

Compelled Dual
Season Three Episode Fourteen: Loex Tolgalen

Cast:

Barry: DM, NPCs and voice of Leo

Al: DM, NPCs and voice of Phi

A: Hey, Barry.

B: Hey Al.

A: Why did the adventurer scream when they were grabbed unexpectedly?

B: Why?

A: Well, it was a Shocking Grasp. It's time for Compelled Dual.

[INTRO MUSIC]

A: Hello everybody, and welcome back to Compelled Dual. I'm Al.

B: And I'm Barry.

A: And we are a single-player, co-DMed, Dungeons & Dragons Fifth Edition actual-play podcast.

B: Previously, on Compelled Dual.

[RECAP STARTS]

Leo: [telepathically] Defiance is here. We have to go with her. Keep your distance, but send help whenever it arrives. We'll be okay. See you soon.

Sabine: [telepathically] Shit. She's still alive? Of course she is. [sighs] Cooperate for now, we'll be there soon. The Fleet is on the way.

Defiance: Lock them up. Separately.

Leo: S-Separate- N-No, no, Phi!

Phi: You are a *child* that is so scared of being hurt, you think it gives you a right to hurt everyone else. And you are *so terrified* that someone will prove that you are wrong, and that you had no right to do *any* of the things that you've done, that you have to tell yourself that everyone else is a fool! I *pity* you.

Defiance: Pity from a dead woman doesn't mean that much, honey.

Pelican: Leoril Valcyne. Help has arrived.

Leo: You beautiful feathery bastard, I would kiss you right now if there weren't a porthole between us!

A: From up on deck, you hear the sounds of clattering, people landing on the deck

The Captain: Defiance! We'll be having our girlfriend back, you evil bitch!

Leo: I'm here too, you know!

A: [laughs]

Leo: Let's go show Defiance who she's dealing with.

Phi: Yeah. Let's.

Defiance: [choking laugh] I hope you find *exactly* what you're looking for.

B: And she crumples to the ground, dead.

The Captain: According to the laws of the pirate court - you killed Defiance. That gives you her job. You're the pirate queen of Astraria.

Phi: O-Oh. Oh *no*.

[RECAP ENDS]

B: Phi, it has been several days since your confrontation with - and the subsequent death of - Defiance, pirate queen of Astraria. You wake up in a pretty normal arrangement, with The Captain snoring in your ear and Sabine curled into your other shoulder. But now, the experience is underlined by the gentle rocking of The Ship beneath you, and the sounds of waves crashing into the hull. Your eyes crack open to early morning light filtering through the portholes. On one side of you, The Captain is, just, dead to the world, on the other side, Sabine is actively drooling into her pillowcase, and just outside the door to the captain's quarters, you can hear the crew running around on the deck, various deckhands yelling things back and forth to each other. It seems like the day on The Ship is already underway. What are you doing?

A: Phi is reverse-army-crawling, sort of, out from between The Captain and Sabine, and out of bed.

B: We've been here before, roll a stealth check.

A: Not again. Uh, fifteen on the die, that's an eighteen.

B: Okay. Well, The Captain's passive perception is... not that, so he stays in his trance. Sabine, however, has a passive perception of twenty-one - you do manage to wake her up, as you attempt to get out of bed. She opens the one eye that isn't buried in her pillow, and then scowls at The Captain's very persistent snoring, and reaches over to just kind of manhandle him onto his side. He stays unconscious, but the snoring stops, and Sabine sits up in bed and reaches out to wrap a dressing gown around herself before standing up.

Sabine: [sighs] You know, I keep telling him to get that deviated septum checked out, and he just won't listen to me.

Phi: [laughs] I don't know, I think it's kind of cute.

Sabine: Which is why it's in *your* ear every night and not *mine*, love. Let's go get breakfast, and we'll let him wake up on his own time.

[TIMESTAMP - 5:01]

Phi: [chuckles] Sounds good.

A: Phi is going to throw something light on, and loop an arm through Sabine's, and head out.

B: Sabine also gets dressed, and you two head out. You have apparently gotten a little bit of a late start this morning, because the mess hall is completely abandoned by the time you and Sabine get down there. But you hear a rustle from the galley, and a large hulking form comes around the corner, with two big plates of food. The pirate Boots - who is about a seven foot tall Stormfolk man, built like a brick shithouse, blonde buzzcut, opalescent with flashes of pink and green, and sporting a frilly little apron with lots of little seabirds all over it - comes bustling into the mess hall and puts these two plates down on the table closest to you and Sabine.

Boots: Top of the morning to you, ladies. You two didn't keep The Captain up all night again, did you?

B: And he winks.

A: Phi wrinkles her nose, and says

Phi: Boots, I will do my level best to procure you a lifetime supply of *any* delicacy from *anywhere* that you would like, if you promise to *never* say that again.

B: He just grins at you, and shrugs, and twirls a long-handled dish scrubber around his finger, before heading off to the galley.

Boots: Aye, I'll be sure to collect on that. Tell The Captain that I left some waffles for him in the galley, when he wakes up.

Phi: Will do. Thank you, Boots.

A: And Phi is going to sit down at the table, very calmly, and then just *shudder*.

Phi: [horrified noise]

A: And she turns to Sabine, and says

Phi: It's not that I don't love Boots, but I could have gone *the rest of my life* pretending that he doesn't know that I know what sex is.

B: Sabine smirks, and takes a delicate little bite of her waffle.

Sabine: I mean, with as many years as everybody else on the ship has spent roasting him and Pelican, I think he's entitled to a *little* payback, you know?

Phi: Sabine. Darling. Dearest. Love of my life. In *what* world was *that* the correct response to the thing that I said?

Sabine: Phi, sweetheart, beloved, light of my world - why are you assuming that I would prioritize *correct* over *hilarious*?

A: [cackles]

B: The two of you sit there and eat your breakfast - it's, like, objectively the best waffle you've ever had in your life. Your aunt Nora is a pretty good cook, but, over the last few days, you are remembering just how much you *missed* Boots's cooking. You're in the process of shoveling homemade whipped cream and raspberry coulis into your face, when The Captain stumbles in, adjusting his hat on his head, still very bleary-eyed

The Captain: [groans] Half the treasure in the hold for a cup of coffee, right now.

A: I think Phi has a mug on the table already, and she just puts a hand over it.

Phi: Is that a promise?

A: She is grinning very mischievously at him - full knife cat. *Full* knife cat.

B: He squints at you, but then seems to wake up a little more, walks further into the galley, takes the outstretched plate from Boots with a nod of thanks, and then sits down at the table with you and Sabine. He does take your mug of coffee, drain the rest of it, and shovel like half of a waffle into his face before speaking again

The Captain: [with his mouth full] Aye, well, about that - [swallows]

B: And then he reaches into the front of his shirt, and pulls out a familiar silver brooch enclosed around a spherical red gem, and puts it on the table in the middle of the three of you.

The Captain: You've got access to far more than half the treasure in the hold of this ship. And I figure it's time we talked about this.

A: Haha. Phi's been avoiding this conversation for several days, and she's not about to stop now! She's going to take her mug of coffee back -

B: It is empty.

A: Bastard. Then she's going to busy herself with refilling it, not looking at either The Captain or Sabine.

B: The Captain also gets himself a fresh cup of coffee, before jamming his finger into the tabletop directly next to this brooch. You see the flickering lights of the mess hall reflect off this gem in it, in time with the identical gem on the amulet around his neck.

The Captain: Look, lass - I understand that the Astrarian succession crisis is first and foremost on all of our agendas right now. But we need to keep in mind that it isn't the *only* delicate political situation at hand. The pirate court, and the code that upholds it, has held for seven *thousand* years. And if we let it fall through now, then I, the *entire* fleet I command, and *every* pirate you've ever met, are doomed to fall back into the way things were before. Backbiting, and violence, and pointless bloodshed. You don't have to like it, but you do *need* to address it - for my sake, if nothing else. Right now, at this moment, you are the pirate queen of Astraria.

[TIMESTAMP - 10:18]

Phi: Captain, I don't even know what that *entails*, I -

A: And then Phi kind of looks at Sabine, and goes

Phi: Would you like to chime in, here? 'Cause I - I - I - I don't know what to do.

B: Sabine pauses with a forkful of waffle halfway to her mouth, and looks a little uncomfortable for a second.

