

The Sprouting

Chapter 01 The Meeting of Souls - Part 01

[Vee]

This world used to be like your world. In fact, it was your world until a couple of hundred years ago. Sorry about that.

Some similarities, but mostly differences. The land, the technology, the people, the politics, the language, the eldritch plants. The people of our tale are attempting to survive in a world where mystical plants have taken over, where eldritch bargains twist the fabric of reality but each has a goal beyond just surviving.

But when the eldritch come to mortal dwellings, it distorts the mind with its inability to be perceived. So, can they trust their senses or must they learn to trust each other? I guess you're about to find out.

This is The Sprouting.

Chapter 1. The Meeting of Souls Part 1.

The year is 80 after sprouting, or 2100 if you prefer. In the vine-strangled graveyard of humanity's scarification of the world, we find few survivors, some banding together for safety and comfort, others braving the unpredictable wilds alone. I start this story within a region known locally as The Cradle.

Generally speaking, the vast Alps to the north and west, the ocean to the east and the dangerous mountains, hills and crevasses to the south have managed to isolate this expanse of land. Small vestiges of civilization are dotted around, providing small havens for the living. One type of haven is the difficult-to-get-into burrows.

Small bunkers, dwellings, underground shelters that were created before the sprouting, to protect the important people, items and knowledge of humanity before its downfall. And it is in pursuit of one such burrow that our story really begins, with the meeting of four souls.

We find ourselves at a gas station. It's broken, decrepit, there was no roof to start with but all the fuel pumps are broken or covered in vines or plants or just simply removed. Nobody knows how, nobody knows why, but that's not relevant right now. Inside the gas station itself, part of the roof has collapsed and it's not doing too well but it does provide shelter for a young man.

This young man wakes and stretches and looks out the window. Amongst all the rubble and ruin, the rusted cars and the pieces of concrete that are broken, he sees an older man. Eyþór, who are you and what do you look like?

[Eyþór]

Hello, my name is Eyþór and I'm going to be playing Sully. So Sully's standing there in the middle of the road looking kind of unkempt because it's been a while since he's had a safe place to stay. He stands kind of average height but you can tell by just looking at him that he

is quite old and that he's been like his skin has taken on that kind of orange leathery look that like farmers get in their old age.

But he still carries himself with just like a hint of discipline I'd say. He's wearing a brown leather jacket that is a little bit patched like there's clearly been holes but the patches are the same color and so it's just kind of keeping the color palette of brown. It doesn't have like bright colors in there.

And yeah he's just wearing normal cargo pants under that. He's wearing some like thick, he's wearing some like real hiking boots and he's got a like a big traveling backpack that's just stuffed to the brim. But there's no like jingling like things aren't hanging off and if the things are hanging off they're like kind of tied to the bag and it's like clear he's got like an order to his backpack.

[Vee]

Yeah, make me a listen check for me please.

[Eybór]

Oh no, I'm bad at listen. Why am I bad at listen? All right, that's a 37 on a 20 roll so fail.

[Vee]

Okay, you arrived maybe an hour or so ago. You actually found the young man who's now looking at you. You found him asleep surrounded by some gear. He had a rifle with him.

But young kids probably not worth interfering with and you might as well just get on with what you need to be here for. Scanning and looking around you see that there is... You can see that kind of you're on a hill sort of and you can see that as you look down the hill there is this very large still lake ahead of you.

It's not rippling, it's not moving, it's not affected. It's a quite clear day that kind of like really cold spring day where kind of nothing is moving. It's kind of cold but if you're in the right part of of the sun it's just kind of kind of warm.

It's an okay day. Looking off to the side of the still lake that is ahead of you, you can see there is kind of this large like cliff face, this kind of large mountain off to one side. It's a little far off and you can see that there are trees all around.

Everything is genuinely calm and peaceful. As you kind of look around you don't really hear anything. You don't hear the guy who in the gas station moving around.

You did pick that up. Maybe old ears, maybe you're distracted by sometimes the genuine beauty that can be this world. As you are looking around and you look up you see what looks like this very small electrical device that seems to be like flying in the air.

There's like as you look at it you can almost make out the sound of the humming but maybe that's just imagination, associations. You've seen drones here and there before but not many. You see that it flies high and travels off, circles around and heads off in a different direction.

We're going to stick with the drone. As the drone flies back to where it came from it slowly

descends on a road, not too far from where the gas station is and it lands very close to you. Neil, do you want to tell us who you are and what you look like?

[Neil]

I'm Ralph. In contrast to your very weathered complexion, he does not have a very weathered complexion. He has a very sheltered skin look, vaguely tanned but not to the extreme.

He's got a bit of a husky build. He's wearing like a tarp type thing, like poncho that looks like it's made out of various outdoor tarp materials and stuff. Like if you've seen the episode of Taskmaster where they have to make something out of the umbrella and then rip the inside out of the umbrella and just use the umbrella over their head.

It's like a tarp. It's kind of that vibe going on. It's open in the front.

It's pretty much on display. He's got a pistol on his chest on a harness. He's got a machete on his back behind his backpack, which holds his drone.

He has short auburn hair that's kind of stuck up, partially due to the VR headset that's currently on his eyes, but when he pulls it up, it kind of sticks his hair up a little bit. It kind of naturally always is lifted.

[Eyþór]

I love that. I love that.

[Vee]

Very relatable.

[Neil]

Yeah, the VR headset in this world, they're kind of more akin to goggles for snow stuff than a bulky VR headsets that we know today. If you imagine like a snow goggles lifted up, that's kind of what it looks like most of the time.

And on his wrist, there is a connected to all this, connected to the backpack, is a small little wrist device that looks to be some kind of computer interface on his left wrist. Behind that are a couple strange tattoo looking things.

[Vee]

The drone, which I believe you have called OT?

[Neil]

Yes, it has feathers tucked underneath the solar panels. It's kind of decorated a little bit, along with the "Birds Aren't Real" sticker.

[Vee]

It also has, for the astute among you, it also has Applesin stamps on the underside, which in this world is a very well known electronics company, at least before The Sprouting. The drone kind of hovers nearby and catches up with you. You can actually see the gas station a little bit further along the road between some rusted out cars and you think you make out the shape

of a gentleman sort of in that clearing area.

