

Episode Eight: Leif Makes a New Friend

(...sort of)

Dungeon Master: Xaan

Jerome: Lady

Mogan: Queen

Vae: Alex

Snow: Bean

Leif: Selah

Kareus: Kian

Content warning:

Xaan: Critically Chaotic is a rowdy dungeons and dragons podcast that consists of adult themes and humor. Content warnings for this episode can be found in the episode description, as well as a link to transcripts. Rest weary traveler, and enjoy.

Recap:

Bean: In the last episode, the Vox Anima went on quite the adventure all without leaving the city. After spending a day discovering new magical abilities, impersonating fellow teammates, and emotionally devastating lonely men, the Vox is at last able to make proper plans for the next adventure. They're also a full team of six again, with Mogan finally coming back to his new friends. Reunited, the teammates plan towards the Barrow Downs, to investigate strange temples and find some artifacts.

[theme song]

Xaan: So you all get some sleep. You get some nice rest. And then morning comes. And in fact, the, so dawn, dawn rises, sunlight filters through the window, and I dunno if Jerome would be woken up by this because he's on the roof, but at least the rest of you are woken up by the sound of pecking against glass and you see that there is a pigeon that is just outside the window, insistently pecking on the-the window.

Vae: Somebody who's quick, could they try and grab it, maybe? I don't trust birds.

Leif: Should we even open the window? I don't know if we should let that thing in.

Vae: I mean we kind of need to let Jerome in anyways.

Leif: [grunts] Maybe he can deal with the pigeon. He's already outside.

[Bean and Alex laugh]

Vae: Very true, very true, good-good idea.

[Leif giggles]

Lady: You hear a sneeze and see a shower of sparkles come from the roof.

Vae: That's not going to be good when he's mid-sneak. I think shitting sparkles really gives away your position.

[all snicker]

Kian: Can I roll a nature check to see like, if it's like an actual [snickers] pigeon?

Xaan: Yeah. Make sure it's not like a transformed druid, or something.

Kian: Yeah.

Alex: Also, I would've probably woken up two hours before everybody else? I probably would've slept in the middle four hours. When did it show up around? Like really recently, or..?

Xaan: Uh, yeah, it-it showed up pretty recently, like very close to dawn. It basically like showed up and started pecking, so. Everyone kind of woke up when it came.

Kian: I got a nat twenty. [giggles]

Xaan: You're able to know that this is indeed just a regular pigeon, there's nothing transformative or magical about this pigeon. And you're so- you're so good that you notice the two strange things in fact, you notice that there is a little scroll tied to one of it's feet and then to it's other feet- feet? To it's other foot, there is a tiny bag tied to it.

Kian: Kareus approaches the window and he says,

Kareus: This looks like a messenger bird, I don't think it's a... anything other than a bird.

Snow: Shall we grab the message then?

Kareus: Alright.

Kian: And Kareus opens the window to let the bird in.

Xaan: The bird doesn't really go into the room, it just kind of like hops forward a little bit on the windowsill.

Kian: Kareus kind of says,

Kareus: Hello.

Kian: And kind of lets the bird- I don't know, do birds sniff hands? [cackles] I only know cat language.

[Selah laughs]

Alex: You can have it perch on your finger, I guess.

Kian: Yeah, and I try and see the message.

Xaan: Yeah, so when you go to, when you go to the-it's leg to take off the message it doesn't freak out or anything. It's-it's trained for this, it understands

what happening. Would the letter be read aloud or would just Kareus be reading it?

Kian: I'd probably read it silently first.

Xaan: So, the scroll- so it's just like a really tiny scroll, and it reads, 'leave us be, and we will leave you be.' And then there is a symbol of a bird in flight stamped at the bottom of the scroll.

Kareus: Ah, so it is a present from our friend Oriole.

Kian: And I kind of pass it to Leif and also pick up the pouch to examine it.

Xaan: It has a- it's basically just like a little pouch of bird seed.

Kian: Oh, I-I immediately,

Bean: [overlapping] So cute!

Kian: Give the bird seed to the pigeon. [giggles]

Xaan: The pigeon eagerly eats up the bird seed.

Lady: Can Jerome hop into the room now?

Xaan: Sure.

Lady: Okay. So, he swings through the open window and is like,

Jerome: Ey, thanks for opening the window! Oh- what-what's happening here?

[Xaan imitates a pigeon perfectly]

Jerome: Aw, there's a bird! Hey, how's it going bird?

Kareus: It's just a messenger bird from uh, Oreo. [chuckles]

Jerome: Oh, Oreo. You work for Oreo, huh? How's that? How's-how's the pay?

[Pigeon noises]

Xaan: It-it finishes up, it finishes up the bird seed and like kind of starts to leave, now that it's message has been delivered.

Jerome: Alright. Have a good one, palie.

Vae: We really aren't going out of our way to interfere in their business? It's truly because they like, attacked us. I had sort of a, an inkling that maybe these lost artifacts that we're going to go looking for, maybe they're associated with this- with Oriole's group? So I'd be prepared for that outcome.

Snow: Well if it's a fight they want, it's a fight they'll get.

Jerome: So uh, do we need to do any sort of preparing or anything? I probably need some stuff. Frickin' sparkle crap.

Vae: We can go together, I can help you out with that. I have to get some stuff from the Outpost anyways.

Xaan: Okay, so we're going to run through some level up stuff before y'all go on your shopping prior to doing quests. Lady, do you want to explain at all why something is about to happen with Jerome, or no?

