Episode 11

# Land Acknowledgement

[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, and to the indigenous peoples of all the lands that you are joining us from.

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# Rainbow Roll Network

[00:00:41] **Esther:** Content notices for this episode include: allusions to sensual content, alcohol use, references to imprisonment, references to violence, and strong language.

 Hello, everyone. Welcome back to Chromythica. I am so, so excited to be back again and to be here with my friends and wonderful players, and with you, our audience. We are a Pathfinder 2E actual play campaign, and I am your GM, Esther Wallace. And I use she and they pronouns.

[00:02:33] **David:** Hi, I'm David. I use he him pronouns, and I play Oom, our party's gnome Sorcerer, who uses any combination of she, him, or they pronouns, and Nommie Oom's pseudo-dragon familiar, who uses he / him pronouns.

[00:02:48] **Alex:** I'm Alex. I use they / them pronouns, and I'm playing Professor Z, who is an academic and Inventor. And he has an invention, Buster, who is a clanging pile of pots and pans.

[00:03:01] **Justin:** I'm Justin. I use he / him pronouns. I am playing Ember, our canine Barbarian, a copper and white two-tone Husky who has been Awakened by forces he does not understand.

[00:03:15] **Fai:** Hi, I'm Fairuz. You can call me Fai if you like. My pronouns are she and they, and I play Temerity Vane, our tief- elf Rogue and new adviser to the king.

[00:03:29] **Esther:** Thanks, y'all. So, in Chromythica, we have a tradition of asking a warm-up question to help ourselves get into character and into the world of the game. And today's warm-up question is what is your favorite smell? Tell us about a memory you associate with that smell.

[00:03:49] **Fai:** "Well, you know, I have a lot of favorite smells, but I think that ultimately the one that I treasure the most is the smell of the open road, you know? Just that like, kind of dirt and rocks and dust when you're leaving somewhere and heading somewhere new. That's my favorite smell. I have too many memories to count of that departure and the promise that it holds.

So I think it sounds a little weird to say dirt and rocks is my favorite smell, but it's what the smell represents for you."

[00:04:25] **Justin:** "The best smell-- there are many good smells, but the best smell is the-- there is a sweet and spicy smell. There are many bread-making places, but this one is only in some bread-making places. It's spicy and sweet and friend Temerity tells me that this smell comes from a tree from far, far away and it is called cinnamon."

I, I do like this cinnamon, and it occurs a lot in the masters' bakery. I do remember that one time, the first time I smelled this, I ate many things that day. And perhaps I was told that I was a naughty dog, but, but they were very good."

[00:05:24] **Alex:** Professor Z has a favorite smell that is that of-- well, I guess I would consider it invention. So Professor Z, as an inventor, you know... "Sometimes you're in the workshop, and you're putting something together and it's going quite well. And you get, you know, a couple of gears together and, and you get it going really, really fast.

And it starts emitting this sort of like smoking and that smoke just fills the whole workshop. And it's often right before something breaks, but it's also the precipice of something new and, and out of that, you get a brand new invention. And that's what I really love to smell."

[00:06:12] **David:** "My favorite scent is a mingling of, of sea breeze and petrichor. In Hermea, my Aunty Nia lived where the salt met the fresh, and every time I went to hear her stories, that was really the scent that greeted me. So I guess it was really just her scent, and it was the scent of, of home."

# Recap

[00:06:34] **Esther:** Thanks so much y'all. So when we were last in our story, the four of you began your day separated. Ember and Professor Z, you had spent the night in the forest with a gnome Druid who came to your aid as you fended off a giant bat and an odd being neither of you identified, who was determined to get your shinies-- Buster, pots and pans, Orianna's ring-- and to get your shinies potentially at the cost of your lives.

After dealing with a giant bat and this odd being, the gnome invited you to stay in her home for the night, and you gratefully accepted and fell asleep before learning her name. Temerity and Oom, you slept in luxurious quarters in the palace of King Drum Thornfiddle, after having quite a revealing chat with the king the previous evening. You all woke up refreshed after what had been a long day.

Ember, you found your gnome host meditating outside her forest home under a tree in much the same way Orianna used to meditate in the mornings. Z, you mentioned to her that things seemed out of balance in the woods, and she confirmed to you that they are.

She said she doesn't think the strange creatures coming from below the roots of the mountains have anything to do with the research or strange goings-on in Brastlewark. She believes that in general, the goings-on and business of Brastlewark don't imbalance the forest or the land or the river. She also believes the creatures coming from the deep may be fleeing something they fear more than the bright world of the surface... or seeking something.

She told you that at first, the creatures appearing in the forest were not very powerful, but they seem to be increasing in number and skill. You, Z, asked her, if she works alone and she responded, "Do you think anyone would want to work with me?" And reminded you that because she's a Bleachling, a gnome who is experiencing the effects of the Bleaching, she tends to unsettle people. She said that people forget their curiosity and remember their fear when they're around her.

Z, you had never really thought about what it might be like to experience the judgment of gnome society as a Bleachling. After some further conversation, you learned that this gnome's name is Zaelie, and that she's the daughter of Vivi Lilyfrost, owner of Lilyfrost Inn and Tavern in Brastlewark. Zaelie said that it's easy not to think about the Bleaching until it happens to you, and you mused that between this conversation and your uncovering a series of secret experiments, your idea of Brastlewark is being challenged and that this kind of change is good. You then received a Sending from King DTF himself. The message was, "Z, good fellow. Sorry about this mess would love to see you at the palace today. Your friends are here. It's all good. The king."

You felt befuddled about why the king would want to speak to you, but after exchanging mutual invitations to visit your laboratory and Zaelie's home, you and Ember headed back into the city in the hopes you could locate and meet up with your friends.

Temerity and Oom, you woke up determined that you were going to help King DTF examine his life and his choices. You strategized about how you would communicate with the svirfneblin, the Deep Gnomes he's been keeping in 'comfy jail' and discussed Hermean processes of restorative justice. After some lengthy conversation, King DTF acknowledged to you that he really messed up in trying to play both sides with the svirfneblin and Frilogarma, the fey queen of the Court of Ether.

You made your way to the Deep Gnomes being held in the castle, and you learned their names are Irvikollirit and Nimirill, Irvik and Nimri for short. They told you that all they want is to go home and Temerity, you very humbly asked for their perspective and for permission to attempt to help the king make amends with them before they leave Brastlewark.

Ember and Z, it was about this time that you met up with Miv on your way back into the city. And after some discussion, you decided a diplomatic approach to locating your friends was probably best for the time being, but you didn't totally rule out setting things or people on fire if necessary.

Back in the palace, Nimirill wanted to hit King DTF with a large book laying around comfy prison, but after much intercession, she and Irvik hesitantly agreed to stick around Brastlewark for a little bit to see what relationships can be built... although neither one of them forgave Drum for what he's done, and they both expect some sort of renumeration for their troubles. Temerity, you told DTF that his penitence was an example of this being one of his better days. At that, he seemed to have an idea, jumped up and ran from the room, exclaiming, "I've had a genius idea! Everybody stay right here." He ran up to the parlor where Z, Ember, and Miv were waiting patiently to be seen and exclaimed again, "Z, I need your presence. I'll explain on the way down. You are just the fellow to help me." And that is where we left things.

As we left our story last time, Temerity, you were feeling cautiously optimistic.

Z, you felt mostly flattered and a little befuddled that the king would want to see you. It's been a whirlwind of a day.

Ember, you were still totally worried about your friends.

And Oom, you felt like there was a little emotional whiplash going on: that king Drum Thornfiddle had demonstrated both genuine growth, and that you were anxious about not knowing where he took off running to.

# Beginning of Play

[00:12:46] **Esther:** And this is where we'll come back into our story: King DTF, standing excitedly in the doorway of his parlor, like, just vibrating with energy. Miv, looking a little surprised that he's burst through the door. And Ember and Z... He beams at you, Z, and he's like, "Oh! You're just the fellow, just the fellow.

 Hello! I don't mean to be rude, I'm in kind of a hurry. Don't know who you are. You must be the dog Temerity's told me about, Ember. Hello! I am King Drum Thornfiddle of Brastlewark." He says this very seriously. Like it's every day he talks to a dog in this manner.

[00:13:25] **Justin:** Ember is still, like, trying to hide underneath the coffee table, which I assume is extremely ineffective.

[00:13:38] **Esther:** I'm imagining him like lifting it up almost.

[00:13:40] **Justin:** A little bit, yeah. With, like, gnome-sized furniture, for sure.

[00:13:45] **Esther:** "I was told he talks," the king says to Z.

[00:13:48] **Alex:** "Oh, well, it's been quite, quite a day. I mean, yes, there's a lot going on-- and Ember it's okay. I think?"

[00:13:59] **Justin:** "Are you the one who took friend Temerity and friend Oom?"

[00:14:06] **Esther:** "Well, I suppose I am, but you see, dear chap, Temerity and I go way back and here, we were friends-- I'm sure-- long before you were born and anyway, they're downstairs. Come, come. I'll take you to them right now. Everything's good. They're all safe. It's been quite a day for me, too."

[00:14:24] **Alex:** "What's, what is going-- we thought you had arrested them."

[00:14:27] **Esther:** "Well, I did, but that was a mistake. That was before I knew it was Temerity. And, frankly, I thought the dragon was here--

It's complicated. I'm sure Temerity can explain, he-- come! Come, come, come. You are just the fellow I need to help me sort all of this out. Glad you got my message." And he's gonna, like, turn around and start walking back towards these series of elevator lifts just gesturing at you. "Come, come, come. I'll explain what I can on the way down."

[00:14:54] **Justin:** "There were so many words." [cast laughs]

[00:14:58] **Alex:** Is Miv coming with us?

[00:15:00] **Esther:** Oh, Miv is coming with you. Yes. "Well, don't this guy seem interestin'! Huh! Ember, you need me to help you out of there?"

[00:15:11] **Justin:** "What-- so many words! Yes."

[00:15:15] **Esther:** "Here, let, let me lift this table off of you. Now just keep up as best you can. I know it's a lot." They're going to give you scratches behind the ears after they help you out from under the table.

[00:15:28] **Justin:** I appreciate the scratches and will, I suppose, head to the elevator -- very, very confused and worried.

[00:15:35] **Esther:** He's, like, holding it for you. "Ah, yes. Come in, come in. All right. So in, in brief, ah, how to explain this? Temerity and I know each other. We go way back. I asked Temerity to help me with a thing that I did before I founded this city that we're in. And it had to do with the founding of the city we're in. I probably should have been honest with Temerity about that at the time. It involved a dragon, and I'm a little terrified of her, and that's why I'm terrified of your friend's little dragon. But I am accepting Temerity's word that it's all above board, it's all good. And I also have been keeping some people in very comfortable quarters in the basement, but I realize I've really messed up in doing that. And it was wrong of me to do that, especially since they didn't want to be there."

So I'm letting them out. Z, I would like you to be their guide to Brastlewark. You are a very underutilized resource, my friend, and I'm realizing that now. I would like you to show them all our wonderful city has to offer. No cost is too high. I will pay for anything they want to do. And I'd really love you to try to sell them on the fact that we're really cool, and we could use their help and we don't want to be enemies forever. How does that sound?"

[00:16:54] **Alex:** "I, I'm very glad you, you've finally taking notice of me and my work, but I just-- are you sure I'm the best for this? Like, I'm, I'm a bit of an academic and a, you know, inventor."

[00:17:09] **Esther:** "Z... I believe in you. I think you're perfect for this. And frankly, they have no idea who you are, which is really good.

 If it's someone they associate with me too closely, they won't trust you. So it's really to our mutual benefit that it's taken me 'til now to realize I'm really underselling you. And if you walk in there like 'the king has never called me here before I have no idea why,' they'll be more inclined to trust you."

He looks very proud of himself.

[00:17:42] **Alex:** "Well... it is true. You've never called me here before."

[00:17:46] **Esther:** Yes, that is true. See, no need to lie to anyone."

[00:17:54] **Alex:** "Fascinating. Y'know, King DTF, you're not at all what I expected."

[00:18:01] **Esther:** "Well, what were you expecting?"

[00:18:02] **Alex:** "I mean, I guess I just, you know, there are a lot of fairly stuffy academic administrators around here, and I just figured in a city that was built on so much knowledge that you'd be akin to them. But now I, I guess I see that you're, you're a little bit more of a visionary?"

[00:18:24] **Esther:** "Z! Yes! You understand. I'm glad that Temerity has enabled us to really get to know one another.

I think you and I could do great things together. It is my vision that has made Brastlewark what it is. And, well, I know that I haven't been my best visionary self lately, but today is me being the man I can be as my best self, like Temerity said. And I'd like to have more of those days. And I feel like us getting to know one another is just a part of that."

