

[CATACOMBS intro music plays.]

Sage G.C.: [eerie, deep] Welcome to the CATACOMBS.

[Music fades out.]

Hello, again. Sage here with another CATACOMBS episode. A continuation in the one-on-one *Pirates of the Public Domain* series. This time I sat down with, you know her, you love her, Jessica Dahlgren, and we set down the foundation for what will become for Valora Skarsgard.

At the time, she was still known as Milena. I don't know, I don't remember when we changed the name, but it was obviously before Episode One. We talk about lots of stuff.

I brought to each of these a sort of smattering of thematic questions, things that were vaguely related to the themes that I wanted to lay down in *Pirates of the Public Domain* and kinda work into and help inspire each cast member as they created their character. And we're playing with different ideas.

[Music fades in.]

So after Jess and I talk about stuff like capitalism and climate change, you know, super fun topics, Jessica then talks about her character idea. And we do a little improv scene with her and also get a little bit of a deep dive into the rules. So if you were curious about how the game design this time around works, we talk about that a lot, actually. And I was surprised how much I stuck to the version we ended up playing. There was some stuff that does change in the main episodes, and there's definitely some rules and things that I'm going to be tweaking before the final version gets published. But as a general overview of how it works in practice, that's in this episode towards the end.

So yeah, pretty laidback, chill time, just hanging out kind of vibe. Hope you enjoy. And thank you, as always, for your support. Let's dive in!

Jessica / Valora

[Upbeat music crescendos and fades out.]

Sage: Hello!

Jessica Dahlgren: Hello!

Sage: My name is Sage. Hopefully, you know me. If not, welcome to the Adventure Pass of *20 Sided Stories*. I'm the director of the show. And I'm here with the longest co-conspirator, co-host, co-roommate, living companion.

Jessica: What?

Sage: Jessica Dahlgren.

Jessica: You tried to make that sound like the most platonic thing. Roommate? Companion?

Sage: Strictly professional.

Jessica: We're strictly professional. There's no funny business happening.

Sage: We're in a domestic partnership.

Jessica: Oh, god. Sounds terrible. Um, yeah.

Sage: I just joke about it 'cause, yeah, we are in the same house. But we're doing this for the sake of presentation.

Jessica: Oh, right. Yeah, Sage and I are currently in separate rooms under the same roof having this conversation.

Sage: This is how we've always done *20 Sided Stories* remote stuff 'cause, yeah, presentation.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: Also easier to edit. Like, having our voices separate, which is gonna be so fun to get back into for *Pirates*.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: Love me some mic bleed. Luckily, RX by Isotope, I got their new plugins and their D bleed has helped me a bit in the past. So hopefully, that'll pull through again.

Jessica: Shout out to them.

Sage: Yes. Shout out to Isotope. Wanna sponsor us? Please. There's very few people I want to sponsor 20 Sided Stories. But Isotope?

Jessica: This is not even going on the main feed.

Sage: Yeah, I know. Not this but, you know, in general.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: Jessica?

Jessica: Yes.

Sage: You are, as I was saying, like, the longest, most active guest of 20 Sided Stories. Producer, cast member. Let's just say cast member.

Jessica: Cast member, yeah.

Sage: Yeah, we've had ro- we've had a rotating ensemble cast that kind of shifts and changes a bit with every series. And you've kinda been the one throughline besides me.

Jessica: Right? It's almost like we're domestic partners, and I love to be included or just wanting to be around you.

[**Sage** chuckles.]

There's nothing more to that. [chuckles]

Sage: Uh, yeah, there is. You're a great actor.

Jessica: Oh, thank you. Yeah, I also do like to have fun.

Sage: Yeah. You tell stories.

Jessica: Thank you.

Sage: You are very expressive. And the people love you for the same reason. Travis and Greg would also have similar throughlines but they've dropped off. Travis only barely with *VICTORIA*.

Jessica: Right.

Sage: He wasn't on that.

Jessica: Was he not in *VICTORIA*?

Sage: Not at all, no.

Jessica: Oh, hell yeah. I'm...

Sage: So you're the reigning champ. You've been—

Jessica: I actually didn't know that. When you said that, I was like, no, I'm not. [stifles laughter]

Sage: You've been in every se- like, every series or season of 20 Sided Stories. Not every episode. I'm the only one who gets that crown.

Jessica: Right.

Sage: But...

Jessica: Oh.

Sage: [chuckles] But you have been in every season. You haven't- you've been here since the beginning.

Jessica: Yeah, I'm appreciative to be in every season. It's fun.

Sage: And throughout all that time I have, I'm sure, brought up many times one particular idea that I really wanna do.

Jessica: Yes. A lot.

Sage: And here we are.

Jessica: We're doing it.

Sage: We're doing it now.

[Stifled laughter.]

Jessica: We're talking about—

Sage: *Pirates of the Public Domain!* Do you remember, like, at all when I first was talking about this? 'Cause I don't.

Jessica: I don't remember a lot of things. I remember some things. But I can't remember... I don't seem to be able to remember when you first birthed this idea.

Sage: Yeah, I think I just for a long time, I've been saying I want to do a pirate season.

Jessica: I think it started off with you just being like, oh, pirates would be so cool! Like, I think-'cause we have many ideas as we've mentioned in previous—

Sage: Huge list.

Jessica: Huge, giant list. And so that was just, like, one of the things. And I think throughout time and the parallels of your, you know, what you wanna accomplish with this series kind of came together.

Sage: Yeah. I wanted to do this since before *MARVEL*. It almost was, but followed *POKÉMON*. And then it almost was but followed *MARVEL*. And then—

Jessica: Yeah, I don't even remember that.

Sage: It almost wasn't what followed the *TWILIGHT SPACE*. But then I said no, fuck that. [stifles laughter]

Jessica: That is true.

Sage: I'm gonna do what I wanna do.

Jessica: Sorry for those who wanted—

Sage: Wanted anything else.

Jessica: Anything else.

Sage: But how do you feel about pirates?

Jessica: I'm excited. I mean—

Sage: Not *our* pirates. Just *pirates*.

Jessica: Oh. Well, I had mentioned this to you the other night 'cause we are watching the *Pirates of the Caribbean* just to get into the pirate vibe, you know.

Sage: Get in the mood.

Jessica: Get in the mood, get some ideas, some juices.

Sage: To do some studying.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: Mm-hmm.

Jessica: And I had said that I didn't- I don't really know that much about pirates. The most I know about pirates is literally the *Pirates of the Caribbean*.

Sage: You don't know anything about pirate history at all? I mean, that's a different question that I have later.

Jessica: No. I've never was- I never had, like, a fascination with learning about pirates.

Sage: Mm-hmm.

Jessica: So I really don't know much about it though. *Pirates of the Caribbean* is my favorite ride at Disneyland. I will say.

Sage: Of course. It's one of the best.

Jessica: It's one of the best.

Sage: And it is interesting 'cause in, you know, doing a lot of research over the past year like, yeah, you know, like, it's not really covered in schools here very much.

Jessica: Well, yeah, that's—

Sage: Very much, like, at all.

Jessica: I don't think I ever remembered learning anything about pirates in school.

Sage: They talk about, like, you know, colonialism and the expansion.

Jessica: Yeah, they definitely talk about colonialism, that's for sure.

Sage: I mean, 'cause it's really only like a 10-year period, the Golden Age at least. But piracy in general happens all- happens everywhere all the time. But you know...

Jessica: I've seen it in *The Life Aquatic of Steve's zazooza*, zoo, zoo, bazoo, zoo.

Sage: But is there modern day piracy.

Jessica: There's- in the Wes Anderson film *Life Aquatic* there is—

Sage: I know I've seen it, but I don't remember it.

Jessica: There is a scene where they get attacked by pirates. Spoiler alert!

Sage: In case you didn't see that one yet.

Jessica: In case you have seen *Life Aquatic*. Which there people are people. But that doesn't really spoil much. You know?

