

Autumn in Hieron 12: Knowledge and Ignorance

0:00:00-0:04:24 Aster (Aster (They/She)#2047)

0:04:24-1:06:23, 1:43:06-1:44:45 Lune (daffodilian#8872)

1:06:23-1:43:06 R (orchivist#0251)

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

AUSTIN: (cross) The last time we recorded.

DRE: (cross) Okay, so we decided that we had to go to the Mark of the Erasure. Uh, marching in there, we killed an owlbear. That was pretty rad.

AUSTIN: Mmhm.

DRE: Then we ran into a cursed lake where there was like an ice monster? We killed it and the lake became less frozen. I mean it's still cold, 'cause it's in the Mark of the Erasure, but not—less frozen.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Uh, we made our way around the lake to a cabin where we found an old goblin man who let us in and explained to us the phenomenon of The Nameless.

CUT

AUSTIN: Okay, Kindrali was He Who Remembers The Day.

NICK: Oh right, yeah.

AUSTIN: And he has also become wordless but only very recently.

(as MEE KOSH): Hmm, if he had his words, Kindrali...Kindrali could help.

CUT

AUSTIN: There used to be an owlbear in this place.

DRE: Oooh. (AUSTIN: He—) Okay. Got you.

ART: This guy just like, muscled this owlbear out.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Which should say something, given the strength of that owlbear.

CUT

AUSTIN: It twists and winds in a way that is off-putting, but not necessarily confusing. Right, this isn't a maze. There aren't lots of splintering paths (["Autumn Not Winter"](#) by Jack De Quidt starts playing) but after about ten minutes of walking you realize that like, you don't really know where you are in the mountain anymore.

DRE: Mmhm.

AUSTIN: If that makes sense. Umm. You also notice, as you get closer and closer, bodies, here and there. First a couple of snow elves, their bodies smashed into each other, mangled together, left to rot. Then a couple of goblins, their heads missing, spat against the far wall.

(A pause as music plays)

It's getting a little more creepy but, you know, underlying all this is still Kodiak's like (dog panting sounds)

(DRE chuckles)

AUSTIN: So at least Thorondir, you definitely feel, you know, like you got a friend, you got a friend there.

DRE: Yeah. Yeah.

ART: Umm, I've got—

AUSTIN: (doubtfully) Mmm.

ART: I might...ugh, fuck.

AUSTIN: Yeah?

ART: I'm, I think there's a, there's a move I want and I can't... There's a move I might want.

AUSTIN: What is it?

ART: Oh no, I guess not. I was going to do something dumb and I guess I can't Discern Realities to not do something dumb.

(music ends)

AUSTIN: What were you going to not do dumb?

ART: I was thinking of like, 'You know what we need, is a lot of noise. Like, just a big loud...'

(AUSTIN chuckles)

ART: Like I don't want to be like walking in here, like that could be anything. I want whatever's in here to come to me.

AUSTIN & DRE in unison: Mm.

ART: So like, what if I just like hit the wall with my halberd as hard as I can?

AUSTIN: Do you want to like set this up in a little bit more like sensible—do you think Hadrian is smart enough to know like, he shouldn't just like, while you're walking, just like (laughing) *BANG?*

DRE: I could—

ART: I don't know that Hadrian *is* that smart.

(DRE laughs)

AUSTIN: What's Hadrian's Intelligence?

ART: 8.

AUSTIN: Mm. Hmm.

(Pause)

NICK: I could prestidigitate sound.

AUSTIN: I think—

ART: I feel like honestly we've gone, we've gone in.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Like there's no, like, like this isn't advantageous terrain.

AUSTIN: Here's...right right right. Right, but you could still set that up, right? Like what I think about is... What I'm specifically thinking about is there was the time you heard that dinner bell in the Tower of Eventide and you like immediately went into a defensive posture.

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: And for me that illustrated something about Hadrian, which is like, even though he's not book smart, we've talked about that before. Uh, he, he still tactically has his head on his shoulders. He knows like,

ART: Yeah

AUSTIN: Alright, I want—Well you just, your picture to me of this was, “I want to get a drop on this thing. Like I don’t. I want it to come to us. Not us to walk into whatever it is.” And that to me suggests some amount of forethought. You know?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: So, and I think you could, you totally could pick like a turn in this cave system where you could be like posted up against the wall, you know what I mean? Umm.

ART: Okay. Yeah, I guess, I guess I need to communicate that to everyone. (AUSTIN: Yes.) Like, alright.

ART (as HADRIAN): We’ve seen too many bodies in here. Whatever’s in here is fearsome, and strong, and—terrible. And we can’t let this—if we keep walking, we run the risk of just, yknow, blundering into this thing and then we become these—these bodies. We need to find a defensible position and try to call this thing out, and then hopefully we can parley with it, but if this turns into a fight, this needs to turn into a fight that we can win.

(pause)

DRE: Austin, is there—there’s nothing I can like... Is the way that the bodies have been killed and mutilated, does that remind Thrandir of any sort of monster or creature he’s either seen or heard of before?

AUSTIN: That’s a good question. I think it’s... I think the thing that rings out here for Thrandir is, the violence walks the line between what normally you would think of as a sentient creature (DRE: Yeah.) and an animal, right, like. There’s no reason to kill a thing the way these things have been killed.

DRE: This is very intentional.

AUSTIN: But yet it’s intentional, exactly, exactly.

DRE: Yeah. This isn’t like an animal just ate someone’s head, this is—

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Exactly. But at the same time, it isn’t like a thing, it’s not a thing a person would do. No one you know would do this, (cross) even the goblins, maybe, especially after last night, wouldn’t’ve done *this*.

DRE: (cross) Wait, can I ask a question that I don’t want to explicitly ask. Are you *sure* this doesn’t look like something anyone I know would do.

AUSTIN: Yes.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: This is too, it's just too messy, right? Um.

DRE: Yeah. Yeah.

ART: Oh my god, he's gonna torture and murder us.

(DRE and AUSTIN laugh)

AUSTIN: Eh, I'm not saying no.

ART: No, you're not!

DRE: Um.

DRE (as THRONDIR): Yeah, Hadrian, you've got a good plan.

DRE: Um, Throndir, y'know, pulls an arrow from his quiver and puts it up on his bow and says,

THRONDIR: Although I don't know if we're going to be able to talk to whatever comes out of here.

(pause)

ART: Alright, and barring any last minute objections from Fantasma, I start railing—I find a bend or turn, anything that gives us even a little bit of extra space.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Give me one second and I'll set it up for you. (clicking) Alright, bring you guys over here. Where am I? Here?

DRE: Oh! Um, if we're setting up at a bend? (AUSTIN: Uh-huh?) Throndir undoes the collar that's lit and like, throws it down the hall.

AUSTIN: Do you like, bury it maybe? Okay, like *further* down behind you.

DRE: Yeah, so that whatever's stepping out, (AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, good call.) steps into that light, so we see it hopefully before it can see us.

AUSTIN: Sure. Right.

NICK: Good plan.

ART: Right, and yeah, and while we're talking about positioning like, I have a polearm, right. That's an anti-charge weapon, (AUSTIN: Right.) and so I'm gonna be like braced, so if he comes around that corner super fast, like he's charging the whole way, (AUSTIN: Mhm.) I want

him to run into my...thing. (DRE: Yeah.) My halberd. (cross) Again, talking is still what I want to happen.

AUSTIN: (cross) Here's my really shitty—cave, do you guys see this cave?

DRE: That's a good cave, Austin.

ART: Yup.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's great. Here's the big middle area, that's like.

DRE: I don't know why you're saying terrible things about this cave, it's a nice cave.

ART: Wait, are we at the top one or the bottom—(cross) or we're in the middle here?

AUSTIN: (cross) I don't know! It's up to you, where d'you wanna be?

ART: Y'know, I think you're right, I think like—

DRE: There?

ART: I—what happens when I—

AUSTIN: (cross) You have to click and hold.

DRE: (cross) You just hold down left click.

AUSTIN: Yeah, click and hold to paint.

ART: Okay. So like. (AUSTIN: That one.) So like if Hadrian's here, (AUSTIN: Mhm.) y'know, that's so—if he just like barrels around here like, not like someone who's coming to talk, he'll run into a sharp thing.

AUSTIN: Right. Mhm. Actually, you guys can have, wait, one second, delete that really quick. Just that.

NICK: (cross) Sorry.

AUSTIN: (cross) No it's fine. I'm gonna...

ART: (cross) And I think our archer would be best served over here.

DRE: Yup.

AUSTIN: Let's do...

DRE: Um, what's the range on my bow, in terms of (AUSTIN: Oh my god.) cubic squares?

(cryptic laughter, probably at something on Roll20)

AUSTIN: Pretty far.

(typing noises)

DRE: Alright. I wanna see what's coming around this corner.

ART: I'm trying to think of a non-confrontational way to call someone out, and it's not coming, so at this point I don't think—

AUSTIN: What kind of dog do you have again?

DRE: Uh, he is—

NICK: (cross) Ah, I was muted that whole time.

DRE: (cross) Like a big Tibetan mastiff.

AUSTIN: Mastiff, right.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Not a husky.

DRE: No. Uh, the other day I was working on a Saturday and I saw two huskies and a mastiff walk by, and I was like (AUSTIN: Oh dang.), woah! These are all large dogs.

(AUSTIN laughs)

AUSTIN: Well, there isn't—I don't have a mastiff. I do have this buddy, though. (DRE: That works.) Or *that* buddy. Wow, that's really big, wait!

DRE: That's a big doggie. I hope you're recording this on OBS.

(laughter)

ART: Woah, that dog's bigger than all of us. (laughter) Aww.

DRE: (laughs) Perfect.

AUSTIN: Alright! (cross) We've set up.

NICK: (cross) What is that, is that a—?

AUSTIN (amused): I don't know what this is.

DRE: (cross) No, you didn't control this dog?

NICK: (cross) That looks like a, uh, it's a... Ah, what is, it's that Japanese breed—

DRE: Oh, a shibu inu? Shiba inu?

NICK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that might be right. What the hell's his name? Right. Right right right. It's, uh...Kodiak. I keep thinking—yeah. I just get confused. I'm very confused. (NICK: Yeah, that's totally a shiba inu.) So where are you putting this dog at?

DRE: (cross) I'm putting—he's gonna be close to Art.

AUSTIN: (cross) I mean, he's yours, so you can—you should be—okay. That's right. Okay. Good. How are you making noise or getting attention, what are you doing?

ART: Remind me of this dude's name?

AUSTIN: Kindrali.

ART: Kindrali. (pause) So like I take the blunt end of my halberd, (AUSTIN: Mhm.) I kind of rap it against the wall a couple of times. (AUSTIN: Okay.) I shout like,

HADRIAN: Kindrali! We—we regret that we have invaded your space, but we need your help. Please. Come talk to us.

AUSTIN: Hmm. You hear like, the lightest stirring in the distance for a few moments, and then...you feel a burst of air. Warm air. And then it stops.

ART (quietly): Mm.

DRE: Like a big sigh.

AUSTIN: Maybe.

ART: But no movement.

AUSTIN: No.

DRE: Are we sure we know what Kindrali is?

NICK: Uh.

ART: (cross) Not as sure as I was a minute ago.

AUSTIN: (cross) Good question. Tell me what you think Kindrali is at this point, as a party.

DRE: (chuckles) Ah—

NICK: I thought he was a goblin.

