

Sangfielle 37: Just Returns Pt. 1

Transcriber: robotchangeling

Austin: *Sangfielle* is a series that draws on elements of dark fantasy, horror, and gothic fiction. As such, a list of content warnings will always be made available in the episode description.

[Music begins: “**Sangfielle**” by Jack de Quidt]

Austin (as narrator): It was a different season when I first wrote the words I'm about to say as introduction, a season of yellow flowers and too-bright suns. But they are no less true today than they were then. I do not think you can blame the Blackwick Group for being away when that sound rung out in Blackwick. However terrible what happened in that town was, whatever the cost and balance of blood, it cannot solely fall on the heads of that town's erstwhile protectors. And if you didn't understand how I could excuse them then, then maybe you can understand now, after you heard nearly all the details of their long snakin' journey away from that county. Perhaps if they'd returned sooner, you might think, things coulda come to a more even handed conclusion when those new arrivals showed up. Maybe they coulda negotiated or investigated or betrayed or schemed or killed as the situation demanded. But when would you have them make up that lost time? Should they have moved more quickly on the way to Yellowfield and ignored the hospitality of Rana and her temple? Well, if they'd done that, who's to say if they would have recognized and rescued Big Bucho? Hell, if they moved with too much haste, they may have missed Alaway's deepest secrets, maybe even missed out on that gross godly little egg sack. Or perhaps instead of uncovering the truth of what happened at Bell Metal Station, you'd have just seen 'em walk on by—pick through some of the train cars maybe, but continue on to Sapodilla without bringing to light the great treachery of Calen Fel Dynestia, without grantin' Fezh, the *Red Zephyr*, even the smallest semblance of peace or recognition. [exhales] And Sapodilla, well, if you can figure out how they coulda wrapped up those events more promptly, then you, my friend, have the cleverness required to invent a goddamn time machine. And that being so, then I would say it is in fact on you to go stop the sound that rang out in Blackwick that day. I'm sorry, I do not mean to get defensive. I just find abrasive the contrast between the weight of blame put on perceived and imperfect heroes and the onus allotted to those who choose to pull triggers. And my point isn't cut the heroes more slack. It's don't have heroes.

[song ends]

Austin: Welcome to *Friends at the Table*, an actual play podcast focused on critical world building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I'm your host, Austin Walker. And joining me today, Alicia Acampora.

Ali: Hi! You can find me over at [@ali_west](#) on Twitter. You can find the show over at [@friends_table](#).

Austin: Janine Hawkins.

Janine: Hi, you can find me at [@bleatingheart](#) on Twitter.

Austin: Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hi. You can find me on Twitter at [@notquitereal](#) and buy any of the music featured on the show at [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](#).

Austin: And Art Martinez-Tebbel.

Art: You can find me on Twitter at [@atebbel](#) and check out our merchandise at Fangamer, if...which might be on sale soon, if I ever respond to that email. [Ali laughs] Lauren doesn't listen to the show, so she doesn't know to send it on Monday.

Austin: Right. [laughs] Right, of course.

Ali: No point. [Jack laughs softly]

Austin: No one's heard that yet, right? When was that even from, the Monday joke?

Art: No, that's happened.

Ali: Oh, that— yeah, that's out.

Art: 'Cause someone sent us an email with that joke in it.

Austin: Oh, that's great. Love to hear it. I don't check—

Art: Yeah.

Austin: I only...I only check emails never. So. [Ali laughs] So, sorry to all those people who try to get in touch with me. [laughs] Mm.

Art: The real thing is that I was sick for two weeks. That's why I haven't responded yet.

Austin: That's—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, that makes sense. I hope you're feeling better.

Art: It's going great.

Austin: I know that you're feeling— I said that and then moved on, because we'd already talked about the fact that you're feeling better. I don't want—

Art: Right, you know.

Austin: I know. / know! [Jack chuckles] Um, today we are continuing our game of *Heart: The City Beneath* by Grant Howitt and Christopher Taylor. Our goals are to ask questions instead of planning; to evoke an atmosphere of wonder, horror, and humanity; to build and break tension; to pay attention to what everyone at the table wants, both long and short term; and to play to find out what happens. I should say, also, you can always support the show by going to friendsatthetable.cash. I skipped that part, because I was distracted by banter. Ain't that the way? Um, before we pick up on this boat ride, [laughs softly] which seems to be short three people, huh?

Ali: Hmm.

Austin: We should go over your Beats. Let's start with you, Duvall, 'cause you're first alphabetically.

Art: All right. Active Beats: "Meet someone from your old life who's trying to get you to give up on your quest," and "Destroy a Haunt to learn more about your task," which makes me think I should have gone with the other group.

Austin: That Haunt did get destroyed. Or, that—

Art: Yeah.

Austin: That whole landmark got destroyed, so a Haunt, you know, that's nothing compared to that. Yeah, easy.

Art: Well, they said don't leave the boat.

Austin: They did say this. This is true. And you still have your Fascination—luck Fallout. I don't suspect that's going anywhere anytime soon.

Art: Yeah, and if we ever go back to, uh... [laughs]

Austin: Right, to Sapodilla where the Oratorio is, you'll still have take five, the...that your thing fires on a five.

Art: Yeah, I should probably just get rid of that.

Austin: No, leave that!

Art: Yeah.

Austin: You never know.

Art: Okay. We're heading— okay.

Austin: We got a long arc. I know that Lyke wants smoke with Virtue, so like, who knows?

Ali: Yeah.

Art: Not going!

Ali: Mm. [Jack laughs]

Austin: Yeah, I mean, that's the thing right?

Ali: What if—

Austin: But maybe you'll get...

Ali: [laughs] What if me and Es go to be like, "Hey, what's up?"

Austin: Right. What if y'all just go to hang? [Ali and Janine laugh]

Art: Sure.

Austin: Like, you get invited to winter court or whatever, you know?

Art: I don't want to get tricked, is the...I don't want to like...

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Okay. Yeah.

Art: ...get in the car and then Lyke's there, you know? Like...

Austin: [laughing quietly] God. Okay. [Ali laughs]

Janine: You know Lyke, yeah.

Austin: Uh huh. Es.

Janine: Uh, yeah. My active Beats right now are: "Engage in reckless abandon with drink, drugs, or sex." That is a Minor one.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: And I have a new one, because I finished writing my thing last time.

Austin: Mm.

Janine: "Acquire a rare or powerful D12 value item, preferably magic." That's a Major Beat.

Austin: Mm. Okay.

Janine: I also have that new ability that I'm *really* excited about.

Austin: This is true. We'll see if it comes up.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I suspect it will at some point. [laughs softly] God.

Janine: Oh, I have that Fallout still.

Austin: Oh, yeah, what do you have?

Janine: I have, uh, Take the Edge Off.

Austin: Right.

Janine: "You can't get your head right until you have a drink or something stronger. Until you reach a landmark with access to intoxicants and render yourself insensible, roll two dice when you mark Stress to Mind and pick the higher. Can be upgraded to Addict." I think I found a compromise that makes this and also my Minor be fun and not, like, uh oh.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: But we'll get to that.

Austin: Yeah, it's worth saying we do have, uh...we don't want to go into the realm of like alcoholism or addiction this season.

Janine: No, no. No.

Austin: I think it's fine to have read that stuff, but like, there is...there are other ways to interpret this, and I as a GM am gonna be pretty broad in terms of saying if it counts or not.

Janine: Yeah. I have a fun answer to the problem, so don't worry.

Austin: Okay. Marn.

Ali: Yeah, hi.

Austin: Hi.

Ali: My current active Beats are still "Dissect something or interrogate someone that can shed light on your task," or— and. [laughs]

Austin: Yes.

Ali: And "Sell or sacrifice a D8 or higher resource to secure a secret."

Austin: Love it.

Ali: I'm like on the way. I have like...the dominoes are on the table on this one.

Austin: You have some D8 stuff at this point.

Ali: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: You have some...do you have someone you're going to dissect or something you're going to dissect, or do you still need that?

Ali: That's what I bought that watch for.

Austin: That watch, yes, the cursed watch. Right, yes.

Ali: [laughs] I seeked out cursed items for...

Austin: You did.

Ali: Yes.

Austin: This makes sense to me.

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Yep. Yep.

Austin: Uh, all right, Pickman.

Jack: Um, I have a Minor Beat which is “Find a Heart-touched sapling on a Delve,” done, found it inside a train.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: “And bring it back to a Haven for planting,” about to do on the boat back to Blackwick.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And I have the Major Beat “Show the truth of the Structure’s majesty to an outsider,” which I haven’t done yet. And I have...I have a Major Fallout where I’m exiled from Bell Metal Station for threatening Calen.

Austin: Yep. Mm-hmm.

Jack: I have a Major Fallout, Hunted, the Shape Knights have, uh...they sent someone out to kill me.

Austin: That’s Alekest.

Jack: But because of Zevunzolia was there, instead, he just became extremely annoying. [Austin laughs] And he wants...he wants me to tell him all about Zevunzolia.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And I have the Minor Fallout Vulnerable: “You feel small, shaken, and scared. This is not what you prepared for. You cannot use Mind Protection.”

Austin: Uh, we should also go back briefly. Marn, you still have In Trouble, right? Which is you upset people from...

Ali: Oh, yeah.

Austin: ...uh, Yellowfield, right?

Ali: Calaway the vampire?

Austin: Alaway. Yeah, the vampire.

Ali: Alaway.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Alaway.

Ali: Is upset with me.

Austin: And then...

Ali: And then, I still don't...I don't remember what Forboding was from.

Austin: Did we get— did you get Forboding back at some point? [Ali sighs] Did I not cash out Forboding with the...one second. I can fix this.

Ali: Did Forboding happen, mm, when I was hearing in the ritual next room when we were in the basement library?

Austin: Ritual? Well, you got it originally from...you got it before that and then gave it to Bucho by mistake.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Ali: Sure. Yeah.

Austin: Did you not then—

Ali: And Bucho's cleared of that.

Austin: Yeah, Bucho's clear. Bucho's safe. [Ali laughs] As far as we know. As far as— yeah, Bucho's safe. I'm checking...

Ali: You're the one who can tell me yes or no, and you said yes, so. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, Bucho's safe.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: I mean, but Bucho's still in the world, which is to say no one's safe.

Ali: No, no, yeah. I'm just saying.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: I've cleared Bucho of the Fallout that I gave him.

Austin: Yes. I'm double checking these last few episodes. Thanks to robotchangeling's transcript on these.

[0:10:04]

Ali: Shoutouts.

Austin: Robotchangeling has been doing a ton of transcripts, it turns out, and so there's a bunch available. If you're interested in being part of the transcription team, you can go to...what is the actual...there's like a tinyURL for it, isn't there?

Jack: [Tinyurl.com/FATTtranscripts](https://tinyurl.com/FATTtranscripts).

Austin: There you go, and there's a little intro page and everything. So. Yes, you got this back.

Ali: Mm.

Austin: You did get this back, Marn, on the last episode of "Hark! The Citadel Beneath."

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: So, that is exactly right.

Ali: I'm pretty sure I got it in the library when I was looking at books.

Austin: That's— sure, yeah.

Ali: And then there was a ritual happening in the next room.

Austin: That seems likely. Anyway. Jack, you were gonna say something?

Jack: Uh, what was the name of the Kay'Van spy dead in the train car?

Austin: Uh...why are you just asking me shit from past episodes I gotta open up other documents for? [Ali and Jack laugh] I think that's this one. Also, actually, I don't need to do that. What I need to do is look at our DMs, because I told you that two days ago.

Jack: You did.

Austin: I did.

Jack: And it rang a little bell in my head.

Austin: It did.

Jack: And I'm trying to confirm it.

Ali: Ohh.

Austin: I said that it is...da-da-da-da-da. Um, I did not say. I just said, “She was saying, blah blah blah,” but I did not actually give you her name there, so I'm a liar. Here it is. My *Heart* number four notes. Mirlande, M-I-R-L-A-N-D-E. I'll put it in the chat.

Jack: Great.

Austin: There we go. Any other questions before we pick things back up on the *Jade Moon*? [brief pause] All right. So, I think everybody wakes up in the *Jade Moon*, and all— this is the beginning of day nine. And all of the doors to like outside the *Jade Moon* are already locked. And when you first wake up here, the boat seems to be still. You're at a dock. And no one is outside, and everybody is inside, and you tell me if you're doing anything. I already know you're not getting off the boat. You've already told me you're not getting off the boat. [quiet laughter] So now would be a bad time to tell me you're getting off the boat, at this at this point, at this juncture. [Jack chuckles]

Art: I waited 20 minutes until the other group gets off the boat. [Austin and Ali laugh] I get off. I run after them. And let's just go rerecord all of those.

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: I think they're out, so.

Austin: I mean, the thing that's wild is they're in a place where you could do that and still never meet them. We could totally just throw out the plans for... [Ali laughs] I could throw out my prep and be like, all right, we're doing another one in fucking Marrowcreek.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: And Marrowcreek is just like that, you know? Easy to not run into them. In any case, what do y'all do? In this, these early hours of the “stay inside, please” day, or days.

Janine: I have an important question.

Austin: Yes.

Janine: Is there room service?

Ali: Ooh.

Art: Ooh.

Austin: You know, I don't think as—

Janine: 'Cause this was...this was kind of my plan for like...

Austin: This was your...

Janine: What's a way to satisfy—

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: —my Fallout and my Beat that isn't... [Jack chuckles]

Austin: Yes.

Janine: You know, I did wine mom with Signet, and I tried to deploy it at that specific moment.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: And to a certain effect. I have no interest in doing that kind of thing again.

Austin: Right.

Janine: However, if you are trapped in a room, and you just finished a whole bunch of work—

Austin: I should be clear, you're allowed to walk around the interior of the ship for these days.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: You're allowed to go to the gambling Hall.

Janine: So if there isn't room service, I can make my own room service.

Austin: Totally. And what I would say is this is a situation where there is not room service as like a point of course, but if you asked somebody to bring you food, would they do it? Probably, especially if you tipped them. Right?

Janine: Right.

Austin: You know, this is like one of those things where it's like, does the hotel have *blank*? Like no, but if it's a fancy enough hotel, they're gonna figure out how to get you *blank*, you know?

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: And there are limits here, obviously. They're just like, they can't bring you things they don't have on board, but...

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So really, it's up to you, in terms— excuse me, in terms of how you want to frame this.

Janine: Yeah, um...if there's no like room service proper, I think the level of indulgence I'm considering here verges on like rude. It's not just like, "Hey, can you bring me like something to drink?"

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: It's like, "I want a five course meal, and..."

Austin: But it's reckless abandon, so maybe rudeness is appropriate.

Janine: Well...

Austin: Reckless abandon suggests...if you're reckless, you're upsetting somebody. You're risking getting in the way of somebody else's night or day.

Janine: To me, reckless is more about like a personal indifference to anything beyond the self, which *can* connect to rudeness.

Austin: Yes. Yes! [laughs softly]

Janine: But also can just connect to like...

Austin: Yeah. You can sit in your room all day and ruin your day, and that can just hurt yourself. I do get that. But I think that...I don't think that that's beyond the pale, the idea that...I would—

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: In other words, I'm saying—

Janine: No, it's definitely like part of it. I just want to know like, I'm just trying to figure out like how big a part of it would it be.

Austin: Right. Yeah.

Janine: I also feel like it can't start out that way.

Austin: Sure.

Janine: Is the other part of it. Like, this is...this is morning. And if this is like a big “engage in reckless abandon” day for Es...

