



banana (GM): We begin *in situ*, a Clouthane phrase meaning "on the precipice of disaster".



Placidus: Well, nuts to those giants. What do they know, besides how to make enormous, distracting beacons.



banana (GM): Good question. Giants vanished from most of the world long ago- the peace of the Federation was not good to such wild creatures. Although the occasional ill giant or tone giant can be found in the mountains of the West, most of them are rumoured to have retreated to the overworld. Perhaps now that everything is on fire and fucked to death, the majestic humanoids will return.



Placidus: One can hope.



banana (GM): In order not to falsify the claim of situ-



Xarvrax: I just realized that we totally met a giant, and could've asked him about the beacon thing.



Ferrinus: damn, you're right



banana (GM): Somewhere between 11 and 13 adventurers on the beach, with a gathering crowd of Fishermen.
You're here to deliver the orcish "emissary" Helbag into their political mercies. He's looking pretty unsure about this.
The fishers' leader, a big man named Kailis, leads you through the steamy air to the gates of a marina. The "Put Aside..." encompasses a stone-walled area with piers, nets and yet another surfer bar.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol is debating whether to offer any further words of encouragement. Those don't particularly seem like his thing.



Riidi WW: Hellllllllbag.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax is keeping an eye on the crowd, he didn't waste his time bringing him here just for someone else to kill him.



banana (GM): There's no chime band in the public house this time- there's a bar full of drinks, but also filing cabinets, tables covered in documents and maps, and just a few women and men in quiet discussions. It looks just a little bit like a barracks.

Kailis: "Brothers. Either our messages got through, or we've been invaded."



Placidus: Placidus is hopeful that oscillating the Fisher will be helpful here. If not, then it will in some other circumstance, anyway. "Yes hello. We've come by way of Northbyron's Commissioner, whose name escapes me at the moment. We brought an Emissary!"



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will be gesturing..."subtly" for Helbag to get out in front here. This is his moment! He should be handling this.

Man with the same kind of weird feathered-chainmail armour as K.M.: "Greetings all. Aren't you the new Hungry Men?"



Ghol, Going East: And frankly, Movement forward and all, but we have places to be.



Placidus: "Yes! Champions of the Hungry Games! That's us."



Travis Meacham: "Greatest of all time, arguably."

Helbag: "These are couriers, humans. Their status is an internal matter for you and yours. I'm here to meet.. it seems.."

He recovers from the stumble. "I'm here to meet those who'd deal with your devils- who have a common enemy in what calls itself 'order'. Are you disenfranchised? Are you given to understand that someone somewhere is your 'better'?"



Ghol, Going East: Phew.

Woman in salt-stained boots: "We'd rather say differently franchised. There's a lot of discussion ahead for us."

Helbag: "As long as there's action in the words."



banana (GM): Everyone's watching the orc and the note-holders intently. You're kind of getting left out, here.



Ghol, Going East: Surprisingly light touch there, given the premise of Helbag.



banana (GM): Though there's a certain *presence* that being armed and famous brings.



Kalira: Very well spoken. Kalira would compliment his choice of words if it wouldn't just piss him off.



Placidus: This is a fine thing to be left out of, frankly. Getting embroiled in politics just means less "us" time.



Ghol, Going East: Being left out of delicate political opening negotiating gambits isn't the worst thing in the world.

Younger woman in brown cloth: "Yes, we'll begin with action. Heading somewhere with less ears. The Pocket is full of spies by nature."

"Which of you are coming to the islands?"



Placidus: Who's she talking to?



banana (GM): Everyone present.



Ghol, Going East: "Just the Emissary."

Helbag: Is the orc gracious enough to offer you a part in something you don't care about anyway..? No, actually. "And no others."



Skeleton: Skeleton is kind of lingering towards the back here, as ske does. That incident with the child's got sker spooked. Who else here knows...?



banana (GM): They did say that Hot Pocket is spy-ful, although the question of *why* it should be so is rather open.

Several people: "This way, then." They beckon Helbag forward and the rest of you back- out of the bar, if you've no objections.





Ghol, Going East: The honor guard schtick is wearing a bit thin. Ghol just wants to get Helbag on his boat and get out of town. Walking around in an armed group this big is...cumbersome.




Skeleton: Wondering vaguely if 'spooked' counts as some sort of slur on undeath, Skeleton doesn't resist getting ushered away. Ske says, to the others in a quiet voice: "What'll it come to, d'you think?"


Guy who recognised you: "From what I've heard, you'd better get back on the road! The good turn you've done here is appreciated, but we can't exactly trust dragons and imperials..."

 **banana (GM):** Could Travis and Xarvrax please make Cha checks, btw.


 **Kalira:** "You didn't seem the trusting sort at all, to me."


Kailis: "Just through the gate here would be great. Always nice to meet such polite and quiet adventurers. Hungry games, really? Pretty good. Down the steps."


 **Xarvrax:** rolling d20 + 11

() + 11

= **23**


 **Placidus:** Placidus shrugs at Skeleton's question. "On its own? Possibly nothing. But the longer the war goes on, the better their position will become."

 **(To Xandrah):** You feel the call of wild magic. Incredibly strong, and close- just beyond the rising wall of steam, within the piers of the marina.


 **(To Xandrah):** (the one you're being led out of)

 **Travis Meacham:** hold on

 **banana (GM):** holding.


 **Travis Meacham:** Ok I suspected my cha was -1.

rolling 1d20+2


() + 2


= **3**


 **Placidus:** Ah.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ah.


 **banana (GM):** btw, wizardry applies to this, but, however, get owwnned

 **Kalira:** Wizards. Not very diplomatic.

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax growls slightly, before turning to the people leading them out, "I'm not done here."

 **Travis Meacham:** well if wizardry applies then I get a killer sum of 8.

 **Skeleton:** "It seems like we're more likely to see fishermen joining the horde than vice versa..."

 **Ghol, Going East:** Glaring at Skeleton: "The Movement."

Kailis: "No?" The tuna-smelling man as well as the chainmailed guy from the lodge are on either side of your group now. When Xarvrax stops, they both go on alert.



Travis Meacham: my character self-conception requires me to be liked and competent. this is extremely problematic.



banana (GM): what if you were liked for incompetence



Skeleton: "What? Oh, right, right. Oops."



Xarvrax: "Did you all really think I wouldn't notice whatever magic you're doing? Even the worst Chaos Mage would feel that huge power."



Skeleton: "Hey, what?"



Ghol, Going East: Ghol's hands drift to his weapons.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax points at the steam wall, "I'm going through there, and if you try to stop me, I'll put you through a wall."



Placidus: Placidus blinks. This isn't like the sort of nonsense Xarvrax says arbitrarily. He's probably on to something. Hands in pockets, one curling around the wand.

Chainmail man: "Notice what you like, but it's none of your business."



Travis Meacham: "I'm inclined to agree. Nobody likes people who horn in."

Kailis: "Care, Garou. This must be one of the dragonwrought."



Placidus: Travis is right, of course, but he's right in a really charmless and unconvincing way. Weird, he's usually so affable.



Kalira: "I don't know that he goes anywhere to be liked. And if he did, he brought admirers to-go."



banana (GM): There's a long, faint noise oceanward- something like a horn or trumpet.



Xarvrax: "I'm the last Dragonwrought, as in, the last one you'll see if you continue hiding whatever it is you're failing to hid from me."

Xarvrax starts moving toward the wall of steam.



Placidus: Placidus sucks in a breath through his teeth, but he backs Xarvrax up.

Kailis: "Hey, hey.."

Garou: "It ain't *for* you. We have the sea, you have the sky."



banana (GM): They're keeping pace with Xarvrax (and Placidus?) as he walks toward the piers. The stream drifts and gusts, and behind it something is taking shape- a LOT of shape.



Placidus: "Xarvrax, is it important?"



banana (GM): That's where Helbag and the others went, of course.



Placidus: "If it's not important we should just go."



Xarvrax: "See, that's where you humans always get it wrong," Xarvrax says, not stopping, "Dragons don't rule the sky, we rule everything."



banana (GM): The noise again. It's oddly harmonic.



(To VoxPVoxD): No, it's evenly harmonic, actually.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol is almost growling. If this idiot preening lizard screws up negotiations between the Movement and the Fishers over nothing--



Xarvrax: "It's probably way more important than anything we've done since we left San Meat."



(To VoxPVoxD): Precisely the harmonic you invoked earlier- the right combination of waveform and oscillation.



Placidus: Now Placidus hesitates, as if something strikes him. "Huh."

"Actually, Xarvrax is right."

"Let's go."



Xarvrax: "I wouldn't care if it wasn't such an obvious magical surge."



Ghol, Going East: The orc-elf teen blinks.



Skeleton: "What's- what's, uh...? Are you sure?"



Placidus: "I'm as surprised as you are."



Ghol, Going East: Well...if Placidus wants to...



Skeleton: "Well, okay, then. Ahem." Skeleton takes a decisive step forward and closer to the the others, having been getting ushered calmly away just moments ago.



Travis Meacham: Obviously, "I dunno, guys, I'm not feeling anything."

Kailis: "Fires of the abyss. If you go past that steam, we have to trust or kill you."

Garou: "Think very carefully about how trustworthy you are!"



Placidus: To the others: "Do you hear that? The string bounces back. That's the sound of the Age."



banana (GM): You're just close enough now to make out- beyond the steam, a number of people from the lodge have gathered at the end of the pier, and the sea in front of them is.. where the horizon should be.



Xarvrax: "Think about how powerful you are before you make threats."



Skeleton: "I'm really trustworthy! As is... I mean, are... us, broadly."



(To Crion): Was Helbag left a weapon?



(From Ghol, Going East): Ghol would've given him like a crappy club or sword for appearances



Placidus: "Come to your senses, everyone. We can all trust each other enough that this needn't fall to violence."



(To Crion): cool



banana (GM): if someone wants to do some sort of diplomatic stat check, feel free



Placidus: "We've fought alongside the Thunder!"



Kalira: i'll go for it.



Placidus: Placidus isn't charming or impressive at all, sadly.



Kalira: rolling 1d20+9 cha with dark majesty

(11)+9

= 20



Skeleton: will multiple attempts hurt? i've got a +6 untrained cha check but no real skills that are applicable



banana (GM): The curiosity of the chaos mage and the occultist versus the now-panicing defensiveness of the agents...



