

Episode 6: The Observatory

[00:00:00] **Esther:**

[00:00:00] **Esther:** This episode was recorded and produced on Lisjan Ohlone land. To learn more about Lisjan Ohlone land reclamation and repatriation efforts, please refer to the information in our episode description.

[00:00:12] **Esther:** Chromythica is a part of the Rainbow Roll Network. To learn more about Rainbow Roll Network shows and events, visit our website rainbowroll.network.

[00:00:23] **Esther:** That's rainbow R-O-L-L.network.

[00:00:28] **Esther:** Content notices for this episode include:

[00:00:31] **Esther:** Strong language; potential references to offscreen cruelty to an Awakened Animal as part of character backstory; conflict between characters leading to combat.

[00:00:42] **Esther:** Transcripts for all our episodes are available at our website, chromythica.com.

[00:00:48] **Esther:** Hello, and welcome back to Chromythica! I am your GM, Esther. I use she and they pronouns and I am so excited that you all are here It's so great to have you, and I'm so excited for our game today. I am going to ask my wonderful friends and players to go around and briefly introduce yourselves and tell us which character you're playing.

[00:02:30] **Fai:** I am Fairuz Rougeaux. I used she and they pronouns and I will be playing Temerity Vane, our Rogue.

[00:02:41] **Justin:** I'm Justin Brown. Uh, I use he/him pronouns and I will be playing Ember, our Barbarian Oracle.

[00:02:50] **Alex:** I'm Alex. I use they/them pronouns and I will be playing Professor Z, a gnomish professor and his, uh, contraption, Buster.

[00:03:00] **David:** Hi, I'm David. I use he/him pronouns and I will be playing Oom, our gnome Sorcerer who uses, uh, any combination of she, him or they pronouns. And, Nommie uh, her familiar who uses he uses he/him pronouns.

[00:03:19] **Esther:** Awesome. So we have a tradition of asking a warm-up question to help get into character.

[00:03:26] **Esther:** And today's warm-up question, uh -- courtesy again of Justin, thank you! -- is this: please describe some gossip someone has spread about your character.

[00:03:38] **David:** Okay. I'll start. So, for gossip...

[00:03:42] **David:** "Well, I suppose there are some times folks who are wary of Nommie's red scales, but honestly, other than that... Well, it might sound rather boring, but growing up in Hermea, there's actually not much gossip to go around. Aunty Nia actually used to scoff at the very word. She said that there's nothing wrong with listening to gossip, but ultimately it's just like any other story. And really at their heart stories often reveal more about the storyteller in the words they choose and the audience and the message they hear more than the truth of the story itself. And I really guess what this all boils down to is that I'd rather you judge me by what you see for yourself.

[00:04:33] **David:** And maybe, I guess if we travel together, we make our own stories and the journeys we share. And to me, that's much more fun than any gossip."

[00:04:46] **Alex:** So, Professor Z has definitely been the subject of some, some gossip around town. In particular, it's often about his, his research and the intersection of his research and, and Buster. So there's definitely been some ill-fated gossip around town about how Professor Z may not actually like, really know what he's doing in, in building Buster.

[00:05:10] **Alex:** And that his, his research might be, you know, a little bit of a, a sham exercise. And so people are sort of like wondering how he got to his, his current position and what his future is. Those whisperings are mostly because, you know, occasionally Buster has had a, you know, like an outburst in colloquium or something like that, that really drives people off. But there's not really a whole lot founded on that. Like, uh, there may be problems with Professor Z's research, but it's not in particular to do with Buster. So there's definitely some, some vicious gossip about his contraption.

[00:05:43] **Justin:** Ember. Oh boy. I would say probably back before Ember was Awakened... he might say now of a time before he was Awakened, "I did not know many words, but I did know the words 'good boy.' And I do think that one time I heard my master say to someone else that I was a good boy."

[00:06:12] **Fai:** Now that is hot gossip, my friends. Temerity is a Tiefling who was born in an Elven family. So probably there's been an assortment of gossip and rumors about that, just because it's interesting. But I think that the worst rumor anybody ever spread about him was that he didn't perform his own dental work.

[00:06:41] **Fai:** And that's just a devastating thing to hear because frankly, he puts a lot of like, love into all of his barbery skills, but has a particular talent for everything dentistry related, he believes. And so that, of all of the ugly things that have ever been said about him, it's probably the one that he thinks about the most because it is, it is the untruest, but the other ones that are untrue at least like interesting or cool, but this is not cool.

[00:07:24] **Esther:** I love it. Defending the honor of barbery skills and also Buster's colloquium steam toots. [laughs]

[00:07:32] **Esther:** It's very awesome. Well, on that note, let's get back to where we were. So last time, on this Fireday in the time of year where winter is turning into spring, you all awoke ready to get into a scuffle. The previous evening you had forayed into the hills to scope out the path to the mysterious observatory that King Drum Thornfiddle of Brastlewark has built in the foothills of the Asphodell Mountains. And Ember, you discovered three metal figures guarding the path to this observatory. You all resolved that you would deal with this on the morrow. And Temerity and Oom, you are staying at the Lilyfrost Inn and Tavern, and as agreed upon -- uh, yesterday evening -- to begin your day, you met up with Miv, who is a gnome acquaintance of yours also staying at the Inn. Miv had indicated they would be interested in seeing what's going on up there in them hills, and would be willing to aid you in investigating this mysterious observatory.

[00:08:41] **Esther:** So this morning, the three of you made your way to meet Professor Z and Ember at Selestine Bakery. On the way, you shared some small talk about your lives and your meanderings around the world. Temerity, Miv seemed particularly interested to make the connection that one of your mothers is Ailuin Vane, an elf who has made quite a name for herself as a master in the arts of what she calls 'cultural reclamation.' And Oom, you were a little curious about said line of work, and were asking Temerity what exactly constitutes cultural reclamation and what constitutes stealing. You had a fabulous discussion about this. In the course of this conversation, you also told the group that you're from Hermea, an island which is founded by the Gold dragon Mengkare, who is aiming to build a utopian society. Over breakfast at Selestine Bakery, you all discussed your plans and potential strategies for getting around the guardians of the observatory road. And then you set about on your day's

work, making your way into the foothills and up the winding road to the observatory, where you did -- true to Ember's word-- encounter the three construct guardians of the path.

[00:09:56] **Esther:** You engaged them in combat and you bested them: two suits of Animated Armor and one low-powered Clockwork Mage, from whose metal remains you gathered a wand of Obscuring Mist, which I believe is now in Oom's care. After the conflict, Professor Z, you patched up Buster and made an alchemical concoction to stage an explosion, like the three constructs got into an ill-fated accident and met a fiery end by fluke instead of by your various weapons and teeth. You continued to make your way up the road to the observatory as Miv marveled at Professor Z's abilities and encouraged you, Z, to make the most of your talents. And that is where we find you all now.

[00:10:39] **Esther:** The path you're on and the foothills around you are beginning to turn green in this early spring weather. There's many deciduous trees kind of growing on the slopes and they're starting to leaf like, just at that stage of, of the leaves coming out where they're about to like burst into full foliage, but it's not quite there yet.

[00:10:57] **Esther:** And there are some evergreens as well, some pine trees growing around and low shrubs that look like something called Mountain Laurel in our world. And there you are making your way up this road...

[00:11:09] **Justin:** Ember is still giving Oom a bit of distance after, after the little bit of a lightning fiasco last time. Just looks a little wary.

[00:11:21] **Fai:** Temerity will stick close to Ember and try to be, you know, like, he obviously knows Temerity better. So like, just to just kind of try to be a, a bumper. Do we have a, do we have an idea of how far away we are, or we just know that there's path ahead?

[00:11:44] **Esther:** None of you actually made it up to the top of the observatory before, though Ember thought he did. I would say like, you could probably get a glimpse of the actual building, uh, at the, the top of the road where you're going now. It's a good guess that you're about halfway there, maybe a little more than halfway.

[00:12:04] **Fai:** We've pretty much wrapped it up here, so we should probably just move ahead, yeah?

[00:12:10] **Alex:** Professor Z is definitely excited to keep moving.

[00:12:14] **Fai:** Then I say we Perceive and attempt to be stealthy and go about our business.

[00:12:22] **Justin:** Ember will attempt to be stealthy. He will sneak through shrubbery.

[00:12:27] **Esther:** So Ember is attempting to be stealthy. Is anyone Perceiving?

[00:12:31] **Fai:** Temerity is perceiving.

[00:12:33] **Fai:** You know, after what happened when I roll a real die earlier, I think I'm just gonna not and see what happens. But it --

[00:12:43] **Justin:** 25!

[00:12:45] **Esther:** You are the stealthiest dog in the land. The paws make no noise.

[00:12:51] **Justin:** "I am the night!" In the middle of the day. Natural 19.

[00:12:56] **Alex:** Should I be rolling for Perception? Sorry, I was distracted because the rabbit got himself stuck.

[00:13:01] **Alex:** [cast laughs]

[00:13:05] **Esther:** Our bunny son doing the most to distract us! [giggles]

[00:13:09] **Fai:** Doing the most is what he does best, is that not? Is that not his thing?

[00:13:13] **Alex:** There was a solid, like twenty-five to thirty seconds of him scrabbling to get back onto the coffee table that's next to the couch.

[00:13:20] **Esther:** For anyone listening, if we don't edit this out, our coffee table has two levels. So actually right now he could be on either one, given the position it's in. [laughs] I don't know that he was on the lower level near the floor.

[00:13:34] **Alex:** It was the lower level. So he was on the floor next to it. And I think he couldn't get traction to get up onto it because they're both slick

surfaces. But it was just like a lot of furious scrabbling. So I had to go see. But anyways, uh, should Professor Z be Perceiving?

[00:13:47] **Esther:** If you would like to, it's not, it's not mandatory. Ember rolled Stealth and is the night, passing without trace. Temerity has rolled Perception. So if you, if you would like to, you can, but it's not a requirement.

[00:13:59] **Alex:** Professor Z is definitely looking around, so I think that Perception makes sense. And definitely not trying to be stealthy. I mean, not trying to not be stealthy, but, you know.

[00:14:08] **Esther:** Okay.

[00:14:08] **Justin:** Ember will scoot from brush to brush and like, occasionally his like snoot will poke out and then poke back in.

[00:14:13] **Fai:** Would you like Stealth rolled Secretly?

[00:14:16] **Esther:** Sure. And is Oom doing anything?

[00:14:18] **David:** Just worried about how Ember is reacting. So I think I'm too distracted to perceive anything but Ember.

[00:14:26] **Justin:** Awwwww.

[00:14:27] **Esther:** Temerity, you too begin to pass very quietly, your feet expertly dodging any branches or leaves or stray rocks that you could trip over. You and Professor Z will both notice that it seems to be a relatively quiet day. Like, there's normal bird song, sounds of little squirrels scampering up and down the trees. Nothing out of the ordinary. You don't hear any evidence of any further constructs up on this road. No evidence of people talking or anything like that. It seems to be fairly deserted. Oom, Miv will notice that you are not doing so well right now, and will stay back and say, "Hey, are you... you all right?"

[00:15:14] **David:** "Just worried about Ember. I, I didn't want to do anything to upset him. That's it. I'm fine, though."