DRE: Yeah, me too, but I'm not sure anymore.

(NICK laughs sharply twice)

ART: He's like, a sacred goblin.

DRE: Yeah, like, (NICK: Oh.) I imagined him as being a goblin (first syllable 'sham') shaman, like a spiritual leader of sorts. (first syllable 'shay') Shaman? ('sham') Shaman?

NICK: Was he—was Kindrali one of the, sort of pagan demigod things that he had little shrines to?

AUSTIN: It seems—no. He wasn't one of those, (NICK: Okay.) but the way he talked about him made it seem like he existed closer to those than to us.

NICK: Sure.

DRE: Mm.

AUSTIN: In fact, maybe you—was he? He might've been one. It's been two weeks and I haven't heard that recording yet. It's totally feasible that he could have been one, is what I'll say. So old and knowledgeable, and so powerful—

ART: Yeah, I'm looking for some kind of ultra goblin.

AUSTIN: Right.

(NICK laughs)

AUSTIN: Okay. I wanted to make sure that I knew what you thought it was.

ART: Yeah, like, if it's—I'm expecting something that looks like a goblin but is somehow more powerful. (AUSTIN: Sure.) If like, a giant spider comes around this corner...

AUSTIN: Right. Right! (laughs)

ART: I'm gonna be real confused.

(AUSTIN laughs)

NICK: Um.

AUSTIN: I mean, nothing's coming, from what you've just done.

ART: I knock again and say, like,

HADRIAN: Kindrali, we've lost important words. We've heard you could...that perhaps (AUSTIN: Hm.) we could help each other.

NICK: Without... Like, there's a beat after Hadrian finishes, (AUSTIN: Mhm. Mhm.) and then Fantasma, uh, using Prestidigitation to amplify his voice—

AUSTIN: Ooh.

ART: Uh-oh.

DRE: Oh boy.

NICK: Uh.

AUSTIN: Go ahead and roll it.

NICK: Yeah, I'm gonna bring up my character—I wish character sheets in this (AUSTIN: Yeah. Mhm.) had like, a minimize.

AUSTIN: That would be cool.

ART: Oh, I just made mine really small and worthless, (NICK laughs) and so like—

AUSTIN: Oooh, and then you just drag it up really quick—

ART: Right, then you like.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: I've also added all my titles to the name thing?

AUSTIN: I see that. (laughs)

ART: So it's just worthless in general.

(general laughter)

NICK: Oh, yeah, so I rolled a 12 on that.

AUSTIN: Okay. So make—

NICK: So I'm amplifying the voice, (AUSTIN: Right.) and he says,

NICK (as FANTASMO) (voice edited to sound like he's yelling from far away): Kindrali!
The man wishes to speak with you!

NICK: And then he—Fantasma immediately drops his guard and goes invisible.

FANTASMO (very fast and under his breath): This won't work.

AUSTIN: Mmfhh. Great.

(DRE laughs loudly)

AUSTIN: The words—

ART: This is probably better than my terrible plan. (AUSTIN: Well—) My next move was going to be bad.

AUSTIN: There is an echo, now, in this—your Prestidigitation works in a way that it echoes out the word *you, you, you, you, you*. And also, caught up in it somehow, are, is the word *words*,

[15:00]

as Hadrian shouted, "We've lost important words." And the two kind of mingle together and echo back and forth here. And you do hear a bit of movement in the distance. But...the second thing you hear is...a buzzing of flies.

DRE: Well, that sounds terrible.

AUSTIN (as AMBIENT NOISE): *Words, words, words, you, you, you. Words, words, words, you, you, you—bbzzzzz—you, you, you...*

AUSTIN: And the buzzing starts to take on the form of these words, bit by bit.

ART: Okay?

AUSTIN: Um, Thorondir, (DRE: Mhm.) I think, is probably the one here. Give me... I—okay, so wait, where is the light at this point? Tell me where the light is.

ART: It's on the—oh, it's not on the dog anymore.

AUSTIN: No, it's not on the dog anymore, so tell me where it is, and kind of how you see it.

DRE: I'd say it's probably around the bend, probably—here?

AUSTIN: Wait, do that again?

ART: I thought it was the other way, I thought it was like, here.

DRE: No no no no no. I threw it up ahead, so when it came around the corner, we could see it.

AUSTIN: You'd see it, but he wouldn't see you yet.

DRE: Yeah, yeah yeah.

ART: Ohh.

AUSTIN: Then you see them. Then you see the flies, as they come around the corner. To be clear, this buzzing was a different sound than the distant movement that you heard earlier. (DRE: Mm.) But you see them, and they do... They kind of swim right past you. They don't move the way flies do. They move the way—again, the word swim to me makes the most sense. They move...as if they're swimming through reality. They move the way—Fantasmo? They move the way that your invisible servant moves, if that makes sense. Right?

DRE: (cross) They are like an ontological Michael Phelps.

NICK: (cross) Okay.

AUSTIN: (snorts) That's correct.

NICK: What?

(DRE laughs)

AUSTIN: (typing) I'm just going to toss something down here. Yeah, that works.

NICK: *You're* an ontological Michael Phelps.

AUSTIN: Great! Throndir.

DRE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Give me a Defy Danger, CON.

DRE: Constitution?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: Sure! 7.

AUSTIN: Okay. You...you feel the first stings of hunger. It's a little strange, um, because you know you ate this morning, you know that Mee Kosh fed you when you were there, and it's way too early in the day for someone who's spent this much time in these woods as you to start getting hungry again. (DRE breathes in) Um, but you can tell that there's something very, uh...there's something unnatural about this hunger, but it's growing in your stomach as the time moves forward. Quickly.

DRE: Mm.

NICK: Does Fantasmo actually see these things swimming?

AUSTIN: Yeah!

NICK (surprised): Oh.

AUSTIN: No no no, no no no, sorry. They're just flies that are—they *are* flies, but they as a *mass* move through the air not the way flies move, not like buzzing back and forth. (NICK: Right.) So yeah, everyone (NICK: No, I know, but I mean—) sees them when I say the word swimming, like floating without, like—moving not from the propulsion of their...—Oh, you mean as you're invisible. (NICK: Yeah. Yeah yeah yeah.) Sorry, I forgot that you were invisible. No. You don't see them.

NICK: Okay. (laughs)

AUSTIN: No. ...Um. What do you do?

NICK: Fantasma, uh, looks down at his servant and he says,

FANTASMO: Servant, what's happening?

(DRE laughs)

AUSTIN (as SERVANT): *Shrug.*

(ART laughs)

DRE: Great.

AUSTIN: While holding your books. *Shrug.*

NICK: Yeah, he just like, turns slowly, turns his little neckless stone face (AUSTIN: Yep. Yep. Mhm.) up toward Fantasma and then shrugs, and it makes like a—as he shrugs it's like the sound of stones grinding against each other.

AUSTIN: Mhm. But Thorondir and Hadrian then, who can see these flies, what do you do?

ART: Uh, what here is evil?

AUSTIN: Not the flies, exactly, but a thing around them, certainly.

ART: Oh, crap. Um.

AUSTIN: Also, two other figures moving in the distance. With each step, you can hear the sound of malice echoing out (DRE: Hm.) from deeper in the cave.

ART: Ooh. "The Sound of Malice" is also the name of my new album.

AUSTIN: Great. (DRE laughs) Nailed it.

ART: I mean, I don't know how to attack a swarm of flies.

AUSTIN: That sounds fair.

ART: And that's, y'know, all my tools are hammers. (AUSTIN laughs)

NICK: Is "The Sound of Malice" a death metal cover of Simon and Garfunkel songs?

ART: Yes, it is!

DRE: Perfect. Beautiful.

AUSTIN: Nailed it. Perfect. Yup! Ideal.

DRE: Um, I guess—like—

NICK: I would actually listen to that.

AUSTIN: Mhm. That's fair.

DRE: Throndir is just trying to get away from these flies. (AUSTIN: Okay.) So he's trying to like—I almost want to say he's running *towards* Hadrian, (AUSTIN: Okay.) to get away from these flies. And maybe even he's running towards Hadrian because he wants to move into the light so he can *see* those stupid things.

AUSTIN: Sure, sure.

ART: Yeah, it's probably—

AUSTIN: Go ahead and move yourself, tell me where you're at here. So Hadrian's right up against the bend of this cave. This cave at this point is a series of three bends. It's like an S on its side, sort of, and they're in the middle bend. (DRE: Yeah.) There's a third bend ahead of them, and there's a first bend behind them, which is where Fantasma is.

ART: Wait a minute, I've seen flies before. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) If you swat at them, they move. I might be able to just disperse them just by swinging a weapon in there. (AUSTIN: Sure. Yep.) Uh, so, you know, everyone put that on my tombstone.

AUSTIN: So go ahead and do that.

ART: Uh, yeah.

DRE: He died as he lives, attacking flies with a halberd.

AUSTIN: Nice!

ART: I rolled real well.

AUSTIN: Go ahead and roll your damage. And also—

ART: That's actually, that was two 6s. That's, that's a perfect roll.

AUSTIN: That is a perfect roll. That might be our *first* perfect roll.

DRE and NICK: Dang.

AUSTIN: If it isn't it's damn close.

ART: Uh.

NICK: There's no crits in Dungeon World, is there?

AUSTIN: No, there are not. Though, with hits like that—

ART: I got a, well, that's an 8 plus 1, so that's a 9.

AUSTIN: A 9 on the, yeah. Uh, you... As you cut through it, you do feel that your halberd cuts into something before it reaches the flies. (DRE: Hm.) (ART: Deep.) And they, hmm. They—you. Here's what happens. You—cut through it, and the flies do disperse as you expect. They kind of separate from this thing, and flutter up away, and then, almost catch fire, right.

ART: Ooh.

AUSTIN: A kind of bright blue fire. (DRE: Hm.) But, as you pull your halberd back—I mean, and they're gone. You recognize the way that these things kind of lit on fire, it reminds you of the magic of when the ice guy that you fought last time melted, from the torch flame.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's kind of a dispersion, a kind of—I think maybe even from Fantasma's invisibility, it's, you can see these blip. For just a moment, you see them blip in the invisible zone.

ART: Are these like forgetting how to be things?

AUSTIN: I—Good question. (DRE: Hmm...) Um, (NICK: The invisible zone.) but when you pull your halberd back up, Art, you see that whatever that was *ate through* bits of your halberd.

DRE: Ugh!

ART: Oh, no.

AUSTIN: Lose the minus 1 extra damage it does until you rest and can sharpen it.

ART: Okay, there's no, okay I'll just remember that, there's no—

AUSTIN: Just—yeah, there's—I don't think so. Uh...

DRE: Woof.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Yeah. That's okay, worst come worst, I'll just punch things until my hands don't exist anymore.

DRE: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: (laughs) That's fair.

DRE: Yeah, good thing I didn't do my initial thing, and that was to, like, slap at these flies.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that would've been bad. That would've been extra bad, let me say so.

(DRE laughs)

ART: Well, I'm wearing armor, right, so (AUSTIN: Right.) once the gauntlets on my armor stop existing, that's when I'll know it's time to stop punching things.

AUSTIN: Right. Fair. I marked your thing with a—

ART: And then I'll move on to kicks, and then headbutts,

AUSTIN: Great.

ART: and then chest bumps.

