

Episode 167 / C2E52: Feral Business

<https://youtu.be/REyVoebe06E> | [oTranscribe](#) | [Transcription Instructions](#)

If you're new to transcribing, welcome! Please read the [TRANSCRIPTION INSTRUCTIONS](#) before you get started. Thanks!

Reminders:

1. Please claim a maximum of **3 time slots** at once. If you want to do a lot of transcription, that's great; sign up for extra slots after you've finished the first 3. If you're unsure how much time you'll have, err on the side of taking fewer time slots so you're less likely to have to back out of your commitment.
 - a. Once a slot has been claimed, do not take the claimer's name out of the box and put yours in, even if the deadline has passed.
 - b. Likewise, do not ask the claimer if you can transcribe their block instead.
 - c. As soon as realize you will not be able to finish your blocks prior to the deadline, please remove your name from the block(s) and leave us a note in the Notes letting us know. That will allow other transcribers to pick up your blocks prior to the deadline.
2. Please be sure to use the **YouTube timestamps** when you transcribe. (The Alpha timestamps are different, and we don't want miss things or have two people transcribe the same section!)
3. When you mark a JENGA, please write the timestamps **in-line with your transcription**. It helps the editors locate them much faster!
 - a. **Example:** This is the fourth [JENGA 1:14:22] that you've seen in this place.
4. You **don't** need to split lines to create captions. We have a code that does that!
5. If you are not a **verified editor**, please do not edit other people's sections **including clearing JENGAs**, other than providing JENGA suggestions in the Notes section of the table at the top of this page.
 - a. You can apply to be a verified editor [here](#).
6. We have seen an increase in sections marked as complete that are missing words and have basic punctuation, grammar, and spelling errors. **You need to check your work prior to marking as Ready for Edit.**

TIME BLOCK	TRANSCRIBER ONLINE HANDLE	EDITOR (verified editors only)	SECTION STATUS	NOTES
0:00:00 - 0:00:00	@example /u/example		in progress / complete	This was fun!

0:00:00 - 0:04:59	/u/LynnE216	@asingingbadger	Final edit complete	Thanks for picking this up! ~TSB (ed.)
0:05:00 - 0:14:59	@vakarianns	@the_mogget/TSB	Final edit complete	
				Welcome, glad to have your help! ~TSB (ed.)
				Good job! Cad really is a mess of starts and stops, I think you did a great job balancing accuracy and importance in your transcription.
0:15:00 - 0:19:59	@Djfrizzell	@the_mogget/TSB	Final edit complete	~the_mogget (ed.)
0:20:00 - 0:34:59	@cardboardmoose	@genderfluid_druid/pearwaldorf	Final edit complete	(grunt) (grunt)
				JENGA 37:10 Taliesin "Like a He-Man action figure" (@cardboardmoose)
0:35:00 - 0:39:59	@alcblack	@genderfluid_druid/TSB	Final edit complete	Good ears on that one! -druid (ed.)
0:40:00 - 0:54:59	@rainydazed	@the_mogget/TSB	Final edit complete	
				1 JENGA. Matt's description of the cat-things goes into the next section but I wanted it all in one place instead of dividing it all. That is perfect! ~Jyll (ed.)
0:55:00 - 1:04:59	@m_b_artist	@genderfluid_druid/TSB	Final edit complete	
				Leaving this spot - have too much on my plate this week sorry! Got it, thanks for dropping it so early! (@cardboardmoose)
1:05:00 - 1:09:59	@cardboardmoose	@heyjyll/TSB	Final edit complete	
1:10:00 - 1:14:59	@alcblack/@asingingbadger	@heyjyll/TSB	Final edit complete	
				Ok I'm gonna try my best but there's a lot happening here between Zorth's incredible accent and all the laughter that happens and some it's super difficult to understand.
1:15:00 - 1:19:59	@SuperGeek514	@heyjyll/kat	Final edit complete	JENGA 1:16:58 cannot make out what Matt says here. It can be really tricky

				sometimes! I've edited your section if you want to take a look. This one in particular was, "Oh, look at this big fellow right here!"~Jyll (ed.)
1:20:00 - 1:24:59	@BlueManxCat	@heyjyll/kat	Final edit complete	
1:25:00 - 1:39:59	@baezil	@heyjyll/ossifrageous	Final edit complete	
1:40:00 - 1:44:49	@vtsphinx	@genderfluid_druid/ossi	Final edit complete	
2:04:32 - 2:09:59	/u/LynnE216	@genderfluid_druid/TSB	Final edit complete	You rock! http://gph.is/1skOllS ~TSB (ed.) Aw, shucks...
2:10:00 - 2:14:59	EnthralledByTheFall	@genderfluid_druid/TSB	Final edit complete	
2:15:00 - 2:29:59	/u/Rndmanswrs4rndm qstns	@genderfluid_druid/TSB	Final edit complete	
2:30:00 - 2:39:59	@dangie1029	@genderfluid_druid/TSB	Final edit complete	First transcription! Welcome! Glad to have your help! - Ossi (ed.)
2:40:00 - 2:44:59	@milkandcookies9000	@genderfluid_druid/TSB	Final edit complete	Please give me feedback on what to improve! You did great! The main thing I noticed was that we do require a space after a double dash (like-- this). You can look at my edits if you want to see more specifics. -druid (ed.)
2:45:00 - 2:49:59	@theredcas	@genderfluid_druid/TSB	Final edit complete	Welcome, glad to have your help! ~TSB (ed.)
2:50:00 - 3:04:59	/u/WebDevRose	@ossifrageous	Final edit complete	
3:05:00 - 3:14:59	@aaalexisaurus	@heyjyll/TSB	Final edit complete	JENGA 03:09:13 Didn't catch the start of Liam's sentence Thanks for helping out! In the future, remember to mark your Jengas in this section as well as using the formatting in the style guide when you have one in your section! For the record, 3:06:05 was in German, and quite rude. ~Jyll (ed.)
3:15:00 - 3:19:59	u/Texblade088	@ossifrageous/TSB	Final edit complete	First transcription, wish me luck!

				Welcome! Glad to have your help! - Ossi (ed.) I edited your work. Feel free to take a look!
3:20:00 - 3:29:59	@swenkkcaj	@heyjyll/TSB	Final edit complete	
3:30:00 - 3:34:59	/fanboyingduringteatime	@ossifrageous/TSB	Final edit complete	First transcription! Welcome! Glad to have your help! I edited your work. Feel free to take a look! Remember, we generally leave contractions as-is, so those don't need to be changed (eg: leave "you're" rather than "you are"). - Ossi (ed.)
3:35:00 - 3:49:00	/u/LynnE216	@ossifrageous/kat	Final edit complete	
3:50:00 - 3:59:59	@borifle	@heyjyll/kat	Final edit complete	
4:00:00 - 4:04:59	@milkandcookies9000	@heyjyll/kat	Final edit complete	I was a bit in a rush with this one, please check for stupid mistakes! That's what we do here! Your section's all done if you want to take a look and see what got changed! ~Jyll (ed.)
4:05:00 - 4:08:33	/u/dikemon	@heyjyll/kat	Final edit complete	[JENGA - 4:05:25] - cant understand what Matt said "They're right here waiting--" and "But, you gather your things--" ~Jyll (ed.) [JENGA - 4:06:45] - don't know what to call Matt's sound effects Don't feel bad! Sounds are tricky. I've put them in if you want to have a look! ~Jyll (ed.)

Relevant Known Spellings

(sp) indicates a spelling that is not yet confirmed, but we need you to use for now

Creatures: aurochs Baron Visco (sp) Bright Queen (sp)	Places: Assarius, City of Beasts Ashguard Garrison Ashkeeper Peaks	Things: Between the Sheets Cobalt Soul critrole.com
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bugbear Gluzo (sp) gnolls goblins Gorth Hugo, @takayuuki_art joechasura (sp) Kryn soldiers Lady Zethris Oleos (sp) Leylas Kryn, Empress Lolth Matteo Scalera and Moreno Dinisio moorbounders (sp) roc Sunbreaker Oloman (sp) The Luxon The Mighty Nein Traveler Tusktooth Yeza Zorth (sp)	Aurora Hold (sp) Bladegarden Brokenveil Bluffs Dwendalian Empire Felderwin (Tillage) Four Corners (sp) Ghor Dranas Kryn Dynasty Ifolon River Marrow Valley Nogvurot Rexxentrum Wildemount Wynandir Xhorhas Zorth's Pits (sp)	critrole.com/events D&D Beyond dndbeyond.com/discord dunamis/dunamancy Emerald City Comic Con Padauk, genus pterocarpus Pub Draw shop.critrole.com shop.critrole.co.uk shuriken The Mistake twitch.tv/criticalrole umavi Wyrnwood youtube.com/criticalrole Words not in English go in <i>*asterisks*</i> Spells and languages are capitalized (Mage Hand, Sylvan) Races, classes, and roll types are not (halfling rogue, stealth) Don't bother with bold or <i>italics</i> Player sound effects or descriptions of how they're saying something go in parentheses. (singing) (door creaking) (cheering) (laughter)
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MATT: Hello everyone, and welcome to tonight's episode of Critical Role, where a bunch of us nerdy-ass voice actors sit around and play Dungeons & Dragons.

ALL: We play Dungeons & Dragons!

MARISHA: Yeah, we do!

MATT: Yeah, okay. Before we get started, we want to give a nice thank you and talk a little bit about our fantastic sponsor for Campaign Two since the very beginning: our friends at D&D Beyond. Sam?

SAM: D&D Beyond, everybody. If you're just joining us, you might not remember this, but I love D&D Beyond so much. I love the app, I love the platform, I love the company, I love the people. I love it so much that I want to be in control of it, and run the company, which is why I'm running for president of D&D Beyond. I launched my campaign a month or two ago. It's going great. Lots of fundraising. I'm waiting for donations from you guys.

TRAVIS: It's in process.

SAM: That's what those envelopes were that I slipped under your chairs.

(groaning)

MARISHA: Thought that was a parking ticket.

SAM: Those are not tax-deductible. I'm pleased to announce today that I have an opponent. A big part of running for office is to have an opponent and to know who you're facing. A lot of nominations came in, a lot of suggestions. Some people couldn't do it. Marisha was actually technically too young to run. Taliesin, not a citizen of the United States. Also not sure where he is a citizen of.

TALIESIN: It's a country that doesn't exist anymore.

SAM: Yep, that's accurate. Travis didn't pass the IQ test. So what we're left with was the opponent that will be running against me for the presidency of D&D Beyond is: (drumroll)

TRAVIS: Oh, is that a drumroll?

SAM: Liam O'Brien!

LIAM: Oh, man.

SAM: We're friends, so I hope we run a respectful campaign.

LIAM: Frenemies.

SAM: Yeah. I'm going to do my best to not-- the problem here is that I'm sort of a master of media. I'm politically savvy. The people love me. I've been doing this for a while. I got Dani Carr as my campaign manager. I've got it going on. So I don't know what you've got in store for this campaign, but it's not going to be all that. But whatever. I'll give you the floor. Let's see what you got.

LIAM: Well, all I can say is thank fuck for a two-party system. Sam Riegel, you're adorable. You're quick-witted. You're clever. You're good in bed, but this is the adults' table. Roll the motherfucking clip!

NARRATOR: (VO) And now a message from Liam O'Brien.

LIAM: My fellow table-toppers, I am coming to you in these dark times to bring sense and reason to the table. For too long has our great game been sliding into a lugubrious den of iniquity, malfeasance, and ineptitude. We live in a world where any Tom, Dick, and Harry can come waltzing into the hallowed halls of both dungeons and dragons with half-baked backstories and Cockney accents in hand, and run roughshod over the time-honored traditions of fantasy make-believe. My opponent in the race to be president of D&D Beyond has relied too long on charm, quick thinking, creative character choices, and that cartoonishly large parasail he calls a smile. Sure, he and his compatriots have peddled you a steady stream of things like heart, humor, complex exploration of the human condition, and the playing of roles in this role-playing game. But at what cost? At. What. Cost. As your next president of D&D Beyond, I am running on a platform of accountability, on the rule of law, and the law of the rules. I promise a new era of gravity and honor. No longer will Hunter's Mark be mismanaged. Rages will be raged when it is indeed time to rage, whether you'd like to or no. And so help me Larkin, every rogue will know precisely when and how to implement the assassinate feature. Enough is

enough. My opponent would have you believe that D&D is about story, adventure, magic and wonder. Don't you believe it, my friends. Don't you believe it. With me as your next president, we will rediscover the true joy of gaming: systemic memorization. To d4, or not to d4: that is the question. Thank you, and gods bless D&D Beyond. (VO) I'm Sam Riegel's husband and I approve this message.

TRAVIS: Oh, wow. I mean, that's just--

LIAM: I leave it up to the people to decide.

SAM: I don't like this. I don't like this at all. I don't have a video, I don't have a logo. I don't have American flags behind me, or wheat fields, or whatever that shit was. Dani, what are you doing to me?! We need a video! Ooh, you're going down. Do you remember what I said about a respectful campaign? Fuck that, the gloves are off, motherfucker, you're going down. I will rule D&D Beyond! Back to you, Matt.

MATT: Thank you, Sam. Thank you, Liam.

LIAM: We'll settle it in the bedroom.

MATT: And thank you, our friends at D&D Beyond. Next announcement. Those who haven't seen The Search for Grog, our special Vox Machina one-shot from our live show in LA, will air tomorrow night. So tune in to the Critical Role Twitch channel at 7:00 pm Pacific to watch it. If you miss the live broadcast, you can check out the VOD on Saturday at youtube.com/criticalrole. Travis, you've got something-- Not Travis, Laura, actually.

LAURA: Hi, I'm Laura!

MATT: That's you! You're Laura. You're Travis.

LAURA: So just a reminder, the preorders for our amazing Mighty Nein and Vox Machina art prints, those end tonight at 11:59. That's signed and unsigned, go to the store if you want them because once they're gone, they're gone. Also, speaking of once they're gone, they're gone: I've got one more thing that I want to tell you about. Which is--

LIAM: Witches.

LAURA: So at our live show for The Search for Grog, we had posters for sale for The Search for Grog. And we thought we sold out of them but then we found an extra box, so we're putting them in the store.

SAM: Oh cool!

LAURA: These are in the store right now. There's not a whole lot of them, so if you grab one, go to the store right now and you can find them. Once they're gone, they're gone for real, because there's no more.

SAM: I don't have one of those!

MARISHA and TALIESIN: Ed!

LAURA: We will grab some out of the box before they go to the store.

SAM: No, the people need them more than us. We can photocopy, it's fine.

TALIESIN: I have a need.

LAURA: So yeah, in honor of The Search for Grog. That's my announcement. Travis! Do you have an announcement?

MATT: There, Travis--

LAURA: Oh! I should say, though, I should definitely say the art is by Hugo--

LIAM: @takayuuki_art

LAURA: @takayuuki_art, and it's so beautiful, I'm not showing-- Okay, I'm stopping. Get away from me, camera. Travis?

TRAVIS: Yes, right. So we dropped a little tease of things to come on our Twitter and Facebook pages this morning. We were all quite blown away by how fucking fast you solved our little puzzle. Especially @TimothyGElsy on Twitter, who was the first to crack the code. He made M.I.T. proud. It's cool, DARPA's very proud of you. We have a puzzle if you haven't seen it, it should be up. We are excited to announce tonight that on March 4th, we are launching a Kickstarter project to create our very own Vox Machina animated special.

(cheering)

TRAVIS: Just let it sink in. Let it sink into your body. Let it get in through your skin and your meat and your bones. There will be more details to share leading up to launch day, but since you cracked it so fast we just had to let y'all know what's going down. So get hype. (singing) Get hype. Get hype.

MARISHA: Animated. An-animated.

TRAVIS: I do it for cartoons, I dance for cartoons.

MARISHA: (laughing) Dance for cartoons!

MATT: I know what I'm getting you for everyday, ever. Thank you, Travis. As you guys may have noticed, we do have a new Twitch overlay that we unveiled tonight. We wanted to spruce things up a bit and we hope that you love it as much as we do, for all the work we did on it. Little changes, little aesthetic changes. We're also working on a few special things to enhance your live-viewing experience that we'll share more about that just as soon as we can. Some cool optional bells and whistles and we'll roll it out as we get the opportunity. An important update, starting this week with episode 52-- which you're seeing tonight-- Critical Role will air on the Critical Role Twitch channel with the VOD available for Critical Role Twitch channel subscribers over the weekend. VOD will also be available on the critical role YouTube channels on Mondays at 12:00pm Pacific. Talks Machina will also air on the official Critical Role channels moving forward. Geek & Sundry's Twitch channel will still host Critical Role and Talks Machina episodes on Tuesday and Thursday nights so you can

continue to watch there if that's where you're subscribed. We just wanted to take a moment to thank all the folks at Geek & Sundry and Legendary Digital Networks for a long and successful partnership and we wish them the absolute best. Be sure to check out criticalrole.com for all the details. And I believe that is the end of our announcements for the evening.

LIAM: Do we still get to play D&D on this show?!

MATT: (goofy voice) Uh, Liam? I believe that's what we're doing next.

LIAM: Yay!

MATT: And on that note, let's go ahead and dive into tonight's episode of Critical Role.

[water bubbling]

[thunder]

[explosion]

(chanting) Role! Critical! Role!

[dramatic Critical Role theme]

LAURA: Roll the dice! (singing) The adventure begins, they were always beside you, your nerdy best friends, and the DM to guide you. And they rise from the flames for the battles ahead. Villains beware 'cause you're about to be dead.

ASHLEY: (singing) They got magic and flair, they got falchions and cunning. They don't see over there there's a monster incoming. Inspiration is waiting, rise up, don't think twice. Put your fate in your hands, take a chance, roll the dice!

(chanting) Role! Critical! Role!

ASHLEY and LAURA: (singing) Can you answer the call? Diggin' deep in your soul as the legend unfolds. Now it's your turn to roll!

[fire burning]

(laughter)

MATT: What?!

TRAVIS: It's the balance of rational--

LIAM: I just tied-in a job I had earlier today.

MATT: Okay!

TALIESIN: I was with you.

MATT: Welcome back! Welcome back. So, last we left off, The Mighty Nein, in search of Nott's kidnapped husband had made their way east beneath the Marrow Valley, skirting the Underdark, under the Ashkeeper Peaks and have emerged into the ashen wastes of Xhorhas. You came in contact with one of the roving scout regiments of the empire who were immediately assaulted by a roving crew of assassins and hunters made of gnolls and a Kryn warrior and some sort of a mage using a new form of magic you've never seen before. You engaged in the battle, and after some blows are tossed back and forth the enemies-- at least the ones with enough strength to survive the encounter-- fled when it seemed like it was not turning in their favor. Left behind, you got some materials from the survivors of the imperial scouting troop and made your way through the wastes eastward. Along that way, you began to encounter some of the distant strange beasts that wander these lands. You endured the heavy rains and were suddenly hunted by a large, somewhat unwell, roc-- a massive bird that you thought was sweeping towards you, but instead seemed to be hunting a troop of bugbear hunters and you. Through some clever use of illusionary magic and some decent stealth rolls, you managed to avoid getting involved in that fray and instead came upon the mostly torn apart troop of bugbears with one survivor who had been playing possum. Noticing that he was still breathing, you decided to have a conversation where you came to an understanding which involved: we're not going to kill you, give us some information, and maybe let me tattoo your body. Jester shaved a portion of his furry form and tattooed him with a classic Tusktooth special. You guys made it across the Ifolon River through some clever Moses-like parting of the waters... and some good rope work. I'm sorry.

TRAVIS: You don't need to do that.

LIAM: That's a mage in Rextentrum.

MATT: Yeah. As the last evening began to come to a close, you could see the distant fire light of what you've now been informed to be Assarius, the City of Beasts, and the home to this bugbear Gluzo you had encountered. Camping up for the night, this far out of the vicinity, you found yourselves sleeping protected underneath Caleb's dome, your hut, and prepared yourself for a morning journey wherever you see fit. That's where we left off. So, Mighty Nein, waking from the evening's rest, to the gentle rainfall from the clouded morning skies, a cold air chilling the surrounding mud. You glance around the gray field dotted with clusters of leafless trees and brush and look to the nearby city of Assarius. What would you like to do?

TRAVIS: When he doesn't start with, "What do you want to do," I get nervous!

SAM: I know! What do we want to, I have no idea what we want to do!

TALIESIN: Has our bugbear friend already taken off?

MATT: The heavy snoring, and somewhat sore movement of his body once he gently comes to consciousness, belays the recovery period from the encounter the day before. He has not left.

LAURA: Hello, Gluzo.

MATT: "Hello to you, too."

LAURA: Good morning.

MATT: "Good morning."

SAM: Doesn't he have to rewrap the tattoo everyday or something for infections?

MARISHA: A little bit of coconut oil.

TRAVIS: Aquaphor.

LAURA: Oh really? I haven't told anyone to do that. I mean, I haven't gotten a tattoo, I've only given them.

SAM: You don't have **any** tattoos?

LAURA: No.

TRAVIS: You never practice on yourself?

LAURA: No, why would I do that? I have other people, you know?

MATT: "It's all right. You treat it like any other wound." He grabs some mud and dirt from the ground, and jams it into the space there.

(groans and pained reactions)

LAURA: Yeah, see? Just like that.

TALIESIN: I'm going to get some breakfast going, we'll have a moment, we'll fill our bellies, and then we'll figure out what we're going to do.

SAM: The conundrum at hand is that some of us don't look like monsters, right?

TRAVIS: Yeah, that is a problem, apparently. How do we fix that?

LIAM: It will be slow going, I don't think we can do anything that will last more than a short while. I can change my own appearance. I can change Beauregard's appearance.

MARISHA: You can?

SAM: You can?!

LIAM: Yeah. Roughly an hour of time.

MARISHA: Wait, you're telling me this **now**?!

SAM: Is this a new ability?

TRAVIS: I think so.

LAURA: Yes it is!

SAM: He's always learning and growing as a wizard! It's what I love about him most.

LAURA: How did you even find this one? That's really cool, Caleb!

MARISHA: How long have you known?

LIAM: Not long at all.

TALIESIN: It still baffles me that anyone can't do this.

LIAM: I have been working on it, because, you know, what you are hoping for.

LAURA: Like what? To changing back and stuff?

SAM: I mean, we hadn't had a talk about it, so I didn't know if that was something that was on your, whatever the ancient equivalent of radar is.

(laughter)

SAM: I didn't know that you were aware. I mean, I don't want to stand in the way of your growth and journey and your path. I mean, if you stumbled upon a way to, you know, make me whole again, I wouldn't say no to it.

LIAM: You know that my main focus is on transmutation, and changing one thing from another, so it's not totally out of the realm of sense for me to have been working on such a thing. What I'm able to do is limited. It's not what you want, but it's a start.

MARISHA: How long does it last?

LIAM: Roughly an hour.

TRAVIS: Same for me. I can re-up it every once in a while.

TALIESIN: I think you look just fine. That's the sense I get.

TRAVIS: Oh, that's right.

MATT: You look over at Gluzo and he's not even paying attention to the conversation.

TALIESIN: (louder) That's the sense I get.

MATT: "What's the-- What?"

TALIESIN: I was wondering, our friend here, Mr. Fjord, is probably going to be, not necessarily welcomed with open arms, but he's not going to draw any odd glances or anything in this town of yours?

MATT: "He's tiny for an orc, but he should be okay."

TRAVIS: No, no, I've worked out. I have--

LAURA: You're very big. You're very large and stuff.

TALIESIN: Fun-size.

MATT: "He's pretty small."

LAURA: I think it's a really good size that you have.

TRAVIS: Maybe I'll make myself a little bit larger.

MARISHA: Maybe you do seem bigger when you're on a ship, an enclosed area.

TRAVIS: Mm-hmm.

LIAM: Where do you clock in, about 6'1" or--?

TRAVIS: Yeah, ish. Okay. Let's stop talking about me. Maybe, if we figure out exactly what we need in the city, we'll understand how long we actually need to be in there.

SAM: We need to go into the city to get some sort of conveyance, right? Some sort of animal or vehicle to take us further in our journey.

TRAVIS: Oh, yeah, that'd make it faster. Otherwise it's, what, two weeks?

LAURA: It's a long time, yeah.

TRAVIS: Boy. Yeah.

SAM: Do we need anything else? Weapons? Allies?

LAURA: Just go shopping. Books, maybe.

SAM: Would they have books in monster land?

LAURA: Some dresses and stuff.

LIAM: Dresses?

