



banana (GM): There's a dead wood between Marrow and Lac Butler. Much of the land south of the Chorizon road is burned and withered, the victim of some past catastrophe predating even the eleventh Age.



Placidus: Good eating, though.



banana (GM): Moderately deep within, a vessel sized between a dinghy and a small sailboat has been inexplicably beached. Night is falling on its mortgagors: a group now without a single name, but going in the same direction. They've been called adventurers. They have fowl.

You've been pursued from the City of Wal^H^H^HTowers by forces varied. Some deadly, some apparently pun-based, and one sleeping with occasional mewls by the fire. The juvenile cat is too deep in recovery to wake, even to the smell of Placidus's cooked goose.

Despite these remaining conglomerations, please make new relationship rolls. But I'm taking the Conqueror 6.



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

(3 + 1)

= 4



Zarick: rolling 2d6 demigod conflicted

(4 + 6)

= 10

rolling 1d6 elect negative

(1)

= 1



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

(1)

= 1



Zarick: four demigod floating command points





Xarvrax: rolling 3d6 Dragons?


(5 + 5 + 1)


= 11


Good.


 **Kalira:** (which i still have not managed to use yet)


 **banana (GM):** The Demigod, that distant figure - child of gods by name, leader of one of the great armies of the world, bulwark against the orcish h the orcish movement. Their influence has been little felt, but since Kalira joined the group, it grows...
Also, you're pretty much due for some dragons.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Dragons. Bah.


 **Placidus:** After supper, Placidus stargazes.
channeling the other


 **Skeleton:** diabolist positive: **2** wizard king negative **3 3**. first 6 i roll is converted to a 5 by my "talent"
well, rip.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol will take this time to make a careful inventory of who and what is still following them, with Kon's help.


 **banana (GM):** Sure:
The flocks of geas are all dead, you're pretty sure, and tasty at that;
Both imps are gone, one sent home to mistress and the other destroyed by the kitten over which, three of you have just found out, Skeleton nearly got everyone killed;


 **Kalira:** What's a few lives when you're already dead?


 **Skeleton:** Extremely dead - mostly by Travis' wizardry, but at least a bit by Kelly's necromancy. It was an ancient, naturally-mummified body that came tearing up out of the ground to then tear straight into the geese, and afterwards the two-robed figure made something of a production of both banishing the monster back underground and snuffing out the unholy lights in the eyes of the subsequently-reanimated waterfowl. "Aheh," Skeleton was heard to comment.

 **banana (GM):** The orc..? orcs? some humanoid figures fought, and they didn't proceed onwards from there.. so you *might* not be tracked by a scout anymore. Ghol's pretty sure that the scout was either bad or deliberately letting themselves be seen, anyway.

 **Xarvrax:** Pfft, orcs.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Hrm.

 **Placidus:** Placidus made sure there were geese for Ghol and Kon after they got back from their scouting. He did apologize, though - you really want a nice tart apple-something to go with roast goose and these trees are barren.

 **banana (GM):** The small persons.. you're sure they *were* still following you up to the Thing on the road, hidden among a group of herders travelling to Chorizon. They're not as deadwoodswise as the hypothetical orc scout, and Ghol found traces from time to time as he ranges behind the group, leading him to think that they're still being pursued by a pair of people who don't breathe, bleed or stop walking. But slowly.
So that just leaves this half-dead Imperial captain who's stumbled into the camp, dragging one injured leg.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol's got an arrow nocked almost before he's on his feet.



Skeleton: Skeleton's sitting by the fire, pretending to be warmed by it. Ske just turns and peers.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax glances at him.



Placidus: Placidus frowns.
How is it injured?



banana (GM): The human's got a badly swollen ankle, with bloody field tourniquets all around it - looks like he has to stumble from tree to tree without ever resting weight on that leg. He stops at the edge of the firelight and the point of the arrow, drawing harsh breaths, trying to speak.



Skeleton: "...hi?"

Captain: "gghw"



Kalira: "If you've got something to say, I suggest you say it quickly. My young friend here isn't happy to meet you."

Captain: "hwwwell met on the. Road. Kon's Men?"



Xarvrax: "What."



Ghol, Going East: "Sure."



Placidus: Placidus will get some bandages out of his pack. He's almost out of poultice - the last batch largely went dry before he had any cause to use it and there aren't any herbs around here - but he should be able to clean the wound and change the bandage if nothing else.
I mean, assuming the guy doesn't do something stupid enough to get immediately killed by Ghol.



Skeleton: Skeleton doesn't know from poultices, but ske can hold or pass stuff along if need be. "What happened?"



banana (GM): He's just standing there on one leg with his arms out wide. There's an empty scabbard for the gladius at his belt, and a shortbow on his back, but no quiver.
Definitely seems somewhat afraid of Ghol in particular, possibly due to Kalira's words.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will lower the arrow once Placidus goes over to help, mainly so he's not pointing an arrow at his friend.

Captain: "The.. palace. We were sent after you to warn you. The Conqueror. Leaving with his blessing on a peaceful venture east, but you were followed. Spotted them." He submits to treatment while still trying to speak.



Placidus: "Alright, hold still. Talk slow."
Placidus changes the bandage. What happened to this guy's leg?



banana (GM): Looks like a vertical slice down it with some sort of saber. The bone's alright, but a lot of the muscle is gone along with the flesh.



Xarvrax: "We know. We saw all of you geniuses following us."



banana (GM): It's still bleeding, too- that deep a cut, it's almost impossible to staunch without magic.



Xarvrax: I could try, theoretically.

Captain: "We weren't trying to hide, ser wyrm."



Skeleton: Seeing as Skeleton could probably only staunch the bleeding by necrotizing the entire damn leg, they're not going to try to get creative, here.



Ghol, Going East: ...Ghol's got healing magic. He thinks he does, anyway; it awoke in him the same time as the other power of the Green Star did.

If he's asked, he'll begrudgingly use it on the soldier.



Placidus: Placidus isn't going to ask that of Ghol, since it sounds like this soldier was hurt by... other orcs? "Which ones did you fight with?"



Xarvrax: rolling d6

(2)

= 2



Placidus: "We've got more tails than a trickster fox."



