

Chromythica Episode 9: Bats and Brandy

[00:00:00] **Esther:** This episode was recorded and produced on Lisjan Ohlone land. We give our great respect to the indigenous peoples of this land and the surrounding areas,

[00:00:11] **Esther:** and to the indigenous peoples of all the lands that you are joining us from. To learn more about how you can support Lisjan Ohlone land rematriation,

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[00:00:25] **Esther:** Chromythica is part of the Rainbow Roll Network, an event-focused, cooperative network for LGBTQIA-led, creator-owned Actual Play shows. To learn more about Rainbow Roll Network shows, please visit rainbowroll.network.

[00:00:41] **Esther:** Content notices for this episode include: alcohol use; combat violence, including violence toward an Awakened animal as part of combat; strong language.

[00:02:10] **Esther:** Hello, everyone. Welcome to Chromythica. I am your GM Esther Wallace, and I use she and they pronouns. And I'm so happy to have all of you wonderful players and dear friends here again. And I'm so happy to have you, our audience here. Welcome to our story and this time together. I am going to ask the cast to go around and introduce themselves and their characters, as we usually do: everybody's names, pronouns, and if there's something you're excited about for our story today, or your character generally.

[00:02:48] **David:** Hi, I'm David. I use he/him pronouns and I'll be playing Oom, our party's gnome sorcerer who's polygender and uses any combination of she, him, or they pronouns and Oom's pseudodragon familiar, Nommie, who uses he/him pronouns.

[00:03:04] **David:** And I'm excited to learn more about King DTF.

[00:03:08] **Alex:** Hi, I'm Alex. I use they/them pronouns. I'll be playing Professor Z, our party's Inventor and his contraption Buster, which is a clanging pile of pots and pans that explodes occasionally. And I, too, am excited to learn more about the king, especially because I believe I'm off in the woods and will learn nothing about the king in the game. So it's going to be great.

[00:03:34] **Justin:** I'm Justin. I use he/him pronouns, and I play our canine Barbarian Ember, who also uses he/him pronouns. I am excited for Ember to discover that his friends are not coming.

[00:03:51] **Fai:** I'm Fairuz. I use she and they pronouns. I play Temerity Vane, our Rogue, who uses he and him pronouns. And I too am very excited about King DTF and seeing what else is going on with my homie here.

[00:04:14] **Esther:** Awesome. I forgot to say at the top: we are a Pathfinder 2E actual play, which is very important for me to note. If you're familiar with the system, awesome. If you're not, also awesome! You don't need to know anything about it to hopefully follow along and enjoy our story.

[00:04:32] **Esther:** So we have a tradition in Chromythica of asking a warm-up question before every game to help ourselves get into character and into the world of the story. Today's warm up question is: tell us about a time your character took a risk in order to achieve a dream or goal. What were the consequences and or payoffs of that risk?

[00:04:56] **Fai:** "Well, my cousin Zorzi, she's my best friend. We grew up together, right? We, we've been thick as thieves for our whole lives and well, you know, I'm actually a thief now, but that's neither here nor there. So when we were very young, we made, we made an oath to one another to always look out for each other and that if anybody fucked with one of us, they fucked with both of us.

[00:05:25] **Fai:** And so we take it upon ourselves as a very sacred duty to fulfill this for one another when we can. So we keep what maybe you could call a ledger and every time somebody say inconveniences Zorzi in such a fashion that she believes they belong on the list or, you know, if they like really, truly fuck her over -- there's there's levels to it, you know?

[00:05:53] **Fai:** So anyway, one time I was in a city, I was doing some work, like you do, and when I was wrapping up for the evening, you know, I'm staying in this lovely place. It's like right in the main thoroughfare of town, I can look out the window at all of the lights and the people, and it's just wonderful. But

you know, I'm wrapping up for the night and I look into my journal and I realize, wait, there's somebody in this city.

[00:06:23] **Fai:** And so I take it upon myself to perform my sacred duty, right? But, so, the thing is: the person, they had this like big estate and it was right across the street from where I'm staying. And well, in that moment, to me, it seemed like there's like a big party going on. So I can't just like go in through the door, everybody's going to see me. Everybody's going to be like, oh, who's this? I'm very charming. So I think to myself, the best thing that you can do, you can clear this man, you can take a running leap and you can totally make this. And so I took a running leap and, you know... ultimately it worked out because while I didn't, I didn't make the landing that I hoped that I would make, I did -- you know, like I almost did.

[00:07:27] **Fai:** And so the whole, the like, what's it called? A trellis? I don't know. It all came down. It was a great expense, I'm sure, for them to like repair this and it was a big embarrassment for them. So even though, I didn't like, technically -- it wasn't exactly what I planned to do. You know, I was going to go inside the house and see what's what, maybe take a couple of things and send her a present.

[00:07:49] **Fai:** But I sent her the like newspaper clipping for the next day. And it was much, it was a much better present, no problem. So, you know, it was a risk, but the reward... even though I broke my ankle... the REWARD! It was worth it."

[00:08:06] **Justin:** For Ember: "This was before the time I first spoke. I can't remember much of that time, but I was lost once and I smelled something that smelled like fire. And it felt like home. And so I stumbled upon a large clearing where there was a dragon, much larger than me, but it seemed friendly. And so I bit the dragon's tail. And this was many years before I, I met the Wild Master, but then this became my Dragon Master and they were very nice."

[00:09:11] **Alex:** "When I was finishing up my PhD in Chromatic Invention and Curious Exploration, I was sort of getting to the end of my, my dissertation and I, and I really just needed something to wow the committee. And my committee was looking a little pale, they needed, they needed something to really, really get them going. And so it was sort of the, the week before my, my big defense talk and I was finishing up the dissertation and I had sent several drafts in, but I, I, I wanted that extra pizzazz. So that's actually, when I when I, I built Buster. I was at home the week before furiously, furiously writing, and then I just thought, why limit a dissertation to writing?"

[00:09:57] **Alex:** And so I gathered up various things in, in my, in my apartment and, and welded them together and made the contraption that you see that it is Buster.

[00:10:07] **Alex:** And it was a little bit of a risk because Buster did, did catch fire several times in the kitchen. And I was a little bit worried that that wouldn't go over well with the committee, although you never know, sometimes fire can really renew the curiosity of everybody.

[00:10:21] **Alex:** And so I, I walked into the dissertation and Buster was with me. And to the defense. The committee really enjoyed my, my talk and my discussion of all my work and Buster was sort of in the corner making steam noises most of the time, but not really doing much. He was a little -- not the most functional at that point.

[00:10:41] **Alex:** You sometimes had to take a big wrench to it, to give his legs a whack and get him to move. And we got to the very end and one of the committee members asked a question. And to be honest, I don't even remember what the question was, but you know, there's always that one committee member who asks a really awful question and just really wants to put you in a corner.

[00:10:58] **Alex:** And I said, "Actually, I'd rather not answer this question. I'd rather have Buster do it." And I whacked Buster with a wrench and he didn't answer the question. He just fell forward. And his head exploded and the committee ran screaming out of the room. And eventually my advisor came back in and said, "If you promise to take that thing away from this university and never have it here, we won't make you redo your defense."

[00:11:26] **Alex:** And that's how I got my PhD. And it was really worth the risk to add that sort of curious exploration in there. Don't worry though, Buster's been much improved! Now when he explodes, it's not just his head that goes off. It's the whole thing."

[00:11:40] **David:** "I guess my biggest risk was leaving Hermea. There was a certain comfort in being protected under the mentorship of Mengkare. But I guess, ultimately I just needed to see what Golarion has offer with my own eyes. Mengkare used to say that as, as much as we have to gain learning from others, our scales shine brightest when we go through journeys and decide for ourselves where our story takes us."

[00:12:10] **Esther:** Well, on that wise note from Mengkare, let's spend a moment remembering where we left things when we were last in our story.

[00:12:24] **Esther:** When we were last in our story, you were headed to Professor Z's home after a long Fireday of investigating the secret observatory of King Drum Thornfiddle in the Asphodell foothills, outside Brastlewark.

[00:12:39] **Esther:** As you made your way to Professor Z's home, Oom, you were feeling very worried that someone -- namely your new friend Miv-- knows you're carrying something. Temerity, you were tired, wanting to chill, and wondering how you became the voice of reason in the party. And you were also very curious about what was going on with the king and dragons. Professor Z, you were feeling a little frazzled on this walk and on an adrenaline high after all the day's adventures at the observatory. And Ember, you were feeling very confused, in a phrase that I love: struggling with the duality of antitheticals.

[00:13:18] **Esther:** So you reached Professor Z's home. And after watching the spectacle of Z unlocking his own door, you made your way in to find that Z's mentor, Alcinora, or Alcie Fifewinder, was waiting for you there. Alcie informed you that the king is aware you took a little jaunt into the hills earlier today. And after all you did give the people guarding his secret observatory your name, Z. So apparently the king is not pleased that you were trespassing the grounds of his observatory without being invited. And Alcie had to spend quite a bit of political capital to be the person to meet you in your home and ask for an explanation.

[00:13:58] **Esther:** She seemed very curious about what you might have learned during your brief time at the observatory and more frustrated that you didn't glean much information about what the king might be up to there than frustrated at you for going. She also told you that the king wants to have an explicit conversation with Oom about their purpose in bringing a dragon to the observatory.

[00:14:21] **Esther:** And since, Professor Z, you are the only named link with Oom you will be called to the King's presence soon. Alcie advised you all to spend a few days out of town on a research trip if you don't want to have that conversation. Z, you expressed some confusion about the nature of academic culture in Brastlewark.

[00:14:44] **Esther:** You just didn't understand why the king wouldn't want multi-disciplinary collaboration as part of this observatory project. You said that academic culture is all about collaboration and learning together. And Alcie

responded that in an ideal world, yes it is. But the reality is that you live in Brastlewark, in Cheliax, and whatever deal the king made with House Thrune places certain conditions on what everyone in Brastlewark is able to achieve. But she also expressed admiration for your idealism and told you that your belief in what you do gives her hope.

[00:15:21] **Esther:** You all decided to make your way into the forest, to the north of Brastlewark, where Vivi Lilyfrost had indicated to Temerity that you might find companionship. You tried to make your way stealthily and unobtrusively through the city, and Professor Z and Ember, you succeeded and were not noticed by anybody in particular. Temerity and Oom, however... things did not go so smoothly for you.

[00:15:47] **Esther:** And you were recognized and surrounded by the city guard. You decided it would probably be better for you to accompany them to King Drum Thornfiddle than to enter into a conflict or run. So you made your way to the palace in the center of the city. Temerity, you noticed Miv trailing behind you, but you lost sight of them as you were led into the palace. You were taken to the lower levels of Drum Thornfiddle's palace to a place that seems part theater, part art installation, part extremely comfortable place of house arrest. The lights began to dim and you heard the turning of gears and the sound of a panel sliding open somewhere.

[00:16:26] **Esther:** And then, "Well, well, well! Bringing a dragon to my observatory, that's a bold move. I intend to find out exactly what you mean by it." Temerity, this voice sounded extremely familiar to you, but as the lights were still dim, you agreed to cooperate. Upon hearing your voice, the questioning came to an abrupt stop and when the lights were brought up again, you recognized before you, in a very fancy purple silk suit monogrammed with a crown and the initials DTF, your friend Prinklegus Figwort.

[00:17:08] **Esther:** Prinkle blustered for the guards for a moment before having Oom led away to an adjacent chamber with Nommie and then the two of you began to catch up on each other's lives. Prinkle shared with you that his deal with House Thrune had allowed him to build the city he'd always dreamed of for gnomekind.

[00:17:27] **Esther:** He also told you the terms of his deal with House Thrune. He contracted with Abrogail Thrune the First to steal the astronomical research of the dragon Athervox and to build an observatory in the Asphodell Foothills, using information from her many notes. It so happens, Temerity, that Prinkle had asked you several decades ago to pick up some cargo for him at a drop site in the Whisperwood, where you now know Athervox lives, and deliver this

cargo to a contact in the city of Egorian. Being a professional, you never asked Prinkle what exactly he asked you to pick up for him. But now you know. You carried the research of Athervox to an agent of House Thrune. After sharing your own recent adventures, you calmed Prinkle's fears about Oom and Nommie, assuring him that Nommie has nothing to do with Athervox. And that Ember also has nothing to do with Athervox.

[00:18:24] **Esther:** Prinkle, who you promised to refer to as Drum Thornfiddle in front of other people, invited you and Oom up to his study for brandy and a chat. Oom and Nommie, you spent this whole time in very luxuriously, apportioned, separate suites. Nothing much happened. Save for near the end of your time in the suite, Oom..

[00:18:45] **Esther:** You heard a tapping on the wall, the wall shared with another room and then voices saying "hello." But just then the King's guards arrived to inform you that you were invited up to his study, and you didn't have the opportunity to investigate further.

[00:19:03] **Esther:** As we left things, Ember, you were feeling great. Like you did a great job at sneaking and Temerity will be very proud of you when you meet up in the woods. Temerity, you were thrilled on multiple levels, thrilled to see an old friend, thrilled to get gossip and thrilled to spill your own tea. Oom, you feel cautiously confused af. You went from almost being interrogated to being dumped in a plush room and invited up to the king's study for brandy. And you're not sure what's going on.

