

## A Ritual Art

Graniulle was barefooted, and had her fingers pressed through the grass and into the earth it grew on, eyes half-closed with concentration, posture relaxed and pretty much at ease, seemingly not even aware of the others approach.

Raine had moved to a safe distance near Gran as she watched with a scrolled up map in one hand and a thermas of decaf in the other, a little lost in her own thoughts as she was still digesting these new angles this new world was producing.

Such magic could get nightmarish fast... Raine didn't like people having the ability to attack her in ways that she had little ability to defend against.

It did make her wonder if there was something special about this 'druid' status that let someone channel Essence differently; there were so many types already she was getting a little swamped trying to fit this puzzle together, and if it was true there weren't many druids left then Raine apparently wouldn't have much in the way of defending against future attacks from this mind magic.

"Oh, hello," Granuille said, after she pulled her fingers from the ground and stretched a bit. "Did you find a map?"

Raine replied by holding out the scroll, taking a sip from her thermas for a moment.

"What kind of distraction are we talking about anyway? Am I supposed to knock him out or use especially engaging conversation?" Raine queried.

She took the map and started looking around for stones to weight the edge down with. "It's probably going to have to be the former. This type of magic is tricky. And I'm already going to have to work against whatever constructs he worked into this spell... Practitioners are often talented at multitasking when it comes to maintaining these sorts of magic. Conversation alone isn't going to be enough."

"Um... constructs?" Kit asked, letting Shelly down. "You mean like... mental constructs things that show up in books and stuff?"

"You'd be surprised what someone can create in a space like this," Graniulle said.

Shelly rubbed her arms, feeling cold all of a sudden. "What exactly am I going to have to do?" She asked, hoping that she wouldn't mess anything up somehow.

Graniulle had pulled out a set of sticks with carved marking on them and set about doing something complicated with them. Repeatedly drawing out a few and tossing them to the ground, studying them and then making marks on the map. It was a process that looked like it would take a while.

"I dunno," Kit shrugged. "Neither of us as a clue." Nate was pretty much blank on the whole thing and was more or less dozing, waiting for something to present itself. "We wait for Madame Mystic to give us something."

SHelly nodded and bit the inside of her lip. She looked to Kit and then to Gran. She was busy... This would take a while. She began pacing impatiently.

Knocking someone out sounded just fine for Raine, as these kinds of interruptions coupled with the recent disaster in the lab kind of built up a bit of stress that she wouldn't mind venting on someone appropriate. Almost airily, she double-checked the batteries in her taser.

It took a couple of minutes for Graniulle to finish her scrying. She contemplated the map, then handed it over. "The good news is he didn't set up any defenses against scrying. The bad news? I can't specify anything more than which building he is in."

Finally, shelly hat her opprituity. "How can I be sure that this is the real world?" SHE blurted out. Realizing how that would sound, she bit the inide of her lip. "Sorry... I'm just nervous... I don't know what's real and what isn't."

Alessa followed into the backyard, "Sorry to bug you Kit, You probably wanted this to be just you and Shells huh...I'm just getting concerned...I know Vas is too.", she said to them and made her way to an empty spot on the grass, where she lay down.

"Let's hope the building he's in isn't a skyscraper," Vasily said.

"We will need all of you," Graniulle said. "From the looks of this, this person is skilled with mind magic, that alone makes him dangerous. While I try to unravel this, he's likely retaliate while rebinding everything I unmake and lashing out at Shelly again as he does it. I'll have to ask you to be as much of a nuisance as you possibly can to him to make him put most of his focus on you.

"Shelly. You need to stay firm and not give in to whatever he tosses your way. If you start caving, your own mind will start anchoring his bindings and make my work twice as hard."

"Wait... your going to let Shelly try fight him on her own? No way!" Kit protested.

Michael slowly raised a hand, "Should I be getting furry and growing claws soon? And, IS there a way to help Shelly with this? At all?" Michael REALLY didn't want to outright say how much he didn't trust Shelly's Willpower. He's no expert in this, but he imagines its a mental fight.

Shelly swallowed. "I'll... I'll do what I can." She said then looked to Kit. "If something happens..." She said slowly, looking to her stomach. "I want to be put on life support. Just in case. At least until the little guy's born. Then pull the plug. I don't want to live like that longer then necessary." She said and took a deep breath.

"Tch..." Raine grumbled, looking at Gran with her fingers drumming on her thermas a little in frustration, "Be a little more specific: Are we hunting this idiot down and knocking him out or are you suggesting we play on his turf and try some mental thing?"

"Shelly is stubborn yes, but right now her stubborn is set against us," Kit pointed out. "And you know it's true," he added to Shelly. "Is there any way I can give her help with it?"

Graniulle looked pensive. "I can use the same link up to allow you to get caught up in the psychic construct Shelly will be in... but who ever cast this spell will have the advantage there. Far more than if you fought him in person."

"Then can't we do both?" Kit asked.

Shelly frowned, seeing that Kit had pretty much ignored her last request if anything was to happen. She figured she got the message across anyways. "Won't the projections or whatever they are just be baseline human? I mean if we go into my dream, won't they just be normal people there? And if we kill them there, won't it be broken?"

"...wait a minute, if this guy's mind raping Shells, wouldn't he be able to probe her mind and figure out what are we up to?" Vasily asked with concern.

"I already asked that. The spell isn't active now." Shelly said.

"He might have left some other stuff there though. Autonomous mind probes, for example," Vasily countered, "Something like that. And it wouldn't stop him from probing for data when the spell will activate too."

"Leading thoughts and stealing memories are different concepts and, as far as I've heard in the least, the latter is far more complicated." Graniulle thought things over. "Don't confuse entering a projection with controlling one. He will be as strong as his mind is, which is why we need to split his attention as much as possible."

"Projections as in the bits of my mind or his mind that are trying to convince me that this world is the fake one." Shelly said. "Like in Inception?" She offered then looked to the others. "Am I the only one that saw that movie?" She'd have to put that on as a movie night...

Raine sighed and drummed her fingers on her thermas irritably, frowning a little at Gran. "So, shall I assume I can't just go look for this person while everyone plays mind games with him?" Raine said a little blandly.

"You shouldn't get full of yourself," Graniulle warned. "You might have learned a some things in these past days, but that doesn't make you someone trained for a fight."

"Who said anything about fighting? A tazer in the back is just fine in my books," Raine pointed out.

"And what makes you think that he would just let you get close enough to him to do that?" Graniulle asked. "Any semidecent practitioner would have set up some protection over his hiding place. If he hadn't, I'd have been able to get you a more precise location."

"Not to mention a legion of armed guards at the minimum." Shelly chimed in.

"Then we can do an indirect troublemaking, like switching off the power in the hiding place. Or entire area. This might be problematic though..." Vasily suggested

"Harassment might work for this, but I figure we might as well try Gran's ritual.", Alessa said to them.

"I'm staying here to help Shels from the inside," Kit said firmly.

Shelly smiled and hugged Kit while whispering 'Thanks.'

"Who will be going with Raine?" Gran asked. "While I don't think he can or will actively check on what Shelly is doing, we shouldn't waste time. He might have detected me examining his spell."

Vasily hummed. "I doubt I'd be really useful in field, unless it would involve computers or other tech stuff, otherwise I'm screwed," Vasily said and turned to Alessa, "Just to remind you, the ritual would be going parallel to the harassment." He also wanted to add some snark to it, but figured that Alessa would literally explode from hate if he'd do it.

While it did make some sense to fortify their mind mage, Raine couldn't help but think it'd make the person stick out like a sore thumb if they were under such guard all the time; trying to blow through another group of guards wasn't going to be very easy without another booster, and like hell she was going through that again.

"I don't suppose it's possible to kill him through this funny mental connection after the binding's taken apart?" Raine thought aloud, wishing she knew more on this subject.

"Again with the talk of murder..." Kit muttered.

Michael merely kept quiet until things settled more into place.

"I'm a druid. My magic doesn't directly harm living things," Graniulle said.

Raine sighed in resignation, still quite annoyed but it looked like her options were pretty limited at the moment, she needed more experience with all this essence stuff and she couldn't lean on Grant every time things went in a weird direction.

"I guess I have to go there personally then if I want a permanent solution to this," Raine grumbled.

//Raine is really make it easy to be afraid of her...

"That's all fine, if that's what you want to do, but remember you don't have a clean up team for that sort of thing. And we still haven't said who's going with you and who I need to tie into the spell," Gran said.

"Do we get to volunteer for this now?", Alessa asked.