Skeleton: Well, actually, Skeleton could probably drain someone else's life-force in order to restore his guy's at some kind of ratio, but ske hasn't got that spell prepared.



Xarvrax: That would be a no on my healing magic.



Skeleton: i mean, unless he's dying literally this round, xarvrax could just keep rooting around until he pulls out some healing magic, right? that's how chaos mages work out of combat, they have to kind of fidget and search blindly until they get their hands on the spell they want

Captain: "That you do. Agh. You've Elandrat's touch with the poultice." (Which is not a compliment, exactly; Elandrat is a goddess of victory and reward, not healing).



Placidus: "I never was a very good doctor," Placidus mutters.



banana (GM): "The tails, ah.. you've got demons, enchanted birds, rogues from the shadow quarter.. and an orc."



Ghol, Going East: Rogues from the Shadow Quarter...? First Ghol's heard of them.

Captain: "We couldn't catch you up, so we thought we might as well stop him. Mistake."



Placidus: "Mmm. Are you the only survivor?"



Ghol, Going East: "Where is this orc now?"



Kalira: "Damn. Impressive."



Skeleton: "...how many of you did this one guy beat?"



Xarvrax: "My guess would be all of them."

Also, if I can do that, I will, I guess?



Placidus: that's not very draconic of you
what has he done to earn your help



Skeleton: shown abject weakness?



Placidus: that merits the help of "being devoured"



Skeleton: devoured... by healing radiance!!



Xarvrax: rolling d6

(6)

= 6

rolling d11

(9)

= 9

Yeah... don't think the orc lord is going to be much help here.

Captain: The questions all come at once. The soldier waits, trying to focus on your faces- he's getting drowsy quickly with the first aid and the warmth. This guy is quite old- enough to be a field-promoted captain, maybe, and it must have been some effort to make it through the forest after what happened in the gorse fields.



Placidus: seems like he already was.

Captain: "He fought like a force of nature with a hunk of metal the size of a knife, arrows, then our own weapons that he took off us as we fell. Four of my men are dead for certain and the other vanished with the orc as I lay in stupor."

"I don't know which of them bore the other away, but I fear the answer."



Placidus: "Did he have a name?"



banana (GM): "Ser, I can barely remember my own right now. Perhaps something was yelled in the battle. Perhaps not. For an orc, there was surprisingly little posturing or threats. Just.. actual threat."

The wounded cat and the wounded man are on opposite sides of the fire, which is good. Judging by how this farce has gone so far, if either spots the other, they'll also fight over you.



Kalira: "So you came to warn us that various groups were following us, but we seem to have mostly handled that. Anything else?"



Skeleton: "Well, what can we... is there somewhere we ought to take you?"



Xarvrax: rolling d6

(4)

= 4

Hey! Healing magic!



Ghol, Going East: Ghol will climb up on the land-boat here for a better vantage point and take another

look about.

Captain: Mumbling: "A road that isn't broken by magic would be nice.. a town, a garrison. My job is to report in, now."



Ghol, Going East: Clearly this guy is still out there, for some definitions of "there."



banana (GM): After earthing a number of blasting spells against the trees and shielding himself in various unnecessary ways, Xarvrax comes up with a way to help.



Xarvrax: Walking over to the man, Xarvrax sighs, reaching out with one hand a force binding wraps around his leg, and before any pain can be felt from it, his other hand comes down to seal the wound.



Skeleton: "WOAH, hey, are you- oh."



banana (GM): Flesh knits, or at least is reborn- perhaps a little ridged but it's there. This technique of just trying again and again until whatever you want happens is quite effective.



Xarvrax: Chaos, if it doesn't work, keep trying, it's gotta change eventually!



banana (GM): Since the mention of the 'rogues', Person has kept away from this guy, hanging over in the shadows of the camp. He's still somewhat mopey about the whole goose-murder thing, too, and is back to an untalkative state.



Placidus: "Well. There you are."

Captain: "..feels really good. I think I'm going to pass out."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax groans, "That's what I was trying to avoid."



Placidus: "It's alright. Rest easy."



banana (GM): He'll be there in the morning, unless you make sure he isn't.



Placidus: To Xarvrax: "He wasn't going to be any use this late anyway. We'll deal with this in the morning."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax spins around walking towards a spot to lay down near the fire, leveling an arm at Ghol, "Don't kill him while I'm asleep."



Ghol, Going East: "I don't murder sleeping men."



Xarvrax: "Good, continue not doing that then."

Issuriel: The camp followers are waiting just far enough away to speak to their 'honoured wing' without disturbing the others who barely tolerate them "Is there any kind of spell you *can't* do?"



Skeleton: That resolved, Skeleton stands and then turns left and right, uncertain of whom to question about what. There's Placidus, Person... and Kalira surely SAW all that.



Placidus: "Okay, okay. It's clearly past all of our bedtimes. Everyone who isn't first watch, or who doesn't need to sleep, should get some rest."

"It's been a long day."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax blinks, "There are plenty of spells I can't do, they're just mostly useless."

Skeleton: Either way, one supposes it can wait. Skeleton sort of nestles themselves back against a

 tree, apparently ready to sleep but in fact ready to (inexpertly) keep an eye socket out all night.


 **Placidus:** Placidus will be up at some point during the night watch if Skeleton has something to say to him.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Watch is going to be annoying, tonight. They're going to have to keep an eye out both on the things out there in the woods...and the things already here in camp.

Mirchin: "Well, I'm sure there's no point in those spells. Maybe just for teaching or demonstration or whatever, or for small children."

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax will keep watch on the magical side of things, while also sleeping. He'll also keep an eye on the ground, make sure it doesn't try any funny business.

 **Kalira:** Kalira's watch is not very effective, but she certainly will take her turn.

 **Skeleton:** Skeleton has, actually. Once it's Placidus's turn, ske'll release a "Psst," assuming nothing unusual's happened up to then.

 **Placidus:** "Mm?"

 **Kon:** Kon has curled up next to the little cat, mainly to keep it out of the line of sight of the soldier -- and keep a close eye on it.

 **banana (GM):** Due to the ongoing conversations and defensible position tonight, I won't make you roll for Watching stuff.

 **Skeleton:** "...stomach feeling okay? I think I heard somewhere that having meat after going without a long time can irritate."

