



banana (GM): A day dawns gross over San Meat.

Even the sun, today, seems to have been butchered; red spots and streaks on its surface look like the marbling of a beef flank. The sunrise casts gold warmth and blood-red light over the city's spires and ziggurats in equal parts.

Perhaps the Goddess is cooking for the rest of the Elect, somewhere.



Placidus: If she is, I bet the Elector is Gordon Ramsaying the shit out of her.



banana (GM): Kon's Men make their various ways to consciousness, although of course Travis isn't up in time to see the sunrise. There are a few points of note.



Xarvrax: Ah right, I'll be using the same icons for my powers, since they translate the same.



banana (GM): For example: Ghol does not wake up feeling very good, today. He got poisoned and stabbed in the back and set on fire and acid-vomited. There's something about this place... the Hungry Games seemed so appealing, but now you hope they don't last forever.

Even beyond that he just feels.. bad. It can't be the freaking swamp flu again, can it?

Half-remembered dreams: a tide of enemies against him; assurances that he would prevail from her sweet face and green eyes; the world itself turning into a soup through which he had to struggle, inexorably. Fun stuff.

There's better news. Placidus's throat is unbruised. Skeleton's meditations have revealed minor secrets of the cosmos, giving sker some hope of regaining the ability to actually cast spells properly. Vraknaar slept REALLY well, not noticing the whole.. Thing.

Xarvrax, on the other hand, wakes up still crackling with power.



Skeleton: Nice! Here's something Skeleton would like to investigate over the course of not sleeping - what DO those weird undergarments actually, like, do? Ske's willing to have just tried them on.



Vraknaar: Vraknaar's jaw has to be ready. That meant not too much biting yesterday.



banana (GM): The rebounding effect of the arena and the blows of the dwarven sappers.. you know the truth, now. The environment and events were just a reflection of what was within you. So much more magic than the trainers back at the monastery ever imagined.



Placidus: That's nice! Placidus's hand still strays to it from time to time as he writes with the rising sun, filling his notes with wave-forms that are coming to strongly resemble actual waves, beneath which sits a very busy-looking icon with way more fine detail than you'd expect.



banana (GM): OK, when Skeleton wears the dead evil priest's underwear there's an immediate effect. Unlike the rest of your bizarre collection of magical geegaws, these ones are straightforward.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax wakes up, noticing the energy flowing through him, sighing before getting ready for the day.



banana (GM): The /Holy Underpants of the Hidden God +1/ increase your recoveries by 1 per day and make their wearer appear, rather than dressed in oddly cut lingerie, to be fully clothed. Skeleton discovers this by nearly tripping over sker own robe-hem that isn't really there.




Skeleton: Woah. Woah! How much psychic control has Skeleton got over the resultant illusory clothes?




Vraknaar: Strange for a person. Useful for a skeleton.



banana (GM): Give me an int check to find out.


 **Skeleton:** rolling 1d20+6 Skeleton concentrates...


() + 6

= **7**

Well.


 **banana (GM):** Not very much.


 **Skeleton:** Can ske keep trying?
Anyway, what's the default?

 **banana (GM):** Nope. Right now, they look like a dark robe.. similar to how the priest himself(?) appeared. But there are occasional twitches in the magic.. it might change, you think. In some.. situation. Or at some time.


You can hear them downstairs, this morning. The fans.


After Kon's showing in the heats, their fervour is growing - people even have you tipped to win the whole thing. Unthinkable last week, for a group of newcomers sponsored by some weird-ass part of the Dragon Army.


 **Skeleton:** What happens if Skeleton puts sker actual robes over the underwear? Anyway, as long as this illusory robe spookily obscures Skeleton's skull and hands, which, c'mon, surely, this is a big win.


 **banana (GM):** Then Skeleton looks from the outside to be wearing two sets of robes, one atop the other.


Sure, it has that concealing effect.


 **Skeleton:** Excellent. What appears to be one of the dark priests greets Kon's Men as they awake that day: "Hey, everyone, check this out."

 **banana (GM):** Holy crap, one of the Heartsblood Gorgers has broken into your rooms but sounds just like Kelly.


 **Vraknaar:** Vraknaar springs up. "What the hell?"

 **Placidus:** Incidentally... can Placidus - who was probably watching Skeleton play dress-up intermittently, since they share a room - have a think about what might make the clothes change? Or would you have to put them on to figure it out?


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax is pretty unimpressed by the skeletons antics.




















 **Skeleton:** Skeleton reaches up carefully, grasps the sides of where ske feels the illusory robe's hood to be, and pulls it back down to reveal a skull whose expression, at the moment, perfectly matches Skeleton's current mental state.


"Look! They sort of project a magic robe for you."

 **banana (GM):** Today's agenda: at 11 AM, the Jawsculpting heats. On the south side of the Alabaster Grill, in a smaller enclosure to the main square, contestants from nine teams will be creating works of food art. Then in the evening, around dinner time, the finals of the Sausage...

Placidus has no magic powers, and can't attempt to affect the robes with his arcane will, therefore.

 **Skeleton:** "Or magically project a robe. The robe seems normal. Someone poke me or something, please, to make sure it's tactile, too?"

	Placidus: Magic is for idiots anyway. He will poke Skeleton, though.
	banana (GM): There's a brief illusion of cloth.. pushing for even a second gets you past it, though. Not really a powerful item.
	Vraknaar: "I guess that's useful for you. Hopefully it doesn't fail unexpectedly."
	Skeleton: "...oh..."
	Placidus: "It yields a bit. Let me try one more thing." Placidus takes his cup of water from his bedside table and splashes it on Skeleton.
	Skeleton: "Oh but this is annoying. They make you a little tougher, too-" Splash! "Good thinking. I was just going to find a candle."
	Xarvrax: Xarvrax pokes the illusory robe with a claw.
	banana (GM): A realistic pattern of water splotching spreads across the faked cloth! Also, Skeleton's tibia is dripping.
	Placidus: "That's quite clever, for a cheap illusion."
	Skeleton: Skeleton grabs a cloth which appears to phase straight through the robes when used. "You know, this is. I just don't know. Seems unsafe."
	Placidus: "Won't help you if it gets cold, of course."
	Vraknaar: "Can you just wear clothes under it?"
	Skeleton: "I suppose I can... put a shirt and some pants on over them. 'Under' them. Ahhh."
	banana (GM): Everyone gimme.. wisdom checks. dc 20
	Xarvrax: <div>rolling d20</div> <div>(4)</div> <div>= 4</div>
	Skeleton: Skeleton ends up going downstairs wearing a scarf, breeches, etc. anyway, but at least ske's upgraded from green-grey to black. And, hey, twelve and a half percent more staying power. <div>rolling 1d20+2 wisdom</div> <div>(14)+2</div> <div>= 16</div>
	banana (GM): backgrounds relating to social nuance and magic items apply
	Xarvrax: It's only an 8 still for me, so.
	Vraknaar: rolling 1d20+6 probably no background here, then

()+6

= **11**



Placidus: rolling d20+6 adding Raised in a Traveling Theatre +1, Placidus knows all the do's and don'ts of costume design, sort of

()+6

= **14**

Not these, though.



banana (GM): No extra insights into the robes here! it's probably for the best.

The common room downstairs is full as heck, but its proprietors make sure a path is cleared for you, their attraction. They've got velvet ropes, from somewhere, to cordon off the inner bar. "Quick, before they-"



Placidus: Something occurs to Placidus, though. "Do we know whose priest those came off of? Of the dark gods?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax scratches his head, "Wasn't it Mailer's priest?"



Skeleton: Skeleton didn't see firsthand.



Xarvrax: "I believe that's the one that died."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol and Kon will return from the Arara Eyrie sometime in the early to mid-morning.



banana (GM): Fans: "Who's doing the mouth sculpture? Is that Kelly the Illusionist? Do any of you know the way to Ironhenge? What do you think about the bookies giving you long odds from now on? Are you from the Federation? What level wizard is Placidus? Can you teach us how to breathe fire? Is Kon really half-bear?"

It was the priest of Guest, but who's counting.



Placidus: "I am NOT a wizard!"



Skeleton: "He's not."



Kon: Kon won't dignify the bear thing with an answer.



Skeleton: "Well, except at sums."



Placidus: "Ghol? Are you-"
Did Ghol get set on fire again?



banana (GM): Of course.















































Xarvrax: Xarvrax snorts, "Yeah, he's just stuck up and snooty, the two aren't mutually exclusive."



banana (GM): Not so badly this time, though. Mostly scorchmarks on the back of his pants.

Placidus: To the crowd: "Xarvrax really likes me. You see, among dragonkind, being called arrogant is

	the highest of compliments."
	Vraknaar: "Me, yes, no, no, no, no, no, no."
	Ghol, Going East: "I'm fine." He sounds mainly peeved, instead of fine.
	banana (GM): Barkeep: "Any of you interested in another round while the eathletes get settled in?"
	Xarvrax: Xarvrax puts a claw to his chin, "Huh, he's actually right about that one."
	Vraknaar: Moody teenagers. Vraknaar's mentally and physically preparing for his event today.
	banana (GM): A lot of people are interested in another round. This WOULD be too early to drink, but it's a festival.
	Xarvrax: Xarvrax asks for something that's on fire, but also non-alcoholic.
	Ghol, Going East: Ghol is going to find, and put on, a shirt. For now.
	banana (GM): Xarvrax gets: a flaming banana smoothie. "Imported from the exotic north!"
	Skeleton: Skeleton waves any offerings away and does sker best not to have to make up an excuse. There are probably very few that wouldn't get people really angry in a holy place such as this.
	Xarvrax: Good. This is... acceptable.
	Placidus: Last night, before bed (and consequently before the whole assassin thing) Placidus asked one of the innkeepers which items on their drinks menu they were having the most trouble moving. He orders one of those. Maybe an endorsement from the future champions of the Games will get their inventory churning.
	banana (GM): Some fans are actually trying to follow Ghol upstairs... but he doesn't have to do anything about it. You've got bouncers! The dragon cultists, wearing their leather armour, are standing guard on either side of the stairs all like "Are you initiates of the Azure? No? Then you are not going to ascend."
	Ghol, Going East: You gotta be kidding. To the fans AND to the bouncers.
	Xarvrax: Sorry, no elf harem for you.
	Skeleton: Maybe skeleton can summon some minions and have them guard sker door, and then summon other minions and have them pretend to be clamoring to get inside anyway...
	Placidus: Maybe skeleton should not perform necromancy in front of a crowd of onlookers.
	banana (GM): They step aside for Ghol himself, but roll their eye.
	Placidus: Maybe that.
	banana (GM): s
	Ghol, Going East: He's a bit too annoyed with his second arara run-in to try and have another conversation with these creeps.
	Vraknaar: Even Vraknaar is a little bit put off by them. Like his brother needed any help getting a big head.

