

## Winter in Hieron 12: A Chaotic Cataloging

[[0 MIN MARKER]]

ALI: Last time, on Friends at the Table:

AUSTIN: There are three big scorch marks in the room. One of them cuts across a large door of wood and glass that opens out onto a balcony that looks out, over Rosemerrow. The second is across the floor and wall and cuts through the Chancellor's bed in the same way. The third, which is slightly lighter in color, is— It's below a window that's opposite the Chancellor's bed. There's also a sign of struggle; there's a broken glass and an overturned bottle of wine. And then there is what's left of Lutz... a collection of ashes in the middle of the room.

[INTRO MUSIC BEGINS]

AUSTIN: ... The districts of Rosemerrow operate their justice systems independently. Each district can try and execute a criminal for the assassination of the Chancellor. In fact, if they fail to do so and instead just confirm what another district has said is true, they won't get as much kind of political prestige. As getting to say *forever* "We were the ones who killed the assassin. Everybody else was wrong."

... The thing is that a couple of the gnolls she's worked with told her recently that Mother Glory had set up a late night sit down with the Chancellor, and that that was supposed to happen the night that he was killed.

... A few nights ago, from the corner of her eye, as she was drifting off to sleep late at night, through the window she has, she saw a *bright* light and then a distant crash. That happened on the same night that the sun disappeared. She thought it was a dream, but. Who knows?

AUSTIN (as Norton Notherhome): ... Addleton wanted my master to meet with an associate of his, and it sounded like very bad news. It sounded just disturbing and dangerous and— All meetings should take place here, in the estate. I've told Master Leonard that many times.

AUSTIN (as Qinta Quatróna): ... He's an illusion mage. Our Ordennan steel already breaks all sorts of magics, and his are curtains waiting to be pulled back, little else. And we have him. And we're willing to give him up to... whoever in Roseheart will have him.

[INTRO MUSIC ENDS]

AUSTIN: She shows you downstairs, and there's like a big, metal door. And there are two guards who like, salute in, like, their Justiciar uniforms. And she like, nods to the door, and they open it. And there is a scorch mark on the ground, and no one in the room.

ART: Fuck.

AUSTIN: You can ask questions about this place, though. I'll give you each a question about this place, also.

ALI: Man... It— Okay. I have a question but I don't know that it's, like— I don't want it to be my "*the* question".

AUSTIN: Mhmm?

ALI: How recent does the scorch mark look? Like, is it like still warm?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's still warm. This— This— The guards tell you that they checked in on him, y'know, three hours ago, two hours ago.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: This happened this turn.

ALI: Okay. Okay.

ART: Alright.

ALI: Is that my question? [wheezes]

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Okay.

ART: My question is also bad.

[ALI, JANINE, and DRE laugh]

AUSTIN: Ahuh. Good to be honest with yourself, though. That's good.

ART: Yeah.

KEITH: And with Ali.

[AUSTIN chuckles]

ART: It's not— It's— It's the same— It looks like a very similar scorch mark?

AUSTIN: Yeah. I'm just gonna give you— That's not your question.

ART, crrosstalking: Alright.

AUSTIN: Yes, it looks like a similar scorch mark. [pauses] Um? Yeah. It does. Yes.

ART: Alright.

JACK: The good news is that this possibly solves a problem for the New Archives.

[AUSTIN hehs]

ALI: Should we be asking about like, trails? Like, what are the exits from this place?

AUSTIN: This place is on complete lockdown.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: They would— Like, their— You're under the ground. And—

JACK: Beyond the scorch mark, are there any commonalities with the crime scene— any other commonalities with the crime scene in the...?

AUSTIN: No. Here's a thing: they have—

JACK: This isn't my question. It's— I was just—

AUSTIN: I know. Yeah— Oh, sorry. But there— I can just give you that, too. The thing in this room is the scorch mark.

JACK: Okay.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: But there is his stuff. So you can also ask— Think about like— They have all the shit that was on his person.

ART: Oh, yeah! Can I— Can I see that?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. So. [sighs] Okay. There is a huge collection of shit here, and— Like, I'll give you like, some basic stuff, and then you'll have to ask more specific questions— a more

specific question to get more. And again, you can stay here and spend more time studying it, if that's the choice of what you wanna do. His stuff basically shows all of the— You kind of quickly intuit, er, from reading, all the different people who were connected to Isaac Adelton. Right? This is a guy who was working with Lenny Lenova to scam people in the New Old Museum. Right? He was caught up with Elgash Or, who was running the Archive's, like, barter and sale thing out of the Kickshaw. Which is a weird thing, but that exists. He has like— There's record of him interacting— Like, you kind of find his meeting book. And like, he's met with Elgash Or. He had met with... Let me just like, let me make sure I'm not missing anybody here... He had met with, I mentioned, Lenny and— And he'd wanted to bring Lenny to meet his— another person, named Arrell. And he had— He also has notes about how to— He has notes about— Oh, and you know that he was trained years and years ago by Fantasma, at the school of mages.

ALI, lowly: *Oh, great.*

AUSTIN: That's why Fantasma, like, was tryin' to get him. He was like— He's a member of the Disciples of Fantasma. He has that ring with the three lines in that— in his stuff.

ART: Great!

ALI: Eughh. I'm not dealing with this.

[[6 MIN MARKER]]

ART: I don't think— I don't think you can opt out now. Think— I think we're in it.

AUSTIN: Reminder that Fantasma's supposed to meet you in the next turn, in Roseheart.

ART: Yeah. That'll be awesome.

[AUSTIN chuckles]

ART: Who isn't looking forward to that right now?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Especially right now.

ALI: ... *Me.*

AUSTIN: [laughs] Good answer.

ALI: [wheezes] Is that it? Is that the turn?

AUSTIN: No, so Art can ask another question— Hadrian can ask a question—

ALI: Oh oh oh.

AUSTIN: — that now he has access to this stuff, is one way of learning it.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: And again, he can stay next turn to ask another big question, if that's a thing he wanted. Or I guess like, you can just have that stuff, so you can always reference it from now on.

ART: So, so we have— We have Arrell as “keeps apartment in Wistful Peaks”, which isn't like, super specific?

AUSTIN: You— Yeah, you can find his apartment. This— Yeah, this guy's stuff would direct you there, and I won't count that as a question.

ART: I wasn't even— That's not even what I meant. That would be— That's— That's *less* than what I want.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay.

ART: I want— Where would they— Was there a meeting place for it? Like, tossing someone's apartment is great; finding them in person...

AUSTIN: No. There is no— There is no, like, “We meet here”.

ART: Okay.

ALI: Does he have any recent, like— Oh. I guess I can't ask. But does he have any, like, appointments coming up?

AUSTIN: No.

ALI: Hmm.

AUSTIN: That's— That's a— That's the last thing I'll give you here. But, like, that's— He's a person who keeps immaculate records and he's made *no* appointments for today, going forward. Including things that were repeated things, right? Like, y'know, he's a mage. He needs component parts. He needs like, y'know, whatever. Saltpeter and like, and ashes of crows, and li— all sorts of weird shit. And he's not made— And like, there are some things he gets every

week, right? He gets newt's eye every week. And he does not have any newt's eye shipments coming in.

ALI: Hm.

JACK: This is interesting. It makes me wonder whether or not the scorch marks are... more like a means of exit than an attack. I mean, he was burned to ash, but I wonder whether or not the scorch marks are somebody either spiriting themselves away or being spirited away.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: I wonder whether or not—

AUSTIN: I'll note there are no ashes for—

JACK: Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: — for Adelton. For Isaac Adelton.

JACK: I mean like, there's, like— You can... You can burn somebody without magic. And you can also—

AUSTIN: *Sure can.*

JACK: — presumably make a scorch mark by spiriting yourself away. Like, I'm curious about... If he has no engagements, is that because he expected to be on the run? And if he expected to be on the run, can we link that with the scorch mark in this cell?

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: I mean even, even worse, right? Like, I can come up with: he might've expected to be on the run, he might've expected not to live this long.

JACK: Yeah, possibly. Possibly. But this means that was— When I'm thinking about it, I'm thinking about the three people in the room that the— Oh god, the plant saw a different explosion. Do you remember? The plant described a smaller, less hot explosion.

ALI: Right.

JACK: So part of me wonders whether or not there was one person in the room to do the thing, and one person in the room to secure the exit? Do we have any precedent for teleporting in this world yet?

AUSTIN: Nnn... Yes.

ART: Yeah, through the mirror.

AUSTIN: Through the mirror.

ALI: Oh right, yeah.

JACK: How did that work? That was like— pattern magic?

AUSTIN: That was pattern magic.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: That was incredibly complex pattern magic.

JACK: Yeah. Like, S— even Samol is kind of impressed by that pattern magic, right?

AUSTIN: [inhales] Yeah. But Samol's position maybe makes— That's a high bar to clear. You know what I mean? If Samol is impressed, everyone else who saw it was like... "WHAAA!! They walked through a mirror!"

[ALI, DRE, and JACK laugh]

AUSTIN: Y'know? So.

JACK, crosstalking: And Samol's like, "Huh. Okay."

ART, crosstalking: That's Waluigi-fying.

AUSTIN: Yes.

[DRE is still laughing]

SYLVIA: Didn't Throndir also find other signs of magic used to get out through the balcony?

AUSTIN: Yeah, but— Yes. He could kind of smell— He could smell magic in the air, basically.

SYLVIA: Yeah. So there might be credence to that theory of the scorch marks being kind of transportation.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Let's— Let's go to Lem and Ephrim. Go up this list.

[[10 MIN MARKER]]

JACK: So we're approaching the— the the— the the... The bottom of this tower, where the prison is, right?

AUSTIN: Wait, I thought you were going to— Wait. Yeah, wait.

SYLVIA: We were going to—

AUSTIN, crosstalking: I thought you were going to Roseheart.

SYLVIA, crosstalking: We're going to Roseheart, yeah?

JACK, crosstalking: Oh no, I'm so sorry. I'm so sorry. We are going to Roseheart, with—

AUSTIN: You're going to Roseheart— You're going to the lower house. Low house.

SYLVIA: Where—

JACK: To see the right hand person of the... Uh.

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: Yes. Uh, Kel Carolina.

AUSTIN: Their name is Kel Carolina.

SYLVIA: Good name.

AUSTIN: So give me a roll.

JACK: Sure.

SYLVIA: Do you want to, or—

AUSTIN: 2d6+2. [pauses] That's an 11.

JACK: That's an 11.

AUSTIN: Good rolls today.

SYLVIA: Nice.



AUSTIN: Alright. So, I've already explained that the lower house is where you meet— is where Lutz, and anybody who's in one of these high houses, like, goes to do their official business. They live high; they work low. And Kel meets you and brings you in to their office on the fourth basement level of the Lutz Low House. Kel, who is Lutz's right hand in the realm of Rosemerrow's politics, is weary but professional, speaking with a warm if mournful tone. Their suit—navy blue slacks, a matching vest, and a teal short-sleeved dress shirt—is clearly into the third or fourth day of straight wear. But there are no signs of that sort of like, heavy wear on Carolina herself. Like, they mostly have their shit together. That said, there's also, surprisingly, no sign of the Archive on Carolina. And I bring that up because Kel Carolina is an orc.

JACK: Huh.

SYLVIA: Hm!

AUSTIN: Kel guides you into their office. It is a large, carpeted room with wooden folding chairs that are already arranged in a circle, as if they were already hosting an event, or— Y'know. They've probably had a billion meetings since Lutz's death a few days ago. Kel rearranges them as they mess with their hair and their tie and they kind of like, *relax*. And it's clear that you are important to them, but you are not like, politics important?

