



 **banana (GM):** Good Morning Every Body


 **VoxPVoxD:** good evening banana (GM)


 **Crion:** hello


 **Travis Meacham:** good morning


 **banana (GM):** The journey to Horizon - and on - is filled with dissent and free-riding.
When Travis emerges from his arcane studies, it's to find that the caravan has swelled to.. what, 12?


 **Travis Meacham:** "How did this happen?"


 **banana (GM):** Yeah, there's literally a dozen of you all going east. Or, presently, south; you're on the coast of Pocket Bay, in a little village named Northbyron, which is indeed north of the Shattered City.
So that would be the four companions Travis expected, the stonemason Janes of Horizon(?), two dragon-worshippers, a captured orcish commander(?), his jailer, some sort of commander also(???) and an ox.
Wait! That's 13 people.
The last one is shadowing Placidus, presently.
Some guy in a hood.

 **Xandrah:** Xarvrax glances at him, "How does anything happen with us? Stupidly of course."

 **banana (GM):** The other way things happen is by rolling too many icon dice, so let's get that going right now.

 **Placidus:** "It's a long story. We agreed to travel with Janes, Person, and Xarvrax's cultists. Then some orcs surrendered into our care yesterday and we're taking them as far as Hot Pocket."
"You know, when I put it like that, it's not actually that long a story."

 **Travis Meacham:** abd had travis met Person
was person the dark cultist who chatted with us pre finals?

 **Kalira:** rolling 2d6 demigod conflicted


(6 + 5)

= 11

rolling 1d6 elector negative

(4)

= 4

 **Xarvrax:** rolling 3d6 Dargron dice

(1 + 4 + 4)

= 9



Ghol, Going East: Ghol and the orc commander will be walking a bit removed from the other, conversing in low -- and not always friendly -- tones.



Travis Meacham: rolling 2d6 conqueror positive

(6 + 5)

= 11



Skeleton: rolling 1d6 diabolist positive

(5)

= 5



Ghol, Going East: rolling 1d6 ORC LORD, CONFLICTED

(5)

= 5



Travis Meacham: rolling 1d6 archmage conflicted

(5)

= 5



Skeleton: rolling 2d6 wizking negative

(2 + 5)

= 7



Placidus: damn



Ghol, Going East: rolling 2d6 ELF QUEEN, CONFLICTED

(5 + 1)


= 6



Kalira: god damn that's a lot of Five





Ghol, Going East: lol


 **Placidus:** I'm sensing some complications


 **Skeleton:** five guys


 **Placidus:** prepare for unforeseen consequences... -the elector


 **Kalira:** five guys burgers and dice


 **banana (GM):** Northbyron: picturesque, but it's a one-ox town and the villagers are as resentful as they are grateful. On the insistence of the local mayor (or 'commissioner'), they're housing and feeding these orcs you've captured, at least until the army marches triumphantly back down this road...
So, it might be best not to take in the salt air and the chalk cliffs for much longer.


 **Placidus:** we're still in fishing community territory, right?
close to the bay and all


 **banana (GM):** Person is a guy in a blue hood who no, Travis had never met. According to the others, he's travelling with you in the hope that you might know or learn the way to Ironhenge, which you have not.


 **Travis Meacham:** 5, good sir.


 **banana (GM):** What's Ghol conversing with Helbag *about*?
And yes, you're overlooking the bay right now. A road runs north-south- just north of the village it meets up with the waystone highway, and then it's small towns all the way south to Horizon.


 **Placidus:** then I'll be channelling the fisher


 **Ghol, Going East:** Well, Helbag wanted a crash course in the duties and responsibilities of an Emissary. Ghol's doing his best to give one, mainly from a practical -- not a theoretical -- perspective.

 **banana (GM):** look at all these manbabies.


 **Placidus:** Placidus is stretching his legs a bit at this particular moment. Mostly he sits on the rickety wagon but right now he's walking, apace with the flank of their caravan facing the sea. Periodically he'll stop for a few steps to stand and look at the waves. This is a lot harder when you don't write it out... but you don't *need* to write it out.

 **Ghol, Going East:** He wasn't entirely paying attention to the theory anyway, and what he was paying attention to, he's not entirely convinced wasn't bullshit.

 **banana (GM):** So this is how things have shaken out in your swollen (tumescent?) group:
- The mayor has Strongly Requested that Kulira travel with the rest of you as far as Hot Pocket, apparently distrusting the rest of you. How Kulira feels about that is up to her.
- Janes is kind of awed by all of this bull shit but ready to get back on the road any old time.

 **Placidus:** At this point, Placidus will stop, and address their new spookily armored friend. "I'm sorry, is it Kulira or Kalira? I've got a bit of a tin ear."

 **Ghol, Going East:** It was Kalinda, wasn't it?

 **banana (GM):** - Mirchin and Issuriel keep nearly falling over the cliff in their wonder at this 'ocean' thing, which provides Xarvrax numerous opportunities to berate or rescue them if he feels like it.

Kalira: "Kalira. Don't worry about it, happens all the time."



Ghol, Going East: Ah.



banana (GM): - Helbag is taking this instruction seriously, apparently feeling some sort of need to redeem himself by doing a good job at.. whatever this is.



Travis Meacham: "It's too bad we can't take some time to swim. A dip would be just what the doctor ordered."



banana (GM): - Person keeps following Placidus just about 15 metres back, too far to easily carry on a conversation but acting like he wants to say something nonetheless.

- The ox does not care.

Of further note is the air, today. As well as salt, it's so thick with omens that Kelly can barely wade.



Placidus: Does Person stand still when Placidus stops to periodically look at the water?



Xarvrax: Xarvrax grunts, "I had plenty of swimming when some asshole threw me off a cliff."



banana (GM): If you wanted to perform a terrible rite, actuate an ancient curse, or give birth to a saviour, this would be the kind of weather for it.



Kalira: "Come now. I'm sure you've done your fair share of throwing people off of things. It was nothing personal."



banana (GM): Person catches up in those moments, actually. Stillness seems to be anathema to him: he's always moving, limbs and body alike, with quite a lot of grace for someone wearing thick and featureless concealing clothing.



Ghol, Going East: Also, point of order: Xarvrax actually grew cool magic wings and hovered back onto the cliff.



Xarvrax: Pointing at her, Xarvrax raises an eyebrow, "So you're saying I can throw people off of cliffs and not be an asshole for doing so? Is it too late to go back and test that?"



banana (GM): The cliffs continue for some miles to the south, if you're looking for the opportunity.



Kalira: "I didn't say that. I said that you're likely as bad as he is," she says a little more firmly. "If you want to start throwing random people off of cliffs I'll see to it that you join them."



Placidus: At some point, then, Placidus will actually linger long enough that Person catches up, at which point Placidus will feel socially free to bother them. "Hello!"



Ghol, Going East: Ghol is kind of warming up to this Kalira lady.
Religion aside.



banana (GM): Thirteen people feels like a crowd. You're walking down an empty trade road, with the water far below to your left and spotty gorse to the right, nobody else about- but it's hardly solitude.
Person: "Hello. Ah!"



Xarvrax: "I'll have you know that it wouldn't be random... Or at least... It would be less random than things usually are around us."



Ghol, Going East: Thirteen people feels like an omen, is what thirteen people feels like.



banana (GM): Hey, you've only got 11 dice floating.

Could be.. ok, it couldn't be more ominous.



Placidus: 12 is probably the most ominous number right now. So if you think about it, we actually dodged it.



Kalira: "I suspect things could be less random if you stopped working so hard to make them so, dragonling."



Kon: Actually, if we're counting Kon -- and of course, we should be -- there's 14 of us. Numerological disaster averted.



Placidus: To Person: "How are you, Person? How do you find the salt air? Do you find it corrosive?"



Kon: Kon's been taking care of the scouting duties while Ghol teaches Helbag about various Emissary stuff; he occasionally loops back around to check in with the party.



Skeleton: Is Skeleton a person, though? Ske's worried the answer to that question's the exact one that makes this the most numerologically ominous, and walks with a particularly anxious spring in sker step therefore.



banana (GM): I'm afraid the count includes Kon, although in the same vein, it includes an ox.

(Mirchin Gleriand is hanging out with the ox. Issuriel van Keter is walking close to Janes Mason, talking quietly to him, and for some reason this has Mirchin constantly on the verge of laughter, so he's sharing it with the beast.)



