We were literally looking at two different things!

AUSTIN: Yes! On top of the weird history between the groups, which should remain weird. This spell should not undo the strange history between the two groups; it is not clear what is accurate.

KEITH: Can we get this guy to safety and then I'm going to go find Lem? That seems important.

AUSTIN: I'm curious about why you would know where he is.

KEITH: I don't, he's just not here. But I knew his mission, right? I knew he was going to get the thing from a vault?

AUSTIN: Totally. But he passed a roll to find the way there; you can't just intuit where he is. You can Discern Realities like him to find your way there.

KEITH: That's a Wisdom... really wish I wasn't Confused. I'm gonna use my one thing and make that a ten. I've got one more prep left.

AUSTIN: Give me those three Discern Realities questions.

KEITH: What should I be on the lookout for?

AUSTIN: Um, you have this guy tied up already. You should be on the look out for whatever Mother Glory is about to do. She has no interest in letting anyone leave here alive at this point. She's holding that back because that's what is best for her people, but once the fire will make a good enough excuse, she will go to town. That moment is very soon. You don't want to be in her sight. Wherever she is looking, you want to not be there.

KEITH: Do you think there's a way to talk her out of it?

AUSTIN: Is that a Discern Realities question?

KEITH: That is not.

AUSTIN: You would get a plus-one forward on that, but it would be a very hard thing to get her not to do.

KEITH: In that case, what here is useful or valuable to me?

AUSTIN: You see the path towards private exhibitions, which you understand to be the private vault.

KEITH: I'm going to ask this question knowing that one person here has the power to kill everyone in the room...

AUSTIN: Just one?

KEITH: Specifically Mother Glory. Barring that, who is really in control here?

AUSTIN: The fire. Speaking of the fire, Ephrim, what are you doing?

SYLVIA: I'm going to try for my Burning Brand again.

AUSTIN: Cool, where do you pull that from? Is it from the air?

SYLVIA: It's literally out of nowhere.

AUSTIN: Give me a roll.

SYLVIA: I already rolled, it's a ten.

AUSTIN: It's a ten! What does that look like?

SYLVIA: For this one, specifically, it's going to, let me do the tags: fiery, dangerous, forceful, and have reach. Ephrim puts his hand out and it looks like the fire in the room goes to his hand. If you were to describe it as a weapon, it would be a longsword, but it looks like a bar of fire coming out of his hand. It doesn't look like an *actual* weapon, just a fire harnessed in this tool form.

AUSTIN: Not a sword on fire, just fire that happens to be in the shape of a sword.

SYLVIA: Yeah, exactly.

AUSTIN: What are the tags on it?

SYLVIA: Fiery, forceful, reach, and dangerous.

AUSTIN: It's like a claymore or something.

SYLVIA: Claymore works. A bit thinner, but that length.

AUSTIN: Awesome. Phantasmo? You see that your student has been tied up at the far end of this room that's on fire.

NICK: I was making my way over.

AUSTIN: So you get to him.

NICK: I jab him with my staff and tell him to get up.

AUSTIN: He's like...

AUSTIN (as Isaac): Professor! Ohhh boy. So sorry! [confused noises] It was not supposed to go this way!

NICK: I interrupt him again and jab him in the stomach. Not trying to do damage, and just.

NICK (as Phantasmo): Not now, move!

NICK: I direct him in the direction that Fero was going.

AUSTIN: Cool. Ephrim, do you also leave with your fire sword? Do you follow them out or do you stay in this fucking melee?

SYLVIA: If they're going to leave, I'm going to cover their back. Follow, but facing the combatants.

AUSTIN: As you start to pull away... seeing *that*, one of the Anchors, this giant metallic living armour, slashes out to you with its blade. What do you do?

SYLVIA: Can I... hit it with my own blade?

AUSTIN: You can totally do a counterattack, just roll Hack & Slash.

SYLVIA: Because I'm using my Burning Blade, I get to roll my intelligence for that. That's a 9. I'm going to use a Preparation to make it a 10 if possible.

AUSTIN: Is that Prep just you doing training exercises with the fire?

SYLVIA: Basically, yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. 'When you attack an enemy in melee, roll Strength. On a ten plus, you deal damage to an enemy and avoid their attack.' You can also choose to do an extra 1d6 damage but expose yourself to their attack, but that's not necessary.

SYLVIA: Let me roll first and then decide...

AUSTIN: You need to decide first.

SYLVIA: Woah! I rolled a 1d8 and for some reason it said 18?

AUSTIN: Is that just fucked?

KEITH: It says you just rolled the number 18...

