

Darnit moves southward, increasing the angle Vardumtron has to pay attention to to see us all, though it is in the corner.

Izar moves in the ethereal realm toward the treasure chest, experiencing the vertigo effect / dolly zoom--he reaches for the chest, and all of the sudden he is there. It appears cleaner, more solid, more real than it did before, less like set design facade for the aquarium. It has more depth, solidness, such heft.

Izar puts the needle shell in the keyhole of the treasure chest. He feels the needles extend when they reach the insides as if to negotiate a complex locking mechanism, so to speak. The lid pops open, and a piece of parchment kind of floats in midair, and lands on what looks like a stone egg inside the treasure chest. Egg has sapphire bright blue wave design, just around the top. It is a little smaller than a head. Parchment is really long, scribbled by hand, but seems to have "Teresias" written at the bottom. Izar picks up the egg, and the chest disappears, fading into a spray of salty air mist

Meanwhile, Hiare snatches the shell from Carlos.

Carlos says, "Uh, guys? Vardum, what do you want? Thiton?" Inside Carlos' head, the sound of voices, whispering and gasping, just says "Trepassers, get out." Carlos says, "We can make that happen, just let me know. I can't leave if you're holding me!" Carlos hears the voice: "Make them leave, or perish."

Hrothulf starts slowly moving toward Vardumtron and starts talking to it: "Uh please Mr. Vardumtron, we'd be most happy to leave your humble domicile, but please don't hurt our compatriot. You can see there's some blood on his neck. Please." The voices, now in Hrothulf's head, says, "One more step, and this one dies" while tightening the sword into Carlos' neck. "Leave this place, you do not belong."

Hrothulf brings up the crabs outside and says they will attack if we leave the room, the Vardumtron replies, "the consequences of your trespassing."

Vardumtron's eyes begin to grow a deep, deep vermillion color.

Darnit grabs Hrothulf and starts to pull him back. Still looking at VardumVoltron. He moves toward the door.

Hiare brings the animal shell to Izar. It looks a little more real here in the ethereal plane. The animals on it glow with an opaline iridescence. Izar rubs the squid shape, calling on Thiton! A

voice like many waters echoes in his head saying, "Where?" "On the Vardumtron, on your captor!"

Vardumtron drops Carlos as tentacles lash out of nothingness and entangle Vardumtron. As if crawling out of a deep abyss, the remnants of the full body of a giant squid, nearly twice the size of Vardumtron, manifests.

Carlos gets up and scuttles away, shocked at this new development. "Gods! Thiton, you *are* here!" He grabs the remaining candles on the floor, and takes them to the Southeast corner, lights one and puts it in its place.

The squid looks a little unreal, with an opalene sheen. It moves like it's in water, even though it is not.

Hrothulf quickly starts moving toward the candelabra that still is missing a candle, and he says, "I say I say Carlos my loyal compatriot, toss me one of them there candlesticks" as he makes the universal symbol for 'toss me the ball'.

Carlos winds up, and as if doing the statue of liberty trick play, the candle disappears. Hrothulf manages to catch Hiare, to manifests in his hands with a candle in her mouth.

Vardumtron's eyes glow blazingly bright in this orange-y-red shade of light which seems to emit like a blob of light that surrounds Vardumtron. That blob of light seems to gather on Vardumtron's sword, which blazes like blobular fire-like light. Vardumtron then manages to slice five of the squid's eight arms off, breaking the grasp of Giant McSquid.

Darnit throws Barkamena (hammer) at the Vardumtron, hitting solidly.

Izar looks at the shell again, but it no longer glows. The squid asks for direction. 'What next, my leige?' 'Please continue ripping his arms off.'

Carlos illumines his candelabra! Then he looks to move toward the door. But the door slams shut!

Vardumtron melts, collapsing into a pile of deceased human flesh, hundreds of bodies spreading onto the floor, like the husks of humanity, like the catch of the day.

Meanwhile, crawling out of the door toward Carlos, a massive amphibian-like humanoid grabs Carlos by the shoulders, picks him up and shakes him a little. Like Slippy, but grotesque.

A pool of molten lava surrounds Hrothulf, and giant horns as if a crown grow all around him. Darnit freezes. He cannot move.

Darnit, unable to move, sees wave upon wave of the innocent that he can't help. He cries out.

Izar is surrounded by a cloud of light. He is pushed back to the material plane. He has become a being of light. A shadow figure comes out of the ground that looks like Visparo, who raises his staff, slams it to the ground, and asks, "Are you ready!?"

Hrothulf is surrounded, and he is so cold.