[00:19:35] **Esther:** And that is where we enter our story again. Let's actually pick up with Ember and Professor Z. It's been a really long day and you've made your way to the woods north of Brastlework and north of the enclave that's called Dwarvenhold where a large dwarf community lives. The forest is mostly deciduous trees. The pines that are kind of to the north and west will intersect with them at a particular point, but are not the kind of trees you're, you're mostly making your way through right now. It's late in the evening, so your path is lit by the stars and the moon, but no other lanterns or streetlights are on. You're in the forest. And as you began to make your way crunch crunching on the undergrowth and hearing the sounds of small animals chittering in the night, maybe an owl hooting here or there, it will occur to you that Oom, Temerity, and Miv aren't catching up with you.

[00:20:50] **Alex:** "Perhaps we should make camp and wait for Oom, Temerity, and Miv to, to catch up to us."

[00:20:55] **Justin:** "I would not be surprised. Temerity is the best sneaker."

[00:21:01] **Alex:** "So they could be close behind. We just, we just can't hear them yet. Should we try waiting for a little bit and see if they catch up?"

[00:21:08] **Justin:** "I think that would be a good idea. I have a piece of a tent. I have a stick. Tents can be made with more than one stick, but I do like this stick."

[00:21:19] **Alex:** I think I'll, I'll use the stick and maybe, you know, the, the tip of Buster and make a little lean-to.

[00:21:25] **Esther:** Okay. I think that will be the first roll of our game today. Please roll me Crafting.

[00:21:32] **Justin:** Can I help?

[00:21:34] **Esther:** Yeah. You, you could certainly try. Let's see how it goes.

[00:21:38] **Justin:** With a negative one in Crafting... nine! Fairly certain that was a critical failure to aid.

[00:21:45] **Esther:** Alex, you rolled a 13.

[00:21:47] **Alex:** Yeah. I rolled a 13.

[00:21:49] **Esther:** Tell me about your process, both of you, for trying to set up this lean-to.

[00:21:53] **Justin:** I was intending to take the stick and put the stick into the ground and like attempt to use my mouth to kind of press it into the ground to be, you know, a vertical stick because I know that tents require some capacity of verticality.

[00:22:09] **Alex:** So, so my plan was to sort of do that and then stretch the blanket between the stick and, and Buster, and then out like in the back and anchor something in the back. Though it sounds like maybe, you know, I put the stick down and started to stretch the blanket between, and then Ember came and took the stick back and moved it up elsewhere.

[00:22:28] **Justin:** Yeah. Your ally takes a minus one circumstance penalty to the triggering check. Sorry.

[00:22:34] **Esther:** So you, you both failed at what you were trying to do. And Alex didn't critically fail with Ember's aid, but this lean-to is going to be not the easiest thing to construct. Like I'm picturing Ember, just trying to like jam this stick into the ground, but you're hitting a rock and Z you're like convinced that it's going to work and you turn your back and have something rigged onto Buster.

[00:22:59] **Esther:** And then Ember moves it and everything falls down. And it happens like three times in a row until you're both a little tangled in everything. And then you're just sitting there panting, sweating, a little dirt covered. How are you feeling?

[00:23:12] **Alex:** "Well--"

[00:23:13] **Justin:** "This does not look like a tent."

[00:23:15] **Alex:** "Maybe we should try to make dinner first and then we can worry about the tent later."

[00:23:21] **Justin:** "I can hunt for food!" Can I attempt to hunt for food?

[00:23:26] **Esther:** You certainly can. Roll Survival. Oh my.

[00:23:33] **Justin:** Seven.

[00:23:33] **Esther:** Would you like to Hero Point that?

[00:23:37] **Justin:** I'm not wasting a Hero Point on getting food.

[00:23:41] **Alex:** We're just going to fail at camping.

[00:23:43] **Justin:** We're just going to fail at camping. I'm going to, I'm going to go searching for like things that I know are good to eat, like squirrels and like, berry bushes. I think I'm going to find a small creek and get very distracted.

[00:23:58] **Esther:** Okay, sounds good.

[00:23:59] **Justin:** Just play around in the creek for an hour.

[00:24:02] **Esther:** You splash around in the creek getting very wet, possibly having a couple crawdads, like come out and cling onto your fur if you upset a rock or, or two. And they're very, very interesting things. It's a good hour.

[00:24:15] **Justin:** Can I eat the crawdads?

[00:24:16] **Esther:** Sure. Do you want to?

[00:24:19] **Justin:** Sure.

[00:24:20] **Esther:** Okay. They're going to be a little crunchy.

[00:24:22] **Justin:** That's fine.

[00:24:23] **Esther:** All right. You, you eat about two crawdads. They're, they're slow crawdads. They don't scuttle away very quickly. They, they crunch.

[00:24:32] **Esther:** One of them might get your tongue a little bit, but it's probably still worth it.

[00:24:36] **Justin:** Definitely worth it.

[00:24:37] **Esther:** So for those who may not know what I offered for Justin to do in, in, using a Hero Point: Hero Points are something that you can opt to use in the Pathfinder system that allow you to reroll a check. Or in our house rules, roll a check with advantage, take an action outside of your turn in combat or a skill challenge, come back from the brink of dying, which is not a house rule, that's an official rule. And as another house rule do something really, really, really cool that is improbable, but not impossible. So when I ask the folks, if they would like to spend a Hero Point, that's what I'm asking and prompting about.

[00:25:15] **Esther:** So: you're splashing around in the creek. Z, what are you doing?

[00:25:18] **Alex:** So I am going to be in the process of converting Buster into an oven because I would like to, I don't know, bake some dinner.

[00:25:26] **Alex:** And so what you can imagine is that I have opened up the front of Buster and at least up to my waist is sort of inside chucking, camping gear out of Buster and making a lot of noise with like my sort of butt and leg,

sticking out, standing on a stool as I like, you know, grab stuff and chuck a sleeping bag out and chuck a pot out and chuck some food out.

[00:25:47] **Alex:** And I'm just making a big pile behind me as I try to clear out Buster's insides.

[00:25:51] **Esther:** Okay. Okay. So you're making a lot of noise making a pile of metal objects, it sounds like., or, or objects that and some of them are metal.

[00:25:59] **Alex:** Objects. All Of our possessions. Yeah.

[00:26:01] **Esther:** All of your possessions that you've brought. All right. All right.

[00:26:04] **Esther:** Are you actively trying to convert Buster into an oven during this hour?

[00:26:09] **Alex:** Yes, my intention is that when I'm done with this, I've cleared out all of his insides and because he produces a lot of steam and heat that he is effectively an oven.

[00:26:16] **Esther:** So first roll another Crafting check.

[00:26:20] **Alex:** Okay.

[00:26:22] **Esther:** And what did you get?

[00:26:23] **Alex:** I rolled a 27.

[00:26:25] **Esther:** All right. You know, The lean-to totally failed, but it's like you're spurred on in your heart by that failure to do this thing. And maybe memories of your, your dissertation defense, come back to you in this moment. And you're like, sometimes you just got to change things up and challenge the narrative of the ordinary and you make a ton of noise while doing it, but you convert Buster into a pretty good oven.

[00:26:54] **Esther:** Like if you had a pizza stone, you could pop it right on in there and make a really good pizza. It's remarkable what you're able to achieve, like really remarkable. Do you want to describe what it looks like or any, any way you feel about that?

[00:27:09] **Alex:** Uh, so what it looks like in the end is sort of like Buster's torso was always a bit of a like wood-fired stove anyways.

[00:27:16] **Alex:** So it's more like you sort of tip the top of Buster's head off so that there's like a chimney going on sort of through what is effectively Buster's you know, ears, producing smoke. And then you've got the, the front doors of a, like wood-fired stove with a spot inside where you can cook some things. Maybe I've packed some, some flour and so we can make some bread or something in the oven.

[00:27:37] **Alex:** And it's one of those, like, you can see this sort of like fire, the like nice wood coals off to one side, heating it up. And because Buster produces a lot of steam, it naturally gets a lot of steam in there, which has a lot of moisture in the oven, which is really important for getting that nice golden brown crust on the outside of your, your bread.

[00:27:55] **Esther:** Oh, that sounds amazing. So the second thing I need you to roll is a Perception check. Secretly, please.

[00:28:01] **Justin:** Both of us or just Professor Z?

[00:28:05] **Esther:** This will be at about the end of an hour or so. So if you are coming back to Professor Z's location about this time, yeah, you could, you could roll one as well.

[00:28:16] **Esther:** All right. So you've made your way a good ways into the forest. And actually you stopped at a point where the undergrowth opens up to a bit of a glade. Professor Z, you might actually have been aware of this place as a kind of a nestled nook that folks will gather at, for summer bonfires and such. If you've never been there yourself, you're familiar with such a place in the north forest and you've wandered around and wound up there, luckily.

[00:28:48] **Esther:** In the middle of the glade, there are several like, downed logs that are old and are sort of arranged around a circular spot of ground that looks like it's had many fires built on it. Like there's no grass that really grows there. It looks like a burned circular ring. And there's some remnants of like, ash and burned sticks in the middle of this thing.

[00:29:11] **Esther:** And so the logs are arranged around it and circular, and there's old tree stumps that are also dotted around as seats, you might imagine. There are pine trees off to the Northwest side, a stand of pine that are meeting the rest of the like more deciduous trees. And on the far side of the glade off to

the north, there are beautiful, colorful flowers that are a sea of blues and greens and purple-pinks.

[00:29:42] **Esther:** They all look very, very similar to one another and yet the coloration is different and there are other plants that kind of are darting up in the middle of some of these collections of flowers. Shrubs that are giving way to other tall, flowering plants, little groves of mushrooms. It's really very interesting.

[00:30:05] **Esther:** Ember, this just seems like a pretty place to you somewhere that you, you may have come with Oriana from time to time, but there's nothing remarkable. However, Professor Z: your eyes are very sharp and perhaps it seems a little odd to you that Oom and Temerity and Miv haven't arrived yet. Perhaps you're on the lookout and you see what at first appears to be a little shadow darting from log to log, and you hear a scuffling noise and little like, "eh heh heh heh," and then you see a very interesting creature indeed.

[00:30:48] **Esther:** It seems to go on all fours, though it can stand up and sort of waddle from side to side until it goes on all fours, again. It does seem to have hands, but hands that also function very well as able to, to run on the ground. And it has long blue-gray hair that it's like coating the sides of it's body from its head on down its back. It, it appears to be dressed in some sort of fabric garments, but it's, the weave is a little difficult for you to make out. And it's skin is like a dark slate-gray, and you can actually hear it sort of burbling to itself in something that sounds like it has the cadence of a language, though I don't believe it's a language you speak. Can you remind me which languages you speak?

[00:31:39] **Alex:** Common Gnome Sylvan, Draconic, Elven, Dwarven and Undercommon.

[00:31:47] **Esther:** You do understand. Wow. I forgotten you spoke Undercommon. So you do understand what it says and it's, it's saying to itself, "Shinies, shinies, very shinies."

[00:32:02] **Esther:** Maybe we can get it to give us the shinies. Maybe we makes friends with it, or maybe we, we takes them. [cackle] And it thinks it's being like very, very stealthy, but you rolled really, really, really well.

[00:32:16] **Alex:** Hi, Gollum.

[00:32:17] **Esther:** What would you like to do? [laughs] I honestly didn't mean for it to have a Gollum voice. And then I was like, well, I guess this is where we're going. Okay. It's Gollum. [laughs]

[00:32:27] **Esther:** There we are. Yeah. What would you like to do?

[00:32:30] **Alex:** I think since I understand it's Undercommon and maybe my Undercommon like, you know, I've learned many languages as an academic, so my sort of informal out in the woods Undercommon may be a little bit stilted.

[00:32:42] **Alex:** But I think I'll, I'll say, "You there, what are you doing?"

[00:32:49] **Esther:** It looks up, startled and you see that it has like, I believe three eyes, like two eyes, one in the middle of its forehead, or maybe like two and one here. Let's, let's say two up here and one down here, like towards the nose. And it says -- I'm going to change its voice. This is exciting, y'all. "I didn't know you could hear me."

[00:33:12] **Alex:** "You're making kind of a racket. And what are you talking about?"

[00:33:16] **Esther:** "Well, I was just coming by and I, I saw that you had shinies. I like shiny things. Might we be able to make a trade?"

[00:33:30] **Alex:** "What are you proposing to trade?"

[00:33:33] **Esther:** "Many things. What, what is it you want?"

[00:33:37] **Alex:** "Well, I, I'm a bit of an adventurer. I kind of like shiny things and I like new things. What do you, what do you have that's novel and interesting, maybe? And what do you want?"

[00:33:49] **Esther:** They're going to root around in their little pocket for a moment and put their hands into like, a few different corners of their garments and then excitedly hold their hands out to you.

[00:33:59] **Esther:** And there's going to be just a jumble of objects, like a few rocks that are shot through with really interesting veins of other kinds of rocks, but they don't immediately strike you as anything precious. There will probably be a few gold coins in there, which are valuable, like three gold, maybe two silver, and there will be some moss... a little bit of leathery substance, you're not

sure what it is. Odds and ends, trinkets. The gold seems to be the most valuable thing there.

[00:34:36] **Alex:** "Well, what do you want?"

[00:34:41] **Esther:** "What is this round thing here? I want round fire!"

[00:34:49] **Alex:** "Well, you can't have, you can't have all of Buster. Buster's, Buster's my, my invention. I got to keep Buster."

[00:34:55] **Esther:** He comes over going up and down and kind of looking around the glade and looking up a couple of times, and then will settle himself by your things and begin to go through them. Like, think very Yoda in, in The Empire Strikes Back, going through all of Luke's stuff like hehe, but with kind of a, a weird Southern accent, because I didn't decide on this character's voice properly beforehand. So walk me through some of the specifically metal things you might have there.