 **Placidus:** Placidus DOES look a bit uncomfortable, now that Skeleton thinks about it. "Oh, it's just a bit of indigestion. It'll clear up by morning I expect."

 **Skeleton:** "Hope so. Seriously, though, this still unsettles me. Remind me - your perspective on, well, yesterday, is what again? You remember it all, right?"

 **Placidus:** "Which part of yesterday? It was quite a long day."

 **Skeleton:** "I just want an idea of how the... break.. works? As in, you've been a vegetarian mathematician long as I've known you, which of course wasn't that long."
"But you... remember that and just don't care? Remember things differently? I forget."

 **Placidus:** "...you mean in San Meat? The Hungry Games?"


 **Skeleton:** "I mean your old self. What Travis pointed out before."


 **Placidus:** "That wasn't *me*. That wasn't anyone at all. None of that was real."


 **Skeleton:** "Gosh."

 **Placidus:** Placidus pats Skeleton's humerus. "In any case, I'm off to bed. See you in the morning." When the gnome gets up, the position of the dying fire ought by rights to throw his shadow on Skeleton, darkening his view. But it doesn't.
As Placidus retreats to his bedroll, it becomes obvious: he doesn't cast a shadow at all.


Skeleton: Skeleton pays attention to the speed at which Placidus's shawl/robe/whatever gets dappled


 by morning dew relative to the rest of the campsite, then.


 **banana (GM):** Humerus Indeed


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol notices this from his perch atop the ship and mutters something to himself, touching his pauldron.


Then he stares out again into the night.


 **Placidus:** It seems to happen as normal - which is to say, Placidus is about six seconds less damp, and then six seconds less dry as the sun rises, than the world around him.

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax stirs briefly, but ultimately continues sleeping.


 **banana (GM):** The morning is quiet, without further unwanted guests. It might be that your only remaining followers are the two currently exploring the camp- the cat which keeps inching closer to the burned out coals to get more warmth, and Captain Sonoman, who isn't up for walking but is now alive enough to observe with interest the quarries For Whom His Squad Died.


 **Skeleton:** Is Person up and about?

 **Placidus:** There's no goose left for the morning, unfortunately, as there were quite a lot of people. Placidus looks a bit MORE unwell when he wakes up, but after a trip to somewhere discreet in the woods he looks, uh, more comfortable. In any case, he'll check on Sonoman's ankle. It's still healed, right? It hasn't turned into a dragon claw from the calf down or anything?


 **Xarvrax:** Hey!
Why would I let some random idiot be part dragon?

 **banana (GM):** Person's up. "Good morning, old and new friends."


 **Placidus:** The same way you do everything else: accidentally.


 **banana (GM):** The human- why are they all named like that?- remains human.
So, the day's agenda is... travel? Get rid of some of these hangers-on? Investigate the distant sawing noise, or perhaps make sure not to?


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol is keeping a wary distance from the soldier, mainly to help keep the peace.


 **Xarvrax:** I do like sawing noises.

 **Ghol, Going East:** ...Sawing noise?

 **Skeleton:** How long's the sawing been going? Skeleton's curious as to how Person relates to the cat, if at all, incidentally. Ske'll up and ask about it shortly but is watching first.

 **Kalira:** A little worried about the multiple Persons unaccounted for.

 **Placidus:** Placidus isn't particularly worried about any of these things. What comes will come.
Maybe it's the physical contact with the substance of madness, or maybe it's the sudden, drastic personality shift. Maybe it was being beaten senseless by a flock of geese. But Placidus is fairly sanguine about their collective prospects.

 **banana (GM):** It's just started up this morning, a bit after dawn - the noise of woodcutting is familiar to enough of you that it's no mystery.



Ghol, Going East: How far off?



banana (GM): Quite distant. Could be as much as a mile, but if so it'd have to be very vigorous.



Xarvrax: Is it on the way?



Placidus: "The trapmakers, maybe?"



Skeleton: "Ooh, yes, that's probably who it is. I'd like to give them a talking-to, but not enough to actually go out of my way to do it."



banana (GM): Well, your route is very generally "south and/or east" to reach the lake and Ersatz. Whether the loggers are on the way is up to you.

Person: "Trapmakers?"



Skeleton: "Whoever set that snare up that caught me!"

Person: "That was a trap? It was very inefficient. I assumed you'd done that yourself, by mistake."



Skeleton: "Of course, it was rope, not wood."



Placidus: "Well, there's only one way to find out. Maybe they've seen the orc, or the last survivor of the Captain's patrol."



Ghol, Going East: All else equal, they have enough problems without seeking new ones out.



Placidus: "I'd hate to make trouble for them, but it might not hurt to ask."



Ghol, Going East: If they're going to interrupt the loggers, Ghol and Kon will at least try to get a look at who they are first.



Skeleton: "Oh, that's true."



banana (GM): Maybe you can just outpace the rest of the group and check. Give me a con check with scout bonus



Kalira: "Well, be ready for anything. With as many pursuers as we left with, a rope trap should be the least of our worries."



Placidus: You'd think.



Xarvrax: "To be fair, most of our pursuers are terrible."

Captain Sonoman: "There are a few unregistered settlements in this area. Bandits preying off the Fed trade- merchants who don't want to pay Chorizon taxes go off the road early and wind up lost..."



Ghol, Going East: rolling d20+10

(8)+10


= 18


bah




banana (GM): The landship is making good time today. If you want to keep up, scouting the loggers


will require that it's actually heading in that direction.


 **Placidus:** This raises an interesting question.


 **Skeleton:** I mean, unless they're in the exact opposite direction I don't see why not.


 **Placidus:** Who's actually... steering?
Is it Kalira? Does Kalira know how to drive a boat?


 **Xarvrax:** I would assume it's captain darkness there, yes.


 **banana (GM):** It'll become important if you get into a regatta, for sure. Does anyone have appropriate backgrounds at all?


 **Kalira:** No, not really. In fact Kalira is probably a poor choice unless someone strong needs to turn the wheel in a storm, and if we get into a squall on land, we'll have bigger problems.