Sabine: Um. I mean, I don't really have the expertise that I would need to give you a sound opinion. I was just sort of *around*, when The Captain became pirate king of the Zephyr Isles, and, um...

B: She takes a very big swig of coffee. The Captain brings up a hand to pinch at the bridge of his nose, and looks down at his plate of breakfast.

The Captain: Aye, you know, odd pattern, there - the last two times we've gotten a new pirate monarch, one of my exes has died.

Phi: You get - Hm. So you get the title of pirate monarch by - How many people have the two of you conspired to murder, together? Just out of curiosity.

The Captain: Well, I mean, I feel like that divides into two different questions - how many *people* and how many *pirate monarchs*? Because the answer to the latter is one, and the answer to the former is...

B: The Captain and Sabine make eye contact, and they both start tallying off on their fingers together.

Phi: Nevermind. We'll discuss it later.

B: [laughs] The three of you turn your focus down onto where this brooch is sitting on the tabletop, softly glowing and pulsing, and The Captain reaches across the table and grabs your hand.

The Captain: Look, lass. Per the code, as soon as you're able to, you can hand the title off to whoever you want. But of all the people on this ship - of all the people we know - right now, it's safest with you. And, in case you were forgetting, I'm also a pirate monarch. I can show you all the things you can *do* with this position. If you don't want it in the long run, that's fine! But, for now, somebody has to pick it up.

Phi: We are already embroiled in about a *dozen* separate crises, I - [exhales] I need to know what *picking it up* entails, in the short term, and I need to know how I can work that around the war that I am trying to stop, and the charges I am *wanted for* in Voldhur, and another throne that I *never* asked to be in the running for, I just - [sighs] It's a lot.

The Captain: Well, essentially what it boils down to is - the pirate court all meet as equals. No matter what other political bullshit is going on in the outside world, we're all responsible for the water surrounding our territories. It's the reason I've been able to keep the Zephyr Isles safe for as long as I have, because we don't have the population, and heavens know we don't have the *military* to hold up against the rest of the world, but we've got the waters. And you? Well, you've got something we could use to our benefit, lass. You've got control over the entire Dragon's Maw. Enough support from the Fleet, you could cut off that island's entire supply.

Phi: Darling, even if we could get the people together, that... won't work. We can cut them off from the outside world, and that is good, of course, but... [sighs] They are highly motivated to keep bringing people to that island, and making them disappear. And if they can't get anyone from outside, then they'll just turn to the mainland, and I

don't think that's a good solution, either. I'm not going to sit here and watch my country devour itself.

B: The Captain frowns, looking down at the table, and you could swear that you just *hear* the gears gnashing and grinding together in his head, as he tries to think and fails. While he is buffering, Sabine reaches down and picks up the brooch, sort of turns it back and forth between her fingers a couple of times.

Sabine: [sighs] Look, I get that you are not *jazzed* about this, Phi. I wouldn't be either, if I was in your shoes. But we need to consider that Defiance likely told your father where she was planning to take you. So - most likely - he'll be along before we have time to come up with a better plan, and he has what's left of the navy, and we have *two ships*, right now. We're going to need numbers. Which is something that you could give us, by leveraging your position on the pirate court! I don't claim to know the code inside and out, but I know the court protects its own. You could convene a meeting, ask for help...?

B: Beside her, The Captain is cradling his head, like he's nursing a migraine from thinking too much, and, without looking up at you, says

[TIMESTAMP - 15:00]

The Captain: Aye, and if you need any more convincing, just imagine the look on your old man's face when he runs up against a line of Agrippina The Red's steamships.

A: Phi was opening her mouth to argue with Sabine, but she swivels, points at The Captain, narrows her eyes.

Phi: That's not fair.

The Captain: I may not be fair, but I am right. The only thing stopping the court from helping you out to the best of its ability a year ago was Defiance, and, well, she's... Not an issue, anymore! Your father's been stomping all over Agrippina's turf for *far* too long, she's probably chomping at the bit to take him out, Beatrix and Ingrid want this war over for Torduun's sake, and Katya... likes you. If you pick up that brooch, lass, and you accept the title, and you call a meeting - they will come, and they will help. Just call the meeting and write a letter, put down what you need. I'll go to Parlay Cove, I'll parse it all out for you.

Phi: I - [sighs] Fine. You're right. [deep breath] We are deeply outmatched, and I'm not going to prioritize my own stubbornness over the resources that we need to stop all this. I - I understand. We need help, and I will do my best to get that help, and to accept it. But...

A: And she takes a deep breath, picks up the brooch and kind of turns it over in her hands for a second.

Phi: I hope you'll both forgive me for saying that with my family history, I am not comfortable keeping a title that I had to kill to earn. So we'll call this my first and *final* act, as pirate queen of Astraria. Yes?

B: The Captain nods, and then stands up, squeezes at your shoulder as he walks around the side of the table.

The Captain: Aye, I won't fault you for that, lass. You and Sabine can work out what you want to put in the letter, and we'll solve it all after we figure out the whole Loex Tolgalen shitshow. And with that, I should go check on my crew.

B: He leans down to kiss you on the forehead, reaches out to press his hand to the side of Sabine's cheek, and then turns around and leaves.

A: Phi stays there for a second, nods to herself, scoops up the brooch, and - to Sabine - says

Phi: I... need a little bit of air, I'm going to head up on deck as well.

A: And then she leans over, gives Sabine a kiss, and heads up on deck.

B: The first thing you notice, when you get out on deck, is that all of your party's familiars are kind of hanging out together. The horrible zombie pelican is perched on the spine of Dexter the bone-wolf, who is just kind of curled up in the sun, and Ruvaen's familiar - Sweetie, this little skeletal sparrow - is perched on the pelican's bill, kind of pecking at the barnacles encrusted there. The bird opens its mouth, and eats Sweetie.

A: [distant scandalized gasp]

B: And as you are watching this happen - from up in the rigging, you hear Pelican, the man, make a very affronted -

Pelican: Ah-ah!

B: - noise, and start snapping at it. The bird reluctantly spits Sweetie out, and she goes flying away to perch on Ruvaen's shoulder. You watch all this happen in quick succession, and then, from next to you, you hear a voice say

Zed: Wow.

Phi: Huh. Yeah, I didn't like that at all. Hi, Zed!

B: Zed is leaning back against the railing of the Ship, with his arms crossed over his chest, eyebrows raised at the scene that you have just witnessed.

Zed: You know, when I was a kid, we had a cat. Just a cat - a regular cat, not a dead one. I'm starting to think that I formed some unrealistic expectations about what a *pet* is supposed to be.

A: Phi stops for just a moment, and then says

Phi: Huh. I've never seen a flesh cat, what's that like?

B: You have seen a *flesh cat*, roll deception right now.

A: [giggles]

B: [distant crosstalk] Pull up your character sheet.

A: [dice sound] Sixteen.

B: Okay, I'm going to roll insight for Zed.

A: [giggling]

B: [dice noise] Dirty twenty. He looks over at you and tilts his head to the side.

Zed: Oh, so you're trying to fuck with me. That's what you're trying to do.

Phi: Yeah. Can't blame a girl for trying, it would have been *very* funny if I'd managed to convince you that there were *only* bone animals in Astraria. I was whipping up a whole pitch about how it was more sanitary - it would have been fantastic.

Zed: You know, I've been to Astrarian church, I saw the skulls hanging from the ceiling - I *would* be inclined to believe you, but I have known you and your brother long enough to know that the two of you share a genetic propensity for bullshitting.

[TIMESTAMP - 20:01]

Phi: Hmm. Yeah, I think that's fair to say. One of our ancestors was a serial killer for several decades before he managed to get himself onto the throne of Astraria - establishing our entire dynasty - and we just kept that shit under wraps for... [hisses] ten thousand years, now?

B: Zed stares into the middle distance for a couple seconds, and then leans a little further into the railing and goes

Zed: Huh. Interesting how Leo didn't catch me up on *that*. Anyway.

Phi: It's relatively new information. Anyway, you get used to the bird. Eventually. Sort of.

Zed: Does it, uh... Does it always eat things?

Phi: Oh, yeah. Stray food, seagulls... It leaves Notice Of Delinquent Repayment alone, but I think that's because they have a healthy respect for each other.