Sage: Well, how do you feel about *piracy*?

Jessica: In the sense of, like, pirating movies? Or like modern day piracy is like the fuckin' Tom Hanks movie, I'm the captain now.

[Sage chuckles.]

Like, *that* kind of piracy? I don't know. It's a little risky. Makes my anxiety go, uh-oh. I would not like to run into some pirates, some real pirates.

Sage: Jess have you pirated anything on the internet.

Jessica: I mean, I guess so, yeah.

Sage: In the Myspace days? What'd you take?

Jessica: I actually- well, so my brother was- my brother is five years older than me. And he was more- he was more into LimeWire. So he got into the whole- he LimeWired our family computer. And ever since then, I've always been, like, a very anxious child, afraid to do anything wrong. And so he did the LimeWire. And then that fucked up our computer, and then I never fucked with it again. Though, I have had my fair share of those websites that rip the, um... Is that what you- is that the proper term? Ripping a video- a YouTube video into audio?

Sage: Yeah.

Jessica: Because I—

Sage: Yeah, that can be considered a form of piracy.

Jessica: I mean, but it was things that I could not get. There were things that I could not buy as a kid. So like, I- I pirated the Brie Larson version of *Black Sheep* when Scott Pilgrim came out.

Sage: Before that hit Spotify.

Jessica: Yeah! Which only happened a year- not even. Within the last year.

Sage: Yeah. That's so funny.

Jessica: That's when they finally fuckin' released that song. I *immediately*, I *immediately* pirated that song through one of those YouTube to MP3 converters. And then also, I remember Ariana Grande. Air-ee-ahn-ah? Ariana Grande. Whatever. She did a cover of Vienna, back in, like, 2012. I watched her on *Victorious*, and I thought wow, this girl, she's talented as fuck. And she did a lot of covers on her YouTube and Vienna was one of them, and it's an amazing- it's probably still on YouTube. She's great, great vocalist.

Anyway, Those are the only two things I can vividly remember going out of my way to pirate. Everything else. I've been terrified of getting a virus.

Sage: Yeah, I didn't have Limewire. I had, like, it was like, some share 365 or something. It was some like, it was like a knockoff of Limewire. Like, I had—

Jessica: You said share, I literally just thought of like,
[sings] Do you believe in life after love?

Sage: You gotta get your head out of the gutter.

Jessica: *Cher*?! Cher is not the gutter!

Sage: Chere doesn't own the word share.

Jessica: I mean, she is Cher.

Sage: She is Cher. Anyway..

Jessica: Anyway...

Sage: Anyway...

Jessica: Any- anyway!

Sage: Anyway... I don't pirate stuff much anymore.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: I definitely had to pirate Adobe programs in the early days when I was a kid and I wanted to use them and parents couldn't afford it.

Jessica: Yep.

Sage: But now I have money. So I try to do my part.

Jessica: That's good of you.

Sage: By learning more about the Golden Age of Piracy, it has made me sympathetic, once again. [chuckles]

Jessica: Yeah. I feel like you're pretty- you're pretty sympathetic towards pirates. Yeah? Would you say?

Sage: I mean, some of them were absolutely fucking terrible. Slavery was still a thing. Right? So I mean, that's not fun. But in general, yeah. The idealism is just, like, anti-monarchy and anti-monopoly. Um, democracy, meritocracy.

Jessica: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Sage: There's more camaraderie, a lot of "ies" here.

Jessica: Ye, ye.

Sage: They represent a lot of goodies and not a lot of the baddies.

Jessica: Ye, ye.

Sage: Ye, ye. Yes.

Jessica: Ye, pirates!

Sage: As every pirate says, ye, ye.

Jessica: Ye, ye! Ye! What's that- isn't that that YouTube video? That, ye.

Sage: Oh, the dinosaur?

Jessica: Yeah.

[Sage hums a tune.]

Sage: Ye.

Jessica: Yeah, it's a great video. Just type in like "dinosaur ye".

Sage: Dinosaur ye will probably get you to it.

Jessica: I'm sure it'll pop up.

Sage: Classic meme.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: Jessica, when was the last time you were on a boat?

Jessica: Oh, god.

Sage: Speaking of pirates ships. Maritime history.

Jessica: I- oh my god. Honestly, and I've mentioned this as in character and as myself, I get, as I've famously said, I am motion sickness.

Sage: Oh, on *POKÉMON*.

Jessica: Yeah, I do get motion sick. So—

Sage: So you don't got sea legs.

Jessica: I do not have sea legs. When was the last time I was on a boat? I think the last time I did go on a boat, it wasn't as bad as I thought it was gonna be. But I can't quite remember when that was. All I can remember is the one time my brother- me and my mom went with my brother to, like, a- when he was in high school, there was like an

extra credit thing he had to do. And we went with him. And I spent the entire time at the back of the boat just fuckin' not having a good time, that's for sure.

Sage: Damn.

Jessica: Yeah. But my- when I was a kid, my uncle had like a- like a motorboat. Like a, you know, he liked to waterski.

Sage: Do you do any?—

Jessica: We did some tubing. I did some- a kneeboard, did some kneeboarding as a kid.

Sage: Nice.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: Did you ever do jet skis?

Jessica: No.

Sage: Aw.

Jessica: No, I—

Sage: It's been so long, but I did some jet skis in Lake Michigan. I was pretty young when I did that.

Jessica: Oh, wow. Yeah.

Sage: Pretty intense. But it was awesome.

Jessica: That's cool.

Sage: Yeah. But I otherwise don't- I don't remember when the last time I was on a boat either, really. Unless you count *Pirates of the Caribbean* 'cause, honestly, that might've been it.

Jessica: Oh, yeah. If you count that as a boat, [trills lips] I'm all—

Sage: Disneyland's got lots of boats.

Jessica: Disneyland does have lots of boats.

Sage: Yeah, I been on those.

Jessica: I really- it's gonna bug me now. I know I've been on a boat not too long ago, but can't remember.

Sage: Yeah.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: Well, maybe we gotta fix that.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: Get in the spirit. After *Pirates of the Caribbean* the movies, get on a real boat.

Jessica: That's true. My friend did used to work on a boat. I visit her at work.

Sage: Oh, yeah? Have you taken a cruise before?

Jessica: No.

Sage: I haven't either.

Jessica: I don't think I- cruises don't really appeal to me.

Sage: You don't have any favorite sea shanties, do you?

Jessica: Um, would you count the SpongeBob theme song? 'Cause I'm pretty sure that'd be my favorite sea shanty.

Sage: This is a good- since this is coming out in the future, this is a good reminder to the handful of people in our *Mass Effect* stream that that, the SpongeBob theme song—

Jessica: Oh, yeah, that's a good segue.

Sage: Is a sea shanti sung by a pirate. [stifles laughter]

Jessica: Mm-hmm. That was the hit!

Sage: The first image of SpongeBob is a pirate.

Jessica: For people who don't watch the *Mass Effect* stream—

Sage: We mentioned it, and then at the very end, we said, like, that there was a- there was a pop culture reference that could probably get you pretty close to what we're doing. And it was SpongeBob 'cause we sang the theme sung by a pirate.

Jessica: Are ya ready, kids?

Sage: The first shot of the show is a pirate. So I still stand by that.

Jessica: And it's call in response? Aye, aye, Captain!

Sage: It's a she- it's a sea shanty.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: They wrote a—

Jessica: That's- and it is—

Sage: Yeah, no, it's brilliant. And then you hear it all the time. And there's lots of maritime stuff throughout the entire show because the creator, Steven Hillberg, RIP, he was an ecologist, I believe. Or a marine biologist.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: So he spent lots of time out at sea. And he used all that influence in the show. And it's one of the best cartoons ever made.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: No contest.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: So I mean, some contest. But it's still, I think it's pretty much one of the best cartoons ever made.

Jessica: Oh, yeah. Easy.

Sage: All right now the most fun questions, Jess.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: How do you feel about capitalism?