 **Placidus:** Placidus had to PRETEND to drive a boat, once, in a production of The Little Corporal.

 **Skeleton:** Not Skeleton, although ske might have a little traction insofar as we can construe this as, specifically, a ghost ship.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol clearly still has his learner's permit.


 **Skeleton:** Unfortunately it is a spirit ship instead, but maybe if we murder a lot of people on/with it...?


 **Xarvrax:** The boat is a weird magical thing, Xarvrax is a weird magical thing.


 **banana (GM):** The spirits are confined to the hull, though, keeping it (evilly?) separate from the earth and able to slide through the ground.


As far as you know, they don't have any influence on steering.

Young cat: "Mrw." It's possible that in the language of cats this means, do I get to just follow you by riding on this thing now? Then again, it doesn't seem inclined to board.

 **Kon:** If not the ship, it can ride on Kon.


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax looks down at it, "You could ride on my head instead if you want?"

 **Placidus:** Placidus is on the ship, and whatever's going on with him he's still allergic to cats, as his vaguely sniffly mode of speaking since the cat broke camp with them attests. He's kept pretty well away so far.

 **banana (GM):** As usual, the cat has no objection to scrambling onto a warg's back. Why, only cats and wargs know.

Captain: Sonoman The dragon soldier is intermittently wakeful. He apologises for taking up space on the boat, at least. "If you let me out at a bandit settlement, I'm sure I can scare them into helping me the rest of the way. They won't mess with the Empire."

 **Kalira:** "Ballsy, but probably not a great idea. They won't mess with the Empire, but one man?"

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax shrugs, "I could scare them, no one messes with dragons, singular or otherwise."

Sonoman: "Idiots and the undead have been known to try."



Placidus: "Why don't we see what we're dealing with before we plot to terrorize them?"



Xarvrax: "Where's the fun in that?"



Placidus: The real question, with regard to steering, is this: how much drag is there on the wheel? Placidus is a gnome, and also, quite scrawny and unathletic even for a gnome. Can he even turn it?



banana (GM): Depends on how fast the ship's going. When it's moving 'through' the ground at a good clip, the rudder seems almost fixed in place- like it's got the weight of the soil on both sides of it keeping it straight.

The closer you are to stationary, the less it takes to pull left or right. Being a sailor must be easy!



Placidus: It must be, given all the free time they have for shanty composition.

Aaaaanyway, given that Placidus is a steady hand on the wheel, and we're heading in the direction of the settlement or encampment... what can Ghol scout out?



banana (GM): A compound half-surrounded by walls of wooden stakes, with two dozen homes and outbuildings inside.



Ghol, Going East: Anyone standing watch?



banana (GM): It's a hive of activity, actually. The inhabitants are busily erecting, constructing, turning and finishing. From a highish place off in the dead wood you can see them going about their day.



Ghol, Going East: Hrm.



banana (GM): A lot of the men - there are more men than women - are armed, but there's no specific organised watch. It looks more like a village than a military camp apart from the infertile location.



Ghol, Going East: Hrrrrrm.

Ghol will slip away and report back.



banana (GM): You know what you're in for, then. Need supplies?



Placidus: Not particularly. They weren't flying a flag, were they?



Skeleton: "So some kind of... carpenter... encampment...?"



Placidus: "It's an in-progress encampment in the middle of a place where the only thing around is wood."



banana (GM): You've been doing rather well with foraging so far, although Marrow is a great country for vegetation.



Kalira: "Seems like as good a place as any to let our wounded warrior off, maybe?"



Placidus: "I suppose in that circumstance, you pick up carpentry or else."

Captain: "They might not even be bandits at all. Nice to find abiders of the law if so- I knew they had to exist."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax chuckles, "If you wanted law abiding people, you shouldn't have come with us, half of us barely obey the laws of reality."



Placidus: "How's your leg?"

Captain: "I think it's going to heal. For now, I can no longer use it at all." Sonoman looks disgusted.
"Can't believe the cleric was the first one ambushed. That orc knew exactly what he was doing- took away our blessings, then our range, then our flesh."



Placidus: "Well. You lived, at least."



banana (GM): The compound is visible now in the distance through the trees- and so your sail will shortly be visible to them.

Captain: "I lived. And when I find that rope-crowned sonofabitch again, he won't."



Kalira: "You already lost when you had an entire patrol at your back. A rematch seems like a bad idea."



Placidus: Placidus glances at Ghol. Any flicker of recognition?



Ghol, Going East: Rope-crowned...?



Placidus: Where's Person, incidentally?



Skeleton: Is he interacting with kitty at all? Skeleton's been meaning to ask him how he feels about the whole affair.

Captain: "I don't intend to repeat the circumstances. No orc is murderous enough to beat all of what civilization can throw at him."



Placidus: "Ah ah. Tempting fate there, a bit."



Kalira: "I can think of one who might, if you're not careful in your throwing."



banana (GM): Person's wandering alongside the boat, doing that economy-of-motion thing he does, where each limb movement seems inadequate to keep up but the effect of the whole is a startling speed. He still hasn't volunteered much, or sought out Kon and the cat- actually, now that you think about it, he's never seemed interested in Kon at all.



Placidus: "Person? How are you holding up after yesterday's fracas?"



Xarvrax: "People, including orcs are the most dangerous when you throw the most things at them, keep that in mind."



Ghol, Going East: If Placidus is watching Ghol closely, he'll see his eyes narrow slightly at the mention of the orc's headwear, and then move away from the fool soldier and those talking to him.



Placidus: He was.

He'll frown a bit, but it's not an issue to raise now, with said soldier around.

Sonoman: "It's true, but that's up to the tacticians."

Person: "Oh, hello. I was trying to learn something."



Placidus: "Did you? And also, did a cat build you?"

The first question was to lure.

Person: : "No. It's a shame."



Placidus: "I ask because I had a dream, last night."



banana (GM): As your vessel approaches the compound through a field of stumps, a few men and women come out warily. They don't have a uniform or a flag, but they're both armed and armoured, and definitely watching your approach. It's not enough to constitute an actual attack, though.

Person: "I see."



Skeleton: "Wait... would it hold a little chisel in its mouth or something?"



Placidus: "I was looking at the moon, and you were with me. You wanted to tell me something but you had to whisper, and you pulled down your hood and I saw your face. It looked a bit catlike, in the dark."

