

THE HIDDEN PEOPLE

Episode 2.04

“Downward Spiral”

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33. The Mirror connection between the Thorne house and the In-Between (Mackenna, Nissa).

SHAYLEE

Mackenna!

MACKENNA

Shaylee?

ALFIE

Nissa!

NISSA

Alfie!

THOMAS

Mackenna!

MACKENNA

Thomas! Sam!

SAM

Mackenna! Nissa! Murphy!

Murphy barks.

SAM (CONT'D)

Okay, now that we've gotten that out of the way...

SAM

NISSA

Where the hell are you? How are you doing this?

ALFIE

Funny you should ask. I have no idea. I just came out of a coma. I don't know these people.

NISSA

Wait, what?

SAM

Alfie was comatose for a day. Shaylee, Thomas, and I had to go into his mind and play D&D to get save him. Super weird.

MACKENNA

Uhh, what?

SAM

Also, Alfie's mom hates you two.

ALFIE

But enough about that. What happened to you?

THOMAS

Yeah, are you okay? Where's the Magister? What happened up in the church tower? It's completely destroyed.

MACKENNA

I lured him to the tower, and the iron bell exploded him. The tower was starting to crumble when Nissa found me, so she drew a circle.

NISSA

A perfect circle, by the way. This shit was not my fault.

MACKENNA

The floor came apart--

SHAYLEE

And broke the circle just as you two were stepping sideways?

MACKENNA

Yeah.

SHAYLEE

So this is the In-Between. I've never seen it before. Nobody believes it exists.

MACKENNA

Oh, it does.

THOMAS

Is it safe there?

MACKENNA

It's a big, empty wasteland. There's water, but nothing grows, and a green sun, but it's almost always dusk.

NISSA

If the Sahara, a green Mars, and a nuclear fallout had a weird threesome baby, it might be something like this.

SAM

I'm thoroughly confused. Is this somewhere on Earth or did you jump to some alien universe?

NISSA

Earth doesn't have a place like this.

THOMAS

But how do we get you out? There is a way to get you out, right?

MACKENNA

That's what the guy said.

SHAYLEE

Guy? What guy?

MACKENNA

He's sort of an alien wanderer? Human-ish, but just barely. He's a weirdo with an eyeball on his hand that you have to lick as payment for him answering your questions.

ALFIE

That's so cool.

SAM

That's disgusting.

MACKENNA

Tell me about it.

NISSA

Anyway, the Wanderer told us about a powerful magic relic that might be our key to getting back.

THOMAS

Perfect! Where is it?

SAM

What is it?

NISSA

It's called the Arm Ring of Frigg, but he said it was ripped in half ages ago and separated. One half is here in the In-Between. The other half is in your world.

Long pause.

SAM

Like...somewhere in the world?

MACKENNA

Apparently.

SAM

Well, that narrows it down.

NISSA

He also said that it glows, though that just might be on this world.

ALFIE

Man, I really want to meet this guy. Could you lick his hand for more details?

MACKENNA

Yeah, that's never happening again.

SHAYLEE

If uniting the arm ring is the only way to get you back, we'll find it. What about the half that's on your end?

MACKENNA

That's the bigger problem. Literally.
Have you heard of some kind of In-Between super monster?

SHAYLEE

Maybe. Might have been one of the things Dane researched. Why?

NISSA

Oh, it's just a giant creature that's trying to devour us. The Wanderer said it basically consumes all forms of everything. And to make matters worse, this air is toxic, and I think I'm dying.

MACKENNA

We need a way to fight this thing if it finds us.

SHAYLEE

Can't you use magic?

MACKENNA

Magic is hit or miss around here. I have no idea if it would work.

SHAYLEE

Okay, so stay out of sight until you can find your half of the arm ring. How do we use it?

MACKENNA

We have to unite the halves. No idea beyond that.

SHAYLEE

Find it and come straight back to this spot. We'll send you a signal when we have our piece.

THOMAS

Mackenna. Be careful.

MACKENNA

Yeah. You, too.

ALFIE

Niss, hang in there. We're bringing you home.

NISSA

(trying to be normal Nissa)

Hurry up, nerd.

