

Episode 54: Hiding in Plain Sight, Part 1

Content warnings: refugees of war, alcohol

Brendan (as Nikolaj): An excerpt from the letters of Augur Nikolaj, spymaster of the Consonant Legion.

The more I learn, the more I realize I've been misled my entire life. The Prophecy tells us from the outset that it's a message from the God of Foresight, sent to the Eyes of Smoke for us to know and understand what is to come. For god knows however long, we have been taught that it is our duty to preserve our destiny, to ensure that events unfold as is written.

And yet some things do not go according to plan. Things exist – *people* exist – that are not accounted for. And the most dogmatic augurs might say, “Ah! This is why the world is collapsing!” But the collapse of the world was already prophesized! The demise of the old to make way for the new! The goal of all this bullshit in the first place!

So then, consider: there are rogue elements – people, events, decisions – and these elements are not actively contributing to the upheaval of Tzel Sh'El. In fact, many of them seem... good. Helpful, beneficial, even occasionally *nice*. Could it be then that the Prophecy is not destiny, but a warning? A list of what may come if we do not act, a threat of what tragedy might occur? I could only imagine how such heresy would be punished in a more stable era.

[music plays - “[The Consonance That Rang Into The Void](#)” by Devin Nelson]

The Eyes of Smoke did not create the Never or the Voice of the Dead God, but we served the Legion to them on a platter. If there is any hope of changing course, it will take all of us. Legionnaires, civilians, Chosen. Even failures... like me.

[music break]

[music ends]

Brendan: When last we left off, the newly reassembled Consonant Legion, such as it is, was heading off towards the High Road into the Dolmara Mountains, east towards Skydagger Keep. We have a couple of things here in the snowy heights that we're going to deal with. And because we're getting close to the end there, and because we didn't have a primary mission as usual at the capital, I've created two missions for the Dolmara Mountains, and we're going to run both of them as if they were primary

missions. Today, we're going to run the first of those. Devin, would you read the description for the recon infiltration mission that we're doing?

Devin: "Argyle presents a well-sketched map of a shrouded caldera with a large central tower built within it, surrounded by village buildings. 'It's a goddamn omniculum,' Argyle reports. 'Eyes of Smoke for sure, fled from the capital by the looks of it. But there's Tailos there too. Not in bad shape either. I don't know if collaborators is the right word, but they're not at odds. But it's not clear what they're doing with, well...' There's no need to explain. Everyone knows what it is that led the spy to the caldera in the first place: a star. A beam of light, leading from the sky to the settlement." Should I read the mission criteria and rewards as well?

Brendan: Please.

Devin: "Mission criteria: investigate the Omniculum, discover what the Eyes of Smoke are up to, if anything, and determine what the star's presence means for the situation writ large." Our rewards are +2 Intel. Potential additional rewards include troops – parentheses can some of the Tailos be convinced to join? Can the Eyes? – supplies, they seem to have enough to spare, can we acquire some? Question mark, question mark, question mark, parentheses, what's in that Omniculum?

(Kris snickers)

Brendan: Everyone's favourite game show, "What's in that Omniculum?"

Devin: What's! In!

(Brendan chuckles)

Devin: That! Omniculum?!

Gavin: You know, if patterns mean anything, we're gonna find-

Devin: Dragon?

Gavin (cont'd): Another Draknor.

(Devin giggles)

Gavin: Yeah.

(Kris laughs)

Gavin: It's gonna be the *other* Draknor.

Matthew: It's like poetry.

Brendan (cross): Mmm.

Matthew (cross): It rhymes.

Gavin (cross): Yeah.

Brendan: Right, right, right, right.

Devin: And our penalties if we were to fail or have not taken this mission in the first place are -1 Morale and +2 Pressure, but we don't need to worry about that, right?

Brendan: Ya.

Gavin: We're not going to fail.

Brendan: No, absolutely not. Spectacular. Commander.

Kris: Hello.

Brendan: You have some questions.

Kris (cross): Took me a second.

Brendan: So you have a- Yes! (chuckles) So you have a total of six questions across both of these primary missions.

Kris: Yerp.

Brendan: Thanks to the two spies that Nikolaj has assigned. You've asked four questions. Go ahead and ask me those questions now and I'll repeat the answers for those of us listening, both here.

Kris: Sure.

Brendan: And at home.

Kris: Yeah. So, specific to this mission, the recon mission, I asked, "what's useful to bring on this mission?" And, "is this related to a previous mission?"

Brendan: Yeah, let's-

Kris: How-

Brendan: Let's do 'em one at a time.

Kris: Okay.

Brendan: Yeah.

Kris: So, first one then.

Brendan: Yeah! So, what's useful to bring on this mission? I think the fact that there's Taílos here and there's Eyes of Smoke here that seem to be sheltered from the cold, that seem to have supplies, that seem to have made some degree of encampment. Not a settlement; this doesn't seem like somewhere where they're going to hunker down for the entirety of the winter. Hopefully not, anyway. But at least somewhere where they can shelter until it's safe to move on. None of this distracts from the fact that the Omniculum looks incredibly cursed.

(Kris snickers)

Brendan: The Omniculum of Tzur that we saw at the- back at the beginning of the campaign looked like a very, very tall kind of cathedral kind of thing. This one looks like that if someone grabbed the top of it and started twisting, but the whole of the geometry just stayed intact, it just kept twisting. It looks as if... it looks as if the building got sick.

(Matthew chuckles)

Brendan: And on top of that-

Kris: (concerned) Mmm...

Brendan (cont'd): No one is going close to it. There appear to be figures that are patrolling in these big, big, heavy robes, that seem to be doing circuits of the place but never go inside. If you're interested in the building itself, religious supplies is probably a good thing, but above and beyond that, there are special rules for this location to do with the cold, and so if you had access to something that could protect against the cold, then that would be super useful to bring.

Kris: Excellent. And then the second question was, is this related to a previous mission? How?

Brendan: Absolutely. We've seen stars in this sort of strange, ominous kind of situation before. We've seen the one descending from the sky as the Legion

approached the capital. Some folks saw the one, the strange artificial star sheltered in Duskfall Canyon. And on top of that, I think there's a weird stillness here that reminds people of Castle Moravida, particularly in that there seems to be something very, very dangerous here. But the folks that are near, that are in this town, they're not in evacuation mode. They *have* to see that the star is headed towards the world, but they're not mobilizing to escape.