LAURA: Well, I like dresses. I thought we could look for some. I bet the ones here look a lot different than the ones in Nicodranas, so I thought it could be fun to go shopping.

LIAM: Undoubtedly, but we are going to need to pick our moments for adjusting Beauregard and Yasha's appearance. It's not game on all day, like we're in Zadash where we can go shopping for things. If we see something, if it presents itself, then we could, but we need to be careful.

TRAVIS: We do have manacles. We could make them our prisoner.

LAURA: That might attract attention, though.

SAM: We could throw a bag over someone's head and drag them into an alley--

TRAVIS: Punch them every once in a while.

MARISHA: I'm standing right here!

LAURA: Well, Caleb, you can disguise yourself and Beau, and I could technically disguise Yasha. I mean, I think I could.

SAM: You can?

LAURA: Well, I can change something into another animal, so I can't imagine I can't change her into another person, do you think?

TRAVIS: How long does that last?

LAURA and LIAM: Roughly an hour.

MATT: That's Polymorph. It's an hour. I mean, yeah, you can do that.

LAURA: Is it weird?

MATT: It's not weird. Polymorph is, you can turn into anything, so if you want to turn into a different person? Totally, by all means.

TALIESIN: It's a bazooka, is what he's saying.

TRAVIS: Use the thing that can make you a dragon into somebody who looks different.

MATT: Yeah, basically. Yeah, totally.

SAM: Does Yasha-- Yasha? Who's Yasha today?

MATT: She's still laying down and looking up at the sky.

SAM: Do you fit in here?

MATT: "I haven't been this far north, but I mean, if someone gets in my face, I'll punch them."

TALIESIN: If we were going to Polymorph anybody, I would recommend Mr. Caleb, since I imagine we would want physical people to feel comfortable in themselves. I guess a lot of you is up here?

LIAM: It's basically all up there. I was thinking that I would change my appearance.

TALIESIN: Oh, that's fair too. That's probably a better plan.

LIAM: Yeah, and you could be whatever you want to be.

MARISHA: Does it change my clothes? I feel like my blue vestiges really say Empire.

LIAM: I can change your entire appearance and your physical being for roughly one hour.

MARISHA: Dope.

TRAVIS: Gluzo, are there any codewords or sayings in your city? Any greetings or things that people exchange that would be familiar to someone that lives there?

MATT: "Not really. It's more of a heavy grunt."

TRAVIS: A heavy grunt?

TALIESIN: (grunt)

MATT: (grunt)

TRAVIS and TALIESIN: (grunting back and forth)

MATT: "That's not too bad. That'll probably work for some people, yeah."

TRAVIS: Having been in the city so long, anything ever make outsiders very obvious to your eye, or ear, when they come in?

MATT: "I don't really look out for the outsiders. I go out and hunt things, and bring them back, and work for my boss. That's about it."

TALIESIN: We're hoping to go in, do a little commerce, and get out without causing a ruckus, is all.

MATT: "Then don't cause a ruckus."

TALIESIN: Then if they see human-ish people-ish, how big of a problem, if we do run into something, do you think that'd be? That's fair.

LIAM: We are not going to cause a ruckus. I would ask of you, Gluzo, are you going to cause a ruckus?

MARISHA: I'm a fan of how much we're using the word ruckus.

TALIESIN: We should get a ruckus room.

MATT: "Look, I'm going to be honest. You people have not done anything bad to me, and you don't seem to be the typical Empire types. As long as you don't go shouting that you're from the Empire, maybe you'll be okay."

TRAVIS: I toss him one more gold.

MARISHA: Is that money bad? Is that bad money? Does it also scream Empire?

MATT: "No, I mean, gold is gold. Not everyone takes it. A lot of the city tends to be barter for work, but some do take gold."

LIAM: If you escort us into the city safely and see us to the outskirts when our business is done, there will be another 20 for you.

MATT: "How about this? When we get to the city, I never see you again."

(laughter)

MARISHA: Barter.

LIAM: I will give you ten gold to make sure that that happens. Just take it.

MATT: "I'll take it, okay. Very good deal." He gets up, (stretching). "Well, shall we?"

TRAVIS: Yeah, let's do it.

LAURA: Wait, are you going to--

TRAVIS: Transport, potions, weapons, things like that. Maybe books, if there are such things.

SAM: Should we split up or stick together?

LAURA: Stick together.

TRAVIS: Stick together in a totally obvious group.

SAM: Do we have any means, if we do get split up, do we know where we're meeting? Because we don't know anything about this city. Are there any-- Gluzo. Are there any places in the city that are easy to spot? Tower spires, anything that we can--

TALIESIN: We're right outside the city.

MATT: "Well, the city's got a wall around it, and there's watchtowers. There's the Aurora Hold in the middle. It's the big gray tower piece. That's where all the Kryn use as their base of operations."

TALIESIN: Let's maybe meet at the wall and not the center of the city. That seems a little--

MATT: "Either way. There are places of business, if that's what you're looking for."

TRAVIS: I guess that's-- yeah. Before we leave, does anyone want to take a, uh-huh, out?

SAM: A gander at the thing?

LAURA: While you guys do that, can I talk to Gluzo? I'm going to take the haversack off and pass it to whoever wants it. Don't take it out.

SAM: No. Who wants it?

LIAM: I'm holding it.

MARISHA: I'll take it.

TRAVIS: I feel like Beau should have it, for some reason, some dreadful reason.

MARISHA: I might get in a ruckus.

LAURA: Don't get in a--

MARISHA: I'm going to try to avoid ruckuses.

LAURA: Hey, Gluzo. Can I take him aside?

MATT: He's standing tall now, once again. Even with a slight hunch, he's still close to seven feet. Him and Caduceus are in a similar range, with a similar hunch, but his ears are a little wider out there. A lot heavier fur. He's pleasantly dopey.

LAURA: Gluzo.

MATT: "Yes?"

LAURA: Can you tell me about the light that you pray to, please?

MATT: "Oh, are you familiar with the Luxon?"

LAURA: Yes, I have heard a little bit about it, but I was wondering what you could tell me about it.

MATT: "To be perfectly honest, I don't know all that much. The darker elves tell us of great possible things if we work together as a community. Since I've grown up, I was always about the Luxon, as a place to come to, and--"

LAURA: Place to come to?

MATT: "There is a place to worship in the city, yes."

LAURA: Really?

MATT: "Yes."

LAURA: What does it look like?

MATT: "It looks sort of like--" He pulls out his necklace. Those who are paying attention, you can see across the chain a small, wire-frame dodecahedron made of rough metal. He goes, "The Luxon, they say, is the first and the original god of Exandria. If we work hard together and we stay pious towards the light, then maybe one day we, too, will be reborn."

LAURA: Right. Because that would be really cool, to be reborn.

MATT: "Yeah. Especially," he points back, "since my line of work is not all that safe. Anyway."

LAURA: To the light, and stuff! Also the Traveler.

MATT: "Okay!" He starts walking towards the city.

LAURA: Oh god, their god is our thing!

SAM: Is the bugbear god the same as the Kryn?

LAURA: Yeah, yeah!

TRAVIS: Did you say, "to the light"?

LAURA: Yeah, he was saying he prayed to the light. He prays to a thing that looks like our thing.

MARISHA: We have their god in our haversack?

LAURA: I know, I think we have a holy relic or something!

TALIESIN: It might be. That seems to make sense. The Luxon, right? That's what I heard.

LAURA: Luxon.

LIAM: I've told you about this.

SAM: You've told us about the Luxon?

TALIESIN: That ring any bells?

MATT: Roll a religion check.

TALIESIN: I was hoping you'd say that.

MARISHA: We thought it was a different Luxor.

TALIESIN: Seven.

MATT: Total, seven? Nah. Nope. Never heard of it. Other than-- at that roll, you barely remember that Caleb mentioned it a couple of times. You're like, oh, oh yeah. That's as much as you know.

TALIESIN: That's generous of you.

SAM: We have their holy relic in addition to the relic that can maybe--

TRAVIS: Amplify it?

SAM: Also give them children? I mean, this is--

TRAVIS: I don't know about that.

LAURA: I think it's all about their being reborn. I think the children, what if-- (gasps) Oh my god! What if, when people die, their soul gets trapped inside of this thing? Until it's returned, new souls can't go into new babies, and so no babies can be born and stuff? What if we're keeping all of the souls with us?

MARISHA: What if our souls get trapped in it, and we're stuck in there for thousands of years? I don't want to be a baby again! Being a baby sucked!

SAM: Oh no, you're getting younger right now!

MARISHA: Shit!

LIAM: I think that we are still in a wait-and-see moment here.

TRAVIS: I think we've used it a fair number of times and nobody's turned into a wee *enfant*.

LAURA: I'm not saying you turn into a baby.

SAM: Beau is saying that.

TRAVIS: That is what Beau is saying.

MARISHA: I don't want to be reincarnated as a baby. Reincarnate me as a tiefling or a dwarf or something.

SAM: Sorry, Beau, just going to say, too soon for the whole Reincarnate business.

MARISHA: Oh, sorry. Didn't mean to-- I spit there. I didn't mean to spit on you.

LAURA: How does that work, though? Can I ask a question, though?

SAM: Sure.

LAURA: How did it work? Did you come back as already a functional person? Or did you come back as a baby goblin?

SAM: No, I came back as what you see here, minus a year or two. I was a full-grown goblin.

LAURA: Where did this body come from, you know what I mean? Was it somebody else's, or did it appear magically or something? I don't understand.

SAM: That hurts a little. I don't know. I don't know if they put my spirit in someone else's body, or if the body was made, or what. I don't know. This body bleeds, so it's not some sort of-- it wasn't built by a man.

MARISHA: Maybe you were a baby and you don't remember it. Most people don't remember when they're babies. I mean, I do.

LAURA: Yeah, but then they remember when they're, like, four.

TALIESIN: I feel like we're getting to the root of something with you that I really want to explore later. I'm not sure what it is yet.

SAM: I don't think I was ever a baby because, if I were a baby, and I grew up to be a goblin adult, my son would be ten, 12 years, right now?

LAURA: That's true.

TRAVIS: Yeah, Flight of the Navigator.

MARISHA: I did just stare at this relic in front of Gluzo.

LAURA: He didn't see it.

MARISHA: Is that super insensitive, though? It looked like your head was in the bag. It probably looked like you were eating some trail mix or something.

LIAM: He doesn't strike me as a high, holy, learned man of the cloth, if it is even a traditional religion. From what I have read, people here, the Kryn, used to worship a different god, I don't know how long ago. Lolth.

SAM: Lolth? I can tell why they stopped worshipping that one.

LIAM: This is some sort of a change for them. Whether that is 20 years ago, a hundred years ago, 300, I don't know. The writings I found on that were somewhat vague. Whoever wrote this text believed that this Luxon, whatever it is, is misleading the people here, and also that it is because of the Luxon that this darkness, I think, that we are seeing, is connected to them. This light and darkness.

LAURA: It's responsible for the dunamancy? Dunamis?

LIAM: Possibly connected.

TRAVIS: Is there anyone heading out of the city in our direction, now that we've spent some time?

MATT: Make a perception check. First off, Gluzo is about 90 feet from you, walking towards the city.

SAM: Oh! We should probably catch up.

MATT: He started walking, and you guys kept talking, and he kept walking.

TRAVIS: 14.

LAURA: Should we disguise ourselves?

LIAM: I think, for maximum time, we should-- everyone pull up your hoods, and let's get closer to the city. Otherwise we are going to burn through 20 or 30 minutes.

TRAVIS: Yeah. Fair enough. Well, let's see who's on the road.

MATT: Looking ahead, best you can see, there's a low fog that permeates a lot of the field in front of you this early in the morning, based on the recent rains that have happened. You don't see anyone. You're not close enough to draw attention, but there's a lot of activity around the city, though it's too far to really make out the fine details. You do see, now in the daylight, some sort of a perimeter wall. Looks to be a gray or purple hue; it's hard to really tell from this distance. You can see watchtowers scattered along the outskirts a little bit. You can vaguely see one spire, loosely central to the entire shape of the city's skyline. You can see there's a bunch of things gathered around the outside of the wall. You'll probably have to get closer to make out more detail.

TRAVIS: Not a ton of traffic on the road coming in and out just yet?

MATT: Hard to tell from this distance. There are no roads leading to you; you guys are out in the middle of the field.

TRAVIS: Let's get a little closer, and I'll use Disguise Self to make myself look fucking jacked. Huge-ass traps and delts, and my clothes don't quite fit right anymore. Rippling-ass muscles, and I'm--

LIAM: I thought that you already were jacked?

TRAVIS: No, I'm fucking jacked. Fjord--

SAM: You're shredded.

TRAVIS: Yeah. I have to turn like this.

MARISHA: Never stretched a day in your life.

LAURA: He's got skinny chicken legs, but super big--

TRAVIS: If I've got to run I'm like (awkward galloping).

TALIESIN: Like a He-Man action figure.

LIAM and LAURA: Always skip leg day.

MATT: It only gets in the way.

LAURA: I'm going to use Disguise Self to make myself look like me, only super goth.

MATT: Okay. Goth Jester.

LAURA: Goth Jester. I'm going to do makeup like Yasha's, so black stuff and eyeliner. Leathers, tattered black leathers, and dark lipstick. Definitely black fingernails and tattoos and stuff.

MATT: Okay. Yasha reaches down and gets some mud and smears it down her face. You see these finger lines across the front. Musses up the outside so she looks like she's been wandering and hunting alone in the wild for awhile.

TALIESIN: I'll play with that. I'm going to scar myself up, and emaciate, and let everything get a little craggly. A little more Dark Crystal-y on the wrong end.

LAURA: Ooh, nice!

LIAM: How do you want to do this?

MARISHA: Can you make me a dude tiefling? A red, shifty-looking tiefling? Red skin, deep eyes.

LAURA: Deep, what color eyes?

LIAM: Crazy eyes, like you're demonstrating for me right now?

MARISHA: Yeah, like that.

SAM: You can't change your voice, now.

MARISHA: What, you don't think I sound like a dude?

SAM: Kind of. Yeah, no. You're good.

MARISHA: Give me a dude physique that would match this.

LIAM: Okay, so I pull out a small caterpillar's cocoon, and I start muttering some arcane words over it. I waft it in front of your face, and then poof. She is a, poof.

MATT: There you go. You are a red tiefling. It's pretty accurate as you can envision, at least what you can see of yourself. You don't really have any reflective surface to check, but based on this, not bad.

MARISHA: I check my pants.

MATT: You're a dude tiefling. Since Caleb's really only seen one dude's tiefling before--

(laughter and applause)

MATT: Long may he reign indeed.

TRAVIS: Holy shit.

LAURA: He's only seen one dude's tiefling.

MARISHA: Why is just my dick purple? I don't understand. There's a gradient.

LIAM: It's just a sunny-side up egg.

MARISHA: My happy trail has an ombre. This is incredible!

MATT: The benefits of the tiefling.

SAM: Long and wide may he reign!

MATT: Anyway.

LIAM: Hold on, we are not finished yet. I begin to cast Disguise Self on myself. I make myself look like a male version of Jester, blue, like a twin, but not quite as goth. Just dialed way back-- A little bit, but not quite as goth, but identical. I can't do anything about the voice, I'm sorry. Let's go.

MATT: All right. Given that there's a time limit on the duration of these spells, a little hustle probably wouldn't hurt.

SAM: Let's do it.

MATT: You guys pick up the pace a bit, jogging through the muddy fields. (squelching) Your boots are occasionally getting caught for a moment, but you manage to maintain a decent pace heading towards Assarius. You catch up to Gluzo who goes, "All right, we're running! Okay!" And he keeps up with you bounding alongside.

LIAM: It's still us. We just went through the Saint's Row character creation.

MATT: Yep. Basically.

TALIESIN: I like that we now have MC Christ and Gerard Way at the table. It's all I really needed.

MATT: This is our version of Monster Factory. Much love to the brothers.

SAM: By the way, Matt, side note: this music is fucking awesome! Whatever you're doing? Amazing.

MATT: Thank you, Blizzard, for giving us approval to use Diablo music.

LAURA: Oh, tight!

LIAM: Thanks, Blizzard.

MARISHA: Thanks, Blizz.

TRAVIS: For the light.

LAURA: (laughing) For the light.

MATT: As you approach the City of Beasts, you can see now the tall fort-like wooden walls. Planks of purple-colored wood sharpened into a point ten feet from the ground around the perimeter. Watchtowers peaking over at a number of points along. Knowing Caleb's direction sense thanks to his feat, you're approaching from a southern-southwestern direction. Batches of mud fields surrounding the eastern end of the city are visible where crews of hobgoblins and bugbears harvest roots and tubers and other strange and hardy produce from the unexpectedly cultivable land around this city. The western side, which would be to your left, outside the walls is dense with wheeled carts, armored orcs, gnolls, and other goblinoid soldiers checking and cleaning equipment and occasionally bickering. You can see, though the war is on that side of Xhorhas, there is still a military presence here. Your eyes catch the rare Kryn soldier who's wandering through the ranks keeping the peace and checking in with members of this regiment. A handful of large hills sit among the crews, resting places for ballista and supplies as goblins lift and unload boxes and affix heavy artillery to the top of these mounds. As you're continuing to move towards the city looking at this display, you see a group of gnolls together tugging on these heavy leather straps at the base of one of these mounds and you watch as it shifts,

mud and dirt tumbling from the sides revealing four hut-sized, thick trunks of legs from underneath. A colossal war tortoise.

LAURA: What?!

MATT: From this distance, you can only guess 60 to 80 feet from end to end on this shell. (heavy footsteps)

TRAVIS: What the fuck is that?

LIAM: It's a war tortoise, man. It's a war tortoise. War tortoise.

MARISHA: Can we trade The Mistake for that?

MATT: A pair of goblins rush up immediately to the front to shovel baskets of moss and other roots into the mouth of the large behemoth. You're in awe of this and noticing the numerous mounds now: four, five visibly scattered amongst this war band. A series of growls and muffled barks catch your attention towards the front ranks where you can see numerous large, tailless, panther-like beasts tethered to heavy posts, saddled and lightly armored for future combat. You glance past the small army beyond that, beyond the mounds to see two gargantuan shapes making a wide perimeter around the city loosely in your direction. A pair of the massive furred hulks that you first saw when you first entered Xhorhas in the distance. They're stalking around the wastes and the surrounding grounds. Heavy iron chains wrapped like a harness across their 20-foot wide torso each mounted by an armored Kryn who's rocking back and forth with each impact of its huge tree trunk-like limbs dragging itself through the muck and mud. You can see squat legs dragging it forward as its limbs pull it forward like a heavy gorilla. All covered in a dark gray-brown fur that's matted with mud and grime. The face of the creature, which you see for the first time now that it's getting close enough, rests between the shoulders without neck or really a head. Just embedded between where the shoulders are as part of the torso. A gray scaled leathery brow that folds around four red eyes the size of cannonballs arranged much like a spider's face and a tangle of teeth and tusks that protrude from a frighteningly wide mouth that almost leads from shoulder to shoulder at the very front. (stomping) As it shifts forward, one of the mouths opens and you see this large, heavy, thick tongue pull off and scrape against the tusks and then withdraw into the mouth and the jaw closes shut. You can feel on the ground with each heavy limb fall (stomping).

SAM: Those are in the city or outside?

MATT: This is outside the city.

LIAM: Roughly how tall?

MATT: That creature is probably about 30 feet at the top of its height. Shoulder height.

TRAVIS: But 20 feet wide.

MATT: The shoulders are about 20 feet wide side to side. If you're to look at it head on like 20, 25 feet right there. The shoulders themselves are about 20 feet apart and from the top when it's fully stood up, you imagine it'd probably get up to about 25 or 30 feet, but it tends to be a little hunched as it pulls forward.

TRAVIS: You know when you go to that area in the game and you're not quite leveled up for it yet?

MARISHA: Mm-hmm, and you run the other way.

LAURA: Yes. You guys, not to be pessimistic or anything, but I think their army is way cooler than the army that we've seen.

SAM: Mm-hmm. For sure.

LAURA: Maybe we should all just hang out and be part of Xhorhas from now on. I mean, they're pretty cool.

MARISHA: They are pretty cool.

LAURA: They've got moving hills. They've got these giant spider weird guys.

MARISHA: I want a war turtle.

TRAVIS: The tortoises are crazy.

SAM: We have not tasted the food here yet. Maybe let's just reserve judgment for--

LAURA: But we have Caduceus.

TALIESIN: I feel like we're gilding an awful lot of expectations at the moment. I'd really like to get a better sense of these people before we--

LAURA: Decide to live here?

TALIESIN: Even decide how we feel about it.

LIAM: Roughly 51 more minutes.

LAURA: Okay, let's go.

SAM: Yes, this might be like... You know when you go to Hawaii and you're like: why don't we live here?

LAURA: Yeah.

LIAM: 50 minutes.

MATT: You push on and Gluzo is jogging alongside you and keeping his head down. You guys approach the southeast gates. Each side is about ten feet wide, maybe 15 feet tall. It actually crawls up higher than the rest of the surrounding wall and has a slight arch to it. One of them is closed the other is partially open. You can see some soldiers are coming in and out. Other people that are working the field start exchanging directions and that would be the nearest entrance-- pardon-- to the city.

MARISHA: Does it look like there are people blocking the entrance? Like they're heavily guarded?

MATT: No one blocking the entrance, but you do see on each side of it two very large and armored ogres. Both holding heavy clubs with an axe blade on each side. They're just there looking out.

TRAVIS: Are people that are coming and going are they wearing anything identifying? Any kind of medals, badges, pins, ribbons?

MATT: Make a perception check.

MARISHA: The people who are coming and going, are the ogres stopping them?

MATT: No.

TRAVIS: 19.

MATT: 19? Nothing that you can really make out, unfortunately. I mean, their outfits aren't uniform. Everything is very patchwork and scavenged or put together to, at least from from what you've seen, to be utilitarian. There's no decor. As you approach this heavy gate, you can see one of the ogres looks to you all and (growling breaths).

TRAVIS and TALIESIN: (grunt)

SAM: Can we just walk with confidence?

TRAVIS: Yep.

LAURA: Yeah.

MATT: Who's leading the charge in to the city?

TRAVIS: I am.

MATT: Go ahead and make a deception check.

LIAM: It's just like we're sneaking into an E3 party. Here we go.

MATT: Done that a thousand times.

LAURA: Yeah, look like you belong. Look like you belong, no one will stop you.

TRAVIS: 16.

MATT: Yeah, we've all had to sneak into our own game parties before.

MARISHA: That's true.

MATT: Low on the totem pole, us actors. As you grunt and the ogre grunts back, you keep walking. He doesn't pay attention. He doesn't notice. You all weasel past through the six-foot space of the right hand door that's open and enter Assarius.

TRAVIS: We're in.

TALIESIN: City of Beasts.

MATT: Within the city, the winding dirt roads you already see before you are rough and slick with the recent rainfall as the air itself is pungent with the smells of animal hair, wet earth, and dung. It immediately hits you like a wall. This is the largest petting zoo you could ever consider visiting. Drove of waste folk wander the streets. Burly ogres clutching barrels and beams. You can see orcs that are dragging hunted quarry behind them through the mud or over their shoulders some of them still struggling, not quite dead from the wounds they sustained before an orc just takes it and slams it across its back so it goes to stillness and stops moving. Not a lot of conversation, but occasional bickering and growling at each other. There is still a civilized sense of order to this. More than you would have assumed based on the interactions you've had with gnolls and other such creatures who seem to live in these spaces. Goblins especially. And you do see goblins. You do see goblins and goblin-kin children rushing through the alleys and scurrying off into the roads. Clusters of them carrying something together. Some of them just trying to wait for something to drop or be left or forgotten from one of the larger folk and then just scavenged and taken away.

LAURA: Definitely keeping hands on pockets and pouches.

MATT: Okay.

MARISHA: Yeah.

TALIESIN: I'm keeping an eye out.

LIAM: Did you give Jester back the haversack or are you--?

MARISHA: Yeah, I did.

LIAM: Okay.

LAURA: Part of my disguise it looks black with my disguise.

MATT: But the majority of the people you see that are spread throughout the city are furred bugbears, scruffy gnolls, anxious kobolds, actually, and the occasional minotaur.