34. Connection closes.

MACKENNA

I can't believe that just happened.

NISSA

Yeah, who knew they could get reception out here?

(hacking cough)

MACKENNA

We need to get moving. We need to find that arm thing.

NISSA

Arm Ring of Frigg.

MACKENNA

Yeah, that thing. Except we don't even know where the monster's hoard of power is.

NISSA

I think we do.

MACKENNA

How?

NISSA

Something in that conversation reminded me. You remember how the Wanderer said the monster is drawn to power and hoards it in its den?

MACKENNA

No, but you do, so go on.

NISSA

How would he know that the monster
isn't just consuming everything if
every powerful thing is gone once it
passes? Unless--

MACKENNA

Unless he's seen it collect things.
Seen where it takes them.

NISSA

Yup.

MACKENNA

I'm gonna have to lick his eye again,
aren't I? This world sucks. Come on.

Mackenna and Nissa walk into the Wanderer's home.

MACKENNA (CONT'D)

Hey. Handcreep. We need to know
something.

WANDERER

I have already revealed that which
secures your escape. What else could
you possibly want to know?

NISSA

The demon's lair. That's where we find
that which secures our fucking escape.
We find the hoard, we find our half of
the Arm Ring of Frigg. We just need to
know where it is.

WANDERER

Seeking that place will be the death of
you.

MACKENNA

No, staying here will be.

NARRATOR

Why not both?

WANDERER

And if it catches you, what then? You stand no chance.

MACKENNA

We'll risk it.

WANDERER

Very well. You know the price for this knowledge.

MACKENNA

Alright, give me your hand.

Sound of SPITTING.

WANDERER

What is this?

MACKENNA

Payment. Comes from the same place as licking.

WANDERER

You can't...it doesn't...I...
(huffs)

That loophole will suffice this once.
The den is most hidden. You must follow
the wind.

NISSA

I'm sorry. What?

WANDERER

The flow of the wind gives you all the evidence you need. The very air you breathe is in constant flight of its presence. Always keep the wind in your face and press forward. You will find its origin.

NARRATOR

Perhaps you should follow the air's example. You would avoid the wind burn and an unfortunate end.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

35. Thorne house.

SAM

So...any ideas where half of an old metal ring might be?

ALFIE

You forgot glowing.

SAM

Oh that's right. An old metal glowing ring. Is that better?

ALFIE

Not really.

SAM

It could be literally anywhere. In another country, in the ocean, buried in a mountain, in a freakin dumpster...

ALFIE

I can check the trash.

THOMAS

Garbage day was yesterday, Alfie. And I don't think it will be that convenient.

SHAYLEE

No, but it may not be as impossible as it seems.

SAM

Good, because from the way Nissa looked, we don't have a ton of time.

SHAYLEE

This object was magical, is magical. It wouldn't have been discarded. It would have been very important to whoever possessed it. I don't think it's in Arcadia. It has to be in the human world.

THOMAS

Why can't it be in the faerie world?

SHAYLEE

Because the Magister would have publicly claimed it for his own.

ALFIE

Okay, even if it's not in the faerie world, that still means this Arm Ring of Twig thing could be anywhere on Earth.

THOMAS

Wait, did they say Twig or Frigg?

SAM

More like Arm Ring of Friggin impossible.

THOMAS

Frigg is a Norse goddess. If it's a relic here in our world, it's probably in some kind of museum.

SHAYLEE

You don't solve magical puzzles with Google, Thomas.

ALFIE

Uh, be that as it may...check it out.

SHAYLEE

Oh.

SAM

Dublin? So it's just chilling in some museum in Ireland?

ALFIE

Hey, Shaylee, aren't you Irish? From Ireland?

SHAYLEE

Those generally go together, yes.

THOMAS

Everybody have passports? Let's get the first flight out.

SHAYLEE
I'll step us sideways.

SAM
Nope. No way. No thank you. That's exactly how Mackenna and Nissa got into this mess. I'll take a plane.

SHAYLEE
Sam, we don't have time to waste. I'll have to take you one at a time.

ALFIE
Aww hell yeah. It's side steppin' time.

MUSICAL TRANSITION

36. Outdoors in Ireland.

SHAYLEE
Just walk it off.