Zed: Oh, that's the cat, right? I had to feed him when I got on the boat.

Phi: Yeah - did he claw *your* hand open?

B: Zed kind of squints at you, and tilts his head to the side.

Zed: No. He's a sweet cat, he's really nice.

Phi: Hmm. He's a menace to society, but, okay.

Zed: Yeah, well, maybe that's why we get along.

B: Zed pushes himself off the railing, stands up, and turns over to look at you.

Zed: You don't look so good. You feeling okay?

A: Phi gives him a *look*, and says

Phi: Well, Zed, since you asked - I am having *somewhat of a difficult few weeks*, yes. You know, what with the being framed for a murder, and being arrested, and... finding out a lot of troubling information about *my* family history, and being *kidnapped*, and I woke up in a *dumpster*, and then I killed a person!

Zed: Yeah, I've been there.

A: [cackles]

Zed: And I mean, I'm not one for toxic optimism, but maybe try to look on the bright side? I mean, we made it out of Voldhur, the weather's nice, the sun is shining, it's a beautiful day, we have fine company...

B: Right in front of you, Boots walks by, and Zed's head goes on a swivel to follow him.

Zed: [sighs dreamily] Yo-ho, yo-ho, a pirate's life for me.

Phi: Careful. You are both so taken. And he's at least put a ring on it.

Zed: Just because I'm on a diet doesn't mean I can't look at the menu. And besides, I don't see his spouse anywhere.

A: Phi looks around for a second, and then points up in the rigging.

B: Zed looks up and up and up, into the rigging, at where Pelican is perched, gargoyle-like, on one of the masts, just glaring at him. The bird flutters up and settles on his shoulder, it is *also* glaring at Zed. It is deeply creepy to behold. Zed's eyes get real big, and he just goes

Zed: Wow. I have suddenly lost interest in being a pirate.

Phi: Eh. It wouldn't work out, anyway - if you said you wanted to live on a *boat* full-time, Leo would break up with you out of self-defense.

B: Zed winces sympathetically.

Zed: Ooh, yeah, poor guy. You know, I think he's doing better now. I can't tell if it's because he got his sea legs, finally, or if he's just holding it back out of spite, but...

B: He nods across the deck, past where Sabine and Doc are set up at a little rickety table, playing a game of backgammon, and, a few feet away from them, Verity is huddled on the deck with the teen squad, apparently reading their birth charts - she's got that little glowing crystal star map of hers out in her hand, kind of poking at it. You looks *extremely* perturbed about what the stars have to say about her. But Zed's line of sight is actually fixed towards the upper deck, at the stern of the ship, back where the wheel is. And, in that direction, you see Leo and Kalessa taking turns throwing knives at the side of a big packing crate, up against the railing. Meanwhile, The Captain is at the helm, turning the wheel to get the ship to catch the wind, chatting animatedly to Eleanora Ashthorne, of all people, who is staring straight ahead with a Kubrick stare, just looking like she would rather be anywhere else but where she is, right now.

A: Phi nods her head over towards Eleanora and The Captain, and says

Phi: Something tells me we're going to need to get in the middle of that conversation to prevent great tragedies.

B: Roll a persuasion check.

A: Okay, fine. [dice sound] Thirteen.

B: Okay, let me roll for Zed. [dice noise]

A: [laughs]

B: [deep breath] Well, you rolled a three, but I rolled a two, and Phi and Zed both get plus ten, to persuasion and insight respectively, so you just *barely* convince Zed to intervene in this. You look over your shoulder and see him tucking what looks to be

homemade betting slips back into his vest, very sheepishly, but then he raises his eyebrows, nods, and goes

[TIMESTAMP - 25:11]

Zed: Yeah! Yeah, we should stop them from fighting, that was *exactly* what I was about to suggest.

Phi: Oh, I'm sure it was, I would never suggest otherwise, knowing your ethics and moral character, *Zed*.

B: Zed looks deeply affronted, and brings a hand up to press against his chest.

Zed: I'll have you know that my ethics are fucking impeccable. I'm just a *bastard*. It's why me and your brother work so well.

Phi: Alright, alright.

A: And Phi's going to head off towards Eleanora and The Captain. Leo, you and Kalessa are engaging in some target practice, as, behind you, The Captain is talking about... something about the wind currents? You don't really understand it. He has been doing this for several minutes, you have not understood more than every fourth word he's said, and you can almost *hear* Eleanora getting more and more aggravated.

B: Okay, but like, is he mansplaining? Because if he's doing that, I'll intervene, but if Eleanora's just annoyed by him, I'm going to let it slide.

A: You don't *think* so, because that requires a level of condescension that you aren't sure The Captain is smart enough to conjure up.

B: Okay, in which case Leo is smirking and throwing another knife at this packing crate.

A: You throw this, like, kitchen knife, and then walk up and retrieve it from the packing crate. Kalessa is standing at the throwing line, one eye closed as she lines up an angle. Sunlight is glinting off of her newly-dyed bright fluorescent orange hair, and the effect *almost* makes it look like a halo of fire around her head. She tilts her head a little bit, still with one eye closed, and

Kalessa: Bet you I can get it to ricochet off the wall.

Leo: I'll take that bet as soon as I am out of your line of fire, how's that sound?

A: She waits for you to move out of the way, and then attempts a trick shot. I'm going to roll for it. [dice sound] You draw back even with her at the throwing line, and she says

Kalessa: I'll put five gold on it, what do you say?

Leo: Eh, we're on a moving ship. I'll see your five and raise you ten.

Kalessa: Okay. Ten gold, I can get the knife to hit the wall, and *then* the crate.

A: She rears her arm back, throws this knife - she rolled a nineteen. It hits the wall and then starts to drop, and she casts Mage Hand.

B: [laughs]

A: [trying not to laugh] And the Mage Hand puts the knife in the packing crate.

B: Leo puts both hands on his hips, and kind of whips around to look at her.

Leo: That was dirty.

B: But then he fishes ten gold out of his pocket and hands it to her.

A: [giggles] Kalessa raises her eyebrows, takes this ten gold from you, says

Kalessa: Thank *you*.

A: And just sticks it in her pocket as her Mage Hand brings her knife back to her.

Leo: I'm starting to remember why I don't make bets with you. [sighs] Anyway.

B: He looks over his shoulder and makes sure that Eleanora and The Captain are still occupied, before turning back to Kalessa.

Leo: I was wondering, um... [chuckles] Well, it seems kind of stupid to ask if you're *okay*, but -

A: Kalessa pauses, sheathes her knives, and, looking at the floor, says

Kalessa: Yeah, it does seem like that would be stupid.

Leo: Look, I'm trying to apologize, so please just cut me a break? Okay? I'm sorry for how I talked to you that night. You had just been through the worst hour of your life, and - no matter what was on the line, people shouldn't talk to their *friends* the way I talked to you, and I'm *sorry*. You have *always* been willing to go to bat for me. No matter what. Even after I had been gone for five years, you were still willing to go to bat for me. And in that moment, I *should* have been willing to go to bat for you, and I wasn't. I'm sorry I didn't acknowledge your loyalty, for that entire time, and I'm sorry that *mine* fell through when you needed it most. But, Kalessa, if you're not okay, just take it from me - *you need to tell someone*. Because without help, this only gets worse.

[TIMESTAMP - 29:55]

Kalessa: I... appreciate the apology. And I get that you... *think* you mean it. But it is really rich to be told, by you of all people, that if I need help I just have to ask. I... [exhales] I spent *years* giving everything that I had to people that *weren't there* when the chips were down. Is me *asking for help* going to change that?

Leo: Yes. If you don't want me to be your friend anymore, I understand. I haven't treated you the way that people are supposed to treat their friends. But if you're willing to give me one more shot, I would *really* like to try to be better.

A: Kalessa, still not looking at you, nods again, reaches up to swipe at her eyes, and then digs around in her pocket for a second, and puts five gold down on the railing, and says

Kalessa: Putting money on it now, you're not going to follow your own advice.

B: Leo reaches into his pocket and pulls out another ten gold, and puts it on the railing next to her coins.

Leo: I'll see your five and raise you ten.

A: As you two are standing here, you see - out of the corner of your eye - Phi and Zed both approaching across the deck.