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: Then morning can't be getting a bunch of people to...I think morning is maybe...

Austin: Well, maybe it's a small ask. Maybe that's how it starts.

Ali: Right.

Austin: That's how it starts, you know?

Janine: I think...yeah.

Austin: “Can you bring me a cup of coffee?” And then you're like, “Ooh, and maybe a biscuit.” You know?

Janine: I think it actually starts even a little bit gentler than that, which is that like, Es like goes to get the cup of coffee.

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm.

Janine: But gets back to her room and is like, “Oh, they had those little biscotti. I should have gotten a biscotti. And they had...what if, when I'm done the— the coffee's a little too hot, and I want something cold to drink first, and I should have got something.” And then it's a thing of like, she's got the coffee, and then I think it's, you know, flagging down...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: ...a porter? Is that the word I want—

Austin: Sure.

Janine: —for someone who works on a boat?

Austin: It can be.

Janine: I don't know. Like, flags down a porter and is very politely like:

Janine (as Es): I just went to get a coffee, but I realized I should have gotten a few other things. Would you...would you mind running running back and...I'd appreciate it so much. [laughs lightly]

Austin (as porter): Oh, what room are you in?

Janine: [quietly] I have no fucking idea. What room did...

Austin: I don't know.

Janine: Room number.

Austin: Yeah, room—

Janine: Room number... [laughs]

Austin: What's the room number? You tell me what the room number is.

Janine: Um...16.

Austin (as porter): Of course, room 16. I'll be right back.

Janine (as Es): Thank you.

Art: Good number.

Janine: Do we have single rooms or are we sharing?

Austin: I think you all have single rooms.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I think that the Structure puts you up like that, you know?

Janine: Damn, okay.

Art: Are we like in the same like region?

Austin: Yeah, it's a small boat. You know, it's not a huge— there isn't— there might be 20 rooms. You know what I mean? [Ali laughs softly] And they're all in the same hallway. So. So, yeah.

Art: Wait. No, there's got to be more than that, 'cause there's a whole tournament.

Austin: Eh. Some of the—

Jack: The band is probably sharing a room.

Austin: Yeah, the band is probably sharing a room.

Janine: Magic.

Austin: Certain rooms might have three people or two people in them. You know?

Jack: Magic.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Magic.

Austin: Also, people got off the boat. Some other people got on the boat.

Ali: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Also, there's crew quarters.

Art: I heard we weren't supposed to get off the boat.

Austin: Earlier, I mean. On the way. [Ali laughs] Like, some people left at Cantbank. Some people left at the Cathedral. Some people got on at the Cathedral.

Janine: Maybe some people on this boat don't even sleep.

Ali: Ooh.

Austin: [laughs] Let me tell you: certainly true. [Jack laughs]

Janine: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Austin: Let's say there's 25, then, rooms, right? Of various sizes. I bet there's probably one really fancy suite that has multiple rooms in it, even. Anyways.

Ali: Balconies?

Austin: Um... [Ali laughs] No, 'cause there's that big open deck. Maybe that— maybe that private room, that private suite has its own balcony, but that's it.

Ali: Oh, sure. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: You know? I think that makes sense. Anyone else doing anything in this first morning of the ninth? I would say like, by noon, the boat begins to move again, leaving behind this dock.

Ali: Mm-hmm. I think this is prep for dissection day for me.

Austin: Yeah, sure. What's that look like?

Ali: Just staying in my room laying out all the tools, presumably a tablecloth.

Austin: Time to become a— yeah, I was gonna say. [Ali laughs] It's like one of those tablecloths with, like, all the little pieces you're gonna put to the side bit by bit by bit.

Ali: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Austin: I think this is a Mend roll?

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: That makes sense, right? In terms of like dissecting a thing and...

Ali: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Probably Mend Cursed, since it's a cursed watch.

Ali: Oh, sure, yeah. That all adds up.

Austin: Uh huh. [laughs softly] Are you doing this alone, or are you looking for...are you trying to get help from anybody?

Ali: [thoughtful sigh] I feel like I'm probably doing this alone.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: Yeah. I think Marn's gotten really into the like, what was Holloway researching.

Austin: Right.

Ali: Because this shit is worrying to me.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: I guess I haven't said this like into a microphone yet. We've said this like really briefly, but I've...the thing that I think that I'm setting up here is that, like, Marn is doing all of this research, trying to like translate this journal, trying to like get cursed items and like work on them with the stuff Holloway was working on, so that they can *then* sacrifice this D8 Null stuff—

Austin: Mm.

Ali: —to someone who works with the Telluricists, to be like—

Austin: Ah.

Ali: “This is all of the research that I have done.”

Austin: Right.

Jack: Oh.

Ali: “I would love to speak to you about this, ‘cause it is very worrying.” [laughs softly] So this is like start...this is like step three in a four part process of like...

[0:20:03]

Austin: Right. In this way, your Minor Beats—

Ali: That’s really— yeah.

Austin: —are really linked together in a larger plan.

Ali: Yeah, yeah. [laughs]

Austin: I gotcha.

Ali: Yes.

Austin: This makes sense. All right.

Ali: But, yeah. Yeah, let me do this roll and see...

Austin: All right.

Ali: I have two Mastery, I think from dancing very well.

Austin: Oh my god. [Ali and Jack laugh softly]

Ali: I’m gonna use—

Austin: You can only use one at a time.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: So yes, go ahead and...

Ali: I'll just get a...yep. And then one.

Austin: Look at that, critical success.

Ali: And that's a ten.

Austin: It's a one, two, ten. [Ali laughs] Jesus Christ.

Jack: Holy shit.

Ali: It's good to be in a great mood.

Austin: Yeah, it is good to be in a great mood. [Ali laughs] You're staying inside on the boat.

Jack: The simplest watch to open in the fucking world. [Austin and Ali laugh]

Austin: This, as a reminder, is the watch that...it goes off if someone's sick or something, right?

Ali: No, this is the one that, if you wear it, it makes you late for all of your appointments.

Austin: It makes you late for all of your appointments. Of course. [Ali and Jack laugh] Good. Great.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: All right, so what is it you're— you're trying to get at like something true about the nature of curses, then, here?

Ali: I think so. I think also part of it is like looking at the stuff that Holloway was doing with the Null stuff, which, if I remember correctly, like—

Austin: Oh, I see what's happening. Now I understand what's happening. Alaway is the vampire. [Ali laughs] Hollowfield is the scientist with the null stuff.

Ali: Hollowfield! Okay, yep.

Austin: Yes. I've been like, "Why does she keep saying how Holloway? There's no Holloway." Hollowfield.

Ali: [laughs] We're missing it. Yeah.

Austin: Yes.

Ali: Yep.

Austin: Hollowfield is like super science cop, and Alaway is like evil vampire. Yes.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Okay.

Ali: And I'm torn up with both of them, apparently.

Austin: This is true. Yeah, uh huh. [Ali laughs] You've dealt with both, so.

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: Well, you didn't directly deal with Hollowfield. The other side did and killed him, so.

Ali: Oh, yeah.

Austin: But you dealt with his shit and stole his stuff, so yes.

Ali: Uh huh.

Jack: Kicked him down a hole.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: You did do that, yeah.

Ali: Well, I looked at what he was doing.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: And I was like, this is scary to me.

Austin: Yes. Okay, so, go ahead and finish what you were saying before. Sorry. I interrupted you because of name stuff.

Ali: Oh, sure, sure. Well, I think it's just as much Marn looking at, like, how to cure the curse from this, but also using some of the Null stuff to do it.

Austin: Mm.

Ali: Because if I remember correctly, that was—

Austin: Right.

Ali: —devised to like, purify every—

Austin: It undoes domains.

Ali: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: It erases domains. So are you like brushing on some Null stuff to...

Ali: I think so, yeah.

Austin: ...bits of the thing to see what it does?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: That's fascinating. All right. I think when you do it, it's like that the...what does a clock untethered to any particular domain do? Or a watch. You know what I mean? Like, if the Cursed— if the Cursed watch makes you show up late, and you can imagine that the, like, the Occult watch tells you the right time to like do your rituals, [Ali laughs] and the Haven watch makes sure that you get places on time, and the, et cetera. What does the Null domain watch do? Besides just like, it stops taking time. That's not— that's boring. You know what I mean?

Ali: Mm. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Maybe it's like...is there a...is there a thing about, like, erasing functionality with— like, it might be that when you look at it now, you can read the time just fine. And then you look away for a second, and you forget what the time said. [Ali laughs] And it's right when you look at it, and you can like really focus and like try to hold it in your mind. But when you look back at it, or when you look away, it's just really hard to hold in your mind what time it was.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So it's not to say that this isn't...maybe this is part of the thing that you've learned, is that like, eliminating the sort of contextual element of what a thing is, taking a thing out of placeness, is not necessarily better than letting it be the thing it was. Because the cursed watch that makes you late for things, that's not good. But it might be more useful than this.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: Is this not what's supposed to happen when you normally... [Janine, Austin, and Ali laugh]

Austin: Yeah, you...

Janine: I feel like this happens half the time when I look at a watch.

Ali: You know, I— yeah.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. Yes.

Janine: I'm asking a lot of questions about my watch. [Janine and Ali laugh]

Austin: Fuckin' modernity has cursed us. Or not literally cursed us, but has changed our relationship to time.

Ali: Mm.

Austin: This is the fear. This is what the Wrights of the Seventh Sun want. [Austin and Ali laugh softly] Society if. Um, the...so yeah, I think that's a big thing here, right? Is like, I think you start to get at this. And maybe this is, like, this is an interesting like intersection between science ideology, but the idea that, like, there could be a purer world where like we don't have to worry about what domain we are in. Not that Marn thinks about domains. But maybe Marn does think about domains. It's totally viable that the Telluricists have different schools of learning according to Cursed, Desolate, Warren, Occult, et cetera. Right?

Ali: [laughs] Yeah. If they don't know it in those terms, they're...like, so much of the society is based off of that.

Austin: Yes, yes.

Ali: That it feels weird that they wouldn't have some sort of like, categorical...

Austin: Yes.

Ali: You know what I mean?

Austin: Exactly, yeah, totally, totally.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: So yeah, so I think part of it is learning that. And then, on a crit, as always, whenever people are doing this sort of investigation thing, I do like to leave open the idea that you want to ask me a question about something, you go ahead and ask me that, and I'll figure out a way for you to have learned it, if it's feasible from the thing you're doing.

Ali: Oh, sure, yeah. Oh, okay.

Austin: If you need time to think about that, we can go around the table and come back around.

Ali: [laughs softly] Okay, sure, yeah.

Austin: It's up to you.

Ali: I don't know that I have, like, a question immediately.

Austin: Okay. Let's come back around, then.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: Um, Duvall or Pickman? What are you getting up to on day one of stay inside?

Art: Um, day one morning, for sure—

Austin: Yes.

Art: I think Duvall goes and enjoys a nice continental breakfast.

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm.

Ali: Mm.

Art: Coffee, a pastry.

Austin: Love it.

Jack: I think that like the direct contrast to that is: day one morning, Pickman anxious about the "don't go outside" but not wanting to go outside, orders a single black coffee from the place where Duvall is having his massive continental breakfast.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And just like—

Art: Which, to be fair, I said a coffee and a pastry.

Austin: [laughing] You said coffee and a pastry! [Ali and Jack laugh]

Art: A massive brea— it's a big pastry, I think we have to roll with now.

Austin: [laughs] Yes.

Art: It's, uh...

Austin: It's like one of those Beer Garden pretzels in size.

Jack: [laughing] Okay.

Art: Yeah.

Ali: Ohh.

Jack: Right.

Austin: Just huge.

Jack: I see what's happened here.

Art: The cherry danish the size of a manhole cover.

Jack: I don't know what a continental breakfast is, so. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Oh, Jack.

Jack: So, this is...

Art: That's 'cause you live in England.

Janine: It's a breakfast that's the size of a continent, that's... [Austin laughs]

Jack: Oh, I see.

Art: And the continent is on the other side there.

Austin: Yes, yes.

Ali: Huh.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: A continental breakfast in American hotel terms, United States hotel terms, is you go downstairs and there are like hot metal...like, what are those like containers? What are those called?

Art: Like [audio cuts out] trays.

Janine: Tureens? Is that...is tureens the word?

Austin: It's like a...maybe.

Jack: Salver?

Austin: Oh my god. I have no idea.

Art: Most traditionally, a continental breakfast is like—

Austin: And it's—

Art: —cold things.

Austin: Yeah. I guess that's true.

Art: It's like pastry, yogurt, and whatever.

Austin: You don't think that there's like scrambled eggs normally? Like a thing of scrambled eggs?

Art: No, I think that's not a continental breakfast.

Austin: Hmm.

Art: I understand that's like what it's become again in American hotels.

Austin: I guess you're right.

Art: But I think, like, if you...if you like distill the continental breakfast, it's fruit, past—

Austin: Yeah. Yes.

Art: It's fruit, bread, dairy.

Ali: Mm.

Art: Coffee, tea, juice.

Austin: Okay. In my mind...I think you're a hundred percent right. But in my mind, for whatever reason— yeah, I think it's because that this is what American hotels have started doing, is like, also there are some scrambled eggs there, you know?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Which is a little plus.

Art: Yeah, if you want eggs and bacon and...

Austin: Right, sure.

Art: A really terrible waffle, they got you.

Austin: Right, right. [Ali and Jack laugh] Yes. But yeah, the fruit is definitely it. Fruit and pastries, yeah. Fruit and bread. Anyway. And like cereal sometimes, right? Anyway.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Art: Yeah, granola or uh, yeah.

Austin: Mm-hmm. In any case, yes, I love this picture of you two. Are you talking during breakfast? Are you catching up?

Art: I thought Jack was about to say that Pickman comes and gets a coffee and leaves.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: I think Pickman comes and gets a coffee and just like stands by the window peering out.

Austin: Sure.

Jack: Like, her little spoon going *clink clink clink* around the coffee cup.

Austin: You are passing through, um, some really beautiful woods. From the little porthole, you can't necessarily get a full sense of the breadth and majesty of this place. But for people listening, I already described what this place really looks like in the last arc. There are these kind of, in my mind, they're like birch trees, this kind of white with black fleck or dark fleck sort of, what's the...bark, there you go. And, but much, much broader. The trunks are very wide, and

they're reaching up, up up. You can't see the top of any of the trees that you are gliding past currently, Pickman.

Jack: Hmm.

Austin: Even in the distance, it's like they just keep going up. And they have many branches and stuff, so it can be kind of hard to even peer through the overlap of branches in that way. But even if you try to, from this perspective, you can't quite see where they reach up to. And it just goes. You're just like in it in a real way.

Jack: Is there any...you know when you're on a train or on a bus?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And if you look out of the window for long enough you will see something out of the window?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Is there anything particularly standout other than this very strange forest that I see as we're passing down the river?

Austin: What do you want to see?

Jack: Oh, I don't know. Um, I think something that might give Pickman— Pickman is wondering, "Why did they tell us all to stay inside?"

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: So maybe something that...

Austin: Do you want something that confirms that you should stay inside, or do you want something... does Pickman want to see something that confirms she should stay inside, or does Pickman want to see something that makes her curious about what's out there? Like, at the heart— in her heart of hearts.

Jack: I think she wants to feel like she was right to stay inside, so probably the former.

Austin: Okay. Um, the..now it's the thing of like me needing to link up with you mentally to figure out what that is. I think the branches, some of that tangle of branches takes on a shape of some sort as you look out at it.