Xarvrax: Xarvrax actually bursts out into laughter hearing that. "Oh, you have no idea how random things would be if I truly let loose, as it stands I'm releasing enough chaos and randomness to make it less likely that I'll randomly explode."



Placidus: Kon is definitely more of a person than an ox. That ox has never won a single competitive eating trophy.



Kon: It's true. That's how the law works.



banana (GM): Person: "I have an idea, Placidus. I'll ask you questions."

Person: "You're curious, and this way you still find things out, but I can be less of a problem."



Skeleton: "Chaos isn't a... conserved substance, though. Right?"



Placidus: "I will answer them! Ask away, Person."



banana (GM): Person doesn't stipulate to WHOM the problem would result if he was to answer some simple trivial thing about corrosion.

*for whom

Person: "Do you know the way to where *you're* going?"



Placidus: "Right now, we're going south, to Horizon, by way of Hot Pocket. After that, east to Santa Cora."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax shakes his head, "Chaos is whatever it wants to be whenever it wants to be, and my philosophy as an expert on the matter is that it's better to not store up chaos inside you."

Helbag: "I can do shirts if I must. Scout.. would you rather this position? Captured, shamed, but still loyal?"



Kalira: "Well, if this is what an expert looks like, I'd hate to see a novice."

Person: "That seems a very easy road. It's a direction and a fixed point."



Xarvrax: "You're in luck then! Because a novice Chaos Mage generally ends up a corpse before they realize that they are one!"



Placidus: "It's a simple road, certainly. Whether or not it's easy will depend on how many complications arise along the way, I think."



banana (GM): Has Kalira, to date, expressed any opinion on detouring with this eclectic group? Actually it's on her way, but I don't think that ever came up.



Skeleton: "Hmm... if I had to periodically blow off excess magic power, I suppose I'd, um. Sort of aim energy blasts backwards bit kind of tilted up and away from the road...?" Skeleton points off in demonstration.

Person: "That's interesting. It means you can be complicated externally."



Kalira: "I hope that they don't come down like arrows, then."



Skeleton: "Well that's why you don't aim them DIRECTLY down the road, see. Off a ways left or right as well as up."

"Of course, if it's specifically CHAOS we're talking here, maybe you can instead just have a coin keep landing on its edge or change the color of your shirt constantly or something."



Placidus: "I believe that I am just one small part of a much larger system, the factors and functions of which are, if not beyond my apprehension, certainly beyond my control. Is that different from what awaits you at Ironhenge?"



Xarvrax: "That's why being a chaos mage is harder than some boring normal wizard, because if you tried that, it would specifically curve back onto the road to hit someone."



Skeleton: "Hitting someone is more chaotic than not hitting someone?"

Person: "It seems the opposite. To gain complexity, I must..."

"Have you destroyed many of your own kind?"



Travis Meacham: I am a prototype for a much larger system.



Xarvrax: "Well, it's more that Chaos really likes doing whatever you're trying to avoid."



banana (GM): On the south horizon is another town. At this rate, you'll reach it around noon (having spent the night in Northbyron).



Ghol, Going East: "Your repeated hectoring on loyalty is both annoying and hypocritical, Emissary. I would not rather be in your position because the Movement wills me elsewhere in this world. What you do now for the Fishers, I do for the elves."



Placidus: Placidus looks thoughtful. "I suppose that depends on how narrowly you define 'my own kind' and how generously you define 'many'. I suppose... I suppose if pressed I would have to say yes."



Ghol, Going East: A...generous interpretation of his conversation with Ingher, to be sure, but not a lie.



Kalira: "That sounds like you, not 'chaos'."



Travis Meacham: wow, placidus either really strongly believes in the brotherhood of Man or is a secret gnome serial killer



Skeleton: "Are you sure you're not a Perversity Mage?"



Placidus: don't ask about what happened at the abbey.

Person: "And you don't build upon their components, who they were- their corpses don't provide a flooring that raises you higher?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax shrugs, "To be fair, I'm not entirely certain how much of it is me, and how much is the well of chaotic energy pulling at the strings at the last moment."



Kalira: Kalira barks a laugh. "Well, that's a convenient excuse. It wasn't me, Chaos did it!"

Helbag: "Strange. The sack of the Kingswood was our first great victory, and I'd THINK it would not be the sort of thing elves fast forget. There's a saying about their memory, yes? Among citizens*?"

*: orcish slur for 'civilised' people



Placidus: "Not literally. Certainly it is... or has been... a learning experience. I know more, I suppose I *am* more, than I was before these things started to happen. And I've taken things people left behind in death and used them. In a sense these are components. But it's all rather less literal than you make it sound."



Xarvrax: "Well, me and chaos are pretty much the same thing at this point, as I'd rather not actually try to fight a literal force of nature."



Skeleton: "It seems that chaos magic wouldn't be the kind of magic that, you know, actually sets out to cause suffering. It'd be something more heretical or illegal that did that."

Person: Happily: "Then perhaps I am a metaphor for you."



Xarvrax: "The funny thing about Chaos Magic is that it's actually more difficult to do horrible things with it than it is regular magic, as you have very little control on how it manifests."



Kalira: "Only magicians blame their tools for suffering they've caused. If I cut you with my sword, I don't then blame it for your bleeding."



Placidus: "That's an interesting thought. Leads one to wonder, though - a metaphor of whose arranging?"



Kalira: "I don't curse the heavens and say my sword slipped its leash, and oh, the power I wield, you just wouldn't understand!"



Skeleton: "You could if your sword had a demon stuck in it or something."



Ghol, Going East: "There is." Ghol won't be easily drawn further down that road. "Things have changed since the death of the Elf King. At the moment their political situation is..." How to put this in sufficiently vague terms. "...fraught." He's mindful to change his pronouns here, while speaking with a Movement loyalist. Such as loyalism is.



Travis Meacham: "Yeah but that would still be irresponsible."



Kalira: "If I cannot control my sword, Kelly, then I will cast it aside and find another that I can."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax raises an eyebrow at her, "Uh, maybe you don't understand that even I don't

understand how Chaos Magic works."

Mason: Janes' voice has been rising steadily. "..naw, I don't think your wiles could compensate for a lifetime of slavery, in point of fact!"



Skeleton: "Well, if you were cursed with it, though."

Mirchin: "aaahahahahaha" *buries face in ox*



Kalira: who was janes even talking to?



banana (GM): Issuriel, who's now glaring at her boyfriend (Mirchin).
As far as Kalira's been able to pick up, those two are some sort of priests...?



Ghol, Going East: Idiots.



Xarvrax: "And I definitely can't 'cast it aside,' considering that trying to put a lid on it almost murdered several people."



Ghol, Going East: They're some sort of idiots.

Person: "My argument falls apart here. I've only recently been able to read literature, and I am unfamiliar with the correct allusions. However.. don't you have gods?"



Kalira: "Maybe casting it aside isn't quite as simple as throwing a sword, but if I were given a power I couldn't control, my first notion would be to find a way to master it."



banana (GM): Actually, could Ghol make a wisdom check here?
Bonuses related to understanding people apply.



Ghol, Going East: Emissary applies, then?



Placidus: "Many, in fact! Arranged in manners sacred and efficient and terrible. They don't guide us as much as we'd like them to."



banana (GM): yep



Ghol, Going East: What about "Student of the Military History of Axis and Kingswood," since that's what we were just talking about?



banana (GM): nope



Ghol, Going East: rolling d20+6

(8)+6

= 14

come on.



banana (GM): Person: "Well, I think that won't matter for very much longer."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax nods, "And that's what I'm in the process of attempting, but mastering Chaos isn't a simple or quick thing."

Person: "Well, I think that won't matter for very much longer."



banana (GM): There's something odd about Helbag - as there was about all his troop - when this subject of loyalty comes up. While they weren't really deserters, his reactions are weird, not within the ranges Ghol expects.. most orcs have a pretty predictable attitude when it comes to these things, but the gruntcaptain is outside of that.



Skeleton: "Well, I'd look into like... unlikely dice rolls, strange patterns of falling leaves, that kind of stuff. In terms of ways to release power."



Placidus: "We can but hope, Person."



Xarvrax: "Not to mention that I'm up to... fifteen different powers swirling around inside of me, at the very least?"

Helbag: Disgusted: "Politics. We'll only be able to get along with this queen of the fishes if she eschews.. *rule*, empires."