THOMAS
Ohhh, I don't feel great. Is this what vertigo feels like?

SAM
I think I might vomit.

ALFIE
I already did. Honestly, you'll feel better if you quit fighting it and just barf.

SHAYLEE
Come on. The museum is up here.

They walk.

NARRATOR
The National Museum of Ireland. Where the past sits on display for the present, relics preserved and untouched. For now.

ALFIE

Okay, so I'm thinking that we do some quick reconnaissance first. We each walk around exploring different parts of the museum until we find the Norse display. Then we find the Arm Ring of Frigg. Make note of the security cameras, trip wires, trick alarms, silent alarms, false alarms--

THOMAS

Are we going to steal this thing in broad daylight?

SAM

What did you think we were gonna do? Wait?

THOMAS

You were a detective! You of all people should be cautious about breaking the law!

SAM

Faeries and magic and alternate dimensions are real! I'm trying to roll with it! Your sister is stuck in an alien world, and Nissa is dying.

THOMAS

I know. But it does them no good if we rush into it and get caught. We need to wait until it's clear and seize our opening.

SHAYLEE

I'm afraid we'll have to make our own opening, Thomas. Sam is right. We don't have time for waiting. And I won't let us get caught.

ALFIE

Heloooo?! I have the workings of a plan here, people.

NARRATOR

(sigh)

You know how this will go, don't you?

ALFIE

Here we go...

Something in the music scoring to suggest that what follows is not real time, but only a depiction of Alfie's plan still in his head.

ALFIE (CONT'D)

Okay, so Thomas is going to pretend to work for the museum. He's going to flirt with the front desk worker and say:

THOMAS (heist)

Hey sweetheart, I forgot my badge last night, crazy story for another time, you know how it is. Any chance you can let me in the back so I can clock in? I promise I'll make it up to you.

ALFIE (real time)

He's going to leave that security door ajar by sticking a paperclip in the door latch. Thomas will pretend to be a tour guide and will lead a tour group through to the Norse display. Sam, dressed as a russian babushka, and Shaylee, the all-American cheerleader will be in that tour group.

SHAYLEE (heist)

Um, excuse me? Is this where they filmed Game of Thrones? Uh-oh, I might be in the wrong tour group. Sorry.

ALFIE (real time)

They'll hang back after the group continues so that they're in position.

SAM (heist)

(Russian accent)

Cold War to Fox Trot. We are in position.

ALFIE (real time)

I will pose as IT maintenance. I will slip into the back through the paperclip door and go to the main power generator. When the time is right, I will cut power to the building.

ALFIE (heist)

This is Foxtrot going dark.

Powering down sound effect.

ALFIE (real time)

Everything will go dark: the lights, the security cameras, the alarms. In the chaos, Sam and Shaylee will open the glass case with their CO2 laser...

Laser beam sound effect.

ALFIE (real time)

Steal the one ring...

SAM (heist)

(Russian accent)

We have it.

ALFIE (real time)

And make the escape just as the power kicks back on. Boom, we're back in Conley just in time to unite the halves and rescue Mack and Nissa.

Long pause with just music, then heist music stops abruptly.

SHAYLEE

You know I'm just going to step sideways inside, knock out a guard, steal the armband, and step sideways back here, right? Two minutes, max.

ALFIE

Why can't we come, too?

SHAYLEE

You would get way too distracted.

ALFIE

Fair point. At least take my walkie talkie. No, wait, take Nissa's. I already wrote my name on mine.

SHAYLEE

Okay, but I'm not going to use it.

SAM

I'm wondering why you even brought us with you if you didn't actually need us.

SHAYLEE

To make you feel useful?

SAM

Yeah, feeling really useful here. I'll just sit on this park bench and wait. Nice to know there's still pigeon shit in Ireland.

SHAYLEE

I'll be right back.

Stepping sideways departure.

THOMAS

So, why didn't she just use the front entrance?

SAM

Show off.

QUICK TRANSITION

37. Stepping sideways arrival.

Toilet flushes. Bathroom stall door opens.

SHAYLEE

And that is why I stepped in alone.

Shaylee leaves the bathroom. The museum is busy. A tour group passes by.