[00:35:24] **Alex:** So various tools, so like wrenches and screwdrivers and drill bits, like a frying pan, like sort of tent pegs or stakes, that kind of thing. What else? Maybe a chain and some joints and like, two axles connected to each other, a couple of pieces of pipe. Lots of odds and ends like that.

[00:35:48] **Esther:** I think he is going to exclaim "Ahhh!" over the chain and then gather three drill bits, two joints, and the frying pan.

[00:36:01] **Esther:** And just look in excitement over all of them and say: "All this, all this, how much for all of this?"

[00:36:10] **Alex:** "I think I need the frying pan. How am I going to cook?"

[00:36:15] **Esther:** He makes a displeased face and hisses at you. And actually shows some very, very sharp pointed teeth. "I want this."

[00:36:30] **Esther:** Ember, it's about this time that you stop fondly reminiscing about the creek and your time with Orianna and notice this creature and Professor Z and specifically the creature's sharp teeth.

[00:36:44] **Justin:** What does this creature smell like?

[00:36:46] **Esther:** It's a great question. I am actually looking to see if they give me any canonical information on what this creature might smell like, so one moment. I don't think there is, but if there is, I'm happy to go from that.

[00:37:01] **Justin:** I think I know what it is.

[00:37:03] **Esther:** Do you?

[00:37:04] **Justin:** I have a guess.

[00:37:05] **Esther:** You actually probably do. Wouldn't surprise me. I'm going to say it smells little metallic, little like a faint din of metal and like the scent of petrichor that you got a couple of times wandering through the city in the past few days. Not the exact same thing, but there's something like the earth after a heavy rain that smells really deep.

[00:37:33] **Esther:** And then a little bit of metallic-ness thrown in. Does not smell like smoke, fire or death.

[00:37:40] **Justin:** Yeah. Right. Well, earth is one of the bad people smells, but not by itself. You need more stuff to be a bad person smell. So then, Ember will approach from behind probably and will say, "I found a creek. You found a person."

[00:37:59] **Alex:** "He's trying to make a trade with me, but I don't know, like we need our frying pan."

[00:38:08] **Justin:** "Why?"

[00:38:10] **Alex:** "To cook things."

[00:38:12] **Justin:** "I can cook things."

[00:38:14] **Alex:** "Well, yeah, but like, the frying pan is important."

[00:38:20] **Justin:** "The frying pan is important. Then we keep the frying pan."

[00:38:25] **Alex:** "Yeah. Let's keep the frying pan. But like the joints and the screws and the, the drill bits. Yeah. We could trade those. I'll, I'll trade those for, you know..." And I'll, I'll like point to like a couple of the rocks he had and the gold pieces.

[00:38:40] **Esther:** He seems completely disinterested in Ember. That Ember is an animal who is speaking. He just, like hisses again at both of you.

[00:38:51] **Esther:** "I want this."

[00:38:55] **Alex:** "Look, if you're going to be rude, then I'm going to have to ask you to put down my stuff and skedaddle. I was making dinner here."

[00:39:02] **Esther:** Roll Diplomacy.

[00:39:02] **Justin:** Ember, Ember will. Oh, okay, nevermind.

[00:39:05] **Esther:** What was it? What was Ember going to do?

[00:39:07] **Justin:** What side of the frying pan is this creature holding?

[00:39:13] **Esther:** The handle.

[00:39:15] **Justin:** Okay. I kind of figured, I would like to, it's harder for me to grab the not-handle part of the frying pan. So I'd attempt to grab the round part of the frying pan with my face.

[00:39:27] **Esther:** Okay. I suppose that's--

[00:39:29] **Alex:** Am I still rolling Diplomacy or have we now ended the diplomatic part of this?

[00:39:33] **Esther:** You can roll -- not yet. You can roll Diplomacy and Ember, you can roll Athletics. Thievery? I think it should be Athletics.

[00:39:43] **Justin:** Yeah, that would make sense to me, kind of like a grapple. It's sort of like a disarm. I'm good at that. 20. Dirty 20.

[00:39:54] **Esther:** Dirty. Okay. 20. And actually, Alex, can you roll it secretly for me?

[00:40:00] **Alex:** Oh, okay.

[00:40:01] **Esther:** Ember, you do succeed in just yanking this thing right out of his hands.

[00:40:07] **Justin:** Sweet.

[00:40:08] **Esther:** Which he does not seem too pleased about. He, he just hisses more and actually like starts to move towards you and like growl. Like, grr.

[00:40:22] **Justin:** Can I, uh, change--

[00:40:22] **Esther:** But he turns back towards the Professor Z and seems to listen for a moment. And it's like, "Maybe, maybe there's something else I could want. Very rude of this one to take it from me, but--"

[00:40:41] **Alex:** "It wasn't yours."

[00:40:42] **Esther:** Doesn't seem to take that in at all, but will offer you one rock and one piece of gold for the drill bits, the joints and the chain.

[00:40:54] **Alex:** "I'll do that if you give me back the joint."

[00:40:57] **Justin:** It's probably a good deal, I guess?

[00:41:00] **Esther:** And you want back the chain, Alex?

[00:41:03] **Alex:** No, the joint.

[00:41:04] **Esther:** The joint. Both, or just one?

[00:41:08] **Alex:** Just one.

[00:41:10] **Esther:** "I want something else if I give this back."

[00:41:16] **Alex:** " Uh..."

[00:41:21] **Justin:** Oh, you know what's relevant.

[00:41:24] **Esther:** What's relevant?

[00:41:26] **Alex:** What's relevant?

[00:41:27] **Justin:** The ring. 'Cause it would be visible. I really... [giggles] am sorry to point it out.

[00:41:32] **Esther:** That's okay. Let's actually-- I'll roll something really quick.

[00:41:37] **Justin:** Ember's ring that he carries around his neck.

[00:41:40] **Esther:** Yeah. Ember's, Ember's ring. Mira's ring. Oriana's ring, I guess. The light does catch on the ring, little starlight reflects.... and as he is considering this offer from Professor Z, he sees it and his eyes, his three eyes go very wide.

[00:42:04] **Esther:** "Ah, I want that. This shiny around his neck."

[00:42:17] **Justin:** Dang it.

[00:42:18] **Alex:** "A word of advice. I'm interested in bartering because I am curious about things, the dog, a little temperamental."

[00:42:28] **Justin:** Dog?

[00:42:30] **Alex:** I'm saying it all in Undercommon. So I don't know that--

[00:42:33] **Justin:** Okay, I certainly don't speak Undercommon.

[00:42:36] **Esther:** Ember, you would just hear like a series of odd noises that, I leave it up to you if you think it's language or not, but Professor Z and this creature are like, talking to each other in a way that you do not understand at all.

[00:42:49] **Justin:** Cool. I'm going to try to just for fun get the frying pan turned around in my mouth so I can hold the handle.

[00:42:56] **Esther:** You do that with some maneuvering. While, while this creature is like pointing at your neck, and its eyes are going wide and it's slowly like crawling towards you.

[00:43:05] **Alex:** "Now now I just, I just don't think-- I think you want to trade with me, not the dog."

[00:43:14] **Esther:** "I am getting impatient. I could stop trading with you at all and call in my friend. Yes, call in my friend. We take it from you after we kill you." [chortles] He shows you his teeth.

[00:43:40] **Alex:** "I'm going to put my hand on like a short sword, my short sword and say, "I think this dealing is done, and you should leave."

[00:43:56] **Esther:** He just looks at you and grins and then like, sticks a, a small hand with long claws, long, really long claws in his mouth and does like a wolf whistle, and nothing happens immediately.

[00:44:12] **Esther:** let's roll initiative. He is now completely like looking at this ring, fixated on it and seems like he's going to do anything he can.

[00:44:22] **Esther:** Let me take you to the map. There is a map for this. And you can drag yourself onto it.

[00:44:28] **Esther:** All right, Ember, you are up first. What would you like to do? This being is brandishing his teeth at you and just hissing and laughing.

[00:44:39] **Justin:** I, I get the sense that this is hostile with that Perception roll?

[00:44:44] **Esther:** Yes.

[00:44:44] **Justin:** Okay. Then I'm just going to attack. Let's do, I mean, I don't, I don't have enough hit points to be careful about this to be honest.

[00:44:54] **Justin:** So I'm going to rage.

[00:44:56] **Esther:** He seems like his mood has changed pretty quickly. And since it came to him that he could just kill you both and take all your stuff, he seems good doing that.

[00:45:06] **Justin:** Okay. I will Rage. I'm going to hop around behind him with the hope that I can flank. And I will do that. That'll just be stride. And then it's gonna be a Wolf Jaws attack.

[00:45:23] **Justin:** That's pretty good. 27 to hit.

[00:45:26] **Esther:** Yeah, I've only Miv had been there. You're so close to a crit. Yeah, that hits.

[00:45:31] **Justin:** Okay. So then that is 13 points of piercing damage from my Wolf Jaws attack, as Ember begins, like gives like a low growl and his fur begins to almost like, smoke as he bounds around behind this creature and then snaps back with his jaws.

[00:45:51] **Esther:** It hisses in pain and kind of gives a low, "Aah!" And then just giggles and like [giggles] "She'll be here in a moment." And just giggles.

[00:46:05] **Justin:** Oh, I don't like that. Why would you say that?

[00:46:11] **Esther:** Professor Z, you're up.

[00:46:14] **Alex:** Okay, so Ember's Wolf Jawed? Okay. I'm going to step forward and slash with my shortsword.

[00:46:19] **Esther:** Okay.

[00:46:20] **Alex:** Yeah.

[00:46:21] **Esther:** And what did you roll?

[00:46:23] **Alex:** I rolled a 23.

[00:46:26] **Esther:** Nice. Awesome. That also hits and--

[00:46:30] **Alex:** Did slightly less damage than Ember, though, in that I only did one damage.

[00:46:36] **Esther:** So you, you did a total of one damage, but every little bit helps.

[00:46:43] **Alex:** I'm really here to contribute.

[00:46:45] **Esther:** You know, it looks considerably less well than it was. He was. And now it is his turn and Ember, he is just going to turn right around and bite you right back, and we will see how that goes.

[00:46:59] **Esther:** 19.

[00:47:01] **Justin:** That definitely hits.

[00:47:03] **Esther:** Does not critically hit. Right?

[00:47:05] **Justin:** No.

[00:47:05] **Esther:** He also rolled very poorly for damage and will, uh, do two damage. And--

[00:47:11] **Justin:** Oh, that doesn't even take out my temporary hit points. That's nice.

[00:47:14] **Esther:** Yeah. And now he is going to spend the rest of his action casting a spell. He's going to cast Grease. And Actually, you're just gonna cast it at you in your direction, Ember.

[00:47:30] **Justin:** Okay.

[00:47:32] **Esther:** Can, can you, as my rules paralegal, remind me if you have to roll a Reflex save right now or on your next turn?

[00:47:40] **Justin:** It would depend on... I don't know the rules for Grease.

[00:47:42] **Esther:** The area effect is solid ground and the area is covered with grease. Each creature standing on the greasy surface must succeed at a Reflex save or an Acrobatics check against your spell DC or fall prone. Creatures using an action to move onto the greasy surface during the spell's duration must attempt either a Reflex save or an Acrobatics check to balance. A creature that steps or crawls doesn't have to attempt a check or save.

[00:48:03] **Justin:** Okay. So it sounds like-- so, but are you, you said targeting me?

[00:48:07] **Esther:** Yeah, at like a range of 30 feet.

[00:48:10] **Esther:** Yeah, so just area.

[00:48:11] **Justin:** Yeah. So it sounds like I need to make the save now.

[00:48:14] **Esther:** Okay. Make that save now.

[00:48:16] **Justin:** 23. That's not bad.

[00:48:19] **Esther:** That's almost certainly going to succeed and... yeah. That succeeds. Well done.

[00:48:25] **Justin:** I would love it if the, love it if the grease kind of just like burned up around him.

[00:48:29] **Esther:** I actually, yeah, let's go with that. Like he casts Grease, and it just all catches fire from Ember's innate heat and burns up. It's amazing. All right. Ember, it is now your turn again.

[00:48:44] **Justin:** Cool. Well, I'm definitely gonna start with a bite. Wolf Jaws! That is a 20 to hit.

[00:48:53] **Esther:** That does hit.

[00:48:54] **Justin:** 10 points of piercing damage.

[00:48:58] **Esther:** All right.

[00:49:00] **Justin:** Do I risk the second attack? Probably. I don't know a lot of other good things to do. Okay. So I'll do the second attack Is that really? Yeah, that's a natural two. Hero Point. I spend my first Hero Point, um, and I am going to use a physical die...

[00:49:17] **Justin:** betrayed, utterly betrayed.

[00:49:20] **Esther:** Oh, no...

[00:49:20] **Justin:** So that is 11.

[00:49:24] **Esther:** Does not hit.

[00:49:26] **Justin:** Curses.

[00:49:26] **Esther:** Yeah. And then you have one action left.

[00:49:32] **Justin:** I do have an action left. Um, I would like to use Intimidating Glare.

[00:49:39] **Esther:** Okay. Go for it.

[00:49:40] **Justin:** To Demoralize this creature. The physical die did do better. So I'm going to go with that...

[00:49:46] **Justin:** Betrayed! Utterly betrayed! 10.

[00:49:50] **Esther:** 10. Okay. And remind me --

[00:49:54] **Justin:** It gives them the Frightened condition if I succeed. But I don't think I did.

[00:49:59] **Esther:** I don't think you did. I'm sorry.

