



banana (GM): There's a great fire that evening in San Meat, and the scorching of flesh is less than ordinarily advertent. It is an omen.

So the priests say, and they'd know; 24 glasses before the sacred barbeque, its natural echo has consumed not game but property and life. In these days, all man's workings are magnified and made catastrophic. New rumours of war burn like the fire in the shadow quarter, and for the first time, some of the massed tourist crowds begin to murmur of dispersing.

How many even died, though?



Placidus: It can't have been very many, assuming you don't count things that were already dead.



banana (GM): It's surprisingly easy to escape a raging inferno. Terrifying, yes, and few memories remain; certainly in the moment it's chaotic and there are problems and pain. But Vraknaar was immune to all harm, Xarvrax nearly so, and all the rest of you had to do was follow...



Xandrah: Or people.



banana (GM): There was even time to get things done. The burning of the Establishment constitutes an opportunity. While escaping, could each of you please pick some Objective you'd like to accomplish and give me a stat+background roll for it?

Things like "save some people" "make myself look good" "loot the rooms" etc.



Vraknaar: Vraknaar started this mess, so he's going to get as many people out as he can, obviously.



Xandrah: I'm going with loot the rooms, using con/dragonforged to not give a crap about the burning part.



Vraknaar: rolling 1d20+10 dex + dragon forged to pull people out of the inferno

(20)+10

= 30



banana (GM): well, okay.

Way to come across as, like, a superhero instead of the actual agent of destruction!



Xarvrax: rolling d20 + 11 phat loots

(8)+11

= 19



banana (GM): Less impressive but still effective. We're looking at a dc 15 for some minimal effect here



Placidus: are there still people in need of saving after vraknaar's superheroism



banana (GM): literally no

none that it's feasible to learn about or reach, anyway




Vraknaar: It was the Dragon's Fire that started this blaze, but the wrym cares for its brood. The innocent caught in the inferno are swept up in strong arms of red scale, delivered from the fire unharmed and swiftly.



Placidus: then placidus is going to take this opportunity to suss out how this place burning down fits into the series and what repercussions it's going to have on the prince of shadows's term going forward

rolling d20+6 philosophy

() + 6

= **7**

alas



Skeleton: Skeleton was in something of a daze that whole fight, really, and had to be escorted pretty forcefully - carried, a few times - out of the building so as to not have ended up just staring in the flames in confusion, but he DID make an attempt to recover something - anything - of Bonanda's materials and personal effects that would explain the necromancer's origins and connections to Omen.




banana (GM): The flames of the Red still burn from the stone outward. In time, the building's foundation will be reduced to slag.. but when the fire spreads to the wood and velvet it's then that it's a danger; the parts of the structure that people actually walk on and in are collapsing, rubble blocking the corridors and ash choking the air. Vraknaar is everywhere, plunging back into the inferno again and again.

After that night there are many who know the faces of Kon's Men and dozens more who at least have an impression of red scales untouched by the glare of heat - take the background Saviour of the Shadow Quarter +3. The low and shadowy classes of San Meat owe Vraknaar their lives.



Skeleton: rolling 1d20+6 wisdom plus necromancy

() + 6

= **18**



banana (GM): Placidus is mostly just overcome by heatstroke. His lungs are tiny enough in the first place, and all this particulate matter.. after rushing through one particularly collapsing doorway, six seconds later he's struck with a wave of dizziness and coughing that leaves him unable to philosophise or contemplate at all.

Xarvrax meanwhile looks after the main chance...



Skeleton: That would explain EITHER necromancer's origins and connections to Omen, really.



banana (GM): Most of these rooms don't have anything valuable in them. The escaping guests and criminals who call the place home are EXTREMELY concerned with their personal property, sometimes valuing it over their lives.. but Xarvrax finds one thing.



Placidus: Eyes stinging, chest heaving, it's all Placidus can do to make sure he doesn't get crushed by some giant bit of burning wood.



banana (GM): At first it looks like a towel, just hanging there. The interesting thing is that fire rages around it untouched.. neither the cloth nor the clasp is affected. He's come across a magical cape.



Xarvrax: I do enjoy a good cape.

Seeing his brother handling all the undirty work, Xarvrax decides to see if anyone left anything useful behind, nothing good until he stumbles across the cape.

Feeling the magic coming off of it, he grabs it and decides to get out before even his draconic fortitude

gives out on him.



banana (GM): The skeleton mage doesn't find any magical artifacts.. but Bonanda's left one thing behind: the box in which sker bones were kept. It's intricately made with a design on the lid and bits of Stuff inside. Fortunately, when the elf necromancer escaped, someone was standing on it.



Skeleton: Well, that's something. Maybe Skeleton can use it as a portable hiding spot...?



banana (GM): When it's all said and done, you get out alive. Not meritorious either.



Skeleton: Ahem,



banana (GM): Bonanda Limetop, necroterrorist agent of the Omen, is alive.. but he's fled. San Meat, at least, should be safe from his particularly gross brand of dark arcanism for now.

*not unmeritious, i meant

*not unmeritorious



Xarvrax: So what does my fancy new cape do?



banana (GM): Good question!



Vraknaar: It keeps your tail warm.



Placidus: It probably doesn't, I bet his tail sticks out from underneath the cape.



banana (GM): The cape is a kind of glossy beige with violet highlights. It looks well made, but there's no runes on it or anything. It's just.. got some magic in it.



Skeleton: A tail of flights and hoards, eternally recoiled.



Xarvrax: That's a really awful color.



banana (GM): Not if you want to look like a napkin!



Vraknaar: Being a napkin would probably improve Xarvrax's personality.



Skeleton: Maybe Travis can ritually recolor it.



banana (GM): The rest of the evening basically consists of a lot of coughing and resting and commiserating and sleeping.

And in the case of Placidus and Kon, smuggling a bunch of bones into the hotel...



Xarvrax: I'm sure there's a tailor in San Meat that can dye a cape.



Placidus: It wasn't hard to smuggle the bones into the hotel, presumably because of how generally fed-up the proprietors are with the years' worth of nonsense they've had to endure over the last couple days. A bedsheet-covered pile of dry clacking whatever's probably didn't even register as unusual.



banana (GM): Yeah, the couple that run the place have at this point got no guests but you guys - and are well paid beercash by the trickle-now-tide of fans who come for autographs. They spend a lot of time drinking themselves.



Placidus: Placidus's pity for them is attenuated by how gross and distasteful he finds the basic conceits of this city.

banana (GM): Is there anything else which the survivors - all of you, you all survived - do that night



during or while retiring? Because this could be your last night of real rest and ordinary life.



Vraknaar: At some point after Vraknaar's come down from The Fire and its subsequent consequences, he realizes they've acquired a skeleton.



Skeleton: Beyond their interrogation, the skeleton's probably been hiding in the room's closet. Whoever opens the door to address the undead creature next finds it apparently napping, sitting curled up with its back against the wall and its skull between its knees. Closer examination reveals that the skeleton isn't entirely limp, though; it's looking down in silence at its own hands, watching the faint silvery ghostlight stream slowly through the phalanges.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax finds a tailor, and gets his new cape dyed the same blue as his scales.



banana (GM): San Meat is juuust big enough a city to have late-night markets including tailoring. The dye doesn't 'take' very well, but it's blue for now, at least...



Vraknaar: "So... why are we keeping it? I didn't think we wanted any undead minions. I certainly don't." Vraknaar's fangs are bared.



Skeleton: Occasionally, the misty glow flickers, intensifies, and begins to stretch outward, haloing the finger-bones in what looks like the outline of actual, fleshy fingers... but it's a too-smooth, too-stylized outline that looks more cartooned than sculpted, and indeed doesn't even look correct to someone not looking down from the skeleton's own perspective because it turns out to be entirely two-dimensional, a flat, finger-shaped plane that's orthogonal to the skeleton's line of sight.