Kris: Hmm... Okay. And then I went for two questions- Yeah. I went for two questions a bit more generally. So the first was, "what news of the Cinder King?" Where he at?

Brendan: Yeah. (chuckles) The (sighs) Tzel Sh'El is swarmed by Never. The stars themselves descend upon the world. The oceans rise to engulf the land. There's so much going on and there's so little contact with what is further to the west that I think it's safe to say that it's not clear where the Voice of the Dead God *is*, but it seems like the things that are directly connected with it, in particular the Neverfire soldiers, the Dread Inquisitors – both of which we saw at the original Omniculum holding commander Azar captive – have been seen in greater frequency. They are moving across the land independent of the Never armies.

Kris: (worried) Cool.

Brendan: Mhm.

Kris: (high-pitched) Okay. And then speaking of Never armies, what's the highest threat we can expect on these missions?

Brendan: Yeah. We're getting, we're getting close to the end in a lot of different ways. We are... we have been pushing further and further towards the east and the path has narrowed, not merely in terms of the mechanics of the campaign, but also geographically. The world is simply shrinking, in a way. The people and the things that are left behind after everything that has happened so far are the things that are strong enough and or lucky enough to have survived. You're almost certainly going to encounter something of at least tier four here.

Kris: Sick rad.

Devin: That doesn't exactly answer that question.

Brendan: (laughs) No, it doesn't.

Devin: 'Cause it's what is the highest? (chuckles) Not what is the minimum.

Brendan: Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

(Devin chuckles)

Brendan: Uh huh.

(Kris makes a concerned noise)

Gavin: Well, the only thing higher than tier four is tier five.

Brendan: That is correct.

Kris: Tier five is like Broken, right?

Brendan: Yeah.

Gavin: Broken, I think the Cinder King has a guy who's tier five. I don't remember.

Kris: Okay.

Gavin: Is it snowing?

Brendan: Yes.

Gavin: Rad.

Kris: Gotcha.

(Brendan laughs)

Kris: Mhm.

Brendan: Marshall, which would be Abunalance.

Devin: What up?

Brendan: Assign a squad and up to two specialists to this mission.

Devin: Aight. Our specialists are going to be me, Abunalance...

Brendan: Uh huh.

Devin (cont'd): And Nikolaj, our Eyes of Smoke expert.

Brendan: Mhm.

Devin: And I'm assigning the aptly named Star Vipers to this one.

Kris (cross): Mmm.

Brendan (cross): Oh, very good.

Devin: So we got, for named characters, we got Jemma, and Waloot, and Aisling, and then two randos.

Brendan: Looking forward to that. Who is playing who?

Devin: Well, as mentioned, I'm going to be playing Lance.

Brendan: Excellent.

Kris: I'm going to be Nikolaj.

Gavin: I'm going to be playing Waloot.

Matthew: And I'm Jenna. Jemma. *Jesus*. And I'm Jemma.

(Kris chuckles)

Brendan: It's okay. It's been a month. I understand that you don't remember all the characters' names.

Matthew: And I'm Jesus Jemma.

Brendan: Mhm. (laughs) Okay, everyone-

Devin: And as I mentioned in chat, Aisling is going to be there in case anybody dies. And he's going to be ready to go shako mode.

Brendan: Right, to eat them and gain their power.

(Kris chortles)

Brendan: Everyone, if you haven't already, reset your armour and your special-specialist skill uses, choose your load for this mission, and decide what it is you're bringing.

Gavin: Yeah, I'm bringing winter clothing, supplies, a soldier's kit, and a medic kit. I also have a fine climbing.

Brendan: Nice.

Kris: Baller.

Brendan: Is that- is that heavy?

Gavin: This is normal.

Brendan: Okay.

Gavin: Heavy would be even one more utility...

(Kris chuckle)

Gavin (cont'd): And heavy armour.

Brendan: Mhm.

Kris: Good lord. Yeah, for Nikolaj I'm also going normal, which means I got fine reliquary. So... (uneasy) we can go to the building, which I'm sure is fine. And then I've got my utilities are winter clothing and I think I'll go with a hand weapon because he does not have much by way of arms.

Matthew: I'm also gonna go normal. That means I have fine armour, a memento from home, fine hand weapon, and I'm also gonna go with a fine repair kit. I then get the choice of fine heavy weapon or fine shield, and it turns out that Jemma, as a sad silver haired anime boy, does not have a lot of Skirmish, and so I'm going to go with a fine shield.

Brendan: Mhm.

Matthew: And then I also get two additional utility. So I'm going to go with a pistol, 'cause otherwise I have no shooting thing, and I'm good at shooting. Black shot with my two additional utility, winter clothing, and then a reliquary, because I get one of those for free as a pious Chimorti.

Devin: And I'm also going normal. That gives me a flare gun, fine armour, fine hand weapon. Did we ever determine what Lance's hand weapon is?

Matthew: I don't think so.

Brendan (cross): No.

Kris (cross): No...

Devin: Cool, he has brass knuckles.

(Kris and Brendan chuckle)

Matthew: Nice.

Devin: And I have a fine luxury item. I don't know what that means. (chuckles) And a fine pistol and ammo.

Brendan: Lance's- Lance is a fine luxury item that few can afford.

(Devin laughs)

Gavin: Oh my god.

Devin: And for my utility, I'm going to bring some black shot and some winter clothing.

Brendan: Good deal. Marshall, sticking with you, assemble the dice pool and make an engagement roll for this primary mission.

[music plays - "[Bracing For The Tide](#)" by Devin Nelson]

Devin: Is everyone on the mission oathsworn to the Legion? Yeah? Right? (chuckles)

Brendan: I think so.

Kris: Yep.

Devin: Did the commander spend one Intel to get you advance information?

Kris (cross): Ooh, how much Intel do we have right now?

Matthew (cross): You have so much Intel and you're about to get more.

Kris: Yeah. We do have a bunch. Fingers crossed that we get more. I'll spend one.

Devin: Alright. Is everyone on the mission a specialist or soldier? No. Does anyone on the mission distrust or disrespect the leadership enough to disobey orders? Not yet.

Kris: No?

Devin: Are required specialists not assigned to the mission... (page turning noise)

Kris: Yes.