[00:50:02] **Justin:** No, no worries.

[00:50:03] **Esther:** Okay. All right. So your first attack did hit for a lot of damage, and he does seem to be in pain, but you notice he's actually beginning to look up at the sky now and just say, "Any moment, any moment." Professor Z, it's your turn.

[00:50:21] **Alex:** I am going to, with my first action, throw my weapons and gadgetry into Overdrive. Especially because all of my tools and whatnot are scattered around the place. So I feel like, you know, this looks like maybe I like, take the shortsword and pick up, a drill crank thing and attach it to it, so now it's like spinning around kind of thing.

[00:50:41] **Alex:** And on the other end, I like attach a like screwdriver or something else that's going to whack into him. So like, yeah, we're going to, we're going to go for just how much can I make this into a preposterous weapon? So I think I do a Crafting check to see if I get things into Overdrive. So where's my Crafting? I rolled an 18, so.

[00:51:02] **Esther:** You succeed!

[00:51:03] **Alex:** All right. Now, that was one action, right? Yes. So now I'm going to spend a Hero Point to attack with advantage with my shortsword contraption.

[00:51:16] **Esther:** Okay. Go for it.

[00:51:19] **Alex:** Alright.

[00:51:22] **Esther:** 22.

[00:51:22] **Alex:** That was pretty good though.

[00:51:24] **Esther:** That was pretty good.

[00:51:25] **Esther:** 22 hits and you deal five piercing damage. Does your Overdrive give you anything in addition to that?

[00:51:33] **Alex:** Your strikes deal additional damage equal to your intelligence modifier for one minute.

[00:51:38] **Esther:** Oh, is your intelligence modifier 3?

[00:51:43] **Alex:** 4.

[00:51:44] **Esther:** 4! All right.

[00:51:46] **Alex:** So nine, nine damage total?

[00:51:48] **Esther:** He is looking incredibly rough right now.

[00:51:53] **Alex:** Can I also try to stab them with my dagger?

[00:51:55] **Esther:** Absolutely. You'll take a penalty because it's your second attack, but you totally can. Is a dagger an Agile Weapon?

[00:52:04] **Justin:** I believe so.

[00:52:05] **Esther:** Then you take a little less of a penalty than you normally would.

[00:52:07] **Justin:** 4 instead of 5.

[00:52:12] **Alex:** Hmm.

[00:52:12] **Esther:** It's, it might be worth it. I would encourage you to try it if you want to.

[00:52:15] **Alex:** I'm going to try.

[00:52:16] **Justin:** And you could also, you could also just do it with the short sword again, right?

[00:52:20] **Alex:** Oh, can I?

[00:52:21] **Esther:** Yeah.

[00:52:21] **Alex:** Okay. Maybe I'll do with the shortsword again. It's got some momentum to it.

[00:52:25] **Esther:** Go for it.

[00:52:26] **Alex:** Not that much momentum, though.

[00:52:28] **Justin:** Natural one.

[00:52:29] **Esther:** Almost render this creature unconscious. And in your pride at your growing prowess as a warrior, you swing totally wide and leave him open to lurch toward Ember with another bite attack as his first action. And he is just going to go for it. And 20 hits you, doesn't it?

[00:52:53] **Justin:** Yes.

[00:52:53] **Esther:** Yeah. Okay.

[00:52:54] **Justin:** Definitely. Definitely.

[00:52:56] **Esther:** For eight damage.

[00:52:58] **Justin:** Okay. We're out of temporary hit points now.

[00:53:01] **Esther:** All right. And now he is going to try clawing you twice. Just one right after the other. And he's going to take a series of penalties. His first one, he rolled a natural one, so it definitely doesn't hit. And his second, he rolled a 21, which does hit.

[00:53:18] **Justin:** That hits. That definitely hits.

[00:53:19] **Esther:** For seven slashing damage.

[00:53:23] **Justin:** Okay.

[00:53:24] **Esther:** How are you doing?

[00:53:26] **Fai:** I have three hit points.

[00:53:28] **Esther:** Well, in exciting news, someone else is now going to appear. In the sky above you, you both see this hovering wings and, and, you know, the way like birds have a very specific flight pattern where you can kind of see the gentle flapping of wings and like bats tend to hover in really weird ways and kind of like jump around? Yeah, this looks like a giant bat.

[00:53:56] **Esther:** And as this little dude is like kind of bleeding out on the ground, after clawing Ember, he looks up and he just starts laughing. Like, "hehehe" and you see a giant bat appear above the trees at the edge of this glade. The small creature who can speak Undercommon is just like, "She's here, she's here. I knew she'd come when I called." And let's see how she does.

[00:54:25] **Justin:** 14. No...!

[00:54:26] **Esther:** However, fortunately, for the two of you, you, also hear a rustling kind of at the opposite corner of the glade over here.

[00:54:38] **Esther:** And you're going to see another figure, step out into the moonlight. This is a gnome- sized person. Actually, you can see, she is a gnome, not just gnome-sized. It's a little difficult to say whether it's a trick of the moonlight across the glade in the middle of battle, but something that looks a little bit unusual about her at first. But she's going to say in a very commanding voice in, in Common, "Are these creatures troubling you?"

[00:55:14] **Justin:** I'm Raging, but yes.

[00:55:16] **Alex:** "Yes."

[00:55:16] **Justin:** Yes.

[00:55:16] **Esther:** Yes?

[00:55:17] **Alex:** "Yes!"

[00:55:19] **Esther:** There is-- there's this air of calm about her coming into a scene like this, where you might ordinarily expect someone to like, run up to you as fast as they can, but she's just standing there taking it in for a moment. And then she's going to calmly make her way over, which will take most of the rest of the turn.

[00:55:43] **Esther:** And, and then we'll see what happens after she gets there. The giant bat rolled pretty well. So it's going to go ahead and go. But it is really

interested in what looks like the two humanoid figures. And first of all, it's going to go up to Buster who is like on fire and gleaming and try to pick Buster up.

[00:56:06] **Esther:** You get the idea that maybe it's not the most intelligent bat in the world. And maybe it relies on, like, commands from the little creature that's like, bleeding next to Ember and fighting Ember, and without explicit commands, it doesn't quite know what to do, and it's going to totally fail in its attempt to pick up Buster.

[00:56:25] **Esther:** And then it becomes very annoyed and is going to try to bite Buster, and does a 26 hit Buster's AC?

[00:56:36] **Alex:** Buster's AC is 17.

[00:56:39] **Esther:** Yes, that does. Doesn't crit, though. It will do, deal 12 points of slashing damage to Buster's, like. This metal. It's like, you know, the nails on a chalkboard, like, "rehr," as the teeth kind of go in and then it is going to turn towards Professor Z and because it just sees so much going on, it is going to try to attack you with its wings.

[00:57:05] **Alex:** Sorry.

[00:57:07] **Justin:** Doesn't Buster only have 10 HP?

[00:57:08] **Alex:** Yeah. Well, that's a question I have. Would Buster have only had 10 HP cause like Buster, we've reconfigured. We've worked on Buster.

[00:57:14] **Esther:** Yeah. I think, I think Buster probably would be slightly improved.

[00:57:20] **Alex:** Okay.

[00:57:22] **Esther:** Does it tell you easily--

[00:57:23] **Alex:** I don't know how Buster improves.

[00:57:24] **Esther:** Does it easily tell you in Buster's character sheet the rules of repair?

[00:57:29] **Justin:** We haven't had a sit down since the observatory. Not really.

[00:57:34] **Alex:** That's true. But like I did just spend a while, like reconfiguring Buster.

[00:57:39] **Justin:** That's true, you were just working.

[00:57:40] **Esther:** You were reconfiguring Buster.

[00:57:42] **Alex:** And that was like a Crafting check on Buster. I don't know, if that doesn't repair Buster, then I think Buster is dead.

[00:57:48] **Esther:** I will say that you got Buster up to like 20 HP.

[00:57:53] **Alex:** Okay. So Buster has 8 HP left, then. Great. Real good.

[00:57:57] **Esther:** And I believe that the Wing Strike is going to miss you because with the penalty, it will have rolled at 10.

[00:58:02] **Alex:** Miss Z?

[00:58:04] **Esther:** Miss Z. Yeah. Is your AC lower than 10?

[00:58:07] **Alex:** My AC is not lower than 10.

[00:58:09] **Esther:** Really impressive if your AC was lower than 10. Alright.

[00:58:12] **Alex:** Yeah, no, that misses me.

[00:58:14] **Esther:** It's Ember's turn again.

[00:58:16] **Justin:** Okay. Ember is going to attempt to finish off this creature. With one more Wolf Jaws attack. I'm not using a Hero Point cause I need to save it. I assume that even with flanking, that my 11 will not hit.

[00:58:30] **Esther:** Yeah, it won't. I'm sorry.

[00:58:33] **Justin:** Ughhh. Do I spend...? I'm betrayed by my dice. I have rolled a two, a three and a four. It would be better for me to use a Hero Point and reroll than it would to try the second So I will spend another Hero Point.

[00:58:51] **Esther:** I think I should've had the bat move instead of attack.

[00:58:54] **Esther:** I forgot where I put the bat. Let's just say the bat did no damage to Buster. It should have had a move action. So, it's, erase that damage. It failed. My bad.

[00:59:08] **Alex:** I feel like that's good anyways, because Buster right now is in oven mode and so is kind of hot. So I feel like trying to damage a hot iron thing, like should have some consequences for the bat, too?

[00:59:23] **Justin:** I was just going to say, with my Hero Point reroll, it was a 26 to hit. Does that happen to crit because we're flanking?

[00:59:30] **Esther:** No, it doesn't.

[00:59:33] **Justin:** Oh, well, 16 points of damage.

[00:59:35] **Esther:** Oh yeah, you have thoroughly, thoroughly rendered this creature down, give us a visual.

[00:59:44] **Justin:** So my plan is, which I would like to spend more actions on my turn to do, is that I want to grab this creature by the, let's say by the neck. And I want to just like clamp down with my jaws and then kind of fling it into the bat.

[01:00:06] **Esther:** Ooh. All right. Let's do it.

[01:00:10] **Justin:** So I assume that would be like an Athletics check? I have no, or like a ranged attack roll? I have no idea.

[01:00:16] **Esther:** Let's just do a ranged attack roll. I liked that one. Yeah.

[01:00:20] **Justin:** Okay. So that'll be my second attack.

[01:00:22] **Justin:** Which, which dice should I let betray me? Or should I go get other dice? I'm going to use my physical dice. I spent so much money on them. Okay. I am not proficient in whatever this creature is.

[01:00:35] **Esther:** I don't believe that you are.

[01:00:36] **Justin:** Yeah. That's not really a question. Okay. So I'm just going to add my dex then.

[01:00:43] **Justin:** 16 minus five -- multiple attack penalty -- 11.

[01:00:47] **Esther:** You do fling this creature at the bat and it goes wide and lands very softly in this field of flowers over here, where we will mark it. And we'll mark it with a little icon that it is out of combat. And now I shall remove it from the turn order. All right.

[01:01:07] **Esther:** Professor Z.

[01:01:08] **Justin:** I assume that's the rest of my turn.

[01:01:11] **Esther:** Yeah.

[01:01:11] **Alex:** Stab the bat?

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

[01:01:13] **Alex:** Yeah. Why not? Let's stab the bat.

[01:01:16] **Esther:** Stab the bat.

[01:01:18] **Alex:** Before I stab the bat, can I, because like all of our stuff is around us, right?

[01:01:23] **Esther:** Yes.

[01:01:24] **Alex:** What if I tried to use Searing Restoration by throwing something that's going to explode at Ember?

[01:01:29] **Esther:** Okay. I'm into it.

[01:01:31] **Alex:** Give Ember a few more hit points.

[01:01:33] **Esther:** If you want to do it, I'm very into it. Let's go for it.

[01:01:36] **Alex:** I don't even think. Is there a, it doesn't say there's a check for it.

[01:01:41] **Esther:** Yeah. I don't think there is a check. I think it's just a one-action action. So you can totally do that.

[01:01:46] **Alex:** Yeah.

[01:01:47] **Esther:** Yeah.

[01:01:47] **Alex:** So basically I think I'm just cauterizing whatever wounds I can reach on, on Ember real quick.

[01:01:53] **Esther:** All right. And you can restore 2d4 hit points.

[01:02:00] **Justin:** It has to be an adjacent living creature. I see.

[01:02:03] **Alex:** Okay. So I'm just going to roll 2d4 dice.

[01:02:05] **Justin:** Seven. That brings me up to double digits. Thank you.

[01:02:08] **Alex:** You're welcome. I thought that was a good idea. All right. Now we stabby stabby, batty, batty.

[01:02:13] **Esther:** Okay.

[01:02:14] **Alex:** We Hero Point stabby stabby, batty, batty.

[01:02:16] **Esther:** Alex rolled a natural one.

[01:02:18] **Alex:** Better.

[01:02:19] **Justin:** If we could roll above a five, that would be great.

[01:02:22] **Esther:** That going to hit. And that's very exciting. And you will deal a total of three damage

[01:02:28] **Alex:** Don't I get to deal an extra four damage though? Cause I'm still in Overdrive.

[01:02:32] **Esther:** Yeah, you do, so it's seven, seven damage.

[01:02:35] **Alex:** Seven damage.

[01:02:35] **Esther:** Not bad. Alright cool. And then, third action?

[01:02:41] **Alex:** Let's just try stabbing again. Like it's totally, isn't going to work, but let's try it.

[01:02:46] **Justin:** Natural 20.