[JACK laughs quietly]

AUSTIN: And then Kel lays out the basics of the Rosemerrow political climate. Gilbert Lutz was a reformer, but his enemies painted him as a revolutionary.

AUSTIN (as Kel Carolina): Maybe it was one of the other mayors? ... Agh. Lenova has, has had his eye on the highest house for quite some time now. ... Could've been somebody from Velas, or Ordenna? [pauses]

AUSTIN: Kel's like, rubbing their temples.

AUSTIN (as Kel Carolina): It could've been a cr— a cron— one of Lenny's cronies. Or it could've been someone who bought into all that rhetoric a little too much. I don't know. I bet it was political, though. How could it not be? Everything in Rosemerrow is politics.

AUSTIN: And then, Kel kind of gives you the more direct, like, immediate stuff that was happening as the push— as the bonus thing here, which is... There was that meeting that I mentioned before in the basement of politicians and representatives from the different districts coming together to talk about what to do about the sun missing. And there was supposed to be a representative from the Church of Samoths, and there was not a representative from the Church of Samoths. They were like, *desperate* for the Church of Samoths to show up. For someone to show up. And no one showed up. And that was like, the worst thing, because the city has kind of thrown in with the Church of Samoths, and has moved away from being— So the city is like a secular city, even though it has roots in old religion, right. Like they used to be— They used to kind of be— Be kind of— Vaguely worshipped the past? Like, worshipped their ancestors? It's more complicated than that; Kel isn't an expert. Kel isn't a halfling, but like, Kel lives in Rosemerrow. Has lived here for their whole life, and so knows enough to know that it

used to be, in the old days, that you used to worship like, ghosts, basically. And then it kind of moved to being you just kinda worship... yourself, and trade, and each other, and the culture of Rosemerrow, and *not* ghosts. And then, the Church of Samoths has made incredible gains in the last couple of months, especially thanks to you, Ephrim. And so we were just hopin' someone from the Church would show up, and that didn't happen. [pauses] You have two questions.

JACK: Ooof. So this is a preliminary question, to lead into a secondary question. You can... not answer it, if it's cheating.

AUSTIN: O-kay?

JACK: Did Lenny Lenova and the other kind of like, semi-senior to senior political figures in Rosemerrow— Do they keep public records of engagements in the same way that politicians here do?

AUSTIN: What's your second question? That you're trying to get to.

JACK: What did Lenny do, in terms of engagements, following the fire at the museum?

AUSTIN: Sure. That's an answer— I mean, that's just straight up an answer Kel can give you.

JACK: Sure.

AUSTIN: They like, lay out: people aren't— Politicians are exactly as public as they want to be. Right? Which is to say they make their— they keep public record for the things that they think are good for their career—

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: — and they don't keep public record for the things that are not. Thankfully, the Office of the Chancellor keeps their own records. And shows you a list of Lenny's actions for the past week. Lenny went to... a kind of a mayoral council meeting with the residents of Westshore-Upon-Sea, in which he had to talk about how terrible it was that the gnolls burned down the New Old Museum. He took meetings about the— He took campaign meetings, as he's building up his campaign funds to keep running for chancellor. He— Not in his public record was a meeting he took with— with— what's his na— with Adelton, and with another figure, who they believe is the mage Arrell.

JACK: Hm.

AUSTIN: And that was two or three nights ago, probably. And then they have a record for Lenny Lenova, which is that Lenny Lenova was arrested moments after the chancellor was killed. Like,

to the minute. So it— It doesn't look like it was probably Lenny Lenova. At least not specifically Lenny Lenova directly.

JACK: Right. Okay. I— He's too cowardly to do that.

AUSTIN: There's also— He didn't— He wasn't taken in— There was no investigation on Lenny Lenova besides this one. Like. There's like, the political opponent, like, investigation happening, but there's no record of Westshore-Upon-Sea's like, police doing an investigation on Lenny Lenova. So Kel's not really sure *why* Lenny was arrested. Hasn't gotten to the bottom of it quite yet.

JACK: Who— Who arrested him?

AUSTIN: The police.

JACK: I mean is that a— The police. Okay, so there's—

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: There is like, an active police force in—

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: — in Rosemerrow.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Throughout the city.

JACK: Hmm. Okay.

AUSTIN: So that's your question. Ephrim?

SYLVIA: My gut instinct is to immediately ask if they know where Arrell is, 'cause we just have, like a vague—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

SYLVIA: — like a vague note of where he is.

AUSTIN (as Kel Carolina): We've been following that guy on and off for... years. I mean, even before I was in the job. My earliest record of him goes back thirty years, or somethin'. Rosemerrow was like a— It was like Knoll Hollow, and Roseheart, and the fields, and that was it. There was no real Westshore-Upon-Sea. And now— Y'know, he kind of came and went as he wanted. He was here sometimes for years at a time, and I

have records of him going to parties and meeting people... and then a decade, no one sees him. He has some connection to the Church, I think. We've intercepted a couple of letters he's written to— There was this guy here in town, Exarch Alyosha. He was here for a while. He was doing kinda conversion stuff before you were here, Ephrim. And then when he moved to Velas, he's kept up that correspondence. But we— Y'know. We don't— We do our best not to get *too* involved in the lives of private citizens. Pays his taxes. What can I say?

SYLVIA: So they don't have like, an address or anything for him?

AUSTIN: Yeah. They slide you the address across the table.

AUSTIN (as Kel Carolina): Apartment in the Wistful Peaks. For a long time, this guy kept a— kept a little— a little apartment near the library, here in Roseheart. But then, once the Wistful Peaks towers went up, he moved into one of those.

AUSTIN: Okay. Fero, also in Roseheart.

KEITH: Uh, yeah! So I'll do my roll—

AUSTIN: Give me a roll.

KEITH: I'm going to the... the foreign affairs office.

AUSTIN: The Commission of External Affairs, yeah.

KEITH: [typing] ... slash roll 2d6+1.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

KEITH: 8.

AUSTIN: 8's not too bad. You don't get the bonus thing, but you get—

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. And you'll still get a question. And the other thing I'll say is, if your question would lead to whatever the bonus information is, I give that.

KEITH: Great.

AUSTIN: So. You might remember Sy from your time in Velas. Sy Elmore, who is the Rosemerrow ambassador to Velas. Now he has been— He explains to you, while eating a large sandwich, the smell of vinegar loud on his breath, he has been recalled from Velas. And you find him sitting in the lobby of the Committee of External Affairs.

AUSTIN (as Sy Elmore): It's a mess! It's a, it's a, it's a mess. Ordenna is at the gates, our friends in Velas are shakin' in their goddamn boots, and now the chancellor is dead! AUSTIN: And he like, eats some of the sandwich. He explains that over the last month or so, there has been an intense, ongoing debate between the high houses about what posture Rosemerrow should take regarding the growing and marching army of the Ordennan Impetus. Some members of the city want to throw in with Velas, and perhaps even the goblins of Auniq, and the New Archives, and whatever's left of the snow elves of Auniq, also, and form a defensive coalition. That is the side that Sy believes in; he is a fan of not siding with Ordenna—

[[20 MIN MARKER]]

KEITH: Mhm.

AUSTIN: But there is another strong faction, of which Lenny Lenova and others are a part of, that believe that they should join up with the strength of the Ordennan march. The spread of civilization would mean, of course, the spread of trade.

AUSTIN (as Sy): You hear it all the time from folks like uh, mayor Lenova. "Given the choice of being the only city in the wild, or the largest city of Hieron, or of civilized Hieron, why would anyone choose anything but the latter?" It's bullshit. It's bullshit. I've been to Velas; there's good people in Velas. I haven't been to Ordenna. We don't know anything about Ordenna! Ordenna is an island. And we have boats, but we don't have boats that can go to *Ordenna*. [sighs] In any case—

KEITH (as Fero): Hey man, an island's just a forest where the trees are water.

AUSTIN: (as Sy): ... Yeah.

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Sy): Sure. Anyway, Lutz called me back to talk about the mess, but now he is gone, and... I just. I don't. [sighs] We're all gonna be speaking Ordenna—*Ordennan*—by next Sun Day. Do you know what they speak?

KEITH (as Fero): I think it's Ordennian.

AUSTIN (as Sy): Ordennian. Thank you.

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah. No problem.

KEITH: [exhales] Huh! Is there— Is there anything of note about this guy, except for his sandwich breath?

AUSTIN: *He got that sandwich breath.* He's like a halfling. He's like a well—

KEITH (as Fero): Can I get a piece of that, by the way?

AUSTIN (as Sy): [pauses] Yeh. Good place, on the—

KEITH (as Fero): Thank you.

AUSTIN (as Sy): It's down the block, you make a left. You go down these little stairs, right? And then you go down through the alleyway, and you go *up* the other stairs. And you cross over, you go into the building, three floors up, knock on the door. Say, "Hey, Sy sent me." And then my mom will make you a real good sandwich.

KEITH (as Fero): Oh, this— Your mom made that?

AUSTIN (as Sy): Yeah, my mom makes good sandwiches.

KEITH (as Fero): That's home-made.

AUSTIN (as Sy): It's a home-made sandwich. I'll give you a little taste.

KEITH (as Fero): That's even better.

KEITH: Austin, could I get— Is it possible that I could— I could get some bonus info—

AUSTIN: If you say "talk to this sandwich" I am going to punch you.

KEITH: No, no no no. This is different. It might— This is definitely not punch-worthy. Would it be possible to use my halfling pipeleaf to get the bonus info?

AUSTIN: Yeahh. But you'd have to like, leave the—

AUSTIN (as Sy): Yeah? Come with me. Come down— How about you like, show me where that alley is?

AUSTIN: He can't do it *in* the—

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, sure. Yeah.

KEITH: No — None in Rosemerrow? Can't smoke inside in Rosemerrow?

AUSTIN: Nope. It's no smoking inside. It's not a problem of, like— It's not *illegal* to smoke the pipeleaf; it's just illegal to smoke it inside. You could have business people coming in—

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Y'know. No smoke inside.

KEITH: I get it. I get it.

AUSTIN: Also, like, fire departments probably aren't great. You don't wanna burn places down.

KEITH (as Fero): Man. Dude, Rosemerrow used to be cool.

AUSTIN (as Sy): I know. I know! I know. The old days, right?

AUSTIN: So the thing that he tells you, over some halfling pipeweed— Mark down that you've used it, also. Unless you want to buy some more.

KEITH: Already done. I still have four uses.

AUSTIN: I was gonna say— You guys got rich in your last— in your last game. I forgot how rich you are.

[KEITH cackles]

AUSTIN: Fuck.

KEITH: Yeah, I'm super loaded now.

[SOMEONE aws]

AUSTIN: Since—

KEITH: I started this season with 50 gold pieces. And now I'm like, "Maaan. I could *drop* that."

AUSTIN: What do you have?

KEITH: I think I have like 400. Hold on, I have it written down...

AUSTIN: That crew got rich. Sorry, Forest Party, but. They robbed like, a lot of shit.

KEITH, quietly: I don't know.

JACK: Have we maybe considered... bribery?

KEITH: I'm gonna have to listen back, 'cause it's still— It says I have 55, which is not true. I have way more than that.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's not true. That's super not true. You definitely have *all* the money.

KEITH: I definitely wrote it down; I don't know why it's not here.

JACK: How much do I have? I think I have about 450.

ALI: Yo, buy me a new backpack.

AUSTIN: That sounds right.

KEITH: We— We— I think that I have— Oh. I have 4— Yeah, 400. ‘Cause—

AUSTIN: 400.

KEITH: If if— If Lem has 450, that means that he didn’t use the 50—

JACK: Oh no, I have 394. Sorry.

KEITH: Oh. Okay.

