## Spring in Hieron 44: The Second Spring Pt. 6

Transcriber: Cole

[Jack de Quidt's "Under the Boughs" begins playing]

**Austin**: One month before the arrival of the Frost Shepherd, the university buzzed with a strange energy. It had been over a year since the Second Spring. But with things as hectic as they were, no one realized they ought mark the occasion. Whether with celebration or censure How could they? Life had yet to find itself in a stable rhythm. Each day brought new challenges, and concerns long thought addressed reared their heads regularly. And so, it was months after the one year anniversary of the rhizome's arrival, before the merchants of the university realized an opportunity. A belated week-long celebration of life and discounts. It is during this new shopping holiday that's Hieron's most ardent comrades in arms, Hadrian and Hella, found themselves browsing the marketplace looking for a spoon.

> **Art** (as **Hadrian**): Alright. It's gotta be this one, right? It's-
>
> **Ali** (as **Hella**): No, that's like a whole bowl in one spoon.
>
> **Art** (as **Hadrian**): Yeah it's a -it's a- You got somethin' you want to put in a bowl? You scoop it with this.
>
> **Ali** (as **Hella**): Yeah.
>
> **Art** (as **Hadrian**): You put it in. You're done.
>
> **Ali** (as **Hella**): But what if everything you want isn't in the first scoop?
>
> **Art** (as **Hadrian**): [sighs] Don't you ever like, have something that's useful, but it's kind of just there because it can be like, 'Wow, look at that table,' you know? And it's not like the table everyone fits at every corner of the table. Sometimes you just have a table that takes up some extra space. I want a spoon where people are like, 'Wow, check out that spoon.'
>
> **Ali** (as **Hella**): I- I'm not usually impressed by spoons, Hadrian.
>
> **Art** (as **Hadrian**): Well, you would by this one.
>
> **Ali** (as **Hella**): Didn't you used to have this problem with fish baits? The biggest one only gets a certain type of fish.
>
> **Art** (as **Hadrian**): Big fish!
>
> **Ali** (as **Hella**): You to think of all of the different soups in your life.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): [sighs] Maybe I need a practical spoon and display spoon.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): Yes. Exactly.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): It's- it's strange like this, having... having abundance.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): Yeah. You know there was a part of me that never thought I would see this many spoons in one place again.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): Yeah. We spent years sleeping on the ground and eating garbage rations.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): [amused] They were the worst. Ugh, god.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): That was the best part of when Samothes would make it so I didn't have to eat. I wouldn't have to eat the- the trash we brought with us. Do you ever miss it? You know, the woods, the ground, the fire, the rations?

**Ali** (as **Hella**): I guess I just think... Like, I used to walk around and like, see a tree and think like, ‘Oh, that reminds me of that time.’ But now I just like... I mean we just get to hang out. So, not really.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): Yeah. Nothing bad ever happens.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): [laughs] Not that never happens, but we deal with it.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): These are more peaceful times.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): Yeah, we've earned it.

**Art** (as **Hadrian**): [exhaled laugh] Or something.

**Ali** (as **Hella**): Or something.

[music finishes]

**Austin**: Welcome to friends at the table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I'm your host, **Austin** Walker. And today, we are finishing uh, Spring in Hieron.

**Art**: Fwoof.

**Austin**: And uh, yeah. Uh huh.Yeah, and uh, Seasons of Hieron. [light laugh]

**Art**: Mm.

**Austin**: Fuck. God. Ugh.

**Ali**: Bye!

**Austin**: We were playing The Quiet Year by Avery Alder. I guess our principles are to play to find out what happens. [lightly laughs] Um, a couple announcements up top before we dig into everything. One is we can now announce that the post-mortem for [hesitantly] Hieron will be Sunday, September fifteenth. And that will be at six p.m. Eastern, three p.m. Pacific. That'll be all our YouTube channel. YouTube.com- Is it just youtube.com/friendsatthetable? What is it?

**Art**: I've never looked at our own YouTube channel.

**Ali**: [quietly, typing] Friends at the Table.

**Austin**: At the Table.

**Ali**: YouTube doesn't like, let you do that.

**Austin**: Nope. It's not that. [**Art** laughs] It's not the one I just said. What the fuck is it?

**Art**: Who's on that?

**Austin**: Am I not subscribed to our own YouTube? I'm not subscribed our own YouTube. I'm learnin' a lot right now.

**Art**: This is why I want one of those plaques.

**Austin**: This is this-

**Ali**: Well, it's like, cause you have to like- It's like-

**Austin**: It's a whole thing.

**Ali**: Youtube.com/channel/ a bunch of nonsense.

**Austin**: Yeah. Just- We will link it on our Twitter, which you can definitely find at twitter.com/friends_table. That's right, right?

**Art**: Yeah.

**Ali**: Mhm.

**Art**: Don't check our website. Who knows what's going on with that?

**Austin**: Oh, wow. A lot of stuff is happenin' there. Who knows? [**Ali** laughs] You can send your questions for the post-mortem to friendsatthetable@gmail.com. Use the subject 'Hieron PM.' Hieron space PM. That will let us find them in- you know, instead of just looking at the mess of weird business email spam that we get now sometimes.

**Art**: [amused] Just a really bad week with someone with a hot new podcasting platform called ‘Hieron PM’ tryin’ to get our attention. [**Austin** and **Ali** laugh]

**Austin**: Uh, it's a shame. Also, we should call lawyers. [**Art** laughs] Alright. Before we get in, let's do a quick recap of what we have here. So, the active clocks right now are that the sapkin are building a tower. Is that right? I think that's right.

**Ali**: They- Yes.

**Austin**: Okay. Red Jack is- has- Throndir went out looking for Red Jack, and now Red Jack is looking for Throndir. Hella, you started another census slash like, you were kind of like- Basically you're tryin’ to like, get that community up... basically, right?

**Ali**: Yeah. Mhm.

**Austin**: And then the two of you, Hella and Hadrian, are continuing to work on this church. In terms of... It's not just building it so much as it is like, figuring out what a new faith looks like. Right?

**Ali**: Light work.

**Art**: Yeah. It’s, you know, the kind of thing you could do in just a couple of weeks. [**Ali** laughs]

**Austin**: Oh, yeah. Got it.

**Art**: Eight weeks is how that-

**Austin**: [laughs] Ah, love it. Listen. It took us five years to kill a bunch of gods. It should only take us eight weeks to build a few, right? Alright. So, Sylvia[1], draw a card.

**Sylvia**: Alright. God, I hope it's a good one.

**Austin**: Me too. There aren’t- Uh, the ones that are left are wild.

**Sylvia**: That's not so bad. Number seven.

**Austin**: Hey, this one’s not bad!

**Keith**: Yeah. [**Jack** laughs]

**Sylvia**: For winter. [reading] ‘What is winter like in this area? How do community members react to the weather?’

**Austin**: What is winter like in this area? What does it mean to be winter here?

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[1] The name in the audio recording is no longer in use, hence the audio/transcript discrepancy.

**Sylvia**: So, I was actually thinking about this like a lot lately- or not lately. Literally yesterday. [**Austin** laughs] Because I was like, ‘What's winter like in a place that is generally like, warm and sunny?’

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Sylvia**: And I think it's just really wet.

**Austin**: Mm.

**Sylvia**: Like, it's the wet season kind of, right? And this may- might be tainted by me having just like, the wettest winter of all time recently. Where it just rained like, freezing rain all the time.

**Austin**: Ugh.

**Sylvia**: But I just think of like a lot of... precipitation.

**Austin**:Yeah.

**Sylvia**: And I think like, part of that is like- the like, a lake up here starts to swell a little bit.

**Austin**: Ooo.

**Sylvia**: And maybe like, grows a bit, and people need to move like, away from the waterfall-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: -because it's starting to like, just become overwhelming. There- We’re- I think it's a lot of like, learning how to weather-proof things in this new world, right?

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Sylvia**: Cause we haven't figured it out.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Sylvia**: And... I hate to say it, probably a lot of allergies cause of the pollen.

**Austin**: Probably really bad.

**Sylvia**: Probably really bad.

**Austin**: I can't believe winter is pollen season. What- It’s the worst.

**Keith**: I have- I have so many allergies that my allergen- Allergies just in all four seasons. [**Austin** and **Sylvia** laugh lightly]

**Sylvia**: Aww.

**Keith**: And that's what this place is like.

**Austin**: Yeah, this place sucks. Someone should do something about this.

**Sylvia**: Yeah. Also, probably really windy.

**Austin**: Yeah. Oh, the trees shaking and such?

**Sylvia**: Mhm.

**Austin**: Ugh.

**Sylvia**: And then, actually... So, that's just it for the card, right? Cause I have my move.

**Austin**: You do. I have to advanced clocks, and one of them is about to finish.

**Sylvia**: Right. Okay.

**Austin**: That one is Red Jack looking for Throndir.

**Janine**: Yeah, it is.

**Darcy**: Ooo, boy.

**Austin**: So, Janine, as someone who took over that, and then Darcy, as the person who is involved-

**Darcy**: Yeah.

**Janine**: Mhm.

**Austin**: I'm curious-

**Janine**: Mhm.

**Darcy**: And-

**Janine**: Sorry. Go ahead.

**Darcy**: I think- Was it Jack who originally also... had Red- had Red Jack leave?

**Austin**: Yes, and Red Jack left originally.

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: So, some- some-

**Darcy**: Yeah, so.

**Austin**: So, the three of y'all can chat. [**Janine** laughs]

**Janine**: Um, I mean, to be honest, the thing I'd most like... to see out of this is for me to set the scene, and then for a Red Jack and a Throndir to have that- to have that moment. [**Darcy** laughs]

**Austin**: Right.

**Darcy**: Sure.

**Janine**: Because I obviously can't dictate what either of those characters- I mean I could dictate-

**Austin**: Well you could- Yeah.

**Janine**: -cause Red Jack's shared. But I-

**Austin**: I just didn't know if you had like, a thing in mind here, in terms of what... You just- Your big thing was just, 'Throndir the one who's lost.'

**Janine**: Yes, but that card specifically said that when that project resolved, I had to..

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: -be the one to resolve it. But because it's such a character thing-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: -I'm just saying I think the thing I'd like to do in that situation is say the circumstance, and then if people want to have that moment have that moment.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: Rather than deciding what that moment is myself. So, I think the thing that happens is that Throndir had- You know, cardinal directions are interesting when the thing you're existing on is basically a cylinder.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: Because you don't really have to just worry about north, west… Sorry. North, south, east, and west. [**Austin** exhaled a laugh] You also have to worry about like, 'Am I on the right side of this big limb?'

**Austin**: Right.

**Jack**: Jesus.

**Darcy**: Mhm.

**Janine**: I think the thing that happened for Throndir is Throndir is very used to like, ‘Okay. Well, I just have to walk north in a mostly straight line, and then whatever. It's fine.’ I think what happened was that Throndir had sort of slowly started twisting around to the other side of the limb. But hadn't realized it because... probably because I mean our maps are still gonna be 2D. Our maps are still- even though we have all these maps-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: -there are limitations. And also, if you are used to kind of relying on your senses, your senses can trick you.

**Darcy**: It's- I'm getting like, that old feeling of frustration when you were playing like, one of the very first video games that had like, multi-level levels.

**Janine**: Yeah.

**Darcy**: But their like, map system did not account for height.

**Janine**: Mhm.

**Darcy**: And so, you're like, ‘I'm standing right where this marker says this thing is supposed to be.’

**Janine**: Exactly.

**Darcy**: And then, for the next two hours, figuring out that actually it's like, two floors below where you're standing. [lightly laughs]

**Janine**: Totally.

**Darcy**: The terrible map system does not explain that well.

**Janine**: So, that's the thing that ends up happening is Throndir, in some senses, knows exactly where he is. But in other senses, is- is hopelessly lost. Like, for all he knows, he is on a different tree or like, a different- He's on a completely- Like, it's just the place he is at makes no sense to him, in a way that would probably be very frustrating. Not just frustrating, but like, I think that's one of those things that when that happens to you, your instinct is to hunker down rather than keep wandering. Because you want to figure out not where the next place is, you want to figure out where this place is in relation to places you know, and then work from that.

**Darcy**: Yeah. Yeah. And I definitely think it is more like, frustrating and maybe a mix of like, embarrassing... than it is scary.

**Janine**: Totally.

**Austin**: Ooo, very much.

**Darcy**: Cause like, Throndir is like, ‘Okay. I'm not going to die. Like, if this is just where I am stuck, like, I'm not going to die out here. And I’ll eventually make it back, but damn, this shouldn't be as hard as it is.’