And you're going to reach the basement slash dungeon-- the comfy dungeon!-- And the doors will open. And as the doors open, he turns to Miv and is like, "Who's that? Who are you?"

[00:19:17] **Justin:** "Miv is a friend."

[00:19:19] **Esther:** "Yeah. I'm Miv. Oh, what were you going to say Ember?"

[00:19:25] **Justin:** "Temerity says you are a friend as well? But there are enemies in the dungeon."

[00:19:33] **Esther:** "Oh, no, no, no, no, no, no good fellow. Nobody here is your enemy. And here, Temerity is going to be just through this large chamber and down a little hallway. And I'm very excited for us to all be together. They can explain everything that's happened. And yes, Miv, it's good to meet you. I don't know how you're a part of all of this, but I'm glad you're here. You're in it now."

And he just takes off excitedly down the corridor, going "Temerity, Oom! Irvik and Nimirill! I have your friends." And he's like, off like a rocket, clearly excited. And so, Temerity and Oom, you will see the king just blazing down the hallway towards you and everybody else probably trailing behind.

# Reunions and Introductions

[00:20:18] **Justin:** Does Ember see Oom or Temerity first?

[00:20:21] **Esther:** Hm.

[00:20:21] **Justin:** [Justin laughs]

[00:20:25] **Esther:** Do Oom and Temerity have a preference? Otherwise, I'll roll it.

[00:20:28] **Justin:** I mean, I'm just going to tackle one of them to the ground. So it's just whichever one I see first.

[00:20:33] **Fai:** I'll take a tackle.

[00:20:34] **Esther:** Excellent. I rolled Temerity, too, so: Temerity.

[00:20:37] **Justin:** Perfect. Upon seeing Temerity, Ember will just, you know, do full like, dog pounce and just like, basically slam Temerity to the ground.

[00:20:49] **Fai:** I will, I will not contest that.

[00:20:52] **Justin:** Many dog kisses.

[00:20:54] **Fai:** You know, I'll try to like make my face avoidable, but accept it and be like, "Ember, I'm so happy to see you. Everything okay?"

[00:21:08] **Justin:** " I--"

[00:21:08] **Fai:** Pet, pet, pet.

[00:21:09] **Justin:** "Could not find you. And I thought, perhaps you were just very good at sneaking. But then I heard that you were taken, but now you are friends with I-- your friend talks a lot."

[00:21:29] **Fai:** Again, the wisdom of the ages will fall upon his eyes and face. "You're right. He does talk a lot, and--" I'm going to leave it at that. "He does talk a lot, but he is my very old friend. I'm very happy to be reunited with him and with you." And I'm going to, like, try to get up off the floor while petting.

[00:21:53] **Justin:** Ember will soon be distracted by Oom.

[00:21:56] **David:** Lots of pets.

[00:21:58] **Justin:** Will not quite have as much of a running start for Oom, but will still-- it's interesting. I think he would want to do front paws on chest, but I don't know how that works with, like, gnome size.

[00:22:11] **David:** It's probably, like, top of head.

[00:22:14] **Fai:** I mean, y'all are almost eye-to-eye, right?

[00:22:17] **Justin:** Yeah, pretty much, but, yes. Also many, many dog licks. Dog kisses. " You are all right. I am glad that you are all right."

[00:22:29] **David:** "Yeah, the comfy prison was, was very comfortable."

[00:22:34] **Justin:** "I do not understand."

[00:22:37] **David:** "That's okay. We don't either."

[00:22:39] **Justin:** "We can be confused together."

[00:22:41] **Esther:** Ember, you will smell a scent that you've caught a couple of times before in Brastlewark. And it is a little bit like one of your favorite scents -- petrichor, not so much cinnamon. But it's like the smell of earth after rain. And also like I don't know if minerals and spices really smell the same, but a little, like, minerally, like it's come from like a depth. And you will see two people sort of timidly poking-- like, they almost can't believe they're stepping out of a room-- poking their heads out of room, like one and then another pops up right above. And they have skin-- well, actually, you're colorblind. I always forget this! Okay. They, they, they smell like petrichor, and they both look at you, and their eyes widen. But one of them just looks at you very, very intently and will be the first to, to like step out and kind of hesitantly step near you, and will ask Oom or Temerity "I'm sorry. Is... is that the creature known as a dog?"

[00:23:59] **David:** "Yeah, that's Ember. He's a good boy."

[00:24:02] **Justin:** "I am Ember."

[00:24:03] **Esther:** "[gasps loudly] In our stories. We don't know that they can talk."

[00:24:10] **Fai:** "Well, usually-- well, not usually. Ex-- Almost always, they don't speak. Ember's very special. You don't have dogs where you're from?"

[00:24:21] **Esther:** "No, we, we have other creatures we, we keep as pets, salamanders, some small bats, creatures that live in the Darklands. We don't have dogs where I'm from, but I have always heard stories of these animals you keep as your faithful pets. And I've always wanted to meet one, but I've never really heard a story of a dog that can talk before. This must be quite special indeed."

[00:24:51] **Justin:** "There are not many like me."

[00:24:53] **Fai:** "You know, even, even if he couldn't talk, he would still be a very special dog. I am so pleased for you that Ember is the first dog that you could meet, though.

He's, you know, in my opinion, he's the best one I've met so far. Like, he's my favorite. So Ember, Z, these are our new-- well, I hope to be friends, but our companions. Irvik and Nimri, this is Ember and Professor Z."

[00:25:25] **Justin:** "I am always glad to meet friends."

[00:25:29] **Esther:** Irvik is going to bow to both of you and say, "It's a pleasure to meet you. I'm Irvikolirrit, but you can call me Irvik."

And Nimirill will also do a bow, and she will say "I'm Nimirill, daughter of Willadeen. It is a pleasure to make both of your acquaintance. May I touch you?" She says to Ember.

[00:25:53] **Justin:** "I like pets."

[00:25:55] **Esther:** She will hesitantly reach out a hand and pet you and say, "My goodness, you're very soft."

[00:26:05] **Justin:** He's also-- he's very hot.

[00:26:07] **Esther:** "And you're, you're quite warm. I did not know dogs were creatures of great warmth."

[00:26:15] **Fai:** "Well, again, Ember is a bit of a special dog, a little bit warmer than the other ones, I would say. But, you know, nice to have as a companion on the road when it gets a little bit chilly at night, I'll tell you that."

[00:26:27] **Justin:** "I set bad people on fire."

[00:26:29] **Fai:** "He has some magic, too."

[00:26:31] **Justin:** "I was told that I should not set people on fire here, but I did want to."

[00:26:39] **Esther:** "Oh, I like you." She's going to point at King DTF. "If you ever want to set him on fire, I'll be right there with you."

[00:26:47] **Justin:** Ember will look at Miv because Miv was the one who had the, like, 'don't set people on fire until I tell you to.'

[00:26:56] **Esther:** "I don't think you ought to set anybody on fire yet, but this does seem to be quite the situation. I, I wasn't aware there was gnome prisons here."

And King DTF is going to say, "Oh, there's nothing for you to worry about. It's canceled. No, nobody else is going to be put in a very comfy accommodations that they simply don't have the option to leave. I'm changing my ways."

 They are just kind of strumming the dulcimer, watching things unfold with great interest.

[00:27:27] **Fai:** I'm just going to give them a like 'good to see you here, I knew you'd be back.' Like I saw Miv see us getting taken, right?

[00:27:38] **Esther:** Yes.

[00:27:38] **Fai:** Okay. So just a like, 'I knew that you had this' kind of look.

[00:27:44] **Esther:** Miv is going to say, "I was worried about you. I had a whole plan for getting in here, busting you out. Oom, Nommie, glad to see you're all right." And they kind of give you a piercing look, Oom, like, 'is everything okay?' And the strumming of the dulcimer takes on like a slightly-- if a question mark could sound like a musical note, they somehow managed to achieve that.

[00:28:07] **David:** If I could return a gaze that was a question mark in return, I would. Be like, 'I guess.'

[00:28:14] **Esther:** They just nod. King DTF turns to Professor Z. "Irvik and Nimirill. I would like to present to you one of our academics, who I've never really had the chance to get to know that well before now. Trust me, we have had no collaboration whatsoever. I mean, this guy-- I really quite frankly passed him over until just now, when I realized he's Temerity's friend. Which is my bad! I think I made a mistake in doing that, much like I have made a mistake when it comes to the two of you.

But Z knows a lot about Brastlewark. I mean, he's been here forever and ever! And still I haven't made him head of any institution. Come to think of it, that must be rough. Sorry, Z. [clears throat] Anyway, I was thinking that Z could be your guide to Brastlewark. Anything you want to do, anything you want to see, anywhere you want to go. No cost is too lavish. I'll cover it all.

But I think he should be your official guide here. And Z, my boy, I can't think of anybody who would do a better job."

And he just looks at all of you in hope.

[00:29:21] **Justin:** Ember has no capacity to like sift through long strings of words for important information. So it's just like this block of text that he's so confused by.

[00:29:35] **Alex:** "Well, I do have my favorite lunch spots around town."

[00:29:39] **Fai:** Is it time for the Cockwork Inn? Don't you get my hopes up.

[00:29:42] **Esther:** Can you roll me a secret Diplomacy check, Professor Z?

[00:29:46] **Alex:** Yes. There we go..

[00:29:48] **Esther:** Awesome. They are going to look at you little skeptically and then Irvik will say, "Well, what kind of a lunch establishment might this be?"

[00:29:59] **Alex:** "Oh, I just meant that as an inventor and, you know, academic in town, I have my favorite little places to go for lunch. And I thought it could be nice if we all went for lunch, you know, somewhere where we can get a, a comfy table in a-- well, I don't know. Maybe you don't want another closed, dark space?"

[00:30:19] **Justin:** " I know many places to get food that are not in dark spaces."

[00:30:24] **Esther:** "Actually, this wasn't a terribly dark space for us. Going somewhere like that might feel a bit like home. But I'd also like to see, while I'm here, some more open places. We can do both if... I'd like to spend more time with the dog. With Ember. Is that possible?"

[00:30:44] **Alex:** "Well, I think Ember did have a good time. In the, in the park when we were there before, right?"

[00:30:51] **Justin:** "Parks are great."

[00:30:55] **Esther:** Irvik will say, "We accept the offer of being shown around by Z here and are very glad to be on our way out of this particular place. I trust that we will get our things back. Can any of you recommend a place to stay that is not here?"

[00:31:14] **Alex:** "My house would be a little cramped."

[00:31:16] **Esther:** "I don't want to impose on your, your home or your hosting duties. Don't need to crash with you, but if there's a place we could stay?"

[00:31:29] **Fai:** Is the Lilyfrost where Oom and I were staying before?

[00:31:32] **Esther:** Yes.

[00:31:33] **Fai:** And it's pretty nice? Or what's the, what's the level? You know, like we don't want to take them to whatever the, the bottom of the barrel kind of place is, no matter if it is dope. Like maybe show them something a little bit nicer than that.

[00:31:48] **Esther:** It is a pretty nice place. It's not the most swankified place in town, but it's not like the makes-a-Motel-6-look-really-really-nice place either. It's a nice inn.

[00:31:57] **Fai:** Okay. "Well personally, I've stayed-- as well as has Oom-- at the Lilyfrost Inn. And I think it's lovely. The proprietor there is a wonderful lady, and the food--" and I look at Miv "--and the entertainment is, you know-- you can't really beat it.

I think it might be nice for you to check that out. And if you want to upgrade your surroundings-- if you want to go a little bit more lavish after that, sure. But let's start there, perhaps, so that you can have a place. And we move out."

[00:32:36] **Esther:** [as Nimri] "That sounds lovely. I would be happy to stay at this Lilyfrost Inn.I like to see other establishments in other parts of the world. We haven't been above the surface too much. So it, it would be nice."

And they will say, "Our stuff will be sent there, I assume?" And the king nods in assurance that it will. "Yes. To the Lilyfrost. No problem."

[00:33:02] **Fai:** Sorry, I just had a couple of GM questions for you.

[00:33:05] **Esther:** Go for it.

[00:33:06] **Fai:** Because Ember can't see color, you stopped that redescription of their skin. But Temerity can, and I can't remember what they look like.

So can I, can I get a refresher please?

[00:33:16] **Esther:** The way I described it before was like, if you've seen the chunks of mountain that are exposed when a highway is cut through a mountain and the beautiful different colorations of rock that go from like slate gray to deep browns, and sometimes blues running through. Their skin has that quality.

Like, maybe one of them is a little bit more slate-colored with some deeper blue like, tones to their skin. And one is perhaps a bit more like brown with some like reddish tones and like a little bit more veining running through, but it looks like they, they've taken on, like, the colors of the deep earth.

[00:33:55] **Fai:** Them having just mentioned not being out in the daylight or whatever they said, I will-- well, okay. So would Temerity know if they'll have any sort of sensitivity if we need to get them some umbrellas or something? Or is that something that he should ask?