Skeleton: also that 20 seems p. good already



banana (GM): Multiple attempts are fine as long as you give me some actual convincy words with them, but actually, yeah, 20 is fine for this tier



Kalira: "Come now, gentlemen. We're professionals, despite my... compatriot's brash demeanor. We will keep any important information in confidence."



Placidus: "Imperial or not, we're neither spies nor soldiers."

Garou: "Professional *whats*?" But his companion's deflated, not wanting to take the step of calling over the citizen-soldiers. "It's too late, anyway." the other man mutters.



Xarvrax: "Besides, The Blue would already be here if this was something that important that the Empire gave a damn."



banana (GM): For a second, it appears that She actually, literally is.



Xarvrax: "I told you that the worst Chaos Mage would've seen that, the best probably can feel it for miles."



banana (GM): You're through the steam, and a *wall* of water is rising- something truly massive shoulders out of the sea, humped and, for a second, appearing winged.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax blinks.



Ghol, Going East: Whoa.



banana (GM): But they're fins, and the dark skin is un-scaled. Helbag is at the end of the pier now, alone apart from the woman with salt-stained leather, who's holding one hand high and crooked in the air as the beast towers over them, taller than any building in Hot Pocket, taller maybe than the cliffs around the valley.



Skeleton: "Oh, gosh."



banana (GM): It's like an un-scaled fish, with lines along its sides and fins and a tail longer than the pier. It opens a vast, gaping maw.



Ghol, Going East: The Fishermen have been busy.



Kalira: "I'm beginning to regret intervening. Is it that thing we're here to see?"



banana (GM): Helbag raises the shitty sword that Ghol left him and screams defiance- then the sea-beast closes its mouth around the ENTIRE end of the jetty. The Emissary and the woman are gone.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol draws his weapons.



Placidus: Placidus marvels. "Would you look at that."



Ghol, Going East: He even runs forward a few steps before...



Xarvrax: Xarvrax sighs, "Nevermind, we're done here."



Ghol, Going East: ...well...



Skeleton: "Mmmmaybe it's just a way to get around?"



Ghol, Going East: ...there's nothing really to hit, anymore.

Kailis: To Ghol: "Come on, man. You heard your commander."



Ghol, Going East: "I heard my WHAT?"



Travis Meacham: "It probably is."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax points a thumb at Placidus as he's turning around, "That would be him, actually."



Travis Meacham: "Maybe it's taking them to a secret underwater magic castle."



banana (GM): The wild magic Xarvrax sensed is fading now, having drawn the beast here- though some of it remains within the thing itself, which is doing a slow and inconceivably wide about-face.



Kalira: "The wizard's statement seems logical. Could that not be a method of transport for this... fisher?"



Skeleton: "You know," Skeleton says, to Travis, "I bet you're right."



Ghol, Going East: To the group: "This all seems very overoptimistic."



Placidus: Placidus just raises his hands. "Thank you for trusting us."

Garou: "That's the sort of thing you weren't meant to learn. Because of the reasons." He waves futilely to the other agents gathered on the dock, who are definitely turning and moving toward you at this point.



Travis Meacham: "Well, or they totally sacrificed him in a fell ritual, which, is not totally different from a lot of other things he might have suffered.

"



Ghol, Going East: Ghol growls again and sheathes his weapons.




Kalira: "Most fell rituals don't involve being eaten by a fish."




Xarvrax: Xarvrax stops once more.





Ghol, Going East: Lot of growling. Need to get out of this town.


 **Xarvrax:** "I'm tired of you all and your games, stand down, or I will personally march to Drakkenhall and send The Five here to burn this place to the ground."


 **Skeleton:** "Woah, hey-"

 **Placidus:** Placidus looks at Xarvrax. "Come on. There's no need for that."


 **banana (GM):** So a few more of them have run up. They've got weapons and, Travis can tell, magic, but they're not attacking so much as incredulously glaring.


 **Travis Meacham:** man, xarvrax is a real dick


 **Xarvrax:** "We're leaving, and we don't care about your damned fish monster either, so put your weapons away."


 **banana (GM):** The woman in the brown slip says: "Yeah, I don't actually believe that you could get Them to do that, so save the rants." They actually do put the weapons away, though.


Woman: "Are you satisfied, adventurers? Going to go and brag in taverns about the great big fish?"


 **Xarvrax:** "They might, actually, they get bored pretty easily."


 **Skeleton:** "We can hardly brag! It's not like we caught it."


 **Ghol, Going East:** Do not answer this question yes--

 **banana (GM):** (The seabeast chooses this moment to slide into the water with a *slap* of its tail on the ocean surface, a huge cracking sound that sprays droplets for dozens of feet around.)


 **Xarvrax:** "I told you already, no one gives a damn about your stupid fish."


 **Placidus:** "Frankly, going into a tavern and telling everyone around that we saw the biggest fish in the world would attract no attention whatsoever."
"Have you heard the stories they tell about fishing in taverns?"

 **Kalira:** "If you wish to punish us after allowing us in, then draw. Otherwise, move out of our way. As my friend here said, why brag about a giant fish you didn't catch?"


 **Placidus:** "We'd bring this up and get cut off with half a dozen stories about fish that were bigger or scarier or full of rubies and concubines."

Woman in brown: "Then you won't mind if we take a measure to stop your tongues. We won't harm you for curiosity, only contain it."

 **Xarvrax:** "Besides, you're already messing around with powers you probably can't actually control, so you'll end up blowing this place up yourselves."

 **Placidus:** "I'm afraid not. You'll just have to trust us."

Kailis: "Oh shit, Commissioner. These people are the real deal, you might not want to--"

 **Skeleton:** "A measure like... I don't think a geas would agree with me, is the thing, owing to circumstances."

Woman in brown: "Did you say geas or geese?"

Travis Meacham: "I didn't even care about this in the FIRST place."



Xarvrax: "If you try to put a magical compulsion on me, I'll take it as an attack and retaliate."



Placidus: "We're going to leave the pier now, Commissioner. Soon we'll be leaving town. You have my word that we will respect your security."



Ghol, Going East: "I'm on the same page with the dragon there."



Placidus: "But we're going to leave untouched."



Skeleton: "The one that isn't a bird."

"Um, multiple birds, that is."



Xarvrax: "That was the first thing The Blue told me, 'Someone tries to mess with your mind, kill them.'"

Woman in brown.: "Got it. No compulsion, no touching, and no geas. Leave."



Travis Meacham: To anyone who will listen, "I'm really very sorry that all of my friends are such nosy parkers."



Kalira: "I'm afraid I agree. If you wish to ensure we do not spread this tale, forcing us to fight you does not seem the way to do it."



Skeleton: Skeleton presses gloved hands together, nods graciously to the woman, and moves to head back out through the clouds of steam.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol stalks after him.



banana (GM): Garou to Travis: "Yeah, we don't really hire adventurers for this reason. You-all kind of turned up unsolicited with something we really wanted, but.."



Xarvrax: "I'm going to say this one last time before we leave. No one gives a damn about your stupid fish, " With that, Xarvrax turns and walks back through the steam.



Placidus: Placidus heads out too. He mutters to Ghol: "We should be careful. That was a very specific set of negative assurances they gave us."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol nods. Kon is already nowhere to be seen -- he's scouting ahead.

If there's an ambush waiting at the edge or just outside of town, they'll want to know about it.



banana (GM): Somehow, word runs ahead of you through the town. By the time you return to the surf bar where you were staying, you're getting blank faces and minimal conversation; Janes and Person are kind of huddled together on the cart because all the street kids have come out, even the messenger kid, to throw sticks at them and then skip away into the alleys.



Placidus: Nice.



Skeleton: Dang.



Placidus: "That went well."




Travis Meacham: Travis is in a grouchy mood now.





Skeleton: "That was a pretty big fish, though. ...eel?"





Travis Meacham: "We're not gonna get to have another clam bake, now. I can't believe this."


 **Ghol, Going East:** "Didn't we just tell these people we weren't going to talk about it?"


 **Placidus:** "Look at it this way, Travis. Now we'll get to Horizon all the sooner."

 **banana (GM):** It was too *wide* to be an eel. More like some sort of wingless underwater dragon... but not really draconic, either, its head was part of its body. The comparison only arises because of sheer size. Maybe it was a kind of... water behemoth.


 **Ghol, Going East:** At least wait until we're out of town. Come on.


 **Placidus:** City of Angels? More like City of Anglers; everybody's got one.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol's already got his things together. That is to say, he's retrieved his shirt.


 **Travis Meacham:** Can you draw Leviathan up with a fishhook?
as it turns out, yes. yes, you can.

 **Skeleton:** "We can talk about it amongst OURSELVES, surely."


 **Kalira:** "As long as we do so quietly."


 **banana (GM):** Hot Pocket was a pretty relaxing place, but you've never seen a community go from open to closed so fast. They must have very good rumourmongers, or a strict hierarchy.


 **Travis Meacham:** "And not in front of Mason."


 **Placidus:** Placidus didn't unpack very much. He hasn't even written anything down since they got to Hot Pocket. "For a bunch of freewheeling anarchists, they certainly do run a tight ship, don't they?"


Mason: "We heading out? The elf kids fell asleep in a spring and nearly drowned. I sent them up the cliffs already for fresher air."


 **Placidus:** "Unsupervised?"


 **Ghol, Going East:** Damned cultists.
"I'll go get them."


 **Placidus:** "Check the bottom of the cliffs first."


 **Skeleton:** "Hah!"


 **Kalira:** "And I've had people say -I- was grim."

 **Placidus:** "There are many kinds of stupidity in this world. I've yet to see one fiercer than the stupidity of people who want to be a dragon's friend."

 **Xandrah:** Xarvrax waves a hand, "They'll be fine."

 **(From Ghol, Going East):** is there any reason to emote going there or can he just drag them back by their ears while grumbling

 **(To Crion):** there is no reason

 **banana (GM):** The good news is, unless something changes on your end, these people are probably NOT gonna reach out to you with any more tedious quests and unwarranted politicking. It's nice to cut off one of those groups at least.



Placidus: "You know, Xarvrax, if you're going to accumulate worshippers, you really ought to consider looking after them a bit."



Ghol, Going East: A short time later, Ghol returns with the two itinerant elf morons. Their conversation in transit appears to have been neither worthwhile nor enjoyable.



banana (GM): This leaves: the road, and the cliffs, and the gorse, and the horizon. Beyond which is Horizon.



Xarvrax: "Whatever, they're fine... I'm sure they've got some kind of powers to protect them."