Placidus produces one of his notebooks, and there's something drawn over all the equations, as if the formulae weren't even there: <http://i.imgur.com/D3m7fl7.png>

Person: "That's odd. Your drawing looks more like a human, but not really. Like a human but different."



Skeleton: Skeleton leans over and peers. "Interesting expression."



Placidus: "Yes. It looked more catlike in the dark, like the nose and the lips were connected."

"But no, it's not quite a cat at all,. is it. It's just strange."



banana (GM): Three of the loggers/bandits step into your path, more or less. They've left themselves room to jump out of the way again, since it isn't clear whether your vessel can actually stop.

There's a human woman, and two men so small and warty that they must be goblins. One calls out: "Ho!"



Placidus: Oh, probably someone should address them. Placidus hands the notebook to whichever of Skeleton or Person is closest. "See what the cat thinks of it, maybe." To the settlers: "Good day!"

"I know how this looks."

, he says, from the helm of a bizarre spirit-touched landship.

Person: "How are you going to ask the cat, Kelly the necromancer?"



Skeleton: Skeleton waves cheerfully at the settlers from behind Placidus, but then busies skerself with th"HEYYY woah woah shhh."

"Pleasedon'tcallmethatinmixedcompany."



Placidus: "Oh, that's a great idea."



banana (GM): ..it LOOKS like Captain Sonoman has dozed off again.



Placidus: "We can't call ourselves Kon's Men anymore, since the Games were fictional and we aren't all men."



Kalira: Kalira snorts, but keeps her eyes on the band ahead.



Placidus: "We can be The Mixed Company."

"We must make a note of that..."

"In any case, I promise you we don't mean you any harm."

Goblin woodcutter: "What it looks like is a boat."

"Are you, uh.. putting in for drydock?"

Human woodcutter: "Maybe they-all need a new mast. For boating through the forest."

Person: "Kelly."



Placidus: "Not necessarily. What we're looking for is a place to let this Imperial Captain rest from his wounds, and possibly some information on his assailants. Past that, we can be out of your way within the hour."
"Unless there's something you need from us."

Person: "If I can't describe you in mixed company, and we *are* the Mixed Company... does that make you indescribable?"

Goblin woodcutter: "Shit, did you say imperial?"

Other goblin woodcutter: "Like with a capital I. Hang on."



banana (GM): They retreat toward the compound, calling out for a couple of people by names you don't know.



Placidus: "Yes...? A soldier in the army of Roland I Liberator, the Dragon Emperor."



Skeleton: "Well... well. I wasn't actually referring to US as 'the mixed company'. Placidus came up with that afterwards. What I meant was, what I meant was," and ske's talking in a hush, here, "I could really get in trouble if word like that gets out so don't let anyone but us hear about it. Anyway arguably that was all really belabored telekinesis."



Placidus: "Oh." He said this to some retreating woodcutters.

Human woodcutter: (She's still here) "Oh, we love dragons here. So does everyone, obviously."



banana (GM): Issuriel and Mirchin visibly perk up.



Placidus: "You love dragons the usual, patriotic amount, I assume."



Ghol, Going East: Sigh.

Woodcutter: "Right. They're great taskmasters and I'm sure they pay fairly, in their own sense of fairness." She's totally straight-faced, but so was Person a moment ago, and he's laughing at Skeleton now.



banana (GM): (To be fair to Skeleton, it's generally extremely unclear what Person believe to constitute humour)
*believes



Skeleton: "I'm serious! About each part!"



Kalira: It is funny, though. Kalira would be laughing if she wasn't focused on the others.



Placidus: "Good, good. That's a normal amount of affection for dragons. In any case, have you seen a lone orc with a rope crown recently?"




banana (GM): Okay, you've got almost a dozen goblins and humans heading out now. Again, all armed, but nobody's actually unsheathed a weapon.


Human woman: "Nope."




Xarvrax: "Man, even I don't know why people love dragons anymore."

More woodcutters: "Okay, you're the soldiers? The guys with the soldier?"


 **Xarvrax:** "Aside from me, that is. I'm amazing."

 **Placidus:** "The latter, yes. Placidus Fixlmillner is my name. The soldier's Captain Sonoman."

 **banana (GM):** He was pretty ruddy once, but is snoring palely at the moment.


Goblin with the biggest gilt necklace: "Right, I'm Foreman Chu. Nice to meet both of you. We definitely don't know anything about who attacked this guy though, and it isn't our fault."


Chu: "Who are the rest of you? Occupationally?"


 **Kalira:** "Kalira. I'm a mercenary."

Another goblin: "They look like wizards, and they came from the northwest."


Another other goblin: "Only half of them look like wizards. It's probably fine."


 **Xarvrax:** "Scion of The Blue, Lord of Chaos, Last of the Dragonwrought, and so on, and so forth."

 **Skeleton:** Skeleton raises both gloved hands, palms out, and kind of vibrates them towards Person, trying to beam as much desperate intensity as ske can from beneath the shadows of sker double hood. Then ske turns, stands to sker full height, and heads out so she's standing up against the rim of the boat's deck, addressing the carpenters. "I'm Kelly Stone, illusionist."

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

Another goblin: "SEE"

 **Xarvrax:** "He's also the resident responsible decision maker."

 **Skeleton:** "I'm not a wizard! I think I'd have to be accredited somehow."

Person: "I too am a wizard. I know spells for becoming, for understanding, and for combining."

 **Skeleton:** "Huh."


Chu: "Okay. Good introduction. We haven't got any fancy titles here, since all we do is chop wood for the wood hole."


"You want to buy any wood? It's ok if you just move on."

Some human: "If they're wizards, they could help us with-"


Some goblin: "Not the kind of help that's helpful, Annah."

Chu: "They're clearly mercenaries rather than wizards. Let me negotiate."

 **Skeleton:** "What's the... wood hole? Also, quick question, are you the guys putting up snares everywhere."

 **banana (GM):** Several people say 'no' as several others say 'yes' simultaneously.

Foreman Chu: "Maybe. Why?"

 **Skeleton:** "Well... I almost got pretty badly hurt by one, so what gives!"

Foreman Chu: "Then, no."



Skeleton: "Look-"



Placidus: "We bear no ill will about that. We weren't watching where we were going."