[00:15:20] **Esther:** It sounds like he's been through a kind of a lot. I mean, it's not every day you meet a talking dog, so I can only imagine. But sometimes people just need a little time to get over or figure out how to work through things that scare 'em. And maybe it won't ever really get easy for him. But if

you give it time the two o' you may be able to work something out." They will begin to play softly a, a soothing tune on the dulcimer that they are carrying.

[00:15:53] **Esther:** So I'll say you can make your way to the observatory structure without much ado. It seems like these three constructs were the guard -- at least that you have seen thus far -- and you will be able to reach the observatory in maybe fifteen more minutes. And walking up, you will be able to take in a large building that ...it's kind of like a circle within a square, if you can picture what I mean. Like the bones -- there, there's a circular building that's sort of like, shaped on each side by, by like a square corners. It's built out of dark stone with a metal dome rising out of the middle towards the sky. The stone of the building itself looks like a black marble veined with gray.

[00:16:44] **Esther:** It seems to have four entrances, one at each cardinal direction with two large wooden doors at each entrance. And the doors are each painted, a deep red with large black, round handles. There are many windows on the outside walls of this building and the sills of the windows are painted the same deep red as the doors.

[00:17:08] **Esther:** And on the Eastern side of the observatory, a little way off from the main building, there are a series of small house-like structures. They really look like someone's homes. These homes are constructed of wood, as opposed to these, this dark stone of the exterior of the observatory, and two of them are painted very bright, cheery colors.

[00:17:28] **Esther:** There's one that is gold with blue polka dots and a door that is an astonishing shade of purple and, one that is bright pink with three green stripes running horizontally near the base of the house, the whole way around the building. And it has a round door painted like a rainbow. And the third house is painted gray and has a very unremarkable door with a brass handle.

[00:17:51] **Esther:** And there's no activity on the outside of these buildings that you can tell.

[00:17:56] **Fai:** Okay, sorry. I have trouble painting pictures in my brain. So I'm going to ask you a bunch of questions about the stuff that you just told me. So there is a circular building with edges and that's the observatory.

[00:18:10] **Justin:** We presume.

[00:18:12] **Fai:** Probably.

[00:18:13] **Esther:** There's a giant dome in the middle of it, so it's a safe assumption.

[00:18:17] **Fai:** Okay. But there's also... What look like houses?

[00:18:23] **Esther:** Yeah. Three wooden house-like buildings.

[00:18:26] **Fai:** In what orientation are they to the, to the observatory structure?

[00:18:31] **Esther:** Let's say you are facing North and these homes are off the Eastern side of the observatory. And they're not attached to it, they're like a little ways from it, there's grass in between. So they're going to be, if you're facing it, on your right.

[00:18:48] **Fai:** Okay. So the houses are on the right and in what orientation are the houses to each other?

[00:18:54] **Esther:** All in a row.

[00:18:55] **Fai:** Okay, so... this is here: house, house, house. Okay. So you said they were different colors and one of them was like, two of them were colorful and one of them was not colorful?

[00:19:06] **Esther:** Yeah. So one house is gold with blue polka dots and a door that is an astonishing shade of purple. And it is the furthest back, like furthest north. The next one in the middle is bright pink with three green stripes running horizontally all around the base of the house. And it has a round door painted like a rainbow. And then the one that's closest to you is painted gray and has a very unremarkable door with a brass handle.

[00:19:32] **Fai:** Hmmmm.

[00:19:34] **Justin:** So you're saying Esther, that there is a large structure and then next to the structure are three effectively gray-looking houses.

[00:19:44] **Esther:** One effectively gray-looking house...

[00:19:47] **Fai:** One's green, the other ones are --

[00:19:48] **Justin:** Well, I'm colorblind.

[00:19:49] **Justin:** [cast laughs]

[00:19:53] **Esther:** Yes. For you, three effectively gray-looking houses.

[00:19:56] **Fai:** Three houses...

[00:19:58] **Justin:** Okay.

[00:19:58] **Fai:** Do the houses smell like anything to you, Ember, or Oom?

[00:20:04] **Justin:** I need to be within thirty feet.

[00:20:06] **Fai:** How far are we away?

[00:20:08] **Esther:** More than thirty feet.

[00:20:10] **Fai:** Okay. But everything looks chill? There doesn't appear to be... okay. Well, I would like to approach, but keeping an eye out for traps.

[00:20:20] **Justin:** I would like to tail my green friend.

[00:20:28] **Esther:** Roll me a secret Perception check.

[00:20:31] **Fai:** [sings] Secret Perception!

[00:20:32] **Justin:** The both of us?

[00:20:34] **Esther:** Sure. Yes. You don't see anything that looks out of the ordinary.

[00:20:38] **Fai:** Okay.

[00:20:38] **Justin:** "There are houses."

[00:20:40] **Fai:** Well, I guess it's time to discuss with the team how we should proceed. "Friends, do you have any suggestions as to where we should start?"

[00:20:52] **Alex:** "Knock on a few doors and see if anybody's home?"

[00:20:55] **Justin:** "The observatory is a secret place and this is the observatory, correct?"

[00:21:03] **Fai:** "Correct."

[00:21:05] **Justin:** "Then we should look for secrets in the secret place because bad people have secrets."

[00:21:11] **Fai:** "Well, Ember, that's a great idea, but I'd like to maybe talk later about the fact that most people have secrets, not just bad people, so... but we'll talk about that in the future. And for now, maybe we'll peek in some windows... perhaps? I think... I think... once we've made noise, we cannot un-make that noise. So whatever we can find out before we alert anybody to the fact that we are here is to our advantage, yes?"

[00:21:42] **Justin:** Ember is now trying to understand the concept of un-making noise.

[00:21:46] **Fai:** I'm wrinkling Ember's brain a bunch, probably. I'm going to approach the observatory. You said there were windowsills that were red?

[00:21:54] **Esther:** Mmmhm.

[00:21:54] **Fai:** So presumably I can try at least to give a little peek, but a subtle peek, you know? Like, if someone's on the other side of the window, I don't want them to immediately see me. I'm going to like, do one eyeball and then if it looks clear, do a second eyeball... but you know, like one eyeball like this, so that maybe the horn isn't peeking up. So just like here, horn here, eyeball there like that. You follow?

[00:22:24] **Esther:** I follow.

[00:22:25] **Fai:** Am I painting a picture?

[00:22:26] **Esther:** You're painting a picture. So that's going to be Stealth. And where are you making your way to? There's many windows carved in this like, dark marble, carved out of this dark marble, and the red windowsills. So you can make your way towards the front... one of the sides... around the back...

[00:22:41] **Fai:** We are approaching from the front?

[00:22:42] **Esther:** Yes.

[00:22:43] **Fai:** Yeah. I'm gonna come up to a window that's on the front but I'll go... there's two windows on the front?

[00:22:52] **Esther:** At least four. Two and then the doors and then two more.

[00:22:57] **Fai:** Okay. So I'm going to go to the ones that are more west so that if I'm creeping and making my way around and there's anybody in the houses, they won't be able to -- you know, like, I won't be creeping, but somebody who's looking out their window in the house could just see me fake creeping.

[00:23:11] **Esther:** Okay.

[00:23:12] **Fai:** Do you follow?

[00:23:13] **Esther:** I do. They're large round windows and you make your way up. You expertly tilt your head to one side and get the horn at the right angle and trying to like come up over the windowsill juuust enough to not be noticed. And what you'll be able to take in is that the interior does seem lit right now.

[00:23:34] **Esther:** And it's daytime and light is coming through the windows. And the building's interior is a little different from its exterior. The stone, for one thing, is much lighter. It's like a cream-colored stone and you can make out on the walls that there are what look like complex star maps formed of inlaid metal and little semi-precious gems.

[00:23:58] **Esther:** And that at certain spots on the floor, this light-colored stone, there are deep red runes that have been carved in and are glowing with an inner light. And also at various intervals there's a, a five-pointed star that is red that is kind of glowing in the same fashion. It's been carved into the floor.

[00:24:18] **Esther:** There's one main hall that you can see like, opens from the front doors and seems to run straight through the building towards the domed area. And then two little corridors that are more round, that seem to branch off from the side of the main hall and lead into other areas of the building. You don't see anyone up front.

[00:24:45] **Justin:** I would like to pad my way to the front door and wait for someone to open it.

[00:24:52] **Fai:** Where are Professor Z and Oom right now? Like, are y'all near me?

[00:24:59] **David:** I'm further back because I was worried about Ember wanting me to keep my distance from his mannerisms.

[00:25:06] **Fai:** Okay.

[00:25:07] **Alex:** And I'm, I'm also further back. I've sort of let you go on ahead. I'm not going to like follow right behind. I also have a clanky machine with me, so I didn't, you know... the whole noise thing. I may not do that by default, but when you tell me "maybe don't make noise," I'm not, uh, you know...

[00:25:23] **Fai:** Well, before I go and report back to the folks, may I ask... you said that there were runes or sigils or something on the, on the ground--

[00:25:33] **Esther:** Yes.

[00:25:34] **Fai:** --inside? Am I able to see them clearly enough to Arcana or whatever check it might take me to see if I can know, or understand, or glean anything about these?

[00:25:46] **Esther:** Roll Religion.

[00:25:47] **Fai:** Ooooh okay.

[00:25:49] **Esther:** Secretly please.

[00:25:50] **Fai:** Oh, Secretly. That's not one of my good ones.

[00:25:55] **Esther:** You would know as someone who grew up in Cheliox and has spent a lot of time here, this seems to be a common hallmark of like, the church of Asmodeus and the five-pointed star is the holy symbol of Asmodeus.

[00:26:08] **Esther:** So you gather that there is some link between the Church and the worship of Asmodeus and those who channel his power and this particular place.

[00:26:18] **Fai:** Esther, as you know, I was recently better organizing my notes so that I can understand my own character where I've been and what I've done. And so I was very much about to leap in and be like, "As someone who was born in Cheliox, which I know now for fact, does that star look familiar?" So I'm very glad that you said that. Thank you, feeling great right now. 'Preciate it.

[00:26:46] **Fai:** laughs] Okay. So yeah, I'm gonna... I'm gonna, you know, try to creep back to them, not be too loud about it.

[00:26:56] **Fai:** Ember probably doesn't really need to be part of this conversation, so I'm not gonna call him.

[00:27:02] **Justin:** Naw, don't worry about it.

[00:27:03] **Fai:** I don't think, I don't think he cares. I think he's probably still chewin' on some of the other shit I said to him. So I'll return to--

[00:27:11] **Justin:** "I make sound..."

[00:27:12] **Justin:** [Justin and Fai laugh]

[00:27:14] **Fai:** I'll return to my gnome friends and tell them, "Well, there seems to be some Infernal things going on. I've recognized some of the imagery, the symbols of Asmodeus. And I, I think that's not super common around here. Am I wrong? We don't, we don't do Infernal stuff here?"

[00:27:39] **Fai:** Just looking at like, Z, who lives here. I don't think anybody else would even know.

[00:27:44] **Alex:** Yeah, what would, what would Z's...

[00:27:47] **Esther:** Z, you would know there is a Temple of Asmodeus in town. It's fairly near the King's palace, actually. And it's not the most well attended temple in town, but it certainly is an imposing presence and people know what it is.

[00:28:06] **Alex:** " There's a Temple of Asmodeus in town."