The drone kind of hovers next to you and OT says,

[OT]

The lake is ahead. There is a road that leads to a chain link fence with a small building. Perhaps 13 minutes from the gas station. The old man is waiting at the gas station.

Are you sure we can trust him?

[Neil]

He shrugs and how does he gather his drone? What does it look like? Does it just like plop into his hands?

[Vee]

Yeah, it's not a massive drone. It's like quite small. It could very easily just like hook to your backpack when it's not in flight.

[Neil]

Yeah, he does that and snaps it to his backpack. It kind of magnetizes to it and that's what charges the battery that's in the backpack as well. It's all kind of one unit and it's meant to be and was probably sold as such.

[Vee]

You would know that when you put OT away after shrugging, that OT doesn't really say anything when you're surrounded by other people. OT doesn't tend to be actively speaking around folks. So just it's a, hey, let's steal this cool new device.

No, let's not do that. So it's just stuck on your back for now. Yeah, you're probably like three or four minutes away.

And as you continue walking down the road, yeah, you see the kind of older gentleman. Could you roll a spot hidden for me, please, Ralph.

[Neil]

I'm going to see you. 65 versus 50. So that's a nope.

[Vee]

Cool. Yeah, you see a slightly older man ahead of you. You too do not spot the young man who's looking out the window as you approach.

[Eybór]

We suck.

[Vee]

You suck.

[Eybór]

Yeah, I think as soon as Sully spots Ralph.

Oh, yeah, I forgot to mention, I do believe you agreed to this. Sully has two guns on him. I genuinely forgot to mention my weapons when you said you've got a pistol.

[Neil]

I do think you agreed to me. I have five guns.

[Vee]

I don't think that's true.

[Eyþór]

Yeah. So kind of tucked away, attached to his backpack is a rifle, but more like ready to be grabbed is a shotgun that he has kind of slung across the shoulders. So yeah, once Sully makes eye contact with you, he just waves a little bit and you see he's kind of stiffens up.

And if you've had any human experience, you know this is a sign of like, all right, steel yourself like he's quite nervous or like unsure of the interaction about to come.

[Neil]

Yeah. Ralph's a bit the same. He always has his like gun very visible in his open jacket, but his hand is nowhere near it at the moment.

He just kind of waves. How are you, pal? What's your name?

[Eyþór]

Hey, uh, I'm Sully. I'm assuming you're Ralph.

[Neil]

You are who I was looking for then.

[Eyþór]

You are Ralph, right? You're not somebody looking for me, are you?

[Neil]

We've worked before on a couple of things, but I think we were doing kind of distance things.

[Eyþór]

Yeah, uh, this is, it's actually very nice. It's very nice to put a face to the name. You can see that Sully clearly like is relaxing knowing that you are who he was expecting.

[Neil]

Yeah, he's lightens up a bit and walks closer and reaches out a hand for a handshake.

[Eyþór]

Sully gives you a firm handshake, like definitely maybe on the harder side. Uh, but he, like he, he, he has a friendly demeanor to him even if he does that.

[Vee]

Could I get you both to please roll a listen check?

[Eyþór]

Give me a spot hidden.

[Vee]

No.

[Kessir]

You're not looking, you're listening.

[Neil]

For the record, how do we read out our roles in this to be like good for listening?

[Vee]

Um, you could like, uh, you could just say fail. Like, oh, I didn't roll low enough. Or you could do like, oh yeah, I needed a 42 and I got like a 56.

So I failed or like, hey, the success or critical success. Like I think the first time you read your stat, it might be nice for people to hear what your status, but I think mix-and-match is fine.

[Neil]

Ok, I'll try to use numbers for a while then.

[Vee]

Yeah. I think so long as you definitely use a success or fail or critical success, so long as the qualifier word is there, that's fine.

[Neil]

Oh man.

[Eyþór]

Are you bad at those too?

[Neil]

So I needed to roll under 20 and I rolled a 74. So.

[Eyþór]

Yeah. Uh, it's the same here. I was, I failed.

[Neil]

I've got my AirPods in. Copyright. I have got.

[Eyþór]

Got Applesin pods.

Yeah.

[Vee]

Applesin pods. Yeah. Yeah.

Any electrical device, if we're not sure it belongs to Applesin. Um, okay. I'm going to freeze you two right there because you don't hear any of the lead up to the big thing that's about to happen.

[Neil]

Spoilers.

[Eyþór]

And then a bear mauls you.

[Vee]

Raw. Um, further up the hill, away from this gas station experience that is happening. There are two people who are moving at speed.

They are dodging through the trees. They are weaving their way through rusted old wrecks of cars and bikes. One of them is an older gentleman who looks to be wearing some sort of cowboy hat and a long leather jacket.

He definitely looks old. It's not young, but he's moving as if he's a very young spry man traveling next to this older gentleman trying to get away from whatever it is they're getting away from. Kessir, do you want to describe what your name is and who you are?

[Kessir]

The name of my character is Lark and they are early to mid teenage kid with bronze tan skin, short dark hair with no apparent gender and Asian facial features. They are of medium height and lanky looking and thin as if from minimal malnourishment, just enough to keep them going. They are wearing an oversized off-white shirt smeared in stains and smudges and tattered at the end and over that a large jacket kept open at the front.

They are wearing pants that look equally as tattered and stained. Assumably the length of the pants is much too long and the ends of the pants are tucked into an old pair of sturdy boots which don't seem to fit them very well. They're a little bit mismatched.

On their back they are wearing a wicker basket that is almost the height of the torso with a top closed with cloth.

[Vee]

The older gentleman you know to be someone that you've known for a very long time actually. You know this gentleman's name is Roland. And currently as you are both kind of like dodging and making your way down through these wrecks of cars and through the forest, you kind of like look down the hill and you can see that on the right hand side there is this, you would know it to be a gas station, people have told you what that is but you may not necessarily know what that is you just know that that's what it's called and dead ahead of you you can see this very large still lake. And you think maybe in your running down that you can maybe spot that there are two people but there's some distance off. As you're kind of like running down you hear the very telltale signs of creatures that are following you.