[00:34:13] **Esther:** As I recall your roll on some Darklands lore last time, it's probably not something you would know right away, but you can certainly ask them.

[00:34:23] **Fai:** Okay. "Just to clarify: I don't really know this, and I want to make sure -- are you safe in the sunlight? Do we need to get you any kind of like, you know, umbrellas? I don't know if you know what an umbrella is if you don't have sunlight or -- do you have rain? I don't know. Much to discover about each other! Do we need to give you protection from the sun, or will you be okay?"

[00:34:44] **Esther:** "We had some protection in our things, which were taken from us, and would be happy to wear them. Dark glasses. Some parasols. Yes. Thank you. Much appreciated."

[00:34:59] **Fai:** "Lovely." So that's the kind of thing that we're going to probably want to get out of their stuff *before* we leave so that they... right?

[00:35:06] **Esther:** Yeah.

[00:35:07] **Fai:** Okay, cool. Great.

[00:35:08] **Esther:** And we'll say the stuff will be brought out by various guards and the king is going to say, "Why don't I leave you all to get to know each other. Make myself a little scarce for the time being. I know I may be a-- well, why don't I make myself scarce?

Temerity you and I, Oom, you and I, we can all catch up. Z, you, too. Ember! And Miv, was it? Yeah, I'm still not clear how you connect to everything, but good to meet you.

I'll be here if you need me, trying to think about how to be a better man. My new vision is going to be how I can be the best version of myself. Got to get to thinking about that and to some of those deals we talked about earlier, you know, I have some contacts I remembered I need to write to in various places. Don't worry, nothing to worry about. All under control. See you all later!" And unless you try to stop him, he's going to like, sort of, back out waving and will leave you all to chat.

[00:36:00] **Fai:** I'm gonna follow him out just to have a, a quick word. But, you know, I don't want it to seem like I'm trying to have secrets with him. So it'll just be me kind of like in plain vision of everybody, but just as a little aside, basically.

And I'm gonna, I'm just going to say, "Before you go, I'm very proud of what you showed us today, and I'm going to give him my hand to shake."

[00:36:26] **Esther:** He will put his hand out and shake your hand.

[00:36:30] **Fai:** "Now there's work for us all to do."

[00:36:32] **Esther:** "Thanks, Temerity. You are a good friend."

[00:36:37] **Fai:** "Thank you. No more deals."

[00:36:40] **Esther:** No more deals, I promise. No more deals."

[00:36:44] **Fai:** And I'm gonna let him go.

[00:36:47] **Esther:** Okay.

[00:36:48] **Justin:** "I do not know what he just said, but I am happy to make new friends," Ember will say to our new friends Irvik and Nimirill.

[00:36:59] **Esther:** Nimirill is just fascinated by you, Ember. If you let her, she will pet you and like just kind of stare at you in awe. "You must have an amazing story. How did you learn to talk?"

[00:37:14] **Justin:** "That was a very bad day. My master was killed and then a Friend Dragon appeared to me. And then, the Friend Dragon...

I do not know what happened next. I told the Friend Dragon that I was sad because my master had died. And then the Friend Dragon asked who I was, and I said that I am Ember. And that was the story."

[00:37:52] **Esther:** "I'm so sorry to hear that Ember. That seems like quite a... quite a story. What kind of a dragon was it?"

[00:38:03] **Justin:** "I do not know. But it is the way of all things, all things that live."

[00:38:13] **Esther:** "Have a dragon appear in front of them here ?"

[00:38:17] **Justin:** "No. [laughs] Um, my master."

[00:38:20] **Esther:** "Yes. Where my mother's people come from, they say it's all just a part of the weaving of the web."

[00:38:32] **Justin:** "I do not know why webs are involved."

[00:38:35] **Esther:** 'Maybe I can explain that if we get to know each other better."

[00:38:37] **Justin:** "I would like that."

[00:38:39] **Esther:** " You know, I've met a couple dragons in my time. What did this one look like? What did it-- you know that the stories, they say, they say your people have an amazing sense of smell. What did it smell like?"

[00:38:53] **Justin:** "It smelled of fire and smoke and death."

[00:38:58] **Esther:** "Oh my. And what did it look like?"

[00:39:03] **Justin:** "It looked like Friend Temerity."

[00:39:18] **Esther:** "So it was a-- a person dragon.

[00:39:23] **Justin:** "Yes."

[00:39:24] **Esther:** She looks at you all befuddled, but with great interest. "I didn't, I didn't know they had humanoid dragons on the surface."

[00:39:34] **Fai:** "Well, don't take me for a dragon expert, but as I understand it, dragons have their, you know, traditional dragon form. But some of them are able to take on a like, you know, like a person. Like a person shape, rather than like a big dragon shape, maybe so that they can deal with people or check them out or really any number of things. But whether it's a, a form of camouflage or just another version of themselves, I'm really not sure. But it's, it's known that that's a thing that they can do. Are the dragons where you come from different?"

[00:40:15] **Esther:** "Well, I've only met a couple in my time. The Brine dragon that lives in the city my mother is from, and a couple of crystalline ones. I've never heard of anything like this."

Irvik's going to say, "Oh, now you got her going. I'm afraid you found the one thing that might get her to really forgive you. You know, her momma's kin are from Súlorn and the stories they will tell...! Maybe we could, um-- maybe we can all go get lunch and keep talking. I'm famished. Not that we haven't been fed good food."

[00:40:48] **Fai:** Let's take them to lunch in a new spot.

[00:40:51] **Justin:** If not told to do otherwise, Ember is very happy to take them to the nearest place to grab food, which will likely be some manner of dumpster.

[00:41:00] **Fai:** Oh, I was-- when Ember earlier said that he knew a lot of places to get food, I was going to be like, not garbage cans? So if Ember says 'I will take you to get food,' at that moment will Temerity be like, "Let's take them to the Lilyfrost for food. We don't want to--" We're not going to mention the garbage.

"I think the Lilyfrost would be the best place for us to take them right now. And we can do some more exploring. And if you would like to eat, you know, from the bins, Ember, be blessed in doing so. But we -- we, we want to show our friends here a little bit better of a time than that."

[00:41:39] **Justin:** "Great food, too. It is further, but we can go there."

[00:41:44] **Fai:** "Lead the way, please."

[00:41:46] **Justin:** Ember will-- tail wagging now that all of his friends are here-- will lead the way.

# A Little Suspicious

[00:41:52] **Esther:** Miv is going to try to first catch up with Ember and then fall back and say hi to Oom for a moment. But if you are setting out tail wagging, they'll jog a little bit to keep up with you and are going to say, "Ember, Ember, hang on a second. Ember, can you tell me again what this, um, Friend Dragon said to you when you learned how to talk?"

[00:42:19] **Justin:** "They said... they asked what my name was, and then they said that it was appropriate."

[00:42:33] **Esther:** "Ember, I don't know if you know what this word means, but this is a little suspicious."

[00:42:40] **Justin:** "I know this word. Suspicious is when something should not be the way it is."

[00:42:46] **Esther:** "Now, I'm not saying you shouldn't be the way you are. I think you're wonderful just the way you are. It's just the whole way that you learned to talk is not the typical way that I think animals learn to talk this way.

And I think the circumstances are a little -- well, sad for one thing-- but just unusual, for another. And I would like to help you as much as I can figure out what on earth is going on or in all the other planets or the planes. You know what I mean?"

[00:43:17] **Justin:** Ember will, will kind of chuckle and say, "Animals cannot learn to talk. That is silly."

[00:43:23] **Esther:** "But Ember you are an animal and you learned to talk."

[00:43:28] **Justin:** "I am Ember."

[00:43:30] **Esther:** "Do you know that you're also a dog. Like, I'm a gnome--"

[00:43:34] **Justin:** "I am a good dog."

[00:43:35] **Esther:** "You are a good dog. Like, I'm a gnome. Temerity is a tief-elf. Oom is a gnome. Um-- uh-- you know, like I'm a gnome, you're a dog. And like my name is Miv. Your name is Ember. Does that, do you follow me? Do you follow me?"

[00:43:52] **Justin:** "Those are all things that are true."

[00:43:54] **Esther:** "Yes so do you understand, like I'm a, I'm a personoid, you know what I mean? You're a dog. You're a canine. Does, does that make sense?

[00:44:06] **Justin:** "Yes, I am a dog."

[00:44:07] **Esther:** "Yes, you are a dog and a person-dog at the same time. Does that make sense?"

[00:44:14] **Justin:** "I am a person. I am not an animal. I am a person."

[00:44:18] **Esther:** "Well, you, you, you're kind of both, I mean, you are-- you're sentient. Does that make sense?" Miv is like, I've gotten myself in too deep.

[00:44:28] **Justin:** "Cannot be an animal and a person. That is silly."

[00:44:31] **Esther:** "Okay. Well, let's just-- you, you're an Awakened animal. That is the truth."

[00:44:39] **Justin:** "I am awake."

[00:44:40] **Esther:** "Yes. Okay. Good talk, Ember. Good talk. I'm, I'm going to try to help you as best I can."

[00:44:45] **Justin:** "We will get food. It will be good."

[00:44:47] **Esther:** "Yeah, you're a very, you're a very good boy. You're a very good boy, and I'm glad I know you."

[00:44:52] **Justin:** "You are a very good gnome."

[00:44:54] **Esther:** "Oh, thank you, Ember. I try, I do." They're going to like, look at everybody, say really low to Temerity, walking back: "I have a lot of respect for you. I think you really know how to put things that he understands 'em. That was harder than I thought it was going to be."

[00:45:12] **Fai:** "You know, I've had a little bit more practice, I think, but thank you."

Let them go on about their business. And in my mind, just be, like, chewing on this new information of Ember conceptualizing himself as a person, 'cause that's interesting. I mean, like I'm not going to argue if he says he's a person, he's a fuckin' person. But that's, that's, that's interesting. That's juicy.

[00:45:36] **Esther:** So Miv is going to hang back for a moment and say, "Oom, how's it going?"

[00:45:43] **David:** "There was a lot to take in."

[00:45:46] **Esther:** "Yeah, I'm getting that."

[00:45:48] **David:** "Miv, you've been around a lot of different places. Is it, is it normal dispute resolution practices to want to hit someone with a book?"

[00:45:58] **Esther:** "I guess I reckon it depends on how bad the dispute is. If somebody's been locked up for some time, yeah, I'd say that's not out the question, not unheard of. It's not what everybody does."

[00:46:16] **David:** "Makes sense."

[00:46:18] **Esther:** "What's it like where you come from?"i

[00:46:20] **David:** "We like to, to talk through our, our feelings and where we were at, but I mean, I guess hitting could be cathartic?"

[00:46:28] **Esther:** "Some people do find it that way. Not the first line of conflict resolution I tend to recommend, but sometimes if blows come to blows.

I was worried about you. You okay? They... they get anything?"

[00:46:47] **David:** "No, I, I think everything's all right. It was a very comfy prison."

[00:46:55] **Esther:** "Well, that's, that's good. I'm glad it wasn't uncomfortable. Glad, glad you're all right. Glad Nommie's all right, too."

[00:47:02] **David:** "Yeah, we, we just-- I just have no idea why everyone is so fascinated and horrified by Nommie. I mean, Nommie is just Nommie."

[00:47:12] **Esther:** "And he is a cute feller, and I think he's just as sweet as pie. I don't understand it either. This is kind of an interesting, strange city, but I feel like we're, we're getting to the bottom of some things and I'm sure I'm going to have a whole heap of gossip to get from Temerity later about everything's been going on. And you! I'm excited to learn about whatever it is y'all talk to that king about, because -- woof!"

[00:47:36] **David:** "Yeah, we're definitely going to have to compare notes. I don't, I don't really understand why, why king DTF was so horrified by dragons, still. It's just weird."

[00:47:45] **Esther:** "Well, maybe we can compare notes over lunch. Everybody share about their own experiences and stuff."

[00:47:51] **David:** "Sounds good."

[00:47:53] **Esther:** So y'all are going to the Lilyfrost for lunch. Did I get that right? Or somewhere else?

[00:47:59] **Fai:** Unless Z trying to take us elsewhere...

[00:48:01] **David:** Yeah, unless Z is going to try and take us somewhere else.

[00:48:03] **Justin:** Ember is currently guiding us to the Lilyfrost.

[00:48:06] **Fai:** We don't know where other establishments might be on the way. Like we, we might pass one of them on the way to Lilyfrost. I don't know.

[00:48:14] **Alex:** I think cause we discussed the Lilyfrost, Z is assuming that we're headed to the Lilyfrost.