Placidus: "We need it," Placidus says, looking up at Vraknaar with the vaguely querulous expression of someone who got either too much or too little sleep.



Xarvrax: "It tried to murder that damned elf, it's fine in my book, so long as it doesn't cause trouble, otherwise it becomes Kon's new chewtoy."



Vraknaar: "Need it for what? How do we know it's not one of One-Eye's minions?"



Placidus: "It was obviously supposed to be, before it went rogue and attacked its master. It's actually a free-willed entity, insofar as anything is."



banana (GM): Now, technically, the skeleton mage can *hear* all of this.



Skeleton: Is a necromancer even a mage, in common parlance? Either way, it's not interrupting as yet, though if someone throws the closet door open for the sake of a dramatic gesture it'll probably volunteer something.



Vraknaar: "Maybe so, but why do we need it? Even if it's free-willed now, who's to say he won't get his hooks back in, given a chance?"



banana (GM): Perhaps ske's preoccupied with the flesh that isn't there. There are.. memories of memories. Nothing concrete, but sure, yeah, there should have been flesh here.



Xarvrax: "Because magic doesn't work that way, you dolt."





Placidus: "That's a good question. I have two answers, one of which you'll understand. Are you familiar with the concept of equity?"





Skeleton: "Actually," says a soft voice from the closet, "I've already figured out a 'Control Undead' spell."


banana (GM): Most of the past is fog. There's just an endless well of darkness and grave whispers-


 voices that could be made out, if she listens closely. It's all like that up until a sudden solid point of existence, presence, knowledge. Except, and this is very confusing, there are two of those.

 **Skeleton:** "...well, 'Command', I think."


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax turns his head to the closet, "Which is both temporary, and limited in use, correct?"


 **Placidus:** "Don't be daft, Xarvrax. If we're going to talk to Mr. Skeleton we should open the door so they can participate in the conversation instead of shouting through the door like we're lecturing an unruly child."


 **Vraknaar:** "Still makes it a liability." Vraknaar looks at Placidus. "Equity like... value?"


 **banana (GM):** The skeleton remembers awakening, to the death that should have been new life.. twice. At the same time. The two memories are overlaid on top of each other, contiguous; one of them took place in Bonanda's room, surrounded by these fighting eating men.

So did the other one, but it was different. *How* might take some time to sort out.

 **Skeleton:** "I'd be shocked to see it last half a minute, really..." The skeleton stands - you can all hear clothes rustling and bones scraping against closet walls - and finally opens the door. It's kind of wrapped itself up in a spare, clean bedsheet, looking like a nun or desert traveler.

 **Placidus:** So Placidus opens the door before turning around to face Vraknaar again. "A bit. Specifically, I mean the amount of something's value you can expect to get for yourself. How many of the world's necromancers would you like to destroy?"

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax looks at the skeleton, "Exactly, and despite the King of Necromancers being much more powerful than you, he still couldn't take over something with an actual consciousness, at least, not long enough to be threatening."


 **Vraknaar:** "As many as I can lay my claws on."


"That doesn't make sense, brother."


"Magic -definitely- works that way. As the wizard gets more powerful, the spells grow exponentially. If this skeleton can do it for a minute, I'd bet the Wizard King could do it for a day."


 **Xarvrax:** "You're not understanding the other part well enough."

"Not only is the skeleton the next best thing to alive, at this point, it's also a necromancer in it's own right."

 **Skeleton:** "I feel like he... could? I mean... there are plenty of loyal skeleton mages." Skeleton turns away slightly here, touching a fingertip to their chin. Are THOSE conscious, but totally enslaved? Basically automata with highly-refined instinctual processes? Does anyone even know? You should be able to infer this from what kind of binding magics the things require, right?

 **Placidus:** "Naturally. If we take as given that Omen will fall and the Dragon Empire will reign triumphant, then we're forced to conclude that all necromancers will be destroyed either in the process or as a result. So it stands to reason, then, that something that increased the number of necromancers and necromantic minions who threw themselves at us would increase the number you got to kill, both in absolute terms and as a proportion of all the necromancers that are being killed or will be killed right now. It would, in effect, increase your dead necromancer equity."

 **Skeleton:** "Of course, I'm not sure what stops the wizard king from... er, just controlling any of your minds? Making your own skeletons betray you? Having a ghost jump into your head."

 **Placidus:** "It's equally obvious that, as a rebellious minion of the Wizard King, Mr. Skeleton is just such

a something."



Vraknaar: Vraknaar scratches his head. "Is this part of your continuing strategy to just say enough words so I'll concede because it's easier than arguing?"



banana (GM): Skeleton had assumed.. although with no clear memories of actually assuming per se.. that the mages were just constructs. It seemed feasible. Now ske's not so sure. The necromancy within skem is such that.. this is magic as ske presumably once knew it, but its source is unlimited and specific. Anything that comes from death is so much easier, because everything comes to death in the end.



Ghol, Going East: Yawn.



banana (GM): ..you're pretty sure that it would be much easier to make a skeleton mage by enslaving a soul, in other words, than by animating bones as a kind of golem.



Kon: Yawn.



Placidus: Placidus frowns. "I'll put it plain as I can. Mr. Skeleton is tremendous bait for all of the necromancers the Wizard King is going to insist destroy or reclaim it, starting with the one who was supposed to command it in the first place."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will have spent the evening sleeping, and Kon will be of little to no help except in his own strong silence.



Placidus: "If you can refrain from destroying this necromancer, there will be many more necromancers for you to destroy."



Kon: As far as convincing dragons of the merits of necromancy goes, at least.



Skeleton: "I think Omen's forces ARE going to come after me. I'd rather be somewhere they'd die reaching..."



banana (GM): I think this might be a conversation as you-all are going TO bed, so maybe Ghol just turned in a little early?
Or hasn't quite yet, if you prefer.



Ghol, Going East: He was sick, after all. Swamp fever.



banana (GM): (Elsewhere, Omen's forces prepare vigorously to come after skeleton.)



Placidus: Vigorously, but not vitally.



Vraknaar: "I guess it'll have to do. Intelligent or not though, if it looks like you're back to old habits..."
Vraknaar extends a talon meaningfully.



Skeleton: "I wish I knew what my old habits were."

"Ah, but you're Vraknaar, right? Xarvrax?"


"I think the red one had the vee, he said..."





Placidus: "That's another thing. There's not really any indication Mr. Skeleton was a practicing necromancer prior to their ossification. Well, no, that's not the word - the skeleton was already there. I guess you'd call that a dis-carnation?"





Xarvrax: "Yes yes, I'm Xarvrax, last of the dragonwrought, blah blah blah, I'm going to sleep."


 **banana (GM):** Xarvrax is way too cool to be bothered expounding how cool he is. And it IS late.


 **Kon:** Bed is very sensible, in Kon's opinion.


 **Placidus:** "In fact, it's not really clear that Mr. Skeleton can *do* necromancy at all, in the sense that, say, Travis *does* magic. Mr. Skeleton is simply a disruptive necromantic phenomenon."


 **Vraknaar:** "So, what... he messes up normal necromancy?"


 **Placidus:** "You heard Mr. Skeleton. It can puppeteer existing undead!"


 **Skeleton:** "I probably could. Just now I'm working on getting a working facsimile in order... I can't manage any normal magic."
"I'm sure I could, once..."


 **Placidus:** "You were almost certainly a wizard before all this."

 **banana (GM):** The power is there, but it comes from such a deep and aspected place. It's like you've fallen into one of the Low Arcana and *live* there.
Another discovery: it seems it's possible for skeletons, or whatever Skeleton is, to tire and need rest.


 **Vraknaar:** "If this is some sort of phenomenon that disrupts necromancy then, we'll definitely have to keep... him? What exactly are you? Do you even know?"