Plants that you are very well aware of as you hear this tick tick tick as you also hear the slithering of roots and branches across the ground. Roland turns to you as you're running and he says

[Roland]

All right I have a plan.

[Kessir]

What's the plan?

[Roland]

You, you keep going. There's people down there at the gas station and I think I recognize one of them. Just tell them, just tell them you know Roland.

Ah there's one.

[Vee]

And he points at this kind of much more shiny small looking vehicle that has like two wheels, has like a very big like handlebar and he runs towards it and he says

[Roland]

I'm gonna take this and draw as many of them as I can away from you. Hopefully they'll follow me and not you. I'll meet up with you in the dreamscape or fate will mean we meet up again. Just go where safety is.

If that man is who I think it is you'll be fine.

[Kessir]

Lark doesn't say anything just nods and looks forward towards the people and like keeps running and like keeps a listen back to hear if Roland manages to get the the the thing. If there's another noise coming from the back they will look behind to see if they are following him.

[Vee]

Yeah like you've probably run like 10-15 seconds when you hear as you hear this like whatever engine it is beginning to kick into gear and you hear it like begin to shoot away and you begin to hear him shouting definitely trying to get as much attention as he can like he's hitting whatever cars he's passing literally making as much noise as he can which if you are someone who is vague listen skilled you probably would have heard but alas only some people are gifted in certain listening skills and you begin to pelt your way down towards where this kind of gas station is and you can see these two people are kind of a little bit ahead of you that they are kind of like reaching out and shaking hands or at least they're about to and as you run down I'd like you to make a spot hidden check please.

[Kessir]

Yep

[Eybór]

Please for the love god.

[Kessir]

I think that's a success, yep success.

[Vee]

Fantastic um as you become like running down um you hear like most of the ticking begin to fade but as you kind of like get towards the edge where this gas station is where this kind of building that has mostly collapsed is, um, you hear the ticking like off to the right hand side in in the tree line and you spot this person, you spot their face at window you see them lift a rifle in the direction of where you're running and all three of you hear this massive loud gunshots for the two of you who are shaking hands you hear it from behind you Lark you see this kind of flash in the window as it shatters and breaks and you hear this kind of like,

[monster noise]

[Vee]

noise coming as you look back and you see that this hollow crest this large red like bulbous looking plant that's running on many many like roots and vines as it runs towards you you see this explosion you see a big portion of its middle section just blow out and you see it be kind of a scuttle backwards into the forest itself and you lose it from sight what are the three of you want to do?

[Eyþór]

Well I'm assuming as soon as the explosion goes off um Sully

[Kessir] He hears nothing!

[Eyþór]

Is like Sully is within a half a second he has this shotgun in his hand it's braced against his shoulder and he's aiming it wherever the sound came from like

[Vee]

It's coming from like the other side of the gas station and you see this like yeah you see this young Filipino-Asian person just running down the road in your general direction.

[Eyþór]

Right, you say young how young are we talking?

[Vee]

Probably mid-teenager

[Kessir]

Yeah early to mid-teenagers

[Eyþór]

Yeah I think Sully's just training a shotgun like straight at the person

[Kessir]

At me?

[Eyþór]

Yeah straight at you heard a giant loud bang and uh and then you're running at him like got his gun up and he's just aiming it at you just staring at you seeing what you're gonna do next.

[Kessir]

Oh they're running and they're like um they're looking behind them because they also just heard the explosion and they look back forwards to see the the gun aimed at them they're just jumping behind whatever the fuck they can find like on like in front like some kind of obstacle that can can hide them

[Eyþór]

Like a gas pump or something

[Kessir]

Yeah something

[Vee]

Yeah like, yeah you can like a gas pump or like a broken piece of like uh cement that was making up like the foundations is like cracked broken up like yeah there's definitely many places that you could be like, oh god shotgun, jump like there's definitely like places for that to you to hide

[Kessir]

yeah because they um they don't know if what happened behind them just hit the the crest so they're trying to like gain their bearings and like make sure like okay shotgun avoided what's happening behind me

[Eyþór]

yeah I think I think you jump to cover and like like I'm assuming like blood rushing to your ears your heart thumping and like instantly you just hear a shout, identify yourself

[Kessir]

Uh they they continue like they they look behind like um in the direction of where the crests were just to make sure that there's no crest because bigger danger

[Vee]

Yeah um you look back and you see that the crest definitely has like a big hole in it and it is like scuttling off into the forest it's like hold up uh and like yeeting itself back through the forest um you see other plants um that it's heading towards and you hear the ticking like really really loudly um but it's definitely scuttling away and some of the other plants that literally move out of its way and then fall back into like whatever bushy mess they once were um looking back you also notice and uh Ralph and Sully also would notice if you're kind of looking in any sort of general direction um you see a young man um appear from behind the building and head in like your general direction having seen um someone just run past them and knowing that at least someone is uh some other people are there you see that they have um a rifle and hear that as they chamber another round um but they don't have it aimed up at you they have it like pointed at the ground and they just like walk around the corner.

[Eyþór]

oh boy uh do i hear that...

[Kessir]

Lark was supposed about to come out but now there's two people with guns in two from

different directions.

[Eyþór]

Sully had seen the the person in the uh station previously

[Vee]

yep uh yeah this is this is them you definitely recognize them like the the gun that they had like next to them is what they have in their hands they're wearing exactly the same stuff um it's like this really like loose shirt and like uh they're kind of like wearing sleeping um underwear like they don't have any trousers on they don't have any shoes on um anything like that they literally just had woken up wandered around someone was in trouble and fired a bullet um and then like came around the edge when you yelled at someone to identify themselves um but yeah they have the gun pointed at the ground they're not like they're not hostile in any way shape or form

[Kessir]

yeah Lark is gonna peek out uh like and and make a point of like looking around back and forth to to make sure that there's no like they're not gonna catch a bullet anytime soon and they're gonna put up their hands uh like make sure that um the people around the corner with a with a trained gun are gonna see

[Eyþór]

them uh yeah once sully sees that like people are de-escalating he's more than happy to like lower the shotgun but he's seen this tactic before somebody's seemingly innocent runs at them asking for help and yeah then you get the gunshots starts flying uh so um he's happy to de-escalate at least for now