SHAYLEE (CONT'D)
Why is it so busy out here?

NARRATOR
This many people will complicate
things. Well, maybe just one person in
particular.

EMMA
Shaylee?

NARRATOR
Aww, how sweet. It's the ghost of
Shaylee's past.

SHAYLEE
Emma.

EMMA
I almost didn't recognize you. Your
hair is...different. And your clothes.
(beat)
Are they inside out?

SHAYLEE
Uh, fashion statement.

EMMA
Looks, uh...nice.

SHAYLEE / EMMA
What are you doing here?

EMMA
(half laugh)
My students are on a tour, so I'm
killing time. You?

SHAYLEE
I'm just...a big fan of history.

EMMA
Since when?

SHAYLEE
It's, uh, a new hobby.

EMMA

I understand. A lot can change in five years. I've changed. You have, too. Obviously.

SHAYLEE

Aye. Things are...different now. Very different. You, uh, look good. Happy, I mean. You are happy?

EMMA

I am.

SHAYLEE

Still love your job?

EMMA

I do.

SHAYLEE

That's good. Really good. And Snowball? How is she?

EMMA

She died. Three years ago.

SHAYLEE

Oh. I'm sorry, Emma.

EMMA

It's okay. She always liked you more than me, anyway.

SHAYLEE

I'm sorry I couldn't say goodbye to her.

EMMA

She was, too.

SHAYLEE

Have you gotten a new cat yet?

EMMA

No. Brigid's allergic.

SHAYLEE

Brigid? Right. Of course. I'm glad
you're seeing some--

EMMA

Brigid is my wife.

SHAYLEE

Oh.

EMMA

Wedding was two years ago. I sent an
invitation. I gather you don't check
your mail much.

SHAYLEE

No. I guess I don't.

EMMA

And you changed your phone number. The
one you had your whole life. Like
people often do.

SHAYLEE

I had to. For work.

EMMA

Right. "Work."

SHAYLEE

I'm...this isn't the right time to say
it, but I am sorry for...everything.

EMMA

The right time was probably about five
years ago. Maybe longer.

SHAYLEE

I deserve that.

(long beat)

I should probably get--

EMMA

We have a son. Liam.

SHAYLEE

That's....wow. I thought you didn't want children.

EMMA

That was you.

SHAYLEE

Oh. Right.

EMMA

I always liked kids. Schoolteacher, remember?

SHAYLEE

Of course. Obviously.

EMMA

How are things with your life? What are you up to these days?

SHAYLEE

Well, uh...

38. Outside the museum. Exterior sounds.

SAM

What's taking her so long?

THOMAS

It's only been a few minutes.

ALFIE

I wonder what she's doing, though. Like, from a sneaky standpoint, is she pretending to be interested in other relics until the tourists move along? Or is she--

SAM

We can't just wait here. She could be in trouble.

THOMAS

I don't know how much trouble she could really get into in there, Sam.

SAM

Did you hear the part of her plan that involved assault?

ALFIE

Maybe she took on the wrong guard.

SAM

That's it. We're going in. Alfie, you need to find Shaylee. Make sure she's okay. Get her out, and meet us out front.

ALFIE

Roger that, boss lady.

Alfie runs away.

SAM

Thomas, you'll have to cut the power.

THOMAS

Cut the...? Me?

SAM

Yes. Then find me. I'll be on the third floor at the Norse display. We need to find someone with an I.D. badge.

39. Inside the museum.

SHAYLEE

My life is pretty complicated. Beyond the popular usage of the word. A lot of rough parts, but things started improving in the last few months.

EMMA

Well, I guess I'm happy for you.

SHAYLEE

I'm working on being happy for myself.

Alfie runs up.

ALFIE

Shaylee, there you are. We need to get going.

SHAYLEE

(quietly)

Alfie, what are you doing here?

ALFIE

Sam got tired of waiting, and I'm pretty sure she's going for the Arm Thing herself.

EMMA

Um, is everything okay?

ALFIE

Oh yeah, we're fine.

EMMA

Are you two...together?

ALFIE

(very slowly, suspiciously)

Yes. We are together. I have a girlfriend, and it is Shaylee.