Kalira: "You counted?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax nods, "I mean, every time a new one pops up, I take note."



Skeleton: "There aren't fifteen different powers, are there? Unless you mean specific things you can do as opposed to, you know. Capitalized."



Ghol, Going East: That is odd, but policing Helbag's politics is the job of a -- what are they called, commissars? The sword of his office -- now Helbag's -- faces outwards, not inwards.



Placidus: "What makes you think that, though?"



banana (GM): The town is similar to Northbyron, with lower cliffs and more boats. It additionally sports a warehouse for passing traders, a single inn, and a small barracks - nearly empty. Though the Conqueror's flag flies above it, the two soldiers lazing on the bench outside wear a uniform more like *Kalira's*, and even salute her as you're passing.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax looks at Kelly, "There are a lot of different powers in the world, some more useful than others, some good, some evil."



Ghol, Going East: "From what I hear, she is nobility that has rejected her throne." Ghol shrugs. "Perhaps that is genuine; perhaps it is posturing."



Kalira: She nods curtly to the two. "On that, dragonling, we agree."



Skeleton: "I suppose if you start counting individual gods..."



banana (GM): The total would be hotly contested.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax chuckles, "They aren't very helpful unless all together at this point actually."

Person: "I don't know." That panicked tone is returning- he's drawing away.



banana (GM): It's like Placidus has come across a being who's unable to actually lie, substituting action and avoidance for per se deceit.



Placidus: Placidus tries a different tack: "I have you ever gotten lost?"

Xarvrax: "I meant actual physical beings of power, like The Five, and such."



banana (GM): Ah. The 'great dragon' theory of history.



Skeleton: "Oh, yes. You know, people always just say The Five, I've been tending to group them."



Placidus: Widely accepted among dragons.



Xarvrax: "To be fair, they're most powerful when all together, though most of them are still stronger than just about everything separately."



banana (GM): One of the two soldiers at the barracks calls out... "Ser. Any news from the west?"



Kalira: "Nothing that couldn't be handled so far. Anything to report here?"



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will spare a moment to glower at these soldiers, their dress, and their deference to Kalira, but he's got other priorities at the moment.

Person: "What would that mean?"



Skeleton: "You know, it's funny, because you always sort of hear of them as basically one unit but you'd think a pack of dragons wouldn't be very internally cohesive at all."



Placidus: "Have you ever been unable to make a decision about which way to move?"

Dark Soldier: "Five legions came up this way to go fight orcs. We're just holding down this fort as a courtesy... but I notice you've got prisoners. That's better news than we expected."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax has to steady himself to keep from falling over laughing, "They're less cohesive than we are, and frequently try to murder each other."



Placidus: Wait just a moment-

Person: "No, so I suppose I haven't been lost. That's good."
"I'll try it. Excuse me."



Kalira: "What were you expecting, then?"

Dark Soldier: "Roland's men to come back on their shields, not with them. From the numbers we were hearing..."



Placidus: While Person tries to get lost, Placidus will wander over to the greater knot of his compatriots. "Friends of yours?"

Other Dark Soldier: "So, comrades- our dire contingency may be for naught!"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax gasps, "Oh no!"



Skeleton: "...what was the dire contingency?"

Dark Soldier: "It's not really 'dire'."



Kalira: "You usually -want- to not use dire contingencies."



Travis Meacham: They just erally like their job, okay

Other Dark Soldier: "A spirit-vessel, under false flags- conveyance and deceit in one- you would claim this mundane?"

Dark Soldier: "I didn't say 'mundane'. I said it wasn't 'dire'."



Kalira: Kalira eyes the first soldier. "Your friend has a flair for the dramatic, then."



Skeleton: "Well, how spiky is it?"



Travis Meacham: "Maybe it's 'fell', not dire."



Skeleton: "Mmm."

Dark Soldier: "Actually, there are a number of bone spikes. Wasn't my idea, but it wasn't a bad idea-the spikes."



Skeleton: "That's at least on the way to dire..."

Other Dark Soldier: "Anyway, it's for naught. If the orcs are down, we don't need to flee at the witching hour."

Dark Soldier: "Let me just establish something? Are the orcs, actually, defeated. Because your orcs aren't really... imprisoned."



Placidus: "They're our friends."



Ghol, Going East: Deep breaths.



Placidus: "Well. One of them is our friend."
"The others are just sort of headed in the same direction."



Travis Meacham: "You DID win, though."



Xarvrax: "I mean, at this point if he tried to run, I'd murder him before he got too far away, and I think he knows that."

Helbag: "Don't worry, idolfuckers. I'm a prisoner, and my warband died by the- by the hordes."



Kalira: "Respect your enemy, you two. We defeated a small group, but they are still strong."



Placidus: "It's true though that the orcs were routed back west. Ghastly affair, from all we've heard."

Dark Soldier: "Phew!"

Other Dark Soldier: "Ghastly as in good ghastly, or...?"



Xarvrax: "He threw me off a cliff, I didn't manage to catch my respect as I was sailing off, sorry."



Placidus: "Ghastly doesn't mean good."
He looks at Kalira. Is this some kind of weird dialect thing, like how dwarves use 'chuffed' to mean displeased?



Ghol, Going East: Ghol is just staring at the guy who said "your orcs," but he's not escalating from there.



Kalira: "You're going to catch the back of my hand if you don't put a lid on it, you overgrown lizard."
Kalira looks over the two soldiers. "This contingency isn't something that's going to get out of hand, is it?"



Skeleton: "I mean... it can, I suppose. If that's what you were going for."

So can Skeleton intuit what a 'spirit vessel' might be, or even sense its presence/properties? Sounds a bit necromantic.

Dark Soldier: "No, ser." They're both a bit confused- Kalira has an officer's uniform but no actual bars of rank or company. Oh well, her description's probably familiar... "It's a boat."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax growls, "Know your place human, before I send you to your gods early."

Other Dark Soldier: "Yeah, with an enchantment to fool the Dead Fleet- so we could slip down the coast."



Travis Meacham: Travis thought that was obvious.



Kalira: "Not bad. So what's the catch?"

Dark Soldier: "The catch is, we don't need it.. and Mogwum here called in a favour with Mottle for naught. I mean nothing."

Other Dark Soldier: Resignedly: "Technically, service to the goddess is its own reward."



Kalira: Kalira turns to Placidus. "You said you and your merry band here had need of travel to Santa Cora, correct?"



Travis Meacham: "We have some stops to maek, but yes."



Placidus: "That's where we're headed."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax blinks, "When you add technically, it makes me wonder why you worship them in the first place."



Kalira: "Are they on the coast? Perhaps this boat, dire or otherwise, could be of use."



Placidus: "Santa Cora isn't *on* the coast, as I recall. But it's quite close to the coast."



Kalira: "Of course, but you lot seem to run into plenty of trouble on the roads."



Xarvrax: "Do we not have to go by Erskine for something?"

Dark Soldier: "She's no sailing vessel. I wouldn't go out on the open ocean.. anywhere in the bay you'd be fine, though."

Other Dark Soldier: "Wait, are we giving away the boat?"

Dark Soldier: "Why not."



Kalira: so where exactly are we on the map



Skeleton: "We do, yes..." Is that like, a river that runs by the Erskine Citadel, there?




Kalira: in the bay by horizon is where he means?





banana (GM): hmm let me see how to signal it
yes




Placidus: we're around where placidus is


 **banana (GM):** that's not very fine grained of course
oh wait
there are drawing tools
you're about there


 **Placidus:** the bay is hemmed in by those rocks I think
so the ship isn't rated to get us very far on the way to santa fe/cora


 **banana (GM):** Pocket bay is shallow water and reefs, yeah. Otherwise it'd be vulnerable to Omen's fleets..
Mind you, it could be better than walking.


 **Travis Meacham:** Wew ant to stop by horizon!


 **Xarvrax:** May as well take it to Horizon, yeah.

 **Placidus:** well we've got to go to hot pocket too


 **Skeleton:** i can't find hot pocket on the map


 **Placidus:** it probably isn't on the map


 **Kalira:** I don't know though. Taking a Bone Ship to Horizon seems like a bad idea.

 **Placidus:** owing to smallness
"I'm not sure taking a ghost ship to cut across the bay is practical. It's a nice thought, though."


 **banana (GM):** Yeah, the map doesn't show little towns like Hot Pocket, of which there are many.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Doesn't seem particularly wise to take a ghost ship anywhere, but Ghol will defer to the group on this matter.