[0:30:16]

Jack: Mm.

Austin: What's the sort of shape or— not the Shape, probably. I think the Shape is probably too intriguing to look away from. [laughs softly]

Jack: You know when...you know that kind of like shadow art where you view something from one angle—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: —and then as you turn the angle, it all draws itself together into a shape?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I wish I knew the name of that. It's sort of like using parallax to create an image.

Austin: Uh, that's called doing a puzzle in *Resident Evil 7* where you have to hold up a thing and spin it.

Jack: Ah, doing a puzzle! Yeah.

Austin: Until it's an eagle.

Jack: Yeah, in *Resident Evil 7*.

Austin: [laughs] Yes.

Jack: Until it's a big eagle, yeah. Um, I think that the like branches of the birch tree—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: —as the boat makes a parallax of them, come together to form an image.

Austin: Mm. I like this.

Jack: And I'm not sure what the image is.

Austin: This is the thing, right? 'Cause like, anything I give you is so— 'cause I'm like, "Oh, it's a picture of you. Oh, it's a picture of—" if it's anything you can place, I don't know why it doesn't pull you in. 'Cause it's such an...like, in the horror movie of this, you know, the string section begins to rise, and it's Pickman looking out with her goat eye. And it's zooming in on this shadow shape forming, and it's very unsettling. But Pickman wears big armor, and Pickman kicks down doors. And it's hard for me to find the thing that gets into Pickman's mind so much

that she's like, “[scoffs] I’m not going out there.” What is that thing? Is it something so deeply personal that it— see, if it’s personal, it feels like it’s a lure.

Jack: It feels like— it feels like Hazard seeing Uno.

Austin: Right, this is the thing. It can't be something that means something to you. It has to be something that's fundamentally shaking but is unmoored from you, right? And then this is the fun thing about horror, is then we start getting into claims around universality, right? [Jack chuckles] What is something that just by seeing it is scary to you? And this is how horror falls into traps of like weird body normativity and shit, right? ‘Cause I’m like, “Oh, you see a fucking grosso. There's just something real gross out there [Jack laughs] that you hate to look at, fundamentally.” And it's like, I don't want to go down that path. But so, what is it? What is the thing? Like it really could just be a creature, right? It really could just be a thing that the way that these shadows begin to move with, you know—

Jack: Oh, I—

Austin: It's like a big spider or something, right?

Jack: What if it's made out of the branches and it's just like a face, like a human face?

Austin: Mm.

Jack: But like 15 feet tall, made out of branches.

Austin: And you can't place it. It's not a particular face. It's not...

Jack: No.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It's like, as the boat moves, the parallax of the branches makes the eyes close on this face.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And I think that absolutely strikes the balance of Pickman looking out of the window and being like, “Fucking hell. [Austin and Jack laugh softly] The tr—”

Austin: The tree is looking back at me. Yeah.

Jack: Trees shouldn't do that.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: The forest has a face, and its massive.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And I think, yeah, it's just like—

Austin: What type of face is it? Is it a human face? Is it a caprak face?

Jack: It's a human face. I think it's a human face.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Um, oh, no, it's a...it's a face tied to the...I think it's a devil face, because of the way the devils have...

Austin: Ah, yeah, sure.

Jack: You know.

Austin: Yep. Yep. In a real way, just to like be out of character here, because we've already walked— only because I've already pulled the veil off of what these woods are in a previous episode. Like, this is a space trying to give you what you want, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Not to lure you in. Like, again, that's not what it's trying to do. But this is one of these classic spaces that is reading you and trying to output something that puts you at ease in some way. Whether it does that...it does this, in this particular way, by creeping you out.

Jack: By confirming Pickman's bias.

Austin: Yes, exactly, right. It doesn't always give you what you actually would write down and say you want. It gives you some version thereof, right? So yeah, the woods look back at you. And like, to complicate it a little bit, you know, roll me one D10. I won't give you any Stress from this, necessarily. I just want to know if it's a high or a low.

Jack: I mean, I'm looking at some cursed woods.

Austin: You are.

Jack: So, I don't think Stress would be...

Austin: Exactly. That's a seven, so it's a success.

Jack: That's a seven.

Austin: I do think that there is...there is a response, which is...remind me about how the Shape glows within you or in a hole in your back again?

Jack: Um, the Shape appears—

Austin: Or between your horns, right?

Jack: Above Pickman's horns, yeah.

Austin: Yeah. But only to...is that a thing that's visible all the time to people?

Jack: It's visible in the sense that dust motes moving through light are visible.

Austin: Right.

Jack: So, if you catch it in the right way.

Austin: Yeah. So, the dust coalesces.

Jack: Hmm.

Austin: The dust in the room coalesces into the Shape above you, between your horns. Duvall you see this happen, and when Pickman like turns to look at you, it all falls. Like, it all goes from being coalesced hovering in the air in the image of the Shape, and then it falls like a piece of paper falling flat onto the ground. And Pickman, when you look down, it is in the— the Shape is below you in dust.

Jack: Hmm.

Austin: It's drawn itself in response to the Course looking at it and looking at it through you.

Jack: Ah, interesting.

Austin: Duvall, how's your breakfast?

Art: Great. I mean, the...it's a little bready.

Jack: Ha!

Ali: Hmm.

Austin: [laughs softly] You see a porter leaving with—speaking of bready things—a plate of bready things to bring up to Es. And, and yeah. The rest of that day, like, you know. These days are going to go...are going to be very self directed, I should say. Unless you, again, do decide to go outside, in which case I can talk to you about some stuff that happens. Also, I guess probably by the end of the first day, you realize you have not seen Chine, Hazard, or Lyke all day. And maybe they're in their rooms. Who could say?

Art: Oh, they didn't...they didn't say they were going?

Austin: They snuck off.

Jack: No.

Ali: Chine left a note.

Austin: Chine left a note, but you'd have to go into Chine's room to read that note, wouldn't you? [Ali laughs]

Art: Chine left a note in their own room? That's a terrible place to leave a note.

Austin: [laughs softly] Uh huh.

Ali: Well, maybe it's *Seinfeld* rules, 'cause we don't have cell phones, so we're just walking into each other's rooms all day. [laughs]

Jack: What are *Seinfeld* rules?

Art: *Seinfeld* rules?

Ali: You walk into someone's room is basically what I'm saying. [laughs]

Austin: When like Kramer would just pop into the room?

Art: We're all Kramers.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: [laughs] Everybody walks in.

Austin: I guess that's true. Everybody does do that, huh?

Ali: Everybody walks in.

Austin: It's kind of weird.

Art: Well, but everyone else buzzes.

Ali: Okay sure.

Austin: Ah, right.

Art: So there's like, uh...

Austin: But Kramer just lives up there, right?

Ali: I'm just, but they...

Art: Yeah.

Ali: They're walking.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Ali: They just open the door.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: Yeah, you should read my *Seinfeld* fanfiction where it's an alternate finale where they just get murdered.

Austin: Oh my god!

Ali: Oh my god.

Art: Like, someone just walks into the apartment and...

Austin: Dark. It's *Hannibal* crossover fic. [laughs softly]

Art: Yeah, uh huh.

Ali: Ohh.

Art: This is his design, [Austin, Jack, and Ali laugh] having killed all of them according to their vices.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: They are all (??? 37:11)

Art: It's a lot like the real finale, actually, if you think about it. [Austin laughs]

Ali: Mm.

Art: Sorry for those spoilers of the *Seinfeld* finale, uh, if this stays in. [Austin and Ali laugh] They are undone by their own hubris.

Austin: It's true.

Art: And they are put in prison.

Austin: Yeah. Anyway. If anyone does check, Chine has left a note that says, "Off boat, be back soon."

Jack: Yeah, I'll go down. I'll knock on Chine's door, 'cause I haven't seen them for a while.

Austin: Yeah, door opens.

Jack: And then puts—

Art: Well, no one's gonna answer. You have to Kramer it. You have to just Kramer on in. [Ali laughs]

Jack: Yeah. Well, and then presumably I Kramer. [laughs softly]

Austin: And then you Kramer it.

Jack: Presumably I Kramer it.

Art: You pull a Kramer.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Yeah, I pull a Kramer, and inside— well, the note says "Off boat..." What does it say?

Austin: "Be back soon."

Jack: [laughs] It's such a good note.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Communicates everything you need. Pickman holding the note, narrowing her eyes. [laughs softly]

Austin: Uh huh, thinking about the face.

Jack: Yeah. And then, yeah, I think I'm gonna go see Marn.

Austin: Marn standing over a bunch of watch pieces.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Oh, you killed a watch.

Art: Kramering into that room.

Austin: [laughing] Yeah, Kramering into that room! [Ali and Jack laugh] Oh no!

Jack: I think Pickman knocks. I think, you know, I think for these people. This is not— I tell you who Pickman did Kramer was Calen, back at Bell Metal Station.

Austin: This is true.

Jack: And that had major consequences.

Ali: Uh huh. [laughs]

Jack: But yeah, I think Pickman sees Marn and the watch and goes:

Jack (as Pickman): Ah, you killed a watch.

Ali (as Marn): Um, yeah, basically. You need something?

Jack (as Pickman): Yeah, I got bad news. Chine has left the boat. I don't know when. They left this note.

Jack: Holds the notes up like a map in *Sea of Thieves* to, uh... [Austin and Ali laugh] Hold it up directly in front of me facing Marn.

Ali: Marn gets ready. No. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Ali (as Marn): They said not to get off the boat.

Jack (as Pickman): They said not to get off the boat. Who have you seen? I saw Duvall at breakfast.

Ali (as Marn): I've been...I've been in here all day. I've been kinda locked up.

Jack (as Pickman): Yeah. Uh huh. Well, should we be worried?

Ali (as Marn): [sighs] After this whole...we just did a rescue.

Jack (as Pickman): We just...we *just* rescued them.

Austin: [laughing] This is true.

Ali (as Marn): It'll probably be fine.

Jack (as Pickman): I don't feel good about these...um. [sighs] Ok— okay. I don't think we should leave the boat, but I do think we should begin making preparations for the Blackwork Group to be...

Jack: Like, a nod and a hand gesture. [laughs softly]

Ali (as Marn): Like, what? Like, dissolved?

Jack (as Pickman): Fewer.

Ali (as Marn): Oh! Well...they know how to get home.

Jack (as Pickman): Ch— mm. Hmm. [Austin laughs softly]

[0:40:00]

Jack: Pickman thinking about the gandy king and the Ravening Beast in the train. [Austin and Ali laugh]

Austin: Thinking about Chine eating a bed.

Jack (as Pickman): Mm. Okay.

Ali (as Marn): Chine's resourceful. that's Chine's whole thing.

Jack (as Pickman): Yeah. Yeah, that's true.

Ali (as Marn): They just, you know, don't have to get locked up again. [Jack laughs softly]

Jack (as Pickman): Okay. All right. Well, uh, I'll go check the other rooms. I just, I wanted to come to you first.

Ali (as Marn): I appreciate that.

Jack (as Pickman): In case we had a problem.

Ali (as Marn): You and I? Or in general.

Jack (as Pickman): In general, Marn.

Ali (as Marn): Oh, sure, sure. I, you know...

Jack (as Pickman): In general on the boat.

Ali (as Marn): Well, thanks for looking out.

Jack (as Pickman): Okay. Uh, you make sure you get some breakfast or something.

Ali (as Marn): Oh, yeah, yeah.

Jack (as Pickman): You've been working hard.

Ali (as Marn): Eh.

Jack (as Pickman): Well, bye.

Jack: [laughs] Just stoops down under the door as she leaves. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Ahh.

Jack: And yeah, I guess I find out in pretty short order that, uh, Chine and Lyke and Hazard.

Austin: You learn about Hazard because they are...you can tell, um, there is one of the—

Jack: Oh, is the crew mad?

Austin: Well, one of the like ushers, maybe it's Teak, is like looking for a replacement dealer for false war, 'cause Hazard's gone.

Jack: Oh, shit!

Ali: Oh.

Austin: So they're short a dealer. And it's fine. You don't— it's not the end of the world, but it does mean that there's like, hey, these are three days in a row that people are indoors the whole time. And so people who might not normally go gambling are doing it right now. [Jack chuckles]

understandingly] Because they might have gone out and hung out on the parlor on the open deck, you know? or fished or something, and that's not available to them right now. And so they're really feeling Hazard's absence. And yeah, Lyke is also gone, no note.]Jack sighs]

Ali: Hazard really shouldn't have gotten mixed up with us.

Jack: I know! [Ali laughs] Hazard was having such a nice life of this boat, just [Austin and Jack laugh] playing cards and trying to regain their existence. [Austin laughs]

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Yeah, I think I'm gonna— I'm gonna talk to Teak real quick.

Austin: Okay. Yeah.

Jack (as Pickman): You know, you said don't leave the boat.

Austin (as Teak): Yes.

Jack (as Pickman): What do you anticipate happens if you do?

Austin (as Teak): Well, we would lose you probably forever.

Jack (as Pickman): Uh. Okay.

Austin (as Teak): It depends on...

Austin: I think he gives you a once over to remind...to be like, okay, right, you're a Shape Knight. You know what I mean?

Austin (as Teak): Mm. Someone like you would be changed perhaps, not lost, if you could remain on board. I don't advocate for it, though.

Jack (as Pickman): No. Suppose some of my colleagues had made poor decisions as to your advice. Is there anything we can do for them? Or is it better that we keep moving?

Austin (as Teak): Were your colleagues the ones who took our card dealer?

Jack (as Pickman): Yes.

Austin (as Teak): I would do as we do and write them off.

Jack (as Pickman): Huh.

Austin (as Teak): There's naught to be gained by following aft.

Jack (as Pickman): Okay.

Austin: I mean, at this point, not knowing when they left makes it hard to know this—

Jack: Yeah, it's like—

Austin: —but like, you're a day, you're a riverboat's journey away by hours at this point, you know?

Jack: I mean, this is real...you know, not to get too grim, but this is real people falling off boats vibes as well.

Austin: Yep. Yeah, sure.

Jack: Where it's like, if you don't know when they've gone...

Austin: Right.

Jack: Pickman's not very boat experienced. The boat, as we all know, is nature's opposite to the train.

Austin: Very different in many ways.

Jack: [laughs] And...and so I think Pickman was just thinking like, "Oh, can we throw up a buoy overboard or whatever?" [Austin laugh] and it's like, doesn't fucking work like that, Pickman.

Austin: [laughing quietly] No.

Jack: They're gone.

Austin: Um, do you also...do you also barge in on Es?

Jack: [laughs] Yeah. But like, quickly. I mean, if I knock on the door, and...like, what happens, Janine?

Austin: Right, sure.

Janine: Um... [laughs] I don't know that she hears a knock. [Austin and Jack laugh]

Jack: Oh, shit. All right, I'm gonna open the door.

Janine: And I'm saying that mostly 'cause I want to make you barge in. [laughs]

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Good.

Jack: Yeah, I'm gonna open the door.

Janine: Okay. The picture that I want to paint of Es is she is like, on...so, she's like on her bed. She's got a lot— she's got food. She's got drinks. She's got like the remnants of previous food and drinks. Like, all— none of it like substantial. All of it's very, like, indulgent. She's like found things probably that people'd be like, "Oh, I didn't even know they had this on the—"

Austin: Mm.

Janine: "I didn't even know you could get a box of chocolates on here, what?" [Ali and Jack laugh] Or like a box of assorted like...the classic, the archetypical like bon bon kind of thing.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Candied fruit.