[Vee]

yeah you can see that he like flicks the safety on and kind of like puts their gun like he tries to like put it in in like a holder on his back but like he's not wearing anything of any real value uh realizes he's in his underwear uh kind of like puts the gun back and just hold it awkwardly at his side and he says um it's okay friend name's Aster you

[Eyþór]

I'm Sully um was that you who shot the gun earlier

[Vee]

he nods yeah one of them anyway ticky boys that was following your friend you're right kiddo

[Kessir]

uh they nod

[Vee]

good

[Kessir]

they're visibly a little bit like uh still processing everything

[Eyþór]

Sully looks over to Ralph uh i'm genuinely curious did Ralph draw his gun during this

[Neil]

yeah he's just now coming from behind the gas station where he initially ran to he's got his machete in his right hand and his pistol in his left hand

[Eyþór]

all right

[Vee]

Ralph i need you to make a spot hidden for me please this is going to be a hard check so it's not just a normal success you need you need a hard success

[Neil]

oh it's not happening

[Kessir]

why not do it Neil i believe in you

[Neil]

i couldn't have done well oh boy oh boy i rolled a 99

[Vee]

so you see like the young person who's like hiding um like behind like let's say a gas pump um you can see them hiding behind the gas pump and just kind of like hands vaguely up just processing what's going on you see that sully is kind of like de-escalating where he's aiming his gun it's no longer like opt and ready to shoot you can see that's kind of aiming it down you can see that he's you can hear that he's talking and you can see that lark is nodding in response to something but you looking in the area where they're looking it's kind of a blur you can't really see a person it's like a heat haze it's just you're having real troubles realizing that somebody is there you can tell there's something weird but you can't see them right now

[Neil]

okay he's just taking it slow and trying to figure out what's going on he's still trying to figure out what was shot i think but guns are being put away so

[Vee]

yep

[Neil]

there's a bit of he's like yeah he looks confused

[Eyþór]

and i think uh at that point uh sully like spots where you ran off to and he's like i think it's okay uh and yeah sully like i think he still has the gun kind of in his hand but he's like pointing it at the ground when he starts walking meaning like it's just in one hand kind of thing uh and he's gonna move towards lark did you identify yourself earlier with name

[Kessir]
no

[Eyþór]
okay yeah uh yeah he's just gonna move up to the gas pump and kind of lean on it like you
okay

[Kessir]
uh lark nods and then says do you roland do you know him

[Eyþór]
uh sully looks up to the other guy and then back down to you are you asking if i know a man
by the name roland

[Kessir]
they nod

[Eyþór]
yes i know roland how do you know him

[Kessir]
i was up there with him he created a distraction he said he told me to run down here he said
he knew one of you

[Eyþór]
okay and...

[Vee]
uh i'm gonna go put some trousers on and he just kind of like turns and like makes his way
back into um

[Neil]
Is that why I couldn't see him, he just censored

[Vee]
you can't but you you definitely know that there's something going on you see yeah you see
like a blurred censure um and you see you see the door open and you see it close again but
you you're really struggling right now to see him like you're aware that someone's going on
and like you hear a bit of a muffle like uh like someone's talking on the other end of the
house and you're like but you can't focus on it right now

[Eyþór]
okay sully's gonna shoulder a shotgun up sorry did you want to do something more Neil

[Neil]
no i'm just still holding my weapons and i'm taking it easy still

[Everyone talking over each other]

[Neil]

if i also weren't a coward i would storm in this building and interrogate this blur man but i i don't i am a coward and i'm scared of it

[Kessir]

take off your google lenses they're censoring naked people

[Neil]

that's true

[Eyþór]

yeah sully's gonna shoulder the shotgun and he's gonna lean down. Rolland is up in the hills?

[Kessir]

yeah we took um we were running from the the Crests and

[Eyþór]

Sully knows what a Crest is?

[Vee]

Yes you would know that a hollow's crest um is this kind of like really big red like bulbous thing that's like six feet hole uh high and you know that it kind of like often like hides in in like corners or in um or amongst like kind of like these these trees that have like these silver and dark bark because it kind of blends in a little bit with these on occasions uh and you know that it

[Kessir]

Birch trees

[Vee]

birch trees thank you um silver birch trees and you know that it kind of like crawls itself across the ground using its roots and you know that it basically makes this weird little ticking noise um there's like a little stem inside that kind of rattles against the inside of it um and it's just known for just eating people it has these kind of like sharp pointy teeth um they can be easy to hear if they're ticking and they're on the hunt um but if they're being an ambush predator and they're amongst the trees you're kind of fucked um so yeah

[Eyþór]

uh pack animal?

[Vee]

not as far as you know

[Eyþór]

okay then it's yeah it's literally like oh a coyote was hunting me it's like okay there's more coyotes around but like yeah a crest was hunting me it's okay cool um yeah then roll uh yeah sorry sorry i cut you off Kessir were saying uh uh a crest was following

[Kessir]

I forgot where i was um he said he was going to create a distraction he took one of and i'm gonna assume that at uh at the gas station there's more of the motorcycle thingies

[Vee]

like yeah yeah let's say there's one that's um yeah it's rusted to fuck yeah the gas tank is kind of like open one of the handlebars are broken but yeah like yeah

[Kessir]

yeah Lark points at one of them and he and they say uh he took one of those and um moved it and it made a lot of noise

[Eyþór]

yes uh yes roland has an operational motorcycle i don't know how he does but i think there may be i think it's not exactly mechanical experience i think there's more to it but that's beside the point

[Kessir]

Lark just has gets a thousand yards there has no idea what they're talking about

[Eyþór]

that's called a motorcycle

[Kessir]

oh motorcycle okay like moto boat

[Eyþór]

very similar uh actually almost exactly the same except one is on two wheels and the other one's in the water you've seen motorboats

[Kessir]

i'm gonna assume i have

[Vee]

100 you've seen a motorboat yeah

[Kessir]

i i just remember boats but i don't remember if it was a rowboat or a motorboat um

[Vee]

you probably um with your history you would have known both for sure

[Kessir]

okay yeah yes i i know motorboats

[Eyþór]

you can see Sully like scrunching his face a little bit uh thinking to himself like knows motorboats never heard of a motorcycle how very very specific

[Vee]

okay um at that point um the the door to the um the gas station opens once again um and i would like ralph to take another spot hidden or a listen check it's your choice

[Neil]
spot hidden

[Vee]
yep go for it you don't need a hard this time you're very aware that there is something there

[Neil]
it's a 53 Vee

[Kessir]
Use Luck or whatever the fuck...