	Xarvrax: Hey! My head is of a relatively normal size... currently.
	Skeleton: Well they'd all be robed or something, but Skeleton doesn't REALLY care enough to pull such a caper. Not at the moment, anyway.
	Placidus: Dragons always need help getting big heads, to increase the volume of throne-quality dragon skulls there are in the world.
	banana (GM): There's One of those.
	Placidus: See, so the world could always use more.
	Xarvrax: You know, I'm pretty sure I still have the power to set you on fire.
	banana (GM): Eating is a little fraught. The crowd are, of course, most interested in this - the actual gustatory techniques - and keep having to be cleared away from loitering around the doors to the inner bar, where they seek to peek.
	Placidus: Placidus doesn't actually eat anything, of course, because everything on this stupid menu has meat on it and trying to order around that fact (the last couple of days, Placidus has eaten about a dozen of the sweet rolls they serve with tea while the sausage is frying) would probably raise awkward questions with the crowd.
	Vraknaar: Vraknaar doesn't eat that much. While jawsculpting isn't about stomach endurance, it still wouldn't do to be super full while trying to do it.
	Ghol, Going East: Assuming they're sticking around the inn for awhile, Ghol will return after a time, wearing his shirt now, to take breakfast and generally talk about.
	Skeleton: Skeleton's in a similar position, but hasn't actually thought of the vegetarianism excuse yet and so is stuck picking up chicken legs and then appearing to get too engrossed in conversation to remember to bite, sipping on glasses of water so daintily nothing actually flows past the rim, etc.
	banana (GM): How's the morning going to go - anything to do or say before you head out to the event? And are there any plans to 'help' Vraknaar out? There's certainly a bit of time to talk and plan before the eleventh glass.
	Xarvrax: Xarvrax is slightly worried about trying to eat, the food might change in his hands right now.
	Placidus: "Oh, something you might have missed yesterday, Vraknaar - did Xarvrax tell you that Sam and Max were going to try to sabotage the Jawsculpting heats this morning?"
	Ghol, Going East: Ghol will settle in next to Placidus. "Are we going to be investigating the dark priests during Jawsculpting?"
	Skeleton: "Why would they do that, whoever they are?"
	Xarvrax: "No, he did not, because they're idiots.
	Ghol, Going East: "Because they're nuts."
	banana (GM): The Priest of Mailer is slated to be participating in it..
	Skeleton: "Hmm."
	Placidus: "I would like to, yes. It may be that our best lead will actually be *at* the Jawsculpting,

though - depending on how stupid or daring our fork-stealing friends are."



banana (GM): The actual way the hotelier put it was that the freelance inquisitors were planning to "rig today's events", or so they claimed.



Xarvrax: "What Xarvrax will be doing, is watching over the jawsculpting, to make sure the only people cheating are us, if anyone."



Vraknaar: "Did you get any info on how they plan to do it? They may be idiots, but even idiots can be dangerous. Maybe especially idiots."



Placidus: "They took a set of forks," Placidus says to Vraknaar. "So their plan will likely involve those in some way."

"Unless they just really needed forks."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol nods and orders a simple breakfast of spiced meat.



Skeleton: "Forks aren't... jaws, though. I mean I guess everyone knew that one already."



Placidus: Oh, that's interesting. Placidus read the rules and bylaws of the Hungry Games - what's the penalty for, say, being caught during Jawsculpting with illegal utensils on your person?



banana (GM): There's only one penalty in most events: disqualification.



Placidus: "Good thought, Skeleton. Vraknaar, make sure no one slips a fork in or near your staging area."

*Kelly



Skeleton: Good thoughts, Kelly Tone.



Ghol, Going East: The elf-orc teen will sort of glare at the Skeleton -- why the heck are we walking around with a skeleton necromancer like this is a normal thing? Why does he think putting a sheet on his undead monstrosities (himself included!) is suddenly going to stop people from realizing they're freaking undead monstrosities? WHY IS IT WORKING??? -- and then get up and go for a walk. Don't mind him, he's in a Teen Mood.



banana (GM): The day's well and truly moving; if you linger too long over breakfast, as well as upsetting Placidus, you'll not have much time left to get anything else done. Fame awaits. That said, and I realise that this is maybe an invitation to NOT go outside, there's a weird sensation in the air. It's not just Ghol, after all- Skeleton feels it, like a sort of pressure; Placidus can see the count, the terms reducing to a perpendicular pronoun.

Dragons are unaffected.



Vraknaar: The only thing that can affect a dragon is another dragon. It's called the Dragon Equivalence Principle.



Ghol, Going East: If Ghol let "weird feelings" stop him from doing anything he'd have stayed inside, motionless in bed since he turned 13.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax uses whatever time before the heats getting a handle on this annoying power.



Skeleton: Skeleton says to the others, softly: "No one's... blessing anything or casting wide-band dispellations or something, are they...?"



Vraknaar: "Uh... no? I don't know?"



banana (GM): To be honest, it does feel like someone's casting a spell on you, if a sort of low-grade and sustained one rather than anything with immediate effect.

The closer you stay to Xarvrax the less the sensation is noticeable, either because he's got a weird aura of power himself now or because the Cloak of the Obvious shields against it.



Ghol, Going East: Does it feel like anything Ghol's experienced in the Movement? Or particularly...elfy?



banana (GM): Nope/



Ghol, Going East: Well, then Ghol's not worried about it.

(This might not be the wisest course of action, but there it is.)



Skeleton: Skeleton finds skerself lingering close to Xarvrax for at least a few minutes before ske realizes why. "...are YOU casting a spell?"

"I figure no because things are so quiet, but..."



Xarvrax: "Not intentionally, but it's entirely likely now."

"That explosion yesterday may have knocked loose a well of power that I don't really have control over."



Skeleton: Skeleton, alarmed: "What?" Ske takes a step away from Xarvrax, kind of shivers in place a bit, and then takes a half-step back.



Vraknaar: "Why am I not surprised?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax glances at the skeleton, before laughing, "What, now you're afraid of me? I was probably more dangerous before, when I could actually control the power I was using."



banana (GM): More dangerous to your *enemies*, sure.



Skeleton: "Not to us!"



Xarvrax: "I was using the same power, just less, and more focused, Sorcery is just a pathetic watered down version of my true power source."



Skeleton: "Which is what?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax levels a glare at the skeleton, "I'm pretty sure I've threatened to brutally murder all of you, at least once."



Skeleton: "Not me, actually."



Placidus: "It'll all even out in the end, anyhow."



Vraknaar: "I would assume dragonblood, unless you've gotten into something else while I wasn't looking."



Skeleton: "It's probably because I only turned up recently."



banana (GM): ...at this rate, it doesn't look like Travis is getting out of bed today. Well, you get that.



Vraknaar: "Also, how do you murder a corpse?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax sighs, "I'm not the Scion of the Blue, per se."

 **Skeleton:** Skeleton glances to Vraknaar. "That's what I thought, too, but dragons can control themselves. Right?"

 **Ghol, Going East:** Whatever. Magic dude talk. Ghol's sort of meandering ahead of the group, occasionally reciprocating a flirt here or there, sometimes boasting and/or chatting briefly with some fan or another.

 **Skeleton:** "Gosh, we'd have problems if it turns out none of them actually could..."

 **banana (GM):** A difficult admission to make, but there ARE other blue dragons, some of them even larger.

 **Vraknaar:** "Can they? I burned down a building because my breath got out of hand."

 **Kon:** Kon keeps an eye on him.

 **Xarvrax:** "I'm Her apprentice, sure, and I am a Scion, yes."
"But I'm the Scion of Chaos, and well, it has its advantages. Such as an enormous well of power to draw from."
"The problem is as one would guess, chaos is pretty hard to control."

 **Placidus:** Placidus, having dismissed this strange occurrence (after all - it's not like Xarvrax was a paragon of restraint before) as statistically undangerous, is keeping pace with Kon. "He seem alright to you?" the gnome mutters to the warg, looking up ahead at Ghol.

 **Vraknaar:** "This is the first I'm hearing of this. I wonder if I'm the scion of anything dramatic and unexpected."

 **Skeleton:** "Chaos, eh? Um, why?"
"Like, was that on purpose?"

 **Kon:** Kon sort of sighs.

 **Xarvrax:** "You are actually, as foretold by ancient prophecies."
"You're the Scion of getting his ass kicked."

 **Kon:** Last night seems to have...affected Ghol, both on the surface and deeper.
As bad as the wound from the knife was, the wound from realizing all elves weren't his friends -- that indeed, some were deadly foes -- wasn't a kind one.

 **Xarvrax:** "It actually was, and wasn't all at the same time. Chaos is weird like that."
"The more sense you try to make of it, the less sense it makes of itself."

 **banana (GM):** The streets outside are as sedate as it gets during the Hungry Games. Crowds are mostly on the sidewalks - big carts are rolling down the boulevard bringing in supplies for jawsculptors to the south square. All the shops are open, and all the windows, and everyone is talking, and there's more than one little incident that might have been prevented if the city guard were up to full strength...

 **Kon:** Ghol probably isn't willing to admit it to himself, but Kon's been able to see the teen's idealization of his other people crumple in real time -- like meeting a long-lost parent for the first time and realizing, sadly, there might have been good reasons they were long-lost.

 **banana (GM):** ..but the last of the bloodstains is disappearing from the sun, and the mood is pretty good overall. The Federation journalists are taking magic pictures as you walk down the street, talking

intently into their ghost tubes.



Skeleton: "Well, I just. Actually, I don't even have the whole story. You two were made, or something? Erm, wrought, even?"



Kon: But these things happen, and one moves on.



Xarvrax: "I could probably go back to using Sorcery, but at this point, I'm tired of trying to keep the most unpredictable and random of forces under control."



Kon: Better he realizes it now, with a friendly moot to back him.



Vraknaar: "Look, I'm not going to destroy you right now or anything, but I'm not going to rattle off secrets of our creation to either. You could still become one of His."



Xarvrax: "It's fairly unlikely, all things considered."



Placidus: Placidus nods along, presumably with his own train of thought rather than Kon's internal monologue.



Skeleton: "Well, sheesh, I was just wondering. I'd tell you the secrets of my creation if I knew them."



banana (GM): One of the most persistent questions being yelled at you by the ruder tourists is: who's that? re: skeleton. Several of them have heard the name "Kelly the illusionist", gods know where, and they want to know if she's actually part of the team..



Ghol, Going East: ...Huh. They got the ghost tubes back.



Xarvrax: "Secrets of our creation my ass, The Five just decided that they wanted dragons that weren't huge lumbering beasts, and there we were."



Skeleton: "Oh, really? I was wondering why you wouldn't just wr... wr. Wright...? Wrea-..."
"Well, MAKE, you know. Another regular dragon."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will still glower at them if they point the cameras his way, trying to look Brooding and Tough if they take a picture.



banana (GM): As the sun climbs higher, Ghol feels better - at least physically. Whatever spasm of recurrent disease is gone from him in a flash. (Skeleton, on the other hand, is still vaguely aware of oppressive magic - maybe the One-Eyed King *is* trying to gain control of sker soul and force sker to e.g. destroy Vraknaar).



Skeleton: At least lingering in Xarvrax's vicinity seems to screw it up. Or maybe that IS the curse...



Xarvrax: Xarvrax pays no attention to the ambient magic, trying to control him would end poorly for others.



banana (GM): The south square: on this side of the Grill, the tiled ground is just whitestone rather than alabaster. It's still a gaudy, white-shimmering elven substance, but not quite so expensive. They've strung canvases along poles high above, running from the temple to a cooking school, creating paths of shade across most of the open area. There's something up in the sky, though, visible intermittently between the pieces cloth, flitting back and forth and slowly downward.



Placidus: Well, it seems like Placidus is going to have to deal with this. Breaking off from Kon, he addresses the crowd, walking backwards as he talks. He still manages to step over rough cobbles and divots in the road neatly. In fact, this morning the gnome seems just a bit sharper all around. "Kelly Stone is a master of mystery! Her power marvels! Kelly is our personal attache and dear friend, lending

us support and goodhumor as we continue our unbroken streak of triumph!"



banana (GM): The contestants' area is by the Grill. You can see other competitors making their way there - the wizards, the giant, the dwarves - and Jenny with her betting stall, guarded by hard-eyed hard faced hard men.