Lady: Sure! So, Jerome has this thing that he does, where he does like a whole worship thing. He worships Tymora, the goddess of good fortune, and the way he does this is he kind of goes about trying to create good fortune for himself through rigging things and being actively like, turning good fortune in his favor. And also creating good fortune for others, through rigging things for them or gifting them stuff to make sure that they have like, good fortune. So, he's been worshipping her for like years and years and years, and through his deeds and various actions he has gained something of a, a boon, a chance. So, every time he levels up, he has to do a d20 roll to get a certain attribute determined by

random chance. The-the one-to-twenty, it's not like, twenty is really good, one is really bad, it's totally random. It's all about luck and having good fortune, so, yeah!

Xaan: Alright, so Jerome, may the luck ever be in your favor, roll a d20 for me.

Lady: What's an eight do?

Xaan: At any point that you would like you are allowed three yes or no questions with a god of your choosing.

[all overlapping]

Kian: Holy shit!

Selah: Wow!

Lady: Oooh!

Xaan: By the way, Lady does not know what any of the effects are.

Lady: I have no clue. This is all totally just random to me. But Xaan do you wanna say what one of the worst effects could be? [giggles]

Xaan: Yeah! One of the worst effects is you don't get to level up.

[Selah gasps]

[All overlapping]

Kian: Holy shit!!

Alex: Oh nooo!

Bean: What?!

Xaan: So-so basically, whenever you all level up I'm gonna actually have Lady roll like, before the end of the session rather than at the beginning in case something like that happens. And Jerome is just going to be a level behind.

Alex: This is so much fun to watch and not be a part of.

Bean: Yeah!

[Selah and Lady giggle]

Lady: Oh, don't worry,

[Alex snickers]

Lady: You guys will have things that you get to be a part of.

Alex: Love it.

Selah: [through laughter] What?!

Alex: Love it!

Selah: [giggles] So scared. But so excited!

Xaan: But yeah, Lady-Lady suggested that and I was just like, 'holy shit, I love this.'

[all laugh]

Bean: It's so cool.

Xaan: A lesser version of Wild Magic, I love it.

Alex: Literally.

Bean: [overlapping] Yeah!

[Selah giggles]

Lady: Well damn. Familiar time.

Xaan: Yes. What familiar would like to be born first?

Kian: Selah, you've been volunteered as [giggles] as tribute.

Selah: Okay, then! Then I will get my-my baby first.

Xaan: Would you like to describe your familiar?

Selah: My familiar is a pseudodragon, she is about the size of a cat. A house cat. She is yellow and green, her-her patterns and her scales remind you of flower petals. Yeah! And she's just very, very pastel colored, very dainty.

Xaan: What's, what's her name again?

Selah: Petal. [giggles]

Xaan: So, Alex, would you also like to describe yours?

Alex: My familiar's an imp. It looks like mothman, but in the form of a deathhead moth. It has a like really peaceful look in its face, it's just sort of like, comforting? But then also sometimes it looks over at Leif's familiar and it has this like, look of mischief.

[Selah laughs]

Alex: Just like, 'I'm gonna fuck around with this thing.'

Selah: Oh God!

Alex: And just looks like, a chaotic look that's like the impish part, but otherwise he's really just like snuggly and just like, likes to chill on your shoulder and just exist and vibe and it's great.

Lady: Awww!

Bean: [overlapping] I love your familiar so much.

Xaan: And what's his name?

Alex: Elendil which in elvish means star friend, but everyone just calls it Ele.

Xaan: Would you just kind of like, both create yours at the same time, just side by side kind of a thing?

Alex: Yeah.

Selah: Sure.

Xaan: Alright, so, you both create your familiars, you both cast find familiar, and each one is created a bit differently due to your patrons. So for Vae, Ele is created [spooky noises start] by like, even though like, there's no lamps, because this is a Medieval time, there's no candles. It's just like the sunlight streaming from outside. But the room inside gets like, visibly dimmed and especially around where the materials for the spell are scattered, it gets especially dark, almost like shadows are almost like a tangible kind of a substance. And you all can hear like, very quiet whispering, and it's like,

[whispers in the background]

Xaan: It's not something that actually has a sound in real life, but it like, it just reminds all of you of the sound of someone whispering about you behind your back, you know? That-that feeling is what you get from these sounds. And so that's happening with Vae's, and then alongside with Leif's, it's still dark in the room, but very bright fire appears in the center [fire sound effects] of the materials on Leif's side, and you all feel like, very, very warm and there's like this golden glow that is coming off if that can't quite fight the-the dimmed shadows of the room from the other spell. But it's still very hot, very warm, and kind of draws your eyes closer to it instead of necessarily what's happening in Vae's spell? And then just in a flash, both of the effects just disappear, and the light becomes normal again, the shadows are gone, the whispers are gone, the fire is gone.

[sound effects cease]

Xaan: And then in front of Vae is this absolutely adorable little moth-looking dude on two legs, looking very fluffy,

Selah: [overlapping] Aww!

Xaan: With these big eyes.

Bean: [sobbing] Awww!

Xaan: He kind of like, looks around at all of you and then sees Vae and quickly flaps its little moth wings,

[Bean sobs]

Xaan: And flutters up and lands on Vae's shoulder and just kind of like nestles down in there like,

Kian: Aww...

Xaan: Settling in like a little... I dunno. Shoulder bird.

Bean: I love him. [sobs]

[Alex laughs]

Selah: It's so cute!