[Neil]
Already, already, already. How do I do that.

[Vee]
you can use your luck to turn a failure into a success so you would only need to use three

[Eyþór]
okay so for each luck point you use you low lower your roll by one and to make a skill check you have to hit your number you don't have to go underneath it

[Vee]
yeah it is however up to you ralph, ralph. God damit

[Eyþór]
Neil, edit that

[Vee]
damn it please cut that

[Neil]
remove three points from luck

[Vee]
yep and then you can turn your spot hidden failure into a success

[Neil]
okay i'm gonna do that

[Vee]
okay um now that you have succeeded on your spot hidden as the door opens you kind of look very intently and it's like having to squint a lot but suddenly all of the all of the blurriness all of the censoring all the everything that you've seen suddenly begins to clarify and you see this youngish man with dark hair um he's wearing what looks like a kind of sports jacket which has a lot of movement in um you can tell that he's wearing proper

trousers he's wearing shoes which uh is only it's not even a surprise to you but everyone else here now looks dressed um and he has a rifle on his back and he has a like a side bag um and he appears to be clutching what looks like a small small piece of card in his hands um and you can't really see what's on it but he's he's at least holding it um he comes out and sees all of

[Neil]

you is it normal that that i this seems strange that i the the man was blurry Vee you know what i mean

[Vee]

yes um

[Neil]

is there something odd about about

[Vee]

yes uh you have never experienced this before um and seeing like a door open and close on its own like yeah it could be the wind maybe maybe just having a moment um but seeing a man solidify out of this kind of blurriness it's definitely a little bit of a shock to the system so i'm going to need you to make a sanity roll please

[Neil]

oh good okay I rolled a 69

[Eyþór]

Nice

[Neil]

versus 55 yeah nice um so so i didn't do very

[Vee]

nice but uh still a fail um you take three points of sanity damage as you see someone just appear out of nowhere

[Eyþór]

how much?

[Vee]

three

[Eyþór]

jesus

[Neil]

well ralph is just squinting kind of he's frozen he's no longer moving towards everyone um still holding his confused look i'm gonna keep watching everyone okay did i say something

[Eyþór]

i'm assuming you are the one who let off the gunshot earlier did you hit the crest

[Vee]

oh yeah yeah i blew a big chunk of that thing out saw a thing run into forest and and he puts a finger to his ear yep i can't hear it

[Eyþór]

all right well let's hope that you did a

[Astur]

fatal shot nah nah probably not i scared it off at least uh i figure you two know each other and he points between ralph and sully

[Eyþór]

um we've known off each other um what's it to you

[Astur]

just wondering uh any chance any of the three of you local to this area do you know anything about it

[Eyþór]

sully shakes his head

[Neil]

i i wouldn't consider myself local to here is that accurate

[Vee]

correct

[Neil]

okay yeah i i mean i figured as much but when things are kind of you know i travel to nearby things and this is almost nearby yeah

[Vee]

it's it's almost nearby

[Neil]

yeah

[Vee]

it's like a solid day and a bit of travel for you

[Neil]

yeah i figured i'd ask um yeah no he shakes his

[Astur]

head no uh sorry i didn't catch your name kid

[Kessir]

oh lark

[Vee]

hey lark do you uh survive or thrive around here?

[Kessir]

i um had a um had a friend i'll meet up with him again later

[Vee]

all right balls and he kind of like looks down at kind of like the card that he has

[Eyþór]

when you say card what do you mean can you be a little bit more descriptive

[Vee]

so i think during like your rummagings and all of you would have seen something roughly like this it's kind of like we would know it's postcard size um and it has like this kind of very very faded picture on the front of like a picture of a lake and like a um like a picnic bench and like someone just like looking overly happy on the front but it's super super faded um and on the back it has like um has like something that looks like it's been handwritten but you can't really see it very well because he's kind of like moving it and twisting it about on his hands and it looks like it's been well worn as well like like it's gone through a lot

[Eyþór]

are you looking for a guide

[Vee]

sort of i've got these instructions to go to a place yeah yeah gas station view of the lake he points at the lake points at the gas station

[Eyþór]

as soon as he says gas station with a view of a lake like slowly throws his head over his shoulder looks back

[Vee]

uh road east leading to chain link fence points out a road that looks like it's probably heading east um for those of you that would roughly always know where north east south west is i.e. look at the sun um where it rises and sets

[Eyþór]

don't look at the sun

[Vee]

it's bad don't look at the sun without sunglasses folks

[Kessir]

Lark looks directly into the sun

[Eyþór]

slap

[Vee]

Road heading east some sort of mountain over there and well it says mountain complex but obviously i'm not close enough to the mountain to know yet um yeah i was just i've been told there's a safe place at the end of the list of directions that might have what i'm looking for

[Eyþór]

um how much does Sully know about the location of the burrow that we're looking for

[Vee]

um so um being that you're looking for a burrow and being that ralph is also looking for a burrow and ralph kind of knows a little bit better where it is um it definitely lines up with what he's saying um neither of you have been there before and in fact none of the three of you have been there before um you don't exactly know what's in it um you don't know how it's protected or how it's not some of you have a little inkling of what's going on there but some of you don't um but yeah it it sounds like maybe he's headed roughly in the same direction or there is a huge coincidence and there is like another safe place um sort of within this within the kind of area that you are yeah

[Eyþór]

uh i think there's like uh yeah Sully looks over to Ralph and she's like um does that sound like the place we're going to

[Neil]

uh a safe place eh

[Eyþór]

that's what he said

[Neil]

you would hope i think but uh by the sound of it no they're looking for security help and considering they've been there for a while and are just now looking for it and kind of wondering why they're reaching out just now but

[Astur]

oh uh person that gave me this information the uh i got it three or four days ago said that these people were just setting up maybe there'd be a place for me

[Eyþór]

wait there are people in the burrow uh Sully looks like kind of like annoyed at Ralph

[Neil]

he's just he squints at you like is he confused at your surprise

[Eyþór]

uh i did not bring a lot to trade i did not realize we were meeting with people

[Kessir]

i think while you're all having that discussion like Lark is just uh looking for a place to sit and

just taking a random fruit out of the out of their backpacks and just eating it

[Neil]

wait what did you want from what did you want from this what were you out to get

[Eyþór]

i'm i'm hoping to find things to recover to um like i would like to take things out of the burrow and bring them to your people

[Neil]

You're a scavenger

[Eyþór]

yes yes

[Neil]

okay do you work with a group?