Devin: Requires a Scout or Sniper, which we have neither of. So, minus one, great. Did the quartermaster equip the mission with horses?

Gavin: No.

Devin: Mokay.

(Brendan laughs)

Devin: Is anyone starting the mission with heavy load?

Kris: No.

Devin: No. So we have one die.

Kris: Do we want to spend that extra two on this mission? From the Tale of the Legion.

Devin: I'm gonna save that for the other mission.

Matthew: Yeah, that would make sense.

Brendan: Okay.

Kris: Okay.

Devin: That one seems like it's gonna be harder, maybe.

(Matthew chuckles)

Devin: So then we have one die. Five!

Kris: Oh!

Brendan (cross): Five's not bad!

Kris (cross): Look at that!

Gavin (cross): Okay.

Matthew (cross): No, that's fine, actually.

Gavin: I'll take a five.

Brendan: Yeah!

Kris: Hell yeah. We've done worse.

Brendan: Absolutely.

Kris: On more dice.

(Brendan chuckles)

Kris: (quietly) I'm so mad.

[music ends]

Brendan: So, let me paint a little bit of the picture here. It is a long way. It is maybe a couple of days ride, or not a ride. You're not riding on horses. It is a couple of days walk. It would have been less with horses, maybe. And the snow does not stop. There is not... It is clear enough that you can see the column of light where the star is descending from the sky, but you can't see a whole lot beyond that. And in normal circumstances in Tzel Sh'El, if you can't see the sky, that's a good omen, but it doesn't make it any easier to approach.

That said, it does probably do something to cover your approach, such that you're not immediately spotted as you approach this strange caldera. Caldera is kind of like a crater, except it's really more like, it's like a, what if a sinkhole was a crater? If a volcano erupts-

Devin: Wh- Yeah, what remains after.

Brendan: Yeah, exactly. Exactly. Like at some point, or in ancient history, this place erupted. And then what was left behind is what is turned into sort of this kind of sunken plateau that has this big, big semi frozen lake in the middle of it. And it has this town ensconced over in the side of it. And so you, when you crest the lip of this thing, this big, high rocky ridge, you can see that there is this town that has all of this old, old, not quite – it isn't ruined, it is all antiquated – but still solid kind of construction, both the town and the weird twisted Omniculum building itself.

But there are also a number of... there's a huge encampment of Tai'los here. I think they are living in yurts, which are like these big circular, modular kind of tents, where they basically bring the frames and the fur coverings and stuff like that with them.

And they and what you can recognize as a lot of Eyes of Smoke folks are here in this town. There are Tailos sentries doing perimeter sweeps of the caldera. They seem to be in these big chariot sleds that are getting pulled by these massive goats. And in addition to them in the town, there are these big, big, big hooded figures. So I think what you've got here is you've got a clear view of the situation, but not an easy way to approach without getting spotted.

Matthew: And then where on this is the beam of starlight, then?

Brendan: The beam of starlight is up, up, up.

Matthew: Okay, so it's not touching the ground.

Brendan: It is not.

Matthew: It's just-

Brendan: No.

Matthew (cont'd): On the way down. (chuckles)

Brendan: Yes.

Kris: Yeah.

Brendan: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kris: Is it-

Matthew: Okay, got it.

Kris: Is it, has it come down enough that we can see it beyond the, past the clouds? If it's snowing, presumably it's cloudy.

Brendan: It is definitely cloudy. I think it's bright enough that you can see it beyond the clouds. It's not beneath the clouds yet.

Matthew: Got it.

Kris: Okay, yeah.

Brendan: It's not *that* close.

Kris: Beneath. That's the word I wanted.

Brendan: Yes.

Kris: Okay, cool.

Devin: Cool, cool, cool.

Matthew: When you said column, I didn't know if we were talking about... this thing was on the ground shooting up or something.

Brendan: It's not, but I think that even from where it has descended, there is no after trail. It is just like a solid beam of light descending.

Matthew: Gotcha.

Brendan: And if you look at the sort of approach, there are a couple of different things. Maybe this is what the commander Intel got you, is that there are a couple of like paths up. And there's one that allows you to approach the Omniculum, the sort of tower building over on the left, more closely.

Matthew: Mhm.

Brendan: And then there's another path that would allow you to approach the town more closely. And so you can be at either of those when you arrive at this place. But both are still risky position.

Matthew: What say Lance?

Devin: Can you get from the town to the Omniculum?

Brendan: Absolutely. Yeah, there's clearly an old road that leads up to that. But it is, it is not merely abandoned, but it looks deliberately defaced. And those really, really big robed figures, these- they seem to be wearing some kind of headwear or something like that.

Matthew: Mm.

Brendan: They are the only ones that walk that path.

Devin: Hmm.

Kris: Huh.

Devin: As if it's kind of taboo if you're not one of them? Or...

Brendan: Yeah. Yeah.

Devin: Hmm.

Brendan: Like they'll patrol that road up to the Omniculum, but they also don't go into the Omniculum at all.

Devin: Gotcha. Okay, well, I think we are decked out enough in winter clothing to not be instantly recognizable as the Legion, so I'm thinking we should pass through the town first to kind of get a vibe check.

Brendan: Okay.

Matthew: Lance's gotta talk to a zombie again real quick.

Brendan: Look. If any RPG has taught me anything, it's that you talk to everyone.

Devin: Mhm.

Matthew: That's correct. Sounds great.

Gavin: You get punished if you do that in the second...

Brendan: What?

Gavin (cont'd): Witcher game.

Brendan: What? Say that sentence over again.

Gavin: In the- You get punished if you try to exhaust a character's dialogue in Witcher 2.

(Kris snickers)

Brendan: Oh, right, right, right. Assassin of Kings. I didn't play Assassin of Kings.

Gavin: You shouldn't. Bad.

Brendan: Yeah, that's what I've heard. Anyway, are you going to just head down to the village? Are you going to try and obscure your movements? Are you just walking openly, et cetera, et cetera?

Devin: Hiding in plain sight.

Brendan: Very good. Hmm...

Matthew: Is this a group Maneuver with Lance leading because he's really good at leading?

Devin: Depends. Is there danger to just walking down to the town?

Brendan: I- There is-

Matthew: We're in a risky position.

Brendan: Yeah. I- Here's the thing. There's not folks coming and going from the town. There's the Pope folks that are here...