Xaan: And then, for Leif, so the pseudo-dragon appears looking as beautiful and flowery as Selah described earlier. And it kind of blinks a little bit, looking like all innocent and kind of like, looking around curiously at everyone. And then it looks at Leif and it's like, innocent like kind of almost nervous expression immediately draws back and it almost like, scowls at Leif,

[Bean and Selah laugh]

Alex: [overlapping] Woah!

Xaan: And it kind of like, turns away and like kind of goes and hops up onto one of the beds and just nestles down there.

Bean: [laughs] Oh my god.

Alex: This dragon's got attitude, I love it! [laughs]

[Selah and Bean laugh]

Alex: Could I just quickly like talk about it like, changing like, what all it's different shapes look like?

Xaan: [overlapping] Oh, yeah yeah yeah.

Alex: Cool. So, I'll sort of like instruct it and like, and ask to see what it can do, I guess..? And it'll just start like, flipping through like, three different shapes, so like the first one is like a tiny little, it looks like a baby weasel?

[Bean squeals]

Kian: [giggles] Oh, cute!

Alex: It like, goes like, white or brown depending sometimes because it's sort of just like, rapid-fire going through it, for fun. And then it's like, it's like this tiny little, about the size of like a- like half a keyboard? It's really tiny. And then it can turn into a little silk moth? Super fluffy, big black reflective eyes, just sort of like crawls around on the floor. And then the last one, it turns into a really small little owl. And that also goes- it goes from like a little tiny like, toasted brown owl with big eyes and then it also goes into like a little bit of a larger owl, with like the snowy look, it's bigger, it like looks more like, regal, but still with the comforting look in his eyes. And he just likes to chill around, so if anyone wants to hang out with him, just grab him, and he'll-he'll exist. He'll vibe.

Kian: Kareus is definitely offering a hand to him. [giggles]

[Bean laughs]

Selah: We're just-we're just passing them around like newborn babies, like, 'oh my god, [unintelligible]

[Kian laughs]

Bean: Yeah.

[Selah giggles]

Bean: We're all just like, 'oh my god, oh my god, oh my god!!!'

Xaan: So you all were going to go and do shopping and whatnot before you continued with whatever you were going to do?

Alex: Yeah. Are there like ten different shaped tiny little vials I could buy?

Xaan: Sure! Yeah. Yeah, in the crafts section of the Sciaca Outpost. Was there anything else that anybody else wanted to get?

Selah: [British accent] I don't think so.

Xaan: So, what exactly were y'all going to do? I know that you were talking about doing one of the tasks on the Mercenary quest board, and then there was also the temple thing that Vae had heard about.

Bean: I have written down in my notes that we took the job for the lost artifacts in Barrow Downs, but we were talking about doing the temple first, like on our way.

Xaan: If you take a carriage it's like a one day trip. Well, it's a one day trip to the Barrow Downs, you're not exactly sure where the temple is.

Bean: I vote for finding the temple, personally.

Alex: [overlapping slightly] Me too. Very intrigued.

Xaan: So do y'all go to get the Sciaca Outpost carriage rental service?

Lady: The-the- we're gonna go to ye olde U-Haul.

Xaan: Also, I know that you're not ta- that you're doing the temple first, but I did make a little bit of an adjustment to the- the job for the, the job that you accepted. So I wanted to let you know what the slight adjustment was. So, originally it was that the artifacts were on the way to Wellspring, and then the carriage got attacked and so then you're supposed to find them and bring them back to Wellspring. But I changed it where it was going from Wellspring to Wingston and so when you find the artifacts you have to bring it to Wingston, so that'll be more of a travel for you all.

Jerome: Alright, everybody got their rations? Used the bathroom?

Snow: Yep.

[Selah giggles]

Vae: Yep.

Leif: Yeah, I'm good to go.

Xaan: So I know that while you all are traveling you were going to have a "hey, who's wanted" conversation after the whole... Leif fiasco?

[All laugh]

Bean: Yes.

Selah: Yeaah...

Vae: So, I noticed that in the tavern we weren't quite the well-oiled machine that I thought we would be.

[Leif laughs]

Kareus: That's a mild understatement.

Vae: So, perhaps we can think of, first of all, let's establish who might attract that sort of attention. Second, we can make a sort of like, plan, like a 'keep it on the down low' kind of plan. And like, who's good at keeping it on the downlow and who can just like, sit there and act as if everything is normal, and who can run interference if something does end up happening.

Snow: Yes, it would be nice to be included on that plan this time.

Jerome: I'll go first, hi I'm Jerome, I'm part of the 'probably wanted in other places' club.

Vae: Is there- is there a specific area that you're wanted in, that should also be noted. So we know when to be on our guard, and when to just to be like regular guard and when to be like, 'oh, time to be scared all the time!'

Jerome: See, uh... yes.

[Kian and Bean laugh]

Vae: Oh. Got it.

Jerome: I think-I think you're picking up the-the sort of track here. It should also be noted, I also go by different names in different areas. So if we go into a city and I start using a different name, that's a thing, most of the alternate names I use, I use like a J name, like... Joseph, or Jonathon or Jedediah. If I'm using a different name and you're having trouble remembering it you can just call me Jay. I'll respond to Jay. But Jerome is my real name, so uh, you know.

Alex: Can I do an insight check on that 'Jerome is my real name'?

[Bean laughs]

Xaan: Yeah.

Bean: Yeah I'm also gonna do that with guidance.