B: Leo raises an eyebrow, and then kind of reaches down to get Kalessa by the elbow, and jostles her a little

Leo: Okay, here comes trouble.

A: Roll me a quick perception check.

B: [dice noise] Nineteen.

A: Zed nods at you, as the two of them are approaching. Phi is not looking at you, she is looking behind you, where you know The Captain and Eleanora are.

B: Uh oh.

A: And, with that nineteen, you can kind of hear - just, like, barely audible - Eleanora go

Eleanora: [frustrated noise]

B: Yeah, The Captain's his friend. And besides that, if he dies, they're going to have some logistical issues getting The Ship moved around, so Leo is going to walk over and insert himself into that conversation.

Leo: Captain, hey! I heard that Sunshine was looking for you.

A: The Captain stops in the middle of what he was saying, raises his eyebrows at you, and goes

The Captain: Oh. Alright, then.

A: And then, one hand still on the wheel, he says

The Captain: I'll go see what she wants. You mind holding this for a moment?

B: Leo very nervously takes the wheel, like he's picking up an armed bomb.

A: The Captain strides off across the deck, whistling a tune that you recognize as an extremely bawdy shanty, but he is not singing it. You've gotten the sense, the last couple of days, that he has *dearly* missed being on his own goddamn boat.

B: I'm happy for him. Too bad it's making him more insufferable than usual. Speaking of which, he looks over at Eleanora and raises an eyebrow.

Leo: You good?

Eleanora: [groans]

A: Eleanora takes a deep breath, puts her hands down to her sides and says

Eleanora: [sighs] I don't know what it is with this guy - he already annoyed me, but now that he's been *chipper* for the last few days? Oh, *oh* he's getting on my nerves.

Leo: Oh, cut him a break. He just got back to his home and his family, and I know he's a jackass most of the time, but. I mean, really, what's he done to you?

Eleanora: Nothing! And I *know* that makes me sound like a bitch. I *get* it. He's just so annoying. He's like you in the first two weeks that we knew each other, but *harder* to ignore, somehow.

B: Leo lets go of the wheel, and plants both hands on his hips as he whips around to look at her.

Leo: Whoa, okay. I'm starting to feel a little bit better about the conclusion of our romantic relationship, now. Hey Zed, honey, are there things about me that are *easy to ignore*?

A: Zed and Phi have come over here at this point. Zed walks up next to you as you say this, puts an arm around your waist and kisses the top of your head, and says

Zed: Not without a good set of earplugs.

B: [infuriated laughter]

A: [wheezes]

B: Leo takes Kimryl's Blade out and casts a Message cantrip at Zed

Leo: Earplugs won't save you, motherfucker, I can get in your head. And even if I couldn't, I'm very good at nonverbal communication.

B: And he puts two middle fingers up at him.

A: [wheezes] Zed opens his mouth to fire back at you, and then, from up in the rigging, you hear

Pelican: Land ho!

B: Leo's eyes go kind of wide, and he - not trying to be *mean*, but urgently - kind of shoves Zed off of him, and goes running for the side of the ship.

[TIMESTAMP - 35:05]

A: Leaving the wheel unmanned, fantastic. Um - [wheezes] Yeah, you go running for the side of the ship, and, sure enough, the coastline of mainland Astraria is coming into view.

B: I think he just stares. In absolute silence. Just looks blankly out over the railing, taking it all in. He's having a lot of big feelings, because it's been the better part of seven years since the last time Leo saw his home, and I think there was a pretty big part of him that sort of just believed he would never see it again.

A: There is a sort of fog over the water that makes the outline of this coast kind of blurry and dreamlike. You are relatively near Loex Tolgalen. Like, you can just barely see the top of the tower that you now know is a long-defunct lighthouse. Between you and it, you see fields, what might be the smudgy shape of a little town. You can tell just by looking at, kind of, the geography, you are around this kind of horn of land that sticks out just south of Es Thalor. You are the closest to home you have been in seven years.

B: Leo is not looking away from all of this, but he is reaching out his free hand towards Phi.

A: Phi had kind of come up to the railing behind you, as you went over. She grabs your hand back, squeezes it super tight.

B: For once in his life, Leo doesn't have words. He just keeps clinging to his sister's hand and trying to process the knowledge that he is returning to a home where there is nothing left for him.

A: From behind you, you hear The Captain yelling

The Captain: You had one job!

A: As he presumably runs back up to the wheel, and Phi turns her head, and, over her shoulder, says

Phi: Love, tone it down.

B: Leo doesn't even have a snarky comment to add onto that - he's fully dissociating, at this point.

A: You are still approaching mainland Astraria - but, more importantly, Loex Tolgalen - and as you draw closer, something... *weird* happens. This low fog over the ocean almost jitters, like bad stop-motion? And shifts? And then you blink, and it stops. Everything is calm for a moment, you are still approaching land, and Phi, from beside you, says

Phi: Wait, what?

B: Uh, I'm going to look around and see what's going on. I'll roll, if you need me to.

A: Uh, yeah, roll investigation.

B: Oh, I still have proficiency - thanks, Sorran. [dice sound] Eleven. Leo's not having a good day.

A: Out of the corner of your eye, you see - ghost Sorran appears. He is following Phi's eyeline, and then stops, seeming distracted, and looks further down the ship, to where Lorelei and the rest of the teen squad are talking to Verity.

Leo: [sighs] You know, I would argue that now's not the time for sentiment, but... I get it. Go forth.

B: And Leo turns back over to Phi.

Leo: What are you seeing?

A: Phi has gone very pale, next to you. And she points with her chin, towards this landmass that you are approaching, and, confused and disoriented, she says

Phi: That's... That's Inneas.

A: You follow her eyeline, and, yeah, there is a city in your field of vision, where there was not before. And you recognize the geography - it has changed from the kind of rolling fields of the middle of Astraria to the sheer rocky cliffs along the Southern coast.

Leo: That's not possible. Inneas would be, what, two, three days of sailing, from where we just were?

Phi: Uh. A-At least, we're... we're on the wrong side of the island - Captain!

[TIMESTAMP - 40:04]

A: From behind you, you hear The Captain cursing up a storm and the ship slowly starts to turn, as Sabine, Zed, Kalessa, and Eleanora all approach. You hear Sabine, from behind you, say

Sabine: Is that...?

A: The Ship continues turning, and you see that you were headed away from Loex Tolgalen, and The Captain is trying to get you back on course.

Leo: What the hell is going on?

A: The ship turns, and starts heading back toward Loex Tolgalen, as Phi looks around and goes

Phi: I - I - I don't - I don't understand, what's going - ?

A: And you start approaching again, and the fog does that *jittering* thing, again, and there's almost a shimmer in the air, and then you blink, and there is just open sea in front of you.

B: Like, no more Astraria? No more nothing?

A: In front of you, no.

B: Leo runs over to the other side of the ship.

A: As you run over to the other end of the ship, you see the coastline of Astraria again. You are heading north again, towards Voldhur.

B: Leo's eyes are just fixed on the island, and the tower in the middle of it. And he purses his lips, shakes his head a little bit.

Leo: Huh. Okay, well this seems like wizard shit. I don't know anything about wizard shit. Ruvaen!

A: You spot Ruvaen down at the railing on the lower deck, near where Verity and the teens have all run to look at what's going on. He looks up as you call his name, says

Ruvaen: Yeah, just a second.

A: And then bustles across the deck and up.

Ruvaen: What - What's going on? Do we know what's going on?

Leo: I - I wish we did. It's like every time we start getting closer to the island, we get zapped to the other side. Do you know of *anything* that could make that happen?

A: Ruvaen squints, and then pulls out his wand. Sweetie, the skeletal sparrow that is his familiar, flies over and perches on his shirt. And he starts casting something, and then, still squinting at this hazy outline of Loex Tolgalen, he says

Ruvaen: Uh... It... Feels *almost* like Private Sanctum? But that's not - Th-There's something else, it's not just abjuration, it's - it's - there's some divine magic in there, and it - it feels like evocation, *maybe*? Maybe necromancy? I d- I don't - This is *weird*.

Leo: Okay. Well, it's weird, we should consult our chief expert on weirdness. Mia, do *you* have any idea what's going on?

A: Mia does not even come up to join the conversation, just, from the lower deck, they yell

Mia: Why the fuck would I know what's going on?