(DRE laughs)

NICK: Uh, at this point Fantasma rematerializes, (AUSTIN: Uh-huh?) just to see what's going on. 'Cause he hasn't seen any of this so far, so.

AUSTIN (very carefully): Fantasma. Give me... a Defy Danger: Wisdom.

NICK: Okay. That's just a Wisdom roll, right.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

(pause)

AUSTIN: That's good.

DRE: Man!

AUSTIN: Killing it today on rolls, y'all.

ART: Yeah.

DRE (in the background): Don't worry, I'll bring us down soon enough.

AUSTIN: You hear her walking—you hear her walking towards you, before you see her. To your right, a thin, slender snow elf approaches you, and she puts her finger up to her lips as if to shush you. (22 seconds of silence) What do you do?

NICK: Uh. Turn invisible again. I don't know (DRE and AUSTIN laugh). No, uh.

DRE: *This* guy—

AUSTIN: This guy.

(laughter)

AUSTIN: No, that's—if—She will act, if you do that, that is fine, that is a fine action—that is—that's *acceptable*. I know what she'll do if you do that.

NICK: No, I mean—Well, okay, look. Fantasma doesn't take orders from people. So he's not gonna pay attention to her *shush*.

AUSTIN: Sure! Good call.

NICK: He ain't gonna be about no *shh* lady shushin' him.

DRE: Yeah, way to be alpha, bro.

(ART laughs)

AUSTIN: Great.

NICK: Uh, so, (laughs) Fantasma just says,

FANTASMO: Madam, I demand you explain yourself.

(DRE laughs)

AUSTIN: From behind you, you hear...Fantasma yelling at a woman.

(DRE laughs more)

ART: A mystery woman, right? None of us—

AUSTIN: None of you see her... I mean, she's—so here's the thing, is she's like around the corner, here.

ART: (cross) Sure, she's probably like, here, or something? Or I guess she's right here.

AUSTIN: (cross) So from your positions, you can't—...That's almost exactly—I have her here, basically. So like around the corner, where only he can see her from your current positions. Um, she's bald with very pointed ears, and kind of—

ART: She's probably completely in the dark, right?

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: But there's—people coming—

AUSTIN: He can see her off of the—(stammers) reflection of the light that's up ahead, bouncing back and forth, you know what I mean? Like, it's diffused through this area, and so he can make her out from here? But like, not very...not very well.

ART: Earlier you mentioned people coming from this way.

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: Uh, are they, do I hear them? Do I see them?

AUSTIN: Mhm. So from ahead, from forward, you hear the, um...you hear the... Okay. The first thing that you see is that the blue light from ahead, changes just a little bit. (Art, warily: Mm?) (typing) into a sort of...a sort of purple-y light?

ART (confused): Oh...

AUSTIN: That's the first thing that happens.

ART: Oka—I', wondering if I can abandon this post to go see what's up over there.

AUSTIN: Defin—you definitely could.

ART: Well, it definitely sounds like a bad idea.

AUSTIN: So we'll say—(laughs)

DRE: Uh, as Hadrian is—is Hadrian moving forward?

(typing)

ART: I think—yeah, I think I wanna like pop out, I think I wanna go...here.

AUSTIN: So around the corner (DRE: Okay.) so you can peek in. And again, can—Thorondir, (ART: Here we go.) can you show me your—where you put the light at again?

ART: (cross) From like here?

DRE: (cross) Yeah, I would say like here-ish.

AUSTIN: Okay. Yeah. So, at—

DRE: While he's moving, Throndir is moving back, like, into the shadows but also maybe down so he can cover Hadrian as he's moving around the corner.

AUSTIN: Sure.

NICK: Can we—

AUSTIN: As you come around there, Art, you see that there's a second bright red light source from, to the kind of up-and-over? To the northeast in this cave, around this bend. Um, it's rolling further up than that, even, up to—oh, I'm in the wrong mode, shit. Here. Up here, and then slowly coming down, closer and closer. It's—(sighs) It's like, what if instead of, you know how a light, a fire on the end of a wick, it burns and melts down the candle? It's like, what if the space between there and here was a candle, being melted down, and there was an invisible wick separating you from there. Uh,

ART: What?

AUSTIN: A ball of red fire is pushing, is like... It's burning through the reality between you and there.

DRE: Jesus.

ART: Holy fuck.

AUSTIN: Towards you. You are getting *awfully* warm.

ART: Yeah, I guess, (DRE laughs) I guess, having seen this, I start retreating

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to help Fantasma, who is both—seems to be in danger and is not closer to the giant flaming red ball.

(NICK laughs)

AUSTIN: Right. Fantasma, at this point, she reaches out for you. What do you do?

(pause)

NICK: Um—

AUSTIN: Like with a single hand, towards your mouth, as you start to scream. Like, with a sort of practicality, like a—"shut up!" type of movement.

NICK: (pauses) Well I, I dodge her hand, but I—

AUSTIN: Okay, so that's a, Defy, give me a Defy Danger: Dexterity first, (NICK: Okay.) and then we'll follow up.

(long silent pause)

NICK: That's not a good one.

AUSTIN: Oh, boy. It isn't. Um.

NICK: Old wizard man's not very dextrous.

AUSTIN: Her hand touches your mouth for just a second. I think, Art, by the time Hadrian gets around this corner, and like, are you turning to look at Fantasma? Or are you just backing the way you came?

ART: Yeah I think, (AUSTIN: Okay.) I think turn, and move.

AUSTIN: Okay. So, as you move back up, you see her hand on his lips, or across his mouth, and then she pulls it away, and puts it back up to her—puts a finger back up to her lips to shush him again.

AUSTIN (as ELF): *Shhhh.*

ART: But she's not like, menacing him.

AUSTIN: No. She starts to walk towards Thorian next. Or—Thorian? Thorondir, (DRE: Throndir.) next. Throndir.

DRE: Do I, do I recognize her?

AUSTIN: No, in fact, she's approaching you and is very clearly about to do the same, when you notice that there's something just a little bit wrong about her. Um, in general, let's say, snow elves tend to have very—what color are your eyes?

DRE: Um, let's say like, green? Like a gr—yeah, green.

AUSTIN: Okay. Hers are a deep black. And you've never seen a snow elf to have eyes like that before. (inhales, rustling noises)

DRE: Um, what's it—

NICK: I mean, that's kinda weird for anybody.

DRE: Yeah. It's—not the norm.

AUSTIN: It is. It—ah, let's say, in this world it happens here and there, 'cause weird magic shit.

NICK: Okay.

DRE: (laughs) 'Cause, y'know, post-post apocalypse.

AUSTIN: Y'know. Orcs have black eyes sometimes and those are part of society at this point, so. Um.

NICK: Yeah, okay.

DRE: Um, I mean, but she looks like a snow elf, though. Like, weirdness aside.

AUSTIN: Other than that. (DRE: Yeah.) Other than that one thing, yeah. And she's about to reach out to your mouth too. What do you do?

DRE: Um. I say, in the snow elf tongue, like, quietly, almost like a whisper,

THRONDIR: Who are you?

ELF: *Shhhhhhh*.

AUSTIN: And she reaches out to touch you on the mouth, she covers your mouth for a second, and then pulls away, and starts to work towards Hadrian.

ART: Is she evil?

DRE: What happens if—What happens if I—

AUSTIN: Yes!

DRE: Aw, shit. I'm gonna—agh...

ART: I, I swing.

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

ART: I guess it's more like a stick at this point.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Also Kodiak is just *losing his shit* at her, at this point. The second she touches you.

DRE: Yeah. Uh, while Throndir is swinging, what would happen if Thorondir tried to ask again, *who are you?*

AUSTIN: Good question. *Nothing comes out.*

DRE: Yeah, I figured. (laughs)

AUSTIN: Um.

ART: I got a 9.

AUSTIN: So that means you can do your damage, and also take damage.

ART: Yeah.

ART: 7.

AUSTIN: She like, reaches out to you with a single finger to like, put on your lips. (ART: Yeah.) And you feel the words sneak out of you, you feel like you've lost the ability to speak for a brief second, but then, you pierce her with her halberd. (makes choking sound, exhales quickly) And then again, her body kind of disintegrates in its place, and Fantasma and Thorondir can speak again.

DRE: Hm.

ART: Man, I really feel like I should go stab that ball of fire, but it's not gonna work.

(NICK laughs)

DRE: You don't know, man. You gotta roll for the fire.

ART: Yeah, I'm on a fuckin' roll, everything I touch dies.

(DRE laughs, AUSTIN chuckles)

NICK: As Hadrian, um, cuts the snow elf lady, there's just, um... You guys hear Fantasma in the middle of an uproarious rant, like someone just hit the unmute button. (DRE and AUSTIN laugh)

AUSTIN: Ah, that's really good.

NICK: And talking about like,

FANTASMO: How *dare* you touch me! You...vile...cave-dweller, dirty creature, blah blah blah.

(laughter)

DRE: Ahh... So there's still this giant rolling fireball, huh.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Oh, is that it? Is it, is it—so it's—

AUSTIN: And in fact... (typing)

ART: Is it that person-y, or is that just a stand-in?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's just that this is a stand-in. Like there, I'll put it on its side so it doesn't look like it's too (typing) too on its, too like a person. And it is, it's just rolling towards you, closer and closer, and it's getting hotter and hotter as it approaches.

ART: Uh, uh,

HADRIAN: Shoot it,

ART: I yell.

DRE: (pause) Yeah. I'll let fly an arrow (AUSTIN: Go ahead.) and I'll also yell,

THRONDIR: What the hell is that thing?

DRE: Or whatever the elf equivalent of "hell" is.

ART: Is it wide, does it take up the whole thing or is that about how big it is?

AUSTIN: I think it's, nah, I think it's *really* wide. (DRE: Yeah.) I think it's like, moving down it. It's big.

ART: Sssure.

DRE: This is like, Temple of Doom style.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Yeah, I guess I want to see if this arrow does anything, and if it doesn't, I think we need to, we need to run.

DRE: Okay.

NICK: Fantasma runs. Already. (DRE laughs) (AUSTIN: Okay.) Before they even light up the shot.

AUSTIN (doubtful): Okay.

DRE: Let one fly here. (NICK: Just like...)

SOMEONE (singing): (like Zoidberg from Futurama) Woop, woowoowoowoo...

DRE: 7.

AUSTIN: Okay, so on a Volley, with a 7, you can move to—you have to move to take the shot, or (DRE: Mhm.) you can do minus 1d6 damage, or you can take several shots, reducing your ammo by 1.

DRE: I'll reduce my ammo by 1.

AUSTIN: Actually, you know what? This is stupid. You shouldn't've had to make that roll, because the second you make one attack you realize that your arrows are just caught up in this thing's flame.

DRE: Gotcha.

ART: Alright. Let's run.

AUSTIN: So you don't have to lose any arrows, or you don't have to lose any ammo.

DRE: (cross) Okay. Yup. Full again.

AUSTIN: (cross) Alright. The crew flees this thing. You make it out towards the front of the cave. Let's, um, here's what I'm going to do. I'm gonna, let's pretend like this thing is split, like a nice easy, let's just do a..

ART: (snorts) I don't think I can command this thing.

(DRE laughs)

ART: Although it's evil...ruuhh... Maybe it's a thing. (pauses) Too late.

AUSTIN: Guess. It doesn't have to be too late.

(typing)

NICK: Did—wait—

AUSTIN: That's my new pop song.