[Selah and Lady snicker]

Alex: I got a negative one, guys, let's do this.

Bean: I got a fourteen.

Alex: Two minus one, so one.

Bean: [snickers] Jesus.

[Xaan cackles and Alex chuckles]

Xaan: Vae, you believe it. You're like, 'yeah, Jerome, you wouldn't like to me. You're an eighty seven year old man named Jerome, you know this.'

[all laugh]

Alex: Why- why can't I read Jerome at all?!

Lady: He's unknowable!

Xaan: Okay, so, so Snow got fourteen, Vae got one... Yeah, Jerome is his real name, yeah.

Selah: Just as I thought! [giggles]

Jerome: I will say though, I am very good at distractions or at hiding, I'm uh, pretty good at both of those things. At drawing of attention or uh... maybe a little less attention, so I can- I can do either, if you need me to. Thieves kits, I'm really good with them. Hiding, really good at that. Making an ass of myself, oh you know that I got that fucking on lock.

Vae: Really? I didn't notice.

Snow: Couldn't tell.

Jerome: No, yeah! I'm very good at it. I know you wouldn't imagine that from a fellow like me, but uh. [sniff] It's what I do.

Vae: Lovely. Who's next?

Jerome: Since I was the one who went first, I feel like I get to choose who goes next, let's go with purple horny bastard! You got this.

[Selah cackles]

Kareus: I don't like that title.

Kian: I'm assuming Kareus is like, driving the carriage again with animal- the animal handling, and he just kind of looks around at all of you for a long moment before he says,

Kareus: I... have serious doubts it will ever come up, but I would prefer to avoid the Sciacca area if at all possible because I am not very popular.

Jerome: Is that why you ain't been going into the Sciacca Outpost things?

Kareus: No, I don't like...

Jerome: Not related, just like a..?

Kareus: Just... makes me uncomfortable.

Jerome: You know, that's fair, that's fair. On a level of like, one to ten of how fucked are we if we do, where would you say we are on that sorta scale?

Kareus: High?

Jerome: Alright, let's go with a solid seven- seven and a half, maybe an eight. So the-the-the purple one, you get to choose who's next.

Kareus: Leif, do you want to talk about any of this?

Leif: Uhh, yeah, um... Originally, it happened in Mugas, but it seems to be following me everywhere? So, I would suggest that we try to lay low as much as we can, unlike last time where we caused an unfortunate scene. Mogan, do you have anything that you wanna talk about?

Mogan: Uhh...

Leif: Is there anything we should be aware of?

Mogan: I guess... I'm not the most popular person, really anywhere?

Vae: Are you in trouble with the law that would have your name on a poster that says "Wanted" and get you arrested? In that sort of "they dislike you", or just the attitude?

Mogan: Individuals that aren't my biggest fan. I actually dealt with them just a few days ago?

Jerome: Oooh, you doing okay big fella?

Mogan: To be honest, no, but it is what it is.

Jerome: Would you like a hug?

Mogan: Absolutely not.

[all laugh]

Jerome: [overlapping] Okay, that's fair.

Vae: Do you want my familiar? They're very comforting.

Mogan: No.

Leif: I would offer mine but I don't think she came out right.

[All laugh]

Xaan: Your familiar like sharply turns her head towards you, and like, does like a puff of smoke through it's- through her nostrils. Like, she was like, she like wasn't seated next to you, she was like, seated like next to the person next to you, but then just like gets up and like, glares at you and just like, moves to like, the next seat behind you.

Alex: Can I like, try and get- can I try and get the dragon beside me? I'm very interested in this familiar.

Xaan: If you're- if you're seated behind like, in the seat behind Leif you can just like, hold out your hand and then she'd probably go over and just like, squeeze in- like- between you and Snow and just puff again.

[Bean laughs]

Alex: [overlapping] Sure, sure.

[Xaan giggles]

Bean: Like pat it a little bit.

Selah: Leif- Leif just kind of smiles at her sarcastically.

Alex: Can I use my firebolt cantrip to just sort of like, play with flames with the dragon, see if it's like, chilling with that?

Xaan: Yeah.

Alex: Dope. I'll do that.

Xaan: Yeah so, so Petal seems very interested in the flames and kind of like, bats at it much like a cat does to like a cat toy.

[Chorus of Aww's]

Bean: [overlapping] Oh my god... I love this so much.

Snow: Alright, well, I guess I'm potentially the only one here, I don't think anyone's out for me quite honestly. I don't believe I'm wanted anywhere or, anything like that, there's- ya know- I don't think there's any place I don't want to go. I will say though, Snow is technically a last name for me, but I don't like my first name. It is Ruan, so if you ever hear me use it, I only use it when I don't really want people to talk to me- it seems a little less friendly than Snow does, but yes. That's all for me, Vae would you like to go?

Vae: Yeah, sure. Same as Snow, I'm not wanted anywhere either. That's about it. That's why I'm good at looking out for you guys and that's why I sort of have been running interference most of the time already, because I'm the one that can sort of, keep an eye out and exist in the public without having to constantly look behind my back. And if there is any trouble, I also have my ability where I can change how I look- my appearance and everything, so.

Jerome: Oh yeah, I can do that too!

Leif: Experienced that firsthand.

Jerome: Alright, so we got two goody-two-shoes, and a whole buncha fellas.

[All laugh]

Xaan: Okay, so do you- does anybody want to do anything during the trip? It'll take you about like, half a day to travel.