B: Leo glares at them, and heavily debates dragging *all* of their shit out into the light of day, but decides against it, and just goes back to looking out over the railing.

A: Ruvaen is still staring, confused, at the hazy outline of the island

Ruvaen: Whatever this is, if it's big enough to cover that entire place, it's - there's some serious power behind it. I - I don't think I could do this

Leo: Unprecedented magic. Big power source. I think I've got an idea what's behind this. Phi?

A: Phi purses her lips, nods grimly.

Phi: Yeah, we have *somewhat* of an idea. How do we get through it?

Leo: Well, obviously not on the Ship - we've tried that three times and it hasn't worked. I've got a Dispel Magic, but, if the power behind whatever's going on is that big, I don't know that I could really touch it.

A: Ruvaen shakes his head.

Ruvaen: Uh... Uh, I - I definitely don't think you could get the Ship through this. [sighs] You could maybe poke a hole in it, but even that - you'd have to get closer, I think.

Leo: Okay. We need to brainstorm. And it'll probably be better if we wait for night to try whatever it is we're going to try, anyway. Captain, we should maybe retreat to a safe distance and weigh anchor!

A: The Captain, sounding extremely troubled, yells back.

The Captain: Alright! That sounds... reasonable.

[TIMESTAMP - 45:04]

A: And the Ship slowly starts to turn to retreat.

B: Phi, several hours pass. The sun begins to set in the west, casting the tower of Loex Tolgalen into a sharp silhouette where the ship is anchored, several miles offshore. And you find yourself in the captain's quarters, with your brother, Zed, The Captain, Sabine, and Ruvaen, all hunched over this big table full of maps. Leo has been pacing for several minutes, but briefly stops to whirl around and point down at the coast of the island on one of these maps across the top of the table.

Leo: Okay, Ruvaen, you said that I couldn't get the whole ship through with a Dispel Magic, but I could punch a hole in the spell, maybe? Big enough for two people? Because if we can do that, I can Water Walk us over there.

Phi: What if they see us from the island, though?

Leo: [sighs] Yeah, that's true - because it would probably be you and me going, just to do reconnaissance. And I can hide pretty well, but *you*, I mean...

Phi: Yeah, we all know I'm very ostentatious. We get it.

B: Ruvaen puts up a finger, and goes

Ruvaen: Also it's night, and you both glow in the dark.

Phi: That... is a good point, and there aren't exactly trees to hide behind in the ocean. Yeah.

Leo: I mean, we've got people on board with invisibility spells, right?

Phi: Yeah, but...

A: Phi looks over at The Captain, and says

Phi: Sweetheart, estimate for me really quick - how close do you think we were able to get to the island, before things got weird?

B: The Captain picks up a couple of navigator's tools from this table, and starts marking at little spots on the map, like, roughly where you were when you first sailed in, and then when you got zapped to the Southern coast, and then when you got zapped to the Eastern coast of Loex Tolgalen, where you are now

The Captain: Uh... A mile? Maybe a bit more?

Phi: I don't think any invisibility spell that we have access to is going to hold long enough for us to Water Walk a mile, Leo.

Leo: Okay, so some other kind of magic to stop us from being seen. I know Verity did that thing when we snuck into Voldhur, but we had to be close to her, right? So... [sighs] I don't even know if I can get the two of us through this, adding a third person seems counterproductive.

Phi: No. And besides, there's only so much Pass Without A Trace can *do*. We're looking at a dead sprint across a mile of water.

Leo: [sighs] Open water. At night. Fuck.

Phi: I... I can cast Darkness.

Leo: Yeah, yeah you could. How long can you hold that up for?

Phi: Ten minutes, give or take. I - I can't move it, though, once I cast it.

Leo: So that would only give us a couple feet of cover, and would we even be able to see in it?

Phi: No, not - darkvision can't pierce through it. I... *Dammit*.

Leo: So, nothing. We've got *nothing*.

B: Leo turns around and, like, smacks his hand against the wall of the captain's quarters, *very* pissed off, and just starts pacing again.

A: Hang on. Oh, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Brain blast. Uh, so, Barry, um, correct me if I'm wrong - I'm looking at the stats for Darkness. I can cast it on a point that I choose, or

I can cast it on an object. So if I cast it on an object and the object moves, the spell moves with it.

B: Oh-kay?

A: Phi stops, and says

Phi: Wait. I - I can - somebody hand me something light - something that'll float, and that I could move with a Gust cantrip.

B: [laughing] Okay. Uh, you know what, rule of cool, I'm going to let you do this - and, actually, go ahead and take a point of inspiration, 'cause I like the cut of your jib.

A: [gleeful laugh]

B: Everybody in this room starts floundering around to try to find something that fits your specifications. You see Zed, like, taking out a couple of his facial piercings and dropping them in a glass of water to see if they float.

[TIMESTAMP - 50:03]

B: The Captain is, like, weighing how much his shirt would take on water, if you needed to use that. Leo has gone pretty much full-unhinged at this point, and just slings the leather messenger bag that he carries around off his shoulder, dumps it out on top of this map table, and starts pawing through the various contents. Let me open up Leo's inventory, real quick... [snorts] Okay. So I also have kind of a wild idea. Leo goes pawing through the contents of this bag, sprawled out across the top of the table - you see a couple extra daggers, some of the glued-shut padlocks that The Captain had given him when he first started his rogue training, his thieves' tools, a coil of rope. And then he stops, braces both hands on top of the table, and goes

Leo: Somebody go outside, put a bucket over the side of the ship, and bring me some seawater. *Now.*

A: [stammers] Okay. Phi's going to go do that. Just dipping a bucket into the ocean.

B: Yeah - you have to get some help from You, who ties a rope to a bucket and helps you throw it down over the side, giving you a *really weird* look, the whole time.

Phi: I don't know, my brother has a plan.

B: You take this bucket of seawater back into the captain's quarters. Zed is looking at Leo like he has grown a second head, very concerned, but as soon as the door shuts behind you, Leo rakes through this pile of stuff from his bag one more time and comes up with a big block of soap.

Phi: *No.*

Leo: I just want to try it. I just want to try it.

B: Leo takes one of the many bars of soap that he was given by This One when the two of you left Oscaea, brings it over to this bucket, and gently lays it down on the surface of the water. I'm going to roll - we'll call it a DC15 nature check, just for Leo to do this little science experiment, and see if this soap will float. [dice noise, exhales] Fifteen exactly. So the soap floats - Leo hurriedly fishes it out of this bucket of water, and holds up a coil of rope that he got with his starter adventurer gear, and goes

Leo: You can push a bar of soap, right?

A: Phi puts her head in her hands.

Phi: Yeah, I *can*.

Leo: Okay. You can cast a Darkness spell. You can push a bar of soap with a Gust cantrip. Both of us are in pretty good shape, I think we could run a ten-minute mile.

Phi: Is the soap gonna - I can't believe I'm saying this. Is the soap going to *last* ten minutes?

Leo: I don't know, Phi, I've never had to *time* how long it takes a bar of soap to dissolve in the *ocean*, before. I'm giving you options, what more do you want?!

Phi: I don't know, but this is the weirdest plan we've ever had!

B: Behind the two of you, Zed puts both his arms up in the air, eyes wide, shakes his head, and goes

Zed: You know what? I was trying really hard to be supportive, but I got to say something. I just *got to say something*.

Phi: No, please, I would love to know that I'm not the only person that sees how wild this is.

Zed: Look, I'm not super caught up on the whole state of affairs. I don't know *everything* that's going on right now, and I don't really want to - but what I do know is that somebody getting onto that island is instrumental in taking down your father, stopping the war, saving the world. And we're looking at those odds, and the best thing we can come up with is *soap*.

Phi: ...I don't have a better idea. This is it. This is the idea we have.

B: Leo is already in the process of tying his rope in coils around this soap, and kind of sheepishly looks down at the ungodly mess of knots in his hands, and goes

Leo: It - It's good for your skin. It's made from goat's milk. No sulfates.

A: [cackles]

Phi: Okay. Put another bar soap in the water, let's see how long it lasts.

B: You and your brother and your friends, internationally-wanted [laughing] *political insurrectionists*, spend the next twenty minutes huddled around this bucket of saltwater, slowly watching a bar of soap dissolve.