Jessica: I hate it.

Sage: Yeah?

Jessica: I *really* hate it. And I really think that- I don't—

Sage: Has TikTok been radicalizing you?

Jessica: Oh, I've been fully radicalized by TikTok, for sure. It's funny, though, because it's not like- I don't know a lot of- I will be straight up honest with you, I'm not gonna sit here and talk about, like- act like I know everything about capitalism.

Sage: Mm-hmm.

Jessica: But what I do know about capitalism is that a lot of people don't really think about capitalism and how that really much affected our lives in many ways than just money. It all just goes back to it. And I think the fact that I don't know that much about it, and I think the average person knows- like, we- everybody knows what capitalism is 'cause we are, like, that is just, like, America.

But I don't think the average person could really talk about capitalism. And that's why I also hate it. 'Cause it's just like—

Sage: Yeah, no, it's basically just, people just think there's capitalism and there's communism, and they're just different. And they're, then that's it.

Jessica: Oh, yeah.

Sage: And there's nothing else to it.

Jessica: The examples of communism are always- not- okay, not to get super hyped up on communism, but like, the examples are always like transitional periods. And we're- like, the whole point of communism is to be like, stateless, governless, like, everything's owned by the people. But like, existing, you know, "communist" countries—

Sage: It's never really happened.

Jessica: Were never- those are complete, like, the government's were fully in control. Yeah, I don't know. That answers your question.

Sage: Do you think it's affected your life significantly as of recent?

Jessica: As of recent? Yeah. I mean, I—

Sage: I bring this up, just 'cause there's been a lot of talk of it. It's been a big- it's been a big buzzword.

Jessica: A big buzzword. It's a buzzword.

Sage: Right now. And—

Jessica: I do. I do think it has completely affected me. I mean, we can talk about how capitalism has affected the holidays, you know, like Christmas. And, you know, now, Valentine's—

Sage: Wouldn't have Valentine's Day without capitalism.

Jessica: Valentine's Day without capitalism.

Sage: Thank god for capitalism because—

Jessica: I know! And, you know—

Sage: What would we do without Valentine's Day?

Jessica: It's honestly crazy. I mean, if you have the money, you know, I guess, you know, you do what you wanna do. But like when I- I went to Target the other day, and it's just like, the giant lot- the giant aisles of, like, Valentine's Day cards that are like \$6. I'm like, \$6?

Sage: \$6?

Jessica: Yeah! I'm not even kidding.

Sage: Rip off.

Jessica: I'd say the average price- I mean, if you want- that's like a nice- I'm sure there's, like, \$10 ones too. But I used to work at a gift shop. Right? And they were very pricey, the cards.

Sage: Mm.

Jessica: And it's- I think it's great to, like, make your own cards. But anyway, yeah, so with holidays, I think also being a woman, um, you know, I've- my mom, I think was affected by this as well. And so thinking of like generational habits of, like, retail therapy. The term "retail therapy", like, if you feel sad, go buy something.

Sage: Oh, god, that's...

Jessica: That's really-

Sage: God, I hate that so much.

Jessica: Exactly! But so many people do it. The fact retail therapy is like, ahaha, like, we can make jokes about it. But there's so- like, I do have an issue. And I've been trying to work on it. And you know it, as someone who lives with me, where it's just like, I'll just buy something. And I'm like, why did I do that?

Sage: I saw a Tweet today that was saying that an ADHD habit is to go window shopping online by just sticking a bunch of shit in your cart. And then closing—

Jessica: I do that. I do that!

Sage: And then just closing the tab and not actually checking out. [stifles laughter]

Jessica: I do that! I haven't done it in a while.

[Sage laughs.]

No, I swear to God, I have, like, so many- I have, like, ModCloth and like, you know, anthropology or, like, urban outfitters app on my phone. And sometimes if I'm like, I just need some, like, retail therapy, I'll just, like, add stuff to my cart. And it does, like, I'm like, oh, I feel great. But I don't actually buy it. Sometimes I do. But I don't usually buy it. And I just, like- but then I think I hear that's bad for the- the website.

Sage: Oh, is it? Sometimes they'll, like, secretly hold items because you don't wanna piss off people who are, like, shopping and they go to check out and then while they were shopping, somebody took it off the aisle, so to speak.

But I don't think, like, everybody does that.

Jessica: No, 'cause there's definitely moments where there's, like, I've had something in my cart and I—

Sage: Amazon will warn you, like, when the- they'll say there's only left or whatever. So...

Jessica: Yeah. Most websites will warn you.

Sage: And in a similar vein, not on the surface, but you don't have to dig too deep to find out, how you feelin' about climate change right now?

Jessica: Sad.

Sage: Very, very broad question, but—

Jessica: Sad, sad, sad.

Sage: Yeah, we recently watched *Our Planet*

Jessica: *Our Planet*.

Sage: Which is kind of like *Planet Earth* 3.

[**Jessica** stifles laughter.]

It's by the same, like, company but it- basically, like, BBC made *Planet Earth* And then they made a bunch of other stuff. And then they made *Planet Earth* 2.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: And they were both huge hits. And David Attenborough is great, and he's in them. And then Netflix was just like, well, we have a bajillion dollars, let's make our own! And they literally just—

Jessica: Oh, they fuckin' nailed it.

Sage: Bought the- they didn't buy the team, but they just literally paid for the same people to make *Planet Earth* again but for Netflix, even though *Planet Earth* is also on Netflix, and, uh, but it has now a spin on, um, how climate change is affecting the- the- all of these biomes. 'Cause the format of *Planet Earth* has been to just, like, each episode kind of focuses on a biome or a region or a type of climate or whatever. So *Our Planet* followed the same structure, but it was also focusing on, like, the negative impacts of humankind...

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: In these regions. And also, which is what I enjoyed about it, the positive impacts of environmental conservation.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: So like, they wouldn't just show like, oh, the whole world's burning, and it's all dead and, like, all the—

Jessica: Right. It actually was pretty helpful.

Sage: All the elephants are- are thirsty.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: Every now and again, it would show you like, so basically, this one policy was passed in this area. And look how quickly this recovered.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: So we actually can make a fucking difference *if* we spend the money to do it.
[chuckles]

Jessica: Yeah. And I think the narrative of like, oh, climate change, it's, eh...

Sage: The whole world's ending, just fucking doom and gloom. Nothing fucking matters.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: The defeatist of just, like, there's just nothing we can do.

Jessica: There's nothing / can do. Yeah.

Sage: Because it's true, though.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: You as an individual, there's barely anything you can do at all.

Jessica: Right.

Sage: Pretty much everything you wanna do at home, it's all just gonna be to make yourself feel good. 70% of the- the climate change we're- we're dealing with is caused by mega corporations.

[Chimes and dings play.]

Whoopsies! Fact check. I was editing and I heard myself blurt out that number and I said, that's awfully specific. Do I know what I'm talking about? Turns out, no. Uh, that 71% number, uh, "100 corporations being responsible for 71% of climate change", uh, that was only, I guess, talking about fossil fuels specifically.

So it's kind of misleading if you talk about all emissions, it's actually closer to 12%. But even then, that's oversimplifying the data because there's not actually enough studies to break it down like that. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, go to Politifact I'll put the link in the episode description if you want to read more about it.

Let this be a lesson folks, don't blurt out statistics that you haven't actually read up on yourself.

Climate change is still a problem, though. Probably the biggest threat facing our civilization today. And corporations and greed are definitely, uh, accelerating it. Still stand by that. Okay. Back to the episode.

[Tape fast forwards.]

Jessica: But I think it's good to try to be hopeful. And I do think that that, yeah, what we watched. I mean, there were definitely moments where I got like, oh shit, real sad. But ultimately, and even the end of the series I do recommend watching it if you haven't, listener, uh...

Sage: But close it when the credits come on, because the worst fuckin' song in the world—

[Jessica sings]

Like, they just undermine their entire fucking thing with that gross propagandist-like, cheesy corny credit song. I fucking hate that.