"You... haven't been paying attention, have you?" Kit sighed.

"Not as such no.", Alessa said sheepishly.

"Mikey-boy and Alessa go with Raine, Me and Vas stay. Can we go now?" Kit said.

Granuille nodded.

Michael nods, this was likely for the best if Kit insisted on staying and helping Shelly out,

Alessa sighed as the decision was made but she accented. "Alright then...", Alessa said.

**[Insert fun time skip here to Raine and Mikey and Alessa on a drive/ride/walk...]**

Raine idly glanced at a roughly folded map where Gran had marked the location, cogs ticking away in her head as she drove, trying to sort out the best plan here.

She wasn't sure how many guards and how strong they'd be, and Raine herself wasn't all that sturdy so she couldn't afford to be careless, and yet with her current forces she wasn't sure anything other than a risky plan would have the best chance here.

Lacking a clean-up crew too was going to be awkward... this could easily go so far south she could already hear the Players laughing now.

"What a mess," Raine sighed, "Things just can't go smoothly until I've finished my work..." She shook her head and tried to focus again.

"Need to find out if they're the shoot-on-sight type and if they have cameras and such," Raine thought aloud, "If I serve as bait we can pull two surprises if you two take advantage when they take the bait, and then I can try something when they are distracted by you two."

Michael nods slowly, unsure of how to say what he wanted to say.

"What do you expect us to do?", Alessa asked, "We're not fighters."

Michael points to Alessa, "What she said." Lets be honest here, the only reason Michael isn't worse then how he is now is because the drugs clouded his thoughts just enough for him to (mostly) ignore any blood he got on his claws. Now? He wasn't dodging paintballs, and his mind is likely going to be not under any drugs. Is he going to be expected to tear someone open with his claws if they use their animalistic forms?

"To be honest I'm not sure," Raine admitted, "We don't have the numbers nor firepower so we're mostly stuck with playing things by ear, once we see what we're up against it might be easier to figure out but the general idea is to provide openings for one another if a fight breaks out." She slowly pulled the car around as she referred to the map and glanced out the window, figuring this was the place so she slowed down to look for a park and attempt to roughly case the place as she did so.

"Still would prefer not to fight...remember last time we were all on some sort of steroids.", Alessa said.

"I suppose I could *try* diplomacy but that could end up even messier if it fails; this guy was using low-key stuff on Shelly and I don't even know how he's targeting her, meeting him face-to-face and not permanently stopping him from pulling those stunts may end up a terrible idea," Raine said grimly, still staring at the place and wondering how the heck she was going to manage this. The main issue with the diplomatic approach was that she'd no doubt be disarmed and at their mercy, and fighting out from that point would be difficult to say the least; if she didn't get what she wanted here, everything was just going to go to hell.

Michael mostly just sat there feeling nervous and almost expecting this to turn into a typical game of [insert video game here] on [insert hardest difficulty ever here] with everyone not prepared at all for the fight. Hell, he's probably the only 'decent' fighter in the car considering how crapped up Raine was after only a couple of magic uses! (Assuming the MnM conversion didn't screw him over ^^; ) "...This is probably going to suck..." He sighs... "Do we even have anything or are we going in with nothing but our good looks and your taser(s)?"

Alessa knew she had martial arts to rely on but she was out of practice, and more importantly, the added weight of pangolin form threw her off her game. "This wasn't that well thought out was it.", Alessa asked.

"I don't suppose you lot had a better idea for breaking out of a secret prison-like research facility," Raine said rhetorically, unclipping her seatbelt to rummage around in her coat, "I figure either I go in and you lot can charge in after you hear an explosion, or we snoop around and systematically shut this place down."

[Notice Take Ten: 12]

It was a building. Three stories. Somewhat high class at that.

<http://bizbeatblog.dallasnews.com/files/2012/12/valleytrails08.jpg>

"Point taken. But unless you have something we can use besides claws..." Michael lets the reply hang in the air. Honestly, they're teenagers, not Naked Snake clones (Metal Gear reference)! You're expecting them to pull a miracle out of their bums without at least something they can use?

"I should have requisitioned Grant for some extra equipment for situations like these," Raine sighed, looking at the building and trying to factor more variables into a rough plan, "I'm not

going to be able to figure out which person it is in a building like that... I guess it's going to be a bit of a gamble."

Raine extracted her spare tasers from somewhere in her clothes and passed Alessa and Michael one each.

"Alright, so, first we need to track down any security cameras, locate fuse boxes and garages, we're going to have to just keep poking them for a response until we can find out who it is," Raine explained, popping the car door and going to climb out, "So first, we locate security cameras; run if you're discovered, I don't want any confrontations until I know who the binder is."

Michael looks at the object he was given, ooh a taser, well its something, non-lethal too! "Sounds simple enough... guess the trick is going to be spotting the cameras before they spot us." ...yeah, this will still suck.

"Indeed," Raine agreed simply as she got out to start her search.

[**Raine** Notice rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $3+2=5$ ]

[Raine... sees nothing amiss]

With a sigh, Michael gets out as well, "Here we go then..." Honestly he was praying that his enhanced senses will make this easier then he's expecting it would be. Well, already he spotted a few cameras, looks like his senses are working.

Notice: Taking  $10 + 5 = 15$

[Awesome. There are a few cameras. They cover the main entrance]

Alessa exited the car. She held the taser cautiously, and wondered what sort of things she could build to enhance her shifted form. She'd tinker around over the next few days if she could. Why the hell did she agree to come here. She followed closely behind Raine, somehow the doctor lady scared her.

After finding his 'sneaky sneaky' voice, Michael quickly voiced what he seen, "There are a few cameras covering the main entrance." He points at each one that he spotted. So long as he stays calm, he should be able to spot a lot of things for them.

//From this point on, assume I am taking 10 with Notice unless I state otherwise.

Raine thought it a bit strange she didn't see any cameras considering what kind of person lived here, but then again she was a little preoccupied with a tiny pointy pebble that had skipped into her shoe and had been attempting to dig it out.

She didn't know what else they might've had so she decided to patrol the perimeter to see if she could spot any fuse boxes and garages, wanting to keep track of any vehicles that her target might retreat to and things she could poke for a response like an antenna or wire.

[**Raine** Notice rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $6+2=8$ ]

There were cars parked in a lot at the back. Like most cars, some had an antenna... you want to poke it?

[As in antenna on the roof of the house]

[Nothing expectional.]

Taking 10 on Notice:  $10+3 = 13$

Alessa followed along behind Raine. She had been practicing walking on all fours in the house so she didn't fall over every other step. But she didn't do that in public.

(Despite his skills saying otherwise) Michael didn't want to be the person who screws this up so soon in the plan, so he sticks with the two females and provided his eyes and hearing. (Raine is going to need it looking at the rolls xD)

[Notice: take  $10 + 5 = 15$ ]

Of course, there was also three or five people just hanging around their place, on the balconies and such. Now, it they would actually do something.

"Ngh... anyone spot any cameras?" Raine queried airily in her frustrations as she stared at the house, trying to figure out what to do, considering how little she had to work with. Normally she'd want more time to set up a variety of traps and things, and try and get a response from their security to see what she'd be up against as much as hoping she could spy who she'd be wanting to deal with.

"Haven't spotted anymore besides the few cams I seen at the main entrance, a couple of people on balconies, but that's it so far..." Michael said with a sigh. A moment later he looked around himself for a bit and carefully moves closer, focusing on sticking in the shadows and looking for anything and everything that could be a threat to doing this in a stealthy manner. The one glorious thing about being part raccoon, they are sneaky as all heck.

[Taking  $10 + 9 = 19$  Stealth]

[Taking  $10 + 5 = 15$  Notice]

Raine grumbled a little when she looked back at the entrance at Michael's comment, scanning around for the cameras so she could try messing with one with telekinesis. Hopefully either pushing it around or unplugging it would get a response out of these people.  
[it was one of those ones in the tinted dome.]

Things weren't looking so great, they were horribly prepared and she was the complete opposite, but there was no telling what other opportunities she'd get to stop such a dangerous individual. So Raine got a little bit grumpy and snapped out her phone to go to ring Grant, preferring to at least update him on this individual's location and the threat he posed, as evidently someone was breaking rules here and Raine lacked the resources to deal with it -yet at least.

Unfortunately, she got his voicemail. "I'm sorry I am not available to take your call. Leave a message and I'll see if I can call you back. Or have my secretary do it."