 **Travis Meacham:** It might be wise to take the ghost ship to Omen, but, we don't need to go trhere.

 **banana (GM):** Oh, I missed Skeleton: yes, a river runs by the citadel.

 **Travis Meacham:** Werll, skeleton does, but not us.


 **Skeleton:** "We could get off it before actually getting in sight of where we're going... it's a question of time saved, I suppose."


 **banana (GM):** Frankly, you aren't making good time right now, what with all these weird people and so on.
But.. you're not really in a hurry, right?

 **Kalira:** "It does seem as if it'd make us appear suspicious, but do we not already?"

Dark Soldier: "Notice how we're the only ones on the street out talking to you?"

Other Dark Soldier: "They tolerate us because my cousin was born in Westbyron."

 **Placidus:** "If people start avoiding us instead of giving us jobs, perhaps we'll make better time."

 **Xarvrax:** "Are you calling us weird?"



Kalira: "Yes, and fairly so."

The one not called Mogwum: "A soldier, a dragon, a gnome, a merchant, some elves, a.. guy in a hood and two orcs.. another hooded woman.. and a wolf. That's weird."



banana (GM): (Travis was NOT on the weird list.)



Placidus: "Anyway, all things being equal I'd prefer not to sail, ghost ship or otherwise. I can't swim."

The one called Mogwum: "Suit thyself."



Ghol, Going East: "Warg."



Travis Meacham: "You know, historically, most military sailors have been unable to swim."



Skeleton: "Gosh, really?"



Kalira: "I can swim, and you're easy to carry."



Skeleton: "Even in that armor?"



Kalira: "Yes, probably. I haven't gone swimming in armor lately, but it can be done."



Placidus: "Military sailors get paid to be on a boat."

Soldier: "Yeah, we're not giving away the paychest along with the spirit vessel."

Janes: "What's the holdup here?"

He's taken the opportunity to feed and water the ox, but now..



Kalira: "You're following us -- them, excuse me -- presumably for security. That means that when they stop, you wait. Quietly."

She then turns to Placidus. "So, you have to deliver your emissary to a town near here? I'm not sure whether it would be easier to go by water or land."

Janes: The stonemason removes his cap ('scuse me') and folds his arms to stare at Kalira. "There ain't no business relationship here. We're travelling together because why not, but in your case it seems I should be asking: why?"



Xarvrax: "Laws of the universe."

"Lost one grumpy tight ass, needed a new one, clearly."



Placidus: "Whether it'd be easier one way or the other is going to come down to what's in the way, rather than the way we take. With our luck I'm not convinced one of the reefs won't come to life and attack us, so I don't see the water route as safer."

"We're kitted out for overland travel, and it's not so far."



Kalira: "Then we leave this boat in the hands of its current owners and move on."





Skeleton: "Yeah, and if there's reason to disguise your ship as a part of the Dead Fleet, then the Dead Fleet's presumably a risk out there. I'm disinclined."





Placidus: "Fair enough. Shall we?"

Ghol, Going East: Ghol and Helbag have reconvened a few steps off, presumably using the current

 situation as a teaching tool, discussing why they're not massacring these servants of the Army of Darkness on sight, etc., etc.


 **Kalira:** Kalira nods, then turns to the two soldiers. "If you don't have need of it and it doesn't become a liability or anything, hold onto it. Could become useful to you or us."


 **banana (GM):** Helbag's view on that is: because we're outnumbered, and only because


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol generally agrees, but is pointing out how, GIVEN that situation, it can be turned into less of disadvantage.


Janes: To Xarvrax "Your new one don't even breathe fire."


 **Xarvrax:** "I know, right?"


 **Kalira:** "You have no idea what I can do, little man."
also, xarvrax is way grumpier than vraknaar


 **banana (GM):** The soldiers nod to Kalira. "Relief should be by in a week and a half, and the subcommander will have some plan for what she calls 'excess materiel'."

 **Placidus:** also way chumpier
imo


 **banana (GM):** The road goes ever on and on.


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax blinks, "Somehow I don't think you can breathe fire. Also I do have a vague idea of what you can do."


 **Placidus:** Down from the door where it began...

 **banana (GM):** The name of the little town with the empty barracks never came up, and it never does by the time you've left it behind. Water slaps at the cliffs, low now, sending spray up over the road at times.


This becomes a pattern: almost two more days on the road before you reach Hot Pocket (and then one more if you continue on to Horizon)... So how does the omened caravan go?

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol is impatient to see Helbag and friends on their way. Not because he dislikes the man -- though he's at best tepid on him -- but because his presence is forcing an uncomfortable amount of thinking about his own split allegiances. And unearthing his previous orthodoxy.


 **Travis Meacham:** With Travis still reading/practicing. Eventually they'll get to Horizon or something will happen.


 **banana (GM):** There are fishing towns, fishing hamlets, fishing villages and fishing cottages. All of them are worried to see orcish faces and keep watching out for imperial soldiers (who surely can't be far behind you) to return to their garrisons. There's a lot of fresh air. There's a change in Kon's diet.


Issuriel makes several more attempts to convert Mason to dragon-worship before going to work on Person.


 **Skeleton:** Skeleton rides about as much as ske walks, looking often towards the sea while doing a relentless psychic inventory to check that no part of sker is rebelling against the binding spell that bids sker to ignore the other binding spell.


Person: "But what makes a dragon different than an elf," he wonders? "Fundamentally?"


 **Xarvrax:** "Levels of coolness, and usefulness mainly."

 **banana (GM):** Helbag brightens up a little eventually, and Ghol can roll scouting to see if he knows why.

 **Placidus:** Placidus works and rides. For a stretch on the second day, when he's pacing around, he pops out oddly against the landscape. Close examination would reveal that despite the sunlight, the gnome casts no shadow. It's back by dusk.


 **Kon:** Kon's current project is learning to fish. He saw how bears (and ursquines) do it in rivers out west; it's not an approach that works too well on the beach, but in the tributaries that empty into the bay it is much more effective.


 **Skeleton:** "Dragons are sort of suffused with elemental power or something, aren't they?"


 **Kon:** rolling d20+10

(13)+10


= 23


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax nods, "They are, and can manifest it in different ways as needed."


 **Travis Meacham:** i can't believe Dreams was written in one afternoon


 **Kalira:** "Dragons are different than other beings owing to arrogance, mostly. They are mighty, but still flesh and blood."


Person: "Is having power the same as being powerful?"


 **Xarvrax:** "And scales, don't forget the scales."


 **Kalira:** "Each one, however, seems to think himself a god. I present to you Exhibit A."


 **Travis Meacham:** "Humans, naturally, are the most clear-sighted and unbiased of the sapient beings," says Travis, apparently with complete seriousness.


 **banana (GM):** Ghol.. knows why.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol's finding himself agreeing with the servant of the Dark Gods a fair bit more than he's comfortable with.


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax scoffs, "I don't think myself a god, I'd like to think I'm more useful than that."

 **Kalira:** "With Mottle's aid, those soldiers crafted an escape that would have otherwise been impossible. How is that not useful? That's practically the definition of useful."

 **banana (GM):** Clear-sightedness is easy around here: the beacon went off again this morning, and lit up the coast in honey-gold light for miles around. Travis and co could see all the way to their destination, the biggest town yet, nestled in an inlet of the bay...

 **Xarvrax:** "And how useful was said escape to them?"

 **Kalira:** "Only time will tell."

 **Ghol, Going East:** He's got other concerns now, though. He quietly sent Kon behind them some time

ago to check something -- and now here he comes loping out of underbrush, conferring briefly with Ghol, pressing a leaf into his hand. Ghol makes two stops. The first is to Helbag, to whom he says, quietly: "You were a fool to think I wouldn't find out." He awaits no reply.

Person: "Escaping from things doesn't seem right."



Ghol, Going East: Then over to Placidus: "I need to check on something. We'll be back."

Person: "If there was going to be a fight.. why not fight? If they're better, they'll win."



Xarvrax: "Because they're cowards, and probably not much better than anything."



Placidus: "Take care," Placidus says to Ghol.



Travis Meacham: "I really wish I knew why this thing kept going off."

"Or like ... how."



Kalira: "And what of your bravery, dragonspawn? Have you ever faced death and not backed down?"