Matthew: (giggles) Sorry, I just like Pope folks.

Brendan: Oh, did I? Well, yeah. There's, yeah. Under normal circumstances, I think you could just do that. I think the trick here is that there's not a lot of folks doing what it is that you're doing. The people that are here either hunkered down in the town or they're patrolling.

Matthew: Mhm.

Brendan: And so part of me is just more just like maybe we should just do a fortune roll to see if the patrols spot you along the way.

Matthew: Sure.

Brendan: Give me a 2d6 and let's just see what it says. Just a fortune roll.

(Devin and Matthew chuckle)

Devin: A two and a two.

Kris: There's Avrae.

Brendan: A double deuce.

Kris: There's Avrae...

Brendan: Okay, so I think what happens here is that you nonchalantly begin moving towards the town, down the slope of the caldera, and the storm begins to clear. And one of these patrols spots you and wheels around to come over and see what you're

all about. They're not threatening. None of them are pointing weapons or shouting at you or anything like that. But they're very clearly like, hey, we're going to come talk to you and see what's going on here first. There's- it's like a chariot. The- it, imagine a husky sled was a chariot and three Taílos could fit inside of it. But it's being pulled by these absolutely massive goats. Big curly horned things. They're called Steinbachs. They're also called an Ibex, if you're familiar with those.

Matthew: Haven't heard of one.

(Kris chuckles)

Brendan: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Matthew: Don't know who that is.

Brendan: Yeah, they're six or seven feet tall. They're just absolutely huge.

Kris (cross): (whispering) Oh my god.

Brendan: And there's a pair of them pulling, there's a pair of them pulling each of these sleds. And now that the storm is clearing, you can see that there's maybe five or six different patrols across the entire caldera. And one of them is pulling up and says, "Halt. From, from whence do you hail?"

Devin (as Lance): We're just passing through.

(Kris snickers)

Devin (as Lance): I think we're lost.

Brendan (as Patrol): I should say so. Do you, this is no space to be just passing through.

Devin: Is this an area we need to get through as the Legion or is this kind of off the path?

Brendan: This is pretty off the path. I think this is like... the vibe of this place is like, this used to be on the path 200 years ago, but ever since the empire fell, I think this place has kind of, really kind of gone...

Kris: We found Route 66?

Brendan: Yeah. This is the boonies.

Devin: Then in response, I say, "Oh my lorekeeper gave me some maps, they must have been out of date. We thought this was the pass."

Brendan: Give me a Sway.

Devin: Okay. Good thing I'm good at that.

Brendan: Absolutely. Risky standard.

Devin: 3d6, lie to the patrol. Six!

Kris (cross): Eyyy.

Brendan (cross): Six!

(Devin giggles)

Brendan: Absolutely. Wonderful. I think one of them waves you on and says, "There's, there's supplies to go around, but do not linger. This place isn't safe. We are not staying ourselves for very long."

Devin (as Lance): Are you worried about the storm or something else?

Brendan (as Patrol): What isn't there to worry about? Never have swept across the land, the capital has fallen, the cold bites at our bones. Better to abandon this place.

Devin (as Lance): Have you seen any Never activity?

Brendan: They sort of look at each other and they're like, "No, we haven't, we haven't seen anything near here. It's the reason we decided to encamp."

Devin (as Lance): Well, hopefully we'll be safe for the night so we can get out of your hair tomorrow morning.

Brendan: They sort of nod and say, "There's room enough, but take care where you stay. There's some places better left boarded up." I think they turn their sledge and continue on their patrol. Do you head down to the town?

Kris: Mhm.

Brendan: Is the whole group going or is anyone going a different way or getting left behind or anything like that?

Devin: Hmm. I'm trying to think about what kind of skill sets we got here.

Brendan: Mhm.

Devin: I definitely want Nikolaj to kind of be on the, have an eye out for sort of the Eyes of Smoke activities.

Brendan: Mhm.

Kris: Yeah.

Devin: Especially in regards to what these, you know...

Kris: Patrol.

Devin: Yeah, these Eyes of Smoke patrols are kind of up to and what their habits are.

Kris: Yeah.

Devin: If there's any ceremony that's involved with it that he might be familiar with.

Brendan: Mhm.

Kris: Yeah, I was, I was gonna as- I was gonna ask if Nikolaj should kind of split off here with the intent to meet everybody down in town in a bit. But, from what I assume is a slightly higher vantage point, try to, try to – I got lenses – try to look at the Omniculum closer but from a distance.

Devin: Yeah, that's exactly what I'm thinking.

Kris: Hell yeah.

Brendan: Sure.

Kris: I'm about it.

Devin: Should I send Waloot with him?

Gavin: Probably a good idea to send somebody with.

(Kris laughs)

Devin: Yeah, I'm gonna send Waloot with him because I know that she's sneaky.

Gavin: Totally.

Kris: We are two people who worked a bunch with Lark.

Devin: Cool. So then Jemma and Aisling are with the rest of the crew though.

Brendan: Cool.

Devin: And me, obviously.

Brendan: Yeah, absolutely. Okay, then Waloot and Nikolaj, what are you up to?

Kris: Let's do a spy on that, on that there tower. I guess we're somewhere where, higher up where we're sort of on a, more of a level with it so we're not looking up at it? 'Cause you can't see as much, it feels like?

Brendan: Do you want to maybe have taken this other path over to the left side of the caldera? So you're closer?

Kris: Yeah. Does that work for you Gavin?

Gavin: Yeah. I don't have lenses.

Kris: I do. I don't have Scout.

(Brendan chuckles)

Gavin: Well, if you hand me that lens, I will Scout.

Kris: Yep.

(Devin chuckles)

Brendan: Maybe this is like- I was trying to put this together. Maybe this is a Scout to set up a Research?

Kris: Oooh.

Brendan: I think that's fun.

Kris: Sure.

Brendan: I think that would get you the most information here because at first glance, these do not look like Eyes of Smoke people.

Kris: Mmm.

Brendan: Yeah, they are just big and hooded and to do with the Omniculum. But the folks that you recognize as Eyes of Smoke, Nikolaj probably identifies a couple of people by face.

Kris: Oh.

Brendan: They're all staying in the town. And in fact, a couple of them probably look towards the Omniculum, but then look at these weird patrols and don't go anywhere closer.