**Janine**: And I think that's the situation that Red Jack finds him in is like, Throndir deep in his- in his embarrassment about being miserably lost. Just like, probably more lost than he's ever been.

**Austin**: Jack, would you like to play Red Jack one last time?

**Jack**: [sounds hesitant] Alright.

**Austin**: [laughs] You don't need to. I can do this.

**Jack**: No. I’ll- I’ll Red Jack.

**Austin**: But I'm curious about where you think he is at now.

**Janine**: Yeah, we still haven't answered what his whole thing was.

**Austin**: Where he's at? Yeah. Well, what- what- Where he- Why he left, et cetera.

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: So, where do we come in?

> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Throndir!
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): One of these days, I'm actually gonna get the part where like, I find you, and I can say, ‘Red Jack!’ And I get to be like, the triumphant one.
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Were you looking for me?
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): Yeah, of course I was.
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Why?
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): That's a... simple, yet complex answer.
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): I am a simple, yet complex person. [**Austin**, **Sylvia**, and **Janine** laugh]

**Darcy**: And I think Throndir like, smiles really big and like, really wide at Red Jack saying that. Cause I imagine Red Jack probably hasn't said something like that in a long time.

> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): You seem well, Throndir, for a man so lost. [**Austin** and **Sylvia** laugh]
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): Honestly? It's kind of nice. I haven't done something like this in a long time. Just like, gone out and, you know, it used to be I could go out and find my way back anywhere, but I guess they weren't kiddin' when they used to tell me there was only one Ranger in the world.
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Well, there is. There is. I see you brought my horse, and then lost my horse, too.
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): I don't think I lost Ace so much as Ace found you.
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): No, you lost Ace.
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): Okay. I'll- I'll hold that.
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): How's Kodiak?
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): He's great. [unnaturally long pause]
>
> **Austin** (as **Kodiak**): Roof! Roof!
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Well-

**Darcy**: Come on, **Austin**. We need you.

**Austin**: [**Janine** and **Jack** laugh] Sorry. Sorry. Sorry. I was like, 'Yeah. How's Kodiak?' And then I remembered I'm Kodiak. I'm sorry.

> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Kodiak, I have something for you. [**Austin**/Kodiak pants]

**Jack**: And Red **Jack** like, reaches inexplicably into Ace's saddlebag. [**Austin**, **Darcy**, and **Sylvia** laugh] And like, pulls outs like, a treat or something that clearly cannot have come from- [Austin makes Kodiak dog noises] you know, the- around the university. It's clearly from somewhere near.

> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): [**Austin**/Kodiak whimpers] Well, Throndir-

**Jack**: I'm sorry?

> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): No. Where- where have you been?

**Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Oh, you know. [**Art** and **Keith** laugh]

**Janine**: Connecticut. [**Austin** groans]

**Darcy** (as **Throndir**): Are you okay?

**Jack** (as **Red Jack**): What?

**[0:15:00]**

**Darcy** (as **Throndir**): Are you okay? You left without telling anybody, and you left Ace behind.

**Jack** (as **Red Jack**): I did. Yes. It is a beautiful world, is it not, Throndir?

**Darcy** (as **Throndir**): It is... That also kind of isn't an answer.

**Jack** (as **Red Jack**): And so new. And so… frightening. And so exciting. And I heard something... out among the branches... I woke in the middle of the night, and I strapped on my armor, and as I passed Ace... Well... he and I knew that uh… we needed to be separated for a little time.

**Darcy** (as **Throndir**): Were- were you fighting?

**Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Ace and I?! Ha! [**Austin/Ace** makes a noise]

**Jack**: And like, Ace just like, [**Austin/Ace** makes another noise] swings his head and just like, knocks Red Jack playfully. [Austin laughs]

**Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Of course not. [disbelieving] Ace and I, fighting.

**Darcy** (as **Throndir**): I mean it happens.

**Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Not Ace and I. [**Austin** breathes a laugh]

**Darcy**: I think Throndir and Kodiak eye each other-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Darcy**: -in a way that says, ‘Okay. They've definitely argued before.’ [laughs]

**Austin**: Yeah, definitely. A hundred percent. [**Austin**/Kodiak makes a noise]

**Jack**: [amused] Well, there's been multiple Aces, as well, right?

**Darcy**: [laughing] True. Yeah.

**Austin**: Right. True. True.

> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): I traveled northward, Throndir. It is beautiful up there. The branches. They have mountains growing upon them. And where the trees here seem to be some kind of deciduous- some kind of remarkable oak, to the north, there are weeping willows the size of cities. And so, I came to a great lake. The light of the moon passing overhead. It must recently-

**Jack**: Uh, was Throndir there when the moon left?

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Darcy**: Yeah. Yeah

**Jack**: Throndir saw the moon leave before he went. Yes.

**Austin**: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That was a while ago.

> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Severea passed overhead, and I caught the reflection of the moon in the lake... The strands of the willow trees were gigantic.

**Jack**: And he just stops, as though he- as though- as though he's like, given you information.

**Austin**: [laughs, then groans lightly] Mm.

> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): Did you find the... whatever the sound was?
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): I believe I did.
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): What was it?
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): I do not think that I can or need to explain it to you,Throndir.
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): [quietly] Alright. Fair.
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Perhaps we can go home, and I can pour a tankard of something or another. And you can tell me about how it was that you came to be lost so close to home. [**Austin** and **Darcy** laugh] And in return, I can tell you of the fish in the lake surrounded by willow trees to the north.
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): Okay. Before we go, I think I… owe you an answer, too. Because you asked why I came out here.
>
> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): Yes?
>
> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): I think when all of this... started for me... God, decades ago. When I first met... Hadrian...and Fantasmo, I thought that... I needed to figure out who I was. And that I needed to find a way to be important and useful... And then... as things

> happened and time turned, I came to think that the only way I could be helpful or useful was in... the service... to greater people around me… And I took... some comfort in that, but a lot of shame in that. But... when we were on the road out to... fight that god-awful dragon thing, Hella talked to me and you talked to me... And I realized that… I think my worth does come from... the relationships I have with other people, but I don't have to feel... ashamed about it... And I... I just wanted to thank you.

**Jack**: I think Red Jack just like, smiles- huge, broad, like horned-toothy smile and whistles for Ace and leaps up into Ace's saddle, and then like, extends down a big red hand and pulls you up into Ace's saddle, to sit in front of him. And just like, kicks the horse to go and starts riding at great speed off, down one of the branches. And as you go, he laughs and says,

> **Jack** (as **Red Jack**): What a wonderful place we find ourselves, Throndir! What a wonderful place this is.

**Darcy**: And I think Throndir just laughs.

**Austin**: Alright. Now it is time for an action from Ephrim.

**Sylvia**: Right. So the... The conversation we had- the whole discussion kind of helped-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: It kind of helped me figure out what I want to do here, and also a way to, I think, move something.. hopefully out of that in-between spot of abundancy and scarcity. So, I want to start a project. And I'm not sure how long it's gonna take because it's a bit of a big ask.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: But I want to start a peace treaty with the Grey Duke, actually. Or specifically a coalition to stop the reconfiguration.

**Austin**: Right. Right. This is- this is uh.. this is some Three Kingdoms shit of like-

**Sylvia**: Uh huh.

**Austin**: -'Listen. I know we're gonna- You and I? Nah. But Dong Zhuo has got to go.' [laughs]

**Keith**: The enemy of my enemy is my tentative treaty.

**Austin**: Right. So, how long does this take?

**Sylvia**: Um…

**Austin**: I think it depends on the terms, right?

**Sylvia**: I think it does, and I think it is... I'd probably go with like, a five or so just because... we literally had a representative of the Grey Duke there for that discussion.

**Austin**: Yeah. Totally.

**Sylvia**: And two, the only real common ground that we absolutely concretely need is, 'Let's not fight each other until we stop this world from being changed into like- [overlapped] something completely different.'

**Austin**: [interjecting] Right. So, I think you get that with- I think you get- you get, 'Let's not fight each other until Galenica is dealt with'-

**Sylvia**: Yeah.

**Austin**: -as like, a two week, I think you get like a... coalition. 'We're gonna- we're- Let's figure out a solution or mutual defense or something' in five.

**Sylvia**: Mhm. Okay.

**Austin**: You know?

**Sylvia**: Then, I'll go with [overlapped] a five then, for sure.

**Austin**: Yeah, you'll get a- Let me tell you this. You'll get- you'll get a, 'Let's solve this right now. And also, you're part of the Grey Duke domain' in three. Like, the more you are willing to be a province of the Grey Duke's Empire, the quicker this would go.

**Keith**: Wait, in three?

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Keith**: Isn't that more than two?

**Austin**: Two is- two is, 'Let's not fight each other.' Three is, 'Let's solve this together, but also, we will really be together.' That's the- that is the offer that they were making. That's what I'm saying.

**Keith**: Got it.

**Sylvia**: [quietly] Yeah.

**Austin**: Like, the less autonomy you end up with, the quicker this goes.

**Sylvia**: I think I'm gonna go with the five.

**Austin**: The five? Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Sylvia**: I feel like that would be a weird betrayal of like, the…

**Austin**: oh, yeah.

**Sylvia**: -just the group's beliefs, in general.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Sylvia**: Like, including Ephrim there.

**Austin**: Yeah. Alright. We'll put this… [mumbling to self] -where to put this- I'll put this up near the Grey Duke stuff.

**Sylvia**: Alright.

**Austin**: Grey Duke... coalition. Five weeks, right?

**Sylvia**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Table's good with five, also? No one- no one has any second thoughts there? Alright.

**Keith**: No.

**Austin**: Cool. Alright.

**Keith**: So, this is real- real treaty, but no autonomy?

**Austin**: No. No exchange of autonomy. No-

**Keith**: Sorry, no exchange. Right. No… uh, yeah.

**Austin**: Yeah, yeah, yeah. No lost autonomy. A real treaty in the like, co-defense pact type thing.

**Keith**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Right?

**Keith**: Yeah.

**Austin**: But not, 'Let's march tomorrow.' It's not that, right? Or is it that?

**Sylvia**: No, I don't think it is like, a marching-orders thing.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: I think it's like a... 'We need to sort of pool our resources together for-'

**Austin**: Right.

**Sylvia**: Not like, pool them together, but like... use them to help each other stop this-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: -and figure out how to do it together.

**Austin**: Okay. Cool. This completes. I think safety is on the board, in a way. Right? Like it- A real military- er it is like, a real rather material and military step towards, ‘They're not going to hurt you.’ With Galenica being the one thing. Which is such a big thing- so much bigger than safety.

**Sylvia**: Yeah.

**Keith**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Alright. Hadrian... Draw a card.

**Art**: Whoops!

**Austin**: I got that. Don't worry.

**Art**: I have the Three of Winter.

**Austin**: Ooo.

**Art**: [reading] ‘Someone comes up with an ingenious solution to a big problem. And as a result, a project finishes early. What was their idea?’ Oh, that's a- that's- that's fascinating, honestly.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: Or- I haven't even read the rest the card- Or, ‘Someone comes up with a plan to ensure safety and comfort during the coldest months. Start a project related to this.’ I'm obviously not gonna pick that. That's literally what just happened. [**Austin** and **Sylvia** laugh] Um-

**Austin**: So-

**Art**: I’m gonna move this to the side.

**Austin**: You want me to take it? Yeah. Cause only- So, you can look at it. That's fine. Someone comes up with an ingenious solution to a big problem and as a result a project finishes early. Our problems- er our projects. Census 2.0. That is the mapmakers going out and meeting different communities, figuring out what their cultures are. Big community move there. There's the new church. There's the- You know, what is the new faith? There is the sap tower, uh… which would be a very funny solution. And there is the coalition with the Grey Duke.

**Keith**: I had a great idea. More sap. More sap, faster.

**Austin**: Put it on top. Just everybody stand on top of one another, like a pyramid- like a cheerleading pyramid. Done. We got it.

**Art**: Yeah. Just put more-more sap. Uh… ugh. Sorry. Ugh. [**Austin** and **Art** laugh] It's gotta be the Grey Duke coalition, right?

**Austin**: Probably I'm curious with this- what this project- I'm curious what the big ingenious solution would be.

**Art**: Yeah. Uh huh.

**Austin**: [**Austin** and **Sylvia** laugh] Darcy says-

**Janine**: [quietly] Harness the bug parasites to make them like us.

**Austin**: Oh my god.

**Sylvia**: Oh, wow.

**Austin**: Ok. That is some manip- that is some true- Goddamn, we should just play L5r. Janine's a scorpion.

**Keith**: [overlapping] We are- we are just doing reconfiguration at that point.

**Austin**: []laughing] Yeah. Uh huh. Yes. Yeah. Listen. That's...

**Art**: I mean what's worth it to you? What's- what's worth it?

**Austin**: [sighs] **Darcy** in the chat says, 'Benjamin hung out with the Grand Kai, and now his secret potential unlocked. And now he can do the spirit bomb on Galenica.'

