Okay, but you are keeping an open mind about this - right?

Sure, Bob. Why don’t you go first.

Before I ran you out of the house you were told that each of you would have one final opportunity to state your case tonight as to why your character shouldn’t be turned to stone. After hearing your arguments I’ll make my decision — and this time it’s going to stick.

We’re doomed!

Okay, but you are keeping an open mind about this - right?

Sure, Bob. Why don’t you go first.

Before I ran you out of the house you were told that each of you would have one final opportunity to state your case tonight as to why your character shouldn’t be turned to stone. After hearing your arguments I’ll make my decision — and this time it’s going to stick.

Now, then, the first important thing to consider is the fact that Knuckles is a mere three feet six inches tall.

Compare this to the Medusa’s staggering seven feet.

Okay, but you are keeping an open mind about this - right?

Sure, Bob. Why don’t you go first.

Before I ran you out of the house you were told that each of you would have one final opportunity to state your case tonight as to why your character shouldn’t be turned to stone. After hearing your arguments I’ll make my decision — and this time it’s going to stick.

We’re doomed!

Okay, but you are keeping an open mind about this - right?

Sure, Bob. Why don’t you go first.

Before I ran you out of the house you were told that each of you would have one final opportunity to state your case tonight as to why your character shouldn’t be turned to stone. After hearing your arguments I’ll make my decision — and this time it’s going to stick.

We’re doomed!

Okay, but you are keeping an open mind about this - right?

Sure, Bob. Why don’t you go first.

Before I ran you out of the house you were told that each of you would have one final opportunity to state your case tonight as to why your character shouldn’t be turned to stone. After hearing your arguments I’ll make my decision — and this time it’s going to stick.

We’re doomed!

Okay, but you are keeping an open mind about this - right?

Sure, Bob. Why don’t you go first.

Before I ran you out of the house you were told that each of you would have one final opportunity to state your case tonight as to why your character shouldn’t be turned to stone. After hearing your arguments I’ll make my decision — and this time it’s going to stick.

We’re doomed!

Okay, but you are keeping an open mind about this - right?

Sure, Bob. Why don’t you go first.
NOW IT’S COMMON KNOWLEDGE THAT KNUCKLES DRESSES IN THE TRADITIONAL STYLE OF THE DWARVES OF PRAXTER. I WON’T GO INTO ALL THE DETAILS BUT ONE PART OF HIS ENSEMBLE INCLUDES A HOODED JERKIN -- ITEM 142 ON THE GARMENTS, FINE, LEATHER SUBTABLE ON THE STANDARD PRICE LIST FROM THE PLAYER’S HANDBOOK.

TWENTY SIX MINUTES LATER...

GIMME A BREAK, YOU'VE GOT A NECK DON'T YOU? YOU DIDN'T FACTOR IN HEAD-TILT.

ACTUALLY I HAVE A CHART HERE WHICH SHOWS THAT MY BOLT POUCH AND PACK FRAME WOULD HAVE SEVERELY LIMITED MY RANGE OF NECK MOTION....

HAR HAR!!! WHAT DID I TELL YOU BOB? I KNEW B.A. WOULD COUNTER WITH THAT ARGUMENT. YOU GOT HIM ON THE RUN -- NOW TAKE IT HOME!!

AND WHEN YOU CONSIDER THAT KNUCKLES WAS STANDING DIRECTLY IN THE DOORWAY -- BACKLIT, MIND YOU, BY THE FLAMES FROM THE TORCH BEARER’S TORCH IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS THAT MY INFRAVISION WAS TOTALLY DIMINISHED. I WAS PRACTICALLY BLIND.

OKAY, I’VE HEARD ENOUGH BOB. YOU CAN STOP RIGHT THERE.

STOP? B-BUT I’M NOT FINISHED. I STILL HAVE SOME CHARTS SHOWING KNUCKLE’S AVERAGE REACTION TIMES TO PAST VISUAL THREATS.

NO NEED TO SHOW THEM TO ME. -SIGH- YOU’VE CONVINCED ME THAT KNUCKLES ISN’T THE ONE TO TURN TO STONE. I DON’T REALLY AGREE WITH YOUR LOGIC BUT NEVERTHELESS, I’M GOING TO REWARD YOU FOR AT LEAST TAKING THIS SERIOUSLY AND MAKING A WELL THOUGHT OUT ATTEMPT TO SAVE YOUR OWN ASS.