Janine: And she's like...she's sitting on her bed, probably like, I want to say either on her stomach with her feet kind of kicked up or on her back with her knees sort of up. I want like, I want very specifically like postures associated with like teenage girls who are like reading magazines on their bed is what I'm evoking.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Amazing.

Janine: Except she's like a grown woman in a, you know, who's also a ghost in a person's body and all of that stuff.

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: And she's kind of like flipping through the manuscript that she's finished and like enjoying it.

Austin: Mm-hmm. [Jack laughs]

Janine: This is like...this is the deepest, deepest fantasy for me that I've maybe ever exercised—

Austin: Yeah. [Jack laughs softly]

Janine: —in *Friends at the Table*, which is someone reviewing something they've written and enjoying it. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Austin: Ugh, yeah. Fuckin', fair enough.

Janine: And just, and being like, "I wouldn't change anything about this! It's fantastic! [Austin laughs] I'm going to drink coffee about it and be happy."

Austin: God.

Jack: [laughs] Amazing.

Janine: [laughs] It's like the most self indulgent thing I can think of, but she's having a great time. And I think when she hears Pickman come in, she just kind of like sits up. And I want to say, like, with her bare foot, like I think her boots are off. She doesn't have boots on the bed. She's not that indulgent.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Ha!

Janine: Like, kicks a little...like, kicks a little chair over, and the chair has got like pastry, like a platter of pastries or something on it. And it's very much a like, "Here, have some. Hang out. It's fun. Have a good time," kind of thing.

Jack (as Pickman): [startled] Oh— oh, I didn't mean to interrupt.

Janine (as Es): No! Well, I mean, you must have, 'cause you barged in, but I don't mind.

Jack (as Pickman): Everybody's—

Jack: And Pickman goes to say, "Everybody's gone missing except Marn and Duvall," and then just like [Janine laughs] looks around at Es having a really good time.

Austin: Aw! [Austin and Janine laugh]

Janine (as Es): Everybody's...?

Jack (as Pickman): Everybody's gone missing except Marn and Duvall. [Austin laughs softly]

Janine (as Es): That's a pretty short jump to...or pretty long, long jump to everyone?

Jack (as Pickman): What?

Janine (as Es): That's like, four people are missing? That's not everyone.

Jack (as Pickman): Yes, of—

Janine (as Es): There's people on the boat still. They've been bringing me stuff.

Jack (as Pickman): It's our company and it's the card dealer, Es.

Janine (as Es): Hmm...

Jack: Sits down, takes one of the pastries. [Austin and Janine laugh softly]

Janine (as Es): They're good, right? They've got— that one's got like a strawberry kind of cream thing. Have you checked everywhere? Are they not like just gambling, or...

Jack (as Pickman): Nope, off the boat.

Janine (as Es): ...harassing someone? No?

Jack (as Pickman): Off the boat.

Janine (as Es): Off the boat.

Jack (as Pickman): Don't you—

Janine (as Es): They did say not to go off the boat.

Jack (as Pickman): They did say. They said— and we just rescued Chine. [Ali laughs softly]

Janine (as Es): I know. [sighs] And it sucked.

Jack (as Pickman): Anyway, I don't want to keep you. I just went and saw Marn and let her know. She's working on something. And I wanted to see if you'd gone off the boat. But, um, you haven't.

Janine (as Es): Nope.

Jack (as Pickman): I would say don't worry about it, but it seems like...you're not. All right, you have a good day. [Janine laughs]

Janine (as Es): You too.

Austin: I mean, putting it in context. [Janine laughs] You know, a month ago in your lives, the Blackwick Group was seven people.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Chine and Lyke are gone. Virtue is gone. That's a big chunk.

Jack: This is Pickman saying—

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: We may need to be fewer or whatever. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah, yeah, I get it. Yeah. But I'm like, you know, putting it in context of, like, you don't know that they had an adventure in Marrowcreek and might be okay, you know? on their way back or whatever. Like, that's just not...you just don't know.

Jack: Like a scythe haven(??? 49:03) could have picked them off or something.

Austin: Sure.

Ali: Mm.

Janine: I think there's also a degree to which it's like, you know, it makes sense for me for Es in particular to not register absence of people—

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: —quite as intently as other people might.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: And it's, it would be different if it was like, “Hey, I saw a big monster come and bite Chine and carry them off.”

Austin: Uh huh. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Janine: Like, that would be a different situation. But it's like, some people aren't here. It's like, well, they're somewhere. I don't know. [laughs softly]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: This is heritrixes versus Shape Knights to a T, which I think is really fun.

Janine: [laughs] Yes.

Austin: Well, and especially a Shape Knight like Pickman who spent most of her youth with the same handful of people stuck on a train.

Jack: Yeah. We don't like talk about this that often.

Janine: Mm.

Austin: We don't like know— I don't know the names of those people.

Jack: That's because it's horrible.

Austin: 'Cause it's horrible. But like, you must have known those people pretty well, you know?

[0:50:00]

Jack: They were like family.

Austin: Or maybe even disliked them, but they were like family. They were your family. Yeah. So I suspect you have a different sort of relationship with that sort of like, "All right, we're a group now, we're together, we're gonna get through this together." [laughs softly]

Jack: Everybody stays together or they die. Good luck.

Austin: Right, right.

Janine: Yeah. Whereas Es's experience is very much like, maybe you know someone for a few years—

Austin: Right.

Janine: —and then you don't see them for a few hundred years.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Right.

Janine: And then you see them again, and you act kind of like you just saw them yesterday.

Austin: Right. Yeah.

Jack: That's really great. I just close the— do you get up to see me out? Or do I just close the door on you lying on your bed reading your manuscript?

Janine: Um, I think I like wave, but like trust you to see yourself out. [Austin, Ali, and Jack laugh]

Jack: Okay. Bye, Es.

Austin: Bye. [Janine laughs softly] All right. Uh, the next day—unless someone else does something else on this first day—is the same, right? Like I truly, these days in this part of the woods, and I'll pull you back over to that other map really quick so that we— oh, you're still there. You're still on that map. Only I moved over. You can now see that there are these kind of trees that you're working your way through on the map, this kind of like, woo, little curve up and around. And that's— actually, this one should be on the other side. Or there should be another one of these. That's what there should be. But that's really it. Like, you're really just among these trees for these days, and if you want to go check them out, then there are opportunities and repercussions. Or not check them out, but if you want to like go out, try to sneak out onto like the deck or something, that's a thing that you can do. But I'm not going to push you there. Again, because of having had the conversation before we started this set of episodes [Ali laughs] asking if people were interested in doing that.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: But.

Jack: No.

Ali: I did have one question, though.

Austin: Yes.

Ali: And this was like my “maybe should I join the other group?” and I didn't, obviously.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Ali: But I was wondering if there was sort of something like messed up about, like, the pursuit of knowledge while being in this place.

Austin: Mm.

Ali: Like, do I feel weird? Does it go strangely?

Austin: You get the sense that being inside of the cabin of this boat is protecting you. And maybe this is actually something that you particularly...maybe it doesn't protect you, because of your proximity to the Null stuff.

Ali: Okay. [laughs]

Austin: Which is kind of fun, right?

Jack: Ha! [Ali laughs]

Austin: That like, there's a...it's already been, you know, negative down. You know, it's already been subtracted. And so, if you do this twice or whatever, it's gonna get undone in some way. It's not protected by Null stuff already, obviously, because it has its own— this place, this boat has its own domains.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: But, but whatever resistance it has, maybe yeah, maybe it doesn't hit you in the same way or doesn't keep you safe in the same way. So, in that way, I actually think that you maybe do get that draw from the woods in a different way where it's able to more directly give you that sense of...I guess, to answer your core question... [clears throat] [Ali laughs softly] Which, by the way, we needed another question anyway from before.

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: Being in this place and trying to find knowledge is that sense of...you know. You know the classic thing of, like, when you first start learning a thing, you think you've understand something completely, and then— there's a name for this that I can't quite remember right now. The Dunning-Kruger effect?

Janine: The something...or yeah.

Austin: The Dunning-Kruger effect, I want to say.

Art: Kanye West disease.

Austin: Kanye West disease. Right.

Ali: Mm.

Austin: You know a little bit and you've decided you know everything. [Janine laughs softly]

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Uh huh. Anyway, you got that. Or, you don't have that.

Ali: Oh no!

Austin: Sorry, you have the opposite of that.

Ali: Okay. [laughs]

Austin: You hit that next bit. You hit that next bit where you're like, "Oh, I don't know shit. None of this is certifiable. I can't—I can't be sure of anything I know here." Being in this place is that. Being in this place makes you always have one more question than you normally would, you know? Where you're like, "Okay, I'm pretty sure I'm right about this." And by day two of your study of this watch, you realize you've written down way more notes and questions of like, "How could I ever be sure this is true? Here's another thing that could have influenced this. Here's another thing I didn't account for or another variable I didn't, you know, try to negate in my study. Like, I didn't do it when the lights were off. I now have to do the whole thing over in the dark [Ali laughs] to make sure that it wasn't something special about the weird lights in this ship." And then the third, you know, and after that, you're like, "Ah, shit, I did it in complete silence. I better turn on some music so that I can...so we can see if sound affects this differently." And you're just like constantly doubting that you'll ever arrive at truth during this process. It feels like you could always defer knowledge. You know, you can always— at some point, you really have to confront the fact that you don't have knowledge, you have guesses. You can only ever induce things. You can never actually deduce anything. You're always...you can never be sure the sun will actually come up tomorrow. You can act like you think the sun will come up tomorrow, but you can't ever actually be sure of that fact. [Ali laughs] And it's like, that's what it's like to be in these woods and try to learn stuff, you know?

Ali: Doesn't sound good.

Austin: And maybe you find yourself at peace with that, but like, that's what it feels like.

Ali: Yeah, I think it definitely makes like the...the act of doing this more anxious than it would normally be.

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm.

Ali: 'Cause it's this sort of thing, like, I'm starting from ground zero here.

Austin: Right.

Ali: And I need to figure out all of it, because I feel like the less I know about it, the more dangerous it will be to whoever else.

Austin: Right. Totally.

Ali: And like, Marn does not get that breakfast or whatever. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, yeah. Yeah, you don't get to kick your legs up and be like, "Ooh, this is so good."

Ali: Yeah. [laughs]

Austin: You're way in the opposite, which is like, "This is worthless. Ah shit, I spent all day on this, and this sucks, actually." [Ali laughs] So. It's, you still got a ten. I'm not taking that away from you. Do you know what I mean?

Ali: Mm-hmm. No, no, yeah, yeah.

Austin: You did actually make progress, but you're in it in that way that can be really demoralizing sometimes.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: So. Uh, anyone else want to do something during these quiet days in the woods?

Janine: I would like to source a clawfoot tub. [Jack and Ali laugh]

Austin: Okay, I don't know that they can produce... [laughs] I don't know that they can produce a clawfoot tub, but they will give you access to some sort of spe— you know, there is, uh...someone will sneak you in...you know what? They want a tip for this. They do want a tip for this. They want a...

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Austin: But they'll sneak you into the fancy bathroom in the...in the suite at the front of the boat, the like fancy person bathroom that does have— maybe it does have a clawfoot tub in there, that's the only one on the ship. And they can't bring it to you. But they could sneak you in and clean up after you. [Ali laughs] But like, you're really like...listen to the words that I'm saying.

Janine: [laughs] Uh, hmm.

Austin: Just a D4, a little D4 tip, you know? Just a little ahem, mmhm. One of those.

Jack: Like a bribe.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Ali: Es, cut out the middleman and just find the person who's in that suite and be like, "Excuse me, sir. I think you should leave your room." [Austin laughs softly]

Janine: Uh, mm—

Ali: “I’d like to borrow it.” [laughs]

Jack: “I’m a horror.”

Janine: The thing that I’m getting hung up on is that like...is like, I...a big part of the image of reckless abandon to me is part of this is like very specifically blocking out everything else in the world.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Janine: It is like holing up in one space and trying to make as much of that one space as possible.

Austin: Mm.

Janine: And—

Austin: They’re not bringing you a tub.

Janine: No, no. So that’s, mm...that makes it tough. What about like one of those round wooden ones?

Austin: Yeah, like a wash basin? Like a big one of those. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Well, like one of— like a big— yeah, I mean, like—

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: That’s the style of tub. Or like a...

Austin: Yeah, no, I...

Janine: Like a metal, one of the long metal tubs.

Austin: Like the one of the ones that they use in the movie *Maverick*, starring Mel Gibson who sucks admittedly, where he and his father—not his actual father, but his in the movie father, whose name I don’t remember—they both sit in the tub and on the riverboat. It’s literally what this arc is.

Janine: Yeah.

Austin: So, there you go. Yeah, sure. Yeah, they'll bring you one of those.

Janine: Now they have to have one of those.

Austin: Yes, they do.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: This is true.

Janine: I'll settle. I'll settle.

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: I'm not above a non-clawfoot tub.

Austin: Uh huh. James Garner played his father in that, apparently. I don't even know who that is. I guess the guy I just said, so. Anyway.

Art: Uh, isn't that, uh...no, nevermind.

Austin: Okay.

Art: I'm not gonna...I'm not gonna make a guess about the identity of James Garner.

Austin: Okay.

Art: Into a microphone.

Austin: Sure.

Art: Where I can be made fun of on the internet.

Austin: He's the original Maverick is the thing he is. That's the thing he is. He was originally Maverick in the television series—

Ali: Oh.

Austin: —and then reprised the role in a sense by being Mel Gibson's father in the movie, which, that's...

Janine: My guess would have been that he's Jennifer Garner's dog, so I would have been wrong. [Jack laughs softly]

Austin: That's not correct.

Ali: Hmm.

Art: Dog. They cast a dog— [Ali laughs]

Austin: Dog.

Art: —as Mel Gibson's father?

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, well, you know what? [Janine laughs]

Ali: Yeah. [Jack laughs softly]

Austin: He deserves less.

Ali: Act a fool, and yeah.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Ali: That's what you get.

Austin: God. All right. Um, any other day two or three stuff? If not, we can keep moving.

Art: I don't...

Austin: Uh— you go ahead. What were you gonna say?

Art: I mean, I sort of want to see the tr— but like, I don't want to leave the boat.

Austin: Uh huh. You don't, in the middle of the night, feel yourself pulled out to the deck?

Jack: Ain't it a puzzler?

Art: In the middle of the night?

Austin: Well, when no one's looking.

Art: That's the worst time. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Is there like one of those coin operated binocular sets somewhere on deck or something?

Art: Mm. [Ali laughs]

Austin: I think that— no, I don't think that. In fact, I think they in general keep the like...if we can go rewind to when Pickman was looking out the window. The second you step away from the window, someone comes over and pulls the blinds shut, you know, or pulls the curtain so that no one else makes the mistake you did of looking out there. In general, they try to prevent people from looking outside during this, you know?

[1:00:03]

Art: Can I like...can I take a bug peek?

Austin: Sure!

Ali: Ooh.

Austin: Now we're talking.

Jack: Oh shit.

Austin: How's that work? That's just a thing you can do. You don't need to roll for it, right?

Art: I don't need to roll. If I close— if I stand still and close— I guess it doesn't say stay still, but that seems like the safest thing to do.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Oh, this is really scary, 'cause it's like...yeah.

Austin: Oh yeah. What do you—

Art: Oh, it does say stand still. "When you stand still and close your eyes, you can see through the eyes of any of your bugs, allowing you to spy around corners or looking into closed spaces."