**Art**: I don't even understand what problem that solves.

**Austin**: You know what? Fair. Great.

[crosstalking]

**Art**: I don't think you-

**Keith**: The Grey Duke would want to be...

**Art**: I don't think we get a peace treaty any- any easier if we're like, 'We got a- We got a- we got a guy who can do a spirit bomb over here.' I feel like that's just like, trivia. [**Austin** laughs] That's like- that's like going to like, North Korea and being like, 'Do you know how many three pointers

Steph Curry can hit?' That's not important. [Austin laughs again] I guess that is. He's a big basketball guy. Nevermind.

**Austin**: He's a big- Yeah, uh huh. He loves basketball.

**Art**: Well, then some other- Pick another country. That guy.

**Austin**: Okay, great.

**Art**: Some basketball hating country. They don't care, you know?

**Austin**: Yeah… The Grey Duke hates basketball.

**Art**: Ugh.

**Sylvia**: Ugh.

**Art**: Why are we even bothering? [**Austin** laughs quietly]

**Austin**: Does anyone have ideas here? Open the table. Ingenious solution.

**Keith**: If it helps, I'm neutral on basketball. [**Sylvia** exhales a laugh]

**Austin**: [resigned] Okay. Great. That's not really what I was asking about specifically.

**Keith**: No, okay.

**Austin**: I meant ingenious solutions to the problem of five more weeks of Grey Duke negotiations.

**Keith**: The problem with a thing that says someone comes up with an ingenious solution to a problem is then needing to have one.

**Austin**: I mean- the- That's true. Unless we can hand-wave it. Like, the thing- I wish that Gnick, the G-N-I-C-K, the goblin salesman, was around because that motherfucker could talk anybody into anything.

**Sylvia**: What- what if we use like- So like, these negotiations are probably gonna have to take place in like, a neutral...

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: -spot. What if we did it… like, near or in Velas where they've been reconfigured before? And like, that kind of helps set the reality in and makes things move faster?

**Art**: I don't know if that's an ingenious solution-

**Keith**: Yeah.

**Art**: -to a big problem. That's just like, good sensible diplomacy.

**Keith**: Okay. So, I guess the question is what is the big- what is the big problem that makes this take five weeks?

**Austin**: I think it- You imagine it's like- a little bit of it is setting terms and, you know, posturing. But there's a lot that we're- There's a lot that we're abstracting out when I say five weeks means you- you retain autonomy, but blah-blah-blah. So, it's like, a lot of, 'Alright. Today we're going to talk about who provides food for a coalition army.' There's a lot of like, 'Who provides-' You know-

**[0:30:00]**

**Austin** (continued): 'Who- who has- who can deliver orders to a battalion of this coalition army?' There probably are weird trade agreement parts of this discussion, right?

**Keith**: [quietly] I guess.

**Austin**: Where it's like, all of that stuff just goes and goes and goes. And then, there's probably just like, putting the army together. Putting together the like- the forces. Integrating those- those troops over the course of a couple weeks.

**Janine**: I have a more serious idea.

**Keith**: Oh, yeah.

**Austin**: Serious, as in grave?

**Art**: Yeah, no. Your last idea is my favorite idea so far. So.

**Janine**: My- my... my less joke-y idea is that something-something, Benjamin, new magic, something-something, Grey Duke thinks that Galenica is trying to reconfigure the Grey Duke's shit.

**Austin**: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. The like- Yes. The like-

**Janine**: And then the Grey Duke's like, 'Alright. Actually, fuck the other stuff.'

**Austin**: 'Fuck this.'

**Janine**: 'We need to deal with this now.'

**Austin**: Yeah. Basically like, an illus- not an illusion, but like, a...

**Keith**: A deception.

**Janine**: Cause if they- if the-

**Austin**: A deception. Yes.

**Janine**: If the new magic is a thing that is- that is very localized to what we can do and people who are studying with Benjamin now-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: -then the Grey Duke isn't gonna have a good understanding of it.

**Austin**: [exhales] God.

**Janine**: The only magic that the Grey Duke is going to be aware of or anticipating is Galenica reconfiguration.

**Austin**: Is…

**Keith**: We're basi- we're basically like, having them intercept false wires.

**Austin**: Right. This is a fla- This is literally a false flag operation.

**Sylvia**: [groans] Ugh.

**Austin**: Here's the thing I want to say. Benjamin won't do that. Someone else might. Like.

**Janine**: He's been teachin' people for a while...

**Austin**: That's what I'm saying. Is this a world where like, we're doing this generational split thing? Where this is like- Sunder's willing to do this. Hates this magic anyway. [lightly laughs] Benjamin wouldn't do something so deceptive. I think Benjamin would be furious if this happened, actually. This would be a- this would be a point of contention, if he figured out that's what happened. And I think that's actually super fascinating. I think that's really interesting.

**Art**: I mean it gives me the icks, but like, whatever. It's- I mean this is all-

**Janine**: We do also have- I bet there is overlap, in general, between people who took Union of Solutions courses-

**Austin**: Oh, yeah.

**Janine**: -and then took Benjamin courses, so-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: I don't even know it has to come down to one person. I think-

**Austin**: No, but-

**Janine**: -it would be reasonable to say there are few people-

**Austin**: [overlapping with **Janine**] Someone has to make the order though.

**Janine**:  -who would be able to team up- And yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Austin**: Someone has to say, 'We're doing this trick.' I'm guessing it's not Hadrian. [**Austin** and **Janine** breath a small laugh; then silence]

**Art**: It isn't.

**Austin**: That's my question.

**Art**: But I've just decided that I feel very excluded that Chief Diplomat Hadrian wasn't even brought into this-

**Austin**: [resigned, but amused] Oh my god. Okay.

**Art**: -negotiation. [laughter]

**Janine**: Someone has to keep the stand going.

**Keith**: A board falls off the stand.

**Austin**: Listen. This is your opportunity, Hadrian. Ingenious solution to a big problem. If you have something that only Hadrian could figure it out, now is the moment. You know the etiquette.

**Art**: What's a thing that-? I don't- I don't know that there is a thing that only Hadrian can figure out.

**Austin**: [amused] Yeah, well.

**Keith**: You're the only one that read the book.

**Art**: Wait, when I gave Ephrim the book, Ephrim didn't read that book?

**Austin**: Oh, boy.

**Keith**: No it's not- [amused] It's- it's on a bed- It's on a nightstand. He's got three other books.

**Sylvia**: Yeah.

**Janine**: Right beside the Great Gatsby.

**Sylvia**: There's a lot goin' on.

**Art**: This is a lock and sock connection moment.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: Um-

**Keith**: I-

**Austin**: **Sylvia** the chat-

**Keith**: Honestly, I like the spirit bomb idea.

**Austin**: [resigned] Oh my god. Sylvia in the chat says, 'We asked Hadrian to host some sapkin while we do this.'

**Sylvia**: Just so important.

**Austin**: Hadrian pouring tea for some sapkin. Yeah.

**Keith**: Don't give them tea, it'll melt them.

**Austin**: It's iced tea.

**Keith**: Okay. [breathes relief] Fwoof.

**Austin**: Delicious.

**Keith**: It will congeal them.

**Art**: Hey, what's up with this tower?

**Austin**: [lightly laughs] Yeah. Right?

**Art**: [breathes a laugh] Um, no. I guess- I guess I like- I guess I like the evil magic plan.

**Keith**: [overlapped] Is there- Hold-

**Austin**: Who does it? Who is the caller? Who is the...

**Keith**: In- in-

**Art**: Keith, what were you…?

**Keith**: In a… You know, just to have a la- one last ditch effort to not like, do the- like, do a false flag-

**Austin**: Uh huh.

**Keith**: -is there something that we could do with this new village that's literally in our uh... sky here? Can they help in some way?

**Austin**: I feel like you need to- You need to have talked to them once before, right?.

**Keith**: What if they just over- They could overhear like- They over-

**Austin**: No…

**Keith**: They just can hear what we're talkin' about.

**Austin**: And they're like, 'Oh!'

**Janine**: They're like, four universities away from us… scalewise.

**Keith**: No. They are right above- Scale-shmale.

**Austin**: No, I just mean- [stammer lightly] We can't have the solution to serious problems be a city nearby who none of us have spoken to before solves it for us.

**Keith**: There's a...

**Art**: Yeah, I mean we could have the false flag collapse that branch and destroy the whole city and make that look like a bigger threat.

**Austin**: Oh my god. [**Janine** and **Sylvia** make long uncomfortable noises] That is some Lex Luthor shit. That is some- that is some like, not even Ibex shit.

**Art**: Yeah. You know what they say about Lex Luthor? He's got some ingenious solutions to some big problems.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: The big problem's called Superman.

**Austin**: Yeah, that's true.

**Keith**: I don't know. I still see Superman flyin' around, as far as I know.

**Austin**: You still see Superman flyin' around?

**Janine**: What if we steal forty cakes?

**Keith**: Yeah, right.

**Austin**: Oh my-

**Keith**: Those comic books are still comin' out. Superman's still in comic books.

**Austin**: I thought you meant in the sky.

**Keith**: Oh. No. I don't see Superman in real life.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Keith**: But if I were- if I was in Metropolis-

**Austin**: Do you wanna know why? Why do you think that is? [pauses] Lex Luthor made a great sacrifice.

**Keith**: Well, that's Lex Luther.

**Austin**: To keep Superman in- Right. A great sacrifice. Lex Luthor gave his life to keep Superman from our reality.

**Keith**: Damn, is that a real thing?

**Austin**: American hero.

**Keith**: Is it the-

**Janine**: What?

**Keith**: Is it the communist Superman one you were talkin' about?

**Austin**: No. I don't know. It's all bullshit [**Sylvia** laughs]

**Darcy**: Man, shout out to Jesse Eisenberg. [**Austin** laughs]

**Sylvia**: Speaking of sweet tea...

**Austin**: What are we... what are we doin'? I like the false flag- er I don't like it, but I think that it is- I think it complicates the university further. I think it immediately gets us in the muck, which is a thing we might not want to do or it's a thing we might want to do, depending on- on the way we lean on this stuff. I like-

**Art**: I mean we're all mind-control bug monsters at this point anyway… [laughter]

**Keith**: I think- I- [laughs] I think like, Fero's position on this is that we don't need the Grey Duke's help.

**Austin**: Yeah, but we're already at… One, he's probably wrong.

**Janine**: We have to finish a project either way.

**Austin**: Yes

**Janine**: That's the whole- the root of this is we need to pick a clock and finish it.

**Austin**: Yes.

**Janine**: And that's vastly the most useful and cool one.

**Austin**: Unless someone has like, a new- a new ingenious solution to religion. [**Austin** and **Janine** laugh] Like. It's like -Yeah.

**Janine**: Hadrian, right? That's what that clock is.

**Austin**: That's what that clock is. Hadrian, do have a new ingenious solution for like, figuring out faith?

**Janine**: Bug mind control.

**Art**: [breaths a small laugh] Yeah, we'll just worship the bugs.

**Janine**: [laughing] Bug religion?

**Austin**: We all worship Galenica, and in the process pray that the world stays the same.

**Art**: Would that work?

**Austin**: No. Probably not. No.

**Art**: Mm.

**Keith**: It never really seemed like they-

**Art**: [overlapping with **Keith**] And it's not that ingenious.

**Keith**: -were taking uh- Never really seemed like they were weighing not doing this.

**Austin**: No, no, no To be clear, what I'm saying is making one church in one city is not gonna do that.

**Jack**: Can we recap real quick what the proposed false flag plan is?

**Austin**: Using Affective magic, using Augury to do something that would convince the Grey Duke troops that Galenica is beginning reconfiguration, or overstepping some bound-

**Jack**: [groans] Ohhh.

**Austin**: -so that they would rush into the coalition.

**Ali**: Sounds good.

**Jack**: It's- it's unpleasant.

**Austin**: Oh, it's bad.

**Keith**: It's- very- It's very unpleasant.

**Jack**: I mean I think-

**Austin**: Benjamin will be furious.

**Jack**: I think my question here, right, is like, we need to ask ourselves realistically if our community is one that would engage in that kind of psychological warfare.