SYLVIA: I think the code for this is glitched out. So... okay, well, 6 is more normal. I'll just go with the one attack.

AUSTIN: You do 6 and it's flaming and what else?

SYLVIA: Forceful, fiery, dangerous, and reach, and now done to two uses.

AUSTIN: You hit it, and it just *clank* -- these are thick. This is your first time fighting an Anchor? You hit it and you assumed it would be an empty suit of armour, which is what they look like. But you push a little and it's metal all the way through. It has three armour! Good news, this one only has 3 HP. You push a bit and keep pushing and you cut all the way through it. You've cut it in

half, leaving that searing glowing orange, diagonal cut across this metallic pal-adin's chest. It crumples in half and starts to superheat for a second, like *bwooop*. And then, it explodes. What do you do, as it's charging up to explode?

SYLVIA: I'm either getting out of the way or trying to bear it. Because this is an explosion, so I'm gonna try getting out of the way.

AUSTIN: You don't have anything that's, like, 'fire doesn't hurt me', right?

SYLVIA: That's the other race skill that I didn't have.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Your alignment is Chaotic and about spreading ideas? It's 'Only I can stop the coming winter and I should be worshipped for it'. Good, great! What are you doing, just dodging?

SYLVIA: Yep.

AUSTIN: Give me a Defy Danger (Dex).

SYLVIA: Oh god. Oh! I got an 8, okay.

AUSTIN: Okay, hard bargain, spot, or whatever the other one is. You can dodge one of two ways. This is going to collapse the exit between you and your friends. If you dodge, you will be stuck on this side with the gnolls, the anchors, and the huge ruckus. Or you can take the brunt of this explosion and get knocked back through the hallway where your crew is.

SYLVIA: I'm gonna hate this, but I'm going to take the brunt of this. I'm dead if I stay here.

AUSTIN: This is not gonna go well, nothing about this is good. I have a thing here that is how much damage things do... how much HP do you have?

SYLVIA: I have 18 left.

AUSTIN: Okay... it could kill a common person, d10 damage. Add the 'ignores armour' tag is the source of the damage is particularly large or if the damage comes from magic or poison. So d10. Take 9 damage.

SYLVIA: I don't have armour anyway. Ooh! That activates Fighting Fire With Fire, which is really handy.

AUSTIN: What's that?

SYLVIA: 'When you take damage and that amount is odd after armour, the flames within you come to your aid. Roll 1d4 and either add that many uses to your Burning Brand if active, take that result forward to summon your Burning Brand, or reduce the damage by that amount, your choice.

AUSTIN: By what?

SYLVIA: 1d4.

AUSTIN: Roll 1d4, awesome.

SYLVIA: Oh, by 1. I'll reduce the damage to 8...

AUSTIN: Are you sure you don't want to absorb that into your sword? That's kinda dope.

SYLVIA: Oh, actually, I'll take an extra charge on that.

AUSTIN: Your sword, after cutting it half, maybe it glows a little less powerful. Maybe your sword is superheated now again, but you got fucked up and are all burned up. At this point, we're back in the hallway where the vault is. Lem? You're being cornered by a man with a spear and a man who has a spear and a hole in his chest. That man is very confused. What are you doing? Your back is now to the vault, you can't easily back away.

JACK: The vault is locked, I can't just open it and slip away...?

AUSTIN: It's super locked.

JACK: Okay, I think I'm going to roll Hack & Slash.

AUSTIN: You're going to get into a melee with them? Again, I think you have to Defy Danger to get in close enough to Hack & Slash. That's the benefit of them having spears and you not, unless you have a ranged thing you can use. The machete is Close and their spears are near.

JACK: In that case, I'll do some more pattern magic. The first time it went really well. (laughs) I have a move called Metal Hurlant, which is essentially a damage move. If it goes really well, it also deafens people? Although that is predicated on me playing really loudly, which I don't think is that interesting?

AUSTIN: I think we're going to be a little flexible with what 'deafens' sounds like. I'm going to treat that as a debility for enemies. What does the playing look like, does it use the bow?

JACK: I think this is absolutely drawing the bow for the first time. I think this is... I'll roll first and describe what it is. I'm rolling Constitution...

AUSTIN: Charisma... is it Constitution? Oh, *boy*, that's a weird thing. I wonder why it has to be... I guess you could be doing it by shouting with great force.

JACK: That's why I put points into Constitution. I think I know why it's Constitution on this one, but I'll roll first. Please go well, please go well, please go well...

AUSTIN: 7. 'On a 7-9, you still damage your target but it's out of control. Your GM will choose an additional target nearby.'