# The Cockwork Inn

[00:48:19] **Esther:** Everybody, roll me a secret Perception check. Temerity and Ember and Z, because you are, in fact -- you, you wouldn't notice this, you would just know it's right there. But Temerity and Ember, you do in fact, notice an establishment, a three-level building with a large metal rooster on top that's been crafted by the finest craftsgnomes at the Tinkerings, and a sign with a similar two-dimensional carved rooster on it that reads "Cockwork Inn" in gnome. Which Ember can't read, so you just see the roosters. And Temerity, you are able to read the sign.

[00:49:03] **Fai:** "Z, did you tell us about this place one time, I believe? I think you told us that they have a great lunch. Am I wrong?"

[00:49:16] **Alex:** "Oh yeah. I really like to, to come to the Cockwork Inn for lunch. It's, it's a great, a great establishment, and I've just always found the, patrons and the staff there to be, quite friendly.

They're always incredibly interested in my work. I can't believe the level of detail they want to go into understanding invention."

[00:49:33] **Justin:** Does it smell good?

[00:49:36] **Esther:** Oh yeah.

[00:49:37] **Fai:** Does it seem like the kind of place we could bring a dog is kind of my question?

[00:49:42] **Esther:** Yeah, probably.

[00:49:44] **Justin:** Probably not outdoor seating.

[00:49:47] **Fai:** I put to the group, do y'all want to go to the Cockwork Inn?

[00:49:52] **Esther:** "Oh, this place looks fascinating. I would love to go in here." Irvik's like, "Oh yeah, this seems like the kind of surface establishment I am very interested to check out. Cockwork Inn it is."

[00:50:05] **Alex:** "I don't know that I've ever seen a dog in there, but I have seen-- I believe he was a gnome in a bear suit? So, you know, maybe animals are allowed."

[00:50:17] **Fai:** "Well, you know, we're bringing these people here by invitation of the king, so I'm sure they'll make an allowance, even if he wouldn't ordinarily be welcomed."

[00:50:30] **Alex:** "Oh, I should tell you, I referred to the king once and they seemed to think I was talking about somebody else. So sometimes, they get a little confused.

They said that the king only comes, you know, late at night and is in charge of entertainment. A little bit -- I guess, you know, the way Miv did entertainment at the Lilyfrost. But I don't know. I just, I just, it didn't seem like something that King DTF was actually doing. I, I think there was some miscommunication there.

I just, I don't talk politics with them that much."

[00:51:04] **Fai:** "You know, I, I have a suspicion that the entertainment might be a little bit different from the kind that Miv provides, but I haven't gotten to know Miv very well yet. And so, let us see."

[00:51:19] **Justin:** "This place smells like food and it is not a bin. Shall we eat here?"

[00:51:27] **Esther:** "That sounds great. Let's do it." You can all trundle into the Cockwork Inn. So it's a little dark inside, but the windows are actually open right now, so there's some light streaming in. It's quite wooden. Like, wooden counter, lots of bottles of different kinds of ale and liquor and fine wine behind the counter, a mirror that reflects most of the room. A series of stairs and lifts up to three different levels up and down, and a stage at one far end of the inn. You can guess that there's some beds on higher levels, and then there's this like, giant stage with beautiful, heavy blue velvet drapes that are currently closed. And there does seem to be a bit of a light clientele, like a few gnomes at tables, chatting.

Behind the bar, there is a, an individual who is a little shorter than Temerity, but not quite as short as most gnomes are. Not, you know, their, their height is a little taller than most gnomes, little shorter than Temerity.

They have dark red hair and light brown skin and green eyes, and they look to have characteristics of both elven and gnome ancestry. And they're going to look at you all and say, "Hello, Professor Z. So good to see you again, always wonderful to have you come in over lunch and this time with so many friends. Ah! We usually don't let animals come in, but for you, I make an exception." And they're going to wink. "Z, come to your favorite table in the house, right over here. We will pull one up if we need to." Like, comes out and it's just bustling around making themselves busy. And you see they're, they're wearing some rather tight leather pants and a leather harness. And that's it. And shoes. Gotta have some sturdy leather shoes in the restaurant industry and the food service industry. But yeah, they, they've got a fine harness that's showing off a very muscular chest. And they're going to say, " Now, what's can I do for you all today?"

[00:53:34] **Fai:** "Well, first of all, you can do us the pleasure of introducing yourself. I'm Temerity Vane, the kings new adviser. And I've brought some friends who are visiting from far away and want to get a picture of the city. And it seems like we've chosen the right spot."

[00:54:00] **Esther:** "You have excellent judgment to bring them here. I'm so glad you went to Z. You know, those other stuffy academics sometimes will just take you to the Featherstone Inn or someplace like that, but we! We know how to have a good time here, let me tell you. I am Mithanar Cantariel, and I am a, one of the co-owners of this establishment. Very happy to have you here. I'm on day shift today, but usually I work evenings. So it's a pleasure to see Z when he comes in -- sometimes in the afternoon, sometime in the evening.

We have some very good specials today, a wonderful cheese and meat platter with as few grapes on this side sourced from my family's own sources in Kyonin, very happy to tell you. A beautiful white and red wine also sourced from Kyonin, and some dwarven ale from the brewery in Dwarvenhold from this very city. What can I get you, and I will hand you menus for the rest of our menu as well. And to our guests, welcome to Brastlewark. It is very good to have you here. I am Mithanar Cantariel, at your service."

[00:55:04] **Alex:** "I've never been disappointed by one of your specials, Mithanar. I would love a special."

[00:55:09] **Esther:** All right, you get the charcuterie board.

[00:55:12] **Alex:** "Anything with cheese and a selection of meats."

[00:55:16] **Esther:** "We have very fine meats here, indeed, Professor Z. We pride ourselves on serving up the finest sausages in Brastlewark." And they just lean in and all wink at Z and give Z this, like, broad smile.

[00:55:31] **Alex:** "Oh, it's so good to see you. I'm glad you were working today, y'know. This is, of course, one of my favorite lunch spots."

[00:55:37] **Esther:** "Always happy to have you dine with us, Z. And you know, we, we usually don't let-- a little dragon, oh, how cute! -- a dog and a dragon. That's a lot for one day, but for you... for you, Z, I will allow it." And they'll make their way off to gather these charcuterie boards if that's what you all would like, or you can order something else from the menu. And they'll be back in a moment.

Nimirill is going to say, "Now *this* is the kind of place I think one can get a variety of excellent stories. My goodness, I'm glad we came here after the dullness of being in that room for so many months. Well done, Professor Z. I'm, I'm starting to like you."

[00:56:18] **Fai:** Can I ask-- Perceive if needed is Z aware of how hard he's being flirted with? Or not?

[00:56:28] **Alex:** Do you want me to just answer that? Or do we, are we rolling for it?

[00:56:32] **Esther:** If you'd like to figure that out as Temerity, I think you should roll for it, and that'll be Perception.

[00:56:38] **Fai:** Then please roll that for me.

[00:56:40] **Esther:** I will say that is successful, so Z, for whatever it's worth.

[00:56:46] **Alex:** Z is-- I guess Z is like subconsciously aware that there's a lot of flirting going on here, but like definitely oblivious in the way that like Z also had that conversation with king DTF being like, "Oh, you're finally noticing me and it's great that I'm like getting some recognition." Like, Z really likes the quality of the service and is definitely okay with some touchy-feely service.

And would-- if one let Z blossom further out, Z could probably, you know, really recognize this for what it is going on. But at this point Z is more like, this is just a really friendly establishment full of people who are very kind, but also not fully dressed.

[00:57:31] **Fai:** A clarifying question for you, Alex. I believe that when you originally told us this wonderful story of the Cockwork Inn, you said that Z has yet to be there at night yet, is that right?

[00:57:44] **Alex:** I think that was what I said in the original story that we may have retconned that five minutes ago.

[00:57:51] **Esther:** I would say you were in there in the evenings, not at night-night.

[00:57:54] **Fai:** That's true.

[00:57:56] **Alex:** Okay. Yes.

So I would say that, you know, in the way that Z is a little confused when they referenced the king, because the king apparently only comes out very late at night. Like, Z has not been around for whoever the king is coming out, like, that late, certainly. But Z has definitely been there, like spent a whole afternoon there kind of thing, and started to get on towards the evening and then left.

So like there's been more going on there. And Z is definitely aware that there's a very particular clientele and that certainly none of the other stuffy academics go there. But, like, also this is very much a, like, the service is always really good. You can always get a table when you show up at the Cockwork Inn at noon because there's always some free tables at noon, kind of thing.

[00:58:46] **Fai:** Okay, cool. Thank you.

[00:58:47] **Esther:** Miv has begun chatting with Nimirill and Irvik, and it seems that the three of them are very well-matched to, kind of, telling stories together, and they're all very interested in each other's lives. If you would like to talk among yourselves for a moment or make plans with yourselves or any of them, this could be a good time to do it.

[00:59:08] **Justin:** Ember will kind of default to, like, being-a-dog-mode because we're in public. But if someone happens to order him some meat, that would be awesome.

[00:59:19] **Fai:** It seems like we probably have no shortage of it if they're just bringing us like a spread of boards and whatnot. So I'm sure you'll, I'm sure you'll have your pick.

[00:59:28] **Justin:** I will happily beg from under the table for stuff from the charcuterie boards.

[00:59:33] **Fai:** I would like to, if a, a lull comes into Miv's conversation with them, was it Nimirill who said that her mom -- was it Nimirill's mom who's from-- I can't remember the name of the place again-- from Sulorn. Is that right?

[00:59:51] **Esther:** Yes.

[00:59:51] **Fai:** Okay. It's fair to assume that Temerity knows what that place is?

[00:59:56] **Esther:** No.

[00:59:57] **Fai:** No?

[00:59:58] **Esther:** You're going to need to roll me Lore: Society or Lore: Darklands, if you have that.

[01:00:02] **Fai:** I want it! So you're telling me that *my mom,* a bard of legend has never told me about this city has never mentioned it ever.

I'm going to argue with you on this one.

[01:00:14] **Esther:** I will give you advantage on this roll.

[01:00:17] **Fai:** Okay. Thank you.

[01:00:19] **Esther:** She's very famous, and she has not been everywhere or seen absolutely everything. And this is a city that there's some politics behind it.

[01:00:29] **Fai:** She's never heard about it?

[01:00:31] **Esther:** Well, we'll see. We'll see. We'll see if she's told you about it.

[01:00:35] **Fai:** Okay. Fair.

I was just like, I assumed that this would be a place that would be Temerity's full jam, so yes. Roll, and I hope I'm blessed.

[01:00:45] **Esther:** All right. You have heard the name, Súlorn, probably from your mother, Terevaniel. And you are aware that it is a famous city in the Darklands, in the realm of Nar-Voth, which is kind of the middle layer of the Darklands of Golarion. That it's a hub for travelers, and there are stories about people getting there by slightly unconventional means. And maybe some folklore around, like, if you're not careful, you'll fall into Súlorn, and then how will you ever get back?

But you don't know too many facts about the city. You know--you believe that it's real, but you don't know anybody who's ever been there. You don't know that your mother has ever been there. And it's, it's kind of almost mythical. Like real, but mythical.

[01:01:32] **Fai:** Okay. And the Darklands is underground or nah?

[01:01:37] **Esther:** Yes. Underground.

[01:01:38] **Fai:** Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay. Okay, great. Great, great. "Nimri? If you don't mind me asking... did I hear that you're from Súlorn?"

[01:01:50] **Esther:** She takes a sip of red wine and seems like she's relaxing a little bit. And she says, " Well, I'm not from Súlorn, though I have spent time there. My, my mother is from there. I was born in Kuvelanor, and I'm a representative of the government and the governing council there. We both are. But yes, my momma's kin are in Súlorn. You know it?"

[01:02:22] **Fai:** "I wouldn't go so far as to say I know it. My mother has told me stories of it. She was rather enamored with the idea, and I have to say made me as well, insofar as I've heard anything.

I would love to hear anything. I mean, all we really know is that it's somewhere like, between the planes or something. And sometimes people like -- I don't know -- like fall through into the city. And you can get there by unconventional means. But I didn't know that there were conventional means by which to travel. And I'm just very interested in anything you'd be inclined to tell me. I would be grateful to hear."

[01:03:03] **Esther:** "Well, I'm happy to share some of what I know. I don't know you too well yet, but I'll be inclined to share information you could easily get from anybody should you travel below. Súlorn sits at the crossroads of many conduits of magical energy. Leylines, connections to the planes. And it is very easy to fall through the cracks if you're in the right place at the right time to get there.

There's connections to the Plane of Air, and Water; places on the surface; other places in the Darklands. You *can* get there by roads... sometimes they change, given the nature of the place. The tides that govern the inland sea, they shift sometimes and block things off or open up new passages.