Jessica: Sorry, Ellie Goulding. We don't mean to roast you, Ellie Goulding. But that song—

Sage: Yeah, it's nothing on Ellie Goulding. I'm sure she got paid great. But, uh, it sucks.
[chuckles]

Jessica: The song is just kind of funny. All I remember is
[sings] I got the whole world!
[normally] And we immediately—

Sage: And I stopped it there. [chuckles]

Jessica: Sage is like, finished. Done. Yeah. Uh, but yes, like, climate change makes me sad.
[Sage chuckles at Jessica's tone.]

Try to be hopeful about it. Uh, that documentary did make me feel a little bit hopeful. But it's just a matter of, like, will the people who have the power do something different? That is probably some most likely not in their best interest. But the world's best interests.

Sage: Well, stepping out of the, um, the broader topics just to get to know you, 'cause I just don't know you that well. You know?

Jessica: Oh, yeah. No one. I'm still—

Sage: [amused] No one does.

Jessica: I'm so- I'm so-

Sage: No one knows! I'm just a mystery.

Jessica: I'm so mysterious.

Sage: I'm just- [chuckles]

Jessica: I'm so mysterious. I- nobody- I'm not an open book. No. Yep. Anyway.

Sage: Did you read that design, doc?

Jessica: Oh, yeah.

Sage: What are your first impressions, Jess?

Jessica: Well—

Sage: *Of Pirates of the Public Domain: The Role Playing Game?* First draft.

Jessica: Well, I had said to you already, there should—

Sage: You want more pictures.

Jessica: I want more pictures. I'm a simple gal. 'Kay? And—

Sage: Mm-hmm. There will be more pictures in the- the finalized pamphlet, booklet, whatever you wanna call it.

Jessica: Amazing. Yeah. No, but I think every- I mean, this is your world that you've created. It's not your world—

Sage: No, it's *ours*.

Jessica: It's *our* world. But you- yeah.

Sage: I've laid down the foundation.

Jessica: You've laid down the foundation, and I think that the foundation is pretty solid. I'm curious to learn more about the bird people because they were the ones that, in this document that you shared, have the longest lifespan. And there was like tidbits of them being kind of more like traditionalists.

Sage: Mm-hmm.

Jessica: And like, obviously, they're wise, but like, they're kinda stuck in their own kind of worldview. I'm just curious about that. And I don't really often see bird people.

Sage: Do you wanna play a Birdman? [chuckles]

Jessica: No. I don't think I'm- my typecast is a bird man. I could be a bird kid.

Sage: Bird folk.

Jessica: Bird folk.

Sage: Um, yeah, I- you know, I mean, like all these, I think you shouldn't make a character you're- like, you shouldn't box yourself in based off of the description. Same thing if you're making a human character.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: But yeah, the intent is like birds in- in Earth are, as we joke about all the time at home, fuckin' dinosaurs.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: They've been around for so long.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: It's honestly incredible that *they* are not the most, like, intelligent species on Earth.

Jessica: There are some smart-ass birds, though. They're not the most intelligent species, but—

Sage: But there's so many different types of birds.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: And they're all over the- they can *fly*.

Jessica: Sage- Sage thinks they're fake.

Sage: [snickers] It's a joke. But yeah, birds are drones. Manmade. That's why. That's why they're not the most- 'cause they're not real.

No, I- I- that came from, yeah, just the idea that birds, when you look at species on Earth, like, they have been around for so fuckin' long, and they have so many different types. I mean, lots of animals are. Crocodiles have been around for so fuckin' long. You know, I mean, that's evolution. Some- some species haven't changed in millions of years. Others have changed in the last 1,000. Like, you know, it's all over the place.

But, um, I've just find birds particularly fascinating 'cause they're just, like, so wildly different. Whereas like, look at like frogs, which there are frog people in our world, a frog is kind of a frog. Like, you have toads and you have poison frogs and have tree frogs. Like, there's lots of different types of frogs. And they're, like, all over the world as well. But a frog kind of looks like a frog.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: There's different sizes and different colors—

Jessica: Oh my god, yeah. Like, speaking of *Planet Earth*, the amount of fuckin' birds we saw on that show, that—

Sage: But if you look at birds, you got flamingos, you got penguins, you have fuckin' tucans.

Jessica: Crows.

Sage: You've got eagles. You got crows, which are brilliant!

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: Like, birds are so crazy diverse to me.

Jessica: Some can talk!

Sage: Because they can fly, they have the most crazy, like, diverse evolutionary tree.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: Um, I'm not an ecologist, but I find this stuff very fascinating.

Jessica: Oh my god, it just hit me now. Like, that's how they lasted for so long. They could just fly away.

Sage: Yeah, they're everywhere.

Jessica: Everyone else was like, ah, fuck.

Sage: I mean, lots of other animals are everywhere too. But like yeah, birds can move far faster and wider than we can. We had to fuckin'- we only built a plane 100 years ago.

Jessica: Built a boat. We build boats.

Sage: We've had boats for a very long time. But still, flying is something we can't really do. And fun fact, I didn't realize they- the- the- the fruit bat is actually the only mammal that can fly.

Jessica: Oh.

Sage: Birds are reptiles. No other mammal can fly. It's just the bat. Which is crazy.

Jessica: You said fruit bats. Just fruit bats or all bats?

Sage: There's probably some ecologist nerd, someone who's getting so frustrated at us.

Jessica: I know. I'm like, you- you- all you- I feel like our listeners are really smart. So when I say things, I'm like, I'm so- I'm sorry. Be patient.

Sage: I think it's just bats. Yeah, are the only mammals capable of sustained flight.

Jessica: Okay, great.

Sage: Anyway, this isn't a bat podcast.

[**Jessica** stifles laughter.]

That was the inspiration behind the birds. Lots of different types of birds, there are birds that's here, birds live the longest. Birds are very smart. Birds feel like they've transcended beyond a lot of stuff humans have done.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: Yeah. Just feel like there's some room for that. The wise curmudgeonly old owl who has seen many things.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: Yeah, that's- that's kind of the- but there could definitely be young stupid ass birds who are super adventurous little toucans who don't know shit. They don't care. But that's kind of the background that I- that I'm imagining them coming from.

Jessica: And there was a picture of them too.

Sage: Yeah, I found some cool pictures. Some, uh, all the artwork in the booklet will be sourced from the public domain.

The frogs had been hard to track down.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: But I got some bird stuff and I got some monkey stuff. So...

Jessica: You got, like, and- one of the- one of those books was Animorphs or...

Sage: That was not from Animorphs but similar.

Jessica: I know, but it- it gave me that vibe.

Sage: It was showing, like, a human coming into a frog. I think it was from somebody writing on evolution.

Jessica: It's definitely not from Animorphs. But—

Sage: But somebody on writing- they're writing on evolution, and they're, like- like, showing that a human could come from a frog. Like- like, with not really knowing much about evolution 'cause this is the 1800s, and they don't really get it yet.

Jessica: Right.

Sage: Anyway. Um, so let's talk about your character before we wrap this up.

Jessica: Ooh.

Sage: You and I have talked in bits and pieces about a possible character idea.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: And after watching *Pirates of the Caribbean*, especially, you know, you've always kind of pitched the possibility of playing the- the Keira Knightley type, basically somebody who comes from royalty.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: Or- or, um, or like, you know, a civilized living.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: And, uh, either wants to or gets thrust into the world of piracy and living at sea. And this is very new for her.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: Um, so tell me about how you're feeling about that. What's changed? Is that idea still kind of there?

Jessica: Well, it- the idea is still there. I had mentioned to you off- off the record earlier, that I was starting to kinda be like, I don't know if that's what I wanna do. 'Cause, you know, when I had thought of that idea, the thing that you had also said to me was, like, we don't want it to be- I don't really- I'm- I'm nervous it's gonna to be another, like, Candace. Which- which—

Sage: Right. Trying to avoid that.