[00:28:10] **Fai:** Okay. But part of the whole thing is that this area isn't really influenced-- doesn't have that level -- a high level of like, Infernal influence, But the surrounding areas all do.

[00:28:27] **David:** There was a bargain that was part of that, though. So... influence is suspect if there's a contract. [giggles]

[00:28:36] **Fai:** Well--

[00:28:37] **David:** It may just not be obvious influence.

[00:28:38] **Fai:** Is that a philosophical question or whatever? I bet people in Chelias would say that a contract is something that you need for anybody to be trustworthy and reliable! If you don't have it in writing, how's it true?

[00:28:52] **Fai:** So, anyway, I suppose that's a matter of perspective, but yes, I will tell them that. And I guess we're theorizing now.

[00:28:59] **Fai:** "So, so the question is... does it seem a little bit abnormal for this place to be tucked away in the way that it is? And for it to also-- so it was already weird that it's a secret and now it's a secret and there are Infernal influences. So that makes it... more weird or regular weird? So just weird?"

[00:29:27] **Fai:** Just trying to take the temperature of the room here.

[00:29:29] **Alex:** Professor Z would find that like, I guess interesting, but not necessarily super weird, right? Like, there's a lot of, sort of crosstalk between academia and various religious ideas and things like that. And we were, I don't know, you know, just at a Divination school the other day, right? So like, Yeah. I don't know.

[00:29:51] **Fai:** Surely if, if there's a competitive culture -- you don't think nobody's trying to sell their soul for... to get a leg up on their, uh, research or information or abilities?

[00:30:04] **Alex:** I think certainly Professor Z sees it as a like mix of competition and curiosity. Like he may be personally quite competitively motivated, but sort of broadly it's about like, the discoveries and how that might help gnomish society and the vision of the King of like a, a city with so much novelty that it helps the gnomes not get Bleached.

[00:30:34] **Alex:** I don't know. Just like the whole thing is-- it's all part of like a, he really believes in the sort of institutional vision going on there and that he can play a big part in that. So I don't think he would find it super suspicious, you know?

[00:30:48] **Fai:** But it would make sense if-- even if people aren't driven by competition, even if their motivations are to aid and better gnomekind, that would be all the more reason to do shady things to help your people. If you were the kind of person who was inclined to, to take that sort of shortcut or one might not think of it as a shortcut.

[00:31:12] **Alex:** So I guess in that sense, he wouldn't think of it necessarily as a shortcut, because there are lots of like religious pathways through curiosity in Brastlework.

[00:31:21] **Alex:** So I think that he would see it as like, "Oh, they've signed a contract with Asmodeus, like, add this to the pile of like, why haven't they shared their current research progress in a colloquium?" But not like "there must be evil occurring here."

[00:31:34] **Fai:** Yeah.

[00:31:35] **Alex:** Does that make sense?

[00:31:36] **Fai:** Yeah. Yeah. And I guess that the, I guess the word evil is kind of wibbly wobbly?

[00:31:43] **Alex:** Mhm.

[00:31:44] **Fai:** Because what does it, you know, like, what does it really mean in this context? Or in general, I guess, but that's, that's more wibbly than we need to get. I guess what I'm trying to hash out is like, this is interesting, but it's still in the, it's in the realm of like, okay, that's not like, this isn't like, the craziest shit that I've ever seen in my life. This is just a curiosity.

[00:32:06] **Alex:** Yeah. And definitely to Prof Z, like, the wackiness here is the secrecy around it, not any of the secrets we figured out so far. Right, like.

[00:32:14] **Fai:** So the real motivation here is just that this is interesting. Not that, like, this is supes suspicious-- I mean, it's a little suspicious, but it's not necessarily a big, what's the word I'm -- conspiracy.

[00:32:32] **David:** Yeah.

[00:32:32] **Alex:** Yeah.

[00:32:32] **David:** So I'm actually also on the former Temerity conspiracy theory track and digesting this still. I kind of want to know if there's like a Draconic Lore connection between Green dragons and like, Asmodeus or is there any, connection between the two, just from that conspiracy theory?

[00:32:53] **Fai:** I want all of my conspiracy theories to thrive.

[00:32:57] **David:** [David giggles]

[00:32:58] **Justin:** The answers might be through this door... [cast laughs] I'm just sitting here, like, if only I had hands!

[00:33:07] **Justin:** [cast laughs]

[00:33:10] **Esther:** You could bark!

[00:33:11] **David:** Yeah. Maybe we should look inside more.

[00:33:14] **Fai:** Okay.

[00:33:15] **David:** So we can actually see the symbols more directly and--

[00:33:18] **Justin:** Only naughty dogs bark to enter houses, Esther. [giggles]

[00:33:23] **Alex:** I think to point out like, Professor Z is definitely like, "Oh, interesting!" And would be interested to go see, but is like holding himself back because of Temerity's noise comments. And by the way, that is all in the context of like, Professor Z believes that Temerity was like, somewhat right in that we just had to fight a whole bunch of clockwork things. And so like not quite charging ahead recklessly at this point.

[00:33:48] **Fai:** Good to know. "Well, I suppose we're really going around in circles. Should we just go inside?"

[00:33:58] **Alex:** "Yeah, let's go take a look."

[00:33:59] **Fai:** Let's go join Ember at the door?

[00:34:01] **David:** I'll stay back a little bit if Ember looks wary towards my approaching.

[00:34:06] **Justin:** A little bit.

[00:34:08] **Esther:** Miv will say -- they have stopped playing the dulcimer by the way, they will have uh, been quiet and listened to this conversation and say, "Is there anything you want me to do?"

[00:34:20] **Fai:** "Well, if you're curious, I wouldn't tell you not to come in with us, but if you're uneasy about going inside and you'd like to stay outside as a lookout..."

[00:34:31] **Esther:** "Oh, this seems way too interesting to not go in, but if you'd rather have me outside, I'll happily stay."

[00:34:38] **Fai:** "I think it's too interesting for me to ask you to stay behind."

[00:34:41] **Alex:** "We can always leave Buster parked outside and you know, he's good at letting us know when something's gone on."

[00:34:48] **David:** Buster's a -- an announcement that Professor Z is around. 'Cause everyone knows what he looks like!

[00:34:54] **Fai:** Well, to be fair, I think Professor Z has to rebuild Buster all the time. So Buster probably looks different every, every now and again, every week or so...

[00:35:03] **Esther:** You just rebuilt him with various parts too, so--

[00:35:06] **Alex:** Yeah, so --

[00:35:06] **Justin:** Yeah, that's true.

[00:35:07] **Alex:** --he might look different. I think the other thing is that like, given this whole new approach of maybe not making noise everywhere, not bringing the clanky pile of metal bits into the like, marble-halled observatory is, you know...

[00:35:22] **Justin:** We could also potentially leave Nommie to be potentially a more like, um...

[00:35:27] **Justin:** [Justin and Alex laugh]

[00:35:28] **David:** Discreet, discreet lookout --that's too easy!

[00:35:31] **Justin:** Discreet lookout? [Justin laughs]

[00:35:33] **Alex:** Do we not trust Buster?

[00:35:36] **Justin:** Well, it was, I was more thinking for the like, empathic ping...

[00:35:40] **Alex:** There's something more useful about an empathic ping than just exploding?

[00:35:43] **Fai:** You know, actually exploding is, is great because not only does it alert us, but it distracts, whoever is showing up to find us.

[00:35:53] **Justin:** I'm totally fine with both--

[00:35:54] **Fai:** So really, it should be both!

[00:35:55] **Justin:** I think it's the best of both worlds, but that's just me!
[laughs]

[00:36:00] **Fai:** But whether you wish to be parted from Nommie is your own business and concern.

[00:36:06] **David:** I think Nommie could fly away pretty easily if there was...

[00:36:09] **Alex:** How big is Nommie compared to Buster? If I rearranged an arm, could there be a perch or like a, you know, this pipe could be a perch for Nommie on Buster?

[00:36:18] **David:** Oh yeah, yeah, Nommie's basically like, house cat-sized, you know?

[00:36:20] **Alex:** Yeah. Yeah. So, so yeah, I'll, I'll like grab a wrench and crank some things around and now there's like a -- a, like bird perch sticking out from Buster. Maybe stickin' out there. [giggles]

[00:36:31] **Justin:** Now the important question is, does Nommie perch like a bird or a bat?

[00:36:37] **David:** I mean, I'm, in the, How You Train Your Dragon scheme of things --

[00:36:40] **Justin:** Yeaah!

[00:36:41] **David:** --So I believe it's like a cat, kind of perched up...

[00:36:43] **Alex:** Yeah, yeah. There. Okay. So, but anyways, there's like, there's a platform resting spot hanging out now on, on Buster for, for Nommie.

[00:36:51] **David:** That's very thoughtful.

[00:36:52] **Justin:** Eventually Buster's just going to be a cat tree. Oom will make him quieter.

[00:36:56] **Esther:** So, Buster and Nommie are gonna hang out together and I'm having this mental picture of a red pseudodragon perching on this metal arm and it's very cute. So... what's your plan to get into this place?

[00:37:11] **Fai:** Is the door locked?

[00:37:14] **Esther:** Yes.

[00:37:15] **Fai:** Is it the kind of lock that one can pick?

[00:37:17] **Esther:** You can certainly try!

[00:37:19] **Fai:** One would like to attempt to pick the lock!

[00:37:23] **Esther:** One would roll Thievery to do that.

[00:37:25] **Fai:** Very well.

[00:37:26] **Alex:** If you need a pipe wrench, I've probably got one.

[00:37:28] **Fai:** Thievery!

[00:37:30] **Esther:** Yeah. So you take out your Thieves' Tools and set to work on this lock and it doesn't take you long at all before you feel like the little spring and it gives way... and the door opens.

[00:37:46] **Justin:** Ember does the, the, like the dog thing of being like, have to be the first thing through the door. [chuckles]

[00:37:53] **Fai:** I will try not to be tipped over by the dog leaping in the moment I open the door.

[00:38:01] **Justin:** It's just like, snoot goes through door and then like, wedges himself in.

[00:38:05] **Esther:** Snoot goes through; Ember wedges himself in; and you hear a loud clanging noise begin to go off and echo through the building. Almost like someone set an alarm.

[00:38:22] **Justin:** What?

[00:38:23] **Fai:** Probably should have remembered to check for traps! Probably should have remembered that. Okay. Um, can I rapidly attempt to disarm this alarm?

[00:38:36] **Esther:** Um...

[00:38:37] **David:** [cast laughs] I don't think we can un-ring that bell! [cast laughs]

[00:38:42] **Fai:** Can't un-make a noise, can you? Is the alarm ongoing? Is the question?

[00:38:46] **Esther:** Yes!

[00:38:47] **Fai:** But it's not one that can be disabled?

[00:38:50] **Esther:** I mean, roll... Arcana...

[00:38:54] **Fai:** Woof. Okay. I will certainly -- oh, secretly?

[00:38:57] **Esther:** Or Religion. Whichever one you prefer.

[00:39:00] **Fai:** Okay. Hold on. I think my, yeah my Arcana's way better. Would you like it to be a secret?

[00:39:04] **Esther:** Yes.

[00:39:05] **Fai:** Okay. That looks like a no!

[00:39:07] **Esther:** Mmm.