But you can get there if you walked below the surface and asked directions. It might take you a while depending on where you start, but it's possible. There are roads. But there's also shortcuts. And yes, there are many stories of people getting there by routes they least expected or did not expect, and then either making their way home or finding a home in Súlorn."

[01:04:13] **Fai:** "You know, I have to tell you, I've always dreamed of maybe one day going there. I, I like to travel to see new things, to learn what I can, to go to different places. And it's not something that I've sought out because there's so much yet for me to see here. Especially considering, you know, that... well, it seems like a lot of people don't come back.

I kind of thought to myself, maybe when I'm an older man, maybe that would be an adventure for me. It's a bit of a romantic idea, I know.

But I'm very honored to meet you, and thank you for sharing. Perhaps if we become better friends, you'll, you'll be inclined to tell me more. And you know, if there's anything you'd like to ask me, please feel free."

[01:04:59] **Esther:** "I'd like to be your friend. In spite of everything, I want to like you all. Maybe one day I will tell you more. I'm... I'm worried for the city, I'll tell you that. I'm worried for everywhere at home if *she's* allowed to continue."

[01:05:13] **Fai:** "I have to tell you I'm not entirely versed in the nature of the conflict. Is she attacking your city? Are you under-- is there currently warfare? Are your people unsafe?"

[01:05:31] **Esther:** Irvik is going to say, "She has many, *many* means of achieving her ends. Sometimes, it's very direct, very aggressive. There is conflict, armed conflict. Sometimes, it's much more subtle, much more sinister. She weaves webs of social intrigue and lies. And sometimes, she just lures people, offerin' 'em what they want. The stories of the conflict are ancient and its origins are obscure even to us.

Some say that she and Nivi Rhombodazzle had a feud and that she's never forgiven Nivi's ascension. That Nivi wronged her or got the better of her, and she's bitter over it and holds it against all of us. Some say that we followed her from the old country, from the First World, to keep her from achieving some great evil here.

I don't know what the truth is. All I know is that she's ruthless, and she won't stop until our people are really hurt or all go over to her side and see things her way. And we-- we simply-- we do not want that."

[01:06:53] **Justin:** Is that loud enough for the party to hear? Or are--

[01:06:56] **Esther:** Yes.

[01:06:56] **Justin:** --you kind of keeping an-- okay.

[01:06:58] **Fai:** "If you don't mind me asking, what's her side? What is it she's-- is she trying to convert them? I'm afraid I don't follow."

[01:07:07] **Esther:** [as Nimri] "You know, it's a little unclear. How many fey beings have you known?"

[01:07:13] **Fai:** How many have, I known? Just the one or a couple or--

[01:07:18] **Esther:** Well? Probably just the one. Less well, a few more to party with.

[01:07:23] **Fai:** "Well, you know, one I would call my friend! But I've met a few, you know, like in the woods and parties with the satyrs and everything."

[01:07:30] **Esther:** "The thing about them is they don't always make sense. Their motives are not always easy for us to understand or track.

I don't know why it is she does what she does. All I know is she wants power. She wants to make a name for herself. She wants to lure people down to dance forever. And *we* are a stumbling block to her in that, because we try to warn people off if they get too close. We try to let them know what could happen there. And we don't just let her tromp around doing whatever she wants to anybody she wants, acting like a tyrant. It's simply not something we are comfortable with." The rest of the party, roll me a Secret Perception check...

# Break

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# Leyline Connection

[01:09:32] **Esther:** So we're back from break, and I just asked everyone to roll a Secret Perception check. So as you're talking about Súlorn and Frilogarma and all of this political stuff, Oom, you are thinking about leylines and how they've come up in this conversation, and maybe Orianna and her research comes into your mind. And then you will overhear Mithanar at the bar, commenting to a gnome patron who have maybe overheard like a discussion of leylines, like, "Oh, isn't it so funny? You know, my sibling cannot stop talking about his research into this very thing. Always obsessed with being at Juratio for all hours. And you know, every time it's like, 'blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.'

And I'm like, 'Come to the bar, relax, unwind. What is life if you are not going to have a little fun?' But it's like, 'Oh, no, I must do my research on this.' So interesting. You know, it's a small world, especially in Brastlewark." And you, you get the idea that maybe Mithanar has a sibling who researches this kind of stuff. Just FYI.

Everybody else, you are wrapped up in the Súlorn conversation and you are not going to notice that particular tidbit.

[01:10:55] **David:** If there seems to be a lull in the conversation, though, I will try to lean in a bit closer and flag this for the group.

[01:11:02] **Esther:** There is definitely a lull in which you can do that.

[01:11:06] **David:** So yeah, I'll try to recount all of that. Yeah, specifically, I guess whether Temerity or Z, whether you are-- would know anything specific about this person, or if you've heard of this research before.

[01:11:21] **Esther:** Z, now that you think about it, there is a half-elven gnome who works at Academica Juratio who looks a lot like Mithanar. And you've maybe never put this together before, but his name is Gwaellorn Cantariel, and now that you're thinking about it, like, yeah, there's a, there's a strong family resemblance there. Yeah, you would know that he studies portal magic, conjuration magic, and may be connected to leylines.

[01:11:52] **Alex:** So Z... Z will say something like, "Oh, I think I might know who we should talk to about that. There's another faculty member. We should talk to professor Gwaellorn."

" Now that sounds like a promising lead."

[01:12:07] **David:** "Should we asked your friend here about Gwaellorn, and whether they could give us a introduction? So we're not contacting them out of the blue?"

[01:12:15] **Fai:** I mean, like, if they're all about knowledge and they're always consortia-ing or whatever together, it seems like it would be in the realm of normal for-- even if Z isn't a friend of theirs of any kind, for Z as a fellow academic to be like, 'Hey, I'd like to refer to you for your expertise.' Like, that's not weird, right?

[01:12:37] **Esther:** That's not weird. That's totally normal.

[01:12:40] **Fai:** But David if you just want to flirt with Mithanar some more, by all means...

[01:12:44] **David:** They do seem very interesting.

[01:12:46] **Esther:** They are...

Irvik will, after a little bit of a lull in conversation with you all and Miv, say, "What else do you recommend we do over the next few days -- or with the rest of our day today -- in this town?"

[01:13:02] **Alex:** "Well, you know, Brastlewark has many fine academic institutions, so I'd be happy to take you to any of those and, you know, meet the faculty."

[01:13:13] **Esther:** " That could be very interesting indeed."

"[as Nimri] And what if we'd like to find somewhere to relax a little bit after being in a very comfy jail for awhile? Is there a good place to do something like that around here?"

[01:13:30] **Alex:** "What kind of relaxation do you mean? I mean, I think this establishment has plenty of rooms upstairs..."

[01:13:36] **Esther:** "You know, I could be interested in that kind of relaxation, professor, but I don't know you well enough yet."

[01:13:41] **Alex:** "Oh, I'm so sorry. I mean, I just meant this is, you know, an inn, are you looking for an inn?"

[01:13:49] **Esther:** "Yes, I think we're staying at the Lilyfrost tonight, though. Um, I was thinking something more like a massage, maybe somewhere to get my, my nails done. Little bit of beauty treatments after being locked away for so long."

[01:14:02] **Fai:** Temple of Shelyn?!

[01:14:04] **Esther:** You did say you wanted to go there!

But someone might have to tell her there is a Temple of Sheyln in Brastlewark.

[01:14:10] **Fai:** "Well, you know, it's funny that you mention this, because when I first came into town and discovered that they have a Temple of Sheyln here, I knew that that would be a promising way to spend an-- a late afternoon, evening, you know?" I'm just going to let that land and see if they know what 'Temple of Shelyn' even refers to.

[01:14:33] **Esther:** "It's been a while since I've been in a place with a temple to Shelyn. I would love that, yes. Yes! I didn't, I didn't know there was one here. That sounds delightful. I would be happy to accompany you there, if you would be willing."

[01:14:46] **Fai:** "Nothing would delight me more."

[01:14:51] **Esther:** "Sounds like a plan."

[01:14:55] **Fai:** Is that where we're going to go next, friends?

[01:14:59] **Esther:** Sounds like you have interest in maybe going to track down Gwaellorn Cantariel, and going to the Temple of Shelyn.

[01:15:08] **Fai:** Well there's always the option to split the party. That's always on the table. It seems like maybe the first thing they want to do is not go talk to a bunch of academics, is the vibe that I'm getting from them.

However, if some people feel like going to talk to academics right right now, that's fair. As for *Temerity*, he's taking his new homegirl to the temple. I don't know about y'all.

[01:15:42] **Justin:** I'm sure Ember has many important things to discuss at the Academica Juratio. So I think I'll be going with you. [laughs]

[01:15:52] **Fai:** Get his claws trimmed?

[01:15:54] **Justin:** We've been on the road for a while, so I think, I think it's time...

[01:15:59] **David:** Sounds wonderful.

[01:16:00] **Alex:** Temple of Shelyn it is, then?

[01:16:03] **Esther:** You can all finish your charcuterie boards or other meals from the Cockwork Inn, sip whatever beverages you may have, bid farewell to Mithanar, and be on your way to the Temple of Shelyn. Miv will happily talk to Irvik and Nimri as you are on your way there, and you will be able to get to the other side of the city pretty easily from where you are.

[01:16:28] **Justin:** Ember would like to briefly say something to Nimri.

[01:16:32] **Esther:** Yes, go for it!

[01:16:35] **Justin:** "You -- you said that there was -- there was an enemy where you live."

[01:16:44] **Esther:** "More than one, but yes."

[01:16:47] **Justin:** "

"You are a friend. I will protect you. I will fight your enemy."

[01:16:53] **Esther:** "That's very kind of you, Ember. She's a powerful being, this enemy of ours. She -- she might be a little much for you to take on all by yourself."

[01:17:05] **Justin:** "I have friends."

[01:17:08] **Esther:** "Well, I'd be most grateful for your help, but I won't hold you to that."

[01:17:13] **Justin:** "I do not mind if you hold me."

[01:17:15] **Esther:** "Well, I would, I would very much enjoy that. I like petting you. You're very soft. I've never really met a dog before."

[01:17:24] **Justin:** "Where, where do you come from?"

[01:17:27] **Esther:** "I come from deep, deep below where we are below the surface of the earth in a place called the Darklands in the realm of Nar-Voth and a city called Kuvellanor. It's a lot of big words, I'm sure. Just know that I come from down below and a city called Kuvellanor."

[01:17:50] **Justin:** "I... I do know of people who are -- I know of, of animals that live underground. I know of moles and sometimes foxes."

[01:18:03] **Esther:** "Yes. And I live much, much deeper than all of them."

[01:18:08] **Justin:** "Deeper than foxes? When I -- hm. There are people that live deep underground... when we bury things, do -- do -- do bones fall on your head?"

[01:18:25] **Esther:** "No, I can't say I've ever had a bone fall on my head from you burying one. That would have to fall very, very far indeed. Don't worry about that."

[01:18:35] **Justin:** "Hm. I... I would like to go there someday."

[01:18:41] **Esther:** "Well, I would love to have you, you would be an honored guest."

[01:18:45] **Justin:** Random side question. Do I know where the Temple of Shelyn is?

[01:18:49] **Esther:** Yes.

[01:18:50] **Justin:** Okay.

[01:18:50] **Esther:** Orianna and Mira would go there periodically, and you would be brought there for trimmings and stylings and such, yes. Usually with Mira, like she would be-- insist.

[01:19:03] **Justin:** "But now you wish to go to the Temple of Shelyn. I will show you the way."

[01:19:07] **Esther:** "Well, thank you very much, Ember!" She seems taken with you.

[01:19:11] **Fai:** Ember could really dump us and just go back with them and be the new fucking king. Like, he would be living *large* while we got to deal with DTF's bullshit, so... might not be a bad choice for him, really, even though I know he won't take it.

[01:19:29] **Justin:** You have the unfortunate situation of actually being able to understand what he says.

# The Temple of Shelyn

[01:19:36] **Esther:** You can all make your way to the Temple of Shelyn, which is a series of six-sided buildings built adjacent to one another, rather like a honeycomb. There is one central hexagon that rises for several stories, and there are smaller hexagons of a few stories each clustered around this central cell. There are six single-level hexagonal buildings attached to points of this central honeycomb cluster, so that it looks like a rather odd but beautifully constructed honeycomb star.

The central stack is painted a base coat of gold, and there are brightly colored murals depicting myths and religious teachings about Shelyn that span from the base to the very top. Each of the other hexagonal structures are painted in really gorgeous shades of greens, purples, blues, pinks, oranges, browns, and black and white -- some solid colors, some a mixture of featuring other murals and graffiti.

There are a wide range of artistic styles on display from minimalist lines to intricate dreamy portrayals of pastoral landscapes and people, to concept art... so many different styles and flavors of art going on on the walls of this temple.