Placidus: "Have you figured anything out about it in your studies?"



Skeleton: "Does it do anything BESIDES send up pillars of solid light?"



Placidus: "We ought to get it looked at while we're in Horizon, I suspect."



banana (GM): It's been a while. If Travis wants to make a int check to Studiedes the thing, he can have a +2 bonus this time.



Kalira: "Have you ever been in a battle for your life you knew you were going to lose? Ever thought 'this isn't worth my life'?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax looks sideways at Kalira, "To the first one I say, I faced down a literal solid wall of murderous spirits, and to the second I say... Why would I fight for something I know I'd lose?"



Travis Meacham: can i add my Wizard background



banana (GM): There isn't a lot of brush on the coast, so Ghol's prey must be inland a way. Only by little signs has he known.. a tree made into an observation post, the scuffed over marks of where a firepit *isn't* visible. They must be about two hours behind you, and so, now, is Ghol (though of course he moves far faster alone).



Kalira: "Then are you not a coward? After all, if a legion of orcs marched into that worthless village that barely tolerated their presence, you expected them to die for it."



banana (GM): Here's the question: whether they know that you know. Roll dex.

travis: yep



Ghol, Going East: Scout bonus, surely.




banana (GM): sure



Placidus: dexy's midnight runner



Travis Meacham: rolling 1d20+13

() + 13

= **33**

HELL YEAH NAILED IT.



Ghol, Going East: rolling d20+9

() + 9

= **23**



Placidus: Bazinga, as Travis likes to say.



Skeleton: borzango



Travis Meacham: i have, secondarily, got some great news: i somehow deleted my copy of travis's character sheet as i migratred hard drives.



banana (GM): wao.



Placidus: that's not great news at all
your level 1 sheet should still be in the chargen thread at least



Travis Meacham: yeah



Skeleton: bua -what they say in spain instead of uwa



banana (GM): Alright #1: Travis has finally, at last, managed to untangle the aura anchored in this thing enough that he can see its basic actual nature as an arcane entity.

Your orb (or beacon) is a artifact created by overworld magic- the weather-wizardry of giants. It absorbs energy and releases it, with meaningful effects.

..what you don't know is what the effect of that absorption or of that release IS.

Apart from the obvious: it isn't killing you to carry it around, and it puts out a lot of light. Piercing the clouds, generally.

Which brings up the point that there have BEEN clouds to pierce 100% of the times it fires. Hmm.



Placidus: Can he tell where it's been gathering energy from?



banana (GM): Not exactly, but however it works, it's working a lot better than it did in the forest. The time you spotted the beacon was probably the first time it'd gone off in forever.



Placidus: That'd explain why it was still there.

Is it firing off at the same rate, about? This is something Placidus would've made note of if nothing else.



Skeleton: So what's different? How thick was the canopy in the forest, for starters?



Travis Meacham: Travis is pretty sure that this is cool.



banana (GM): In the clearing, not very.



Skeleton: (Skeleton doesn't know, bu tske'd ask this of the others once the topic of the orb came up in

conversation)



banana (GM): It's been roughly the same rate - every 6 days? - since you got it, but would have been FAR slower before.



Skeleton: buttski



Placidus: butt out, buttinski



banana (GM): Alright #2: Ghol avoids notice from the trailee who's noticed their trail he's trailing.



Kalira: Maybe getting closer to Horizon is doing something to it?



banana (GM): This is much more difficult than he expected.



Ghol, Going East: He's scouting a scout.



banana (GM): There's a snare or two set back BEHIND their path, as if expecting Ghol to double back.. placed in locations he was never trained for. hmm.

In the end, he discovers this: the other scout is moving away from them. Inland, fairly rapidly, such that their paths could diverge by a long way. And yet, Ghol is totally certain that his own spotting of their spotting has not been spotted.. so either the pursuit's been abandoned, or they don't *need* to follow close.



Ghol, Going East: Well. At least things are staying interesting.



banana (GM): Unfortunately, there's a plausible explanation for that.



Travis Meacham: EWLL???

WELLL????



banana (GM): Surely I don't need to spell out something THIS plausible.

Helbag: "Shouldn't one of you be keeping an eye on me? I have sharp fangs, and I could break any of your necks with a punch."



Kalira: He's delivering a message. Presumably containing our whereabouts.



Placidus: Placidus says, "I can see you just fine."



Travis Meacham: "Yes, but if you did that we would kill you."

"I'm expecting you to make a break for it at some point, but ... not super worried one way or the other."

Helbag: "Civilised 'policing' reduced to its essence."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax grins wide, making sure to show as many fangs as possible, "Mine are sharper."




Placidus: "There's a trenchant political point in there, somewhere."





Kalira: "Would you do differently? Would your warband show mercy to a prisoner who attacked them or attempted to flee?"


Helbag: "It depends on what you consider mercy, idolfucker. If an enemy fought well and ended up subdued, we've been known to recruit..."


Ghol, Going East: Is this explanation so completely obvious and plausible that it'll justify rejoining the


 group at this point? Because if not, Ghol will continue his hunt.


 **banana (GM):** Well, Kalira's idea is a good one, but there's also: the beacon.


 **Skeleton:** "I count sixty."

 **banana (GM):** Unfortunately, as things stand, there's no need for a scout to be within a day's walk of you to track you quite precisely.


 **Xarvrax:** So that beacon is acting as well... a beacon.


 **Placidus:** Weird.


 **Travis Meacham:** ITS THE BAT SIGNAL
IT IS THE BAT SIGNAL.
IM CARRYING THE BAT SIGNAL.

 **Xarvrax:** Going, "Here there be wizards."


 **Skeleton:** orb signal


 **Kalira:** "Is that mercy? If I offered you a choice between worshipping my gods or death, is that mercy? I have an inkling I know which you would choose."


 **Placidus:** "He's surrendered once already. It might be easier the second time."


 **Xarvrax:** "What gave it away? Was it the idolfucker comment? I bet it was that."

Helbag: "It's not an idle insult, you know. Ask about her dark master's parentage."


 **Placidus:** "I don't think I will."


 **Ghol, Going East:** If the trail is that cold, then Ghol will return to the group.
How much free space is there in that wagon?

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax chuckles a bit, "You know, if you hadn't thrown me off a cliff, I think we could've been pals."


 **Kalira:** "No, they say that all the time." Kalira waves it off. "I won't be distracted. Is it merciful to offer you an impossible choice and expect you to accept it, washing my hands. We are soldiers, orc. Lies are not becoming."

there should be a question mark after hands

 **banana (GM):** Janes' cart is mostly empty, since he was delivering stone TO San Meat.

 **Placidus:** "In a sense, there is. If you're going to die either way, then giving you the chance to spit in my face first lets you go with a bit more dignity."

Helbag: "The question reveals a lot."

 **Ghol, Going East:** Then the first thing Ghol will do upon returning to the group is viciously coldcock Helbag.

And then continue beating him until he's unconscious.

Kalira: "Perhaps, but it's dishonest to call it mercy, Placidus."

Helbag: "You're not certain of your cause that you think it could ever persuade me. I have no such doubt in mine."



Placidus: "It's polite, though."



banana (GM): *not certain enough

Helbag: "The scout returns-"



Placidus: "Oh, Ghol! What did you-"



Ghol, Going East: And once he's unconscious, put him in the wagon.



Kalira: "Now -that's- honest." Kalira's smirk is positively wicked.



Ghol, Going East: To the rest of the orcs: "You will be silent until we make camp. I don't need you alive."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax blinks



banana (GM): If Ghol had heard the whole conversation, mind you, he'd know Helbag was listening to his diplomacy lessons.
(There aren't any other orcs!)



Ghol, Going East: Oh, I thought we had prisoners.
Get rid of that, then



banana (GM): nah, the rest of them were left behind



Xarvrax: "And here I thought I was the randomly violent one."



Ghol, Going East: To the group: "We're being tracked. More orcs."



Placidus: "How many?"



banana (GM): The road turns southwest away from the cliffs, to slowly arc down into a bay-within-a-bay. There's a sandbar, a spiral of homes and shops, a beach with long surfable waves and a marina...



Kalira: "Are they after you or him?" Kalira indicates Helbag's now-unconscious form.



Ghol, Going East: "At least one very good scout. No way to tell their full numbers -- they're not tracking us closely." He indicates the orb. "They don't have to."



banana (GM): It's hardly a city, but it's more than the miniscule little places you've been playing around in so far, and the bubbles in the warm water reveal the springs beneath the inlet that give this place its name. Hot Pocket.