Kris: Gotcha. I kind of like the idea that we take this other path over closer to the Omniculum. Whenever Waloot and Nikolaj get to the spot where they decide, okay, here's gonna- Here's where we're gonna, we're gonna do this scouting out from...

Brendan: Mhm.

Kris (cont'd): Nikolaj just almost falls into the routines I think that he got used to with Lark, where he just sort of just, you know, hands the lenses over.

(Brendan chuckles)

Kris: Except to Waloot now, 'cause it's like, I mean, you're pretty much our scout. Here you go.

Gavin: I think she hesitates for a second 'cause she's surprised Nikolaj is putting this responsibility on her, but then she takes it and looks through.

Brendan: 'Kay.

Gavin: What's my position and effect here?

Brendan: Risky standard.

Kris: The lenses are *fine*. Does that increase... the effect?

Brendan: That makes it risky, risky great.

Kris: Yes.

Gavin: Okay. I'll take a five.

Brendan: Yeah, five's not bad. Okay, so I think you get a clear view of these things, and this will set Nikolaj up for a Research. These folks are wearing robes from head to toe, not well crafted, homespun, I think is a kind way to put it. But what is really, really striking about them is not their robes or their size – they seem oversized in a weird way, like they're half again like as large as a regular person. But they have these masks that are reminiscent of bird skulls.

(Kris makes a noise)

Brendan: That... It's, it's, they have to be crafted. They're so, I mean, maybe they're from actual birds, but you've never seen a bird that would glower with this kind of menace.

(Kris chuckles softly)

Brendan: And each of the eye sockets of these bird skull masks is streaming smoke. The reference that I thought I had downloaded to my computer and didn't-

(Kris chuckles)

Brendan (cont'd): Is the Executors from Pathologic.

Matthew: Great pull.

Brendan: Which- that's a very small image. I'm going to make that much, much bigger.

Kris: Oooh.

Brendan: Yeah. There's maybe a dozen of these things...

Kris: Just encircling it like fucking carrion birds?

Brendan: But also like making, wandering down the path and down towards the village itself. But there are always enough of them there to guard the way.

Kris: Yeah. Do they go into the village or is it kind of like where the village they don't go to the Omniculum, these guys also don't go to the village?

Brendan: No they go into the village but they always go in pairs.

Kris: Okay.

Brendan: I get a risky consequence but let's do the Research first.

Kris: Sure. So, is it still risky standard?

Brendan: Yeah, I think so.

Kris: Waloot's great effect gives me two benefits?

Brendan: Yeah.

Kris: Okay, but I also have fine books and scrolls-

Brendan: Mhm.

Kris: Does that give another benefit?

Brendan: Absolutely.

Kris: So holy shit. Okay, I'm rolling four dice controlled great.

Brendan: Mhm.

Kris: Let's do it.

Brendan: Yeah, you're-

Gavin: The dream.

Devin: You're OP at nerd shit.

Brendan: Absolutely.

Kris: (chuckles) This is what he was born for. This is, this is like the weirdest combination 'cause it's like the I have all the prophecies and the none of the prophecies have me combo.

Brendan: Mhm, mhm.

Kris: Good lord. Okay, here we go. There's a six!

Brendan: Six. Six is real good. So these are, these folks are from the Eyes of Smoke, but the uniforms that they have, as far as being part of the Eyes of Smoke, haven't been used in like 500 years.

Kris: (intrigued) Mmm.

Brendan: These folks are like a relic. They are some kind of living or animate record of the past that are here. And I think with a great result, with a six great result, I think what you get is you, I think you know the story of this place.

Kris: Ooh.

Brendan: And that's that this was for a long time, a major outpost for the Eyes of Smoke. I think in the way that a lot of different sites are sacred to the different gods, this place, the Omnicium of Voa, was sacred to the God of Foresight. Up until three powerful members of the Eyes of Smoke, each of whom was unparalleled except by one another in terms of their understanding and grasp of the Prophecy, became tyrants, and they became fiercely, fiercely paranoid of the whole world as they did so. And they began to make this their own personal fiefdom, completely domineering over the order here in this place until the rest of the Eyes of Smoke locked them inside the Omniculum.

Kris: Ah.

Brendan: Uh huh.

Kris: Cool. What were you gonna say, Gavin?

Gavin: We call that foresight sickness, or foresickness.

Brendan: (chuckles) These these old Eyes of Smoke people that are in these strange bird masks and these still, these enormous crafted, noncrafted big robes are probably remnants of the Eyes of Smoke that have been here ever since this place was closed down. Ever since wards were placed on the me- on the Omniculum itself so that no one could go in or out.

Kris: Mhm. Cool. Baller.

Devin: Are- did y'all find a little alcove to chill in or is this some weird situation where Nikolaj is crouching down and Waloot is sheltering him from the snow so that he can read a book?

(Brendan and Kris chuckle)

Gavin: There's mountains here.

Brendan: Yeah, I kind of thought you two, they were on the other lip of the caldera.

Kris: Yeah.

Brendan: *But* I do get a risky consequence here.

Kris: Mhm.

Brendan: And that's that I think while all this is going on, I think Waloot you're looking through these lenses down at the town and out of the biggest building, I think you can see Karla come out.

Kris: (gasps) Ohhh!

Brendan: And the situation worsens to desperate for the folks in the town.

Kris: Oh no.

Gavin: Karla...

Matthew: I just love Karla.

Gavin: Okay.

Kris: The one who was trying to help Lydia.

Gavin: Yeah, right. And she was in the chorus with Rahel.

Kris: Mhm.

Gavin: Okay.

Brendan: Yup.

Matthew: Is this resistible in some way?

Brendan: Hmm. Yeah.

Kris: Oh.

Brendan: Yeah, I think so. Who wants to resist it and how?

Kris: God, I would... how? Hmm...

Matthew: Is this about time?

Brendan: Sure.

Kris: I wonder if it's about warning the others like, hey.

Brendan: Yeah.

Kris: (chuckling) Heads up.

Brendan: I like that. I think that's good.

Gavin: Flashback to the capital.

Brendan: Uh huh.

Gavin: Nikolaj and Karla are... Nikolaj catches Karla leaving or something and they have a conversation.

Kris: Maybe the last time that they both went to, through the secret tunnels, to go talk to Sophina.

Matthew: Mmm.

