



**banana (GM):** The Ourdline isn't exactly a mountain range. Its scarp rises high enough to block the view of a traveller by land, but you're standing on the highest peak among the hills and can kiind of still smell the salt air.

That's because it's downhill from here to Lac Butler. Spread out from the south to the east of your horizon is a line of fire turning to water; the sun is rising above the long, saltwater body that demarcates the Dragon Empire from the Snakesrule. The last or first outposts of civilisation (depending on how you count it) are ahead.

Looks like a full day's march would take you down out of the scree and probably to the lake shore, which is dotted by tiny towns - the land isn't fertile, but the water certainly is. Inbetween is some sort of sprawling old ruin, a city reduced to foundations in past ages, and a lot of open country.

Of course your camp is surrounded by corpses, but you could roll them down the hill and be on your way easily enough.

(I say 'march', because until you're past the hills, there's still no wind...)



**Placidus:** Placidus is up before dawn. He might not've slept after the battle at all. He's building fires for the corpses.



**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol, in fact, has been rolling them down the hill and stacking them up as a side-project to his watch.  
Preparing them for the fire, as it were.



**banana (GM):** The battle took place *at* dawn, so Placidus has got something interesting going on there.



**Placidus:** Of course, the apices don't go on the fire. They wouldn't burn.  
Certainly not clean.



**banana (GM):** The zorigami Person is considerably more genial in its wake. He seems to have really enjoyed not killing anyone (while you did all the work).



**Travis Meacham:** Well I always knew he was weird.



**Ghol, Going East:** "So," he grunts to the gnome. "Guess I can't ignore the..." He gestures vaguely at the metal bodies. "...implications."  
"If nothing else, the Orc Lord will have found a new existential enemy."



**Placidus:** "Of the clockwork men who tear each other apart to build a more perfect self?"  
"It's a bit disconcerting."



**banana (GM):** If a group of entities exists, the Orc Lord can usually find a reason to fight them.



**Kalira:** "I'd think they'd fit right in with his philosophy. The strong conquer the weak."



**Ghol, Going East:** "Unsporting to cut a thing near-clean in half and not have it die."






















**Xandrah:** "Why any more disconcerting than normal? Humans do it all the time with weapons and armor."





**banana (GM):** The spirit dinghy of Mottle lists, ironically listless, leaning against one pile of jagged stone and *through* another.





**Placidus:** "Yes, rather like the undead in that way. Still! It's less likely that each of the zorigami is a trapped soul enslaved to some dread necromaster."

	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> He barks a harsh laugh at Kalira. "You're not thinking about it from the right perspective. Think, instead, of an entire construct -- an entire civilization -- in one being."
	<b>Placidus:</b> "Takes all sorts, I suppose."
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> "They're microcosms of everything he hates. Or they will be, when he hears of them."
	<b>Kalira:</b> "Civilization in a bottle?"
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Xarvrax's camp followers have finished packing up, including their own bedrolls which are now habitually placed as far away from everyone else as possible.
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> "Civilization in a bottle."
	<b>Placidus:</b> "Building and breaking... breaking <i>to</i> build. Building... to break."
	<b>Travis Meacham:</b> "Sounds chill."
	<b>Kalira:</b> "I'm not really sure how I feel about it, to be honest. Obviously I wouldn't want someone to come along and absorb me, or whatever it is they planned on doing. But in their shoes, I don't know that I'd hesitate either."
	<b>Kon:</b> Kon took some time to duck out and check on that merchants' camp they saw go dark the previous night. They suspected the worst -- did the worst come to pass?
	<b>Travis Meacham:</b> "I wonder how small they are when they start out."
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> Microcosms, becoming macrocosms. Anathema.
	<b>Placidus:</b> The little fire is lit. It'll take a bit of time for it to fill the entire shallow pit. "Person!"
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Kon found what he expected, and something else.
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> Ghol shakes his head. He's spent too much time communing with his orker side recently. He misses Her. Ah well. Another body on the pile.
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Shepherds bodies, strewn about the other camp site- only a couple of them even had weapons, and those were cut down by whirring mechanics rather than bandit clubs. The flock partly slaughtered for a meal on the spot, the rest mostly escaped and wandering. And there is also the inevitable result of violence.
	<b>Kalira:</b> Kalira's piling bodies as well. No sense just leaving them all littered about.
	<b>banana (GM):</b> They're huddling in the cave where the shepherds had their common stores: a squad of orcs, newborn and leaf-clad. They have fresh unscarred green skin and weapons made of hewn stone, metal chips. The biggest one waves and grunts at Kon. A friend!
	<b>Placidus:</b> "Person... <i>Person</i> ... <b>Person</b> ... <b><i>Person</i></b> ..."
	<b>Person:</b> Popping up from under the boat: "Placidus. Good morning, I hope."
	<b>Kon:</b> Oh.


**Placidus:** "Person, what are the funerary customs of the zorigami? What treatment do we owe the scrap?"


**Kalira:** "Well, you're still in one piece. So good enough, I guess?"


**Xarvrax:** Xarvrax growls, "Those things tried to skin me, hurl them in a ditch and lets go."


**Kon:** Kon will trot over and take inventory. How many orcs are we talking, here?


**Person:** "I didn't think there were any such rites for a long time. The parts we didn't consume after encounters would just be gone, hidden away, when our pack returned that way."  
"Later I realised that smarter people like men had been taking care of the problem. To avoid alarm to people like you, we hide the pieces over a wide area - scattered one by one, so that each looks like a simple dead machine."


**Placidus:** "Like ashes."


**banana (GM):** Kon's found four normal-sized orcs and one runt, the sort of half-grown character you get who ends up on a mount or telling jokes around the campfire for scraps. They ruffle his fur and try to feed him bits of dead shepherd.  
Even now, they're discussing how best to go west. They need to seek the Orc Lord. They don't even know who he is.

**Kalira:** Kalira brushes her hands off and looks around. "So where are we off to next? I feel like we were doing something before we ended up here but I can't really remember what."


**Kon:** Hrrrm. Kon will make sure they're corralled in the cave and not trying to leave, then head off to find Ghol. If they try to follow, he will make it *clear* his intention is they stay put.


**Placidus:** "We're going to Snakesrule, as I recall."


**banana (GM):** Well, it's very early in the morning, so there's no real objection yet...


**Travis Meacham:** "To claim our reward for being heroes."


**Placidus:** "Erskine land. Treasure for Travis and Skeleton."


**Travis Meacham:** "Or rather, for covering up a strange ancient mariner."


**Kalira:** "Ah. There was something about a necromancer too, wasn't there?"

**Placidus:** "Oh, I heard about that. What did the cause of that turn out to be?"

**Skeleton:** "The real question is, does anything happen to them out of improper burial that's like what happens to humans?" Skeleton says this on the assumption that improper burials or corpse desecration are an at least semi-reliable way to get zombies, but maybe this isn't true..?

**Kon:** Kon trots back into camp a short time later and pushes Ghol with his snout until the two confer a short distance away from the body pit.

**Xarvrax:** "I have need to eventually be in Drakkenhall. I have questions for a certain quintet of dragons that I want answered."

**Travis Meacham:** To Placidus, "Still don't know." To Kalira, "Yes, Bonanda. They tangled with him once before."



**banana (GM):** It kind of sucks, to find out you're just one of a series of world-domination master plans, and not even one who gets to learn the whole story. Maybe a discarded one.



**Travis Meacham:** Her? I think bonanada was a he



**Placidus:** Placidus's understading is that any corpse left to linger in the ground at all is a potential zombie, hence the imperial custom of burning all the bodies.

bonanda limetop is a guy  
in a green hat



**banana (GM):** Bonanda Limetop is a male human.



**Ghol, Going East:** Then Ghol sighs, walks back to the ship where they've packed their things, and plucks their great map from the belongings. "There is something I need to take care of at the Shepherds' camp," he says by way of explanation as he walks in that direction, Kon following with him. "Won't be long."



**Kalira:** i thought bonanda was an elf for some reason. the legend of bonanda



**Placidus:** it's the green hat  
automatically makes you assume pointy ears



**Skeleton:** Right, but are they a potential zombie in and of themselves, rather than just potential Wizard King ammunition?

**Person:** In accordance with the scattering plan, Person's gathered up the larger and more consequential remnants into a sack. There actually aren't too many, as the barely-apex zorigami got COMPLETELY owned last night.