ABOUT THE CLOSEST THING I’VE SEEN RESEMBLING REAL ROLE-PLAY AROUND HERE IN MONTHS.
OKAY DAVE, YOU'RE ON DECK. TELL ME WHY YOUR CHARACTER SHOULDN'T BE TURNED TO STONE.

WADDYA MEAN YOU POURED YOUR HEART INTO IT? YOU SIMPLY ANNOUNCED, "LET'S GET THIS BITCH IN THE GROUND" AND TOSS THE DICE. I GAVE YOU THE MODIFIER BECAUSE TEFLOM WAS INEBRIATED AND EVERYONE LOVES A DRUNK -- NOT BECAUSE I WAS IMPRESSED WITH YOUR ROLE-PLAY.

WHAT A RIP! YOU TRY TO GO THE EXTRA MILE IN THIS CAMPAIGN AND YOU GET SQUAT.

BECAUSE IF YOU ARE, YOU'LL BE TREADING ON SOME VERY THIN ICE. IF YOU INSIST THAT EL RAVAGER NEVER LOOKS AT HIS OPPONENTS WHEN ATTACKING YOU'RE LEAVING YOURSELF WIDE OPEN FOR B.A. TO SLAP A PERMANENT NEGATIVE TO-HIT MODIFIER ON YA. I JUST THOUGHT I'D POINT THAT OUT.

BUT IT'S THE ONLY ARGUMENT I GOT!!

BRIAN? THAT WAS CERTAINLY TACKY. YOU JUST POINTED IT OUT TO B.A. AS WELL.

OH... DID I?

SORRY. MY BAD.

NOW THAT'S NOT EXACTLY TRUE, BRIAN. YOU DID MANAGE TO SHAKE DOWN WIDOWER FANIGAN FOR 300 GOLD PIECES FOR YOUR "PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT".

HECK, THE MAN WANTED A SPEECH - HE GOT ONE. IT'S NOT MY FAULT HE DIDN'T TAKE ME SERIOUSLY WHEN I TOLD HIM THERE WOULD BE A SMALL FEE.

BRIAN? THAT WAS CERTAINLY TACKY. YOU JUST POINTED IT OUT TO B.A. AS WELL.

OH... DID I?

SORRY. MY BAD.

DUE TO WHAT THE HELL ARE ARE YOU DOING? YOU'RE FIGHTING FOR YOUR LIFE HERE.

I'M THROWING MYSELF AT THE MERCY OF THE GM.

MERCY OF THE GM? THERE'S NO SUCH ANIMAL.

WHATEVER.

* See page 36 “Made You Look”
Now that I think about it, there’s no need for Sara to present her case. I already decided last week that she couldn’t be the one turned to stone. She clearly stated she was looking toward the rear of the party because she suspected some sort of ambush.

Whoa, Dave? What’s this? You’re actually conceding to my authority?

C’mon, Brian. Wouldn’t do me that way.

Would he?

Hmmmrrfff! Once again the ‘cousin card’ comes into play.

What?! Dude you had the ‘I was reading my spellbook’ defense - it was golden.

Oh I see, you’re just trying to ride the honesty ticket ‘coz you see it’s working for me. Well stop muddying up the waters.

Uh oh! Now what the hell is he up to?

Whew! Thank goodness, who knew being paranoid would end up saving my life?

In a way you were right. It was an ambush.

This may surprise you, B.A., but I wholeheartedly agree with you. I came to the same conclusion. I was in target acquisition mode and there’s no denying it.

Well... this is certainly refreshing. I appreciate your honesty Dave — and for sparing me the usual line of B.S. I’ve come to expect from you.

In fact, I’m going to withhold my decision regarding El Ravager until I hear Brian and Sara’s arguments.

You just might get through this unscathed.

It comes down to you, Brian. And just so you know where we stand, I’m going to be honest with you. At this point, I’m really leaning toward you as the victim.

You clearly indicated you were bringing fireballs online when Bob opened the door. Therefore your intent to locate a target is irrefutable.

What?! Dude, you walked right into Brian’s hands. Don’t you see? He made you the pigeon! If you get turned to stone then there’s no reason for B.A. to even hear the rest of the arguments. Brian’s trying to save his own ass at your expense. He just played you like a used Atari 400!!

W-w-what are you looking at me for? I wasn’t trying to torpedo, Dave. I swear. I was genuinely concerned for him.

Really? I was trying to help.

Sure you were, Brian.

I’m just admitting that B.A.’s right. It’s irrefutable.