AUSTIN: Okay. So he, over the pipeleaf, explains to you that he’s like— Kind of just gettin into conversation like, “What else you been up to lately?” And he’s like,

AUSTIN (as Sy): Y’know, I don’t have anything else goin’ on, so I’ve been looking at like, the whole import-export stuff that we’ve been doing—

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Sy): Like, that’s my whole thing is: I deal with Velas. And so I’ve been looking at what’s comin’ and goin’ from Velas. And recently, there was a shipment that came in from that guy, Sid Half-Off. And then his cousin— His cousin was the guy who was movin’ it, Sol. Sol Cider-Brew? It came up weird—

KEITH (as Fero): They’re cousins?

AUSTIN (as Sy): Yeah, they’re cousins.

KEITH (as Fero): Dang.

AUSTIN (as Sy): You know. Rosemerrow, right?

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Sy): Y’know, me and you, we’re probably cousins.

[KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN (as Sy): What’s a lil— What’s a little pipeleaf between cousins?



KEITH (as Fero): No, nothin'.

AUSTIN (as Sy): So he was shippin' in somethin', and it came up a little strange. It was like, y'know, he was supposed to come in with all of these— all this fruit and whatnot. Some goods for his cousin's shops, and then also there was supposed to be fruit for his, for his cider brewing company. Y'know, Cider-Brew's Cider Brewery. And, and it was lighter than it was supposed to be. And it was—

KEITH (as Fero): Huh.

AUSTIN (as Sy): It was just— There was somethin' else in there. I don't know; I wasn't the guy at the place. But the weight was off. So. Y'know.

KEITH (as Fero): So— It was— The weight was different than it should have been for that amount of liquid?

AUSTIN (as Sy): It was just fruit; it wasn't liquid.

KEITH (as Fero): I thought you said it was cider? Oh, it's fruit for the cider.

AUSTIN (as Sy): And he makes it into cider. He got this new fruit from Nacre! They call it apple. He's gonna make some of that apple cider, I guess.

KEITH (as Fero): Mmm.

AUSTIN (as Sy): Um. I don't know what type of cider he used to make. [breaking character] I hadn't thought that part through... enough. But it wasn't apple cider. [laughs] I guess.

JACK: Pear.

AUSTIN: Hare cider.<sup>1</sup>

JACK: Pear.

AUSTIN: Oh, *pear*. Yeah, pear cider. ...Not hare cider? [laughs]

JACK: No, no.

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<sup>1</sup> T/N: For this whole bit, am unsure if Austin and Art are saying hair or hare; went with the latter to match Jack's joke.

KEITH: No. No, no.

JACK: What you're thinking of—

ART: Just to be clear, you thought— You thought it was hare cider? *Hare* cider?

JACK: What you're thinking of there, Austin, is soup.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh wait, soup. Sorry.

KEITH: If we want to get technical, pear cider is called perry.

AUSTIN: Oh! Huh.

KEITH: Yeah. It is not called cider.

ART: What do you call hare cider?

KEITH: ... Hairy.

ART: Mm.

AUSTIN: That's my cousin's name. [pauses] So the thing— The thing that he does say is: whatever that they *did* find was not marked down as contraband. So they didn't mark down what he did have instead of all the fruit he was supposed to have, on his like, manifest. But, whatever it was, nothing was illegal about it, and so they let it through. They're busy. It's snowing.

KEITH: Okay. That's still—

AUSTIN: He probably bribed them.

KEITH (as Fero): Okay. Y'all probably got bribed.

AUSTIN (as Sy): Yeah, it happens.

KEITH (as Fero): I mean, I get it. We're in the alley, smokin' pipeweed.

AUSTIN (as Sy): *Yeah* we are.

[SOMEONE snorts]

AUSTIN: Alright. Throndir and Adaire—

KEITH: No, I still have a question. I haven't asked my question.

AUSTIN: Oh, you do have a question.

KEITH: Yeah, I have a question.

AUSTIN: Right. That was just to get the bonus.

KEITH: Yeah. Yeah. You know what. Do I already know where Sol is? Is there a... known location?

AUSTIN: You know where his brewery is. Yeah.

KEITH: Yeahh.

AUSTIN: You do know that. You know where his brewery is; it's in the Kickshaw.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: But that doesn't mean that's where he is, necessarily.

KEITH: Right. Okay. I guess I'm gonna take a— I'm gonna take the chance that— You know what? No, I'm not. Do you know where— Does he know— Does this guy know where Sol is?

AUSTIN: Is that your question?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Sy): Yeah, he's got a little place in the Mills. It's *kinda* near where he works, but— It's like across the street and then down a little bit.

KEITH (as Fero): Okay.

AUSTIN (as Sy): He's the sort of guy who, y'know. He runs a business, but he mostly does it from the couch, if you know what I mean.

KEITH (as Fero): So he "runs" the business.

AUSTIN (as Sy): He lets other people run the business.

KEITH (as Fero): Right, yeah.

AUSTIN (as Sy): He doesn't really go to the office that often.

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah. That's what I meant. Like he "*runs*" the business.

AUSTIN (as Sy): Yes. Right.

KEITH (as Fero): Like you said.

AUSTIN (as Sy): Right— You did air quotes there, but I had trouble seeing you through all the smoke...

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, I get it.

AUSTIN (as Sy): ... that we're smokin'.

AUSTIN: Alright.

KEITH (as Fero): Anyway, good seein' ya.

AUSTIN: That was a good bet you made, Keith.

KEITH: Thank you.

AUSTIN: Alright. Next up, Throndir and Adaire. Down in the Canyon.

DRE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: So the Canyon is, is— I'll just give you like, the broad strokes here, and then one of you can roll. The Canyon is just like, a collection of stalls and little shops built into the sides of the Low Houses, basically. And just like a bunch of smells, and it's— It's really well-lit, because there's so many lights everywhere. And it, presumably, closes down at some point, but it's so well-lit that like, it doesn't feel like— This is a place where it hasn't quite felt like it's been stuck at night for the last week, because it's just so busy and crowded. And that's where you are. Give me a roll, and I'll tell you what you, what you stumble into.

DRE: I'll go. I'll roll.

AUSTIN: Alright. Confident roller.

DRE: Ehyyy. 7.

AUSTIN: 7's alright. You rolled a +2. A 4, a 1, and a +2. Okay. It gives you a little bit.

DRE: Could've been worse.

AUSTIN: So you run in to Sid Half-Off, who has businesses throughout the northwest of Hieron. Here in Rosemerrow; he had a stall for High Sun Day, he kinda moved— was visiting Velas back at High Sun Day, a few months ago, to sell some baubles; and he has like a small stall in Twinbrook, also. No, that was not Sol, Adaire. This is Sid.

JANINE: You definitely said at some point that Sol was the cousin of a character that had already been in the thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Sid Half-Off. Yeah. Sol is the cousin of— Yeah.

JANINE: But isn't there a Sol that runs a brewery here that—

AUSTIN: Yeah, Sol Cider-Brew.

JANINE: Is that a different Sol?

AUSTIN: No. That's your Sol.

DRE: That's our Sol.

JANINE: You said our Sol was dead.

AUSTIN: When did I say that?

JANINE: When you gave— When the tree people gave me his watch— [laughs]

AUSTIN, crosstalking: Oh.

JANINE, crosstalking: — and said that “people like that got taken care of” —

AUSTIN, crosstalking: Oh yeah. Yeah yeah yeah! Yes.

JANINE, crosstalking: — and I was like “Okay, thanks”.

AUSTIN, crosstalking: I did not say he was *dead*.

JANINE, laughing: Well. That was heavily implied.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: He's not dead.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Those tree people aren't evil. They don't just kill people.

JACK: When the tree people say "taken care of", they actually mean "opening a cider business in Rosemerrow".

AUSTIN: [laughs] Yes.

JANINE: Hmmm.

AUSTIN: Yeah, he's not dead.

JANINE: God, is he un— is he an undead brewer?

AUSTIN: Yeah dog, the plague is real!

JANINE: Okay. Well, you could have said that.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Fuck. Ohh, this just got way more interesting.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. So. You run in to Sid, who runs a small collections of stands here in the bazaar, along with this one place where you run in to him, which is like his premier storefront. It is called Half-Off Goods Warehouse, and it's— everything in there is half off, and the prices on everything is two dollars. So it's half off of two dollars. And what he explains to you— He's like shutting down the shop for the night, and he explains that he was also shutting down the shop for the night when the attack happened on Chancellor Lutz. And he heard a bunch of loud noises, and he saw one of those beasts running through the Canyon.

[[30 MIN MARKER]]

AUSTIN (as Sid Half-Off): It was *probably* a gnoll? It could've been a werewolf. Might've been an owlbear. Coulda been a regular bear. I don't know, I don't know many owlbears. Real fast, though. Could've been like a, like a anthropomorphic gazelle. Or just like a ram? Like, rams are bigger than people think. Probably a gnoll. Probably a gnoll.

DRE: Hmm. I guess— So if he was, if he was, like, awake and like, working on his shop around the time when all the stuff went down, did he see the bright light and hear the crash that Mitta says she saw and heard?

AUSTIN: Mitta said that that happened when the sun went out, not when Chancellor Lutz was—

JANINE, crosstalking: Yeah, that can't— That was— That was—

DRE, crosstalking: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN, crosstalking: Yes. Important distinction.

DRE, crosstalking: Okay. Right. Yeah yeah yeah. Sorry. Thank you. Yeah. ... I don't know. Adaire, you got anything, off the top of your head?

JANINE: So wait, he's saying this thing like ran through ... the bazaar?

AUSTIN: He was line shuttin' down his shop and then he saw like off in the distance, running through the Canyon, or running through the bazaar, was a big creature. A big beast.

DRE: Hmm.

JANINE: And there was no, like, chatter about that, after the fact?

AUSTIN: He's busy.

JANINE: Like, it's a busy place that's well-lit, you'd think...

AUSTIN: Eh. People say things. He thinks it was a gnoll. It was probably a gnoll. If you want to make it as your question, he can go talk to other people to confirm whether or not it was a gnoll. Or, if you want to make that your question here, it can be like you then spend the rest of your time here, figuring out if that's what was truly seen.

DRE: Yeahh. I kind of— Adaire, maybe we can like teamwork this. Like, 'cause I— I think maybe our like, our questions can be, y'know, asking other peop— Like, if we ask other people what they saw, is that both our questions?

AUSTIN: No. That's one question. Like, if you want to canvass this place, I'll give you an answer.

DRE: Okay. So maybe we can be that. Yeah, maybe one of our things can be canvassing, and then the second one can be me trying to like, pick up a trail or a track or something from whatever this thing was.

JANINE: Oh, that's a good idea. I think that's probably how it would shake out, too.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: Like, Adaire would hear that and then hear that like, Sid seems pretty content with his assumption, is just “Aaah, it was a gnoll. Whatever.”

AUSTIN: Yeah. Alright, so—

JANINE: It would— It would make sense to do some asking around, while the Ranger did some tracking.

AUSTIN: You do some asking around, and people definitely saw a big fuckin’ gnoll. They describe it as “the biggest gnoll they’ve ever seen.” One person says, “one of them big ones.” One person says, “It was a gnoll” *comma* “definitely a gnoll.”

[JANINE scoffs, DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Another person says, “She had a torch.” Another person tells you that  
AUSTIN (as a bazaar witness): She knocked over my cart, but then stopped and said “Sorry, sorry!” and then kept going—

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN (as a bazaar witness): Which was— Which was— I appreciated it.

JANINE: Was she running away—

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: From— Like out, or in?

AUSTIN: Out.

JANINE: Okay.

DRE: And definitely a she?

AUSTIN, as a bazaar witness: Ah! I don’t— Yeah. Probably. It was a big one.