Ghol, Going East: Hmph.
Steak Whisperers.



banana (GM): Those, yeah.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax makes finger pistols at the wizards, narrowly avoiding shooting lightning out of them.



banana (GM): The businessman hasn't been seen in town since the night of the fire - but the Prince's team are still in it to profit from it. They aren't really fans of yours by now.



Placidus: Whyever not! It's not like we're busting their odds and also heads.



banana (GM): Yes it is! And that's why!



Placidus: Oh. Well, fair do's.



Skeleton: Skeleton will peer upwards to try to see it, although ske's also going to have to help Placidus out, here. The robed figure steps lively to join the gnome at the peripheries of the group, waving with both gloved hands at anyone who looks excited at the prospect and conjuring, as if by magic, the sound of tinkling bells.



banana (GM): Skeleton sees... oh, it's just a bronze dragon. Flying slower than they usually do, but you might well have expected it if you've been paying attention to the rhythm of the days.



Placidus: Muttering back to Skeleton: "Is that a gnome trick?"



Skeleton: Anyone who makes a normal save realizes they're illusory, of course, and AS half-real apparitions of sounds have a gloomy, leaden timbre rather than a cheerful silver one, but, ehh.
"Is it? I just reached down for a sensation..."



banana (GM): Does Vraknaar have: a plan? Any special requests or suggestions that were being prepared for him here today? An entrance to make?



Placidus: Placidus frowns. "It might be. I haven't tried to make noises since I was a boy. I'm pretty confident my mother taught me how."



Vraknaar: Vraknaar has an idea in mind, but he's not really sure he needs anything special for it, other than some kind of edible material that can be molded. But if that isn't in evidence here, then everyone's going to have a hard time, probably.



banana (GM): Vast, vast quantities of food are being delivered to the side of the contestants' area. They have heaps, mounds, piles, baskets and vats.



Xarvrax: Vats is disquieting.



Skeleton: "Oh, that's right. Is magic, or what? I never knew."



Xarvrax: Pfft, Xarvrax doesn't make fake noises, that's for amateurs.



Placidus: "Mother always called it the witch-pipes. I'm not sure what it is, precisely."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol is already keeping an eye open for the Dark Priests.
(Dork Priests.)



banana (GM): Sadly, there's no other gnomes about right now to ask. Well, there's one - Gary Appleton, the red-cheeked captain of Gnome Team - but he's over in the contestants' area discussing something earnestly with a priest.



Placidus: Any sign of our scaly and hairy friends?



Xarvrax: Me and Kon are right here Placidus, geez.



Placidus: Kon is furry and you aren't our friend.



banana (GM): Ghol is not disappointed. Here they are now - making their way into the south square out of a blob of shadow, the air chilling around them, drawing every eye with their sonorous murmuring as thwait what's that, why did a scaled shadow just sort of lumber over the square?



Xarvrax: Fair enough.



Ghol, Going East: ?!



banana (GM): The dragon is circling and *bellowing*, at first loud and then progressively more faintly. It's lumbering through the air like an overfilled carriage.



Placidus: "Er-"



Xarvrax: Dragons...



banana (GM): (This is nothing to do with The Five 6x3. It provides you no advantage at all.)



Skeleton: "Um."



banana (GM): This would actually be a good time for Placidus to hunt around for the Freelance Inquisitors, since everyone is distracted. Give me some sort of roll.

This is what they're distracted by:

The courier's dragon collapses onto a rooftop, one wing giving out. His saddle is empty and bloodstained. He raises his long neck to call out one more time and then rolls backward, going stiller, as functionary priests make hell of haste in that direction.

Everyone in the south square: *talks all at once*



Ghol, Going East: Hrm.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax propels a lance of force into the ground, hurling himself up and in the direction of the rooftop.



Placidus: Placidus does his best, but he can't see very far through or around all the much larger people.



Vraknaar: Vraknaar also makes haste in that direction.



Placidus: rolling d20+5 wis check

(13)+5

= **18**



banana (GM): Thick crowd and a lot of rubbernecks, + priests try and shoo you back to the jawsculpting area.. cha check for vraknaar.

Or for Xarvrax, either of you can cover it.



Skeleton: "Oh, gosh. Oh gosh! Look at-" Skeleton's reaction is indistinguishable from that of everyone else in the crowd, really.



Vraknaar: i'm going to apply dragon forged to Presence people out of the way or that idiot who has charisma can do it i guess



Xarvrax: I'm currently sailing through the air or?



banana (GM): It's not really.. hard to see them, once Placidus gets a moment of stillness to pick the figures out. A yuan-ti and a hairball bent over, frozen in comical "sneaking" poses just on the other side of a line of food storage tents - Samwise turns his head without moving the rest of his body and does a tongue-flicker of greeting.

They're about 30 metres away, without many people inbetween if you wanted to go over there - then again openly interacting might not be the best way to secretly sabotage a secret plan of sabotage.



Placidus: Greeting... Placidus?



banana (GM): Let's say.. cha check for vraknaar, dex for xarvrax.

Sailing through the air doesn't seem all that diplomatic.



Vraknaar: crap!


oh well. here goes.



Placidus: Is there a more discreet route to the tent than just straight cross the square? Especially now while everyone's distracted?



Vraknaar: rolling 1d20+6 cha check with dragon forged

() + 6

= **14**



banana (GM): Yes, the yuanti is watching Placidus watch him. He winks - they have eyelids, unlike most snakes - and turns back into the frozen-sneaking-along position.



Vraknaar: Urgh. Get out of the way. Vraknaar doesn't make much progress.



Xarvrax: I keep forgetting, level factors in, right?



banana (GM): yep

Oh man, it's going to take a while for Vraknaar to get through the crowd.



Xarvrax: rolling d20 + 7

() + 7



banana (GM): Xarvrax is faster, aiming for the right rooftop to arrive at about the same time as one of the superior priests. Father Ribchop has also flown here, on briefly manifested angel's wings, leaving ragged tatters in his brown robe.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax actually managed to get the direction right this time, and maybe even won't impact a crater into the roof.



Vraknaar: I hope he does!!



banana (GM): Placidus could sidle around the vat tents without much objection probably.



Placidus: Well, he'll do that. It's not prudent to ruin these idiots' plans before figuring out if their success would help us!



banana (GM): There's an acolyte accosting Skeleton and Ghol, meanwhile. "Hey. Hey. Aren't you with Kon?"



Skeleton: Skeleton doesn't really have ideas for the dragon and didn't spot Sam and Max right away, so they're basically just gawking until they get accosted. "Hmm? Ah, yes, hello."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol sighs. "Sure."



banana (GM): Bronze dragon, to Xarvrax: "You? Gold give me strength." His whole body is splayed out on the roof, quivering - he looks exhausted, on the verge of consciousness.

Father Ribchop: "Clear the roof, please. My chil- sir- my child," he decides. "Let meat ease your pain."



banana (GM): Several priests have fallen in behind Vraknaar, using him as a shield to push through the crowd.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax glances down at the priest, "This is a matter concerning dragons, and thus I have a higher authority here than you, so I think I'll stay."



banana (GM): Acolyte: "Where's your sculpture guy? We were going to start in half a glass." This was before the wounded dragon fell out of the sky, but.... the Games must go on.



Xarvrax: Examining the dragon, Xarvrax sighs, "What did this to you?"



Skeleton: Skeleton waves a hand around a bit before pointing in what should be the right direction. "Seeing to the dragon. Wait, that soon even so?"



Vraknaar: Vraknaar isn't even seeing to the dragon, because this damned crowd--! Maybe he should just head off in the appropriate direction.

Bronze Dragon: The creature's great eyes roll in disbelief, like the question is stupid beyond words. He's mostly just exhausted, but there are tears in his scales, revealing cuts and irregular gouges... "Orcs!"



Ghol, Going East: Whatever. Ghol's not the manager, here. He's not accountable for where Vraknaar is or isn't. He wanders off into the crowd, maybe trying to get a better look at the Cultists...

Father Ribchop: "Calm. Annuka enushka alabastia, let your blood flow slow as gravy. Rerum deepfridic, the satiety of a meal restore you and bring you rest." He's casting spells, probably.



Skeleton: "I'll see if I can get him!" Half a glass is how long, thereabouts?



banana (GM): There are twenty-four glasses in a day, six days in a span, twelve spans in a season, five seasons in a turn.



Placidus: This is basic stuff, Kelly.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax resists the urge to slap the damned thing, "Obviously, but WHAT happened to you, you poor excuse for a wyrm."



banana (GM): Look, you don't have to deal with amnesia, Placidus.



Placidus: Apparently we all have to deal with it, thanks to Skeleton's constant bumbling!



Vraknaar: Vraknaar's already trying to head over to the area he's meant to be in. His brother's with that dragon, gods help us.



banana (GM): Gleemax: "I think the short man has seen us."
Samwise: "Leaving aside the hypocrisy of your adjective: yes."
Gleemax: "Shall we retreat to the shadows and resume our stalking?"



Skeleton: Skeleton knows, but I don't! Vraknaar meets Skeleton going the other way. "Oh, there you are. I was going to warn- what's going on up there, did you see?"



banana (GM): Most of the team, then, is adrift in the square, converging on the contest area. Placidus is at it, but they'll all arrive on his location shortly except possibly for Ghol.
This is due to Ghol having found his targets. The priests of the dark gods, the three surviving Heartsblood Gorgers, are in a dark corner surveying everything from under their hoods.



Vraknaar: "Not really. Xarvrax is up there though, so it'll be fine." The red doesn't sound so confident.



Placidus: Placidus, standing behind Gleemax, stage whispers: "It might be too late."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will hang out nearby, trying not to glare too conspicuously at them.

Bronze Dragon: "Disaster. The advance party.. not nearly enough. By now Fulcrum will be.."



Skeleton: "Well, so're some priests and things... ugh, though, this far away from him that aura or whatever's in full force."

Father Ribchop: "You're tearing your uberglottis! Sleep, friend wyrm. Let postprandial bliss carry you to a healing coma."



banana (GM): rolling d20

(17)

= 17

The dragon can't really resist the spell in the state he's in, and his eyelids droop.



Xarvrax: "To hell with that, you imbecile!"



Skeleton: "In fact, the uh. The- ... Hang on a sec."



banana (GM): More priests and guards clamber up onto the roof to join Xarvrax and co.



Xarvrax: "Apparently we've just lost our only source of information on the orc murder machine, that is apparently on Axis' doorstep!"



Skeleton: Skeleton turns away from Vraknaar, looking down at sker own hands. Ske makes a few experimental motions. Can ske... ward off the influence? Bolster skerself? Something?



Samwise: "Placidus says it might be too late, Gleemax."



Xarvrax: "Good job, you're wonderful at being terrible at everything important!"



Gleemax: "Fair enough." The hyperkinetic halfling unfreezes in an instant and stuffs himself(?) into a corner of the tent, looking kind of like a pile of trash.



Placidus: "What are you two gentlemen up to this morning?"



Xarvrax: "If we weren't in the city of your god right now, during a festival in her honor, while her influence is most powerful, I would murder you for being so terrible at everything."



Samwise: As Vraknaar and Skeleton draw near: "We're looking for a flawless sapphire gem. Got any?"

Father Ribchop: "What? Look, I need to heal this dragon. Go away... also dragon."



Vraknaar: "Sure. Let me just reach into my scales and pull one out."



Skeleton: "I'm saving mine."



Samwise: The yuan-ti nods, apparently having closed off that dialogue path. "So what are you doing here?"



Vraknaar: "Competing...?"



Samwise: "Competing for what prize, exactly?"



Xarvrax: "I'm leaving, but only because you've put the only important thing up here to sleep, and I would recommend that you pray to your god that I'm out of this city before her influence has faded, because she won't be able to help you otherwise."