(ART laughs once)

ART: I don't think (AUSTIN: Oh.) I can do this thing while I'm... I guess I could. (DRE: I think I'll—) It feels like I wouldn't be able to do this I Am The Law shit while moving.

DRE: Uh...

AUSTIN: Probably, yeah, that's a good point. That's a good point.

ART: No, like, representing divine authority is a, is a stationary thing. (AUSTIN: Right.) So if I can't get good space on this, it's essentially useless.

NICK: (high, breathy voice) Hadrian—Sword of Samothres—Defender of the Flame—Vessel of the Undying Fire—Member of the Order of Eternal—

(DRE laughs)

AUSTIN: Exactly.

ART: Word.

AUSTIN: Hup... There we go. So this is the bottom here.

DRE: As Throndir is running, he yells up to Fantasma,

THRONDIR: Do you know what that thing is?

(pause)

NICK: Uh.

AUSTIN: That's a good question—

DRE: 'Cause he assumes, 'cause it's magic, (AUSTIN: Right.), he just assumes that Fantasma will know what it is.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

NICK: (laughs) Uh. Fantasma says.

FANTASMO: I know that it's getting farther away from me!

(DRE laughs)

AUSTIN: Do you want to roll, uh, Spout Lore?

NICK: No. Fantasma doesn't care. (AUSTIN: Okay.) He just wants to get the f—eff out of here.

(DRE laughs)

AUSTIN: That's the wrong way, my bad. (typing noises) Uhhh...

ART: I mean, we're not going to stay out of here, we're going to stay at the front of the cave and then when it's gone, we're gonna go back in.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

DRE: (laughing) Sure.

AUSTIN: Sure. As it—

ART: I ain't giving up. I got words in there.

AUSTIN: As it spills out of the cave into this kind of snowy outcropping here, it begins to melt the snow as it moves after you. What do you do?

ART: Oh, it's like following us.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

NICK: Is it still like, melting reality, also?

AUSTIN: Yes. Yeah!

NICK: Hm, uh...

DRE: Throndir's gonna peel off away from the group and head towards the thick trees.

AUSTIN: Okay. So you're—party is splitting up. Okay.

ART: I'm gonna, I'm gonna try to command it to stop.

AUSTIN: Okay. (cross) How do you do that?

DRE: (cross) Yeah, you do that, buddy. I'm going for the trees.

ART: Uh, y'know...

AUSTIN: Also, yeah, you guys can position yourselves generally here, if you're not here just pull yourselves back up to that top map.

ART: Oh wait, what?

(Someone makes the woop woop noise again very softly)

AUSTIN: Uh, obviously you were staying—Oh, she's also gone, she's dead.

ART: She's dead. (pause) So yeah, I try to find, I try to get enough distance to turn, and...y'know,

HADRIAN: Creature of flame, uh, I am the Defender of the Undying Fire—I am Hadrian, Defender of the Undying Fire, you will yield and let us pass.

AUSTIN: Okay, go ahead and make your roll.

ART: It was nice knowing you guys.

AUSTIN: Nice touch talking about the undying fire.

DRE: You crazy for this one, Art. You *crazy* for this one.

ART: 7!

AUSTIN: On a 7, what happens..? (NICK: Mm.) You don't get to plus 1, right?

ART: Wait... Why is that number red?

AUSTIN: Good question, oh, 'cause you rolled a 1.

ART: Oh.

AUSTIN: 1 plus 4? I guess? No, I don't know why. That's weird.

NICK: Yeah. (ART: On a 7 to 9—) I've been wondering, why, what these things are for.

AUSTIN: So green is definitely a—so we're talking about our Roll20 screen now, for people who obviously can't see it. Green is definitely a good success, a high success.

NICK: Sure.

AUSTIN: Blue—

ART: Green is a 6, blue is a 1 and a 6, red is a 1.

AUSTIN: Wait, what do you mean. What do you mean, green is a 6.

ART: If you mouse over it—

AUSTIN: But that's a rolled 6, that's like a proper roll, right?

ART: Right.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: It's like, I guess if you're playing a system that cares about the individual dice.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, that must be it. I don't know—yeah.

ART: So, so 7 is they can do what I say, back away cautiously then flee, or attack me, and considering it's already attacking me, y'know.

AUSTIN: Mhm. Yeah, but that would mean—yeah.

ART: I'm the Defender of the Undying Fire, we're basically brothers.

AUSTIN: And so it just means you don't get the plus 1 forward, right.

ART: Right.

AUSTIN: Okay. So, it does attack you but it specifically attacks you in this very specific way, which is that it like, um. It peels away from that one, from that spot? Like, at the mouth of the cave? And it slowly (typing sounds) kind of spreads out around you. Encircling you, keeping you trapped here, separated from Thorondir and Fantasma.

ART: Alright, I guess this is it, boys.

AUSTIN: Uh—the way into the cave is still open, at this point. But it has...kind of cut you off from them.

ART: I guess I like, cautiously move to the mouth of the cave?

AUSTIN: I mean, it's gonna... (amused) Yeah. Okay.

ART: Like, if it's letting me go in there—

AUSTIN: Well, it isn't so much doing—it's just in this brief moment, it has kind of spilled out around you in this way, and you know that in a split second, it will probably close in on you. It doesn't feel safe, this isn't like, (higher pitched voice) *Oh, come on in!*

ART: (cross) I thought it was like, forcing me in. Like, I thought it was like, it's worse in here.

AUSTIN: (cross) I'm just letting you know. No. No, it's not doing that. In another second—I mean, you could probably just run through the fire, too. D'you know what I mean?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: But. But.

ART: I mean, I guess I'll do that, I'll try to get into the cave.

AUSTIN: Okay!

ART: Is that Defy Danger?

NICK: But there's no—

AUSTIN: Yeah, give—Hm?

NICK: Is there a cave? I thought everything was being eaten.

AUSTIN: No, it's not being *eaten*. It's being distorted. (stammers) It's not like un—it's burning *through* reality. It isn't devouring the cave itself, the cave isn't *gone*.

NICK: Oh.

AUSTIN: You know what I mean?

NICK: Yeah, no, I guess I imagined like, this fire was burning and there was like a starscape or a like hologram grid behind it.

AUSTIN: No. No—No.

NICK: Okay. (laughs)

AUSTIN: Sorry. I should've been clearer.

DRE: Through the fire and the flames, Art.

AUSTIN: Uh, yeah, give me—so are you just like, quickly doing, like—How are you defying danger here?

ART: Yeah, I imagine I'm doing it...quickly. I don't think (AUSTIN: Uh yeah, I think that's probably it.) I mean, yeah I guess there's a CON way of doing it, but I don't think that's what would occur to me (AUSTIN: No, yeah.) in the moment. Like, "I'm just going to tough through this fire" is like not what a person thinks.

AUSTIN: Well, the other thing is, I'm really reserving toughing through it to not mean dodging damage. To meaning, I'm gonna get this thing done *despite* the damage. Like, normally, getting shot with arrows would stop me in my tracks. But, because I Defied Danger: CON, I'm able to continue forward and get the book on the pedestal, or whatever it is, y'know. That's kind of how I'm imagining—Or, again. Defy Danger: CON being, going without food, or water, like that sort of CON thing. But like, just pushing through weight or something would be Strength.

But anyway, in this case, I think DEX is the right case.

ART: Uh... Yeah! Just barely!

AUSTIN: Okay. Um... So on a 7 (ART: All about those 7s.) with Defy Danger, I offer you a worse outcome, hard bargain, or ugly choice. (pause) That's pretty... Hm. That might be too mean. That might be too mean. Um.

Yeah, it also just doesn't make sense. Uh. (exhales) As you get in, you feel the um, the pack that you're carrying catch fire, and the healing potion you're carrying snaps from the kind of, the belt that it's tied to you with? (ART: Sure.)

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And it falls and shatters on the hard rock floor of the cave.

ART: Oh, that's a shame.

AUSTIN: It's a shame. But you get in. And for a moment, the briefest moment, this fire looks almost confused, as if it doesn't know what to do. (ART laughs) Let's move you back up here,

Art, just for convenience's sake. Obviously this isn't one-to-one, but. You're back up in the cave system at this point.

ART: In the cave system.

NICK: While all that is happening—

AUSTIN: Yeah, what are you guys up to?

NICK: Um. I wanna—Fantasmo, I wanna try to roll a Spout Lore.

AUSTIN: Sure!

(pause, vague mic noises)

NICK: Uh, 7, and I'm going to use my books too, so, plus 1.

AUSTIN: Okay. So you've, you've kind of—oh wait, no, you don't want to do that, because 7 plus 1 is still only an 8. Which, you need a 10 or above to get like a super success. (DRE: Mhm.) (NICK: Oh. You're right.) 7 to 9 is like the... So yeah, save your books.

NICK: Yeah yeah. Sorry.

AUSTIN: Um, so I get to tell you something interesting, it's up to you to make it useful. Uh... interesting. I think it's clear to you at this point that each of these things, you're able to put it together based on what, what Mee Kosh told you, based on your experience here, that each of these things has been a missing word. A word that was stolen from someone. Mee Kosh told you before you left, to carry your important words close to you but not too close. In each of these cases, this feels like maybe it was someone carrying a little, carrying—(enunciating) *carrying* their words a bit too close, *caring* a bit too much about what they were. (DRE: Hmm.) Whether that thing was their hunger, or their need for warmth, or quiet—uh, you're able to see—

ART: Oh, I hope it was that fuckin' group of books, I hope they came through here.

DRE: (laughs) God, could you imagine if this dude got his hands on a dictionary? We would be *screwed!*

(NICK laughs)

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, imagine if one of these things had more than one word. That would be bad.

DRE: Mhm. (ART: Yeah.) That would be like, Scribblenauts, from hell.

(NICK laughs, AUSTIN chuckles once)

ART: Like ScribbleNazis.

AUSTIN: So—Yes.

DRE: Well.

ART: That feels bad.

AUSTIN: Thorondir, let's go to you. You bounced, right? You're like, in the woods.

DRE: Well, I mean I think I ran towards the treeline but I probably like, was looking over my shoulder (AUSTIN: Mhm.) as this was going on and as I see—I mean, could I have seen Hadrian duck back in?

AUSTIN: You... Yeah, you see him duck back in, and are you like, hidden up against a tree?

DRE: Well, I think I've like stopped at the treeline and I've turned around because I'm like, what is Hadrian doing, why is he not running?

AUSTIN: Okay. (cross) Um, so what do you do?

DRE: (cross) So what's the fire doing?

AUSTIN: I'm asking you—let's talk about what you're—so you're stopped here, then. That's—

DRE: Yeah. Uh,

AUSTIN: That was, you're like, (quietly) here? Okay.

DRE: I'm waiting to see if the fire is going to go after Hadrian, or is it gonna come after us.

AUSTIN: Okay, but you're waiting. So, so.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Fantasma, what are you doing?

NICK: Um... (pause) Fantasma is, uh, acting on the knowledge he just had, he's gonna start, like, yelling all of the synonyms for fire, (AUSTIN: Hm.) starting with "fire," that he can think of. (laughs)

AUSTIN: (amused) Okay. Uh... but not with any like, like what's your emotional intent here, I guess?

NICK: Uh. Duress.

AUSTIN: With the—Like, what is your actual intent here? Okay.

NICK: I'm trying to, I'm trying to see if I can cancel it out.

AUSTIN: Okay. Uhh...