Austin: Yeah. Do you, um...what type of bug do you use for this?

Art: Um...one with good eyesight. A... [Austin laughs softly] Maybe like a lightning bug.

Austin: Ooh, I love that. All right.

Art: Controls its own light source.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, uh huh. So, you—

Art: Can't be too dark for a lightning bug. That's what they say.

Austin: Always saying this. Uh...you know, here we go. This is the shit I'm talking about. Come over here. All right. So, you...what time of day is this? Is this in the night so that you get the lightning bug shot? Or do we...

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Okay.

Art: I mean, yeah, the light— once I got the lightning bug idea, it has to be at night, yeah.

Austin: Yeah. Yeah. [Ali laughs softly] All right. So, you send it out, presumably through, you know, underneath the door or whatever you do. And it begins to— it first sees the thing I described Pickman before, right? This vast wooded area, tall trees. Here, with this view, you can see that above this is the full moon, as it is always full, but here it seems very full. And here, it seems as if the trees touch the moon. Which, I don't think you were in the scene, but as a reminder, that is something that is a visual that we first saw in the radio seance, that Ali or that Marn and Lyke did with Bucho.

Ali: Mm.

Austin: And so you see that here. Like, this is that space. This is the woods that are holding up the moon, right? Or— I mean, it really looks like the moon is bearing down. [laughs softly] Like, it really looks like the moon could crash into you at any moment. You've never seen the moon so big.

Art: [concerned] Ooh.

Austin: And, you know, the lightning bug does the thing a few times where it does the phosphorescence. It glows in the night, and you can see the area around you glows like that a few times. And then, without— [laughs softly] I mean, you can't do this anyway. But without your instruction, you realize your eyesight has changed. And as you peek through the window or the glass door or whatever, to look at the bug itself, it has changed from being a lightning bug to being a scarab beetle.

Art: Mm.

Austin: Just from its nature, just from being out there. And it's still like flapping around, and you still have control of it.

Art: I don't have control of it, but yeah, I get you.

Austin: Wait, you don't have control of it?

Art: I'm still connected— no, I can't control them.

Austin: Oh, okay. I see. Right, right. Then yes, it's still, it is—

Art: But I'm still connected to it, yeah.

Austin: Yes, uh huh. And—

Art: Well, I'm glad I didn't go out there with my whole self.

Austin: [laughs] No? That's interesting.

Art: That would be confusing. [Ali laughs]

Austin: But, but, but isn't it also extremely Duvall to think about what it means that this place could change you so completely?

Art: Yeah, it's—

Austin: And, and you know, maybe the thing here is that like a single bug changes in a different way than a whole person does. Or a small thing changes more quickly than a big thing. You don't know.

Art: I don't know.

Austin: Are you curious?

Art: Uh, yeah.

Austin: Like, curious—

Art: Not, like—

Austin: Not curious enough to investigate further.

Art: Not...I mean, I might like throw a loaf of bread out a window and look at it or something.

Austin: Mm.

Art: But I'm not gonna like...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: There's a big— there's a big experimental chasm between “this is interesting” and “I’m gonna throw my whole self out there.”

Austin: Well, what's the next step in the— but, you know, here's a question. Do you do a second bug?

Art: So you're saying you don't like my loaf of bread plans. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Loaf of bread's fine. If you want to go back to the continental breakfast and just come back with a loaf of bread. [laughs]

Ali: A whole loaf?

Jack: [laughs] It was too bready.

Austin: Yeah. That's very interesting, right? 'Cause like, is it gonna stay? To some degree, I'm playing on your fascination here, right? It's not necessarily...we're not zooming in on the luck element. I mean, we could, right? Which is why it's like, is it...did this bug change because it was un— as quickly as it did because it was unlucky, or is there something else about it? Did—

Art: Sure, but I don't think bread can have luck.

Austin: Why not?

Art: 'Cause it's—

Austin: Can pizza have luck? [Austin and Ali laugh softly]

Art: No?

Austin: Okay.

Art: I think I have to be consistent enough to say that.

Austin: Yes. All right. So, you go and get your bread.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Sneak back upstairs. Go to the door.

Art: And sort of like throw it out there.

Austin: Quickly open the door, toss it, close the door. One of those?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. [Jack laughs softly]

Art: Let the scarab back in.

Austin: Scarab comes back. And by the time the scarab comes back in, it's got to be something else, right? Or actually, no, here's the thing. It's just a different beetle this time. It's still a beetle, but it's not a...it has not completely changed in that way.

Art: I assume there's some sort of bug apparatus to make sure this is okay, that the bugs check the other bugs.

Austin: I guess?

Ali: Mm.

Austin: That's a good question.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: [laughing] I guess we'll find— you know, we'll find out. That piece of bread sits out there. How long do you wait to see if that piece of bread changes?

Art: I said a whole loaf of bread. It's a whole loaf of bread.

Austin: Sorry, a whole loaf. How long do you wait?

Jack: Sorry, Ali. [Ali laughs quietly]

Art: Um...I don't know, 10 minutes?

Austin: Sure. Okay. Minute eight, minute eight it changes. What's it change into? Um...okay, here's what I'm gonna say. Minute five of like—

Art: Uh huh.

Austin: —completely pure, it's just out there. It can't...it's not a thinking being, right? Even the bug was a thinking being.

Art: Right.

Austin: Or a being with, you know, affinity, let's say. It might not be sapient, but it's certainly sentient. And it certainly has goals and desires. Bread does not. Minute five, it's changed from...what type of bread was this?

Art: I think it was like, uh, like a...what is it, a demi baguette, which is like half a baguette? Is that right?

Austin: Baguette experts? [brief pause] Sure. Yeah. That looks...

Art: I have a French person and a bread person here, and I got nothing.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: No one...

Austin: No one knows. All right. So yeah, let's say demi baguette. It changes to a sourdough at minute five.

Art: Mm. But about the same size.

Austin: Mm-mm. Smaller.

Art: Oh.

Austin: Smaller.

Art: Smaller?

Austin: Yeah. A little sourdough.

Art: That's interesting, 'cause I would think a scarab beetle is bigger than a lightning bug.

Austin: Sure. Totally.

Art: This is...

Austin: I'd say it's a step bigger.

Art: Yeah. Fascinating.

Austin: And then, after that, it liquefies and turns into— I mean, you can't smell it. But it turns into like a brown liquid.

Art: Mm. Gross.

Austin: Mm. And then the liquid turns into about 30 different ants, and they begin to crawl around on the deck.

Art: But they're not, like...they're not affiliated with me.

Austin: They're not your ants, no.

Art: Sure.

Austin: And you don't have— you don't have a thing that's like all insects, it's just your insects, right?

Art: No, no, it's just...it's a very specific set of insects.

Austin: Right.

Art: But, you know, there's a lot going on with bugs here.

Austin: Uh huh. And now it's a bunch of little ants. And there's something happening here, which is the ants don't seem...I said there's 30 different ants, right? So over the next 20 minutes, a couple of those ants begin to change into other things. Some of them turn into other bugs. Some of them return to non-thinking beings. Some of them don't turn at all.

Art: They're just ants, ants that used to be bread.

Austin: They're ants that used to be bread. And on a long enough timeline, they will change. But something is happening here when it comes to the relationship between this kind of raw Course and everything else. I'm just gonna tell you here, for me, like, your study reveals that these are the things that are available to you here, over the course of this night. One is: you can heal Echo damage here. It's a D10 Echo Haunt. I don't know if it— excuse me. I don't know that anyone has any Echo Fallout or...or Stress, but it's a really good Echo Haunt. The second thing is...this is arrived at through just study of what's changing here and the fact that you're kind of like in soft communion with this place. If you went out there for a few hours, you could try to shape back— you could kind of reach back out and try to use whatever this energy is for your own good. You can heal any type of Fallout or any type of Stress here that you want, but you have to make a roll to do it. You can tell me what that roll is, but you have to succeed at that roll. If you do not succeed, you would be harmed instead.

Art: Ooh.

Austin: I'll just say that harm will be evenly split. It'll be a D10 harm, and it'll be evenly split across your resistances. And the final thing is if you spend more than an hour, a single hour, exposed to the woods—and I'm giving you this 'cause I also gave the other side this

option—you can change anything on your sheet, and then the woods will change something else of approximately the same weight. This is—

Art: Oh, I hope...I hope no one did that.

Austin: They all did it. [Ali laughs]

Jack: They have to.

Austin: They have to. They were there. They were there for long enough that it was like completely unavoidable.

Art: [apprehensive] Ooh.

Jack: I mean, Lyke might be a bunch of ants when we see him again.

Austin: That's true. Lyke could have changed the ancestry to "a bunch of ants."

[1:10:03]

Art: That would be really biting my thing. [Ali laughs] (??? unclear)

Austin: I think so too. It would be very rude. It would be very rude.

Jack: It would be kind of cruel.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: I hope that that happened.

Austin: This is why you don't want to go hang out with Virtue with Lyke, [laughing] is 'cause he bit your whole bug thing.

Art: Yeah. [Austin laughs]

Jack: Oh, man. When I was listening to that episode, Austin—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: —I was like, "Oh, I know what I would have picked if Austin offered this to me."

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And I have now completely forgotten it.

Austin: Ah. Brutal.

Jack: That's fine. We'll just...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: You know.

Austin: Sleep on it. Here's another thing that happens as you're— you're just about done, and between the ants and the bread and the spilled tea and the million other things that things have become out there on the deck, the boat...the like, the not roof, but like the front of the boat does like hit some of— hit some low hanging branches and shakes loose— it doesn't break anything new, but it shakes loose a broken branch that falls and lands on the deck. And there is a broken Course-touched branch out there for whoever first gets to it, and maybe it won't be any of you. Maybe it will be someone who works on this boat and goes “Aw, we gotta get rid of this thing. Toss that shit overboard.” [laughs softly] But it is a resource out there. There's a Cursed resource out there.

Jack: [interested] Hm-hmm.

Austin: So.

Ali: Great.

Austin: Just hanging out.

Ali: The race is on.

Austin: The race is on. [Ali laughs] For Cursed shit. Uh, I had one other thing that we should probably do during this section, which is I don't know that you get out of these three days, Jack, without a conversation with Alekhine. Right? Or not Alekhine. Alekest. Alekhine is from Twilight Mirage. Alekest. [Ali laughs]

Jack: Yeah, I don't think so.

Austin: Yeah. Wait, was that—

Jack: I think it's an inevitability.

Austin: Oh, I thought— I didn't know if you were like, “I don't think so, actually, Austin. I think no.” [Jack and Austin laugh] I'm gonna pull an Es and not leave my room.

Jack: No, I think it's an inevitability as well. Pickman is sort of— Pickman has got the impression that this is going to happen one way or another.

Austin: Right. Right. Do you therefore choose the moment of contact in a sense?

Jack: Yes, I do. Um...I think I— yeah, I think I go— I think I go to his room and knock on the door.

Austin: Oh, okay. Yeah.

Austin (as Alekest): Um. [clears throat] Come in.

Jack (as Pickman): I don't have a lot of time. I assume you wanted to talk to me today?

Austin (as Alekest): [deep breath] Uh, yes, take a seat.

Austin: And he's like, he buttons up a vest. He has a vest on, but it wasn't buttoned, and he like fixes his tie.

Austin (as Alekest): Hmm.

Jack: Is his armor just like on a mannequin in the—

Austin: Yeah, that's exactly right. Yeah. A hundred percent.

Jack: What does the herald, the...what's the great paper called? The Heartland Rider?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: He has like a nickname, right?

Austin: Who's that?

Jack: Alekest.

Austin: Yes. It is...he is...

Jack: He's called like, it's like the Crimson Dragoon but not.

Austin: It is the— he is the Margrave of Tescano, the Porcelain Knight. Because—

Jack: Pickman doesn't know this.

Austin: I think he may have said the Porcelain Knight. Did he not say the Porcelain Knight? Maybe he didn't say it. No, you would know it. You would have...

Jack: Oh, even Pickman would know this?

Austin: As a Shape Knight? Probably.

Jack: Oh, as a Shape Knight, yeah, probably. I was accounting for the doesn't read the paper.

Austin: Yeah. Maybe it took you a moment to put it together. I can't recall if he had said, "Oh, I'm the Porcelain Knight," [laughs] or not. You know, very possible he didn't.

Jack: And his knight, his armor is like Delft style porcelain, Delft blue porcelain, right?

Austin: I think it's white. I think I described it as white and not blue, but yes. That is correct.

Jack (as Pickman): I assume you want to keep going.

Austin (as Alekest): At your leisure. It would be rewarding, I think, to both of us to get into this as soon as possible.

Jack (as Pickman): So let me recap. You saw a wall in this fabled city when you were younger.

Austin (as Alekest): Mm-hmm.

Jack (as Pickman): And it has possessed you.

Austin (as Alekest): The truth of it is I have not only seen it when I was young, and it haunts me today, still, in my sleep.

Jack (as Pickman): You say you made your armor from the wall.

Austin (as Alekest): I made my armor from the wall the way a painter makes the sunset from the sunset. I've not been to the wall. If I had been, I wouldn't so badly need you.

Jack (as Pickman): And you think that seeing this wall in person will free you from this trap that you find yourself in.

Austin (as Alekest): I...I hope. I hope so much.

Jack (as Pickman): Do you consider that it may consume you utterly?

Austin (as Alekest): The nights I have, that would be preferable.

Jack (as Pickman): I have encountered the city twice.

Jack: That's right, Austin? Yeah. Once, the...

Austin: The table and the...

Jack: Scale model.

Austin: Yes, yes.

Jack: And then the...when was the second time? The...

Austin: The portal being seemingly powered by—

Jack: Oh, the ritual room, yeah.

Austin: —by the egg sack at the time, opening up the portal to look directly at it, yeah. Also, I'm wrong. You were correct that the armor is made of the stuff itself that...that he has gathered in bits and pieces and reshaped. That is correct.

Jack: Shit, okay.

Austin: So, take that back, what I just said.

Jack: I mean, in that case— yeah, in that case, I'm absolutely going to go back.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack (as Pickman): How did you get the stuff to build the armor?

Austin (as Alekest): Bits and pieces.

Jack (as Pickman): From where?

Austin (as Alekest): Dealers, Wrights I've killed. People don't even know what it is sometimes, what they find. There are people who—ah, this is strange—will wind up with a piece of the city and begin trying to build it themselves in their basements. Like a centerpiece you build a table around, or they'll build a model around it. In my suspicion, the sketches and models that the Wrights sometimes build draw on a similar thing.

Jack (as Pickman): Huh. This is reminding me of a story that I heard from a colleague.

Austin: Eyebrows go up.

Jack (as Pickman): I don't remember who. [Austin laughs softly]

Jack: I remember. It's Duvall and Chine, right?

Austin: Yes, it's Duvall and Chine.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Jack: Pickman heard this back in Blackwick—

Austin: Yes, yes.

Jack: —and it's been like...it's a long time.

Jack (as Pickman): I think I encountered such a phenomenon. Every time I've met the city, it has done me good. [Alekest breaths quiet a laugh] And it has brought me immeasurable unease.

Austin (as Alekest): Do you sus—

Jack (as Pickman): Do you understand that?