Gleemax: "Tell me it's a lifetime subscription to /Scale Candy/."



Skeleton: "A lot of money, isn't it?"



Placidus: "I heard someone was going to try and rig the events today."
"I assume you two were investigating the same rumor?"



Samwise: "I can't imagine why anybody would do that. Anyway, isn't the prize for each event a gemmed medallion?"



Vraknaar: Is it?



Samwise: Yep. Sapphire medallion for first, ruby for second, emerald for third. The overall prize for the Games themselves are a magical artifact.



banana (GM): Yep. Sapphire medallion for first, ruby for second, emerald for third. The overall prize for the Games themselves are a magical artifact.

 **Placidus:** "The goblet, right?"

 **Gleemax:** "Samwise! He said 'goblet' like it's a real word!"

 **Samwise:** "Never fear, little buddy. I've got a dictionary in my other suit."

 **Skeleton:** "It IS a real word."

 **Placidus:** Placidus looks back at Skeleton and Vraknaar, his lips pursed with concern as if the three of them were looking at some sort of mine disaster or other catastrophe in progress from too far away to help.

"A goblet is a cup."

"Like you drink out of."

 **Skeleton:** "Although it does sound kinda weird, now you mention it..." Skeleton's hood turns towards the cobblestones contemplatively.

 **Gleemax:** "It's like a gobbet with extra bl."

 **Samwise:** "Extra bl is the LAST thing we need in this city."

 **Skeleton:** blblblblblbl

 **Vraknaar:** "Okay, well, it's becoming perilously close to event time, so I'll be off. At the risk of sounding too much like my brother, if you interfere, I will burn you to ash."

 **banana (GM):** The acolyte trailing behind your group is Relieved at this, and immediately ushers Vraknaar toward the stage where the competitors gather.

Ghol's watch on the priests reveals one of them, too, breaking off from the group...

but instead of heading straight to the competition, the Priest of Mailer walks up to Ghol.

 **Placidus:** "Come on now, you two. We hate necromancers as much as you do. What are you trying to do?"

Dark Priest: "Disciple of Pauldron, are you?"

 **Placidus:** Looking back at Skeleton: "Tell them how much we hate necromancers!"

 **Samwise:** "'Trying' is a loaded word."

 **Skeleton:** "Overwhelmingly!"

 **Placidus:** "You two are nothing if not trying."


 **Gleemax:** "Other loaded things: my wand, my wallet, the bathroom back at your hotel where we visited... Sorry."


 **Samwise:** "Look, we definitely don't want to interfere with any firebreathing dragons."


 **Placidus:** "What are you doing here?" Is it apparent what, and who, they're trying to sabotage?

 **Xarvrax:** "Then you shouldn't be here."


 **Skeleton:** "Gross - oh, hey." Skeleton relaxes slightly as Xarvrax drifts over.


**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol spits at the ground. He misses the priest's feet by a good couple more. "Yup."


**Samwise:** "There's nothing like a 'no entry' sign for attracting visitors, mac."


**Xarvrax:** "Then your asses are hanging them up, because they're attracting my foot."

Dark Priest: "Far greater power is available. You're not likely to survive without it."


**Gleemax:** "Is it time for escalating threats of violence into a disappointingly pacifistic conclusion again?"
Neither of the inquisitors is, right now, sabotaging anything that Placidus can see.


**Ghol, Going East:** "Feel like I've done pretty well so far against your buddies."


**Placidus:** "Come now! Surely we can just have a conversation." Does anything look already-sabotaged?


**Gleemax:** They're just hanging out behind the competitors' area - as are you - up against a tent full of kebabs and apple barrels.


Dark Priest: "We aren't enemies."
Considering Ghol. "What's your orientation. East?"


**Vraknaar:** You could say that.


**Ghol, Going East:** If they're not enemies, then someone's very seriously fucked up. "I go where I please," Ghol replies.


**Xarvrax:** "You two are just lucky that I'm pretty sure Lil' Brainmelter here, " Xarvrax points to Placidus, "could stop me if I tried to kill you."


**Samwise:** "Sure, we've always got questions to ask. Like how come you turned up when I read this scroll."


**Placidus:** "That depends, let me see the scroll."


**Samwise:** The yuanti hands you a completely blank scroll. "Of course, magic being what it is, you might not find this very useful."


**Gleemax:** "We didn't!"


**Skeleton:** "...huh," says Skeleton, to nothing in particular. They take an experimental step in one direction, then the other.


**Placidus:** Does Placidus find this blank scroll very useful?

**Samwise:** "The necromancer who gave it to us was not a useful fellow."

**banana (GM):** No.

**Skeleton:** "...what did it use to say?"

**Placidus:** "It doesn't seem particularly useful, no. Did you read it out loud?"

**Xarvrax:** "Looks about as useful as you two."



Samwise: "Originally, it said something like '□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□□' Do any of you feel compelled to destroy our enemies?"

Dark Priest: "..."



Xarvrax: "The only thing I feel compelled to do, kick your ass."



Skeleton: i saw those symbols as a bunch of empty squares, what should they say



Xarvrax: "So, no different from normal."

58 190 387 210" data-label="Text">

Skeleton: "Who are your enemies?"

"Could I see that, actually?" Skeleton holds out a hand for the empty scroll.

Dark Priest: "...you'll find there are worse things than monsters. When you feel sufficiently betrayed, find Santa Cora, and know that Mailer accepts *any* blade."



Ghol, Going East: Yeah, fuck along.

Dark Priest: Receiving no encouragement, the priest hurries off to sculpt.



Vraknaar: And sculpt he shall!



Samwise: Vraknaar gathers with others on a stage.

58 440 558 460" data-label="Text">

banana (GM): Vraknaar gathers with others on a stage.

There are only a few priests here to officiate. The reliable Father Vealsgravy has the magic megaphone - most of the acolytes have been sent to take away the wounded dragon into the Alabaster Grill.

The crowd's mood is dark, what with the implications, but most of them are still here to watch the heats, and attention turns to the nine of you...

58 560 993 595" data-label="Text">

Ghol, Going East: Ghol will try to find Placidus. Maybe they should slip off and investigate, now that they know all the dark priests are here...?

58 610 993 665" data-label="Text">

banana (GM): Apart from Vraknaar, the sculptors are a moody lot - all standing apart, psyching themselves up for the creative and logistic difficulties of the task. There's a gnome, a dark priest (the last to arrive), the wastelander Far-archer, the ire giant, Sid...



Placidus: He'll find Placidus distracted by idiots at the back of the square.

58 715 606 735" data-label="Text">

Ghol, Going East: Are they still around when Ghol turns up?

58 750 993 785" data-label="Text">

banana (GM): Keeping as far away from Vraknaar as possible are Achen the dwarf and Xiaxi the Green, the killed wizard, now looking... odd.

There's a blankness to Xiaxi's face, with expression in his eyes but not muscles, and his robe shimmers from its earlier green to other colours.

58 845 993 880" data-label="Text">

Samwise: As Ghol turns up, the yuan-ti is blathering again. "There's not a lot of people who aren't our enemies, technically. Necromancers, tax collectors, Gnoplance, tinkers, tailors, soldiers, sailors,"



Gleemax: "My grandma, the city of Chorizon, everything that lives in the overworld, most gods..."



Placidus: "**We* aren't your enemies."

58 965 993 985" data-label="Text">

Skeleton: Skeleton still wants to see the scroll! "Were you concentrating on any particular one? Are you

sure the scroll sends things after YOUR enemies instead of after THEIRS?"



Samwise: "That would make more sense, actually."



Skeleton: "Of us, in fact, who would you say is most your enemy? Or most likely."



Samwise: (Placidus has the scroll!)



Ghol, Going East: Great. These guys.



Placidus: Placidus will offer the scroll up to Skeleton if ske asks for it.



Skeleton: Skeleton looks over Placidus's shoulder at it. They got it from a necromancer, they said... traces of magic or anything?

Fr. Vealsgravy: "Today! Today we gather for the CREATION OF ART!"

Gnome beside Vraknaar: "Nice to meet you, ahaha 'meat'. You're Vraknaar the Red?"



Placidus: In the process of doing so he'll see Ghol. "Hello, Ghol. Oh, you must have pressing business to discuss not in this tent. Let's go!" Placidus will leave Skeleton and Xarvrax to Sam and Max.



Ghol, Going East: Phew.



banana (GM): Sure, this was a magic scroll. Travis might know better, but Skeleton guesses that some kinds of scroll let you read the spell off once, then it's gone?



Vraknaar: "I am. And you are?"



Skeleton: But was it a BLACK magic scroll.



Ghol, Going East: Once they're out of earshot: "All the dark priests are here. If we're going to look into them, now's our chance, during Jawsculpting."



banana (GM): Yes, totally super evil stuff.



Placidus: "Are they doing anything here besides looking ominous?"



Skeleton: Well then skeleton should have a shot, here...! Unless it's just generally evil instead of necromantic.



banana (GM): Sure, roll int.



Xarvrax: Wizards, never around when you need them.



Skeleton: rolling 1d20+10 int+necromancy

(18)+10

= 28



Xarvrax: Can Xarvrax also attempt with hila...



Samwise: "What it was *meant* to do is find the greatest threats to our dark reign and turn the power of undeath against them."



Xarvrax: Nevermind.



banana (GM): My goodness, that's EXACTLY what the scroll was for, Skeleton can detect.
Except, as earlier guessed, the threats to the dark reign of the actual spellcaster who created it.



Skeleton: "My gosh."



Placidus: Does it have Bonanda's stink on it?



Skeleton: "What are the properties of your personal dark reigns, would you guess?"



Ghol, Going East: "One of them tried to get me to join a cult of Mailer. I suppose that's standard for them."



Gleemax: "We are talking some dire prophetic sh- stuff. My reign's gonna have a bouncy castle, and a staff of pro torturers, and sexy witches, and an eternal black hand."



Samwise: "None of that will actually happen, probably."



Skeleton: "I'm just trying to figure out why- ...what the scroll would decide to send undead after."



Samwise: "Whoever's destined to stop us! The idea is to stop them from stopping."



Skeleton: "How come a necromancer gave it to you, anyway?" DOES it look like Bonanda's handiwork?



banana (GM): It's a scroll. Hard to say either way whether the guy who wrote it had a green hat on or a fetish for pigshit.



Placidus: "They make any particular offer or did they expect a short and brutal life of violent servitude to evil to just sell itself?"



Skeleton: "It's a pretty good scroll that can figure out and act on what your destiny is."



Xarvrax: "I doubt they 'gave' it to them, so much as they were beaten to death for it."

Gary: The gnome introduces himself with a very small handshake. "Gary Appleton. Eyes over stomachs, you know us. Good luck with the creative and other juices, right?"



Gleemax: "He's figured out our secrets. This dragon must be the target after all."



Ghol, Going East: "They expect a great and imminent betrayal to sell it to me. Also there's apparently 'things worse than monsters,' like that's some kind of plus."



Placidus: As they talk, Placidus and Ghol are probably heading in the direction of that house they saw the cultists all glide out of the other day. "Aren't they the things worse than monsters?"



banana (GM): Mailer, presumably, is the monster in this equation.



Vraknaar: Vraknaar returns the handshake without breaking any bones, which is an impressive feat.
"Same to you."



Skeleton: "So tell us some more about how you got this, maybe?"

Vealsgravy: "The work areas are prepared (with tarps). The omens are all in our favour!" This last is a blatant lie. "Miracles of meat and mind will take place today!"