**Greykit** asked Chatzy to choose between available and busy. Chatzy chose: *busy* 6:46 PM

Raine sighed at her luck, not overly grumpy or frustrated since she didn't want all that much, but this was rather inconvenient. So she just left a brief message of where this place was and that there was a 'rulebreaker' to be dealt with, and then hung up.



"This isn't looking so good, our options are exceedingly few and ones that will be successful are even less," Raine said plainly as she stared at the conundrum of a fortress, "I can't see any subtle way of both getting their attention and not betraying our identity or location, to try and get a response out of their security. And as much as we could barge in there, unless we can locate the individual responsible and deal with camera footage in short order, at best we'd be arrested by authorities, at worst we'd be some kind of mind slave guinea pigs."

"So what's the plan now...do we just go back empty handed?", Alessa asked Raine. Honestly to Alessa that was the preferred option.

"I do so hate being empty-handed," Raine said thoughtfully, "Might just have to stake out, maybe they'll do something when the others break the binding, and we might get an opportunity then."

"So we're banking on the others being fine without us breaking in.", Alessa said.

Raine sighed and kneaded her temples.

"I have no idea any more, this whole situation is pissing me off and everything just keeps getting worse, from Grant springing all this new information on me far later than he should have, and then failing to tell me any number of these rather vital details that will effect our day-to-day lives. To be honest I'm almost at my wit's end, all this treading on eggshells has got me so wound up I swear I'm going insane," Raine said through mostly gritted teeth, though she was trying to massage a few muscles tight from stress, "To hell with it, I've sent Grant a message so if I end up in jail then so be it; you two head on in and maybe try and go through the fire escape or something. Run amok, stay together, knock on all the doors, make a lot of noise I don't really care, I'll start blowing things up from out here."

After Raine's little moment of frustration she started making a beeline for the front cameras, a little orb of force building up in her right hand mostly concealed by her sleeve and the position of her hand.

"Sure about this Mikey?", Alessa said to him holding out a hand.

"...Not even remotely. I'm more of a Sly Cooper, not a Wolverine." Michael replied as a joke to him being half raccoon. He sighs and made his way towards the fire escape.  
Stealth roll as requested: <http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4468061/> 21

While unchallenged, Raine simply moved onwards to the parked vehicles of the apartment's residents, extracting her pistol with her left hand and going to squat before the first one on the side of the fuel tank to locate the tank itself, intending on memorizing a few fuel tank locations before making her move.

Michael and Alessa headed to the fire door, Michael for his part being rather unobtrusive about it.

Michael sighs and looks at the door. Honestly he was hoping for a set of stairs that led up. Start at the top, work your way down so there isn't a bog of enemies blocking your way out, "You

good with foresight? What are the chances we'd be able to get to the top before we really start making noise?" Heck, they can just go through a window if they had to at first and not this door that shall make noise.

Providing none of the vehicles had a considerably empty tank, Raine figured she could get a tidy pool of petrol leaking everywhere; but just to be safe she moved a dozen paces from each car and took a moment to line up the shot with where the fuel tank was, squeezing off a round or two and going to the next.

Michael groaned and started to do what Raine told him to do; make noise, from the inside, by going through a fire escape, pulling a fire alarm lever if for some reason the alarm isn't already going off, "I regret everything!" Frankly he'd rather sneak up behind people and stab them in the head or something instead of now constantly fearing for his life.

She did the rounds, opening all the fuel tanks within an area before migrating to shooting cameras, making a note to leave a bullet spare and looking for a surface to cause a spark onto the petrol.

Sucky post time: Stuff happens. Seriously If you have one weirdo shooting up the parking lot and another pulling the first alarm, stuff is going to happen. It did take a while though. Panicking people might be panicking but even they need time to build up steam, get up and out the door and such. And this was a fairly expensive condo-partment. Materialistic people grab stuff. Then there was the double motivation of staying in because of a shooter and running out because of an alarm... Eventually the choose out and started spilling out the doors.

After setting things up, Raine spared a hand to retrieve her cellphone and dial Michael, keeping her gun trained on the pool of petrol as she stood a distance away. She took the moment to telekinetically gather up her spent shell casings and pocket them, figuring she shouldn't be *too* sloppy.

Michael pulls out his cellphone and answers it after a quick glance confirms it was Raine. He makes every attempt to minimize water from attacking the phone as he talks just loud enough for his voice to be heard over the alarm on Raine's side of the conversation, "Went for it as soon as I heard a gunshot, whats up?" He peeks around the first corner/intersection he comes across. All because the alarm is going doesn't mean he should blindly run into gunfire. He pulls out the taser Raine gave him as he does so.

<http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4484337/> Stealth and notice: 14 and 11.

"I'm all set up, let's get out of here before the authorities arrive," Raine said simply, "Don't let anyone stop you."

She hung up and pocketed her phone to free up her hand in case she needed to sling any balls of force about, not about to take chances here.

The crowd of people continued to grow as it was supplemented by not only the residents of the apartment, but also others in the area who were pooling to see what the excitement (and sudden gunfire) was about. For shame Raine. Increasing the crime rate. For shame.

Alessa was mostly confused as she followed Mikey through the building. She didn't do much besides ruffle a few things and pull other arms in an attempt to help.

Michael practically smiled the moment he heard 'lets get out of here', "Roger." He quickly pockets the phone and heads for the fire door. Also, he'll be the first to tell you that they need some actual training in this if they're ever going to do this again because he was very worried about how deep they might have had to go. He Speaks to Alessa as soon as he turns around "She's all set up, we're getting the heck out of here!" He makes his way out of the door and moved as fast as Alessa can towards where the car should be, "Hope you can run." Needless to say, his raccoon infused eyes and ears were extra sharp at the moment due to the potential danger.

<http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4485013/> Notice: 22

Alessa ran alongside Michael though she had poor balance on the stairs. After her first stumble, she shifted to a four legged stance that the gods above knew was crazy, but it was more stable for her.

Balance: **mew77** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $9 - 2 = 7$

Michael tried to ignore how Alessa was running (in human form no less!) in favor for getting back to the car. Lets face it, if Raine has something set up, it's probably going to be something that goes boom.

Let's just say KA+BOOM. Cause Fen reminded me. Darn movie cliché cars. Marge! I told you we shouldn't have bought our car from that dealer! He was shady as f-

Yeah. Explosions happen here. As if fire and gunfire wasn't enough to get this place on the front page already.

Of course Raine was already half way to getting the heck out of dodge after she'd made sure her petrol fuse was alight and had caught the ejected shell, getting back to the car and prepared to drive rings around the place on their way home.

And of course Michael was having no problems on his pathway to getting the heck out of dodge as well. He just needed to make sure Alessa didn't trip up.

The two laggards, Alessa and Michael, got a special treat. A voice, like someone whispering by their ear. "What fun! You must be Alessa and Michael... Quite the fireworks display you set up. Though the credit should go to the great Raine."

Michael had only just got to the car when someone spoke to him from the inside of his head, "...Well crap." So now the antagonist of the day was in his, more likely everyone's mind now, that can't be good.

"Does no one appreciate a congratulatory speech anymore?"

"Normally I do, but I don't trust random voices in my head." Michael says, keeping an eye out. He wasn't sure if he should also say that he doesn't trust a random voice that may also be harming Shelly as they spoke. Then again, he's probably a mind reader as well.

"But they often have such good advice. Stay alive kid. There's a lot to see in the world."

"Wasn't planning on dying..." Michael said with an eye roll before getting into the car. Praying that this stunt did something for Shelly.

Alessa didn't say a thing to the voice.

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Raine got a voice to. Because she was special. "Hello, my dear."

Raine froze at the mental intrusion half way opening the door to the car, eyes widening and glancing at the building.

"Ah hell," Raine sighed with much frustration, extracting her gun again and quickly putting a new mag in.

"Now, now, no need for that sort of thing," he said, for it was a male voice. "Haven't you terrorized the locals enough, as it is?"

"I've only been in this game for a couple of weeks and I already know the tricks you're playing is forbidden, so clearly this is the only answer," Raine said as she scanned the building from a distance, watching for anything approaching that was remotely unfriendly.

"Ah, The Game," he chuckled slightly. "Sorry to break it to you, but I am not a player. Merely the occasional mercenary. A clever mind for hire, if you will."

"Didn't say you were a player," Raine grumbled, getting into the car and buckling up, "Your mind tricks aren't allowed, and if you keep messing with my little den I'm going to requisition a sniper, understand?"

"The rules are for those at a certain level. Not everyone is in that league," the voice said. "Still, I've earned a bit from this. Till we meet again."