DRE: (intrigued) Mmm!

NICK: Or like, by calling its name, maybe I can—

AUSTIN: Right right right. I think it—

NICK:—gather some power over it.

(pause)

AUSTIN: It definitely... You definitely have its attention. It like, it does respond as if you've said its name, as if you've called to it. Y'know?

NICK: Okay, sure.

AUSTIN: But it doesn't—you can see your words devoured in the air and become part of this fire. It's not making it stronger, or anything, I'm not screwing you over for this idea. But you can tell it's reacting to it, y'know?

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: Like, it's almost as if—

NICK: Am I forgetting these words? As I'm saying them?

AUSTIN: No, no, you're not. Because however deep the person who wanted warmth's desire was for it, yours is...put on. Like, (NICK: Right, yeah.) there's a difference between the person who is freezing to death, wishing for a fire, and you trying—y'know.

NICK: I don't actually *want* fire. (cross) I want, I want power (much more quietly) over this thing.

AUSTIN: (cross) Right. Exactly. And it knows that. (NICK: Yeah.) Right. Exactly. Um.

ART: Oh, I don't want to meet the thing of this that's *power*.

AUSTIN: That's a good question.

DRE: Oh boy.

(NICK laughs)

DRE: Can I—Can I tell, can I intuit from like seeing Fantasma yelling fire and seeing it kind of perk up, (AUSTIN: Mhm.) Thrandir starts to think of the first time he ever saw a big rainstorm. Like, which was probably not until like he got to Velas.

AUSTIN: Yeah, when **was** that? Yeah, I was gonna say—

DRE: Probably not until he got to Velas, because he's used to all this snow.

AUSTIN (delighted): Tell me about the first rainstorm you saw.

DRE: Uh... It was probably, he was probably still in the woods, coming out of the Erasure, (AUSTIN: Mhm.) and, um, like when he started feeling drops on his head...just had, just was completely baffled. (AUSTIN laughs) And then when it started to just open up and just drench on him, he probably just stood there and laughed. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) Because it was such a bizarre, surreal experience, to see, like—

He's probably heard of rain (AUSTIN: Right. Yes.), right, like he's heard of it? But he's never felt it before in his life. Um. Like, the first time someone who's lived in Arizona their whole life runs into a snowbank.

AUSTIN: Right, right. Totally.

DRE: Um, so he thinks of that moment as hard as he can.

AUSTIN: Um, he like really—but are you just thinking about it? Like how—you see where the division is here, (DRE: Yeah.) this is, it has to be the—I mean, there's a lot of things this has to be for this to happen. Like, to be clear, this isn't just everyone who's ever had a serious thought here has made that thing come true, right? (DRE: Right.)

Fantasma does understand that these are creatures that are kind of catching onto real desires. (DRE: Mhm.) They're not just—it's not just like, oh, this place is cursed. He gets this. Fantasma knows this at this point because he's the one who spouted lore and is the magician, and he's put all this together. (DRE: Right.) But Thorondir maybe...thinks that will work. (DRE: Yeah.) And...it's not out of the question, I guess.

(contemplative noises) Give me...give me a... um. So I think this is almost a Parley. Give me a Parley roll.

DRE: Okay. Is that Charisma?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it is.

ART: Oh no.

DRE: Oh, boy.

AUSTIN: 'Cause I know what they want.

DRE: A 5.

AUSTIN (amused): The lightning strikes you, like, near you, so quickly. (DRE laughs) You couldn't have imagined. But there is a thunderstorm out now. And that's not a thing you have the

word for, in fact, you don't know what this stuff is that's falling on you, exactly. Like, you know, like, ah, it's wet st—Mm, you don't even, can't even, you've lost—

DRE: Aw man. I've lost the memory of rain. The word for rain.

AUSTIN: (struggling to describe) You don't ever see—but you can't—it's just, rain, and water, (DRE: Yeah.) and wetness, and moisture, and all of that. But you felt it, you really did feel it. (DRE: Yeah.) Which really goes to show your compassion for your companion, Fero.

Or not Fero, goddammit. Keith's gonna *kill me!* Uh, (DRE: Yeah, a little bit.) Fantasma. But the rain does do what you hope it would, which is put out this fire. Things get slippery quickly, as the snow is rained on and reveal the hard ice underneath. (DRE: Mm.) What do you do?

DRE: Um. Make for the cave.

AUSTIN: Okay, I'm gonna have you roll a Defy Danger: DEX to get up the hill kind of, (DRE: Ooh, yeah, sure.) from the treeline? But Fantasma, you're able to get back in pretty easily. Uh, give me the Defy Danger. (NICK: Okay. Wh—)

AUSTIN: What's up?

DRE: 10.

NICK: Why could Fantasma do it easily?

AUSTIN: 'Cause you're still up in this general area. Do you know what I mean? (NICK: Oh.) Whereas Thorondir ran down to the treeline from this mountain. (NICK: Sure.) He like, sprinted away from the party immediately. So Fantasma doesn't have any problem doing this. Um. sSo yeah. I'm gonna also pop you up to—You got it. Oops, sorry, I didn't mean to put you on top of each other. (NICK laughs)

And at this point... So yeah, what did you roll, then? Oh yeah, successful?

DRE: 10.

AUSTIN: Great. Everyone's keeping track of their misses, also?

DRE: Mhm.

ART: Yep.

AUSTIN: Alright. Hadrian, what did you do—this is while all this other shit was happening? (cross) What did you do when you were outside?

ART: (cross) So I guess I'm trying to figure out, like, what's going on in this, is there another thing coming, is there like, (AUSTIN: Right.) I guess I'm like, I'm trying to move my way back, I don't know how long this is, but I'm trying to get like here.

AUSTIN: You do, easily. And you see, when you get here—you see—Fuck, I have to refresh this page, I hate you Roll20 sometimes, (ART laughs) (sing-song) Not all the time, but sometimes, it breaks... You see at the, up to the top of the curve, a figure lit by the, um, the leash that had that light spell cast on it.

ART: Sure. I guess if I'm passing the leash, and I probably am, I'm probably going here.
(AUSTIN: Right.) I pick it up.

AUSTIN: Okay. That's fair. (muttering) I have to like, completely quit and come back in to this thing, I swear. The figure that you see is much larger than you were anticipating, it is fair to say. It is almost as tall as this cave is, big and round. You know, fourteen feet, fifteen feet tall. Probably, you know, ten wide. On the top of its green... head, its green, what do you call it? Not just fangs, but we described the orcs—like tusked, it has like a tusked mouth, and deep red eyes—is a little crown. Like a crown *not* the size of *his* head.

And he wears a mix of metal and cloth. There is something regal about the man in front of you, or the thing in front of you, the troll in front of you. Or not troll, *ogre* is the word I'm looking for. The *ogre* in front of you. (typing)

ART: Does his crown look anything like my holy symbol? My ring.

AUSTIN: No, I mean only insofar as it's a crown. D'you know what I mean? (ART: Right. Sure.) But not—but beyond that, no. (NICK: Yep. (laughs)) (ART: I think—) He says, in just a deep, moving voice,

AUSTIN (as OGRE, with a deep, husky voice): Welcome. Come with me.

AUSTIN: Hadrian, do you follow this thing back to wherever it's taking you?

ART: Yeah, yeah, you know, I'm open to the idea that I'm gonna go up there and he's gonna club me with his hammer, right?

AUSTIN: Uh, I should actually describe that it's not like a hammer—this token is holding a hammer. It's like, a giant scepter. It's like a giant gold and bronze and like, it's like a mix of a bunch of different metals, and pieces that have been crafted from a bunch of different hands, put together into what looks like a king's scepter. It peaks at the top of the—a kind of bulb, and it has a large ruby at the very tip.

ART: Ugh, well, there's evil and there's menacing, right? Like, (AUSTIN: Sure.) Hella's evil, but I never think that like, she's just gonna stab me.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah. Fair. Absolutely.

ART: Like this guy is not... This guy looks like he's on the up and up?

AUSTIN: He's like, acting like that, you know what I mean? He's definitely, like, you feel hospitality in his tone, at least. You know?

DRE: Hmm.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: So, whatever that means to you. Uh...

ART: I mean, at the very worst the cavalry's coming.

AUSTIN: Right, that's true.

ART: Uh... yeah, I approach, and I—I'm blanking on that name, it's good we're in the forgetting area.

AUSTIN: (laughs) yeah, Kindrali.

HADRIAN: Kindrali, I presume.

KINDRALI: Mm. That's right. Sit.

AUSTIN: And he offers you a seat around like, a giant, there's some benches. This is like his, not like his bedroom, but his—shit. I done fucked up on this map.

ART: It's about to get *sexy*.

AUSTIN: *Yeah*. (ART: Mmm!) No, (DRE: That's weird.) he offers you to sit—Did I just move these the wrong way? No, I didn't, okay—on these benches that are around a big fire pit at the center of his like, living area. He has like, a bed of straw in one corner. Uh. And in the other, there are—it's like, his waste corner, and it's the bones of things he's eaten. Uh... The bones of men he's killed.

ART: Okay.

DRE: Cozy.

ART: Yeah, uh. Oh, fuck me.

AUSTIN: Yeah?

ART: I'm not allowed to suffer an evil creature to live.

AUSTIN: You're not, but, y'know. It's not immediate (DRE laughs) (ART: We're not there yet. Yeah.), you have some time. (NICK laughs) Right. Right.

ART: Uh, fuck. Aw. I don't want to do this. Um! (DRE laughs)

KINDRALI: What brings you—

ART: Alright, yeah, I sit down, I sit down.

KINDRALI: What brings you to this place?

AUSTIN: He says.

HADRIAN: My companions and I, we've lost important words, and we were told by a friend that you had too, you might be able to help.

KINDRALI: Mm.

AUSTIN: He nods.

KINDRALI: Ah. Many people lose words here. The thieves, they steal our words from us. I've lost a few myself. Ha ha ha!

HADRIAN: Can they be—can we regain our words? Can you help? Can we help you?

KINDRALI: Hm. Perhaps. What words, what sort of words have you lost?

AUSTIN: (amused) obviously he isn't going to say "what words."

ART: Right.

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HADRIAN: Uh... Um. I've lost, I've lost the most important name in my life. (typing noises) I've lost—

KINDRALI (cutting in abruptly): A loved one?

AUSTIN: He laughs.

HADRIAN: Uh—A god.

KINDRALI: Mm. (cross) I know the name of many gods—

HADRIAN: (cross) My companions—

ART: Oh. Sorry.

AUSTIN: He says,

KINDRALI: I know the name of many gods. Tell me about yours.

HADRIAN: Uh, my god was the first king of these lands. He, he forged the sun from the volcano, the iron volcano.

AUSTIN: Hmm. (pause) He looks at you, like, in the eye, gives you a really solid, deep look as if he's peering into *your* mind.

KINDRALI: Samot. You are speaking of Samot.

ART: So it's not right, but do I know it's not right? Do I remember that I've heard that before?

AUSTIN: Give me... Give me a Defy Danger... (sighs) do you think this is Intelligence or d'you think this is Wisdom?

ART: Uh, I'd have to read the descriptions.

AUSTIN: Let's take a look. It's one of the two.

ART: Uh... Defy Danger. Quick thinking is Intelligence, mental fortitude is Wisdom.

AUSTIN: I think it's qu—mental fortitude.

ART: That's good. I have Wisdom.

AUSTIN: (laughs) That is good.