DRE: Okay.

JACK: I mean, Mother Glory is the biggest gnoll we know.

AUSTIN: Yes.



DRE: Would she stop and say sorry for knocking stuff over?

JACK: I mean, probably not?

KEITH: Uhhhh. When we first met her, no, but later on, maybe?

DRE, crosstalking: Oh!— Ooo!—

JACK: What were you gonna say, Dre?

DRE: Or would that be what, y’know, an illusion mage that has made themselves look like a gnoll say when they run into someone’s cart?

JACK, delighted: Ohohohoho! He’s an *illusion* mage! Who do we know who can— Can we s— Oh, crap. [exhales]

[DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: What’s your question? You’re not *there*, but, again, you can just talk. This is— This is how this works.

JACK: I’m trying to work out a way to sort of corroborate the— Like, illusion magic is extremely rare, right? Like, so spectacularly rare that like—

AUSTIN: Yes. *Magic* is incredibly rare.

JACK: That like— Y’know. Um... Shit. Um.

AUSTIN: There are definitely stories of ma— Like, the illusion mage you know of turned that museum into a different museum, basically.

JACK: Yeah, totally.

AUSTIN: That would be totally in the realm of possibility.

JACK: Absolutely. And like, him masquerading as a gnoll kind of politically hangs together. I’m trying to work out how to corroborate it. Um.

DRE: Well, I mean—

JANINE: Do gnolls need torches? To see by?

[A pause. AUSTIN exhales quietly]

JACK: Probably.

JANINE: 'Cause hyenas sure don't.

JACK, half to himself: ... No. Well, I mean, I'm thinking about—

JANINE: They're night active. Like.

JACK: ... Yeah. Hold on, let me look at the list.

DRE: I mean, kind of the running theory I have going in my head right now is that— That that was— I mean, he's worked with Lenny before. Lenny is definitely not a fan of gnolls and wants to like, ensure that— At least from what I've heard of, y'know, the museum stuff so far, Lenny wants to make sure that gnolls don't have much to do with Rosemerrow.

JACK: Also, um. So, two things here. Arrell is the third point of this triangle that we don't really know much about yet? If we—

DRE: Good point.

JACK: If we have Lenny and Adelton, and then we have Arrell. And I mean, if we're being honest here, this triangle is potentially a square, with the other point being Fantasma. I'm also curious about what the— Gloria has a note about Elgash Or fleeing Velas with a book of some note?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Elgash Or left with the Book of Life that Fantasma originally retrieved.

JACK: Ah.

AUSTIN: Like, forever ago. Elgash Or is the one who ended up with that book at the end of the holiday special.

JACK: So we know that's not related to this magic. That's a different sort of magic.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that magic brought things that were inanimate— It didn't just make them— It didn't just move them, it didn't just puppet them, it gave them a sort of life.

JACK: Yeah. Hmm.

AUSTIN: Okay. Do you— There's one more question here, that you two have.

DRE: Yeah. I think I basically— Like, I want to do a Hunt and Track. And I think I'm looking for anything out of the ordinary, but I think specifically I'm trying to see if there's any more of that same kind of magical scent thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's a good question. I'm not gonna make you even roll for it. Totally.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: It is super faint. Like, it's very close to being gone. The bazaar is a bazaar; it's filled with stuff and smells, and it takes like all of your doing to locate it, but yes. Between those two questions, you believe that people saw an approximation of Mother Glory, holding a torch, running through. And that was probably magic.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which also, and I'll just give you this because it's like a tr— you're a tracker, it lines up with what Mitta told you. I think it was? It was either Mitta or it was— No, it was Arva. Arva Feritas. About the timeline of when Mother Glory would have been going to Roseheart. She had a meeting with Chancellor Lutz, but it just *doesn't* quite add up in terms of like, the timing. She wouldn't have gotten— She barely would have gotten out of Flank Fields by the time the killing happened, and would not have been running through the fucking streets. They probably caught her trying to get back, as soon as she heard anything had happened, from like the Mills or something, going through Flank Fields back to the Southern Wood. So the *real* Mother Glory was being arrested while the fake Mother Glory was running through Roseheart.

DRE: Okay.

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: Okay. Nice work.

DRE: Nice.

AUSTIN: Alright. Turn 3. Is everyone cutting through Rosemerr— Roseheart this turn, or leaving Roseheart this turn?

JACK: Yes.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I am.

ART: Yeah, I think so.

DRE: Yeahh.

KEITH: Um... Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay. You're supposed to meet up— Where were you supposed to meet up with Fantasma? Where did you tell Fantasma to meet you?

KEITH: It was probably the Canyon.

AUSTIN: Okay, that actually makes sense. Maybe there's a little, a little café or something.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What's the best café in Roseheart, Fero? Or the best restaurant. Like, I'm gonna take a lunch break.

KEITH: A lunch break, okay. Um. Crepes. Somewhere with crepes. Okay. It's called the Likely Striker.

AUSTIN: Ooh. The Likely Striker. Okay. This... This is— There's gonna be a whole arc of things here. So you all get together and everyone's— There's a big table— Oh my god! [pauses] Who gets there first? What's the order people get here in?

KEITH: Probably Adaire and Throndir first.

AUSTIN: Yeah, 'cause they're there.

SYLVIA: And then probably Lem and I? 'Cause we're close.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Alright. So, Throndir and Adaire. There's a man there who's like,

AUSTIN (as the man): How many seats do you need?

DRE (as Throndir): Uhh. Wait, now I'm having to do math in my head. Is it 9?

KEITH: 8?

DRE: Right? That's all of us.

AUSTIN (as the man): Seems like too many. That's—

JANINE (as Adaire): Does the dog need one?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN (as the man): Oh, there are no— No, uh—

DRE (as Throndir): Well no. All of us, plus Fantasma.

ALI: Yeah, the dog will [inaudible]

ART: Austin's not sitting.

AUSTIN (as the man): Fantasma? Take a seat. Yes, yes. Fantasma. Yes.

AUSTIN: And then Lem and Ephrim come in, and Lem, you recognize the man working here.

JACK: [gasps in excitement] Who is it?

[[40 MIN MARKER]]

[SOMEONE pffts]

AUSTIN: It's Emmanuel Aracia La Salle.

JACK: Whaaaaat! [gasps]

[JANINE chuckles]

ART: Yes!

DRE: Austin!

JACK: What!

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: His eyes well up.

JANINE: Cue swelling music.

AUSTIN: Swell!

[JANINE chuckles]

AUSTIN (as the man, Emmanuel, trying to maintain composure): I will get you a table.  
One second. Ah.

JACK: When did we last see each other?

ALI: Oh, he's spreading the curse. I have to kill this guy.

AUSTIN: He is spreading the curse. He's probably undead, right now. Who knows? I don't know.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): [flustered sigh]

AUSTIN: He's like, taken. And like, "Deep breaths! Go back into the kitchen!" Like. Talking to people as everyone else filters in.

JACK (as Lem, whispering): Hella!

ALI (as Hella, whispering): Hi.

JACK (as Lem, whispering): That's Emmanuel!

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI (as Hella): I— Is that the guy?

JACK (as Lem, whispering): He's in the kitchen.

AUSTIN: You overhear him putting on the worst fake Velasian accent you've ever heard.

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: And he takes off to sit down with you all and have a nice meal. Everyone take +1 forward on the next roll you make. This food is really good.

Dre, touched: Ohh.

JACK: Well of course it is!

AUSTIN: He cooks like a special— He cooks really good crepes and, like, it's warm and delicious. And he like— He's talking the way people who aren't comfortable with it being quiet talk, where he's just like giving a long spiel. And he's talking like, conspiratorially, in a sense, because he doesn't want other people to know what's happening, but he can't help but getting excited about, like, parts of his story. Which are like: the Ordennans came, and he got stuck in his restaurant for a week because one of their cannon shells blocked the entrance, but that turned out to be an okay thing because if they had seen him right away they probably would've killed him. And eventually he managed to dig his way out, and then he had food 'cause he ran a restaurant. And so he snuck out, and then he fled and joined up with a bunch of refugees; there's a bunch of Nacre refugees in the refugee camp. That's a thing that's true, by the way, and is part of why the curse is spreading.

JACK: Oh, Jesus.

AUSTIN: And he's pretending to be a Velasian so he can get real work and not just be stuck in the refugee camp. And now he's, you know, he's just— He's just, you know, a chef here, but one day he wants to open his own restaurant here again. [pauses] He's very excited.

JACK (as Lem): Your accent's fantastic.

[ALI snorts]

JACK (as Lem): I couldn't—

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel, with a goofy affectation): I do my best!

ALI: Ohh.

[JACK suppresses a laugh]

JACK (as Lem): Blended right in.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): It's very *good*.

ALI: Just. Lem, be nice.

[DRE chuckles]

JACK: I am being nice!

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): I worked *very* hard! On it.

[KEITH laughs]

JACK (as Lem): What name do you go by here? What name do you— What name do you go by, here?

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): *Emmanuel!*

ALI: Ohh.

JACK (as Lem): Ah. Right.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): *Emmanuel?* ... La Salle.

JACK (as Lem): That's just your—

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): Velas names are not— Are not that different.

JACK (as Lem): Right, but look. Um. If you're trying to hide your identity, probably shouldn't pick the name... that you have.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): I am not a liar. I am just... scared.

[ALI sighs]

JACK (as Lem): It's good to see you.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): [drops the affectation] You too. You too. [pauses] Where is ah, the Fantasma?

JACK (as Lem): Just Fantasma's fine, really. I mean, we wouldn't—

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): The Great Fantasma. It's what he said.

JACK (as Lem): That's— Yeah, yeah. I think he's supposed to be coming?

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): Hm. Okay. We have an extra crepe for him, ready to go.

AUSTIN: And... He isn't showing up. I think like—

KEITH: Is the crepe on the table?

AUSTIN: Yeah. The crepe is right on the table.

JACK, simultaneously: Don't eat it!

KEITH, simultaneously: I eat the crepe.

ALI: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: Ohp, it's gone. He ate it.

KEITH: I already ate it. Sorry.

JACK: I'm sorry, Emmanuel.

DRE: Aw! You coulda at least given it to this dog.

AUSTIN: Oh, the dog got a crepe, don't fuckin' worry.



KEITH: Yeah, the dog got a crepe.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Please. And it got like a dog-friendly crepe. It's not gonna poop a lot.

[DRE wheezes]

ALI: Can I like, fistpound Fero after he does that?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: The whole crew is here.

[ALI wheezes]

JANINE: This is the invisible guy, right? Should we like, wag a broomstick around and see if it hits anything? And he's just like, standing?

AUSTIN: That's— [laughs] Yeah, totally. No, there is no— apparently no magical invisibility thing happening here. Can you—

KEITH: When I wave something around to see if he's there, does it— Do I knock anything over?

[DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: No. Nothing gets knocked over.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: There are, outside, yells.

JACK: I'm gonna stand up and go outside.

AUSTIN: As you do that, like, you're breaking eye contact with Emmanuel. Like, he's like— It's gotten to the point in the conversa— er in like, the meal, where everyone's kind of broken off into their groups to talk, 'cause it's such a big table. And he's like,

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel, quietly): Where are you going?

JACK (as Lem): Look. This can only be bad.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): Oh. Oh, you mean the stars.

JACK (as Lem): Y— Yes?

[MUSIC BEGINS: A Chaotic Cataloging of the Entire World]

AUSTIN: And he points. And there are falling stars, dozens of them. Hundreds? And they arc across the sky. And then you hear a loud crash from Roseheart, somewhere else in the Canyon, and there is screaming.

KEITH: I would like to investigate the screaming.