 **Skeleton:** "Um.. a skeleton."
The skeleton shrugs, past this.


 **Kon:** That is extremely just and reasonable, in Kon's opinion, which is only half-considered as he's dozed off in the corner of Ghol's room.


 **Placidus:** "I'm not even sure they were a him. Theoretically you could make an educated guess by measuring the width of the pelvis and other things, but aside from being terribly rude we can't be sure all of Mr. Skeleton's bones were their original bones."


 **Vraknaar:** "You're obviously more than a skeleton, though."


 **Skeleton:** "A skeleton mage, I suppose? Either way, thanks for being, er, understanding about all this."
The skeleton kind of fidgets under their bedsheet. Right now all you can see is fingertips holding the cloth together and the skull peeking out of a makeshift hood. They'll have to find themselves a robe or something.


 **Placidus:** "If you're going to walk around outside we're definitely going to need to get you a cloak or something," Placidus says while stifling a yawn. "But that's a matter for tomorrow. Do you need a pillow or a blanket or anything? I'm not clear to what extent you feel things. Physically."

 **Skeleton:** "I can just fold up, I think."

 **Placidus:** "Convenient!"

 **Xarvrax:** Skeleton in a suitcase.

 **Skeleton:** "I'll say." The skeleton's not even tired, really, but that's fine; they need more time to take a personal occult inventory.

 **Vraknaar:** Vraknaar's tired. He shuffles over to a bed and falls in it. "Better get some rest. The Games

proper start soon."



Skeleton: Skeleton just closes the door of the closet they were in and sits back down to meditate, or stare blankly, or prepare spells, or whatever.



Placidus: "Feel free to stay in my room, Mr. Skeleton. Good night."

Placidus is fine with sker there. It's not like it's the only skeleton in his closet.



Ghol, Going East: Skeleton will actually end up on the floor of Ghol's room. That, or Ghol has a long dreamquest ahead of him through the inn's top floor.

Either works, really.



Placidus: Kids these days and their sleepwalking.



banana (GM): You don't have a room each, so I'm assuming Ghol Kon and Placidus share one.

Well, maybe not Kon?



Placidus: I doubt Kon doesn't sleep in Ghol's room.



Kon: No, Kon definitely is indoors tonight due to Ghol's illness.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax sleeps where he pleases.



Kon: And the generally odd addition of a Skeleton to the group.



banana (GM): The next morning, then: it's on.

It 's ON.



Ghol, Going East: Yawn.

Yaaaaawn.

Skeletons are weird, man.



banana (GM): Ghol, as mentioned, is waking up on the floor all grabby, as if carried there by his own dreams.. but at least he doesn't feel sick anymore!

Everyone else just wakes up. Lunchtime today is the Opening Barbecue. The start of the Hungry Games and the rededication of the world's meat.

And then, you have reason to believe, tonight is the very first event...



Ghol, Going East: Ghol and Kon are up early, generally mucking about.



Placidus: Which one is first, is it the 100' sausage?

Or did it get rescheduled to be the Night Steaks?



Xarvrax: I was pretty sure the steaks got moved forward, didn't it?





Placidus: This was explained, Placidus dimly recalls. He recalls very clearly not caring or paying attention at the time, though!




















banana (GM): There's been no announcement at all. But Travis infiltrated the organisers, and that's what they were saying...



Skeleton: Skeleton turns up as soon as he hears the others up and about. "Actually, does anyone know where to get me a- what's going on, anyway?"

- **Ghol, Going East:** "AAAOh, right."
- **Placidus:** "I know a local tailor. I got these clothes our first day in town."


Placidus says this, clearly referring to his green robes and shapeless hat, which Skeleton might've noticed is covering a scalp that's largely shaved bald (though not recently - hair's begun growing back in).
- **Ghol, Going East:** While everyone else is getting ready for the day, Ghol's already gone and gotten some breakfast and is currently restringing his bow for maximum...well, okay, the bow was strung fine, he just does this when he's nervous or anxious. Good to have the bow back, for that.
- **Placidus:** The bow needs to be wound as tight as he is.
- **banana (GM):** Breakfast this morning in the hotel is very light. Cordial, salad, just a bit of bacon.. the whole town is looking forward to lunch.
- **Ghol, Going East:** Yeah!! Ghol will chirp in agreement before getting the not-quite-joke at his expense.
- **Skeleton:** "Ah, nice. I need... a robe, I guess. Gloves and hood and so on, too... is there a way to look like somebody's fanatical cultist but still remain unobtrusive?"
- **banana (GM):** The fans are **already** here, a couple of dedicated groups downstairs in the common room hoping to take magical snapshots with you and get people to sign their body parts and so on...
- **Placidus:** "You'd have to change your clothes every time we went somewhere where a different cult was in favor."
- **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol and Kon are willing to press the flesh, ha, as a distraction if they want to smuggle the Skeleton out the back.
- **Placidus:** "Oh, for the love of meat. They're **already** downstairs. Ugh."

"Don't these people have lives?"
- **Vraknaar:** "Not to mention looking unobtrusive compared to us is fairly easy."
- **Placidus:** "That's true. Not being an enormous dragon or a bear-sized warg gives you an excellent head start."
- **banana (GM):** Barkeeper somewhere: "..try the brown wine, a favourite of the Dragon Brothers! It'll help fuel their sandwich skills, I bet."
- **Placidus:** "Er, skull start."
- **Ghol, Going East:** It's still a head.
- **Placidus:** Is it, though?
- **banana (GM):** Fans: "Oh, oh ok!" "Is Travis still glowing golden like a god-man?" "Is this the right city gate to leave for Ironhenge?" "Is it true that there's an orc in Kon's Men who'll be leaving after the games to fight the Conqueror?"
- **Skeleton:** "That's true, that's true. Well... I don't know, I suppose I can stay up here for now while someone finds me something? I'll pay you back as soon as is practical." Skeleton isn't sure who this is that's supposed to be downstairs, but figures it'll be explained in time.

 **Kon:** Kon is already in the common room, giving pawprint autographs and looking sufficiently regal/threatening/etcetera to those who try to pet him like some common...well...pet.

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax catches the end of the barkeep's pitch and scoffs, "I really don't get why people think wine is good, it tastes awful, and it being brown sounds even worse than normal somehow."

 **Placidus:** "I'll tell you what. I'll see to your clothes. No one'll want my autograph so I can just slip out."

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol, meanwhile, will be very confident that he has plans for After the Games, and completely circumspect about what those plans actually may be.


 **Skeleton:** The skeleton nods, and makes themselves unobtrusive. Hopefully people won't actually come storming up to Placidus's room in any case.

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax spends his time checking over his new cape one last time to make sure it's not terrible special.

 **banana (GM):** It takes a key to get upstairs, thank goodness, and you haven't driven anyone into an actual criminal frenzy.
The cape...

 **Placidus:** That doesn't seem like the kind of thing that would happen. "If you need something to occupy yourself, see if you can make any sense of that thing under my desk that looks like a pile of junk."

 **banana (GM):** The colour is already fading! It's still Xarvrax-shaded, but a little lighter than before. Beige, apparently, will out. You can swish it around a bit.. it's certainly a very **strong** cape. Could it be protective magic?
Probably someone who knows how to analyse magical spells and artifacts would help here.

 **Placidus:** Where **is** Travis, anyway?


 **banana (GM):** That's a good question, but I won't answer it.

 **Skeleton:** "Sure thing." What IS the pile of junk under Placidus's desk?

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax pokes Placidus, "Hey. Hey. Do you know what this thing does?"

 **banana (GM):** It's exactly what Placidus says it is. A sort of central metal circular piece with things.. strapped on. Levers and bits. Some of it is more rocky than metallic.
There's quite a lot to it, and most of it can be made to move, but it doesn't DO anything.


 **Skeleton:** Skeleton glances over as the blue dragonwrought stops the gnome, briefly. The cape doesn't have the unglow of necromancy, does it?