**Skeleton:** i thought bonanda was a white elf, too



**banana (GM):** Whatever Ghol's gone off to do is definitely okay and safe, you can tell.



**Ghol, Going East:** Bonanda has never been an elf. Ghol would've had objections.



**Xarvrax:** But he teleported to get away from us.



**Kalira:** Maybe Person is going to snack on these parts on the road.



**banana (GM):** hang on, am i misremembering  
was he, literally, a white elf  
wow



**Xarvrax:** I remember, because I almost hurled myself out a window at him.



**Kalira:** i thought he just jumped



**banana (GM):** Yeah, that's why he didn't initially stand out in San Meat



**Ghol, Going East:** Wait...Ghol did have objections.





**banana (GM):** Well, reality stands corrected.





**Travis Meacham:** How racist


 **Placidus:** white elves aren't really elves at all, frankly


 **Travis Meacham:** All white folk look slike eh. I see how it is

 **Placidus:** it's true; they do


 **banana (GM):** Sun's high enough in the sky now to call it morning rather than e.g. night. With the corpses dealt with, it seems you've technically done a good deed: these hills will be much safer for anyone else dumb enough to take the off-road way east.


 **Ghol, Going East:** After a short walk: "Movement forward," Ghol says as he steps into the mouth of the cave, looking around at the newly formed orcs.


 **banana (GM):** rolling d20+4 recognition

() + 4


= **18**


 **Travis Meacham:** Technical good deeds ftw.\

 **banana (GM):** Three orcs look up from a game of someone-else's-knucklebone dice. One of them grins and flexes, confident in muscles he's never used. "Don't know what that means, but it sounds good. Are you from these parts.."  
"Scout?"


 **Ghol, Going East:** "No."  
"I am on assignment."  
"Remember that: 'Movement forward.' When you run into your brothers and sisters, that's what they'll want to hear from you."


**Orc:** "Then we ask your time for advice. To travel. To serve. I am Wor."


 **Ghol, Going East:** "Greetings, Wor. I am Ghol, Going East."


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax grumbles in the background, "No one ever recognizes or respects me..."


 **Travis Meacham:** Wor. UNH. Good god yall.

 **Placidus:** "Well. That's all taken care of. Shall we move on?" Placidus straightens out, the tiny bobs of metal glinting beneath him as he walks back to the ship, catching the light his absent shadow fails to obscure.


















 **Travis Meacham:** Since when has placidus not had a shadow?


 **Placidus:** since the madness pond  
it's come back once or twice


 **Skeleton:** "No objections here." Skeleton's all straightened out and bundled up, and still in fairly good humor following the stunt ske managed to pull last night.


 **banana (GM):** Ghol hasn't come back yet, but he could probably catch up. He's been doing that repeatedly on the journey, ranging from ahead of the train to behind it, keeping watch.



	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> Ghol will have indicated they can proceed without him before leaving.
	<b>Travis Meacham:</b> He's a damn rube. Running all over the place like that.
	<b>Placidus:</b> Yeah, that's why Placidus is willing to move out in his absence. Ghol's always a bit afield of the ship. A bit... abroad? It's difficult to tell what combination of nautical and conventional language is best here.
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Introductions: "Kent." "Berig." "Grudd." "Slido." He's stern to the poop bow's deck, I think is the term.
	<b>Travis Meacham:</b> Slido
	<b>Skeleton:</b> finallyslido.com
	<b>Xarvrax:</b> Xarvrax returns to what he does best then, yelling orders at people, "Let's go lady and gentlemen!"
	<b>Placidus:</b> I feel bad for Kent. What's it like to be the one orc with a human name?
	<b>Skeleton:</b> He'll wise up and stick an apostrophe in there sometime soon.
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Hey, Berig is a human name. Berig the Basketmaker was one of the famous founders of Concord.
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> Ghol nods at each in turn. Then: "This is Kon." He pauses. "There is an entire speech you're supposed to get here, about the Orc Lord, about leaving your old life behind, and about new dedication to the Movement. I am not qualified to give it. My mission calls me elsewhere. So your re-education will have to wait. Here is what I am qualified to give you." Ghol spreads the map out carefully. "Directions."
	<b>Wor:</b> "Hey, we'll take it. This isn't a bad spot.. lamb, sharp things and a view. Directions are what we needed."
	<b>Grudd:</b> "Next will be entertainment."
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> Ghol: "Which one of you is strongest."
	<b>banana (GM):</b> The two people inclined to take Xarvrax's orders do so. The garbage and luggage is hauled. The tiller responds, sluggishly, and those of you on foot know what to do. Time to make like trees, of which the hills do not have any, and leave.
	<b>Wor and Grudd:</b> "I am strongest." The others nod. The strong ones glare at each other, and indiscriminately about.
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> To the two of them: "Demonstrate the claim."
	<b>Placidus:</b> Time to make like trees and not be on these hills.
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> He's rolled the map back up for the time being.
	<b>banana (GM):</b> There are several trails all leading down and east- generally toward the ruined city, although one's more recently travelled and dips toward a valley that's slightly more fertile than the rest of this barren country. No need to make decisions yet. The going's good, you've run out of tails, and if Janes Mason was still here he'd have started singing along with his ox.


 **Skeleton:** "Anyone know what that place used to be?"


 **Placidus:** Do we?

 **banana (GM):** Just before the lee of the hills takes you too low to see the sea, you can take stock of its coast - Ersatz is almost directly east of your line of travel (the lake itself being more southeast), visible as the only walled settlement along its shore.

Well, maybe. Give me int rolls, with whatever backgrounds make sense


**Orcs:** Wor hefts the thing most like an axe among the new-grown weapons. Grudd reaches for a club, then puts it down again, spreads his fingers wide, cracks knuckles.


 **Placidus:** **23** this is Raised in a Traveling Theatre +1


 **Xarvrax:** rolling d20 + 5


() + 5

= **21**


 **Skeleton:** [1d20+8] straight intelligence, but add +4 specifically for learning, idk, who was buried here or what echoes from the netherworld whisper or similar


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol watches, face impassive, arms crossed, fingers occasionally drumming on one bicep.


 **Skeleton:** **27** straight intelligence, but add +4 specifically for learning, idk, who was buried here or what echoes from the netherworld whisper or similar


 **banana (GM):** They don't pace back away from each other, but just charge over the intervening two yards from a standing start. Grudd's not quite as big as Wor, but he has him in a hold almost immediately and it's clear that he's fast, for an orc, and knows about pressure points.

It's always been a point of.. not contention. Just difference.


 **Kalira:** seems well in hand


 **banana (GM):** There are plenty of half-orcs in the Movement. Probably the majority of ALL half-orcs in the world, unattractive as their other life options generally are.

 **Travis Meacham:** rolling 1d20+11 this is with my Education, so knock off 3 if not

() + 11

= **19**

 **banana (GM):** So it's not like Ghol was alone in having been born, raised, and so on. Childhoods, memories - all were common. Even some full orcs remember being, in some sense, other than orc - individuals, if hazily.

 **Placidus:** We're all very smart.

 **banana (GM):** But.

These are orcs as they were before the Movement, as they are popularly seen - born of the earth itself,

joyous in vengeance, ready to destroy from the moment and fact of their existence. They're the core footsoldiers of the h- of the army, the ones who never question because either they are born of its philosophy or vice versa.



**Ghol, Going East:** The host. Surely.



**Placidus:** Suuuuure.



**banana (GM):** Wor takes off two of Grudd's fingers with a last wild blow, and then he's choked unconscious. Everyone yells cheers and demands that the new leader get them alcohol and spoils when next available (and that he make it soon).



**Skeleton:** The hoe-down



**banana (GM):** About that ruined city:



**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol grunts, walks up to Grudd, and kicks him over onto his back. Then leans over and squints at him. Good. Still alive. He grunts again and nods. "Well met, Wor. Choose a purpose."

"For instance: I am Going East."

"This is not something you need decide now." Ghol shrugs. "But it could be."



**banana (GM):** Several of you know the basics. This was a city of crafters, in Ages past; a place whose name has been lost, as have its walls above ground-height, but which is still remembered for the quality of the local wine and jewelry. Lac Butler vintages turn up in old stories and, allegedly, ancient cellars. They had mines and vineyards and, Placidus recalls, a god, whose name is also lost.

This is not a coincidence. The names were erased, because they wouldn't build underground shrines and let snakes hang from the rails of their fences. Two or three Ages ago, the destruction of the city on Lac Butler marked the rise of the dominion of Skerri.