ALI: Yeah, can we like go—

SYLVIA: Yeah.

ALI: Jump up, to help? Like.

AUSTIN: Totally.

DRE: Yeah.

JACK: Can we bring Emmanuel with us?

[[45 MIN MARKER, MUSIC FADES]]

AUSTIN: He looks at you and then looks back at his boss. He's like,  
AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): I— Wh— I—

JACK (as Lem): Oh! I will— Uh, how much— I can, I can pay him.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): But I need the job!

ALI: Just, what?

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): I can't just leave.

JANINE (as Adaire): You're gonna rent his guy?

ALI (as Hella), crosstalking: Yeah, no. Use the depute excuse. Don't... flash your coin.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel), crosstalking: I'll be right here.

JANINE (as Adaire): A mercenary crepe maker? You know weird people.

[AUSTIN laughs]

ALI, quietly: God.

JACK (as Lem): You don't understand.

AUSTIN, touched: Oh. Hho hho.

ALI (as Hella): Just say, as a cop, he has to come with you. Don't try to flash coin. God.

JACK (as Lem): Look. Look! Emmanu— Emmanuel, I'm sorry. Give me just one second.  
[whispers] Hella! You were suggesting that we should *kill* him!

ALI (as Hella): Yeah, I mean—

JACK (as Lem): Look! You're— If we're talking scales of morality here, bribery is a lot much better than killing—

AUSTIN (as someone outside): Aaaah, fire!

ALI (as Hella): I just—

AUSTIN (as someone outside): There's all this fire! I'm *burning*!

[EVERYONE laughs]

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Okay, I'm gonna—

JACK (as Lem): We're the cops, and we'll be taking him.

AUSTIN: Whuhh.

DRE: I wanna say while they're like—

KEITH: Can I have already left?

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah, we're out.

DRE: Yeah. While Lem is discussing this, Throndir has taken the like, the little pin off of Kodiak and put it on Emmanuel and said,

DRE (as Throndir): Come on, let's go.

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: Dre—

JANINE: Is Kodiak sad now?

AUSTIN (as Kodiak): Rurr... [a disappointed dog sound]

KEITH: No, he just barks once.

DRE: No, Kodiak's fine. He got food.

JANINE: He understands.

AUSTIN (as Kodiak): Rer. [a pleased dog sound]

DRE: He's great.

ART: Terribly infantilizing, too. "Here's your little dog badge."

[SEVERAL PEOPLE laugh]

JACK: The dog's says Junior Deputy.

KEITH: Nah, it's the same badge. You wouldn't give— You wouldn't give the dog a worse badge.

AUSTIN: That's— Yeah, he— Yeah. True. Yes. They love—

ART: It would be dog-sized.

AUSTIN: ...No. It's a big dog.

JACK: It's a big dog.

AUSTIN: The dog is people-sized.

ALI: Oh. Yeah, 'cause it's like the same size.

DRE: It's a *large* dog.

KEITH: This is a person-sized dog.

[AUSTIN chuckles]

DRE: It's probably bigger than me.

AUSTIN: It is!

KEITH: Bigger than me, definitely.

AUSTIN: And in Rosemerrow! In Rosemerrow!

JANINE: Maybe it says, like, "Dep-cutie" instead of Deputy.

AUSTIN: Oh, ghhh.

[ALI chuckles]

KEITH: In most of Rosemerrow it's like, "Is that a dog, or a small mole?"

[AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: There is a fi—[cheerfully] People are dying. A ha ha ha! From the fire that is spreading through the Canyons.

[SEVERAL PEOPLE pfft and laugh]

AUSTIN: There are lots of people close together, and there's lots of stuff made of wood. And there is a white hot flame, but again, it is like it's a flame made of, like, metal or plastic— Like, it's matte. You can see the shape of the flame, as if it were cut from a material. It's not just fire; it's not translucent; it's not a gas lit aflame. It's— It's as if light— the light of the fire was a blade. And it's just like, charging through this space. And just crushing and burning everyth— Like, things are still burning and turning to ash and cinder. People are... on fire. It is bad. It is very bad.

SYLVIA: Can I try and use my Zuko-style skill that lets me control fire, to sort of try and contain things?

AUSTIN: Yeah, give me a roll. [pause] Oh, friend.

SYLVIA: That didn't work.

AUSTIN: That's a 4. Bad news, this isn't fire. This is something else. It's like— Let me give you what the feel of it's like. It's like, let's say you lived your entire life, like, drinking water. And it's the only thing you drank ever in your life. And you like, got really smart about how water tastes differently. Right, like you know what like New York water tastes like versus Toronto water, versus San Francisco water. You know like, difference— You could drink a sip of salt water and tell me what ocean it was from. Like, you know everything there is about water. And then, you lift a glass and take it to your lips and drink a big gulp of pure rubbing alcohol. That's what this is. And, from appearances, you're pretty sure that this thing is fire. It doesn't feel or— It doesn't feel anything like fire, except for: this is the first time you know what being burned feels like. In your life.

KEITH: If I could take a second to just emphasize how distressing it is for even a normal person to take a sip of water and realize—

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: — that oh, it's... Sprite. Or whatever.

AUSTIN: Right. Yes.

KEITH: Like, that's already the worst thing in the world.

[AUSTIN laughs]

AUSTIN: Yes. This is really bad. And there, in the middle of all these people, there is a figure. Who, again, does not light their surroundings, but it is— Looking at it is hard to do because of how bright it is. But it isn't lighting up the Canyon around it. In fact, like, as the sconces and the torches get knocked over, like, there is less and less light here. And then there's this one thing that is too hard to— too bright to look at, but that isn't lighting the area around it.

[MUSIC BEGINS: A Chaotic Cataloging of the Entire World]

AUSTIN: And it is humanoid in shape, with long, flowing robes and a— like a book or a scroll or a tablet in one hand, and huge, like— I guess, Fero, you're— for like a brief second think it's a big bird, 'cause it has big wings, but then you look a little closer, and the wings are made of this like, metallic fire stuff. And they look sharp. And as it moves and turns, it sets more things ablaze from its wings touchin stuff. A cart, filled with apples. A tapestry that hangs down from a bridge that connects one of the High Houses to another one of the High Houses. The front door of a little bistro nearby. It's glass, it's a glass door. But it lights up like kindling anyway. And none of you are engineers, but you all know that glass isn't supposed to burn. And then, something even stranger happens. At first, the flame is just consuming whatever it touches as fuel; it burns

things away. That's why people were screaming. But now, when you look inside the fire, you see that things are *changing*. The apples on that cart, they blossom into a new form. A misshapen fork. One of them becomes a small wheel. The tapestry that hangs from that bridge— it's reduced to ember, but then those glowing bits of dust reform into a sharp, wrought iron fence, stabbing downward. The windowed door of that little bistro burns too, and and then, in its place there's a massive cabinet. Drawers filled with dirt, and candles, and something moving, you think. Fero, it's something alive. You can sense that. And the fire, it spreads until it climbs up the side of one of the High Houses that line the Canyon walls. And as it burns, the walls crumble, and then they bloom. A wheelbarrow for a front gate. A watchtower where a balcony once was. A tree where should have only been curtains. The fire is a chaotic cataloging of the entire world, and it is writing itself as it goes along.

[[52 MIN MARKER, MUSIC ENDS]]

AUSTIN: What do you do?

ALI: Can I... attack it?

AUSTIN: Sure.

ALI: [laughs] Okay.

AUSTIN: Give me a roll.

JACK: Um. Ah.

AUSTIN: Give me a Hack and Slash.

ALI: [chuckles] 'Kay.

JACK: This is a complete error, I think.

[JANINE sighs]

ALI: I have a magic sword.

KEITH: Hmmm.

AUSTIN: Oh boy.

JANINE: Still a sword, though.

ART: Ohp. I'm with you, Hella. I am also planning my first move for our battle with this flame monster we definitely can't kill.

ALI: Good.

KEITH: I have also planned my first move.

AUSTIN: Good. Give me a roll.

ALI: Okay. I'm wondering if I should Death's Eyes this. But. I should probably just attack.

AUSTIN: Oh, what's that do? Yeah. Tell me what that does. What's that do?

ALI: So, I wrote it down before, and now it's missing. But basically what it is is that when I enter combat I can, like, "call upon the spirits of death" and if I roll well, I can say who lives or dies?

AUSTIN: Yeah. [reads] "When you go into battle, roll plus Wisdom. On a 10+, name someone who will live and someone who will die. On a 7 to 9, name someone who will live *or* someone who will die. Name NPCs, not player characters. The GM will make your vision come true if it's even remotely possible. On a 6 minus, er, 6 or under, you see your own death and consequently take -1 ongoing through the battle."

ALI: Yeah.

ART: "Remotely" is sure a— is sure a word, isn't it.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah. You know. I think if ever there was a moment to use this thing...

ALI: I'm just checking— Okay. 'Cause I'm not sure if I added the Wisdom, but it's— a 10 isn't going to give me a +1 anyway. So I'm just gonna roll this.

AUSTIN: Nah, there's no pluses. [pauses] That's a 9.

ALI, pleasantly surprised: Okay!

AUSTIN: So name—

ALI: Wait—

AUSTIN: — an NPC who will live or who will die. If it's remotely possible—



ART (whispering): Pick the fire monster!

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Wait, but do we want the fire monster to die, or can we— Do we want to interrogate it?

JACK: Yeah, this might be like a— A waste.

AUSTIN: Hella, what's your—

ALI: Hmmmm.

DRE: It's cool; Art can talk to 'em. [chuckles]

AUSTIN: Hella, what's your— Let's, let's go through the things here. Hella, your alignment is to destroy something rather than to understand it. So—

ALI: Uh huh.

AUSTIN: Definitely in alignment. I'm not saying you should do this, right. I'm just trying to—

KEITH: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: — give us our, our answers, er, all of our questions.

JACK: [chuckles] "Destroy something rather than understand it" is the best trait for a *detective* to have.

[AUSTIN and SYLVIA laugh]

ALI: I— I— I feel like— I mean, I know that there are eight people that I'm talking to, who all have their motivations. But I feel like, in the scene of this—

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: It's Hella yelling at her friend not to rent his, like, crush, and then running out of the restaurant—

[KEITH laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: — to attack something. And she's not like, "Oh, I should do this carefully."

AUSTIN: When's the last time that Adelaide talked to you?

ALI: That's a really— I don't know.

AUSTIN: We haven't seen it. Right? We heard her chuckle once.

ALI: Right, we haven't seen it.

AUSTIN: She says,

AUSTIN (as Adelaide): Hella. Run.

ALI: Okay. I don't.

AUSTIN: Yep.

[DRE giggles]

ALI: Now I'm gonna roll my attack.

ART: You also probably don't tell the rest of us that that happened, right?

ALI: No.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Hm.

ALI: No.

JANINE: Also, wait, you have— We all have that +1, right?

AUSTIN: You do.

JANINE: Like, would it be worth it for you to make that a 10?

AUSTIN: Oh shit, it totally would. Name someone who is— She— It's a forward; she doesn't get to decide whether or not she uses it or not.

ALI: Oh.

AUSTIN: Just, you get +1 forward on the next roll.

JANINE: Oh.

ALI: Oh!

AUSTIN: So that's a 10. So name someone who lives. Name an NPC who lives.

ALI: An NPC... Um.

JACK, whispering: Emmanuel.

ALI: Do I know there are more important here— people here than Emmanuel? No, right?

AUSTIN: Not that you can see.

ART: "Important" is one of those words.

[JACK inhales]

[ALI sighs]

JACK: Ali.

AUSTIN: So— So you're naming Emmanuel?

ALI: Okay, he's going to live this time. I— I can't promise you—

AUSTIN, crosstalking: WOW.