Placidus: "Wouldn't you have to grant them?"
"I admit I'm not clear on the particulars of dragon-worship."



Xarvrax: "If I have to constant watch them, then who will do the threatening?"



Kalira: "Worshippers are worth nothing if they get nothing in return, dragonling. They'll turn to someone who does look after them the first chance they get." She seems serious.



Placidus: "Imagine if nobody did."

Issuriel: "Don't worry, Mr. Fixlmillner. Not all power has to be given explicitly up-front."



Ghol, Going East: "Whatever powers they have come from the Elf Queen. And they've made it clear they've no use for her," harrumphs Ghol as he stalks past. Left his shirt on the table, you see.



banana (GM): (Ghol having just returned with her and Mirchin)



Placidus: "Imagine if we went an entire day without having to defuse a fight that got started because of errant threats."
"Just, picture it, in your head."



Xarvrax: "I know Placidus, such a horrible world."



Ghol, Going East: *Her



Xarvrax: "We really should have covered their ears before speaking of such."

Issuriel: "No, it's fine for the companions of the Honoured Wing to talk about us like we aren't even people. He can grant them that right, for some reason."



Placidus: "This is madness."



Kalira: "Threats are fine, directionless, purposeless ones, less so."



Xarvrax: "Also really, who wants to serve a boring Queen when you could serve me, an awesome dragon."

Person: "He can? How do you cause someone to not be people?"



Travis Meacham: "When I was studying my orb, I never threatened anyone with insane brutal death. Maybe we could all take a page from the wizards' book."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol looks from her to Kalira and Placidus, throws up his hands in exasperation, and storms outside.



Placidus: "You'd get very angry if we all started taking pages from your book."



Xarvrax: "Also, I didn't say people could talk about you like you're not people, and as such, if you hear someone doing so, you should punch them in the face."

Janes: "The world is full of stupidity, sure. But friend Xarvrax.. if you keep pointing that out, how's there going to be much world left?"

Issuriel: "Understood pending contraindicative circumstances, lord."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax blinks, before hitting himself, "You think you're clever, that one actually hurt me to think about."



banana (GM): The road goes thusly on.

And so: do you have anything in particular to do or talk about *before* reaching the City of Walls?"



Placidus: On the way, Placidus will abruptly turn to Person. "Do you know the way to Ironhenge?"

Person: Person's more lively in conversation these days. "I don't know its location, which is why I ask. I know *how* to get there."



Placidus: "How?"



Skeleton: Skeleton, to Travis: "So... what's our plan for Horizon, again?"

Person: "Congregate. Learn. Grow. Surpass."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax chimes in, "We go meet the Archmage, and throw Capel under the cart."



Placidus: "Surpass what?"

Person: "Everything else."



Placidus: "By what metrics?"



Skeleton: "Are we going to get anything? Seems petty otherwise."



Xarvrax: "Probably? We're doing his job after all."



Travis Meacham: "Why are we turning on Capel? Honestly, I'd love to go to Santa Cora."



Placidus: For Skeleton, since odds are excellent Xarvrax forgot. "This is in exchange for their collusion during the Games."



Kalira: "That's a tall order. Surpass everything else."



Placidus: "We also need to make sure someone knows that the waystones on the Via Arcana are malfunctioning."

Person: "I'll ask you a question again. How do you measure whether you're better than someone else?"



Travis Meacham: "But yeah, we definitely need to report the broken waystone, and maybe investigate what's going on to cause that."



banana (GM): Ghol, scouting roll for the final leg of the journey, please.



Skeleton: "Ah, yes, right. What'd we promise in exchange in specific? Is there someone in Horizon we turn up and offer a favor to?"



Ghol, Going East: rolling d20+11

(19)+11

= 30

Nice.



Kalira: I've got money on us still being follow--holy shit



Xarvrax: Xarvrax looks at Person, "Being a Dragon?"



banana (GM): whoa



Travis Meacham: "We promised to take a note to one of the temples in santa cora."

i, personally, forget which, but travis probably has it written down



Kalira: "I can probably help with that. However, Horizon is on the way, is it not?"



Placidus: To Person: "You compare two things by evaluating them. With people, that will usually mean a test or measurement of some kind. Competition, often. So the question is, how must you surpass everyone? In what way must you become the best?"



Ghol, Going East: While the conversation meanders on, Ghol has slipped away with Kon to survey the road ahead...



banana (GM): At first, Ghol is certain of this: nobody's following or endangering you at all. There are only grey birds in the sky and occasionally in the gorse.



Placidus: "You have to know what abilities need to be tested in order to test them."



banana (GM): It's that night that he realises the problem.

Specifically, while sleeping. Specifically, the Elf Queen's face is filling the starry night as she talks quietly about rebuilding, about breaking a cycle of vengeance. Specifically, she hesitates to look *past* Ghol at the grey stars that orbit his green point- not stars. Birds.

The Elf Queen: Her knight dreams of geese. Perhaps he is hungry, now, having left the meat people behind. She cannot help but be a little amused.



banana (GM): Horizon is certainly on the way to Santa Cora. It's on the way also to Ersatz, or Newport, or Drakkenhall, or the Wildwood, or Lamphaven... you're rounding a corner of the Realm, or at least of the sea.



Ghol, Going East: That is...likely.

The Elf Queen: His distractions are minor. He has far yet to travel, and the two crowns in the east are waiting. But.. she wonders.

Person: "Being one dragon would be a good start. Wouldn't you rather be two dragons?"



Xarvrax: "Not really?"

"I'm pretty sure I'd technically be a Hydra at that point, and Hydras are dumb."



Placidus: "We don't aggregate in quite that way."

Person: To Placidus: "Yes, you just try out and see who's better. Then you-" there's something about the way he says it. The first time 'you' was in the plural form of the common tongue, and now it's singular. "You can carry on to the next trial."



Placidus: "What happens to the ones who were worse?"



Kalira: "I've never seen a hydra, but I don't think they're just two dragons roped together."

Person: Happily: "Improvement."



banana (GM): whoops, i should take Helbag off this world map



Placidus: "Do they continue to exist discretely?"

"Or does one dragon become two?"



Crion: Ghol spends much of the next morning -- and the rest of the walk to Horizon -- keeping an eye out for, and keeping his mind on, geese.



Xandrah: Xarvrax huffs, "I believe I'm the Dragon expert here."



Kalira: "Perhaps two dragons become one. One better dragon."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol spends much of the next morning -- and the rest of the walk to Horizon -- keeping an eye out for, and keeping his mind on, geese.

Person: "No, that's not right. You can't just.. manufacture dragons." Oblivious of the fact that this is in fact Xarvrax's origin. "The boss is right! Two into one. Three into two. Five into three. Eight into five."



Kalira: "It's a metaphor, you clod. One I'd be happy to end."



Placidus: "A reduction of terms."



banana (GM): Well, if Ghol keeps looking for geese- he keeps finding them! They're common around here, and some are flying the same route as you're walking.



Kalira: "So, synthesis. Become better by... joining together. But do you remain? Or does only the... better remain?"



Ghol, Going East: Well...cool.
Do they seem to be doing anything interesting, or...just geese.



banana (GM): The Elf Queen wasn't actually done, though, in the dream.



Travis Meacham: maybe they were metaphors



Ghol, Going East: Ah.



banana (GM): (In which they were just geese, as they are in the light of day also)

The: Elf Queen She wonders about something she's only recently learned. She's hesitant, not wanting to believe the worst. People CAN change, can't they? And not all tricks are lies. They're just.. pranks, at times. Jokes with friends.

The Elf Queen: She wonders about something she's only recently learned. She's hesitant, not wanting to believe the worst. People CAN change, can't they? And not all tricks are lies. They're just.. pranks, at times. Jokes with friends.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax raises a finger ready to contest Person, but just shrugs and goes back to walking.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol gets the feeling he might know who She's thinking about.

Person: "The problem is that I don't know. I really don't. Because I've never lost."



Placidus: "What happens when you win?"

Person: "Me."
"Eventually, Ironhenge."



Kalira: "Losing is the best way to learn. Maybe not in this case, though."



Placidus: "Ironhenge isn't a place at all, is it."
"It's a consequence."

The Elf Queen: It's very likely. Her knight has been rubbing shoul- has been meeting with many people. Soooooooooo...
Did he end up finding, ah, an egg.

Person: "No. No!"
"I MUST reach Ironhenge. This will involve physically travelling, moving through space- I go to where it is. It's in a fixed place. I just don't KNOW where. We need to- you need to help me look, or I have to find other guides. Another way."



Placidus: "When was the last time you were tested?"



Skeleton: "So... is it in a fixed place, but one you can only arrive at after winning enough?"

Person: "It was- I don't- maybe. Maybe I can discover the way by winning, growing, but I don't think so. I don't think there's any more.. TO grow. If I can't find it."



Ghol, Going East: Somewhat. He found a creature with a box. And on that box, and egg.
*an



Skeleton: "Is it where you started? It'd sort of make sense - you're sent off, told to come back once you've achieved enough."



Ghol, Going East: The creature ended up coming out of the box, come to think of it. Out of the egg.



Kalira: "I'd say it sounds cruel, but it's how the world works, isn't it? At least in his case the instructions are clear."



Placidus: "If it's where Person started, then Person would know the way back, no?"




Travis Meacham: Travis isn't sure that helping person Grow is actually a good idea.
However, if he was sure it was a good idea, it wouldn't be much of an experiment, would it





Placidus: If it was an unambigiously good idea then it would be far too boring to help with.


Person: "I don't know if I'd know."

 **Travis Meacham:** ok lets be clear, though
is person a pile of nanomachines


The Elf Queen: This doesn't make any more sense to her than it does to Ghol.


 **Skeleton:** "I don't know the way back to where I started. Unless you count that inn room."


 **Placidus:** "You know where you'd have to go to get a pretty good idea, though."
He repeats his previous question to Person: "When was the last time you were tested?"


 **Ghol, Going East:** That's less than comforting.
There was also the other box, the one that looked like the egg box, but wasn't it. The one they got from the wizard.

Person: "Seventy-six seasons ago. Around the time they broke the walls, here." He's pointing at the horizon- at, in fact, Horizon.