[TIMESTAMP - 55:07]

A: As we're doing that, I'm going to continue to strategize. Phi turns to The Captain, and says

Phi: Do you think you could draw attention with the boat, somehow, while we're doing this? So no one looks too close?

B: The Captain, staring blankly down into this bucket, nods

The Captain: Aye, we've got a hundred souls aboard and several cannons, which is better than your bar of soap, lass.

Phi: Everyone stop saying the word soap. I don't want anyone on here hurt, but any attention we can draw off of the two of us will help us get there, and... [sighs] Maybe we can figure out how to take down whatever spell it is, so you can all join us as reinforcements? I - I don't know. One way or another, we have to get there, though, and a Darkness spell can do a lot, but *eventually* someone would notice that there is a patch of darkness moving over the water.

The Captain: Aye. We can't get too close to the island, obviously, but... Ruvaen could maybe put out feelers, make sure that we can get just along the edge of the magic, and we could draw attention that way.

Phi: Okay. So we have a plan. Our plan is to follow a bar of soap across the ocean, while you all shoot cannonballs at the center of the Kimrylite church. Cool.

B: Zed fists his hands up in his hair, and goes

Zed: I need to take a walk.

B: And just walks out of the captain's quarters.

A: [laughs]

B: And, several minutes later, our camera zooms in on you and your brother, on the upper decks of the Ship, with your soap on a rope and... a plan. Leo is crouched down on the deck, drawing a complicated-looking arcane circle in chalk, casting Water Walk as a ritual. And, next to you, Phi, Sabine comes over and squeezes at your shoulder super hard.

Sabine: The two of you are firing off a message as soon as you find anything, right?

Phi: Yeah, of course, but... Our top priority is finding a way to get the rest of you onto the island to help us.

Sabine: Good call. As long as whatever that enchantment is is up, I don't think I could get in there to teleport you out, so. I *want* to say this is a bad idea, but it's not *bad*, it's just... insane.

Phi: [groans] I'm sure it'll be fine. I'm - I'm *sure* it'll be *fine*.

B: She pulls you in and kisses you.

A: Yeah, Phi kisses her back

Phi: [exhales] Okay. We'll figure out some sort of shenanigans to get the spell down, I'm sure. Maybe something *e/se* that can be solved with a bar of soap!

Sabine: sighs] This is... bananas. I am romantically involved with two people that are absolutely off their fucking rockers. Don't die.

Phi: I'll do my best.

A: And then Phi's gonna cast a Darkness spell on the soap on the rope.

B: [laughs]

A: *God*.

B: You do this just as Leo is wrapping up casting this Water Walk spell as a ritual. The two of you step into a lifeboat, and are lowered down into the water. Leo casts the bar of soap out, probably thirty feet in front of you - he still has a little bit of slack on the rope coiled around his arm. And you two set off, with this void-like Darkness spell in front of you, shielding you from anybody who might be watching from the shore. Okay, so, Phi, here's the thing. Your Gust cantrip can only move an object up to ten feet at a time. I *will* factor in the knowledge that you are on moving water, and that that water is moving towards the island, but what I'm going to need you to do is roll me a perception check,

to see if you can anticipate which way these waves are going, enough to keep this shield of darkness out in front of you and Leo.

A: [dice sound] Uh, natural seventeen. So, twenty-one.

B: Okay. That will cover you until the Ship starts playing its part in this whole operation. If you look back over your shoulder, you can see the Ship, lit up as brightly as it can be, all of the portholes open, just starting to unleash cannon fire.

[TIMESTAMP - 1:00:02]

B: None of this artillery reaches the island, obviously, it's too far back, but they're making a lot of noise. And, from the island in front of you, you see three bright red pinpricks of light start to gleam through the darkness. They get brighter and brighter, and then three beams of laser-like magical light shoot out across this distance. Gonna roll to hit three times. [dice noise] Okay. Only one of those is going to hit. So that's... [dice sound] twelve damage to the Ship. You and Leo have covered about a quarter of a mile at this point. Phi, I'm going to make you roll perception again.

A: [dice noise] I'm going to use my point of inspiration. [dice sound] Nineteen.

B: Okay. You're good. The Ship is still holding the attention of whatever weapons are on the island, but they're going to roll three more times on the Ship. [dice noise] Hit. [dice sound] Hit. [dice noise] Miss. [dice sound] Another thirty-two damage on the Ship, and Phi, you and Leo cover another quarter of a mile. Roll perception again, as you continue blasting these Gust cantrips.

A: [dice noise] I'm going to use one of my rerolls. [dice sound] I'm going to use a second one. [dice noise] Gonna use my final reroll. [dice sound] Sixteen?

B: That will just barely do it. So you and Leo keep trekking, pushing this Darkness spell out in front of you. I'm going to roll to hit three more times on the Ship. [dice noise] Hit. [dice sound] Hit. [dice noise] Miss. [dice sound] Twenty-eight more damage on the Ship. It is far behind you, at this point, but you can still hear the echoes over the waves of the hull splintering, and some pretty hefty damage being done. Phi, you are on the home stretch. You're on this last quarter mile between you and the shore of Loex Tolgalen, you have no rerolls remaining, the Ship is taking heavy fire. I'd like you to roll perception one more time, to keep this Darkness spell on track.

A: Alright, alright, alright. [hisses, dice sound, exhales] That's a nine.

B: [exhales] Okay. The bar of soap that is carrying your Darkness spell gets yanked off course by an errant wave, and you and your brother - as Astrarians, as bioluminescent people that glow in the dark - are momentarily exposed. And you see one of the three

magical lasers that has been focused on the Ship pivot to point at you, as you run across the surface of the ocean. You're close. You're within a quarter of a mile of the beach, but... You don't know that you can outrun this.

A: Hey, since we have Water Walk cast on us, we *can't* go under the water, right?

B: Um. Let me look at what Water Walk does, hold on. So, the wording of the spell says that it grants us the ability to move across any liquid surface. Up to ten willing creatures - there's only two of us, that's fine. If a creature submerged in a liquid is targeted, the spell carries the target to the surface of the liquid. So *I* would interpret that as, yeah, we can't go beneath the surface of the water, because if we *had* been beneath the surface of the water, the spell would have pulled us up.

A: Okay. I cast Tidal Wave.

B: [laughs] Okay?! Um, alright. Tell me what that does, and I'll figure out how to integrate that into this situation.

A: The text of the Tidal Wave spell reads *"You conjure up a wave of water that crashes down on an area within range."* The range is a hundred and twenty feet. *"The area can be up to thirty feet long, up to ten feet wide, and up to ten feet tall. Each creature in that area must make a DEX save, on a failed save the creature takes bludgeoning damage, is knocked prone,"* blah, blah, blah. *"The water then spreads out across the ground in all directions."*

[TIMESTAMP - 1:04:55]

B: Okay. I mean... [sighs] Should I make you make this DEX save? Like, maybe with advantage? No, because you're on top of the water! Like, you're not getting hit by it. Oh, this is fascinating. Okay. Um, no, yeah, the way I'm interpreting it is you and Leo are on top of this wave, because you *cannot* physically go under the water, which means that you can't be hit by the wave. I will say that this wave will carry you the rest of the way to shore. I *am* going to make you make the DEX save, not from getting walloped with the wave, but from getting body-slammed onto the beach. Does that sound fair?

A: Yeah, that works.

B: So, Phi, what you're going to do is roll me a DC19 DEX save against your own spell save DC. Leo is also going to do that.

A: [dice noise] Natural twenty!

B: [laughs] Um, wow. Okay. Phi, you fully hang ten on this wave. You just ride this rolling wave of water onto the beach, with the utmost grace, like a pro surfer, and step off onto wet black sand, totally unfazed. I'm going to roll for Leo. [dice sound]

A: [laughs]

B: Wow.

A: [giggles]

B: Well, I didn't roll a nat one, but I did roll a two. Which, with Leo's modifier for DEX saves, is a seven. So Leo gets, I think, just caught up in the barrel of this big tidal wave that's rolling towards the shore. He can't go under the water, so he just gets tossed around like a coin in a washing machine -

A: [laughs]

B: - and then gets fully body-slammed onto the beach, and I do need to roll that 4D8 bludgeoning damage for him. [dice noise] So that is seventeen bludgeoning damage, as Leo just absolutely eats shit on this beach, and the waves wash up the sand around him, before retreating back into the ocean. He lays there for a couple seconds, immobile, and then laboriously flops himself off of his face and over onto his back, sticks one arm up in the air, with his hand curled into, like, a *hang loose* gesture.