Carlos is staring in the eyes of the frogman. It just looks at Carlos with disgust and says, "Who are you?"

We can all see our own, and if we look around, each others'.

The weight of all of this crushes Hrothulf. He is equal parts stunned, and afraid, and uncertain.

Carlos--what is going on here? As he wrestles with his identity as giant frogman asks, "Who are you?"

Darnit really can do nothing, and he starts to question whether he really wants to.

Izar--Are you ready?

[We each have secret information]

Hrothulf lights his sword and takes a chop while a single tear rolls down his face. He breaks one prong of the crown.

Darnit has fallen to the ground, and he is no longer holding his weapons. He sits, forlorn, upon the floor.

Izar, an archon of light, hears Visparo asking, "Are you ready?" "Yes," Izar says. And Visparo says, "Prove it." Visparo points his staff and Izar and grasping shadow-y tentacles erupt out of the ground, holding Izar in place, squeezing.

The frogman, disgustedly, tosses Carlos to the ground and turns away. Carlos says, "I am a great doctor, and seeker of the gods!" "You are a LIAR, and a disgrace to your people." Carlos, unconfident, quotes, "Some say we are what we do; others say we are how we respond to what we do!" Frogman turns and punches Carlos in his mouth, (like Balrog). He just got popped in the mouth by Frogman, bro.

Hrothulf puts his palm on the chest of the statue in front of him--his oldest brother, formed from one of the prongs of the crown around him. Hrothulf looks for a moment, recognizes it is a statue, then he straightens his arm and pushes it over backward, saying, "My dear brother. You are no longer kinfolk of mine." He drops back, and the statue shatters into ash, and there's an opening where there once was a cage.

Darnit, feeling useless now and through his life, is reliving everything in his head, wondering whether he has accomplished anything. He starts to say, "I'm sorry" to all his close friends who have died during times of war, during battles he has lost, and even ones he has won. As their undefended souls whisk by him, in turn they keep asking "Why, why are you sorry" "For not defending you" "Why? What could you have done differently" "Defended you. I am here and you are not." A primary trainer now says, "But you did everything you could have done anyway." "Then please accept that I will continue to do everything I can to defend those around me." But he says, "Your weapons are too heavy." Darnit tries to pick up his weapons, but he can't. They don't budge.

Carlos bounces up from being popped by Frogman, bro, with a mixture of defiance and confusion, reliving some of the past times he has been popped (though not necessarily by Frogman bro). He says, defiantly "I am not you! I am what I have made myself. I am no 'cercata'. Are you even real? What is going on, Thiton?!?" The voice of many waters addresses Carlos: "You are currently only half yourself. Will you embrace your place as a member of the branch or continue to ignore the truth of yourself? You cannot proceed until you are whole."

Hrothulf now comes across his youngest brother in statue form. He swings and shatters this statue, and his youngest brother manifests out of the stone in flesh and looks at Hrothulf. "You're a coward," the brother says. "You were always Father's favorite. You had every angle and you took none of them. You could have so much, and all you do is run and hide." He draws his sword, too.

Darnit is still trying to pick up his weapons. The souls coalesce into one being, tied to a post, and out of the aether crawls a giant dragon. All of Darnit's fallen friends and family have been set up as a sacrifice to this dragon, who approaches the post. Darnit stands between his friends and the dragon, trying to call his bonded weapons into his hands. Glancing off to the side, he

can see his weapons aren't budging. The dragon rears up and starts to do its belchy thing. Darnit's spirit friends behind him say, "Move! Save yourself!" Darnit casts a level two Ice Chromatic Orb at the dragon--specifically at its mouth. The dragon consumes and is unfazed. The friends tell him there's still time. Get out of the way.

Carlos says, "Fine! I take my being from others. I am slaad, but I am also Carlos." Carlos extends a hand to frogmanbro. In a strange move of bravado, and air of confidence just bro's out of him, and as Carlos extends one hand, for the first time frogmanbro is afraid, and the giant frogman succumbs to the mere will of Carlos and is drawn to him. He is fighting him, but he slides across the ground, and begins to meld with Carlos. Carlos winces in agony but it is a different kind. Carlos stands victorious over frogmanbro, having become half frogmanbro and half Carlos. He looks at the wall, in the mirror, and he has become something completely different that he can't describe, in that reflection, and that he doesn't entirely understand. And as soon as he looks at it, and looks away, he has forgotten what it looks like.

Izar grabs the tentacles entangling and attempts to magically dispel them somehow. All other see is Izar wincing in pain as the tentacles also spark and dissipate in a cloud of light. Izar is light now, and in him is no shadow at all. It is also like he is incapable of casting shadow. "Can you live like this, as a being of light?" says Visparo. "Only you know."