 **Xarvrax:** "It's not sorcery so I have no clue about it, really."


 **banana (GM):** No death magic in this particular garment.


 **Skeleton:** "Doesn't look like anything to me, which I suppose is a good sign."
Skeleton fiddles with the object. "Where'd this come from?"

 **Placidus:** "Underground, beneath the dwarf stronghold where the Kingswood used to be."
Placidus looks at the cape. "Hmm..."

 **Skeleton:** Skeleton turns it over a few times, twists the auxiliary bits into a few shapes that seem to make sense with each other, and metaphorically sniffs the thing for familiar magic, but otherwise is at a loss.


 **banana (GM):** The streets outside are filling up, you can see from the windows. Windchimes ring occasionally in the air as citizens and tourists alike zip about, clustering and preparing. Banners are going up in the main street, erected by priest-spellcasters who look a little tired from acting as a fire brigade last night..


 **Placidus:** rolling d20+6 raw, unworked int. add 1 if my occultist skill is applicable. this is about the cape


() + 6


= **13**


feh!!


 **banana (GM):** The face of Alabastien Meat, as depicted, is that of a milkmaid.

 **Placidus:** THIS is why you always have a five


 **banana (GM):** Well, Placidus can see why Xarvrax thinks it's magic. The folding is kind of unnatural and it does seem to be more of a piece than actual woven strands of cloth. He can't detect that sort of thing himself, of course.

 **Ghol, Going East:** While the nerds nerd out about nerd stuff, Ghol will be preparing for Night Steaks...!! Did they register just him, or him and Kon? Teen Elf-Orc remains unclear on the particulars, both generally and specifically.


 **banana (GM):** That's actually going to be finalised at the bbq, so you'd better make sure to attend! It's in just a couple of hours, so this would be a good time to do clothes shopping.

 **Placidus:** Did we have to register people for the event or can people just show up? If Placidus had to register people he would've registered Ghol and Kon.


Ah, there we go.


 **banana (GM):** (Also, in order to finalise it, you'll need to actually decide.)

 **Xarvrax:** "Augh! I'm about to just start hurling magic at this thing until it reacts!"

 **Placidus:** "I'm not a wizard, sorry."


"You could go find Capel or someone."





 **Skeleton:** rolling 1d20 6 int alone on the gizmo


()

= **20**

make that a 26, i forgot the + sign

 **Xarvrax:** "And ask that pompous, stuck up, nosy, wizard for help?! Well... at least I'd know what it did then."

-  **Placidus:** "Just use some of your legendary charm to win him over."
-  **Vraknaar:** "Maybe you shouldn't start blasting it. You might ruin it."
-  **Placidus:** With that, Placidus goes shopping for clothes for a skeleton.
-  **Xarvrax:** "Maybe I will!" Xarvrax shouts after him, before going off to find a stupid wizard to tell him what this thing does.


 **banana (GM):** Everyone heads out on errands, except the poor guy(??) who's trapped by her(??) own nature...


Skeleton probably had a decent brain, once. Figuring out how wire A goes into fuse B is pretty easy, and the thing can be made to *spin*.. Placidus probably didn't know about that, ha!

Funny thing is, the spinning reminds you of something.

It's just going on and on, round and round like the gilded oval on Skeleton's bone box.


Ah, that's what it was. When you awakened, full of triumph and power, the box had of course been prepared. It was a key component of the- of- well, you don't recall exactly, but anyway. The power was THERE, and also, leaving.


 **Vraknaar:** Vraknaar probably follows his brother, to keep him from maiming anyone who doesn't deserve it.


 **banana (GM):** Streaming away, being *pulled* - Skeleton's own life and mind and mana being unwound like a bobbin of thread. Inevitably. It was at this point that Bonanda started making silly demands, but, also, he didn't?


In the overlaid memory, instead this happened:

"Hey. Sucks to be you, right?"


 **Skeleton:** Skeleton, sitting crossboned on the floor in front of Placidus's weird machine, twists their spine and neck most of the way around to look back at the box they were decanted out of. Hang on. Haaaang on....


 **banana (GM):** Xarvrax has an easier time finding the Thaumaturgustators than Placidus does an open shop.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Personally, Ghol would like to have a good, solid off-hand cutting tool/weapon/what have you to complement the rune, but he appears to still be sitting on just 45 gold at the moment, give or take a piece or two. Keeping track of money is unpleasant.


 **Placidus:** Actually balancing accounts is very soothing.

It's a great way to relax.

 **banana (GM):** There are booths and stages set up all around the main square at the base of the Alabaster Grill.. thanks to the foresight of Doulz, one even has your own standard above it. Another has the shattered palace of Horizon and the Apprentice's shadowed flame, and there the wizards gather.

 **Placidus:** You know what's not soothing, though, is wandering around these terrible meat-smelling streets looking for a damned tailor.

What *is* our standard?

 **banana (GM):** Capel the Bold is striding hugely around the little float throwing weird pods and sweetmeats to the crowd. Five grey-robed terrified figures keep being swept out of his way as they try to finish setting up the Thaumaturgustators' stand - apprentices, who need a union badly - and it's hard

to get any attention. Xarvrax is immediately noticed by the two *other* wizards though.



Xarvrax: Oh gods no.

Not them.

ANYONE BUT THEM!



Ghol, Going East: Ghol and Kon will report to their booth immediately, though Ghol will want to get in some bow practice first...or, well, eventually.



banana (GM): Standing in the shadows of the float and sipping iced somethings are a human all in green and a thin figure made up of spindly light. "Hey," says the androgynous green one. "It's a dragon."



Ghol, Going East: They will not, in any strict or even acceptably loose sense "man" the thing, however.



Xarvrax: Oh, it's not actually them.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol because he will constantly be wandering off due to Attention Span and Teen, and Kon because he is a warg.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax glances at the "green one," "Hey, it's a... whatever the hell you are."



Vraknaar: "Two dragons, actually."



Skeleton: Skeleton, in the not-past, having just assembled themselves out of a small box in a huge swell of arcane power: "Eh?"

Xiaxi: "I... am Xiaxi. Aspirant of Growth, third level estuchess (M. inferior). You must be Vraknaar and whoever."

Dude made of light, roughly shaped more like a tree than a humanoid: "Apparator."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax turns to the much more interesting light tree, "You seem to be the reasonable one here, and the fact that you appear to be made out of light suggests a pretty decent chunk of magical power, so I'm guessing you two are some kind of wizards."



banana (GM): Skeleton's word - exclamation, really - was swept from their own mouth by the tide of dwindling power. Taken, and it's skeir own spell doing it.. this was a *trap*. Nebulously present, falsely-remembered, casually dressed, some girl said: "Yep. They got you good."

Apparator: A mouth forms in order to grin. "Wizards is our day job. Today we're gonna eat."



Skeleton: "What? No, no, no. You see this? My last weakness - all the flesh and so on - finally carved away. Now I have ETERNITY to... to..."



Ghol, Going East: Oh, sure. Let the giant light tree in the contest. That's not cheating. Grumble.



Kon: Well...it's probably not.




banana (GM): Placidus finds, at last, a Meat Khetheran general store which does not hold at all with the Games and is valiantly trying to serve the tide of customers who do. There's a large family and they do handyman jobs, including tailoring and selling premade clothes.




Placidus: Hooray!





Vraknaar: "Barbeque's not started yet. Surely you can spare a few minutes."


 **Skeleton:** "...hang on, no, you can't be right. No, this must have used more mana than expected, or something. Wait, wait, wait..."


 **banana (GM):** (On his way through the square he comes across the banner of Kon's Men, which turns out to be a copper dragon rampant fighting along side a great warg against a tide of schnitzel-creatures and eggs.)