Jack: Oh my god! Holy lord.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. That was the regular horn(??? 1:17:13). That wasn't anything special. He says— he nods, and he says:

Austin (as Alekest): This is the curse of the place, isn't it? Eh...to see it is haunting in beauty and is...compelling in a way things ought not be. The first time I saw it, it was all I could think of for a week. I stopped attending classes. My family thought I'd grown seriously ill, and in a way I had. And all other things seemed paler next to it. That's a curse, not a blessing. And I have not yet figured out what I will do if I make it there, except, I suspect, stay. And hope that proximity removes the sheen.

Jack (as Pickman): I assume we have both met the zealots that seek the city's construction.

Austin (as Alekest): The Wrights, yeah.

Jack (as Pickman): You said you'd killed them?

Austin (as Alekest): A few. They talk a big game, but...

Austin: And like, kind of shrugs backwards at the armor.

Jack (as Pickman): How long were you a Shape Knight?

Austin (as Alekest): 20 years. Still am.

Jack (as Pickman): Huh.

Austin (as Alekest): They didn't take it away from me. I'd like to see 'em try.

Jack (as Pickman): The first Wright I met had transformed a man into a train, remorselessly. He believed that it was some passage, some way that he could get himself closer to the city of which he dreamt. Do you understand my hesitancy in talking to you, if these were my previous encounters with those who seek Zevunzolia?

Austin (as Alekest): Mm. Yes. Yeah. I hope you understand that, eh...

Austin: Trying to find— he's looking for the analogy here, right?

Austin (as Alekest): There's a great vineyard near where I'm from, Tescano. And the wines produced there are consumed by the great tyrants of the world's continents. But their servants think it tastes nice, too. Now, do I wish the winery would be more particular among its clientele? Absolutely. But I don't think it's as simple as breaking the bottles. The tyrants would find another wine to drink, and we'd be one taste less in the world. And I understand that this is a [chuckles] particularly dangerous taste. The metaphor escapes me here, right? But you see what I mean. Not everyone who pursues it is...in fact, in my understanding, [laughs] it is who pursues it that is...if we lived in a better world, maybe better people would be pursuing it. I suspect that is the case, in a sense. Here, let me...

[1:20:41]

Austin: And like reaches into a drawer and grabs a book that is just filled with scribbles and theories and little papers stuck in it that, [Jack laughs softly] you know, he takes out and unfolds and little maps and...and basically begins to walk you through seven different theories of what he thinks Zevunzolia is, right? One of them is that it's heaven. One of them is that it's a city from a previous world. One of them is that it is a...a sort of imagined place that you can only access through like your mind's eye ever. You can never actually get there. And the one that he, like, ends up zooming in on here, because it's relevant, is he says:

Austin (as Alekest): From what I've gathered from the Wrights I've interacted with, who like speaking to me even less than you, if you can imagine...

Jack (as Pickman): Hmm.

Austin (as Alekest): There are other worlds, other versions of...not just Sangfielle, Aldomina and Kay'Va. And there are worlds where there is no Kay'Va, not anymore.

Jack (as Pickman): Hmm.

Austin (as Alekest): There are worlds where there's no more Sangfielle. Except the land is still here, you see. Does this...do you follow? It's heady, I know.

Jack (as Pickman): Other places aligned with this place, but not this place.

Austin (as Alekest): Yeah, other places. Yes. Other versions.

Jack (as Pickman): Yep. Okay.

Austin (as Alekest): And the thing is...I thought about this a lot. Our Wrights of the Seventh Sun, they've made okay progress. They know about Zevunzolia like we do—they probably know more than we do—but they ain't built yet. If those other places had Wrights of the Seventh Sun, wouldn't they work together to build it more quickly? Coalesce their power, et cetera. But that hasn't happened, which leads me to believe that the people building it in those other worlds are not the Wrights of the Seventh Sun. I don't know who it is. Maybe it's the Shape Knights over here, and it's scholars from the Republica somewhere else. [laughs softly] And I don't know if that is more or less scary. Because I've killed the Wrights of the Seventh Sun. I think if we got the right people together, we could stomp them out. I don't think that's true for Aldomina. If the Empress decided this was the project?

Jack (as Pickman): Ha.

Austin (as Alekest): You see?

Jack (as Pickman): Yeah.

Austin (as Alekest): Or...you know, I don't know any Telluricists personally, not on a first name basis. But I could imagine a world where the Telluricists are building it, and I suspect their version of the place would be better than the Wrights's. I don't know that that's happening, you see. I don't have—

Jack (as Pickman): It's as though we found the worst ones. [Alekest scoffs in amusement] Our representatives were the worst representatives.

Austin (as Alekest): That is a very optimistic perspective, Ms. Pickman. What makes you think we got the worst?

Jack: [heavy sigh] Yeah, all right. I'm gonna draw him...I'm gonna draw him the...

Austin: [laughs] Yeah. Uh huh.

Jack: Draw him the thing.

Austin: Mm-hmm. I think that's the scene, right? Or do you have more?

Jack: Yeah, I want to ask him—

Austin: Mm-hmm?

Jack: I just want to ask him, um...

Jack (as Pickman): You're from this...you're from here, right?

Austin (as Alekest): Very much so.

Jack (as Pickman): And you're sure of that?

Austin (as Alekest): [amused breath] I don't think it's tricked me like that. I think I...I think— are you sure?

Jack (as Pickman): No, absolutely not.

Austin (as Alekest): Well, then, me either.

Austin: And laughs.

Austin (as Alekest): [laughs softly] You see a thing like this, and everything...eh. But I know I've had this armor for many years. I remember the estate I was raised in and the names of my family, and I believe I have continuity.

Jack (as Pickman): Mm.

Austin (as Alekest): I don't think I've lost time. But...

Jack (as Pickman): Paintings of your grandfathers on the wall of your fancy house.

Austin (as Alekest): [uncomfortable] Y- yes, yes. Which, again, you're welcome to. Visit.

Jack (as Pickman): I don't care.

Austin (as Alekest): You don't— I can't give you the house, of course, this responsibility.

Jack (as Pickman): Not interested.

Austin (as Alekest): Okay, well.

Jack: Yeah, okay. [Austin laughs softly] Eh, Pickman's not really smart enough to be like, "What's in it for me?" [Austin laughs] I don't think Pickman would really be... [laughs softly]

Austin: Yes.

Jack: You know?

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Like, the...I have this D12 useless book that, if I could fence onto him, if I could fence these three books onto him...

Austin: Yes, yeah, yeah. Um, you could.

Jack: Oh, yeah, no, fuck it. Let's do it. Yeah.

Austin: Yeah. There's things you could get.

Jack: I mean, Pickman already tried to figure out what Hazard was up to.

Austin: Yeah. I mean, and specifically, what I would say is, like, you helping someone with a good reputation with the Shape Knights could get you un-exiled and un-hunted, you know?

Jack: Oh, I don't care about that.

Austin: But I don't think you care about those things, right? So.

Jack: No.

Austin: So wait, what do you want to— what do you want for them, then?

Jack: I mean, this guy is like an unbelievably wealthy Shape Knight—

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: —who is tooled up with a load of...

Austin: Yeah. All sorts of shit.

Jack: He's not gonna give me his armor.

Austin: No. But he'd be happy— this is the thing, is that like, this is someone who would happily be a closer ally to you than you want even, you know what I mean? [laughs] At this point.

Jack: Yeah, I can fuckin' tell.

Austin: But also wants to like recruit you into the cause, in a sense, in a way that's a little overeager.

Jack: Yeah. Um, well, could you...what's some D12 resources that Alekest has?

Austin: I don't fucking...give me a little bit. Let's take a break and let me think about it for five minutes.

Jack: Okay. Well, actually, what's 12 times 3? 36.

Austin: [laughs softly] Uh huh. Wait. Oh, you three D12 things? Yeah, you have these three books, right.

Jack: Yes, Austin.

Austin: Yeah, these niche books.

Jack: You said—

Austin: And this truly is the one person! [laughs] Ahh.

Jack: You said to me, "Here are some books that are really hard to sell."

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And then introduced the one man who'd buy them from me.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Yeah, let's think of a D36 resource.

Austin: Oh my god.

Jack: And be back in a second. [laughs softly] Is Tescano in Sangfielle? It is, right?

Austin: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Jack: It's south of, uh, Erlin's place?

Austin: Is it south? Is that what I said it was?

Jack: Or is it between Vish and Marrowcreek?

Austin: I think it's...I thought it was further west than that. I thought it was closer to the Republica, but I might be wrong.

Jack: Uh, you'd know.

Austin: Pff, I wouldn't. [Ali laughs]

Jack: [laughs softly] You're just making all this shit up.

Austin: I'm just making it up. I know where it was in my brain when we last did this. It's in the west. In my mind...like, this is the thing, is I said it was in the west, because at the time that we played, I knew in my mind where it was on the map. But that was...

Jack: Ah.

Austin: ...two months ago or something. You know what I mean?

Jack: Yeah. But he's from Sangfielle.

Austin: In my mind— yeah, yeah, yeah. In my mind, it was like, pretty close to the edge of...it was like where I'm pinging on the map, basically.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: I should add it, just so that we have it on the map.

Jack: Although, like—

Austin: It's like up here somewhere, you know?

Jack: Part of the Aldominan...well, and the sort of the City's exploitation of Sangfielle was specifically, like, slave labor on vineyards, right?

Austin: Yes, totally. But—

Jack: So there's—

Austin: But Aldomina was out here.

Jack: Oh, yeah, but what I'm saying is that there is definitely supposed to be something kind of queasy about this guy being like, I'm from an old family of vintners.

Austin: Maybe. I mean, yes. Yes, yes, yes. I definitely think— I mean, he is from a powerful people who remained in power. I suspect was more Unschola Rep— he's a human, right? So he's from the human Republica, which broke away from Aldomina, right?

Jack: Yes. Yeah, that's true.

Austin: So, so they were on the right side of that moment, but we also talked about that moment being opportunistic, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: We have talked about that being not fully, you know, altruistic or something. But it does allow Kay'Va to come into being. They were on the right side— when the moment came, they were on the right side of it, you know?

Jack: Yes.

Austin: And this is all well before his time, certainly. But also, [laughs softly] he's a Margrave. He is a noble, right?

Jack: He's like our second...he's our second landowner, after, um...

Austin: Dayward YVE.

Jack: Dayward.

Austin: Yeah. And Dayward—

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: The thing, the difference is that Dayward YVE probably owns land all across Sangfielle still. Like, tru—

Jack: And is an Aldominan devil.

Austin: And is an Aldominan devil with particular ties to power still in Aldomina, in a way that's, you know, like that, right? I'm surprised it's only our second landowner. I bet we've— oh, no, it's...Alaway owns land, obviously, in Yellowfield.

[1:30:00]

Jack: And fucking everybody in Sapodilla.

Austin: Right, a lot of people in Sapodilla are rich like that, though it's a different type of rich or it was a different type of rich. It was much more mercantilism rich than a landlord rich. I mean, there's also literal landlords there, so.

Jack: And now they don't own anything, because you can't own a synthesizer made of people.

Austin: That's true. That's true. And now, the hard part: figuring out what the fuck he would even have. I mean, I think that this is a renowned piece of equipment.

Jack: Is Duvall still looking for a renowned piece of equipment?

Austin: No, he got the painting.

Jack: Oh. [Austin and Jack laugh]

Austin: So yeah, I don't...I don't know what he has on him here, but I think it's probably a renowned piece of equipment for these three books. It has to be, right? And... [sighs] And it would be given to you at the end of this multi day discussion, right? This would be like...and you give him the books in exchange, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: What the hell would it be? And like, partly it's like, well, what's interesting to give to Pickman here, right? Because that's like, I don't want to give you another weapon, right? It's boring. Is it some sort of delve equipment? Is it something special that's like...

Jack: Oh. If it would help...

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: In terms of...I was wondering whether when I try and plant the sapling—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: —in Blackwick, it just takes my whole gun with it.

Austin: Oh, it might. That's totally possible.

Jack: I like the idea of like planting a gun like a tree.

Austin: [laughs softly] Yes.

Jack: So, in that sense, another weapon might be worthwhile, but then we'd have to design a weapon. And that's something we can come back to, but.

Austin: Yeah. If that's something you're interested in, we can do that. I mean, it's...it's not that hard to design a weapon. It's just that we actually spent some time designing the new espignole.

Jack: Yeah, exactly.

Austin: And it feels kind of silly to, like, give that up in that way. Not silly, but like, have you even gotten to use it use it?

Jack: Sort of a wasteful...uh, yeah, I attacked the puppet master with it.

Austin: Okay, sure.

Jack: And it was sick.

Austin: So that's one. That was one sequence. Yeah, that's fine. But I keep thinking back to like, this is someone who's done the Shape Knight thing for 20 years. So I think that there could be something really cool around, like, here's a piece of equipment that's not about like getting a kill. I mean, like, you know, would it be cool if Pickman had a big ax made out of Zevunzolia? Maybe. Like, that's kind of cool.

Jack: But is it like a boarding device? Like, a train boarding device?

Austin: Yes, exactly.

Jack: Or is it a...

Austin: Is it the equivalent of...do you get the Master Chief's new grappling hook, you know? [laughs softly] Do you get some sort of sick compass or anchor that can stop a train or...I lean towards Delve equipment, because delves are important and renowned Delve equipment is incredibly powerful to the degree that feels like it would be an appropriate exchange for such valuable stuff. And like, their examples. Here, let me read you their examples of what renowned equipment are. Razoredge tooth ripped from the skull of The Wolf, capital T capital W, [Jack laughs] which is a Compel, has a Compel Knack: Carve Threats. So if you carve a threat with this tooth, you get a Mastery on it. Jeska MacDiarmid's glass eye to replace your own, Discern Knack: Lies. So, whenever you roll Discern, you would have the the ability to discern— you'd

get Mastery on discerning lies. Tar-black rope used during the infamous conclusion of the Hallow Witch Trials, Delve Knack: Get Out of Trouble. And then the the Gjallerbrong Rifle, etched with spiraling kill marks, Kill Knack: Infamous Beasts. So that's the sort of...that's the realm in which we're playing, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: It's funny to be like, here's some really good rope for these three books. [Austin and Jack laugh] But that's— it's not bad, you know?

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Let's think about this in the background a little bit as we continue.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: You know, this is a multi-day trip still, so, easy to think through it.

Jack: I've got a downpayment on the...

Austin: Yeah, exactly. I mean, like, part of me does just want to give you the armor, you know? But like, I feel like you haven't earned that with three books. I feel you earn that when...when he gets to walk in the portal and go to Zevunzolia, then you get the armor. You know what I mean?

Jack: Yeah. [laughs]

Austin: That's a different thing, though.

Jack: He leaves a note behind like Chine. "Gone to Zevunzolia. Take armor."

Austin: [laughs] Take armor. Yeah, exactly. Mm.

Jack: Yeah. Okay, let's rotate it in our minds.

Austin: Let's sleep on it, but yeah. Mm-hmm. All right, anything else going on on this boat before we get to the next part of the boat trip? Anyone else peeking outside, any other ridiculous requests for self enjoyment?

Janine: [laughs] I was gonna ask about, like, maybe a musician, or...

Austin: Oh, that's doable. [Jack laughs] That's extremely doable.

Janine: I don't need the whole band, but like...

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: I don't know, a cellist or something. That'd be fun.

Austin: [quietly] God.

Janine: What?

Austin: You're not doing this to cure Mind Stress. You're just doing this for fun.

Janine: Oh yeah, I have no Stress at all right now.

Austin: [laughs] Perfect. Good. Then yeah, uh huh. You make this request. I think that, you know...I think, at this point, some of the staff are starting to talk about your increasingly excessive requests. But the fact that it's keeping you indoors is a plus. This happens to people during this period. You get kind of, you know, cabin fever-y.