 **Placidus:** "What was the test?"
Also, when were Horizon's walls broken?


 **banana (GM):** The great city is just slowly showing in the edge of your vision. Its great towers and shattered walls, all grey stone with light and crystal at the peaks- wizards' clouds and auras floating above what was once the greatest fortress in the West.
int roll, history stuff applies

 **Kalira:** "That's... a long time."

 **Travis Meacham:** rolling 1d20+10 , -3 if my public school education doesnt count

(20)+10

= 30

 **Skeleton:** rolling 1d20+7 skeleton certainly won't remember this - but will, maybe, just inexplicably know?

(1)+7


= 8


 **Placidus:** rolling d20+10 adding 'student of military history of axis'


(4)+10

= 14

nice

 **banana (GM):** Travis knows this. Hell, he grew up with it all around him.

 **Skeleton:** my god, travis. my god

 **banana (GM):** The "Shattered Palace" was shattered near the end of the first phase of the great war, when the Conqueror took it from the Federation. Ten years ago, the Prince of Horizon was cast down (executed, in fact) and the Archmage swore neutrality toward the Dragon Empire.


That was largely the end of war in the south; there have been skirmishes and negotiations with the Snakesrule ever since, but most of the real fighting has been up north for the past decade. The siege, the orcs, Forge, etc.

wait, i got some numbers wrong.

Please pretend that Person said "fifty-one seasons".


 **Placidus:** Fine.

 **banana (GM):** thank you

 **Travis Meacham:** has glitterhaegen really been under siege for that long?


Travis finishes telling that part of the history. "I don't remember hearing anything about someone like Person being involved in that, though."

The Elf Queen: Well. Probably it's fine. But the knight should know that this egg thing.. he doesn't need to worry about that, probably. It was an idea from, um, a different place, and it's really secondary or maybe even not a good idea at *all*. You know. As far as she knows.


 **banana (GM):** Yep, ten years semiblockade of the City of Coins.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Oh. Okay.

The Elf Queen: Yeah.


 **Placidus:** "He might just have been there, rather than involved."

The Elf Queen: So.


 **Skeleton:** "What'd you do in the meantime?"


 **Placidus:** "What was the test, and in what way did you differ after surpassing it?"

Person: "Remember, there are a lot of things that I shouldn't tell you."


 **banana (GM):** The Queen's face kind of floats there, looking alternately at Ghol and away again.


The sussuration of infinite elves all about is comforting, but awkward.

 **Kalira:** "Shouldn't tell us for our benefit, or yours?"

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol will put the egg quest aside for the moment, until She develops stronger feelings for it, or he stumbles across it in the course of searching for the crowns.

Yes, it does seem a bit difficult to get any private time, like this. He wonders if it's always like this for Her.

 **Placidus:** "I remember. What was the test, and in what way did you differ after surpassing it?"


 **Ghol, Going East:** Surely there's always an elf sleeping somewhere.


The Elf Queen: Great, that sounds pretty good. The restoration of the Crowns is vital, of course, for hope for the future.


It.. can be difficult. Sometimes you


If you don't know who to trust, but know the world needs changing, you can make mistakes.

Dream Goose: Honk.

 **banana (GM):** Ghol wakes.


 **Ghol, Going East:** DREAM GOOSE AAGHGood morning.


 **Xandrah:** I agree Dream Goose. Honk indeed.


 **Travis Meacham:** That said, you definitely should not trust the diabolist.


I would trust the orc lord about 9 trillion times more.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Hey: same.

 **Travis Meacham:** the orc lord: you know where you stand. specifically, under the headman's axe.

 **Skeleton:** Sometimes it's either trust the Diabolist or be relegated forever to the role of mindless servant, though.

 **Placidus:** Say what you will about the Orc Lord, but he's never personally threatened Placidus, which isn't the case for at least two other icons.

 **banana (GM):** where you stand: on the end of this jetty- I mean inside this mout
h


 **Xarvrax:** I disagree, always trust Demons, nothing can go wrong.


They just want hugs.

Person: "Boss, he keeps asking the same questions. I have to go."

 **Zarick:** Not quite as reliable as trusting the Dark Gods.


 **Kalira:** my personal beliefs.

 **banana (GM):** It's been a lonely couple of days on the coast road- now coming to an end. Several roads meet here, including a waystone highway. The rest of your journey to Horizon will be swift.

 **Placidus:** "Why is she your boss?"

 **Travis Meacham:** The dark gods are extremely reliable. Except for one of them.

Person: That's the not the first time Person has called Kalira 'boss', actually. "You can't tell? She's leading the pack, now. I remember how THIS goes. Hehe."

 **Placidus:** "How does it go?"

Person: In the tone of someone recounting a story: "The boss tells us where to look for parts, how to make designs. We all get together to work on improving and sometimes there's a better idea, sometimes you become the boss instead. When you're the boss, you have to direct all these small and simple people.. really, you're learning how to be more complex, yourself. How to be a person involving internal direction."



banana (GM): The latest flock of brown-feathered birds arrows across the sky as the roads join. Janes Mason, uninterested in the philosophical discussions, perks up. "Home, y'all."



Skeleton: "Hooray."



Placidus: "Have you ever been the boss?"

Person: "In the end, I was."



banana (GM): Horizon: It's big. The biggest city some of you have ever seen. Not as large as the Axis caldera, but far larger than the Axis settlement itself. San Meat certainly pales. All along the cliffs and consuming the roads, surrounded by farms and outsuburbs and towers is the once-walled city.

The wizards' town is now open to the world - not by design but in practice. Its great broken walls lie across miles of earth, symbolising the Conquest; at the back of the city, barely visible behind the haze of streets and towers and spell-products, the Shattered Palace itself looms, broken in two, above Pocket Bay. The only thing visible at this distance is that in the split interior of the keep, dragons roost.



Skeleton: "They really did a number on this place, eh?"



Travis Meacham: "They made a clear example."



Skeleton: "...that's a real phrase, right?"



Placidus: "Yes."



banana (GM): The number they did was 2, as in cleaved in twain.



Placidus: "It's a performance thing, I think. We always called a specific song-and-dance routine a 'number'."



banana (GM): Despite the deliberate evidences of war, Horizon is prosperous today. Its farms groan with magically altered produce going back and forth; you're joining a stream of travellers and caravans heading rapidly down the waystone way into the heart of the town, which opens into towering offices and residential towers. Even miles out you can feel the magic in the air.



Crion: Ghol's hackles are up. Civilization. And far less elven this time around.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol's hackles are up. Civilization. And far less elven this time around.



Placidus: Placidus really doesn't care for big cities, but at least this one doesn't reek of meat.



banana (GM): It's civilisation less obsessively focused on a goddess and a game.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will at this point grudgingly put on his shirt.



Skeleton: Skeleton's in fairly good humor about the place... except, shit, for the part where everyone and their brother is going to have some kind of mage sight, isn't it? Time to think REALLY hard about veiling...



banana (GM): Janes is entering his element. "We'll deliver to the Bosox warehouse on 18th Crescent. Anyone need the location of a good hotel? Market? Watering hole? Vulgarer hole? Sage?" He looks at everyone walking beside the cart. "Pedicurist?"

Mirchin Gleriand: "I could use almost all of those."

Travis Meacham: "I've never been here before, so how does one go about bringing a matter of Official

Business to the archmage's attention?"

Mason: "Uh. You know, I've never tried to do that. Or do you just mean the city government?"

Placidus: "We need to see a functionary. I want to find an academy or a toy store."
*and a toy store

Skeleton: "I'd like... hmm. Erm." It'd be nice to get this box looked at by some fresh eyes, but what if they find out something alarming? Wouldn't even asking for a discreet analyst of some kind be dangerous?

banana (GM): Oddly, as you walk down the highway through the town outskirts, some people start cheering- then stop, embarassed. It happens a few times, each time ending when you get closer. Eventually you get it: you're being mistaken for the returning Dragon Army. They must not be far behind.

Travis Meacham: We musat look pretty militaristic.
What with being epicly win and cool and brave and tough.

Placidus: Also we literally march alongside a dragon.

Ghol, Going East: One supposes they're either not that prejudiced against half-orcs, or they just don't recognize Ghol as one immediately.

Placidus: The literal dragon is going to make up for a lot.

banana (GM): Xarvrax's presence is the main thing confusing people, yeah.
Or... giving them the correct impression? You ARE citizens of the empire who've like, done cool stuff in it. Just not fought FOR it per se.

Placidus: We aren't *all* citizens of the empire. Some of us are actually, strictly speaking, its enemy. And others are skeletons.

Skeleton: Ain't no rule says- oh, wait, here it is.

Mason: "Two kinds of functionaries in the city now. There's the civilian government, they report to the Tower- staff at each local tower run services and exams and civil courts. Traffic fines." He spits at that one.

"Then you've got the military government, reporting to the Palace. Empire's outpost. They manage the garrison, and collect tithes, and judge high crimes. Assaults, killings, treason. Except crimes against wizards by wizards."

Skeleton: "Are those even crimes? I thought that's just what you did."

Placidus: "Who judges wizard crime?"

Mason: "Bigger wizards. The Tower."

Placidus: "Is that where we'd want to go to tell someone the Via Arcana were breaking down?"


Mason: "Yeah, probably. In my grandpa's time, stuff was the same way except the Palace looked out for just Horizon, not a whole empire. Under the Prince.. but his soldiers used to use the roads too, so.. I dunno. Try both."


banana (GM): "Now if you want toys! Fifth Lane. Right by the creekside. They've got the big stores all


 along there, emporiums and bazaars, with whole sections just for kids of rich parents."


 **Placidus:** "Splendid."


"What about academy? Where are the best schools in the city?"


 **Ghol, Going East:** Schools. Pah.


 **Skeleton:** Quietly, to Travis: "So, hey... how do you think I should get the box I've got investigated without it turning into a huge thing, potentially? Who's safe to talk to?"

 **banana (GM):** There are streets around you now, not just street - homes and shops and parks and already towers. (Janes points out one of the rounded structures as you pass, an ostentatious building with literally a burning flame instead of a roof - this is apparently a civilian government office or outpost.)

 **Travis Meacham:** "Hm. That's a good question, and my answer is"


 **Placidus:** Wizards: no sense of taste.


 **Travis Meacham:** Well, honestly my answer is 'nobody at all'
but that's not very helpful to skeleton.


 **banana (GM):** Well, how about "somebody well-paid"?
Or "somebody over whom you have a Hold".

The nice thing about Horizon, as opposed to Axis or San Meat, is that a lot of people here don't mind necromancy per se- it was, of course, legal ten years back, and one of the greatest schools of training FOR necromancers was here.