SHAYLEE

(under her breath)

This is not happening.

EMMA

Seems like a lot has changed with you.

Power shuts off.

ALFIE

Wow, what could that be? Weird, isn't it, Shaylee? I think we need to get going. Now.

40. Echoing stairwell. Thomas throws the door open and ascends quickly.

THOMAS

I can't believe they just leave maintenance doors unlocked.

(beat)

Ugh, Sam, your plan didn't account for
the emergency lighting being so dim.
Where's the door?

Door handle turns. Door does not open. Thomas tries it
multiple times.

THOMAS

(grunting)

Why is this door...locked? Oh, come on.

THOMAS gently TAPS on door.

THOMAS

Uh...help?

41. The In-Between. Mackenna and Nissa walking. A strong
breeze.

NISSA

Of all the circumstances to be given,
why couldn't we walk with the wind at
our backs?

MACKENNA

Seriously, this is like walking uphill
the whole way. At least I don't have
that side-splitting exercise pain yet.

NISSA

It's been miles. Your endurance must
have been enhanced by...uh, the power
upgrade you got.

MACKENNA

Hey, if this means I can just forego
cardio entirely, I'm all for it.

NISSA

(coughs)

MACKENNA

It's getting worse, isn't it?

NISSA

What gave it away?

MACKENNA

Well, you look like shit. Also the blood you just coughed up.

NISSA

Covertly wiping it on my already bloody clothes didn't get past you?

MACKENNA

The more you joke, the more I know it's bad. Do you need to stop?

NISSA

(chuckle that turns into a cough)
We don't have time for bullshit like that. I can keep going.

(beat)

What are we going to do if the creature is already there?

MACKENNA

I thought about that, too. I think we'll need to wait until dark or until it's not paying attention, then slip inside. Try and grab that arm ring and get the hell out. As Alfie would put it, stealth mode and shit.

NISSA

Sneaky things. Fuckin' Alfie.

(more coughing)

Mackenna, I need to confess something, about Alfie.

MACKENNA

Oh, dear lord. Do not tell me that you're in love with him and that if you die I need to give him your final declaration of affection, because I already told Sam a while ago that you're not a thing and it would just complicate everything--

NISSA

Mack! I'm losing my life, not my mind.

MACKENNA

Oh, good. There are fates worse than death, you know.

Throughout the next line, the wind subtly dies down to nothing.

NISSA

In case I don't make it, you need to know what happened that time with the fried chicken. What really happened. I know you were there, and you thought that--

MACKENNA

Stop talking.

Utter silence.

NISSA

Mack, I'm trying to pour out my heart here.

MACKENNA

Do you hear that? The wind stopped. I think we must be here.

NISSA

Then why isn't anything here?

MACKENNA

No idea. The Wanderer probably lied. He's probably laughing his ass off at this fool's errand. What a waste of spit.

NISSA

You licked his hand.

MACKENNA

That story will never be told again.

MACKENNA / NISSA

(laugh)

NISSA

Ow.

Nissa keels over.

NISSA (CONT'D)
(coughing)

MACKENNA
Niss! Are you okay?

NISSA
Ugh...Mack...look at the ground.

MACKENNA
I'd rather not study your phlegm, thank you.

NISSA
No, this dirt. It's darker than what we've seen all day. It looks fresher. I think it's been kicked up. And look at the swirl designs.

MACKENNA
You're right. But what does that mean?

42. WANDERER
It means you found it.

MACKENNA
Shit! Where did you come from?

WANDERER
If you had looked back even once during your journey, you would have seen me keeping pace from afar.

NISSA
Why did you follow us?

WANDERER
To ensure that you arrived, which you have.

MACKENNA
Yay for us. Now if you'll excuse us, we have to open some door that's hidden under this dirt. Thoughts, Nissa?

NISSA

Maybe we dig? Unless you know a magic word for Open Sesame.

MACKENNA

Open Sesame? Feeling inspired by Alfie, are we?

NISSA

Just try it. Or focus your mind and open it that way or something.

MACKENNA

Fine.

WANDERER

Might I make a suggestion?

MACKENNA

No, you might not. Let me concentrate.

Mackenna's breathing. Her breathing slows. The ground begins to shift.