"I have to wonder, though, what you set those traps to catch. Not a lot of game in these woods."



Skeleton: "It's a bit weird, yes. and inconsiderate"



banana (GM): You saw several more traps once you'd started paying careful attention, including some pits that were either concealed poorly or long ago - but actually, none were close to this camp.

Most of the woodcutters are pretty wary now and have generally shut up. Chu licks his lips and fingers his large brass rings.

"I can actually tell you for sure that we haven't set any traps recently and aren't presently in the business of trapping anyone. Or anything."



Placidus: "Do you know what the traps were set for?"

Captain Sonoman: "Presently?"

Chu: "Good day, Captain. Welcome to a loyal settlement of the Dragon Empire, where nothing is wrong."

Sonoman: "This the place? What are they, professional suspicious characters?"

Woodcutter: "Woodcutters."



Xarvrax: "So you say."



Kalira: "Okay, enough. Either start telling the truth or spring your trap, whatever it is. This stiff speech lying is grating."



Skeleton: Skeleton shies away from Kalira a little.

Chu: The goblin is holding up two hands, palms out front, making a massage-the-conflict away motion. "Calm down, everybody. There's no need for any claims or opinions. This is a logging settlement, which is why we have "- pointing- "a lumber mill, a storehouse, toolshed, bunkhouse, and cart rails out into the logging fields. All of this is clearly true and there isn't actually a trap."



Skeleton: Skeleton turns to the others on deck and lowers sker voice. "So, all else aside, I'm guessing this isn't where we want to leave the Captain to recuperate."

Sonoman: "Not unless they have an hourly carriage service to Fort Lac."



Xarvrax: "I think a ditch would probably be a better place than this to get better, honestly."

Chu: To some of the others: "What are you layabouts staring at? There's not going to be a fight, since there is literally no reason for one. Get back to work."



Kalira: "Something weird as all hells is going on here. Weirder than usual."



banana (GM): To their credit, it's saws they pick up when a couple of them do walk away.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax blinks, before starting to shout, "You're right! There's no reason to fight these people! It's clearly not being controlled by a dragon who is terrible!"



banana (GM): Rather less to it, someone sniggers at Kalira's comment.

Chu: "What?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax looks around, "No? No angry roaring? Guess I was wrong and you all are just weird."

Chu: "No, our employer *is* a dragon. Why are you trying to pick a fight, though,"

Sonoman: "Huh. Maybe it's alright after all."



Kalira: "Having met a dragon, can you honestly ask that question?"



Placidus: "Which dragon?"

Chu: "This explains so much. The instinctive animosity between powerful dragons is leading your group to act belligerently towards my group. Since we've aired that out, this awkward situation should defuse pretty quickly."



Skeleton: "I bet you're right."



Xarvrax: "Answer his question and we'll see? Which dragon is your employer?"

Goblin with far less jewelry: "That's why he's the boss."



Placidus: "We aren't being belligerent. We're just confused, because you keep saying obviously false things."

Chu: "I can't just give out the name of our employer, who enjoys privacy. Let me briefly address your other concern."



banana (GM): The goblin fingers his necklaces once more then walks out of the compound entrance, right up to Placidus. "How much do you know about lying, Gnome Fixlmlner?"



Placidus: "I know less about it than other things."



banana (GM): "Okay, that was clear. Here's the deal: it doesn't matter what people think. You can just say whatever you like as long as you can back it up."

"If you're powerful, you don't need much to back it up at all. Weak and you might need evidence, facts, the trust of someone who IS powerful."

"So here's the deal: you're gonna find that everything I've said about this community, I could show you proof or, in the worst case, could show you someone who's willing to set you on fire with his dragon breath if you keep disputing it. What's wrong with that?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax kneels down next to Placidus in front of the goblin, holding out a hand, claws sharp, "How about this then, from someone who's powerful. Tell me who your employer is, or I'll throw you into a wall until you do."



Placidus: "Well, it's a bit insulting to be told obvious lies backed up with absent threats, as you can imagine."



banana (GM): Gimme an intimidation (charisma) roll!




Placidus: "Now my friend Xarvrax, he insults easily."

"You know how dragons are. Presumably."



Xarvrax: rolling d20 + 11

() + 11

= **18**



banana (GM): He's scared. There's an odd backbone to the little guy, but he's a bit scared- just scared enough that, in effect, you get what you want.



Ghol, Going East: Ghol has been taking this all in, while sliding in position for a fight if one breaks out.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax snarls a little, "No dragon likes privacy enough not to be touted as the leader or commander of something."

Foreman Chu: "If you do that, Kyriez the Black will have you *skinned*, Scion."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax smirks, "Especially when he's got a bunch of weak willed cowardly idiots working for him like you."



Skeleton: Skeleton wrings sker hands, then looks to Xarvrax. "Ever heard of them?"



Placidus: "Ah, does that make you the Kyriez Liaison?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax shakes his head, "No. And I don't really want to, if you think I'm bad, Black dragons are worse. The only type of dragon more arrogant than them are Red."

Chu: "You're right. Kyriez is extremely self-important and very bossy all the time, but he can do that, because he's got huge talons and a lot of money."

"See how this works now?"



Kalira: "But you don't, and you're out here. So a little less lip is probably a good thing."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax laughs, "Big doesn't mean powerful, and it's just like a pathetic moron like you to think as such."

Chu: "Well! I'd better leave quickly."



Skeleton: "I mean, I, for one, don't want to antagonize any extra dragons."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax spreads his arms as wide as he can, "The Blue could crush this entire settlement with a claw, but what good would it be being that big all the time?"

"Smart dragons know that being big is more of an inconvenience than anything else, that's why they made me how I am."



Placidus: "Look."

"We didn't actually come here to fight you all."

"And whether or not you won, things will be better for you, specifically, if we don't fight at all."

"So... what's the harm in being a little less opaque?"

Chu: "Yes, that's- obviously, which is why I'



banana (GM): "Opaque?"

The goblin turns theatrically to the group guarding the compound gate - within which, life goes on,

makes a theatrical 'just one moment' gesture.

"You can't seriously have misunderstood my intent."