Leo: Cowabunga, dudes.

A: [laughs] Phi is going to apologetically walk over and give him a hand up.

Phi: I'm sorry I made fun of your soap idea.

Leo: I'm sorry I had it. Let's figure out those lights were coming from - I think if we take those down, we can give the Ship a better chance at getting here.

Phi: Yeah. Uh, shoot somebody a Sending, tell them they can back off.

B: He zaps Kimryl's Blade out of his bracer, and you see the knife glow for a second. Leo sort of frowns, and then nods his head, before zapping it back in.

Leo: Okay. Sabine knows, they're retreating.

A: Phi looks up the island, at the looming shape of the tower that used to be a lighthouse, nods to herself, and says

Phi: Okay. Here we are.

Leo: Here we are. Let's finish it.

Phi: [chuckles] Yes, let's.

B: Our camera smash-cuts away from Leo and Phi, into pitch-black darkness. For a moment, there is nothing we can see. And then, out of this darkness, balloons a lattice of luminous blue magical light, that is intricately laced between leather-gloved fingers. We watch a few moments of this frantic magical cat's cradle, thumbs and fingers dropping between these threads of magic only to pick them up again, lacing them into increasingly complex patterns, until the magic has formed something that looks almost like a window.

[TIMESTAMP - 1:10:05]

B: And, in this window, we see the effects of a Clairvoyance spell play out. The magic glows and pulses from these threads, and coalesces into an almost screen-like depiction of a young Infernal Elf woman, and a young Astrarian Elf man, sopping wet, struggling their way upwards from this black sand beach. And, in the ambient glow from this vision and this lattice of magic, we see the silhouette of a person who is wrapped head-to-toe in dark clothing. In fact, in the darkness of this environment, *all* we see is a thin sliver of pale skin with blue undertones, and two gray eyes with slit pupils, staring down at the tableau in front of them. We hear a sharp intake of breath, and then the complicated threads of this magical cat's cradle shatter into dissipating motes of light, the picture disappears, and our camera cuts sharply away once again.

A: Leo, you walk quite a distance on the island of Loex Tolgalen, a place that has haunted your nightmares for more than half your life. You walk past the docks, you walk past the remnants of a crumbled structure that you know, from the angles, is the boathouse where your great-great-however many times great-grandfather told his sister what he had been doing to keep his power. You walk through the dilapidated remains of a village that you saw through the eyes of Elandor Valcyne and the priestess Justice. No one has lived here in a very long time. The priesthood all live further down the island, around the central tower that used to be the lighthouse, so what you are walking through now is... nothing but ghosts.

B: Cool. Love that for *me*, specifically.

A: Yeah. Roll a... just, like, a WIS check.

B: [dice sound] Fourteen?

A: You are passing the ruins of what used to be homes and community centers and places of worship, and, out of the corners of your eyes, you see people that, again, you saw through the lenses of Elandor and Justice. Old ladies calling their grandchildren in for dinner, fathers walking away from the docks with fishing nets slung over their

shoulders, laughing and joking with each other, children playing tag in the square. And you are very aware that every single one of these people is gone. It is just... the *impression* that has been left on this island, before it became somewhere that people only went to die.

B: Um, just knowing my character, I'm probably going to need for Leo to roll a save, to not just collapse under the weight of this.

A: Yeah, go ahead. Uh, WIS save.

B: [dice noise] Nineteen.

A: You stand in the ruins of the place where the legacy that you fought for your right to inherit - and the *blood-soaked* history that you have learned undergirds that legacy - began. You stand on the island that, for so long, has represented, for you, the center of a religion that has done nothing but disappoint you, the place that took your mother from you, and, more recently, the place where your first love *died*. And you do not fall.

B: Leo staggers forward, and leans against the nearest solid surface, but then zaps Kimryl's Blade out of his bracer, and... I would like to try to cast a bit of an unorthodox Locate Object spell, if that's okay.

[TIMESTAMP - 1:15:15]

A: Uh, remind me what you need for Locate Object.

B: Okay. Verbatim, the spell says that I can describe or name an object that's familiar to me, I sense the direction to the object's location as long as that object is within a thousand feet of me. If the object is in motion, I know what direction it's moving in. The spell can locate a specific object known to me, as long as I've seen it up close - within thirty feet - at least once. *Alternatively*, the spell can locate the nearest object of a particular kind, such as a certain kind of apparel, jewelry, furniture, tool, *or weapon*. I saw those weapons fire on the Ship. I would like to cast Locate Object to find something that can shoot magic lasers at people.

A: Okay. I want you to roll me an arcana check to see if you can, like, visualize and conceptualize whatever this is, well enough to be able to find it with this spell.

B: Can I take a short rest so I can talk to my grandma again and get proficiency in arcana checks?

A: You *could*, but the longer you are on this island and out in the open, I'm going to start rolling for something bad to happen.

B: *Fuck*. Okay.

A: It's not guaranteed! I could roll high.

B: But you could roll low, like *I've* been doing all day. I'm just going to roll the arcana check, I'm just going to fucking roll the arcana check! [dice sound, inhales sharply]

A: [distant wheeze]

B: Well, that was a natural one. So with my arcana modifier, that's a four. *Motherfucker.*

A: So the spell does not work. With your special little eyes and your little brain, you are going to have to try and figure out where on the island those magic lasers - for lack of a better word - were coming from. And also, you have used a second-level spell slot. So if you're going to start looking around for this weapon, I want you to roll me a survival check.

B: [dice noise] Okay, well, *that's* a twenty-one. So apparently I just turn into fucking *Aragorn* after this spell doesn't work - put my ear to the ground, I don't fucking know.

A: I want you to roll me a stealth check. I'm going to have Phi roll one as well.

B: [dice sound] Twenty-one, for Leo.

A: And Phi got a seventeen! Okay. You roll a very good survival check. You *think* you can, like, vaguely tell where those blasts at the Ship were coming from. You start to set off towards the other side of the island, where the lighthouse is, and, with a group stealth check of nineteen, you manage to stay undercover, as you move around this island. You crest a hill, on the road that you know leads from the village to the lighthouse, and you see the tower rising tall above everything. And around it, you see, laid out, various smaller buildings that were not there when you saw this island through the eyes of Elandor Valcyne and his sister - you gather that these are all buildings that have functionality to the priesthood, you would guess housing and sort of ceremonial buildings. Roll me... investigation or perception, I'll let you pick

B: [dice noise] My God, dice are *ice* cold today. Thirteen!

A: ...*Okay.* That's great. You don't see anything that strikes you as *obviously* the source of those beams of light, you would have to move further in among these buildings to try and figure it out. As you are considering that, Phi, from next to you, is looking up at this tower, troubled.

Phi: There's one thing I don't get.

Leo: Well, that puts you ahead of me - there's a lot of things *I* don't get.

[TIMESTAMP - 1:20:02]

Phi: Well, yeah, obviously, but it - [sighs] I just mean... why disable the lighthouse?

Leo: ...I mean, this is a little grim, but it makes enough sense to me. Shut the lighthouse down, it makes for easier shipwrecks. Makes for more people that nobody's going to come looking for.

A: Phi's gaze breaks away from the tower to look at you, and she goes

Phi: [horrified noise]

Leo: Look, we'll tackle all of the nastier parts of this as soon as we're able to get those weapons shut down. Let's just find them, and then... We'll figure the rest of it out.

A: Still looking troubled, and a little bit confused, Phi nods and says

Phi: Yeah, let's - let's do that. Let's go.

A: She starts to set off down among these buildings. I need the two of you to roll another - significantly higher DC - stealth check.

B: [dice sound] Dirty twenty.

A: Okay. [dice noise] Phi got a six. The last stealth check was a DC15. You two start walking down among these buildings. And, as you are crossing over the threshold into the bulk of what seems to be the living space on this island for the priesthood, roll me another perception check.

B: [dice sound] Twenty-one.

A: As Phi is about to step around one of these buildings, you hear a twig snap.

B: Leo grabs her by the elbow and yanks her back around the corner of whatever building they're sneaking behind.