NISSA

You're doing it!

MACKENNA

No, I'm not.

WANDERER

Indeed, she is not.

NISSA

Oh shit.

WANDERER

It's coming.

MACKENNA

Hide. Quick!

Rumbling as the monster Cygnus emerges.

NISSA

(whispers)

Great. It's already here.

MACKENNA
But it's leaving. Why is it leaving?

Cygnus grows distant as it leaves.

WANDERER
Perhaps it has caught scent of other
fresh prey.

MACKENNA
And after we find the Arm Ring of
Frigg, how do we escape without it
catching our scent?

WANDERER
There are ways.

NISSA
Goddess, you are so cryptic.

MACKENNA
Guess we'll have to figure that out,
too. Let's go.

43. Museum stairwell.

THOMAS
Who locks a public stairwell? That's a
fire hazard.
(beat)
Wait.

Door handle turns. Door opens.

THOMAS
Pull, don't push, Thomas. Idiot.

SAM
(from around the corner)
Thomas?

THOMAS
Sam? Is that you?

SAM
Where have you been? I was waiting for
you!

THOMAS

I thought I got locked in the stairwell back there.

SAM

Aren't those the public stairs?

THOMAS

I don't want to talk about it.

SAM

The Arm Ring of Frigg is this way. We need to hurry.

They hurry.

THOMAS

Whoa. It's beautiful. It almost seems like it does glow.

SAM

In the dark, you can see it fading in and out.

THOMAS

Like it's waiting for the other half.

SAM

I'm trying to figure out how we unlock this mechanism. I can't pick this lock.

Glass case shatters.

SAM (CONT'D)

Or you could just break it and draw everyone's attention!

THOMAS

I was trying to read your non-verbals.

SAM

Just take it. Let's get out of here.

THOMAS

Got it. What now?

SAM
Now we run like hell.

Voices come from far away.

SAM
Shit. Guess we're using your stairs.

Door opens. They run down the stairs. Power comes back on.

SAM
Shit, power's back on. Are these
security doors?

THOMAS
Actually it should just be a pull door.

Door opens.

SAM
How did you think it was locked?

THOMAS
In my defense, it was very dark.

SAM
Hurry!

THOMAS
No, take the side door here.

SAM
Good idea.

They run, open the door, and run outside.

THOMAS
Where are the others?

SAM
There!

ALFIE
Sam! Thomas! Over here. I met Shaylee's
ex!

SHAYLEE

Not the time, Alfie. Did you get it?

SAM

Yes, but we were definitely on camera.
I imagine guards and police are
inbound.

SHAYLEE

I prepared a circle. Thomas, you and
the ring first. Let's get out of here.

Stepping sideways departure.

44. Cygnus's lair. Mackenna, Nissa, and the Wanderer walk
on a mixture of stone and dirt.

Nissa coughs periodically throughout.

MACKENNA

Watch your step. This descent is really
steep. Nissa, are you sure you don't
want to wait at the top for us to come
back?

NISSA

Of course I want to wait at the top.
But I'm coming with you.

MACKENNA

Thanks, Ni--ugh, what is that smell?

NISSA

It's putrid. I've never smelled
anything like it.

WANDERER

It's the hoard. You were expecting it
to be all treasure?

MACKENNA

Well, yeah.

WANDERER

This dominion belongs to the greatest void across all dimensions. It has amassed in abundance that which fulfills its power. The first layer is venom. Look upon the walls, but do not touch.

MACKENNA

I'm seeing dirt.

NISSA

But it's laced with some orange substance. Look, it's all over.

WANDERER

With its venom, it steals life from its prey. As a creature of power, it first chooses to remove power from its adversary. This top layer is only the beginning.

MACKENNA

What's next?

WANDERER

Can you not yet tell? Odd that the farther we descend, the warmer it gets.

Rushing, boiling water.

MACKENNA

I feel woozy all of the sudden.

NISSA

It's blood. The iron smell is so strong. Mack, that must be what you're feeling.

MACKENNA

Nissa, it hurts. Like, everywhere. My head, my chest, everything.

NISSA

Let's keep walking. Here, let me help you. Put your arm around me.