Jessica: Yeah, which I started to, like, think about like, no, ideally, I'd like a character who's a little bit o- just a- just a tad bit more reserved, or someone who's a little bit more like a shut in. You know?

Sage: Hmm.

Jessica: Like someone who's super- like, when I was thinking of ideas of like a character archetype, yeah, the Keira Knightley type, or just like not even Keira Knightley, er, in *Pirates*, but even *Pride and Prejudice*, like there's something about her as a character type that I find interesting. And I also married it with, like, Rapunzel, a little bit.

Sage: Oh, interesting.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: So are you saying that, like, your family *specifically* was, like, trying to keep you from seeing the outside world a bit? So like—

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: Overly sheltered.

Jessica: Overly sheltered, yeah. Super overly sheltered. And that kind of goes into the desire of wanting more, wanting to see more. Whether or not- I'm not super married to the idea of whether I have found this group of pirates or I was thrust into it in some kind of way. That's kind of—

Sage: Mm-hmm. Well the big question with that is, if you're coming from civilized living, I'd imagine she's upper class.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: And you can correct me if I'm wrong.

Jessica: Well, it's- I'm not married- it doesn't necessarily have to be upper class.

Sage: Mm-hmm.

Jessica: But that could be.

Sage: I do think it would be good for somebody in the group to have that representation, so to speak.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: Um, we'll see what the other ideas are and how they fit together. But, like, just for now, nothing's set in stone. If- if she was from upper class, um, the big question remains, like, do you think your family is rich from being government officials in a city, or rich from being executives in a big-ass trading company?

Jessica: Well, when I was reading the packet, that was a question I did think about, 'cause you have ideas, obviously, of the overall story of where you want it to go. I have no idea.

Sage: No, no. I mean- I mean, yes, and no. Like- like, there's things that I want to do.

Jessica: Well, there's- yeah.

Sage: I have a list of encounter ideas. I have, like, some ideas of, like, what the climax might be, or like how the ending might come to be thematically, like in very, very loose terms. But my work on the plot comes- like, I can't do that until I know who my protagonists are. And you guys lead the charge on that front.

So, I mean, this is- this is me starting to do that work. I've built, like, the lore of the- the structure and the scaffolding of, like, where it can fit, but the characters drive all of my decisions in every 20 Sided Story that exists. I mean, I've made big sweeping changes of things that I thought I would do just based off of the characters you guys have made.

Jessica: Right.

Sage: You know, like *MARVEL* especially, if you look at the finale of that, I mean, every- every, like, piece and plot device in that was directly inspired by one of your guys's character ideas.

So do you think you have a preference?

Jessica: Um...

Sage: 'Cause- 'cause, you know, we talked about the royalty angle but you don't necessarily have to be from traditional royalty. Royalty in this world really is more like, you know, the fucking Walmart family. Like...

Jessica: Right, yeah.

Sage: So- but, like, it has- it has the same purpose.

Jessica: Mm-hmm. Like recently I found out that there is, the Getty Images, like, there is a Getty family.

Sage: Oh, wow. I mean, that tracks.

Jessica: There is a Getty family.

Sage: That's so funny.

Jessica: And they're- they have a- one of the heiress is around, like, you know, her 20s. I only know this because, um, Anya Taylor-Joy, a very popular actress right now, was a bridesmaid in a wedding of a Getty.

Sage: Mm.

Jessica: And I was like, what the fuck? [stifles laughter]

[Sage stifles laughter.]

But anyway. Um...

Sage: That's funny. I—

Jessica: Yeah. I could- I could see that being, like, from a Getty family.

Sage: Here's the thing, I mean, this is the sad reality about our world, but it's definitely something I'm putting very blatantly into the pirate world, on the Private Isles, like, all these companies, big executive leaders and managers, they're all squirming around in the pockets of every single city official all over the Isles.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: So basically, you have the opportunity to look at nepotism and, like, where, like, what side of it are you on? Are you part of the family who's getting bought off by these companies? Or are you part of the family buying off- buying policy, so to speak?

Jessica: Yeah. I feel like it'd be interesting to be the latter. Me trying to be a little bit different from Candice, I'd probably want my personal POV to not- either not be aware of it, like, just being truly ignorant in it, but like, not in a bad way.

Sage: Mm-hmm.

Jessica: Like, not wanting to be involved or to continue it, but like kind of being like, oh, I never even looked at it like that. Like the idea—

Sage: Oh, yeah, you're just ignorant.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: To- to what the world is actually like.

Jessica: Exactly. And I think even being more of, like, a shut in, even has the opportunity of somebody to be even more like... you know when you kind of grow up, and sometimes you look at your family or your parents, as a kid, you're like, oh my god, these- I mean, I hope that most people see their family or parents as kids, like, as like, these people are superheroes. You know? And then to grow up, sometimes you're like, oh, these are just, you know, everybody's flawed. They're not superheroes, they're human. But on the lean into that, like, oh my god, wait. My family's doing, like, fucked up shit. And I didn't even- How did I not even know?

Sage: I think it's a lot of opportunity too to, um, there might be something on your character sheet that would encourage you to, like, you know, change over time, in whatever way you want.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: So, um, one thing that I can see already, with or without that being very, very ripe for good scene work is like you are put on an adventure as kind of a fish out of water, seeing things that you've never seen and hearing the opposite of everything that your family has told you.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: Which is, like, probably stuff like pirates are nasty, pirates are murderers.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: The whole world is just rampant with disease, you don't wanna get out there.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: Spoon-feeding all of this bullshit. And then somehow, we'll figure out like, you know, and that's kind of up to you, what you- what you would wanna do, what would be the inciting incident that would put you out at sea, so to speak.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: And it's obviously this crazy big world and you're gonna be at conflict at first with a lot of these pirates, but then you'll come to learn that it's really not as simple as- as your parents made it out to be.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: And then it's kind of up to you, obviously, as the actor to, like, how do you take that? Does it- does it just lead her to dig her heels in more? Or does she become a little more of a- she realizes her- in her nature all along? That's why she's always asking all these questions blah, blah, blah, whatever it could be.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: [chuckles]

Jessica: No, I—

Sage: I'm doing a lot of talking. But—

Jessica: No, you're- you're doing not too- you're not doing any more talking than you should.

Sage: I mean, you know, you just throw story ideas at me and I'll just...

Jessica: Oh, well—

Sage: I'm a machine. Like, I'll, like, if you put- if you put a quarter in this machine, I'll spit out a- a- like, way more homey or- or gumballs than you thought you were gonna get back.

Jessica: What are homies?

Sage: You didn't ever get homies?

Jessica: No.

Sage: Oh my god. You know, like, the little- they had all the stupid toy- the quarter machines at, like, the- that they used to always have at the door of the—

Jessica: Yeah, I used to get the- I'd get- I would get the stickers.

Sage: At grocery stores.

Jessica: I'd get the ones where you put them in the slots and you push that thing and then, like, a sticker—

Sage: Yeah.

Jessica: I'd get the stickers.

Sage: Nice. They had- they had one called homies that—

Jessica: Oh! Those were stickers!

Sage: They were little...

Jessica: [confused] No.

Sage: They- maybe they made stickers too, but they- I knew them as they were these little miniatures. They were a little tiny miniatures and it was all, like, gangster, um, culture.

Jessica: Yeah. I feel like I'm vaguely remembering that.

Sage: It was very, like- yeah, it was like all these little cool, like, urban miniatures.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: And it was stupid corny, but I remember I tried to collect a handful . [chuckles]

Jessica: Aw.

Sage: Yeah. Back in the old days. What happened to homies? Whatever happened to 'em?

Jessica: I did collect those, um, this was I think a little bit later 'cause I remember being more like a preteen and being so fuckin' stoked 'cause, uh, phones used to have, like, a little thing where you could add charms to it, you know, like a string.

Sage: Mm.