[00:39:08] **Fai:** [Fai and Esther laugh]

[00:39:10] **Esther:** Well, um, Temerity, it's just bizarre how there can be the sound of a bell and you look around and there's like, no obvious traps and it's just like, weird. You feel at once like you should be able to know what's going on here and, and oddly defeated, like, like you're missing something and it's on the tip of your brain and you just can't quite remember it.

[00:39:42] **Esther:** What could be going on here?

[00:39:43] **Alex:** So seeing Temerity be confused, Professor Z is going to try and look around and see if he can figure out what's going on.

[00:39:50] **Esther:** Okay. You begin to hear footsteps echoing down the hall, so would you like to perceive what's going on? Do you want to like, know what is going on specifically with the alarm?

[00:40:03] **Justin:** I turn to face the footsteps.

[00:40:04] **Alex:** I'm specifically concerned with the alarm at this moment, I think.

[00:40:08] **Esther:** Okay. Uh, Arcana or Religion.

[00:40:11] **Fai:** Can I ask a question?

[00:40:13] **Alex:** Wait, do you want that secret, Esther?

[00:40:15] **Esther:** Yes, please.

[00:40:16] **Fai:** Are we, are we inside the door given that we're inspecting, looking for a place to disarm it?

[00:40:23] **Esther:** My understanding was that Ember went in and the door is like, open. So I would guess you are at least just inside it.

[00:40:30] **Fai:** Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. I just want to know if there's, if there are footsteps coming, I want to know if there's anything for me to hide behind in this room.

[00:40:41] **Esther:** Let's do Professor Z's roll first and then we'll get back to hiding behind.

[00:40:45] **Esther:** Alright. So Professor Z, you do recognize this as something called an Alarm spell, and there is no way short of dispelling it that you can get it to stop. So you should probably hide... is your feeling or, or leave or be prepared to have a conversation.

[00:41:05] **Alex:** So I think I'll just say, "Everybody, I think it's an Alarm spell!"

[00:41:08] **Justin:** I can do none of those things.

[00:41:09] **Alex:** I guess I'm a little bit curious, like, does Oom have a reaction? Like, I certainly know nothing about dispelling spells, but like, does Oom?

[00:41:19] **Fai:** Oom is far back because of Ember, right?

[00:41:22] **David:** Yeah. I'm too far back. That's why I wasn't doing anything.

[00:41:25] **Alex:** Okay.

[00:41:27] **David:** If you're saying that it's an Alarm spell I'll, I'll probably try to see if I know, like, what's the radius of this. Like, is it going to be something where we're alerting like, the whole town or are we just like, going to fight more people here?

[00:41:40] **Alex:** So maybe, given that Oom is far back too, I'll say "It's an Alarm spell, we should hide!" Because I know as an Inventor, I can't really do anything about spells.

[00:41:47] **Esther:** Also Professor Z, you would know that you're not going to alert the whole town. This is like, warding a particular area so that if someone crosses a boundary without permission or knowledge or something like that, it'll make noise.

[00:42:00] **Alex:** So yeah, I think I'll say, "Ooh, it's an alarm spell. We should hide."

[00:42:03] **Esther:** There are several large columns in this entryway-- And then there's the two branching corridors like, off the side that are kind of round and seem to go into chambers. You don't know what's in those chambers, but you could make for one, or you could run outside and like try to make it to the nearest tree.

[00:42:22] **Fai:** I want to stay inside. So the pillars don't really provide much cover. Right?

[00:42:31] **Esther:** They are large columns. So you could probably like, try to do the circle-around thing if someone comes into view, so they don't see you. And you're being very stealthy. But long-term, they won't provide much cover. There, there are also several tables that have various, like small equipment on them. They're fairly large. You might be able to get under one.

[00:42:52] **Fai:** I need to make that decision and then roll Stealth and not let the Stealth roll choose where I hide?

[00:42:59] **Esther:** Yes. Mmhm.

[00:43:00] **Fai:** So you said that the corridors go to rooms, but the rooms are a question mark?

[00:43:06] **Esther:** Yes.

[00:43:06] **Fai:** I was not able to see into the rooms when I peeked earlier?

[00:43:10] **Esther:** Nope. You just looked in the front windows.

[00:43:13] **Fai:** Okay. And the footsteps are coming from the same direction as the room, those rooms or a different direction?

[00:43:18] **Esther:** No, they're coming from like, what you take to be the main chamber. So there's like, one big wide corridor that seems to go straight through this building and like, back towards the area where the dome is probably above.

[00:43:30] **Esther:** And they seem to be coming from that big room and there's like, light at the very end. It's like, an expansive building, but you probably have five seconds. So, um...

[00:43:40] **Fai:** The question is, can I make it to one of the rooms that you mentioned?

[00:43:45] **Esther:** You can certainly start dashing that way and see what happens.

[00:43:49] **Fai:** I'll do that.

[00:43:50] **Esther:** Okay. And you want to be stealthy?

[00:43:52] **Fai:** I would like to be stealthy.

[00:43:54] **Esther:** Okay. Roll Stealth. What is everybody else doing?

[00:43:58] **Alex:** I'm going to follow Temerity.

[00:43:59] **Esther:** Are you trying to be stealthy?

[00:44:01] **Alex:** Yes.

[00:44:02] **Esther:** Alright. That will be Stealth from you as well.

[00:44:05] **Alex:** Great.

[00:44:06] **Esther:** And Oom, what are you gonna do?

[00:44:08] **Alex:** You want secret Stealth?

[00:44:10] **Esther:** Yes, please.

[00:44:11] **David:** Far enough back that I don't think it would make sense to try to follow at this point, so I'll just try to hang back, and if they scream, then I'll know to go.

[00:44:22] **Esther:** Are you like standing in the middle of the doorway outside or are you like --

[00:44:26] **David:** Yeah, I'm gonna try to be off on the side.

[00:44:28] **Esther:** Okay. We'll get there in a moment, to you and Miv. Okay. And Ember, what are you doing?

[00:44:33] **Justin:** I am dead center facing wherever the noise is coming from. No attempted stealth. For all intents and purposes, looking like a wild dog who somehow accidentally made his way in through a window.

[00:44:46] **Esther:** Professor Z and Temerity --

[00:44:47] **Justin:** Maybe they forgot to lock it.

[00:44:48] **Esther:** -- are you making for the left-hand chamber or the right-hand chamber?

[00:44:53] **Fai:** Are they equidistant from me? Is one closer?

[00:44:57] **Esther:** I think you're like right in the middle. So you're probably equidistant, yeah.

[00:45:01] **Fai:** And neither of them are any closer or further away from where the noise is coming from?

[00:45:07] **Esther:** Nope.

[00:45:07] **Fai:** I will go to the left one.

[00:45:08] **Esther:** And Professor Z, you're following Temerity?

[00:45:10] **Alex:** Yeah. So how I imagine this having gone is like, Temerity comes in, is looking confused. I come up next to Temerity and I'm like, "Oh, it's an alarm spell. We should hide!" Like, kind of tapping Temerity, Temerity darts off in some direction and I'm following Temerity immediately. Like, I'm not picking a side. I'm just, where Temerity is going, I'm following.

[00:45:32] **Esther:** You make for this chamber. In the meantime, there are loud footsteps and like a clanking. It sounds like someone who's rather heavily armored is running down this hall and in about three seconds, Ember, a somewhat tall-for-a-human-figure appears before you. She has pale skin and dark brown hair and brown eyes. She's wearing heavy armor and in the middle of the armor, emblazoned on the chest, there's a star-like symbol, not quite identical to the star in the floor, but, but similar to. And she says "A dog? What are you doing here?"

[00:46:16] **Justin:** Ember just like, cocks his head. Just kind of like, low growl.

[00:46:20] **Esther:** There's a second person who is now making their way down the hall, also wearing very similar armor. This one's about six feet tall, also brown hair, light brown skin and brown eyes. He's going to say "What's, what's going on?"

[00:46:34] **Esther:** And she's going to say, "I don't know. I think some made off for the left. You follow-- you go, I'll follow. There's this... dog here. This is so

strange." The other person is going to make off for the left- hand chamber. And in the meantime, this --

[00:46:51] **Justin:** I want to, I want to like, get in front and in the way, and do the like, back on the legs, kind of like, tail wagging, playing sort of thing.

[00:47:02] **Esther:** Okay. He says, "I don't have time for this! Not now, dog!"

[00:47:08] **Justin:** I'm going to keep being a nuisance.

[00:47:10] **Esther:** Okay. What do you roll to be a nuisance?

[00:47:14] **Justin:** I don't know, you tell me! [laughs] I guess I'm creating a distraction--

[00:47:20] **Esther:** Athletics?

[00:47:20] **Justin:** -- so that would be Deception? I would take Athletics. I'm much better at that --

[00:47:24] **Esther:** I mean, are you like jumping up and putting your paws playfully on him? Like, not very well socialized behavior, but you're havin' fun.

[00:47:32] **Justin:** Sure. Yeah. Let's do that.

[00:47:33] **Esther:** Okay. Then roll Athletics.

[00:47:35] **Justin:** Hero Point! That was a natural 2. That's-- I'll take a 15. That's better.

[00:47:43] **Esther:** You're going to be able to slow his progress for a good 30 seconds, at least, as you're like jumping back and forth and he tries to like duck around you, but he just can't quite get around and your tail is wagging and you're so excited.

[00:47:56] **Esther:** In the meantime, the woman is going to stride forward and look outside. And as I roll a thing for her, Temerity and Professor Z, describe to me what you're doing. And then, Oom, describe to me what you're doing.

[00:48:13] **Fai:** I guess I have the lead on this since I'm being followed. Well--

[00:48:18] **Alex:** I'm definitely just following.

[00:48:19] **Fai:** Are we in the room?

[00:48:21] **Esther:** You will make it to the room. Yes.

[00:48:24] **Fai:** What does the room look like?

[00:48:25] **Esther:** It's a round chamber. And -- so, first of all, you could see the corridor leads into it. And then there's another side-- it's a circular chamber -- where the corridor leads out and it looks like into an identical chamber, like, just next door.

[00:48:39] **Esther:** So little circles within circles, there's two levels to it. And a ramp that kind of winds down from the top level slowly down to the lower level. Like you are descending. On the lower level, in this cream-colored stone, there is a giant five-pointed star that is glowing red, like, up from the bottom. And, on both levels, there's bookcases covering the walls with various tomes and instruments, scrolls, and there're little workstations that have a variety of accoutrement spread across them, like, beakers with weird grains and dusts and oils, scribe stations with notebooks and half-constructed instruments. It looks like a workshop of some kind.

[00:49:29] **Fai:** Are there nooks and crannies? Or is it a very open sort of workspace and library?

[00:49:34] **Esther:** I would say there's better nooks and crannies on the lower level, like the base level.

[00:49:39] **Esther:** And there's definitely some big comfy chairs one could hide behind, probably a table with a tablecloth over it -- small, but you could see maybe getting under it.

[00:49:51] **Fai:** I'll definitely head us to the lower level and hope that Ember is buying us precious seconds of distraction. And try to find us separate places to hide to give us a better chance of being hidden, of somebody getting out of here secretly. Basically what I would do would be like, as quick as possible, look for a smaller space for Z and kind of just like, be like "There," point him to it, and then dash off to find a slightly bigger, but as small as I, a short king, can contort myself into. That's my mode of attack here.

[00:50:30] **Alex:** I guess follow Temerity down to that lower level, but maybe not try to find the like same's hiding slot, try to find a different hiding slot.