[01:02:48] **Esther:** Natural 20.

[01:02:49] **Justin:** Natural 20.

[01:02:49] **Alex:** Yeah.

[01:02:49] **Esther:** That's going to change things a bit. Okay. So you critically hit this thing.

[01:02:55] **Alex:** I rolled a natural 20, so I critically hit, I have a shortsword, which has been turned into a whirligig shortsword that has a whole bunch of contraptions on it. So my short sword, I rolled a five on the damage die, plus an extra four for my shortsword being in overdrive.

[01:03:13] **Alex:** So this thing's really it's at nine, you know, going full shredder mode, and it crits. So we double that to get to 18 damage total. Basically my shortsword has turned into, you know, like a, a chainsaw blender.

[01:03:29] **Esther:** That's a beautiful visual. So you just like shred through these wings, creating many holes. And this bat is like shrieking and can barely stay aloft, and it looks really bad.

[01:03:43] **Esther:** It looks really bad. So the person who has made her way across the clearing is going to spend her first moments of her turn, just looking around and saying, "It looks like you have things in hand. Do you need my aid?"

[01:04:01] **Alex:** I think, I think Professor Z is going to be like, "Well, what -- we're being attacked? What is this thing?" Like, still not, we're not done fighting.

[01:04:08] **Esther:** She says, "it's a giant bat."

[01:04:11] **Alex:** "Well, maybe we could, you could help us get rid of it?"

[01:04:14] **Esther:** "I will see what I can do."

[01:04:16] **Esther:** And she will roll her first attack, and that will hit and deal 11 points of bludgeoning damage, which will render this bat unconscious. She takes a staff that she's carrying in both hands and just whack, like whacks it. And the bat falls "plop" on the ground in front of you, and its wings like twitch a little bit.

[01:04:40] **Esther:** And it curls up and falls totally unconscious. And this person just breathes, replaces her staff.

[01:04:51] **Esther:** "What brings you to this glade on such an exciting evening?"

[01:04:58] **Justin:** Ember is going to kind of do the, like, panting kind of thing of like, as the Rage subsides, and then is just going to collapse into a little ball and just be like, "I am done fighting today."

[01:05:12] **Alex:** Z is going to say, "So we're out here on a, on a research trip."

[01:05:18] **Esther:** "Ah, so you are from the community in Brastlework, I take it?"

[01:05:26] **Alex:** "Yes. Yes, I am. I'm an exalted member of the Tinkerings."

[01:05:31] **Esther:** She doesn't seem to react at all to Ember speaking. This is really interesting. Most people, many people who you've met in Brastlework since you gained the power of speech, have been a little weirded out by it to say the least. She just comes up to you and gently touches you and says, "Perhaps I can aid in your healing, if you would like." I'm going to have her roll a Medicine check. We'll see how she does.

[01:06:02] **Justin:** I'm down 24 hit points, which is a lot at Level 2.

[01:06:06] **Esther:** She's definitely--

[01:06:07] **Alex:** And I tried to blow you up, but you know.

[01:06:10] **Esther:** She's definitely going to be able to help you. She's able to heal you for 10 hit points right now.

[01:06:14] **Justin:** I am feeling much better. "Thank you. That is nice."

[01:06:19] **Esther:** "You. I know you."

[01:06:26] **Alex:** "The dog?"

[01:06:27] **Esther:** "Yes." So I'll take a second, as she says this, to describe what she looks like. Now that you can see her close up, she's not like most other gnomes you tend to see, Professor Z, and like most other gnomes you've seen, Ember. Though you have seen some people like her. She has light lavender hair and light, light blue skin, and aquamarine eyes that have sort of a faded quality.

[01:06:57] **Esther:** All the gnomes you've seen in Brastlewark thus far have incredibly bright coloration of their skin, their hair, and their eyes. They tend to wear incredibly vibrant clothing with interesting textures and patterns. She's dressed in pretty simple like linen outfit with some leather accoutrements.

[01:07:19] **Esther:** And it's not so much that I would describe her as having no colors at all. It's like, if you've seen fabric that has been in the sun or like colored paper that has been in the sun for a long time, and you can tell it used to have a really, really vibrant shade of something and it still retains that it's just faded. Or like a rug that's been in the sun and has been walked on so much that you'd know what the weave was, and you can still trace that pattern, it's just the colors are much less intense than they were. So when we say Bleaching, I wouldn't describe it as like, like bleaching like that word might evoke, but just this, like this fading of color. So you can guess that maybe once upon a time. She had like really vibrant purple hair.

[01:08:06] **Esther:** And now it's, it's a little bit of a faded lavender. Ember you have met Bleachlings before with Oriana and you remember that Orianna was always very kind to these particular gnomes whose colors seemed less bright. And the other people around her were not always as kind.

[01:08:28] **Justin:** I am colorblind, just a reminder, but yes.

[01:08:31] **Esther:** That's true. That's true.

[01:08:34] **Justin:** I think I might notice that like, these people are treated differently.

[01:08:39] **Esther:** Professor Z, you have never, ever seen someone who is undergoing the effects of the bleaching in Brastlewark or near Brastlewark.

[01:08:49] **Esther:** Like, this is a place where that *does not* happen. If you have encountered people who have Bleached before or are undergoing the Bleaching, they are typically treated with a great deal of fear or social awkwardness, or like

they are in need of help in some way. And I leave it up to you what your feelings would be -- whether you would be a little bit uncomfortable in this situation, whether you don't care at all, like maybe you and your folks rolled different growing up.

[01:09:23] **Esther:** I'll leave that up to you for you to describe to us.

[01:09:26] **Alex:** I think Professor Z's default mode is definitely a little bit awkward and maybe a little bit overly forthright. So in this case, the awkwardness is going to shine through.

[01:09:37] **Esther:** She continues and she says, "But I know you. You... you would come with Orianna when she came to see me at my mother's. Ember."

[01:09:52] **Justin:** Do I remember this person?

[01:09:54] **Esther:** Probably have flashes of memory. She seems familiar. You, you maybe remember going with Orianna to the Lilyfrost Inn and having a slightly younger version of this person maybe try to pet your ears. You remember her mother seeming worried about her and Oriana seeming kind, calm as usual.

[01:10:16] **Justin:** "I do know you. You are nice. I am grateful. You knew my master."

[01:10:26] **Esther:** "I did. Since she's no longer here to watch these woods, I watch them."

[01:10:36] **Justin:** "I think she would be grateful."

[01:10:39] **Esther:** "I'm grateful to her."

[01:10:41] **Justin:** "I am very tired."

[01:10:42] **Alex:** "What are you watching them for?"

[01:10:45] **Esther:** Ember's very tired? "You may rest safely in my home tonight. Come." And she just, will, will stand up. "Gather your things. I watch these woods for any who would harm them." She will gesture to the side of the clearing, where there's more pine trees and there's actually a collection of logs, which you can see on the map.

[01:11:05] **Esther:** And some area that's clearly been felled. "There is a time to take at a time to give back. If industry and the ambition of the city takes too much. I will ensure that the forest gives back. I watch for creatures like these. Perhaps those in the city are not aware of, or willfully choose to ignore that they bring upon themselves."

[01:11:38] **Alex:** "Well, I had no idea that such creatures existed out here."

[01:11:42] **Esther:** "I expect you spend much time with your studies."

[01:11:47] **Alex:** "Well, you see, I I'm, I'm a bit of an inventor, and I've been building this thing --" and I'm going to sort of gesture at Buster as I start to reassemble Buster and put bits back in there and shove like the tent in there and all that.

[01:12:05] **Esther:** "He is remarkable."

[01:12:05] **Justin:** "Professor Z is very smart. He knows many words."

[01:12:10] **Esther:** "I am sure that he is quite intelligent, and he does know many words. Make haste. I would not wish the two of you to need to fight any more tonight. It seems that you have been through a lot." She looks at Ember. Maybe, maybe a little bit more was going on with you than that particular fight. "You may stay in my home tonight."

[01:12:32] **Esther:** And once you're done gathering up your things, she'll lead you through the forest. Not exactly along a path at first, though you will come to one that is clearly well-worn by her. And you will come across a charming little hut that's like made halfway out of a living tree and branches, which seemed to have been called up from the ground to make some of the walls and halfway out of constructed walls that are made of wood.

[01:13:01] **Esther:** And it has a, a mossy mossy roof with a little chimney and she will get a fire going. So it's, it's quite comfortable in there, and she'll have a bed for herself and will offer to make you beds of moss gathered from the nearby woods, if you so, so choose, or if you brought along a bedroll, you can like lay it down in her little one- room cabin.

[01:13:25] **Justin:** I think Ember is just going to immediately curl up next to the fire.

[01:13:31] **Alex:** "Thank you for letting us use your home. I didn't realize there were so many strange things out in these words."

[01:13:39] **Esther:** "There are, and more and more are coming from the mountains."

[01:13:45] **Alex:** "Fascinating."

[01:13:48] **Esther:** "Perhaps in the morning we will discuss further. You are in need of rest."

[01:13:52] **Alex:** "Indeed." Lay out my bedroll.

[01:13:57] **Esther:** Let's leave y'all there for the night and let's go to break, come back and visit Temerity and Oom and King DTF

[01:15:20] **Esther:** Welcome back everyone. We are going to pick back up with Oom and Temerity and Nommie and King DTF in his study where you all are gathering to chat over brandy. You will be led through corridors that are incredibly brightly painted. Like, some are entirely one color walls, like, a bright yellow, and then like, shocking blue trim -- like, blue molding or whatever. And some are like polka-dotted walls or striped or muraled all over. There are like, silk curtains and curtains made of velvets and those cornice boards with tassels everywhere. There's so much color and texture to the build of this place. There are winding corridors and you get glimpses of circular rooms and square rooms and rooms that are all kind of polygon shaped and corridors that just abruptly end or suddenly there's a huge balcony in front of you. It's like the entire city of Brastlewark boiled down into a palace.

[01:16:33] **Esther:** But eventually you will make it to a particularly resplendent wing. And there are some large, ornately carved oak doors, which will be pushed open by either the king himself or the guards, and you will find a lavishly appointed study.

[01:16:51] **Esther:** There are big squashy couches for gnomes and big squashy chairs for humans. They are also, like, covered in rich velvets, like, bright pink and yellow and orange. Some of them are done up in silks, some of them are patterned fabrics that look very, very expensive. And, like, there's a mural on one wall that kind of complements the one you saw in the lower part of the, the palace.

[01:17:22] **Esther:** I suppose we could say the, the nice, the nice house arrest portion. He doesn't like to call it a dungeon, and it doesn't feel a lot like a dungeon, even though that, it's kind of what it is, but it's this like mural of a place that is very bright and colorful and many, many strange creatures and then a hard break and someplace that looks more like the world you're used to and, and ordinary things just on one wall.

[01:17:49] **Esther:** The others are like a mixture of, again, like stripes and polka dots and, like, maybe even a Paisley pattern, and I'm not sure people can hear my dog walking in the background, but we'll pretend that it's Ember walking around a cottage and that's, like, echoing into our, our story. Anyway, there's a large fireplace made out of gray stones with a roaring fire and many different, like, awards on this fireplace that are displayed. Like, "to King Drum Thornfiddle on behalf of the Scholarium, for your generosity, for your vision, and for your collaboration with us in making this city such a success."

[01:18:29] **Esther:** And these trophies and plaques, he seems to display with a great amount of pride. And, like, there's very, very plush carpeting as well. Woven carpets that have all sorts of bright and glorious patterns. There's a noted lack of any draconic figures in any of this scenery. And you might notice that, given the whole series of conversations you've had.

[01:18:51] **Esther:** He will sit himself down into a large squashy purple chair by the fire and say, "Do sit down. Do sit down and make yourselves at home," and Temerity, he'll gesture to you. And then when Oom, you come in with Nommie a few moments later, he will say the same to you. "May I, may I get you some brandy or something less alcoholic to drink? We have many options."

[01:19:15] **David:** "I'll have whatever you're happening."

[01:19:17] **Fai:** "Likewise."

[01:19:19] **Esther:** He'll pour this brandy into very, very fine crystal glasses and hand you each one. "Does your, um... dragon... drink?"

[01:19:30] **David:** "Yes, but not as much, or he'll get snippety."

[01:19:34] **Esther:** "I'm, um, sorry we got off to a bit of a rough start earlier. I, um, well, I didn't know that you were an acquaintance of Temerity's and Temerity and I, we go back, you could say, and I'm willing to give you another shot on Temerity's good word."

[01:19:52] **Esther:** I am King Drum Thornfiddle of Brastlework. Welcome to my city. I believe your name is Oom and Nommie, was it?"

[01:20:01] **David:** Nommie will nod.

[01:20:03] **Esther:** He looks at Nommie a little suspiciously, but will say, "It's nice to meet you. Are there any questions I can answer for you about all of this?"

[01:20:17] **David:** "I wouldn't even know where to begin. I mean, how do you two know each other?"

[01:20:24] **Esther:** "Well, Temerity and I, we used to work together. Isn't that right Temerity?"

[01:20:32] **Fai:** "That's right. I was very fortunate to know Drum before he was a king. And, you know, we, we were maybe younger men together."

[01:20:46] **Esther:** "We have always been in the business of inspiration! Filling of people's heads with big ideas and the belief that they can accomplish those ideas if they really set their mind to it.

[01:20:59] **Esther:** You know, it's one of the things that I, I love about Temerity's family. I feel like your mom is that way, too. She believes she can do something, and she does it. And I've always found that very, very inspirational myself. So I would say that's why we get along so well."