Kris: Right? They just have a conversation where it's just like there's an air about it like, oh, this is the last time we're going to talk *now*, but we will talk again later. And Nikolaj is just like, oh yeah, I did- Wait a minute. Mmm, okay. (laughs) I guess this is then.

Brendan: Mhm.

Kris: Could be that, or something to that effect, but I do like it in a flashback. That's fun. 'Cause they know an amount of stuff, right? Prophecies aren't everything, clearly, but some things might still hold to them. I could resist it. Would that be Insight?

Brendan: Well, my- What is the material effect? I think that flashback is cool. What is the material effect of that?

Kris: Hmm.

Gavin: I'm kind of... I'm at- it's not like Karla *isn't* here, it's more like-

Kris: The other group has *noticed* that she's here? Like hey by the way-

Devin: We see her before she sees us?

Kris (cont'd): Karla is probably here.

Gavin: Karla is here, but also chill?

(Kris and Brendan chuckle)

Gavin: I guess? Like Karla knows somehow that the threats to her life, the people threatening her life are now gone, maybe?

Brendan: Maybe. I hesitate to... I have a very clear idea of what Karla's attitude is, so I don't necessarily want to colour it that way, but I'm-

Kris: Yeah.

Brendan (cont'd): More than happy to be like, oh, the... Karla gets distracted and heads the other way, or you're able to warn the others in some fashion. Know what I mean?

Kris: Mhm.

Devin: Like I was saying, we see her before she sees us.

Brendan: Yeah, exactly, exactly.

Gavin: So instead maybe a flashback to Nikolaj going like, heads up, Karla's probably here.

Brendan: Yeah.

Gavin: Knowing what I know.

Brendan: Yeah.

Kris: Saying that especially to Lance.

Brendan: Yeah, like if the Eyes of Smoke are here, there's a non, there's a pretty darn non-zero chance that Karla is here.

Kris: Yeah. It might be the sort of thing where pre-Waloot being Waloot, Nikolaj would have said, "Karla is here," whereas now he says, "Karla," yeah, "There is a non-zero chance that Karla is here."

Brendan: Yeah, I think that's reasonable. Nikolaj, mark one stress.

Kris: Okey doke. And then do I still have to roll to resist, or?

Brendan: No, I think just marking that for the flashback is fine.

Kris: Okay.

Brendan: Yeah. Yeah, Lance and crew, what do you do?

Devin: So, we kind of enter nonchalantly. We haven't seen Jemma on screen yet. What's his vibe?

Matthew: I think that he's sort of low affect, hanging out in the background, sort of mumbling to himself mostly.

Devin: So what do we see as we kind of roll in?

Brendan: There's a lot of folks here. There's a lot of Taílos who are bundled up, talking amongst one another, but who are visibly excited to see you arrive. Who are talking with one another and looking excitedly between one another. There's a number of, not nearly as many, but there are some Eyes of Smoke that are curious, who I think draw back a little bit seeing outsiders arrive. Knowing, Lance, knowing now that you know that Karla is probably going to be here, do you try to stay out of Karla's way? Do you try and engage with her in some way?

Devin: Hmm. Even though Lance was involved with drama-

Brendan: Uh huh.

Devin (cont'd): With Carla, they were both pro-Lydia. (laughs)

(Brendan and Kris laugh)

Brendan: Yeah, what?

Devin: What?

Matthew: Damn, true.

Gavin: Well...

(Kris laughs)

Gavin: I don't know. We don't know what happened, but I think Karla may have made up her mind about what happened.

Matthew (cross): Yeah. that Lance killed her girlfriend.

Gavin (cross): I guess we could find out.

Devin: I mean-

Gavin: Yeah.

Devin (cont'd): They were both on the chopping block at the same time.

Brendan: Sure.

Matthew: Sure.

Devin: (chuckling) By the same people. Just you know, Lance continued to get power with those people and she fucked off.

Brendan: Sure. I guess the question is just like, do you go talk with her? Do you go into the, what looks like the bar? Do you try and investigate this big house? What is, what is the- Or do you tell people spread out and learn what you can? What is, what's the vibe?

Devin: Yeah, actually, you know, I like the idea of us kind of rolling in and then dispersing a little bit.

Brendan: Mhm.

Devin: Just to kind of get everybody to get a lay of the land from a different angle. And then maybe we can meet at the bar in like 20 minutes. Just, you know, as much of a web of- do a vibe check web.

Brendan: Abs- yeah. 100%.

(Kris chuckles)

Matthew: Seems like maybe a group Scout or a group Research maybe?

Kris: (chuckling) Group Consort.

Matthew: Group Consort, sure.

Brendan: Actually yeah, I think that's a group Consort.

(Kris cackles)

Matthew: Yeah, let's do a group Consort.

Devin: Okay, cool.

Matthew: Let's go.

Devin: I'm leading it, obviously.

Matthew: Obviously.

Devin: So it's just me and Jemma rolling?

Matthew: Guess so.

Kris: Mhm.

Brendan: I think someone should roll for the rookies, right?

Gavin: That's what Jemma does.

Brendan: That's what Jemma does.

Matthew: Yeah, I am Jemma and the rookies.

Gavin: Yeah.

(Matthew chuckles)

Kris (cross): Is someone gonna make-

Brendan (cross): Truly, truly, truly outrageous.

(Kris chuckles)

Matthew: This is 1d6. Hmm...

Devin: And we're risky standard?

Brendan: This is... yeah, we resisted that so it's risky standard.

Matthew: Okay.

Devin: Alright. And just let me check my thing real quick. So Tactician, “You anticipate problems others would never see coming. When you lead a group action, you may suffer at most one stress.” And then Lead From The Front, “Whenever you lead a group action, improve scale up or down one level. For example, a small group counts as a medium group. If you lead a group action combat...” blah blah. Okay. Yeah. I don't think either of those apply here.

Matthew: I mean, you could maybe make an argument that it gives us great effect because we're doing a better job of spreading out and talking to more people.

Devin: Oh.

Matthew: ‘Cause of your direction.

Devin: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Brendan: Yeah. Totally.

Devin: Okay. Cool.

Brendan: Yeah.

Devin: So risky great.

Brendan: Risky great.

Gavin: God, end game characters are so strong.

(Kris chuckles)

Devin: But we both got a four.