SAM: (gasp)

MATT: One in particular catches your eye who's walking with two sets of five soldiers on each side, Kryn soldiers. You see one massive minotaur, jet black onyx fur, giant grown horns that curve to the front. Pristine-- uncharacteristically for this space-- pristine silvered armor that is intricately carved and detailed. You can see

this dull gray cloak that falls past the shoulder mantle and drifts to the back of the knees. Its hooves are adorned with a type of plate armor right to the front. As it looms by, you can see this heavy greatsword that's thrown over its back. Everyone stops and gives wide berth as it walks through across the street.

LIAM: The whole table just turned into the horny and aroused meme.

LAURA: Yeah.

SAM: I'm into this.

LAURA: He was beautiful.

MATT: Continues down the street in loosely the direction that you're traveling, but a good 20, 30 feet ahead of you and then continues if you wanted to keep pace or just wait.

MARISHA: He had a posse?

MATT: A posse of roughly 11 or 12 Kryn.

TRAVIS: Are just around him?

MATT: Around him, yeah. You get the sense that he has some sort of importance or station in this location.

TRAVIS: Yeah. I was going to say that's a guard.

TALIESIN: You've probably got to work hard to keep that clean.

LAURA: Wow.

TRAVIS: Do we want to follow? Now that we're in, is there anything that is discernible to the eye? Like a weapons store--

MATT: Gluzo's just walking away.

TRAVIS: Yeah, okay. He can just--

MATT: He doesn't acknowledge. You're in the city and he just walks away.

TRAVIS: You forgot your... ten... gold. Okay. Do we see anything like a blacksmithy or a weapons store or--

SAM: Livestock?

LIAM: Well, that's everywhere. That's going to be hard to pinpoint a place.

MATT: You can start to look around.

LAURA: There's probably animals.

SAM: We can ask around.

TRAVIS: I don't want to make a lot of-- I don't want to hit up a lot of contact just yet and see what we can see.

MATT: Go ahead and make a general investigation check. Oh, if you're not asking around, then it would just be perception.

TRAVIS: Damn. Investigation would've been better. Not bad, though; it's 19.

MATT: As you guys begin to walk and enter the city, you start taking in some of the sights around you. One thing you notice is there are occasionally humans here. They're not all of the various monstrous races that you would've expected. The humans that you do see here are usually solitary and they are scarred and rough. Possibly feral, it's hard to tell, but they have an eye about them like they've been through enough to survive amongst these people in the wastes and this city. You get a sense of why Yasha put herself into a little bit of that rough and tumble presentation before you entered.

LIAM: Do they have the look of, say, beaten, fearful slaves or rough--?

MATT: Make an insight check.

LIAM: Yeah.

TRAVIS: Good call.

LIAM: (growling) Balls.

TRAVIS: Maybe if you had more, you know, space in that dice tray.

LIAM: 12.

MATT: You don't get a sense of any sort of enslaved or subjugated aspect. They just seem to be another surviving member of the community who, because they are human and the nature of the war and the kind of people that exist in this space, has had to undergo some rough hazing.

LIAM: Prison rules.

MATT: Yeah, kind of.

SAM: Is anyone wearing the symbol? The Lux? The Luxor?

MATT: Make a perception check.

TRAVIS: Ooh, good call.

SAM: Not great. Ten.

MATT: It's hard to tell. There's a lot of movement, and a lot of armor, and a lot of fur, and a lot of other types. You don't see anyone who very overtly is showing off any sort of iconography or jewelry that would be similar to what you saw on Gluzo.

MARISHA: Aside from the minotaur and the army, is there any type of guards? Any type of--

TRAVIS: The watchtowers.

MATT: You don't see any noted guard. You don't see anybody who seems to be uniformed or have any sort of an identifiable attire or imagery that would give you the idea that there was a wandering guard, yet.

MARISHA: The watchtowers seem like they're probably for siege attacks, for army? They don't seem to have anybody posted in them?

MATT: They do have people posted in them. You don't know if that's because it is wartime, or that it's part of the watch over the city, or both. You're uncertain.

LIAM: Maybe you covered this and my player missed it, but do the Kryns seem to be an occupying force or part of--

LAURA: Why does it sound like you say Koreans?

LIAM: Because it sounds like he's saying Koreans.

LAURA: No, he says "Krin."

MATT: I say "Kreen."

LAURA: But you say "Kor-een," so it sounds like you're saying--

LIAM: I believe I said "Krin" last game, Laura Bailey. This time I tried to match the dungeon master, but I am playing with a German accent and sometimes strange things happen. You should have heard the things I had to say in a German accent earlier today. It was this whole scene, man.

TRAVIS: Twins, twins, please. Please.

LAURA: Aww.

LIAM: Occupying force or integrated with society?

MATT: Make an insight check for me.

LIAM: Give me a good roll. It's cocked, right?

SAM: Because you have a thousand dice around it.

LIAM: It was the same roll. 19.

MATT: It's hard to tell. There doesn't seem to be any fear of the Kryn as they walk around, but they don't seem to be fully integrated and rubbing shoulders with the roughnecks of the city. You don't sense any sort of tension that would normally be part of an occupying force.

LIAM: Yeah. Okay.

TRAVIS: I'm of the mind that we should follow the big minotaur. I mean, he could only be going to and from places of importance.

SAM: Did we see where he went?

MATT: Yeah, he's still walking ahead of you guys with a brisk pace. There's some distance growing between the two of you.

TRAVIS: Yeah, we'll keep 20 to 30 feet behind.

LIAM: I thought we were trying to get beasts to ride.

MATT: As part of this, as you're walking, and based on the perception roll that you made-- because I'm going to fill you in on more of that. Looking around, the structures of this building are varied and patchwork, with huts and hovels mingling with mud-brick buildings and domes, and small, roughly-hewn and sculpted domiciles. You pass one of the dormant tortoises that you saw that's actually in the city. It's sitting there occupying a lot in this city. Atop its back, you see a goblin neighborhood of dense shacks and dwellings, clustered, built, and strapped onto its back. You can see--

TRAVIS: Get the fuck out of here.

MARISHA: That's so fucking cool!

LAURA: Did it crawl into the city because it could move?! The whole city can move?!

MARISHA: Yes, is the turtle still alive?

MATT: You can't tell. All you see is the shell there and this goblin neighborhood built atop its shell that's strapped and pressed onto it. You can see all these clustered tents and huts and pieces of gathered and scavenged woods that have been pressed together to create this small shantytown atop this tortoise shell. There you can see a few goblins out there that are doing repairs, a few that are--

TALIESIN: I was going to say, cruise ships are the worst.

MATT: Some that are stretching out leather to tan, but the weather isn't good for tanning. They're getting frustrated because it's getting mildewy. This goblin's like (angry muttering) and trying to stretch it out more and breathe hot on it. It's not really doing anything.

LAURA: Nott! Did you live on a turtle?

SAM: No, I did not live on a turtle. I've never seen anything like that. That's *amazing*.

LAURA: This is way cooler than what you had.

SAM: Yes. Yes.

MARISHA: I really feel like we should invest in a turtle. It seems so useful.

SAM: The maintenance, though. If you own a turtle, you have to fix everything on it.

MARISHA: That's true. What if you rent the turtle, is that--

MATT: Leasing is really the way to go.

MARISHA: Yeah, lease it. Get the newest turtle.

LIAM: It's a business expense.

MATT: As you guys pass the small goblin neighborhood to your right, you hear the familiar barks that had echoed from the army earlier. You pass a preserve/livery for those panther-like beasts. You can see a numerous number of these kept in this large pen. They have these chain collars around their neck, and they're all tethered to a central, heavy pole that's currently pressed deep into the mud. There are some of them that are lying and sleeping; some of them are hungrily pacing on the outside of the pen, looking at the passersby and growling. Getting a better look at it, you can see they have this wonderfully aerodynamic profile to them. Their head and neck are sloped all the way past their shoulders to the back. Basically, it isn't until the hind haunches that the curvature ends. What it is is this super slick, matted, thick, heavy, wiry fur that itself is a dull gray-purple color. It seems matted at the top, and then it tends to fluff out a bit once you get past where the shoulders and the pits are of its appendages. It's very panther-like in its physicality, just more muscular and lean and stretched. A little more exaggerated in its feline figure, aside from the fact that its head is this continuous, muscled neck into a sloped, toothy mouth at the front. You can see on the sides these two large, bulging, almost creepily fish-like eyes that are lidless and poke out the sides of the head, looking out in both directions. In the front, there is not a classic cat nose, but it looks almost like a cat skull, but flesh pulled over it. It has these two open slits that are long in the front. Its jaw hangs open with these two large tusks that curl up in the front, and its tongue dangles out the front. (panting)

LAURA: Can they blep? That's the important thing.

MATT: We'll have to find out.

LAURA: With the fish-eye blep. That would be so cute.

SAM: We've only seen these creatures on their own? They're not carrying anything, and they don't have saddles of any sort?

LIAM: I thought they were armored up.

MATT: These ones do not. The ones that you saw outside in the army were.

SAM: Were armored, but didn't have people riding on them?

MATT: They were saddled up. They didn't have people on them at the time.

SAM: Oh, they were saddled up?

LAURA: We could ride them.

LIAM: We are going to Skeletor this shit.

MATT: You also can see the single, three-story spire of gray stone that Gluzo had mentioned before that he said was called the Aurora Hold. You can see portions of it are the stone structure, and then elements of dark, almost tinted glass seem to make it up like a cathedral spire. It looms over the rest of the city, which doesn't have a lot of variation in its height. Most of the buildings are built close to the ground, whether it be from limitations on the people who constructed it or a cultural indifference to trying to make things with multiple layers. You can see the distinctly elven elements to its design and structure, which makes it stand out even more against the rest of the city. You also pass inner-city livestock pens, with pigs that are kept in general pig conditions. Not terrible, but they love their mud, and this is a good space for them. You can see one pen that has these giant aurochs that are being kept as beasts of burden that are penned into each other into a small space. There's a portion of the ground where more of those roots-- similar to those large fields you saw being cultivated on the outside of the city-- there's a smaller version of it being placed here.

LAURA: (whispering) What's an auroch?

LIAM: It's an ox.

MATT: Yeah, a massive ox. Big, heavy, bison-type fur wreath around its head, huge horns. These in particular, you would gather, probably pull a lot of the heavy equipment and, from base to shoulder, probably stand about eight feet tall.

LIAM: Big yak.

SAM: Do we go talk to the livery folk?

LAURA: Oh my gosh, can we ride these thingies with the fish eyes?

SAM: Yeah.

MARISHA: Can I go knock on the turtle shell and see if the turtle's still alive?

TRAVIS: Let the tortoise thing go for a little bit.

SAM: The turtle shell's not connected to the livery, right?

MATT: No, it's a distance behind it. As a note, as you walk through the city, denizens push past you. Some pay no mind; some do give a curious look because you're certainly not a troop of mostly beast-looking folk. They don't seem to stop you.

LIAM: Caleb noted the time when they cast their spells. Would his keen mind tell them how much is left?

MATT: At this time, I'd say you have between 25 and 20 minutes left of those spells, in the time that it's taken you to walk to the city and then make your way this far inside, keeping an eye for various details around you.

TRAVIS: What if we split? What if we acquire some transport from the people that don't have the fear of changing back? The others can make their way out of the city, and we'll meet you there.

SAM: Or! We've seen some humans around here, they're just scummy. You could just muck up your face and fit in.

LAURA: Or we just fucking recast the spell.

LIAM: Yeah.

LAURA: Yeah. Just let us know when we're running out of time.

SAM: I'm just saying, if we're going to be here for longer than two hours and we don't want to keep recasting, we could maybe see if--

TRAVIS: We could just beat the shit out of Beau and we'll be fine.

MARISHA: I'm so down to be scummy.

LIAM: Let's be clear about our goals here, though. We were going to get something to ride, and leave. *Ja*?

TRAVIS: Yes.

LIAM: Okay.

MATT: Caduceus. While they're having this conversation, you're looking around the space, and you look back and that big minotaur that you guys were following is now walking straight towards you.

SAM: Oh, god!

MARISHA: What do you mean? Oh, god!

TRAVIS: I don't want to be here!

TALIESIN: You guys don't know anything yet. We've got company.

SAM: Let's go see if there's someone working at the livery. Is there a hut?

MATT: There's the large pen, and there is a 40-foot-wide structure; rough, thatched roof that's been treated with some sort of a heavy muck and/or possibly creature mucus to give it a shiny, rain-proof exterior. The front has a door. It's a rough-looking door, that's rounded at the top and doesn't fit properly into the entire entryway, but it seems functional. Do you walk towards the livery?

SAM: Yeah, that's why we're here.

LAURA: I'm staring at the minotaur.

MATT: You guys move towards the livery, he curves and follows. He's beelining towards you.

TALIESIN: Mm-hmm. I'm going to acknowledge with a bow, once I notice that he's moving towards us.

LAURA: I'm going to smile and then remember that I'm goth and go--

TALIESIN: That's much better.

MATT: He approaches. Only two of the Kryn soldiers that were with him are now at his sides; the rest have gone inside the Aurora Hold, which seems to have been his destination until someone had taken note.

TRAVIS: I wish we had planned out a story before we came in here.

MARISHA: Yeah. I mean, yep.

MATT: He approaches and stops maybe ten feet from you, towering over your lot. About your height. Maybe a little bit taller, but much wider, and burly. As soon as his final hoof-fall hits the mud--

TALIESIN: Okay, I'm feeling the physical aggression?

MATT: Just a presence.

TALIESIN: I'll give it to him. I'll get a little shorter.

MATT: "I must admit I have not seen you within this city before."

TALIESIN: This is our first time here.

MATT: "So color me curious. What is your business, and whom do you serve?"

TALIESIN: May I, or do you want to? Our business is we're looking to collect some transport, maybe do a little trade while we're in town, and head on our way. As to our service, we are private contractors on what I will say, of the many missions that we've put forward, is one of our truer, more noble missions at this point.

MATT: "Contractors? What is your business?"

TALIESIN: Whatever we're being contracted for. At this point, just--

MATT: "Sellswords?"

TALIESIN: Sometimes.

TRAVIS: Smugglers.

TALIESIN: Sometimes.

MATT: "From where do you hail?"

TALIESIN: Everywhere.

LAURA: All over, really.

TRAVIS: Nogvurot, for me, yeah.

MATT: I need you both to make deception checks.

TALIESIN: Is that deception?

MATT: You're definitely not from all over. You're from one place.

TALIESIN: That's fair. 19.

TRAVIS: 17.

MATT: Okay. Looks squarely at each of you as you say this, and turns the nose up a bit and gives a very brief nod. You hear the plates of the metal creaking as he shifts the weight from one hoof to the other.

TALIESIN: That is beautiful, by the way, I've never seen anything like it before.

MATT: "And you never will. Handmade."

TALIESIN: Gorgeous.

LAURA: By who? A really powerful artisan master smith and stuff?

TRAVIS: You're gothing. You're gothing real good.

LAURA: I'm going on gothing as I'm doing it.

SAM: She's not moving her jaw.

MATT: "It was crafted from a sister of my house in celebration of my near-umavi ascension."

SAM: Near-umavi ascension?

MATT: "You're definitely not from around here, are you?"

TALIESIN: Very much not.

MATT: "Well. Sellswords, if you're looking for work, there is work here in these lands in a time of war. If you can carry a blade, while we send most of our able-bodied soldiers to the front line, cleanup is a bit of a problem here at home. I would say talk to Lady Zethris Oleos within the Aurora Hold if you are looking for contracted work."

SAM: Say that name again?

MATT: "Zethris Oleos."

TALIESIN: That is very generous of you.

TRAVIS: I'm sorry. Forgive our impertinence, we didn't ask for your name.

MATT: Gives you a look like-- you can see in the way the head turns like, you don't know my name? He goes, "I have had many names through many lives, but the one I take now is Sunbreaker Oloman."

MARISHA: Sunbreaker Olman?

LIAM: Oloman.

LAURA: Almond.

SAM: And is there a Mrs. Sunbreaker, or--?

TRAVIS: Are you flirting with the fucking minotaur?

SAM: He is fucking hot.

(laughter)

SAM: And, you know, 50/50 my husband's dead, so.

(shocked laughter)

TRAVIS: Wow! We've been sending him messages every night.

LIAM: Risking our lives behind enemy lines.

MATT: The massive minotaur looks down at the goblin with a curled eyebrow and goes, "Heh. No."

SAM: Hmm.

MATT: "Well, don't make any messes," and he turns around.

TALIESIN: Pleasure. I like it here.

LAURA: Did you see the way? I think he winked at you. I think I saw--

SAM: I couldn't tell--

TALIESIN: I thought he winked at me, but that's fine.

SAM: -- through his piercing eyes.

LIAM: Those were his horns, were piercing. His horns, Nott.

SAM: Yeah. He was horny.

LIAM: Stay on task.

SAM: Sorry. I'm sorry.

TRAVIS: How much time, Keen Mind?

LIAM: About 15 to 20?

MATT: At this point, about 15 minutes or so before it--

TALIESIN: Let's head into the liv--

TRAVIS: Livery.

TALIESIN: Livery and see if there's a conversation.

SAM: What was his name? Oloman.

LAURA: Olman? Olmin?

MATT and LAURA: Oloman.

LIAM: Nottbreaker Oloman.

(laughter)

TALIESIN: Oh no.

MATT: Anyway.

SAM: Saddle up!

(laughter)

TRAVIS and SAM: Like a gerbil on a banana.

TALIESIN: Once again, Sam has ruined tomorrow morning's Twitter.

LIAM: DM's as red as his t-shirt.

MATT: Never underestimate the players' ability to fuck with you. You approach the wide structure that sits affixed to this large pen where these creatures are currently held. The smell is strong. It's a combination of the fur, the dung, and this heavy, acrid smell that you can only attribute--

LIAM: Cat piss.

MATT: -- the heavy, long-soaked piss. You enter the interior of the building. You can see a series of goblins that are in the process of lounging, not doing their jobs. They're sitting there, drinking these little wooden cups of some sort of a liquid, they're talking amongst themselves. You catch the tail end of the conversation, Nott. One of them's saying, "This whole thing is being ridiculous. Everyone's just taking stuff and not really paying for it." As soon as you guys walk in they all (grunt) and sit upright and all look over on the opposite end. You see, turning from the opposite side-- this would be... perfect. An older goblin, probably later in his years. A bit rotund, this puff of gray-white hair that sits at the back of the head and the front of it's just bald entirely. Liver spots on the face. Long nose that comes to a gradual point towards the ground. Bulbous chin. Looks like Meg Mucklebones from Legend, but much smaller and a dude.

LIAM: "Older in his years," does that mean he's like 15, 16?

MATT: Pushing 20, maybe 25.

(oohing)

TALIESIN: He's seen some shit.

MATT: This figure is missing both arms. Has a really nice somewhat dirty vest over no shirt. Has a pair of slacks rolled up towards the knee and bare feet walking that are black on the bottom. The long, dirty toenails

haven't been clipped in a while and hook over the front of the toes. You can see him reaching up with one leg and finishes wrapping a rope around some pole leaning on the edge. He turns the rest of you and go, "Hello, there! You coming to do business, eh?"

SAM: You're on fire tonight. Hello, old timer!

MATT: "Oh, hi there, little girl! Nice to see you!"

SAM: Pleasant day we're having here.

MATT: "Quite pleasant indeed!"

SAM: Do you manage these stables here?

MATT: "Aye, welcome to Zorth's Pits! I'm Zorth."

SAM: Zorth?

MATT: "Yeah!"

LIAM: Zorth.

MARISHA: Zorth's pit?

SAM: Family business? Are these your kin?

MATT: "No! They're a bunch of pissants!" And they kind of (goblin yelping) scatter. One of them starts carefully stepping into the pen with a cluster of maybe not-the-freshest meat but is standing before them and tossing them. You hear (snarling) and immediately the goblin runs outside. Looks back at the rest of you, "Here we got the best beasts in the land. You looking to buy something, huh?"

SAM: (stuttering) We are. Or at least rent. Lease? Borrow?

LAURA: Loan, maybe.

SAM: Yes, we've been taking a look at your stock here. I'm from the south of Xhorhas, so I'm not familiar with the animals of here. The...?

MATT: "Moorbounders!"

SAM: Maulbounders?

MATT: "Moorbounders!"

SAM: Moorbounders. That's the longer, panther-like?

MATT: "Yeah, they're from the swamps in the south."

SAM: That's why I was familiar with them.

MATT: "That's where you said you were from. You don't know what they are?"

SAM: Well, we call them something different down there.

MATT: "What do you call them?"

SAM: We call them... swamp panthers.

MATT: It's not very imaginative. And not accurate either.

SAM: No. No, well that's why--

MATT: "Who am I to judge? A nice young lady coming in here to do some business. Now I'm not going to lie, these aren't cheap. And looking at the bunch of you, I don't know if they're in your wheelhouse to afford it. But you know? Let's give it a try anyway. What are you looking for? How many you looking to buy, huh?"

SAM: How many would we need? Can each one carry more than one?

MATT: "Well if you're included, then you'll probably fit three on one of them. For the average sized folk-- Oh, look at this big fellow right here! He's pushing-- maybe two at most with him on there, but you know... conservatively saying." (giggles)

SAM: My face is covered in spittle. You had other creatures here, too, did you not? Are there larger creatures?

MATT: "No, just them."

SAM: Oh. Didn't we see some larger beasts of burden?

MATT: Those were other places.

SAM: Okay.

LAURA: How much are we talking for one?

MATT: "For one? Well let's see, prices have been going up since they've been buying them off me left and right for the war parties, so pushing about five hundred gold apiece."

LIAM and TALIESIN: Oof.

MATT: "They're dangerous, they're quick; faster than any riding horse you've ever seen!"

TRAVIS: Single saddles, or do you sell custom double saddles?

MATT: "They can jump thirty feet in a single bounce! Not needing any sort of run up at all!"

TRAVIS: (laughing) I don't know why I'm trying to drink right now. That's a fucking mistake.

MATT: Hopping down trees, mountains, rocks, whatever you need. Cliff sides? No problem. They'll take you there.

SAM: (like Zorth) How's the resale value on these? Sorry, sorry! (normal voice) Sorry. How's the resale value if we bought these? Could we sell them in another town for almost as much?

MATT: If you've got a good enough sales plan and you're very convincing, probably. But treat them well, push them, feed them, don't let them kill and eat you, I think you'll be good.

LIAM: Is this happening in Common?

TRAVIS: Nope.

LIAM: Is this Goblin or Common?

MATT: This is Common, because it was a mixed group that came in here. Has not slipped anything Goblin-wise to you directly yet.

LIAM: Okay.

LAURA: That's a lot. I don't know if we could afford that.

SAM: How many do you think we would need, do you think? Three, four?

LAURA: One, two, three.

SAM: They can each hold two, fully grown. What about this big fellow here?

MATT: That's what I'm saying! He's probably pushing it to two tops. Maybe three if you're included. You're also a big one. You're pretty tiny. You'll probably do that, eh?

SAM: We can get away with three of them, maybe.

LAURA: We could probably get away with two.

SAM: Two?

TALIESIN: No, no. No, we need three.

LIAM: Excuse me, my good sir.

MATT: "Yes of course, what's your name?"

LIAM: Gorth.

MATT: "Gorth? (laughs) Pleasure to meet you. I'm Zorth. Our names rhyme. That's silly.

LIAM: That is a coincidence, *ja*.

MATT: "Doesn't happen often."

LIAM: No.

MATT: "Tickles me belly."

LIAM: Doesn't seem very remarkable to me. I wanted to ask you: how hard are these creatures to pick up mastering them and riding them? Can you just pick it up or is it a learning curve?

MATT: "Nah, I'll probably have to give you some sort of seminar when you purchase them. But that's part of the purchasing price. Get a chance to set you down and we'll go over the basics of maintenance, and hey, give them a name, get them used to you. Just a few hours of training and I think we'll be good, yeah?

LIAM: A few hours. But, just maybe one of us per creature, per beast, who knows how to manage it?

MATT: "Preferably, yeah. It needs to bond to one individual. Two, and it might get confusing and then it might pick one over the other one day, and then eat the head off of the one it doesn't decide, you know. If you didn't do it right. So you've got to be careful. (chuckles)"

LIAM: Well, you know, I am good with cats, so this is sounding good to me.

MATT: "Oh, perfect! It's meant to be! How many you buying?"

SAM: Zorth, you said that fighting forces were coming to take these from you.

MATT: "Well, they purchased a few. We've been trying to keep up."

SAM: They're not paying full retail, though, are they?

TRAVIS: Here it comes.

MATT: "They're paying what they are supposed to pay, seeing as how they're keeping us safe from all the fucking bastards over the Ashkeepers, the way--"

SAM: And more power to them. I hope they kill those Empire scum, but--

MATT: "Damn right!"