**Placidus:** Snakes... drool.



**Travis Meacham:** Skerri



**banana (GM):** The only extra thing Skeleton knows about death and the dead city is that its god was buried with it. Presumably it was not one so consequential as to leave a visible trace on the landscape.

@Travis: Skerri. Everything east of here is the Snakesrule.



**Kalira:** Skerri? What do I know about Skerri?




**Skeleton:** "You know... there are probably a lot of valuables under there."



**Kalira:** ah yes

rolling 1d20+5 int plus shadow dogma

() + 5

= **6**



**banana (GM):** Nothing. The Gods of Light are irrelevant.



**Kalira:** And dead.


**Grudd:** "I might be Seeking A New Hand, if this keeps up. Do any of the rest of you have a purpose,





boys?"

**Slido, the runt:** "I am Slido, Climbing Higher. You'll see. Heha."


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol nods solemnly at him.

 **banana (GM):** Everyone else just kind of mumbles a bit. Grudd kicks the unconscious Wor again, idly, and traces a route on the map.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Wait.


 **banana (GM):** Meanwhile, does anyone particularly want to visit a) a dead flat city or b) a slightly inhabited valley on their way to the Lac shore? c) is an option.


wor was the 'he' of 'he's choked unconscious', if that's what we're Wait ing for


 **Ghol, Going East:** Wor takes off two of Grudd's fingers with a last wild blow, and then he's choked unconscious.


Okay.


 **Placidus:** "I'll be honest, a hidden cellar of Lac Butler wine would really hit the spot right about now."


 **Ghol, Going East:** Then change "Well met, Wor" to "Well met, Grudd," and it was Wor Ghol kicked over on his back.


 **Kalira:** "I can't think of anything I'd like better than to plunder the tomb of a dead god."


 **Skeleton:** "Plus jewels and things. Those are definitely salable even if they're not ritual-relevant."


 **banana (GM):** Maybe it's worth a quick look.


 **Travis Meacham:** "Wouldn't people have already done that?"

 **Ghol, Going East:** Regardless, Ghol spreads the map out again. "We are here." He puts a finger down at the proper point on the map. "You want to get past here." Ghol taps Forge.


 **banana (GM):** You haven't *heard* any tales of someone recovering the lost treasure of lac butler... and nobody from east of the place would visit such a condemned site, anyway...


 **Ghol, Going East:** "You talked of entertainment."  
"You will find entertainment in the Host."


 **Placidus:** "Probably, Travis, but they're not as clever as we are. Besides, it's on the way."

 **Ghol, Going East:** "You will not find it in the hills and forests of the south. Not when there are four of you."  
Generously.


**Kent:** "What is south?"

 **Placidus:** "And really... what sort of business ARE we in if we don't give storied ruins at least a good once-over?"


 **Kalira:** "If nothing else, we can knock some statues over and rough the place up."


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol takes Kent by the arm and drags him to the cave mouth. He points straight into


the rising sun. "East." He roughly turns him about and points the other way. "West." He turns Kent around again to face the sun. "Sun comes from there." Turns him around AGAIN. "Sun goes to there."


 **banana (GM):** It's actually kind of odd that the ruins aren't more recently-storied. Could there be something wrong with the place?

**Orc:** "Hey, ow.. east. West. Okay."

 **Ghol, Going East:** Turns him to face east again. "When facing sunrise, turn left." Ghol turns him left. "North. Towards the top of the world." Turns him back to face east again. "When facing sunrise, turn right." Ghol watches him. Does he turn right?

 **Skeleton:** If there is, it can't be worse than the last few wrong things we ran into. Skeleton, presumably along with the others, makes way for the ruins.


 **banana (GM):** You trudge and slide toward the city. It's hard to tell the exact size, since nothing remains of outbuildings, but from the crumbling walls and razed heaps of stone, but thousands of people must have lived here once. This track was paved at some point, and there are irrigation channels, overgrown, sloping southeast. Wisps of cloud on the western horizon will eventually send rainwater down them to the lake, keeping the grooves intact as ersatz rivers.


 **Placidus:** Ersatz? You mean the royal family once lived here?


**Person:** Person's dropped a thing like a breastplate down a hollow tree stump. "So gnomes, humans, and dragons.. what do *they* do with the dead?"


"Also, skeletons."


**Orc:** Kent the orc keeps turning to face where the sun now is, adjusting his position carefully, and *then* right. It's not too far off.

 **Placidus:** "Here in the Empire we burn our dead."


 **banana (GM):** (The others are laughing, although you doubt they know any more about compasses)


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol grunts in something that isn't quite approval, but isn't reproach, and corrects him to face the proper direction. "South."

 **Skeleton:** "Well-" Skeleton glances back to check that the dragon cultists, who might be just oblivious enough to not be clued in yet, aren't in earshot before turning back around. "We sort of ARE the dead, so generally we're done with."

 **Placidus:** Placidus cranes his neck to look north and west, the way they came. "I suppose we're very near to saying, 'Back home, in the Empire,'..."


**Orc:** "South is another word for dizzy."


 **Ghol, Going East:** Then he steps back, so all five orcs can see him, and signals with his arms. "East. West. North. South."


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax shrugs, "It's actually rare enough that dragons die that we don't really have specific customs for dealing with it."


 **Ghol, Going East:** "You head north."

**Grudd:** "On the map, we must travel West and North. We're going here." He stabs a remaining finger into the rough location of Forge.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Good. He's taking charge.

 **Kalira:** "Everyone else's customs for when dragons die is to make boots and coats out of them."


 **banana (GM):** It's actually not quite where Ghol marked- east, rather than west, of the dwarf country.. but maybe he's right at that.

 **Travis Meacham:** "They make really good shields, boots, coats, and so on."


**Person:** "..gears..?"

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol will let them study the map a few moments more, then roll it up. "It is not out of concern for the settlements of man or elf between here and there that I tell you to stay your hands against them."


"It is because you four are of the Movement now, and I intend that the Movement receives you intact."


 **Skeleton:** "In general skeletons get buried or burned, though. In either case the idea is to make sure the body doesn't get any untoward ideas about what to do with the rest of its death."


**Wor:** Wor's woken enough to be sitting up, leaning on the cave wall. He spits on the ground. "Settlements. Like blisters of poison strung out across the land. Lead us between them, Grudd- around to the backsides."


 **Travis Meacham:** " I don't know if you could make clockwork out of dragon parts. Intriguing question."


**Person:** "Xarvrax, may I see your teeth?"


 **Ghol, Going East:** "You are not a raiding party. You are barely whelped. Travel at night. Avoid roads. Hunt what you can. Steal what you must. Only fight if you know you can win." This is directed at Grudd: "Make that assessment honestly."

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax snarls a little, "A warning for all of you, if you decide to wear the skin of my kind, I will wear the skin of yours, and it will not be pretty."


 **Ghol, Going East:** "Your lives are our Lord's now. He will know if you dally."


 **Kalira:** "Mine would be pretty. I don't think there's enough to cover you, though."


 **Placidus:** "I confess, I'm surprised you'd ever admit to not being pretty, Xarvrax."

 **Travis Meacham:** "Of course it wouldn't be pretty, ours are all flesh and hairy. None of those nice slick scales."


**Orcs:** They're all set for a moment to laugh it off, ignore the warnings, make promises with no intent to keep them, but.. yes. They have a purpose beyond destruction. They know it.

 **banana (GM):** Might have been nice.

 **Xarvrax:** "I didn't mean the skin, I meant the process for acquiring the skin."

 **Kalira:** "Regardless, if someone gives me a dragonscale armor I'm going to wear it. I won't skin a dragon to make one, because that's just rude, but so is waste."

"Take it as a compliment! Your scales are so strong others want to wear them."

 **banana (GM):** The nameless city draws closer. It doesn't have any fully intact structures, so maybe it

won't take long to search There are birds nesting about the place, but almost no vegetation.

When Ghol comes down out of the mountains, he can look across the landscape between here and the lake, and see the ruined city, and it will unfortunately be completely obvious where the rest of the Mixed Company has gone.

(not that they're mountains, really, but)



**Ghol, Going East:** "One more thing. In your travels north through this land, you may come across an older orc, with a bow like mine and a persistent cough. He is Scoutmaster Ingher. You may think the cough is a sign of weakness. Three nights ago he murdered a half-company of Imperial soldiers by himself. The cough is not a sign of weakness. If you need direction or assistance, he will provide it -- provided you are of the proper mindset and disposition."