Placidus: "No, I understood your intent perfectly. It was to avoid saying anything that'd betray your reasons for being out here, in hopes that we'd just go on our merry way."



banana (GM): "Right."



Placidus: "But, instead, you've managed to get far more of our attention than we'd intended to spare you."

"It's an awkward situation."



banana (GM): Chu: "Okay, perhaps that was a misstep. In recompense, I offer the threat of the black dragon. The idea is that if you pry further he'll be mad, see? So you shouldn't, and anyway we actually are logging."

"Let me just admit to a lie, here."

"I offered to sell you some wood. But that was a lie. We don't want to sell wood. We need as much as we can get, and if you've got some, Kyriez might even be persuaded to pay for it. But it looks like you're using this boat."



Placidus: "Can I suggest a compromise?"



banana (GM): "How gnomic."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax rakes a claw over his head, "Do you know how many dragons have threatened me? I've literally been threatened by THE Black."



Placidus: Big smile. "If you tell us what the traps are for, we won't inquire as to the nature of your logging work, or demand on threat of violence to see that you aren't kidnapping people to feed to a black dragon."

"Because, Foreman Chu, whether or not we win that fight, you will un*questionably* lose it."

Sonoman: The captain's about to say something, but doesn't.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax smiles menacingly, "The thing about using someone else as a threat is that you have to survive long enough for them to get here for it to make a difference to you."



banana (GM): Chu: "Wow. You're completely on the verge of attacking me out of what amounts to curiosity. I can tell you that this would never happen in a goblin town, though it's exactly what I thought would happen when I came over here."

Chu: "In order to avoid that, I'll give in and tell you."

Chu: "The traps are for our *old* line of work, before we took up logging. So we aren't setting them anymore, and there's no problem."



Placidus: "What was your old line of work?"

Chu: "..."

Sonoman: "..."



banana (GM): The ex-bandit and the soldier look at each other.



Skeleton: Skeleton looks between them.



Xarvrax: "It's probably the first thing you suggested, just replace dragon with goblin, and you're good."

Sonoman: "I'm too badly hurt to jump on you when you admit to banditry. You know, though, that if you make a move against me or those under my protection, the Empire will come."

Chu: "Maybe that was true five years ago. Maybe it was true one year ago."



Xarvrax: "And with it, there will be many more dragons than your one supposed protector or employer."



Placidus: "Okay, well, we're not here to chase ex-bandit dragon slaves."

Sonoman: "Abyss, if they'd give me a ride to Fort Lac I wouldn't even call them in."



Placidus: "How about it, Foreman? Can you spare a wagon for the Captain here?"

Chu: "I can spare a wagon more easily than I can spare an honest word. We **aren't** gnomes." Is that.. pride in his voice?



Placidus: "I forgive you."



Xarvrax: "You're also not good employees of a dragon, you have to be like these two, " he says hooking a thumb at the cultists.

Mirchin Gleriand: "Just do exactly what he says and stay out of the way, yeah!"



Placidus: "Presumably, that IS what they're doing."

"You'll notice that your elf friends are little help to you when you're being accosted by adventurers."



Xarvrax: "I could fix that, I just don't need to."

Sonoman: "Take me to the godsdamn fort. I don't care that you're"

Chu: Interrupting: "You WOULDN'T have cared if we were bandits, HAD that been the case."
", is what the deal is."



Placidus: "Fine."

Sonoman: "I have an orc to report. His russet hood is and gnarled fangs are burned in my mind. Nothing else matters."



banana (GM): *hood and gnarled

It's a brief and irritating negotiation, after which you're free of one unwanted - if nominally allied - passenger.



Skeleton: Skeleton still feels like these weird dragon-serving woodcutters would as soon as murder the Captain as soon as he was left with them, but, hell, if HE'S okay with it...



Placidus: It wasn't that irritating, honestly. Hard to take it personally.



banana (GM): When Foreman Chu swaggers back to the compound, all the other goblins are looking at him in admiration. That guy knows how to **lie**.





Placidus: Say what you will about goblins, but they aren't **halflings**.




Xarvrax: Xarvrax turns back to the group, "Okay, we need to leave before I burn this place down."


Person: "To the city of the necromancer? Are there more strange places on the way?"


 **Placidus:** "Of the necromancer?"


 **Xarvrax:** "Probably."


 **Skeleton:** "No objections here! Those guys were pretty weird."


 **Placidus:** "Oh! Bonanda."

 **Skeleton:** "Bonanda, yeah. Speaking of, what do you remember of him?"


 **Placidus:** "Just what you all told me. Gross little man, green cap."

 **Skeleton:** "But you don't remember, like... meeting him? Fighting him a bit?"


 **Placidus:** "Do you remember Person killing the dragon that was the moon?"

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax looks at Person, "What color was that dragon?"


Person: "As white as bone."


 **Skeleton:** "No... but that was before my time, wasn't it?"


Person: "I think it was before even mine."


 **Placidus:** "Right! But you've damn sure heard about it."


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax ponders.


 **Skeleton:** "Yes, but, if you were to tell me that I was there, watching, when Person killed the moon, I'd be pretty alarmed about it."


 **Placidus:** Placidus shrugs. "We're a strange lot."


 **Xarvrax:** Placing a claw on Placidus' shoulder, he shakes his head, "You could ask The Five about it, when we eventually get to Drakkenhall, but I couldn't tell you anything about that."


 **Placidus:** "I'm sure we'll know more than they do by the time we get there."


 **Skeleton:** "No, but this is really worrying! This isn't, like - well, I never got to ask. If you think the Hungry Games and Bonanda and all that was a story we've told you... what do you ACTUALLY remember happening over the past few weeks?"

 **banana (GM):** You might well be passing a dragon's home just now, although where it would live in the relatively small compound... and what it would do with so much wood, you do not know. Anyway, if Kyriez exists, it's unlikely to be a lunar expert.

 **Skeleton:** Don't black dragons spit acid? Was that goblin's mention of fire breath just rhetorical?

 **banana (GM):** Roll int!
Let's see how much Skeleton knows, or once knew, about dragons.

 **Xarvrax:** It's possible he's just an idiot.

 **Skeleton:** **12** int plus level



banana (GM): "good question"



Placidus: "Oh, all sorts of things. After the outbreak I fled Undermountain. and then deeper still... I forget when exactly we met up. It's a bit hazy. I think I took fever."