[Eyþór]

no not anymore um i work by myself and i try to help people that's really it i didn't realize there were people there if there are people that live there i can't scavenge i have to trade and then i have to things to trade for so i'm a little bit blindsided i'm sorry uh didn't mean to come off

[Neil]

oh no you're fine

[Eyþór]

ungrateful

[Neil]

what do you, where did you, where did you hear about this place if not from... where did you hear about this hold on

[Vee]

you got it neil we believe in you

[Kessir]

Ey, ey?

[Neil]

and where'd you hear about this place if not from the people inside it

[Eyþór]

uh are you asking you uh Sully

[Neil]

yeah yeah

[Eyþór]

i didn't even know there was a burrow here until very recently i the information i got was just an unc like an unspoiled burrow i thought we were going to discover it i guess is the word i would use

[Neil]

oh okay no probably not

[Astur]

it sounded like from the person who gave me the information that they had only just set up like they'd only just arrived but you're saying that they've been there a while

[Neil]

pause is that the case fee do i have that assumption

[Vee]

that's what you were told okay i was just

[Eyþór]

making sure that i i wasn't fucking up okay since neil pause yeah i'm not crazy you told me this was a discovery like i assume okay okay

[Vee]

yes

[Neil]

okay i'm being gaslit and i just wanted to make sure

[Eyþór]

we're both being gaslit

[Kessir]

in very different ways

[Vee]

we're all being gaslit here

[Kessir]

including me and i knew nothing of the place hey

[Eyþór]

Even Lark with their apple

[Kessir]

they're a teenager they need food sustenance

[Vee]

yep they need to keep growing

[Kessir]

i need to feed my my lark

[Eyþór]

I must fiest, um yeah um okay um oh boy

[Neil]

i haven't been there i just know from rumors and in communications and such you know the usual trade

[Eyþór]

it's no problem a new burrow is a hopeful new chance to find things that are useful to us things that i can bring to the farms to help them grow better

[Vee]

uh you see like the guy kind of like has a very like visible like um look to his face he says yeah i was told there was some kind of magical stuff int here

[Eyþór]

Sully crosses his arms

[Neil]

so you're looking for fertilizers and magic

[Vee]

well just the magic stuff really

[Neil]

no you're looking for his points at Sully

[Eyþór]

yeah yeah i'm looking for untainted seeds really of course like high quality fertilizer from before the sprouting would be great but untainted seeds would be the best

[Neil]

and you're going to take the seeds that are safe in the vault outside of the vault to try to grow uh where they can be tainted

[Eyþór]

yes because inside the vault they do nobody any good the skeletons of humans are not going to be thankful for the unspoiled seeds

[Astur]

hmm there's sometimes ways of protecting plants my people used to do that

[Eyþór]

yeah with magic you say

[Vee]

he roll a psychology for me

[Eyþór]

yes please

[Vee]

wait no that sounds like you have more than the basic

[Eyþór]

I already rolled it he lies

come on don't do me like this all right all right that's a 30 on a 60 65 check so that's a hard success

[Vee]

oh um yeah this guy was like 100 into magics and not only was it him and his people into magics they were clearly shady magics because he feels obviously very uncomfortable um thinking about it like just the thought of kind of like some of the stuff that he's done is obviously like he kind of gets a bit of a bead of a sweat he doesn't look anybody in the eye because his eyes are kind of squinting like his shoulders suddenly become quite stiff um like yeah he is uncomfortable with the subject um and he doesn't like whatever he's done in the past

[Neil]

well your plants not grow better when they're infected or you know as long as you're taking your medicine right is you're all fine

[Astur]

he looks at you uh i don't take any medicine me are you all right

[Neil]

maybe maybe not

[Eyþór]

yeah Sully like definitely staring at Ralph that was a very series of questions what do you usually eat sully's genuinely looks like a little bit like

[Kessir]

canned beans

[Neil]

i i eat normal things everything i eat all kinds of things i just cook them and anything that is wrong with it is no longer wrong with it and i eat a bit of everything but i just are you not eating he's just asking about the state of the farms he's confused he clearly hasn't been out in a while again.

[Eyþór]

yeah yeah yeah like Sully like looks at you thank you thank you for saying that by the way i needed confirmation that you were asking for information

[Neil]

yeah i want to also reinstate he doesn't he doesn't look like this is his first day out he looks

you know but he's got yeah yeah he's got jeans his you're probably in boots he's got sneakers he's a nerd underneath this tarp his tarp is very outdoorsy you know what you're doing

[Vee]

he has all the equipment of a weekend warrior but doesn't spend much time outside yeah

[Eyþór]

okay yeah that's a good point yeah okay yeah sully then like goes like yeah there's a whole host of plants out here that are tainted do you not scavenge for your own food

[Kessir]

you're just taking about food and like lark just eating

[Vee]

eating this uncooked apple

[Neil]

i'm pointing at the apple eating

[Eyþór]

Sully looks at the apple just like i'm pretty sure that's untainted looks fine to me

[Neil]

right look it's just going to be hard to convince the people that have it in the vault that it's going to be better used outside of the vault there are you know they're scavengers too most likely they're trying to take what they found and make a living themselves from it however they might also recognize that if you don't take it today it'll be here for the people tomorrow do you need it now is it the time for that you're taking something from a vault

[Astur]

look we don't even know what's there we don't know who's there or how long they've been there we've all got conflicting info