ART: I mean, I have a 0 WIS, but, y'know.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: Are you drawing more stuff down there, should I be down here? Oh!—

AUSTIN: Yeah, there's a whole little thing.

ART: Look at this!

AUSTIN: Yeah, I made a whole little thing for you down there, I made like a whole little diorama.

ART: I'm on this bench!

AUSTIN: Right, you're on that bench!

ART: It's got a... Yeah, this is exactly—That's a big—who's that big chair?

(laughter)

AUSTIN: Do you not see him on top of it? Is he not there?

ART: He's there, but um—(DRE: Yeah, he's there.) (AUSTIN: Okay.) Hey, I got experience!

AUSTIN: Oh, boy.

(ART laughs)

NICK: Also, why is he standing on—he's standing on top of the chair.

AUSTIN: He's sitting on the—(joking pained voice) I don't have a sitting, I don't have a sitting—

NICK: I know, I know.

AUSTIN: (cross) I'm trying my best, I'm trying so hard—

DRE: (cross) Just go with it, Nick!

NICK: I wasn't—I'm sorry—

ART: He forgot his word for sit.

(laughter)

AUSTIN: Um, no, you have no idea—yeah! Yeah! Samot. You try it on, it sounds good.

ART: Eurrghhh, great.

AUSTIN: Mm. (sighs)

HADRIAN: (cross) Thank you.

KINDRALI: (cross) That is your god. What else have you lost?

AUSTIN: I—

HADRIAN: Uh—

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

HADRIAN: Oh. My—

ART: And I pause as I think of the shorthand I would use for Fantasma. (AUSTIN: Mhm.)
Because "friend" isn't it.

AUSTIN: Aaww.

ART: "Companion" seems cold.

AUSTIN: Right.

DRE: Is that wrong, though? I feel like "companion" might be the best one.

(typing)

NICK: "Travelling companion?"

HADRIAN: My—my ally.

AUSTIN: Mm. Mm.

HADRIAN: Has lost—

NICK: I don't know if that's quite right either. But... sure.

(DRE laughs)

ART: I mean, I'm also being diplomatic here, right, I won't be like, "this *jerk* I hang out with."
(NICK: Yeah. (laughs) Yeah.) "Help him too. I don't like him. You should do him a favor."

(laughter)

Um.

HADRIAN: My ally has lost his...his grasp on uh...on this plane? I don't know how to describe it, he can't—he can't not be invisible.

KINDRALI: Hmm.

HADRIAN: Forgot magic words.

KINDRALI: Hmm. I would have to speak to him. His words are his. I cannot give you his words.

HADRIAN: I appreciate that. And my—

DRE: So speaking of that, where are we?

(NICK laughs)

AUSTIN: Good question. I feel like you guys are about to come in.

DRE: Okay.

HADRIAN: And my newest friend seems to have lost a lot.

(AUSTIN laughs)

DRE: Aw, buddy! (laughs)

KINDRALI: Many people lose things in these woods.

HADRIAN: He's from here. This is his home.

KINDRALI: (interested) Mmm! I see.

AUSTIN: For the briefest moment, the deepness in his voice is replaced with a, not just a higher pitch, but almost a different voice steps in. Right, like he has this (doing Kindrali's voice) deep, regal voice. But for a moment, there's almost a snicker when you say he's from here.

ART: Oh—like a charming snicker, or like a—

AUSTIN: No. Like...a...

ART: Oh, I just saw this bone pile, it was behind my character sheet.

AUSTIN: Yeah. (DRE laughs) Um, like there sort of is—

ART: The (??? 1:04:56) going to work here.

NICK: He (AUSTIN: Like the sort of a snicker—) ate that lady and now she's (whispers) *living inside of there*.

AUSTIN: (quiet amused exhale) Like the sort of a snicker that someone makes—that like, a football captain makes, when talking about their rivals that they crushed in the big game?

ART: Like a, (nastily) "heh!"

DRE: Oh, boy.

ART: Like that?

AUSTIN: Yeah, like that. Yeah. Or like, not the quarterback. Like, a second string...like the second string quarterback makes. Like, (nasal but still nastily) "Heh!" In my world second string quarterbacks are more nasally, I guess.

(NICK laughs)

ART: Yeah, that's why they're not first string, they can't breathe as well.

AUSTIN: Right.

(NICK laughs for longer this time)

AUSTIN: So you guys can come in now, at this point. And you see this giant ogreman.

(NICK is still laughing)

AUSTIN: What do you do?

HADRIAN: Oh! These are the people I was telling you about.

KINDRALI: Come. Sit.

AUSTIN: He eyes you so, so badly, Thorondir. He like, his eyes like—they're joyous in a really *mean* way when they look at you.

DRE: Hmm. (pauses) Oh gosh. I mean, he's this...giant man. Throndir is... I guess the only thing he can say is,

THRONDIR: I feel like you have something to say to me.

KINDRALI: Tell me what you know of your people.

THRONDIR: Um... We came to this land before, before the Erasure happened, and—we prepared ourselves for it so that after it came we could—our people could live on.

KINDRALI: (chuckles) Yes, you were here before the Erasure, but you were not alone.

THRONDIR: You're not the first person to tell me as much.

KINDRALI: (carefully) Your people took a lot from mine. We taught them how to live. (pause) The goblins and the snow elves were friends, strange friends, but friends. And, in a moment of crisis, we joined together, my men and yours, and we found a place in this world to be safe. Right at the heart of the...of the terror. Sometimes the closer you are the safer you are. And we survived.

And, for many years, we prospered together. And the elves lived shorter lives and the goblins longer lives, and that was a point of contention. (laughs) But...one day, there was a debate among the council who runs your civilization about what to do. About where to go. Or *if* they should go. My people understood that the worst had passed and yours wanted to stay locked up, forever.

One of these *word-eaters* was born in this moment, when the elves and goblins had this dispute. Would they continue to be a civilization of hoarders prepping from one disaster to the next, or would they step out of their inhabitation and explore the world again, attempt to make things better? The word "hoarding" itself was devoured, and then another word, and then another word, and then the word "Auniq" itself was eaten.

AUSTIN: Auniq, you know, is the name of your people and your culture and your place.

DRE: Mhm.

KINDRALI: And the conversation vanished, but the dispute remained.

AUSTIN: Did you have something in mind for Auniq, for what it meant, Dre?

DRE: Um, I was looking up like, different words for snow and ice in other languages? Uh, and—

AUSTIN: Mhm. I think it means, I think it means "strange bedfellows."

DRE: Mm! (cross) I like that.

AUSTIN: (cross) But you don't know that.

DRE: Yeah. I like that.

AUSTIN: None of people know that anymore.

(typing)

KINDRALI: Do you have any questions, snow elf?

THRONDIR: What... Were you there when the Erasure happened?

KINDRALI: Of *course* I was there.

AUSTIN: Fantasma, what are you up to?

NICK: Um... Uh, Fantasma is kinda just...like, watching and listening and being a little flabbergasted?

AUSTIN: That's fair. (ART: That's, yeah.) Are you sitting on one of these benches? Ae you hanging out?

NICK: No, I'm still hanging out.

AUSTIN: You're standing where you were.

NICK: In the entry—yeah, in the entryway.

AUSTIN: Um, uh. I think Kodiak is sniffing at these bones.

DRE: Yeah. That's, yeah.

ART: That's what dogs do.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

NICK: Uh, Fantasma's going to go follow Kodiak.

AUSTIN: That's good. Uh... Good. That's good. Stay there for a second. (small laughs) Is there, are Hadrian and Thorondir asking anything else of this guy.

DRE: Oh god, yeah.

ART: I mean, I have questions, but they're end-of-conversation—they're conversation-enders.

AUSTIN: Okay. So let's talk about Thorondir first.

DRE: Yeah, um.

THRONDIR: What other words have we lost? I...

KINDRALI: Many words.

AUSTIN: And he starts saying them and you don't know what—you don't... They don't mean anything to you.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: One after another. "Kindrali," he says, and laughs.

KINDRALI: You lost Kindrali a long time ago. (sly chuckle)

(pause)

DRE: He, um...

(pause)

He looks at Kindrali and he says,

THRONDIR: I'm different from, from the elves that came before me, my father and his father and his father before him. Why?

KINDRALI: How are you different?

THRONDIR: We age, we live longer, like the elves used to.

KINDRALI: Huh.

AUSTIN: He leans forward, his face lit, his gray, grinning face lit by the flames.

KINDRALI: Tell me why you're special, boy.

ART: Ew.

DRE: Ugh... (laughs)

KINDRALI: Give me your word.

DRE: Oh, jeez!

ART: Word like promise, or word like—?

AUSTIN: Give me—give me a Defy Danger: Charisma?

DRE: Oh, boy, yeah, you would pick my worst score. (laughs)

AUSTIN: I think? I think? ...Well, okay, maybe that's wrong though.

ART: It's sing charm and social grace to evade danger.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think—I think it's... (DRE: Wisdom?) I think this is again Wisdom.

DRE: Okay. (pause) 7.

AUSTIN: Okay. ...So what—here's how I'm going to say this. This is, one of my options is "worse outcome, hard bargain, or ugly choice." What does make Thorondir special? You say that it's because he ages more slowly.

DRE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Right. So that's one. What other things make him special? Like, in terms of himself. (DRE: Yeah, um...) In terms of the world. Not just as a snow elf. Just in general.

DRE: Yeah, I mean, he comes from a group of people who, who hide and want to stay secluded forever. (AUSTIN: Right.) But he has left of his own volition, like something in him drove him to leave.

AUSTIN: Good call. That's good.

DRE: Um, and something—

AUSTIN: So that's like a... So like, adventurousness or braveness? Courage?

DRE: Yeah, I would say it's—

AUSTIN: Courage.

DRE: Yeah. Courage, and. Unlike most of his people, he doesn't just accept what's given to him. He just wants to figure out things instead of just being complacent.

AUSTIN: So—Alright, so then, let's say this then. Let's say, long life, courage, or inquisitiveness. Which of the three do you give to him?

DRE: Oh, *boy*. Um...

AUSTIN: Let's rephrase it! Long life, courage, or inquisitiveness. Which of the three do you lose?

(long pause)

DRE: 'Cause I'm curious to see what'll happen... (AUSTIN laughs) Long life.

AUSTIN: Fantasma. You see Kodiak dig through the bones. He's like, (dog foley) rah rah rah ruh ruh ruh. (DRE laughs) He's pulling away at them, he's pulling away at them, and he's, he's kind of shoved...

[1:15:00]

he's kind of shoved them aside, and he's digging and digging, you know, the way, the way these things happen, the way these...

DRE: The way dogs do.

AUSTIN: (typing) Whoops. The way dogs do. Like you do. Um, and...underneath the bones is a body. And not just any body, but, of course, the body of Kindrali. What do you do?

ART: How do—

AUSTIN: You see it lit by the, by the licks of the fire pit at the center of the room.

ART: What does, I know I can't see, but what does that body look like?

AUSTIN: There is some flesh left on it, but it's mostly bones at this point.

ART: Yeah, but like, how do—what is—like just—literally, what does it look like? Like—

AUSTIN: It's the same as the thing in front of you.

ART: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's, it may as well be a twin. Um. From here, anyway. From this perspective.

ART: Oh... I feel so much better about how horribly we're about to be killed.

(AUSTIN and DRE laugh)

ART: 'Cause I was actually gonna—about to have like a really uncomfortable conversation.