"Which I pray is never -for both our sakes," Raine grumbled as she turned the car on, getting the three of them out of the fire and back home.

**[ And the rest sitting under a tree...]**

Shelly relaxed and closed her eyes, sitting on the ground cross-legged. "Well... I guess I'm ready. Anything you need?"

Vasily awaited the stuff in silence.

"You should get yourself comfortable. This will take a while, and your body getting cramped will only make things harder for you," Graniule said, crossing her legs beneath her in a long practiced fashion.

Kit frowned, but snagged the spot against the tree trunk that was as conducive to reading as it was napping.

Vasily sat down on the ground after a shrug. "Right,"

Shelly nodded and curled up next to Kit. She smiled, taking in his scent and looked into his eyes. "Looks like we're going to have that cuddle session ahead of time." She said.

"I'm have to warn you though, since it's Shelly's dream that we are linking to, you'll have to remind her of what's going on."

"Because dreams always start right when you're in the middle of a situation, never showing how you got there?"

"Because it is a fabricated dreamspace already spelled to run off your subconscious. These two," Gran nodded at Vas and Kit, will have to shake you free of the setting's hold on you."

Wait... try to get stubborn shelly to charge her mind in a her mind with extra stubborn? "Well," Kit muttered, "This will be fun."

"Meep." Shelly said and looked to Kit. "Remember what I said though."

"Welp, I hope we'd come up with something," Vasily said

"I'll do my best to come to my senses." Shelly said and looke to Kit, laying her head down on his chest. "Might as well get this show on the road. By the way Granelle, just so you know: it takes me forever to actually get to sleep so... yeah." Shelly said, closed her eyes and attempted to get comfortable on Kit.

Gran smiled. [Roll Will save Shelly]  
<http://orokos.com/roll/172036> 17+4=21

Suddenly extremely tired, Shelly gave a yawn and her head rested on Kit's stomach, lulled to sleep faster then she ever slept in her life. When she came too next, she was in her bed. Or rather her new bed since She didn't want to make Kit feel akward what with his new girlfriend. Michael was sleeping on the other side of the room and she checked the time. 3:15 AM. She groaned and tried to remember her dreams. Normally they were clear to remember, but this time, she was drawing a blank. Sighing, she flopped back into bed and tried to go back to sleep.

Despite what Shelly might have experienced, the spell didn't strike right away. Like all dreams, it couldn't work until she her brain waves were receptive to them. Even magic followed rules, even if you weren't aware of all the ones it ascribed to. "I wouldn't have been able to do this if I hadn't sat in on the biology course," Graniulle admitted after the silence stretched for a while. "Just because we can see everything doesn't mean we can understand it..."

"What biology course?" Kit asked as Gran starerd intently at Shelly.

"Human biology. They did a series on Neuroscience. Really educational. My Archdruid had me take chemistry courses too," she added. "There... the spell is active..."

Kit jolted. "It is?"

"Don't wake her!" Graniulle chastized.

"Sorry..."

As usual though, Shelly slept like a rock. She had even told Kit, more then once, that she had slept through an earthquake. Even if it was a small one.

"Just relax so I can try you two into it..."

Vasily tilted head to side and then closed his eyes. Relax, eh. Time to think about something relaxing. Something that is not a power metal track at least.

//Yeah... don't think that counts as relaxing lol

//Unless it's symphonic power metal. Then it might work. Up to the point of "power" part kicking in.

Graniulle made some complicated hand movements as if she were looping threads around them. At the same time, a sensation of wooziness overcoming the two guys.

Shelly was just generally uncomfortably. She tossed and turned in the bed, trying to find a comfortable spot as she slept. When that failed, she got out of bed and went to get some water. Sometimes, she just got so thirsty.

It was one of those transitions that only make sense in a dream, somewhat disorienting then perfectly normal again. Only to find themselves in exactly the same place. Literally. Under the same tree. Only, it was now dark. Night time.

Vasily blinked several times. Wait, they missed the whole dreamscape? Weird. He looked around to see if Kit was here. Maybe the whole battle against mind control was in his dream that he had forgotten quickly?

After taking her water, Shelly used the bathroom, then went back to bed. Or rather tried to. Sheadding one of the layers of blankets, she tried to see if that would help her sleep. It was getting a little hot this time of year. At least, for her. She was finally getting used to the

temperatures over here. If she noticed the arrival of the other Kit an Vasily, she didn't make it known.

"That was weird..." Kit said. "You okay Vas?"

Vasily nodded, "Yeah, kinda,"

Shelly meanwhile sighed whe she couldn't get comfortable. moving the top blanket to her torso, she let her arms lay on top of the lower blanket. Hoping this would help with the heat distribution, she waited for sleep to take her.

"That was a yes or no question," Kit said, getting up and yawning. "Okay... that was *really* weird."

Vasily nodded. "Is Gran here?" he then asked, looking around once more.

"I'm going out on a limb here and saying... no," Kit said, noting the empty lawn around them. "So are we in Shelly's head... or did we just get punked?"

"What is the worst option? Go with the worst option unless proven otherwise," Vasily said and got up, dusting himself off (without dusting anything off because there wasn't really anything to dust off), "We could actually be in Shelly's head or it is already done, we need a way to check it."

"Already in," a third voice commented from above them. It sounded familiar. Except there was an underlying tone of reluctance to the voice, as if the speaker had some reservations about the whole idea of using it.

Kit started, looking around sharply before looking up. His mouth gaped slightly when he spotted himself perched on a tree branch, gazing intently at the house. Kit tried again. "N-Nate?"

Vasily glanced at Kit's Evil/Chaotic/Wild twin. Friend or foe? "Well, we are certainly in a dream now," Vasily stated. It would probably be in Nate's interests to keep Shelly in a living state without some mind control screwing around with her, so Vasily slightly hoped that this alter ego would be on their side.

//Kit/Christian: Chaotic Good, Nate/Nathaniel: Chaotic Neutral... Dan/Daniel: Chaotic Evil?

Nate held to the apparent belief that words were a semi-precious resource that should be carefully measured and used sparsely and, true to form, said nothing. Even when he was the voice in the back of Kit's head Kit was the one mentally supply the words to the feelings that Nate suggested.

Kit was silent because he was looking for the words. "This just keeps getting wierder and wierder," he said after a moment. "You plan on getting down from there?"

Nate eyed Kit, eyes faintly reflecting light, but leapt down after a moment. The two were literally identical. Which made sense since they were the same person. Nate just... held himself differently. It was like Clark Kenting. He held himself in a more controlled bearing than Kit. Not one born from training or discipline, just a natural restraint. Nate was like a carefully coiled spring to Kit's steel wire, a taunt string on an instrument compared to the reel. In one sense, it made him more stable than Kit, something Kit himself noticed, Nate being more level headed and detached, lacking his urge to make a joke of everything, but on the other hand, Nate was more narrowminded and likely to snap, like what happened when he got them shot.

Nate looked past the two, focused on the house in that said same narrowmindedness.

Vasily glanced at the house and then at Nate, then he looked at Kit, "Welp," he said, "We are going in?"

"You could start by actually going," Kit said. He slipped into his soft voice. Not just because they were supposed to be sneaking around (not even that), but because he didn't like talking any louder than he needed to and Vas's hearing was as good as his own. He approached the house at a sedate pace, scratching at the side of his nose thoughtfully as the back door loomed. "Think we should knock on the front door?"

"Or we could sneak in," Vasily replied with a shrug, "Maybe we should peek first," he said and peeked inside. [it looked average. nothing out of the ordinary]

"And what benefit does sneaking in get us? Because I'm not seeing it," Kit said blandly.

"Spell's defenses could be triggered, dreamscape foes could spot us. This isn't really our house after all so it's better to assume it's not entirely friendly in this place," Vasily explained.

"Would this be because we would be knocked on the front door, or because we would be-"  
Neither of them noticed Nate as he grabbed a rock and smashed a window with it.

**Irbynx** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 3 **Greykit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 13

Kit yelped, jumping and whirling, looking at Nate with a mingled glare of horror, shock and 'what-else-was-I-expecting-from-him'. "What was that for?"

"Locked door. Window easier," he said, using the rock to clear the shards away.

Notice: <http://orokos.com/roll/176169> 9 - sleep penalties  
Shelly didn't hear anything, still fast asleep.

"Welp, seems like stealth's cancelled now," Vasily muttered, checking if he'd got any of the shards on himself. Wait, it's a dream, isn't it? How detailed those get anyway...

//What level is this window? First floor, second floor?