Selah: Leif is probably trying to get his familiar to warm up to him somehow, like, like kinda trying to call him- call her over to him, or like trying to play with her a little bit, but it's not really working out.

[Several laugh]

Alex: I'll- I'll sit up front with Kareus and I'll just sort of like, be like "look at my really cool familiar" and like, play around I guess.

Kian: Kareus is cooing over this familiar 100%, absolutely in love. Like, the most enthusiastic you've seen him so far.

[Several laugh and awww]

Xaan: While, so while that's going, and while Leif is desperately trying to get-

[Bean giggles]

Xaan: -Petal to warm up to him, Petal like, doesn't, is just kinda like lying down on the seat and is not really reacting to- to Leif. If anything, she looks kind of annoyed, and then at one point, when Leif is like, holding his hand out trying to be like "Come on, come on just let me pet you," she like kinda stands up, and for a moment it seems like she's gonna like lean into the hand. But then she like, purposefully like, slinks under the hand, and walks like, right past Leif and plops herself in Kareus's lap.

[Several gasps, followed by several laughing]

Selah: [drawn out] Dang.

Lady: [overlapping] [laughs] Kareus must be in heaven.

Alex: [overlapping] [laughs] Backstabbing, wow.

Selah: How dare you?

Alex: [overlapping] The first betrayal of the campaign.

[all laugh]

Xaan: You all are travelling for like around the half- like the half day, it's maybe like, a couple hours after mid-noon, when- so you all are like travelling down the path and you notice the remnants of a wagon along the side of the road. And, y'all know that you are like, essentially around the area that they call Barrow Downs. And you still- you weren't really sure about like, this temple, you were

hoping to like, spot a glimpse of it of some kind or something like that, but you haven't really like seen anything besides the general path, and now you see this remnant of the wagon that is, kind of like half destroyed on the side of the road and kind of leading, like further into the plains towards like the very edge of the forest that you're kind of coming upon. You can see like trampled grass and broken branches and what-not leading off into the edge of that forest.

Jerome: Does this scream 'suspicious' to anybody else?

Kareus: Very.

Lady: Can I investigate the wagon?

Xaan: Yeah.

[Dice rolling sounds]

Lady: Ope, how's a four lookin'?

Xaan: It's a wagon, it's pretty fucked up. There's like, there's some wood that's like broken? One of the wheels is like snapped in half... There's like... wood.

Alex: Does it look like brute force, hit it from the side or something?

Xaan: Yeah, it definitely looks like it was attacked, not just like, the wheel kinda like fell and then the wagon was abandoned.

Alex: And does the tracks look like they're coming out of the forest, or in?

Xaan: It's kind of hard to tell, but, it kind of seems like the- based on the way that the grass is like, bent down, it seems to be going towards the forest.

Kian: Can I investigate the tracks to see if I can identify what made them?

Xaan: Yeah. And then if anybody else also wants to investigate the wagon again after Jerome's four, you can also do that.

Queen: Mogan'll investigate the wagon.

Kian: 16?

Xaan: You can't really like, make out any like, animal prints of any sort? You do see like, what kinda looks to be some maybe, like humanoid footprints, like boot prints of some kind, but it's kind of hard to tell.

Kareus: I don't think an animal did this.

Alex: I was gonna do investigation too, and I got 22.

Bean: I also- I gave her Guidance by the way.

Queen: And then I got a 17 for investigation.

Xaan: Okay so you're, you're kind of looking around, and you found that like, the wagon is like, like parts of it are kind of wet? Like it has like, almost kind of like, soggy, moldy-ish type wood from some kind of... water? But it's not like the entire thing is wet as though it had rained. It's just like, almost in like little weird patches, and then kind of like under the wagon and kind of like, half-buried in some of the grass, you all are able to also find a few documents. One of them is a letter, which if you open it up, it's a letter to a curator in the Wingston museum, kind of describing the artifacts-

Alex: [overlapping] Oh!

Xaan: -that are being donated. And then, another paper is kind of like, basically like a checklist for all of the artifacts that are- that were on the wagon and clearly are not now.

Alex: I'll keep those with me.

Bean: Can I detect Detect Evil and Good on the wagon to see if it was like, magically destroyed, or?

Xaan: Yeah. There's no consecration or desecration of any sort.

Snow: Did a few of us want to walk over to the forest and see if we can find anything else? I don't mind going as well.

Vae: Perhaps Kareus, you're good with tracks. Jerome, you can maybe like, hide under the cart, and Mogan you can guard it.

Jerome: I'm good at hiding. That's- that is true.

Snow: Well let's head over to the edge of the forest and see if we can find anything else, or possibly get attacked, or who knows what'll happen?

Bean: I'm gonna do a perception check first just to see if anyone's around...

[Dice rolling sounds]

Bean: That was... sad, alright, that's a nine. [laughs]

Xaan: You don't see anyone.

Selah: I got a seventeen!

Kian: Hey, thank god for Leif!

Selah: Woohoo!

Xaan: You don't see anyone around!

Bean: Okay-

Selah: [overlapping] Dang.

Bean: -so we're good guys.

Selah: Alright guys, I think we're alright.

Xaan: So you're very easily able to follow the tracks to like, find the drag marks, find like broken branches, or like, scuffs in like rocks, and you're just like "Yes. It's this way." So you all hide the- all hide the carriage, and then you head off, and Kareus is like, a boy scout, or an eagle scout leader, being like "Yes! This way!" He picks up some dirt, he sprinkles it, and he watches the way that the wind blows-

[Kian laughs, overlapping]

Xaan: - and is like, "Yes! This direction."