AUSTIN: Right.

ART: With that guy, about like "hey, you've been really helpful, but (stammers) I gotta try to kill you."

AUSTIN: Mhm.

DRE: Yup. (laughs)

AUSTIN: Here's a q—

NICK: Hello?

(EVERYONE makes sounds of greeting)

AUSTIN: Fantasma's back. Hey, Fantasma. So what do you do?

NICK: Uh, it wasn't my mic, VoiceMeeter apparently crashed on me.

AUSTIN: (scoffs) It's always VoiceMeeter.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I love VoiceMeeter. We need it. We use it a lot for streaming. But. (DRE: Mhm.) Yeah...

ART: It's another one of the array of crappy programs we're stuck using.

AUSTIN: (laughs) One day all this stuff will be figured out.

NICK: Also, apparently all my sound is different now, so, I'm sorry, Keith.

AUSTIN: Oh, boy.

(ART laughs once)

AUSTIN: He'll work it out.

NICK: Uh.

AUSTIN: So what's...what do you do when you see the body of Kindrali?

NICK: I—I also lost a lot of that? Because (AUSTIN: Okay.) as VoiceMeeter crashed, (AUSTIN: You lost sound?) I lost all my sound, too, so. (ART laughs)

AUSTIN: So underneath the bones that Kodiak was digging through? Alright, so first things first, uh, Throndir lost the word for—(DRE: Long life.) which one did you end up giving him?

DRE: (cross) Long life.

AUSTIN: (cross) Long life.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: And at that moment is when you realize that you saw the body of Kindrali underneath the bones that Kodiak was digging through. And I asked you what you did.

NICK: Oh wait, so the guy that's sitting in the thing?

AUSTIN: Yes. Yeah.

NICK: Is it like, do I notice any uh...like, degradation of the body? Has it been there a while?

AUSTIN: Yes. It's been, it's been there a while, it still has some meat on the bones, but a lot of it is gone. It may have been bitten into. It may have been eaten.

NICK: Oh. Fantasma just sort of looks back and forth at the guy sitting in the chair (AUSTIN laughs) and the body that he sees under the bones a few times. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) Uh. And he says, uh,

FANTASMO: Pardon me, gentlemen.

ART: Uh—well I guess, yeah, we look, right, yeah.

NICK: Yeah. (small laugh from AUSTIN and DRE)

FANTASMO: Uh, I—

ART: Are you like—oh, sorry.

FANTASMO: I believe I have found someone's twin.

(AUSTIN laughs lengthily)

KINDRALI: Oh.

HADRIAN: Oh...fuck...

KINDRALI: Yes, he—yes, that's my twin.

AUSTIN: He says. (DRE laughs) And he's like, snickering a little.

DRE: Man, someone failed the shit out of that Parley roll.

AUSTIN: He stands up, pushing the chair back, this big stone chair.

KINDRALI: (laughing, delighted) Mmm, he died a long time ago and it was—oh, it was very sad, I was very sad. I was just heartbroken.

AUSTIN: What do you do?

NICK: Is that him laughing?

ART: Does he sound that sarcastic?

AUSTIN: Yes, absolutely.

NICK: Oh.

DRE: Mm.

AUSTIN: Um...

ART: I still want to know—ugh.

DRE: Nah, it's bow time.

ART: I'm—I know, but I have so many cosmological—this is so interesting! (AUSTIN: Mhm.) Theologically.

(AUSTIN laughs)

ART: Like, what is it to steal...a god? To steal *being a god*?

(AUSTIN laughs)

ART: Ugh. I'll ask the next one.

AUSTIN: The next god that you encounter, yeah?

(DRE laughs)

ART: (cross) The next person pretending to be a god that we encounter.

AUSTIN: (cross) The next person pretending to be a god. Sure. Um. Hmm.

(pause)

DRE: Throndir's was most definitely going for his bow.

AUSTIN (quietly): Sure. I'm just—

ART: Yeah, I think you should shoot him.

AUSTIN: He shakes his head.

KINDRALI: Stop. Leave. I've given you what you've wanted. What have I taken from you?

ART: Um—

KINDRALI: A few years, maybe. Heheh!

AUSTIN: He laughs.

HADRIAN: I can't. (NICK: Uh.) (stammers) I made a divine promise. I can't—

KINDRALI: To who?

HADRIAN: To—Samot.

(KINDRALI laughs)

HADRIAN: I can't—

NICK: Um—

DRE: I can't tell if that's an Austin laugh, or a—

AUSTIN: No, that's an in-character laugh.

ART: No, that's his laugh.

DRE: Okay.

NICK: Fantasma hears that, and he says,

FANTASMO: Even I know that's not his name!

AUSTIN: Ha! (claps)

ART: Wait—

DRE: Nice. Nice!

(AUSTIN keeps laughing)

NICK: What?

AUSTIN: I just realized—at no point did Art even *ask* another player! (ART: Yup, no.) This is how—great! Perfect.

ART: Hadrian doesn't do that!

AUSTIN: No, he doesn't.

ART: Hadrian's is not an asker, he's a fixer. (pause) (NICK laughs) I look—I'm confused, right? I'm visibly confused. (AUSTIN: Yeah.) Like, like,

HADRIAN: It is, right?

AUSTIN: Kindrali nods his head and looks at you, and smiles and nods.

KINDRALI: Mm. Yes—

NICK: Who's—Who's you?

AUSTIN: Uh, to Hadrian,

KINDRALI: (lighthearted) Of course, of course it's your god's name, you know it in your heart! (turning menacing) Why would I lie to *you*?

ART: Why—why would you emphasize *you* like that? We're not—we're not friends. Uh. (laughter)

HADRIAN: It doesn't matter, I can't—I can't...

ART: I—I point my weapon at him.

AUSTIN: Okay. What's your intent, with pointing it at him?

ART: I guess I'm like, this is dumb. I guess I'm like, giving him a moment to surrender.

AUSTIN: So you're not, this isn't—give me a Defy Danger... Mm. Hm. No, I don't think he's—I have to get into his head. I have to really get in there.

He reaches out his hand and touches the tip of your halberd, and, cutting his hand as he does so, pushes it slowly downwards.

KINDRALI: Leave.

HADRIAN: I can't.

AUSTIN: He shakes his head and pulls his hand up and in the fire, you can see the cut healing.

HADRIAN: It doesn't matter. If I have to—if, to serve, I have to die here, that's what my service requires of me.

KINDRALI: What if I don't let you die. I'd bet you have many words that I would find interesting and it wouldn't take too long for me to get you to call them out. How many are you willing to lose? (HADRIAN: All of—all of—) I already have *so many*.

HADRIAN: Everything.

NICK: Can I try a Spout Lore?

AUSTIN: Sure.

NICK: Uh, I'm looking for—wait, how does Sp—how do you Sp...

AUSTIN: You just roll it and I tell you—Spout Lore, so there's Spout Lore and there's Discern Realities. (NICK: Okay.) Spout Lore is you're recalling accumulated knowledge.

NICK: I always get the two mixed.

AUSTIN: You're poring through books, you're whatever you're doing to, um, learn something about the current situation. (NICK: Right.) On a 10+, I will give you something interesting and useful about the subject relevant to your situation, on a 7-9 I'll tell you something interesting, it's up to you to make it useful, (NICK: Right.) and then Discern Realities is the one where you have to ask a bunch of different questions from a set. Which is like, what happened here recently, what's about to happen, et cetera.

NICK: Alright, I'm gonna Sp—Oh man, I really hope my audio isn't totally messed up. Um.

AUSTIN: I'm recording on OBS and you're coming in fine for me, (DRE: Yeah, you sound good.) so worst comes to worst, we can cut you in here.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Is your Audacity recording? Do you see...

NICK: Yeah, no, it's going, (AUSTIN: Okay. Okay.) but it's like, I think I'm clipping real bad (AUSTIN: Ooh.) even though I've got myself turned down? In a weird way? I don't know. It's weird. Um.

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay. We'll see. Sorry for our listeners if he sounds bad right now.

NICK: Alright, yeah. So I'm gonna... I'm gonna roll a, uh, Spout Wisdom—uh, Spout Lore.

AUSTIN: Okay, so that's Intelligence roll.

NICK: Ugh. 7.

AUSTIN: Something interesting but not necessarily useful... Um. (NICK: Yeah.) You think that, you're pretty sure that—you're *pretty* sure that this is a collection of words. That this is a collection of word-eaters, or one word-eater that has kind of gluttonously devoured many words for a long time. And you know that—...

I think it clicks in your head that there's enough truth in this for this to be a very old wordeater. That he was—I don't know if your audio was cut out at the time, but at one point he was describing being there when the goblins and the elves were together and that there was a big dispute? And that they lost the word of their (NICK: Yeah.), what the meaning was, of their culture, he probably devoured that word. He was the one who probably devoured the word "hoarding." Um, these people really wanted to keep hoarding things. (NICK: Sure.) And *really* wanted it. And then he got it. And he's been hoarding words ever since.

So I think that's interesting but not useful. (laughs) Definitely interesting, though. I think.

ART: Definitely is.

NICK: It is.

ART: I think it's useful.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: He points with one arm to the door. Like, not to the door but to the mouth of this little entryway.

HADRIAN: I won't, I can't! I've been given a choice to fail my deity or perish, and I have to choose perish. Or, y'know, not perish.

ART: (scoffs) (AUSTIN: Mhm.) Y'know, I'm not throwing myself on my blade here.

AUSTIN: Mhm, mhm.

NICK: Fantasma sorta sidles up to Thorondir and whispers to him:

FANTASMO (bad whispering): How did you make the rain, before?

DRE: (laughs) I guess I'm saying this in like, hushed tones.

NICK: I guess, also you might, I guess you don't know what the word "rain."

AUSTIN: Yeah, you don't.

DRE: Oh, man.

NICK: So—

AUSTIN: Yeah. How did you do—How did you—

FANTASMO: How did you make the wet stuff, from the sky—

AUSTIN: Nope, no, he doesn't have "wet" either.

NICK: Oh.

AUSTIN: Or "liquid," or "water."

FANTASMO: The stuff that killed the fire (AUSTIN: Mm, good job.), how did you make it?

THRONDIR: I—I thought really hard about the first time that...I remember feeling...some...something. And, just feeling something, and remembering *something*, and just—I couldn't let Hadrian down.

NICK: Fantasma, Fantasma pats Thorondir on the shoulder and he says,

FANTASMO: That'll do, my boy.

DRE and AUSTIN (laughing): Aww.

NICK: He, uh, confidently strolls forward. Uh.

AUSTIN: Not into the fire, I'm guessing.

NICK: No no no, he strolls forwards towards the...the doppelganger here (ART: Well, I guess I'm like *here*.) (AUSTIN: Yeah.).

AUSTIN: Mhm.

NICK: And he says: (pauses)

FANTASMO: You like words, yes? Ideas? (pauses, waiting for a response)

KINDRALI: Hm.

FANTASMO: I have quite a lot of them for you. Let me tell you a story. (DRE laughs) (ART: Oh *no*.) When I was a young elf, and I mean *very* young, before...before maturity! (snickering) This was...I don't...a hundred years ago?

KINDRALI: (sarcastically) Oh, you're so very old, Master Elf! A hundred, a hundred years, he says!

ART: This guy's a real asshole.