 **Kon:** Nice.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Nice.


 **Xarvrax:** "Fair enough, I suppose." Xarvrax chuckles a bit, before grabbing the cloak from an edge and pulling it around in front of him, "You wouldn't happen to know what this damned cape does, would you? It's not sorcery, necromancy, or any kind of magic I can recognize, but I know it has some kind of magic in it."

 **banana (GM):** The plain wooden box, unadorned.. it was supposed to hold Ske, to hold, whoever they were, their essence. Keep it safe? But even the box is physically *leaving*, rising into the air and travelling, carrying you away. The girl: "Want me to stick a fork in their plans?"


 **Skeleton:** Skeleton's snatching helplessly at the thing, and more besides - but great streams of multicolored magical power are just bleeding heedlessly through and past the creature's phalanges. "No, I can- I won't allow the- they can't- what in hell's name IS this, how do I STOP it?!"

 **banana (GM):** Xiaxi the Green and The Apparator both turn immediately to look at the cape. So do nearby elements of the crowd, actually.. Xiaxi: "Did you do that on purpose, sir?"


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax notices the large amount of movement and eyes directed at him, "Do what exactly, all I did was move the thing?"


 **banana (GM):** Now Skeleton recalls the true incongruity of this memory, if that's what it is. Ske's going *backwards* coming apart, into the box - it's open, and finely planed wood is all that you can see. A very short and obvious destiny.


The girl pushes the box aside with one clawed hand, winces in sympathy. "All you have to do is ask."


 **Skeleton:** Skeleton's just managing to pry the lid open, boned fingers on either end of the crack and pushing it open just enough to peer desperately at the woman with one mostly-covered eye socket. "HELP ME!"


Apparator: "Yeah, hang on." The wizard waves one "arm"-beam - there's a little flicker and you can kind of see an actual person beneath for an instant as they cast a spell. "You've got a Cloak of the Obvious there, friend."

 **banana (GM):** Ghol's drawn some attention, too. A couple of white-robed meat priests are heading over with forms and a taster plate.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Forms...?! That's manager work, is what it is.

 **Xarvrax:** "Yes, it's obviously a cloak, I gathered that much myself, so what exactly does it do?"

 **Placidus:** Placidus is looking for a traveling cloak, something sturdy with a lot of coverage that doesn't look flashy. Something in a nice gray or drab brown-green would do the trick. Along with gloves, boots...probably some kind of pouch for that little box. Who knows.

 **banana (GM):** The Girl: "Okay, but you owe me."
Skeleton can barely hold on to the edges of the box with both hands now- or, well, hand-bones is what

they've become. This is all going the wrong way, which is to say, inside.



Placidus: Hopefully the transaction all goes through on the nod. Placidus needs to get to the Sacred BBQ...!



Skeleton: In different circumstances, this would provoke a sudden drawing back, a wary peering, an extreme and meticulous curiosity. Now, though: "WHATEVER-"



banana (GM): She reaches out to the lid of the box and traces something, a symbol out of your vision... little runnels of gilt appear around the edges. The magic has holes, now; edges.

The-person-Skeleton-was can't really see the pattern due to at this point in time being sucked bodily and spiritually into the bone box - and torn apart in the process, scraped by its edges, by the tide of skeir own magic. But the edges are irregular, and something remains.

That's you, you remember. You remained.

Xiaxi: "That's what it does. It's obvious."



banana (GM): Placidus doesn't have any problems, as long as he's willing to outlay like four gold pieces here.



Vraknaar: "Pff. Like he needed any help with -that-."



Xarvrax: "So it's a cape... obviously so." Xarvrax groans and puts a claw on his face, "Wizards, why can you never make things simple."



Placidus: That's fine. It's just money. As long as he knows exactly how much he has, he doesn't particularly care what that number is.



Skeleton: Skeleton, sitting now on Placidus's floor and still turned away from that device the gnome dug up, reaches out to pick up their former box and look over it carefully. This is it? This circle thing? That's the design that girl must've put down?



banana (GM): There's tracework around the edges, cutting into the sides of the box.. violently, you now realise; limiting it. The central design isn't quite a circle, though. More an egg.



Skeleton: Does Skeleton still seem to be connected to the box?



banana (GM): There's a clatter as the gizmo stops spinning at last, falling over to point eastward.

Yes. Necromantically, figuratively, literally - something that is or was Skeleton is in there.

The box hasn't actually been opened since you, or at least your bones, came out of it - and it doesn't open easily. Maybe for a reason.

Xiaxi: "No, that's what it does. Obviousness magic."

Apparator: "Normally I would ask: how'd you find one of those? But they're easy as hell to FIND. The problem is getting people to look away."

Capel the Bold: "Guys, why are you helping our competitors?" He's leaning over the top of the float.



Placidus: Placidus knocks on his own door, which may or may not distract Skeleton or interrupt sker reverie.



Skeleton: ...! Maybe Skeleton can... recover something, then, or free themselves completely, or something. They do try to open the box, but stop trying if the box itself seems to resist. Something to keep in mind, though, and definitely to keep safe... and then there's that machine. Pointing east, eh?

Any other components there that seem to, say, clarify or highlight the precise angle, list anything like a vertical shift or estimated distance?



Xarvrax: "So it's a hypnotic cloak, at least to some degree, interesting, possibly useful, but not terribly amazing."



Skeleton: "...ah? Oh, come- wait, who is it."



banana (GM): The whole thing is definitely... oriented, yeah. Skeleton can spend some time taking notes, but isn't going to do any better than Placidus did on that particular topic (and probably worse; he trianguated, and he knows geometry).



Placidus: "It's me!" Placidus calls.



banana (GM): OK, apparently Skeleton can't spend time taking notes at all.



Skeleton: "Come on in, then. Look at this..." Skeleton waves an arm over the device once the gnome's inside.

"I got it spinning... and suddenly remembered something about, well, about yesterday in the process, and now it's pointing eastward."

Apparator: "Quiet, get back to your dancing."

Xiaxi: "They only made two of these ever, because that's *enough*. They're each incredibly non-rare."



Placidus: Placidus drops a largish bundle on the floor. "Oh, it's compassing again. Ah! You connected a bit, there. That's interesting, I couldn't make any of those dangling bits match any of the sockets."



Skeleton: "You summoned or, or invoke, or something, the King, did you? Yesterday?"



Placidus: It's not pointing in a different direction than normal, right?

"I did, yes."



Skeleton: invoked*



banana (GM): Same way as always. Making it spin is Skeleton's only innovation.



Skeleton: actually, i should ask - did skeleton recognize the diabolist, there?



banana (GM): Given time to process and consider, skeleton could probably make some guesses. Of all the things ske does remember about the world, the Icons are foremost.

And, like, there aren't a lot of famous young women with horns.



Xarvrax: "So it's an amazingly not-rare two of a kind cloak of obviousness that... still isn't terribly impressive with the way you're putting it."



Skeleton: "How recently have you tapped... the diabolist?"



Placidus: "I haven't, yet. Why?"



Ghol, Going East: Phrasing.



Skeleton: "This thing." Skeleton taps the box. "It was supposed to trap me... and I'm still tied to it. I remember, when Bonanda called me out in the first place. I think she saved me from it."

Placidus: "That was arguably very nice of her."

"Do you know why?"



banana (GM): There are, alas for Ghol, no managers in sight. "Father Potpie, Brother Mintmutton. You must be from the Companies' team?"



Skeleton: "No. The - unless I don't remember it all, our exchange was pretty brief. I was, er, in a hurry... but it WAS an exchange. I owe her, I think."



Ghol, Going East: "Yyyyyyyeah."



Placidus: "Oh. You mean to say that you retain your will because of some vague and unelaborated debt you owe to the Diabolist."

Xiaxi: "Well, I could just give you the stats if you like. Swap a favour?"



Vraknaar: "If they only made two, it's either impressive or useless."