[01:21:16] **David:** "Well, you've certainly accomplished a lot getting to where you're at. How did you, how did you become king of this place?"

[01:21:23] **Esther:** "Well, it's a bit of a long story." He puffs up a little bit. "Temerity, you're-- you're sure I can trust him?"

[01:21:35] **Fai:** Out of character, I would like to remind you that I did not say that.

[01:21:38] **Esther:** I know. I know.

[01:21:39] **Fai:** [Fai laughs] "Hmm. Hmmm! Well, my king, I will remind you that I like Oom, but I don't know them very well. We've, we've been through a couple of scrapes together, and I think we're becoming friends, but you know, not like you and I are friends."

[01:22:04] **Esther:** "Well, then I can't give away all the secrets of how one rises to the level of success that I have achieved, but it took a lot of ambition, little cunning, the willingness to do the work, to put myself in situations that other people might've found uncomfortable, but if you--"

[01:22:24] **Fai:** 10% luck

[01:22:27] **Esther:** "20% skill, 15% concentrated power of will. Yes, exactly. A classic formula.

[01:22:35] **Esther:** You know, it just took being willing to meet the right people, to schmooze with a lot of the big names until you find someone who can, who can make it happen for you. And when you find them and you're in business, well, it's going to happen whether you have a second or third or fifth thoughts or not, so might as well make the best of it. That's what I say! But you are from Hermea, was it? I imagine you could tell me a thing or two about how to run a city of enterprise, of goals, of meaning. Isn't that what Hermea is all about?"

[01:23:12] **David:** So, uh, for background knowledge, I guess there was some previous knowledge that, that Mengkare had disdain for how he got his kingship, but it was a bit ambiguous. Do I get the sense that that was more common knowledge? Like, that's something that he might know of Mengkare's opinion from a diplomatic standpoint?

[01:23:31] **Esther:** I would say probably not... probably not. There's, there's never been like an envoy from Brastlewark to Hermea that you know of. So it's, it's just kind of a... you can roll Perception to get a good guess as, as from, from the King's affect.

[01:23:52] **David:** Is it secret Perception or is--

[01:23:54] **Esther:** Yes, secret please.

[01:23:55] **Esther:** He's clearly so pleased with himself that anything you get from him would have to be passed through that filter. Yeah, so he's, he's just a little hard to read in that way. It's not totally clear.

[01:24:11] **David:** "Well, I guess then, you know, as you, as you know about Hermea we're really just trying our best to learn how to better ourselves. So it's not that different from what you're trying to do. So I think we'd have a lot to learn from, from each other, just trying to make a society that works well for everyone."

[01:24:30] **Esther:** "I completely agree. I completely agree. Are there... anything unique going on in Hermea that really, really keeps the colors bright? What do you love about living there?"

[01:24:42] **David:** "Well, I think there's a certain comfort to living there, but as you can see, part of what keeps the colors bright is really just journeying for yourself.

[01:24:52] **David:** And that's really what brought me here. It's trying to learn more about really just everything."

[01:24:58] **Esther:** "Well, you have come to the right place, my friend. I mean, we have academies here that study absolutely everything you could imagine, except, I suppose, dragons, but you could always travel to do that. But it's my dream that if you were to come live here, you would never have to travel again to find something that would satisfy your heart and, and keep the colors bright.

[01:25:22] **Esther:** I want us to have a place where we can, we can come, not have to worry about expending so much effort of our lives going here and there and everywhere and then being able to have a place we call our own. And that's what Brastlewark is. A place we can call our own."

[01:25:42] **David:** "Well, I, I find too that the things that we don't say sometimes say a lot more. And since you're such a learned person that was interested in studying everything, I just can't help but wonder why dragons are so taboo here?"

[01:25:58] **Esther:** Roll Diplomacy.

[01:26:01] **David:** Is that also secret?

[01:26:02] **Esther:** Yes, that is also secret.

[01:26:04] **Esther:** "Well, you know, they're large terrifying creatures, and if you attract the attention of a dragon and it goes well for a while then it's, it's great. But we live longer than some people of other ancestries and we have to worry about hundreds of years of life. If you get on the wrong side of a dragon, say the wrong thing, do one little thing that annoys them, that gets you on their bad side.

[01:26:34] **Esther:** Then you have to worry for hundreds of years. And why go to the trouble of doing all that when you could just avoid it in the first place?"

[01:26:40] **David:** "I suppose, but I think... I mean, not all dragons are the same. Or are you suggesting that all dragons look alike or behave the same way to you?"

[01:26:50] **Esther:** "Oh no, no, no. Of course not. Of course not. I have a lot of respect for the--" and he's going to look at Nommie -- "the multitudinous ancestries of dragons and their multitudinous cultures and individualities. Absolutely. Absolutely. No, no offense intended. Sometimes it's just like, you... you take a mint from someone's home and you didn't realize that it meant that much to them. The mint meant that much to them. And then they just hold a grudge against you forever for taking that one little thing. You know, I've never felt like I wanted to put myself in a position like that.

[01:27:28] **Esther:** So, um, I just find it better not to. You know what I mean?"

[01:27:35] **David:** Can I secret Perception that?

[01:27:38] **Esther:** Yeah, absolutely. Or you could roll Society.

[01:27:43] **Esther:** You can tell this topic is really uncomfortable for him. It, it hits way too close to home, and whatever he talked about with Temerity is still very fresh in his mind. He just, he just is babbling now, and he's trying to like, catch himself and seem like the smooth operator he normally is, but something is rattling him.

[01:28:01] **David:** "Well, in any case, I think that it really goes both ways. I mean, a dragon's memory is long, and you're right. They can hold grudges. But I think similarly, they can also hold a lot of gratitude especially if they're, you know, well, well taken care of, I mean, you definitely went out of your way to make sure that, you know, as we were waiting Nommie and I were given quite comfortable, um, suites, and so we definitely appreciate that."

[01:28:28] **Esther:** "They are comfortable aren't they?"

[01:28:33] **David:** "No complaints. It was, it was wonderful."

[01:28:35] **Esther:** "Thank you. It's like, who wouldn't want to spend some time in a lavishly appointed suite with endless excellent food and reading materials, and little gadgets that you can't find anywhere else in the world. I mean, half the time, I want to go down there myself to take a vacation from all my kingly duties. I'm glad you think they're comfortable. No complaints?"

[01:28:56] **David:** "Yeah. If you're going to be detained, it might as well be in comfort."

[01:28:58] **Esther:** "That's my thought *exactly*. Detention is a little bit of a strong word. Ah... I prefer to think of it as a staycation."

[01:29:09] **David:** "Yeah. A forced chance to relax and..."

[01:29:14] **Esther:** "You know, ah, yes, I... I'm, I'm glad you found it comfortable. I'm glad you found a comfortable. Um, so tell me about your travels."

[01:29:22] **David:** "Well, I mean, there's not much to tell really. I mean, as you can tell, you know, we haven't been traveling for that long. I'm a bit young, uh, for traveling, but it's just been quite a journey, learning about different things and seeing different sights."

[01:29:37] **Esther:** "And what's your favorite place you've been to?"

[01:29:40] **David:** "Well, so far here. I mean, like you said, there's just so much to do, um, so much to experience and we were really hoping to see more of the Festival of Flight once it really goes underway."

[01:29:54] **Esther:** "The Festival. It is amazing. Of all the festivals we have here, this is the one that I envisioned just being what we're known for. The Festival of Flight! And what is more amazing than flying? It's captivated so many people throughout the ages. And I mean, some people can do it on their own, but a lot of us can't, and who wouldn't want to harness the power of flight, and be known for that. I mean, incredible. That's why I, I try to get our airship shipyards funded all the time. Why I try to have all these centers of research, have endlessly deep pockets to pull from so that we can produce things like that."

[01:30:31] **Esther:** "And this year, it's going to be really special. There's always these balloons, the airship. Sometimes they crash, but everybody makes it out okay. All these demonstrations. Honestly, though, this year has been... *a lot*. I'm somewhat responsible for a lot of the planning, but there's a committee with the Scholarium and the Aerie and all of these places... endless meetings, you know how it is."

[01:30:53] **Esther:** "If you have other things going on, it can be quite a lot. I'm glad the two of you are here because I think you may be able to help me. I want

you to enjoy the festival and take a few days to really soak in everything Brastlewark has to offer, everything can offer you.

[01:31:10] **Esther:** I could also use your help making sure things go off without a hitch, shall we say. The truth is I have a few projects I need to have funded that -- nothing to do with the, the place on the hill, let's call it -- other things, institutions, new centers, all that. The money doesn't just grow on trees. And I have persuaded one of the richest people in all of Absalom to attend the festival this year.

[01:31:42] **Esther:** And if we impress this donor -- they're very mysterious, I don't know a lot about them -- if we impress them, I think we could be set forever. It's very important things go well. And I'm just a little worried that they might not go well, you know?"

[01:31:59] **David:** "Well, I don't know much about, you know, Temerity, like he said. You know, we just met each other, but you know, he's good friends with, with Ember, and so if Ember trusts him, you know, I trust him, too. And I think that, by extension, if we can help you, and it seems like it's okay, that seems, sounds good to me."

[01:32:22] **Fai:** "Well, of course, you know, I will help you in any way I can help. Merely ask and it's yours."

[01:32:29] **Esther:** "I owe you, but if you would be willing to help me this one more time, I would be so grateful."

[01:32:38] **Esther:** All right.

[01:32:38] **Fai:** I will have the look in my eyes of, "oh yeah, you definitely owe me, bro." But with love.

[01:32:45] **Esther:** "I am under a tremendous amount of pressure as, as the king of Brastlewark. The vision is mine to maintain. The, the collaborations between all of these institutions and the endless politicking, mine to maintain. The relations with the House Thruene, mine to maintain. And well, to keep everything going smoothly and to, to honor the vision I have for Brastlewark, I need to have my fingers in a few different mint jars, shall we say.

[01:33:15] **Esther:** Well, let's just say that maybe I, I got my fingers in a couple of different candy jars, and the owners of those jars may, uh, each think that I was doing them a favor, and now, might each want to follow up on that. And it's

creating a bit of a stressful situation for me. I mean, they are so unreasonable to deal with.

[01:33:42] **Esther:** I would be really grateful if you could just keep your senses alert for anything strange... er going on around town, and if there is a series of upsets that have nothing to do with the usual explosions and merry-makings that, that seem sinister, if you could let me know. And if you can take care of it, you will be richly, richly rewarded."

[01:34:12] **Fai:** "Would you like to be a little bit more specific, so that we are better able to aid you?"

[01:34:18] **Esther:** Hmm. I am going to roll Diplomacy for Temerity secretly, but you have a little bit of a bonus on this check because you are very close to King DTF.

[01:34:31] **Justin:** I am adding a note to King Drum Thornfiddle's little bio that I'm keeping, which is, "has a thing for mints" and just wanted to share that with you all.

[01:34:40] **Esther:** Thank you.

[01:34:41] **Esther:** He gives another look at Oom and is like "I've always wanted to find a place -- to *make* a place -- our people could call home." And he's going to gesture at the mural on one end of this room. "We had a home once. Thousands and thousands of years ago. We were driven from it. Not all of us, but a lot of us and well, whoever we left behind, they don't care about us. They've never tried to help us. All we have in this plane is *us*. Nobody else -- none of these gods -- have ever tried to stop what can happen to us. None of these other peoples have cared enough to partner with us, to figure out how to stop what can happen to us. And I just want a place where we can call *home*."

[01:35:37] **Esther:** Where we can be safe from this thing, this Bleaching that happens to us. And I, I knew early in my life that I would do anything to make that happen. And I have done, I have done hard things, but it gave me Brastlewark.

[01:35:58] **Esther:** But in the past 60 years, I've courted investors, and I've given the institutions the money, and we're no closer to finding out what will stop the Bleaching or reverse it. We can keep people's colors bright here, but we don't know anything, and I started to get little impatient, I suppose you could

say. I thought maybe I could reach out to some people who might have other perspectives on it.

[01:36:27] **Esther:** So I reached out to some kindred of ours who left the surface world a long time ago. You know, a, a friend of a friend of an associate's knew someone... down below, through some deals. I didn't ask. You know, Temerity, it's not professional to inquire about a lot of these things, but they made some introductions and, well, invited a couple of our, our long-lost kindred up here to Brastlework. They don't suffer from the Bleaching the way we do, and I just wanted to know why. I thought maybe they knew why. I thought maybe we could all work together in peace. Well, that went fine up to a point, but I, um, I also may have reached out to someone else, someone from the old country. Well, *she* has been around a long time, since like the beginning, as I understand it.

[01:37:22] **Esther:** And I thought that maybe she might be able to help us. She, she says she can. But she's a little demanding, a little, little bit of a tight leash. I mean, I thought House Thrune was a situation, but now I'm thinking I've gotten myself into another situation. And um, I think if, if they knew I was working with her, it would be bad because they don't like her.

[01:37:44] **Esther:** And she wants me to deliver something on them. And some... thing I've never even heard of, and I don't know what it is. And I may have some guests staying long term downstairs, and their king may not be happy about that. It's a bit of a situation. I feel like if something were to happen at the festival, if all of this were to come to a head, could just be messy, and I need it to not be messy."

[01:38:10] **Fai:** "Well, my friend, this is already fucking messy, first of all, I'll tell you that." Um, me to you, boss, when he says the old country, does that to me mean the old country, like where we come from? So he made a deal with somebody. Like a different kind of deal?

[01:38:32] **Esther:** Um.