//first



Well, there were no sounds of movements or anything coming from upstairs, even as Nate carefully climbed through the window.

**Φαιόσγαλή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 15-10+4 Michael

**Φαιόσγαλή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 3-10-5+5 Kit

**Φαιόσγαλή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 16-10+2 Miranda

**Φαιόσγαλή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 10-10+5 Vas

He carefully jumped over the shards scattered under the window.

**Φαιόσγαλή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 12+9 Acro Nate

"Come on!" Kit protested, somewhat in vain since Nate never listened to him regularly anyway.

**Φαιόσγαλή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 5 Charisma/dip

"Gah," Vasily muttered, "Now guess who we have to follow before more troubles arrive?"

"You put the idea in his head you know," Kit said, climbing in after Nate before his rasher half could cause even more trouble. "At least it doesn't seem like anyone woke up..."

Vasily climbed in after Kit, "Now to the second floor?" Vasily asked.

"This is going to go so bad, but I have no better ideas," Kit said, trepidation in his voice.

Nate, of course, headed right for the stairs.

"Hey, at least Nate would get all the flak," Vasily joked and forced a short lived smile before looking around and deciding to go after Nate.

Kit, on the other hand didn't see that as a joke, remembering the last person to walk brashly around enemy territory and around corners and what happened to her and hurried and dragged Nate back by the shoulders. Kit and Nate tripped over each other (tripping over himself?) and crashed to the ground, knocking into stuff. Oddly, there was still no response from upstairs. Nate bared his 'fangs', more just showing incisors, in irritation. "What!" Nate demanded with a snarl. **Greykit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 1

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HvH5WXovz0c>

"I thought I was impulsive," Kit scowled back. "Can be just be careful about this and not barge into it like bilsnipe!"

"Bil... snipe?" Nate echoed uncertainly. That definitely wasn't common knowledge.

"Bilsnipe, Bilgesnipe or whatever it's pronounced. That thing from avengers Thor mentions?" Kit said. "Just think for once. Jeeze... I'm arguing with myself..."

Vasily sighed, "We are making so much noise I bet everyone over here is aware of us already" //I think something is wrong with the listen checks lol

//nah lol. they're just sleeping. Rough day. Long day. no caffeine.

Kit pushed Nate off him and got back to his feet. Nate still somehow managed to beat him to it. After that, he made there way up the stairs.

Vasily followed, trying not to make too much noise (as if that would help tho)

Oddly, the stairs seemed longer than it should be. And it was easy enough to notice after the third landing appeared. "All doth not seem right here," Kit commented.

"We are in a dream, duh," Vasily replied, "Just watch out for the happy fun sawblades of death and fun."

There was the faintest ripple in the air. Like the tremble of a slight breeze. And Michael was waiting for them at the next landing, standing perfectly still. "Who are you."

"Non-hostiles," Vasily replied, his paranoia getting off the charts at this point. Mhm, great memory, Misha. Or is he Michael?

"You don't belong here. Who are you." Michael, well, Not-Michael looked at them. And it was like something physical hit them, pressing down on them, a thick heavy force like a stack of a dozen mattresses weighing down on them, Not-Michael's, or someone acting *through* Not-Michael, mental force exerted against them.

[roll willsave]

**Kit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 2 12:49 AM Helpless, prone  
Kit's eyes rolled back and he rocked, dropping to his hands and knees, then the rest of the way. Mental force turned to physical one in a world that was purely mental. While he might have a strong personality, Kit always did have trouble bringing his mental fortitude around (and about of times Nate put him in a mental headlock was embarrassing...)

**Nate** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 19 12:49 AM Entangled, Slowed  
Where as Kit caved to the pressure, Nate snarled in the face of it. He didn't fall, far from it, but even his stubbornness wasn't quite enough to resist it totally. He took a step towards Not-michael.

**Vasily** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 13 + 5 = 18 Entangled, Slowed

Oh this ain't good. "We'd gladly tell you who we are if we weren't pressured by this weird thing..." Vasily replied with a heavy effort, trying to take a step onwards as well.

"I see..." the voice was changing subtly, sounding less like Michael (or even Not-Michael) and like someone else. "So you are trying to break my hold? Entertaining. Shall we see how long you last?"

Not-Michael advanced, his expression still blank as his hand lashed out inhumanly fast, clutching Vasily and bodily picking him up and tossing him at Nate, sending both of them tumbling down the stairs.

**Not-Michael** rolled a die with 20 sides for grapple. The die showed: 13+5+5+2

**Nate** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 3+[something... see uncollected sheets note] Hit anyway

[Roll toughness]Vasily rolled a die for toughness with 20 sides. The die showed: 19 + [dunno][fine]

**Φαιόγαλή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 14+[see sheet comment. He's fine though.]

Kit watched in something close to panic and still quite helplessly pinned down by the mental force, his efforts are marshalling his will against it not enough to shake the effects of the Man's thoughts.

**Kit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 8... still pinned. Darn it Kit! Make a will save!

Vasily swore nastily mid-flight, thankfully using his native language to keep tender ears of people safe. "Really now?!" he yelled as he landed and tried to get up from Nate

Nate mercilessly shoved Vasily off him, not being one for the social graces. He growled and fur started to spread across his form.

**Nate** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 10+6

Vasily grumbled and swore again. Calm down, that's Nate. Probably he did good too. Wait is he shifting..? Bah... Considering the situation... Vasily didn't consider the situation for too long. No time and head hurted anyway. Claws are better for fighting whatever this thing is...

**Vasily** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 18+modifiers

//for transforming, duh.

It took some focus, but managed to muster his will against whatever that force was. It was still bearing down on him, making his movements sluggish, but at least he could move.

**Kit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 15 Woot

"Of course, you are the true bloods. Here to fight for your ally, I take it. Marvelous." Not-Michael was pretty much acting independently of the voice. He grabbed both Nate and Vas by their necks and lifted them off the ground. "Of course, stopping to change your forms was not the wisest course of action."

**Not-Michael Grapple checks** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 11 and 14 + 12(each)

Nate struggled, attempting to claw at Not-Michael's grip, a desperate though overall ineffective attempt on his part.

**Greykit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 4

Vasily struggled in grasp, failing to break it, growling and hissing.

**Irbynx (Android)** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 2 12:45 AM

She said it... the dream word was maintained through Shelly and manipulated by the caster... So... Whatever was going on was likely the guy..? Whatever. Eitherway, waking up Shelly should do the trick. Instead of going after the guy (Abraham proved he was too rash anyway), he made for the landing Michael, or Not-Michael, came from.

**Kit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $12+2$  *Int check*

Kit mentally murmured an apology at Vas and Nate and left them with Not-Michael. Fortunately, the mental meddling seemed to stay with Not-Michael, and the rest of the place seemed normal. So he headed to the room.

**Kit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $11+2$

Back in the stairwell, Not-Michael smiled. "Now... how did you find your way here..."  
*Willsave here*

**Nate** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $4+3$

**Vasily** rolled a die for will with 20 sides. The die showed:  $15 + 5 = 20$

It was like... someone sifting their hands through his mind. Nate shuddered and dropped to one knee, though his face was still determined, Vasily faring better, gritting his teeth through it.

"Outside help was it? I see..."

Whatever more he had planned to do was sidetracked when a sudden look of slight distractedness tinted Not-Michael's face. "Yes... outside help. This should be entralling. I will leave you to play with my toys for now."

There was a flicker, and that otherness that had other taken Not-Michael was gone, leaving the blank, impassive look again. Which... might not be a good thing considering he *had* tossed them down the stairs even then. Around them, the walls started distorting some, warping even further.

Vasily growled and slightly backed off from Unmich. Great! Was that a mind probe? It most likely was. He eyed Unmich carefully, anticipating his next move.

It was a punch. It wasn't the best of punches, but it was a strong one.

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $2+6$  at Vasily

But what does a strong punch mean if it doesn't hit? Vasily hissed as the hit passed to side and he sidestepped slightly. He couldn't even do anything, not considering shifting prior to going in and now being the biggest potato in the combat.

Human digits didn't make for good clawing, and Not-Michael didn't seem phased by it.

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $10+6$

Nate tried lashing out as well, but his was having a string of bad luck, Not-Michael evading the blow.

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $6+4$

Not-Michael, on the other hand, was going strong, even without his controller around. His hand lashed out and grabbed Nate. At least the wild side managed to break free of his grasp and not get tossed around again.