Wait, I mean nasty instead of nice.


 **Skeleton:** "How closely do they watch you here, anyway? Do you start drawing attention if you even, say, look up the wrong thing in a library?"

 **Ghol, Going East:** There's not really much for Ghol in Horizon...but perhaps he can come up with some way to advance his other goals. Like finding a shard of a Crown when his only clue is "underground."
Then again, perhaps not.
Doesn't seem like a very underground-y place.

 **Skeleton:** Oh, so? What's happened to the school now? If you make a hand crawl around, how heavily do they come down on you?


Mason: "There's the Invisible College, but we've no way to find it. Most famous school in the city is the Royal Consilium, and the best one you DON'T need noble blood to get into is Xoriander Houses."

 **Placidus:** "And these study natural subjects, yes, as opposed to being schools of magic?"

 **Travis Meacham:** "It depends on the library, but in general, it's pretty safe to ask questions."

Mason: "HELL no."

"As unnatural as possible is the Horizon way. We believe in civilisation here."

 **Travis Meacham:** "If you want to ask questions without questions being asked of YOU, though, you'll need to pay highly."

Travis is basically spitballing here, though, because he never studied in Horizon.



banana (GM): Where DID he study?



Travis Meacham: Good question.



Placidus: "By 'natural' I just mean, not exclusively wizardry and magic spells."
"If I wanted to find a mathematician, let's say."



Skeleton: "Hmm. I'm not sure I CAN pay highly... I suppose I'll just poke around and see what I can find on my own."
"Hey, they probably sell proper wands and things here, right?"



Travis Meacham: "Yeah, definitely."
"In fact, we should both go shopping for some good gear."



Skeleton: "You're right. I need a real implement - I think I've figured out how to make use of one."

Mason: "Oh, they've got people like that at schools too."

Person: "And *I* have some directions to ask. Shall we disaggregate and reform again in a while?"



Placidus: "Seems reasonable."



Travis Meacham: "Absolutely. Placidus, do you want to stop by the government first to report in?"



Placidus: "Good idea."



banana (GM): The prospect of a real city opens up before you- with real shops for buying real adventuring gear e.g. magic weapons. This is something you didn't even know you'd been missing.
Shops are everywhere, in fact - populated by people of all shapes and sizes. Horizon is more human than anything, but there are dwarves, gnomes, half-orcs and elves visible from time to time- and of course wizards. The skies are full of magic carpets, broomsticks and tottering figures floating under their own power. Occasionally, one of the dragons high up in the Palace roost will leap into the air and soar about snapping at them for a while, clearing the skies until it's gone and they cautiously resume.



Placidus: It's important to remember that wizards are a distinct race of monsters rather than whatever race they look like.



Travis Meacham: That's very true.



Placidus: So first things first, Placidus is going to see what's what with the Tower.
It seems like it'd be lower-traffic than the regular city government, so if it turns out to be the wrong place to take the issue there's time saved.



banana (GM): Mirchin and Issuriel, ever eager to serve, promise to secure you a good resting place and then seek you out via 'their divine connection with Xarvrax, the Honoured Wing'. Mirchin keeps snickering as Issuriel says that but as far as you can tell they do believe it'll actually work.



Travis Meacham: "I'm sure there's some kind of lewd pun they're making here."
"Just can't ... quite put my finger on it."



Skeleton: "What if YOU just made a lewd pun."



banana (GM): Alright: you split up in a wide square full of crowds, marble highlights and scorchmarks. Alright, Placidus - and possibly others if they aren't following different agendas - heads to the nearest

flame-topped tower- a civilian-government post.



Travis Meacham: Travis grins. "I did. But also what I said is true."



Skeleton: Skeleton didn't even see the broken waystone firsthand and so can't actually help with the report thing, but ske's fairly curious as to the fallout - ske'll tag along if both Placidus and Travis are going to inform the authorities, or otherwise follow Travis re: going shopping.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol's undecided about what to do or where to go -- but less time spent with the cultists, the better for his sanity.

He'll tag along with the main group, for now.



Travis Meacham: Team "sensibly reporting things to the propoer authorities" is a go.



banana (GM): The Tower- is it a specific tower, or an organisation? What you're seeing right now is, literally, a tower. It's an edifice of grey stone and magical cement, reaching several storeys, with only space for a couple of rooms per floor. Outside is a bored-looking human in an apprentice's white robe, guarding the door and greeting people who looks like they might enter; you can see a bit inside, where there's some sort of clerical space.



Placidus: That's clerical in the sense of paperwork, right?



banana (GM): Yes. Very few gods in evidence.



Placidus: "Excuse me?"



banana (GM): A group walking past: "..you going to the parade? I heard that Gnome Baskin and Gnome Robbins is going to have a float where they'll be giving out free samples.."



Skeleton: "Of what?"



banana (GM): The bored apprentice is a marvel of the form. She's spotty, hunched, wears a robe that's clean but repeatedly darned, and squeaks a little involuntarily as she talks.

"You're excused. Sir."



Placidus: "I'd like to report an issue with the waystones of the Via Arcana. Is this the correct place to do that?"



banana (GM): Apprentice: "Waystones?"

Apprentice: "Like, on the roads?"



Placidus: "Yes."



banana (GM): The pedestrians didn't notice that Skeleton was talking to them, unless ske wants to actually go up to them.



Skeleton: Skeleton's not that concerned. Anything that comes in free samples probably requires a working biology to make use of.



Travis Meacham: That's generally true.



banana (GM): Apprentice: "Huh. You'll have to go in and talk to Adept Beneficarum."



Placidus: "Where can I find them?"

Travis Meacham: Her, guesses Travis.



banana (GM): Travis may or may not be right, because you're directed inside to talk to a clerk in such all-consuming robes as to have a totally indiscernable gender.

"CITIZENS," booms the slightly higher ranked wizard, who's probably met Capel at some point. "What civic matter entails your arrival."



Skeleton: What the, who just sets up a big mirror right behind a des- oh, I see.



banana (GM): Here's the thing: Skeleton doesn't stand out at ALL here.



Travis Meacham: "We need to report a problem with one of the waystones of the Via Arcana."

"Well, at least one."



banana (GM): Adept: "That's probably an issue for the Palace patrols. Has it been vandalised?"



Travis Meacham: "It was in the wrong place."



banana (GM): Ah yes. Bureaucratic intransigence. That and anonymity.. maybe it's better than what you were experiencing down the coast.

Adept: "Ha! A thaumic impossibility."



Travis Meacham: "Yes. That's why we came to report it."



Skeleton: "It's pretty worrying!"



banana (GM): The bureaucrat takes a better look at you, noting the e.g. wands and protective spells and arcane auras. "You were probably imagining things. Or the power of the enchantment deluded you. Would you like to file a hallucination report?"



Placidus: "The ley line itself was jagged."



Skeleton: "...what do you do with hallucination reports?"



Placidus: "The stone wasn't moved, the magic pulled it out of alignment."



Travis Meacham: "Yes. The stone was in the right place for the ley line, but it wasn't in the same place it had been for the past however-many years."



Crion: Look at all these wizards, wizarding.



Ghol, Going East: Look at all these wizards, wizarding.



Placidus: Don't you DARE

"How did you put it at the time, Travis? 'Disordered'?"



Travis Meacham: "Yes. Evidence of a disorderedm ind."



banana (GM): Adept: "I assure you, beneath this sixth-circle apparel I'm white as a sheet. A misalignment of.. the world itself? The spells that trace the bones of existence? You MUST be fishing me."



Placidus: "Adept, I assure you we are not in the business of performing pranks on bureaucrats."

"This was not long out of Axis."

"The waystone, I mean."



banana (GM): Adept: "This is above my grade, if true. We'd better go see Maitre D'Appal in the district supertower."

Adept: "I warn you- if you're wasting Tower time, there are consequences. On the other hand, if you're reporting an important phenomenon, there are rewards."



Travis Meacham: "Let's go, then."



banana (GM): The wizard collects a few papers into a brief case and hurries you outside. "Apprentice Wittles. Follow me."

Apprentice: "Yes, ma'am."



Placidus: Looks like Travis was right.



Skeleton: Skeleton's successfully hurried. This is a bit exciting!



Travis Meacham: It's all in the grammar.



banana (GM): You're led rapidly down the streets. More crowds pass, and carts- Horizon's boulevards are quite good for vehicular traffic. The mood of the city is.. nothing in particular. It's too big to have moods without good reason.

There's a larger tower, above which burns a green flame; three stories, and wider at the base. This one is surrounded by a little wall and has TWO apprentices on guard outside.



Ghol, Going East: So this is the sort of place the Orc Lord most desperately wishes to destroy.



banana (GM): Pretty much.



Ghol, Going East: Yeah, Ghol can see why that might be.



banana (GM): After a few exchanges of passphrases and minutiae, you're inside, and taken straight up to the top floor. There's a desk, with a wizard and a decanter of wine, and a bunch of shelving - as well as more file cabinets.

The wizard here is taller yet, which helps to tell them apart, and has a rather good beard.

Maitre: "Adept."

Adept: "Maitre".

Maitre: "Apprentice."

Apprentice: "Maitre."



banana (GM): Adept: "Maitre, these travellers have been on the waystone roads and encountered, so they claim, a misaligned leyline."

Maitre: "Surely you mean a misaligned waystone."

Adept: "If only surety were accomplished by plausibility."



Travis Meacham: "That's not how it appeared to us. The waystone was correctly aligned to the ley line, but not in the same place as it had been for years before."



banana (GM): Maitre: "Who are you."



Travis Meacham: "Travis Meacham. I'm a wizard."



banana (GM): Maitre: "Same. I'm Maitre Shock D'Appal of the Fourth Circle of Fate, Irenius school. I know from leylines. Do you?"