[00:50:41] **Esther:** So wherever Temerity is like hastily gesturing you, you'll probably try to --

[00:50:44] **Alex:** Yeah.

[00:50:45] **Esther:** -- slot in there. Okay. And Oom, where have you made your way to?

[00:50:50] **David:** I'm assuming Buster is just kind of standing there in the open...

[00:50:56] **Alex:** Yeah, like next to the door, like kind of where you'd put like a potted plant, if you were decorating the front step.

[00:51:02] **Fai:** I thought they were at the like, tree line or something! [laughs]

[00:51:06] **David:** There's not really that much value in hiding too far away, then. I'll probably be a little bit further away from the door, like around where Miv's at and kind of observing so I can still see Buster and Nommie, cause you know, Nommie is valuable to me. I'm assuming Buster's somewhat valuable to you. [giggles]

[00:51:27] **David:** So I'll be around them in case something needs to be done. But yeah, so somewhat to the side of the door. So I'm not like obviously visible, but yeah. Trying to keep close enough to Buster and Nommie.

[00:51:40] **Esther:** Alright. Roll Stealth.

[00:51:43] **Justin:** We didn't think to disguise Buster as like, a potted plant.

[00:51:46] **Fai:** Does Buster have a compartment that a gnome could fit in? I'm looking at the art and it seems, it seems like it's feasible, but I don't know what the internal steam components, what kind of clockwork... what's going on.

[00:51:58] **Alex:** I feel like Buster is not like, a hundred percent hollow inside. There's definitely like, compartments in Buster where you could hide things. But I think fitting an entire gnome would be, it would be difficult 'cause there's like, gears and a furnace and other things going on.

[00:52:13] **Fai:** It would have to be a contortionist gnome who was smaller on the scale of, of how tall a gnome gets maybe?

[00:52:20] **Alex:** Yeah, yeah.

[00:52:21] **Fai:** I see.

[00:52:22] **Esther:** This woman strides outside. She takes in Buster and Nommie with a glance and says "What in Heaven?" And then she, will do a quick, like, once-around the building. Miv seems to have vanished, Oom; you certainly aren't really aware of where Miv is right now. The woman gets to you and she looks straight at you and says, "Who are you, and what are you doing here?" And at this point she's taken out a weapon and she's, yeah, she's got a bow pointed at you.

[00:53:00] **David:** "It was just a nice day out. I thought I'd go for a stroll."

[00:53:02] **Esther:** Roll Deception.

[00:53:04] **Esther:** "You thought you would go for a stroll to the observatory that no one in this town comes to unless they have permission? I think you'll need a better story than that."

[00:53:12] **David:** "I mean, I didn't know that's what it was. But if this is an observatory, all I thought was, there was a path, and why not go up it?"

[00:53:21] **Esther:** "And what are your accomplices who are inside want to do?"

[00:53:24] **David:** "What accomplices?"

[00:53:25] **Esther:** "I heard them. I saw them making for the left-hand path. Come on. You're coming inside with me and I'm going to ask you some questions."

[00:53:35] **David:** "I mean, okay, if you want me to go inside this thing you just said was secret."

[00:53:39] **Esther:** "Don't be smart with me." She's like, "Mmm, move."

[00:53:42] **David:** I'll follow.

[00:53:43] **Esther:** Okay. "And what are these things?" She points at, at, uh-- ohhhh. Yeah, she points at Buster and then she stops and she takes Nommie in. And she says, "Is this with you?"

[00:53:57] **David:** "Uh, the familiar yeah, is with me. He's just resting on this-- I don't know what it is."

[00:54:03] **Esther:** "Then... I guess he should come inside, too." Oom, roll Perception.

[00:54:10] **Esther:** Yeah, she's very intimidating. You have not been officially Intimidated, but her armor is really formal looking. She's carrying a huge warflail and this bow and this, this woman looks like she could screw you up and screw Nommie up. And it seems like the best idea is probably to follow her.

[00:54:30] **David:** Sounds good.

[00:54:32] **Esther:** So she's going to lead you back into the main chamber that's visible from the outside, the domed room. I will describe to you what you're going to see on entering. And then I think maybe it would be a good time to take a break.

[00:54:46] **Esther:** So the thing that's going to immediately attract your attention as you go into this room is that there's an enormous brass telescope in the middle of the space. It's right under the large vault of the metal dome. And it's on a platform that seems to run off some kind of like, clockwork gears mechanism that's visible in the walls and like, part of the flooring. And this platform seems to be able to be raised and/or lowered and maneuvered to various angles. And there are two literal floors in this room.

[00:55:20] **Esther:** There's the one like at the base of the telescope platform, which is the same kind of cream-colored stone of the rest of the indoors. And one above it that is made of wood and can literally be like, parted down the middle and rolled back along the sides that seems to operate like, by some sort of the same clockwork mechanism, so the telescope has the space to like, rise up and look places. And there's also several workstations in, in this particular space and, a group of three people at the far like, the north end of the chamber who look a little nervous clustered around a workstation. And one of them has like, like a wrench in her hand and is prepared to be fighting.

[00:56:06] **Esther:** And someone who is gathered near like, a table of scrolls, like, on the Eastern side and it seems to also be like, a little, a little bit nervous,

but ready to spring into action. And there will be a few chairs, two of which looked like they've been rather recently abandoned near the front of the chamber.

[00:56:23] **Esther:** And this woman is going to say "Sit." And that is where I think we should leave things until after the break.

[00:57:46] **Esther:** Welcome back from break, everyone! Where we are now -- where the party currently stands: Miv is persona non grata. You're not sure where Miv is. Oom has been escorted by the woman in plate armor back to the main central observatory chamber, and you will have been set in a chair and presumably are about to be interrogated. There's a group of gnomes at the far end of this chamber and one gnome uh off to the Eastern side. Professor Z and Temerity you are, hiding in the first of the left-hand circular round chambers on the ground floor, and Ember, you are trying to play keep-the-human-away with the man who is in plate armor who also appears to be one of these guards. I think that's the state of where everyone is and what has unfolded to this time.

[00:58:41] **Esther:** Ember, with your Perception check that you just rolled, it is very likely you would be able to notice Oom being taken back to this central chamber with Nommie So, let's start with Ember. You've managed to keep this guy from making further progress towards Professor Z and Temerity for a good thirty seconds. What do you do next?

[00:59:05] **Justin:** Does this person have a weapon?

[00:59:07] **Esther:** Yes.

[00:59:08] **Justin:** I want it.

[00:59:09] **Esther:** Okay. You're going to try to do the grapple-the-weapon thing again?

[00:59:13] **Justin:** Sure.

[00:59:15] **Esther:** Okayyyy.

[00:59:16] **Justin:** Are they actually wielding the weapon?

[00:59:17] **Esther:** Yeah, It doesn't look like they're trying to-- overly eager to hit you with it. They're-- seem to have this-- there's a large adorable dog trying to play with me and he's just in my way. I really don't-- I'm just trying to like, lift him physically off of me. So he's not about to like, attack you with the weapon.

[00:59:37] **Justin:** Okay. I really just kind of want... so he's, if he's holding the mace, I am going to like, sit like a good boy and look at it as though it were a stick and we are playing fetch. Just in his way.

[00:59:50] **Esther:** He's he's going to say, "We don't have time to play fetch, dog. Now, kindly move."

[00:59:55] **Justin:** I will whine. I will whine plaintively. [chuckles]

[01:00:00] **Esther:** Roll...Diplomacy?

[01:00:03] **Justin:** I will break your character's heart. That is not good. [laughs] It's pretty good for Ember, but...13.

[01:00:12] **Esther:** He just looks at you and says, "Stay." And is going to try to walk around you and go into this small chamber.

[01:00:20] **Justin:** Willl sneakily follow but--

[01:00:24] **Esther:** Okay.

[01:00:24] **Justin:** Hope I have given enough time. Just want to be available. I will sit down next to the open door.

[01:00:31] **Esther:** He will walk into this little chamber and I'm going to bring you there on the map now. So take your minds on a little journey here, that this layer here is the basement and you see this -- what looks like some kind of terracing, like this third line down, we'll say like, that is a demarcation zone between floors. And part of these are like the little ramps that are, that are leading down.

[01:01:00] **Esther:** And then this space up here are the upper floor. And on the upper floor, there are many, many different kinds of workstations, which are detailed on this particular map by these amphora and various tables and scrolls

and such. Like, there aren't actually as many walls as there are in this little map representation that I have, but it is a rather crowded workspace and there's bookshelves like, on the actual walls of the room. So Temerity and Professor Z, you're going to be down here somewhere. If you position yourselves, drag yourselves onto the map and put yourselves roughly where you want to be on the ground floor, and we'll go from there.

[01:01:46] **Esther:** This individual strides into the room, very confident, and says "In the name of Asmodeus and House Thrune, reveal yourselves!" Waits for a beat to see if there's a response.

[01:02:02] **Justin:** I bark.

[01:02:03] **Esther:** "Yes. A good boy, indeed." [clears throat] "I warn you, if you do not reveal yourselves, I will have no choice but to assume that you are a hostile agent and attack."

[01:02:16] **Fai:** Hmmmm. How serious does this person sound about that?

[01:02:21] **Esther:** Very serious.

[01:02:22] **Fai:** How likely does it seem that we will definitely get caught? I don't know. I guess I'm going to make him work for it, unless it seems like it's absolutely like... it will happen within the next two minutes. Oooh, actually, hold on a second. I've got a series of questions. Ember is at the door?

[01:02:45] **Justin:** Mmmhm. Are there flammable things in this room?

[01:02:49] **Fai:** Okay. Here's what I want to know, is... is it in the realm of possibility that as this person is searching the room, I can sneak out of the room? I would probably have to leave Z behind, though. That would kind of suck of me.

[01:03:07] **Esther:** It is in the realm of possibility. You would need to begin by rolling Stealth if you want to try that. Or you may spend all three Hero Points and attempt that.

[01:03:20] **Fai:** Okay. Well... um, Hm.

[01:03:24] **Alex:** I think Professor Z is more likely to be intimidated into revealing himself in this moment than Temerity, I don't know. Is there something like, maybe I should roll to figure out whether Professor Z -- like,

Professor Z would start by like looking at Temerity, but there's like, definitely some like, wheels turning about like, do I just go out with my hands up?

[01:03:48] **Fai:** That is to your discretion, my dear, because I... here's my struggle: I don't think that Temerity would just peace out and leave Z behind. But I also don't think that Temerity is likely to give himself up. So... I guess we've got ourselves a questionable scenario here. Perhaps you should roll to determine what you think you'll do.

[01:04:18] **Alex:** I just did that... and I don't really care what it was, I rolled pretty low. So I think I'm going to come out with my hands up.

[01:04:25] **Justin:** Nooo!

[01:04:27] **Esther:** "I don't care what it was..." [laughs] I was going to say, how long does this series of looks transpire?

[01:04:34] **Alex:** I mean, by the time he's-- the person is saying, "Come out or I'm going to attack," I think Z is you know, there's some screeching or something as a, like, whatever object he was hiding behind slides across the marble floor and he comes out from behind it, with his hands up.