(AUSTIN laughs)

NICK: (laughs) After he says that, Fantasma, um, I'm gonna try to roll a Prestidigitation.

AUSTIN: Mhm.

NICK: Um, Fantasma pounds his staff on the ground, (AUSTIN: Uh-huh?) and causes it to—and I'll forget Prestidigitation for this—(AUSTIN: Sure.) causes it to echo throughout the entire cave.

FANTASMO: (yelling, audio is loud and echoes) QUIET! I AM SPEAKING!

(DRE giggles)

AUSTIN: You've lost that spell.

NICK: That's fine.

AUSTIN: No no no, no, you've *lost* that spell.

NICK: What? Oh.

KINDRALI: That's one.

AUSTIN: He says.

KINDRALI: Do you want to teach me more?

[1:30:00]

FANTASMO: I told you to be quiet. I am not finished with my story.

AUSTIN: He like, bows to you.

KINDRALI: Mm.

FANTASMO: (slowly and deliberately) This was before I was the head of the most powerful magical university in the land. This was before I had *enrolled* in that university. There was one thing. There was *one*... (typing noises) driving force that led me to this university. That led me to knowledge and magic. Do you know what that was?

KINDRALI: (voice rasping) What was it?

NICK: I, uh, (laughs) get up on my tippy toes as much as I possibly can, (AUSTIN laughs) and I whisper at him:

FANTASMO: (whispering slowly) *Ignorance*.

NICK: And as I'm saying it, Fantasma is recalling the fear and the...powerlessness that he had as a young elf, watching the world crumble around him and not knowing anything to do about it. Watching his elders die, watching...magic as he knew it drain from the world. Just this complete, crippling fear of the unknown and emptiness of ignorance.

AUSTIN: He *howls* at you. And you feel a wealth of knowledge, you feel words pass through you for just a brief moment, things that you, that no one else knows. Things that, you know, knowledge that even at your height, even when surrounded by your books, things from before the bad times, pass through you, briefly. All of you in the room feel this.

For a brief moment, Hadrian, uh—I'll come to you, I'll come to Hadrian last. One second. Um, Hadrian's is important in a big picture way. Uh, Thorondir, you see Auniq and it's at its glory days when the goblins still lived there. And you see people working hand in hand to raise crops that will live in this bad weather. There's a point at which the weather changes, and they have to figure out, like, shit, we were prepared for what the climate was supposed to be here before the

Erasure, and this is not what it is anymore, so how do we deal with this, and there was some harsh times, and they get through it, and there's friendship, and, and a real intermingling of the species. And, a friendship, and these pass through you, and they're gone in the next second.

Fantasma, you feel a deep connection to the amount of knowledge this man had, for as much—or this thing... Excuse me. It swells up in you for the brief moment, you—there's something seductive about that much knowledge, which you were already very familiar with that sort of seduction, (NICK: Mhm.) and that sort of seductive power. And...you see faraway places and you see the kind of magical theory that was so powerful as to be forbidden. Even to people at the highest level of the university. You know, this kind of nuclear reactor level shit that's kept under lock and key, flows through you for a brief moment and it's gone. You know—(NICK: Uh.) you remember a *touch* of it. Mhm?

NICK: Fantasma falls to his knees, like gripping his staff, as that washes over him.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um, you can also remove the Stunned state, as you get your invisibility spell back, and your Prestidigitation. (NICK: Hm.) Hadrian...

ART: Yep.

AUSTIN: They're there. All of them.

ART: All of...?

AUSTIN: The old five?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The old five. (ART: The old five.) The pantheon (ART: The pantheon.) that used to rule this place. (ART: Uh-huh?) (sighs) And you don't know their names, but you see the boy-king again with his blond locks and his distant view. And you see the iron sun, the iron king, who you worship, Samoths, and his name comes back to your lips, and it is a beautiful thing to have again.

And you see her, with her shield, defending the continent against the waves themselves. And you see her, the pirate woman at the head of her ship, moving down across the coast, her ship filled with refugees. And you see...a man? A tree? A thing in between. Jolly, playful, watching the word—world burn and not being too sure what to do about it. And then they're gone, but you see them for that second and you'll always have that second.

ART: Sure.

(pause)

AUSTIN: He drops to his knees as he's howling at you, and begins to take fire, take flame, in the same way as the other things did, not the big fireball one, but as they were defeated, so to speak.

NICK: Like the blue, (cross) burning at the edges.

AUSTIN: (cross) The blue fire, yes, exactly. Separating from here. And he smiles at you and says,

KINDRALI: I still have o—I still got one.

AUSTIN: And you feel it slip from you, however slightly, that you've lost just a bit of your pride. Just a little bit.

DRE: Hmm.

(NICK chuckles)

AUSTIN: Let's call it there! Actually, let's do a little bit of post-this narration. I wanna set us up for the next thing. Which is:

You're able to leave here, you have your words back.

DRE: Well, I think after it happens, (AUSTIN: Mhm.) like, Throndir whoops and he hugs Fantasma, and just says like,

THRONDIR: *That was incredible!*

(AUSTIN and NICK laugh)

AUSTIN: There is, I think—okay, so here's the other thing that I wanted to convey, and I don't know that I did this at any point directly. Which is, you all share one word that you feel as it gets ripped from him, which is... How did I write it down, like what's the exact word I want here? Uh...

Deception. Like, it's the emotional desire to deceive. Which I think should leave everyone—like, obviously now that you know your real god's name is not Samot, (ART: Right.) but there were things that sounded true in there, but also all of it should be covered in a bit of...a mix of whether he was telling the truth or not. Right, like there's some doubt about that.

DRE: Mm.

ART: Yeah, I think I got that.

AUSTIN: Okay, good. I wanted to make sure.

ART: But I was lied to most directly, so.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... As you... Do you leave? I mean, I guess you leave, you're not just going to stay here for the rest of your lives, right?

DRE: Yeah, there's nothing else to see in there, is there?

ART: No, this is it, we live here.

AUSTIN: Nah.

ART: Set up a detective agency.

AUSTIN: I mean, he still has all, ah—the, true armor and scepter fall to the ground. He was wearing Kindrali's real, like—and his crown.

ART: Oh my god, that must be priceless.

DRE: Yeah, we gotta take that.

AUSTIN: It's priceless. I mean, good luck hauling his giant armor? Also his giant scepter? Like,

DRE: Aww.

ART: Could we bring it back to, uh...

DRE: Kindrali.

AUSTIN: Sure. No. Yeah.

ART: No. The other one.

AUSTIN: Mee Kosh.

DRE: Oh, sorry. Mee Kosh, yeah.

ART: Mee Kosh.

AUSTIN: Yeah, probably. It would take, let's say, the rest of the day. We were saying this is like, 2pm, 3pm? It would take until the night. But you could haul that back.

ART: I mean, he should have it.

AUSTIN: Probably.

DRE: I agree, I agree.

AUSTIN: It's a pain to do, but you can do it. Um, I feel like as that's happening, you do that and he's thankful—I just want to speed through this so we can set up the next session and then

wrap here. (ART and DRE: Sure.) He gives you another night there, obviously, he's amazed at what you tell him, but at the same time, it seems to all click into place for Mee Kosh.

MEE KOSH: Hmm. Yeah. Yes. Hmm.

AUSTIN: Oh, also, actually, this is all—above all of this is, you're doing this in the rain. In the pouring rain. This whole area is just (DRE: (laughs) Whooops...) covered in just like a crazy thunder storm.

ART: Oh, and it's awful when it rains when it's already cold.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's cold and miserable and you are...(DRE: Ugh.) and you know that this place isn't safe still, right? (DRE: Yeah.) Like, you killed one of these word-eaters and he was a bad one, but like, and he clearly had others at his command? But there are definitely things that you see that feel very strange that you avoid. (DRE: Yeah.) Like, "hey, why is there a weird cherry blossom tree here? That shouldn't be here." (DRE laughs)

ART: Let's not touch it.

AUSTIN: You just—Let's just fuckin' keep going. (DRE laughs) Uh, and so you spend the night back at Mee Kosh's, um, and in the rain, the next day, you set off again. You're warmed up and you have more to drink, and you have some food to bring with you. Um, and you start heading southeast, deeper into the Mark of the Erasure.

And at some point you climb up to a hill, and you see two things in the distance. First, between you—first. Um. I guess, Dre, what are the walls of Auniq, look like? How is it separated from society?

DRE: Um... I would say that they are...they probably are not all that impressive, because there's not, (AUSTIN: Okay.) I mean, the only thing you're protecting yourself against that they know of are animals and creatures. (AUSTIN: Mhm.) I mean, they're stone walls, like they're solid enough that an owlbear couldn't get through it, (AUSTIN: Okay, um.) but they're not a fortress.

AUSTIN: How big is it?

DRE: Uhhh....

AUSTIN: Like, how wide, or not wide, but how long do the walls go for?

DRE: Uh, probably only a couple of miles.

AUSTIN: Okay, but that's still a lot, right. That's still... You see *miles* of wall. That's still a lot for you to see in the middle of this wood, right. (DRE: Yeah yeah yeah.) Also it did turn back—at some point, on the way here, it did turn back to snow and ice, and it's getting colder and colder. For a bit there, that's hail, and that's miserable.

Then beyond Auniq, (DRE: Sorry.) past its stone walls, you see, uh, a tower, sort of like the one you'd seen before, except, instead of being tall in the sky, it's been knocked over, towards its base. (ART: Hm.) It's wider, and broader than the one that you—that Hadrian and Fantasma visited before. Which is that, each floor of it, each floor would be a bigger floor in every way, but it's been toppled. The size of it is a bit—it overcomes you a little bit. Y'know.

From this distance, even, (voice strained) it towers over Auniq. Excuse me. Even from this distance, it towers over Auniq. And...you know that's where you're going. You just know it. What you'll find there, you're not sure. Alright. Let's do end-of-session junk.

DRE: Mm.

ART: Yeah.

DRE: Can ThronDIR say one more thing before we close?

(the wave sounds of "[Autumn Not Winter](#)" by Jack de Quidt fade in)

AUSTIN: Sure.

THRONDIRE: Before we go any further, I have to tell you why I left.

(theme music begins, pause in dialogue)

AUSTIN: My name is Austin Walker, you can find me, as always, at [austin_walker](#) on Twitter, thecalcutec on Twitch, clockworkworlds.com for my writing. If you are listening to this in a month, or two, which is about right, um, and you haven't somehow read my Paste, my piece on PasteMagazine.com/games, I don't know, go look for it. It's called "Real Human Beings." (typing) It's about Shadow of Mordor, and NPCs, and Watchdogs, and racism, and system design, it's got a bunch of stuff. Nick, where can people find you on the internet?

NICK: Uh, you can find me at Twitch, [Twitter](#), and YouTube /drevilbones.

AUSTIN: Andrew?

DRE: Hey, you can find me on Twitter at andrewleeswan.

AUSTIN: And Art.

ART: Uh, you can find me on Twitter at [atebbel](#), and if I'm doing my math right, I will have just reviewed The Hunger Games: Mockingjay - Part 1 when this comes out on ComicMix.com.

AUSTIN: (laughs) Good math. Solid math. As always, you can find all of the things that we do, the archives of the video games we stream, at StreamFriends.tv. Thank you for joining us, everybody. (music fades out) And remember, as always, our agenda is to portray a fantastic world, fill the characters' lives with adventure, and to play to find out what happens.

[1:44:45]