"Test your strength as you must. Against each other, certainly. Perhaps even against Ingher, if you find him, and if he permits it. Always be growing. But do not forget: your purpose lies north."

"And mine lies east." He nods to Grudd. "Movement forward."

Once he and Kon are gone down the mountain, he'll mutter to the warg, "I hate having to do that shit."



**Kon:** Kon yawns and shakes out his shoulders as he walks, as if to say: you didn't **have** to do anything.



**Travis Meacham:** Hell he didn't. Ghol is a responsiteen.



**Ghol, Going East:** Now he's responsible for finding this damn -- oh.

Well then.

At least ruined cities are the best sort.



**banana (GM):** There's one thing left behind, when the orcs go.

The axe Wor discarded- none of them reclaimed it. It's a raw and gleaming thing, made of some metal Ghol doesn't immediately recognise. Well, 'made'.

The handle is definitely just a tree branch, but it fits a hand well.



**Ghol, Going East:** Perhaps there'll be use for this down the road. Ghol will stow it for the moment, to examine later.



**banana (GM):** The ruined city looks less impressive up close. It spread out over quite an area, particularly if you include its subsidiary infrastructure, but down here on the plain there's just.. walls with faded frescoes, heaps and heaps of stone blocks, channels suspended just above the ground for aqueducts. None unholed.



**Ghol, Going East:** All cities look less impressive up close.



**banana (GM):** There was a grid of streets, like in Horizon, and patches of the earth are oddly coloured - circular shaded portions, like they're tanned or dyed.

The patches don't seem to overlap in any regular pattern with building foundations. Odd.



**Placidus:** Is the ground barren?


As in, is this discoloration in the soil rather than grass?





**Ghol, Going East:** Presumably he can locate the rest of the Mixed Company ably by following the sound of bickering with a dragon.




**banana (GM):** Not totally so. Weeds are in shaded cracks, though not the open earth.. someone roll wis?


 **Ghol, Going East:** Scout bonus? This is just as much nature as not.


 **banana (GM):** No scout bonus, this is about agriculture  
Civilisation, even

 **Kalira:** rolling 1d20+4 here's some wisdom?

() + 4

= **17**

 **Xarvrax:** rolling d20 + 2 wisdom


() + 2


= **6**


 **Ghol, Going East:** rolling d20+6

() + 6


= **20**


 **Placidus:** **23** here's placidus's heavily degraded 'natural historian +1' background, governing botany, husbandry, etc


 **Travis Meacham:** rolling 1d20+4 im wise


() + 4


= **10**


 **banana (GM):** Ghol's worked it out by the time he arrives, and Placidus can tell on the spot. The earth between where the streets used to be doesn't have the right loamy smell, and particularly from the borders of the city outward.. a pinch of it on your tongue and you can taste salt.


 **Ghol, Going East:** "Land's all fucked up here," Ghol will say by way of greeting.

 **banana (GM):** Kalira comes across a rotunda, all broken pillars and 'tanned' stone - this is the only place you've seen the shape of the city coincide with the coloured circles on the ground.


 **Travis Meacham:** "Salted?" Travis has heard of this sort of thing but would never have put the pieces together himself.


 **Placidus:** "They really wanted to send a message, didn't they?"


 **Kalira:** "There's something here. Or was."


 **Ghol, Going East:** Salting. The Movement burns settlements down -- razes cities to stones -- but salting the earth? An insult.




 **banana (GM):** It certainly doesn't restore the balance of nature or anything like that. It's just another ruined place on this ugly peninsula. Conflict wrecked much of the country between Marrow and the Snakesrule, long before either place had those names.


 **Skeleton:** Is salt particularly efficaceous against hauntings, the dead, or black magic in the 11th age?


 **banana (GM):** Completely useless.  
It's a powerful weapon against druids, though.


 **Placidus:** Is there anything that could organically produce this much salt, or did this have to have been done on purpose?


 **Skeleton:** Skeleton's got nothing, then.


 **Travis Meacham:** Travis just goes ahead and assumes that there's nothing that could organically produce this much salt.


 **banana (GM):** Well, there IS a saltwater lake just over a ridge from the far side of the city. Maybe some sort of engineering program..?


 **Kon:** Kon is circling around, clearly agitated, growling.


 **Travis Meacham:** "It lasts for Ages. As we can see, I guess."

 **Kon:** He is far less pleased about the salting than even Ghol.


 **banana (GM):** Generally, though, the catchment rains wash salt OUT of the soil and into the body of water, hence its nature.

 **Placidus:** Yeah, it's a bit odd that salt lingers in the soil this long unless people are re-salting it or there's something in the ground pushing it out, isn't it?  
With the way the rain flows.

 **Kalira:** "Someone definitely wants this ruined city to *stay* ruined."

 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax sniffs around, "Seems pointless to me."


 **Ghol, Going East:** "Wizards, no doubt."

 **banana (GM):** Probably so. Actually, though- give me another int check, bonuses for stuff related to art


 **Placidus:** "Person?"


**Person:** "I did not do it."

 **Travis Meacham:**

() + 7

= **18**

 **Xarvrax:**

() + 5

= 14



**Skeleton:** 25 raw int



**Placidus:** 26 here's placidus's raised in a traveling theatre background again



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

(9)+3

= 12

lol



**Kalira:** "Seems really precise and purposeful for just a conquering."



**banana (GM):** You know, these painted frescoes are *really* fragmentary and faded.



**Travis Meacham:** "It's a message."



**banana (GM):** But, with obsessive patience or intuitive reassembly, one can pick up some of their content:

The city's remaining murals don't depict much magic at all. There are figures that look like priests, generally worshipping either some sort of wingless dragons or very large Koru Lizards.

Also a lotta pictures of people growing grapes, plucking grapes, stamping them down, building barrels and cellars, etc.



**Placidus:** Is Skerri the god of snakes or of reptiles, generally?



**Xarvrax:** Xarvrax is going to say... no.



**banana (GM):** Skerri of the Elect is the god of serpents and burrows.



**Travis Meacham:** "Well this is very bizarre. Why would the faithful of SKerri salt this place so thoroughly?"



**banana (GM):** Notable for the large tracts of the South where He's the primary god, and for being the *only* god still standing who claims dominion over those things. Most are more contested.



**Kalira:** "Maybe someone fucked up."



**banana (GM):** Serpents almost certainly doesn't include dragons, though.



**Placidus:** "Could be a taxonomic dispute. Perhaps in bygone ages there were more snake gods."



**banana (GM):** If there was a god of dragons, dragons would object.




**Xarvrax:** Exactly.





**Placidus:** "And Skerri is just the last one standing."


"Er, so to speak."


Snakes don't turn into pillars of salt when they die, though, as far as Placidus knows.


 **Skeleton:** doesn't it look more like everyone here WAS worshipping skerrl, and then got fucked up? not that skerrlites are responsible?


 **banana (GM):** Anyone want to perform an exhaustive - and exhausting - search of the ruined city with a con check? Warning, failing this one will make you tired.

 **Xarvrax:** I'll do it.


 **Ghol, Going East:** "Maybe worshippers of the god of slugs rolled in."


 **Placidus:** "Hah!"

 **Xarvrax:** Though, I'd also like to make a case for magical anomaly to help search for anything weird/important here.


 **Ghol, Going East:** Honestly, given what they've seen so far in the southlands, that's only half a joke.


 **Kalira:** "Slithered in?"


 **Xarvrax:** rolling d20 + 11


() + 11


= **16**


 **banana (GM):** magical anomaly counts


 **Travis Meacham:** it is so very fucking Flavorful that after sitting around and using our brains to reconstruct frescoes and make philsoophical deductions  
we're sending xarvrax out to dig through the dirt


 **Xarvrax:** Well shit.


 **Kalira:** also i missed the message about the con check  
i would have done it


 **banana (GM):** Kalira can join the search party!


 **Placidus:** **9** I'm going to add my unnatural philosophy background here, subtract four if I can't rationalize that. placidus is going to follow xarvrax around either way


 **banana (GM):** Xarvrax got enough that he doesn't suffer ~consequences~, but all the grubbing about is actually fairly unproductive.

 **Kalira:** actually idk. xarvrax's bonus is huge apparently

 **Placidus:** ah, well  
"Whew,"

 **banana (GM):** Placidus loses a recovery, owned.


 **Placidus:** "Spending all that time on the ship has gotten me out of shape."

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol isn't doing anything else. Would Scout apply here?