SAM: But, I hope, also, that you've been giving them the best of your stock to fight in the front lines.

MATT: "Well, all we keep is good stock! I mean, to be honest, the ones that don't grow up perfect tend to get eaten by the first. So, you know, the ones that survive, they're usually the best stock regardless."

SAM: All right, I'll switch to Goblin. All right, listen: Goblin to goblin, if we buy three of these, couldn't you cut your fellow gobbie a deal here?

MATT: (chuckles) Make a persuasion check.

(laughter)

SAM: Okay, persuasion? Ooh, there's no minus. So that's 15.

LAURA: Ooh.

MATT: Okay. He goes, "Mmm..."

SAM: I can throw in a tiny statue of a dick!

(laughter)

SAM: A one-of-a-kind dick statue.

MATT: Leans in close.

SAM: And?

LAURA: And we can't understand! We just see her pull out a dick!

(laughter)

SAM: This was actually a petrified dick.

MATT: "Really? Of what?"

SAM: Of a tiny, tiny human, an ancestral human--

TRAVIS: Nope.

SAM: That we found in a mine somewhere.

MATT: Make a deception check.

(laughter)

SAM: Nope. Well, no, it's there. Persuasion?

MATT: Deception.

SAM: Deception.

(laughter)

LAURA: Oh, no.

SAM: Wait, where's that? Ooh, 11.

MATT: "Eh, seems about right. I mean, no offense. (bawdy chuckle)"

(laughter)

SAM: I know, right? Humans.

MATT: "Funny."

(laughter)

TRAVIS: You live with that.

MARISHA: Uh-huh. Oh, I know.

MATT: "I'll tell you what. We can work for trade."

SAM: What kind of trade are we talking?

MATT: "Hey, hey! Get--" Well, he can't actually do that; he doesn't have a hand.

(laughter)

MATT: He actually snaps with his toes. "Hey!"

(laughter)

MATT: He's awesome! He is **super** dexterous with his feet. "I'm having a conversation! With some prospective clients." And they all scutter off into a back room and close the little door. "I'm in a bit of a pickle, to be honest. You see, I keep two subterranean nests where we breed our moorbounders. And something's kind of moved into one of them. Killed one of my last batches, my last clutch, whatever they call them, I don't know. Not very well studied on their history; I'm just good at raising them and selling them."

(laughter)

MATT: "It got a bit scary, so I sealed it off with some chains. And if you'd be interested, maybe you could go down there and see what's inside, see what the problem is. Maybe *kill it* and I'll take your price down."

SAM: How much down?

LAURA: (whispers) Free.

MATT: "You're looking to buy how many?"

SAM: Three.

MATT: "You do this for me, I'll give you all three for 750 gold."

SAM: Half price?

MATT: "Half price."

SAM: Let me confer with my fellows.

MATT: "Yeah, of course! Go for it! (chuckles)"

SAM: All right, I will convey what was said. What do you guys think? Should we-- oh, shit! Hold on... Hey!

MATT: "Yeah?"

SAM: Is the monster, or the nest, the place where we would be going, within the confines of this city here, or outside the city?

MATT: "No, it's here beneath the actual premises."

SAM: Oh, it's right here? Okay, cool. Back in a few.

MARISHA: Sounds unsafe.

TRAVIS: Did he say what it was?

LIAM: What are you talking about?

SAM: He wants us to go kill an unknown creature for him, and he'll knock half the price off.

TRAVIS: Oh, that's great. Yeah.

LAURA: That's still a lot of gold, though.

MARISHA: Two-thirds.

LAURA: I don't know if we can even get that much gold together.

TRAVIS: Sure we can.

LAURA: I don't know if we can, though. We don't have that much gold. Maybe he can knock the price down a little bit more!

TALIESIN: How much gold do we have, I don't actually--

LAURA: We don't have a lot of gold with us, you know? I honestly don't know how much--

TRAVIS: You know what we should do? We should go down there and take a look at this beast, and we'll decide on the way down.

SAM: What?

TRAVIS: Yeah. Let's go see what's in this cave underneath.

SAM: You just want to go?

TRAVIS: Yep.

TALIESIN: I was actually going to recommend maybe we can send our tiny, furry friend down there for a little look-see, and then formulate whether or not this is a good deal or not.

LIAM: Well, whatever we do, we should do it in the next six-and-a-half minutes.

TRAVIS: If we all go down into the cav-ay, then maybe you can recast-ay the spell-ay.

LIAM: I did not cast Comprehend Languages; I don't know what that is, but yeah, we could go down below just a scooch, and I can do what you're talking about.

TALIESIN: I'm sure if we have a conversation about our individual issues that if anything were to arise while we're in here, I think they seem like an understanding bunch.

LIAM: I don't know if I have that much coin, but I have some gems and some other items.

MATT: "Well, if you don't have any gold to spend, then why are you coming in here asking to buy things?"

LAURA and SAM: We do have *some*!

SAM: Listen, we've decided to go down and take a look, assess the situation, and we'll come back with our verdict. Does that sound good to you?

MATT: "I kind of prefer a confirmation. It's up to you."

SAM: We can agree to do the job right now if you cut the price down to 400 gold total.

MATT: "No!"

MARISHA: (whispering) 500!

SAM: 500 gold total.

MATT: "650 gold and that's all."

MARISHA: 600 and a tiny dick statue.

LAURA: Yeah, that's good.

SAM: 600 and a tiny dick!

MATT: "Sold!"

SAM: I hold out my leg and say: Shake on it!

MATT: You're fairly dexterous, but it feels like a handshake. The actual foot curves around, gives it a hearty shake, and withdraws back and looks at you all and goes, "So?"

SAM: I'll leave this for collateral.

MATT: He plucks it between the two toes and tucks it into a little pocket in the vest in front.

TALIESIN: I figure we go down there. If it gets rough, we'll just make an expeditious retreat.

LAURA: Is it right there, right where you go down, or is it--?

MATT: "It's sort of a-- I'll lead you there."

TALIESIN: That's awful kind of you.

MATT: "Okay! You ready? All right, come on, follow me!" Turns around, moves behind where the pen was and beyond the door where the goblins were in there. You can see them peeking out as you guys walk by, and they chuckle and giggle behind the door. Getting a closer look at them, they're younger.

TALIESIN: Weird question, are they laughing with us, or at us? Are we being taken? Make a what?

MATT: Insight check.

TALIESIN: Insight check. That's good, that could've been so bad. 21.

SAM: Whispers! Goblin whispers!

LIAM: (Liam Neeson accent) Now listen to me very carefully.

SAM: Guys, D&D Beyond is not aware that I'm running for president of their organization, but you should subscribe to their service.

TRAVIS: You're going to follow up on this?

TALIESIN: I said I don't follow politics. I was talking to Sam.

MATT: On the far end of this chamber, there's a heavy metal tunnel that curves around the back and that leads from where the pen is-- yeah, there you go-- from the pen reserve, where these creatures are being held and tethered, into another back room. He leads you inside and this is a holding area. The breeding grounds are underneath. They're brought up here and out into the pen as they get older, possibly. Inside here, there are large bundles of food. There are big piles of rolled chain that have been coiled, and there is a hatch that leads into a downward slope. He goes over to it, opens the hatch, and goes, "All right, come on. Follow me," and heads down into the darkness.

TRAVIS: We follow.

TALIESIN: I cast Light.

MATT: All right, the light emanates. The smell down here is **worse** than the interior because it's a combination of the moorbounder shit, it's a combination of rot, like rotting-corpse rot. The chamber curves a little bit, then goes straight, and then it splits off into two. There are two doors: heavy iron doors. One of them has a small barricade that's slipped in on the right side. The one on the left side has multiple pieces of metal pushed and propped up against it, chains wrapped around it, and a series of other poles and tools and things that are pushed up to try and keep it closed and at bay, as well as other furniture thrust against it. You can see that it's been pushed back a little bit.

TRAVIS: If you don't mind me asking, did you get a good look at it before you barricaded this entry point?

MATT: "No! I went in there and saw that that the-- well, one of my litters was being eaten, and then it made a bunch of noises and then I ran."

TRAVIS: You just heard it, right?

MATT: "Yeah, I'm not going to-- you see what I have to work with!"

SAM: Were the noises more squawks and shrieks? Or barks or growls?

MATT: "Small, angry squeaks, and then a big growl."

SAM: Will you be coming with us?

MATT: "No!"

SAM: All right.

TRAVIS: This doesn't seem like too big of a deal. I think we'll be just fine.

LAURA: Pop in, kill the thing, and then pop on out. Are any of them in there?

MATT: "Unfortunately, not in that one. The one on the right is where the litter's being raised currently. The one in there, not doing too well." He bows his head sadly for a moment.

LAURA: That's really sad.

MATT: "But hey, that's life in the wastes."

LIAM: So you're just going to wait here on tippy-toe while we go in?

MATT: "Yeah! Just want to listen in."

TRAVIS: Actually, we'd prefer to work in a little bit of silence. If you'll just wait for us up top, we'll take care of this lickety-split.

MATT: "All right. Okay, I accept your terms."

SAM: See you soon.

MATT: He goes over and pulls a key out of his pocket with his right foot, deftly unlocks one of the locks, pulls the chain off. "That's the big part. The rest of it is up to you." He scurries up the previous chamber and then up the slope and out of sight.

MARISHA: Am I still a tiefling?

LAURA: Should we prep?

LIAM: We've got about one minute left.

MARISHA: What's it look like? What's it look like when I change? Can you see, like, a little bit of my features poking through? What happens?

LIAM: No, it just happens instantaneously.

MARISHA: Am I getting a little smaller? Oh, really?

LAURA: I want to see-- wait! Can I look in your pants as it's happening?

MARISHA: Yeah, yeah, yeah!

TRAVIS: Fucking ridiculous.

MATT: You watch as the Polymorph wears off.

TRAVIS: Describe it! Tell us! Does it just disappear? Does it (slurping)?

MATT: It reverts.

LIAM: Two, one.

TALIESIN: Happy New Year!

MATT: (slurping) There you go.

TRAVIS: I was in the pool!

LIAM: Oh, for goodness sake!

SAM: Wow!

LAURA: I was distracted, I was looking at the horns! I didn't even see.

SAM: I saw it! I saw it!

MARISHA: Okay, sorry.

TRAVIS: Hey, Ducey. Why don't you come over here and put your ear on this wall and see if you can hear anything.

TALIESIN: All right.

MATT: Make a perception check for me.

TALIESIN: Yeah. Ugh, that's terrible. 12.

MATT: You don't really hear much, unfortunately. It's pretty quiet.

TALIESIN: Might be sleeping.

TRAVIS: Take your ear away for a second? I'll go (boom) against the side of it.

MATT: Okay.

TRAVIS: Now do you hear anything?

MATT: I'm going to say both of you guys make a perception check. You with disadvantage, based on the failure of the last roll.

TRAVIS: 17.

TALIESIN: 15.

MATT: Okay. Still hard for you to pick up a little bit against the door. You hear skittering.

MARISHA: Yeah. A fucking spider level.

MATT: Tiny squeaks, some scratching, more skittering. It's a ways away, a distant echo; and you're only barely able to make it up against the door.

TRAVIS: Yeah, sounds like a bunch of little things. But he did say a bunch of little squeaks and then a roar, so maybe whatever the bigger thing is has something to clean up the scraps.

TALIESIN: Or it was the sound of one of the panther things dying.

LIAM: Or perhaps we are talking about babies and mama? Hard to say.

LAURA: Maybe it's a spider, like a giant spider, that had a nest of baby spiders, so there's like a thousand little baby spiders and then one giant big one?

TALIESIN: I like spiders.

SAM: Well, let's go find out! Do we have a plan of attack?

TRAVIS: Is it supported by poles?

MATT: There are probably about 20 different poles, metal bars, pieces of heavy furniture leaned up against it. Whatever he and his goblin troupe were able to muster they pushed up against this door to ensure that whatever was in there did not come out.

TRAVIS: And it looks like it's been hitting against it?

MATT: Yeah.

MARISHA: Oh.

MATT: It looks like some of the poles have been pushed into the ground a bit, and there's a slight gap at the top where the door looks like it's maybe pushed a little out of its hinges.

TRAVIS: Good deal, good deal.

LAURA: I'm going to bless you, and you, and you. Yeah.

SAM: All right!

TALIESIN: Well, actually, do you want to wait until we're in? Because it's a 60 second-- do you want to wait until we're in?

LAURA: It only lasts for 60 seconds?

TALIESIN: Yeah. So you want to wait until we're--

SAM: Let's go in!

LIAM: We've got to go in now.

LAURA: Right as we're going in.

TRAVIS: Yeah, we start removing the poles.

MATT: Okay. Yasha helps you and it takes-- it doesn't take too long. Yasha's peeling them off the door and between the two of you and anybody else who wants to help you, you manage to get to a point where the door eventually (creaks) hangs open a little bit. The top and bottom hinges loose. The bottom breaks off entirely, and it opens up at an angle where now it's longways, occupying the same jamb where the door previously was.

TRAVIS: All right, so instead of a thing, it's opened its hatch slightly?

MATT: It's open and slid to one side, so now you can travel under or over it.

TRAVIS: That's kind of at our advantage. If you wanted to, you could float some light down in that direction, or send in your little friend to take a look. I'm looking at you, Widogast.

LIAM: Yeah, but we're running out of time.

TRAVIS: Time for what?

LIAM: She has given her Blessing to some of us, and that is--

LAURA: Yeah, right as we go in.

SAM: She was just saying she was going to do it as we're going in.

LIAM: Okay, okay. Oh, my cat. All right! Sending in Frumpkin.

MATT: Okay, roll a stealth check for Frumpkin.

LIAM: Good. Oh, but that's cat stealth, it's 18 plus-- where's my cat? 20.

MATT: Okay, then roll a perception check for Frumpkin, please.

LIAM: Natural 20.

TRAVIS: Ooh!

MATT: Okay. Frumpkin heads into the chamber. It is a rough, carved tunnel that descends into a subterranean cavern; maybe 50, 60 feet across before it comes to an end. It's not very wide, and it has a small opening towards the beginning, pinches a bit, and then curves around the side to end. It is damp, it smells awful, and as Frumpkin, stepping down into the first area, you can see bones scattered across the front area. Small bones, at least small for the creatures that were in here. They look human-sized in their tinier age, I guess. You see across one cluster, one mostly picked-clean body of what may have been a young moorbounder. Probably 30 or 40 large, crusty rats are clustered up over the body. Some of them are fighting for each other, squeaking at each other. Some are looking in the direction of the sound and the little bit of light that's peeking through from the door, that's now been pushed to the side, and the Light spell that Caduceus has been maintaining, and they're all pulling strips of flesh and whatever remnants they can from the bones and the corpse of one of these creatures.

TRAVIS: When you say large...

MATT: About that big each.

LIAM: Hold on, hold on. Looking through Frumpkin's eyes, I want Frumpkin to look at the ceiling.

MATT: Okay. Frumpkin looks up at the ceiling, and there are a few rough bits of rock and stone that seem to have, either through ancient seismic activity, pushed through this cavern. While it was partially carved, there were some pieces of heavy stone that couldn't be carved, and as such they protrude and arc down a bit. Looking up, pressed between where these two stones are jutting out, there is some sort of a creature. No details to be seen, but a large creature that has currently pressed all of its limbs against the two sides of the rocks, and it's suspended looking down.

LAURA: All of its limbs?

MATT: You see about four arms or legs. It looks almost feline-like, from what little details Frumpkin can see, pressed American Ninja Warrior-style into the rocks and is looking down. (snarling) A little bit of saliva drips from above.

LAURA: Is it very dark in there?

MATT: There's no light: pitch black.

LIAM: I ask Frumpkin to slowly, slowly crouch down low to the ground and back out of the chamber.

MATT: Okay. (softly) Frumpkin slowly backs out. (snarling) Backs out, backs out; and then manages to come back to the doorway, unnoticed.

LIAM: I snap him away from the door. He's gone. Okay, so there's a rat situation. That's one thing, a lot of rats. There is a big thing hanging from the ceiling, looking down at--

LAURA: Like a spider, or what?

LIAM: No, no. It was muscular; it looked maybe feline itself. It looks like it is watching the room.

SAM: Can you send in one of your big balls of fire?

LAURA: Straight up to the ceiling or something?

LIAM: I do not have that ready today because I thought we would do a little more talking in the city.

LAURA: That's a bummer.

LIAM: Yeah. Big bummer.

SAM: I have some oil.

TALIESIN: I've got some thoughts.

LAURA: (excited gasp) Fluffernutter! *Fluffernutter*!

SAM: We could do something like Fluffernutter.

LAURA: Ah!

SAM: I mean--

LIAM: Do you think we could make Fireline work here?

SAM: We could.

TRAVIS: Fireline? Wall of Fire?

LIAM: Hmm.

SAM: I would have to run in, though.

LIAM: We could tailor it. We could have Frumpkin do it and keep you safe.

SAM: Frumpkin can't carry a bottle of oil.

LIAM: That's true, that's true. What will you do when you get there, though?

SAM: Keep running. Hide.

LIAM: You need to peel away. You need to get up to that point, douse them, and peel away.

LAURA: Or we throw in some black powder, and you shoot it! Fluffernutter!

SAM: Fluffernutter! I don't have any black powder.

LAURA: What the fuck?

SAM: I have a big jar of burning oil, but that's similar. Similar!

LIAM: We have a thing we have done before. We could do it now. We could try it. Better than running in. Want to give it a go?

SAM: Sure. You've been in there, visually. How far from the entrance is the creature?

LIAM: It was about midway into the chamber, and the chamber went back about 60 or so. So 30, 35.

SAM: Maybe I can use Mage Hand to carry in--

LIAM: That's even better.

TRAVIS: What if we could convince this thing to be a steed? I could try to go in and talk to it.

SAM: You mean tame the beast?

TRAVIS: Yeah.

LAURA: What if it's intelligent? What if it's a human thing?

TRAVIS: That would be unfortunate.

TALIESIN: I have not known a lot of positive instances of getting a wild animal to be all right with domestication.

LIAM: I like this idea because that thing is not looking for a vial or a jar of anything floating through the air. We could drag it along. Then, like you're cooking, you're seasoning your food, you could douse the rats.

SAM: Go all over the room with it?

LIAM: Straight line to the rats, then juice the rats. Then (explosion).

TRAVIS: Do it.

SAM: I'm juicing the rats? I'm not juicing the guy up top?

LIAM: I have no way to reach the guy up top.

SAM: Okay. I'll juice the rats.

TRAVIS: You juice-a the rats-a!

SAM: I'll juice-a the rats!

LIAM and TRAVIS: You like-a the juice?

LIAM: That's a fresh SNL skit from 1980-something.

TALIESIN: Only the freshest.

MATT: He'll get you more juice.

SAM: We're going to try something. A set play.

MATT: Okay. In this moment of intense quiet, as you gather your supplies to prepare for your plan, you take a deep breath. We'll come back at this moment.

MARISHA: I knew it!

MATT: We can take a break now and then jump into whatever this is going to be when we return. We'll be back here in a little bit. We're going to take a short break, folks. We do have our fantastic Wyrnwood giveaway tonight.

TRAVIS and TALIESIN: Wyrnwood!

MATT: It's so pretty. I'm going to mispronounce the shit out of this. Padauk? Pad-ock?

SAM: It's beautiful. It's orange.

MATT: It's a great color. Or as they put it here: “*genus pertocarpus*.” *Pterocarpus*, maybe? I don't know. I don't try and pronounce things on this show anymore. I get enough shit as it is. One of you lucky winners gets to win this. Since you are in our Twitch chat, you just have to enter the keyword “beasts.” Plural, beasts. Once. More than once and you will be disqualified. Once again, it's only for people in the US and Canada, excluding Quebec, because of dumb laws. We will return here with a winner posthaste. See you guys in a little bit.

[break]

MATT: Welcome back, everyone. Laura will be jumping in here in a second. She's taking care of baby stuff. In the meantime, we have our winner of our Wyrnwood giveaway, which is joechasura. I believe that's the proper name. Joechasura. Congratulations! We'll get you your brand new spanking Wyrnwood dice box ASAP.

TRAVIS: You're giving out spankings?

MATT: You should be so lucky. As you guys begin to prepare yourselves to enter this chamber--

SAM: Yee-haw, Matt.

MATT: Yee-haw, Sam.

MARISHA: Y'all come back now, you hear?

MATT: I'm so happy!

MARISHA: Best idea.

MATT: It's the best. For you guys, to try and ascertain what your setup is as you head into this chamber, I would like you guys to figure out what your placement is. If we're at this point here, who's going in first?

SAM: Nott is right at the door because we're going to try to pull some shit.

MATT: That would be right at the entrance way, there. Caleb, you're at the front?

LIAM: Well, I will go to the other side of that chamber, that hallway.

MATT: Here?

LIAM: Yeah, and then take three steps backward. That's good. I am preparing a Fire Bolt to launch at the ground.

MATT: Three steps back, so we'll put you--

LIAM: Oh, I'm sorry, I meant five feet. Yeah. That's perfect. What is going on?

SAM: Travis threw food in my mouth.

MATT: That's Caleb and Nott. Where is everyone else going?

TALIESIN: I'd like to be towards the back, but not at the back.

MATT: There, maybe?

TALIESIN: That's good.

LAURA: Did everybody roll initiative?

MATT: Not yet. Combat has not yet begun.

TALIESIN: Who do we want in front? We should probably put Yasha towards the front, I imagine.

TRAVIS: I'd like to be up near the front as well.

MATT: We'll put Yasha behind here, and Fjord there, in front of Caleb.

LAURA: I guess I'll be next to Caleb.

MATT: Beau?

MARISHA: I'll be behind Caleb or near Caleb. Yeah, that works.

MATT: Are you keeping your blink dog at bay?

LAURA: He's going to sit outside for this one.

MATT: Nugget curls back into the exit portion of the chamber and (whines).

LAURA: Don't make any noise. I don't know if he understands me. He's real cute.

MATT: He sits there looking at you expectantly.

SAM: You still have a ferret around your neck?

LAURA: Yeah.

SAM: But a goth ferret!

LAURA: Yeah!

MATT: A gerret. Mighty Nein, what would you like to do? From as far as Frumpkin could see from how far Frumpkin went into the chamber, that was as far as it went. That's all you know.

SAM: The rats were whereabouts?

MATT: Right there.

LIAM: That's our only play at the moment.

SAM: Okay. I'm going to attempt something. It's definitely going to work and kill everything in there in one move! Watch and learn.

TRAVIS: Sounds confident.

LIAM: It will flush things out. Here we go.

SAM: (yelling) Fireline! (normal voice) I don't yell that. I don't yell Fireline. I whisper: Fireline! I cast Mage Hand. I take my purified pot of burning oil. I had purified some alchemist oil before. With the Mage Hand, starting maybe ten feet from where we are, the hand is going to start pouring it out slowly as it carries it down in a line.

MATT: (counting) It can get--

SAM: If I need to, I'll step in--

MATT: You may have to step in a little closer for the 30-foot range of Mage Hand. That's about as far as you need.

LIAM: I'm going to step in closer, then, behind Nott.

SAM: I'm going to douse the rats, right?

LIAM: Straight line up to the rats, and then season them like you're cooking pasta.

LAURA: Can Nugget fight?

MATT: Nugget can. Nugget can also die. It's up to you.

TALIESIN: Wow!

TRAVIS: Let Nugget fight!

LAURA: No, no, no.

MATT: Just to let you know.

LAURA: Good to know.

SAM: God forbid.

LAURA: Stop it!

MATT: Some things never change.

SAM: Going to make a line towards the rats. Then when it gets around the rats, a bunch of figure eights all over the rats, all around. When it seems like it's out, I'm going to (clicks tongue) to Caleb and say: Fireline!

MATT: The oil vial drifts out, pouring the line. You hear it scattering across the floor of the stone interior cavern, splattering and droplets hitting the stone. As it pours out, some of the rats (hissing) towards the sound. They have a darkvision of 30 feet, so they see you, Nott. You see in a second, all of a sudden, about 14 pairs of eyes suddenly glow as what little bit of light is peeking from the tunnel, behind where Caduceus has had the spell out, catches the back of their retinas. They all gleam in your direction, and then a few more. There's a large cluster of rats over there. Now, I need everyone to roll initiative.

LIAM: Is the oil mid-flight at this point?

MATT: The oil has just reached them and is now pouring over them. They've noticed Nott, and they're starting to scatter as the oil spills in their direction.