Jessica: Like, your flip phone or whatever.

Sage: Oh, yeah.

Jessica: And they used to have those- the Winnie the Pooh in a costume. It was like a Winnie the Pooh figure and this rubber little costume, and Winnie the Pooh would cosplay as like a rhino or like an ice cream cone. Or like Hello Kitty or, um, a giraffe.

[Sage stifles laughter]

And it would just literally be Winnie the Pooh in this, like, very, like, Polly Pocket-esque, like, clothing jumpsuit. And it would connect to your phone. So I remember that. Anyway...

Sage: Nice. [stifles laughter]

Jessica: How did we get—

Sage: Polly Pocket.

Jessica: Polly Pocket.

Sage: Always secretly wanted Polly Pocket.

Jessica: [eager] Get the fuck out. Really?

Sage: Yeah.

Jessica: I didn't know that. Did I tell you that I had, like, a giant Polly Pocket collection?

Sage: [chuckles] It was more that I- it was less about Polly Pocket and more that I wanted, like, flexible—

Jessica: Variety?

Sage: I wanted flexible action figures. I felt like all of my action figures, I barely got any, and they were all too stiff. But I liked that Polly Pockets were all rubbery so you could pose them in different ways.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: And you can change out their clothes and stuff. Like, I was just attracted to the variety and, like, the customization, basically.

Jessica: There was a lot of variety with Polly Pockets, yeah.

Sage: Yeah. Anyway, um, do you have a name for this character yet? Any ideas floating around?

Jessica: I did have a name idea. I forget- I think I had even, like, a last name idea, but I don't think I wrote it down.

Sage: Well, I guess to start, what region do you think they're from?

Jessica: We had talked about possibly having her be from- I think from the south.

Sage: That's right!

Jessica: Yeah, I made a Pinterest board of just, like, different, kind of like, imagery that I would like to channel. And I found the name, uh, Milena [pronounces: Mill-ay-nuh]

Sage: Milena.

Jessica: Which is Swedish and Spanish.

Sage: Wondering, what's the Mortal Kombat character's name?

Jessica: But it means- it means tower.

Sage: Think it's Melina. [pronounces: Mel-ee-nuh]

Jessica: Well, Melina.

Sage: Yeah, Melina.

[deep announcer voice] Melina.

[normal] It's different. Um...

Jessica: Milena is what I'm thinking of.

Sage: There is no pressure to pick a name right now. I was just curious.

Jessica: I know. But I'm- I'm more frustrated because I know I picked a really good pairing of a first and last name too, but I can't even remember if I- there's gotta be one of my journals laying around here. I wrote it down physically.

Sage: We gotta scour after this.

Jessica: I'll scour.

Sage: For now, I'll call you Milena.

Jessica: Milena. It is a little close to Masha, but I don't think that, um—

Sage: So if you're part of one of these big companies or your family owns or works for one of these big companies, which one? Do you wanna invent one? Or do you wanna use one of the ones that are in the—

Jessica: None of the companies that were in the doc really popped out at me, like, thinking I could probably be a descendant from one of them. So maybe make up my own?

Sage: You don't want to be Milena Jones? [stifles laughter]

Jessica: No, I don't- Well—

Sage: [amused] Of Davy Jones's heritage?

Jessica: I don't think that that...

Sage: [chuckles] I don't know, there's some potential there. [chuckles] contextual thing.

Jessica: Well, then I feel like I'd have to probably change a region. It just it's- not that I have to, but it just changes kind of like the—

Sage: Yeah, no, Davy Jones is supposed to come from the West.

Jessica: Yeah, like- yeah.

Sage: Yeah, no, I mean, come up with a new- come up with a new company. It's a whole world. Just 'cause it's not in the booklet doesn't mean it can't exist.

I haven't, you know, I've tried to make sure that there's sections about that, there are other creatures in The Public Domain that are not monkeys or frogs or birds that probably are intelligent and speak. There are other city states that are not of the eight that I have listed that are considered, like, the superpowers, there are many other smaller ones. Um, there are lots of other creatures that, uh, perhaps your character knows a myth of and that's why they're so scared of sailing to The Public Domain. I don't give a shit. That's the great fun of it.

Capitalism has bred this world, and the, uh, the- the monetization of the internet and every fucking piece of media we consume has made it so that everybody thinks they're an expert in everything.

Jessica: [exasperated] Oh my god.

Sage: And so whatever your characters think, you know, subjectively, it's correct. [chuckles] And I'll find a way to- to fit in the objective truth from that.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: But start subjectively, I much prefer working from the inside out. I think we already have done the outside in work from here. So...

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: Can we do a- a quick scene so you can get used to how the dice rules work?

Jessica: Oh, sure. I don't have any dice with me right now.

Sage: You don't have any d6 on your desk?

Jessica: No.

Sage: Um, here. I'll just give you some.

Jessica: Oh, how are you gonna give me some we're so far away from each other.

Sage: I will ship it to you. Amazon has, um, one-minute shipping with Prime Ultra.

Jessica: Yeah. Prime Ultra.

Sage: It's only \$4,000 a month and somebody is waiting at all times ready to send it through a Lightspeed Portal that Bezos funded himself with Blue Origin.

Jessica: [monotone] Whoa.

Sage: Yup. One sec.

Jessica: Okay.

[Beat.]

Oh, I hear- I hear him. Wow, you look a lot like Sage.

Sage: [goofy voice] It's me, Jeff Bezos! Here you go!

Jessica: Get out of my house!

Sage: [goofy voice] Make sure to sub- Watch Prime Video!

Jessica: My dog—

Sage: [goofy voice] The Lord of the Ring series is coming out very soon! Word is out. The time—

[Muffled scraping.]

[normal] Uh, so do you recall how the game rules work? They're still very much work in progress and going to be tested.

Jessica: I am definitely one of those, like, learn by doing.

Sage: The main difference with how we've done stuff in the past. And how this system works is I want there to be significantly less stopping and checking.

Jessica: Uh-huh.

Sage: There's not really checks, set of checks. I want you to think of things as challenges. And anything that could be considered challenging, or even not but maybe you still want to do it a certain way, dice are rolled in pools.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: And your pool is made up of many dice that you earn over time from things like your weapons and what you're wearing and your reputation and the stories you get to tell of your great adventure.

So to start, Jess, you probably don't even have a weapon.

Jessica: I could have a pan. That's a *Rapunzel* reference. Where's this on the- on the packet?

Sage: Bottom, in Gameplay. Uh, if you see that there's a scale from 0 to 6.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: So you have a dice pool, we'll have cups that we'll be using, you don't have to use a cup, it's fine, you can just roll. But basically, you- before an encounter of some kind, before danger before a quest, a voyage, whatever, you- everybody will roll. And at first, you can't look at what your dice is. So keep your hand over it until you use it. And when you need to use a dice, you're going off of that scale.

So you're not rolling the dice that you have, you're looking at what you can do and then you're deciding what you're gonna spend.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: So your dice are like a currency. And your whole pool kind of forecasts what you can and can't accomplish and is up to you to strategize and- and roleplay. Based off of those results.

Jessica: How does somebody get zero?

Sage: If you can't spend because you don't have any dice left.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: So the circumstance we're about to do wouldn't be one that I would have you roll a whole pool. But for the sake of learning, we're just gonna do it that way.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: We're just gonna roleplay a scene, roll your dice, roll two dice.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: Fine, roll three, you have a pan, you have a special pan that you like.

Jessica: Okay.

[Sage stifles laughter.]

I was only joking, but...

Sage: I'm sure you have something you can consider a weapon.

Jessica: An umbrella!

Sage: Sure. So you have three dice to start.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: So roll them, and when you roll them, don't look at them.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: Put your hand over it and don't flip them either.

Jessica: Okay. Oh, shit. It kinda went everywhere.

Sage: So this is the thing, it's a give and take. Sometimes I might stop you or declare a minimum on something, like I need a 3 or higher. Other times, you can just spend because you want to do something with that adjective on that list.