Uh oh! Now what the hell is he up to?

Fortunately I had an ace up my sleeve the whole time and didn’t even know it.
**Okay Brian, what is it this time?**
A loop hole? Some shoddy rule you found a way to exploit?

* Naaa, nothing like that. In fact, I *really* thought I was toast. I wracked my brain all week but couldn’t come up with a single valid argument to save my sorry butt!

**Then what gives? You mentioned having an ace.**

**I only stumbled upon it last night, talk about yer late hour reprieves. Imagine my embarrassment when I realized my oversight. It was recorded right there on my character sheet the whole time. Like a big goof I’d simply forgotten all about it.**

**Forgot about what, Brian? Is this one of your tricks? Coz if it is, I’m not going to...**

**No, it’s no trick, B.A. I assure you this is totally legit. You remember about eight years ago when I was running Teflon’s father, Crimson Lotus?**

---

**Crimson Lotus? Sure I remember him. He died during the three rivers ordeal, but what’s he got to do with the here and now?**

**Well as you may recall, Crimson Lotus and Scorn-Dexter the Halfling Monk went up against a tough-ass burrowing basilisk in the Dark Hordes of Devastation adventure. We had a devil of a time trying to defeat that critter.**

**Looks like he has an ace up his sleeve after all. I know that voice -- it’s just dripping with confidence. This should be good.**

**No, it’s no trick, B.A. I assure you this is totally legit. You remember about eight years ago when I was running Teflon’s father, Crimson Lotus?**

---

**CRIMSON’S INVISIBLE HELM OF GAZE- AVERSION!**

**Invisible helm? Sounds interesting, what is it?**

**It’s an invisible silver great helm with the visor welded shut. On the inside of the visor a perpetual illusion spell shows the wearer what he would see if he weren’t wearing the helmet.**

**It was one of my first attempts to use magic to mimic high-tech gadgetry. The helm was designed to be a sort of magical VR heads-up display!**

**The beauty of the thing is that no one knows you’re wearing it.**

---

*See Tales from the Vault Volume One: Crimson Lotus was a mage Brian ran in B.A.’s first campaign. Crimson kept a detailed journal of his adventures which (Brian maintains) was passed down from character to character until it finally fell into the hands of Black Lotus (Teflon Billy’s true name) his great, great, great grandson.*
She's right, Brian. Why are you wasting our time with all this? It's not like Teflon Billy even has the helmet. And even if he did, don't think he'd be walking around wearing it all the time on the off chance he might run into a Medusa or Basilisk.

Let's be real. I mean...to even suggest such a thing would be absolutely absurd.

Yeah, I suppose it would be absurd if it weren't for the fact that the helmet was handed down to Teflon Billy along with Crimson Lotus' journal and other personal effects. It's clearly listed on Crimson's last will and testament. Teflon even pawned it once when he was down on his luck.

Anyway, last night as I was going over my notes I noticed Crimson's helm listed on my character sheet in really small print.

Oh you should be embarrassed alright, what a blatent attempt to cheat your way out of a jam. I thought you had more respect for yourself than that, Brian.

Cheat??!! Firk ding --you sayin' I'm lying??

C'mon Brian. Get that half-baked excuse of an argument off the table. Nobody's going to buy such a load of nonsense.

I'm really disappointed in you Brian.

Crimson's helm, it's here...just like he said. Of course it's there.

Put yourself in my shoes, how plausible is your story? We're to believe that Teflon has been wearing some stupid invisible helmet for the last five years?
WAIT! I CAN PROVE I'M TELLING THE TRUTH. EVERY MONTH YOU HAVE US TURN IN PHOTO COPIES OF OUR CHARACTER SHEETS FOR YOUR ARCHIVES. THE LAST SHEET I TURNED IN WAS A FULL TWO WEEKS BEFORE THE MEDUSA ENCOUNTER. I DEMAND YOU PULL YOUR COPY AND CHECK IT. YOU'LL FIND THE HELM AND THE FACT TFELOM WEARS IT AT ALL TIME ANNOTATED -- JUST LIKE I SAID.

THAT WOULD SETTLE THE MATTER ALL RIGHT, YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO WITHDRAW YOUR ARGUMENT BEFORE I CALL YOUR BLUFF?

I BELIEVE YOU BRIAN. IT LOOKS JUST LIKE SOMETHING YOU'D DO.

ACCEPT HIS OFFER, BRIAN. NO ONE BLAMES YOU. YOU WENT TOO FAR.