ALI: — that later in the show I won't kill him. [laughs]

DRE: *Whoa!*

AUSTIN: God damn.

ALI, laughing: I just like— As a fan of the show, and also as someone playing my character—

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: — he's who I'm going to name this time, Jack. Jack.

JANINE: But don't get used to it.

ALI: I'm *rooting* for you. I am.

[DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Hooly shit.

ALI: I just— There's gonna be a day when I have to be Hella.

[DRE laughs more]

JACK, morosely: "Don't bribe the guy," she said.

[AUSTIN uh-huhs]

ALI: I just like—

AUSTIN: Alright.

ALI: Y'know, you seemed so happy talking to him.

AUSTIN: Give me a Hack and Slash.

ALI: I will. That's a Strength. That's just a Strength.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah.

ALI and AUSTIN, simultaneously: That's an 11.

AUSTIN: Do you get anything bonus?

ALI: Which means that I can break ♪a thiiiiing♪ on it. Right?

AUSTIN: Does it? Or is it higher than that? That you— I think it's—

ALI: Oh, it's 12+. Man!

AUSTIN: It's 12+. Yeah. Sorry.

KEITH: 12+? That's a high roll.

AUSTIN: It is.

KEITH: That's the highest roll you can roll.

AUSTIN: Wh— So tell me what this looks like— So, this thing, as it moves, like every move it makes makes that noise I was talking about before. Like it's the sound of countless voices talking over— like, talking over each other, yelling over each other. It's reflecting the natural noise here. Give me your damage roll.

ALI: I would love to. 7.

AUSTIN: Okay. So you— Like, it— What do you do? Tell me what you do, as it turns to face you.

ALI: Like, is it— I think that it's just like, a running towards. Like, she's surrounded by all of this, like, people screaming, and like all of this bad stuff happening. And she just kind of centers in—

AUSTIN: Mm hm.

ALI: — and like, just pulls it out as she's running. So it's probably like a, like a slash up, almost? Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay. What— Do you do the bonus damage in exchange for taking damage? Or do you just do the damage you do?

ALI: Ohhh, prob— No. [wheezes]

AUSTIN: Okay. That's fine, like. Fighting defensively is totally a thing.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Maybe that's what you do when, when— in response to Adelaide saying run, it's like, "No. But I won't— I'll be a little careful."

ALI: Okay. Yeah.

AUSTIN: So. You cut this thing from like, from its leg, up across its chest, and... Like more of that fire spills out of it and down, like cinders, on to the floor. And begin to spread across like, the dirt-packed floor of the bazaar. And it screeches at you and like is struggling to find— It sounds like it's trying to find a word and can't. But also there's thirty of it trying to find a word and that, that can't. And then it like, sketches something onto its, onto its like, tablet, and begins to stitch itself back together. Hadrian, sounded like you had a thing to do?

ART: Yeah, I'm not sure if it's relevant anymore. What I was going to do was cast Darkness to try to make this thing chill a little bit. But maybe I should just Hack and Slash it.

AUSTIN: Up to you.

ART: Ah, let's try Darkness. That's more fun; I'm worse at it.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Good. I— Art, I love you.

[DRE and KEITH laugh]

AUSTIN: Hey! Hey, buddy.

ART: Ohh!

ALI: Oooh.

AUSTIN: You rolled a 12.

ALI: Look at you!

AUSTIN: So, what's Darkness do?

KEITH: Do you get to break something now?

ART: Darkness says [reads] "Choose an area you can see. It is filled with supernatural darkness and shadow. While this spell is ongoing, you take -1 to cast a spell." Let's just say like a, like a, oh, probably like 2 yards centered on this— centered on this guy\*?

AUSTIN: It is incredibly dark for that like, that little part of the corridor of the Canyon. And you can still see it. This thing is— [sighs] I'm like having a hard time finding words for it, because it's not a thing in real— Okay. Did you see that— Did you see that stuff going around that was like the darkest possible black material?

ART: Yeah.

JANINE: Vantablack. It's made up of like, tubes.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's wild. Like it looks like nothing. Like, it looks like there is nothing there. This is like the opposite of that, inside of the darkness, right? That like, you can make out the— as if it's Vantablack, but it's white instead, right. Like, again, not necessarily bright. Like it's not— It's not just like it's hard— It is hard on the eyes to look at it directly, but it's also just like— Nothing could possibly cover this thing up. You can almost see it through other people, is how, is how

material it is. It's that it's from a plane of existence, or something, that is so clear that it is impossible to ignore. Or impossible not to see. But it does seem to calm down at that point. Like— I mean, it's not, it's not angry or anything, anyway. But it isn't moving. It is standing still. Hella is probably caught in that 2 yards of darkness, though.

[[60 MIN MARKER]]

ART: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: Hella, everything's black. Except this big bright thing that's hard to look at.

ALI: Oh cool, thank you.

JANINE: Hnh.

ART: Just tryin' to help. Thought about supernatural darkness might... might clamp it down.

AUSTIN: Fero.

KEITH: So the first thing that I was thinking of... And I don't want to do this if it's going to take up my attack turn, I guess? But I wanted to see if I could Discern Realities.

AUSTIN: Yeah you can— Uhh. That will take up your— Ah— Yeah, that will take up your turn. 'Cause Discerning Realities is about like— It's not— I don't think it's a quick look. [reads] "When you *closely study* a situation or person." Yes.

KEITH: Yeah. That's Wisdom, right? For Discern Realities?

AUSTIN: Yep.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Mm hm.

KEITH: I would like to do that.

AUSTIN, crosstalking: That's a 9.

KEITH, crosstalking: That's 9, plus 1 is a 10.

AUSTIN: Yes. So you're gonna take +1 forward on the question, and you can ask [reads] "What happened here recently? What is about to happen? What should I be on the lookout for? What

here is useful or valuable to me? Who's really in control here? And what here is not what it appears to be?"

KEITH: I'm gonna start with this one—

ART: Point of order: he rolled 2d12.

AUSTIN: Ohp! Yeah, reroll that.

KEITH: Oh yeah, okay. Good point.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh huh.

KEITH, quietly: Roll... [typing sounds]

[JANINE and DRE laugh]

JANINE: That's a shitty roll for 2d12.

KEITH: Yeah it is, actually.

DRE: Yeah.

KEITH: ... plus 2. Alright.

AUSTIN: Still a 9!

JANINE: What! [laughs]

KEITH: Still a 9, now a 10.

DRE: ... Wocka wocka.

AUSTIN: Oh right, from the forward. Yeah, totally a 10. So you get 3 questions.

KEITH: Alright. So, three questions still. I'm gonna start off with What here is not as it appears to be? If I could— If I could try and narrow it, I think w— No. I'm not gonna try to narrow it.

AUSTIN: No, what did— Let me hear the narrower thing, 'cause maybe you have a cool idea.

KEITH: Well at first I— At first I was going to say specifically within— I was trying to think of what I could ask that would try and pick out, maybe, what this— these voices are screaming, to see if there was something in there that would be—



AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: — helpful or useful. But if you— If you were going to go more broadly and provide somethin' that was actually more useful, then I wouldn't want to stop that.

AUSTIN: No, there's not— I don't have anything too useful here for that. So that is— The thing I'll give you there is, it is clearly— It is layering— You can hear that it is trying to find whatever language people are speaking, but everyone is screaming and yelling, and so that has— It's like, reflecting— It's trying to gain that... that language— It's trying to gain whatever your language is through you— what it's hearing. And it can't do that right now—

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: — because everyone's yelling. And then the second thing, the second layer of that is that it's not just trying to figure it out from what people are saying, it has like a— It is saying stuff back from what sounds like older or— from variations on what the common tongue is that are not the right common tongue.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: It's like it knows different dialects than you. And it's— also doesn't really know your, your grammar.

KEITH: Sort of foreign or dead dialects that—

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: — are so old— Like, it's like listening to Chaucer.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes. Like that. So that's one. Two more.

KEITH: What should I be on the lookout for?

AUSTIN: This thing is going to kill you. Like.

KEITH: Ohhkay.

[DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: What. Yeah.

KEITH: So it's not— It is not trying to figure out how to say like, [deepens voice] "Don't! I'm not dangerous. Stop"?

AUSTIN: No, but. I mean, it doesn't matter if it wants to kill you. I'm not saying its intention is to kill you.

KEITH: Right. Okay.

AUSTIN: I'm saying this thing is dangerous in the way that like, an earthquake is dangerous.

KEITH: Okay. Alright, well. I am no longer going to ask "What is about to happen".

AUSTIN: Trying to think if there's anything else you should be on the lookout for. You should be on the lookout for more of them? The stars are still falling from the sky. This is the first one you've heard hit the ground, but.

KEITH: Right. [sighs] Okay, so. Then. What here is useful or valuable to me?

AUSTIN: The method of exit. The— The last thing you want to do is get trapped.

KEITH: Okay. So.

AUSTIN: Other than that... Yeah. Yes. Your life is useful and valuable?

KEITH: Okay. You're— So. This—

KEITH (as Fero): Hey guys. This thing's *bad*.

AUSTIN: Yes. I guess like, since— Here's the other one—

KEITH (as Fero), as if shouting from a distance: Hey everybody! THIS IS A BAD THING TO BE NEAR, I'VE LEARNED!

[ALI and DRE laugh]

AUSTIN: Here's what I'll say is, like, the other— The other part of like, of "What here is not what it appears to be?" is that like, more of what it appears to be is true than false. Like, there isn't— There isn't the secret— This isn't the illusion, the illusion gnoll. Right? There is no easy answer to what this thing is. It appears— It is the thing it appears to be, and whatever that is is fucking terrifying.

KEITH: Okay. So can I— Can I spend the rest of my turn not doing an action, but, like—

AUSTIN: I mean, that— That study is your action.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright.

KEITH: Okay, nevermind.

[[65 MIN MARKER]]

AUSTIN: 'Cause that's like— That takes up time.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: To figure out shit. What else is— What else are people doing?

DRE: I want to do my— Or, attempt to do my Kindrali's Chosen.

AUSTIN: Ooh.

DRE: Which is basically Spouting Lore, er, consulting Kindrali to see if he recognizes this creature.

AUSTIN: Mm hm. Give me a Spout Lore.

DRE: Oh, it's a— I guess it's a 7, with the +1 forward.

AUSTIN: That's true. That prevented something really bad from happening. So that's good.

DRE: Yup!

AUSTIN: So, on a 7, what do you get? You get something “interesting, but not useful.” Um. [horse sighs] Kindrali... Does Kindrali know anything about this? Y’know, Kindrali could totally see this being a... God, what is. I guess, for Kindrali, the thing that this most reminds him of is the Wordeaters. In that it is a condensed form of something. Of like— It feels elemental in that way. Of like, “Oh. This is— This is— Whatever it is, there's noth— It's the thing it is.” Like it is the form of that thing. It is, it is holistically the thing it is. And it is not like, just—

DRE: Hm.

AUSTIN: I'm struggling for words, he's struggling for words. But that's definitely— It *feels* to him the way the Wordeaters felt. In that they were—

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: In that they existed in this plane of language also, that was more than just, like— They— If the Wordeaters found their form from language, these things are already language and they are given form. If that makes sense. Anybody else?

JACK: You mentioned that this thing is speaking weird, mashed up Common?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I'm pretty good with languages.

AUSTIN: You are. Do you wanna give me a Spout Lore?

JACK: Yeah, alright. I'll give you a Spout Lore. That is... Wisdom?

AUSTIN: Intelligence, I believe. Yeah. [reads] "When you consult your accumulated knowledge about something, roll plus INT."

JACK: [laughing] So I'm consulting my knowledge of language here—

AUSTIN: Of language.