So if you look, Scuttled, Lily-Livered, Bilgi, Fair, Savvy, Bountiful. It's basically Bad to Amazing. From 1 to 6. What you really don't want is a 0. And a 0 means you didn't spend a dice. So you wanna spend your dice.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: But it's up to you to choose what you wanna spend.

Jessica: Okay.

Milena Role Play

[A breeze flows in the background. A bird cries out.]

Sage: *Knock, knock, knock on the door.*

Gentleman: Hello, I'm going to come in.

Milena: Oh, oh, oh. Hello, I—

Gentleman: Oh my god. Milena, what are you reading?

Milena: Oh. Oh, just a book that I found in a library.

Gentleman: Found it at the library? You aren't supposed to go in the library without an EX Escort.

Milena: Well, no one- they were on their bathroom break and I just wanted to go and—

Gentleman: Bathroom br- are you—

Milena: I gave them a bathroom break because—

Gentleman: *You* gave them a bathroom break?!

Milena: Yeah.

Gentleman: Who sa- who put you in charge, little lady?

Milena: I don't think- do I have to be in charge to just be like, yeah, you can go to the bathroom? It's kind of embarrassing to—

Gentleman: It is not your job to tell the servants and the- the guards what to do. That is *our* job as, uh, the property owners have this- this great- this great estate that we live on. From all the money we earned doing that *thing* we do.

[Sage chuckles]

That we have not yet established! What is it we do?

Milena: I don't know.

[Stifled laughter.]

I don't know yet.

Gentleman: We sell, say it together. We sell...

Milena: We sell...

[Beat.]

Th- mmmm...

Gentleman: Mmmmmm...

Milena: Aaaaa...

Gentleman: Aaaaa.....

Milena: *[slowly]* Arshmellows?

Gentleman: Mellows! We sell marshmallows. We're the greatest marshmallow company in all of The Private Isles. And as a matter of fact, we've sell more than marshmallows now. We spell marshmallow cereals, and we've expanded into chocolate and into crackers. I mean, we own all of the s'mores industry. And why stop there? We're- right now we're looking at, uh, just- just, uh, gifts. we've invented a new day. It's called Gift Day! Where you go and you give chocolate. And of course, we're stocking up the shelves. Lady, I don't need to go on.

Milena, where did you get that book? That is a foul, foul read!

Milena: I just- I- like I said, I just went to the library 'cause I was needing a new book, and I just wanted to find something new to read. Um... It was a—

Sage: *I'm gonna need at least a 3 to persuade.*

[Dice roll on the table.]

Jessica: *I have a- I have a 4.*

Sage: *Spend it.*

Jessica: *I'm spending it.*

Rules

Sage: So you put that dice away from your pool.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: You've spent that 4.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: And that means it's Very Fair, you accomplish what you want. In this case, it was Persuasion, as I declared. But this is where there's a give and take. I'm giving you the player the power, in that situation, you didn't have to wait for me.

You could have said [dramatically] hold on, mister, I got a 5. I'm telling you right now with Style. [normally] You know, whatever, and do whatever you wanna do. The point is your role- your- the- the—

Jessica: I thought I wasn't supposed to see my dice.

Sage: No, *until* you're gonna use it for the first time. The idea is that, like- so if we start an encounter, um, like, we're gonna go down a cave, a shaft, we've left the ship. Basically, when we leave the ship, how it's gonna work in action, like, everybody will roll and their cups will- everyone's cups will stay down.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: And so there's gonna be this tension bubbling over, like, well, what did I get? Like, what is the forecast, 'cause you might get a bunch of 1s under there, but you don't know until it's time to roll.

And when you go and you wanna do something, you lift your cup up, and you can spend what you wanna spend.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: But the point is, I just wanna keep it a mystery for everybody until it's time.

Jessica: Alright.

Sage: And then, also, your dice that you spent, you spent it for now. And you can't reset your pool until times of rest or at my discretion when there is another time to reset your pool.

Jessica: Interesting.

Sage: So over the course of an encounter, you're gonna see your dice getting- you have less than less stuff to spend and less and less actions that you can take, getting you closer to the black spot, and you don't want that.

Jessica: Right.

Sage: But there will be other perks. If you scroll down further to Forte, eventually, you guys will have some special modifications basically to, like, how you can strategically use your dice.

Jessica: Whereas Forte? Aha! Yes.

Sage: So lots of different things that kind of change how you would strategically use your dice. For example, if you're a Mystic and you get into voodoo, or whatever it is, which is not something I have really in the lore, but—

Jessica: You do voodoo?

Sage: Um, like, their thing is they can sacrifice three dice of any number they want to give someone else a free action, which is a 6. So if your- if your partner, your scene partner is in dire, dire straits, but you have plenty of dice, you haven't used any of your 5 so far in the scene, you can move three of those out of your pool. And then you act away to be like, hold on! I got you! And then you give them a free action and then you roleplay that result.

Jessica: Mm.

Sage: So certainly, it'll take a little bit of getting used to compared to what we're doing. But I actually, you know, my hope is that this is a lot more fluid, rather than stopping and checking and stopping and checking. And it also gives you the power to play your luck how you want as opposed to just a number kind of helps your luck, better for worse. I don't wanna focus on success and failure. I wanna focus on the adjectives and how well or bad you accomplish something.

Jessica: Mm-hmm. Okay. I- I- I understood this better now.

Sage: Cool. So got a Fair 4 to persuading.

Milena Role Play

Milena: Thank you, Sir Smith.

Gentleman: That is me, Sir Smith the Groundskeeper. And your father's first mate.

Milena: Yes. Um, I appreciate the work that you do. Uh, just gonna go finish this book back in my room, um, which you don't really have to tell my father that we saw each other.

Sir Smith: What? You want to meet a lie?!

Milena: No, not- not- you don't have to- he- if he asks then maybe, you know, we saw each other earlier today, but not now. You don't have to mention *now*. You could mention possibly—

Sir Smith: Give me one good reason, lady.

Milena: Um... Mm, because I am- asked you so nicely? Please?

Sir Smith: I was about to say I didn't hear 'please.' But then you added it at the end there like a nice little cherry on top. Well... It's good point. And, uh, your father doesn't really take kindly to anybody really talking about his offspring in any way sort of way. Get- it's very sore subject. He cares about you a lot. A little too much. Uh...

Milena: [agreeing] Mm.

Sir Smith: Protective much?

Milena: Yeah.

Sir Smith: It's not really my place to say. But...

Milena: Okay.

Sir Smith: Fine. You want, I'll keep this between us. Just- just- just know, lady, that that's- that book... it's a dangerous book. You don't want to learn about the pirates. They're nasty, devious, gross, disgusting men and women who just kill and plunder and rape and- and slaughter everybody. So- so put it- put it away, I'd say. Um, close it.

Milena: Well, I guess I should probably, um, read it just so I know what to avoid.

Sir Smith: Oh, to defend yourself. Yeah.

Milena: Yeah. So I can know them like the back of my hand. That way I won't have to, um, be a victim to them.

Sir Smith: Okay, look, I'll come by later...

Milena: Mm-hmm.

Sir Smith: To pick it up.

Milena: What time later?

Sir Smith: I don't know, like- like when I call you for dinner or something?

Milena: Okay, groundskeeper. Thank you for always calling me for dinner.

[Sage stifles laughter.]

I know you have a lot of jobs that you have.

Sir Smith: Yes.

Milena: Even as my dad's best man.

Sir Smith: Yes. Lots of- the best man *and* first mate. What a- what a crazy wedding that was.

Milena: You've done- you've really done so much for my father. I really-

Sir Smith: I keep the grounds, I- I—

Milena: You tell—

Sir Smith: I basically raised you! I mean, we don't have that much of a relationship, uh, but- but, I mean, *shit*. What does- what does he do? Really? Not much. I'm not bitter.

Milena: Oh, well... Okay.