Janine: I wonder if there's a degree to which...to which Es has like used that at this point, too.

Austin: Yeah, for sure.

Janine: And been like:

Janine (as Es): [exaggerated innocence] Well, you know, I'd go and get it myself. But I would just...I don't know where to go. I would just end up wandering around, and I might look outside, and...

Austin: [laughs softly] [mumbles] like:

Austin (as porter): Madam Es. The band performs [Janine laughs] every night at the dining and dance hall, as usual.

Janine (as Es): I don't need the whole band. My room's not that big.

Austin: Oh my god. [laughs softly]

Janine (as Es): They love music. That's why they're musicians. Surely they would want to play more music for someone. [laughs]

Jack: [doubtful] Mm...hmm... [Ali laughs]

Austin: You're not a real artist unless... [Janine laughs] Oh my god, nightmare. You know, it happens, and, you know, I think some of the staff are like, "[exasperated sound] I can't wait for this ship to get scuttled. No more of this shit." [Jack laughs]

Janine: Can I do a superficial dice roll to determine which instrument I get? Which instrument player?

Austin: Yeah, how many— there's five instruments, Jack?

Jack: Oh, it's a quartet.

Austin: It's a quartet. Right, duh. What are the numbers and what are the...so, it's D4. Jack, what are the...which number is which?

Jack: It's a...one is violin, two is viola, three is cello, four is clarinet.

Austin: Mm, mm-hmm.

Janine: Nice, nice, nice. Uh...clarinet.

Austin: Clarinet.

Ali: Ooh.

Janine: I just got one clarinet player in there. That's not bad.

Austin: Uh huh. Jack, what's this clarinet player's deal?

Jack: I don't actually know anything about the clarinet player.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: [laughs softly] The viola player kind of has a cursed double.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: The magistrate, uh...the cellist maybe used to be a magistrate.

Austin: Gotcha.

Jack: Um.

Austin: So, so the clarinet player, truly mystery background.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: Mystery person.

Art: Does the viola player have a cursed double because the viola is itself a cursed double of a violin? Is that your like inside...

Jack: [laughs] No, I don't think so.

Ali: Mm.

Art: Mm.

Jack: They met someone in Cantbank who...the whole band went to shore in Cantbank, like, some time ago.

Austin: Mm.

Jack: And in a bar in Cantbank met an exact double of the viola player. And they were like, "Huh, weird." And then they all got back on—

Janine: Mm.

Austin: Which one got on board?

Jack: They all got back on the boat, and the bandleader is like, "Viola player's been a bit weird lately." [Austin laughs]

Janine: Ooh.

Jack: So they're not sure which one they've got.

Austin: Ahh, ain't that the way?

Jack: But yeah, I don't know about the clarinet player.

Austin: Interesting. Yeah, sure. But they're...they're good at playing the clarinet. They can do a little performance here and be a little confused about this. I think they are assuming that they'll be paid for this, but they don't know if that's a thing you'll be doing or if the boat will be paying them extra.

Janine: Great question.

Austin: And so there's a moment at the end of this performance where they're like:

Austin (as clarinetist): [uncertain] Okay!

Jack: [chuckles] A long pause.

Austin (as clarinetist): I hope you enjoyed the music.

Austin: Yeah, exactly. [laughs softly]

Janine: I offer them the apple caviar lollipop I've been holding onto from the doctor.

Austin: Oh my god. I think they say:

Austin (as clarinetist): That's okay. I'm good. [Janine laughs]

Ali: Aw. [laughs]

Janine: I held onto it just in case—

Austin: No, you know? Yeah. You know what, fine. They take it.

Janine: Because he said it was the last one, and someone—

Austin: It's the last one.

Janine: And then you made a point of the doctor saying, like, someone might come to you looking for this.

Austin: Yeah, you know what? I think that's...

Janine: And I think, well, I better save this! [laughs]

Austin: I think that that's...that's a fun little exchange. They pop it in their mouth, and they like, you know, I think that they kind of strut away happy with this lollipop, [Janine laughs] because it's a rare lollipop, you know?

Janine: Damn.

Austin: I don't know if it's delicious or not, but. [laughs softly] I wouldn't want to have it, certainly.

Janine: The true—

Jack: Roll a one D4 to see how delicious the lollipop is. [Janine laughs]

Austin: Mm. Let's see. Uh...three. That's...

Jack: That's fine, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: Okay.

Austin: Eh, pretty good lollipop.

Janine: (??? 1:39:12) above average.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Janine: Could be better, but.

Austin: Uh huh. All right, if no one else has anything during this three day period, then you break through the edge of the woods finally. Does anyone ever try to sneak out to get that branch?

Ali: I'm going for it.

Janine: Me as a person, like as a player—

Art: Oh.

Austin: Yes.

Janine: —really wants to, but I am the least... [Ali laughs softly]

Austin: Damn.

Janine: I'm in the last position to do it, so.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Marn said...Marn said "I'm going for it," just now. Ali said that.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: All right.

Janine: Do it.

Ali: Anyone else have dibs?

Jack: Wait, before Marn does, is there any chance that my magically warded armor might protect me from this? 'Cause I could go out and get it for Marn. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Maybe. I don't know. You know.

Jack: What if I—

Ali: Don't I already have the trees talking to me?

Austin: You already got the fucking trees talking to you. Yeah.

[1:40:01]

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Do you want to—

Ali: Going out there to get some air, 'cause I'm deeply compelled to. [laughs]

Austin: Oh, yeah, does it just— yeah, that's kind of it, right? It's that day, and you're like, "Ah, last day in the woods. I better go outside before we're out of here." [laughs]

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Like, the way that you make a bad decision without realizing you're making a bad decision.

Jack: [laughs softly] Yes.

Austin: You know what I mean?

Ali: Yeah, the way that you do that, sure.

Austin: Fuck. [Ali laughs] Do you end up just stand— staying— like, it's really pretty. What's— we talked about this with Pickman already. You step outside. The door closes behind you. The curtain is closed, so people can't see you out there without pulling the curtain aside and looking. The branch is there. I think it's like a really striking branch. It's like a...for Marn, who's just a little guy, it's a pretty big branch.

Ali: Mm.

Austin: But you can pick it up.

Ali: Oh. Yeah, sure.

Austin: But it has like a really interesting almost like claw-shaped pattern. Not pattern, but like, you know, shape of the branches, where like, instead of it being... [sighs] Instead of them being mostly parallel, it's as if it's like a...in my mind, I'm imagining, start with the shape of a claw machine claw, that kind of three prod claw, right?

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: Or a bird claw.

Ali: Right.

Austin: But that specific three thing, and then add some tree variability there, right? So the branches are still going off in other places. But it looks like you could like put a big orb in there and it would hold it, you know what I mean?

Ali: [intrigued] Mm.

Austin: It's one of those. It has that sort of a shape, that if Marn wants to become—

Jack: Oh, for pondering the orb.

Austin: Right, if you wanted to ponder the orb. [laughs softly]

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: If you wanted a staff that had an orb in it, that would fit, you know what I mean? It'd be a big orb. It's a big...it's a big... [Ali laughs] Like, the branches are big. We're not talking about a little tiny claw. It's a big tree claw. And this is a...this is a D8 Curse-touched wood branch.

Ali: Wow.

Austin: Cursed— or Course-touched wood, Cursed resource.

Ali: I have—

Austin: So you got another D8 Cursed resource here.

Ali: Great.

Austin: But also—

Ali: Now I have an active Beat, which is [laughs softly] find or buy a D8 or higher orb.

Austin: Right, good, yes. To fit into the... [Ali laughs] But as I said to Pickman before, the, you know, the woods look back at you. What is it in this moment of being outside and breathing in the air that Marn feels she wants and that the woods want to provide? And again, the moon is right up there, even in the day. [Ali laughs] It's scary here. It's weird here, at the very least.

Ali: Yeah, I bet.

Austin: And unlike in Marrowcreek, it's not hiding itself from you.

Ali: Mm. I don't know, I think... 'cause Marn is freaked out and like going through it right now.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Right? In terms of just being like, I've discovered a secret society and I'm nervous about it. [laughs]

Austin: [sighs] Then like, is it just, it's a really nice day. And it would be really nice to just lay out on the chair and let the— [Ali laughs]

Jack: Oh no.

Austin: —let the Course massage those shoulders a little bit, you know?

Ali: Mm, maybe.

Austin: And potentially change something on your character sheet because you've been out here for too long.

Ali: [laughs] [faintly] No.

Austin: No, you're good? You don't want that?

Ali: [laughs] No, I think I'm good. I think I'm good.

Austin: Ah, I feel like there's...you have to open yourself up to something here, having come out in this way.

Ali: Sure, yeah.

Austin: Right?

Ali: Okay, yeah.

Austin: So, I think maybe what we need is a resist, some sort of resistance here.

Ali: Oh, sure.

Austin: To try to not get wooed since you've literally stepped out into the place. [Ali laughs]

Jack: [laughing] Oh, god.

Austin: Right?

Ali: I think Marn is that, 'cause the way that I've been thinking about this since the Hark thing...

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: We saw Zevunzolia, and we were like changed.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ali: And I was like, "I want to resist this," and then I didn't, 'cause I don't have any resistance.

Austin: You don't have any Endure, yeah.

Ali: [laughs] I think that has been like stuck in Marn's head as like a "I could have said that thing to that person," right?

Austin: Right.

Ali: But like, instead it's like—

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ali: "I should have not let that happen, and I'm very put off by that happening."

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Oh, Marn, I got someone that I think you'd love to meet." [Ali laughs]

Austin: Ah. Uh huh.

Ali: That guy should be talking to me. I've been looking into this stuff all week.

Austin: Doesn't know about you.

Ali: I know. It's really a shame.

Austin: There wasn't a fuckin' bounty put on your head, yeah. [Ali laughs] You could get introduced.

Ali: Things just work out like that, huh?

Austin: Yeah, exactly.

Ali: You know?

Austin: I think that guy and Bucho would get along pretty well. I think— you know?

Ali: Mm, yeah.

Austin: I think that there's...there's overlap in this crew. [Ali laughs] But I think it's an Endure Cursed check, which you don't have either of those. [laughs softly]

Ali: I don't have either of those, right.

Jack: Oh, dear. [Ali laughs] I mean...

Ali: I still have one Mastery left over.

Austin: You do, so that's two dice, yeah.

Ali: I can be a master of nothing.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Ali: [laughs] And I could say that I bought my radio out here to like listen to the radio, but I don't think that I did that, so I'm just gonna roll this.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. I think it would get you caught pretty quick. [Austin and Ali laugh] All right.

Ali: That's a seven.

Austin: That's a success. That's...take Stress. I've already discussed how bad Stress is out here. All right, take eight Echo Stress.

Jack: Holy shit.

Ali: What?

Austin: But you don't— nothing on your...nothing on your sheet changes.

Ali: Echo— that's a lot.

Austin: Yeah, it's a D10. It's bad out here. You're at the Course.

Ali: That's so many.

Austin: You could almost touch the moon.

Ali: Can I start throwing stuff to heal that? [laughs]

Austin: What do you mean, throwing stuff? Oh, oh, do you want to... [Ali laughs] Do you want to... [Jack laughs] I mean, first of all, you have to roll to see if you get Fallout.

Ali: Mm-hmm. I sure do, don't I?

Austin: Mm-hmm. [someone groans sympathetically]

Austin: Something on your sheet's about to change, [Austin and Ali laugh] it's just not gonna be what you thought it was gonna be. [someone groans] Hey, Minor Fallout.

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Who could've thought it?

Ali: Sure.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: Why not?

Art: Some of the best Fallout.

Austin: It kinda is.

Ali: I don't know it was worth this stick, but... [laughs]

Austin: Ah, I don't know. It's a D8 stick. [Ali laughs]

Jack: You'll feel differently once you get the orb.

Austin: Yeah, when you're... [Austin and Janine laugh]

Ali: Uh huh.

Austin: Once you're orb'd up, this whole thing is gonna feel pretty much worth it. [Ali laughs]
Um, all right. Uh...god.

Ali: Yeah, take your choice.

Austin: There's a lot out here, huh? Lot of Minors.

Jack: What Fallout is this?

Austin: Echo.

Jack: Oh god.

Austin: Yeah. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Tragically, Echo Fallout is great for me, and I've never gotten it ever.

Austin: That's very funny.

Jack: Huh.

Austin: You know, if you want to go outside, you can still go outside. I'm not, you know.

Ali: Yeah, come get the stick.

Janine: I've made such a big deal about how I'm not gonna...

Ali: Uh huh. [laughs]

Austin: This is true. You have done that.

Janine: It feels— it's peak metagaming if I go outside at this point.

Austin: Uh huh. [Ali laughs] Eh. You got Beats in this game. This game is pro-metagaming in a way. I'm not mad at it. Um...fuck, I...there's some funny stuff here. What was it that— you didn't get the face, right? That was Pickman. Did anything specific...

Ali: Mm.

Austin: Did we say anything specific was looking at you from the woods?

Ali: I don't think so.

Austin: We didn't.

Ali: Just tree, moon.

Austin: Yeah. Okay.

Ali: I did have the whole moon thing.

Art: I think this would be a great time to introduce a new Ravening Beast. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Well, it is something similar to that. It's not Ravening Beast, but you're gonna take Follower: "Someone or something believes you are very important, chosen of the Heart, and worth following."

Ali: Oh.

Austin: "A weird looking but essentially harmless creature or person follows you at a distance. They won't approach you, but they'll be keen to sift through your rubbish or attempt to hurt anyone who looks like they might want to get in your way. Ongoing." And that can be upgraded to other things. So what is it?

Art: So we're adding a Newman to our... [Ali laughs]

Austin: Right. To our *Seinfeld*, yeah, uh huh. What is it, though? I think it's some sort of creature and not some sort of person.

Ali: Okay.

Austin: I think that it's, like...what's a fun weird creature? I don't want to take this stick away from you, but making it stick-related would be cool. [Ali laughs]

Jack: How about a scarecrow?

Austin: Oh, that's— no, we already have scarecrow connection to Bucho, and I feel like that's...

Jack: Oh, to Bucho.

Ali: Oh.

Austin: I think it's like, you know, you could do that, but I think that it's...I want something smaller, maybe. I want something that feels more like it fell out of the woods. You know what I mean?

Janine: One of those lizards that looks like bark?

Austin: A bark lizard. Yeah. You're like, this stick is really good. And then you turn it, and you realize in fact, that like, you didn't realize it, but there was a stick lizard attached to this thing.

Janine: I put a picture in Sangfelle.

Ali: Here we go.

Austin: Okay, lizard picture, everybody. Everybody check out the lizard pic. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Ignore the baguette one. That one's not relevant anymore.

Austin: Okay, sure.

Jack: Oh!

Austin: Oh, wow.

Jack: He's lovely.

Austin: That's incredible. That's a real thing?

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: It's just a lizard?

Janine: Stick lizard.

Austin: That's a lizard? That lizard?

Art: What's going on at the elbow?

Janine: I got the picture from Flickr. It's a picture from Flickr, and it's from Sheri Hayden on Flickr.¹

Ali: Are those— those are lizard limbs?

Janine: Yeah. Sheri says, "Saw this stick as I was walking in Georgetown."

¹ Link to photo: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/26038958@N08/2459389106/in/photostream/>

Austin: Okay, it's a stick.

Janine: Oh, wait, no. It looks like a lizard. [laughs]

Austin: But...