TALIESIN: That is terrible.

LIAM: Yep.

TALIESIN: Going last is probably good as a cleric, to be fair.

LAURA: This is true.

MARISHA: Are we still blessed?

MATT: You guys are blessed.

TRAVIS: Does that count for initiative?

MATT: No, only for attacks and saving throws. 25 to 20?

LAURA: 24.

SAM: 22.

MATT: 20 to 15?

TRAVIS: Yasha rolled a 19.

MATT: Beau, you're 18?

MARISHA: Correct.

MATT: 15 to ten?

TRAVIS: Ten.

TALIESIN: This is good.

MATT: Ten to five?

LIAM: Five.

TALIESIN: Six. Clerics at the end are nice because I can undo anything terrible that happened.

TRAVIS: Good. Clean up.

MATT: Top of the round, as soon as you hear the cluster of hisses and shifting of darkened rat bodies in the shadow across the way-- because most of you have darkvision. Those who don't, there's limited light in here. You cannot see really beyond the threshold of this chamber. Jester, you are first.

LAURA: Do they know that we're here?

SAM: The rats do, but that's about it. You're way in the back, so you might not even see what's going on.

LAURA: Okay.

SAM: Prepare something?

LAURA: Fuck it. I'm going to do it. I'm going to throw Daylight into the chamber.

MATT: What's the range on it?

TALIESIN: 60 feet.

LAURA: I'm going to put it right on the top of that little--

MATT: Right here? Daylight fills the chamber, revealing the rest of it. You can see where it continues and arcs around the way. That's as much as you can make out from this distance. You don't see anything else immediately visible from your vantage point. The chamber is very bright. It is like it's daytime, cloudless sky, within the room. The rats (snarling).

LAURA: That's why I did it; I thought they wouldn't like light.

MATT: Yeah, there you go. That's your action.

LAURA: Yeah. Yeah, and I already did a spell, so I can't do my bonus. Yeah, that's going to be my move.

MATT: You're going to stay where you are?

LAURA: Yeah.

MATT: Jester stays there. Next up on that is Nott.

SAM: With the light being cast, do I see the thing that was on the ceiling?

MATT: Make a perception check.

SAM: Is this my action to perceive?

MATT: This is a quick glance upwards. The Daylight's going to make it a little--

SAM: Four.

MATT: You do not. The ceiling itself comes to a pinch point where a lot of the stones were jutting down and creating this-- what would normally be a 15-foot-high ceiling comes down to about ten feet, where a lot of these rock shapes are jutting out from the sides and the ceiling. You do not see the creature that was mentioned by Caleb.

TRAVIS: A reverse crevasse in the ceiling?

SAM: I'll move forward and to my right, into that little jut-out area there, or maybe where-- I'm looking for a place to hide, so either that juttied-out area there--

MATT: Here or over here?

SAM: If there's a hiding spot where your finger is right now, that would be great.

MATT: There might be, yeah.

SAM: Okay, I'll go there.

MATT: Five, ten, 15, 20. You at least can get behind the series of natural stone and rock formations that cluster on that side of the wall.

SAM: Bonus action hide. Then hold my action until I see that creature. I'll hold the crossbow.

MATT: Okay, ready to shoot it when it appears?

SAM: Yes.

MATT: You go it. That ends your turn, Nott. It is Yasha's go.

TRAVIS: Yasha would like to use her 40 feet to come within the cave, all the way in, as far as she can.

SAM: There's going to be a line of fire.

MATT: 30, 35, 40 will get her right up to the--

TRAVIS: Right. Where do the rats start?

LIAM: Right where Yasha is.

TRAVIS: Let's back it up ten feet.

LAURA: Out of the line of fire, basically.

SAM: Just to the right.

TRAVIS: To the right?

SAM: I mean, it's from where I was standing--

TRAVIS: I'll go protect-- she will protect Nott. She'll be over there.

MATT: Yasha steps over and becomes part of the barrier that's hiding Nott.

TRAVIS: With her bonus action, she would like to rage. She will hold her attack for when something comes within melee range.

MATT: You've got it. Yasha finishes her go. Beau, you're up.

MARISHA: Okay, I go: Sorry, excuse me, Jes. Excuse me, Fjord. Sorry. I hear there are rats? I wanted a pet rat once. My mom wouldn't let me have one. Really sad. They're actually pretty clean--

MATT: That's your turn.

MARISHA: Yep.

MATT: That's all you do?

MARISHA: Maybe hold my action for an attack, but yeah. I want to move forward past everybody and come up towards Caleb, but out of the way.

MATT: There, maybe?

MARISHA: Yeah.

MATT: Okay. You're talking and saying this as you walk past, just as the oil flask, which has emptied now all over the rats, gets dropped and shatters on the ground right next to it. That finishes your go, Beau?

MARISHA: Yep.

MATT: All righty. At the end of that turn, you hear (snarling). Leaping from that ceiling portion down towards where Yasha is, you see a massive beast entity. In some ways catlike and some ways doglike, it has large, bone-like spined protrusions along the row of its back, between its shoulder blades. You can see patches of fur and robust ribs that are pushing against very tightly-pulled skin. It looks like it's starved or itself gaunt and skeletal in nature, but it is probably about ten feet from front to back. As it leaps down towards her, it attempts to make a multiattack on Yasha.

LAURA: Whoa, it's huge!

MATT: First, you get your attack, as does Yasha.

SAM: Oh, plus this for attack? 29 to hit.

MATT: That hits.

SAM: Am I hidden enough to get a sneak attack?

MATT: It is adjacent to Yasha, so you don't have to worry about it.

TRAVIS: 25.

MATT: That hits.

TALIESIN: Holy fuck. Jesus.

SAM: 34 to hit-- I mean, 34 points of damage.

MATT: Ooh, nice!

TRAVIS: 15 points of slashing damage.

MATT: Slick! As it jumps down from the ceiling, Yasha strikes with the Magician's Judge through the air, right as you release your bolt. You hear (pained cry) as it rears slightly from the attack, but the momentum still comes clambering down towards the ground and then up towards Yasha. At this point, you see that it has a tail. A long tail. A hooked, curved tail.

SAM: Scorpion tail?!

MATT: It has a hooked barb at the end that's about a foot long. First, it's going to strike with its bite attack against Yasha. That's going to be 19 to hit?

TRAVIS: That hits. She's really got to do something to her armor class, seriously.

LIAM: What's her AC at?

TRAVIS: 14.

LIAM: That's low.

SAM: Wait, no-- not 34 points. 31 points of damage.

MATT: Okay, got you. It's all good. That is 27 points of piercing damage to Yasha, reduced to 13. This tail stinger arcs in towards her to make a strike as well. That's going to be another 19 to hit.

TRAVIS: That hits.

MATT: She takes 15 points of piercing damage, reduced to seven, as the stinger at the end of the tail strikes and dives into right where the clavicle and neck meet. It sinks in, and she pulls and yanks it out. She does need to make a constitution saving throw, though, if you don't mind.

TALIESIN: That she gets a d4 added to.

MATT: Who is not blessed?

LAURA: Only three people are blessed.

TALIESIN: Yeah, it's only three blessed right now.

SAM: Fjord, Beau, Nott.

TALIESIN: Oh, I thought it was Yasha, Beau, Nott. Oh, never mind. She doesn't get that d4, then.

TRAVIS: 17.

MATT: Who is it?

LAURA: It's Fjord, Beau, Nott.

MATT: Fjord, Beau, Nott, so she does not get plus d4 on that.

TRAVIS: It was a one, so 17.

MATT: 17, okay. That's fine. The stinger withdraws. She pushes it out. She grasps the wound for a second. Doesn't seem to have any effect.

MARISHA: I was holding my attack. Can I do some shurikens at it?

MATT: Sure. That's true, you were holding your attack for ranged, so go for it.

MARISHA, TRAVIS, and LAURA: (shuriken noises)

MARISHA: First attack. Natural 19, so 27?

MATT: 27 does hit, yeah.

MARISHA: Plus a d4. These are d4 damage, right? Or are they monk weapons? We've gone back and forth about this--

LIAM: I remember this. We've talked about darts as shuriken.

MARISHA: I'll do a d4 for now. I don't know. That's pretty good. That's three plus five, so that's eight damage for the first one. Do I get to do two? I get to do two, right? Or do I just do one?

MATT: By the rules, it's one, but we've been house-ruling that you can take the full. That means that I can also use it against you guys as well.

MARISHA: That's another natural 19. I'll do the d4. Seven damage.

MATT: You got it. Okay, that finishes your go?

MARISHA: Yep.

MATT: All righty. That finishes that turn. Fjord, you're up.

TRAVIS: Yep, yep, yep. We haven't even done the line of fire yet.

SAM, TALIESIN and LIAM: Nope.

TRAVIS: Sweet ass! All right.

LAURA: Yee-haw!

TALIESIN: It'll get old, I swear.

SAM: Rootin'-tootin'!

MARISHA: Happier than a jackass eating cactus!

TRAVIS: I'm going to move in and get in front of Caleb, down on that ledge. I will stay there. With my bonus action, I will cast Hexblade's Curse on whatever the fuck that thing is.

TALIESIN: It's a puppy-kitty. Half puppy, half kitty.

TRAVIS: I will hold my attack action if it comes within melee range.

MATT: You got it. That ends your turn. That brings us now to the rats. This one (counting) can get right in between. It can move into people's spaces--

TALIESIN: Oh no.

MATT: That doesn't make a huge difference, as a swarm. Also, another rat swarm comes out of the corner here. Comes around and occupies Yasha's space. It's going to make a round of bite attacks against you, Beau. That's going to be a 16 to hit.

MARISHA: Miss.

MATT: The rats begin to swarm around you, and you kick and beat them.

MARISHA: I say: No, no!

MATT: Attacking Yasha, that is 14 to hit? That just succeeds, so Yasha then takes-- as the rats begin to climb up and bite around her legs and knees. Some of them jump up towards her, and she's trying to whack them away with her hand as she's focusing on the creature ahead of her. She takes nine points of piercing damage.

TRAVIS: Five total?

MATT: Yes, or four total. That finishes their go. Caduceus, you're up.

TALIESIN: Man. No, I'm after you. I'm six, so Caleb is first.

MATT: He's five. Right, Caleb? You rolled a five for your initiative?

TALIESIN: Oh, so I am first. It's going to be interesting. Can I get within 30 feet of the big fella?

MATT: Probably, yeah.

TALIESIN: You can't cast Bane on a rat swarm, can you? That seems--

MATT: It's a creature.

TALIESIN: Is it technically a creature?

MATT: It is a swarm, technically.

TALIESIN: I'm going to cast Bane on as many things in this room as I can cast Bane on, which is technically three, as long as they're within 30 feet. It's a charisma save, so you've got a shot.

MATT: Six for the rats on this end.

TALIESIN: Close, but no cigar.

TRAVIS: Yeah, I like it when you talk shit to the rats.

MATT: That is 14.

TALIESIN: Still no.

MATT: Rolled a natural 18, but they're minus four charisma.

TALIESIN: And the big fella.

MATT: 16.

TALIESIN: It's a charisma save of 16?

MATT: Correct. Natural 17 minus one.

TALIESIN: Did he save, or did he--?

MATT: Is your DC 16? Then he saved, yeah.

TALIESIN: Ah, motherfucker.

MATT: Sorry.

TALIESIN: That's okay. I'm going to use my bonus action to cast-- I'm so sorry. Reaction. There we are. Cast Healing Word on Yasha really quickly. I can do that, right? Yeah, 60 feet.

MATT: Well, you cast Bane, so you cannot do Healing Word in the same round.

TALIESIN: Oh, I can't do Healing Word in the same round? Okay, thank you. I can never remember.

MATT: It's okay. It's one spell and a cantrip.

TALIESIN: Then I will use my other one to release the swarm of angry beetles.

MATT: Swarm-on-swarm violence!

TALIESIN: I'm going to put the beetles on the creature who's being a jerk.

MATT: Sure. Whereabouts? 30 feet, you can do it right there.

TALIESIN: On him. He's going to be in the middle of it, and they're going to take a bite.

MATT: Go for it.

TALIESIN: Where are we? Here is my blightstaff, and I have to go to creatures so I can figure out how to do this. That's an attack-- there's my bite. That's a 15?

MATT: 15, that hits.

TALIESIN: That hits it? Oh wow, that's so nice. Let's get a few d4s here.

TRAVIS: I don't trust Matt right now. 15 hits the thing?

MATT: Yeah. Not everything has huge armor classes, Travis.

TRAVIS: Don't even talk to me. Mm-mm. That's a deep-ass cave. This ain't done.

TALIESIN: That's terrible. Three, five-- that's seven points of damage.

MATT: Seven points of damage? All right.

TALIESIN: He's irritated.

MATT: He is. The beetles are climbing and biting in various parts of-- the patchy hair and fur across its body already has exposed bits of dull gray and liver-spotted exposed portions that the beetles are already climbing onto, and clinging, and carving bits out. It shakes them off best it can.

TRAVIS: How much did you heal Yasha?

TALIESIN: I couldn't. That was why I didn't say.

TRAVIS: Yasha looks at you, disappointed.

MATT: That your turn?

TALIESIN: Yeah, that's the end of my turn.

MATT: Caleb.

LIAM: Six seconds ago, it was just Caleb and Nott standing on that little ledge, and Caleb was starting to swirl a little bit of fire in his hand. Then fucking pandemonium broke out, so Caleb just watched and went: Oh, oh, oh. The ball goes (flame sputtering) from his hand and hits the oil on the ground.

MATT: (fire roaring) That's going to be against the-- yeah, the oil on the ground. Those rats, those rats, the guy, and the beetles all suffer the flame explosion as it burns across. It's a dexterity saving throw for each of them. For the rats-- strangely, yeah! They made a 15, so they manage to only take--

TALIESIN: Wait, they take a d4 negative to that.

MATT: That's true. That'll do it. 11, they fail. That is five points of fire damage to that rat swarm. The other one-- no, they fail. That is another five points of fire damage to that rat swarm. The beetles--

TALIESIN: Seven.

MATT: Seven? They take five points of fire damage. The creature, natural 19 plus one, 20. It makes the save, so it takes no damage.

LIAM: I will finish this turn-- Caleb backs out of the room going: Oh, oh, oh. Walks back and stands next to Jester.

LAURA: Hi!

LIAM: Oh, we look alike.

MATT: All righty. That finishes your turn. Jester, you're up first.

LAURA: Okay, I'm going to cast Spiritual Weapon!

MATT: Where you putting it?

LAURA: At fucking 4th-level.

MATT: 4th-level, nice!

LAURA: I'm going to put it right above the dude. That's my bonus action, so I'm going to try to hit it. 14?

MATT: Just misses.

LAURA: Balls, yay. I'm going to cast Toll the Dead as my action at the guy.

MATT: It's a wisdom save?

LAURA: Yes.

MATT: Natural 20.

LAURA: Cool. That was a really fun turn.

MATT: Sorry.

TALIESIN: Some days, man.

TRAVIS: But you got your candy out there on the field.

LIAM: (deep voice) This is Sam Elliott for the church of the Traveler.

MATT: End of Jester's turn. Nott, you're up-- unless you want to move? You're good?

LAURA: Mm-hmm.

SAM: I'm going to get up and run deeper into the cave, right past the thing, using bonus action to disengage.

MARISHA and LAURA: Ooh!

MATT: (counting) 25, 30, 35. That's as far as you can get there.

SAM: Okay. I'll turn around. Well, do I see anything back there?

MATT: Make a perception check.

SAM: Okay. Nope, seven. When I get there, I'll turn around and fire a crossbow bolt into the big thing.

MATT: You got it. Roll for attack.

SAM: Oh yeah, plus things. That's 29 again.

MATT: 29 again hits, yeah! Roll damage.

SAM: Still sneak attack because it's engaged to--

MATT: Because it's engaged with Yasha.

SAM, LAURA, and TALIESIN: Whoa!

MATT: Oh no! Six, six, five, five, one.

SAM: 29.

LIAM: One low roll, the rest are high.

TALIESIN: It's like the thing splintered in it, oh god.

MATT: As it's currently being assaulted by a cluster of beetles biting into its side, flames burst from underneath it. Yasha and it are both clashing with jaw and blade. (arrow swish) In its hindquarters, the bolt slips in there. You watch the tail suddenly, instinctively pulse and reflexively tense itself from the pain that it's now suffering from the impact.

SAM: I'll add a Fury of the Small, another eight points of damage.

MATT: Sure! 37 points of damage on one hit. Not too bad. That's your turn. Yasha's go.

TRAVIS: Yasha's going to stay in the melee range of the creature and is going to try and work her way around and grapple the stinger on the tail.

MATT: Okay! She can move around this way, if she wants to go through the difficult terrain. (counting) 40. She'll get right there to try and grapple its tail. The rats do get an attack of opportunity on her. No, not with the minus four from the Bane. She moves around. Make an athletics check for her. Because she's raging, she does have advantage on it.

TRAVIS: That is 17.

MATT: She manages to grapple the creature, and she's holding the tail. It's grappled. It can't move. It can still strike with it. If she wants to, next round, she can attempt to continue to actually restrain the tail and prevent it from attacking. It is grappled, and if she wants to, next turn, she could hold it and make it unable to do anything. Got it. It does get an attack this turn, but I'll say it's at disadvantage.

TRAVIS: Does the grapple count towards keeping her rage up?

MATT: Yeah. It's still an attack.

TRAVIS: Great. Okay.

MATT: That finishes Yasha's turn. Beau, you're up.

MARISHA: I'm going to dart across, parkour off of the stalagmite because I'm a boss. Nope, in front of the catdog's face.

SAM: Where I was hiding.

MARISHA: Yeah. I'm going to jump, and I'm going to come down, and I'm going to rocket punch it with my staff to its throat.

MATT: Right there? You got it. The rats already used their reaction, so it doesn't matter.

MARISHA: Do I get advantage?

MATT: No, you don't get advantage on it.

MARISHA: Okay. That's a 19 again. That keeps happening, and I'm super into it. Oh god, and I rolled max damage! 13.

MATT: 13? Ooh.

MARISHA: Second attack--

MATT: As you come down, *whack* with the staff over the top of its head, (scream). It whips off to the side. Slobber scatters across the rock floor, and it has to catch itself. It's starting to look woozy.

MARISHA: I want to bring the staff back up and reverse, with 20 to hit.

MATT: That hits. Roll damage.

MARISHA: Yeah. Ten damage. Crack.

MATT: Crack. Ooh, it's looking real bad.

MARISHA: Then I'm going to turn to Yasha, and I'm going to say, "You chasing tail?" Then I'm going to do a Flurry of Blows, and I'm going to go *pop, pop.*

MATT: I want to give you disadvantage for those attacks.

SAM: Does her tiefling dick grow back when she says that?

TRAVIS: It's like in Disney in The Little Mermaid. There's this little, boop!

MARISHA: It's subliminal. Yeah. First attack, natural one.

MATT: You're so involved in your shitty phrase to Yasha that you look back and go, whoa!

MARISHA: I meant to do that. Next one, that's better.

TALIESIN: Still have your d4.

MARISHA: That was a natural one. Yeah, still a d4, so that's 21 plus--

MATT: That hits.

MARISHA: Okay, 24. Ten damage again.

MATT: Ten damage. You missed with that one strike, and you turn back. It turns its giant jaws towards you, its mouth open, the strings of slobber stretching from across its teeth. As it rears back, Yasha holding its tail, you uppercut it right in the chin. You hear (whimpering), and it falls unconscious on the ground.

SAM: Unconscious, not dead. We could still wake it up and tame it.

TRAVIS: Impressive.

SAM: Should we wake it up and tame it?

TALIESIN: There might be more in here. Let's--

MATT: Hexblade's Curse is unfortunately gone.

TRAVIS: The what?

MATT: Hexblade's Curse is gone.

TRAVIS: Oh, right.

MATT: You gain temporary hit points from that, I think?

TRAVIS: I do. Yeah, that's okay. I haven't been hit at all.

MATT: That ends Beau's turn?

MARISHA: Yep.

TALIESIN: Now the dragon's turn. Sorry!

MATT: You watch it collapse, and there is this, "Oh cool, we can maybe tame this thing," Nott, you hear (growling). You look up above, and on an upper platform, up here, as well as around the corner, are two more of the same creature looking right at you. As they both run in and-- leaping down, there and there. First one is going to make two attacks at you, one with a bite and one with its tail stinger. That is going to be a 19 to hit.

SAM: Hits!

MATT: You take--

LAURA and TALIESIN: Oh no!

TRAVIS: Nice narrow cavern, too.

MATT: 22 points of piercing damage.

SAM: Okay, I guess I'll Uncanny Dodge that one.

MATT: You take 11 points of piercing damage. You can mark that. The tail stinger is going to attempt to strike at you. That is going to be a 22 to hit.

SAM: Hits.

MATT: You then immediately suffer 14 points of piercing damage. I need you to make a constitution saving throw.

TALIESIN: With a d4.

MATT: Correct.

SAM: Not great. Better, better. 15.

MATT: You succeed the saving throw.

SAM: Thank you!

MATT: As you feel the toxin pushing into your body, you manage to wrench it from the front of your chest and sternum. Some of the weird, oily, poison venom (spurting) out the back of it, as you remove it from the wound. As you push it away, the other one comes in to bite you from the opposite end. That's going to be a 15 to hit?

SAM: No!

MATT: That you duck below, and its bite hits the side of the rock wall. Tail stinger is going to come at you. That is a natural 20.

TALIESIN: You're more that 30 feet away, aren't you?

MATT: From you, yes.

TALIESIN: Yep, never mind. I can't do anything.

MATT: You suffer 30 points of piercing damage from the tail as the stinger hits you in the abdomen and lifts you like a foot off the ground. You're actually held there for a second. Make another constitution saving throw.

SAM: That's a natural one.

MATT: You are poisoned, and you are paralyzed.

TRAVIS: Oh crap! Okay. Where the fuck are you?

LAURA: This is really bad.

TALIESIN: Well, it's bad. It's not really bad, but it's bad.

SAM: I'm not dead, just paralyzed and poisoned.

LAURA: They both have gone now?

MATT: They both attacked, and they are going to back away now. It's going to drag you this way in the corner, in its jaw. It's pulling you off of the stinger of the other, and it pulls you away. Nott's-- you're still conscious, right?

SAM: Yeah.

MATT: Eyes open, dragging on the ground, hands and crossbow being pulled across the stone. That ends their turn. That now brings us to Fjord.

TRAVIS: Yeah, I'm going to bring myself within 30 feet of where Nott is. I guess I'll come forward as much as I need to.

MATT: (counting) 30.

TRAVIS: No, 30 feet away from Nott.

MATT: Oh, 30 feet away. I see.

TRAVIS: Yeah. I'm going to use my bonus action with the Summer's Dance falchion to Misty Step to Nott.

MATT: You then suddenly appear partway across the chamber, right next to Nott.

TRAVIS: I'm going to reach out and grab her and go: Bad doggy! I'm going to cast Thunder Step. I'm going to bring Nott with me.

MATT: Okay! What's the saving throw on Thunder Step?

TRAVIS: It is a constitution, 16.

MATT: Ten plus six, 16. It just makes it. It still takes half damage, right?

TRAVIS: It does.

MATT: Roll damage on that.

TRAVIS: Okay, that's 4d10 now. 12, 22, 28. Yeah, 28.

MATT: 14 points of thunder damage to it as you appear, grab Nott, and then this quaking impact, this blast, shakes the interior of the chamber. Pieces of loose stone and rock tumble from the ground as a whole layer of dust is shaken loose from the roof of this cavern, slowly drifting down as other pebbles fall. You see as Fjord reaches out and grabs you, and you both vanish. Where do you want to be placed?

TRAVIS: We're going to shoot back up to where Caduceus is. I'm going to drop Nott off.

SAM: What a move! Greens stick together.

TRAVIS: Yeah. Drowning victims.

MATT: Yeah. Does that finish your turn?

TRAVIS: Yes.

MATT: That ends Fjord's go. Now it's the rats turn. Now, these rats are going to move up to Caduceus, there. This one's going to also move up to your area there, Caduceus. You now have these two rat swarms. They start clawing up the side of the rocks and swarming up towards you. Around the left side, you see the other swarm spin up in your direction.

TALIESIN: That's fine.

MATT: First one is going to-- I'm going to roll the d4, since they have Bane on them. That is a 12.

TALIESIN: That does not hit.

MATT: That does not hit.