**Austin**: I think that the person who's made the case for that is **Janine** by saying we have a school of saboteurs and spies that have been trained specifically to do nefarious shit for good ends quote-unquote. I don't think the community does it. Because this is- and this is not- The- the solu- The card-

**Jack**: Is that like, a plausible deniability thing, or is that like actually legit, 'We are not involved'?

**Austin**: Who is the 'we'? So, this is what I was gonna say is the card said- the card does not say the community comes up with-

**Jack**: No.

**Austin**: -an ingenious solution. It does not say the community- It's not like the bug thing.

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: This is one person unilaterally-

**Jack**: Someone.

**Austin**: -comes up with a big idea. Now the question is like, who agreed to do it? Who was in the room? I think a lot about the beginning of the Planet Hulk arc of Marvel. Someone correct me if I'm wrong. Someone who reads Marvel stuff, correct me. They launched Hulk into- 'They.' So, the Illuminati, who are specific characters. [**Jack** laughs] Who are Prof X, Dr. Strange, Black Panther, Reed Richards, Tony Stark. Is that right, Art?

**Jack**: Sure.

**Austin**:  Namor- Namor.

**Darcy**: That sounds right.

**Jack**: I think that's who I'd say would be in the Illuminati.

**Art**: Namor. Did you say Black Bolt? Black Bolt's in there, too.

**Austin**: I forgot about Black Bolt. Was like, 'We have to deal with the Hulk.' I forget why. The Hulk did some shit. The Hulk was dangerous and so-

[crosstalking]

**Jack**: Big, dangerous guy.

**Art**: The Hulk is dangerous.

**Keith**: The Hulk did the Hulk thing.

**Austin**: Right. And they were like, 'We have to get him out of here. We should send him into space.'

**Jack**: Bad. [laughs]

**Austin**: And a couple of things happened. One was- Was it Namor and Black Panther who were like, 'You know what? Peace'?

**Art**: It might have been more, but it's at least those two, I think.

**Austin**: Uh, were like, 'Hey. No.' But that didn't stop the rest of them from doing that thing. And I can imagine a sequence like that. Where it's like, 'I am not going to be part of this plan.' And people leaving the room until it's only the people who would agree to a plan like this.

**Jack**: Right. Yeah. It would pay off that arc really well as well… is the thing.

**Austin**: Yeah. Like, Corsica says yes to this in a second. Are you kidding me?

**Sylvia**: Sure.

**Jack**: Well, so this- this lets us like- Narratively, this lets us address two things at once, right? Which is like, growing unease at Corsica's um… autonomy.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Jack**: Plus the school of saboteurs. What are they up to? I mean maybe it's Corsica's school of saboteurs.

**Austin**: Plus you can't introduce- You cannot introduce a new type of magic... You cannot introduce any new technology-

**Jack**: [finishing **Austin**'s sentence] And not immediately see it used.

**Austin**: Yes, exactly. You cannot just be like, naively rolling it out like this. Which speaks to Benjamin's original like, 'Alright. I don't wanna go back and tell anybody yet.'

**Jack**: Sure. But like, I mean even in and of itself, that's kind of a weird flawed argument, right?

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Jack**: Cause like, what are Benjamin and Blue J going to do beside this river discussing it that is going to prevent this from happening?

**Austin**: Nothing. Nothing. But- but-

**Jack**: Fuckin' nothing.

**Austin**: But this speaks to why Blue J- partially why Blue J- er why Benjamin would be like, 'I'm not ready to go back yet.'

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: 'I don't want to go back yet.' You know, Benjamin is probably thinking, 'It would be better if I died with this as a secret one day. Like, never use it.'

**Jack**: Mhm.

**Austin**: 'But now it's too late. Now we're here. Let me try to do best by it.' And then immediately seeing this?

**Jack**: And-

**Austin**: And also, I think it speaks to the idea of like, new world does not mean new people.

**Jack**: Yep.

**Austin**: We did not suddenly come out- You know what I mean?

**Jack**: Well, this is part of, I think, what Lem tried to get to with Galenica is it's like, 'What actually happens to people when you reconfigure them?' Uh, and the answer, in part, here is just- I mean we haven't been reconfigured, but we've seen this massive world transformation. And it's just like, 'We went to bed one day. We woke up another day. We're in a tree now.'

**Austin**: 'And we're still up to some shit.'

**Jack**: Yeah, we've seen the orcs use pattern magic for like, straight up political garbage.

**Austin**: Totally. You've done it.

**Jack**: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. Lots.

**Austin**: So.

**Jack**: Yeah, I've come around on it. I think it's horrid.

**Austin**: It's bad. I think this is a- I think this is a bad moment. I think it's- The camera- I'm curious who was in the room when this- when it's decided. Who knows about it? And what's it look like?

**Art**: Yeah, I'm very interested in that. Like, who does- I mean I think- I think I'm decided that Sunder is the one who gives the order.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Art**: Maybe not the one who does it. But Sunder is the one who- Sunder is Jack Nicholson here, right?

**Austin**: Which Jack Nicholson?

**Art**: The-

**Darcy**: 'You want me on that wall. You need me on that wall,' Jack Nicholson?

**Art**: Yeah, yeah.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Art**: 'You're damn right I did.'

**Austin**: Right. Yeah.

**Art**: What's the movie called? With- Tom Cruise is in it. I don't know.

**Darcy**: Is it- is it-

**Darcy** and **Austin**: 'A Few Good Men.'

**Keith**: A Few- Yeah.

**Art**: That's it.

**Austin**: It's 'A Few Good Men.'

**Art**: And like who- who's there-?

**Darcy**: Can I ask why you think Sunder and not Corsica?

**Art**: Cause Sunder's the person who knows the magic people better.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Darcy**: Okay.

**Austin**: I don't think you can do this without a mage.

**Art**: Corsica definitely doesn't leave the room.

**Austin**: Corsica would ever think of this. Corsica would be eager to do it. But I don't think Corsica- Corsica rides cavalry in. Do you know what I mean? And like- and is happy to take advantage of weird, cool magic. But I don't think... I think it has to be someone who is close to the mages. It could be Uklan Tel. But I feel like we're gonna just triple down on that, and I don't think he's been allowed [laughs] in any of the conversations anyway.

**Jack**: [jokingly as Uklan and other] 'Uh, I could help!' 'No, you can't.'

**Austin**: 'No. No.' What a heartbreaking thing that would be. You know? If it was. Ugh. Just never getting better. But no, I don't think- I don't think this one's him.

**Art**: But, yeah- Like-

**Austin**: But I do- Yeah.

**Art**: Who else says yes? And I guess- and also, importantly who says no? And do they tell Benjamin?

**Austin**: And do they do anything. That's my bigger question is like, is... Whoever's-

**Darcy**: Yeah. Like, the thing about your Illuminati thing is that like, two people, or multiple people say, 'No, this is messed up. We're leaving.'

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Darcy**: But then they don't actively stop it. Like, nobody goes to Hulk and says, 'Hey, bud. Watch your back.'

**Austin**: Was that Wolverine?

**Art**: This was ultimately reckoned with in the follow-up of World War Hulk.

**Darcy**: Sure. Also, I said 'bud' not 'bub.' So, no. It's not Wolverine.

**Austin**: Oh, I thought you said ‘bub.’ Apologies. [**Darcy** laughs] Also, I was wrong about Black Panther. The very, very, very important thing is Black Panther is like, ‘No. I'm not going to be part of that,’ right? Like, from the jump Black Panther says no.

**Keith**: Says no to being in the Illuminati?

**Austin**: Yes. I'm ninety percent sure that was the part of this that I'd forgotten.

**Darcy**: Mm.

**Austin**: Anyway. This doesn't matter.

**Jack**: Does Hadrian tell Benjamin?

**Art**: I don't think Hadrian’s in this meeting.

**Jack**: Okay.

**Janine**: I mean Adaire definitely is because this is Adaire’s alignment.

**Austin**: Yes.

**Janine**: Adaire's alignment is ‘Intervene when someone's making life worse for other survivors.’ But also chaotic.

**Austin**: Also chaotic.

**Janine**: Like, not the ‘good’ kind of-

**Austin**: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Janine**: Not good intervene. It's, ‘I'm going to intervene when I want to.’ And-

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Sylvia**: I don't think there's any getting around Ephrim being involved-

**Austin**: No. Yeah.

**Sylvia**: -in some way, so I'm just putting that on the table.

**Ali**: I think Hella is there. I think she's- There's like, a dual thing of like, still being a person who believes in extreme solutions. And then also just like... the reason her whole line was- Like, this is the Ordenna story, right?

**Austin**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali**: Which is like, four or five people are gonna have a really big idea, and just hope that it goes well. And it kind of didn't. [laughs] So like, as weird as she feels about it, it's like, 'I can at least supervise. I can be in that room and try to help you-'

**Austin**: Mm.

**Ali**: -'make this the best idea that it can be. Cause it's the best idea that we have right now.'

**[0:45:00]**

**Austin**: Anyone else?

**Jack**: Lem knows about it, but isn't here.

**Austin**: How- how does he know about it?

**Jack**: He's been told.

**Austin**: Okay. It got leaked out?

**Jack**: It got leaked out. It got leaked, and I think Lem, you know-

**Austin**: Or I guess- No, my question is who's the leaker?

**Jack**: Oh, um-

**Austin**: Cause we know who's in this room. That's the- That's-

**Jack**: Who would be someone who... would... Cause I think- So, the play here with Lem, right, is that like, Lem knows about it... doesn't want to be a part of it, but also, doesn't necessarily put himself in a way to stop it.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Keith**: Is it Devar? Was Devar there? Did Devar leak it?

**Jack**: I mean-

**Austin**: I don't think Devar would be in this room. Devar doesn't have it like that. Devar was in that last one cause-

**Keith**: Devar was just asking for swords.

**Austin**: Yeah, cause- because he came back with the news from Velas.

**Jack**: Right. It's like-

**Austin**: But he is not tryin' to run any- He- he's not- he doesn't even want to be part of any sort of war council ever.

**Jack**: Yeah. It's like, who would... It's someone who- It's someone who has a justifiably low enough opinion of Lem to be like, 'We can tell Lem. They might- He might like, grumble, but he's not gonna try and get in the way of this.'

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Keith**: So, it's someone who knows Lem really well.

**Jack**: Right. Yeah. [**Austin** breathes a laugh, **Keith** laughs] Yeah. Or more specifically, it's-

**Ali**: I'll tell Lem. Fuck.

**Austin**: And then let's go round a circle really quick. We know- So, Adaire is there. Hella is there. Hadrian is not there. Ephrim is there. Uh... Fero, are you there?

**Keith**: No. No. Fero is not there.

**Austin**: Because no one invites you?

**Keith**: Yeah. I think- I think it's cause no one- I think that- I think that at least a hand- at least the- the party members that are in there would be like, 'No, Fero would like, throw something.'

**Austin**: So, yeah. That's my- The other way of this it could be, no one- it doesn't leak. Benjamin knows. Benjamin knows cause Benjamin is-

**Jack**: Sure.

**Austin**: -does this. He's the person who knows this shit the best. And immediately when it happens, it's like, 'Fuck you.' Like, '[groans] I cannot believe this.' And Benjamin is the one who figures it out, which puts him in this terrible spot.

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Which is like, 'Who did this? Dad, did you know?'

**Art**: 'No.'

**Austin**: Right. I kind of like that. I kind of like the people who do it do not have a leaker. There is no…

**Jack**: To the point where maybe some people, until they hear from Benjamin, actually believe it.

**Austin**: Why wouldn't they believe it?! You would all believe it.

**Jack**: It- You know, as part of the false flag-

**Austin**: Right.

**Jack**: -until we hear from Benjamin.

**Austin**: Lem, you heard them say what this looks like. You wrote down what it looks like.

**Jack**: Yeah. One hundred percent.

**Austin**: Which is enough to make it look like it's happening.

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Right?

**Jack**: Yeah absolutely. And so, like, there is like gen- Even... We essentially pull a false flag on our own community.

**Sylvia**: Mhm.

**Jack**: And [overlapped] like, over a long period-

**Austin**: Right. No. That is what it is. Yeah. It's terrible.

**Jack**: Where we are like, ‘They're doing it. They're doing it now.’

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: Or this is like, a prelude. And does Benjamin- does Benjamin say eventually... among ourselves?

**Austin**: Yeah, absolutely. I mean I think tells Hadrian immediately.

**Jack**: Is like, ‘Oh. This is a lie.’

**Austin**:  Like, wherever this is- Yeah. Immediately is like, ‘This is-’ Well, can reach into the bag, so to speak, and feel stuff moving.

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: There's one bag everybody reaches in. You know? And there are other hands there in that moment.