**Kalira:** ah yes

rolling 1d20+7 applying divine strength here. kalira sorts through wreckage

() + 7

= **11**



**Skeleton:** i've got Ritual Caster. maybe i can do a ritual Speak With The Dead to find out what the deal is, or a ritual Summon Undead to produce a long-term skeleton digging crew...?



**Travis Meacham:** Travis is not going to dig about in this ruined, forgotten city.



**Xarvrax:** Hmm.



**banana (GM):** Kalira also loses a recovery



**Xarvrax:** Can I make a second attempt at double the penalty?



**banana (GM):** Several hours of searching lead you to discover... why it is that there aren't many stories of this place.

There are a lot of rocks to turn over, and they're HEAVY, and there's nothing under them! Not even snakes!

Skeleton might as well try sker ritual, because at this point it's starting to seem like a waste of a trip..



**Ghol, Going East:** rolling d20+7

() + 7

= **12**

Imao

+5 if Scout applies



**Skeleton:** "What's everyone think, should I try to commune with whatever echoes remain of the fallen to find out what happened here, or just get us some extra hands?"



**banana (GM):** What a frustratingly uninteresting ruin. Just hints, that something may have been or still be here.. but there's always death, isn't there?



**Kalira:** "I don't know. Is it going to cause some crazy horror show that we have to fight our way out of?"



**Xarvrax:** Xarvrax chuckles, "Our luck that'll happen either way."



**Skeleton:** "Not directly."



**banana (GM):** With half the Company sitting around pooped, you at least have time to look at the architecture. They had.. columns, basically, and structures made of large individual blocks of stone. There are surprisingly many fragments of glass, as if it was once common.



**Skeleton:** What's basically been stymieing us here has been too much ground to cover, right? This is a ruined city, after all, and there's like half a dozen of us.



**Travis Meacham:** "I wonder if they had some way to efficiently make a lot of glass ... look at all the glass around here."



**banana (GM):** Skeleton's basically right, yeah. So far you've worn yourselves out while still leaving many stones unturned.



**Skeleton:** Well, what the heck. It MIGHT be more efficient to simply ask which is the correct stone to turn up, but that won't help us if it DOES come down to a matter of collecting and consolidating lots and lots of loot. "All right, everyone, this might take a bit, but it's a bit you can use to just chill out pretty much-"

Skeleton sets up in one of the larger circles of salted earth, right in the center of the city. Ske shuffles around, drawing long grooves in the ground with one foot before sitting cross-legged in the middle of a mandala with similar style but entirely different specific configuration to the one that yawned out wide across the hilltop last night.



**Ghol, Going East:** Whatever. Ghol and Kon are heading outside of the city to hunt up some lunch. They'll bring some back if anyone wants...whatever game animal there is to find around here.

Hopefully the wizards will be done wizarding by the time they get back.



**Xarvrax:** Probably not.

You know how wizards are.



**Placidus:** Placidus is pretty hungry by now, and sweaty. Luckily he's not a wizard.



**Skeleton:** Ske leans back, then tilts sker hood back further, allowing a long plume of silver-grey mist to rise up into the air as though sker robe was one big chimney. Soon it's joined by similar wisps of power rising from the sleeves and em, and then from the grooves of the mandala, and then from around cracks in the pavement and shattered windows and piles of crumbled masonry farther and farther and farther away.



**banana (GM):** You've got a choice of Sickly Hare, Gull From The Beach and Rat that lives Under a Log.



**Skeleton:** Old bones, whether bleached by the sun or buried in the earth, start to quake and rattle...



**banana (GM):** The gulls are the most prevalent.



**Kalira:** "You got me excited at the prospect of wine and sticking it to the Elect. All that's here is dirt and rocks. Hopefully Kelly turns up something."



**Skeleton:** alright, so skeleton's using necromancy to raise a big ole day-long (maybe longer?) skeleton work crew

this takes: as long as banana says, requires: whatever materials banana says, and involves a skill check to determine overall efficacy

**28** here's int+necromancy

oh hell yes.



**Placidus:** well done





**banana (GM):** It's more than Skeleton expected, bonewise.


Bigger, hardier..


The skeletons that rise to serve you clothe themselves in dirt and rock fragments, but Xarvrax proves prescient. Scattered throughout the city, most readily available to your power because even in death their own waits, are the bones of multiple dragons.





 **Skeleton:** "...wwwooooah."


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax scowls.


 **Placidus:** "Ah."


 **banana (GM):** They're not real wyrms, just.. partial shapes, with flowing earth running where their wings should be, scrabbling at the ground to unearth more bones.


 **Placidus:** "Well."


 **Skeleton:** "Gosh, *gosh*. I didn't expect that at all, I swear."


 **banana (GM):** They have some definite aim in mind, though.


 **Placidus:** "There we are, then."  
Placidus is slumped against a broken pillar, sweatily.


 **Skeleton:** "I mean, maybe some of the big lizards in those murals...? Look at how the dust is holding to where they ought to have wings, though, I didn't expect that."


 **banana (GM):** The several and various dead dragons- you're pretty sure each is made up of the parts of more than one wyrm - move under Skeleton's original vague direction, to specific parts of the city, where they stomp and claw at the ground, ripping it up with zombie strength. Whatever they're looking for they haven't found yet, and you can feel a dim echo of dead frustration.


 **Skeleton:** "Well, it's only a matter of time before we find something or, um, satisfy ourselves that we couldn't expect to find anything, I suppose." Skeleton strolls about, watching one servant work and then another.


 **Kalira:** "Seems like you already found something."


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax growls at Skeleton, "I hope you realize that if we make it to Drakkenhall, you will be waiting far away from The Five."


 **banana (GM):** Dirt curtains muffle some of the noise, but they certainly make a great clatter as they blunder about, dragon sized if not correctly shaped, converging one then another of the darkened circles.


 **Kalira:** vraknaar would be mad as hell right now


 **Travis Meacham:** "Yeah, seriously. Look at all these dragons, or at any rate dragonkin, that were here."  
"I wonder if they died in the attack or the defense?"


 **Placidus:** "I bet Vraknaar wouldn't like this."


 **banana (GM):** None of them have wing bones at all...


 **Skeleton:** "What. What? They're just skeletons!" Of course, there's a definite sense that they've agendas, haven't they, what with the unusual purpose with which they're digging?


 **Xarvrax:** "If not for the fact that I know you didn't know about it, you would be a pile of dust by now."


 **Placidus:** "So it was taxonomy."


 **banana (GM):** Yeah, Skeleton's secretly certain that this is not ENTIRELY of sker direction.


 **Placidus:** "The dragons had their wings taken."


 **Kalira:** "Could they just be big snakes?"


 **Skeleton:** "No, they're definitely - they want to have wings. I think Placidus is right."


 **Placidus:** "Look at the dust! Clearly their *souls* have wings."


 **Kalira:** "Or was something trying to make dragons into snakes, because they couldn't find snakes big enough to please their weird, fucked up god?"


 **Skeleton:** "Maybe this place got so completely destroyed because it was... mutilating dragons, somehow. I can't imagine how it got away with it for long enough to make murals about it."


 **Xarvrax:** "The Five will erase you if you set foot in their presence, I would avoid that."  
Xarvrax takes another look around at the salted ground, "Now I


 **banana (GM):** Some smaller bones, humanoid bones, have now been stirred from the ground by the force of digging- but they aren't catching on Skeleton's spell. Two-legged people lived here for sure, if the murals weren't enough proof.


 **Skeleton:** To what extent does Skeleton feel that ske could communicate with the dragon skeletons, or at least commune with them? How self-willed are they compared to sker?

 **Kalira:** "I'm sure dragons aren't... well, *all* dragons aren't idiots, and can recognize an ally when they see one."


 **Xarvrax:** "I'm fairly certain I know what destroyed this now."


 **Skeleton:** "Yeah, hey, I've got nothing against the Five!"


 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol and Kon return with a couple skin, gutted game animals of some kind, see what's going on, and immediately retreat to a safe distance so there's no weird...food interactions.  
\*skinned


 **banana (GM):** Skeleton's summons are so long-dead that they can't really communicate. You've called the shreds of souls back across a gulf of Ages, and they're mostly following some sort of rote.. what they'd be doing if they were, themselves, self-willed ghosts, given shape by Skeleton's intent.