Gavin (cross): Never mind.

Matthew (cross): You only have one in Consort?!

Devin: Uh huh. That's all in Sway.

(Brendan laughs)

Matthew: Whoaaa. Okay.

Kris: Oh, okay.

Gavin: He's a liar, not a truther.

(Kris laughs)

Matthew: Okay.

Devin: As seen immediately the action before this.

Matthew: Sure, sure, sure.

(Devin and Kris laugh)

Brendan: Oh, that's good. That's good. That's real good. Okay. So, great results. Mixed success. Here's, I think, what you get: the Taílos are eager to be gone. The Taílos here are like, they know that this place is safe, but they don't trust it. And they don't trust, I think, a lot of what vague whispers you get that you overhear, what the Eyes of Smoke seem to be offering. They think that... Or rather, there's a strong split. There are some that are like, we can't trust them at all. We gotta get out of here. We gotta keep heading east. And there's some folks that are like, no, this is the only way we've got, we've got to throw in with them. It's all or nothing.

And you can tell, I think, that there's, this is a hard conversation for a lot of people where people are expecting one another to be, to have solidarity in a situation where people are breaking down just as a consequence of the situation of the Never are coming. The stars are falling, the capital is fallen, the whole world seems to be collapsing around them. And it is driving some people to the brink and it is driving some people to be like, no, we have to keep fighting. So there's this weird vibe across the entire town, at least as far as the Taílos are concerned.

On top of that, there is, between the Eyes of Smoke, this weird anxiety of these people that they are encamped with might tear them to pieces for what happened in the capital and are just as eager to get gone, but seem to feel like in order to leave, they have to get inside the Omniculum. Like whatever it is that is keeping them here is *there* and they can't go. They can't go until they pry that thing open and do whatever it is that they need to do.

Kris: Mmm.

Brendan: I think the consequence here is that... Actually, before I give you a consequence, you got a great result. Both of you can ask me one more question.

Matthew: Hmm, I mean, the question I want to ask is, why do the Eyes of Smoke people feel like they want to get into the Omniculum?

Brendan: Uh huh.

Matthew: Is that too much?

Brendan: No, I think that's a very good question. God, I think you overhear you overhear a couple, one very, very on the verge of tears and the other trying to talk them down and saying, "Come nightfall, we'll open the place up, we'll deal with the situation, we'll perform the ritual, and this will all be over."

Gavin: I don't like the sound of that.

Matthew: Jemma didn't overhear that, Penthos did.

Brendan: Oh, of course, of course. Yeah.

(Kris makes a concerned noise)

Devin: Yeah, I was going to suggest the same thing.

Brendan: Yeah.

(Kris makes a more concerned noise)

Brendan: Lance, do you have a question?

Devin: Yeah, I think Lance beelined to the bar to-

(Brendan laughs)

Devin (cont'd): Get ready to-

Brendan: Alright, spread out and ask questions. Hello, my good man.

Devin: Well, you know, he was making sure that there was a home base for them to return to.

Brendan: Absolutely.

Devin: He's doing his job as the officer.

Brendan: Absolutely.

Devin: But he also wants to listen to folks in the bar. I think what he wants, intel-wise, is a vibe check on how people feel about the Legion.

Brendan: Hmm. Good question.

Devin: 'Cause stories have probably spread.

Brendan: Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. The folks here... I mean, there's two groups of folks, right? There's the Eyes of Smoke and there's the Tailos. The Tailos, as far as they're concerned, think that the Legion are heroes. That they can stand up to the Never, that they're one of the only things fighting for Tzel Sh'El, and that they don't stand a chance, but they're fighting and that is heroic.

And the Eyes of Smoke, I think, feel (chuckles) that the Legion are heroes and that they are villains. And that if the Legion ever get their hands on them, then it's a death sentence.

Devin: Maybe the old Legion, but we'll see about this Legion.

Brendan: Sure.

Devin: Also, he's drinking a whiskey neat.

Brendan: I think-

(Kris snickers)

Brendan (cont'd, cross): The only thing they have here is fermented goat milk.

Matthew (cross): Course he is.

Devin: Damn it. (laughs)

Brendan: Unless, unless...

Kris: Drinking it neat.

Devin: He's drinking it neat.

Brendan: Well, I mean, unless you brought your own whiskey. Whiskey neat. Maybe you've just-

Devin: I do-

Brendan (cont'd): Got a little kit. Maybe that- Oh!

Kris (cross): The fine luxury item.

Brendan (cross): This is the fine luxury item!

(Devin laughs)

Kris: You have a fine luxury item.

Devin: Yes.

(Kris chuckles)

Devin: (laughing) Also, just the idea of Lance rolling up to a bar-

(Brendan laughs)

Devin (cont'd): And then pulling out his own alcohol (laughing) is really funny.

Matthew: Incredible.

Brendan: His own rocks glass, his own single cube.

Kris: What can I get you? Oh, I'm good.

Devin: You can get me a glass.

Brendan: Yeah, and a coaster.

(Kris and Devin laugh)

Gavin: Honestly, that's probably a good way to make friends in this town. If they've all been drinking fermented yak milk.

Matthew: Yeah.

Brendan: Hey, do you want to watch me drink this whiskey? (chuckles)

(Matthew laughs)

Gavin: No, you share the whiskey!

Matthew: We know, we know, Gavin. We know.

Kris: You slide it down the bar. Real quick, real cool.

Brendan: Here's what I think the risky consequence is, is that Penthos, I think, in conveying this information, has led Jemma to the road leading to the Omniculum.

Kris: Wuh oh.

Matthew: Mmm.

Brendan: And a pair of these strange bird-masked Eyes of Smoke are here. And peer down at you and say, "Be gone."

Matthew: I mean, that seems like a pretty easy thing to just do.

Brendan: Uh huh.

Matthew: But it's probably some stress, which I think we can narrativize as this resist roll.

Brendan: I mean, well, does Jemma start to do that?

Matthew: I think so. I mean, what happens if he does? He wants to go back to the bar.

Brendan: Well, I think one of the birdmen raises their hand and says, "Not you," and points at Penthos and says, "You. Be gone."

Matthew: Oh, fuck.

Kris: (muffled) Ohh...

Matthew: Ahhh, that's good. Love that shit.

Gavin: Well that answers some questions.

Matthew: Yeah.

Kris: Yo.