**Keith**: Do you have to- do you have to like, apologize when you accidentally grab someone’s hand. ‘Oh, sorry.’

**Austin**: Yeah. ‘Sorry. I didn't mean to-’ It's early on, you make- There's like, a whole part of the learning is like, ‘Hey, this is a normal thing. You're gonna touch people's hands.’ It's like- it's like wrestling. It's like, you know, like collegiate wrestling is like, ‘Listen. You're gonna pin people to the ground, and your legs are gonna be all around them. It's gonna be weird, but you're here to compete. Don't- It's fine. You both want to be in this weird combat sport. It's totally fine.’ It's like that. You've really kind of get over that weird hand touching stuff. [lightly laughs] It's not literally hand touching, but it is a- I mean... you know.

**Keith**: Why- Well, why couldn't it be literal hand touching?

**Austin**: It could be a literal hand touching. Anyway, Hadrian?

**Art**: But then like, what does- what does- This is gonna- This is gonna go bad, huh?

**Austin**: It might.

**Art**: I mean... in- in being upset about this, is Benjamin gonna find out all the people who knew? [**Jack** groans an ‘oof’]

**Austin**: Oh, yeah. No. This is- This is not great.

**Janine**: This is why I like the actual hand touching thing because I picture a moment where Benjamin is reaching in and feels that hand-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: -and then it becomes his mission for like, the next week. Like, he finds excuses-

**Austin**: Yeah, no.

**Janine**: -to shake people's hands to be like- [**Keith** laughs]

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: -’Did you fuckin’ do it?’

**Austin**: That's great. I love it.

**Janine**: ‘Is that your hand?’

**Austin**: ‘That's Sunder’s hand.’

**Darcy**: God, yeah.

**Austin**: That's- Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Keith**: This hand’s too rough. This hand’s too soft.

**Janine** and **Austin**: Yeah.

**Keith**: This hand is just right. And it's Sunder.

**Austin**: And it's Sunder.

**Jack**: Do these conspirators have a name?

**Austin**: They have to. We have to have a name for this. [**Janine** laughs]

**Jack**: For this group. For this like, war- the war council within the war council.

**Austin**: Yeah. Can I get- I need a list of these people again. I have to write them down.

**Keith**: This sucks. I can't believe- I can't believe Art didn't just want to start a new project. [**Austin** laughs]

**Art**: I mean I have the best thing is if the next card is the king.

**Austin**: Oh, it's perfect.

**Art**: And we just like, never get to deal with any of it.

**Janine**: Mhm.

**Austin**: It's ideal. Honestly? It's the way the movie ends. Adaire, Hella-

**Keith**: The trilogy though? The whole trilogy?

**Austin**: It's great. Adaire, Hella, Sunder, Corsica, Ephrim.

**Art**: Join us for Hieron: The Force Awakens in [**Austin** laughs] however many years that was.

**Austin**: No, but like, think about-

**Art**: Ten? Twelve?

**Austin**: -the extension from where we're at here, right? Which is like, there are the people who run the world... and then there are the people who really run the world. There are the people who will take action to help their community. And there are the people who will take action to help their community. Adaire, Hella, Ephrim, Sunder, Corsica. Not Throndir? Throndir's not here? [pauses] Okay.

**Art**: Didn't we say Lem?

**Austin**: Lem is not here. Or did we say Lem?

**Keith**: No, we said that Lem got leaked to, but then we nixed the leaking.

**Austin**: But we nixed it. Not Red Jack. Not...

**Art**: You have Corsica, right?

**Austin**: I have Corsica. I should put Corsica- Sunder and Corsica at the top.

**Keith**: Does-

**Jack**: Lem, as usual, has a careless culpability in this because his notes-

**Austin**: Right.

**Jack**: -on what the process of reconfiguration look like were used.

**Austin**: Absolutely. Totally.

**Keith**: Who- who got the notes?

**Jack**: Lem just was like- When Lem got home-

**Keith**: He was like, ‘Everybody look at this!’

**Jack**: Lem was like-

**Austin**: Right.

**Jack**: Uh, no. It came through Emmanuel, but not in the sense that Emmanuel is a co-conspirator.

**Austin**: Mm.

**Keith**: Maybe.

**Jack**: But in the sense that the camp cook talks.

**Austin**: Right.

**Jack**: And, you know, like, a description of how it happens came to Emmanuel, and then that went to someone over a bowl of soup. Then that went to someone over- And it's like, ‘Oh, from the archivist’s notes, we know that this is-’ [overlapped]

**Austin**: Here- Yeah.

**Keith**: To be a fly on the wall of a shared soup in Hieron. [**Sylvia** and **Jack** laugh]

**Austin**: Here's a question. Is the Golden Lance involved?

**Jack**: I can't imagine why they wouldn't be.

**Austin**: Right?

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Gloria Lake-

**Darcy**: Probably.

**Austin**: Or no- or not Gloria Lake, but Victoria Solomon... seems like, she'd be like, ‘Yeah.’

**Jack**: Golden Lance are like, bribe you to take the carrot; hit you with the stick. So like, it would make sense for them to just be like, ‘Hell yeah. Psychological warfare?’

**Austin**: Right. I'm now looking at my list of NPCs to be like, is there anyone else we're forgetting here? I don't think Stornras Glasseye hangs in this- in this company.

**Jack**: Uklan Tel is not allowed.

**Austin**: No. ‘Get outta here, Uklan Tel.’

**Keith**: He's allowed to ride bugs, but he has to get the worst bug.

**Sylvia**: Dung beetles only.

**Austin**: Mm.

**Keith**: Inch worms.

**Art**: Oh, that would be a bad ride.

**Keith**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Not- not a fan of that.

**Keith**: Slow. Really squishy. Like, you’re just like, sinking into it. [**Austin** groans]

**Art**: I think we all got it. I don't-

**Austin**: I'm just triple checking. I don't see anybody else here though. Do we have a name for this group yet?

**Art**: Oh, um-

**Darcy**: Hey, Red Jack wouldn’t be here, right?

**Austin**: No, I said yeah, no way. Or- or if there was a leaker, it would be Red Jack. But I think this group knows we can't- Like, when Sunder has this idea, she is like, 'Well, Red Jack can't fuckin' know. He might kill me on the spot.'

**Keith**: I bet they'd be something really boring. Like, they take the first letter from-

**Austin**: Each of their names?

**Keith**: -their names, and that's the group.

**Art**: Alright. Let's get a- let's get an anagram generator.

**Darcy**: Yeah, get a generator.

**Janine**: I actually- I did that before we added the Golden Lance.

**Austin**: Oh, I'm sorry.

**Janine**: And... Yeah. The Golden Lance kind of makes it difficult. The words before were 'aches' and 'chase.' [**Keith** and **Darcy** laugh]

**Austin**: Mm.

**Darcy**: [amused] The Chaves committee.

**Austin**: Right. You add that V in there. You lose- You gotta lose another-

**Janine**: Yeah.

**Austin**: If you- Ephrim, if you weren't there, they could be The Chavs. [**Janine** groans; **Austin** laughs]

**Sylvia**: The E could be silent. [**Austin** laughs and groans]

**Austin**: The V really throws things off, huh?

**Janine**: I learned a cool new word for dagger.

**Austin**: What is it?

**Janine**: Anlace. A-N-L-A-C-E.

**Austin**: Oh , those are- Oh, I don't- That one I don't know. That's a cool dagger.

**Janine**: It's like a- it's like a double-edged medieval dagger. It's just like, a cool word.

**Austin**: Cool. I feel like I had one of those in Dragon's Dogma.

**Janine**: It's also a class of frigate in Halo, I guess.

**Darcy**: Sure. Sounds right.

**Janine**: So, wait. Who's-? It's Victoria and-

**Austin**: Right now my list is Sunder- or I only included Victoria. I don't know that Gloria knows.

**Janine**: Okay, I'll just add a V to this list.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: Uh, yeah. There's only words that go with five of these letters.

**Austin**: Yeah, not with all six. I've also already tried to Rot13 them thinking that would be great, but the only words that come up- But were- we, again, only get five letters. We don't get six.

**Ali**: I'm starting to think like, if there's even a name, or if it's just like... Cause I don't know that this is the sort of like, group that like... these six people are gonna keep meeting.

**Janine**: Yeah. Yeah

**Ali**: -and being like, 'Oh.' You know?

**Janine**: Do we intend to reconvene under this banner or-?

**Ali**: No. I think we just all have an understanding, and like-

**Austin**: Ah, The Understanding. Got it. [**Ali** laughs]

**Ali**: But it's like-

**Austin**: [loudly] Oh my- That's the worst. [laughs] No, Darcy.

**Ali**: No. [**Darcy** laughs]

**Austin**: Darcy, in the chat, says, 'Is it The Six?"

**Ali**: God. Um-

**Austin**: [groans] Ugh, it's so good.

**Darcy**: But we spell out the number instead of just putting the number.

**Austin**: Right. Uh huh. [**Ali** hyucks a laugh] It's different.

**Darcy**: It's different.

**Austin**: It’s different.

**Ali**: I really think that all of these people are like, A: cool enough, and B: like, know that they're doing a fucked up thing to just be like, We're not talking about this.’

**Austin**: Ever again.

**Janine**: Adaire just named three schools a few weeks ago-

**Austin**: True. Yeah.

**Janine**: -so I feel like if she shows up to this meeting, and they're like, ‘What do we call ourselves?’ She's just like, ‘Fuckin who care- Whatever. No.’ [**Austin** and **Janine** breath laughs]

**Austin**: I thought you were going to-

**Janine**: ‘Do you want to embroider this on an armband?’ Like, No.’

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: I'm just gonna write down ‘The Understanding’ up top. Uh, and [overlapped] no one actually calls it that.

**Keith**: The Sunderstanding.

**Austin**: The Sunderstanding.

**Janine**: The Concord.

**Austin**: Right. See? [**Ali** laughs] I get what- I think you're totally right, Ali, for what it's worth. I also think groups like this get names.

**Ali**: Oh, yeah.

**Austin**: Do you know what I mean?

**Art**: Especially in fuckin’ Friends of the Table they do.

**Austin**: Uh huh. [**Ali** laughs again]

**Janine**: What does- If Benjamin like, writes a book-

**Austin**: Right.

**Janine**: -about the responsible use of this magic or whatever, what is the horrible name he gives them?

**Austin**: Right.

**Janine**: For this- for this thing that they do.

**Ali**: Right.

**Janine**: That's the more interesting question to me.

**Ali**: Well, I...

**Austin**: I'll start looking up words that are a synonym for deception.

**Janine**: Or even-

**Austin**: You know.

**Janine**: What's the like, ‘Temba. His arms wide’ version of this?

**Austin**: Right. No. Yeah. Totally. Do you want to explain what that is to people who don't know who Temba is?

**Janine**: It's a Star- It’s a Star Trek thing. There's a Star Trek thing where... they find aliens who speak using, um… The word I want isn't metaphor... I mean it's also a metaphor, but it's like um, allegory and like- and like historical storytelling kind of- kind of comparisons. That's how they communicate. And they have to like, learn those- those metaphors and those stories in order to communicate with the aliens.

**Austin**: Yeah. It's like, ‘Shaka, When the- When the Ar- When the Walls Fell.’

**Janine**: When the Walls Fell, yeah.

**Austin**: It’s like, ‘Oh. Damn.’

**Austin**: It- it's- There is a article out there that you can find by searching either of those phrases we just said that compares it to like, contemporary memes. And like-

**Janine**: Totally. Yeah.

**Austin**: That style of- of having a shared lexicon of phrases that produce a... like, an immediate, you know, shared response.

**Janine**: A bond between people who share them, but also impenetrability between people who don't.

**Austin**: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Um… That’s it. The Deep Fried Crispy Mean Boys. Thank you… **Darcy**.

**Ali**: Mhm.

**Austin**: I think we can come to this later. For now, what's important is this happens.

**Art**: Yeah. And honestly, we can either add it in a pickup or at the end of the thing that I'm gonna start for this.

**Austin**: Right. So, it finishes. This happens. Can someone start drawing like, some soldiers here? Where I've pinged.

**Sylvia**: Yeah, I can.

**Austin**: Like, on the way down to Alcyon. Like, some sort of barricade or some sort of battalion. I don't know. Anyway. And... god. What's... One question is, 'What's Alcyon think of this?'

**Sylvia**: Uh-

**Austin**: Does- Is Galenica asked to leave? Do they understand what's happening?

**Art**: Like-

**Austin**: It's the first week. So, to me, I feel like, for this week, Benjamin and people Benjamin talked to maybe know that it's fucked up. But no one knows who. Benjamin- Like, I like the idea **Janine** had. Like, Benjamin shaking hands people for a week. And also, I don't think Alcyon would know that it's fake, at this point either, right?