 **Ghol, Going East:** "Only when it suits them, I guess."

 **Samwise:** "We're kind of on a mission here, we don't have a lot of time to chat."

 **Gleemax:** "That's a lie, Samwise."

 **Samwise:** "Sometimes adults have to lie to each other."

 **Skeleton:** "Well, you've gotten it over with, so let's have it."

 **Placidus:** Placidus is remembering that correctly, right? It was in fact the priests of Mailer etc who came out of that house by where Kon's Men chatted with the Steak Whisperers? "Say, you haven't seen an unusual amount of fish or class uprising, today, have you?"

 **Samwise:** "Okay. We got the scroll from an agent of the Wizard King after rolling 6."

 **Gleemax:** "He was spooky."

 **Samwise:** "We were trying to find a necromancer to seek our nemesis to get a sapphire to give to the club bouncer so we can turn off the switch to avoid the defence grid to get the newspaper to prove our case."

 **Gleemax:** "Against evildoers!"

 **banana (GM):** Placidus *does* remember the cultists' house.

 **Skeleton:** "What...?"

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol: "Wha?"

 **banana (GM):** It's to the south of even the south square, a little rented villa with adobe rather than crystal walls. No apparent entrances, but presumably that's just dark illusion.

Vealsgravy: "Take your places! The heats will be judged on creativity, on material diversity, and on piety."

 **banana (GM):** 'L.A.' of the Aftershock: "This one's going out to all the ladies in the crowd!"
Priest of Mailer: "Luck to you all."
Far-archer: "Our tribe's crafts are up to this task."

 **Placidus:** "We'll talk about it later. Do you want to try and go in through the front? I've not done much scouting."

 **Samwise:** "We get that a lot. OK, have fun not rigging the competition."

 **Skeleton:** "Certainly. Um, hey, though, the necromancer, what were they like?"

 **Xarvrax:** "I advise you do the same, lest I kill you, and find a necromancer to reanimate you, and kill you again."

 **Ghol, Going East:** "Hrm. Let me take a look around."

 **Samwise:** are you going to... .scout it

 **Kon:** Kon will have joined them, and the two of them circle around the house, scouting out possible entrances...



banana (GM): It's not hard for Kon to smell the general location of two entrances - the priests are people, and their scents linger, for all that they seem to exude more evil than sweat.

Ghol's input is required for the fine motor control to flip catches, slide away thin sheets of stone, break a crystal that causes a magic barrier to disperse..



Ghol, Going East: Which entrance appears to be the more discreet?



banana (GM): With such weird characters in it - most of whom do not look like either artists or heavy eaters - the jawsculpting is being watched with some fascination, their attention split between Vraknaar and the others. The dragon himself can't afford such lack of focus (or can he? is he that good?).

He's got his choice of tarped areas, sandpits, pools with hoses, tables and grills - and all the basic foodstuffs (focusing, of course, on meat) that he could need. How's this going to begin?

One of the entrances to the priests' house is on the rooftop, a hidden trapdoor surrounded by cylindrical chimneys. That's probably the best way for Ghol and Placidus to go if they don't want anyone at street level to see them.

Requires a little climbing, though.

(specifically, a str check's worth)



Placidus: Placidus is literally tugging his collar as he looks up at the roof here.



Vraknaar: Vraknaar finds himself a clear space, probably on tarped ground. He needs some room but obviously no one wants to throw meat on the ground. Except maybe Salubriot.



Kon: Kon can probably carry Placidus up, right?



banana (GM): L'Angelo, a human with a classical figure and crossed trumpets over his back, is actually the one who's scooped up just piles and piles of cutlets to haul back to his area.

Salubriot the Ire Giant - who has to produce two works, of course - is starting with a vast cheese wheel.

Xarvrax and Skeleton find themselves in the position of spectators. Here in this informal by-the-contest-area are several other eathletes cheering their team members on - most notably Capel the Bold, who's sidling over to join you.



Ghol, Going East: Either way, Ghol's going to climb up to check it out.

rolling d20+6

(3)+6

= 9

...And falls flat on his ass.



Placidus: Placidus winces.



Vraknaar: Well, Vraknaar's selecting a bunch of different cuts of meat. Chuck, flank, round... pretty much every kind you can think of. Also a bunch of different cheeses. Some gouda's good. This'll do nicely.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax eyes Capel, "Finally gotten over being a sore loser?"



banana (GM): ..unfortunately, the adobe walls are sheer. Falling like that drew a few spectators, with reactions ranging from lmao to omg.

You can try again as much as you like! But at this point, neither entrance is going to be stealthy.



Ghol, Going East: Great. Great.

Capel: "Yes! I'm more concerned with my colleague."

"Have you seen much of him since he came back from the dead?"



Vraknaar: so how do the rules for this work. i'm sorry to say i've forgotten



Ghol, Going East: Ghol is storming off now, embarrassed. Seems he'd rather just, not investigate, if he's going to look like an idiot while doing it? Goddammit, teens.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax glances at the the competing wizard, "He does look stranger than usual, yeah. But to be fair, he did die."



banana (GM): Sid, the Steak Whisperer, has lived up to his name. A few big cuts of beef and a basket of loaves are his materials.



Vraknaar: do you just use your mouth to carve things, or can you use your hands to mold etc



Placidus: If there's no stealth to be had then we should just go in through the front door, probably?
Placidus says: "Ghol, psst! I need your help inside!"



banana (GM): Hands and feet are the only part of your body you **can't** use.



Ghol, Going East: "FINE."



Skeleton: Skeleton still wants to hear more about the necromancer who passed that scroll along, but after hearing whatever Samwise has to say ske'll sidle back over to the other members of the Kon's Men.



banana (GM): The hint is in the name, of course - jawsculpture is predicated on the mouth being the main fine-control organ for people without other extremities available. But if you want to elbow the meat into a portrait, somehow, you can.



Placidus: Placidus isn't going to ask Ghol what his problem is. Clearly the kid needs a little space and something else to focus on.

Like this investigation!

Capel: "Right, I'm not so concerned about that, I mean, whatever. Third circle, he should know better. We're all arcanists, here." This includes Skeleton, apparently. Have you been sussed?

"The thing is- reincarnation. That's not normal. Right ordo ordus for it, but Xiaxi isn't THAT good. ..nobody is, except one."



Placidus: Placidus is going to go through the front door, here, unless Kon warns him not to.



Xarvrax: "Technically I'm not an Arcanist, but sure, yeah."





Vraknaar: Fortunately, Vraknaar's mouth is not a tiny hole filled with fragile blunt instruments. It's a wide maw full of fangs that are surprisingly dextrous. At first it's not really clear what he's constructing here, as he piles different cuts of meat together. But then one leg starts to come together, ending in talons. Then another, then four.



banana (GM): The front door was concealed, rather than barred. Opening it is easy enough (although as mentioned, elves are watching you go in).


The interior of the house is disappointing at first.

 **Skeleton:** Should - hey, a bunch of us are just going in there. Skeleton hurries after Placidus and Ghol, unless they motion for sker not to.


 **banana (GM):** The dark priests have dark bedrooms, yes, with malign shadows clinging to the walls and horrors on the edge of vision, but they sleep in rented beds and their luggage is pretty unsurprising. There's no holy symbols or magic shields scattered about. You open rooms and closets, but there's not even a Tome. Roll Wisdom, though.

Isn't Skeleton in the south square watching the Jawsculpting with Xarvrax?


We could retcon that if you like but I'm not sure if it's intent, here, or confusion.


 **Skeleton:** Maybe so, I'm not sure exactly when it was that we stopped talking to Samwise or how far away the dark priest's domicile is. It might make more sense to put Skeleton next to Xarvrax and Capel.


 **Ghol, Going East:** rolling 1d20+4


() + 4

= **15**


 **banana (GM):** Placidus hurried away with Ghol, then you talked to the Freelance Inquisition for a while longer until they baffled you into submission and fucked off, basically.


 **Vraknaar:** The red Dragonwrought appears to be constructing a meat dragon, and what's more, he's doing it with cuts of meat appropriate to their location on a cow, filling in what would be inedible parts with whatever's at hand. So the dragon's underbelly is flank steak, its hindquarters round, its back ribs. It's all meat so far, and Vraknaar places it and molds it with his fangs.

 **Placidus:** rolling d20+5 enter... the wis-dome


() + 5


= **9**

 **banana (GM):** where you = skeleton and xarvrax

 **Placidus:** Or not. Whatever.


I'm not even mad.

 **banana (GM):** Placidus doesn't notice this at all, but.. there's breathing, above you.

 **Skeleton:** Oh, yeah, Skeleton's listening in on Capel's account, then.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol...looks up.


Capel: Capel the Bold rubs his beard. "So yeah, the big guy didn't have a thing to do with this and Xiaksi-" he says it 'ex-ee-ax-ee' "won't tell me who DID. So naturally I thought of the fuckers who, thereby, legitimately and un-upsettingly took victory."


 **banana (GM):** Wood.

Ghol sees wood. Ceilings, you know.


 **Placidus:** Placidus looks up when Ghol does. "Something up there?" he whispers.


 **Ghol, Going East:** "D'you hear that?"


 **Placidus:** Placidus shakes his head.


 **Xarvrax:** "So you mean to tell me.

 **Ghol, Going East:** "Breathing," Ghol mutters.


 **banana (GM):** How quiet are Ghol and Placidus themselves, though.

 **Xarvrax:** "That you think one of us reincarnated your team mate, whom we didn't kill, to win a competition."
"Just to fuck with you, I guess?"

 **Placidus:** Placidus is whispering! That's like maximally quiet. No need to call for a stealth roll here, no sir.


 **Vraknaar:** Remembering how much Ghol liked dragon-fired deer, when Vraknaar's done sculpting he takes a step back and starts to cook his meat dragon with his fiery breath, a much more impressive spectacle than the construction.


Capel: The 'Thaumaturgustator' beams. "That's right! I was wondering if any of you make a habit of raising the dead."


 **banana (GM):** rolling d20+12


( 1)+12


= 13

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol's mutter was pretty quiet, and it's the first time he's spoken since walking in.

 **banana (GM):** The wizard is, you become aware, subjecting the two of you to intense arcane scrutiny.
Well, if you're super quiet, I guess it's ok.


 **Xarvrax:** "I make a habit of unmaking the dead, also pretty much everything, including reality at this point. Also pesky wizards who don't seem to know what my cloak does."

 **banana (GM):** The regular, shallow breathing above.. Placidus can just hear it now that Ghol points it out. Sounds like someone trying to be quiet, themselves.
Vraknaar gets a few startled looks as soon as he lets out fire.

 **Placidus:** How often is it breathing? How deep are the breaths? Placidus counts.

Sid: "Can he do that? Judge!"

Gary: "It's coming from his jaws, isn't it?"

 **Vraknaar:** Now fully cooked and smelling wonderful, Vraknaar takes an assortment of cheeses of various colors and begins to add scales to his dragon. Red for most of it, yellow for the underbelly. The meat's hot but not too hot, so the cheese melts enough to stay (and be delicious) but not enough to run off onto the ground. That's good dragon. Vraknaar's not really sure if making an edible dragon sets a good precedent, but he can't deny it looks cool.

L.A.: L'Angelo is the other nearby competitor, but he's in no position to talk. He's stripped near naked and covered himself in a dome of meat.



Vraknaar: do i need to make rolls or spend rolls to make sure this isn't fucked up or is this just a "have a good idea" thing



banana (GM): I'd like a crafting-y roll. Dex would apply obviously, but I'm convinceable on other notes Just for the pure mechanical skill bit, basically. The idea seems decent enough



Vraknaar: okay on a related note. is it possible for someone to win the heats so hard that they're the only who advances, thus winning outright
just a Theoretical Question



banana (GM): nope!