JACK: — rather than like, horrifying star monster.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: 'Cause I have— Aww, great. That's a 6.

AUSTIN: You get a +1 forward! That's a 7.

JACK: Okay. Wow, okay.

AUSTIN: You catch bits of language that remind you of what the things under Rosemerrow sounded like.

JACK: Oh no. Oh, okay. That's not so bad, actually thinking about it. That's more just a marker of time, rather than. Like.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Well! Yeah. It's a weird marker of time, is what I'll say. It isn't— It isn't— Here's an important distinction. This is not a version of the language that you've heard, or that you've seen in a book, or that you've heard in a spoken story. This is not— This is not what Common sounded like four hundred years ago, or five hundred years ago, or a thousand years ago, from what your knowledge of what those things is like. This is what it sounded like from those people

or weird things under Rosemerrow— from this weird, alternate Rosemerrow. That's not— It's not clear in the same way, and that's not the *only* sound it's making. It's not *just* making that version of Common. There are other versions of Common mixed in with it that you do not understand. At all. You don't recognize at all.

JACK: Ooof.

AUSTIN: So... Thrandir's gone... Adaire has to go. And Ephrim has to go. No, Ephrim tried to control the fire.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN Adaire?

JANINE: So the fireness of this thing is burning stuff, right?

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: Okay. This might be a stupid thing to do, but I'm going to try it anyway. So I have poisons.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

JANINE: I specifically have an Applied Poison and not a Touch Poison, which means it needs to be consumed.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: But this is fire, which consumes things that touch it.

AUSTIN: Ah huh.

JANINE: So what I want to do is throw a potion at it. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Okay. Give me a roll? Give me a Defy Danger... I— What is— What even is this? I dunno how would this even work. I think this is like, a weird Luck die, to see if this is how this works.

JANINE: It might also be Volley, which is my throwy thing. Er, which is *the* throwy thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah. But like, you're not gonna miss the fire. Right? Do you know what I mean? Like.

JANINE: That's true, yeah.

AUSTIN: That's not interesting. I think the interesting thing here is whether it works. [pauses] Y-Yeah. You throw it. And... [snorts] Okay, yeah. Okay. You throw it. And it consumes this poison, and then— It, like— It dims for a brief second, and you can make out the like, the face of what looks like a person. Just like a regular— Like a human. Or a humanoid, at least. With like, curly hair— curly, dark hair. Kind of like, tan skin. And it— It drops the tablet it was holding. This like— Now it looks kind of like a stone tablet that hits the ground and shatters. And then it goes down on one knee right in front of you, Hella. What do you do?

[[70 MIN MARKER]]

ALI: I have a very specific alignment. [laughs]

AUSTIN: You do.

[JANINE chuckles]

ALI: Do I just roll another Hack and Slash, or?

AUSTIN: Oh, no. You— Are you killing it?

ALI: Okay. Yeah, probably.

JACK: Ohh my god.

AUSTIN: How are you killing it?

JACK: Ohh my god.

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: I mean, it's too late. She made that earlier roll; it was going to die in this scene no matter what.

JACK: Yeah.

ALI: Right. Yeah, come on.

KEITH: There is a sliver in there where if it— It can only die if there's even a little bit of chance that it would make sense.

AUSTIN: Oh, it totally makes sense. Hella has that sword.

ALI: This makes sense.

KEITH: No no no, I'm saying that that's the—

AUSTIN: Hell yeah.

KEITH: That's the wiggle room, is that if we don't give you a way that it makes sense for it to die, then it won't. But we did, so.

AUSTIN: If Hella had a different sword, this probably wouldn't be happening.

ALI: Yeah, well... It's at my mercy?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. That's why I'm not making you roll to Hack and Slash. Like.

ALI: Right.

JANINE: I threw a sleepy poison at it, technically. Just to be clear.

ALI: Uh huh. Yeah.

AUSTIN: It didn't understand what that was. Like I— Maybe even Lem makes that out, of just like,

AUSTIN (as the star, slowly): What's... happening... ?

AUSTIN: And then like, on to its knee. In the dark.

ALI: This is just like a straight up, like, sword over head. Stab down motion.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Through the head.

ALI: Just. Torso, whatever you want. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah. There is like— It just cuts through the whole th— all the way through him. And he splits, and then there is this huge flash of light, which leaves huge weird scorch marks all through the Canyon. And this like— Like the vacuum in, like. [inhales, exhales a loud "pohh!"] Like, explosion of kinetic energy. And bits of that fire spread through the Canyon, but then like— like embers, and then, when they hit the ground, they turn to nothing. [pauses] Nice. Good job, I guess. When it did that vacuum thing, the fire came back into it.

JACK: This is like, we had an opportunity for first contact here and we sent Hella.

AUSTIN, realizing something: Fuck! That's not what happens; you have that sword.

JACK: Oh no!

AUSTIN: Jesus Christ, what did you do?

[ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: This is the sound of me throwing out prep for shit that's not supposed to happen for TWO MONTHS!

ALI: No! [continues laughing]

AUSTIN: Okay. It's cool.

ALI: I can do a different thing.

AUSTIN: Noo, you can't.

ALI: I can—

AUSTIN: You so can't. No, this is good. It's good now.

JANINE: You just made the case for how you couldn't do a different thing.

AUSTIN: Yep. You can't. That's totally the thing. It's just— Y'know. There was a bit that was gonna happen later, and I didn't quite know what the conflict was gonna be. And now I do. So.

ALI, quietly: Ohh.

AUSTIN: It does the vacuum sound, and then everyone pauses to wait for that explosion that follows sounds like that, in *everything*. And that doesn't happen. But your sword takes on a strange color.

ALI, quietly: Stop.

JANINE: Nnh.

AUSTIN: The center— Is it the center one? What gem turns white?

ALI: [laughs painfully] The big center one was... the main guy.



AUSTIN: Oh, I know.

KEITH: Amethyst?

ALI: Just the— the—

AUSTIN: Yeah, what's his name. Amathee— Amethyst. No, it— It gains a second— So it's a stone that's like— The stone is basically looks like it's cut in half now. Like, on one side of the blade it's red, and on the other half it's white. It's like a diamond. It's a diamond— The whole thing is a diamond, and there's a drop of red in it.

ALI: Ohoho! That's better.

AUSTIN: Yeh.

ALI: That's better. You got there. I'm glad you did.

AUSTIN: Phew. Had to walk through it.

ALI: Ah huh.

ART: Oh my god.

[JACK sighs]

ART: Oh my god! Things are gonna get so bad.

AUSTIN: Yeah! You don't know the half of it, bud.

ALI: This— Okay. Guys, if there was a tsunami happening, and you could stab that tsunami in the heart, you would do that.

AUSTIN: She's laughing to you now. But like a relief laugh? It's like she forgot— She just, I think she just says to you,

AUSTIN (as Adelaide): The sword. Right. The— The sword. The sw— [laughs, sighs]

ALI: [laughs] Ohh, god. I think that when Hella hears Adelaide's voice, her expression just drops. Like, if there was a close up on her face as she was cutting this thing in half, she was grinning. 'Cause like, her heart's deepest desire is to destroy things. But hearing Adelaide and being reminded of her presence kind of ruins the celebration. [laughs]

[SOMEONE sighs deeply]

ALI: Anyway, I—

AUSTIN: Hadrian in the chat says, “Maybe sometimes you let your friend with the less fucked up sword stab that tsunami.”

JACK: Woof.

AUSTIN: Fantasma hasn’t shown up.

KEITH: Dick.

AUSTIN: Yeah, weird.

SYLVIA: Before we change the subject from the weird... thing Hella killed, I just have one quick question.

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVIA: How comparable was the light from it to the light of the crescent sun that I have?

AUSTIN: They are different things.

SYLVIA: They are different things. Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I— As someone intimately familiar with fire and light, that thing should shake you a little bit, probably.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like, it’s not the same. It— And people won’t be able to tell the difference, maybe.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which is a little weird. [pauses] It’s the same in that, like, the crescent blade feels otherworldly. This also feels otherworldly.

SYLVIA: Yeah. But it’s— Okay. Just making sure.

AUSTIN: Alright. So who’s going there now? And who’s going where?

JACK: I am prepared to go and see Arrell, because of the information that I received from Carolina.

SYLVIA: I'm— I'm definitely going as well.

AUSTIN: Who else is going to Arrell's highrise?

DRE: Oh, so we don't— We don't know if Arrell is there, that's just their apartment, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's just his apartment.

DRE: Okay.

ALI: I want to go there, but I don't have to.

ART: I— That's, I think, also where I am. That's where the investigation has led Hella and I, but.

ALI: Right.

JACK: We should probably diversify.

ART: It's an apartment, not a— not a ballroom.

[DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: It's— Those apartments are for rich people.

JACK: Oh, oh! I— I'm happy to go— I want to go see Mother— Well. Is it in our interest to see Mother Glory now, if we know that there was— I'm not too concerned—

JANINE: I mean, she still— Did she still complete that meeting, or did that meeting not happen?

JACK: Oh, that's interesting.

AUSTIN: Based on the timeline I gave you, that meeting didn't happen.

JANINE: Okay.

AUSTIN: She fled before she even got to Roseheart.

DRE: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

JANINE: Well that's also interesting.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I gave you that at the— in the last turn.

JANINE: Yeah.

JACK: Okay. Um...

DRE: I mean. I guess we need to find Isaac, and Arrell is kind of our best connection to that, so far? Or Lenny. I guess if someone wants to go talk to Lenny, that's maybe not a bad idea either.

JACK: Oh my god. I'll go and talk to Lenny.

ALI: I could do that.

JACK: Yeah?

ALI: Don't we want to rough this guy up?

JACK: Yeah, let's go rough this guy up.

ALI: Put some pressure on him.

[DRE laughs]

JACK: Roughing the last guy up went great, didn't it Hella?

[ALI and AUSTIN laugh]

ALI: Hella seems really—

KEITH: To be fair, I roughed—

ALI: —out of it? By this point.

KEITH: I roughed Lenny up, and it didn't— it didn't destroy anything.

[JACK laughs]

AUSTIN: Fair.

ALI: Hmm.

AUSTIN: Alright, so that is the... Where is that at?

[SOMEONE chuckles]

AUSTIN: Who else is going to Arrell's?

DRE: I'll also— Throndir will also go to Arrell's.

ART: I honestly think that's where Hadrian goes.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ALI: How many people are we leaving to not do this, though?

AUSTIN: So there's Adaire left, and there's Fero left.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Where are you two going?

KEITH: I would like to go to... the Long Sand.

AUSTIN: Cool. That's interesting.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I like that for you. For people at home, the note that Gloria has for the Long Sand is, "I hate this place." And then under that, "Victoria says there's some sort of wise, old sage out here, but I don't believe in that stuff."

[DRE giggles]

ALI: Oh, that's great for Fero, because he can just fly over the weird sand.

AUSTIN: I mean it's snowing, and that's tough. It sucks up there.

ALI: I was gonna volunteer to go there, 'cause I could just like, frolick my way through.

[DRE laughs]

ALI: He could just fly.

AUSTIN: Adaire?

JANINE: I— I'm a little worried it's, like, a waste of time at this point, considering stuff. But I want to go talk to Blake.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: In Crescent Creek 3.

AUSTIN: Let me just tell you, not a waste of time.

JANINE: Okay. Well, that's good to know.