There are garden beds all around the temple and in them you can make out many rose bushes among other varieties of flowering plants, and fruit trees-- and berry bushes, as well. As you walk up an artfully-cobbled pathway, probably with some mosaic designs embedded in it, you make out a short figure attending to the rose bushes.

There is a halfling dressed in loose purple and blue clothing,with a basket of gardening tools nearby. He will look up and say, "Ah, so lovely to see you! Welcome to the Temple of Shelyn. What can I do for you today?"

[01:21:29] **Fai:** "A beautiful day, it is. Um, Hello! I'm Temerity Vane, adviser to the king. These --" I just got to toss it in there! "--these are some honored guests, and, we just wanted to welcome them to the city properly. And in my opinion, this is the place to do that. Am I wrong?"

[01:21:55] **Esther:** "We are delighted to have you in our beautiful temple, where we celebrate love, beauty, art, and music.

We are honored that you would think of us. I am Drusello Phonial, a cleric of Sheyln here, and I will be happy to show you around our temple and welcome you. Yes, yes. Do, do come in, honored guests!" And will introduce himself to each one of you and shake your hands or bow or whatever kind of greeting you prefer.

And then will catch sight of Ember and say: "Goodness! It can't be! [noise of incredulity] Is that Orianna and Mira Selestine's dog?"

[01:22:39] **Justin:** Ember is back in dog mode of like, doesn't particularly want to introduce himself.

[01:22:47] **Fai:** "It is indeed. His name's Ember --

[01:22:51] **Esther:** "Yes, yes!"

[01:22:53] **Fai:** "And -- you're familiar with him?"

[01:22:55] **Esther:** "We've given him beauty treatments many times in our grooming facility, yes! Oh, I thought something terrible had happened to him when Orianna... [trails off]"

[01:23:07] **Fai:** "Well, something terrible did happen to him, in that he was there to see that happen. But he survived! And he's -- he's back here! I found him a little far away and helped him come back home. And we'd like to get him, you know, gussied up, if you like, for when Mira comes back!

You know, I'm a barber. But I don't really specialize in dogs, mostly people. So I don't really know what to do with fur, just hair and teeth and horns and that kind of thing, you know?"

" Yes. Yes. We are happy to help with his fur. I'm so glad --you, you must know Mira. And I think it's been very hard on her. It's been a while since she's been here; we understand she's out... [trails off] Well, I'm glad that he's home. And I'm sure I'm sure they'll be -- *she'll* be -- very, very happy to have him back."

[01:24:10] **Justin:** I would say: the scars are new since the last time he was here. I don't know if that comes into anything, but they are.

[01:24:18] **Esther:** Yeah. He's going to look at you and just like, very concerned and say, "Oh, oh dear. It seems he's been through a lot. Yes. We'll be happy to pamper him, give him all the treats he could want. Come this way, come this way."

And you'll be led to the central structure first and then off into various side little honeycomb rooms. "We, we do ask for a donation of two silver to help cover our labor and our costs and to keep the temple up. You know how it is. And, um, my, my friends will be happy to assist you."

And there's another halfling cleric and two gnomes who will come up and be able to lead you off to various places. What in particular would you like to have done?

[01:25:04] **Fai:** Well, first I'm gonna I don't know how much money I have, but I'm going to drop them like five gold. And then I will be led wherever to get whatever done.

[01:25:15] **Esther:** So mani-pedis are available, massages... like a basic 2 Silver package probably gets you like a hand and foot massage and a mani-pedi. And for Ember like the works -- the works, the works.

But if you want to drop a little more, you can get a full-body massage. You can get a haircut, a makeover if you want -- just a whole range of things that will probably take you from like, two silver to one gold.

[01:25:47] **Alex:** Z has a huge head of hair that's often sort of uncoiffed from his inventions and gets dirty all the time. And so is going to go for a full-on just, make his hair look beautiful.

[01:25:59] **Esther:** Love it. You will be with the talented Uvaria Gibzorith. And he's going to be like, "Oh honey, we can totally take care of this. Now, like this volume? I'm loving it. I'm loving it. It frames your face perfectly. I think we can take it down just a little bit so that it's not like all out here, you know? And like, it's not going to get caught in any of our little cogs at the tinkerings. It's not going to get on fire if you have, you know, like a little explosion because we all know Buster! We are gonna make you like, the perfect inventor haircut." And is gonna just set to town on you.

" As you're doing it though, just, just, if you find my torque wrench, I really need that back."

[01:26:43] **Esther:** "Absolutely. Absolutely. We're going to look in here-- goodness. Wow!" And so is going to get to help you... [laughs]

[01:26:51] **Alex:** There's like screws and nails and stuff too, if you go looking.

[01:26:55] **Esther:** Oh, all right. Temerity, what would you like done?

[01:27:01] **Fai:** Oh, I don't even know. I was just going to say that, like, I will pay for everything because I'm expecting that the king will pay my ass back. But like, I want to make sure that the, uh, that our honored guests get literally anything that they want done. Obviously they already know that it's taken care of.

But just like, slip them however much seems appropriate for literally anything and everything. Them being the clerics, et cetera, so that our friends don't have to concern themselves with such issues. And you know, like probably, probably go for a mani-pedi. And he could probably use a coat of varnish or something. I don't know if he has nails or claws. I don't think, I don't think we've discussed that, but either way they could use a freshening up, I'm sure. A, like a nice face mask while we're at it, 'cause -- been living a lot out on the road. Maybe haven't been, washing and moisturizing to the same level that he might have were he living a little bit differently. So, just try to just, just a little pampering.

[01:28:08] **Esther:** So Temerity is going to be in the range of one to two gold, at least as will Irvik and Nimri.

And they are going to get the works done. Like, at least an hour-long, full-body massage, whatever they want beauty treatment-wise. And they are going to be led off to beautiful, airy suites. Miv will similarly express a desire for a massage and maybe a pedicure, but will say: "And what I'd really like to do afterwards... you are the Temple of Shelyn, and so I understand you may have some musicians here. If there's anybody who would like to harmonize with me while I play on the dulcimer, I'd love to do that. I'd love to have some musical ex-change, love it. If I could learn a new song or two while I'm here, or maybe teach one..." And they'll be directed to one of the clusters of honeycomb-like structures where there's some musical notes wafting from.

There's like harp music, a couple harpists in the main lobby playing a very soothing spa- like tune. And those notes will be able to accompany you all through your spa treatments. But there does seem to be a little bit more music going on in one of the wings.

Oom, what would you like to get done?

[01:29:15] **David:** I think Nommie would like to go wherever Ember's going, for the pampering animal treatment. I think Oom would probably enjoy either a, yeah, a mani-pedi -- I think she would prefer her hair not be touched because she does like the grass and twigs in her hair as they are. Possibly stick around with our guests, if they seem to like more company after being stuck in comfy prison. But if they would rather be amongst themselves, that's fine too.

[01:29:46] **Esther:** Yeah. I think after their massages and everything, they'll totally be down for company.

[01:29:51] **Justin:** Ember will kind of whisper to Nommie. "They, have a great spot for sunbathing."

[01:29:58] **Fai:** I would love to, while the massages are happening, perhaps Oom and Temerity are at like in the same area getting their nails did or whatever. 'Cause I'd love to have a conversation with Oom.

[01:30:14] **Esther:** Fabulous. As you're, you're settled in like, Oom's attendant is like, "Yes, totally. We can leave the sticks and the leaves. That is a vibe. And the most important thing about beauty, is that you determine what is beautiful. And we respect that. And like, I'm into it. If this is important to you like, I think that is beautiful." And is gonna go to town on your nails. So absolutely time for convo!

[01:30:45] **Fai:** I'll wait until, perhaps if such an occasion occurrs that our attendance are talking amongst themselves to each other?

[01:30:53] **Esther:** "Yeah, girl, and it was great. And there's this amazing cream that I'm using now. I love it..." Yes.

# Oom and Temerity Have a Heart-to-Heart

[01:31:00] **Fai:** Wonderful. So that we have at least a semblance of some sort of privacy -- obviously not full privacy, but you know, they're not like listening and paying attention. 'Cause they have important stuff to talk about over there.

I'm gonna say "Oom I wanted to thank you for the help that you've given me. You know, as I said before, you have no reason to embroil yourself in what could become very dangerous. And I want you to know that it means something to me that you made the decision 'there are people to help here and I -- my best use is here helping, not leaving.' I take that very seriously. You know, we haven't known each other for very long, but I want you to know that that's something that I really respect. And it's something that makes me feel like... like maybe we are going to become real friends."

[01:32:01] **David:** "I mean, I feel the same too. I think that that's just part of journeying forth; that if I didn't want to meet new people and see new things, I wouldn't have left home to begin with.

And I think the biggest judge of your character is that you were friends with Ember, and that you helped him. And that's all I need to want to know more about you and to help with everything that you're doing here. But we are going to talk about Vroth'rien again, because I feel that there's more to unpack with that."

[01:32:36] **Fai:** "Well, you know, maybe if we... sure. We can talk about that some more if you want. But let me ask you this: is there some way I can help you? I'm not going to ask you for your business, although I *have* to tell you, I'm extremely curious. Are you in trouble? Is, is, is there anything wrong? Do you need help with something? Are you okay?"

[01:33:04] **David:** "It's not trouble, uh, specifically. I do have some things that I'm trying to deliver, some important things that I guess would rather not lose or talk about in public for now. But that was part of what I think, Miv was, was concerned about if, if you heard them talking."

[01:33:27] **Fai:** "Okay, Oom. . I understand. I understand maybe more than you, because many times in my life have I delivered something important. And I delivered something important for Drum."

[01:33:46] **David:** "What did you deliver?"

[01:33:48] **Esther:** By the way, the attendants will leave you for some privacy if you'd like. They'll be like, "A good beautician always respects when the client needs to talk about something. And your nails are just going to dry for a while now. So we're just going to go chitchat out here, and feel welcome to stay in here as long as you like, the walls are really soundproof." And they wink at you.

[01:34:11] **Fai:** "What I delivered is what got him this city. Let's leave it at that for now." But I will say:

 "I understand the need for secrecy and safety. But, um, you know, without knowing anything about this, let me just tell you: sometimes a package can be bigger than what is inside of it. So... if you need help...

If Drum had asked me for my help then, we wouldn't be here now, trying to help him rectify these terrible mistakes, because I would've given him much more, much better advice than any of the people he's obviously had around him in the past, I don't know, sixty-whatever years. You know, it gets fuzzy. Just be careful, you know?

I have no regrets. I'll always do a favor for a friend and I'll always be there to, to help them pick up whatever pieces might fall along the way, but be careful. And if you need help, please ask for it. I will be willing to give it to you."

[01:35:37] **David:** "That's really appreciated. It sounds like what you were delivering was, was really important. I mean, to get him an entire city?"

[01:35:49] **Fai:** "Well, it's what led him to be able to make the deal that he made. Let's say that. So it was bigger than the package.

And I didn't know what was *in* the package at the time, because I'm very good at my job -- at any of the jobs that I pick up -- but, you know, that's kind of the, the one thread that's been going for a really long time. You know, the family business, I suppose. But I didn't know what was in it. I didn't ask. I didn't look.

If I had, I would be much worse at my job, but I might've been able to be a better friend."

[01:36:35] **David:** "How did you get this package? Was it, were you just delivering it from one of his friends, or?"

[01:36:46] **Fai:** I was just the middleman, right?

[01:36:47] **Esther:** Yeah. You picked it up from a drop site in the Whisperwood.

[01:36:52] **Fai:** Not going to mention that part yet. I was-- look, I'm givin' a lot and I'm not gettin' a whole lot, so!

"I, I was the middleman. You know, I picked up something. I, I picked it up from one place, dropped it off to another. It's important to me to be, or to try to be, the best man I can be. But you know, sometimes,a couple of shady deals... as long as it's not like *really* bad stuff, it's fine, right? So yeah, sometimes you pick up a package from a drop site and then you take it to another place and then it gets taken to someone else, you know, to obscure it's provenance, shall we say. And that's kind of a normal thing, you know, in the like, overall rogue business, right? Insofar as there's one, because there's lots of businesses. But, you know, it didn't seem like anything really... it wasn't really out of the ordinary."

And I'll make a little bit of a face because the place I picked it up from was a little out of the ordinary. But whether or not you noticed that face is a matter of, I don't know, maybe rolls or Esther's determination or whatever.

[01:38:10] **David:** "I mean, that's interesting to me. For me, that is-- even picking up from a random place -- is a little bit out of the ordinary. I mean, maybe it's ordinary for you. But I guess yeah, in my experience, for my package at least, it's from home. It's not, it's not something mysterious or, or hidden in that way. It's just a delivery I have to make.

But yeah, is that, I mean, is that normal for you? To have to just pick up random packages? 'Cause I mean, I'd like to hear more about that. That's way different from things that I've experienced."