**Art**: Probably not, right?

**Ali**: [breathes deeply] Well, there's some- Like, does- does Galenica deny that they did it? Or like, in seeing… people in this community go to that extreme to get rid of them...

**Austin**: I don't know. Um…

**Ali**: Right? Cause I feel like, that's- if it's a- [lightly laughs] If it's a, 'they said-they said' between god... [laughs]

**Austin**: And a big community. Right.

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: [sighs heavily] I don't know that they are like, 'Well, I guess I'm not wanted here.' Do you know what I mean?

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Keith**: Honestly, they're probably like-

**Jack**: The ease with-

**[1:00:00]**

**Keith**: ‘We should get this reconfiguration done faster. Or they're gonna be a problem.’

**Jack**: The ease with which they admitted to having reconfigured Velas-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: -makes me think that- So, I believe them when they say, ‘I haven't decided what to do.’

**Austin**: Yeah, that is a truth. If you had rolled, you know, Discern Realities or whatever, I would’ve been like, ‘Yeah, they are telling the truth.’

**Jack**: Yeah. But, at the same time, I think that because they’re a god- if they were to be told, ‘You have to leave,’ I wonder what their response would be. They might just say, ‘No.’

**Austin**: Right.

**Jack**: ‘I have work to do.’ I don't- I don't know.

**Austin**: I also- I also love the last thing that Corsica- er not Corsica- the last thing that Galenica told Lem was, ‘You'll do it without me anyway. You'll find another god.’ And then immediately… [laughs] You know.

**Jack**: We like, weaponized-

**Austin**: [finishing **Jack** sentence] A new magic.

**Jack**: [overlapped] We discovered a form of magic and weaponized it.

**Austin**: To make it look like what they would do. Um… [**Jack** groans] Mhm. I think that they... I think that they just- [conflicted] Ooof. The question is how far... into Alcyon would they stay? Would they leave and- Oh! I know what they do. It's Alcyon. There is a large statue of them there. That is where the rest of them is. They return to that. That is where they set up, you know? Like, they... are in the base of that tower of the statue of Galenica, who they also are, as a- as a reminder. Which is like, here on the- on the eastern side of Alcyon, let's say. And go into repose.

**Keith**: And the stairs to the library.

**Austin**: Right. [lightly laughs] Right. And that is like- No one goes in. No one is like, ‘We gotta go find out what's up with Galenica.’ So, that is where they are. Uh, I should advance some clocks. Oh, that's a bigger- [lightly laughing; clicking mouse sounds] I didn't mean to make a

gigantic- Alright. There we go. New church, now one away. Census, now one away. Sap tower, now one away.

**Sylvia**: Should we also move safety to an abundance?

**Austin**: Yes. Yes.

**Sylvia**: Cause that clock finished.

**Austin**: Yeah. That was part of the plan, right?

**Sylvia**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Again, note- noting that safety is not- does not include safety from Galenica or reconfiguration.

**Sylvia**: Mhm.

**Austin**: But, you know, probably doesn't- Uh, sorry. Sorry. Doesn't- doesn't hurt those things. It doesn't- The Coalition is real, right? I think you're in a better place than you would be if you did not have safety. [lightly laughs] Um, okay. Fwoo, love to use the abundance of magic immediately. Um, **Art**, what are you doing this turn?

**Art**: I'm gonna start a project.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Art**: And it is Benjamin's investigation.

**Austin**: Ooo, love it. How many ticks is that? [overlapped] What is the goal? What is-

**Art**: Well, we're not sure. How hard is it to find out?

**Austin**: What is the goal? Is the goal to find out who did it, or who was involved? Who the people were?

**Art**: Yeah. Benjamin wants to uncover The Deep Fried Crispy Mean Boys is what I believe they're called. [**Austin** and **Darcy** laugh]

**Jack**: We have to stop- we can't call them.. We cannot call it Duckberg. [**Austin** laughs]The more we call them…[**Darcy** laughs] it Duckberg, the more that's just gonna become the name of Duckberg.

**Austin**: I think a few weeks? Is it a month?

**Art**: Four? Five? Three of you.

**Keith**: Is three is a few?

**Art**: Three-

**Austin**: Three is a few! This is really a question for the people involved.

**Sylvia**: Yeah. I think because it's Benjamin, it can be a shorter clock, right? He's-

**Austin**: Cause Benjamin rules? Is that why you're sayin-?

**Sylvia**: Well, because he's one of the few people- One, he discovered this magic.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Darcy**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: And he's also one of the few people who actually like, studies magic here at the same time.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: So.

**Darcy**: Well, and if the way that he is discovering it is like, this kind of the metaphorical, but literal feeling of the hand in the bag-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Darcy**: -like there's probably a hand- There's no other hand he would recognize as easily as Sunder's.

**Austin**: Right. And then from there, it's like, 'How do I find out more once I know Sunder's involved?' I think that's three. I like three there.

**Art**: Now we're playing with fire. I'm not gonna do the math, but the odds on this project finishing are low. So.

**Austin**: Mhm. Uh, they're probably still alright. We still got some time left.

**Darcy**: It's like fifty?

**Art**: I think it's better than fifty, but I don't know that it's much better than fifty.

**Austin**: Right. Um, alright.

**Art**: Someone's already in my Twitter mentions being like, 'It is exactly this. You dolt.'

**Austin**: Right.

**Art**: And stop calling me a dolt on Twitter. [**Austin** laughs]

**Keith**: Is that a big problem for you?

**Austin**: Are people doing that to you? Buddy...

**Art**: No. It's literally never happened. And please don't do- Ali, just don't use this, please. [**Keith** laughs]

**Ali**: Yeah. No. It's not.

**Austin**: Alright. That's a turn.

**Keith**: Yeah. No one's- I just searched it. No one's ever called you a dolt on Twitter.

**Austin**: Does anyone call anybody a dolt on Twitter? Probably. Yeah. Definitely.

**Keith**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: Definitely.

**Austin**: Uh, Jack, it is your turn.

**Jack**: Okay. [breathes deeply]

**Austin**: Deep breaths.

**Jack**: It's been a fuckin' rollercoaster of the last few turns, hasn't it?

**Austin**: It sure has.

**Jack**: Okay.

**Austin**: The Jack of Winter. Huh.

**Art**: Oh god!

**Austin**: Huh.

**Jack**: Hm.

**Austin**: Fuck.

**Art**: Oof.

**Keith**: Do we really need a second infection?

**Jack**: Okay. The Jack of Winter says, [reading] ‘An infected outsider arrives seeking amnesty. They have some much needed resources with them. Choose one. Welcome them into the community. Remove a scarcity, but also introduce an infection into the community.’ Or ‘Bar them from entry. What scarcity could they have addressed? How does its needs become more dire this week?’ [groans and laughs]

**Austin**: It’s a big one.

**Jack**: Okay. So, the first place my mind goes to, and I don't know that this is necessarily the best idea, for some answers that I will- for some reasons I will say in the next slide of this PowerPoint, are someone arrives with a really good argument for reconfiguration.

**Austin**: [lightly laughs] Yeah?

**Jack**: [laughs] Um, I don't like this because I don't necessarily like the equating of that with an infection. Um… It- It is... I don't know whether or not I want to say this is infectious thought. Specifically from the card text.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Jack**: If we had come to infectious thought from say, for example, the council within the council, that would be a different matter.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Jack**: But the card is specifically talking about infection.

**Austin**: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Jack**: And I think if we choose to interpret that as a kind of infectious thought, we are saying something about our decision making as storytellers. Um… I'm also wary of just being like, ‘I'm gonna invent a new disease.’

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: Because we are late enough in the story that... that would feel really... flat.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Jack**: So, I'm thinking about infections and diseases and transmittable stuff that we have experienced in the show, up to this point.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: That can't just be like, ‘Oh, it came up from another lamina.’ Like, ‘Oh, it's a-’

**Austin**: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Actual stuff that we've seen is what you're talking about.

**Jack**: Mhm. Yeah. So-

**Austin**: And non-metaphorical diseases.

**Jack**: Mhm.

**Austin**: Or- or are you say- or infections rather.

**Jack**: Um, I- I could hear a case for metaphorical stuff-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: But I think we'd need to be- we'd need to be cautious about what it was we were saying.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: Um… We have... Undeath doesn't have any effect anymore, right?

**Austin**: Not that we've seen. This is no longer... Or I guess it all is. That was a- Okay. So, there was no such thing as unfact- as an undead disease is the thing.

**Jack**: Sure. Right.

**Austin**: Right? That was a-

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: That was a myth created by the Ordennans.

**Jack**: Like, as a complete fabrication.

**Austin**: Right. I mean there were undead people, and that was- that was, at the time, Adelaide being like, 'No one should die anymore.'

**Jack**: Right.

**Austin**: 'People should have autonomy over their final death.'

**Jack**: Mhm.

**Austin**: Real quick, by the way, Hella, how does Adelaide feel about this stuff?

**Ali**: About... which stuff?

**Austin**: About the... the uh…

**Ali**: Oh, the-

**Austin**: The Understanding that they- that you would do this thing. That you would do this thing quietly because it would cause people to react the right way and quickly join this coalition.

**Ali**: It's- [groans] It's tough. I- You know, I think that… [quietly] Oh god. [regular voice] I think that a reason kind of the Hella-Adelaide relationship works and is interesting-

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Ali**: -cause it was like, kind of a mutual move away from that sort of action.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Ali**: But I also think that like, Adelaide was a leader for a really long time-

**Austin**: Oh, yeah.

**Ali**: And like, you know, gets that sometimes you're in between a rock and a hard place. I also don't- Like, I- You know, I- I believe that it would have been something that Hella would have reached out for guidance for. Like, while it was happening.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Ali**: Um… So, Hella still did it. [laughs]

**Austin**: Right.

**Ali**: [laughing] I don't know that Adelaide is like, one hundred percent on board with it, but they've at least had the like... talk about it, I think. And yeah. I don't know. Like, her... being Death now... I don't know. I maintain that she's probably not one hundred percent on board with it, but like, gets that-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Ali**: -sometimes you make hard choices.

**Austin**: Yeah. [lightly laughs] Debate in the chat over whether- or about Adelaide and whether or not she would be cool with this. So, if you're at home being like, 'I disagree about,' you know, it's a collaboration. [**Austin** and **Ali** laugh lightly] And I'm gonna do- I'm going to default to Ali on this one. I think that that's- I think that's probably right. I think there is some... I think that there is probably some short like, 'Hey, this is bad.' And Hella explaining the situation, and Adelaide being like, you know, okay with it. This is not a point of… you know-

**Ali**: Yeah, and I-

**Austin**: Like you said, she has- she has been a queen.

**Ali**: Yeah. And I think part of Hella's role there was to try to negate the... risk and the like… [laughs] I mean she didn't stop anyone from doing it, and she was on board with it, but she was definitely there to be like, 'Let's make sure-'

**Austin**: [finishing **Ali**'s sentence] That no one gets hurt.

**Ali**: '-if we're gonna do this-' Yeah. You know, '-that people don't actually literally get hurt.'

**Austin**: Right. Right.

**Ali**: Yes. That's number one. And then be like, you know, 'Do this as small as possible, but big enough that what we want to happen will happen.'

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Ali**: And that- You know, that takes some doing. [laughs]

Yeah. So, where you feel- how you feelin' on this one, Jack? [Jack groans loudly] Stuff that comes to mind that's like, infectious stuff that we've seen before on the show: The pala-din- [coughs] Excuse me- like, toxin stuff. Poison that turns you into a pala-din.

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: We know that the Alcyon plants were poisonous in some way. Um, we know that there was the old- now the old Spring had a thing that was like that. That like, wasn't- was trying to slowly take over the university during the winter. We know that Ordennan steel became infectious.

**Jack**: Mm.

**Austin**: That it was so tied to the Heat and the Dark that it carried the Heat and the Dark with it. And like, when people used it, it hurt- it would eventually make them sick. Which we saw both in the Last University for, you know, for years. And then, at the end, we saw in Ordenna- er sorry, in Malle's Fist. Where people in Quint were being like, put into quarantine camps in Quince Parish. And kind of cycled between like, using Ordenna steel and then healing from it, and then using it again.

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: That's one that's certainly on the table. You could imagine someone showing up with Ordennan steel knowing like, 'Well, we know it kills gods.'

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: You can imagine Car-

**Jack**: Okay. Here's-

**Austin**: Yeah, go ahead.

**Jack**: Yeah. Let's say it's that. But I really don't want from the camera- from the- from the point of view of camera people, I don't want to put the Heat and the Dark on screen.