AUSTIN: Okay. So. Let's start— Let's start with Arrell. You are— You flash your badges. Gimme a roll first I guess, actually. Plus 3. 2d6+3. There's a 12. Alright, so. It takes you— You know, you're shown up the— The way Wistful Peaks works is there's five towers, I think. Five of these like, skyscrapers, basically. And they all have these like trees on the outside; they're really beautiful. And that is the first thing you notice, actually, about being inside of this apartment. It is one of the more expensive— It's high enough up in the tower that you know— First of all, it's in the tower, which means it's expensive. Because Wistful Peaks is for rich folk. Two, it's high enough up that it should— Like, part of the sale should be it has a view. But it doesn't. There are no windows. There is no balcony here. There is no like open-roofed area, like some of these places have. It is— It is a big cell. It is a single big room, like the size of a skyscraper floor, that is filled with books and with scrolls and with like weird, old artifacts. Like, y'know, masks and gauntlets and paintings and rings and you don't even know— crystals— you don't even know what half the shit in here does. And there is a bed in the center of the room. There is like— The center of the room is like an octagonal mini-room that's basically made by the shelves that are around it. There's kind of like eight, like, alleys of books that go throughout the entire place. And at the center is this bed and a little like side bed and a desk and— There's probably a bathroom in here somewhere. I don't know— I don't know. What. And you begin to dig through the stuff that he has, and put a bunch of things together. So the first thing you put together is that he is— He is working with Isaac Adelton, who we've talked about. Adelton is in his notes and stuff all over the place and, in fact, is on a list of... one, two, three, four, five... Six names. He is the first one on the list. Actually, he's the second one on the list. The first one on the list is Chancellor Lutz. The second one on the list is Isaac Adelton. The third one on the list is Elgash Or. The third one on the list is Obelday Adelbury. The fourth— The fifth one on the list is Sol Cidermoon. I'll just give you this list in a second. The sixth one on the list is the sage. And the seventh one on the list is Victoria Solomon. Also I said Cidermoon, I meant Cider... brew? Ciderbrew. Cidermoon is like, much closer to a tea witch name. And Sol is no tea witch.

[[82 MIN MARKER]]

JANINE: Also we've established they don't respect cider.

JACK: And these items are just on a list in Arrell's notes?

AUSTIN: It's— It's a loose list. So separate from his notes. Much of his notes are written in a strange cipher, and so it will take some time to break through them. But you've got your Push, which means I can give you some stuff here. So there is a— You manage to kind of like— I'm guessing— Wait, who all is here?

SYLVIA: Ephrim, Throndir, and Hadrian.

AUSTIN: Ephrim, Throndir, and Hadrian. I think, between the three of you, you like piece together his like— You effectively piece together his life story. I think the thing that you notice is, despite being like filled, like up— a library filled with knowledge and books, there are a handful of personal things close— closer to the center of the library. So like, that's where you find a sketch of him and another person, who both and Ephrim and Hadrian recognize as Exarch Alyosha. When the Exarch must have been, y'know, nineteen or twenty. You find also there— Right. You find a painting— You find like an easel set up, where he is doing a painting. And Hadrian, you recognize that face. It is a man wearing a white cloak with shining, bright armor.

ART: Mm!

AUSTIN: And like, shoulder-length blonde hair. Samot.

ART: Yeah, I've got that cloak.

AUSTIN: You're wearing that cloak. Like.

[DRE chuckles]

AUSTIN: You— The image of you looking at that painting of him wearing that cloak. And then you find what is effectively a set of memoirs this guy has fucking written about himself and has had, like, professionally bound. And you don't have time to read through all of them, but his life story goes like this: He was born way back when the University was still around. And he was a prize student who worked really hard at helping other people. Like, was— He wasn't really great at theory or at innovation; he didn't have any novel, like, research, but he was a good enough sport and a good enough, like, aid to his peers that they still let him pass his dissertation anyway. And as you know, mages who go through the school at the Last University— then still just the University— they're given names based on what they can do. Right. Sunder Havelton, and the like. And his name was Tutor. Tutor Arrell. Because of how well he worked with others and brought the best out in everybody else. And so he became a teacher there and for years was just like this bright spot at the University. Like, the weight of the University was put on him, because when there is no knowledge in the world and no more big cities and so little in the way of infrastructure, it is easy to be like, all doom and gloom. But he was a dude who like, kept

everyon'e fuckin spirits up because he helped them focus on their problems and solve their problems. And because of that, you read that he was eventually given access to a higher level of information at the Last University. Kind of like, taboo books, of which he still has many. Of which he's recovered from the ruins of the University. And it's there that he read about something called the Heat and the Dark. And he grew despondent and realized that the world was doomed in a way that no amount of magic could solve. And began to try to find some alternative solution for people to keep on living. And that is where this would have ended, if you had not succeeded. But you got a 12. So first, ask me some questions. Give me your questions, and then I will give you the Push.

ART: How is he gonna stop it?

AUSTIN: He isn't gonna stop it. What he's gonna do instead, and you figure this out through, again, a collection of his notes— Like, this is a long montage. This is one— This scene is one of the reasons why I wanted each turn to be hours, is that like, you're poring over notes at this point. Also there's no like, clear lighting in here, but it is light in here. There is light coming from something. He is, and this lines up with stuff that Isaac Adelton told Fantasma— Arrell, who is part of the Disciples of Fantasma, you understand, is whisking people away into what he refers to as— He refers to it in his own terms as The Study. Sometimes he goes into this place in his own mind called The Study, and he's figured out a way to externalize that into a sort of physical space that he has complete control over. A sort of like, private realm where he is god. And he is tak— He is putting people into their own versions of that. A sort of like, solipsist heaven. And so his goal is at this point not necessarily to stop the Heat and the Dark, whatever that is. He's not— He never like, goes into detail directly about what that is. You can stay here and read about it, for sure, if you spend more time here. But. He is trying to put people in a place where they have what is effectively an infinite amount of time to continue studying the Heat and the Dark and also just to like, live in heaven for as long as they want. So that's his plan.

KEITH: Sorry, I— Are they coexisting? Or are they each in their own individual things with no connection?

AUSTIN: No, they are not coexisting. Like, core to this is the philosophy— Like, so this is the thing that he kind of learned after— He read about the Heat and the Dark and like, then started seeing human connection, or connection with other people, as being like, deeply depressing. Because like, it didn't matter how good he was as a teacher. Like, "Cool, you went from a B+ student to an A+ student. Who fucking cares? We're all doomed."

JANINE: So this is Shelter, not The Matrix.

AUSTIN: What's Shelter? I don't know what Shelter is.

JANINE: That music video with the sad anime girl living in the fancy world.



AUSTIN: Oh, right. Yes. This is Shelter. Yes. In fact, I saw that— When that— When that fuckin Porter Robinson video came out I was like “God dammit. This is what Arrell is doing.”

[JANINE and DRE laugh]

AUSTIN: Yes, this is Shelter. But for everybody; that’s his plan. Or at least, you gather, the people he thinks— he deems worthy. Right? Like, he’s prioritizing people who could theoretically one day figure out the Heat and the Dark.

DRE: Is there any way to pull someone out of their like, pocket universe once he’s put them in there?

AUSTIN: He can do it. He knows how to do it. He believes that there are a bunch of ways— That people in there could even try to do it if they— like, eventually. There’s moments where it feels like he’s rationalizing to himself that it’s effectively not a prison because, on a long enough timeline— and inside of those little micro-heavens, the timeline is infinite— everyone will figure out how to get out. After, y’know, a thousand years or whatever.

[[90 MIN MARKER]]

KEITH: But does time— Does time pass?

AUSTIN: Time— From the moment— The way that time in that space works, time— They experience stuff so rapidly that our time barely advances.

KEITH: Okay. And then you can go one level deeper— And you can— So you can whisper something in a dream—

AUSTIN: Right. It’s Inception also. Yes.

[DRE giggles]

AUSTIN: But they are— Here’s another thing, for real, is they are gone. They are not in this physical realm.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: He doesn’t like, have these people in a warehouse somewhere. [pauses] Ephrim.

SYLVIA: [sighs] God. The only thing I have is some character stuff that I can ask. ‘Cause.

AUSTIN: That stuff is cool and important too.

SYLVIA: Ephrim has no idea who Samot is.

AUSTIN: True.

SYLVIA: And he sees Hadrian standing here, wearing this like identical cloak to this guy in this painting.

AUSTIN: Yep!

SYLVIA: So the question is, who is this painting.

AUSTIN: Hadrian?

ART: Oh, I have to tell him?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: I feel like, he probably just, does ask you that. Yeah.

ART: What does Hadrian really know about Samot. Because we're still before—

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART: We're still before the Marielda—

AUSTIN: Yeah. Lore dump. Yes. I want your answer, and then I will also like, modify that answer with information you can find here.

ART (as Hadrian): Sure. Samot is a rebel god in the south. He... He was a constant presence in my journey to the Mark. I encountered his agents, his pala-din—

ART: Does, does Ephrim know the word pala-din?

SYLVIA: I don't think so.

AUSTIN: No.

ART (as Hadrian): Okay. Well, the Anchor are pala-din. But not like that, at all.

[SOMEONE chuckles]

ART (as Hadrian): Stone— Stone soldiers that serve cosmic powers. And now also Ordenna, not a cosmic power. And Samot is alive. Samot is in the City of First Light,

where he gave me his cloak and told me— And told me about some things that maybe happened? Maybe are happening now? Maybe haven't happened yet. But I think it would be foolish to, to say no to a gift like this. You know what I mean?

SYLVIA: Ephrim just starts laughing.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Good. Great.

SYLVIA: Like. After seeing the like thing that Hella killed and getting like just a glimpse into what that was and now learning about like this other god that he had no idea about. He's just, like, sitting on the floor, laughing.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

ART (as Hadrian): Yeah, that's about right. I mean. Yeah.

AUSTIN: So. Another thing you learn about Samot is that Arrell thinks that he might be an effective ally against the Cult of the Dark Sun, whatever that is. You gather from Arrell's notes that the Cult of the Dark Sun is less interested in stopping the Heat and the Dark, and that they operate in every major settlement in Hieron. And are spreading. There is— And maybe Samot's stuff is how you find it. The Push, the extra information. So. There is— I guess, maybe, no. I'll just give you the Push this other, different way. And maybe it like comes together— Maybe it's hitting people at different points, at different things, right? Which is that— One of you finds a note that says that actually, Arrell knows Samot very closely; they're very good friends. And it doesn't really add up, because like, Samot is never mentioned in the memoirs? And then like, all the sudden, one day, Arrell starts talking as if they were like, buds. And like, is sending letters to him. And then— And then there is another thing that you notice, which is: there's a point after he learns about the Heat and the Dark and gives up being a teacher where Arrell gives up the name Tutor. He thinks that like, being a teacher is a fucking waste of time. In fact, being a mage is a waste of time. He aspires to something else. He is not a mage; he is a wizard. He is wise; he understands the world in a way that others do not, and he will pull back the illusion of reality. And people will realize who he is, and what he's doing, and how he is their only hope. And then there's a second thing, which is: he realizes that he can't just go around as Arrell everywhere. People know what that guy looks like. And he can't just go around and like, "Oh yeah, I'm gonna go get the Book of Life. Like that's— I'm that dude that you recognize from being in Rosemerrow all the time." And so, he takes a step back. He literally takes a step out of this physical plane of existence and goes to a place where he can just be invisible and creates for himself— He kind of cuts part of himself out, part of his story, and gives it flesh. And follows it around, and carries its books for it, and y'know, does all of the things that it wants him to do, and whisks him away into that invisible plane whenever it's scared, and lets him do the work that Arrell can't do publicly without the Cult of the Dark Sun seeing him. And I guess that's when you realize that this guy, who is connected to all of this shit, is in fact the Great Fantasma, leader of the Disciples of Fantasma. Sometimes it is what it says it is on the can.

[[MUSIC FADES IN]]

[[1:38:08 END OF EPISODE]]