[Several laugh, overlapping]

Alex: 'Woah! Kareus you're so good at this, I'm in awe of your abilities!'

[Kian cackles]

Alex: I'll walk behind Kareus.

Vae: Jerome, perhaps you should go and start doing your sneaky thing in the forest? This is kind of your... prevue.

Jerome: Yes.

[Bean, Xaan, and Lady giggle]

Lady: So Jerome starts doing the stealthy thing.

Xaan: So, you all continue following Kareus and then eventually the forest kind of opens up into a small alcove within the forest and you find what looks to be the remnants of a forest village, probably like a tiny one that just isn't marked on a major map 'cause there's many like tiny, tiny villages that just aren't mentioned unless you get like, a very large, very detailed and expensive map. However, this one looks to be abandoned of some kind? Like the- you don't see anyone, you don't hear anything, there are like old crops that are like dead or like half dead and there are-there's some damage to the buildings as though nobody's lived there for a long time and so like, animals or weather has just kind of worn the

buildings down. But what you notice most, and probably immediately, is the fact that there is a temple at the center of the town.

Alex: [overlapping slightly] Heeey!

[Selah gasps]

Bean: Eyy!

Xaan: It is a- it is a pretty large structure that seems to have no visible entrance at the bottom but there are a lot of steps that are leading upwards into the, one of the top floors that has a building. Very similar to a ziggurat if you remember middle school history, if any of y'all learned about-

Kian: [overlapping] No.

Xaan: No? Okay! I'll send a picture of what a ziggurat is.

Bean: Can I do a religion check to see if I know like, what this is in relation to what we know? Oh, I... [vocalizing] [singsong] That's a five! [wheezes]

Xaan: It's a religious building.

Bean: [laughs] It might be religious, guys. It might just be like, a cafeteria, but like, it-it could be religious.

Alex: [laughs] Can I do a history check for this to see like,

Xaan: [overlapping] Yeah!

Alex: How old this building is? Ooh that's a natural twenty!

Bean: Oh my God!

Lady: Hell yeah!

Xaan: It's definitely pretty old. In fact, you're kind of like... you can assume that this is the temple that people were talking about. And it makes you like a little confused as to why people were like, 'oh yeah, like a temple kind of out of nowhere!' because this is definitely an old temple that's been around for a while. You can't quite tell, like, what the temple is for? Like what-what god it was used for because there's not really a whole lot of inscriptions on the outside but based on the design and what you have read in history books, you can assume that any hints as to like, what this temple is used for or what that would be is most likely located inside which would be intimately decorated than the outside.

Alex: Cool. Do we want to maybe look around the town first before we go in the inside just to see if there's anything going on?

Lady: Can- wait, before that, can I do an arcana check on the temple..?

Xaan: Yeah.

Lady: Alright, I-I got a seventeen.

Xaan: There's probably magical shit in there.

[Bean and Alex laugh]

Xaan: It's a- it's a religious- it's a religious temple, like...

Bean: On the-on the eighteen, where the- was Jerome able to tell if it was like, hidden by magic or anything?

Xaan: No, it doesn't, it doesn't seem to be like hidden by magic, this town just kind of seems to be like, a very secluded town in the middle of a forest away from a lot of natural paths.

Alex: I'll start walking forward then.

Xaan: You don't really see anyone, you're like, you're looking around, you're being very careful looking and you don't like notice anybody hiding away, you don't notice anybody like looking at you from the forest. It seems that you all are

just completely alone. So you all look around for a bit and there's not a whole lot of like... It's kind of hard to tell what was maybe like, intentional damage versus just like, weather damage? It's kind of hard to tell the difference between them? You kind of go around and you poke your head into the various houses. There's maybe like, seven or eight houses total in this area and in one of them that you all kind of stick your heads into, you actually find a skeleton that is on the floor just kind of like splayed out. It's still like, wearing some clothes that haven't completely like, faded away into nothingness. And it's just kind of, just kind of hanging out. It's like- it's like looking at the door, so you walk in and it's almost just like the skeleton is just on the floor staring at you like, 'hey! What's up?' That's kind of what everyone finds, as just kind of like a cursory overview. And then Leif with a nineteen you are able to find, it's kind of like half-hidden in some of the grass and whatnot, but you're able to find some like kind of broken arrow tips and like, old, like metal chips from weapons and so it's clear that like, some kind of fighting happened here? But it's kind of hard to tell what necessarily. Also, when you go over towards the-the skeleton that you all found, you are able to see like a, a dark stain kind of on the floor which has kind of faded a lot over however long it's been but you kind-of you can pretty much tell that it was like, blood. And so whoever this person was, whoever this skeleton belonged too probably like, bled out on this floor.

Selah: Then I'll-I'll let rest of the group know, I'll be like,

Leif: Well, at first I thought this was just abandoned but I think some sort of fight broke out here? I- it's hard to tell what exactly happened but... These people didn't exactly go peacefully.

Xaan: And then with Vae's twenty-three, while you all are kind of going around, looking into the houses, Vae you're able to note like, a few items that are just kind of like left around the houses that seem kind of innocuous but you see like, a lot of rope, you see a lot of finely put together threads, some hooks... You see, you end up like at one point finding like this barrel behind someone's house which, when you look into it it has a lot of like, gross grime that you can't- that most people can't quite identify, but thanks to your fucking twenty-three!