THANKS DAVE. AT LEAST SOMEONE HAS A LITTLE REGARD FOR MY INTEGRITY.

A FEW SECONDS LATER AS B.A. DIGS THROUGH HIS ARCHIVES.

THIS IS TENSE! KINDA LIKE THE O.J. TRIAL WHEN THEY ASKED HIM TO PUT ON THE GLOVE.

I FIGURE WHATEVER THE OUTCOME IT'S GOING TO END WITH A TABLE BEING FLIPPED AND HARD FEELINGS.

YOU KNOW BRIAN, SOMETHING JUST OCCURRED TO ME ABOUT CRIMSON'S HELMET.

OH YEAH? WHAT'S THAT?

CRAP!!

UH...ER...ACTUALLY I BELIEVE CRIMSON TOOK THAT INTO ACCOUNT WHEN HE...UH...ER...YEAH, HE FOUND A WAY TO ENGINEER A SOLUTION AND WORK AROUND THAT PROBLEM. THE...UH...ER...

THE DETAILS ARE IN MY NOTES SOMEWHERE. I...UH...ER...

IF IT'S INVISIBLE WOULDN'T YOU BE ABLE TO SEE RIGHT THROUGH IT? AFTER ALL YOU SAID IT GIVES OFF AN INVISIBLE AURA SO WOULDN'T THE HEADS-UP ILLUSION BE INVISIBLE AS WELL?

UH...ER...

A FEW MOMENTS LATER....

OKAY, I LOOKED OVER MY ARCHIVE COPY OF YOUR CHARACTER SHEET, BRIAN. I EVEN WENT BACK SEVERAL YEARS. TURNS OUT YOU WERE RIGHT -- IT'S ANNOTATED JUST LIKE YOU SAID. YOU WERE BEING TRUTHFUL.

A FEW MOMENTS LATER....

I OFFER YOU A VERY SINCERE APOLOGY, OLD FRIEND. I'M SORRY I DOUBTED YOU. I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN BETTER.

UH...ER...ACTUALLY I BELIEVE CRIMSON TOOK THAT INTO ACCOUNT WHEN HE...UH...ER...YEAH, HE FOUND A WAY TO ENGINEER A SOLUTION AND WORK AROUND THAT PROBLEM. THE...UH...ER...

THE DETAILS ARE IN MY NOTES SOMEWHERE. I...UH...ER...

YOU REALLY DIDN'T KNOW UNTIL I TOLD YOU - DID YOU? IT'S WRITTEN ALL OVER YOUR FACE.

B.A. WASN'T THE ONLY ONE WHO WAS GREEN. SOUNDS LIKE YOU GOOFED UP.

OKAY, OKAY, HOW 'BOUT A FREE SLOP-N-GO MINI PAINTING FOR EACH OF YOU FOR YOUR SILENCE?

MAKE IT "TABLE TOP" QUALITY AND YOU HAVE A DEAL.

YOU HAVE A DEAL!
Well I'm glad to hear it. Next time maybe you won't be so quick to rush to judgement.

The important thing is that Teflon Billy didn't buy the farm simply because of a bad GM-call. Truly that would have been a travesty of justice.

Sorry, Dave. I guess this means El Ravager is the poor soul who gets petrified. I really feel bad about it - especially since you were the only one at this table who stood by me. Don't worry, I'll do everything in my power to have you restored to flesh and bone. You have my word on that. If there are any expenses involved I'll even shoulder ten percent of the tab. My way of saying, "thanks".

Think nothing of it, dude. I've seen you pull a rabbit out of your ass so many times I figured the odds were riding with you.

Uh...hold up, Brian. I wasn't finished yet.

OOPS. Sorry, B.A. Please - continue.

Something you said during your argument really clicked. I don't know why I didn't catch it before. I suspect it was because I was pretty green as a GM back then.

If Crimson's helmet is invisible wouldn't you just be able to see right through it?

I'm going rule the Medusa's gaze meets yours and Teflon Billy is immediately petrified.

I wouldn't feel too badly, Brian. You put up a good...uh...

Brian??!! W-W-what are you doing??!!

Later as the dust settles...

KRAAAASHHHHH!!!

Okay, guys, I think that's a good point to end the game tonight.

Ha! I called it! It ended in a table flip - and hard feelings.

We still get the free table top quality mini paintings - right?

We still get the free table top quality mini paintings - right?

Shut up, Dave!