[01:04:49] **Esther:** [screeching sound effect]

[01:04:50] **Alex:** And, and sees Ember too, right? So like, I think that's part of, what's giving him the like, confidence to not totally think he's just going to be dead at this point, but like. Also, this is not in Z's plan, but I hope that this provides Temerity an opportunity to not do the same thing.

[01:05:07] **Fai:** Temerity has taken this as a blessing of 'I'mma do me, but-- and you can do you.' And, uh, Temerity will attempt to use this distraction and whatever happens between the two of them, because I know that having a conversation with Z is a lot.

[01:05:25] **Fai:** So I'm assuming that this guard person is going to be rather focused on all that's going on here. It's going to be a situation of move, hide, move, hide, see what I can get away with. And also--

[01:05:42] **Justin:** If we need to we can always set the place on fire.

[01:05:44] **Fai:** That's true. That's always in the pocket. But also the motivation of staying here longer and staying and being as secret as possible is to get as

much information as possible. So, you know, in the in-between stages of hide, kinda just trying to take in whatever is possible to take in, obviously not rifling through shit, but like giving everything as good as scan as possible in the short amount of time that is happening.

[01:06:14] **Esther:** Okay. Professor Z, what do you say when you screech the table aside and crawl out with your hands up?

[01:06:23] **Alex:** "Hello?"

[01:06:25] **Justin:** [Justin laughs]

[01:06:26] **Esther:** "Who are you and what are you doing here?"

[01:06:29] **Alex:** "I am Professor Z. I'm a member of--" What am I a member of? Which one? The Tinkerings! "I'm a member of The Tinkerings. And I have-- I was, uh, just, you know, up here to see what the research was about."

[01:06:47] **Esther:** "Your name has not been sent to us on one of the lists. We were not expecting you. Why have you come here?"

[01:06:54] **Alex:** "Well, I, I didn't realize there was a list. I mean, uh, you know, I visit other academic institutions all the time."

[01:07:01] **Esther:** "Surely it has not escaped your notice that this is not an institution that is open to the public, including the academic public, Professor Z."

[01:07:12] **Alex:** "Uhhh... actually, that's very strange aren't all academic institutions in Brastlewark open to other academics? It's a, you know, a collaborative endeavor. And I just, you know, wanted to see which of my colleagues was working up here."

[01:07:27] **Esther:** "I care not for your local policies by which the grace of House Thrune allows you this liberty. You will exit this facility immediately and not return."

[01:07:37] **Alex:** "Uh, oh, oh. Okay. Okay. I didn't mean you any wrong. I just, wanted to, wanted to understand what was going on here." And I'll, I'll head for whatever door Ember is right in front of.

[01:07:49] **Esther:** Okay. Temerity, during this exchange, you're going to try to sneak out and figure out what might be happening at the same time, see if you can information gather?

[01:07:59] **Fai:** If they're headed to the door, I'm not going to head to the door. I'm just going to try to be invisible in here. I'm going to kinda wait to see if Z like, is being escorted out, essentially. Because I don't want to be by the door when the guard's eye's on the door. It would behoove me more to my goals to just stay in here and try to be as hidden as possible.

[01:08:33] **Esther:** The guard is actually going to pause for a second and say, "I should regroup before I dismiss you. You will come with me to the main chamber. Then you will leave this facility and never return." Professor Z and Temerity, roll, roll Perception. And Ember too, if you would like to.

[01:08:48] **Esther:** Well, Ember, you have a great desire for the stick that is at the end of the giant ball in his hands, and the more you look at the stick, the more mouthwatering the stick looks and your mind is becoming somewhat focused on what the stick would taste like if you were able to get it. You are just overcome by the struggle to remain focused on what is happening to your friends in this room and the allure of the end of this, this ball-chain-stick. It's fascinating. As for Professor Z and Temerity--

[01:09:24] **Justin:** I take the ball-chain-stick.

[01:09:26] **Esther:** Okay. We'll get to that in a minute. [cast laughs]

[01:09:31] **Esther:** Okay. Professor Z and Temerity, you both notice this guy looks really young, like very confident, full of himself, strong, wearing good armor, but also like, young. He has not been doing this job for too many years. And he looks young in human years, not a teenager, but early twenties maybe. And, and clearly like, just trying to do a good job. So take that for what you will. Okay, Ember: roll Athletics.

[01:10:05] **Justin:** Okay. Uh, yeah, that's what we do. I want to roll a real die.

[01:10:10] **Justin:** Oh! Ahhhh, that's a 16.

[01:10:15] **Esther:** All right. You're attempting to disarm him, technically?

[01:10:22] **Justin:** Yeah.

[01:10:22] **Justin:** On a Success, things that they do with the weapon basically take a minus two penalty for the following turn. On a Critical Success the weapon is dropped. On a Critical Failure... I forget what happens to me, but it's not good.

[01:10:37] **Esther:** What I was looking for is the Reflex DC bit. Okay.

[01:10:41] **Justin:** Oh yes, yeah, it's Reflex.

[01:10:42] **Esther:** And you rolled a 16?

[01:10:43] **Justin:** Yup.

[01:10:43] **Esther:** And you succeed.

[01:10:45] **Justin:** Cool.

[01:10:45] **Esther:** Yeah.

[01:10:46] **Justin:** I weaken my target's grasp on the item.

[01:10:48] **Esther:** He's just going to like, tug on it. " Let go!"

[01:10:52] **Justin:** "Grrrrrr!" [chuckles]

[01:10:55] **Esther:** "This is not a game! It's very serious business." And he's going to like, start dragging you across the room with his weapon.

[01:11:02] **Justin:** I will absolutely do the like, dog tug of war things. Like... [chuckles] paws skidding.

[01:11:07] **Esther:** Professor Z, are you going to follow this train of...

[01:11:11] **Justin:** [laughing] He just forgets about Professor Z!

[01:11:14] **Alex:** I think I am going to fo-- I mean, so my plan roughly in my head is to like, we're going back into the main hallway, right? But as we go back into the main hallway, my intent is to like, walk towards the front door to leave. So I am following this train into the main hallway.

[01:11:30] **Esther:** Actually, I was going to have you walk across the room to get there a slightly different way, but I like this. Main hallway it is. If you want to go out the main hallway, that's great. Let's do it that way. Temerity --

[01:11:40] **Alex:** No, I just thought we had to go back out the main hallway to get in-- well. Okay. Maybe I don't understand the geography of this building.

[01:11:46] **Esther:** So there's central chamber, main hallway, leads to front of building. Front of the building there's also like, two curved, like semicircular corridors that lead into these four, two on either side circular chambers. And then the circular chambers nearest to the main room also have little corridors that lead into it.

[01:12:07] **Alex:** I'll just follow wherever this train of dog and, and soldier is going.

[01:12:13] **Esther:** Okay. Temerity, I need one Stealth check from you to remain hidden and concealed and such.

[01:12:20] **Fai:** Well, um, I'm going to go ahead and Hero Point it so that I can roll twice.

[01:12:26] **Esther:** Okay.

[01:12:27] **Fai:** Just in casies. You said Stealth, right?

[01:12:31] **Esther:** Yes.

[01:12:32] **Esther:** He doesn't seem to notice you as he is rather distracted by the dog holding onto the grasp of his flail, but looking over his shoulder to make sure Professor Z is tailing them. Let's go ahead and follow you into this main room, and then we'll get back to you Temerity, and see what you can find. So Z, are you going to try to like, peel off or are you going to follow him the whole way?

[01:12:58] **Alex:** So what is going on in the main room now? Like what...

[01:13:01] **Esther:** That's a good question. Oom is sitting in a chair. You don't know that, and we haven't established what else is going on yet. So you don't really know.

[01:13:11] **Alex:** Well, but I guess I followed a dog holding onto a mace into this room...

[01:13:19] **Esther:** Okay, got it.

[01:13:19] **Alex:** Is the person I'm following continuing, like what? I'm just trying to understand --

[01:13:23] **Esther:** You're gonna follow them through the circular chamber that you and Temerity were in, like up and out through another basically identical circular chamber. And then in a hallway that leads you into this big observing room. And--

[01:13:37] **Alex:** When we get to the hallway can I see the front door again or not?

[01:13:41] **Esther:** No.

[01:13:42] **Alex:** Okay. So I'm just going to keep following them, then.

[01:13:44] **Esther:** Essentially you are like, my hand is a semicircle on the left side of the building. You are following the semicircle. At the end of the semicircle is the big observing chamber. You're going from a hallway into it, and then if you walk into the middle of the chamber and look down the main front hallway, you can see the front door, but you can't see the front door from the corridor that you are entering from.

[01:14:06] **Alex:** So that's, basically what I'm getting at here though is this whole time, I have relative position information about where I am in this building, but I don't actually know what way leads to an exit at this point. So like, because I left the room I was hiding in by a different entrance than I came in from.

[01:14:22] **Esther:** Yeah. I mean, you could retrace your, you know, that if you went back the way you came, you could eventually get out.

[01:14:26] **Alex:** Yeah. So if I had not followed them at all... I assume though that I feel some compunction to follow... I assume that I would be following, but I also assume in that case that I would feel some level of intimidation or, or threat to follow, but if what's really going on is that this is a youngish boys-soldier- something wrestling with a dog and a stick, maybe I actually don't feel compelled to follow. Does that make sense?

[01:14:55] **Esther:** Yeah. Okay. He has not intimidated you or otherwise compelled you to follow him. He does seem like he has a lot of training. He seems serious that he wants you to, he also seems very young and eager to do well at his job.

[01:15:09] **Alex:** Is he actually paying attention to me though? Or is he just paying attention to the dog?

[01:15:13] **Esther:** I mean, like, you know, it's, as much as one can, while a dog is hanging onto one's weapon and you're looking, he's like looking over his shoulder after checking in on Ember and trying to do things. So it's, it's not like you have his full attention, but he is checking to make sure you're there.

[01:15:27] **Alex:** So I think before they start moving in the wrong direction, I think I would just say something like, "I'm going to go now!" And like, start walking towards what I know to be the front door.

[01:15:36] **Esther:** Okay. He's going to follow you and say "No! No, no, no, no. I, I, I need to ask you a few more questions with my superior officer before you go. And then--"

[01:15:46] **Justin:** "Grrrrrr!"

[01:15:48] **Alex:** "Oh, but I really must be heading back to The Tinkerings."

[01:15:52] **Esther:** This guy looks like -- he just looks slightly at a loss. And then he's like, "Just-- stop! Can you control your dog and tell him to stop-- to let go of my weapon?"

[01:16:03] **Alex:** "It's definitely not my dog."

[01:16:05] **Justin:** I want to take the weapon again! I want to try again.
[giggles]

[01:16:10] **Esther:** Okay. Try again.

[01:16:12] **Justin:** It's fine. It's 12. [

[01:16:14] **Esther:** Okay. Status quo. Let's return for a moment to Oom who is in a chair with a woman staring down at you and she's gonna like -- just stares at you for like at least thirty seconds. And then I need you to roll a Will Save...

[01:16:34] **Esther:** She's going to say, "You are trespassing on the property of House Throne, a very serious infraction indeed. Perhaps you are not from around here and I need to impress upon you how serious this is. And You gain the Frightened 1 condition. She seems very intimidating indeed. And incredibly serious. "Explain to me what you and your draconic companion are doing here.

[01:17:04] **David:** "Like I said, we were just out for a stroll. How was I supposed to know this was trespassing? Really should have better signs."