Skeleton: "Why don't th- oh."









Placidus: Placidus's eyebrows go up. "Using the beacon as a beacon. Fair enough, I suppose."

Janes: "Sheer linguistic coincidence."



Ghol, Going East: "We should plan while Helbag's unconscious."

Travis Meacham: "If there's enough of them to ambush we should just do that."

	Placidus: "How long do we need to be in Hot Pocket? If we're anticipating a raiding party, or a warband, I'm loath to tarry if it means attracting them to the town."
	Ghol, Going East: "I don't know. It's possible Helbag's been signalling to them somehow -- he knew about them before I did, and he doesn't have my training. I suspect they've been making contact with him while we're in camp for the night."
	banana (GM): Your task here is simple: convey Helbag alive and cussing to the "Put Aside...", a name which Mayor Pendled gave up reluctantly. Unless something goes wrong it shouldn't require a long visit.
	Placidus: "We'll have to wait until he wakes back up, at any rate." "I should make something for the bruises."
	Ghol, Going East: "The wagon will carry him fine for now. We should move as fast as we can while we have time. Helbag might not be able to tell how far we've gone when he wakes."
	Travis Meacham: "Good idea, Ghol. And we should have another 5 days or so before this goes off again."
	Kalira: "He means we cannot deliver him unconscious, Ghol, if he is to negotiate."
	banana (GM): Well, presumably he'd wake up later.
	Ghol, Going East: Oh I missed the Hot Pocket intro narration.
	Skeleton: test ah okay
	Ghol, Going East: My understanding was we're bundling him on a boat to be sent to [location] for negotiations Not that negotiations are being held here
	banana (GM): The commissar implied he'd be taken somewhere, yeah.
	Placidus: "Whether or not he's negotiating here, it wouldn't do to hand over an Emissary who looks like he's had the tar beaten out of him. Even if he came by it honestly."
	Ghol, Going East: Ghol just stares at him blankly for a second. Oh, right. That probably would be an issue, for non-orcs.
	Placidus: He spares a glance at Helbag in the back. Do orcs actually... bruise?
	Kalira: "I don't know. Perhaps they should know that he is unwilling."
	banana (GM): It's nice to have everyone brought closer together by a common enemy, though.
	Mirchin: "Honoured wing Xarvrax?"
	Skeleton: "We could just explain that it was, um, a cultural thing. After all, it actually was!"
	Placidus: "I imagine they'll be able to tell he's unwilling as soon as he opens his mouth. Showing up hurt makes him look weak too."



Xarvrax: "Yes?"

"Well, it'll be good that they know that too."

Mirchin: "Honoured wing Xarvrax, if your fellow-travellers don't want to stop in the town, will we be able to stay at a beach town later instead?"



Xarvrax: "Is there a reason we need to?"

Mirchin: "Issuriel really lives the waves. It'd be nice to cool down after we perform the Rite of Flame's Embracing Helix."



banana (GM): *really likes



Xarvrax: Xarvrax blinks.

"The what now?"



Placidus: "You'll find out when you're older."



Ghol, Going East: "We can patch him up in town. If you want to take care of that, I'll do another wide sweep. Make sure there's nothing creeping up on us through the woods."

"



Kalira: Kalira laughs out loud. Placidus, you're all right.



Xarvrax: "I mean, we'll probably end up in one at some point, sure."



Placidus: "That's a good plan, Ghol."



banana (GM): The only other thing creeping up on you through the coastal gorse is a particularly optimistic cougar.



Placidus: Like a big cat?



Ghol, Going East: Not that Ghol's opposed, but -- oh, the large cat.



Placidus: Do those usually live out here?



banana (GM): They do! They range from the Giantwalk all the way to the coast, and as far north as Glitterwood. People call them 'prairie lions' to contrast with the true 'lions' of Ostgard.



Ghol, Going East: Best to stay out of that thing's way, then.



Placidus: Placidus sniffs. "Is there a-" He blinks back tears.



banana (GM): It won't attack if you're in a group, unless it's so desperate as to be suicidal.



Placidus: Or a druid, or something.



banana (GM): You never know.



Placidus: "We'll keep the lambs close and head into town."





banana (GM): This involves walking down a wide spiral slope into afternoon laze and many shallow warm pools.


The water of the hot springs merges with that of the sea (a little; there's a heavy sandbar), creating


clouds of steam that vent upward constantly, hiding the Hot Pocket from Pocket Bay proper. Down in the town, the valley walls also arch around you, giving a sense of seclusion and safety, for all that it's open to dragon attack.


A number of curious townspeople, some armed, note your approach. must be hundreds of people living here, perhaps more than a thousand.. they have multiple town 'squares', delineated by the spring pools as much as anything, and a lot of houses on stilts with nets strung between them to catch shellfish swept in by the currents.


 **Placidus:** "This seems like a nice place."


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax nods, "It's okay, yeah."


 **Ghol, Going East:** At least this way they're spared Helbag's smug running commentary on what the Movement will do to this place when they arrive. Ghol remembers giving that speech a couple times. Always a downer.


 **banana (GM):** The ox and cart move slowly. In the last couple of small towns, Janes picked up some cloth to trade- stuff left behind cheap by less daring merchants who'd fled the presumed oncoming horde. Accordingly, he's heading for a cluster of shops by the shore and clearing his throat to hawk in both senses.


 **Travis Meacham:** "Anybody have objection to us having a nice big seafood dinner and a dip in the hot spring somewhere?"


 **Ghol, Going East:** "Orcish raiders might."
"...but we should be safe for now."


 **Skeleton:** "Ooh, uh, good idea. I would definitely enjoy, both of those things."


 **Placidus:** "You're an even worse actor than I was."


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax grumbles, "I'll drown them if they show up again, I'm tired of dealing with orcs and their pursuing of us."


 **Placidus:** "Maybe they'll just want a clam bake."


 **Travis Meacham:** easy solution to being tired of dealing with orcs: Literally Die To The Horde, Scum


 **Skeleton:** "It'll turn out I'm allergic and shy, see."

 **Travis Meacham:** "The water might feel good on your bones. You don't know."
(doing a skeleton impression that sounds like cairne bloodhoof) "My old bones ache."

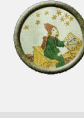
 **Placidus:** Placidus glances sidelong at Kalira. Did anyone ever actually explain Skeleton to her?


 **Ghol, Going East:** It would also let those elf kids get a chance to play in the waves.

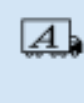
 **Skeleton:** We didn't, but Skeleton was actually keeping sker voice down and muttering that last bit to Placidus.

 **banana (GM):** It's hard to tell how old the cultists are, because, they're elves, but they can't be very old.

So that's one half-hearted half-vote from Ghol against relaxing for a while as Helbag sleeps off his bruises, and everyone else for.

 **Placidus:** We can afford to take a day, probably. And frankly, what's the point of adventuring if you're not going to see the sights a bit?

 **Travis Meacham:** Exactly.

 **banana (GM):** Hot Pocket, it seems, is a town welcoming to tourists. The people here are quite leisured themselves, but a subset spring into action for the chance to earn your silver (sapphires).


The springs are free to all, but there's plenty of secondary industry: cafeterias, cabanas and everything inbetween. If you want to learn how to dive for oysters, you've come to the right bay.


It doesn't seem like a place touched by war or politics. You're so far south now that nobody sees Ghol as anything but an orc - yet far enough north that this is totally safe Imperial territory.


..not a single Dragon Empire soldier or priest around, though.


There's quite a lot of traffic in and out of the harbour. Small boats, commercial and otherwise; people come and go into the night, at which point it's short-stay hotels competing for your attention.


Does anyone want to stay in the overexpensive imported-luxury place with the feather beds, or are you happy enough to bunk up with the surfers after this long on the road?


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol prefers the latter, but he won't object to the former.


 **Travis Meacham:** The latter, actually. Travis, being a sensible and practical wizard, doesn't want to get TOO comfy.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Signalling that we have a lot of coin to throw around could draw some undue attention to ourselves.

 **Travis Meacham:** Just, you know. Appropriately comfy.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Best they think all those crates are just trading goods.

 **Skeleton:** It's totally immaterial to Skeleton, of course.


 **banana (GM):** So it could. This seems like a peaceful place, but it has its shady characters.

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax doesn't really care.