Skeleton: "Prrrrrobably."



Kon: Kon pads over to lend the proceedings an air of authority and supervise Ghol.



Xarvrax: "Sure, why not, I'm not terribly busy now."



Placidus: Placidus nods. "That makes sense. Well here, I've got you some clothes. We should get out to the temple before something disastrous happens."

Potpie: "This is the schedule for the bbq. You guys are fifth speaking slot.. here's the form of service." He keeps giving Ghol more and more paper. "Event registration and updated schedule. Can you fill that in while we wait?"

Mintmutton: "Onion ring?" He's got a platter.



Skeleton: "I suppose it does... does this thing always point that way?" Skeleton stands, here, taking whatever Placidus has found for sker.



Ghol, Going East: "I can...completely write things down." Pause. "Speaking slot...?!"
Completely switching gears to onion ring: "Oh, thanks."



banana (GM): The Apparator slouches/glows off to do some business as Xiaxi expounds to the dragons. "Well! You're looking at +1 PD on that, standard flex-enchanted, but the really obvious power comes in like three parts.. it's super synergistic! The creator must have been a real Master of Power."



Placidus: "It does. It's got some sort of tidal attraction to a point that, near as I can tell, is a bit outside of Santa Cora, on the seaside."


"Naturally we need to see what it's pointing to. But come! There'll be time for that later." Skeleton finds a bunch of gray-green robes and some gloves and boots that don't match it at all.

Xiaxi: "I'll give you these stats for free, just gimme some info and tips in a few days, ok? I'm assuming we'll be winning already by then but it never hurts to have friends. You've got a +2 to be noticed... -2 to *avoid* notice, stealth and so on, and most excitingly of all, The Obvious Conceals." This last is said in words of magic; runes drip from the wizard's mouth and hang briefly in the air before vanishing.

"Which is to say: you're highly, highly resistant to scrying when you've got that thing on. It's easy to see you.. if you're there to see it. Now you don't."




Ghol, Going East: Ghol will fill out the forms to the best of his ability, liberally skipping places he doesn't know how to complete. An adult will want to review this, before it is filed.

 **Skeleton:** "Well, I'm quite interested in seeing why, now." The skeleton pulls the clothing on, making sure to cinch the hood forward and down as far as it'll go. When that's not quite reliable on its own, ske grabs a spare cloth out of the closet to tie around the lower half of their skull as a sort of scarf. Finally, they flex their fingers under the gloves, crack their knuckles, and emanate a brief, weird chill before holding a hand out at Placidus. "Here - how's this feel?"

 **Placidus:** rolling d20 a normal save


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
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 **Xarvrax:** "So it's hard to see me if I'm wearing this thing? Because all they can see is it, I guess?"


Father Potpie: The square is being slowly cleared of crowds to make space for the actual event; the lowest stair of the Grill is being cordoned off by priests and a couple of crystal-armoured elf soldiers. Enticing scents drift down from the ziggurat. "Yes, speaking slot- each team gets to make a brief dedication or invocation, sort of a stomach-cleansing mantra."


Xiaxi the Green: "It's really, really easy to see you, but only with eyes."

 **Skeleton:** Huh - it's like there's flesh under there, almost. Something, anyway, some sort of volume that isn't just wrist and forearm-bones.


 **Placidus:** "Oh! That's quite convincing. Nicely done. Shall we?"


 **Skeleton:** "Let's." As Skeleton heads out of the room with the gnome, they begin: "So... explain this competition, or whatever?"

 **Placidus:** "Well, there are five events..." Placidus gives Skeleton a run-down as they make their way out to the Sacred BBQ.

 **banana (GM):** Mintmutton, the novice, is going over the forms as Ghol scrawls, frowning. Several times he seems about to say something and then closes his mouth..


 **Placidus:** Hopefully Placidus gets there in time...!


 **Ghol, Going East:** "Sounds...cool?" There's multiple places for signatures. Ghol doesn't truck in signatures.


 **banana (GM):** Here's my question.
Which of a Conqueror advantage and an Orc Lord advantage-with-complications would Placidus prefer gets him there in time?

 **Placidus:** Is this a choice Placidus himself gets to make?

 **banana (GM):** Sure.

 **Placidus:** Then let's go with the 6. Placidus has seen what happens when you oscillate the Orc Lord, and we don't have time for embarrassing shouting contests and equally embarrassing fights right now.

 **Xarvrax:** I disagree, we always have time for those things.

 **banana (GM):** The old priest Potpie is smiling kind of cruelly as he reaches out for the documents.

Maybe he doesn't like the look of Ghol very much, with his ears and his skin combined..

ATTENTION !



banana (GM): "ATTENTION! Stand and listen for the Imperial Courier's words!"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax sits down where he was standing.



banana (GM): All across the square, people drop what they're doing and turn to watch. A bronze dragon's just dropped out of the sky to land at the Grill, and its rider is using some magical tool to amplify her voice. It's hard to NOT listen.



Vraknaar: Vraknaar kicks Xarvrax in the tail. "Quit being a pain in the ass."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol, easily distracted, stops his haphazard and slightly grouchy form "completion" to listen.



Skeleton: Skeleton, now a skinny figure wrapped in dull green robes, stumbles back a bit and wrings their hands at the blast of noise and dragon-presence.

Courier: "The morning's update on the situation in Marrow to major towns and cities, by the grace of his Imperial Highness Dragon Emperor Roland I Liberator."



banana (GM): Placidus and Skeleton are coming into the square as the courier continues to yell.



Placidus: Placidus looked quite nervous about making it to the square late, but a minute or two before the dragon swooped out of the sky he seemed to calm down considerably.

Courier: "The Dragon Army marches west from Glitterwood to meet the orcish threat! Fedport's cowardly merchants survive in their swamp another day, another month! But Glitterhaegen remains under siege! The Conqueror will make do with merely thirty thousand of the finest soldiers in the world, blessed by the Elect Gods, and battalions of golden-scaled wyrms in the air!"



Xarvrax: "Ah good, they're getting useful dragons now it seems."

Courier: "In the southeast, the reserves at Chorizon and Ersatz have been mobilised! Given travel time, they won't be part of the engagement - but any orcish stragglers that flee towards settled lands will be easily mopped up by these fine fighting forces! Another twenty thousand trained veterans ready to defend the empire!"



Ghol, Going East: Thirty thousand men against eighty-eight thousand orcs? Correcting for quality, the Imperium of Man is only outnumbered five to one or so.

Dragons, though...

Courier: "In short - this new back-stab by the Orc Lord, no doubt Omen's ally in secret, will be trivially thwarted! Citizens, resume your feasting."



Placidus: Yeah yeah, Elect, empire, blah blah blah. Placidus is up on the stage in a trice while the courier keeps shouting.




Ghol, Going East: Well, whatever. Either way, the real fate of the Movement won't be decided by a splinter spur led by an ex-chef.





banana (GM): It's true. Estella's force isn't comparable in size or motivation to the one up North.. but it's a lot of orcs.

Skeleton: Skeleton will mill around down by the edge of the stage unless it looks like they're meant to


 follow the gnome up.


 **banana (GM):** Capel the Bold has lost his audience, so he's climbed down to chat to Xiaxi and the dragons. "Nice to know just how fucked we are, right?"

 **VoxPVoxD:** "Hello! Hello, yes. Are these the registration forms? Thank you."


 **Vraknaar:** "That's what the dragons are for."

Brother: Mintmutton "Yessir. We've got two copies in case you need your own for reference."


 **VoxPVoxD:** "Well, first we need to fill them out, don't we?"


 **Ghol, Going East:** Rude. Ghol was handling that just fine, except for all the parts he was ideologically opposed to or thought looked stupid.


Capel: "Are you kidding? If the City of Coins is still tamped down meaningfully, then there must be a thousand dragonriders still there holding off the Dead Fleet. Roland's lost the plot and started believing what the gods tell him."