TALIESIN: That one I'm going to use Shield of Retribution on, just because that's fun. Yeah, just to be a dick. They suffer-- here we go. That second group of rats takes 4d6 force damage. That's 14 points of force damage, and they have to make a strength saving throw or be pushed 20 feet directly away from me.

MATT: Three, they fail! Which one do you want to cast it on?

TALIESIN: The second one, whichever one is closest to Nott.

MATT: This one.

TALIESIN: Yeah, 20 feet away.

SAM: Some of you guys care about me so much.

MATT: As they climb up and start attacking, Caduceus pulls the-- it's the shield, right? Slams a foot into the ground, and the shield suddenly emits this vibrating, impacting wave of arcane or divine energy and forces outward. The rats scatter back in this net of furry bodies that all pelt the ground about 20 feet away, not far from where you're standing, Beau. They all gather in the center to form another swarm once more. The swarm is actively thinned out. It's half the swarm it used to be.

MARISHA: Still whole on the inside, though.

MATT: There you go. Mostly.

TALIESIN: Rat game.

MATT: That's going to finish their go. Caduceus, you're up.

TALIESIN: I'm going to cast-- can I touch Nott at this point?

MATT: You can move over and touch Nott.

TALIESIN: I'm going to move over and touch Nott.

TRAVIS: How do you touch Nott?

TALIESIN: I'm going to very gently give a little pat, and I'm going to cast Lesser Restoration. I'm going to pick paralyzed because that'll be a beginning. Since that's a 2nd-level spell, as a bonus, can I cast something that's a lower level? I can't remember how the dual-- oh wait, no, I also have a--

LAURA: Only a cantrip.

TALIESIN: Only a cantrip? Not a bonus action, even with--

MATT: As it works, you can cast one spell per round.

LAURA: You can take a feat, though, to do that.

TALIESIN: Which feat is that?

LAURA: It's in Matt's.

MATT: It's in the Tal'Dorei-- next time, yeah. That's what you've got right now. You cast Lesser Restoration, and that's your turn, unless you have a bonus action spell that's a cantrip.

TALIESIN: For my bonus action, I'm going to move the insect swarm to whatever's the closest thing to them.

MATT: The rats you pushed back.

TALIESIN: Then they're going to take a bite.

MATT: Go for it. With that, you are no longer paralyzed, Nott.

SAM and LAURA: Hey!

MATT: You're still poisoned.

TALIESIN: That's terrible. Seven.

SAM: As I whip out of my paralyzation, I look at Caduceus, and I'm confused. Sunbreaker, is that you?

TALIESIN: No one's ever called me that before.

MATT: As you're having this discussion--

TRAVIS: Hey, it's okay, I only saved your life.

SAM: He looks like a minotaur.

MATT: You hear the screaming of dozens of rats as beetles feast upon their corpses. Swarm-on-swarm violence ends with the death of that rat swarm.

LAURA: (laughs) Swarm-on-swarm violence.

MATT: There we go. That finishes your go, Caduceus? Caleb, you're up.

LIAM: I will take a straight walk forward, and plant myself next to Caduceus, and look past Beauregard and Yasha. Smearing molasses on my hands, I go and I turn my hand in a counterclockwise circle and cast Slow, 120 feet away on these two beasts.

MATT: On these two beasts there? You got it.

LIAM: Wisdom, 16.

MATT: The one on that end there, natural 14 plus five, 19. The one around the corner--

MARISHA: Plus five.

MATT: Yeah, they have a plus-five wisdom save. Ten plus five, 15.

LIAM: Oh, so that one fails.

MATT: That one is slowed.

LAURA: They're really intelligent.

MATT: Your spell DC's 16? Yeah, so that one is slowed.

MARISHA: Maybe we **can** tame the unconscious one.

SAM: Or all of them.

MATT: Slow is, they can only take attack--

LIAM: Action or bonus action, not both. AC is reduced, and movement is--

MATT: Halved.

LIAM: I'll get back to you on that.

MATT: That's fine. Okay, well, there you go. You cast your Slow spell. Is that your turn?

LIAM: Speed is halved, takes negative two to its AC and dex saves. Yeah, that is my turn.

MATT: Okay, cool. Ending that go, top of the round, Jester, you're up.

LAURA: Okay, I'm going to step in the doorway, and I'm going to point to the back like I'm about to swing a baseball bat.

TRAVIS: A home run?

LAURA: Yeah, a home run. I'm going to do this and make my Spiritual Weapon fly up and batter swing the bad guy.

MATT: Right there? Go for it. That's amazing.

LAURA: Motherfuck you!

TALIESIN: That was so rough.

MATT: I saw that dice spin around and do a little dance.

TALIESIN: It thought about things. It really deliberated.

SAM: There's no crying in baseball.

LAURA: That's 11. That does not hit.

MATT: 11 does not hit, unfortunately. It swings wide and hits the rock. Part of the stone wall, next to the beast as it pulls away, breaks, and a section of stone (clattering).

LAURA: Fuck you! Know what I should've done? I should've done this in the reverse order! Whatever, I'm helping someone else out. I'm going to Guiding Bolt that beast next.

MATT: The same one? Go for it! Roll for an attack on Guiding Bolt as you *hadouken* a giant, glowing, divine bolt of energy.

LAURA: 17?

MATT: 17 hits.

LAURA: Oh, I was casting that at 4th-level, P.S., because that's what I have up. I swear.

TALIESIN: Yeah, that is true.

MATT: Okay. That's your other 4th-level spell? You got it.

LAURA: Yes, because I'm smart. That's 7d6.

TALIESIN: I'm concentrating on Bane, which is almost gone anyways because there's only one more creature with it.

LAURA: (counting) 27 points of radiant damage. The next attack gets advantage; that's why I should've fucking done that first, and then I had advantage on my--

MATT: Yeah.

TRAVIS: Nott is after Jester.

LAURA and MARISHA: Yee-haw!

TALIESIN: Dang-nabbit.

MATT: That finishes your go, Jester. Nott, you're up.

SAM: At the top of my turn, do I take-- I'm still poisoned, I believe?

MATT: You're just poisoned, is the status. Meaning your attacks have disadvantage.

SAM: Oh, I don't take damage every round?

MATT: It is not a consistent, damaging poison.

SAM: Okay, attacks at disadvantage?

MATT: Correct, while you are poisoned.

TALIESIN: If you get advantage, you cancel it out. If you get double advantage, you get advantage, if I recall correctly.

MATT: Technically, if you have advantage and disadvantage, as long as they cancel each other out, it doesn't matter how many more of one or the other. It's a regular roll.

TALIESIN: Fair.

SAM: Is anything engaged with these beasts?

MATT: No.

SAM: They're at disadvantage because they're slow, right? No.

MATT: No. That guy's AC is a little bit lower. That guy has advantage against him on the next attack because she hit it with Guiding Bolt.

SAM: I'll go attack the one that has Guiding Bolt. I have to run up closer to get within 30 feet.

MATT: Okay. How close are you getting?

SAM: Within 30 feet exactly, without running into fire.

MATT: Yeah. The fire, it's not enough to really damage anybody after the initial flare-up.

SAM: Caleb, should we do Fireline again? I got one more flask.

LIAM: Back to the drawing board.

SAM: Then I will bonus action hide behind that pillar. Shit, I could attack now, but it won't be sneak attack damage. Well, I'm bonus action hiding.

MATT: Make a stealth check.

SAM: Okay. 18 plus things.

LAURA: Plus 11.

SAM: Plus 11. I'm going to attempt to hide and then attack. Disadvantage, advantage, so it's a straight roll? Ten.

TALIESIN: Would you still have a-- do you still have Bless? Yeah, you haven't gone unconscious.

SAM: 11, and the attack is plus nine.

MATT: It does hit. However, it is not sneak attack because, even though you were hiding, advantage and disadvantage cancels out. You're just doing a regular bolt.

SAM: A regular bolt. Mm, so sad. Eight points.

MATT: Eight points of damage. That finishes your go, Nott. Yasha's turn.

TRAVIS: I'm going to be honest, I think D&D Beyond reset her hit points. I think she was at 55? I'm guessing from memory, so that's--

MATT: You guys have had a few nights. You had a long rest, remember?

TRAVIS: Yeah, but she got hit a bunch in the cave. I mean, reset her--

MATT: Oh, earlier, you mean?

TRAVIS: It just reset her. Yeah, so I don't know if chat has it or whatever. Max can tell me, but I think she was at 55. She will run up and make both of her attacks at, yeah.

MATT: You got it.

TRAVIS: Not reckless because thorny tails and shit. That is a 22 to hit.

MATT: 22 hits!

TRAVIS: Brilliant, and that's 21 to hit.

MATT: 21 to hit also hits. Both hit! Nice.

TRAVIS: First one has the Divine Fury. Six! Awesome. (adding) 22! 22 points of slashing damage. Second one, (adding) 14 points of slashing damage.

MATT: As she rushes forward, one giant swing with her two-handed greatsword, Magician's Judge, cuts across the front of the head. (squeals) It backs away, and you see a splatter of blood across the ground. She comes around for a second body strike. It actually cuts through part of the shoulder of the creature. You see its arm fold a little to that side before it catches itself, and the blade catches the stone. The actual weapon shakes from the impact as she dislodges it. No damage. It's a magic weapon; it's fine, but it leaves a giant cleft mark in the middle of the wall. That end her turn?

TRAVIS: It does.

MATT: Okay. That brings us to Beau.

MARISHA: I sashay forward towards this guy. Might as well finish what Yasha started and pop pop.

MATT: Go for it.

MARISHA: I'm going to use my staff. That's super lame. That's 11.

MATT: 11 does not hit. You try and swing and it's jaws actually catch the edge of your staff and you have to wrench it free. It's growling at you.

MARISHA: No fetch! Natural 20 on the next one. What's up?

MATT: That will definitely hit.

MARISHA: Big money, no whammies. Oh my god. This happens to me all the time. Every time, I feel like. I'm going to double my one to a two.

MATT: I'm sorry. But hey, you hit!

TRAVIS: Critical beep.

MARISHA: Seven damage.

MATT: All right. Seven damage on that strike. You have your bonus action still.

MARISHA: Super cool. I'm going to bonus action Flurry of Blows.

MATT: All righty.

MARISHA: Don't fuck me, Gil. 14?

MATT: All right, let's see here. 14 does not hit.

MARISHA: Okay. Next one.

MATT: 15 is the threshold, unfortunately.

MARISHA: No.

LAURA: Are you adding your d4? You're blessed.

MARISHA: Fuck. So 14 plus--

MATT: That hits.

MARISHA: To 16? Okay. Thanks, Jes. That's better. Ten damage. And the next one was an eight plus five, so 13 plus-- 15.

LAURA: That's what you need.

MARISHA: 15 hits? Eyy, Bless is the fucking best! Eight damage.

LAURA: Yeah. It's like even though I'm not hitting, I'm letting other people hit.

MARISHA: It's true.

MATT: Do you want to learn anything about the creature?

MARISHA: Yes. What--

SAM: What if we can tame it!

MATT: Resistances, immunities, condition immunities, anything else you want to know about it?

LIAM: Favorite chew toy?

MATT: What type of creature it is, whatever. You have two hits.

MARISHA: What type of creature is it? Is it a beast? Is it a creature?

MATT: It is a fiend. A demon, specifically.

MARISHA: It is a demon-specific fiend.

LAURA: Oh my god, what if there's a portal in here?

MATT: As you punch into twice and you pull back, you look at its wounds and there's this necrotic essence festering in it, and that's when you're like, "This creature's not from this plane. This is not natural." You can learn another thing from it, if you want.

MARISHA: Okay. It's made of planar essence. We know his wisdom is plus five. Do we want to know any saving throws?

LAURA: Weaknesses?

MARISHA: Yeah, let's see if it has any vulnerabilities.

MATT: Vulnerabilities? No vulnerabilities on these guys.

MARISHA: Fuck!

LAURA: Shit. Sorry.

MATT: There's always damage resistances you can learn. There's always condition immunities.

MARISHA: Resistances? Okay.

MATT: You did hit one earlier with a bonus action, didn't you?

MARISHA: I did.

MATT: You got to remember to use that.

MARISHA: I know.

LIAM: It's all right. There are only three rules in the game. They're very easy to remember.

MATT: That finish your turn, Beau?

MARISHA: Yep.

MATT: All righty. It's now their turn. The one that's slowed, half movement. It's going to bound up towards Yasha. It can only make one attack, so it's going to swing out with its tail. Right? It says it can make--

LIAM: Action or bonus. Not both.

MATT: Oh, action or bonus? But multiattack can only take one attack, correct?

LIAM: Only one.

MATT: So it's going to attack with its tail stinger.

LIAM: A single thing.

MATT: All righty. That's going to be 16 to hit.

TRAVIS: Hits.

MATT: So Yasha takes--

TALIESIN: We need to do something about Yasha's AC.

LAURA: Yeah.

MATT: 17 points of piercing damage, reduced to eight. Constitution saving throw.

TALIESIN: With a d4.

MATT: She does not get a d4. She's not blessed.

TALIESIN: Oh, she's not blessed! My god, my brain.

TRAVIS: Not going to do it. That's a seven.

MATT: She is poisoned and paralyzed.

LAURA: No!

SAM: Not P&P!

MATT: As the stinger jams into the side of her neck, she reaches up to grab it and suddenly the muscles tense up and flexes and the stinger withdraws from her throat. Her eyes go wide and you can see a bit of foam gathering at the corner of her mouth. Her hand is stuck in that position. The other one is going to go. It's going to make both of its attacks on a paralyzed Yasha.

LAURA: Oh no, she's paralyzed! That means it gets critical! Is it an auto-critical?

MATT: Yeah. So the first, the bite attack, is going to be a critical hit automatically.

LAURA: Oh my god, did you just kill Ashley's character?

SAM: Do you know how many hit points she has?

TRAVIS: Uh-huh.

LAURA: You know now how many she has left?

SAM: Did they text you or something?

TRAVIS: I was guessing before, but I think I was close. I might be off by one. I know where she's at.

TALIESIN: Oh wow. How bad?

MATT: 54 points of piercing damage?

TRAVIS: She's unconscious.

LAURA: Oh no, oh no. Is he getting another attack?

MATT: Yasha is unconscious now.

SAM: Someone do something! Someone do something!

MATT: It has a rampage ability. When it reduces a creature to zero hit points on a melee attack on its turn, it can make a bonus action to move up to half speed and make a bite attack. So it's going to--

LAURA: Isn't it slowed, though?

MATT and LIAM: This is the other one.

LAURA: Oh no.

MATT: The other one is going to bonus action and attack to you with a bite attack, Beau.

MARISHA: Okay, okay. It's fine.

MATT: That's a natural 18. It's going to be 26 to hit.

MARISHA: Yeah. That hits.

SAM: It's Ashley's fault. Should have been here.

LIAM: Start thinking.

TALIESIN: We cool, we cool.

SAM: "We cool, we cool"?!

MATT: 24 points of piercing damage to you, Beau. After it sinks its teeth into Yasha's shoulder and throws her to the ground, she falls. Her eyes roll back, lids half open. It pulls back. You can see it tasting the blood in its mouth. Its eyes go wide as the blood lust kicks in, and it turns towards you and lashes out again. You bring up your staff to try and deflect it, but the jaws reach out and push it to your chest and clamp down on your shoulder and chest. You pull yourself forward. The pain-- both the crushing pressure of its jaws and the teeth sinking into your torso-- is astronomical. As it has you there, it's tail goes toward the back.

MARISHA: Bad demon dog. Bad demon dog!

MATT: That's going to be a 20 to hit.

MARISHA: My AC is 20.

MATT: That hits.

TALIESIN: Goddamn it. I'm working on it.

TRAVIS: It's a constitution saving throw if it hits.

TALIESIN: You have a d4 on that constitution saving throw.

MATT: 17 points of piercing damage to you as you feel it hit you right by the spine in where the left kidney is. It enters your body with a sharp pain, and you need to make a constitution saving throw.

MARISHA: Okay, okay. Where's my con save? Oh, plus three. Thank you. Okay. Roll a d4. That's 18 plus three, so 21.

MATT: The poison does not take hold. You feel it enter the inside of your wound. The sharp pain that hits you is nowhere near as strong as your monk's will to resist it. The control over your body and your organs and the systems within you gaining as you continue to grow in experience and world understanding. You concentrate for a second and the poison actually ejects from the wound. The muscles itself not allowing it to enter your bloodstream.

MARISHA: That's cool.

MATT: That ends their turn. Actually, that one is going to use its movement to attempt to leap up onto the top of the platform. You do get an opportunity attack if you want to take it, Beau.

LAURA: Kill it, Beau. Kill it.

MATT: To try and keep it from going.

MARISHA: Sentinel, as well. 15. That's what I needed, right?

MATT: Yep. He does not get the chance to shift away.

MARISHA: He does not move and he takes eight damage.

MATT: Eight points of damage.

MARISHA: Yeah.

MATT: All righty. That one is slowed. I believe at the end of the turn it can make a wisdom saving throw. Let's see if it gets to remove the Slow. Natural 19 plus five. It is no longer slowed.

SAM: Oh man.

LIAM: Okay, okay.

MATT: That ends their turn. Now, it brings us to Fjord's.

TRAVIS: I have a quick question. The 54 points of damage, was that halved? It wasn't, right? Because it was poison? The critical on Yasha?

MATT: No, that was piercing.

TRAVIS: It was piercing?

LAURA: So it should have been halved?

MATT: Correct, yes.

TRAVIS: Okay. So help me. What is half of 54?

LAURA: 22

SAM: 27

LAURA: Just kidding, 27

TRAVIS: Okay. She was actually at 56 points. So she's--

MATT: At the top of the round, right?

TRAVIS: Yeah.

MATT: So she took that.

TRAVIS: She was at 62 minus 8. And then--

MATT: She took the bite attack at the beginning. Or no, it was the tail attack.

TRAVIS: Mm-hmm. She was at 54. She was at 54 and she took half of 54. So she's still up.

LAURA: So she's not unconscious.

TRAVIS: Right.

MATT: Okay. Well, as opposed to redoing all of that scenario, she's still paralyzed, and she's in the space.

MARISHA: She's alive? She's not unconscious?

TALIESIN: That's a shame.

SAM: It's a shame that she isn't dead?

MATT: It was 54 at the top of the round?

TRAVIS: No. 62 minus eight, and then the half of the 54.

MATT: Yeah, because the 16 reduced to eight, so it would be, yeah. So she's still up.

TRAVIS: What's half of 54?

LAURA, SAM and MATT: 27.

TRAVIS: Thank you. Got it. She's at exactly 27. Sorry.

TALIESIN: Yeah, that's works.

MATT: That round happened as it happened. Because you didn't--

TRAVIS: Dani and Max were screaming from the lobby, "She's not unconscious!"

MATT: Now you remember. Lesson learned.

MARISHA: It's like you're playing two characters or something.

MATT: Exactly, I know.

TALIESIN: We cool. We cool.

MATT: That finishes their go. Fjord, it's your turn.

TRAVIS: Okay. Yeah. I'm going to use all 30 feet of my movement to head towards my comrades. Are the rats still a thing?

MATT: (counting) 30. Yes. They haven't gone yet this round. They're after you.

TRAVIS: As long as I'm not-- no attack or anything.

TALIESIN: I've got a swarm. They'll attack them.

MATT: They're currently next to Caleb.

TRAVIS: Okay. I'm going to send two Eldritch-- boy. Boy, boy, boy.

SAM: Oh boy.

TRAVIS: Oh boy. I'm going to send two Eldritch Blasts at one each.

MATT: One each? Go for it. Go for the one that's in front of you there.

TRAVIS: That's a natural one.

MATT: Oof. You go to fire. It's leaping up, and you correct for it and fire up to catch it, but then Beau grabs its tail and drags it back down and it ends up slamming into the rock where it was going to go.

TRAVIS: That's fucking teamwork

MATT: The other one, it does have half cover because it's by the wall, so it gets a plus two to its AC. What did you roll to hit?

TRAVIS: It's a natural 15 plus eight, so it's--

MATT: Yeah, you still hit. Roll damage.

TRAVIS: 1d10. Plus five, that's ten, so 15 points of Eldritch Blast.

MATT: 15 points of force damage. The second one, you release and it skids off the stone and hits it in the center of its jaw and nose and as it pulls back, you can see this burn mark where the impact hit and the dent where you probably broken a part of the front of its snout.

TRAVIS: Awesome.

MATT: That finish your turn?

TRAVIS: That does, yes.

MATT: All right. End of Fjord's go. The rats are going to move up here, and move into Caleb's space.

SAM: Rats attacking.

TALIESIN: Are they getting away from me? Are they the ones who attacked me, right?

MATT: You moved out of the way, though, to try and heal Nott.

TALIESIN: That's right. Never mind.

MATT: No, that's okay. All of a sudden, they swarm into your space, Caleb. Finally, a decent roll for the rats. 17 to hit?

TALIESIN: Minus a d4.

MATT: That's right. Minus a d4. 16 to hit.

LIAM: 16? Shield, reaction.

MATT: The rats leap up and all scatter back as the arcane shield thrusts them down the stairs. They gather up again into a cluster right at the base of your feet, and you're holding up the Shield. That ends their go. Caduceus, you're up.

TALIESIN: Weird question: if someone falls unconscious with paralysis and poison, if you heal them back to consciousness, they're still paralyzed and poisoned, correct?

MATT: Right.

TALIESIN: Okay. Just checking. I'm going to move 30 feet in. I'm heading in that direction.

MATT: (counting) 30. Right there?

TALIESIN: Yep. As close as I can get.

MATT: Okay. The rats do get an attack of opportunity against you as you rush away.

TALIESIN: That's fine.

MATT: That is going to be a 20 to hit.

TALIESIN: Minus the d4?

MATT: Oh. Right. Another one. 19.

TALIESIN: Yeah, that hits.

MATT: That hits you? Okay. Rats are doing things for once! Nine points of piercing damage to you.

TALIESIN: Mm-hmm

MATT: And I need you to make a constitution saving throw. You have advantage because you took War Caster, correct?

TALIESIN: Yep. Yes, I did. Ten.

MATT: Ten? You just manage to maintain concentration on your Bless. Ten's the DC. All right. What are you doing?

TALIESIN: Yeah, actually, I'm still trying to remember how having a spell that exists as a bonus action. I have to use a cantrip as my action if I want to use a spell as a bonus action.

MATT: Correct.

TALIESIN: Shudge.

LIAM: One full level, one cantrip

TALIESIN: One full level, one cantrip. Okay. I'm going to, instead of doing anything I want to do, I'm going to cast Bane on these two jokers.

MATT: Okay. This Bane fades.

TALIESIN: Mm-hmm. Actually, they get to make another roll for it, because I can cast it on three things within 30 feet.

MATT: That's true. Yeah. So we can do that.

TRAVIS: Nice!

MATT: All right. Is it wisdom?

TALIESIN: Charisma, 16. Enjoy.

MATT: Oh, charisma? Oh yeah. They're not that good at charisma. The one on the far end there, natural three. He is Banned.

TALIESIN: Fudge you.

MATT: The one around the corner. That is a 17.

TALIESIN: That, he-- yeah.

MATT: Well, it's a 17 minus one, because his charisma is 16.

TALIESIN: So 16.

MATT: So yeah, he does save. And the rats... No! That is a six.

TALIESIN: All right, got one swarm!

MATT: Rats are like, "We're free! Aww." All right, that finishes your turn?

TALIESIN: As a bonus action, my swarm is going to attack the rats.

MATT: (laughs) Poor guys, can't go.

TALIESIN: That's 22 to hit.

MATT: Yeah, that hits. As they pounce on the cluster of rats.

TALIESIN: Just make sure I'm doing this right.

MATT: I hate this.

TALIESIN: That's-- ooh, that's nice! 14 points of piercing damage.

MATT: 14 points of piercing damage, all right. As they're assaulting it and striking into it, you notice the nature of the swarm is it's hard to hit, and they're clustering. So it takes the damage, but it's not taking as much as you would think based on the nature of it being a swarm. So all the beetles are swarming it and attacking it, the rats are defending themselves. It takes the damage, just not as much as you'd expect.

TALIESIN: Boo.

MATT: That ends your turn?

TALIESIN: Yeah.

MATT: Caleb, you're up.

LIAM: Okay, I am going to intentionally stride through the rats. I know that I will be bitten, but I'm going to walk as far forward as I can, up near Fjord and Caduceus.

TALIESIN: They already took their reaction anyway.

MATT: Yeah.