[all snicker]

Xaan: You're able to know that these are like decomposed organisms of some kind? And if you were to guess it's probably some kind of bug? Maybe like maggots or worms or something like that? Just like... Just like a bucket of them.

[Selah and Kian make disgusted sounds]

Kian: I regret coming to this temple! [laughs]

Vae: Well, shall we go into the temple now?

Kareus: I suppose...

Bean: Snow's like already walking up the steps towards it.

Xaan: So Snow, because you headed towards the temple first, you find this first. Kind of on the steps leading up towards that top floor to where the door is you come across a golden necklace that's kind of like on the steps as though it was just kind of dropped.

Bean: Okay...

Lady: I'm sure that's not suspicious.

Bean: Yeah, I'm-I'ma do an investigation check on that, for damn sure! [laughs] [dice rolling sounds] That does not seem suspicious at all... God, why am I rolling like absolute trash right now? [groans] Yeah, that's-that's just an eleven. [snorts]

Xaan: Alright. You can't quite make out a whole lot about it? It seems that- you can assume based on like, the fact that it's gold and looks pretty valuable that this is probably one of the missing artifacts..? At least you would assume so, it would be- it's kind of unlikely that this would just be another, like, old, very valuable treasure that just happened to be in the same place where a lot of artifacts went missing. And you're able to make out a, what appears to be like an embossed picture of a tidal wave on the necklace. Like the necklace is kind of like a-a coin amulet that has an emboss of a wave.

Snow: Hey, Vae, you-you have that list of the artifacts right? There might be one on this tem- the stairs. Come like compare?

Vae: Yeah, sure!

Alex: I will promptly head over.

Xaan: So you kind of look through and indeed on one of the lines it describes a golden- like, they're very quick descriptions and it says 'golden necklace, image of a wave.'

Alex: I will, I guess I'll do like a little check mark to show that we have it.

Bean: So I'll-I'll pick it up and put it in my back and then continue our way up to the temple doors.

Xaan: Alright. So you all enter into the temple and inside it's still mostly stone. And it's pretty dark.

Bean: I cast Light, I'll cast it on... I'm-I'm wearing that necklace so I'll just cast it on that so it's going to glow really brilliantly.

Xaan: So Light focuses from Snow and it brightens the entire room. So you find yourself in a stone room, it's fairly big, it can easily house the six of you with a little bit of extra room but it's definitely, it definitely seems to be one of the smallest rooms being at the top of the temple. And across the-the room you can see what appears to be a door of some kind that -that leads somewhere. And then on either side there are big murals etched into the stone and the murals depict what appears to be like, oceans and waves and a lot of ships kind of along the walls. And there are a lot of low chairs on either side, kind of creating a couple small aisles with the walkway in the middle for you to walk through. And then at the end there are two altars of some kind and with the light from the necklace, you're also able to see from the ceiling there is a sculpted glass mural that appears to be a ship being crashed upon by giant waves. Like it's very-it's very beautiful in the way that the-the light from the spell dances off of the glass. You can tell that it's worn down a bit, but because it was inside of this temple the weather didn't seem to have worn it down as it may have if it was outside. And

then, so you see the-the ship with the waves, and then just behind it on the other side, on the far wall, you're also able to see what appears to be the image of a regal elven looking man kind of seeming to look over not only this ship with the water, but also kind of down on all of you.

Kian: Xaan, I have a question, do we notice if the murals like, are stylistically similar to the ones we found in the cave..?

Xaan: No, they seem to be pretty different just in the way that the, everything is kind of made. It doesn't seem to be made by like, the same type of people.

Alex: Does it seem like the same age around? Like how worn it is?

Xaan: No, it seems to be newer compared to that old cave.

Kian: Okay.

Bean: I guess I'll do a religion check on the altars first..?

Xaan: Okay.

Alex: Can I see if it's like, fae related?

Xaan: You can do a history check.

Lady: And then can I do an investigation check to see if like, anybody's been walking through here recently and like, how disturbed everything is?

Xaan: Yeah.

Kian: [overlapping slightly] I would also like to do that as well.

Bean: I rolled a thirteen for my religion check.

Alex: I got another twenty-three.

Xaan: [scoff-laugh] Oh my god. Okay. So with a thirteen you're able to assume that the elven-looking man that is drawn up on the wall is the God that belongs to this temple, just based on like what you know about religious buildings. But you're- and you can assume that it's probably a God that has to do with like, water or the-the sea with-with sailing..? But you can't quite identify like, exactly which one he is. And then what was your score Alex? Twenty-three for what? The-the fae history, right?

Alex: Yeah, it was just history.

Xaan: Based on like, how old things appear to be it's possible that this could've maybe involved the fae..? But you can't really tell. There's not really a lot of writing that you see at the moment. So you-you can't really tell if there's like, any like really old ancient runes or anything like that, or, or there's no images of people besides the elven man so you can't like, you don't see any fae figures at all.

Lady: I got an eight for my investigation check.

Kian: I got a six.

Xaan: Cool. It looks undisturbed! Nobody's been here for so long.

Selah: May I also do investigation Xaan?

Xaan: Of course.

Selah: Ooh, I got a dirty twenty!

Queen: I was gonna say, I was gonna roll too and I got a dirty twenty as well.

[various cheers and whoops, all overlapping]

Kian: Mogan and Leif got us!