[01:17:11] **Esther:** "Did you not encounter guardians on the way up the slope?"

[01:17:17] **David:** "What's a guardian?"

[01:17:19] **Esther:** "It is my understanding that everyone in this area knows this property is to be accessed by permission only. I ask you again: why have you brought this tiny dragon here?"

[01:17:32] **David:** "That's a different question. That's my familiar. We're out for a stroll. Am I not saying it right?" I'm going to look towards the other -- there are other gnomes, right?

[01:17:43] **Esther:** Yeah, they are. And they're slowly like putting down their tools and stopping huddling. And one of them says, "Oh, Carden. I think this is a misunderstanding. I mean, they don't look dangerous!" And the woman is like, "I am the investigation expert here. Not you. You're paid to build the telescope!" This other group of gnomes and the one that's like, is on the opposite side of the room to you basically puts down his scroll and they all, they all start like inching closer. There's a very young looking gnome, someone who looks maybe about your age to you, who is going to like softly exclaim at the sight of Nommie and be like, "Oh, it's so cuuuuute! Ohhhh! Where did you get it?"

[01:18:29] **Esther:** And this woman in the armor is just going to be like, "I can't believe this. This person could be a dangerous infiltrator. Keep your distance!"

[01:18:37] **David:** "You don't think Nommie's cute?"

[01:18:39] **Esther:** "I think it's my job to find out why you're here and what you're doing, what you're plotting."

[01:18:43] **David:** I'm going to turn towards the gnomes and like, "Maybe you could help me out. Is it, is it really that weird for gnomes in a, in a city built

around curiosity to just walk around? I mean, are there signs here staying it's off limits?"

[01:18:59] **Esther:** "Well", says one who's like getting closer and, uh, this gnome, I will describe her to you, has silver hair and very light blue eyes and light blue skin. And she says, "Well, I don't actually patrol the woods. I just build the telescopes. And I'm so excited you're here. Now it is true that most of the people who come here who are gnomes, I understand have permission from the King and are contracted to be here. And that includes everybody who delivers our groceries. And, you know, I've never actually been to Brastlewark. I look at it sometimes and it looks really beautiful, but I don't know! But it's so exciting we have a visitor! I always thought someone would wind up wandering in one of these days and I just think this is a misunderstanding, Carden."

[01:19:48] **Esther:** And she just beams up at this woman from like this, this almost six foot tall woman looking down at like, a two-and-a-half-foot-tall gnome who's just radiantly beaming up at her. "And what's your name?"

[01:20:01] **David:** " It's Oom and can I just say I love your hair? It's just so wonderful."

[01:20:06] **Esther:** "Oh, thank you! I love yours! It's gorgeous. And who is this adorable little companion of yours?"

[01:20:16] **David:** "Oh, this is Nommie. Uh, Nommie, why don't you say hi?" And the pseudodragon will come up and act like a house cat.

[01:20:24] **Esther:** The woman puts a hand out to like, scritch Nommie behind the ears. And the human woman will like-- like swats at her hand and says, "Don't touch it! You don't know what it might be here to do."

[01:20:34] **Esther:** And this woman with blue hair will say "I'm Tildee Twinkleglass, and this--" and she's gesturing at the younger gnome who expressed enthusiasm for Nommie, "This is Aster, my assistant and my colleagues' assistant, and this--" and she's pointing to a, another adult gnome, kind of behind the two of them. And this gnome has curly red hair and golden eyes and freckles all over her face and very light brown skin. And she's like, got some loose flowing linen clothes. "-- This is Beacon Wander. And we work here!"

[01:21:13] **David:** " That's so cool. What do you, what do you do here?"

[01:21:17] **Esther:** Carden is like, "No! No. This individual is my charge and should be frightened. I'm very unclear on what is happening. Fine. Will you all agree to watch them while I go and find Alivance, wherever in heaven he is?" And Tildee's like, "Oh yes, don't worry. We'll make her right at home!" And Carden strides from the room, like, shaking her head and mumbling.

[01:21:46] **Esther:** And Tildee's gonna lean forward and say, " You know, it's really adorable just how much passion she has for the job. They're on the day shift. Their superior officers work the night shift. I think they're always a little bit more nervous, and it's just so cute to see them in training. Anyway, what was your question?"

[01:22:06] **David:** "Just wondering what you, what you do here. I mean, Carden was just saying you're building a telescope. That just sounds so cool!"

[01:22:12] **Esther:** Roll Diplomacy.

[01:22:14] **Esther:** The gnome named Beacon is going to say, " Well, um technically, we're not supposed to talk about it, but we never get visitors, and what's life if you can't talk about the thing you love doing? We're building a telescope for the King of this, uh, Brastlewark. We are experts that the King brought here for this specific purpose. We've been working at it for years. It's really fun, really unique kind of instruments. Frankly, I think it's keeping my hues very vibrant."

[01:22:45] **David:** " Well, that is important, keeping one's hues vibrant. Uh, so you mentioned it's special. Like, special how? Does it let you see certain things or what's it do?"

[01:22:56] **Esther:** Tildee, is going to say, "Ooh, well, you know, I probably really shouldn't be telling you this, but-- honestly, I think whatever their paranoia is, is a little bit overblown. And I love talking about my research, so sure. I'll go ahead and tell you. So we are building instruments to detect magical functions in the stars and in the sky. As far as I know, nobody's ever quite done it this way before, which is, is really exciting.

[01:23:26] **Esther:** And it's just so fun to work on this. It's a, a totally new field in some ways of like, can we detect certain magical energies? And, and if you're familiar with how people discern schools of magic using certain spells, we want to see if we can do that with a telescope, looking at the movement of the heavens and watching for any major shifts. Isn't that interesting?"

[01:23:51] **David:** "That's super cool. So like, I don't know anything about this, cause I'm not really an expert, but is that like the same thing that people do for ley lines and stuff?"

[01:24:04] **Esther:** "Ley lines... you know, I study the sky and I know a little bit about ley lines, but I'm, I'm no ley line chaser myself. I suppose, so in some ways. I suppose so." And Beacon will say, "Yeah, like I, I think a lot of people will look for the same kind of energies along ley lines, but what we're really concerned with is mapping shifts that the cosmos can tell us, like, like major shifts. You remember the catastrophe thousands of years ago, the catastrophe of Earthfall? Well, we want to be able to predict if something like that's going to happen again, not just with a space object, but you know, if some magical being might be messing with things, if there's ways we can detect that and detect they're coming to Golarion."

[01:24:53] **David:** "Wow! So like a defense system, or like fortune telling, or like, how's that work?"

[01:24:59] **Esther:** "Personally, I'm doing it to study whether we can trace magical energies around stars or other planets, but I suppose it could be used for defense, yes."

[01:25:08] **Esther:** And Tildee's going to say, "Yeah. So we build the things and, tell them, how it all works and how you can be measuring a certain thing and, you know, House Thrune is the people, you should probably be talking to, Carden and Alivance and their superior officers, or maybe even somebody higher level than them to tell you what the plan is to do with all of this."

[01:25:28] **Esther:** Personally, I have some theories that, you know, the obvious one is they're trying to prevent another Earthfall. But personally, I wonder if they're like, worried that Aroden is going to come back one day or, or Iomedae is going to just, boom! Appear after traveling through space somehow, you know?"

[01:25:51] **David:** Do I know what those names mean?

[01:25:53] **Esther:** Yeah. Okay. So Aroden is the god of humanity who-- who was a really big deal in Chelixa and died like two hundred years, a hundred-odd-some years ago. And this was a huge, like, cataclysmic event that had repercussions weather-wise all across the planet. Uh, he was the god of prophecy and prophecy stopped functioning after his death.

[01:26:16] **Esther:** There's a giant permanent hurricane in one of the Southern oceans that appeared when he died... it had ripples. And now Aroden is no longer worshiped because he's dead, but there's lots of conspiracy theories about like, why he died, if he's ever gonna come back, 'cause he was a god. And Iomedae was Aroden's herald who has ascended to goddesshood in her own right. And she and Asmodeus, they don't really get along that well. And a lot of their followers don't really get along that well. The Church of Asmodeus is the state religion in Cheliah. A lot of people also worship Iomedae and House Thrune would love it if those people worshipped Asmodeus instead. But, I would say her worship is, for the purposes of our campaign, tolerated.

[01:27:03] **David:** "I mean like, so I guess I could ask the guards about this stuff, but I mean, you saw them doing their, their guard thing. So, you know, I'd much rather keep chatting with you folks and hearing your theories and just learning more about what you know about how this all works. This is way more fun."

[01:27:22] **Esther:** "I would love to tell you about how this all works. Do you know anything about telescopes?"

[01:27:28] **David:** " Uh, no."

[01:27:30] **Esther:** "Oh, fabulous. All right. I'm just going to start you out at square one." I'm not going to do that. She'll start you out at square one and tell you all about telescopes. Let it be known that I did my due diligence in asking the person I'm married to who built telescopes as part of getting an advanced degree, what I should know and what kind of a telescope this might be. And I was told "it's a magical world, invent it." So she's going to tell you all about how telescopes function, like what lenses are, how you build them, their whole process go into a lot of depth. And while she's doing that, let's go to Temerity and see what you have seen.

[01:28:11] **Fai:** Mmmhm. Everything's happening. The dog is draggin' someone, Z is trying to peace out, and I'm just over here lookin' through shit, being nosy as fuck, but trying to keep an ear out so that if I hear anyone...

[01:28:25] **Esther:** Okay. So Temerity, your plan is to look around, see what info you can find about this whole secret observatory and its mission, and also try not to be detected while doing so.

[01:28:39] **Fai:** Exactly. So digging, but not staying out and visible while doing the actual creeping. Does that make sense?

[01:28:48] **Esther:** It does. Okay. So that will be a Stealth roll and then a Perception check.

[01:28:52] **Fai:** Okay, so that was Stealth and Perception?

[01:28:55] **Esther:** Yes.

[01:28:58] **Fai:** That's a face.

[01:28:59] **Esther:** I will tell you, if you would like to reroll one of those, I will give you the option to do so.

[01:29:06] **Fai:** Would you like to tell me which one I should reroll? I should consider re-rolling...

[01:29:10] **Esther:** I feel like that's mildly cheating.

[01:29:13] **Fai:** Well, I mean -- Okay. Yes, I will reroll it. Which one am I going to reroll?

[01:29:17] **Esther:** I would reroll Perception if I were you.

[01:29:20] **Fai:** No better? [laughs]

[01:29:22] **Esther:** Wow! Okay. Well, Temerity, you are able to move with cat-like grace throughout this room, like, making your way from the shadow of one table to another, ducking down. It's really astounding like, your thieving skills learned from your mother. Ailuin Vane are on full display and it is -- she would be proud watching you right now.

[01:29:50] **Esther:** What you're going to notice is the remains of someone's lunch that it looks like was eaten about an hour or so ago, like some rice in the bottom of a bowl and some scraps of greens on top of it, it smells really good. The noises of Ember's continued play slash distraction and Z making his way out of the building, and two human voices like, calling after them are making their way to you. And there's an enormous amount of books in this room. Like so many books that it's overwhelming to think of how long it would take to flip through all of them to try to find like, little notes of gossip. But you will come along, as you're like, looking in a cabinet, like trying to see if there's anything that looks especially juicy, and there's so many options, like, this mummified hand. Like it's, it's very weird. It looks like a strange mummified hand object.