MACKENNA

But you can't hold me. You don't have
the strength.

WANDERER

Allow me.

MACKENNA

I don't know how I feel about letting a
man help me walk on my own two feet.

NISSA

And I know exactly how I feel about
letting a man take my place to help my
friend walk on her own two feet.

WANDERER

Well...I'm not exactly a man.

NISSA

Fine, but I've got my eye on you, alien
person. How much farther?

WANDERER

Oh, a ways. We only passed the second
of five rings.

MACKENNA

Rings?

WANDERER

Rings of the creature's destruction. We
descend into the spiral chasm of its
hoard.

MACKENNA

That's why we're walking in downhill
circles?

NISSA

My skin is burning. I can't breathe.
What is this purple stuff?

Sizzling and popping.

MACKENNA

I don't know, but it's oozing out of the dirt and making the walls smoke.

WANDERER

The layer above, as you quickly guessed, is composed of a river of blood, held at a constant boil. It releases a metallic smell in thick clouds that fills the lungs. That is what pains you still. With each new kill, the thing drains blood into the river, keeping it filled to the brim. It then strips the flesh away with this substance you see all around you. Acid, so black and so corrosive that it glows violet. It can decompose most flesh even without touching it.

MACKENNA

How does it get away with all of this? Has anything tried to fight it? Or kill it?

WANDERER

You speak as if it were possible. As if you needed proof, this fourth layer shows you the growing mountain of bones, stripped of their owners' flesh.

NISSA

I hate skeletons.

WANDERER

There is nothing to challenge it. Nothing will fight. It only consumes. Here, it is king, and all else is only dust. No amount of power can overtake this monster. It bends the rules of this world to its will.

MACKENNA

So why are you here? If this shit is so hopeless, why are you risking your neck?

WANDERER

I have my reasons, as always.

MACKENNA

Are you just helping prepare us for the slaughter?

WANDERER

No. If I wanted you dead, I would not be guiding you here myself. Trust me, I wish for you to succeed in this. As we now complete the great circle, we come to the fifth and final ring of this lair, that which you truly seek. The treasure.

NARRATOR

Relics of ancient metal and precious power. And yet, Mackenna, you need only one.

NISSA

Where is it? I've already played find the relic among the treasure. I don't have patience for this shit anymore. Let's get it and go.

WANDERER

But you've already got it.

MACKENNA

What do you mean?

WANDERER

Look in your coat.

MACKENNA

What? I don't understand. I never had this. How did I--

WANDERER

The Arm Ring of Frigg is an Earth-bound relic. The very act of descending into the pit of this hell and suffering from the elemental forces grants you, an Earthbound being, the means of escape. And while it is only half of the Arm Ring of Frigg, that is more than we had a moment ago. And now...

Blade slides off of metal sheath. Nissa struggles with the Wanderer.

NISSA

Let go of me!

WANDERER

I need you to give me that piece of precious magic.

MACKENNA

Are you kidding me? I should have seen this coming.

NISSA

You had us do all the work and you're still betraying us? You coward.

WANDERER

No, not a coward. It took patient cunning. I had to give you real knowledge. I had to give you hope, guidance. And in return, you just provided me my escape from this wretched torment.

MACKENNA

But you could have come with us. If you had asked nicely, you'd find that we're a pretty forgiving group.

NISSA

Not anymore. I will remember this moment forever.

MACKENNA

Let her go. We're leaving.

WANDERER

But someone must remain. At least one
must--

MACKENNA

Don't say fill the void, okay, because
that just has weird implications that
we're not ready to accept.

WANDERER

You seek to resist me? You are both
weak, deteriorating from this chasm as
we speak. And this is an iron blade.

MACKENNA

You seem to think that iron blades can
kill me. Bring it, Hand Eye.

WANDERER

You might not suffer from this
wound...but she certainly can.

Blade drags across skin.

NISSA

(cries out)

MACKENNA

Nissa!

WANDERER

The Ring. Give it. Now.

MACKENNA

Take it. But it won't save you.

WANDERER

Well, it certainly won't save you. That
fresh wound will ensure the Void's
return. I'm sorry I will not be there
to see it. Goodbye, humans.

The Wanderer leaves.