	Placidus: Oh great. Let's just break out the measuring tape and settle this like men.
	banana (GM): The great thing about is that Apprentice Wittles is <i>*literally*</i> making a jerking-off hand motion behind their backs. <i>*about this</i>
	Travis Meacham: "I remember what I saw. It was outside of the Axis caldera on the way to San Meat."
	banana (GM): Maitre: "Intersection of the Via Carnis and the Via Arcana. And you observed what, exactly?"
	Ghol, Going East: Ghol is swinging his arms back and forth while staring off into the middle distance like an archetypal bored teen.
	Travis Meacham: "The waystone looked weird, so we first investigated visually. It wasn't resting in the place it had been. This was puzzling to us, since we understood waystones to be aligned to their ley lines. So we investigated using the sixth and seventh senses, and saw that they waystone WAS aligned, but the ley line itself was not where it had been before." "The way I remember describing it at the time was that the ley line seemed the product of a disordered mind."
	Placidus: "I measured. The waystone was," He says how far out of alignment the waystone was.
	banana (GM): Adept: "The... seventh sense? What's this?" The Maitre's eyes narrow. Maitre: "Above your grade, Beneficarum." Maitre: "The line spell was.. inexpertly cast? Madly? Do you know what you're saying?"
	Travis Meacham: Grimly, "Yes."
	Placidus: Placidus has no idea what "the seventh sense" is, though, right
	banana (GM): none at all
	Placidus: this is all wizard nonsense okay
	Ghol, Going East: Kinda bouncing back and forth now. There's some cool stuff on the walls, he guesses.
	banana (GM): Maitre: "I can't ignore an allegation like this. But I CAN'T take your word for it. You're just.. some guys and girls with a warg."
	Travis Meacham: "That's true. It definitely bears further investigation."
	Placidus: "We're just doing our civic duty."
	banana (GM): Maitre: "So you are. Perhaps."
	Skeleton: "You can't just check from here, can you? Magically?"
	Placidus: "I know that if <i>*I*</i> was serving the Archmage, and he was slowly going insane, I'd want somebody to let me know."
	banana (GM): Maitre: "Not myself. I'll need you to come with me to see Incantronach Pyrefrost, at the College tower."

	Ghol, Going East: "He's a--" Wait a second. "--yeah."
	banana (GM): Apprentice: *gasp*
	Travis Meacham: He sounds cool. Or, you know.
	banana (GM): Both cool and hot at the same time?
	Placidus: Frost to dull the pain, and pyre to relax it away.
	Skeleton: "I wonder what percentage of wizards have references to both heat and cold in their names."
	banana (GM): Maitre D'Appal: "I assume none of you have keys to the hidden realm."
	Placidus: "Do we all need to go? We still need to make arrangements for lodgings while we stay in the city."
	Travis Meacham: "Not me."
	Skeleton: "Uh, which hidden realm would this be."
	banana (GM): Maitre D'Appal: "Oh, just some of you would be fine. As long as it's someone who's been to the exact location."
	Placidus: "I assume that's a reference to the Invisible College. In which case, no." "Though if you're offering,"
	banana (GM): Maitre: "If you have no dimensional key in your aura, then you won't need blindfolds for this trip. Be pleased."
	Placidus: "If... you insist." Placidus affects a smile.
	Skeleton: Skeleton leans back a bit, uncertain.
	banana (GM): Maitre: "All who are intending the Incantronach- stand now. The rest of you may go. Adept, come." Adept: "Apprentice, come."
	Travis Meacham: This might be a good time for skeleton to bow out, to be honest, but it's up to sker. Travis stands up and gets ready for a trip into the realms of wonder and enchantment.
	Placidus: Placidus was definitely trying to give Ghol an out. Who knows how much longer this is going to be.
	Ghol, Going East: Ghol isn't doing anything else, and it's not like "finding a room at an inn" is actually like. Interesting business.
	banana (GM): Wittles, whispering: "They call it the Tower, see, because it's like an incredibly tall staircase and you can't get to each floor without going through all the ones in the way."
	Placidus: It was just an excuse! He could go meet an elf girl and alienate her with his awkwardness.



Travis Meacham: "That makes a lot of sense."



Ghol, Going East: You know what.

That's actually a great idea.

Ghol will go explore the city.



Skeleton: Skeleton PROBABLY hasn't got any business here, but unless Travis signals as much ske's going to stand up. This is just interesting!



banana (GM): When Ghol heads down to the ground floor of the district tower, the adept on duty has no idea who he is, but a brief negotiation later, he's free and on the streets.

By now you've also lost Kalira and Xarvrax- so it's just the wizard, the one who used to be a wizard, and the one who looks like a wizard.



Placidus: Placidus isn't as enamored of plumbing the depths of wizarding as the two actual magicians are, but he feels some obligation to stick around seeing as he was the one who anticipated the degradation in the first place.



Ghol, Going East: He's with the warg, of course.



banana (GM): D'Appal leads you, Beneficarum and Wittles straight out the window onto a magic carpet, then squats uncomfortably at the front behind the crowd.

Maitre: "Command word: Phobos."



Skeleton: Skeleton sits down cross-legboned, humbly folding sker hands in sker lap.



Placidus: Skeleton doesn't even know what the leg bones are called, does ske.
What a complete joke of a necromancer.



banana (GM): Ah, but ske knows just what they're CONNECTED to-



Placidus: Placidus winches his eyes shut. Not a fan of heights.



banana (GM): You soar out through the city, trailing glitter. Horizon's streets aren't far below, and anyway a lot of the buildings are tall, so it's slightly harrowing. The rooftops have quite a number of cats sunning themselves.



Skeleton: Of course ske does! But the phrase is cross-legged, not cross-shinned or similar, so sacrifices must needs be made.



banana (GM): Adept: "If the Archmage is-"
Maitre: "Don't even."



Placidus: "ACHOO"
"Sorry."



Skeleton: "Aww-"



banana (GM): Apprentice: "Wasn't the road to Axis the most recently built one? Because, like, Axis is new."



Travis Meacham: SHIN ISNT THE NAME OF A BONE EITHER!!!



Placidus: "It wasn't old magic."



banana (GM): Apprentice: "Yeah, like even the roads all the way to Newport and Concord are older."
D'Appal wants to silence her, but on the other hand, he doesn't want to acknowledge her. So you go.



Placidus: Just kick her off the carpet.



Skeleton: Of course it's not. But the problem is that there's no single bone which makes up all or even most of a "leg", so the substitution isn't as easy as turning wrongheaded to wrongskulled or something!!



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will probably just...wander around for awhile. It's unlikely he'll be given too long a respite from those freaking elf kids anyway.



banana (GM): You're above a small creek that runs through the city, when out of nowhere there's a ripple in the air. The maitre intones an incantation, or incants an intonation, and suddenly you pass through- to yet another tower, this one part of a large structure which is still mostly invisible. As far as you can make out, it seems to be floating above the western part of the city and slowly moving.



Placidus: Wizards.



banana (GM): You barely get a chance to take in the sight of the college before you're in another tower window and D'Appal is jumping off into a carpeted study. "Pyrefrost!" He calls.



Ghol, Going East: You are.



banana (GM): Without looking up, an enormous blue-robed avian figure: "Hey, kid."

Maitre: "Incantronach."

The birdmanwizard takes note of the formality and looks away from an enormous, sparking grimoire.

Incantronach: "Maitre."

Maitre: "Incantronach!"

Incantronach: "Adept."



banana (GM): Adept: "Incantronach!"

Incantronach: "...Apprentice."

Apprentice: "I-incantronach."



Skeleton: Woah, a birdmanwizard? Didn't know they had those. Skeleton carefully moves from the carpet to the floor.



Placidus: Placidus totters down too, glad to be indoors.



banana (GM): Yeah, it's a big blue bird with wings, but a human head and upper body? Apart from the wings coming off it?

The whole room is chilled with the power radiating off Pyrefrost's form. That's Third Circle wizardry for you, presumably.



Travis Meacham: Not sure what the correct title is for a wizard who's OBVIOUSLY better at wizardry than you, but not in the same hierarchy.

Travis bows slightly. "Incantronach."



banana (GM): Incantronach: "Champion."



Travis Meacham: and please, no cracks about other people who are better at wizardry than travis.



banana (GM): Maitre: "What?"



Placidus: Placidus: "Incantronach."



Skeleton: So does this guy have arms AND wings so as to arguably be a rare kind of insect, or are we to understand they're a third level wizard without thumbs?



Placidus: third CIRCLE



banana (GM): Incantronach: "..ah, the manager? Forgive me, it took a moment to place you. We have so many wild-eyed becappped gnomes around here."



Placidus: "I can imagine."



banana (GM): No thumbs. He(?) seems to be pretty good with those wings, though.



Placidus: "You'll recognize Travis more readily, of course."



banana (GM): Maitre: "What's- these people are travellers, who claim to have-"

Incantronach: "They're in the news, Maitre. Also, the prophecies."

Adept: "What?"

Apprentice: "Shh, they'll notice us."



Placidus: Placidus clears his throat. "If I may."

"As much as I'd like for you all to loudly discuss how important and impressive we are, our news is rather alarming."



banana (GM): It seems you may.



Placidus: "So if we could..."



banana (GM): The streets of Horizon are more packed than before when Ghol finds his way back to a main square.

There were some detours on the way. Cafes.. people selling dubious things in alleyways.. a brief and highly localised shower of magical rain.

Once he's out in the city proper again, it's like every freaking citizen of the place is congregating. They're all talking about the 'parade'.



Ghol, Going East: Ugh. Magical rain.

And of course, while he was wearing his shirt.

Unbelievable!



banana (GM): Incantronach Pyrefrost: "By all means. Get it in before I turn into a ball of fire and lose all my memories again, ha ha."



Skeleton: "I'd like to know what's this about prophecies, actually-"



banana (GM): Maitre: "Incantronach.. you know they're working on a way around it."



Ghol, Going East: He takes the thing off to dry out, and...what's this about a 'parade?'



banana (GM): The tower study is huge, and well furnished- if not to any particular taste. There's a balcony, through which you can see a little more of the collegescape and people drifting about.

The bird wizard looks between Placidus and Skeleton. "Well, pick one."



Travis Meacham: "When we were walking on the wayroad outside of axis, we noticed that a waystone was not in the correct place."



Skeleton: "Ah, I'll defer for now."



Travis Meacham: "We investigated thaumically, and discovered that this was because the leyline was not in the right place."



banana (GM): What this is about a parade: eventually, a town crier involuntarily informs Ghol and Kon that it's a *victory* parade. Not the kind of victory that's particularly great from his point of view.

Horizon is the site of a very large garrison, see, and they were called away on a probably-suicide rush defense, but today they're coming home...



Ghol, Going East: Oh. Fantastic.



banana (GM): Incantronach: "The ley-line itself mis-placed? D'you mean there's been an earthquake, or a thaumogravitational nexus somewhere..?"

Maitre: "No, Incantronach."

Maitre: "He means the spell was.. fumbled."



Travis Meacham: "Jagged."



banana (GM): Adept: "Fizzled."