[01:38:33] **Fai:** You know, like a contract?

[01:38:34] **Justin:** I'm really getting the sense of, like, of the farm land, where like the grandparents, you know, work. That's my vision of old country.

[01:38:43] **David:** I don't know. There are just a lot of pronouns. So I think Oom's drinking more.

[01:38:47] **Esther:** He is like guzzling. Yeah, he, that was very intentionally, a long rambling, "fuck, I fucked up and I can unburden myself now." So you might ask him what he means by the old country.

[01:38:59] **Fai:** Okay.

[01:38:59] **Justin:** By 'her...'

[01:39:01] **Fai:** Let me ask you a question before that. He is from around wherever I'm from, or like where's he from? Do I know, I should know.

[01:39:11] **Esther:** You don't know where he's from.

[01:39:13] **Fai:** Okay. All right. Okay. Then I'll just say, "Well I have several questions, but let's start with, when you say 'someone from the old country,' you know, I make certain assumptions. It kind of sounds to me like a, you know, like a contract and like that kind of thing. What, what do you mean? What, what are you talking about?"

[01:39:36] **Esther:** "Well, when I say the old country, I mean the place my people came from a long, long time ago. The First World."

[01:39:43] **Fai:** "*That* old country. I see. " So who-- do I want to ask you this question? I'm wondering what, who is she? Should I ask this later, or should I not ask?"

[01:40:02] **Esther:** He's going to take another -- down another glass of bready and then pour himself another one.

[01:40:08] **Esther:** "Might as well tell you. All right. You know, professional networks being what they are, you, you hear of people who can do you certain favors. I've heard of her from a few different sources through the decades. She styles herself, Queen Frilogarma. She's an entity who lives down below, and she's from the old country.

[01:40:38] **Esther:** She's been here a while, as far as I can tell, and she is willing to do things in exchange for favors. She's very powerful. And I thought maybe she could do a few things for me, which I think she can. It's just, I have to deliver to her, you know."

[01:40:56] **David:** Does that name mean anything to me?

[01:40:59] **Fai:** Does that name mean anything to me? I'm pretty sure I know that name.

[01:41:04] **Esther:** Yes. That would be a secret Nature check from Oom. Temerity, this name definitely means something to you. Your friend Neriani often spoke of her lady, Frilogarma.

[01:41:18] **Esther:** Oom, this name means absolutely nothing to you. Never heard it before.

[01:41:24] **Fai:** When she spoke of her lady, what was I able to get from that? That she was beholden to her in some way that the, her lady was like her, her patron or what?

[01:41:40] **Esther:** You tell me. Do you want to have asked her about it in detail?

[01:41:45] **Fai:** Yeah, definitely. You know, if they, periodically over the years would meet up and hang out in the woods and party with the satyrs or have tea or whatever, I would think that over the years, he would periodically like ask, some questions about her, especially given that I'm sure she was mentioned like, in her tales and everything. So if she, well, if she was invoked in whatever way, he would have eventually gotten as much information as seemed reasonable to ask for. Not like pushed, but just been like, okay, so what's up with that?

[01:42:24] **Esther:** She would have spoken about Frilogarma. There's the 'my lady Frilogarma....' though you would have gotten a sense that it's like half a joking title and half a very serious one. Like, maybe something that started out as more of a, an in-joke between friends and drifted into something with a little bit more distance, though she never said that explicitly. It's just, you would have gotten that sense. She would have told you that she and Frilogarma have known each other for a long, long time, even more time than you could easily understand. And that they have been very close with each other for a lot of that time. And that where Frilogarma goes, Neriani wanted to follow.

[01:43:26] **Fai:** Okay. Noted. I don't know if I'm gonna say anything about that at this point. I do have another question. The assumption here is that Frilogarma is like some sort of fey entity?

[01:43:39] **Esther:** Yes.

[01:43:40] **Fai:** Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. "What, what did you promise her?"

[01:43:49] **Esther:** [sighs in character] "I mean, [a] few things here and there, and then it just kept snowballing. I... I promised her that I would do my best to help sort things out with the Deep Gnomes. They and Frilogarma have some kind of long ongoing thing that I don't really understand or care about, but I told her I do my best to help her smooth it over with them.

[01:44:20] **Esther:** And I told them I do my best to help them deal with her. And now it's all a mess. And then, with more information, she would give me, the more, the higher the price was. And now, she says that she knows the secret to why our kindred don't Bleach and they won't tell me anything about it, despite the fact that I put them up in extremely good lodgings for quite some time now! And given them access to a great deal of research from our point of view! Some people are just difficult, you know?

[01:44:58] **Esther:** So in order to get her to tell me, she wants something called the Sword of Time. Now what that is. I have no idea. Nobody here has any idea. She may have made it up for all I know.

[01:45:13] **Fai:** Is that something that I have ever heard of in any kind of legends from my mom or history lessons, or do I need to make an Arcana check? Like what do you got for me?

[01:45:24] **Esther:** I think that would be... Nature? Nature.

[01:45:31] **David:** Can I roll anyway? [giggles]

[01:45:33] **Esther:** You can roll anyway. I would also let you roll Draconic Lore.

[01:45:37] **David:** Should I tell you my modifier or okay.

[01:45:40] **Esther:** Yeah, if you tell me your modifier, I'm happy to roll it for you. Temerity, this name doesn't ring a bell. Just -- this term, Sword of Time, not really.

[01:45:49] **David:** Plus seven for Draconic Lore.

[01:45:51] **Esther:** Oom, it sounds very familiar to you. It sounds like a name that was a little bit unusual for a Draconic name, that is one of the names given to you by Mengkare. A name that seemed almost more like a title in some way.

[01:46:10] **Justin:** Wait, just clar-- Mengkare called Oom the Sword of Time?

[01:46:15] **Esther:** No.

[01:46:16] **David:** No, no, no. It's just a name, I, I have.

[01:46:19] **Esther:** Yeah.

[01:46:20] **David:** I won't say anything.

[01:46:21] **Esther:** Okay.

[01:46:22] **Fai:** I would like to Perceive Oom, please.

[01:46:25] **Esther:** All right, let me, let me find your modifiers. Okay. Oh! Yeah, no question. You can tell Oom is keeping something inside.

[01:46:38] **Fai:** Okay. That's fair.

[01:46:40] **Justin:** 'Get out those reading glasses, the library is open,' kind of read?

[01:46:46] **Esther:** Yeah. Get out those reading glasses. The library is open.

[01:46:51] **Fai:** Very well. Very well. Okay, so "Let me, let me-- Look, what it sounds like you're telling me is that... you have taken some of your kindred hostage in exchange for information that -- is this information they have refused to give you, or they're telling you that they don't have?"

[01:47:25] **Esther:** "They claim they don't have it."

[01:47:28] **Fai:** "Well, okay. Now... from afar, it's certainly possible that they're keeping it from you and that they're keeping it from you because you're holding them hostage, or it's, it's very, it's also maybe possible that, because your people who've been separated for so long, if this is not an affliction that they experience, it's not something that they are avoiding. It's something that you are all potentially prone to that they are immune to. So, like, it never happens there. It only happens to those of your people who move to, to this plane of existence, or to the surface on this plane of existence. So it's entirely possible that they don't even know, you know? You, you developed a common cold that they don't even get down there.

[01:48:28] **Fai:** Have you considered this?"

[01:48:32] **Esther:** His whole frame just sags in on itself, and he stares sadly into his glass of brandy.

[01:48:39] **Esther:** "They... there has to be a reason. It can't just be another dead end."

[01:48:51] **Fai:** "Okay. Well, there's, there's a lot of questions as to how you got from zero to, to hostage situation. That's neither here nor there. I believe what I understood from some of the other things that you said was that you told her that you would like help her parlay with them, but you told them that you would help them overtake her, or what exactly did you promise to everybody? What, what were the words that you said? What was the terms of the contracts, my friend?"

[01:49:27] **Esther:** Puts his head in his hands. "It's just-- Temerity, do you think I've become That Guy?"

[01:49:40] **Fai:** "W-- well, I have to tell you I'm a little bit worried. Yes. Like, I believe that you have very noble intentions here, but I think that maybe you were so focused on them that I think maybe you focused so hard on the end justifying the means that you have stopped to look at the means that you are using."

[01:50:07] **Esther:** "It's hard being a king. I love it. Don't get me wrong. I was made for this. Sometimes things just get away from you, you know. When you're like, how did I wind up making this series of decisions? And now I've got to make even more of them. So... what I said. They -- they have some kind of long ongoing cold war that sometimes heats up.

[01:50:28] **Esther:** I told them that I would help them gather intel on her and provide them with resources that we have here in Brastlewark that could possibly help them defeat her forever. And then I may have told her that I could provide her with resources about gnomes that we have here in Brastlewark that could possibly help her-- not defeat them forever, they are our people after all -- but deescalate things and...

[01:50:54] **Esther:** Well, I haven't, I haven't, you know, paid in full, shall we say? And now everybody wants payment."

[01:51:01] **Fai:** "Okay. So you, you, you promise them both information to fell the other. Is that, is that what I'm getting?"

[01:51:11] **Esther:** "Well, fell is a strong word. I told her that I could, maybe help smooth things over culturally or with some magical aid, but I was never planning to give her as much as I was planning to give them, because if somebody is going to come out on top, I would rather it be, you know, our people."

[01:51:31] **Fai:** "Yes, of course. Okay. Well--"

[01:51:33] **Esther:** "I was hoping maybe everything could just be smoothed over, you know, maybe we all meet up. We have a huge party, they all show up to one of our festivals, and everybody gets along. I know that's a stupid idea, but..."

[01:51:45] **Fai:** "Well, here's the thing. Many times in the course of history has a fucking killer party, you know, fixed some deep societal ills. I'm not going to save that that's not the case, but you also have to put in the, you have to put in the work to also aid the societal ills. And my concern here is that yes, it would be great if maybe you had approached your, your kindred a little more gently, I think. Well, take me, take me back to how that started. How did they... did, did you invite them and say, "oh, come study with me," and you lock them up, or what? How did this go down? Take me on a walk here."

[01:52:30] **Esther:** "We were introduced through the acquaintance of a friend's friend's colleague's friend's associate's -- and, well, I didn't want it to be widely known. After all, you also have House Thrune to think about, which is kind of my backup plan, because since we have protection from them and from, you know, the "may his cloven hoof rest upon you" himself, who's going to charge in here and really try to take us out? Except maybe --" and then he remembers that Oom is there and is like, "So, you know, it's a lot of threads Temerity. A lot of threads at once in my mind, but that's what it takes to be a visionary."

[01:53:09] **Esther:** So I invited them here and we've done some secret collaboration. And at first, you know, they were staying downstairs completely at their own ease. And they were collaborating with a few of our most trusted academics here. And that happened for several years, maybe a couple of decades. And then it seemed things were going well.

[01:53:30] **Esther:** And then it seemed that they felt they couldn't be of help to us, but I suspected maybe they suspected what I was doing, and they willfully weren't wanting to help us. I just feel like they must have some reason. So I was like, 'maybe we can all work together here to find out what it is.' And they were like, 'we just want to go home.'

[01:53:55] **Esther:** And, you know, I thought, why not have them stay here a little longer? Just a little longer to see if we can all find a reason. And well, now all they do is complain about the lavishly appointed suites and all the books and the gadgets and the food."

[01:54:12] **Fai:** "Okay. I see. Now you spoke of my mother earlier. You told me how much you admire her.

[01:54:26] **Fai:** Let's talk about one of the, the most important lessons that my mother instilled in me, which is foresight. You can't have a plan if you don't know how the plan ends, and you need to have multiple options so that when one potentiality comes into play, then you can, you know, switch to plan D, E, F, G, Z, whatever, right? It seems to me like maybe, maybe you didn't have a plan and maybe instead of considering the future and what would happen after you were so focused on the goal that you didn't consider, how you're going to dig yourself out from this one. Because, step back, my friend: yes, it's lavishly appointed, but these people want to go home. They're imprisoned, are they not?"

[01:55:24] **Esther:** " Well, that's not a very nice word."

[01:55:26] **Fai:** "No, it's not a very nice thing you've done to them."

[01:55:33] **Esther:** He just looks like a, like a puppy who realizes that he has done something very bad.

[01:55:39] **Fai:** "There's some way to get out of this. There's some way to get out of everything, but you have to think, you have to think things out, first of all. I don't know how we're going to do this, but I think the first thing you need to do is make amends with these, with these people who are your people, as you've stated. You know, in the beginning, you could've figured out how to, how to establish some kind of relations between them and her so that whatever happens happens.

[01:56:08] **Fai:** But you know, like maybe you could have smoothed things over, but this is too complicated now. So right now there's a big knot, and we're going to have to like, oh, we're going to have to like, take a tiny little needle so that we can get a little string and then pull it and pull it and pull it. So, yes, I'm going to be here with you to help you.

[01:56:25] **Fai:** Oom, honestly, if you decided to turn around and run the fuck out of here right now, I would understand. And honestly, before he started saying the name of who he was dealing with, I was going to tell you like, "Hey,

are you sure you even want to hear this?" So like, you know, make your own decisions and understand that if you don't want to be involved in this, I, I support you in that decision, but there are people we can help here, right? And my friend is one of them, but there are other people that we can help too."

[01:56:57] **David:** How many cups of alcohol am I, am I in right now?

[01:56:59] **Esther:** Several. And I actually need a Fortitude save. I believe that would give you a bonus that you probably will not need, but good to know. So you are, you are at many cups of alcohol.