 **banana (GM):** Here's the event schedule Placidus and Ghol have, to be settled..
<https://app.roll20.net/forum/post/1120940/the-hungry-games-event-registration/#post-1178128> (last post, below your original tentative roster).


With a trumpet blare, the courier is off. Disgruntled priests in white robes (and a few brown, from the Church of the Elect) are reclaiming their stage.


 **Placidus:** "Well, let's see here..." Wow, Ghol's handwriting is terrible.


 **Xarvrax:** "Speaking poorly of the Emperor is a good way to get killed, most people tend to like him."

 **Ghol, Going East:** Actually, I think you'll find what's unacceptable is the unnatural and deadening yoke of school.


 **banana (GM):** Father Potpie's gone off to get the stage fixed. The younger priest is still hanging around eating onion rings - any excuse to take more himself. "Are you guys.. *sure* you want just a man and a wolf in the Steaks?"


 **Ghol, Going East:** Actually, I think you'll find what's terrible is the unnatural and deadening yoke of school.


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax glances at his brother, "Well brother? Are we leaving it up to the boy and his warg?"


 **banana (GM):** Nobody official's noticed Skeleton yet. It helps that ske isn't the only person hanging around mysteriously in all-concealing robes!


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol is RIGHT HERE, guy.

 **Skeleton:** They're in fashion, nowadays!

 **banana (GM):** There's like a group of four people all done up like that on one float, and another couple scattered throughout the crowd. Skeleton may have hit on some sort of fashion??

 **Ghol, Going East:** Going around calling him a man like that...rude as hell, this city.

 **Vraknaar:** "Seems like adding more is just going to make it more difficult."
"And those two are used to hunting together as a team in a way even you and I are not."

 **Ghol, Going East:** ARE they sure they want to run just Ghol and Kon out there? Ghol, of course, is perfectly confident everything will be fine.

 **Xarvrax:** "True enough, I suppose we'll sit that one out."

 **Vraknaar:** "Dragons don't hunt together. They'd consider it embarrassing."

 **banana (GM):** Capel shrugs as the dragons head off to deal with registration. "As long as it's not *my* funeral, you can be as patriotic as.. whatever."


 **Placidus:** It'll get harder the more people we add to the event.

 **Kon:** Kon is willing to take a more measured view.


Mintmutton: Mintmutton hisses "It's just.. I heard about what you did with the araras and the fire, right?"


 **banana (GM):** "I wouldn't want to see you guys get.. eh. I'm sure She will provide."


 **Placidus:** Is Mintmutton talking to Placidus, here?


 **banana (GM):** Yep.
Well, he's talking to the group. You all seem to have turned up.

 **Xarvrax:** "I will burn you if you bring those damned birds up again."


 **Placidus:** "Get what?" Placidus says, without looking up. Basic social etiquette takes a backseat to paperwork.

 **Xarvrax:** "I'm beyond done dealing with magical rock birds, and the next idiot to mention them is getting set on fire in some way."

 **Skeleton:** "I don't even know what those are."


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol looks up from Forms, startled. Casual threat of disproportionate violence? That must mean--sure enough, Xarvrax is here!

 **Vraknaar:** "Save it for more of them. Who knows if we'll find more."

 **banana (GM):** Yep, it's Xarvrax. In fact, you've got +2 to notice him arriving.
Mintmutton seems to have clammed up, and is beginning to wander off.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Oh no you don't, mumbly priest. You don't get to cast vague aspersions and then flee the scene...!

Mintmutton: Doesn't he...?

 **Placidus:** One of the violent people will get him. In the meantime, initial here, sign here, fill out this and this and that...

 **Kon:** Kon, in fact, will step in front of him, such that if he has returned to his onion rings, he will just walk into a big fluffy wall.

 **Skeleton:** Skeleton watches proceedings at a remove, idly tightening their gloves, fidgeting with their hood, and so on.



Placidus: Forms filled out, Placidus looks up at the banner. "Is that a manticore made of sausage?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax looks up at the banner as well, "I... have no clue what that is."



Ghol, Going East: "He wants to know what you meant by 'wouldn't want you guys to get and then I stopped talking,'" Ghol offers "helpfully."

Ghol and Kon are the ones most affected by the possible violence hidden in weird God pandering and then absconding.



banana (GM): give me a charisma or strength roll, ghol, to befriend or scare the guy



Ghol, Going East: rolling 1d20+6

(17)+6

= 23



Xarvrax: Go go strength!

Useful for something after all?



Ghol, Going East: Scary orc teen.



Skeleton: give me a charisma or strength roll, xarvrax, to scare or befriend the guy



Xarvrax: I think you mean, scare or scare the guy?



Skeleton: the str roll is for a hug



Xarvrax: I'm a dragon, hugging is scary.

Also likely lethal.

Mintmutton: The priest is pretty young. It's hard to tell white elf ages, but his eyes are glowing almost blue, and he's got an adam's apple bobbing faster than the apple barrel games set up on the other side of the square...



Xarvrax: Wait... non meat based games?! What is this!?

Mintmutton: "Ummm. Um, I'm not meant to say anything, because of orders from Above, and anyway, the event is usually pretty dangerous and people CAN just leave, but.. it'd just be you. Against the four of them. I don't think any other team was going to send just one guy."



Kon: Well, if it's just that...Kon nods and moves out of his path.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax isn't quite so kind.



Skeleton: "...isn't that the one where the other team can just attack you?" Skeleton looks to the nearest person - probably Vraknaar - for confirmation.



Vraknaar: "I think so."



Skeleton: "Maybe... having just one entrant and their warg means they can more easily evade the others...?"



Xarvrax: "It'd be him against the four of them? Don't you mean it'd be him against a number of people

fighting amongst themselves?



banana (GM): Two entrants, technically - Kon counts as a contestant even if the young priest doesn't realise that.



Xarvrex: Xarvrex nudges the teen to follow him over to Placidus, "Change of plans."



Vraknaar: "I think maybe they moved it up because they want to see if they can thin the herd, so to speak."



Ghol, Going East: "Okay."



Skeleton: "And each entrant absolutely needs to eat something to be on a winning team, is that right? Out of... whatever game they have running about in the dark?"

Mintmutton: "Yeah." The novice looks absolutely miserable. What hold do 'they' have over the meat priests? "I don't think they're trying to actually win the event so much as remove competition for the others."



Xarvrex: "I'm also entering the Steaks, not with you two though, I don't give a crap about winning it, as long as you two do."

Mintmutton: "It's not right. They're literally spooky dark priests of the evil gods. Why are we catering to them? Um, you know what I mean."



Vraknaar: "Interesting. Running interference?"



Xarvrex: Xarvrex makes a swipe with his cape, "Luckily I've got a brand new distraction ready to go, yeah."



Ghol, Going East: Whoa, back up. The Dark Gods are dictating event order?!
"I'm in favor."



Vraknaar: "Wonder if I should join in."



Xarvrex: Do we know how many others are participating?
I feel like we should.



Skeleton: "If... I mean, if ANYONE can just hop in as, basically a free agent. Hrm."



banana (GM): Well, anyone who's paid the fifty thousand silver piece fee.



Xarvrex: Or rather, I feel like we learned that at some point, and I've forgotten.



banana (GM): Vraknaar, roll int to see just how much you ended up learning of who's entering this one



Skeleton: But we're all paid for, right? Possibly Skeleton isn't. Still seems funny that the same fee can effectively fund formally different factions within the melee.



Vraknaar: i have a +3 temp background right



banana (GM): yep



Vraknaar: rolling 1d20+5 here goes

(16)+5

= 21



banana (GM): Well, they aren't factions in the sense that if both did well, it wouldn't mean double points for that team..