[01:38:47] **Fai:** "Well, yeah. You know, I guess it makes a lot of sense for -- if nobody ever really leaves where you live because it's so amazing and you're the only person who's wanting to go and see other things, it'd make sense for someone to say, 'Hey, while you're out there in the world, take this out for me.' You know, like, okay. Yeah. That makes a lot of sense to me. You know, the thing about odd jobs, shall we call them, is that they're odd. So it's not so much that there are-- well, there are some people who work specifically as couriers. But if you want to work with people that you trust if you're doing, you know, some things. And so that made me much higher on the list than some random courier, right?

Uh, when you're, when you're doing things that are maybe not illegal, but kind of something, or maybe that *are* illegal, or maybe that just sidestep the law, whatever -- it's all a matter of circumstance, right? You just have to, whatever the situation calls for is what you do.

So if you don't want people to know who got what from where and how, it's best to obscure your footsteps, shall we say? And so I was, I was the, I was the first set of footsteps, maybe."

[01:40:21] **David:** "How do you know when you're delivering those things if it's the right package to deliver, or that you can trust the person you're working for?"

[01:40:29] **Fai:** "Well, you know, that's something that only time can teach us, my friend. For Drum, I trusted him. I still trust him, even though, you know, he's obviously kind of gotten a little high on his farts. I have great love for him and that's unchanged. So if a friend asks me to do something and they don't have a lot of details about it, you know, you can be pretty chill about it. But sometimes, well, as I said... you learn by doing.

And... you asked about Vroth'rien.

That's a situation of learning by doing. And I don't just mean in the like, wink-wink-nudge- nudge kind of way. That's a situation of, you know, we're all here doing illegal or questionably legal things, but some people take it way too fucking far, right? And, well, I guess that's what we had a falling out about. Because I told him, "Look, man, you're taking it way too fucking far. It's one thing to be a little bit shady, but it's a whole other thing to be like a straight up fucking bad guy."

And you know, maybe when you're young, it's romantic to think of yourself as like a kind of a bad guy, kind of a bad boy, sexy or whatever. But as you move on in life, you start to realize things, I hope. *I* realized things. And so when I came face-to-face with people who weren't just like oh, a little bit of a bad boy, but like a really bad guy, [it] made me take stock of, "Well, am I going to go down this road? Do I want to be that? Or do I want to hold myself to the standard of the best version of me?"

You know, like I told my friend. And some people, like Vroth'rien, are concerned with the terrestrial matters of, becoming king of a shit heap and being the king of shit. But I'm not interested in that. And I'm not interested in watching my friend build a kingdom that's not a shit heap, but that's concealing shit.

It's like I said: you can always smell shit."

[01:43:03] **David:** "I mean, it's, it's inspiring that you're so confident about being able to judge that. And I guess maybe it's just a little different for me because I've, I've only been alive a blink of an eye compared to how long you've been around, that I'm, I'm not always sure what the right thing should be. I guess that's just part of living, like you said."

[01:43:27] **Fai:** "Don't get me wrong, Oom. It's only in the moment that we can make that decision. And sometimes in later moments we realize it wasn't the right one. I'm not always confident that the decision I have made is right. But I *am* confident that I try my best to make the decisions that will be at least better. You know, sometimes you only have a choice between multiple evils, but there are levels to evils.

I am much older than you, but we can still only take it day by day. We can only be the best person we can be in every moment that we try to be. We're not always going to make the right decisions. We're not always going to know what the right decisions are. But what we are in control of knowing is ourselves, to whatever level we are able to meet ourselves currently.

The longer you're around, the more time you have. But that doesn't mean you're spending that time reflecting upon yourself. And so I think that what I would say to you is that it's normal, not just for somebody who's young, like you, but for *anyone* to be unsure in the moment, what the right thing to do is, what the right path to take is, what the right step to take is.

There are many variables outside and maybe even, you know, inside. But the best we can do is examine ourselves and ask ourselves ' which me do I want to be? Which step do I want to take? Which step is most in line with the person that I wish to be, or become, or maintain.' Does that make sense?"

[01:45:34] **David:** So for example, when Nimirill wanted to hit your friend with a book and you were okay with that, what about the situation made you think that was the right thing?"

[01:45:44] **Fai:** "Well --"

[01:45:46] **Esther:** So, I'm loving this. I want us to hold there for a second. Hold that thought about the book hitting the king, and what made you think it was okay, and briefly check in with Ember. Because it's been a moment and I just want to see how Ember is doing in his treatment, and then we'll get back... Ember and Z.

# Ember and Z Get Gussied Up

[01:46:04] **Esther:** Actually, I think it would be kind of funny if you wound up close together, like in, in neighboring hexagons. But Ember, you are going to be lovingly led to a hexagon by Drusello, who will personally groom you. Lathered up. And Nommie can be there sunbathing and like, being oiled down if that's what Nommie wants, or getting claws trimmed.

And you'll be like, shampooed and conditioned and dried and then combed, and have your paws very, very gently attended to -- like waxed, and then nails filed, if you will agree to such a thing. And Drusello, upon touching you is going to kind of exclaim "Oh, you're so warm. That's... that's new. Isn't it?" And really like, carefully examine some of your scars and like, rub some very good-feeling different kinds of tonics on them.

And you'll get a doggy massage -- be a really lovely experience. Do you say anything throughout this time?

[01:47:07] **Justin:** I do not.

[01:47:08] **Esther:** Drusello just says "It seems like you've been through quite a time, my friend. I'm so sorry for whatever it is you've seen and endured. I hope Mira can come home soon to see you."

[01:47:24] **Justin:** I think Ember will make a sound. Kind of like a sort of, kind of a like agreeable kind of-- not like a bark. Agh, there's a word for this and I cannot think of it myself. But kind of like a whoo kind of sound.

[01:47:45] **Esther:** A sub-woof.

[01:47:47] **Justin:** Yeah, a very quiet like, woof-ish sound, in a way that could be interpreted as agreement or just as a dog making noise.

[01:48:00] **Esther:** And Z, anything in particular you want to like, talk about with your stylist as your hair is getting done?

[01:48:06] **Alex:** I don't think so. Not with the stylist, no. Just like, uh, admiring the various things that, uh, come out of my hair:

[01:48:14] **Esther:** A couple of little screws. Like, definitely some soot.

[01:48:18] **Alex:** Well, and, and all of the like, screws and other objects, like bits of metal and stuff like that, I've been keeping.

[01:48:24] **Esther:** So there's going to be a little pile and every time he finds one he he's like, "Oh my goodness, Z. If you put that in there you can cause quite a tangle!" And -- non-stop stream of talking to himself. And Z, I'd like you to roll me a secret Perception check, please.

You hear through the non-stop stream of your stylist's happy chatter -- like, it's a little hard to make out because you're listening through this, a couple of voices murmuring as they're in passing, like, "Yes, it's so stressful. Like, they're missing and I don't know where to find them." And then someone being like, "Do you think like, we're just going to have to make new ones? Because there's only like, nine days before the festival, and I like don't even know if that's feasible." And they sound a little stressed, a little worried. That's what you get.

[01:49:16] **Alex:** I might ask, my lovely stylist "Have you all lost something?"

[01:49:22] **Esther:** "Have we lost something? Z. Listen. You know how like, every year the festival, we have the best kites and we like, take off from the mountains? And we like hangglide down? And they have beautiful tails and beautiful embroidered artwork and painted banners and stuff, because Shelyn, am I right?

Well, our kites were vandalized in a dastardly act of vandalism. And a couple of them were stolen. A couple of them were stolen. And some of them, we just don't know if we can repair. I'm like, it's a very stressful time. Z. It's very stressful indeed."

[01:50:03] **Alex:** "Is there anything I can do to help? I mean, you know, Buster is light as a feather and could practically take off. So, you know, kites should just be right in my wheelhouse."

[01:50:12] **Esther:** "Z, if you can make Buster wings, you can do anything. If you can make Buster fly, I believe that you can do it. Yeah. Like, I don't know, though."

[01:50:21] **Alex:** "Fly is an interesting choice of words."

[01:50:21] **Esther:** "I feel bad about accepting your help." Roll me Diplomacy.

[01:50:28] **Alex:** I roll a 17. There was a seven modifier in there, so...

[01:50:34] **Esther:** "Z... I don't know if I feel like we can accept your help. You're *so* busy. If you talk to your friends and they like, all want to do this, maybe. But like, I can't ask you to take this on alone. Absolutely not. No. And like, we're just getting your hair to a place where I'm like, all the metal shards are out of it. So like, I wouldn't want you to have to go to any trouble after I have spent such a long time crafting this beautiful style."

[01:51:01] **Alex:** "Well, just let me know if there's anything I can do to, you know, help craft in another kite or something like that. Like, I do have some experience there, so I'd be happy maybe just to, maybe we could see about repairing some of the vandalized ones?"

[01:51:15] **Esther:** "Z, I really appreciate that offer. Let me talk it over with the other clerics and we'll see about that. I just... I just don't know who could have done such a thing, you know?" And will go back to like, attending to your hair.

When the other clerics pass by it will be mentioned, and perhaps your offer of help will be accepted. Holding that thought, let's get back to Temerity and Oom, who were on the precipice of discussing why it's okay for someone to hit someone with a book.

# On The Merits of Biblioviolence

[01:51:53] **Fai:** "Now keep in mind that I'm no arbiter of morality. This is just the way that I see things. And I'm happy to explain it to you. As far as I'm concerned, he deserved to be hit with a book. But it seemed like a reasonable exchange. If allowing her to commit this harmless act of physical violence that would exorcise some of her anger-- if that was the way to get us to the next stage of this discussion to allow her to clear her mind a little bit and feel like she can, she can see past her anger and see what she would determine to be justice? As far as I was concerned, it's okay for her to hit him with that book. I think that that would be absolutely reasonable. They've been imprisoned against their will. I mean, really, you could say that he insulted their honor by refusing to believe them.

So in the scheme of things, for me, I didn't think it was that big a deal. If hitting him with a book-- which again, is something that I do believe that he deserves -- you know, if punching him a couple of times... that's not going to kill him. It's not going to hurt him. He's a fucking king.

And he's, I mean, I'm sure he has a cleric and et cetera on staff. He can heal that so quickly. And you know, another edge of it is that in the moment it didn't feel like maybe it would be such a bad thing for him to, to have an immediate physical consequence that he could feel, that you can't talk yourself out of having been hit with a book. You know? You merely have to feel that pain. And although I think I got through to him, ultimately... you were there with me. For a moment, it seemed like he was going to flutter off again. And I believe that I got through to him. But as far as I was concerned, it's a drop in the bucket.

Do you feel that I was wrong to have been willing to agree to that? It's okay to say no."

[01:54:15] **David:** "I guess I'm just trying to understand a little bit more since you also seemed really confident talking to him about Nommie and your feelings about dragons being different than what he and some of the other people around here seem to think, too.

And so I don't think you're wrong for wanting to trust in what you believed was right in that moment. I'm just trying to, I guess, figure it out a bit more. Like, how did you know it was the right thing to do to stand up for Nommie, and for saying that it was okay not to be afraid of dragons in the same way that he was?"

[01:55:00] **Fai:** "Well, that merely seemed right. It's my experience that he didn't have anything to fear from Nommie. And so I spoke it, you know? Ultimately... ideally, when something comes into question, ideally the best answer is the truth. Sometimes that's not the case. Sometimes the truth is only going to make things more difficult or worse.

Sometimes the truth is variable. Most times the truth is variable. I think that you kind of discussed that when you talked about a sharing of viewpoints. In general, that's what I try to lean on. I'm not going to say I never lie. Sometimes it's very useful to lie, either to protect oneself or someone else.

Sometimes it's merely easy to lie. But in a moment like this, when it's a matter of someone's freedom? The truth must be told. And the truth is that you -- well. The truth as I believe it is that you and Nommie don't have any, any ill intentions to him or his city."

[01:56:27] **David:** "So yeah, I definitely don't have any ill will towards King DTF or this city. I think that it's a wonderful goal, even if it seems he has some misconceptions about what it means to go through the Bleaching or what it means to end your life after a life well lived. I am a little concerned about his fear of dragons and what that means.

And I guess that's also why I was wondering what you thought."

[01:57:06] **Fai:** "Okay. So to continue: in the moment I believed -- and I continue to believe, I think -- that you represented no harm to him or the city and that you have nothing to do with any of his problems.

And we were in -- you know, you were more than me, because I don't think I was ever really in danger of becoming imprisoned -- it's possible that you and Nommie could have been. And so it's more important to me to speak to the, what I, what I believe to be the truth than to be cautious and allow you to be in captivity, even if it's comfy captivity, right? So that's why I made that decision. But I'll tell you this: you know, I don't know if it's going to ease your mind or complicate things because of where you're from, but he's concerned about dragons for a good reason.