MACKENNA

Nissa, are you okay? How's your
shoulder? You're bleeding.

NISSA

Mack, I'm already dying. I can't feel much worse. What are you going to do?

MACKENNA

He's gonna get my scythe up his ass.

NISSA

No, we need to get out of here alive.

MACKENNA

Fine. We'll deal with him if we ever catch him. I mean, he only ever does that slow villain walk thing, right? We're bound to catch up at some point. Let's turtle race this shit. Put your arm around my shoulder.

NISSA

Ow ow ow!

MACKENNA

Oops. Sorry. That's the arm he cut, huh?

NISSA

You're clearly a bad friend.

MACKENNA

Tell me about it.

NARRATOR

And so, one cursed friend helps another back through the winding Rings of the creature's lair. As they reach the light of the chasm's beginning, a terrifying miracle awaits them.

MACKENNA

There he is! The Wanderer. We caught up!

NISSA

Fucker does walk slow.

Cygnus is returning, growing closer.

MACKENNA (CONT'D)
Oh shit. Nissa, this doesn't look good.

WANDERER
Take them! I've done nothing against
you! Have mercy!
(screams)

Cygnus tears the Wanderer in half.

NISSA
Did it just rip him in half?

MACKENNA
Well there's part of him, so yes. Hey,
his severed arm is still holding the
arm ring. Be right back.

Whoosh of Mackenna's super speed.

NISSA
Nice job, Barry Allen.

MACKENNA
Enhanced speed is convenient.

NISSA
Where was that earlier?! You just let
us walk forever when we could have been
there and back in five minutes!

MACKENNA
I'm still learning, okay? The monster's
distracted by chewing on the Wanderer.
Now's our chance.

NARRATOR
Hobbled by her own failing strength,
Mackenna's speed is, at least, faster
than turtles. As she hurtles toward
their camp with Nissa in her arms, they
experience the fateful collision of
hope and despair.

MACKENNA
Look, the water is right over there!

NISSA

We made it.

45. Cygnus roars behind them, closing in.

MACKENNA

Shit. How did it find us so fast?

NISSA

It senses power, remember? It's tracking the arm ring. And probably you.

Cygnus closing in.

MACKENNA

How do we work this thing? I don't know how to call them on the other side. Shaylee didn't tell us how.

The Arm Ring emits a dull hum as Cygnus closes in.

SHAYLEE

(filtered)

Mackenna!

MACKENNA

Shaylee! Nissa, it's Shaylee! She's right over here, in the water. Come on. Shaylee! The monster is coming. We have the arm ring. What do we do?

SHAYLEE

(filtered)

Look at our ring in the reflection. You have to make it align so that your half makes a perfect ring with ours.

Cygnus nearly there.

MACKENNA

I can't. The water is too choppy! It's too windy!

THOMAS

(filtered)

You can do it, Mackenna! We believe in you!

SAM

(filtered)

Focus, Mackenna. We're right here. We're all holding our half of the ring. You can make it.

Cygnus roars.

MACKENNA

I can't do it. The water's not still. I can't complete the ring.

NISSA

(faint, like a whisper)

The wind flees from it. All will soon be still.

MACKENNA

The wind flees from it. Gotta time this just right.

Wind dies down to silence.

MACKENNA (CONT'D)

Still water.

Utter silence. Cygnus is inches away.

ALFIE

(filtered)

It's right behind you!

MACKENNA

Now!

A magnified ringing, like from rubbing a glass. A rush of wind and whatever else comes from bridging dimensions. Then silence.

NARRATOR

The halves of the Arm Ring pull to each other, reaching across dimensions. Mackenna and Nissa are pulled along with their half as it rips them through a hole in space. Unfortunately for the monster bearing down on them, only its head makes it through before the hole closes.

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MACKENNA

That was too close!

ALFIE

It worked! Woohoo!

THOMAS

Oh, Mackenna. It's so good to see you.

ALFIE

Uh, Nissa, it's me. Alfie.

(beat)

What's wrong with my voice?

(beat)

Why am I sitting across the room from myself?

MACKENNA

Oh, no.

(beat)

Alfie?

ALFIE

Yeah?

SHAYLEE

Shite.

THE END