[01:30:52] **Fai:** Is that Arcana check or something different?

[01:30:55] **Esther:** Yeah, I think Arcana will, will be perfectly reasonable.

[01:30:59] **Fai:** Very well.

[01:31:00] **Esther:** You recognize this as probably some kind of magical item that will give you an interesting ability. You would have spend a little bit more time with it to narrow down exactly what it might be, but it seems like in, in a place like this, where people are doing handiwork and various craftsperson things, it might be an object that's kind of useful in some way for that. Like, you've heard of things like this, that hold like, hold things, help you do stuff.

[01:31:32] **Fai:** Okay. Uh, I'm going to steal it. Put it in my bag.

[01:31:38] **Esther:** For the record, this looks like kind of an Elven hand. It's like, kind of got a, in this case, like a, a dark chain coming off of it.

[01:31:47] **Fai:** Well, if it's an Elven hand, I would like to rephrase: I'm going to reclaim it.

[01:31:52] **Esther:** You're going to reclaim it. Alright. Love it. Cool. And that is what you will be able to glean from this particular room.

[01:31:59] **Fai:** Okay. That's good enough for me. Uhhhhh, I guess the question is: should I try to leave or should I just try to stay? So I can hear them.... I can hear Professor Z trying to leave, is what you said, right?

[01:32:18] **Esther:** Yes.

[01:32:19] **Fai:** If I retrace my way back the, in that same direction to attempt to leave, are there places where I could like sneak-hide, sneak-hide to, you know, like... is it barren or are there little notches or places that I could potentially conceal myself while, you know, like, so that I can see what's going on, try to make my way toward leaving, but not be completely out in the open if there's people obstructing my ability to leave?

[01:32:52] **Esther:** There's the big columns in the entryway and also several tables that you could hide adjacent to, or try to-- try to look unassuming next to. Yeah.

[01:33:04] **Fai:** Okay. Um, I'm just gonna, yeah, slowly make, try to make my way out, but the priority being Stealth, not escape.

[01:33:14] **Esther:** Roll me some Stealth!

[01:33:16] **Fai:** Sneak sneak!

[01:33:18] **Esther:** You are able to make your way into the entry as as the young man is wrestling with Ember and trying to prevent Professor Z from leaving, and the woman, whose name is Carden, though you don't know that, is striding down the hall and they seem not to notice you.

[01:33:36] **Fai:** Is she going opposite me? Are we going in the same dire--

[01:33:39] **Esther:** Coming -- she is striding down a different hall than the one you just came from. Like, she's striding down the main hallway and you came out of like, one of the curved hallways, but you are headed the same direction.

[01:33:49] **Fai:** Okay. But she's ahead of me?

[01:33:50] **Esther:** No, she's passing you. I would say.

[01:33:52] **Fai:** Okay. But she's making her way to be ahead of me.

[01:33:56] **Esther:** Yes.

[01:33:57] **Fai:** Okay, great. I will obviously try to allow that to happen.

[01:34:00] **Esther:** Roll Perception, Temerity and Professor Z.

[01:34:03] **Esther:** Temerity, you're going to see like, behind Professor Z a good ways, like half-covered, slinking next to the opening and doing a great job of blending in, is Miv. And Miv is going to start motioning to you, taking out their crossbow and like, make a complicated series of like you want me to start shooting at these? Like, what's the plan? And, you're going to hear it in your ear, a low voice, and you'll see their lips moving, but like, it's not like they're shouting at you. And they're gonna say "So, um, what's the plan? You want me to start taking these, fellers on or, or what's going on? Where's Oom?"

[01:34:42] **Fai:** Okay, question. Are they inside with us or they're outside their peeking in?

[01:34:49] **Esther:** They're outside peeking in.

[01:34:52] **Fai:** Okay.

[01:34:55] **Esther:** And you can respond in a way that you get the feeling will not be heard unless you choose to make it so by everybody else.

[01:35:05] **Fai:** I will say... "Thank you but do not shoot. Oom is very charming. We're just going to try to get the fuck out of here," in as low a, you know? Thank you, but no.

[01:35:19] **Esther:** You see their lips moving and they're like, "Okay, but I'm here if you need backup."

[01:35:26] **Fai:** Giving them the old... [makes finger guns symbol] Well, no, I'm not going to do this! 'Cause I don't want them to think, "fuck it, let's just go shootin'!". Just going to give 'em a, a double thumbs up.

[01:35:38] **Esther:** Okay. Okay.

[01:35:40] **Fai:** And just keep my eyes peeled for an opportunity at which you know, the inattention of the guards for a sliver of a moment would allow me to dash, hide, get out the door, whatever. How far am I from the door?

[01:35:57] **Esther:** Probably ten feet or so.

[01:35:59] **Fai:** Oh shit. I'm chilling. Alright! Well, I shouldn't say that...

[01:36:02] **Esther:** Maybe fifteen, fiteen feet? Like fifteen feet, yeah.

[01:36:05] **Fai:** But close enough that it is in the realm of possibility that with all of this shit that's going on, they can be distracted enough for me to dip outside of the door.

[01:36:17] **Fai:** I'm just going to wait for my opportunity to do that.

[01:36:20] **Esther:** Z and Ember, you now have the full and undivided attention of both of these people in their fancy plate mail. And the woman is going to say, "What is going on here?"

[01:36:34] **Alex:** "I was just leaving."

[01:36:35] **Justin:** I want the stick.

[01:36:37] **Esther:** "I need to ask you a few questions first. Can you please tell your animal to sit?"

[01:36:43] **Alex:** "It's not my animal, but I, I really must be going now. I need to get back to The Tinkerings."

[01:36:48] **Esther:** You are trespassing on the property of House Thrune. I'm going to need to ask you a few questions before you leave. What is your name?"

[01:36:57] **Alex:** "Well, I I'm so very sorry. Yes, I'm Professor Z. I'm a faculty member at The Tinkerings and I really ought to be ought to be getting home now because, my, my contraption, uh, has a tendency to, you know, malfunction occasionally. And I just, I wouldn't want that happening here. We just really ought to be on our way."

[01:37:14] **Esther:** "Your contraption? That thing? You brought that thing here?"

[01:37:18] **Alex:** What thing is she pointing to --?

[01:37:20] **Esther:** To Buster.

[01:37:22] **Alex:** --Buster at this point? I'll say "It, it follows me, yeah."

[01:37:25] **Esther:** "What was the purpose of your group in bringing a dragon to this facility?"

[01:37:29] **Alex:** "A dragon, which dragon? What dragon?"

[01:37:32] **Esther:** "The small dragon with the young gnome, the red tiny dragon."

[01:37:38] **Alex:** "You seem convinced that there's some conspiracy going on. I was just heading back to The Tinkerings. I was up here to, to just merely, you know, see what my colleagues were up to. And now I'm headed back. I've been told I'm not supposed to be here."

[01:37:49] **Esther:** She looks like her patience is growing thin. And she's going to take out her bow, aim it at you, and say, "What is the dragon doing here? I want an answer or you won't make it back to The Tinkerings."

[01:38:02] **Justin:** I attack.

[01:38:02] **Alex:** Well--

[01:38:03] **Esther:** [cast laughs]

[01:38:04] **Esther:** Okay!

[01:38:04] **Esther:** [cast laughs]

[01:38:08] **Esther:** I was going to have her roll Intimidation, but all right! Uh, I guess...

[01:38:12] **Justin:** I am not going to take kindly to someone threatening one of my friends.

[01:38:16] **Esther:** Alright.

[01:38:17] **Esther:** This may be a good place to stop so I can have a map of the hallway prepared next time.

[01:38:24] **Fai:** Just a freeze frame on Ember leaping is where, where the episode comes to its end. It goes to a black screen and we're like, what happens?

[01:38:34] **Esther:** [Esther giggles]

[01:38:36] **Esther:** So, post freeze frame: favorite moments of the day?

[01:38:40] **Fai:** Okay. Oh, hold on. I took notes. Oh, my favorite moment was Oom saying "you don't think Nommie is cute?" Because in the cinema of my mind, I saw like a Honey-chan kind of situation of like, just like, big anime eyes and like, wobbly lips. "Don't you, don't you think Nommie's cute?" And, uh, that was probably what my favorite part? I think I wrote down another one though, but I don't remember what it was. And my notes are very messy. So yes, that was my favorite part.

[01:39:11] **Alex:** That and the mixture of Ember being protective and really just wanting to play fetch with sticks.

[01:39:17] **Justin:** I can do both! I continue to enjoy the like, "Control your animal!" And Professor Z being like "That is not my animal." [laughs] What do you expect of me? It is a wild dog, basically.

[01:39:32] **Fai:** I also love the fact that, um, I feel like Temerity is the only person in this group who isn't a wild card. [laughs] 'Cause I definitely feel like the other three of y'all are, but maybe that's just a flawed perception and we're all different kinds of wildcards. I'm not sure, but I really think that I never know what y'all are gonna do and I love every moment of it.

[01:39:58] **Alex:** I feel like --

[01:39:59] **Justin:** I would say that Temerity's the most like, traditionally cautious of the group.

[01:40:05] **Alex:** I also feel like too, though, that like at least Professor Z like, a little bit of a wild card, but also has no stealth ability even if I wanted to be stealthy, like...

[01:40:16] **Fai:** Professor Z at least is able to, uh, be talked around, which makes him a slightly less wild wild card. But a wild card nonetheless. You never know where he's gonna bring his, his huge clunking machine.

[01:40:32] **Justin:** And Oom flipping the interrogation around was just a delight to watch.

[01:40:37] **Fai:** Oom is constantly a delight. I literally never know what to expect. I'm just, I'm just like, okay, strapped in, what's going to happen? I love every moment of it.

[01:40:47] **Esther:** Beautiful. Yeah. I'm loving the, "Does your dog bite?" "No." *dog bites* "You said your dog didn't bite!" "That's not my dog."

[01:40:55] **Esther:** [cast laughs]

[01:40:58] **Alex:** [French accent] That is not my dog.

[01:41:00] **Esther:** Thanks so much for tuning into Chromythica and being in this story with us. If you enjoyed this episode, please feel welcome to let us

know by rating and reviewing the show in your podcast app of choice. This will really help us get the show to a wider audience.

[01:41:17] **Esther:** You can find the YouTube version of our show under the channel Chromythica, or by clicking the embedded links on our website, www.chromythica.com.

[01:41:26] **Esther:** If you'd like to follow us on social media for the latest updates, we are @chromythica on Twitter, Instagram, and Tumblr.

[01:41:33] **Esther:** Chromythica uses trademarks and copyrights owned by Paizo, Inc., used under Paizo's Community Use Policy, which you can access at Paizo.com/communityuse. We are expressly prohibited from charging you to use or access this content. Chromythica is not published, endorsed, or specifically approved by Paizo. For more information about Paizo, Inc., and Paizo products, visit Paizo.com.

[01:41:57] **Esther:** Our theme music, credits, break music, and some background music is by Justin Brown. Other music used in this episode is licensed from JP Soundworks, pack published by Platonic Game Studio.

[01:42:08] **Esther:** If you want to find out where our story takes us next, feel welcome to subscribe using your podcast app of choice.

[01:42:14] **Esther:** Until we're together again, remember: tell the stories you most want to encounter in the world.