**Austin**: No.

**Jack**: We've previously seen the Heat and the Dark associated with Ordennan steel, right? As this kind of like- um-

**Austin**: This is an established fact. Yeah.

**Jack**: As like, some kind of- What does it look like? It's like-

**Austin**: The steel? Or the...

**Jack**: The- the Heat and the Dark with the steel.

**Austin**: We've never seen it like...

**Jack**: [finishing **Austin**'s sentence] Affect someone?

**Austin**: We seen it-

**Keith**: It's not like a visual thing, right? It's that-

**Austin**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Keith**: It's just that- It is like, very close to it... chemically?

**Austin**: It is- It is condensed Heat and Dark, right? Like, it is- it is hyper-condensed, very strong metal that is-

**Jack**: Sure.

**Austin**: -just the Heat and the Dark, pure, you know, drilled down. And then, the thing that happened was people close to it found themselves getting sick as their bodies broke down the way the Heat and the Dark was breaking down Samol's body.

**Jack**: Sure. Yeah Okay. So, I think what it is is it is a... mercenary arrives. I think it is a... tall orc woman who shows up, and she offers her services as a mercenary. And I don't think we know straight away that the blade that she carries is Ordennan Steel until we see it. At which point, we know immediately that it's Ordennan steel.

**Austin**: Is it just her? Or is it her plus a company?

**Jack**: It's her- it's her plus a company-

**Austin**: Okay.

**Jack**: -of like, three others. Um, she doesn't have a full mercenary company. She's much more like, a party almost.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Jack**: Like, a party showing up.

**Austin**: Right.

**[1:15:00]**

**Jack**: What I really don't want this to be is the- the ‘Carrie's hand coming out of the grave,’ but for the Heat and Dark.

**Austin**: No. No.

**Jack**: This isn’t-

**Austin**: But I think what this does underscore is... something bigger that we haven't direct- directly addressed, which is like, it's not gone, right?

**Jack**: Mhm.

**Austin**:  There- the-

**Jack**: Yes, this thing is not going to come and kill us tomorrow.

**Austin**: Right.

**Jack**: Or maybe even our children.

**Austin**: Or- Right.

**Jack**: Or maybe our children’s children. But um... You know, this- this troop has arrived carrying weapons that are made from it.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: And it has us- It has an effect.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Does this remove the good tools scarcity? Or knock all the way up?

**Jack**: Uh, yeah. It knocks it all the way up because we now have… Oof. Or does it... Yeah. Possibly. Yeah, cause we have- we've made- we've made tools from silk and other things for like, um-

**Austin**: Yep, that's what got good tools up to, 'Not a scarcity.'

**Jack**: And now we have swords.

**Austin**: And now you have- now you have weapons made of stuff that can kill- that can hurt gods.

**Jack**: And also, you know, this isn't even necessarily we're committing to use then.

**Austin**: No, no, no. Totally. But the people know... But there is an abundance. There is- there is-

**Jack**: Mhm.

**Austin**: It is not a worry on the community's head in this direct way. Unfortunately, there is also now... Does this- does this introduce a line of thought, which is like, 'Oh, yeah. We should find more Ordennan steel weapons' to people like Corsica and the Grey Duke? Or the Grey Duke's troops?

**Jack**: Definitely. But it's like, a wildly uncomfortable thought for a lot of people.

**Austin**: Yeah. Definitely. I don't think it's even- Yeah. Yeah.

**Jack**: Uh, yeah.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: It's like, 'You've got your fancy pants Augury.'

**Austin**: Right.

**Jack**: 'But if we just hit a thing with Ordennan steel it dies.'

**Austin**: Right. And there- there is something that maybe gets hit. There's something that we want to hit- we want to be able to hit.

**Jack**: Mhm.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: [lightly laughs] Yes. Or more insidiously, we don't want to not hit.

**Austin**: [lightly laughs] Right. Yeah. Alright. I'm going to advance clocks. Hella, the census completes.

**Ali**: Hey.

**Austin**: What's that look like?

**Ali**: You know, I think the- the... [sighs] The original sending out of people was like, really basic.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Ali**: I don't want to like- I think that there's like, a lot of value in like, just being able to arrive a place with like... some seeds and stuff.

**Austin**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali**: And also just like, 'Hey. Here's what we're up to.' The way that I've been thinking about it is like, people going with like- like a very just basic pouch of like, here's some seeds and like whatever we use for fertilizer. And like, some stuff that we figured out that we can use for pens. And like, 'Here you go. I'm here now. Can I ask you some questions?' And the more that I've been considering it, I think that like, it's just like, what are the three... You know, 'How many of you are here? How long have you been here? What kind of things have you been dealing with?' But also framing it in kind of the like, 'What do you have? What do you lack?' thing from...

**Austin**: Right.

**Ali**: -Severea's original…

**Austin**: From the- from the Buoy. What is your lack? Is that what you're thinking of?

**Ali**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali**: Yeah, yeah. Yeah. Just in terms of like, you know... It's just the most base level community building sort of stuff. Which is like, 'Oh, you guys need rice over here? Yeah, we have a ton of that.'

**Austin**: Right.

**Ali**: 'We can make a lot of rice... You have pumpkins? [**Austin** laughs] I haven't seen a pumpkin in three years. Can I take one of those home?' Like- [laughs] And it's just like, really simple stuff like that cause I don't like- This isn't like, an expansionist thing. It's not like a, 'Who is your leader?' I need everybody's names and-'

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Ali**: '-and everything' sort of thing. But like, the casualness that like, she approached the bird people and being like, 'Oh, you guys need magic? We have books, I guess. [**Austin** and **Ali**

laugh lightly] You wanna come read our books?' is like, just the base level like... we know what the map is. Now we should have an understanding of who is out there.

**Austin**: Right. Cool.

**Ali**: So, yeah.

**Austin**: Nice. What's this-?

**Ali**: I don't know if-

**Austin**: Ooo, it does move somethin'. Is this community? Is this knowledge? Is this population?

**Ali**: I don't know.

**Austin**: I could really hear an argument for eith- for any of them.

**Ali**: Um… Yeah, I don't know. It might... it might bump population over?

**Austin**: Okay.

**Ali**: I feel like, you know, the thread to divide between humanity and population is like, a really wide one.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Ali**: And with the community the way that it is right now... [**Austin** makes an 'aww' sound] It can stay where it is. And also just being like, 'Oh, hey. Here's- You know, thanks for the apples' isn't like building a community with other people a hundred percent.

**Austin**: Yeah, but it- but it is saying like, 'Oh, hey. We are all part of the same... settlement. We're all part of the same-'

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: I kind of want a less...good word than community. You know what I mean? Like.

**Ali**: Yeah. I think population kind of answers that though.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Ali**: In terms of being like, you know, we started this. We didn't know anyone who was out there. We didn't know how many people were out there. We didn't know what was out there.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Ali**: And now just having an understanding like, ‘Oh, you know, the people up north like-’ I don’t know.

**Austin**:  Does this include this new branch of people?

**Ali**: I don't know why someone wouldn't stop there.

**Austin**: Cool. What's their deal?

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Are they just like, another little community? I guess, Keith, you drew them. Did you have any ideas of what their deal was?

**Keith**: So, the only thing that I had is that they had made their homes... in these like, mossy boulders.

**Austin**: Ooo.

**Keith**: And they had carved out of- carved into the stone these houses.

**Austin**: Cool.

**Keith**: Which is part of why it started bending.

**Austin**: Sure. Boulders are heavy.

**Keith**: Right. And round.

**Austin**: Right.

**Keith**: Roundish, at least. So, I- No, I had not- I had not come up with anything beyond that just, you know, in case somebody else went and did the investigation.

**Ali**: Shout outs to whoever drew a pumpkin.

**Austin**: It was me. I drew a pumpkin.

**Ali**: [laughing] Next to the Farmer’s Almanac.

**Austin**: Next to the almanac. Uh huh.

**Keith**: Not a bad Pumpkin.

**Austin**: I'm happy with this pumpkin.

**Keith**: Yeah, it’s not a bad pumpkin.

**Ali**: It’s great. Yeah. It looks- Yeah.

**Austin**: I don't remember if it's green at that part... I don't think it is. But sometimes you see green on a pumpkin drawing.

**Keith**: Pumpkins- Pumpkins, for sure, have some green on there.

**Ali**: Yeah, there could be a leaf there.

**Austin**: I don’t know.

**Ali**: The pumpkin vine-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Ali**: -is what that is, I think.

**Janine**: I think that’s what the- Wouldn't that be the brown part? The brown part would originally be green cause that's where it's on the stalk?

**Austin**: Maybe, but sometimes I see like, a pumpkin with like, a leaf up there, too, you know?

**Janine**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Or like a- I don’t know.

**Ali**: Yeah, this is a freshly picked pumpkin.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: Damn.

**Ali**: It’s still got the leaves on.

**Austin**: Yeah. That's all. Um… cool.

**Ali**: But yeah. I think that like, that community especially having like, really good carving tools...

**Austin**: Cool.

**Ali**: -is good.

**Austin**: Yeah, totally.

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: I like that a lot.

**Janine**: For the pumpkins?

**Austin**: Yes.

**Ali**: Yes. Also for the boulder homes.

**Austin**: Yes.

**Janine**: Right.

**Keith**: They call themselves ‘augers’ because they dig into rock, and they-

**Austin**: No. Oh my god. Fuck off. [lightly laughs]

**Ali**: Mm.

**Austin**: It was very confusing for like three weeks especially during this investigation. Poor Benjamin [laughs] is like, ‘I'm trying to find out about the augurs.’ And like, ‘Oh, yeah. They're right up- they’re up there. They're at the-’ It’s people just pointing up at the branch. He’s like, ‘I gotta get up there. I gotta find out more.’ Um, the sap tower-

**Keith**: ‘All these hands are wrong.’

**Austin**: [breathes a laugh] Yeah. The sap tower finishes.

**Janine**: Okay. So...

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: Here's what happens with the sap tower. So, the sap tower is, to a degree, a thing that they feel compelled to build. To them it is- it is like a thing awakens in them. They have enough knowledge to do this. They are mature enough to do this. They sort of understand the process enough that they have done it. And it's this minute of like- or this moment of like, as they're completing it, there are probably a lot of the sapkin who are like, ‘Why are we doing this again?’ Like, ‘We're almost done and that's good. But what happens when we're done?’

**Austin**: Uh huh.

**Janine**: And the thing that happens when they're done… is that- I should start drawing on this tower.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: This tower... [sighs] So, the tower is where it is, and it's- it's quite tall. It's not- [to self] Why is it not-? Alright. There we go. It's like, fairly tall. It's much wider at the base and then kind of like, a sap pole more than anything else on top. I didn’t plug in my tablet today. So, this is the best we're getting. And there's sort of some meeting rooms at the base, and this is kind of, for them, a center. But the thing that happens once this is done... and more importantly I think part

of this is also once it's hardened, like, I think part of that clock, for me, was they got the basic structure in there. They used the bark to like, help solidify it and stuff and then hold it. But part of it is waiting for the sap to solidify and crystallize the way that they do.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: And once that happens, it's like, a very particular day when the wind is a very particular speed. And it's one of those things of all the factors are right, and it just got- You know, it just hit the right consistency.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: And it starts to kind of resonate, and it's probably like- It's like a tuning fork sound.

**Austin**: Ooo.

**Janine**: And it's probably like this for a full afternoon, which is long enough to- Like, it's long enough that it's a little- It gets worrying, probably. [**Austin** and **Janine** laugh lightly] But then, it stops before everyone's like, in full on panic mode.

**Austin**: Right.

**Janine**: It's like, 'Oh-' You know, everyone just thinks there's a ringing in their ears for a bit and then, 'Oh, no. It's the tower? Okay. Should we do something?' And then, by dinnertime, it's quiet again, and everyone's like, 'I guess that's fine.' Um, but the thing that happens is throughout the course of this ringing- and again, it's very subtle and hard to pin down until it's gotten to a certain point- but little sort of rivulets start sort of forming out from the sap pool, kind of alongside the existing stuff, but also... Just like, all over kind of.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: Like, little veins. And they just kind of spread all over the damn place.

**Austin**: Uh… Wow. That's all over the place.

**Janine**: Yeah, they're very-

**Ali**: Oh.

**Janine**: They're very narrow. Like, I'm imagining these being the width of like, a footpath, basically.

**Austin**: Oh. Do you want me to make them more narrow?

**Janine**: Sure. I could have also done that, I guess, but I... I just went with the regular brush. But it's basically like a network of little like rivulets of sap.

**Austin**: Mm.

**Janine**: But they harden. They harden over- You know, they expand over the course of the crystal resonating, or the cry- It is a crystal, and it is resonating. So, that's- that's accurate.