A: As Phi is stepping around the corner of one of these buildings, you hear a soft, almost imperceptible [arrow sound effect] I'm going to roll to hit, I want you to roll a DEX save.

B: Fucking uh oh, okay. [dice noise] Eleven.

A: You reach out to grab her, but you are not fast enough, and an arrow goes sailing out of the darkness. *But*. Because Phi has her armor and her shield, it does not hit. And you

realize, as this is happening, you are *not* alone. And you have *not* gone unnoticed. Dozens of Kimrylite priests start to flood out of these buildings.

B: Leo has Phi by the back of her armor at this point, and kind of shakes her a little bit, and nods off towards the surrounding terrain that is outside of this residential area.

Leo: Okay, abort mission, we'll come back later, *go*. Go go go go go.

A: Pursued by these priests, you two run into the woods. I'm going to have you two roll a group survival check, to get away from these priests that are pursuing you, and a group stealth check to hide from them.

B: Okay. So, survival check to get away. [dice sound] Leo rolled a nineteen.

A: Okay, and Phi rolls... a five. So, that averages out to a twelve. Which will *just* do it.

B: Okay, and now we're rolling stealth to hide?

A: Yep.

B: [dice noise] Twenty-six.

A: Okay. Let me roll for Phi. Nat twenty! So you two just barely get out of eyeline of these priests, as you run through the forest, you just *barely* manage to get yourselves in a position where you *can* hide, but Phi manages to find a tree that has kind of a hollow in it, and some heavy leaf cover, and pulls branches in around you, as she yanks you into this space. You two are still and silent, as the forces of the Kimrylite church start pawing through these woods, looking for you. As you are sitting there, you can feel Phi shaking next to you.

[TIMESTAMP - 1:25:06]

B: Leo brings a hand up over his mouth, to try to muffle his heavy labored breathing, and reaches down with his other hand to squeeze at hers.

A: She squeezes back super tight. And you two are not found, as these priests keep searching for several more minutes afterward - you have no way of telling exactly how long it is.

B: I think Leo is going to start counting, from the last sound that he hears in the woods, and not allow either of them to venture out until it has been at least a half an hour after that.

A: As soon as you give the signal that it's okay, Phi is up and out of your improvised hiding space, breathing quickly and heavily, and she puts one hand out on this tree that you have been hiding against, to steady herself, and just nods a couple of times.

Phi: [deep breath] Okay, okay, okay.

Leo: I don't think we can do anything more, right now. I think we need to find somewhere to bunk down for the night, and come at this with a new angle tomorrow. Yeah?

Phi: I - Yeah, yeah, I think that's, um. Yeah.

A: You two start trying to find somewhere to camp for the night. Roll survival one more time.

B: [dice sound] Seventeen?

A: You search around for a while - you're trying to find somewhere that is both easily hidden and *safe* to trance in for the night. You manage to find an area where it seems like a big tree has fallen over, and it offers a little bit of shelter where it is leaning against another one. You think you could hide this place well enough - if not to light a fire, at least to bunk down. So, you two start getting set up, and... Buddy, I'm going to need you to roll me one more perception check, I am so sorry.

B: [dice noise] Twenty-one.

A: Okay. Let's see what you're rolling against. [dice sound] You two clear out a space that you can trance for the night, you manage to hide it well enough - you think - that you won't be disturbed - you *hope*. You are trying to relax. And then I need you to roll me a grapple check.

B: Oh, for fuck's *sake*! Okay, so I get plus five to acrobatics to try to get out of this, right?

A: Yes, sir. I'm going to see what you're rolling against. [dice noise, startled noise]

B: Cool, great, awesome. [dice sound] Fifteen.

A: I got an eighteen... You are sitting there on the ground. Your sister has curled up right next to you, with her back to you. She's on her side - she is clearly not trancing yet, but she is trying to relax after... the events that just happened. And then a dark shape comes out of a tree at you, and tackles you flat to the ground.

B: Leo screams. *Loudly*.

A: As you shriek and get tackled flat on your back, Phi is up and grabbing for her shield. And, before she can do anything, there is a knife pressed to your throat. You have the presence of mind - barely - to notice that it is not a priest's knife. But it is a knife! And it's on your neck!

B: Leo yells again, and he is going to cast Freedom Of Movement, which allows him to escape from any non-magical restraints.

A: You process that this figure kneeling on you is a slender sort of figure, draped head-to-toe in dark fabric - gloves, high tight boots, a long flowing cape with the hood pulled up, and a mask over the bottom of whoever-they-are's face. You process a thin strip of softly-bioluminescent fair skin, with bluish undertones, and two big luminous gray eyes with slit pupils and crow's feet at the corners. You slip out of this grapple. What are you doing?

[TIMESTAMP - 1:30:04]

B: Uh, scrambling backwards as quickly as possible and readying an action to cast a Blight if this person gets any closer to me or Phi.

A: You and Phi are both sitting on the ground - she reaches out and grabs your arm super tight - and this figure's head swivels sideways. You watch these eyes squint at you, and this person says, in a soft mid-range alto voice

???: Valoran?

B: Leo had his knife up, ready to drop the biggest baddest Blight spell that he could, but it falters and lowers a little bit as he squints at this figure.

Leo: Um... No. I'm about a century too young, and way less *dead*. I have been told the resemblance is uncanny, but I'm... not Valoran Valcyne, I'm his nephew. Who are you?

A: This figure backs away a little bit, and shakes their head, eyes closed.

???: N-No, that's - that's not *right*. That's - [deep breath] That's not right, my Leo's just a little boy, that's not - [inhales sharply]

A: And all of a sudden, you recognize this voice.

B: After *everything* he's been through, Leo has been fooled enough times by outside forces pretending to be people that he loves. He still has this Blight spell prepared, glowing on the end of his knife.

Leo: I haven't been a little boy in a *long* time. Last time I'm asking. Who are you?

A: This figure shakes their head again, looking troubled. And then one gloved hand goes up to the mask over the lower half of their face, and pulls it down. And, Leo, you are looking at your mother. She doesn't look how you remember her. She is an Astrarian Elven woman in the equivalent of her late fifties, early sixties. She has slate-gray hair - you always remember it being immaculately taken care of - not ostentatious, usually tucked out of the way in a braid or a bun, but very healthy. It is oily and knotted and frizzy, now, and hacked off at about... a little longer than yours is. She looks like she has not been able to take very good care of herself, since the last time you saw her. But, undoubtedly, this is Archduchess Adhana Valcyne. She looks back up at you, meets your eyes, and her expression goes from troubled to clear. Confused, but very *focused*, in a way that you remember *vividly*. Softly, almost hopefully, she says

Adhana: Leoril?

Leo: Mom?

A: And *that* is where we're going to end this week.

B: Oh my God! Oh my God! Oh my God! [yelling]

A: [trying not to laugh]

B: [more yelling]

A: Next time.

B: On Compelled Dual!

[OUTRO MUSIC]

B: Hey, everybody, Barry here with the postscript, just clearing up a couple of housekeeping things here at the end of the episode. As always, I'm going to go ahead and plug our social media profiles, you can find us on Twitter, Tumblr, and TikTok @CompelledDual. We have lots of other cool stuff going on, however - an official website, an official Spotify profile, our official merch store, stuff like that. You can find all that stuff linked on any of our various social media profiles. If you're interested in supporting the show, we ask that you consider heading over to patreon.com/CompelledDual, where, starting at just \$2 a month, you can get access to all kinds of cool patron perks, including early access to episodes, access to exclusive playlists and bonus content, and even handwritten letters from your favorite character every month. If you're interested in supporting the show in ways other than pledging to our Patreon, we ask that if you're listening to us on Apple Podcasts or Spotify, that you leave us a rating and a review, since that helps the show get promoted to a wider audience. We host a weekly Q&A show on our YouTube every week, and we would love

to see you show up for that, ask a couple questions, we always have a really fun time. And, as always, if you like what you're hearing on the show, we ask that you just tell a couple of friends about it. And if they like it, ask them to tell a couple of friends as well. Word-of-mouth advertising is the most powerful tool we have at our disposal. Our next episode will be going live on Friday, April 15th, 2022. Or, if you're a member of our Patreon, you'll be getting your early access on Thursday, April 14th. Thank you all so much, and we'll see you next week.