 **Kalira:** "Well, what destroyed it then? Angry dragons? Wouldn't it be burned, then?"


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax shakes his head, "It doesn't really matter. The Five don't really hate necromancy, until it's used to desecrate our kind."


 **Skeleton:** Hmm, interesting. The necromancer will definitely watch for glimmers of deeper awareness if and when something is uncovered, or for whether the souls-of-souls-of-souls seem more inclined to cling to this world or wriggle free of it as time progresses.


 **banana (GM):** Hmm. Obvious in retrospect, but they're digging up the rotunda.  
That was one of the most intact foundations, so you didn't think there'd be anything UNDER it.. anything like that would have had to predate the city's destruction.


 **Skeleton:** "They're not being desecrated!! This is practically their idea."


 **Kalira:** "Someone probably desecrated these dragons while they were alive. We're helping them fix whatever was done to them. Probably."


 **Skeleton:** "Think of it as, um, they're trying to finish unfinished business."


 **Travis Meacham:** oh


 **Skeleton:** "I mean okay it's broadly going to be excavation-related business but you don't see 'em complaining, do you?"


 **Travis Meacham:** so that reminds me of something that i dont think weve discussed  
are ghosts real in 11th age  
as in the ovluntarily-undead spirits/souls of the departed with Unfinished Agendas


 **Skeleton:** i think they exist in legend but are in practice unheard of


 **banana (GM):** Ghosts are real, and the Wizard King lays claim to their allegiance.


 **Skeleton:** which MIGHT be because the OEK snaps them all up instantly


 **banana (GM):** The general advice is  
If you die, do NOT come back as a ghost


 **Skeleton:** ah okay


 **banana (GM):** or you're going to end up in servitude forever


 **Ghol, Going East:** Didn't we just run into a consequence of ghosts in San Meat?  
That is to say, ghost terrorism?


 **banana (GM):** yep, bound ones


 **Travis Meacham:** well i knew those were bound dead souls  
but i thought they had been like, forcibly snatched at the moment of death


 **Skeleton:** yeah i think thet hing is that natural hauntings can happen, but are increasingly rare, for the same reason that like veins of underground gold are increasingly rare


 **banana (GM):** Well, look at what's being uncovered. You're all feeling much more energetic now, what with the undead labour force hurling slabs of stone out of the way. Maybe there was originally a secret passage leading down here, maybe sealed by the ruin of the city, or on purpose by its inhabitants, but either way.. a bona fide Crypt. Those are genuine metal-clad spiral stairs proceeding into darkness, with a straight-up legit chill of the grave radiating out of the revealed borehole.

 **Ghol, Going East:** Anyway, to Kalira and any wizards not participating in this...business: "We got lunch back by the ship." Ghol stares dubiously at the necroshow. "Are we camping here tonight?"

 **Skeleton:** "Ooh. Ooooh."

 **Ghol, Going East:** "If so I'll find a suitable bit of ruin and get a fire pit going."

 **Travis Meacham:** "Tonight? We need to investigate this crypt!" Travis is hyped because, really, how often do you see this?

 **Kalira:** Kalira hefts her sword. "Lunch can wait. We've got work to do." She looks excited. Maybe there will be ruins to wreck up after all.



**Travis Meacham:** It's like a relic of at LEAST two ages back, maybe more.



**banana (GM):** It's also out of the coming rain.



**Xarvrax:** Xarvrax nods sharply, "We're going now. I want to know what they were used for."



**banana (GM):** The assorted bone dragons have started to come to pieces. Chunks of them are separating, each heading toward one of the widely-spaced dark ovals on the earth.



**Placidus:** "Oh, so now everybody's excited. Where was this when we were cataloguing frescoes?"



**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol rolls his eyes and walks back to where the boat and the rest of their group is waiting. "Kon, keep an eye on them. Help them dig a fire pit. Make sure the elves don't set the boat on fire. The wizards want to go poking around a *crypt*."



**Placidus:** Placidus huffs to his feet. "It's not a party until you've got several dead maimed dragons on hand, it seems."



**Kon:** Kon shakes his head solemnly at this foolishness.

**Person:** "May I help you make camp, warg Kon?"



**Skeleton:** "Definitely, yes. Let me see here, though -" Once the excavation's complete, unless the dragons seem to then be trying to squeeze down into the hole they've uncovered, Skeleton stretches sker arms out and... lets them go. Do they slip away into the ether? Slink off to just keep being weird bone dragons to slay or be slain by future adventurers? Salute Skeleton grimly?



**Kon:** Then he barks in the affirmative to Person, and sets to work.



**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol, meanwhile, rejoins the rest of the group. He'll take a moment to appraise his new weapon, actually.

Might be relevant.

Considering: *crypt*.



**Placidus:** "Oh, you found a new axe."



**banana (GM):** They go, immediately- only tenuously present despite whatever strong connection of emotion bound them to this place. The bone segments which were yearning toward their presumable gravesites clatter to the earth, and the dirt that's holding them together falls in mounds.

Hey, what if it's magic? Ghol would just be accumulating the things like some sort of.. destined hero, obviously.



**Ghol, Going East:** "Hm? Yeah. From the Shepherds' camp." He turns it over in his hands. "Not sure what the deal with it is. Yet."

He'll use it instead of the knife, this time out. See what's what.



**Xarvrax:** "I need to get some kind of random weapon of some sort."



**Placidus:** "A bag of dice?"



**Skeleton:** Skeleton waves shyly at dragon bones as they collapse, then turns, rubbing sker gloved hands, towards the crypt.



**Travis Meacham:** "Weaponized top?"





**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol resists a "Diabolist has one of those" joke.



**Placidus:** "The important thing here is, moonlight shone down this hole once."



**Skeleton:** "Would it mess you up if it hadn't, down there?"

"Ooh, also. Razor sharp playing cards."



**Placidus:** "A giant roulette wheel balanced for throwing with deadly accuracy."



**Xarvrax:** Xarvrax yawns, "Wow, you all are so unoriginal, going for the obvious choices."



**Kalira:** "A big rock. It's as subtle as you are!"



**Skeleton:** "Just a regular sword but it's got 'chaos' written on it, but only some of the letters are capitals."



**banana (GM):** The hole is more like a spiral - a torn- open pit that goes partway around a circle, with steps descending.

They look slippery with frost..

There's no sign that the tunnels might lead to other parts of the city, though. Your earlier search wasn't incompetent, and this might really be all there is left.



**Placidus:** Maybe we secretly are incompetent.



**Xarvrax:** Little bit.



**Travis Meacham:** let's Climb In

Jump In.



**banana (GM):** Who's brave enough, then.

Or, in one case, mad.



**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol isn't quite sure who wants to take the lead here, but he'll step up if necessary.



**banana (GM):** \*two cases



**Skeleton:** Skeleton's going in, just not first. Ske'll shelter behind Kalira.



**Kalira:** Kalira, definitely.

Let's do this.



**Xarvrax:** Xarvrax hurls himself down the stairs, as fast as possible.



**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol's fine with bringing up the rear, then.



**banana (GM):** Is it too angered a rush to miss more frescoes? These ones are more intact, but it's total darkness down there, so you'll need to bring light to make out more than the tops of them.



**Kalira:** Kalira's definitely not going to do what Xarvrax did. She's brave and eager enough to take the lead, but not stupidly.



**Travis Meacham:** Travis definitely can conjure wizardlight. He DID go to school, you know. Though you don't know where.