Aha, ok



Xarvrax: I really hope you're not in any combat today, because it'll suck for you.



banana (GM): Here are the Night Steaks teams:

From Wash-It-Down: Megga, Vill, Achen, both Kapps, Emm and Chexk



Xarvrax: 6 people, well, that's... bad.



banana (GM): From the Heartsblood Gorgers: A Priest Of Mailer, A Priest Of Blamer, A Priest Of Mottle, A Priest Of Gash

Salubriot

From the Steak Whisperers: everyone except Jenny

From Gnome Team: just the Swamp Thing



Xarvrax: This is a lot of people to be distracting, maybe I do need dragon back up.



banana (GM): From the "Barbarians": far-archer, dog hater and immense, which is 3/4 of them

Yeah, it's going to be a huge clusterfuck now that Vraknaar thinks about it.

The Thaumaturgustators are sending Capel and Xiaxi

The Aftershock have opted not to participate at all..



Xarvrax: I'll... be staying away from the wizards, yeah.



banana (GM): And finally, the four Knights of the Snakebelly Stretchers are in but Princess Erskine is not.



Xarvrax: So you two best avoid them.



Vraknaar: "This is going to be a mess. Either they know something we don't, or they're expecting to conquer everyone else so they can take their time hunting."



banana (GM): Now, here's the thing: attacking and fighting other people in the Night Steaks is a wholly optional part of the competition. It might even be seen as a shitty, heel-ish thing to do. A Bad act, if you will.

..but who's going to take the chance that nobody else is taking that chance?



Ghol, Going East: Ghol is still kinda fixated on the casual aside that the Dark God contestants are literally dictating the structure of Hungry Games events.

That's kinda messed up!



banana (GM): So most teams are out in force, in case the others are out to use force. Which means more hunting, and a longer event, and more chances for things to go wrong.



Xarvrax: So murder IS frowned upon?



banana (GM): Well, if you were to kill someone during an athletic competition, in the Empire: that's illegal. The city guard will arrest you and send you to prison!
..it just isn't against the rules of the Games.



Vraknaar: So you can't split up, like Xarvrax was implying. So the only way to protect Ghol and Kon is to join them.



banana (GM): Right. Unless you want to trust to their stealth and swiftness, in pulling off a swift ending before anyone decides to take this to the darkness...



Xarvrax: So it looks like the four of us will be competing after all.
Stealth or no, we're already a threat to a lot of those people, and there are a LOT of them competing.
So it'll be the same concept, we'll just also have to eat things.



banana (GM): Plan Actual Hunters is not necessarily infeasible - but it was not fully informed.



Ghol, Going East: It is highly dangerous...



banana (GM): Thanks so the novice spilling his guts, how it is. The guy does not know WHY the hell the Gorgers' request to move the Steaks forward was accepted, but he knows that it was.
*thanks to
*now it is



Ghol, Going East: But you know what would make a good, and completely illegal, distraction.
A skeleton mage showing up out of nowhere and going wild on everyone.



Xarvrax: He would get blown to hell by the 20 or so people there, probably.



Ghol, Going East: Clearly the work of unaffiliated necromancy, or even the Dark Gods in league with the One-Eyed King, and DEFINITELY not of them.
Yeah well, he's a Skeleton. They can always just like, put him back together, right?



Xarvrax: Oh don't worry, they can put you back together too, I mean, you won't work either, but you'll be together!



Skeleton: Given time, Skeleton might be able to flood the whole competition with horribly-reanimated game animals, or something... it really depends on how far he's able to stretch his powers and how much time he has to work in secret. He's not confident at all re: just striding in there and slinging magic, though. They'd blow him to bits.



banana (GM): I'm assuming that this entire emoted conversation is actually taking place between Kon's Men, just it's being abbreviated here as we depict it.



Ghol, Going East: Once the novice has been shuffled off for secrecy's sake.



banana (GM): Some of the teams are not comprised of Warriors, mind you, but, some are.
This is just one of those things about the Hungry Games that everyone assumes you know. It's bloodsport in more than name...



Skeleton: "Safest thing to do is probably to just send in as many of us as is practicable, have those of us with gullets eat total game equal to our number, and just, well... survive? Beat people?"



banana (GM): ..and it's about to be formally opened, looks like. Crowds are all being fenced away, the Grill is glowing with some holy enchantment, the Federal cameramen are wandering around shrieking

for a good place to stand.



Skeleton: "A sudden win based on stealth and the smallest possible entry would be neat, though."
"How DO they check you've eaten something?"



Xarvrax: "Let's just send them in, they can probably manage to at least avoid dying, if not win."



Ghol, Going East: "I mean, we're trackers. Scouts. We can hunt stuff. That's not a thing."



banana (GM): Looking through the list of participants, it mostly does NOT include people who know how to hunt stuff. Maybe the "barbarians"?



Skeleton: "I could toughen one of you up for the event... but it'd also slow you down. Probably best left off."



banana (GM): There's likely to be a lot of blundering around and animal-scaring.



Xarvrax: "Let's go with it, just avoid fighting as much as you can, or you'll end up in a messy brawl, almost certainly."



Ghol, Going East: And if we complete it quickly, we lessen the chances that the Dark Gods' clerics get what they want: a long, confusing, deadly slog.



banana (GM): You've managed to avoid running into the Gorgers at all this week. This is the first time you're seeing them, on their little stage across the square from yours.. four black-robed figures with hoods in subtly different shades of black. Three of them are just, meditating ominously in a circle, bowed and facing each other, flared sleeve-ends held in classic evil-prayer pose, but the fourth is entertaining the crowd with puppetry and illusions. Flashing lights, fireworks, magically conjured balloons. That sort of thing.



Skeleton: Skeleton's suddenly self-conscious that their robe isn't black at all, but maybe that's a good thing.



banana (GM): All you know about them is that they're representatives of the Army of Darkness, here by special negotiation with the Empire; that Gash was excluded from the arrangement; and that they have a couple of agents in town, freelance inquisitors.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax chuckles, "Look at them, worshipers of dark gods reduced to street performers."



Vraknaar: "Most priests are just a different sort of performer."



banana (GM): You have not seen the priests of Alabastien do a lot of cool magic here. A couple of them worked useful weather magic last night, to put out the fire in the end, but that seemed to be their Top Men.



Xarvrax: Pfft, weather magic, the lamest of magics.



Skeleton: Top Men!



Vraknaar: How does a storm dragon think weather magic is lame? For shame.



Xarvrax: Because they're just ripping off dragons, but are worse at it.



banana (GM): A hush is falling over the crowd. It starts with the citizens of San Meat, and spreads to the tourists.. the elves' reverence is catching.

Descending the gleaming alabaster steps is a long-bearded elf in an apron holding a megaphone and a

spatula. Burgersear, the High Priest.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax refrains from booing on reflex.



banana (GM): All around the square, there's a hiss of gas being released from canisters of dwarven make. The barbecues are firing up.



Ghol, Going East: Burgerseer...? How does that even -- oh, BurgerSEAR.



Vraknaar: I love seeing burgers.



banana (GM): Banners drop from various buildings. Priests begin a Coran Wave around the square. At the peak of the Grill, a soft red light begins to gather as the Divine makes itself known in the Realm. There's a gnome in brown just behind Burgersear, but the Elector's man tactfully drops back to let the local priesthood have their day...



Xarvrax: Gods, always trying to steal the spotlight.

Megaphone: "PEOPLE OF THE FIELDS AND KITCHENS! BLESSED CHILDREN OF HAM!"



Skeleton: Skeleton draws their arms together and sort of backs towards their fellows. They don't feel particularly abjured as of yet, but there's always the chance that a sufficiently concentrated amount of holy power is going to have unpleasant side effects on them.

Megaphone: "We gather here on this holy day in MOUTH-WATERING CELEBRATION!"



banana (GM): Omens of the end of the world aside, there are going to be a lot of speeches and a lot of hot dogs.