Janine: It is a stick. [all laughing]

Austin: I think there's no way that's a lizard.

Ali: I was like, how are its toes and its skin like that? What's going on?

Austin: But this is it.

Art: And it has like Wolverine bones.

Austin: It really does. It's wild.

Janine: The like clip thing that—

Austin: Janine, I'm so happy. [Ali continues laughing]

Janine: —Google image search gave me just said, “Saw this stick as I was walking in...” And then it was like, it trails off.

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: And I was like, oh, and then she's gonna say “and it was a lizard,” 'cause it moved.

Austin: It didn't.

Janine: The stick moved. I just filled it in in my head—

Austin: Yeah.

Janine: —'cause I wanted it to be that way.

Austin: Yep. Zev— or, the Course has spoken to you and read it and— no, but that's it for sure, now. It has to be this guy. It has to be this stick lizard. [Ali and Janine laugh] You know, a little tongue emerges from the bottom of the stick you're holding, and you realize part of it is actually just this stick lizard, and it jumps away and does a little like step away, stop, and look at you. And like, and then it kind of moves closer, but not too close. It doesn't want to scare you away.

Ali: Sure.

Austin: So yeah, you got a little follower. Write “Follower: stick lizard.”

Ali: I got it. Okay, yeah, the stick lizard.

[1:50:02]

Austin: Gotta remember it's a stick lizard.

Janine: Hang on. I found another lizard I just want to share.

Austin: Uh huh.

Ali: [laughs] Okay.

Janine: It's just...he's having fun.

Austin: Oh, yeah.

Ali: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: Good one.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Ah, he's great.

Ali: Give Marn a week, and that's what that lizards gonna be up to. [Austin, Jack, and Janine laugh]

Austin: All right. That's fun. All right, I think we've made it through the woods, literally and figuratively. And the next morning, the boat comes to a rest at a dock. It's a li— to call it a— I mean, it's a dock, but it's not a dock the way Cantbank had a dock. It's just like a little tiny, you know, 12 foot long, you know, stop that you could hop off at if you wanted to. And at this point, every day from here to— this is day 12. There's only 12, 13, and 14 left. You could leave and do the rest of this trip on foot if you wanted to. I'm going to say, effectively, looking at the map, you are now effectively...you're in this quadrant, just northeast of Last Rest, and each day you'll get a little bit closer to Blackwick. And the question is like, well, is it a faster trip on foot or a faster trip...and also, do you want to go fast, or do you just want to kick back? You know? I will

note—and it's important to note this, I think our fans would really appreciate me noting this—Lye Lychen was going to be in the finals for the true false— er, for the false war tournament.

Ali: Mm. [Janine laughs]

Austin: Lye Lychen is not on the boat anymore.

Art: Mm.

Austin: And so, the rules dictate that there is an open spot, and it doesn't just go to the third person. You can earn your way back into the finals, if you've already lost. There is now a losers tournament.

Art: Oh my god, I have to win this!

Jack: Shit.

Art: I have to have a sports anime here.

Austin: Uh huh. [Ali laughs] So you have to win twice, 'cause you'd have to win the losers bracket, and then you'd have to win the finals.

Art: Yeah, and I still don't have anything that does this.

Jack: Can I help?

Austin: How?

Art: By cheating.

Austin: B cheating.

Art: Or whatever Jack was gonna say.

Jack: Yeah, I mean, I was gonna— [laughs] I was gonna say by playing a skill that you do not have, but you know, part of that might be...

Austin: You do have the skill.

Jack: No, I wouldn't help you. I'm...but I'm...I don't want to help Duvall. I'm— Duvall and I are still...the last conversation I had with Duvall was being like, "Now, wait a second. I think you attacked Lyke."

Austin: Right. Yeah.

Jack: I have a...

Austin: You didn't want to have any further conversation with Duvall while on the boat, I guess? No?

Jack: Pickman is not gonna...

Austin: No clearing the air here?

Jack: Clearing the air? I don't think Pickman knows what that means. [Austin and Ali laugh]
Um...I'm not— if Duvall wants to come and talk to me, that's fine, but I'm not gonna help him play cards. Sorry.

Art: Well, I'll do it if it's gonna help me play cards.

Jack: You don't know that!

Ali: Ah.

Jack: You don't know that I can help.

Austin: Yeah, you do.

Jack: All you have seen Pickman do play cards is she like played very badly twice.

Austin: Well, Duvall also did that, so maybe with your powers combined. [Ali laughs]

Art: Also, I think history is gonna look very fondly on my involvement in the Virtue-Lyke conflict. [Austin laugh]

Ali: Mm...

Austin: I think it mostly—

Art: Time to get on the winning team.

Austin: I'm mostly interested in seeing what that conversation would be like, and I think that it's a good alibi to have it to talk about this potential conversation around a card game. I think that's a good opener to have a deeper actual conversation about what's going on here.

Art: Yeah, I think that's probably a good idea. Especially 'cause, at some point, something horrible's gonna happen, and we gotta be on the same page.

Austin: Mm-hmm. [Ali laughs]

Art: Like me losing a card tournament again. [Austin and Jack chuckle]

Austin: So, where is it that you find Pickman?

Art: Kramering right into her room, I think is the...

Austin: [laughing slightly] Okay, good.

Art: I hope you're ready for a lot of imagining what the Sangfielle version—

Austin: Uh huh.

Art: —of the *Seinfeld* theme song sounds like this week. [Ali laughs]

Austin: Yeah, what the Broken Quartet plays that version of it. Yeah. Great. [Jack laughs]

Ali: I just watched eight seasons. I'm ready to...

Austin: You watched eight seasons? You just did the damn thing. You just did...

Ali: Yeah. I'm almost done.

Austin: Uh, I almost said... [laughs]

Art: You just did *Seinfeld*.

Austin: I almost said Sangfield. [Ali and Art laugh] Which is how we got here to begin with, presumably.

Jack: Sanfeld, I think was...

Austin: Sanfield, yeah, Sanfeld.

Jack: Sangfeld was the first continent.

Art: Seinfeld.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: Janine said, "No," and she was right.

Austin: Uh huh. [Ali laughs]

Art: [imitating Jerry Seinfeld] What's the deal with the Structure?

Austin: Hrm. [laughs softly]

Ali: Wow. [Jack laughs]

Austin: Where's this conv— so, you've Kramered in.

Art: This is a better—

Austin: Also, fuck Michael Richards. We know this. Blah, blah, blah. Like, come on. You know what it is. [Ali laughs]

Art: Yeah. Kramer is bigger than Michael Richards.

Austin: [laughs softly] Yes.

Art: As Kramer is bigger than all of us. Run for your lives. It's Kramer. [Austin and Jack laugh]

Austin: Uh huh.

Janine: You don't know what to do with this scene, do you?

Art: [laughs quietly] Why, just 'cause I'm talking about Kramer a lot more than normal? [Ali, Janine, and Austin laugh]

Janine: I don't know.

Art: [laughing] Janine's got my tell, and it's really obnoxious. [others laugh] I'm Kramering into the scene, in more ways than one.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. You've come into the room.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Pickman, Duvall is here.

Jack (as Pickman): What do you want? [Austin laughs softly]

Art (as Duvall): Look, I think there's been some bad blood between us. I noticed you didn't come over at breakfast the other day. That was very hurtful.

Jack (as Pickman): What?

Art (as Duvall): At breakfast the other day, when I ordered a cherry danish and they gave me a seven pound pastry? I was like, "Oh, Pickman's here. Now I don't have to eat this pastry by myself." And instead, you just made that weird scene by the window.

Jack (as Pickman): Do we have something to talk about?

Art (as Duvall): Yeah, what's...what's the matter?

Jack (as Pickman): Well, when we met up following our time in Sapodilla...

Art (as Duvall): Yeah.

Jack (as Pickman): Virtue was gone.

Art (as Duvall): Uh huh.

Jack (as Pickman): And you'd burned Lyke.

Art (as Duvall): That was an accident. And I helped Virtue. Virtue wanted help. Lyke was being kind of a dick, if we're being very honest.

Jack (as Pickman): What happened?

Art (as Duvall): Okay. So, I'm gonna skip over a lot of stuff about a revenge song and jump to a horrible machine god under the city.

Jack (as Pickman): Okay.

Art (as Duvall): So, there we were, confronting the horrible machine god. And we had three choices for how to settle this, one of which involved Virtue becoming Vampire Queen of Sapodilla, one of which involved Lyke not secretly harvesting an evil god and keeping in his backpack and not telling anyone about it the whole time.

Jack (as Pickman): Lyke has a god in his backpack?

Art (as Duvall): Uh huh. Yeah, he picked it up a couple months ago, didn't tell anyone he was doing it, and is like trying to turn it into some sort of tool for him to amass power.

Jack (as Pickman): When we were in Sapodilla, before we left...

Art (as Duvall): Mm-hmm.

Jack (as Pickman): He spoke to me about it. He took it out of his bag.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah.

Jack (as Pickman): And he wanted me to help him. He said something like, “Do you know what this is?” And I said that I—

Art (as Duvall): Did you know what that was?

Jack (as Pickman): No, I didn't. And I didn't care. And I said that he should talk to Chine, but clearly...that's a god. He has a god in his...

Art (as Duvall): An evil god, I think it's important to specify.

Jack (as Pickman): And what was option three?

Art (as Duvall): Gonna be completely honest with you. I'm not sure I remember. [Jack and Austin laugh]

Austin: Uh, it was...okay, what—

Art: It wasn't as exciting as the other two.

Austin: Well, it was the one that you wanted, right? The third one was the— wasn't the— oh, oh, oh. It was to combine...it was to use the god...it was to use Aterika'Kaal with the Oratorio to kind of keep both of them permanently in check with each other or seemingly permanently in check with each other, synthesizing the two of them so that neither could feed forever because they'd be constantly feeding on each other.

Art: Yeah.

Art (as Duvall): No one knew how that was gonna work, and so we quickly focused on other options. Lyke was not willing to sacrifice his own power but was unwilling to let Virtue acquire any. I thought it was a good thing to have one of our colleagues and...I don't know about friends, but you know, strong work acquaintances to be Vampire Queen of Sapodilla. And so, in the moment, I made what I thought was the right call. And as a consequence, Lye did get burnt. It's unfortunate, but it was unintentional and an accident of messing with cosmic forces. From what I understand, he's fine now. And I think Virtue's gonna be great in her new role.

[2:00:03]

Jack (as Pickman): Are you extremely naive? [Austin laughs]

Art (as Duvall): No, I think I'm a regular amount.

Jack (as Pickman): What makes you think—

Art (as Duvall): Did you and Virtue have...have problems?

Jack (as Pickman): What makes you think for a moment that Virtue will give us anything?

Art (as Duvall): Loyalty?

Jack (as Pickman): Huh. You get the impression that she was a particularly loyal person?

Art (as Duvall): I think that if someone made me Vampire Queen of a place, that I—

Jack (as Pickman): I think she's already forgotten.

Art (as Duvall): Well, she got us the tickets to this boat.

Jack: Is that true?

Austin: Are you asking me?

Art: Yeah, I thought that was clear the whole time.

Austin: Is that what Duvall believes? [Ali laughs]

Art: I—

Austin: You doing that got you the tickets to the boat, but it wasn't—

Art: Yeah.

Austin: —a gift from Virtue. It was a gift from the Structure. It was a gift from the Sleeping City for...

Ali: Yeah.

Austin: Which is a thing you have not mentioned, by the way, [Ali laughs] that you also helped give the Sleeping City a little backdoor into Sapodilla.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Uh huh.

Art: It's not a deposition.

Austin: [laughs] Ooh! Oh, no one's hands are clean.

Jack (as Pickman): What was—

Art: I don't remember being sworn in at the beginning of this conversation. [Austin laughs]

Jack (as Pickman): What was required for Virtue to take this power?

Art (as Duvall): Um...it was some ritual magic.

Jack (as Pickman): What ritual magic?

Art (as Duvall): Look, I'm not a ritual magician. Virtue knew what to do. And so too, seemingly, did some of my insect friends. And we just sort of made it happen.

Jack (as Pickman): Some sort of a gem or a ring.

Art (as Duvall): There was a—

Jack (as Pickman): A transference of power.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah, uh huh. A lot of stuff was going on at the time.

Jack (as Pickman): Like what?

Art (as Duvall): A transfer of power...

Jack (as Pickman): In what respect?

Art (as Duvall): From the machine god to Virtue.

Jack (as Pickman): What did this machine god look like?

Art (as Duvall): It was awful. Just the worst. All sticky and metal and blood from victims.

Jack (as Pickman): From victims.

Art (as Duvall): People...people just dying forever in there. Well, there was also like a time component. It's the...linear time is...don't focus on anything related to linear time. The point is: I saw an opportunity to help one of our associates. Lye did not see it that way. I think having an ally in charge of Sapodilla is gonna be a great help to us. I think

Virtue will remember who her friends are. Specifically me, the Queenmaker of Sapodilla. You're talking about this like it's a bad thing, and I think it's a neutral thing at worst.

Jack (as Pickman): How neutral was what happened to Fezh? We saw it with our own eyes, Duvall.

Art: I don't recall who that is. Who's Fezh?

Austin: That in character or out of character?

Art: That's out of character. Who's Fezh?

Jack: [laughs] Fezh is the guy who Calen turned into the train!

Art: Oh, okay.

Art (as Duvall): Bad. That's objectively bad.

Jack (as Pickman): And there's a difference between siphoning the power from a god into our amoral vampire acquaintance.

Art (as Duvall): And torturing and most of the way murdering an unwitting accomplice? Yeah, I think there's a strong difference there, yes.

Jack (as Pickman): I think you're as big a fool as Lyke is.

Art (as Duvall): I think I have a slightly smaller fool than Lyke is. And I think the evidence really backs me up on this assertion. Lyke is dangerous and foolhardy. And I am cautious and just kind of accepting of the way the world works, in terms of doing favors for people and having them owe you one.

Jack (as Pickman): You're pretending to be a kingmaker, Duvall.

Art (as Duvall): Pretend— I'm not pretending. Well, queenmaker, please. Vampire Queen of Sapodilla.

Jack (as Pickman): What were you hoping in coming here? For me to look at what you did in Sapodilla and go, "Oh, good."

Art (as Duvall): Well—

Jack (as Pickman): All I've learned is that Lyke is as stupid as you are.

Art (as Duvall): Well, I think I also wanted you to learn that I did not hurt Lyke on purpose, nor would I ever.

Jack (as Pickman): Okay, fine. You've made your point.

Art (as Duvall): And, I mean, I think we need to have a productive coworker relationship from here on out. And I was gonna float the idea of maybe you help me cheat at this card tournament.

Jack (as Pickman): What? [Austin and Jack laugh]

Janine: I was gonna say we weren't very Kramery anymore, but then we came back around. [laughs softly]

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Blank confusion on Pickman's face. [Ali laughs] Like, cracks a small smile. Um...

Jack (as Pickman): No. Make it morth— worth—

Jack: [laughs softly] Morth. [Austin laughs]

Jack (as Pickman): No. Make it worth my while.

Art (as Duvall): I'll split the pot with you.

Jack (as Pickman): Like, how?

Art (as Duvall): What? [Austin laughs]

Jack (as Pickman): How? What amount?

Art (as Duvall): I'll take what they give me, and I'll give you half of it.

Jack (as Pickman): Uh, yeah, okay. [Austin laughs]

[Music plays: **"Sangfielle"**]