**N-Mike** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 19 grab

**N-Mike** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 4+6+5 grapple

**Nate** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 17+2 Whee...

Kit, meanwhile, finally got to the bed room. This mentalcape was annoying, but he got to the bedroom and pretty much just burst into the room. "Shelly!"

Which... might not have been the best idea. There were other Not-people standing between the bed where she lay and the doorway. Some girl he didn't know, Vas and himself. Oh, and Shelly *wasn't* in the room. "Ah... sorry. Wrong room," Kit said, closing the door and running.

Closed doors didn't bother them. There was a crash as they hurdled through it like it wasn't there, aside from the cloud of wood fragments.

"Crapcrapcrapcracrarrap," Kit swore as he tried to run. That make three of him. He didn't need three Kit's running around the place!

Something hit him from behind and tried to grab him, but he did this funky twisting step thing and manage to break the hold (getting a climbs of the three people chasing him with horror movie-esque blank expressions.) "SHELLY! WHERE THE HELL ARE YOU?"

**ἄπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 14 Hit.

**ἄπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 9 Miss

**ἄπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 8 Grapple on the hit.

**ἄπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 18 Kit broke free. The Kit's are in sync! I mean the good Kits!

Shelly's wakeup call: **Yellow 13** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 14 -10 for sleep penalties=4

"Guh!" Shelly yelped, waking up hearing Kit screaming her name. Groaning, she rolled over to look at the time and found it was still three in the morning... she barley got any time to fall asleep. And now Kit was screaming her name as he (Probably) had-- shelly banished those thoughts as they emerged into her brain, taking one of the three pillows from under her head and mashing it over her face to drown him out. Pretty soon there'd be grunting from both him and-- *no! bad girl! stop thinking about Kit's love life! You're not part of it anymore!*

**Yellow 13** rolled a die. The die showed: 6

::Stairwell

Nate for some reason seemed like he was attempting to start shifting again.

**ἄπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 4 Control check [modulated] failed: full shift

Look, another flying Nate. Two times now. And for the second time crashing into Vas.

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 16 Grab attempt

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 16+10 Grapple check N-Mike

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 18+4 Grapple counter Nate

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 16 Not mike aiming at Vas. Hit.

Toughness save DC: um... 18 I'll call it.

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 20 Nate save. PERFECTLY FINE!

**Irbynx** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 11+1+con Stunned, Injured. Prone, also

Nate was a tad ungrateful. After beaning Vasily, he didn't even stop to see if the guy was okay.

He just bounced off him and

**N8** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 12+9=21 Acro Pass! Bounce my child!

**N8** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 10+5 for Control Pass! Sprout fur and claws my soul brother!

Be the Hero N8! Use Hero Point: Twin Actions

First Action: Modulated Shift: Left Hand of the Beast [probably not the name, but it sounds awesome]

Second Action: Panthera Roar!

[Roll will here. DC14 save vs fear]

**Irbynx** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 4 + 5 Shaken

The Psychocate is Immune to Mind Affecting Effects!

---

**Greykit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 20 Control Shape.

"Fine. If you want to play rough!" Kit snarled, the echoes of Nate's roar hinting at his ears and the corner of his mind. Reach for it... focus on the limb, push the rest aside... With the entirety of his essence focused and confined in one limb, bones shifted rapid, fur sprouting. Then he lashed out with the new claws.

**Greykit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 12+4 Attack DC 19

**Psychocate** rolled a die with 20 sides for toughness. The die showed: 10+5 Bruised

**N-Mike** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 15+5

The Psychocate of Michael leap after the two with another punch, landing a solid blow on Nate.

**N8** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 11+2=*bruised and stunned Knocked down the flight of stairs.*

Vasily got up back on his feet, feeling quite a bit scared by a growl. Not feeling that he could do anything with his usual hands, Vasily focused on partial shifting, only for it to go horribly wrong...

**Irbynx (Android)** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 1 12:38 AM

**Irbynx** rolled a die for toughness with 20 sides. The die showed: 5 Stunned, bruised

Nate rolled to his feet again, getting rather annoyed with the repetition of this all. He snarled again, glaring up the stairs past Vasily were the one who wasn't Michael stood impassively, looking down at them. "Stop wasting time. Act," he said again to Vasily.

N-Mike leaped down at them, arms spread as he crashed down towards them, looking to plow them further down the stairs, and succeeded, forcing them even deeper down the endless staircase. It was getting progressively darker and colder.

**N-Mike** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 16

**N8** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 1

**Irbynx** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 8

Crushy crush, and another couple of seconds Vasily's vision was offline, hearing ringing and the head spinning as his attempt at shifting backfired horribly to him.

[Out in the hall]

Kit took heart and struck again, this time his claws struck hard, and deep, punching into the chest of the girl's chest. He swore. But... it didn't feel like a body (not that he knew what that was supposed to feel like, but it didn't feel like flesh and bone.) It was resistant, but more like a clump of something thick and mostly solid. She screamed, a shrill sound, her face stretching to the limit, then past that, distorting, features blurring as a distortion spread from the place he hit her, clothes, boobs, skin, everything distorting until it was just a deadly white featureless humanoid shape his arm was sunk into, then that too distorted out into nothing.

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 20 DC 24

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 14 Dead (tougher minion, but still minion)

The others, the clones of himself and Vas paused, then their features shifted from featureless to enraged, but still managed to look like a mask as it did that. The Not-him lashed out and grabbed for him, and he evaded, only for the Not-Vas to grab him by the throat and lifting him easily so his feet weren't touching the ground.

**Not-Kit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 17

**Kit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 19

**Not-Vas** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 16

**Kit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 7

Okay, screw that shifting business, he's really not good at it at all. Vasily tried to get up and hit the foe - maybe, just maybe, he could actually "believe in himself" and the dreamscape thing wouldn't be as resilient as the logic said (and the logic said this idea won't work)

**Vasily** rolled a die for attack with 20 sides. The die showed: 17

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 18 toughness

The Not-Mike took the hit and barely blinked, keeping his grip. Well, he tried. But something, whatever that thing was, caused him to go haywire. His hands started breaking apart, layers stripping away from his hand like Quirrel in The Sorceror's Stone; blasted away by some unseen pressure, the bits disintegrating as Not-Mike's outer form stripped away revealing a bland pale and faceless, featureless, figure and a silence scream that still rattled the insides of their head.

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 1 Grapple turned Sim fail

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 3 Sim fail save fail

And with it, whatever was forcing them into the warp and out, or through, the psychoplane ceased, crashing them back unto the base landing of the stairs, covered in a layer of fine ash or dust.

[saves here vs stun/fall]

**N8** rolled a die with 20 sides for status. The die showed: 1... unconscious. We hate stairs.

**Kit** rolled a die with 20 sides for resonance. The die showed: 19 fine.

**Vasily** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 19

Shelly finally got out of bed, wincing as her feet hit the cold ground. Pulling on her socks, she opened the door to her room and looked around. "Kit?" She called out. "You okay? Nobody's dying, right?"

What Shelly saw was questionable. Vasily and Kit stood side by side, both having turned in unison to look back at her. And held in Vasily's grip was Kit, another Kit, dressed differently from the one that wasn't in a neckhold, something weird going on with his arm. The distraction loosened his grip and Kit managed to slip out, gasping slightly as he staggered back. "Seashell!"

**Not-Vas** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 8 1:12 PM

**Kit** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 19

Shelly's eyes widened in horror and she looked back into the room for her pills. "Oh shit... I'm having another breakdown..." her breath started to come in erratically. "What the hell is going here!?" She demanded.

Will save, DC 15: **Yellow 13** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $15 + 4 = 19$

Kit didn't waste much time on the pleasantries, he just charged again, pushing through the two doppelgangers, who did try to grab him, but couldn't quite get their hands on his person. He did manage to stand between the them and her. *This is such a dumb idea.* "Nate! Vas! Where the hell are you?"

**Not-Vas** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 6 1:17 PM

**Not-Kit** rolled a die. The die showed: 4

Shelly yelped and pressed herself against the back wall, unsure of what to do. The fact that there were two Kits was problematic enough with her fragmenting mind, but now not only were they able to see each other, but they were also fighting! Or were these two just more parts of her mind? She closed her eyes and charged straight in the general direction of the Kit, Other Kit, and Vasily.

Attack: **Yellow 13** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 20

Kit was getting ready for a last stand when something slammed into him from behind and sent him reeling. Well, staggering off balance. She slammed into Not-Kit as well, sending him staggering too, and she kept going and slammed hard into Not Vas. He didn't take it well.

**ἄπαθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 13 1:33 PM

**ἄπαθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 12 1:33 PM



The two of them tangled together, which afforded Shelly a front row seat as the psychocate lost cohesion, the outer shell that define it's personality and character peeling away and disintegrating, leaving the pale featureless base to shudder, form rippling and bubbling, before bursting.

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 5

Shelly didn't see the start of it, but when she realized she had collided with somethig solid and fleshy, she opened her eyes again and stared in horror a she saw Vasilyuenly fragmenting and disintegrating. "WHAT! THE! ACTUAL! FUCK!?" She yelled in horror.

Will: **Yellow 13** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 2 +4=6

Acrobatics: **Yellow 13** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 9 +2=11

[Starts with but quickly moves ahead of the timeline]

Meanwhile Vasily blinked and dropped down on the floor, managing to gather himself up for the fall and get up after it fairly quickly. "Ow... Ow... Did it work?" he muttered and looked down to Nate to see him in quite a bad shape. "Oh damnit..." Vasily muttered, seeing that the only capable fighter there was out of the game. Although at least he didn't go poof like the thing did.

Allright, time to actually become more useful. Vasily thought he would handle the unconsciousness of Nate later and, closing his eyes, focused on shifting into his feline form.

**Vasily** rolled a die for shift with 20 sides. The die showed: 13

**Vasily** failed a die for toughness with 20 sides. The die showed: 1 [staggered]

**Vasily** rolled a die for recovery with 20 sides. The die showed: 14

Nate recovered about halfway through Vas' shift, pretty well pissed off and a low his in his throat, ready to try to kick ass again. Then the hiss turned into a wince. The impact caused a sore back, and he lost his partial shift during it as well.

**ἀπάθεια** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 10

He promised himself a "Never again" stance on shifting because every single time he shifts, it's just a torture. That wasn't much different, apparently. The shift ended though, some time, and he managed to get himself at least some claws, but his body hurted so much from the whole thing... He got up and glanced at Nate, who apparently was better now. "You fine?"

The world went as well, fractures starting from around her feet, spreading along the floor, then the walls, then the very air, until everything gave with the sound of a thousand glasses hitting a thousand stone floors, fragments whirling with glimpses, sights, sounds and cries from the false world surrounded them as it desparatly trying to assert themselves even as the masquarade shattered under the outside influence of Gran's work and the blunt force of the cats removing most of the operational anchors and the lack of the controller to assert his will to maintain it.

Then everything was still, silence. For the most part, it had all gone, leaving only nothingness. A void of blackness that somehow provided solid footing. In the 'sky', a space of chaotic shifting darkness (It's the mind, it doesn't make sense) suspended in the air were large shards of 'glass', the remains of the conctructed plane, empty and sad looking now [DC10 will save if you focus on them vs melancholic feelings.

**Vasily** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $2 + 5 = 7$  (Is he focusing on them?) Curiosity, duh.

"So..." Shelly said nervously as she looked around. "This is the inside of my brain... I thought it'd be more... less freaky." *Way to break the ice, Shells... that really helped...* She thought.

Kit grabbed her from behind and held her tight and close. He didn't say anything, he just held her, terrified now more than he was before about what whoever that was had been trying to do to her now they he saw they things that had been whispering in the back of her mind.

Shelly yelped when she felt something grabbing her and spun, taking in a sharp intake of breath but sighed with relief when she saw it was Kit. She hugged him tightly, burying her face in his left shoulder. "I'm scared..." She whispered, muffled by Kit's flesh. Or was it even flesh on this mental world?

Ah, what's there to be scared up?" Kit said, giving her a weak attempted of a dope slap and an equally weak smile, rubbing away the moisture pooling at the corner of one eye on his arm. "It's your own fault."

A little distance away, Nate recovered enough to start moving about.

"How is it my fault?" Shelly asked, looking to Kit, shivering some. She heard the movement from Nate and looked over, seeing him and blinkig. "Tell me he's not one of those... *things* from earlier."

"Because you're just so stubborn," Kit said, brushing her hair back and kissing her on the forehead. "It's one of the things I love about you, just pick them better next time. And no, that's Nate."

"That is one of those things," Nate said his is somewhat rougher intonations, pointing off to behind them.

Not-Kit was off... somewhere. It was getting pretty obvious the distances in this place weren't quite right, with Nate being apparently much closer than he had first seen. Still, Not-Kit seemed to be further still. And, as if Nate bringing notice to him was a trigger, it opened it's mouth and... It was hard to describe. It was as much a feeling as it was a sound, yet you couldn't quite hear it, like when you think you hear something calling your name, or the faint whisper of a frying some televisions seemed to make, and you couldn't quite feel it, like a shudder down your spine or a limb partway between asleep and pins and needles.

*Kit! Nate! Vasily! Finally!* Gran's voice said suddenly in the three male's head.

Shelly looked to Kit and smiled, still trembling like a leaf. She cooed softly and held him tightly. With his words, she glanced to Not-Kit. A slight shudder went through her body. This... **THING** had been violating her mind for.... Months? Days? Weeks? How long was this

happening to her for? The sound made her skin crawl, but she stayed with her Kit.  
"Now what?" She whispered.

Vasily grumpily glared in some general direction, because the whole situation just sucked balls.  
"What?"

Kit and Nate both flinched. The latter looked around with a slight scowl, trying to place the voice. Kit, on the other hand looked up for no real reason that it felt right. "Gran! Were have you been!"

"I didn't hear anything..." Shelly said, wondering what the males heard.

*I think the bindings on her trapped your mind when I linked you. It finally reconnected when the spell started unraveling! She sounded harried. Everything fine on your end?*

"Meh, it's fine, although looks sad as hell," Vasily replied.

"How come I can't hear anything?" Shelly asked.

"Shh, explain later," Kit said, hushing Shelly.

"The house broke," Nate said at the same time. "It's empty now. Blackness. Not like night, just... dark. And one of the things from the house."

Shelly wanted to point out, for pride reasons, that she was the one that broke it in the first place, but she stayed quiet. She pushed down on Kit's shoulders, wanting to sit down.

*The spell is breaking down, so it should go with it. It's not independent. Right now, I think you're in the lower parts of Shelly's subconscious. You did what you had to, So I'm going to pull the three of you out before it starts affecting you. Gran sounded relieved. Keep a hold on Shelly while you do, lover boy. You don't want to leave her conscious thought down there either. It- What in the world is that?*

She might have, probably would have continued, but the last survivor wailed again, this time it was like a void calling out. From around it, the darkness seemed to swirl in numerous points and form narrow tendril like reversed whirlpool that emerged from the center of each vortex, uncertainly extending outwards, then arcing over to get drawn into the shape of Not-Kit. Even it's Shell was flaking and getting suck into the gaping circular maw that was consuming it's face.

"...oh great, another nastie... This is going to be fun..." Vasily muttered.

*Hold on! Gran said*

A moment later, Nate, Kit and Vas started glowing gold. Nate backed up and clamped a hand hand around Shelly's shoulder even as Kit was hugging her. The glow was met with dramatic beams of light shooting down, peircing the 'ceiling' to strike the three travellers, pencil thin at

first but quickly swelling into columns of light. Shelly, as Gran promised, got enveloped in the columns around the twins as well.

As if it were tractor beam or a matter stream, the 'ground' fell away from them as they were drawn away. But the psychocate finally decided to do something more than just scream and launched himself after them, after Shelly in particular.

"Hold her!" Kit said to Nate, pushing away from them, taking his portion of the stream with him and kicking the phage soundly.

**Kit kicks the phage** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 19

**Phage tries to tank** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 11

The actual results were lost since the transition was made, and they found themselves slowly waking up.

[Also, Team B is back]

Shelly screamed in terror. She could feel part of her body start to lock up from something, but she fought that back. Kit was here. he would protect her and they would be fine. The fact that this thing had been violating her mind. She clenched her teeth and held onto Kit as tightly as she could. When Shelly woke up, she was covered in a cold sweat. Her heart was pounding, yet she couldn't bolt awake as she normally would after something like that.

**Combat Fear: Yellow 13** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed:  $20+4=24$

Raine wasn't feeling as content as she felt she should have been after that ordeal, thus was still a little grumpy as she made her way out of the car and through the house, tazer in one hand as she hunted down the mind-running group to check on them.

She opened the back door to see if anything significant was happening, still not certain if her distraction was enough -she'd much preferred to have had the resources on hand to capture that mind mage and get rid of him as necessary, but alas she was working with skeleton resources here.