Vraknaar: damn.



banana (GM): top half get in



Xarvrax: "Really Capel, you should try to take a lesson on not being so obvious about ramming magic at someone."



Vraknaar: shit. do i risk it or do i use my dragon power
fuck it. no guts no glory

Capel: "Fully authorised necromancy-detection rote. Take it up with the Empire."
"The good news is, neither of you's a necromancer."



Xarvrax: "Maybe I will."



Vraknaar: rolling 1d20+11 dex + dragon forged. dragons are mouth wizards

(18)+11

= 29

booya



banana (GM): dang



Placidus: Well.



Xarvrax: "I'm the Font of Chaos, I don't need necromancy."



banana (GM): Half an hour passes, then forty-five minutes. Vraknaar's one of the first to finish, despite the precision and colouring - and the appetising smell!

This is clearly going to be a hit. Let's take a quick look at a few competitors..



Xarvrax: Let's see angry man first!



banana (GM): Who's that?



Xarvrax: Salubriot?



Vraknaar: angry yes. man? no.



Xarvrax: I guess he's an angry giant, but.



banana (GM): (Judging by his count, Placidus thinks it's 'a human-sized person' up there. Probably quite a big one, since they can't fully conceal their breath.)


Salubriot is male, but he's eleven feet tall and has flames instead of hair.

He's used his fiery beard to advantage! The cheese wheel is seared and jaw-stabbed into shape, forming a kind of fist/hand shape - there are roughly outlined fingers, and then a single much longer index digit, pointing outward, indicating the viewer. He's still working on his other piece.



Skeleton: "Huh?" says Skeleton, briefly mesmerized by the jawsculpting display. "Oh. Oh, yes, that's good to hear." They turn to peer at Capel a moment, checking out of curiosity whether the wizard's a hypocrite.

rolling 1d20+10 int+necromancy

() + 10

= **22**



banana (GM): Capel is no necromancer. He looks like an adept of.. of.. you can't remember. Was it Puissance? Or Essence? Are those among the Low Arcana? Skeleton knew this, once, when ske was someone else.



Ghol, Going East: Can Ghol see this guy (?) at all...?



banana (GM): No, there's just a corridor ceiling above you. Must be some sort of space in the roof.




Placidus: Is there a staircase or trapdoor or something?




banana (GM): A priestly judge approaches Vraknaar. "Lifelike indeed, red one. Is your creation to be eaten, or just admired?"

rolling d20+8 let's see

() + 8

= **26**

rolling d20+9 and also


() + 9


= **11**


rolling d20+7 further,

() + 7


= **12**


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol draws his weapons, just in case.

 **Xarvrax:** "So you said only one has the power to reincarnate someone, so why aren't you bothering them instead of us?"

 **Vraknaar:** "Eaten, of course. It'd be a crime to use all this meat just to look at."


 **Skeleton:** "But, I mean, the fellow with the letters ex... they weren't revived necromantically, right? I remember silver flames and such."


 **Placidus:** Placidus has his wand out.

 **banana (GM):** Far-archer, the 'barbarian', has produced something really impressive too. It's not clear HOW, since he's got blunt human teeth.. but his miniature of mounted figures engaged in a chase is extremely detailed. Not seared and fixed in place like Vraknaar's, just piled vegetable and meat, but the precision is astounding.


The Priest of Mailer, on the other hand, fucked up here. He or she or it has a bunch of pork and lettuce that looks like.. a pile.


Capel: "The Archmage, of course, has total power over life and death. Thing is, he didn't do it."
"We're not even here on our master's behalf. Not directly. This is a sideshow."


 **Xarvrax:** "Then who did that ridiculous light show that you wizards just love to have?"

 **banana (GM):** It takes a bit of hunting, but once you know there's an attic, you can find the ladder that leads up to it. NOW I need a stealth roll from someone to creep inside.


Capel: "Dragonwrought, you've discerned the reason for my inquiry at last."


 **Placidus:** Placidus looks up at Ghol.

 **Skeleton:** "Who else, then? The gods?"

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol's willing to let Placidus take the lead here, given his last attempt at--oh come on.
Fine.

Capel: "Ha! Gods!"
"I mean, maybe, but come on."


 **Skeleton:** "What's Exee like, now? Not rotting or anything, I trust."


 **Placidus:** If Ghol wants Placidus to do it, he'll certainly try.
It's just, you know. There's a reason Placidus never takes his shirt off.


 **banana (GM):** rolling d20

(12)


= 12


 **Ghol, Going East:** Can this be a Wisdom check, to wisely not make any noise and avoid, using common sense, things that would alert anyone inside?


 **banana (GM):** Here's what Xiaxi the Green is like: He's in a sort of trance state, gnawing and chewing and iterating. He's produced a gravity-defying jawsculpture, without Vraknaar's realism or detail, but an interesting abstract pattern and one that seems physically impossible. It's not finished yet, and the time limit is near...


 **Placidus:** Does it seem like the person upstairs is hiding from us, specifically?


Capel: "Annoying as hell. Well, excuse me." He's watching intently and looks about to head over away from Skeleton and Xarvrax toward the nearly-finished competition.

 **banana (GM):** Placidus: yes
Ghol: no

 **Placidus:** Well, then... why do we need to sneak at all?
They know we're here.

 **Skeleton:** "But does he- oh, okay."


 **banana (GM):** Yeah, if you want to play it a different way you could. This is just if you want to creep up on them without them knowing they've been discovered..

 **Ghol, Going East:** Sigh. Ugh.


rolling d20

()


= **11**

 **Skeleton:** Skeleton watches the stage, now. What CAN be discerned by the necromancer of Xiaxi's current state of animation?


rolling d20+10 to confirm the presence or absence of black magic, if needed

() +10

= **22**

 **banana (GM):** Vraknaar's now being asked to explain the Themes of his work to a small crowd of acolytes. Some of them are taking notes.


rolling d20+14

() +14


= **28**

L'Angelo's done. The bard has produced... a negative.
He formed an image of *himself* inside a meat dome, somehow pressing every inch of his skin to form it into shape, and then shriving away the outer part of it, using it as a mould. The result is something approaching classical sculpture, but smellier. It's much *larger* than most of the pieces, but pretty impressive.
Ghol bursts into the attic. Well, not 'bursts', but it makes a little noise.

Thus, when he and Placidus approach, the person here has thrown open the roof trapdoor and is standing inbetween it and them.


 **banana (GM):** A column of sunlight illuminates..... a dark priest.


Like, it's just one of them, black-robed, identical to the others. What?


 **Placidus:** "Oh, come on!"

I mean, maybe they're not a dark priest.


Maybe all these cloaks and cowls were just, in the wardrobe when they got here.


 **banana (GM):** Maybe so. The unidentified figure, then, raises a pale and elegant white hand from within their flared robe to point and hollowly intone: "This is trespass, is it not?"

 **Ghol, Going East:** ...Ghol saw all the priests that were supposed to be in town at the event, didn't he?

 **banana (GM):** He saw three all together.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Then: "Yes, you are."


 **Placidus:** How many fingers are on that hand?

 **banana (GM):** Just the five, with long nails painted scarlet and an unadorned silver ring.


As far as Skeleton can tell, Xiaxi is a normal living person. Sure, he WAS dead, but that was brief. Only the slightest trace of the realms beyond clings, mostly in his mind.


The close scrutiny shows something else, though.


 **Placidus:** Blamer, Mailer, Mottle, and Guest submitted priests for the competition, and Guest's is dead.
..but there are *five* dark gods, aren't there?

 **banana (GM):** The wizard's speeding up more and more in the construction of his sculpture. Unnatural haste.


Dark Priest: "Since you've entered by choice, step here a while. Tell me of yourselves."


 **Ghol, Going East:** Grrrr.

 **Vraknaar:** "The themes of it? The dragons are here to protect you and bring the Dragon Empire to unmatched prosperity. The works of my competitors are fine pieces, no doubt, good specimens of various humanoid efforts. But only dragonkind can and will use its power to feed and protect you, especially from the myriad threats the Empire faces."

 **Ghol, Going East:** Talking! All these damnable priests want to do is talk!
What in the world is the dark priesthood coming to?!

Inconvenient acolyte: "But, but. Didn't an injured dragon fly in today.. doesn't that mean they've failed to protect us?"

 **Vraknaar:** "Once the judging has taken place, I encourage any and all who wish to taste it do so. So long as I have the honor of first taste."

 **banana (GM):** Not a single one of the dark priests has raised a hand in anger or threat, to any of you.
I mean, that's probably severely against the terms of their participation.
They're sinister as heck, though.



Vraknaar: "Orcs aren't overrunning you right now, are they? If not, then they haven't failed yet. And I say they will continue to keep you safe."



Xarvrax: I probably do more threatening and violence than they do on a daily basis.



Ghol, Going East: Gah! Fine! "A question for a question. An answer for an answer."

Priest: , husky-voiced "You may ask the first." The figure is still silhouetted by the sunlight, both arms at their side, impossible to make out in detail.



Placidus: Placidus has a question in mind, but he'll let Ghol take first crack if he wants.



Ghol, Going East: Having proposed the terms, Ghol is more than content to let Placidus execute them.



banana (GM): Skeleton and Xarvrax haven't objected to anything going on in the competition, right? It looks like Vraknaar did very well at least.



Placidus: Fair enough! "Are you a servant of Gash, then?"



banana (GM): rolling d20+9 vs md, placidus

(18)+9

= 27

rolling d20+9 vs md, ghol

(14)+9

= 23

The priestess removes her hood. She's impossibly fair, literally; it's an obvious enchantment, alluring beyond wild imagination. "Yes."



Placidus: "Ah,"



banana (GM): She's a white elf, like most of the town, but like no woman you've seen in it. It's hard to concentrate or speak.

Priestess of Gash: "My question. Will you be?"



Placidus: Is there any compulsion interfering with our replies?



banana (GM): Not enough of one to prevent you from choosing your own words.

It would be hard to raise a blade to her, if you had one...

Priests nod about Vraknaar and make a lot of checkmarks on their clipboards. Before the food cools further, it's time to taste.

Not all the sculptures are intended for eating. L'Angelo's, for example, is simply too big. And Salubriot...



Ghol, Going East: rolling d20 save vs. girl

(8)

= **8**

Ghol...might not be too useful here.



banana (GM): The Ire Giant has constructed two little models. They're arranged in order. The second is a hand pointing at you, the viewer; the first is a crude approximation of two giants doing rude things.

Salubriot: "I call them Fuck and You."



Ghol, Going East: "Er. Uh. Whhoa."



Placidus: "The numbers on that don't work out, I'm afraid. Why are you hiding here, instead of competing?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax nods at the giant, appreciating the sentiment.

Priestess of Gash: Before Placidus has even finished rejecting her God, she's got a long knife. It has a sharp side and a blunted side, and the grip is something obscene.



banana (GM): rolling d20+11 initiative

(**13**)+11

= **24**



Ghol, Going East: rolling d20+2

(**10**)+2

= **12**



banana (GM): The humanoids present have -4 to hit and to defences against the priestess; Kon does not.



Placidus: rolling d20+6 initiative

(**14**)+6

= **20**

Capel: Capel the Bold returns from wherever he went, dusting off his hands. "There. Girl can't say I didn't try."



banana (GM): (This is to Skeleton and Xarvrax. He seems to like you guys.)



Placidus: Could Kon even make it up the ladder?



Xarvrax: "What did you try for who now?"



banana (GM): If he couldn't, I suggest you go down it.

rolling d20+13

(17)+13

= 30

Xiaxi's finished his sculpture just under the deadline. It's a mass of whorls and loops and impossible geometries.. but it isn't, itself, magic. You've got to imagine magic was used in its construction, but apparently the judges did not see the wizard use any, and he WAS biting and gnawing the thing the whole time. Anyway, it's kind of meaningless but very technically impressive.