Xaan: So the both of you are able to see that like there's a lot of dust on the-the chairs and the altars. But you're able to see that like a lot of dust and dirt that

would've been settled on the walk has been kind of kicked up and is like, not clean, but like is definitely disturbed to some degree. And you're also able to kind of see across to the-to the door at the end and it looks like the door had been kind of moved in some capacity. Somewhat recently, it's hard to tell exactly when, but like, recently enough that like the dust has been moved and no fresh dust has settled.

Leif: Someone ran in here somewhat recently.

Jerome: Do we think this is a sort of worship temple or uh, tomb of hidden horrors temple that's just filled with an abundance of traps?

Kareus: It can be both.

Vae: Probably both.

Snow: Probably both. Up here is definitely a worshipping area, but I-I can say for certain what would be below.

Jerome: Shall we cautiously advance? And keep checking for like, any sort of traps?

Alex: Is anybody experienced in traps or like disarming traps, stuff like that?

Lady: I do have a proficiency in disarming traps.

Alex: Would Mogan and I, would we be able to sort of go like, walk really close side by side and I can like keep an eye out but Mogan can [laughs] take the damage? Or does that not work? Be my meat shield, Mogan!

Xaan: Yeah, if Mogan walked in front of you, theoretically yes unless it's like an area of effect type of a trap.

Alex: And then Jerome I guess then probably Snow? Oh wait, can I send my, my familiar to fly ahead as well and check things out?

Selah: Oh! Can I send Petal to go with them..?

Xaan: You can indeed try.

Alex: [laughs] Oh god.

Selah: [overlapping] Alright. I will try to instruct Petal to uh, to go ahead and accompany Vae's familiar to keep an eye out.

Xaan: Alright. You tell Petal that and Petal just gives like a puff of smoke through her nostrils and just kind of like, goes and sits down.

Selah: Wow.

Bean: [snorts] Oh my god!

Xaan: At-at Snow's feet.

[Selah laughs]

Leif: Come on, please?

Xaan: She like turns her head like distinctly away from you in a kind of, 'hmp!' type of gesture.

Alex: Wow!

Selah: I just sigh and I'm like,

Leif: Alright. I tried, guys. She's just gonna do her own thing. Yeah. I-I don't really know what's gone wrong but... I'm trying. [chuckles]

Xaan: Okay, so do you all head to the door? It is a closed door so your familiar cannot go through a closed door.

Alex: What! It can't phase through solid objects?

Xaan: What's even the point? [laughs]

[Alex laughs]

Bean: Yeah, honestly.

Vae: Mogan, would you like to lead the way?

Mogan: Uh, sure. Let's go.

Vae: Perhaps, Jerome you check it for, the door for traps first.

Jerome: I can do my best!

Xaan: Well, as you approach the door there is a little inscription written in a language, what languages do you speak Jerome?

Lady: I know common, elvish, half- n-no...

Xaan: Halfish. [laughs]

[Selah and Alex laugh]

Alex: Halfling?

Lady: No, shit, not- halfling! Halfling, that's it.

[Alex snickers]

Xaan: Okay. So it's written in something that's at least very similar to elvish. It's written slightly different in the same way that like, old english is written different from modern english. But you're-you're able to kind of like get the gist of it and it's basically like, a warning that says that there's danger below, and there's a need of-of great knowledge in order to reach the bottom for, for a great reward.

Jerome: Okay, so as the rest of- as uh, the elven readers of our party can probably tell it says something about danger below, gotta be smart to get there,

so either there's gonna be some kind of fall trap or it's very literal in that you gotta be smart to make your way through the temple on down.

Snow: Well I would assume it means there's multiple traps and it's going to require different skills to get through it. However, I would also say that Vae definitely has the most just basic knowledge of all of us? Perhaps we should send her first.

Alex: Can I go over and see what language it is?

Xaan: Specifically you can tell it's like an older version of elvish. Much like english goes like through multiple kind of generations, like old english, middle english, blah blah blah, you can tell that this is like an older version of elvish.

Alex: And it just says...

Xaan: Yeah, it's basically like 'hey, there's danger! Be smart! Maybe you shouldn't go down here. You can't sue us, thanks, you signed the waiver.'

[all laugh]

[theme song starts]

Alex: You signed the waiver with your footstep.

Xaan: Critically Chaotic is a dungeon and dragons podcast brought to you by the following people. The DM is Xaan, who can be found at @Xaandiir on all platforms. Vae is played by Alex, who simply cannot be found. Snow is played by Bean, AKA Alexa, who can be found in a variety of ways but mainly @alexandra_jaden on twitter. Kareus is played by Kian, who can be found as @lostfanboy on most platforms. Jerome is played by Lady, who writes, quote, 'and that's all you get, you dirty gremlins.' Mogan is played by Queen, who chooses not to be located at this time, or ever. Leif is played by Selah, also known as Strawberry online, who can be found at @_str4wberrymilk on twitter. The theme song is Melody by Emorie. If you would like to support Critically Chaotic, please consider leaving a five star review and following us on whatever podcast listening platform you are currently using. You can find us

@critchaoticpod on twitter with no underscores, where we post updates and retweet fan content. For any other platforms you would like to find us on, please look in the description. We will see you next week for the continuing adventures of Vox Anima. Have a great week, everyone.

[theme song fades out]

Selah: From fantasy Micheal's.

Lady: Excuse you, I'm going to fantasy Joanne's.

Xaan: Micheal's and Joanne's are two dwarves that had a falling out,

[Bean cackles]

Xaan: And they got divorced and they made their own craft stores.

Bean: Yess!

Selah: Can we have an arc where we try to get them back together?