Admittedly Michael wanted to do something more, such as taking out that mind controller, but alas you really can't expect a bunch of teenagers and a mad scientist to do much more other than what was done today without getting into a major firefight. So as much as he hates to say it, this will have to do if it helped their friends enough.

Kit... had a pounding headache. He groaned before slowly opening his eyes. "Argh... light..." he said at the lancing pain the vicious vicious rays of malevolent light.

*{It's not that bad,}* Nate said in his head again, *{Let eyes adjust.}*

"Nate's back in my head... guess it's reality again," Kit muttered, shielding his eyes.

"Well... That was interesting." Shelly said and looked at Kit. *And I can't even tell you all the thoughts I'm starting to put together... Wonder if Gran will let us do that again in Kit's mind or something...* Shelly thought, grinning a little. Kit would know the look.

"Are you three, or four, okay? Pulling you out left a bit rough. It seemed like something tangled around your strings when the spell fell apart," Gran said. "And what about you Raine?"

"I'm fine... Scared out of my mind though. Was that supposed to happen?" Shelly asked.

"I could be better, but not because someone's been messing with my head," Raine replied a little grumpily, "Unless of course Telepathy uses the same targeting measures as this mind magic here. I would've been much happier with a more permanent solution to that mage, if only I had more resources to play with..."

"I second that," Shelly said. "Is there a way to permantly block him out?"

"Um... can we not casually talk about killing people," Kit asked, "Or at least pretend we aren't? Because it only makes my headache worse when you do.""

Raine stared at Kit for awhile looking rather unimpressed, before sighing and going to rub the bridge of her nose with a thumb and forefinger.

"I'm gonna get back to work..." Raine said tiredly as she turned and went back into the house to go to her lab.

Kit looked as if he might have said something more, but it was lost as he suddenly doubled over and threw up on the lawn in a spectacular fashion.

Gran yelped and jumped.

Michael holds up a card with the number 8 on it, "Dare I ask what we missed?"

Shelly bolted back. "Whoa!" She said and turned away, trying to get away from the spray and to go back inside. "Umm... I'll get you some water." coming out less then half a minute later, she passed the water to Kit. "Lemmie know if you need more."

Vasily muttered something under his breath as Kit shared the contents of his stomach with the lawn. "Uh..."

"Oh my, what happened to you!", Alessa asked Kit. She was scared to find out, but today has been anything but safe.

Kit reeled slightly, taking a few staggering steps back, away from the mess. "Aww... my head is killing me... I didn't know you could get mind diving sick..."

Michael stands near Kit in case he needs any help, hoping it wasn't anything bad.

"I have never seen it before, but then, I've never done this often, and people get sick from plane hopping," Gran admitted. "Maybe it's like the mental bends?"

[Rollnotice DC 15, or if you just happened to find Kit's spew interesting] Meanwhile, something weird was happening to the stuff Kit hacked up. A strange mist was raising from it, gathering together and forming a vague shape.

From the corner of his eye, Michael notices something odd. He looks and sees that whatever lunch Kit threw up was... why is that even, "...Why is there some sort of mist coming from Kit's puke?" YAY! More wierd ass sh\*t thanks for this madness!

<http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4558493/> Notice check: 16

"Come on, hun. Drink this." Shelly said, giving Kit some more water. She heard Micheal;s words and turned, blinking. "Oh what is it NOW!?" She huffed.

**Yellow 13** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 6 +4

The vague shape took on definition; pulling itself into a humanoid outline that twitched as if it were trying to move, one leg snapping out into a sudden step. A haunting and faint laugh could be heard, and it seemed to eminent from whatever that was as the mist deepened and thickened, forming almost a roiling colomn around the humanoid shape. Within it's depths, two pale yellow point suddenly flared, like eyes snapping open, eyes lit from within, an inhumanly grin, needle like teeth outlined by the same pale glow that spilled out from within.

Kit coughed a few more times, gaspnig slightly. "What... what is that?"

"Some kind of monster!" Shelly said and began to drag Kit away from it.

Michael quickly helps drag Kit away a few feet and got into a combat stance, "Alright, what the are you and what do you want?!"

move: drag Kit away from ????. Ready action: attack ??? if within range. free action: mark ??? with DMA. (+1 to melee defense if attacked by ???)

//I also cast magic missile!

"Monster...? So cruel... you are... so rash with labels" the figure drawled in a coarse voice. One suffering from ill, if not a total lack of, use, but getting better. The mist sucked inward and the figure revealed itself. A male, around 6 feet tall, dark skinned, though not obviously black, more of a mixed race. The strangest part; he was still... ghostly. He lacked solidity, for though he seemed as opaque as the rest of them, there was still something misty about his form, for all it's definity. Maybe it was just a sense? "What am I? I am what I am. What who I am made me." His voice was rapidly shedding it's rasp, and becoming something oddly familiar. "I am my father and my mother. I am Son. Thank you for birthing me Mom Shelly, Dad Christian."

Alessa had trouble keeping her constitution around this point and opted for hiding behind the others in case she vomited from the sight of anything else.

Shelly stared at the person dumbfounded then looked to her own stomach. "You mean...?" She placed a hand over her stomach and then looked to Gran. So many thoughts swam through Shelly's head. How was he so skilled with speaking already?

Michael blinked and slowly moved out of his combat stance, still looking tense and feeling about as confused as Shelly was. This..... person, is their child? But, that isn't how... "Can, someone please explain what's going on here?"

Shelly cleared her throat and stood up. "Lewis," Shelly said, hoping that she just named him. Unless he had one of those already too. "I'm sorry. I've just been stressed for a while and your... Birth was pretty strange."

"Ah... what?" Kit asked, totally and utterly confused. You couldn't blame him. Here was a translucent ghost looking full grown man thing that formed from his puke and claimed to be his son. That made no sense at all.

"Mother and Father. Born within Mother's heart and mind when fractured. Nurtured in Father's when light drew me out. Given Essence from father's life. Now a name. Lewis. Warrior and Fame," He was definitely settling into his voice and even finding an easy stance that cut down on the creepy but not so much on the disconcerting.

"You're really well-spoken for being less than a minute old." Shelly said, a hint of pride in her voice.

"This is probably breaking laws of physics... I think Raine would be as horrified as intrigued as I am at the moment," Vasily stated. Yeah, as if the whole therianthropy, telekinesis, mind rape doesn't...

"Oh! you haven't been introduced to anyone yet. That's Vasily," Shelly said, and started pointing out the others and their names.

"You'd think someone who claims to be created from your souls and stuff doesn't know the names, if he knows yours?" Vasily replied, narrowing his eyes. A ghostly foe, or a friendly apparition? Fighting one would be problematic... Children don't usually fight their parents, but then again, nature loves playing around with that (see: most of parasites).

"I... don't know?" Kit said slowly.

"Some. From both. Father and Mother's memories helped make me. I know you too since you were in mother's mind when it shattered and those helped birth me," Lewis said. He was slipping into a more casual manner of speech too.

"Suppose you don't have intentions of gutting us at the moment?" Vasily asked. As if he'd tell.

"Vasily!" Shelly said, reprimandingly. Her maternal instincts seemed to be kicking in, despite the strangeness of the situation. "I won't have you speak to my son that way!"

"Er... are... I mean... aren't you kinda talking, uh, taking this a bit too well?" Kit said, rubbing his forehead. "I just throw up and now it's claiming to be my kid..."

"We can't even confirm his words yet, Shelly, calm down," Vasily replied.

"I would try not to hurt mother, father or their friends. Excepting Dr. Raine. Mother hates her," Lewis supplied helpfully.

Shelly's eyes widened. How did he know...? "Well I wouldn't say it's THAT bad..." She said trying to salvage the situation.

Michael decides to sit down on a chair and rub his right temple as he files this under 'magic', for some reason that makes him feel better at this point. He was still keeping an eye on this thing.

Lewis smiled widely again. "I will visit again. I do not have the essence to remain visible."

"Oh..." Shelly said, dissapointed. "That's good though. I...guess I'll see you later then, sweetie." She said and went to hug him.

For a moment, there was a predatory edge to Lewis' smile [sense motive 18] and he vanished, and along with him left a slight feeling of uncertainly, an itching at the back of their minds.

"... I'm so confused right now," Kit said slowly.

**ὄρετή** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 14+1

Sense motive: **Yellow 13** rolled a die with 20 sides. The die showed: 14

**Vasily** rolled a die with 20 sides for sense motive. The die showed: 8

Michael <http://invisiblecastle.com/roller/view/4582506/> **18 exact for sense motive**