Placidus: "It worked fine, it was just a bit crooked."



banana (GM): Apprentice: "But it's the High Arcana. If they work at all, they do EXACTLY what you want."

Incantronach: "Caw."

Incantronach: "..well, has this been verified?"

Maitre: "No. I was hoping you could scry it incredibly easily with your powerful lore."

Incantronach: "Yes, sure. Give me a moment to plumb the cosmos."



Skeleton: Skeleton tries to work out who's being sarcastic and eventually concludes that no one is.



Travis Meacham: This is how normal people talk, Skeleton.



banana (GM): People who respect and acknowledge each others' ability.



Skeleton: Unless... everyone is. Like, everyone, at all times. But that'd be too horrible to contemplate.



banana (GM): The incantronach, who anyone with a history of reading bestiaries is increasingly sure is some sort of phoenix, raises a claw. Ice swirls about it, coalescing from the air, and then bursts forth...!






















The ray of discerning frost punches a tiny octagonal hole in the tower wall and keeps on going, presumably in the direction of Axis. Pyrefrost squints down the beam, huge eyes filling with a blue glow that reflects scenes of rapid movement, skimming above the land.





Placidus: Oooh.





banana (GM): After a few moments, the reflection in the bird's eyes stabilises - a flash of a matte-black road surface. The wizard yanks its wing back and a pulse flies upward along the ray of frost, terminating in an explosion of information.


	Ghol, Going East: Ghol will at least stick around in the corners -- perhaps the shadows, if there are any suitable -- to observe this...procession.
	Skeleton: This cryoscrying is pretty, uh... neat.
	banana (GM): Into all of your minds comes a certainty: one Travis already had. The great spell anchored at that crossroad was produced by a mind so stressed and aged that its thought process is.. unreliable.
	Travis Meacham: scrying?
	banana (GM): Apprentice Wittles starts crying, and the Adept casts a cone of silence spell to muffle it.
	Kon: Kind of hard for Kon to find an inconspicuous place, too.
	banana (GM): There's a mandatory but appropriate silence. Ghol, then, possibly lacking Kon, is the first of Kon's Men to observe the return of the dragon army. Notably, at their head is the god damn Emperor of the Realm.
	Ghol, Going East: ...
	Placidus: Whoa.
	Skeleton: "Oh, that's... that's bad, isn't it."
	banana (GM): The sun is low in the sky as legion upon legion of soldiers march into Horizon. The streets are lined with crowds and stands and yes, they're giving away free gnomish icecream.
	Ghol, Going East: Technically speaking -- technically speaking -- his duty here is to kill that man. But, given circumstances...
	Placidus: Eat ice cream!
	Skeleton: go for it, imo
	Placidus: Baskin and Robbins make excellent stuff.
	banana (GM): Only a few dragons wheel overhead. Roland already looks a little injured, even- he's got an arm in a sling, and the generals about him are a little.. sooty.
	Ghol, Going East: Yeah, he's well within creative interpretation of his orders to, uh, bide his time. At least until his friends aren't off in secret hidden dimensions. Or whatever.
	banana (GM): There's not just soldiers leading the soldiers. The Conqueror is flanked by generals, and by an ENORMOUS wizard- seriously inhuman, closer to Salubriot's size - and by a blonde, horned woman.
	Ghol, Going East: What's this "emperor" look like?
	banana (GM): Roland is overshadowed, at first, by these figures.
	Ghol, Going East: A blonde, horned woman...?
	Travis Meacham: the conqueror's entourage is chill


 **Ghol, Going East:** That's not the Diabolist, is it?


 **banana (GM):** The crowds cheer and cheer for their Emperor, and for the return of a native to their city, and for, you're pretty sure that's the freaking Diabolist. 'God damned' is tautological here.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Hoo boy.


 **Placidus:** Placidus would be able to tell him that it is.


 **Ghol, Going East:** The Conqueror, Ghol's not sure about. But the Diabolist...
Pretty certain he has business with her.
And if he doesn't, pretty sure he's going to invent some.


 **banana (GM):** After a moment Ghol gets a good look at Roland I. The Conqueror is actually a pretty big and impressive dude. Powerful jaw, kind face, one muscled arm raised (and the other injured).. He looks like the sort of men men would follow. As you'd expect. Apart from that, he's just a man.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Hrm.


 **Placidus:** How big are his pauldrons?


 **banana (GM):** The legions have a few wounded among them, but they march in close to full formations. They can't have had many casualties (unless the missing dragons..?).
Someone hands Ghol a sparkler- a little stick that you wave about and it blazes and gives off light.


 **Placidus:** yaaaaay. all the orcs died


 **banana (GM):** Incantronach: "..."
Incantronach: *waves wing irritably, dispelling the cone of silence*
Incantronach: "This is a disaster."
Maitre: "The perfectly wrong timing. When the world is already burning. Can you hear them cheering outside?"


 **Placidus:** "It's very bad."
"It's perfect TIMING, of course."
"But very bad."


 **banana (GM):** Incantronach: "Of course... we're talking about a slight disorder, you know? Someone who doesn't always make FULLY rational decisions, but is basically in command of their personality and memories."

 **Placidus:** "The trend isn't positive, though, you'll agree."

 **Skeleton:** "What are the odds that, uh... the line actually is straight, but only from a higher-order perspective unavailable to laymen and relative-to-archmage laymen?"

 **Placidus:** "So while there's likely still time, there is a finite amount of it."

 **Travis Meacham:** "The Archmage himself is probably aware of this, right?"

 **banana (GM):** Incantronach: "Well, Ms Stone.. it could be seen that way. It could be seen that way if we deliberately portrayed it so and tried quite hard. The question is whether this is the right thing to do."
Maitre: "We can't know if he knows. Who's going to ask?"

Incantronach: "Mara."



Placidus: Placidus glances at Travis.

"Who's Mara?"



banana (GM): Maitre: "That doesn't really help!"

Incantronach: "No offense, d'Appal, but this is above your grade. Above mine, really."

Adept: "Yeah, I knew it was above my grade at the start."



Skeleton: Skeleton didn't give a name, did ske? Good to know that whatever superficial identification magics are yielding the answers Skeleton'd want them to.



Travis Meacham: is mara the apprentice, the fisher, both, or neither, and do we know this



banana (GM): Yeah, either your disguise is holding or Pyrefrost heard about the Hungry Games roster.

If you didn't know, you find out at this point:

Incantronach: "Mara Half-Giantish. My master's master, sort of. The Apprentice." You can hear the capital letter quite clearly.

Maitre: "She's a horrible asshole."



Placidus: "Where is she right now?"



banana (GM): Incantronach: "Grumpy, perhaps. Socially inapt. But not a bad person and certainly more powerful than any mage in the last century."

Four wizards shrug at Placidus.



Placidus: "How do you get in contact with her?"



banana (GM): Incantronach: "Technically, we should take this to Mystocrypt Pfeiffer."



Placidus: Oh come on.



banana (GM): Incantronach: "..above the levels of the towerbound there's a certain amount of discretion."



Placidus: There is no way that is not a series of made-up nonsense syllables.



banana (GM): Maitre: "We need to keep this to as few souls as possible. Actually, we should brainwipe the others."



Placidus: "Excuse me?"



banana (GM): Maitre: "Not you."

Adept: "Excuse me?"



Placidus: "Oh."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol briefly considers his bow...but surely Roland I has wards against that. And besides: that arrow is rightfully the Diabolist's.



Travis Meacham: Mystocrypt is a really good title.



banana (GM): Pyrefrost: "Yeah, how about we just ask them not to say anything first? Are you good to go, adepts?"

Apprentice: "Excuse me?"



Travis Meacham: Pfeiffer, though ... well, it's probably the mystocrypt's actual real name, so in a way that's also impressive.



banana (GM): Pyrefrost: "There's no way anyone below fifth circle could have withstood that scrying spell and still be conscious."

Beneficarum: "We'll definitely go home right away and make sure to NOT think about this at all, forever."



Skeleton: Skeleton wonders if ske could get away with this. Mortiwright? Thanatrix?



Placidus: No! Stop it!



banana (GM): D'Appal "Infohygiene, though..."



Placidus: Goodness, it's like the temptation to make up nonsense words is contagious.



banana (GM): Pyrefrost: "Whatever. Take the carpet and get them back to the Tower towers."

The large blue avian regards the three adventurers/professional eaters in front of it. "Technically, your role in this is done."

"I feel like you might have more to say."

D'Appal also looks like he wants to say more, but doesn't say it. The number of wizards present begins to drop rapidly.



Placidus: Is he saying he thinks we have more things we want to say, or more things TO say



Travis Meacham: "So, how much attention if at all were you paying to the Hungry Games?"



banana (GM): Seemed like the former.



Skeleton: Skeleton touches a hand to where an onlooker would guess a chin would be beneath the overlapping, shadowed hoods. "...is there a reward?"



banana (GM): Pyrefrost: "We get ONN here, and some of the Mystocrypts are fans of the whole scene, so there's an occasional peershow. I know you did very well, and were led by a warg of all things."

Pyrefrost: "..fighting necroterrorists meanwhile. An interesting Games to be sure."



Travis Meacham: "So what was the deal with the wizarding team? I mean, I'd known Capel before, but it looked like the Archmage took a hand himself."



banana (GM): Pyrefrost: "A reward? Perhaps so. Perhaps so. Whether some would consider it truly a reward.."

let me know if you want to cash in that 5x2 to get a Complicated Reward >:-D



Skeleton: i'm strongly tempted



Placidus: HELL yes



Travis Meacham: Yes

defibitelt



banana (GM): Pyrefrost: "No, the Archmage is busy. He's been.. busy for a while. Seemingly. Going to various important places with no time for almost anything. It's worrying, in retrospect."

Pyrefrost: "The Apprentice ran the games team. Did a damn impressive piece of high arcana work in the middle of it, though it came to nothing, of course... mind you, our role in events like that isn't really to have a chance of WINNING."



Placidus: "While we're in Horizon, I want to meet with some mathematicians. Who are the pre-eminent academics in the field in the city and how can I get time with them?"



Travis Meacham: "And, as Kelly said, what's the deal with that prophecy you mentioned?"



banana (GM): "Capel's Incantronach-equivalent within the Blattoit school, so he knows what's up."



Skeleton: "And while we're piling questions on, I think we might end up clashing with the terrorist from San Meat again. What's there to learn about death magic here?"



banana (GM): Pyrefrost: "Alright, alright, two at a time."