[01:57:13] **David:** I think I might non-sequitur. [laughs]

[01:57:16] **David:** "So, so earlier, there was this thing about, about Vroth'rien and your past relationship? Kind of want to revisit that cause I don't really understand any of this."

[01:57:28] **Esther:** He's just, the king is just going to be like. "Yeah! This guy Temerity met like a long time ago and they spent some weekend together on a lake somewhere and it, you know, it was good, but then apparently it's not good."

[01:57:41] **David:** I'm going to look at, at Temerity and be like, "Hey, not judging, but kind of curious."

[01:57:48] **Fai:** "Okay, well, I mean, you know. Sometimes in the course of your life and in doing different jobs in different places, you meet people and they seem interesting, and they're very handsome, and they have a very like commanding presence or whatever.

[01:58:02] **Fai:** And they're like, okay, that's kind of interesting, whatever. You do, a job, you, whatever happened, you know, like you kind of like snipe at each other, but it's a little bit sexy, whatever! You know, like it's... so yeah, like it happened like maybe a few times or, but you know, that doesn't make someone your ex! And honestly, I, you know, I have some thoughts about, like, I think he's a little bit too obsessed with *me*.

[01:58:29] **Fai:** I think that maybe the whole rea-- Well, you don't even know about this thing of mine that he fucking took. But like, I really think that the whole reason that he took it is because he's just like, he was so upset that when I said, "Hey, man, you're doing some really sketchy shit. Like, it really, like, he felt judged and, but he was judging himself.

[01:58:49] **Fai:** And so he like lashed out at me and like maybe his enemy, but secretly I think that he's like, he, he wants my approval too much. And that's why it hurts him. That's what I think. But you know, that's neither here nor there. I'm glad to give you the gossip if that's what you so desire. He, he... I don't think he's a very good guy, but, uh, maybe I'm a little bit biased because of all of the shit that I've seen him do over the course of however many years this has been. A decade, a century. A century? Over a century. I don't know, a long fucking time.

[01:59:26] **Fai:** Does that answer your question?"

[01:59:30] **David:** "Not really sure I had a specific question, but it certainly tells me a lot."

[01:59:35] **Esther:** "Wait, this guy took something from you? Nobody steals from my friend. I will write him a letter demanding as king of a city that he give it back to you."

[01:59:51] **Fai:** "You know what? My friend, that is, that's a beautiful thought, but I think right now you're a little bit overextended. So perhaps let's resolve the issues you currently have on your plate. It's a very full plate. And then we'll, we'll think about that. Do you know he's on the ledger? Zorzi knows all about him."

[02:00:13] **David:** "The letter sounds like a really cool idea. I mean, this guy hurt Ember and we should make him pay."

[02:00:20] **Fai:** "Well, we will, but you know, we have other shit to do right now."

[02:00:27] **Esther:** "I'll get on that letter. I just want to take us back to a couple of things really quickly. All right. So when I first went to them, I was like, 'I'll help you.' And then I went to her and I thought, 'I'm a smooth talker. I've got vision. We'll work it out. It'll all be diplomatic.' And then I was like, 'well, I'll just tell her what she wants to hear for now. And in time, I'll talk her into a reasonable point of view,' but it kept spiraling, you know? And now we're here, but the thing about your mother--" And he's like, pretty drunk at this point. "That's really wise. It's just, well, honestly, I was just thinking of, you know, Celwynvian. What was her plan?"

[02:01:14] **Fai:** That was one of the things that she busted into, or...

[02:01:18] **Esther:** Yeah.

[02:01:18] **Fai:** Can you refresh me please?

[02:01:20] **Esther:** She went into a city in the middle of the Mierani Forest and took a lot of shit from a, a zone that you could say was a bit of a cold war itself. And she did this all by herself. It was, it was quite a feat and she was very, very, very proud. And you were very proud of her. And then she returned all these reclaimed artifacts to her people.

[02:01:48] **Esther:** Come to think of it. She hasn't really been back to Crying Leaf in the years since then, but.

[02:01:59] **Fai:** Wait, Crying Leaf is where she took it from?

[02:02:03] **Esther:** It's near where she took it from.

[02:02:05] **Fai:** Okay. So she has, she hasn't returned to the area from which she--

[02:02:08] **Esther:** Yeah.

[02:02:10] **Fai:** Okay. "Well, I think part of her plan was don't shit where you eat, man, you know? Like-- we have, we have multiple places to call home. So you know, if she can't go back there for 50, 70, a hundred years, whatever, you know, like, okay, big deal, we'll go to the Barrowood. We'll go to Greengold. But you know, this is, this is the place that you, like, you have set up. You have created this, you, you are connected, and you don't want to be separate from it. So like, it's, it's a little bit different don't you think?"

[02:02:44] **Fai:** Oh, and also she didn't make any, but I don't think she made anybody any deals. She just went in and did what she does. And she didn't really--" Did she, did she involve other people and machinations and scheming? That I'm aware of?"

[02:02:58] **Esther:** Sometimes, your mother doesn't share her plans. Probably out of a maternal instinct to keep you safe. So...

[02:03:03] **Fai:** That's probably true, yeah.

[02:03:05] **Esther:** You didn't know a ton about this operation.

[02:03:08] **Fai:** Okay, so I won't say that then. But you know, I'll just be like, "You know what the other thing is, it's a good point that you bring that about, because there, there were consequences. She *can't* go back there, you know, for a while.

[02:03:20] **Fai:** And if she, if she wanted to, it would be, it would be troublesome for her. Now, you don't have the luxury that she has of just laying low because you're the king of the fucking city. So, you know, it's, it's true that you're very, very smooth and very charming. And it's true that your, you have a very noble intention, but I, I think that if you have not before now, you know, step back and looked around and like really noticed how deep in the hole you continue to have dug yourself is. It seems, it seems like maybe at every point, you were like, when you realized that there was something, there were some big shits, like you were like, 'okay, well, if I dig a little bit deeper, then I can get a little bit further away from the shit.' But you didn't think about the fact that you have to eventually get back to the surface. Am I right?"

[02:04:16] **Esther:** " Well, I just thought I could make another deal with someone to get me back to the surface."

[02:04:20] **Fai:** [deep sigh]

[02:04:22] **Esther:** "You find an air pocket... blows you back up. You know how it is."

[02:04:28] **Fai:** "You know, I-- you've al-- you've always been a very lucky man. And I worry for you. What happens when your luck runs out?"

[02:04:39] **Esther:** "I am going to make this right. I'll let them go. Maybe they'll work with you. Maybe you -- you should meet -- they don't even know you! Yes, I think that's a great idea. Why don't the two of you meet them, and we'll all go from there."

[02:04:57] **Fai:** "You know, honestly, I, I actually think that might be the best case scenario." How drunk does Oom look? Like, pretty sure, like hiccuping, swaying? Okay. I wonder if it seems like a good idea for us to do this now or wait for Oom to sleep this off.

[02:05:27] **Esther:** I would vote for waiting to sleep it off.

[02:05:29] **Fai:** I think that's, that's probably pretty wise. Okay. "You know, I think it's a great idea for us to talk to them. I think that Oom has, has enjoyed

your brandy and could maybe use a rest before we take upon such a, such a task. And you know, in the morning. Everything's a little brighter in the morning, right? Literally or not literally. And so, I think, I think it's a nice way to start the day to come in and say, "Hey, something has gotten real fucked up here, but we're going to try to fix it."

[02:06:10] **Esther:** " Yeah. Agreed. Where is that fellow who was at my observatory with you all? Z. Professor Z. Why isn't he here with you, if you were with him?"

[02:06:27] **Fai:** "Well, we were all trying to go a little bit into, you know, like take a little bit of a vacation from the city because of how much attention we had drawn ourselves. But because, you know, I had, I had Nommie swaddled, so-- very cute, so everybody in the street stopped me, and they were able to continue going.

[02:06:52] **Fai:** So, you know, I think he just made it to the woods and probably is blowing something up right now."

[02:06:58] **Esther:** "Good fellow. That's the spirit of Brastlewark. We'll send him a message saying I'm not mad anymore in the morning."

[02:07:06] **Fai:** Alex, I don't know if this was in character or not. I remember Alex saying that, that Z like really admires the king and, like, thinks he thinks he's done something cool. And like, is like an admirable figure. I don't remember if that was in character or not. Alex, do you recall?

[02:07:26] **Alex:** I think it was in character, but I don't remember.

[02:07:28] **Fai:** Okay.

[02:07:29] **Esther:** I think there have been a couple moments when Z got at something like that in character.

[02:07:33] **Alex:** Yeah.

[02:07:33] **Fai:** Okay. Okay. Okay.

[02:07:34] **Fai:** "You know, even though we've just become friends, I'm very fond of Z. I think he, I think he has something very special. And when you send, when you, when you send your message to him, you know, make it a little bit, uh, put a little admiration in it.

[02:07:55] **Fai:** He's, he's a great fan of yours, and he, I think that he could really use the, the boost boost that it would give him to know that the king knows who he is and knows his work because I think he's working on-- you know, I think he has some, he has some interesting things going on in there, and a little encouragement can't do any bad for anybody, right?"

[02:08:15] **Esther:** " You are so right, Temerity."

[02:08:17] **Fai:** " These are the ways you should be using your power. To empower other people, you know, think about this."

[02:08:23] **Esther:** "So he really thinks that much of me?"

[02:08:26] **Fai:** "He does. I barely know him, and I've heard him talk of you."

[02:08:29] **Esther:** "Well, he has excellent taste, then. I will write him a glowing letter. If you like him, then I like him."

[02:08:38] **David:** " Is it more or less ominous if we say we're alive and doing well?"

[02:08:42] **Fai:** "I think that if Z is, is being, given his flowers, so to speak, I'm not sure he would even notice if it was ominous or not, you know? It could say like, we killed your friends, but you are working on something great, and I'm not sure, you know, like, I don't mean that as a judgment either. Like-"

[02:09:00] **David:** "No, you're probably right."

[02:09:02] **Fai:** "He has got a very good outlook, and it's very positive, and it's focused on, on the good things. So for him, the good things are the discoveries and the work that he can do. So even if, even if there was something horrible amiss that he would, he might miss it just because of the good stuff that he's focusing on, you know?"

[02:09:20] **David:** "Yeah. All right."

[02:09:21] **Fai:** "And the, the potential explosions, I think."

[02:09:25] **Esther:** "I'll make sure he gets word in the morning. I'll show you to some nice rooms. Upstairs, not downstairs. And then we can all sleep it off. Make a fresh start." And he's going to open the office door and gesture you into the hallway and will lead you to two also very, very lavish guests suites,

incredibly comfy beds and pillows. Ornately carved beds. Probably have like canopies and curtains and such, and you will be able to have a very sound sleep should you wish to do so in the home of king DTF.

[02:10:03] **Esther:** Let's leave things there for now. Everybody, finally, after a very, very long Fireday... getting some much needed rest and having some answers and probably many, many more questions about everything going on.

[02:10:21] **Esther:** How are your characters feeling, right now as we wind down.

[02:10:26] **Justin:** Ember is very tired, and Justin is very sad because I forgot that Ember only heals two hit points on a full night's rest.

[02:10:36] **Alex:** I'll just burn you again.

[02:10:39] **Justin:** That sounds good. So yeah, he's very exhausted from a full day of fighting, and he's happy to, you know, be somewhere kind of cozy. He's worried that, you know, but he trusts that that friend Temerity is good at sneaking.

[02:10:55] **Fai:** Temerity is-- there's a lot going on. Temerity did not-- Temerity had like a sip and was like, 'let me, I need my faculties about myself to listen to all of this goddamn mess.' And he, he truly believes that his friend can turn this around in some way. Whether that's a way that, that he's going to survive, I don't, I don't know, but turn it around in such a way that he can fix the fact that he has, he's imprisoned some people in very nice digs in his castle. You know, like, he can at least make some, he can right the ship in some ways. If it crashes into the fey realm, that's another matter. But like what's happening in this realm is something that we kind of need to focus on in this moment what's happening in this castle, we need to focus on, and then we can expand out from there, I think. That's where Temerity's at. But also, probably taking another bath because you never-- like, when you have the facilities available, you must use them. He's, he's been sleeping on the road and dirt for so long that he's like, let me just, let me just soak. Let me just make myself a crown of bubbles. That's what's going on

[02:12:11] **Alex:** Z is definitely tired and wanted to just have a regular camping trip, not be attacked by a giant bat. A little bit awkward about this person who has taken them in but not anything beyond that. And, and yeah. Ready, ready for regular night's sleep.

[02:12:29] **David:** Yeah, I'm not sure Oom's any less confused now, after having talked more and learned more. I think tipsy, and I think probably focusing more on the Vroth'rien plot line because it's more easily understood than the, the other stuff that's floating around about, you know, forced vacations and permanent imprisonment.

[02:12:52] **Esther:** I will keep that in mind as I think about the next time we're all together. As always, thank you all so much for being here. It's always a delight to be your GM and to watch everything you get up to and to tell this story with you, and thank you to everyone watching and listening for being our audience and for being in this story with us. Thanks so much for joining us this episode and for being in this story with us.

[02:13:29] **Esther:** We really appreciate you being here.

[02:13:32] **Esther:** If you enjoyed this episode, please feel welcome to let us know by leaving us a comment,

[02:13:38] **Esther:** liking this video, subscribing to our channel, and telling your friends about us... or any combination of the above.

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[02:14:23] **Esther:** Thank you so much for tuning in.

[02:14:26] **Esther:** Until we're together again, remember:

[02:14:29] **Esther:** tell the stories you most want to encounter in the world.