Kon: Kon is at the base of the ladder. Ghol is probably fleeing down there regardless -- sorry, "tactically retreating," to some place with more space.



Placidus: Placidus will as well, assuming he doesn't immediately die here instead.

Capel: "Could you clarify the question?"

Priestess of Gash: OK, the goal here is to make sure Placidus DOES immediately die. All she does is come at you with a knife, but she's got, like, unnatural vigor and an aura of overpowering sexuality and the knife is magic and evil.



banana (GM): rolling d20+9 vs ac, 12 damage and ongoing 4 bleed

(20)+9

= 29



Placidus: Well.

That's a good way to start.



Xarvrax: I think she succeeded pretty hard there.



banana (GM): Agreed! Take 24 damage and ongoing 4 bleed (that is not, sadly, doubled itself).

She's engaged with Placidus, and, fair warning, if you try to disengage, her aura means she'll almost certainly get you as you hesitate.

His turn, though.



Placidus: Well, here's the bad news. Trying to gain focus while engaged provokes an OA anyway, so he's got to at least TRY to disengage.



banana (GM): In the south square, the crowd has been released to mingle and view the wonders on display. In a few cases, they get tiny samples - most goes to the judges and contestants.

Frankly, many of them are more art than food.



Placidus: rolling d20 here's him doing that

(19)

= 19



banana (GM): Success on a hard save! She DOESN'T stab you again.



Placidus: phew!



banana (GM): Moving down the ladder would be a move action, but of course you can't do that AND focus.



Vraknaar: can't you? i thought disengaging was just a normal move action more or less



banana (GM): he already used his move action to disengage, can't use another to change zones
i mean
would have to use another
to change zones



Vraknaar: ah



Skeleton: Skeleton looks thoughtful, somehow, despite having only a dark hood to emote with.
SHOULD ske call out the haste spell? Vraknaar's probably coming in ahead of the mage, but it'd eliminate competitors...

Fr. Vealsgravy: "Wondrous! Meat feats beyond the reach of the paintbrushes of bepatroned.. painters!"



Placidus: Placidus, blood dripping down his robe, looks up at the priestess dreamily, arcing back at the exact moment her knife comes down again, as if he had timed it himself. He coughs and blood flecks his teeth. "You hear that, my dear? They're playing our song."
focus go



Kon: quick action heal, placidus gets a recovery

Fr. Vealsgravy: "For your edification and your stomachs today, our nine contestants have created sculptures of art! With their eating parts!"



Placidus: do I save vs bleed



banana (GM): FWIW, Skeleton did not see Xiaxi *himself* cast a spell. But..



Placidus: taking 4 more damage, so I'm down 28 before recovery



Kon: Could Kon get up the ladder and into the attic to fight, or is there not enough space?



banana (GM): you take the damage at the start of your turn
and save at the end



Placidus: putting me down TO 14

rolling d20 here's a save, then

(4)

= 4



banana (GM): Ghol's turn!



Placidus: rip


Xarvrax: Xarvrax is curious who is slinging magic around.


 **Vraknaar:** surely ghol isn't half dead. he just forgot to refill his hp/recoveries


 **Placidus:** rolling d6+1 double this

(2)+1


= 3

 **Xarvrax:** There are plenty of wizards here, but which one of the fuckers is doing it.


 **Placidus:** 20/42 hp, 7/8 recoveries


 **Xarvrax:** Your recovery can't just be a d6.

Priestess of Gash: "I don't care if you're from the Empire or from the city or from the priests. There's a whole world of experience that Alabastien Meat will never provide."

 **Xarvrax:** Not at 2, especially.

 **Vraknaar:** he doubled it

 **Ghol, Going East:** Seeing Placidus's blood breaks Ghol out of his indecision...

 **Vraknaar:** the modifier does not increase with level. that's the doubling

 **Ghol, Going East:** rolling 1d20+3

(8)+3


= 11

rolling 2d6+6

(1 + 5)+6

= 12

ON MISS: 2 DAMAGE

 **Xarvrax:** Right, everyone else has a terrible modifier.

 **Ghol, Going East:** rolling 1d20+2

(6)+2

= 8

rolling 2d6+5

(4 + 5)+5

= **14**

ON MISS: 2 DAMAGE

Priestess of Gash: "What's raw meat without the death that transforms it or without.. life? The fullness of living flesh pressed against flesh, intermingled, skin and souls - we're so much more than meat."



Ghol, Going East: ...but he's still hesitant, and completely ineffective.



Kon: Can Kon get up here or not?



banana (GM): 4 damage total.



Skeleton: Skeleton continues taking a very dire standard action here, but relents. "Yeah, your guy cut it pretty close, there. Does that thing he made, um, mean anything?"



banana (GM): Kon can try and scramble up the ladder. He probably should, too.. It's not easy, but needs must. Dex check would do it.



Kon: Then he will.

rolling d20+2

(**7**)+2

= **9**

end turn.



Placidus: the escalation die is at 1 now!



Xarvrax: Xarvrax extends wacky ChAoS powers to check and see for wizardy shenanigans.



Placidus: hooray



banana (GM): She's way too An Enemy to get any escalation-related powers.



Placidus: let's see if she attacks me again



banana (GM): Xarvrax, roll int!



Ghol, Going East: She has to disengage from Ghol to try, doesn't she?

Priestess of Gash: Placidus is already bleeding, and Ghol's right here.



Xarvrax: rolling d20 + 4

(**12**)+4


= **16**


Priestess of Gash: But you know, he could always bleed more.




Vraknaar: i hope she gets a penalty to disengage. because you're so attracted you won't let her go


Priestess of Gash: Minor action: booty call


 **banana (GM):** rolling d20+9 vs md


()+9


= **12**


 **Xarvrax:** Probably not able to apply my backgrounds here.


 **banana (GM):** IF that hits, Placidus will stumble over, compelled to join back in the melee...

 **Xarvrax:** But 16 feels like it's good enough.


 **banana (GM):** 16 IS good enough to tell this: Capel did a bit of magic while he was away from you.


 **Placidus:** placidus's defenses are at -4, right


 **banana (GM):** yep


 **Placidus:** then a 12 hits exactly


Priestess of Gash: "Let me show you life."

 **Xarvrax:** "So Capel, have fun with your wizardly shenanigans?"

 **banana (GM):** It's not what she says, but the way she says it....


 **Placidus:** Well, Ghol probably needs the help anyway...


 **banana (GM):** rolling d20+9 vs ac, 12 damage 4 ongoing


()+9


= **25**


Priestess of Gash: "Let me show you death."


 **Ghol, Going East:** hit


 **Placidus:** is that on ghol

 **banana (GM):** it's vs placidus


 **Ghol, Going East:** christ


 **Placidus:** well, trigger first

 **Vraknaar:** she yells BOOTY so loud that placidus is yanked bodily towards her

 **Placidus:** what are her pm/pd
md/pd

banana (GM): md 17, pd 15

 **Xarvrax:** So you need 19 to hit her, basically.
Which is kinda bonkers.


 **Placidus:** rolling d20+4 this is vs pd then, and will deal force damage

(**20**)+4


= **24**

ah, well


 **banana (GM):** indeed it will


 **Xarvrax:** Or.
You could just do taht.


 **Skeleton:** helllll yes

 **Placidus:** so before I roll damage
I'm also using my gnome racial


 **Xarvrax:** That works too.

 **Placidus:** [] BITTER REVELATION (1/Battle Racial Power) No Action
- Trigger: I roll a natural 16+ on an attack
- The target is dazed until the end of my next turn.

 **banana (GM):** Dazed: -4 penalty to attacks.

 **Placidus:** does that apply to the attac that hit me
by any chance

 **banana (GM):** yep

 **Placidus:** then it now misses


rolling 3d6+4 she takes this much force damage, doubled

(**6** + **5** + **6**)+4

= **21**

* Brain-Melting Secrets [A]

- When a spell attack hits, one target can't attack me during its next turn unless no other target is nearby.

 **Xarvrax:** Record scratch noise, suddenly she is the one being stabbed.

Priestess of Gash: Now that the elf is out of the beam of light, she's a figure rather than a black robe. That figure shifts and changes, hard to see, different depending on whether Placidus or Ghol is looking, but every part alluring. He can't help but come when called. What he can do is decide what happens when he gets there.

The knife moves wickedly fast-



Vraknaar: more like the knife tip pierces his flesh and a comical explosion emits forth



Placidus: Placidus is blushing now. He whispers, conspiratorial. "You've shown me yours. Let me show you mine."

Fr. Vealsgravy: "All are amazed - but now, the judging!"

The Judging



Placidus: The priestess is made to understand. The terms align - it's too much to think about. She sees the numbers, but it's such a tactile thing. Maybe that's how Gash would've wanted it. The deep thrumming comes to a head as her knife and his wand cross like fencing swords. The vibration passes from him to her, and she can't take it. Violet light billows forth from her eyes, her ears, her mouth. And she sees it all so clearly.

She's rippling, like something inside her has shaken loose, like she's a two-dimensional photograph whose film is bubbling with heat.



banana (GM): With 42 damage, the priestess is staggered (just!). This happens:

Two new silhouettes flip, literally, down from the trapdoor. One of them does a kind of corkscrew thing in the air and lands holding a crossbow pointed right at your melee. The other is unarmed, but holds up hands in a classic spellcasting posture - then begins instead to hum.

B.B.: "Watch out, guys. She's a priest of Gash."



Placidus: "See, Ghol? I told you. The secret to being a Fisher is patience. You hold your net right and they'll come to you."



banana (GM): Light and shadow intermix. The mood is broken - your -4s are ended. It's Ghol's turn, and the strangers will act after.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol doesn't respond; he's gone to an angry, empty place. He no longer thinks like an elf, or an orc, or a normal teen boy. He's a vanguard of the Movement, and he is a killer.



Placidus: wait hang on
it's MY turn



banana (GM): oh shit



Placidus: that all ahppened on her turn



Ghol, Going East: Sigh.



banana (GM): lol yes
ok go



Placidus: anyway placidus is going to disengage again, keeping in mind that she can't attack me
focus go




Ghol, Going East: Ghol doesn't respond; he's gone to an angry, empty place. He no longer thinks like an elf, or an orc, or a normal teen boy. He's a vanguard of the Movement, and he is a killer.

Capel: "Fingers crossed, right?" A couple of gnomes and dwarves wander up to the spectators' group. Xarvrax and Skeleton know the Kapps, of course, and they might know Helen Dementor, who's going

to be in the Sandwich...





Ghol, Going East: rolling 1d20+8

() + 8

= **17**

rolling 2d6+6

( + ) + 6

= **10**

ON MISS: 2 DAMAGE

fucking hell



banana (GM): 17 hits

vs ac, yes?



Ghol, Going East: does 16?

yes



Vraknaar: welcome to the vraknaar zone



banana (GM): 16 also hits ac, she's unarmoured



Ghol, Going East: ok, using surprising to -1



even now

rolling 1d20+7

() + 7

= **18**

rolling 2d6+5

( + ) + 5

= **12**

ON MISS: 2 DAMAGE


The vanguard's hammers fall on the decadent.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax waves at the Kapps, and also Helen who he vaguely remembers.



Kon: rolling d20+2 dex

() + 2

= **4**

Kon, meanwhile, still can't get up the damn stairs.

done



banana (GM): It's too hard to climb a ladder when your upper body is bigger than the hole at the top :(



Placidus: so it turns out that kon's single heroic weakness is: a ladder



banana (GM): 22 damage, however

Fr. Vealsgravy: "First, the disappointments! Commendable effort, but some will not be joining us in the final Jawsculpting round, the two-hour art piece, the master class..."