 **banana (GM):** ...for example:


 **Ghol, Going East:** Also: if we're hoping to impress the Fishers, and we're like, giving a shit about Helbag's bruises to that end, then it seems like splurging ostentatiously and conspicuously consuming would defeat that entire point.


 **Kalira:** The real question is how overexpensive? If it's like 1 gp then come on. We're adventurers here.

 **banana (GM):** There are enough of you that you can get a common room all to yourselves. The establishment ("..If Only For Her") is just logs and carpets, but it's warm enough in Hot Pocket. When you start waking in the morning, whoever's up first finds a child waiting at the doorway with a message and a mouth full of toffee.


(The child is not the shady character.)

 **Skeleton:** "Hello?"

 **Kalira:** I hope it's not Xarvrax. He would literally take candy from a baby.


 **Skeleton:** Skeleton set skerself to wake up early, and was just about to get to some pacing.


 **Ghol, Going East:** "Stop answering the--!"


 **Xarvrax:** Not out of their mouth, that's gross.


 **Ghol, Going East:** I mean, seriously?!


 **banana (GM):** Kid: "Fair breeze, miss. I've got a token for you from a shady character."


 **Kalira:** What, are you going to catch a human's disease?

 **Skeleton:** "Oh, really? Gosh."
"Who are they?"


 **Xarvrax:** Who knows what that thing puts in its mouth!


 **Ghol, Going East:** The child does not seem to have realized he (she?) is talking to an undead monstrosity, so Ghol doesn't intervene further.
He instead just, hovers, waiting for disaster to strike.


 **Skeleton:** It's just a skinny person in a robe! Two robes. Their two sleep robes..?


 **Xarvrax:** Wow Ghol.


 **Placidus:** Maybe they get cold.


 **Xarvrax:** Way to be racist against skeletons.


 **banana (GM):** Youngun: "One of the shady ones, you know. From the sea. He said that 'people like them will inevitably end up in a place like this', and if I give you the message, I 'certainly get rewarded, given those no-good meddling types'."
Youngun: "You're the skeleton, right, miss? The skeleton with the orc and the dragons."


 **Ghol, Going East:** Aaaaand there it is.


 **Skeleton:** "Hmm, okay, I'll pass it on. Should I be whaaaa? No."
"That's crazy."


 **Placidus:** Placidus emerges in his stocking cap, rubbing his eyes. "What's all this?"


 **banana (GM):** Sprog: "Then it would be totally crazy of me to give you this important message."


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax pokes his head out the door, "There's only one dragon, so nope."


 **Skeleton:** "Listen, you can give us that message, but that in no way confirms the, uh, the SLANDEROUS, uh, look they're wrong."

 **Kon:** Kon has come back inside to check what the noise is all about, looming over the kid from behind.

 **Skeleton:** "Look, it's a puppy!"

 **Ghol, Going East:** "He's not a--"

 **Placidus:** "What's your name, child?"

 **banana (GM):** The ...If Only For Her in the morning is occupied by breakfasters now; they eat quite

different fare than was available in the Gut & Bowel, apart from agreeing that alcohol is a good way to start the morning. It's a lot sunnier, too; rays coming in through the steamwall cast dappling paths across the log-and-reed walls, illuminating swimmers, fishers, divers, and quite a lot of people who don't seem to have any particular trade.

Youth: "I'm eight."

It's holding onto a wrapped piece of paper quite tightly, without even getting the thing sticky yet.



Xarvrax: "And I'm five, who cares?"



Placidus: "Let me see that." He reaches for the message.



Kalira: Kalira is sitting up, rubbing her eyes. "That explains a lot."



banana (GM): The child just, gives Placidus the missive. Maybe because he's about the same height as it.



Skeleton: Skeleton doesn't volunteer information as to ske age. Ske's still leaning away from the child as though any sudden movements could trigger an explosion.



banana (GM): It's an ornate piece of stationery with stylised ivy etchings around the sides, bearing fruit.. hats?



Placidus: Placidus will open the message.



banana (GM): The thing is sealed with wax, but you can read the outside: *TO MY CREATION*



Ghol, Going East: This is already going well.



Travis Meacham: "I guess that might apply to any of us,t hough."



Ghol, Going East: "I don't usually get my mail delivered like this."



Xarvrax: "That could be mine, give it here."



banana (GM): Kid: "And are you usually so stingy about it?"



Skeleton: "...what did the person who gave you this look like, exactly?"

"What? Oh, no, no. That's what I was forgetting. Who's got - what's a good amount?"



Ghol, Going East: If Ghol had to guess, he'd probably guess it's for Person.



banana (GM): Child, unexpectedly wordy: "He was one of the citizens from the islands! In the exchange. But he was going out on a boat and couldn't stay."



Placidus: "I've got some loose silver in with my things. Kelly, would you please? Five silver is a good rate for a courier, I should think."



Travis Meacham: "A fair pay for a fair job."



banana (GM): Person is still curled up in a corner, a pile of blankets atop his un-removed clothing..






























Placidus: Does the wax seal look familiar?

Or, like, distinctive at all?



banana (GM): Ghol might observe, at this moment: Person doesn't breathe.

	Ghol, Going East: Lot of that going around.
	Skeleton: "Great, yes. Listen, little... one, do me a favor and discount basically everything you heard from them." Skeleton counts out ten silver.
	Xarvrax: Xarvrax snags the letter from Placidus, cutting the seal open with a claw.
	Placidus: "You're just going to need someone to read that to you."
	Ghol, Going East: This fucking dragon.
	banana (GM): Little one: "I didn't hear nothing... from nobody." It winks, or tries to. Xarvrax reads(?):
	Skeleton: Once ske's handed the money over and added a "Seriously. Like, please." Skeleton shuffles around to behind Xarvrax to peer at the message.
	banana (GM): "To my creation, whose own role in your genesis you have misunderstood:" "I name you Nemesis."
	Skeleton: "Not a promising start."
	Placidus: Placidus would've guessed that was for Skeleton, rather than Person.
	Travis Meacham: "This still could be liuterally any of us."
	Placidus: None of this is contradicting that.
	Xarvrax: Xarvrax shrugs, definitely not mine.
	banana (GM): "You are one of a kind- a brilliant stroke of luck. Beyond all ordinary constraint." "The King has granted me permission, therefore, to attend personally to your retrieval and exploitation, provided that my schedule is not compromised."
	Skeleton: "Hmmm."
	Placidus: Dryly: "What luck."
	Ghol, Going East: "Haha, wait, this isn't from that dumbass necromancer from San Meat, is it?"
	Xarvrax: Xarvrax shrugs, "Probably."
	banana (GM): "That schedule is unremitting, however, and your thus-far 'willed' nature could have its first useful expression. I therefore propose parley."
	Kalira: "I suspect an explanation is in order."
	banana (GM): "From the mark of the bell, you head east. My own direction, if at a necessarily slower rate. I find that business will take me, erewhile and anon, to Erewhile (and not Anon)."
	Skeleton: "The mark of the - oh, no. How good a heading does that give them?"
	Ghol, Going East: ...There's an Anon?
	banana (GM): "Let us meet in that place on Skerrl's neutral ground. I know about the egg. I know about the Archmage's trap. So I have answers to your questions, and I have the right to question you in turn."