	<b>Skeleton:</b> It seems like Skeleton's being-a-skeleton kit won't be complete until ske's got bonafide darkness-trivializing lichsight, but for the moment ske's happy to have torches, Light cantrips, etc.
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Well, it's once Travis reaches enough depth - these stairs go round several turns, at least, spiralling inwards - that you can make out the mural which follows them along the wall.
	<b>Placidus:</b> Placidus doesn't have a light, but he doesn't seem bothered at all by the prospect of going into this terrible dragon-tomb.
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Your boots and so on make ringing noise on the metal stair and your breath is coming out in frozen gusts. All this is illuminated, along with scenes of more winemaking and priests. In fact, they're winemaking priests.
	<b>Travis Meacham:</b> "It's REALLY cold in here."
	<b>Placidus:</b> "It is, a bit."
	<b>banana (GM):</b> The grey-robed figures are, themselves, descending into darkness - a pictorial representation of the stairs. They stop at a curtain, and march aside, donning new ceremonial garments.  Each of them is carrying a bottle.
	<b>Placidus:</b> Placidus is glad to see the winemaking murals. No religious order worth its - aheh - salt doesn't have a storied tradition of making and then drinking booze.
	<b>Skeleton:</b> "That's true." Down here, in the crypt, now that everyone present knows sker terrible secret anyway, Skeleton's got no compunction against removing sker gloves and putting down both hoods. It's nice to be able to see what's to the left or right without rotating sker entire upper body.
	<b>banana (GM):</b> In their new garb, the priests continue downwards, into a dark room, and hold out their bottles toward a great light - then each one, in the next fresco, is also glowing, a rich vivid purple.
	<b>Xarvrax:</b> Xarvrax is tearing down the stairs, the flames coming out of his mouth keeping him warm and also lighting his way.
	<b>Travis Meacham:</b> i hadnt thought about it but yeah, people watching us must think skeleton has a really serious neck ailment
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Slightly before the others, Xarvrax comes to a pause in the stairs. The metal gives out for a stone landing - you're buried well underground now, and the temperature's stopped dropping at "too cold". There are some sort of hooks or rings set into the ceiling above this landing. The stairs continue past it, and there's also a side passage, 'outward' from spiral, just as dark.
	<b>Skeleton:</b> I mean, the hood can twist a bit, but it's still annoying.
	<b>Travis Meacham:</b> what ... SORT of hooks?
	<b>Skeleton:</b> Maybe for nice warm coats?
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Little circles or ringlets.  You could run a bar between them more easily than a coat.
	<b>Skeleton:</b> "Let's see what's down this way first?"  Skeleton's pointing to the side passage. Gotta fill out the map!
	<b>Xarvrax:</b> Xarvrax turns to look down the side path, breathing some fire down it to light it up.



**Travis Meacham:** Agreed 100%



**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol rolls his eyes.



**banana (GM):** Looks like it's just a small room in there.. there's a rack of armour against the wall, and some totally rotted cloth around it. Like, the threads and buttons of vestments that are themselves entirely gone.

\*of fabrics

The armoured underlays remain, though- metal rings and boiled or otherwise hardened leather, three sets.



**Skeleton:** Any other murals or inscriptions or whatever?



**banana (GM):** Yes, actually.



**Placidus:** Is it good armor?



**banana (GM):** There's a depiction, on the walls of this room, of four priests going down the stairs with bottles again. Three of them wear grey robes and one blue. Then a picture which is just solid white - and then three priests in grey coming up the stairs with glowing bottles.



**Travis Meacham:** Well it doesn't have any padding. So it can't be that comfy.



**banana (GM):** Could be.. in fact, if it's survived this long, it could be enchanted.



**Travis Meacham:** Which is, as far as Travis can tell, the only reason you might wear armor.



**Kalira:** Kalira could use some good armor, but she isn't going to just put on some random armor she found in a dead god's tomb. What if it's cursed? Or worse, dedicated to the gods of the Elect?



**Skeleton:** "So... it looks like the deal is, they turn people into wine. Or sacrifice people to enchant the wine or similar."



**Travis Meacham:** its probably dedicated to dragons



**banana (GM):** Frankly, this is the exact kind of tomb you'd expect to be cursed in.



**Skeleton:** Hell, Skeleton's cursed already.

"Anyone want to try it on?" If only we had some id scrolls...



**Kalira:** can i roll wis + shadow dogma to see if this is related to them somehow



**Placidus:** "Is it wrong to say that this makes me want to try the wine a little more?"



**Kalira:** rolling 1d20+7 here goes.

(17)+7

= 24



**Placidus:** "Because if so, I won't say it."



**Skeleton:** "I mean, it probably gives you awesome powers or something, if they go to that much

trouble."



**Xarvrax:** "Or kills you."



**Skeleton:** **30** an int+necromancy check (subtract 4 to turn it into a wis check) to similarly glean mystic information about the armor

man i am on balefire today



**banana (GM):** Kalira extends her senses or at least her ability to think rationally...



**Skeleton:** "If it kills you it's surely to allow you to be distilled into even MORE powerful wine, which then distills someone into even MORE-"



**banana (GM):** Hmm. You know, there's nothing holy about this place, in the sense of being sacred to a God of Light. You don't think there ever was. It reminds Kalira a little more of the way a Dark God is worshipped, where you omit much of the symbology because the sheer presence of the God renders it unnecessary.

Both she and Skeleton can confirm that the armour is *not* cursed. Any magic that lingers on it is benign to the wearer, so that's nice.

Xarvrax finds himself shivering. Dragons are creatures of heat, and this is right on the edge of tolerable. It makes him want to sit down and rest, which is the same impulse that gets travellers killed in snowstorms, so don't.



**Travis Meacham:** xarvrax should ptu on the armor  
maybe its magically warm ing



**Kalira:** "Here goes nothing."



**Skeleton:** On all three of them? "Yeah, this stuff definitely doesn't stick to you and make you easier to stab or anything. ...who's got dibs?"



**Kalira:** i assume it's heavy armor



**Skeleton:** oh yeah, is it light or heavy  
i assumed light since it went under robes



**banana (GM):** Yeah, it's light armour.



**Kalira:** oh. damn.



**banana (GM):** It's quite protective-looking, but doesn't actually cover that much of the body.



**Kalira:** She reaches out and taps it. "Actually, I don't know. There's not really enough here to match my armor, even if it is enchanted."



**Xarvrax:** Xarvrax grabs a set and starts hurling it on.



**banana (GM):** Impatience overcomes the others' caution, and he's got the stuff over his head and arms in moments.

..you feel weird.

Numb. It's not really pleasant.

No warmer than before, either, and sort of.. patchily sensationless.

**Skeleton:** "Well?"



**Xarvrax:** Xarvrax shudders, and off it goes again.

"It may not be cursed, but it sure as hell is weird, and I'm not wearing it."



**Skeleton:** "Well, lemme see." Skeleton doffs sker outer, grey-green robe and gets the armor on.



**banana (GM):** Even the touch of it on your armscales while you slide it off sucks. You can't *feel* it, it's like wearing something that cuts off circulation.

Skeleton has no such sensation, however.

Just a sort of vague feeling of protectedness, such as one might expect from magic armour.



**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol, grumbling, has pulled on his own shirt. Cold down here.



**Skeleton:** How's sker AC looking? "Seems fine to me. But, I mean, it probably would."



**banana (GM):** Improved! It's +1 armour, along with whatever other effect there might be. Thanks, ancient winemakers.



**Skeleton:** Hell yeah.

"Well, here's hoping this doesn't make me extra vulnerable to some monster or trap that lives down here." There were THREE of these, right?

While the mural specifically showed four people heading down, then three returning?



**banana (GM):** That's right.

There's one good thing about this crypt, it's oddly low on ancient guardians awakened and seeking vengeance. Apart from being difficult to FIND, you haven't run into any defenses at all.



**Placidus:** Are any of them gnome-sized?

The suits of armor, I mean.



**banana (GM):** The one Skeleton put on actually changed size, shrinking in width to fit sker skinny frame.



**Placidus:** Placidus will try one on before they head out, then.



**banana (GM):** Hey, it does the same thing! How thoughtful.



**Placidus:** "This feels weird, but not in a bad way, exactly."

"I've become... comfortably numb."



**Travis Meacham:** Travis doesn't react, because that is'nt a reference in this world.



**banana (GM):** Oh, Placidus doesn't have the numb sensation either.

That was literally just Xarvrax.

I'm sure it doesn't mean anything in particular.



**Placidus:** Oh, neat.


"It's probably just how cold it is, though. I'm fine now."





**Skeleton:** "I suppose these things must've... aided in harming dragons somehow."




**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol eyes the armor dubiously. He'll pass.

 **Skeleton:** Experimentally, Skeleton pokes Xarvrax.

 **Placidus:** "Well, Xarvrax doesn't have wings in the first place."

 **banana (GM):** Xarvrax, you feel as if someone's just poked you.  
It was Skeleton.


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax pokes skeleton right in the skull, "Don't poke me."