Sir Smith: [quiet, bitter] He p- he operates the company and he- he helps invent the new marshmallow recipes and...stuff like that. Yeah, I get it. He's- he's important.

Milena: He comes up with the names with some of the seasonal marshmallows.

Sir Smith: Yes! Let's name a few. Like, uh... Swampy Marsh! Mellow. And Stanley Marsh! Mellow.

[Sage stifles a laugh.]

Um...

Milena: Martial Law-low.

Sir Smith: Yes! That one was a hit!

Milena: Yeah.

Sage: Had the cowboy art on it. You know the Cowboys?

Milena: I don't- I don't know about cow- they're- they're- about cowboys?

Sir Smith: Oh god, that's another book. No, no, no! No, no, no! You- you rolled a 4. A Fair 4. Not a 5 or a 6.

Milena: What do you mean I—

Sir Smith: I'm not gonna get you more books!

Milena: Sir Smith, are you losing your brains? What do you mean I rolled for something? Rolled? What did I roll?

Sir Smith: You rolled yourself...

Milena: I keep dropping everything on the ground.

Sir Smith: A Sarah Marshmallow.

Milena: I keep forgetting- I keep forgetting—

Sir Smith: You saved them! You save them—

Milena: I keep forgetting about Sarah Marshmallow.

Sir Smith: You save them and you roll them up and then later you smoke 'em.

[Sage stifles a laugh.]

Milena: [confused] What?

Sir Smith: Yeah, it's a new one comin' out.

Milena: Oh. See, I was thinking of like Mary... Jane Marshall.

Sir Smith: Oh. Right. Yeah, that one wasn't very popular. I think... think it was just a poor marketing campaign, really.

Milena: I just- yeah, I just keep forgetting about that Sarah Marshall. Mellow.

Sir Smith: Mm-hmm.

Milena: Anyway, Sir Smith, I- I- I li- I really appreciate the work you do, as I said. You know, you are like a second father to me. And so I appreciate you trusting me and, you know, wanting to educate myself about things that are very, very dangerous.

Sir Smith: [panicked] Watch out!

Milena: [panicked] What!?

[Sage chuckles.]

What?

Sage: Spend.

Jessica: Oh.

Sage: 2 or higher.

Jessica: Oh, I- my dice had dropped multiple times throughout our interaction. I think with the

Sage: Were you touching them?

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: I was touching mine the whole time too.

Jessica: See, I'm a- I'm a fidgeter, and if there's something for me to, like, throughout this whole recording session, I fiddle with this, like, tape measure. So you guys have a visual, and I just kept doing this this whole time. I have—

Sage: Well, I need a 2 or higher.

Jessica: Okay. Well, I have a three right now. So...

Sage: Alright. That's Bilgey. You accomplish what you want, but at a cost.
The chandelier from above falls!

Milena: Ah! Oh my god! Sir Smith, you saved me. You saved me!

Sir Smith: I saved you?

Milena: You told me to watch out.

Sir Smith: Oh, that's right. Looks like, uh... Oh no! It fell on the book.

Milena: What!?

Sir Smith: Damn shame.

Milena: [desperate] Wait, hold on. I can- it's fine!

Sir Smith: All the pages are torn up. I'll have to dispose of this.

Milena: No, no, I'll dispose of it.

Sir Smith: What?

Milena: Don't worry about it. You have so many jobs that you have. Don't worry about throwing it- this away, this measly book away. You have so many important things 'cause you are so important to this company. You don't understand how important you are. You have so many tasks. How could you—

Sir Smith: You're trying to persuade me again?
[Beat.]

Milena: No. I'm just telling you what it is. When- and what it is is t hat—

Sir Smith: I'm an easy sway. I'd say there's no minimum.
[Stifled laughter.]

Milena: There's no minimum?

Sir Smith: No minimum to what you need to persuade me. I- it- I—

Milena: Okay. So then me just saying what I'm saying should suffice.

Sir Smith: Oh, no, but I'm not persuaded.

Milena: Well, I do have a 1.
[Jessica stifles laughter.]

Sir Smith: Okay, well, you suck.
[Sage chuckles.]

Scuttled. I'm gonna- I'm sorry, Lady, I'm gonna have to tell your father about this.

Milena: What?
[Sage chuckles.]

[whining beg] Sir Smith, please don't! Please, please, please!

Sir Smith: Nope.

Milena: Why?

Sir Smith: 'Cause I don't wanna be the one who gets in trouble.

Sage: *And then he leaves with a 6. Perfection. [chuckles] And scene!*

Jessica / Valora

Jessica: Fun.

[Sage laughs.]

No, it was fun. Wait, so what does this mean now? I have no dice.

Sage: Correct! Tensions are high.

Jessica: Am I dead? How do I get—

Sage: No, no, no. You- you- okay, so like you spent that 1 'cause you *had* to.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: If- that's fine. That's bad. It's practically a failure if you Scuttled it.

Jessica: So I don't wanna be- I don't wanna be doing much. I'm trying to hoard my dice.

Sage: Not necessarily.

Jessica: I mean—

Sage: You just wanna use them strategically.

Jessica: Okay.

Sage: So for example, you had a 1 to persuade him to let you keep the book. If you still had another dice and you got to 6, you have to decide as the improviser and as the character what is worth that dice? The 6.

Jessica: I had—

Sage: You wanna save that 6 for later? Or do you think—

Jessica: All three of my dice were so low. So there wasn't—

Sage: Yeah. And that- that'll happen. That'll happen sometimes.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: So you gotta be, again, like, looking at what do you want the 2? Where do you want the 3? Don't overthink it, just spend something. But the point is that, it'll tell you kinda how to act it out. So if you Scuttled it, you- you fudged it, you suck. And that's- that's basically a failure. Like, you'll do it, um... The point is that you at least tried.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: And that's far better than a 0, which is that you are- you were incapable of doing anything. And this will bring on a severe injury. And you could only have that happened to you five times or you die.

Jessica: Nice. Got five lives.

Sage: You have five lim- you have four limbs.

Jessica: And a head.

Sage: Five if you include your head, yes. So just avoid the Blackspot. It's pretty rare that you'll be alone with your dice and running out of dice on your own 'cause you guys can combine dice. So if you're working with, you know, just pick somebody, M and M has a 2, you can jump into the scene with a 6, and you spend a 6. And that makes it an 8.

[Episode ending music fades in.]

Jessica: Aye, aye, captain.

Sage: So yeah. Keep working on your character.

Jessica: I will, yeah. I mean if that's- if that's what we're liking... I mean, obviously you have yet to talk with everybody else one-on-one.

Sage: Mm-hmm. Well, we're all gonna come together at the Session Zero.

Jessica: Mm-hmm.

Sage: Don't fall in love with anything you set in stone.

Jessica: Oh, I'll try my best.

Sage: I had fun. Jess, I hope you did as well.

Jessica: I did.

Sage: Any- any last words?

Jessica: Um...

Sage: [pirate voice] Any last words, you scurvy dog?

Jessica: Guys, he's gonna, uh, this might be the end.

[Stifled laughter.]

I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding.

Sage: Alright!

Jessica: That was a very poorly executed joke. Um...

Sage: Uh, not as poorly executed as *you'll* be in a couple of minutes, scurvy dog. [stifles laughter]

Jessica: Oh, no! Guys, wait, I wasn't joking! [stifles laughter]

Sage: Just kidding.

Jessica: Oh, yeah. We're gonna play some Stardew Valley.

Sage: That's true. That's what we're gonna do, actually.

Jessica: Yeah.

Sage: The most- the opposite of- of murder, pretty much.

[Stifled laughter.]

A fuckin' farming 2D game.

[Stifled laughter.]

Jessica: It's so fun.

Sage: Yeah.

[Music crescendos and fades out.]

Credits

Milena played by Jessica Dahlgren

Gentleman/Sir Smith played by Sage G.C.

Editing, Sound Design, and Music by Sage G.C.

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