Matthew: Let's see. I think this is a Resolve resist?

Brendan: I think so, too.

Matthew: Yeah, let's do this Resolve resist.

Brendan: To keep Penthos with you wherever it is that you go.

Matthew: Yeah, exactly. I'm going to spend my Grit here, so I get two extra die on this resistance roll.

Brendan: Nice! Nice.

Matthew: And that makes this a 4d6, I'm pretty sure.

Kris: Mhm.

Matthew: Do that. That's a six.

Brendan: That is a six, absolutely. What do you say to these strange, skulled sentries?

Matthew: Well, Jemma puts a arm around Penthos' shoulder and says, "He goes wherever I go."

Gavin: Falls over.

(others laugh)

Brendan: Shit! Do you head back to the bar?

Matthew: Yeah yeah yeah yeah yeah.

Brendan: Okay.

Matthew: I mean, these guys are like big giant weird bird things.

Brendan: Mhm.

Matthew: Yeah, (chuckling) they're leaving, but they're backing up backwards, keeping their eye on.

Brendan: Okay. Everyone begins to reconvene at the bar. Lance, what are you up to here?

Devin: Lance has busted out some of his whiskey. He's regaling some of the patrons with stories of his bravery.

Gavin: Of course.

Kris: Tales from Novara.

Devin: He's telling the story of how he was a really cool cop at the...

(Kris laughs)

Devin (cont'd): Capital.

Brendan (as random villager): (hushed) That's Lance! That's- he was commander of the capital guard. I-I want to buy him a drink. The drinks don't cost anything! I'm going to get him a drink anyway.

Devin: So yeah, once he got that the vibe was good towards the Legion here, he was not hiding it at all.

Brendan: Excellent, excellent. No, you've got a small crowd surrounding you saying, like, "Will the Legion continue to fight? What's- what are your plans?"

Devin (as Lance): Well, we're heading east, trying to get to safety, trying to put some distance between ourselves and the forces of the Never. Maybe we could travel together, you know? Strength in numbers.

Brendan: And immediately some of them are like, "Yes, yes, we should go east." "No, no, no. There's a, there's a plan. We're continuing on where it is that we're going. We're (stutters) we're not going with them. Wherever they're going is just..." And immediately almost begin shouting at one another as if this has just reopened a fight that was just happening five minutes ago, where everyone is...

(Kris chuckles)

Brendan: Where half the room seems to be shouting, "The world is over! The world is doomed." And the other is like, "No, we have to go. We have to keep going."

Gavin: This place is giving me Castlevania vibes now.

Devin: Can I try to chill this out a little bit.

Brendan: Absolutely, you can. 100%.

Devin: Could I use Discipline?

Brendan: You can use Discipline, yeah.

Devin: Yeah, I already have kind of positioned myself as a person of authority in this room.

Brendan: Sure, I would say that any of the four Resolve actions could be used in this way. It really just depends on how you want to colour it.

Devin: Well, I think he tries to do the inspiring leader thing, because that's kind of the vibe he's kind of already cultivated with them.

Brendan: I would say that is Marshal, actually. Discipline is like forcing people to do what you want them to do.

Devin: Ohhh...

Brendan: Discipline is like-

Matthew: Shutting down the crowd?

Brendan: Yeah.

Devin: Then I'm going to make it Sway as in playing the part.

Brendan: Yeah.

Devin: The character that they want me to be.

Brendan: I think that's more theatrical. I think that's good.

Devin: Yeah. And I think he, you know, he uses this as a chance to practice his leadership monologuing as well.

(Kris sputters)

Brendan: Of course, of course.

Kris: Ohhh...

Devin: "The doom is upon us, but we can forestall doom. The work we put in means more days we have to live." And is just kind of poetically saying some hero shit.

Brendan: Absolutely. I think risky standard, given that you've already kind of gotten in with these people.

Devin: Cool. And I have my fine luxury item, my whiskey.

(Brendan chuckles)

Devin: I've been using that to get them a little bit drunk.

Brendan: Hmm, I'll allow it. Yeah, okay.

Devin: Five.

Kris: Oh.

Brendan: Five's pretty good.

Devin: Yes.

Brendan: Okay, so I think they settle down. They feel suitably chastened in the face of a hero such as yourself and look sheepishly at one another, and look at you and say, "You should talk to the boss. The boss, augur Karla, she- I'm sure she would love to speak with you. She will know what to do. Absolutely, absolutely."

Devin: Who says that she's the leader in this moment? Is it an Eyes of Smoke person or is it a Tailos person?

Brendan: I think it's a Tailos person and-

Devin (cross): Huh.

Matthew (cross): Mmm.

Brendan (cont'd): Immediately, immediately both sides of the room-

(Kris cackles)

Brendan (cont'd): Say, "Yes. Yes. Speak with, speak with augur Karla."

Devin: Huh. Okay, interesting.

Brendan: We have a consequence here to deal with.

Devin: Oh.

Kris: Oooh.

Brendan: Right?

Kris: Oh, yeah.

Brendan: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Kris: Was risky.

Brendan: Hmm. Hm hm hm hm hm. Oh, I know, I know! This is a big bar. I think this is a really... Considering how old this place is, it is well kept up. I think it's-

Devin: Like a ski lodge kind of vibe?

Brendan: Yeah, it is, it is. And I think someone who was on the upper floor who was sitting by themselves has found themselves drawn in by your honeyed words and moves to the railing to hear what it is that you have to say.

[music plays - "[What Has Yet To Be Written In The Annals](#)" by Devin Nelson]

Devin: Do I see this out of the corner of my eye as I'm giving my speech?

Brendan: Sure. What does it look like when Lance looks at Whisper?

[music break]

Brendan: Oathsworn is an actual play podcast created by...

Devin: Devin Nelson...

Gavin: Gavin Fregeau...

Kris: Kris Allison...

Matthew: Matthew Guzdial...

Brendan (cont'd): And me, Brendan McLeod. Music for the show created by Devin Nelson - find it and more at devindecibel.bandcamp.com. Find a link to their music and any of the games we've played in the podcast description. Follow us at [@oathswornpod](https://twitter.com/oathswornpod) on Twitter or at oathswornpodcast.com. If you enjoy the show, please consider sharing it with a friend, or rating us 5 stars on your podcast platform of choice.

[music fades]