He crossed one. And dragons have long memories, I believe. So his paranoia about another mistake he made, another slight-- well, I mean, slight is kind of a light word for it. Another mistake he, he made, another person he wronged, his paranoia about that is what led to his treatment of Irvik and Nimri. And it's not a completely unfounded paranoia, I will say that.

I didn't know about the, you know, *that* before. But I knew that, you know, even though, like I said, I believe that you have secrets -- and you know, everybody does-- I believe that you and Nommie meant no harm and that he was being kind of paranoid.

And so I merely spoke the truth. The same as when I said 'if we negotiate, I will advocate for you to be able to hit him if that's what helps.' Because that was merely the truth. It was something that I was completely willing to do, but it was also something that I believed was the right... you know, was right *if* necessary.

I still think it would've been worth it, you know. But I do appreciate that you came in and you kind of helped the conversation go in a different way. If he had been hit by the book, or if she had said, 'Yes, I will deal with you. I will listen to what he has to say, but you must let me punch him...'

Yeah. I would've gone outside of that room and told him, 'Look, you fucked up big time. And you're lucky that this is all that she wants to do. She's not asking me to sink a knife into your fucking guts. So you're going to take this and you're, you're going to be a grownup about it.' You know, that's what, that's what I would have done."

[02:00:26] **Esther:** I will say the attendents are going to come back in and be like, "So we are like really sorry, but um, we do have our next clients, so you can go to the next room over. But like, we're going to have to kick you out." And they're going to kick you out of this particular room.

[02:00:42] **Fai:** I'm going to thank them from the depths of my heart. I'm going to tell them what a beautiful job they've done and take the fucking hint.

[02:00:50] **Esther:** "But like, you know. Stick around, totally cool. Have fun." And they're going to like, they will gesture you in the general direction of the foyer or of another private little room.

You can probably see that both Professor Z and Ember will be done and relaxing by a beautiful fountain with Nommie. Everybody else is like coming out from their massages and other beauty treatments, seem very relaxed, very happy.

[02:01:18] **Fai:** What were you going to say, David?

[02:01:20] **David:** "I guess since, since you took a leap of faith, what my heart is telling me is that I should too. And so what I'm trying to deliver does involve dragons and does involve, I guess things that might scare King DTF. So I'm not sure how much more I should say about that. Knowing that if he's already freaked out just about Nommie, how much more would he be freaked out if I'm just trying to deliver things?"

[02:01:59] **Fai:** "That's fair. Do you have to go beyond the city to deliver this, or is it a delivery that's made here?"

[02:02:06] **David:** "Yes. I'll likely have to go far beyond this city. It has been a long journey and involves a lot of different dragons."

[02:02:21] **Fai:** "Okay. If you don't want to answer this question, I understand. Keep in mind that it's in my best interest for my friend Drum to maybe have a little bit less information than more right now, because he's maybe kind of proven himself to be a little bit of an asshole. And we have, you know, we don't need to add any more messes to clean up before we're finished cleaning up these fucking messes, right?

With that said: where are you delivering to? Not to whom. But if you can tell me where..."

[02:03:03] **David:** "I actually don't know where if we're being completely honest."

[02:03:07] **Fai:** "So you know to whom?"

[02:03:10] **David:** "I do know to whom. I just don't know to where."

[02:03:15] **Fai:** "I'm not going to ask you what it is. I didn't even look what it was when it was *me* delivering something, so far be it for me to ask you what it is, if you've looked. You're delivering it to a dragon?"

[02:03:30] **David:** "To multiple dragons."

[02:03:32] **Fai:** "Okay. Okay, multiple. That's... okay.

Okay, look. I'm not going to be cute. Is Athervox one of these these dragons?"

[02:03:46] **David:** I'd like to try to perceive the intent of asking that.

[02:03:51] **Esther:** That that will be a Perception check.

[02:03:53] **Fai:** If it's bad, you could also just ask what the intent is.

[02:03:56] **Esther:** I would say that you have every reason thus far to believe that Temerity has everyone's best interests at heart, and Temerity may be a little enigmatic to read in this particular moment.

[02:04:16] **David:** "Is there a reason why you're specifically mentioning Athervox?"

[02:04:27] **Fai:** "Is there a reason you're answering my question with a question?""

[02:04:34] **David:** "I guess, just because of the distrust of dragons in general, that it seems this place as a whole thus far has had stigmas against dragons. And as far as we know, Athervox is a Green dragon, especially. So... I guess the general feelings of dragons, and specifically what those feelings would mean for a Green dragon that others may believe is evil, just leads me to wonder why Athervox specifically?"

[02:05:11] **Fai:** "Well, personally, I don't have any like, prejudices about dragons or anything like that. But that is the dragon whose name was stricken out of the books." And I'm going to leave it at that and see if, see where that goes.

[02:05:38] **David:** "Athervox is one of the dragons I'm trying to find. And from my perspective, I do trust that Mengkare wouldn't want me to find this dragon unless there was a good reason."

[02:05:55] **Fai:** Oom's spoken about Mengkare multiple times. Can I please get a refresher on what exactly has been said? Like, it's with great reverence that Oom speaks of... him?

[02:06:17] **Esther:** Yeah, him.

[02:06:18] **Fai:** Of him, right? Um, he's the leader of the city? He established the city?

[02:06:23] **Esther:** Roll me a quick Society and -- oh, I have to roll you a society. Yes. And then we will see what you might just know about Mengkare to begin with.

You know that Mengkare is the founder of the island nation of Hermea and that he is a Gold dragon. That's about all you know in this particular moment outside of what Oom has said, and if you'd like to add on, David, please do. I will remind you that you have heard Oom speak very respectfully of Mengkare's wisdom in sharing a lot of memories.

They frequently cite what Mengkare says about conflict resolution or the way we are with one another, and Mengkare comes across as a very wise figure it seems that Oom maybe has a direct relationship with in some way. And that's probably what you would have gotten. David, please add on if there's other things.

[02:07:21] **David:** Yeah. That's pretty much the gist. And you can always ask too.

[02:07:24] **Fai:** I just wanted to clarify like, what I would know in that moment.

"Okay, look, I'm going to tell you this.It's clear to me that you have a great deal of respect for Mengkare. It seems clear that he's very wise. Everything that you've said, all of your impressions that you've gotten across from him, are a great wisdom that has been shared. And it's interesting that, as I understand it, he founded a city to be, you know, an oasis, a utopia or whatever.

And I mean, I don't know how that happened, but Drum founded this city out of love and care, too. And I -- what I want for him is that someday people will talk about him the way you're talking about Mengkare. Now, whatever business-- whatever dragon business they have between one another-- is none the fuck of mine, okay?

It certainly complicates our situation -- or my situation, maybe. I don't know. She's the one who is angry at him. I mean, that's probably obvious because she's the one whose name was stricken, right? She's the one he's so paranoid about. So keep, keep this information very close. Thank you for sharing it with me. I appreciate that that was a leap of faith.

 And I... I offered you help. And I mean it. [overwhelmed sigh] I don't know in what way I can be helpful to you here, other than just bearing this between us."

[02:09:12] **David:** "I mean, I hope that maybe we can be helpful to each other if it seems like this is the dragon that he's pissed off. And if it seems like through our deliveries we might interact with Athervox, perhaps there's room to..."

[02:09:31] **Fai:** "I don't know how I'm going to reconcile this information, and I don't know how we are going to affect this situation. But I will tell you that... well, I, I already said earlier, he *did* wrong her. It's not going to be 'take you around on a spin through the city and show you some like, hot people without their shirts on and take you to the temple to get a tune up and, you know, take you to the festival' kind of restoration of justice, you know? He could very well die. As could I. I was accessory to that situation and... that's not why I'm invested.

He did his best to keep me out of it. And that's why we haven't seen, we haven't seen each other until I saw him in that room, because he did his best to keep me out of it. But I'm in it now. And the, I think the only way out is through.

But I would be happy to help you make your deliveries. I care about you, and that's a very, it's a very long journey, as you said, to go to multiple places. And I don't want you to have, to have to undertake such a journey on your own. It's very difficult to do that. We all of us need a community of some kind and I'm happy to be that for you. But I want you to know that for that delivery, I might be more of a-- I might be more of a hindrance than an aid. I might be... I might be a little drop of poison in that well. So this is something we're going to have to consider, but this is not something that Drum needs to know about.

He has enough things to concern himself with and there are more of his things that I'm going to have to concern myself with, I'm certain. But I will help you however I can help you. And if helping you means not being around in certain situations, I can do that too."

[02:11:53] **David:** "I appreciate that. And I think that help works both ways. So if there's anything I can do to help right those wrongs, that's definitely something we can talk more about later."

[02:12:14] **Fai:** "You know, it's certainly possible. You may be young, but you have wisdom in you. And you, like all of us, have the seeds of greatness in you.

So I believe that you could be of help. You already have been. I don't believe we would have gotten as far with Irvik and Nimirill without you. You know, it's one thing for me to come in and say these pretty words that they may or may not believe, but they, they felt a connection to you. And they trusted that. And I believe that they were right to. I believe that you have what's right in your heart.

And you know, maybe sometimes you get a little bit hot about some things, but you care very deeply and, well, I hope that maybe, you know, between all of us somehow we'll be able to make the best out of this situation.

And I thank you again, for staying, and for this offer, too. I don't know how we're going to figure this one out, but I think you have an important point of view to bring forth. And I think it could be worse. If you have to talk to a certain dragon, like if we have to establish some kind of communication with her eventually, it could be a lot worse than having someone like you-- I'm not going to say on our side, but at least able to mediate.

I said earlier, 'Oh, of course, if you leave and nobody else leaves, of course people are gonna tell you to bring something.' But I thought it was like, you know, a pair of earrings or something that someone wanted to send to a friend that they haven't seen for a long time. You know, that's kind of what I was thinking.

He wouldn't have trusted you with something this big if you weren't trustworthy, and if he didn't see those seeds of greatness and didn't see you tending to them.

So maybe we can, maybe we can do something here."

[02:14:30] **David:** "I think we can."

[02:14:32] **Fai:** "Thank you, Oom."

[02:14:38] **David:** So I think we'll try to make our way back to the larger group.

[02:14:42] **Esther:** Miv will be walking out with a bunch of musicians and will say, "Well, don't we all look rested." And the two Deep Gnomes will nod in assent, and you can all regroup together.

And I think we should leave things there for now. You can share with each other what you may have learned after. Next time, I think we're going to start with several days of downtime, which you can use as you would like to craft things, to go shopping, to maybe go on a couple of little errands, or save those for after the downtime days. Like, four to five days, I'll decide. And we'll pass some time until the festival.

But Miv will be able to show the Deep Gnomes around, and we can narrate some of what they do. So: as we leave things here today, how is everybody feeling?

# Winding Down

[02:15:34] **Justin:** Ember is relieved that all of the friends have been found and is delighted to have two new friends. Is still very confused by Drum Thornfiddle, but is kind of willing to just accept that he will be confused about that.

[02:15:51] **Fai:** Temerity is hopeful. That was a very, very good conversation with Oom, I think. And one that, kind of cemented some roots, I believe. Because there were some remaining questions. And it wasn't just like, "What are you hiding?" But it was more of a, like, "Who are you?" I think that Temerity feels more like he gets who Oom is now, more than the snapshots or assumptions or whatever he's made prior to this.

He's definitely, definitely like, "Oh, this is -- at every step this is getting more fucked up." But there's hope. He believes that Oom wants to help. And that that's clear in everything about her, is the desire to help, even if it's a little quick-triggered sometimes. So like just stressed but blessed, and loving the new nails and toenails.

[02:17:09] **David:** Yeah. I think the mani-pedi definitely helped relieve some tension. I think for, for Oom, it is a bit of relief in general to just... I think she was feeling a little bit worried at first when Miv noticed that the magic, in, in what Oom was carrying. But it feels a bit of a relief to finally be able to share some of what's been going on with someone else in talking with Temerity and seeing, really trusting that he's looking out for Oom, and vice versa. And that that's sort of a leap of faith that Oom is gradually coming to accept.

[02:17:57] **Alex:** Z is, uh, I think a little bit, unlike everybody else in the party, like kind of feeling like the Festival of Flight and everything, it's on the up and up. You know, being important and having the King's credit card, so to speak, is a positive development. And he may have missed some of the, the politics about that. But Z is very excited for what's going on.

[02:18:27] **Esther:** Awesome. I will look forward to what happens next. Thank you all very much for being here. That is our story for today! And thank you so much to our audience for being with us in this story. We look very, very forward to being with you again next time. And until then, please remember to tell the stories that you most want to encounter in the world

# End Credits

[02:18:59] **Esther:** Thanks so much for joining us this episode and for being in this story with us.

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tell the stories you most want to encounter in the world.