Meanwhile, Hiare is just falling and falling in a void of unmatched socks.

Hrothulf: "My dearest baby brother. Have you not wrought enough hardship and destruction upon this great family?"

"What makes you think anyone thinks this family is great? You ran away."

"My dear brother, you are one pox on the great house. And to question the grandeur and splendor of what our house has been in the past is an affront to our very existence."

"You know that was always your problem. You're always stuck in the past. In the grandeur of the past. I'm trying to take us to new places in the future. Can you imagine what you could have been, if you'd taken this crown?"

"I know what I am. I do not need to look into the past. I do not need to think of what coulda woulda or shoulda been."

"What were you afraid of? You could've stepped up. You could've taken this."

"After seeing the destruction and the ruin that this has wrought upon our family..."

"What family? You think what we had was family?"

"There was greatness there. I have eyes to see it. You are dumber than a tadpole." (Carlos is half-insulted by that.)

"But I was strong enough to put myself in this position. The rest of this alleged family couldn't handle it. They died easily enough."

Darnit casts Chromatic Orb again. It powers through the flaming blast of the dragon, and freezes the dragon entirely. In an attempt to protect itself from the blast of the ice, it reared back a little bit. It rocks back and forth, hits the ground and shatters, and Darnit turns to all his fallen to show him that he could defend them after all, and then have been stabbed through and through with icicles from the fire blast that turned to ice. And in one voice, they say, "We forgive you."

Izar says, "I don't understand why I have to fight you or shadow. It doesn't make any sense." "Can I live as a creature of light? I was always told that there would be sacrifices. It will be an adjustment. The lady asked then if I'd be willing to make a sacrifice, and I've been preparing since she spoke to me, for such a moment as this." Visparo leans in uncomfortably close. "Who do you want to be?"

Hrothulf: His brother killed his many other brothers, put their dad in a coma.

"Brother you are a treacherous, no good, yellow-bellied, back-stabbing stake in the grass, and I do believe believe it's time for me to do the universe a very small favor."

"You don't have the stones."

Hrothulf ignites his sword, and his brother lights his own dual daggers.

"As usual my little brother, your sword is not as big as mine." Then Hrothulf takes a chop.

Their swords collide. The brother looks at him with his super smarmy wink face.

Hrothulf kicks at the gut, but his brother easily parries the attempt, seeing Hrothulf will play dirty.

The brother spins. Two bolos fly out and catch Hrothulf around the knees. Hrothulf drops to the ground, and drops his sword. The little brother walks up to him, pokes his head with his foot so that he looks at him. "I will always beat you. Right?"

Who does Izar want to be: "Myself." "What do you mean 'yourself'?" "Whatever it takes to help the branch." "What does that look like?" "Fabulous magical powers? Two wholes.

Mezzaluxeans--the daywalker and the nightwalker." "Which fabulous magical powers."

Hrothulf's brother stands over him. Hrothulf pulls out his chef's knives (Ooh, what are you going to do? Cut some vegetables?) and makes a slash at his brother's achilles tendons. Hrothulf successfully slices his brothers tendons. He maintains his blades, but drops to the ground next to Hrothulf. The brother is pleased with Hrothulf's cheap shots. "You're finally owning what it's like to be a part of this family, doing what you have to do to get ahead." Hrothulf slashes his sword across his brother's chest/neck area, saying, "Goodnight, sweet prince." As he's lying on the ground laughing at Hrothulf, as Hrothulf takes his sword above him, he sees he's pulled out a vial of green juice, getting ready to poison his blade to end this fight, but Hrothulf got to him first, besting him at his own game, as his head rolls into the spot where his older brother used to

stand. And the crown that imprisoned him shrinks into something that looks like what used to be Hrothulf's dad's crown.

Visparo says, "So be it," and Izar absorbs him. Izar looks like himself, except his purple eyes are no longer purple. They glow with a bright amber yellow like the sun, and there is a black stripe in his white hair.

Darnit grabs his weapons, and on both of them has been etched the word 'Forgiveness' in Dwarven, shaped like a dragon. Barkamena is now frozen and Oshuut is lit with fire.

Hrothulf--there is the crown and the head of his brother, and the bolos loose themselves. Hrothulf goes to put the crown into his pouch. His brother's head says, "Coward." Hrothulf curb stomps his brother. He pulls out a cigar, lights it on his skin, and turns to his compatriots.

We're all together in the room. All of the mirrors in the room cease to show reflections. They're just like silver walls showing no reflections.

Izar is holding an egg, and a piece of paper.