[Neil]

and what do you have to trade do you have anything to trade them for magic

[Astur]

Me? no i i no i i've got knowledge and skills that apparently would have lined up with the things that they do

[Neil]

oh

[Eyþór]

there's definitely like it's not true but like sully takes like a like a half a step back it's just like he's he seems to be readjusting himself but when he's done he's like moved back a little bit

[Vee]

uh you can see that aster kind of like turns and looks at you and he says look i i don't practice

that anymore right that was that was a long time ago

[Eyþór]

you do what you have to do to survive that's what we're all doing out out here

[Vee]

yeah

[Eyþór]

talking about surviving uh lark you were running away things roland was with you um are you gonna be okay

[Kessir]

um roland just told me to talk to the two of you because he knew one of you you and like like they pointed you and uh that's all that's all i know

[Eyþór]

okay uh all right

[Neil]

well here's where i'm at Sully it sounds like there's more than just seeds at the vault that's very unfortunate for all of us it sounds like i'll help you get your seeds or whatever but just try to take some unstained seeds back to the vault if you can from whatever it grows

[Eyþór]

of course my uh

[Kessir]

lark pulls out a few seeds out of their apple and like walks up to you and holds it up in one hand

[Neil]

great there we go now we can go home you don't even have to go to the vault you got all you need

[Eyþór]

uh sully genuinely gives gives you like uh like uh i don't even know what to call this look the look of like fuck are you talking about dude like uh oh the oh come the fuck on look there you go

[Neil]

i've never traded for magic before so i don't exactly know how it works eh so just uh so you're aware i might not be able to help so much with the magic trade uh thing i that's i'll you know do my best but let's hope

[Astur]

let's hope that everything is there maybe it's one of them really big boroughs we keep hearing about you know one that has uh magics and food and season technology i mean isn't that some of the excitement but we don't know what's there i mean also some of the

terrifying fear that some of that terrifying fear that we're all being led into a trap somehow

[Neil]

or you're uncovering something that's safe without your involvement and putting it at risk

[Vee]

maybe

[Neil]

let's at least go see them i have no problem with any of this

[Eyþór]

uh Sully like kneels down and takes the apple core i guess that uh Lark gave him

[Kessir]

Lark is not that small

[Eyþór]

but you said you were sitting down right

[Kessir]

yeah but they stood up the moment they were giving you the seeds they walked over to you

[Eyþór]

okay okay sorry

[Kessir]

they were sitting a little bit off the side and then walked up to you when like

[Eyþór]

they were listening to your conversation i was imagining you were sitting like right by them
okay uh no problem uh yeah then uh then suddenly uh uh just receives the course and she's
like apple cores were like apple trees would be like fairly common they're just super slow and
not very worthwhile

[Vee]

it's basically a long-time investment

[Eyþór]

yes uh these are good uh to be scattered around but uh farmers need something more
actionable uh corn potatoes uh pine pineapples the fuck's a pineapple why do i not
remember what a pineapple is

[Kessir]

ananas

[Eyþór] yeah okay yeah no not pineapples okay thank you

[Vee]

I was about to say, maybe not

[Eyþór]

they need corn potatoes um salad heads and stuff like that something that grows in a cyclical year cycle that they can work with but these are good always be sure to throw them somewhere where they might actually get to grow in peace from the taint from the sprout

[Kessir]

uh um luck's gonna pull out a tiny little potato out their back and hold it up to you

[Eyþór]

uh yeah it looks like all the potatoes that are around

[Vee]

yeah it's not talking to you it's not a different color it's definitely a potato

[Eyþór]

uh while it has not been affected heavily i believe that it is changing or has been changed a little bit i believe it's growing slower or giving us less or giving us more of something we don't want there's something wrong with a lot of the crops they don't grow like the books say they should grow i would like to get some untainted seeds to people again you

[Vee]

can see that like aster is like beginning to walk away and he stopped like turns around and you can see he's very carefully lifting his leg over he's like obviously knows there's cracks in the ground and stuff like that he's being careful to walk over them and he kind of like points both his fingers towards you like finger gun style is like how about we walk and talk we're burning daylight here

[Eyþór]

fine by me um Lark do you want to come with us it sounds like you were running away from something and if roland was helping you

[Kessir]

lark points over to probably like some remains of the of the crest that are still laying around

[Vee]

yeah as you kind of like walk onto the street a little bit yeah you can look up and see like the obvious kind of like uh like silver birch and like red bulbousness that kind of like blown out the back a little bit up the road

[Kessir]

yeah yeah um those

[Eyþór]

if you don't want to be alone i understand that and i'm sure roland has ways to find me again if he saw me

[Lark]

i think so i can i come with you

[Eyþór]

of course any friend of roland is a friend of mine he seems to say that a little bit bitterly

[Kessir]

oh there's history here they they put the after the comments earlier we're talking about the potato they're like rub some of the soil of the potato and put it back in the backpack

[Eyþór]

i'll eat your potatoes they're just not the potatoes are great great like our ancestors grew

[Vee]

up with they had these huge potatoes they called them melons um yeah like as as you like begin to make your way along this road that kind of like heads in the easterly direction which leads towards that kind of like large mountainous cliff end um at the end of the the still lake um you're probably it probably is like a 20 minute walk um O.T. probably wasn't too far from accurately gauging how far this was um as you are walking and as you're coming to the end of your walk i would like the three of you to either make a spot hidden or a listen check

[Eyþór]

i'm gonna ask this question do we all have high spot hidden low listen

[Kessir]

no i have both almost the same

[Eyþór]

what is that what numbers do you have

[Kessir]

60 and 65 okay

[Eyþór]

fantastic fantastic i just wanted to make sure not all three of us dumped spot hidden dumped listen i say all right

[Kessir]

i'm gonna do a spot hidden

[Neil]

rolled a 85 so that's a no

[Eyþór]

God damit

[Kessir]

36 success

[Neil]

we'll say that i have my drone out i'm i've pulled my goggles down and the drone

disconnects from the backpack and flies up and he's looking for radio signals and such to guide us somewhere