JACK: I love this, this is great. I think this is a piece of pattern magic that Lem finds very hard to do, because, unlike anything he's played before, this requires Lem to not know what he's playing. Lem can't hear this as music. As far he's concerned, it's a series of notes -- very mathematical. It's algebraic music, completely discordant.

AUSTIN: It's math rock, got it.

JACK: It's not! To the person who hears it, it sounds like something that means something very important to them. This is very controversial; orcs like having control over what they do. Some people don't even think this exists, but it does. Is it Button is the other halfling...?

AUSTIN: Button is the one with the hole in the chest.

JACK: So Corey i-

AUSTIN: (interrupting) Corey is the one who is still alive.

JACK: So Corey hears is music that he and Button... it's important to them. It's music that they've heard together, played together, it's a drinking song they have. Lem doesn't know this, but the effect of it is bad.

AUSTIN: I gotcha. Give me a roll for damage, 1d10.

JACK: I think it also physically hurts...

AUSTIN: 5. That's not bad. It's definitely an old drinking song. It starts really low. Button, who is confused, picks up what is first and starts singing it low, under his breath. He's having a hard time breathing, because of the lungs not existing anymore? And so, he's, like... what's a good drinking song? It's *100 Bottles of Beer on the Wall*.

AUSTIN (as Button): Hun-hun-hundred bottl.. Of eer on the wall... *hun-hun-hundred* bottles of beer...

AUSTIN: It starts really quiet, and soon he's screaming it. He's dropped to a knee and is folded up on the wall and crying and scream-yelling it. Corey, realising what he's done, is sing-talking it and drops his spear and covering his ears and shaking. He's got one hand on Button and is trying to shake Button back to being better, but there's no being better once your chest has been pierced with a spear. It's at that point that the rest of the crew comes down. Who comes down first?

KEITH (as Fero): Hello.

AUSTIN: What's the saddest song that Fero has ever heard?

KEITH: Fero has heard a song one time... it's a love song about two people who met once and were in the same place every same day, but one day apart from each other.

AUSTIN: Is there a special reason for that?

KEITH: It's just particularly bleak. Hey, guess what, everything you want is literally one day away from you and you'll never get it.

AUSTIN: You catch the glimpse of that. It doesn't hit you in the way that it hit these two; I don't think you've heard Lem play a song like that before? Anyway, there's two halflings who are bleeding, and sad. I think Corey is probably ear-bleeding at this point or cry-bleeding. Semiotics is weird. He's crying blood. And there's Lem King! At the vault! Waiting for you...

NICK: Crying blood *does* sound pretty metal...

AUSTIN: It does. Now check this out... move these guys over here and *vwoop!* There's the vault! It's right here!

KEITH: That's the vault.

AUSTIN: For people listening on the radio, I've turned this room into the vault. It's a big circular thing that kinda looks like a vault anyway.

KEITH: Are we in the vault, are we just ignoring these two sad halflings...?

AUSTIN: I don't know what you're doing.

KEITH: What kind of steel are my ornate daggers?

AUSTIN: Regular steel. Nobody just has Ordennan steel.

KEITH: I found them in a weird place, so, it could have been...

AUSTIN: Where did you find them?

KEITH: I thought I found them in the tower?

AUSTIN: Maybe... no, it's still not Ordennan steel. I think you got them from Samot's boys who were in the tower. Anyway, you're at this vault now, you gotta get in the vote.

NICK: Still locked?

KEITH: I will please be my big poisonous mole that can dig through everything!

AUSTIN: You said it could dig through mountains, that's not made of metal.

KEITH: I could do a real good job, maybe go through the walls...

AUSTIN: It's a vault. You know that vaults have metal walls, right?

KEITH: There's a lot of stuff in this building that looks like stuff but is other stuff.

AUSTIN: I'll let you start digging. Give me a roll to transform.

KEITH: Here's my roll to transform... 11.

AUSTIN: Fero turns into his weird fucking poison vole.

KEITH: Mole.

AUSTIN: Whatever. (laughs) It's better if it's a vole!

KEITH: Yeah, but moles have big claws so I can slash something with them.

AUSTIN: (chuckles) Yeah, but voles are cute.

KEITH: That's true, voles are really cute... I can already do a mouse, I don't need another cute thing.

AUSTIN: That's fair, that's fair. Well, you can't go through the vault this way. You can dig around it, but there's no path of ingress, it's metal all around.

SYLVIA: Is there a specific locking mechanism on it?

AUSTIN: How much do you know about locks?

SYLVIA: Is there anything that visibly looks like it holds it? I don't know shit about locks, is there anything obvious?