Placidus: oh also, 16/42 hp, 7/8 recovery. save vs bleed

rolling d20

()

= **7**

rip

Fr. Vealsgravy: "Mailer's priest. Gary Appleton. Achen Earthsdaughter. Sid. Your pious works have earned you a place in Heaven for sure, but not in the final round."




Xarvrax: Xarvrax moves over to the Kapps, "Sorry about barbecuing you guys, I didn't have much control over anything after being blown up."



banana (GM): After Ghol's followup assault, the priestess's spell is thoroughly broken. She collapses back into her robe, no longer impossible to ignore - just a madwoman with a knife. The only noise she can make after what Placidus did (WHAT did Placidus DO?) is a guttural keen, a kind of growl from the stomach or..

..it's still attractive, somehow. The noise she makes, the way she moves. Rather than just enchanted she's been CHANGED into whatever she is. But it's also sickening.

rolling d20+7 vs ac

()+7

= **15**

whoops, escalation die +1 there

B.B.: Barry Bitter fires. The bolt takes her in the back and she drops to one knee.

T.S.: The Singer croons and light fills the attic; everything seems closer together, less shadowed and suggestive. It's just bare wood floors and an old-velvet covered chair. The air is fairly clean, the space unremarkable, the trapdoor and ladder less narrow and constraining than they seemed (dc 10 to climb even as a worg, now).



banana (GM): Placidus' turn.

Placidus: Placidus is humming, but he was doing that anyway. Is the priestess dead?


Fr. Vealsgravy: They don't give out official rankings for a heat, but this is clearly in order of how impressed the priests were by each entry. "Xiaksi the Green! Vraknaar the Red! Sculpture himself, The Angel! Far-archer, the Champion! Salubriot the Provocative! All of you have truly created art from meat."

 **banana (GM):** She's not quite gone.


Priestess of Gash: The priestess is kneeling, and not by choice, and she can't move very much, but she's making wild swings with that knife still.

Capel: "Hell yes!"

Big Kapp: "Aw."

 **Placidus:** Placidus will stay back, and concentrate.
focus go

 **banana (GM):** Ghol's up.



 **Ghol, Going East:** An end to this.

rolling 1d20+9


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
= **25**


rolling 2d6+6

( + ) + 6

= **14**

 **banana (GM):** If the Priestess gets another turn, she'll resort to throwing her knife.
It appears that will not happen, however.

 **Vraknaar:** how dare you be more impressed by their floating blobs than my meat dragon!!


 **Placidus:** 12/42 hp, 7/8
saving again


rolling d20


























()

= **10**

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax pokes Capel.

 **Placidus:** does that stop the bleeding or is it 11+

 **banana (GM):** The dragon was very good, it really was. It's just... not everyone thinks dragons are quiiiiite as cool as dragons do, you know?

	Vraknaar: at the end of battle you take the damage one more time and it ends automatically iirc
	Xarvrax: "I recommend you not be too happy, I know exactly what went on here."
	Placidus: yeah but the battle isn't over yet
	banana (GM): Xiaxi's Escherian piece is pretty amazing, if you know anything about modern art.
	Placidus: a save is 11+ though right
	Vraknaar: it is a severe character to not like dragons! character flaw*
	banana (GM): right
	Skeleton: Were they ranking those pieces in ascending or descending order?
	banana (GM): descending
	Xarvrax: Bah.
	Placidus: well, let's see if we can pratfall this whole thing into lasting for 2 more turns then
	Xarvrax: Salubriot's was clearly the best. She's dead already.
	banana (GM): you can't, because ghol did enough damage to kill her.
	Placidus: rip
	Xarvrax: Or rather, "She ded."
	Placidus: so I end the fight at 8/42 with 7/8 recoveries
	Xarvrax: That's why you should never go anywhere without your font of Chaosy goodness.
	Placidus: how many hp do you have now anyway
	banana (GM): As the orc-elf moves in for the kill, his own magic weapon meets flesh, and then cloth. The priestess is shrivelling within her robe, almost melting away, shrinking into something smaller and older.
	Vraknaar: "goodness"
	Xarvrax: Me? 54.
	Placidus: is that before or after the meatbonus
	Xarvrax: After. I lost a point of con mod.
	Placidus: RIP
	Xarvrax: In my changeover.
	banana (GM): This happens because she dies, probably. And yet: the power of Gash. You know you



won't remember her as this shrivelled unidentifiable thing, but as she was at the height of her power. This is a detail. The God remains.



Xarvrax: But now I have four stats above 0! Yay for stats!



Placidus: Well. The humming subsides and Placidus sinks slowly down onto the floor of the attack in a pool of his own blood, which only starts soaking up into his clothes after he's lain down.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol woodenly steps back, shakes the Rune off, wipes it dry, then walks over to Placidus. "Kon, the medicine bag," he says tonelessly.

He'll do his best to patch the gnome's wounds.

He's silent as he does so.

Barry: "Phew. It feels a lot less.. hot in here." The musician starts packing away his crossbow while his companion moves forward to help - she doesn't have healing magic, but a steady hand and experience with bandages.

Arguably this is not an appropriate time for a conversation, but you think he knows that. "We heard some folks were poking around the Half-God's lair. Not a good idea."



Placidus: "You're a good friend, Ghol," says Placidus absently. To Barry: "Did she tell you herself?"

Barry: "She..? No. Cells don't work that way. Who are you, really?"



banana (GM): Along with the other four successful sculptors, Vraknaar's lauded and has to stand around uncomfortably on a stage bragging... actually, the journalists want to interview him if he's interested.



Placidus: "My name is on the registry forms, Barry. I'm-" he coughs a bit as Ghol's bandages tighten. "I'm Placidus Fixlmillner."



banana (GM): Either way, the event's over! So far, you've either won or progressed in every single one of the Games events. Without running the numbers, you're not sure if any other team can say that...

Vraknaar: Vraknaar claps a journalist on the shoulder. "You can interview me after the main event. This is just the introduction."



banana (GM): "T.S." whispers along in time to Ghol's ministrations. You notice that she doesn't speak, except in melody- another hallmark of The Singer from the Thunder.

Reporter from Omen: "Not a word for our crowds? They love your whole dragon THING, not a lot of dragons back home."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax pokes Capel again, "I hope you realize that I'll be watching you now, and it's hard to escape the watch of a normal dragon, much less me."




Vraknaar: "Well I can tell you then that they'll really enjoy what's to come. No bones about it."


Barry Bitter: "Okay, but Fixlmillner. That's one in a hundred and fifty gnomes. There are Fixlmillners in Ersatz and Concord. You have.. the exact look and feel of a man with influence, power, apart from literally."


Capel the Bold: "Watch what you like, Xarvrax. I'll produce spectacle as necessary."





Ghol, Going East: Once Ghol is finished his work on Placidus, he'll begin a mechanical, but rather uninspired, search of the attic. He doesn't appear to be in the best place, mentally.


 **Placidus:** "One in a hundred and sixty-two, actually."


 **banana (GM):** The attic contains: a magic knife with an obscene handle; an unidentifiable corpse, which doesn't seem to be big enough to fit its robes; a chair backed with old velvet, which looks way out of place from the rest of the house's rented furnishings; two bards and Placidus.

 **Xarvrax:** "And I'll produce victory, something you don't know much about, without cheating involved, at least."


 **Placidus:** HEY WAIT
WHERE'S HER RING
I WANT THAT FUCKING RING


 **Xarvrax:** Dibs on crazy lady knife.

 **banana (GM):** It's there, it's just not magic.
Nor is it adorned, so presumably sentimental significance?


 **Placidus:** Placidus doesn't care. He wants that ring.


Barry: "Who do you work for, then?"


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol briefly contemplates the knife. Form versus function, indeed.
He wonders if he can wrap up the handle and...hrm. It's probably a bad idea to be fooling with Dark God artifacts in the first place.


 **Placidus:** You could go blind.


 **Xarvrax:** Besides, I called dibs.


 **banana (GM):** And after all that... it's lunchtime.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol will wrap it up triple-tight in bedsheets and the like, then.


 **banana (GM):** Did Placidus's and Skeleton's groups arrange to meet up anywhere, or just wander apart and assume they'd never see each other again?


 **Xarvrax:** Always 2.


 **Skeleton:** Assumptions are chill.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Once he's done here, Ghol's plan is to go back into the inn and spend the rest of the day in bed. He's got stuff to think about.
Responsible adults might be able to dissuade him from this.

 **banana (GM):** For example: Kon's big event is in the early evening! Surely he wants to see it.


 **Xarvrax:** Pfft. Responsible.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Yeah...he'll show up for that.

 **Placidus:** Well, Placidus probably ought to eat to keep his strength up. He's as deathly pale as his brownish skin will allow and his robes are drenched in blood.


Xarvrax: Half of us are criminals, the other half are dangerously insane, and all of us are just regular


 type insane.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol will help him back to the inn, then. It's likely that's where they'll be meeting up.


 **banana (GM):** The Aftershockers aren't going to press if he refuses to answer questions, but they *did* help out. Without them, you're not sure you'd have made it.

 **Ghol, Going East:** But first: what's up with that chair?

 **banana (GM):** gimme wis check


 **Ghol, Going East:** Is Barry's question just directed at Placidus, or both of them?


rolling 1d20+6


( 4)+6


= **10**

oh come the fuck on


 **banana (GM):** He was asking Placidus, but partly because Ghol was busy.
nothing obvious arises re: chair apart from it being out of place - perhaps the priests brought it with them


 **Ghol, Going East:** Fine! It's fine. I didn't want plot or setting information anyway, diceroller.
One assumes Placidus can at least attempt this roll too, however.

 **banana (GM):** sure
I mean, you could take the chair. Just carry a chair through the streets.
We broke into this house and came out with a chair. no big

 **Placidus:** can I add any background to the roll?


 **banana (GM):** friar


 **Placidus:** rolling d20+6 friar +1


( 5)+6


= **11**


ugh

 **banana (GM):** Placidus is gonna have to agree with Ghol here that the chair is out of place.

 **Xarvrax:** Bring me a chair.

 **Ghol, Going East:** I guess we're going to steal the chair, and just continue to reroll until one of us passes a FUCKING Wis check

 **banana (GM):** I shan't stop you.

 **Vraknaar:** ghol carrying a chair through a crowd. "vraknaar, look at this chair please. do you see any

malice within"



Ghol, Going East: Ghol hefts the chair. This morning has been an unmitigated disaster.



Placidus: "hee"



banana (GM): Vraknaar totally mitigated it.



Ghol, Going East: He does not view dragons as mitigation.



banana (GM): Of course...



Xarvrax: Well elves are stupid.



banana (GM): If you think about the courier wurm. It might have been pretty fucking disastrous.



Xarvrax: And orcs are ugly.



banana (GM): We'll find out in the last days of the Age.



Placidus: Placidus is singing a little as he staggers around. He's no The Thunder, but the orders of Megistus had music same as any religious order. "...now far ahead this road has gone, and I will follow it if I can..."

B.B.: "Nice to meet y'all. I'm sure we'll cross paths again."



banana (GM): (He's got a bit of an Ostgard accent, very uncommon down here.)



Ghol, Going East: Ghol nods. Not in a talking mood.



Kon: Kon will give a more enthusiastic, somewhat apologetic, bark.

The boy's constantly rude, that's nothing new nor anything intentional, but what was up with Placidus...?

Well, he was stabbed.

That's probably it.