	Placidus: If there wasn't before, there will be, you know. Soon.
	banana (GM): "Yours, in fellow-servitude and surprisingly-shared prowess," "BONANDA LIMETOP, 2nd Circle Adept (Death), subBurgobursar Rake Emts."
	Ghol, Going East: "FUCK YES. Let's kill this guy."
	Skeleton: "He doesn't exactly specify a date..."
	Xarvrax: Xarvrax growls low, "I will end him. There is no doubt about this anymore."
	Placidus: "Do you think he started calling himself Limetop after he got the hat, or do you think the hat is a Limetop family heirloom?"
	Kalira: Kalira's got her armor all strapped on now, and is throwing her sword over her shoulder. "Need a hand?"
	Skeleton: Skeleton's hood turns to Kalira. "That's a necromancer we fought in San Meat. He, uh... I'm kind of cursed, if you must know."
	banana (GM): The kid, meanwhile, has fucked off.
	Placidus: "There's no need for you to entangle yourself further, Kalira. You only had to follow us as far as here."
	Kalira: "Who's saying anything about entanglement? Necromancers are always good for a laugh. Freelance soldiery is mostly what I do and you lot seem like the kind to run into profitable trouble more often than not."
	Travis Meacham: "He contends you are NOT cursed."
	Placidus: "You know what my least favorite thing about Bonanda is?" "Doing the laundry afterward."
	Skeleton: "Okay, but I'm DEFINITELY cursed in a manner which I'm going to fail to specify."
	Ghol, Going East: "Yyyyp."
	Placidus: "At least you wisely forego shirts."
	Kalira: "So the only question is, do you want help? All I ask is an equal share in whatever we take."
	Placidus: "What do you all think?"
	Xarvrax: "I don't care who goes, I'm going to murder him, so whoever wants to watch can."
	Skeleton: "Help dealing with Bonanda? Frankly, he DID seem really powerful." "As long as your share doesn't come out of any necromantically relevant items or literature he may have on his person, though. Because... I need to work out what he did to me."
	Ghol, Going East: "Yeah, I don't see a problem wit--" It's precisely here he remembers Kalira's a servant of the dark gods. "With it. I guess. As long as she pulls her weight."
	Kalira: "With pleasure." Whether the smile was calculated to chill Ghol's blood or just does so because he's an Awkward Teen is undetermined.



Placidus: "Well, that's a majority. Welcome aboard, Kalira."



Ghol, Going East: Smiles from ladies don't usually chill Ghol's blood, so it's probably the first one.



Travis Meacham: "Frankly, I'm shocked you guys let Bonanda get away."



Placidus: "The building was on fire."



Ghol, Going East: "We were kind of busy at the time, and he was very insistent on leaving."



Skeleton: "He was really well-shielded! Magic had barely any purchase."
"Also, he's a white elf and it's not like the room was warded."



Xarvrax: "He's just lucky I couldn't see through the smoke, or I would have tackled him out a window."



Kalira: "Given recent events, that does sound like what you would do."



banana (GM): whoops sorry i'm back :/



Kalira: "Good thing it sounds like we'll be meeting him in the open. Perhaps we should find out if it's near a graveyard or not first."



banana (GM): midnight neighbourparty problems



Skeleton: "It'll probably be near one in effect if he's got any time to prepare."



Placidus: "Graveyard isn't really Bonanda's bailiwick."



Skeleton: "Gosh, though, it'll be really inconvenient if he's left more messengers like that, just... waiting around. With such an erroneous description of us."



Ghol, Going East: "Better to look for a butcher's."



banana (GM): Dividing up the spoils in advance is, frankly, a great way to spend your time. This is one of the perks of being an adventurer, and I wouldn't dream of interrupting it.



Placidus: "He's more of a latrines and abbatoirs kind of fellow."



Skeleton: "He's really gross, though, yes."



banana (GM): Except to point out that Erewhile is quite a way away, and you do have a gagged, furious orc in a mason's wagon.



Placidus: Hell, who doesn't?



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will have let him up to stretch out and relieve himself and eat. And probably had to beat him up again after doing so.



Travis Meacham: I hope this time he just gave him some good kidney punchers.




Placidus: "had to"

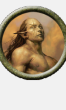



Ghol, Going East: Please respect orc culture.





Placidus: "Well. I suppose the party's over, isn't it? We should see Helbag off at the very least."

 **banana (GM):** Judging by the music starting up outside, the party goes on.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Most likely -- if Helbag's truly learned his diplomacy lesson -- he and Ghol will just wail on each other for awhile, get tired, and go back to being vaguely antagonistic verbally.

 **banana (GM):** It's not a band as such.. a group of mostly young people playing drums, pipes made of shells and tambourines. They have a sort of impromptu rhythm that goes on and on, entertaining the drinkers at the beachside bars, who occasionally give them sips for their troubles.


 **Skeleton:** Skeleton ponders the metaphysical links between shells and bones, but doesn't attempt to join in by exploiting them or similar.


 **banana (GM):** Gimme a strength check, Ghol


rolling d20+8 orc

() + 8

= **15**


 **Ghol, Going East:** this is in the purview of an Emissary, I feel,

 **banana (GM):** i'm not 100% certain of that

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ritual one on one combat with a village elder to prove dominance, but not so severely that you kill them and have no one to negotiate with (unless you've identified an amenable second)


but ok


rolling d20+8


() + 8

= **20**

phew

 **banana (GM):** The gruntcaptain makes one last go at getting his revenge, but... he's old, and injured, and in some ineffable way *beaten*.


 **Placidus:** It's not ineffable.

 **banana (GM):** For all his bluster, Helbag is a pretty traumatised orc at this point. Maybe enough so to engage in diplomacy.

 **Placidus:** You just effed it.

 **banana (GM):** i effed up :(

 **Skeleton:** :effort:

 **Ghol, Going East:** Getting beat up by a scout is probably not that great as far as the ego goes, but the ego isn't really what the Movement is about and he was helping other orcs secretly track them. So whatever.



banana (GM): So: there are a couple of small marinas in Hot Pocket, and one of them is the "Put Aside..."; it's right by the steam-wall, with jetties on either side, on the edge of the bay. Rock-strewn roads lead past it to sets of housing and another beach where children play.

Do any of you have advice or instructions for your captor-Emissary as you head over?

Apart from the core group, the only caravan member who wants to come is Person. "I want to see if they know the way," he explains.



Placidus: "If you see any famous musicians, and they ask to hurl you into dreamtime, you should politely refuse."



Ghol, Going East: "If the scout tracking you is half as good as me, the ship won't stop them. Next time they make contact, you tell them your mission, tell them my name, and if they have any problems with it, talk to Ingher. They'll know who Ingher is."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax nods, "Avoid diplomacy with dragons, most of them have less patience than I do, and will likely dismember and or eat you."



Kalira: "Good luck. You'll need it."

Helbag: "One last time: It WASN'T ME they're tracking. You better hope your elfquest is as much a thing of destiny as you think it is.. Scout Ghol."

To Xarvrax: "Absolutely will do."

To Kalira: "Thanks, human. I'm going to try and make something out of disgrace. Perhaps you'll regret this particular mercy."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax grunts, "Don't push it, or I'll push you into the ocean."



Kalira: "Perhaps. Uncertainty is ever the price of mercy."



Ghol, Going East: "Uh huh. Movement forward...Emissary Helbag."



banana (GM): There have always been quite a few people in Hot Pocket who just.. loiter about the town and the springs, lightly armed. As your group approaches the marina, they begin to unsubtly congregate.

Ultimately, a man who must be half-troll gets in your way, reeking of tuna. "Hey, strangers. How are you liking the town?"



Placidus: Placidus isn't armed. He's wishing he had something a little less warm to wear, though. "It's nice! Pretty."



Ghol, Going East: Smelled better a few seconds ago than it does now.



Xarvrax: "It's a town."



Skeleton: "I like it. Very relaxing."


Tunaman: "Yeah, it's a great place to live and work. Plenty to be done, and plenty of time left to spend on the beach."

"Are you looking for anything in particular?"





Kalira: "No, but I suspect you will help us find what you want us to find."

Tunaman: "Could be. The name's Kailis."


 **Placidus:** "What can we do for you, Kailis?"


Kailis: "My brothers and I-" Other people are gathering. They can't all be brothers, since some are women or not human, but whatever. "We'd appreciate knowing your names too."


 **Skeleton:** "Oh, well. I'm Kelly."


 **banana (GM):** Person: "I don't have a name."


 **Travis Meacham:** "Travis."


 **Crion:** "I'm Going East."

 **VoxPVoxD:** "Placidus Fixlmillner."


 **Crion:** "I'm Going East."

 **Kalira:** "I'm Kalira. You ask a lot of questions."


 **Ghol, Going East:** "I'm Going East."
finally


 **Xarvrax:** "My name is Go to Hell, all one word."

Kailis: "I don't think those can all be your real names."


 **Ghol, Going East:** "Mmm."


Helbag: "Theirs don't matter." The orc steps out from behind a conveniently LoS-blocking structure.

 **Xarvrax:** "Well I don't think I give a damn what you think."

 **Ghol, Going East:** Really.

Kailis: "Looks like you're headed the right way after all, strangers. Shall we all go together?"

 **banana (GM):** These, then, are the last moments of the eleven-member caravan. (Not counting oxen or wargs)

 **Travis Meacham:** Nice.

 **Kalira:** That ox's days are numbered.