[Vee]

okay

[Neil]

that's why i don't notice things

[Vee]

yeah that's a really that's a really good like thing like you you start traveling on the road and as you send it up into the air like they kind of direct you to go down like this kind of like slightly narrower lane that comes off of the main road and if it looks like if you continue down the main road there'd be like much bigger buildings coming into view like multi-story buildings like offices and old homes and such like and apartment blocks but he O.T. guides you down to one side and you're kind of busy listening to the signals that you are being given and paying attention to that little overhead display of where you should be going but you completely miss what's obviously right in front of Lark um um Sully you don't spot this really at all um until it is basically you're in it um but i think that maybe Lark may notice this and point this out before who knows it's up to Lark ahead of you at the end of this kind of narrow road that twists and turns through the forest you don't hear anything approaching through the forest you see like bits of Zlata's grace everywhere the kind of like blue vines and purple leaves often denote that there is something weird or magical eldritch happening in the area it's kind of everywhere actually the further you walk the kind of more intense that it becomes you can definitely see that some of those three petaled flowers just closed but kind of maybe getting closer to you the closer that you kind of get to your destination ahead of you you see that there is this chain link fence and a gate the chain link fence is covered in all sorts of ivies and climbing vines and you can see that it has fallen down in areas where trees have been knocked down you can see that the gate looks like it's been torn open and lark the first thing that you spot as you kind of all turn around this corner is that the road that leads that you're on that leads through the gate and straight forward into this large like mountain that has like this tunnel this entranceway that has been like put into it and you can see that there is like a couple of very big heavy like iron looking doors that are slightly ajar although that pathway is completely clear you notice that amongst some of the high-grown grasses and amongst some of the rusted out cars and the small building that's there that's kind of looks like a very small hut where only a person could maybe stand it's right close to the gate you notice that there is a lot of red amongst the greens and the yellows and the greys you notice that there is a lot of humanoid shapes and yet definitely humans that are lying in the ground partially hidden by cars and broken tarmac and cement and hidden by bushes you can see you can probably count very very quickly maybe six people that are lying outside this complex

[Kessir]

when you say there's red did you mean in the grass

[Vee]

yep as if splashes of blood are everywhere

[Kessir]

so it's like fairly fresh

[Vee]

yes

[Kessir]

there's something over there i think that's blood and people

[Vee]

as you will look at the nearest body that lark is pointing to you see their foot twitch

[Neil]

hi there neil here voice of ralph just wanted to say thank you for listening to the episode and we hope you enjoy the new series here this has certainly been a departure from the norm of what i am used to system-wise and thematically but uh very fun so far so i hope that everyone is also enjoying this as much as i am if you're familiar with any of our other work you might notice that we are trying some new things here so um let us know if you like what we're doing we would love to uh hear from all of you big thanks to Karim for voicing Roland and Tanya for the voice of O.T. big thanks to some patrons here i'm gonna mess up these names but for once it's not your names i'm gonna be messing up it's the names that you came up with Derps thank you for uh Retep Siwel, Dice Panda for Wenzel, Fell Sorcerer for Idraine, Fortello for D'rsi N'Vind and Judas Plague for Diamus i tried so hard. Thank you so much for listening we uh we hope you enjoy this new series make sure to tell a friend about the show if you can it helps us get the word around that we're doing this new thing now here is Vee and Eyþór to tell you more about quest portal a sponsor of the show who we have been using to run our game here so Vee Eyþór.

[Vee]

we're back to talk to you more about our amazing sponsor quest portal

[Eyþór]

we're going to talk about the keeper side this time and that's much more involved in Volly's court Vee what are the kind of features that you like about quest portal

[Vee]

i like how easy it is to make a campaign hit the add campaign button and from there you can set it up with specific players you can pull in a bunch of character sheets for each of the campaigns you make you can make character sheets for your npcs and they are hidden from the rest of the folks and when you roll up those buttons yeah when you roll the buttons the players don't even see what i'm rolling so it's really nice if i miss click or if i'm like there's a mysterious person up a hill and they're shooting an arrow down at them i can click that and you won't even know who it is i'm rolling which is really nice you can pull as many characters into the campaigns as you want or at least so far i haven't hit the max and there's quite a lot of npcs in the story that actually have character sheets now

[Eyþór]

yeah i've actually noticed that you are like clicking around a little bit usually you just grab the next die and throw it i've noticed you're like it looks like you have a lot more stuff going on behind the the scene

[Vee]

i'm able to actually like store a lot more stuff because it's all in the same interface and it's not slow it's actually pretty responsive it responds really well and really quickly i can have everything i need in like one interface inside the campaign itself i can have my notes which are hidden from the players and i can share notes with you guys

[Eyþór]

you were so happy when you saw that you could put links in your notes to link to other notes

[Vee]

oh it's so nice actually like like other systems i've used like putting notes in is such a genuine hassle to move it from my google docs over to well i mean the questport guys saw my original filing system for another podcast we do and it was just chaos and even i made it to a point where i'm putting my notes all of them on there because i can link to like oh hey here's a link to this town which has mentioned this character's backstory and the notes that i give you guys you can all edit it edit the notes that you receive

[Eyþór]

which is fantastic because sometimes i need to add like a little bracket where we found it or how i pronounce a certain person's name because the way that it's spelled is just not how it's pronounced

[Vee]

i like the fact we have multiple scenes that we can put in there

[Eyþór]

yeah yeah

[Vee]

could put maps in there which are all things that you can find available within the scene setup and you can upload your own ones as well and the same with the music you can have the music automatically running and also fog i've never had fog that is so easy to use

[Eyþór]

you have a one scene that is just a world map and you click it every time we ask questions about locations but yeah you've blocked out like a huge part of the map and it gives me that like video game feeling where i'm like i need to go over there so i can see what's under the fog of war

[Vee]

it's really good it's really nice as a gm i mean all the free tools that are there

[Eyþór]

it's been really nice to use and i'm very happy that you're liking to use it because i don't wanna i don't want to go off the system the system feels really i like using quest portal

[Vee]

and if you want to find a link to quest portal you can use the will be somewhere in the show

description and yeah enjoy

[Eyþór]

bye

[Outro]

this has been a Blighthouse Studio production. Thank you for tuning in.