Skeleton: Skeleton folds sker hands patiently.



Travis Meacham: ghol and kon should have assassinated the emperor, imo



banana (GM): Pyrefrost: "Math... prophecy... necromancy.. rewards. I think we can put those things together in thanks for bringing the Tower this fucking awful news."



Placidus: This is so much better than San Meat.



banana (GM): Pyrefrost: "Tell you what. Occasionally I do have to follow the rules." He casts a spell- Travis manages to catch the tail end, some sort of contact.

Pyrefrost: "While we're waiting. We don't keep any necromantic artifacts, because that would be incredibly illegal. So if we give you one, you're really doing us a favour."



Placidus: "Glad to be of service."



banana (GM): Pyrefrost: "The math will take care of itself shortly. How much do you know about oracularismology?"



Skeleton: "What? Oh, yeah, definitely. No one should have to keep something like that around."



Travis Meacham: "Not very much."



Placidus: "I might know what it means."



banana (GM): The Conqueror's parade moves through the streets, to one of Horizon's big squares and then another. Ghol has little trouble tagging along.. everyone's trying to get a good spot to troopwatch, but most of them don't know how to MOVE or look out for anything.



Ghol, Going East: Good.



banana (GM): Eventually he's able to find Kon behind a dump, briefly out of sight of the street. It looks like this will go on for some time, at least until sundown.

The heralds aren't being very specific about the triumph at Fulcrum, but you get the gist of it: orcs dead. Men alive.





Ghol, Going East: Sundown is better suited for his...various purposes.

So that's not a problem.


banana (GM): There are of course many more orcs. Today, though, everyone feels safe

 **Placidus:** we'll kill them all eventually

 **Ghol, Going East:** His first order of business -- and hopefully not his last -- is an audience with the Diabolist.


 **Skeleton:** Skeleton probably needs one of those, too, although at the moment ske's not in position to realize it's even a possibility.

Pyrefrost: "Well, it doesn't amount to much. Prophecy is a.. it isn't like in the theatre, you know? Scrolls bearing cryptic names and so on. No, if there's a true pattern to the change in the world, it's beyond us to predict it."

 **Placidus:** Placidus nods along as if he agrees.

Pyrefrost: "What we CAN see is... attributes. Characteristics. People have fates, you know? Tendencies. Things they are likely to do, or otherwise. It's really no different to having green down or a long beak."

 **Travis Meacham:** "Mm-hmm."

 **Skeleton:** "Makes sense."


Pyrefrost: "So when I say prophecy.. there was a first-circle initiate of Story watching the games with us, and he picked out a few notable things about the eventual champions, exempli gratia, you. For one thing, your fates are entwined. You lot, the warg and three others."


"Entwined to what end? Well, seemingly one major factoid, perhaps rising to the level of a 'prophecy' as popularly conceived."


"Let me tell you, there were maitres and solfacultors joking in the common room that we should we have you destroyed or something, because wow."

"..and I've got to say, today's news only bears it out. Score one for the High Arcanum of Story."

 **Travis Meacham:** What's the factoid!

 **banana (GM):** Following the Diabolist after the parade... it's not easy, of course. Most of the legions are heading right into the Shattered Palace, including their guest of honour. But it is shattered, and consequently, feasible to infiltrate. Maybe. What Ghol's going to have to give me here is a dex check.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Argh.

 **Placidus:** "Well hang on. What's the factoid."

 **Ghol, Going East:** rolling d20+5

(16)+5

= 21

phew

Pyrefrost: "Your destiny, bearing in mind the caveats of that term- you're tools with consequences."

 **Skeleton:** "Hey-"

Pyrefrost: "Should anyone commission your group to perform a task.. in all likelihood, magically speaking, you're going to succeed at whatever it is... in a way which is really pretty disastrous to others. NOT to those who hired you. Great to hear, huh?"



Placidus: "What about to us?"

Pyrefrost: "UnFated one way or another. You get whatever you manage to get."



Placidus: "And presumably that extends to things we do of our own volition rather than on orders?"

Pyrefrost: "Sure. It's a kind of destiny we don't see often, granting even that most arcanists can't see destiny at *all*. They call it Commando Syndrome."



banana (GM): There are shadows now, in the early night. Horizon has a lot of lights, but those just make for deeper shadow. Ghol creeps and/or climbs from one to another, finding a way to follow the procession as it splits up into the outer parts of the Palace, heading over a wall and... shit! There ---->
He spots it BEFORE it spots him. Could back away, even, dash off into the night. It's a.. an inky blob with a glowing fiery heart. Placed in his path, atop the wall.



Ghol, Going East: ...



banana (GM): It's moving. An indeterminate number of limbs. Turning, watching, making a little giggle...
Somehow he knows it's waiting for him.



Ghol, Going East: Diabolist or dark god in origin? Can he tell?



banana (GM): What, when you get down to it, is the difference?
This thing is a demon of some sort.



Ghol, Going East: The number of words before a number of swords.
Ghol is confident enough to think he can take this thing. He's smart enough to think he probably can't take it quietly.



banana (GM): Someone raps on the doors to Pyrefrost's office. He scrambles out from behind his desk, flapping a little, and conjures the door open with a head gesture.



Skeleton: "Hmm... well, hey, basically being fated to win's pretty good."



banana (GM): Outside: "Incantronach."
Incantronach: "Mystocrypt."
Over his shoulder: "Right, but don't COUNT on it-"

Mystocrypt Pfeiffer: This wizard is barely bothering to maintain a physical form. They drift in and out of physical space, turning into impossible dimensions- occasionally you catch glimpses of long and tangled hair. "We have guests, I see."



Placidus: "Mystocrypt."

Demon: The creature makes a little warbling noise as it adjusts its posture. Sometimes it looks like a mammal, sometimes a reptile.. it's a thing of chaos alright, given form and pinned to the world only by the will of.. a charming dabbler? The swamp witch who betrayed the Movement? A terrible criminal conspiracist? A hot girl with many faces.

Pfeiffer: "Occultist."



Travis Meacham: "Mystocrypt."

Demon: It isn't very BIG, though.

Pfeiffer: : "Wizard, I think..?"



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will...can he at least position himself to be able to flee easily if this thing decides it wants a fight?

Pyrefrost: "You didn't watch the Games."



banana (GM): Yes; he's got the drop on it.
(& can control how he engages, if he does)



Placidus: "Excuse me?"
"I don't know what that word means."

Pfeiffer: "I call them like I See them, even when they don't make sense. Your soul describes you fully, in every potential act and deed."

Pyrefrost: "A discredited and cruel theory, sir."



Ghol, Going East: Then from the shadows, he will say: "Creature."



Skeleton: Skeleton draws back behind Travis a little more.

Pfeiffer: "Presumably you didn't call me here to re-litigate your dissertation."

Pyrefrost: "No: To talk about mathematics."



banana (GM): The even more senior wizard's occasionally-visible eyes light up.



Placidus: "Yes!"

Demon: "Ack! What, where, who, which, whether."



banana (GM): It sounds like if a rat could talk and was constantly on the verge of spitting.



Ghol, Going East: "Whither, creature. Whither your mistress?"

Pyrefrost: "I've brought you a student (kind of) who DOESN'T want to learn any advanced casuistcraft at all and just likes the numbers. Do you have some time free while I go and petition the Apprentice for a boon?"

Demon: It spins around, bringing the single burning eye to bear on Ghol. "Wooowwww. You. Are. QUIET."



Ghol, Going East: Ghol's eyes narrow. He remains in a crouch, elbows on knees.

Pfeiffer: "I do! I have a dimensioncrystal set aside to call up a timeless space of intellectual discussion."

Pyrefrost: "..was this for romantic purposes, or..?"

Pfeiffer: "Silence, Incantronach."



Placidus: "A timeless space of intellectual discussion sounds like a very fine place indeed."

Demon: "I'm here to protect and WARN the mistress actually, not to wither Her. You better respect."

Pyrefrost: To Travis, and therefore to the hiding Skeleton: "Take this receipt to the Invisible Vault."



Travis Meacham: "Well, okay, but where is it?"

Pyrefrost: "D'you know Magic Map..?"



Skeleton: "Erm."



Ghol, Going East: "Without respect, this conversation wouldn't be a conversation. Warn your mistress the Green Star would have words."



Travis Meacham: "I do not."

Demon: "The mistress is very busy and very tired. Also, she's washing her hair tonight."

Pyrefrost: The phoenix mage sighs. "Alright, I'll drop you off. I do NOT have a saddle. You will cling to my talons, one each. Whoever's lighter take the left talon."



Ghol, Going East: "I did not ask. It was not a question."



Travis Meacham: "I'll take the right talon."

IN MY DEFENSE, MAGIC MAP IS NOT A SPELL IN THE BOOK. HE MUST HAVE SOME OTHER BOOKJ.



Skeleton: "Uhh. Ahh. That's... you don't have a carpet or anything?"

Pyrefrost: "Frankly, those things are for total wannabes."



Skeleton: "I just. It's a bit uncomfortable and scary and so on. Er."



(To Crion): an offer



(To Crion): so ordinarily, the diabolist is a powerful enough figure that she doesn't have to have meetings w/ people if she doesn't want to. but! you could totally cash in that 5 if you want to use it for that purpose. however, the consequences would be significant in this case. specifically, post-meeting, you'd be..... Captured

Pyrefrost: "Yes, a lot of wingless people have this problem."



(From Ghol, Going East): hrrrrm. sounds good



Skeleton: "Well, well, I. Look. In general I have a problem with being grasped and carried and so on in specific, not heights. Can you do me up a little cloud to sit on or anything...?"



(From Ghol, Going East): captured by the imperials?




(To Crion): yes



(From Ghol, Going East): my only concern is this turning into hanging out in a prison cell all of next session...




(To Crion): i'll make sure that isn't a thing

 **(From Ghol, Going East):** then: full speed ahead

Demon: "Yeah, okaaaay guy. No question, no geas, no homo. I'll lure you into an obvious trap, we cool?"

The creature is barely comprehensible but you think it's genuinely rattled by your threat.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol grins. "Fair's fair."

 **banana (GM):** Forewarned is certainly forearmed in this case.

Placidus vanishes into a mysterious mathematical realm, Travis and Skeleton take a death-defying/revealing ride, and Ghol infiltrates the Shattered Palace to confront one of the women of his dreams. All these things must signify the end of an Age.