 **banana (GM):** Please make a saving throw.

 **Xarvrax:** rolling d20


()


= **1**


 **Skeleton:** Which one of us?


 **Xarvrax:** Well.


 **Kalira:** good!!!


 **Skeleton:** also, did xarvrax have to save upon being poked, or only upon poking?


 **banana (GM):** Xarvrax tries to poke back... and a feeling of freezing cold deflects his normally steady aim!  
(upon poking)


 **Placidus:** "Hah!"


 **Skeleton:** "Woah!"  
"Someone else try. Actually, what the hell-" Skeleton jabs a phalange at Placidus's shoulder.


 **Ghol, Going East:** ...Is there any more of this armor? One more suit?


 **Kalira:** dragon-warding armor


 **Placidus:** Does anything inhibit Skeleton's poking?

 **Ghol, Going East:** Ghol has no interest in wearing it, at least not right now, but they should certainly take it with them.


 **Xarvrax:** Xarvrax growls, "I wouldn't trust it too much, because I will find away around it if I have to,"


 **banana (GM):** There are three sets total.  
And yeah, it's not stopping the playful jabs of anyone but a dragon.


 **Ghol, Going East:** "We should take the other set with us, too. Just in case we run into dragons we don't like as much as Xarvrax."


 **Placidus:** "It seems these implements that aided in the ritual torture of your ancestors will stop you mildly annoying us."





**banana (GM):** You're not sure how strong the effect is, but it definitely could be useful if you were regularly attacked by wyrms.


**Placidus:** "It doesn't sound very nice when I put it like that."


**Travis Meacham:** "Heck, sounds good."


**Skeleton:** "Well, if I had to choose one thing in specific to be slightly safer from it'd almost certainly be dragons."


**banana (GM):** ..I think for most people it'd be skeletons.


**Ghol, Going East:** That evil, undead ship has sailed.


**Placidus:** "If only cats were a kind of dragon."


**Skeleton:** Skeletons are more afraid of you than you are of them.


**Xarvrax:** Xarvrax growls, "Did I mention that I will find a way to destroy that if need be?"


**banana (GM):** You've probably got as much entertainment as you can out of the robing room. What if it's even colder below, though...


**Placidus:** Well, let's find out.


**banana (GM):** It's even colder. The chill washes over you as you take a step off the landing and onto the next silvery spiral of stairs.  
  
You don't think you could remain down here safely for a long time.


**Ghol, Going East:** "Skeletons are more afraid of you than you are of them" is probably, specifically, true of the Movement.  
  
Not sure about its applicability elsewhere.


**banana (GM):** The stairs are turning inward, though, coming to some sort of destination..


**Kalira:** Kalira's clothes are probably warmer than most, but still. Brrr.


**banana (GM):** Hey, it's a sudden terminus, and two doors, and, in fact, a skeleton.

**Skeleton:** It's very scary to be a skeleton. Everywhere you look, your kin are trapped in suffocating prisons of living flesh. It's neverending body horror!

**Ghol, Going East:** Ghol is bouncing around, keeping his blood pumping and heart rate up.

**banana (GM):** And is that actual *writing* rather than a fresco chiseled into the rock above each silvery arch?

**Skeleton:** Skeleton only notices the cold in an abstract, detached way, but is beginning to worry about brittleness. Is it an animate skeleton or anything, and what's the writing say.

**banana (GM):** No, just an ordinary centuries dead person, lying with one bone arm outstretched half into a doorway, like they'd been trying to get in.  
  
The actual doors have long since rotted away. There aren't many insects that can stand the cold down here, but over the years, they manage.  
  
\*since

Does anyone speak Archaic, though?

(Or: read)



**Travis Meacham:** i don't think so.



**Placidus:** What is typically written in Archaic?



**Kalira:** paging dammitwho



**Ghol, Going East:** Old shit.



**Placidus:** heh heh. page



**banana (GM):** Oh, the single word inscribed above each door is in your own language, that of Marrow and the Empire, but it's just obsolete usages.



**Placidus:** oh, would it be something that you might find in old timey theatre



**Skeleton:** Skeleton doesn't speak Archaic, unless it turns out ske does and didn't realize.



**banana (GM):** Actually very likely.



**Placidus:** on the order of knowing what 'anon' meant in elizabethan england  
hooray



**Skeleton:** Are dark spells often written in it?



**Placidus:** should I roll int+theatre here



**banana (GM):** yep  
Divers alarums, and so on.



**Ghol, Going East:** Dork spells.



**Placidus:** **11** let's see how many of his lines placidus remembers  
not many  
he never was very good at acting



**banana (GM):** Not enough! You can't read the one that's in an obtuse and ancient dialect.  
The other says: WINE



**Xarvrax:** rolling d20

(10)

= 10



















**Skeleton:** **24** here's an untrained int check if it helps  
i am freaking CRUSHING it today



**Travis Meacham:** on the off chance that you would learn it in an elite preparatory school, **26**

**Xarvrax:** add 9 to mine.

	<b>banana (GM):</b> You know what, the untrained one makes the most sense.
	<b>Placidus:</b> "Well, that one means wine. The other one, I bet, means something more ominous."
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Skeleton knows an old term for: GARBAGE
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> "Iron?"
	<b>Skeleton:</b> "...'garbage'...?"
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> Eh. Close.
	<b>Kalira:</b> "Garbage wine?"
	<b>banana (GM):</b> We've all been there.
	<b>Skeleton:</b> "I bet this actually means something like wine sacrifices, or, hmm, maybe whatever spooky byproducts come from the wine-making sacrifice ritual."
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Incidentally, the terminus here is made of stone, too. Only the spiral steps themselves are metal.
	<b>Skeleton:</b> "Like what's left over in a human body once everything that could possibly contribute to great wine has been sorcerously ripped away."
	<b>Xarvrax:</b> "Aren't we glad we dug up the bones of my kin for literally revolting armor and garbage wine?"
	<b>Skeleton:</b> "...a bit? This is nice armor."
	<b>Kalira:</b> "Hey, look on the bright side, Xarvrax. We may find something for you to avenge yourself on yet."
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Well, which do you prefer for vengeance, trash or drink?
	<b>Travis Meacham:</b> "I think, Xarvrax, that one door is for garbage and the other for wine. Not that they're both for garbage wine."
	<b>Kalira:</b> "Oh. Hm. Perhaps we should check garbage before we get to the good stuff."
	<b>Xarvrax:</b> "I don't really care, honestly. Just pick somewhere and hope we find something actually worthwhile."
	<b>Skeleton:</b> there are only two doors, right? which words go with which door?
	<b>Travis Meacham:</b> "We need to move quickly."
	<b>Placidus:</b> "I suspect garbage will lead us to dragon remains." "Or... some kind of remains."
	<b>Ghol, Going East:</b> We could split up. Might be a bad idea, though.
	<b>Kalira:</b> "At least it'll be quick and painless, said the executioner."
	<b>banana (GM):</b> Skeleton: You've lost track of north and south down here. Don't tell Ghol.



**Skeleton:** oh wait somehow i thought we'd unearthed the label "vengeance"

"I think we should try the 'wine' door first. That stuff's probably intrinsically powerful or valuable or something and we want to secure it if we need to leave."



**Kalira:** "I guess so. Garbage or corpses or whatever are less likely to break, and less likely to be missed if they're broken."



**Skeleton:** "I want to see them too, mind you. Could be necromantically potent."



**Kalira:** Kalira heads for the wine door. Let's go. It's cold down here.



**Skeleton:** Onward



**banana (GM):** It's just a short passage. There's actually a side grille, but you can see the main chamber at the same time... do you want the good news, or the news?



**Travis Meacham:** Let's take the good news first.



**banana (GM):** There are racks around the walls, and some aren't empty! Bottles upon bottles!

The other news is this isn't a tomb.

There are great pillars of metal by the far wall, with untarnished chains anchored to them. They lead to shackles so vast any of you could slip right through one.

The creature in the shackles won't be needing to, since it IS dead, but it looks like it was malnutrition that got it, mostly.

The reflected magelight from silver scales is blinding. You've, except for Xarvrax, never seen such a vast wyrm, let alone one with its wings removed and horrid ragged stumps.



**Skeleton:** Skeleton stares, both sker hands at sker mouth.



**banana (GM):** Flesh has rotted from the wyrm's skull, and scales have slid off. Its eye sockets stare accusingly upward at the end of arched neck-vertebrae. NOW Kalira can pick up the energies of divinity; this place is utterly desecrated.

Sacred to nothing and noone. You know, the Dark Gods wouldn't approve of this - it would set a bad precedent for the High Priest of Guest. You've answered one of the four great questions of dragonkind.

Also, there's a noise behind you from the path not taken. Looks like the ancient deadly guardians have finally awoken.



**Ghol, Going East:** "Ready your weapons," Ghol spits. "They're *civilized*."