Skeleton: "...hey, Xarvrax. Don't black dragons spit acid?"

"Outbreak? Where are you from?"



Placidus: **13** int+level+traveling theatre, what do black dragons breathe lol



banana (GM): Something horrible, no doubt.



Xarvrax: "They actually breathe the hottest fire, such that it could be seen as acidic in the way that it burns away everything."



Skeleton: "Woah, really? ...then what's that make reds?"

"Do reds have... volume? Range?"



Xarvrax: "So take note that their breath is actually more dangerous than a Red's. A Red dragon just can breathe more of it, yes."



Placidus: "Well, I'm from Gnoplance originally. Where the mountains meet the marshlands. Lovely country. But we traveled up and down the Marrow, the usual circuit, you know."

"Did I ever tell you we were touring performers?"



banana (GM): From Gnoplance to Erewhile. Placidus is moving up in the world.



Xarvrax: Xarvrax chuckles, "Everyone knows that all dragon breath is actually heat based."



Skeleton: To Placidus: "I thought you were a monk under Megistus."

To Xarvrax: "What about the ones that breathe cold? They... suck heat in?"



Placidus: "Oh, yes. But that was after. I was going to get married, but we didn't want to lead the same sort of life. After that fell through I went to a monastery, as is tradition. Then there was the outbreak, and.."

Placidus makes a wry face. "You know the funniest part?"

"The reason we didn't marry is... I didn't want to travel all the time."



Skeleton: "Oh, gosh. You'd never mentioned you were going to be married."



Placidus: "Funny how life works out, isn't it?"



Xarvrax: Xarvrax shakes his head, "It's actually funnier than that, in that it disperses the heat into the area around it."



Placidus: "It's not the sort of thing that comes up in normal conversation."



Skeleton: Skeleton: "What about the poisonous ones. Aren't the green ones poison- wait, wait, waiiit. Venomous."

To Placidus: "Yeah, I suppose not. So, no, though, okay, traveling performer, monk... that lines up. But outbreak of what?"

Person: "What's the difference?"

| | |
|---|--|
|  | Xarvrax: Xarvrax actually laughs at that one, "Haven't you heard the expression that 'poison is fire coursing through your veins? Well..." |
| | Person: "(Between poisonous and venomous.)" |
|  | Skeleton: "A poisonous thing poisons you if you ingest it or touch it or something. A venomous thing actually actively delivers poison to you somehow. That's right, right?" To Placidus. |
|  | Placidus: "Venom is produced by a living body. A snake is venomous. Nightshade is poisonous." |
|  | banana (GM): You sail on, through patches of cleared forest. The loggers have been active - of course, the dead wood is very easy to cut down in great quantities, but it at least demonstrates that logging is occurring. Slowly, the trunks are beginning to thin out and the colour of the ground is changing. |
|  | Placidus: "I don't want to talk about the outbreak, though. It's not important. If we wind back up towards the Glitterwood, then I suppose I'd have to. But we're going the opposite way, so it isn't important." |
|  | Skeleton: "But it's when you.. got interested in astronomy?" |
|  | banana (GM): All the talk of fire and flame is a bit like an omen. The way the forest floor itself is black and withered - it's like the world burned underground, or burns still. |
| | Person: "So to attack with poison, you should become venomous." |
|  | Placidus: "Right, or gather poison from some other source." |
|  | Skeleton: "Just to be - I don't want to pry or anything. I'm just trying to, to figure out where our memories actually line up now, you know?" |
|  | Placidus: "It'd be easiest if it was inherent, though." "For instance you could put poison in a glass of wine, and you'd be attacking with poison. Or coat a blade with it. But if it didn't come out of your body or some other animal's body, it isn't venom." "It's the same way that you wouldn't say that a falling rock punched you." |
| | Person: "I'm not an animal, though. I'm a person." |
|  | Placidus: "Then I'm afraid you can only ever hope to be poisonous, and not venomous." |
| | Person: "Oh, I think I can come up with something." |
|  | Placidus: "I believe you." |
|  | Skeleton: "I bet what'shisname, Samwise was venomous. And counted as a person." "I didn't mix them up, did I?" |
|  | banana (GM): Honestly, they probably both are. |
|  | Placidus: "Samwise was the yuan-ti, yes." |
|  | Skeleton: "Phew, okay." |
|  | Placidus: "Anyway, I was interested in astronomy before the outbreak. It was part of... I really don't want to talk about this." |

In a sense he did last night. He never was a good doctor.



Skeleton: "No, fine, fine. I'm just - what I remember, see, is that you were a monk interested in... I guess math? Maybe some herbology? Prior to whatever sent you from the monastery and to Axis."



Placidus: "*Medicine*. Herbology is what wizards do."



Skeleton: "Oh, right. And between meeting Travis and Vraknaar and so on and Axis and, I guess, touching the break in the road the other day... it's all a blur?"



banana (GM): It's growing late, but if you press on, you could leave the forest today. On the horizon is actual grass, and small hills, and a country road.



Placidus: "I've never been to Axis in my life."

"I just told you, I went undermountain after the outbreak."



Skeleton: Skeleton leans back a bit. "Then... you met us where and when?"



Placidus: "'I forget exactly when we met up.' It's all well and good to answer your laborious and invasive questions - it passes the time well enough. But I don't want to answer them all twice."



Xarvrax: Xarvrax looks between the two of them, and then at Ghol, "Have I been replaced as the craziest member of our group?"



Placidus: As the sun sinks low, it remains apparent that the gnome casts no shadow.



Skeleton: Skeleton turns away - not completely, but just a bit - and sort of hunches sker hood down over steepled fingers, thinking. "Okay, okay. It's just - errgh. Either you've been misled somehow or we have, right? Brainwashed, even. We shouldn't just... leave it."



banana (GM): It's not really about whether you should.

This is, they say, the ending of an Age. It's the time when grievances are aired and settled. It's the time when mysteries are solved and long-awaited calamities enacted.

Skeleton is perhaps a product of the times, because there's what you **should** do and what you **will** do, and while one strange part of your journey is ending- they're not going to get any closer together.