LIAM: Excellent. So, step away; I am pulling out my little clay cat's paw, because I know that this hound from hell will find it offensive, and I will cast Banishment on the healthier one; so the one on this side. Charisma; 16.

MATT: Charisma 16!

LIAM: Go to hell.

MATT: No, he banished.

(cheering)

MARISHA: He banished, bitch!

LAURA: If they belong on another plane, they don't come back.

LIAM: If the spell does not get interrupted, he's gone.

MATT: He's just sitting there and goes (snarl), looks up at you for a second (escalating snarling), leaps in your direction, and (fssh) in a swirl of arcane energy, and just "pop!" out of existence.

LIAM: (brittle laugh) *Fick dich*.

MATT: All righty. That finishes your go, Caleb. Top of the round. Jester, you're up.

LAURA: Oh, okay. I'm going to Guiding Bolt at 1st-level, that guy.

MATT: Okay.

LAURA and TALIESIN: Natural 20!

(cheering)

MATT: That'll do.

LAURA: Ey-oh, ey-oh, ey! Do I double my dice?

MATT: You double your dice.

LAURA: Woo!

MARISHA: Don't roll ones.

TALIESIN: Oh, that's pretty good.

LAURA: 11, 14, 16 plus 12 is 28. 31!

MATT: 31. How do you want to do this?

(cheering)

LAURA: Just because I haven't used my spiritual weapon, I'm going to swing it up and slam it down at the same time I Guiding Bolt.

MATT: Right as you release the Guiding Bolt, your hand goes up, and you bring it down. As the luminous burst of divine, bright, white-blue energy slams into the creature, sending it upward, reeling from the impact (squawk); at that point, the giant lollipop swings and cracks it on the head. It just hits the ground, its legs sprawl out, splayed, and it is done.

LAURA: I use Thaumaturgy to make it sound like a round of applause in the cave.

(applause)

LAURA: Thank you. Thank you. A-thank you.

LIAM: Squeak, squeak, squeak-squeak-squeak!

TRAVIS: How long is that thing banished for?

LIAM: Forever, if my spell doesn't get interrupted.

TRAVIS: Amazing.

LIAM: Banish it back to hell.

SAM: Forever?

LIAM: If it were from this plane, it's temporary. If it's from another plane, it stays in its plane if I don't get fucked up.

TALIESIN: Yeah, it doesn't have a hold here, so there's nothing to tether it back to the mortal plane.

LIAM: *Ja. Ja-ja-ja!*

SAM: Wait, what? How would your spell get interrupted?

LIAM: Me getting hit, and dropping the spell.

SAM: Just ever?

TRAVIS: Yeah.

TALIESIN: No; just when it got cast.

LIAM: Within one minute, if I get punched in the face and lose the spell, it could come back.

SAM: And if you don't get punched in the face in the minute, then nothing happens.

MATT: Do you want to move or stay where you are?

LAURA: I'm going to walk through and stomp on the rats as I join the party.

MATT: You got it. Okay, that finishes your go. Nott, your turn.

SAM: There's nothing else to--

LAURA and MATT: There's rats.

SAM: (groan) Oh.

MATT: And they're coming for you!

TRAVIS: We do technically need to take care of banished beast when it comes back.

LAURA: No, it's not coming back.

SAM: That's what I'm confused about, too.

TRAVIS: I'm going to sit over here.

LIAM: Unless I get punched in the face, it's *not coming back*. Don't punch me in the face.

SAM: I punch Caleb in the face.

TALIESIN: I've been waiting for it.

SAM: No, I will go over to the rats. Or I'll just-- I'll throw a vial of acid at the rats.

MATT: Sure, okay. They make a dexterity check, right?

SAM: I believe so. It says I can splash it onto a creature within five feet of me, or throw it up to 20 feet, shattering on impact. So it doesn't say what they save as, it just says 2d6 acid damage.

MATT: Oh sorry, then just make a just general dexterity-- roll a d20 and add your dexterity modifier.

SAM: Ugh.

LAURA: You should have just walked up and splashed it on them.

SAM: Yeah, well I didn't. Eight.

MATT: Eight? It misses. You watch as the rats go (squeak) and get prepared for impact, and it hits the stone, and they (slower squeaking).

MARISHA: Oh, that's cute!

SAM: I will hide.

(laughter)

MATT: Yeah, because you still had disadvantage on that, because you were poisoned anyway. Did you add a d4 to your roll?

SAM: It doesn't matter. It was only an eight.

LAURA: Well.

SAM: Now it's an 11.

LIAM: They're rats!

MATT: That makes a difference.

LAURA: See, it worked?

SAM: Wait, shouldn't I have had disadvantage?

MATT: But you have disadvantage, so roll again.

SAM: Natural 20.

TALIESIN: Oh, 11.

MATT: So yeah, that does actually hit.

MARISHA: Hey!

MATT: In the alternate reality in which they winced and turned, they're like, "Aww, That would've been great." However, their imagination ran wild with them, as the reality is, they took--

SAM: Eight points of damage.

MARISHA: They had their own Jacob's Ladder moment.

LIAM: Yes, the 20 rats. So 20,000 rats in the dodecahedron.

MARISHA: (whooshing) This timeline.

MATT: A bunch of baby rats in space, looking over Earth. The monolith floats up. So the swarm is still alive, but their numbers are very reduced. You hear the horrible, screaming hisses as a bunch of these distraught, subterranean, hungry rats begin to dissolve and wither into these small little puddles of fur and flesh, but they're still around. That finishes your go, Nott.

SAM: Yeah.

MATT: Yasha's up. Yasha is paralyzed.

TRAVIS: (muffled, inaudible speech)

MATT: Yep, at the end of its turn, it can make a saving throw.

TRAVIS: Okay.

MATT: Constitution save.

TRAVIS: Let's do it! 16.

MATT: 16? She succeeds.

TRAVIS: Yeah! With her bonus--

MATT: That's her turn.

TRAVIS: That's my turn.

MATT: Yeah. With a bonus action, that's your turn. Beau, you're up.

MARISHA: Sorry! Sorry, rats. Sorry.

SAM: Just curb stomping.

MARISHA: Just take my stick, and right in their heads.

LAURA: So sad.

MARISHA: It's real sad.

LAURA: Why don't they just run away?

MARISHA: I know. Sorry. I kick a few, then I'm like: Shoo. Shoo.

MATT: Just roll an attack roll.

MARISHA: Okay.

TALIESIN: And you still have your d4!

MARISHA: That's pretty good. 19 plus 20 total.

MATT: Yeah, so roll damage.

LIAM: Batter up!

TRAVIS: I might have to get a new iPad.

LAURA: Somebody's going to get--

TRAVIS: Safari keeps crashing on this thing.

MATT: Oh, buddy.

TALIESIN: Oh, we haven't updated. Oh no!

SAM: No, it's the tablet. It's not D&D Beyond.

TRAVIS: No, it's Safari. It's the iPad.

MARISHA: 11 damage on the first one.

MATT: 11 damage. How do you want to do this?

LAURA: Woo!

TALIESIN: There was an update that we probably--

MARISHA: I try to save as many as I can by shooping some away.

MATT: A few do shoo off, and it's like (squeaking) dart off--

MARISHA: The ones that are half hanging on by the acid from Nott, I just--

MATT: Put them out of their misery.

MARISHA: Yeah.

MATT: Okay. One by one.

MARISHA: Just little pops.

MATT: The rats are finished. Caleb, you sit there and concentrate for the full minute, and then the spell is finished. The tether is disconnected, and the creature is banished to its hellish realm where it once stemmed from.

LAURA: Is there a portal or something in here? Should we look for a portal?

SAM: Maybe we should look for a portal.

LAURA: Make sure no others are going to come through.

TALIESIN: Anybody who's hurt--

TRAVIS: Yasha raises her hand; says, "Ouch."

TALIESIN: So anybody who's hurt, come sit over here for a second. Do they get to save against the poison or should I just do that?

MATT: No, they're no longer poisoned. The paralysis and the poison are gone. They're both hand in hand.

TALIESIN: Nott as well; is she okay?

MATT: Hmm?

TALIESIN: Nott's not poisoned anymore either?

MATT: That's still-- No, because you were-- because the poison-- hmm.

TALIESIN: I can cast the spell and make it go away if I have to.

MATT: While poisoned, target is paralyzed. So interesting point: yes, actually. Your poisoned and paralysis are gone. The two are tethered together.

TALIESIN: So anybody who wants to get some healing, I'm going to be doing a Prayer of Healing over the next ten minutes.

MARISHA: I go get healed, but I'm distracted the whole time I'm getting healed, looking at the unconscious demon dog.

MATT: That demon dog is close to expiring.

MARISHA: Oh.

MATT: It's not dead yet.

MARISHA: I just watch him as I get healed by Caduceus.

LAURA: Nugget! Come in here.

MATT: (panting, poof) Just teleports, blinks to you.

TRAVIS: Oh, get a critical hit for Nugget and dispatch the demon dog.

LAURA: What?

TRAVIS: Have Nugget finish off the demon dog.

LAURA: Oh, the unconscious one?

TRAVIS: Uh-huh. Let it taste blood.

TALIESIN: 21 healing points to anybody who wants them.

TRAVIS, SAM, LIAM and MARISHA: Yeah.

TALIESIN: Let's make sure. How many people are taking that? One, two, three, four, and I will be five. Cool. You were good?

LAURA: I'm good.

SAM: Should we try to wake this fiendish thing and tame it?

LAURA: Should we just kill it?

MARISHA: He's very almost dead, whatever it is.

LAURA: Nugget, bite him! Don't bite him; you're too sweet. Don't bite anything. Here, have some candy.

MATT: He gets down and starts tearing the candy apart on the ground. Nugget's not full-grown at this point. He's still a puppy, but a big puppy, getting to about that size, and not really knowing the full size of the animal, you're already like, "Oh, this is going to be a big boy."

LIAM: What did you just feed him?

LAURA: Candy!

LIAM: What kind?

LAURA: Do you want some? I have peppermints, I have some cherry suckers, and I have--

LIAM: Just not chocolate, yeah?

LAURA: No chocolate.

TRAVIS: I take the falchion and stick it in the back of the neck of the demon dog.

MATT: It exhales its final breath and goes still.

TALIESIN: Mister Caleb, maybe we should take a look around and see where these things came from.

SAM: Good idea. I will join you.

MATT: Either two of you make investigation checks, or one person does with advantage.

LIAM: Investigation at advantage because someone's helping me?

SAM: I will do an investigation check as well.

MATT: All right, both of you guys take one.

SAM: A million.

LIAM: 24.

MATT: 24 and a million.

SAM: 26.

MATT: Okay! You guys move along, stepping over the corpses of the two creatures. The rotting-flesh smell that you first came into the chamber, when you get close to these creatures-- now that the adrenaline has worn off and you can actually take a moment to process all the senses-- this very molded-citrus-type, acrid smell emanates from their bodies along with long-rotted flesh. It is an awful smell from these creatures. In ways, parts of them remind you of hyena-dogs with these large ridges along the back of the spine, the tail extremely venomous. You guys move past and head around the other corner. You pass by other bones and other corpses of what were smaller moorbounders, pups that were being trained or risen and fed, and in the back corner, Nott, you see it first and Caleb just seconds after, there is this faint glow, this very faint red glow. It looks like a crack in the stone. You approach and look at it, and as soon as you look at a side angle, the crack isn't on the stone; it's about an inch away from it. It's in the air, and it's about two feet across, like that, and about an inch sliver.

SAM: Should we stick our hands through there?

LIAM: No, we should not do that.

TRAVIS: That's what I'm for.

LIAM: No, this is where the problem is coming from. I'm not sure what to do about it, though.

SAM: Can we seal it? Can we un-magic it? Yasha! Yasha, you have-- Oh, do you have a dispel?

LAURA: Yeah.

SAM: Jester!

LAURA: Okay, I'm going to try to Dispel Magic.

MATT: Okay, make a wisdom check. Roll a d20 and add your wisdom modifier.

LAURA: 15 plus eight.

MATT: Plus your wisdom modifier.

LAURA: Sorry, 15 plus five.

MATT: 20?

LAURA: Yes.

MATT: 20 is the DC you needed. As Jester steps forward, you see through the crack. It begins to slowly widen, and for a split second as she's concentrating and focusing, for a split second beyond that there's red and purple and you hear this faint swirling of wind and screams and who knows beyond the veil, and you can see

another one of those creatures starting to come up and sniff the other side of this rift, and right as it looks through, its eye peeking out from the other side, it seals and is gone.

SAM: You did it!

LAURA: I did it!

TALIESIN: That was amazing.

LAURA: Good, because I don't know if we could have fought another one of those guys, you know? We totally could have taken another one.

LIAM: We need to convince our goblin friend upstairs that we have performed some form of exorcism on top of the killing part, so hopefully we get a better deal, even.

TRAVIS: Yeah, where did that rift even go?

MARISHA: Well, it feels like some sort of fiendish enemies that we were fighting, so I'm assuming the Nine Hells?

LIAM: Have you not read of the Hells?

MARISHA: Would I know where those things might have come from?

MATT: You can either make an arcana or maybe a religion check.

MARISHA: I'll do the religion because I've read about rel-- okay, 16.

MATT: 16? Looking at these creatures, the essence of them, especially since you've extracted their aspects, you've taken the time to think it over. Fiendish, definitely. Not devil.

MARISHA: Which is Nine Hells.

MATT: Correct.

MARISHA: So this is abyssal.

MATT: This is abyssal. The chaotic nature of its form, the little glimpse beyond that you saw, and the general smell that remains after it, is less of the essence of brimstone and other such smells that seem to accompany rifts or doorways that lead to the Nine Hells, and instead the smell here is something else entirely. Based on all these things together, you're pretty certain that this was an abyssal creature.

LIAM: You share that?

MARISHA: Abyssal dogs.

TRAVIS: Was the rift just large enough for a creature like that to come through, or was it larger?

MATT: It looked at the moment like a creature that size could maybe squeeze through, but you also saw it begin to expand as the creature began to draw near. So it may have had some level of flexibility.

TRAVIS: So not like something else came through before.

TALIESIN: Well I mean, I don't know. These things could happen.

TRAVIS: I walk over to the first demon dog, and I'll take the falchion and cut the stinger off the tail, and hand it over to Caduceus and go: Shouldn't we maybe hold onto these for something?

TALIESIN: I would talk to Nott about that. It's not a terrible idea.

TRAVIS: Really venomous and poisonous. Paralytics and all?

LAURA: You should give the other one to Yasha.

TALIESIN: I'm going to see if the spores will take in these things or not. I don't know if they will.

MATT: Okay. The fiendish nature is resistant to the spores, but not immune. Meaning you're used to your Decomposition being rather rapid. It is beginning, but it is a slower process.

TALIESIN: That's interesting. That's very interesting.

LIAM: You know, this is interesting, because when I was at your library, one of the many things that I discovered there that day is that-- Do you want to finish talking?

MATT: Continue.

LIAM: That the empire here, the Kryn Dynasty, there was mention of Tharizdun.

MARISHA: Ter-is-doom?

LIAM and MARISHA: Tharizdun.

SAM: What is that? Is that a place?

LIAM: A terrible, dark god. From ages past. Affecting the people here, coming up from below. And we find this here, just this close to the surface? Maybe it's coincidence. Maybe not.

MATT: To clarify, just because you would know, the research that you uncovered deals in drow cultures and what's written on them. There are connections to Tharizdun, and a madness that is known to have claimed much of the Tal'Dorei drow and the Underdark that resides there.

LIAM: Tal'Dorei drow?

MATT: Correct. But there is speculation within imperial books and research that perhaps the same madness is also spreading in the east.

LIAM: Hmm. Okay. Well, Caleb would not have understood everything that he found that day.

MATT: Correct. No, it's true. Just letting you know.

SAM: Can I see if there's any poison I can extract from these stingers? With my expert medicine checks?

MATT: Yeah, go ahead and make a medicine or nature check on this, I'd say. Your choice.

LAURA: Want me to help you?

SAM: Yes!

LAURA: Can I help him? Because I got proficiency in medicine. I know what I'm doing.

SAM: I'll look for the chemicals, you look for the--

LAURA: The veins.

SAM: The veins, you look for the veins.

MATT: Go for it.

SAM: Natural 20. Should I roll again?

LAURA: No.

SAM: No, that's it.

LAURA: Wouldn't it be amazing if it was two natural 20s, though?

MATT: Anyway, it takes you a little bit of time and you manage to extract-- unfortunately, due to the state of its body, once it dies, the toxin begins to separate and suffuse its own flesh and system. But you do manage to extract a vial of its venom.

TRAVIS: Some vicious shit.

SAM: That's paralysis venom, right?

MATT: Possibly.

TALIESIN: That could be mean.

TRAVIS: Poisoned and paralytic.

LAURA: Like how big of a vial? Like a skinny kind?

MATT: Like a single application.

TALIESIN: One run.

MATT: It's smaller than those; it's about that big. Because it has to be purified element. It's good for one application, whether that be weapon, or imbibed, or whatever the case may be.

LIAM: Killer app.

SAM: Okay, thank you.

MATT: So you got that. You do know, with your natural 20, that there is a shelf life on the toxin, meaning over time it might become diluted. But with the natural 20, you also know that's probably weeks, if not months away. But there is an eventual shelf life on its potency.

LIAM: Should you use it now?

TALIESIN: Right now.

MATT: Just jabs Caleb.

TRAVIS: Well, we've successfully cleared the demons. This cave is clear.

LAURA: We should disguise ourselves again before we go back up.

MARISHA: Yeah, that's a good call.

TALIESIN: I'm going to look a little different no matter what because I can only do that once a day, but that's okay.

LAURA: Oh no.

TALIESIN: That's all right.

LAURA: We'll just make you look kind of dirty and stuff. I start rubbing dirt all over Caduceus.

TALIESIN: This stuff is-- not this dirt. This is weird dirt.

LIAM: Do you want your horns and dick again?

MARISHA: Yeah.

LIAM: Okay, I start waving the caterpillar cocoon in front of her face and give her a wang.

MARISHA: (coughing) That's dusty.

MATT: You reclaim your respective illusions and/or transformations.

TRAVIS: (bulking up noises)

MATT: (laughs) Perfect.

MARISHA: (laughs) Macy's Day float over here.

TRAVIS: (lower pitched) 'Sup?

MATT: You ascend back into Zorth's Pits. As you make your way up towards the top, the trap door is actually closed. As you go to open it, it is currently locked.

MARISHA: Oh, goddamn it.

TRAVIS: (knocks)

MATT: "Yes?"

TRAVIS: We're done.

MATT: "Is it you?"

TRAVIS: Yes, it's us. What, you think they talk or something?

MATT: "I don't know about these things! Just being safe, come on."

TRAVIS: Open the door!

MATT: "All right, just hold on a second." (multiple locks clicking) You hear chains being pulled. Eventually it gets pushed open and he's kicked the lid of it open. The actual doorway falls back and leans against the wall. He looks down. "So is it done?"

TRAVIS: Oh god, there's another one! Run!

MATT: (screams)

TRAVIS: Nah, I'm just kidding.

MATT: "Tricksy orc."

TRAVIS: Yeah.

MATT: "All right, come on up. So what was it? What'd you do? What'd you kill? Was it done? Are you sure? What proof you got?"

TRAVIS: Actually, we left them down there for you if you're interested in, I don't know, harvesting pieces of-- what was it, demon creatures?

LIAM: Fiends, for sure.

MATT: He looks you over real close and goes, "I don't know why, but I believe you. Okay, I'll go down and take a look. Just checking, didn't know if it was some sort of a pull one over on me and take my business, so I'm just being careful."

TRAVIS: Did you want to go look right now?

MATT: "Yeah!"

LAURA: Okay, but you should know that you had a portal to another dimension in your cave.

TALIESIN: That's true.

LAURA: I had to close it. It was not pretty, but you should be careful, because if it opens again, what are you going to do, you know?

MATT: (quietly) "That's not good."

LAURA: Do you know why it happened? Have you ever seen that kind of thing before?

SAM: Yeah have you heard of something similar happening?

MATT: He lifts one foot up and scratches the edge of his temple and goes. "No, I haven't. That's pretty dangerous, isn't it?"

LAURA: It is.

MATT: "Would you guys let the Lady know maybe?"

TALIESIN: The what?

LAURA: The Lady?

MATT: "The Lady. If this sort of stuff's happening, that's very not good."

TRAVIS: Yeah, Zethris--

MARISHA: Zethris Oreos?

TALIESIN: I think that would be the neighborly thing to do.

TRAVIS: What's her name? Zethris?

MATT: "Lady Oleos."

TRAVIS: Oleos.

MATT: "Oleos. I haven't met her. Otherwise I'd tell her myself, but you know... I don't know, them drow folk make me feel sort of self-conscious, you know?"

TALIESIN: That's surprising. You're very impressive. I mean, I'm certainly charmed.

MATT: Make a-- your choice, persuasion or deception.

TALIESIN: Oh, persuasion.

TALIESIN: 21.

MATT: "Oh, stop. Oh, you're adorable."

TALIESIN: You're great.

MATT: "Well done! Great! Fantastic! Let me go look at it!" He goes down and runs in the darkness below and you hear, (shouting) "Ah, god! Ah, another one! Jeez, how many were there?"

LAURA: There were three, but one of them is gone because he was banished.

SAM: We could lock him there and just take all--

TALIESIN: Hey, hey, hey. We're making friends now.

MATT: "That's amazing! You killed three of them! Fantastic."

LIAM: Additionally, there was a rift in the very fabric of time and space down below and my sister here closed that.

MATT: "That's amazing!"

LAURA: So if you want to give us even more of a discount because, you know, we saved you a lot trouble in the future--

MATT: "We had a deal, no. But that's amazing!"

MARISHA: You also had a serious rat infestation.

MATT: "I know about the rats! I mean, that's half what you feed these things."

TALIESIN: Well, sorry, then.

MARISHA: They were a little out of control. I feel like you shouldn't leave scraps of food around. I don't know.

LIAM: Also, we did not agree to close any kind of rift to another dimension.

MATT: "Oh, no, and that's so appreciative of me!"

LIAM: I would hate for us to open it back up. So since it was something outside of the deal we made--

MATT: "Then maybe you should go talk to the Lady and tell her the good deed you did, and maybe she'll be, 'Thank you! You went and close a rift for the town! Here's some money!'"

TRAVIS: Let's get these steeds and move on.

LAURA: I'm a very kind person. I don't mind closing rifts for people in need, you know?

MATT: "That's wonderful."

MARISHA: Will you at least hold on to the jag-- the moorbound-- the swamp kitties for a little bit longer while we go talk to Lady Zethris?

MATT: "Yeah, I've still got to train you."

TALIESIN: That's fair.

MATT: "I mean, I'm not just going to hand them over. That's a recipe for disaster."

MARISHA: Yeah. How'd you lose your arms? Was it also in one of your seminars?

MATT: "You know, when you're learning how to work with these things, if you're not careful, bad things happen. But you learn. Twice. But you know, hasn't slowed me down!"

MARISHA: I guess you can still straddle a swamp kitty. All right, let's go!

SAM: We're going to go see this woman?

LAURA: Why?

TALIESIN: I think this is an opportunity. To be good neighbors. We're going to maybe need a few friends while we're out here, so let's try not to be criminals and a criminal element too much.

LIAM: Is it the kind of thing that we can do in under an hour, or perhaps would wait until tomorrow?

SAM: We're close by, right? It's that spire over there?

MATT: "Oh, yeah. That's maybe 12 minutes from here, tops."

TALIESIN: I say it's worth it, personally.

MARISHA: Maybe she takes appointments.

TRAVIS: Yeah, I mean, when we get there, she may not even be home.

SAM: When are we going to be in the City of Beasts again?

TALIESIN: At least let's file a report, like proper citizens.

TRAVIS: Yep.

TALIESIN: Thank you.

TRAVIS: We'll be back.

MATT: "All right, I'll be over here. I'm going to start rounding up my three choice picks for you. See which ones are the most spry and lively."

LAURA: Get one that's really cute for me, okay? Like, gothy, but cute at the same time.

MATT: "For you? I'll do my best!" (giggles) He escorts you guys to the outside of Zorth's Pits, closes the door behind you guys and you're now standing in the center of the main street thoroughfare.

TALIESIN: Let's head that way. It's always worth making friends, no matter where you are.

MARISHA: Do you think she's a mage or sorcerer or something?

TALIESIN: I have no idea.

MARISHA: They keep calling her Lady and she lives in a tower.