AUSTIN: There are metal hinges... actually, those are protected by part of the vault.

KEITH: I know what I can do. If anyone has a straw or a tube, I can turn into sand, get in the straw, you can blow me right through the lock.

AUSTIN: There's no lock. It's not a lock hole. It's a vault! You've seen what vault doors look like, guys!

KEITH: Who knows what an old fantasy vault looks like? There might be a keyhole.

AUSTIN: I'll show you a picture... I'll show you a picture of the vault.

KEITH: We can make a plan based on this picture.

SYLVIA: I can try and cut a hole in this thing.

NICK: Yeah!

AUSTIN: There's another thing you can do that's just better than this.

SYLVIA: Oh, shit!

KEITH: Is it unlocked?

AUSTIN: No.

SYLVIA: Can I use my Handcrafted skill for this?

AUSTIN: Yes, you can use your Handcrafted skill!

SYLVIA: Fuck yes! I didn't even think of that! Thank you, sorry, it's late.

KEITH: What is this, what's this skill, I don't know what this is.

SYLVIA: 'You may use your hands in place of tools and fire to craft metal objects. Mundane weapons, armor and metal jewellery can all be formed from their raw components.' Here's the important part - 'You may unmake these things, as well, but to do so without time and safety might require that you Defy Danger first.'

AUSTIN: So give me a Defy Danger...

KEITH: So the idea is that you're going to unmake the door?

SYLVIA: Yeah, I'm gonna melt this thing, basically.

AUSTIN: Give me a Defy Danger for speed. If you aren't fast enough, things are going to get bad here. Give me a... hm. What would you roll to use this normally?

SYLVIA: You don't normally roll to use it is the problem.

AUSTIN: What does it look like, how are you trying to do this? Are you investigating it, are you hacking away, are you...?

SYLVIA: What I was thinking is that it's more like... once I know what type of metal it is, he dispels the brand and uses that fire to burn it. Putting his hands on it.

AUSTIN: How does he *do* your brand brand? Is that Con?

SYLVIA: To summon it is Con, to use it is Int.

AUSTIN: Um, it's the same thing for you. Go ahead and do that. Because you're sacrificing your Brand is why I'm letting you do those, otherwise I would make you roll Dex to do it fast. This is to do it fast.

SYLVIA: I rolled an 8.

AUSTIN: I rolled an 8... hard bargain, ugly choice, or the third thing I always forget.

SYLVIA: Worse outcome?

AUSTIN: Worse outcome. Here's your bargain: you know that you can finish this job. If you take time, and something bad will happen if you take time, you can make sure you can open this door *safely*. If you don't, everyone will need to make a Defy Danger the second you open the door. Also you're also not sure what will happen when it falls; it could ruin what's in there, it can hurt somebody, it would crush you... you're not sure.

SYLVIA: Sorry, guys, I think I'm gonna have to wait and do this properly.

AUSTIN: (laughs) Here's the scene. You have two crying halfling boys, you have, upstairs and around the way, a huge fight, you have Ephrim slowly lightsabering his way through the vault door. Phantasmo, Fero, Lem, what are you doing as this is all happening?

NICK: Phantasmo just says:

NICK (as Phantasmo): That's a big door.

SYLVIA: (laughs)

AUSTIN: Good! Lem and Fero?

JACK: I think I'm just sitting there with my back to the wall.

NICK: I'm also keeping the pointy end of my staff trained on Isaac.

AUSTIN: Oh, Isaac's with you too, fuck! I forgot Isaac was with you.

AUSTIN (as Isaac): We gotta get outta here, Professor... We have to get out here.

AUSTIN: I'm playing him too young, he's like forty.

AUSTIN (as Isaac, slightly deeper): Professor, we have to get out here.

NICK (as Phantasmo): There's things in that vault we need more.

AUSTIN (as Isaac): Trust me, we've got everything that we need. *Please!*

NICK: He holds his hand up.

[closing music starts]

NICK (as Phantasmo): You remember in class when I held my hand up, it meant you *be quiet*.

AUSTIN (as Isaac): (sullenly) Yes, Professor...

NICK (as Phantasmo): Don't make me flick the lights on and off!

AUSTIN and SYLVIA: (laughs)

AUSTIN: As you say that, the sconces down here flicker with the sound of heavy feet stomping. *Stomp*, flicker, *stomp*. You hear the stomps turn into a gallop and then, shoving her way through the tiny stairwell, is Mother Glory. She stands up in this hallway and takes up all of the space that there is; the point that she can't stand up all the way down there. She flexes her whole body and breaks the wall around her -- and starts stepping quickly towards you.