TRAVIS: Well, listen, if y'all are worried those of us that are under minimal changes-- we could let her know.

LAURA: Fjord, yours is pretty major.

TRAVIS: It is, isn't it?

TALIESIN: I hadn't noticed.

LIAM: You two don't need to do much of anything, do you? You should talk to her, in case she's able to see through things.

TALIESIN: I imagine that anybody who lives in this city will understand the desire to be incognito.

LIAM: I do not make that assumption, I would like the horny one and the little green lady to talk to her, if that's okay.

TALIESIN: Beau and Nott? Sure.

LAURA: (laughs)

TALIESIN: That was for you.

LAURA: I liked it.

SAM: Makes sense.

LIAM: Just precautions.

TRAVIS: Sure.

LAURA: We're on it. We have this totally handled.

LIAM: I believe in you.

SAM: Let's go!

MATT: All right. Is everyone going as a group?

SAM: We'll walk over there as a group, but the detectives will go in.

MATT: You guys make your way through, pushing past three major carts that are being pulled by aurochs that are currently in this large harness, pulling them through the muck and mud. (aurochs lowing) On the back of it, you can see barrels of large ballista ammunition. You can see heavy barrels containing three, four-foot long metallic bolts with hooked and jagged edges that are used for piercing and destroying boundaries and borders, walls, doorways. Some are placed up and some are placed down, and they have large loops at the end. Reminds you of harpoons, a bit.

MARISHA: Are these human catchers? People catchers?

TALIESIN: I'm trying to remember the name. There's a name, and it's somewhere in my brain right now.

MARISHA: Spikes with a loop, yeah.

MATT: You're not entirely certain. Actually, you, being the learned one, make an intelligence check.

MARISHA: Just straight intelligence? That was almost fucking awesome. It's still okay. 14.

MATT: You're not entirely certain the application of these, but these are a different type of ballista ammunition.

MARISHA: Interesting. Okay.

TALIESIN: They don't know, but I did remember the term.

MATT: Passing by those carts as they're wheeled southward towards the gate, you make your way to the outside of the Aurora... Hold. That's the word I was looking for. As you approach now, it stands out like a sore thumb against the majority of the architecture in the interior of Assarius. It almost resembles, in its design, a classic church and steeple, where it has this gradual incline on the edges that come to a partial roof, and then the central spire shoots up into this gradual point about three stories off the ground. Along it, it's not smooth. The edges are ridged, and you can see intricate details where it has this hooked-- in some ways similar to a pagoda, how it edges outward in these curves and points, where the roofs come to a gentle end and slope. There are a number of beautiful, beautiful glass windows that are stained glass, but as opposed to multicolor, it looks like a more muted palette of grays and purples and silvers and blacks and blues. From the outside, it doesn't look as gorgeous, but as you walk up to the front door, which is already open on the inside, what light comes through fills the interior with this very calming, blue-purple color that has this strangely welcoming and almost chilled atmosphere to it. As you approach, you see two Kryn soldiers walk by. They step aside. They don't take note of you, but they move on, and both of them split as they reach the center road and go in two different directions, heading north and south. What would you like to do?

SAM: Let's go in.

LAURA: Yeah, we should go right in.

SAM: We're just going to go in. Yeah.

MATT: The two of you?

SAM: Sure. Wait out here, y'all.

TALIESIN: All right.

SAM: Thanks for saving my life.

MATT: As you guys patiently wait, the investigatory team, you step to the base of the building, and up what's maybe five feet of stairs, these wide, 15-foot wide stone stairs that lead to the main open doorway. Stepping into the initial chamber, the light that fills the inside, it's beautiful. It's warmer on the inside, and there's no desk, more than a set of chairs-- comfortable, well-made chairs, once again standing out against most of the furniture and the living spaces you've already encountered, even in cursory glances across the city. As you enter the chamber and look around, there are two doors, one to the right and one to the left. They are both closed, and there does not appear to be anybody in the chamber at the moment.

SAM: Knock on some doors? Or is there a bell?

LAURA: Do we see anybody?

MATT: Make a perception check.

SAM: 12.

LAURA: 12.

MATT: You both look and, to each side of the door, there is a braided cord that hangs about ten feet from a bell, flanking each side of the door on the inside.

SAM: There's two different doors, two different bells?

MATT: Correct.

LAURA: Shall we just ring them both?

SAM: Any markings on--? (ringing)

(laughter)

TRAVIS: Amazing!

MATT: A moment passes before one door opens up and, stepping inside, you see a human, a man probably in his mid-forties or so, big, bushy beard that falls down to his mid-chest, hair that is greased and slicked back into very tight ponytail that then releases into a bunch of billowing curls that go to about his mid-back. He is wearing dark gray-silver robes and bright, shiny, little pins that mark where the clavicle and the shoulder meet. As he peeks through and goes, "Can I help you?", the other door opens, and you see a drow girl, young, maybe late teens, early twenties. Bright silver-white hair that is pulled into a high ponytail and then two tendrils that go past the front of the ears and dangle down to about mid-chest. Beautiful, solid gray-blue skin, almost amber-colored eyes, as she peeks through wearing a similar robe as to him, and goes, "Hello?"

SAM: We're looking for Lady Zethris. Is one of you-- I don't want to presume.

MATT: The man closes the door, and the girl walks up. "If I might ask, what is the reason for the meet?"

LAURA: The Sunbreaker told us to come over here, because he said maybe that you guys had some work for us, but at the same time, we were supposed to come tell you about this stuff that we found here.

SAM: We're an investigative duo. We're known as Django and Nash, and we go around finding things--

LAURA: Really important things.

SAM: We found something that you might be interested in.

MATT: "All right. Please wait patiently. I will let the Lady know."

SAM: Oh, you're not the Lady.

MATT: "No." Closes the door.

TRAVIS: Good pitch.

SAM: I thought she was a lady. She **is** a lady.

LAURA: Yeah. We're going to tell them of the rift, right?

SAM: If it suits our purposes.

LAURA: What else are we going to tell them?

SAM: I don't know, honestly.

MATT: Eventually the door opens, and she returns and goes, "Please, if you would not mind, come with me."

SAM: Sure. Yes, of course. We do this sort of thing all the time.

LAURA: Sure, yeah, yeah, yeah. Insight check!

MATT: Make an insight check.

TRAVIS: Have you ever killed one-half of a table before, Matt?

MATT: Yeah.

LAURA: 21.

MATT: Okay.

SAM: Oh! Oh! I'm going to die! We're going to die! She's a monster in a girl's shell!

TRAVIS: Guys, D&D Beyond has a ferocious race for president of D&D heating up.

SAM: The only way that you can vote is to subscribe. That's not true.

(laughter)

MATT: You follow suit?

LAURA: Yeah, yeah.

MATT: Leading you through the door, the next chamber, it looks like there are two parallel hallways, because where would be the left, where the other door had opened, there is a long, heavy stone wall that divides this. This chamber seems to be divided into two sides. Heading down this way, you pass a closed door on the right, a second closed door on the right, a third closed door on the right, and each door has a guard there. The guards are wearing mantles that are similar to, or of the same design as, the Kryn armor and the mantle you saw on the mage that you fought, when you first came to Xhorhas. It's just the mantle, and it's adorning the simple silver-gray robes that the other figures in this building seem to be wearing. The interior is beautiful. Whereas a somewhat plain exterior, aside from the general shape and curvature of the edges of the building, the interior walls here have beautiful scrollwork chiseled into all the stone. Each doorway frame has this ivy-type texture that curls and swirls around the door frame. A lot of effort and work has gone into the construction of this building. You go past the third door, and the woman goes and opens the chamber doorway, nods, and gives you a nudge to enter.

SAM: We do.

MATT: You enter the room. The first thing you're met with is two drow warriors, both adorned in armor, but the armor itself is clean, well-kept, possibly ceremonial, or at least has not been used in battle for a while. They both look at you both and step aside. Beyond that, you see a beautiful, tall, high-back lounge chair that extends out with this deep reddish-purple hue, like a velvet. The rim on the outside that curls around it, also beautifully done in a brass color that spirals on the edges. You can see a small altar in the center of the chamber, about three feet from the foot of this, and this altar heads up in this slow, gradual, spiralling point, almost like there were two paths of a tapering tower. At the top, you see a brass dodecahedron.

SAM: I look everywhere but at that.

MATT: Hollow, there's nothing inside, but it's an art piece. In the chair, sitting in incredible, detailed brocades inlaid into this silk robe that drifts past her legs to the point where you cannot see her feet, dangling and rolling off the edge of the chair, this beautiful dark elf woman, her skin a soft violet hue, her hair bright white that seems to taper to a similar purple-violet color as to her skin as it goes past her shoulders. Her hair is long. It goes past her hips, and tumbles off the edges of the chair. She sits towards the edge of the chair, just looking her face towards this art piece, her eyes closed, and her hand raises up and asks you to enter, silently.

SAM: We'll just wait until she talks, I guess?

LAURA: Yeah. She'll start the convo.

MATT: She gestures for you.

LAURA and SAM: Yeah, yeah, we'll do that.

MATT: The two Kryn soldiers close the door and stay there, watching. They're not leaving you alone in the chamber. Her eyes open and looks toward you, and her irises are a pure, vibrant amethyst purple. It's entrancing, even just to see the color. Even in this low light, it almost seems to be backlit, the way the color comes at you. Her face seems gentle and comes to a smile. "So I have been told that you are investigators. Is this correct?"

LAURA: Yes, we're detectives.

MATT: "You came at the behest of the Sunbreaker?"

SAM: He told us about you. He didn't say, "You must go there."

LAURA: But he was like, "You should probably go see her because she's pretty cool," and he wasn't lying, man! You are super cool.

MATT: "Right. Well, are you coming seeking work?"

SAM: Maybe. We were interested in possibly sharing some information with you.

LAURA: We found something that I think you would like to know.

MATT: "Please, do tell me."

LAURA: I'm going to tell her.

SAM: Yeah, sure, sure. We were on another case, can't get into the details of it. Super hush-hush. We like to keep our client list private. But we were on another case and we stumbled upon a bit of a rift.

LAURA: Yeah, it was like, you know, like a--

SAM: A doorway to another dimension.

LAURA: It was very flexible. It was another dimension.

SAM: It could expand to accept any shape that wanted to enter it, but that wasn't the interesting part.

LAURA: No, no, that was normal.

SAM: The interesting part was that this passageway let in creatures from another dimension. An evil dimension. Some call it the Abyss, or something.

LAURA: They were definitely fiends, you know, that came through. There were multiple ones and they were scary.

SAM: Right in your home town here!

LAURA: They were right here! Under the ground!

SAM: A few hundred yards away from here! We were like, "That's crazy." But right away, we were like, "We got to go tell Lady Z."

MATT: "Zethris. Thank you. And I'm impressed. There has been a worrying rise in demonic activity in the proximity of this town. There have been words of lost sleep and bad dreams. There has been talk of possible corruption of a fiendish nature. The true difficulty is our resources are focused to the west. We have found too many close incursions across the Ashkeepers and we are waylaid left and right. So it is fortunate you have come to me because I have much interest in talented minds. Especially those who are looking to work for coin or trade."

LAURA: Well, coin is pretty cool and stuff, and so is some trade.

MATT: "May I ask you, what are your specialities, the two of you?"

LAURA: I'm really good at healing people and stuff.

MATT: "That is good."

LAURA: And I can also, you know-- I make a duplicate of myself. I can also do that!

SAM: She's a talented artist.

LAURA: I draw. I could draw a portrait for you, if you want me to.

SAM: A tattoo artist-- budding.

LAURA: Yes yes yes! Very talented tattoo artist. If you are ever in need of a piece, let me know. I can be of service.

SAM: I mean, these skills-- those would be at the end of the resume, like special skills. I think that--

TRAVIS: Horseback riding.

LAURA: Like driving stick shift.

SAM: Has driver's license. But I think the one she wanted to lead with was, she's a healer.

LAURA: I'm a healer, but I'm also, like, a badass healer. You know, so I can hit things and heal at the same time. And then *you*.

SAM: Fast as lightning.

LAURA: Super drunk, sometimes.

(laughter)

SAM: Okay, that's lower. That's lower on the CV, high tolerance. Fast as lightning, sneaky as a motherfuck!

LAURA: And! And!

SAM: Sharpshooter. (crossbow bolts whizzing)

LAURA: Super, super good with arrows and bolts and stuff.

SAM: But together, we have some sort of-- I don't know what it is, actually. We've never really talked about it. But we have this incredible mind for solving conundrums. For getting to the root of the problem. Bad cop, good cop; good cop, bad cop, whatever you want to call it, we are... We're a dynamic duo.

MATT: She still smiles. There is a distinct hardness behind the smile, and in that instant, for a brief moment, being as relatively insightful as you are, Jester, there is a thinning patience. But she says, "Well. And you have-- this rift that you mentioned. These fiendish things, did you just discover them? Or have you dealt with them?"

LAURA: Oh, we dealt with them! They are dead and gone and (snaps) banished and also the rift is closed.

MATT: "And it's just the two of you?"

SAM: We have some coworkers.

LAURA: Some other people that work with us.

MATT: "Well. That makes a lot more sense." Okay, make a persuasion check. Either both of you together, or one of you with advantage. Your choice.

LAURA and SAM: Both of us.

LAURA: Woo!

SAM: Dueling 18s!

LAURA: 22 for me.

SAM: What is it, deception or persuasion?

LAURA: Persuasion.

SAM: Just straight 18.

MATT: Okay! Interestingly enough, that impatience and hardness that has been growing subsides. She began to lean forward in kind of an, "I'm going to deconstruct these people," type of energy; something that you've encountered before. And then a few things you said, and the way that you explained it away, she began to feel a little more comfortable. "Well, we can use all the help we can get. There are two things that come to mind at the moment, if you are interested in helping. For one, I have come to believe there is an Empire spy in our midst, living here, in Assarius. Possibly, if my information is correct, working or staying near the Four Corners. An intercepted missive out of the city from this individual was shot down, being sent by nighthawk. And the

messenger was seen leaving the Four Corners. This missive was giving information about the movement of our forces, preparations and such, to the Empire. It was being sent to Bladegarden. If you can suss out this spy and turn them in to me, you will be rewarded greatly. Bring them alive, I'll leave you with 5,000 gold pieces."

(gasping)

MARISHA: I'm so broke; we're so broke.

MATT: "3,000 if dead, with proof. If that does not suit your fancy, or your particular skill set of investigation, you seem to already be somewhat tangled with this demonic presence. There have been some strange murders in the city. Some locals going mad or... feral is becoming a growing issue. And I have suspicions that it is connected with this demonic presence. (sigh) Focusing on the war efforts, I am unable to allocate many resources to this, so you would be of great help. If you could find the root of this corruption, wherever it stems from, and snuff it out, freeing Assarius from this infernal influence, the Dynasty is willing to pay 10,000 gold pieces."

LAURA: That's a good amount of money.

SAM: Mm-hmm, that's good. Money is good, money is good. We--

MATT: "If money is not interesting to you, we could always trade with favor to the Bright Queen."

SAM: That is actually, possibly even more appealing than money, maybe?

LAURA: (whispering) Who's the Bright Queen?

LAURA and SAM: (whispers and confused muttering)

SAM: We may have need of that. There is an ally of ours who we've been trying to ascertain their whereabouts, and maybe through favor, you could help us.

MATT: She leans forward and goes, "Are either of you consecuted?"

SAM: Consecuted?

MATT: "Understood."

SAM: I've never heard that word before. Is that a made-up word? Is that a Scrabble word?

MATT: She got all she wanted from that. She goes, "Well, if you seek the Bright Queen's favor, I just assumed you were perhaps of the houses of Ghor Dranas. My apologies. But the coin remains, and perhaps a favor or a trade. But these are conversations to have when you have succeeded."

LAURA: Right. Do you know where we would start with the stuff, and stuff?

SAM: The demons, the demonic presence, any leads? Any hot tips?

MATT: "That is precisely why we would be hiring an investigator."

SAM: Yeah, we know that.

LAURA: Yeah, we know where to start because, you know what, we just came from something so we'll just follow that trail.

SAM: Totally.

LAURA: Yep.

MATT: "I look forward to the completion of any or all of your missions."

LAURA: So do we.

MATT: "May the light be with you."

LAURA: And also with you.

MATT: The door opens behind, the soldiers are holding the door and kind of looking at you expectantly.

LAURA: Okay. Well, we should go then.

SAM: All right. See you soon, then.

LAURA and SAM: Bye!

MATT: "Bye." You guys are quickly escorted back outside of the hall. As you guys are sitting there waiting nervously for a while, eventually you see two Kryn warriors gently nudging both Nott and Jester outside.

SAM: As we left, I just quickly rang the other one one more time and just kept going out.

MATT: You hear, "Hello?", as you just walk away.

SAM: Okay. So you sent in the right people for that job!

LAURA: (ptchoo, ptchoo, ptchoo!)

SAM: We have two assignments that have nothing to do with saving my husband. But maybe if we did one, she might be able to help us. Maybe?

LAURA: That's a hard one.

SAM: I don't know. Here's the thing: we have these three beasts now. We could go charging across the badlands to Ghor Dranas, right? And search around for my husband, which I really want to do; don't get me wrong.

TRAVIS: Unless that minotaur's around.

SAM: (exhales) I mean, did you see his pecs? They were not fake, like yours. Anyway. We could do that, but it's a lot of unknowns, right? This lady could give us... something. I don't know.

TRAVIS: Did she sound connected with Ghor Dranas?

LAURA: Well, yeah. I mean, she's high up here, you know. So she could definitely get some shit done.

SAM: She said that she could curry favor with the Bright Queen?

LAURA: Which is the queen!

SAM: Is that the queen?

LIAM: They've got an Empress here.

LAURA: That's what I'm talking about. It's her!

LIAM: I don't understand all the terminology, but she is referred to as a word: an umavi? I don't know what that is, but I noticed that your boyfriend said he was--

SAM: He said, "I'm almost an umavi ascended" or something like that.

MARISHA: A near-umavi ascension?

LIAM: Umavi, yeah.

SAM: So she's called *an* umavi or *the* umavi?

LIAM: I think she's called *the* umavi? I don't know. It was vague.

LAURA: Something about umavi, for sure, though.

LIAM: It refers to the Empress, Leylas Kryn.

SAM: Have you ever heard the term "consecuted"?

LIAM: That's not a word, is it...

SAM: No, it doesn't seem like the word. But she said--

LAURA: She said that it sounded like it had something to do with the high up houses or something.

SAM: Yeah. Are you consecuted?

MARISHA: I'm pretty sure consecuted means you're of a royal or a proper family? Would I know that?

MATT: Make a history check.

TALIESIN: I might know that, too. I feel like that might be in my wheelhouse.

MATT: Go for it. Make a history check.

TALIESIN: No. That's a one minus one.

MARISHA: Not great for me, either: eight.

TRAVIS: I've got this.

SAM: Oh yeah! No, I wrote it down here: "Empress Leylas Kryn, 'umavi.' 600 years old." That's what I wrote down. I don't know what that means. But I put it in quotes, like that's what she's called, right?

TALIESIN: 600 years old is what she's called?

SAM: No!

MATT: None of you guys have any idea of what consecuted refers to.

LAURA: We just have to ask somebody.

TALIESIN: Well, I also think that maybe getting a little preparation before we head deeper into this place might not be a terrible idea, and having a couple friends before we start--

SAM: I mean, I'm all for charging ahead and leaving this town, but I just don't know what we're heading towards.

LIAM: Well, in the short term, we need to learn how to ride those beasts. We could have-- Jester, you could check in with Yeza.

LAURA: Yeah. I mean, the tasks she set for us are not super easy, I don't think.

SAM: Task one was to find a spy from the Empire.

LAURA: Yeah. There's some dickhead empire person that's, like, a spy.

MARISHA: Interesting.

LIAM: And did they give you any leads?

LAURA: Nope. Oh, the Four Corners.

SAM: Yes, she said that they were transmitting signals from the Four Corners-- or messages from the Four Corners. And 5,000 gold if we find he or she alive. And then the other was to find more of those rifts, the source of them. Put it out, 10,000 gold. Or, one super-hot favor.

MARISHA: Well, the source of them could be in a whole other plane or dimension.

SAM: She seemed to think that it was here.

LIAM: This all sounds very time intensive. We should check in with your husband.

MARISHA: I'm a little interested in who the spy is. I mean, it could be a bit of a conflict of interest, because I feel like we're spies from the Empire.

SAM: We don't work for the Empire.

LAURA: (aggressively whispering) Shh. Don't say that! Shut up! Don't say that shit out loud.

TRAVIS: Well, listen. We've got to go to rest for the evening anyway. There's only going to be three of us that are taking these seminar classes on how to ride the shadow panther maniacs, right?

TALIESIN: I think it might be wise for-- well, I don't know-- for everybody to learn.

LAURA: He just rolled. He just rolled to see if they heard you talking about that. I know he did. He was rolling perception.

MATT: What are you talking about?

LAURA: (angry growling)

MARISHA: I was speaking *hushedly*.

TRAVIS: You know what? Why don't we just take this out of the city for now?

SAM: Wait. Leave the city to go to sleep?

TRAVIS: And to talk about this a bit more, yeah. Because if we're coming back in to take seminar classes, maybe half the group could go check out the Four Corners.

MARISHA: Fuck, that's a good point.

TRAVIS: Otherwise, we're just sitting in daycare, you know what I mean?

TALIESIN: That's not a bad idea, actually. I'm not normally a fan of splitting people up, but that's clever.

LAURA: Let's go to sleep though, because it's been a really long day.

TALIESIN: Yeah, I am tired.

MARISHA: We are going to try and sleep in the city or outside the city?

TRAVIS: Out.

MARISHA: All right.

TALIESIN: Yes, sir.

MARISHA: Make our way out.

LAURA: But we stop by Zorth's place and just let him know to keep hanging on to our little guys and we'll come and get them.

MATT: "Yeah, no worries! Just come on by whenever! They're right here waiting-- shut up! Beat 'em! They'll be right here. I, er-- I've got to go! I'll see you later!" Heads on back to join the rest of the goblin crew that are-- it looks like one of them is starting to buck and get angry, and they're holding it down with ropes. It's going to be some interesting purchases. But you gather your things--

SAM: All right, we'll make our way outside the city.

LIAM: Let's go camping.

MATT: You exit the city. You find yourself a comfortable place on the outskirts, which is not too hard. There are actually a number of tents on the outside of the city where some folks just don't have spaces inside Assarius to find home, or some folks that prefer to sleep out under the stars. There are a number of campsites ahead out there, especially over by where the large portion of the army is set. You can see a number of fires and light systems. The sun eventually crests for the day where all the soldiers are scattered and still preparing for whatever movement is ahead of them.

TALIESIN: I'm going to keep an eye on the skies for birds.

MATT: Okay. As you guys are preparing and dusk sets in, you do see one of those large beasts looming towards the city, just naturally wandering in that direction, and begins to gain some speed (booming footsteps) towards the edge. You hear a horn go (ascending call) and another one (lower-pitched answer) off behind it, and you see a few soldiers come rushing out on that end of the gate as this huge beast is looming towards it. It gets close, and then suddenly skids to a stop and turns around and bolts the opposite direction. They repel it, though you are not certain of the means or use. It runs the opposite way for about a quarter mile, and just stops and sits there. You watch and it slowly begins to mosey northward, away from the city.

TRAVIS: No flashes? No lights? No--?

MATT: No.

TALIESIN: Interesting.

MATT: But you bed down for the evening; gather your thoughts, gather your abilities, and think amongst yourselves what the next proper plan of action is before you're about to enter day two on the outskirts of the City of Beasts. And that's where we'll end tonight's session. Pick up there next week.

TALIESIN and TRAVIS: Yeah! City of Beasts!

LIAM: Amazing.

SAM: Matt. So good.

MATT: I'm excited. It's a very different vibe from where you started.

MARISHA: Yes!

TRAVIS: I'm a fan. I'm a fan!

TALIESIN: Let's update that iPad.

TRAVIS: We need a new tablet.

MATT: Yeah, you do. We'll get everyone fixed.

TALIESIN: Let's start the updates now.

LAURA: Oh my gosh.

MATT: Well, thank you guys for tuning in. Don't forget tomorrow, here at the Twitch channel at 7pm is our Search for Grog one-shot. Make sure to see that: 7pm Pacific.

MARISHA: Event of the season!

MATT: Indeed, and we'll see you next Thursday. But, guys: thank you so much for joining us; we love you very much, and is it Thursday yet? Good night.

(cheering)

[music]