**Austin**: [amused] Uh huh.

**Janine**: They expand over the course of that. And then, once it stops, they sort of- The sap there starts to harden. At the end of each one, a little pool sort of forms where the extra has collected. And a little like- a little Weaver King digit is sort of popping up out of each of those.

**Austin**: Oh, geez. So, it's travelling through... the... these rivulets?

**Janine**: Kind of. Yeah. We got a little weaver digit. There should actually- I mean, honestly, there should be a lot of these.

**Austin**: Right, right, right.

**Janine**: Because- But specifically the thing that's happening here is- Well, there's two things. One, more sapkin are going to emerge from these pools. Because these are their like, sort of birth places. These are-

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: This just looks like a green apple with a little butterfly on it, but whatever.

**Austin**: It does. Yeah.

**Janine**: So, they- they start originating there. But the thing that this project to solving is we now have an abundance of roads and paths.

**Austin**: Mm.

**Janine**: Because the sapkin have very specifically said we want to- we want- we want to have our own little network of communities at places that are important to the university. Because the university is like- is our culture. It's our place.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: It's a place like- Everything we know we learned here at about this place.

**Austin**: Right.

**Janine**: And we want to one, be a part of it, but two, expand it and- and provide something.

**Austin**: Can non-sapkin use these rivulets?

**Janine**: Yes.

**Austin**: Or is about-

**Janine**: I think that- Cause they're solid. They are- It's-

**Austin**: Ohhh.

**Keith**: Footpaths?

**Janine**: I think that-

**Austin**: I see. I see. I see.

**Janine**: Yeah, that's why they are-

**Austin**: Interesting.

**Janine**: That's why they're like, footpaths  is basically like-

**Austin**: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

**Janine**: I think it's tricky to do things like use wagons on them.

**Austin**: Right.

**Janine**: Because they probably have very low friction once they're hardened. Once they're hardened, they're probably pretty smooth.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: Or at least they're- they're probably very bumpy and lumpy, but the material itself is very smooth. So, it's hard to get traction on it.

**Austin**: Gotcha.

**Janine**: It's probably really good for bugs though because bugs often have like, sticky feet to-

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: -move along surfaces like that.

**Keith**: No, we established that no one knows how that hap- works.

**Austin**: Yeah. No one knows about how bugs stick to things. So.

**Janine**: Ah. [laughs]

**Austin**: Yeah. Alright. Cool. We also completed new church. New church in the wild.

**Art**: Sure did.

**Austin**: What's- what- what's up with it?

**Art**: It's a great question... because I sort of feel like, it's like, a little less relevant than it was when I started it.

**Janine**: Like all churches. [**Keith**, **Austin**, and **Sylvia** laugh]

**Art**: Uh, I think most of them last longer than eight weeks. Well, statistically, that might be wrong.

**Austin**: Well, that was the founding of the new church. That wasn't, 'We're gonna have a new church for eight weeks.' Was it?

**Art**: Right. No.

**Keith**: You're on day one.

**Art**: But I mean the project succeeded, so it succeeds. And um… I mean I guess like, the- like, the snapshot I want is just like, you know- is like, Hadrian a little building opening up and-or second... neighboring stand.

**Keith**: This can't be an eight week church stand.

**Austin**: It was such a long- It was an eight- Yeah, it's eight weeks. You've done more than that.

**Art**: Alright.

**Austin**: Think big. It's also the last-

**Art**: It's the biggest-

**Austin**: It's also- This is- this could be our last thing that happens.

**Art**: Biggest fucking stand you've ever seen. [**Keith** laughs]

**Austin**: [resigned] Oh my god.

**Keith**: It's a two story lemonade stand.

**Art**: [amused] It's fifty feet high and as big as three football fields. No. Um, no I think it's- I think it's a- it's a medium sized building. Probably one that already existed and has been repurposed somehow. Oh, I guess we didn't have that many extra buildings, huh?

**[1:30:00]**

**Austin**: Eh, we built some. [breathes a laugh] It seems like.

**Art**: Yeah, there is a lot of buildings on this map. More buildings than I remember in our old university map. And it's, you know, it's- it's Hadrian like, ushering people in and just kind of like, giving his- his brief little speech on like, self-empowerment and self.... you know the- the, you know, 'The gods will not save you, but you can save you.'

**Austin**: 'Except for my friend, Hella's girlfriend, who is-' [**Ali** laughs]

**Art**: It ain't no bein' saved at that point.

**Austin**: It's a different sort of saving.

**Art**: Sure. Also, in two weeks, that might all blow right up. [**Austin** laughs]

**Austin**: Actually, that's a good question is does the Galenica stuff completely change the attitudes- Or like, does that help more people be like, 'Oh, yeah. We need- we need a faith of- of mortal kind'?

**Art**: Yeah, I think that is- I think that helps a little.

**Austin**: Or- Uh, Ali, did you have a thing there?

**Ali**: No. I mean I think that there's... Like, extending from this, I think that there's... The angle that Hella is able to add from this like, especially in like, having to... recontextualize the…

**Austin**: Mm.

**Ali**: -relationship she has with Adelaide for a church is interesting.

**Austin**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali**: In terms of being like, 'Yeah. We were two people who really hated each other, and she was a person who like, was interested in manipulating people for her own ends.'

**Austin**: Huh. You don't say?

**Ali**: [laughs and mutters] It's fine. But like, I think that like, Adelaide being someone who is human and still being able to like, act in the greater good for people and come around when the world sort of needed that-

**Austin**: Mm.

**Ali**: -is- is more grounding than like, ‘Oh, this is this person who sprang from a thought.’ [laughs] And-

**Austin**: Right. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. There's something very practical, very real about that in comparison.

**Ali**: Right.

**Austin**: Is there... Ephrim, you weren't really consulted on this thing too much? Or like, you were kind of there, but I'm curious if there is more on that note.

**Sylvia**: Um, yeah. I don't think Ephrim really gets involved that much with it.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Sylvia**: I think that when it's opening, he comes by to show support and stuff. But... we've definitely like... not just over... like, this season of the show, but like, the- when we started it with the Cold Dark Winter, like Ephrim was distaning- distancing himself from the faith more and more.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: And I think that's just sort of like... ‘This brings back too many bad memories for me to attend services regularly.’

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: ‘But I don't mind it being here.’

**Art**: Sure. And, of course, eagerly attending the opening is Benjamin, who makes sure to shake every congregate’s hand.

**Austin**: Oh, of course. [**Janine** and **Ali** laugh] Yeah, definitely. God.

**Janine**: For what it’s worth, I think Adaire is also there. Even though Adaire is like, wildly... anti-all churches pretty much consistently and still.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: I think she does kind of have a genuine curiosity like, ‘Okay, Hadrian. You tell me what you think this should look like.’ Like, ‘I'm all ears.’ Not in a sarcastic way. Not in like, a confrontational way, but in a like... ‘What's- what's the way that this should look in this world?’

**Austin**: Yeah. Is she- How does she feel about the sermon?

**Janine**: I mean I think... To a degree, it's something- If any sermon was going to speak to Adaire DuCarte, it would be this one.

**Austin**: Uh huh.

**Janine**: But also, it's, to her, I think, a bit like... if we walked into a church and the- and, you know, the pastor at the front, or whatever, gave us like, a good soup recipe. It's like, ‘Okay. Well, this is all stuff I can do, and do do. But I don't know if this is what I'm here for.’

**Austin**: Right.

**Janine**: ‘I don't know what I'm here for, but is it this? I'm not sure.’ It's just like, very straightforward and practical to her, in a way that-

**Austin**: [lightly laughs] Keith says, ‘Debate me’ in the chat. [**Janine** breathes a laugh] Okay.

**Janine**: I think she like, pats him on the back like, ‘Job well done.’ But, eh. Other than that.

**Austin**: That's somethin’.

**Janine**: Eh.

**Austin**: Okay. Jack, is it still your turn? I believe it is. Are you- What are you doing with your turn?

**Art**: Wait, wait. Hold on. I would like to- I would like to say that this moves community over to abundance.

**Austin**: Yes, I agree with this.

**Keith**: Was this not Ali's turn, I thought?

**Austin**: No, we've not gotten to Ali's turn.

**Keith**: Oh geez.

**Ali**: Nope.

**Austin**: Uh huh.

**Keith**: Big turn.

**Ali**: I just had my fingers in a lot of-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Ali**: -the pies on this one.

**Austin**: Uh huh.

**Jack**: Oh, God. Okay. I would like to hold a discussion.

**Austin**: Good call.

**Jack**: So, I get to make a statement or ask a question.

**Austin**: [simultaneously] Or ask a question.

**Jack**: If I make a statement, that's the end. I don't get to speak.

**Austin**: Yes.

**Jack**: And if I ask a question, I get to speak at the end.

**Austin**: Yes.

**Jack**: Okay.

**Keith**: By season seven, we'll have Hold Discussion down. [**Austin** breathes a laugh]

**Jack**: [laughs] I know. It's- it's just fiddly. Um… okay.

> **Jack** (as **Lem**): If we get reconfigured, what, as a community, should our next step be?

**Austin**: Hella.

> **Ali** (as **Hella**): We… [exhales] We're not- we're not gonna know for sure what will happen to us. But I think that we've kind of set up a good outline.. on what should be done through what we've done in the last year. Which is... look at the people closest to us and do as much as we can. And once we feel... secure or, I don't know, capable, start tryin' to spread it.

**Austin**: Um… [clears his throat] Who is this? I think for sake of getting her voice back here, it's Corsica, if- if she's invited to this conversation. And what she says,

> **Austin** (as **Corsica**):The same that we did here. Secure the lives of the people who we care for. Prepare for the inevitability of conflict. And ensure ease to those who... are struggling.

**Austin**: Fero.

> **Keith** (as **Fero**): I guess if we got reconfigured, I would go home. And I would... find new friends.

**Ali**: Fero...

**Jack**: I'm gonna take a contempt. [**Austin** and **Ali** laugh lightly]

**Art**: Yeah, that was rude as hell.

**Darcy**: Geez, same.

**Jack**: That's how we know he cares. [**Janine** laughs]

**Austin**: Uh huh. Adaire.

> **Janine** (as **Adaire**): I mean it depends a lot on how we get reconfigured, right? Like, if... I don't know… There are reconfigurations I could be happy with, and there are reconfigurations I'd be very unhappy with. If I get reconfigured back to Velas, I'm probably gonna burn that place down. But if I get reconfigured into like, a really big house with like... a buncha... gold- [laughs]

**Austin**: Oh, yeah. Uh huh.

**Janine**: [laughing; catching breath] I don’t- Uh, no, it’s not- That's not great.

> **Janine** (as **Adaire**): -a really big house with like, a bunch of space and nice furniture and stuff, then I'm probably not gonna complain too loud.

**Austin**: Throndir.

> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): I mean I agree that we... should come together and turn to each other. But I... I don't think there is a world where we can truly come together and turn in to each other, when our own self-determination isn't on the table.

**Austin**: Ephrim?

> **Sylvia** (as **Ephrim**): If reconfiguration does occur, it means we'll have failed again. And honestly, I think there's too much going on for me to even bother entertaining about thought.

**Austin**: [laughs] Hadrian.

> **Art** (as **Hadrian**): I think I'm- and I’m stunned to hear me saying this- but I think I agree a lot with Corsica. We’ll- we'll do what we've done so far and have done before. We’ll- we’ll rally our communities and try to stick together the best that we can... I guess not Fero though.

**Austin**: Lem.

> **Jack** (as **Lem**): Galenica said that there was no end.. state. That there wasn't any point that we could reach and say, ‘We got there! We're done!’ But if we have to build a community… in a new world... again? I can't help, but ask, ‘How many more times we're going to have to do that?’

**Austin**: Alright, Hella. Draw a card.

**Ali**: Oh, it's my turn.

**Austin**: It is.

**Ali**: The Nine of Winter. [reading] ‘Someone goes missing. They're alone in the winter elements.’ [**Jack** laughs quietly]

**Austin**: Oh, fuck.

**Ali**: ‘Choose one. The community organizes constant search parties, and eventually, the person is found. Project dice are not reduced this week.’ Is this an ‘or’? Oh, yeah. It’s a ‘choose one.’ Or ‘No one ever hears from that person again.’

**Jack**: I love this card. This card is horrible. [**Austin** and **Ali** laugh]

**Ali**: Um… Shucks. [laughing] I don’t know. Dang. Um… God, I'm trying to even just think of who would be...

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Ali**: [sighs] What’s interesting at this point? We've had some missing… people. [laughs]

**Austin**: Yeah. [breathes a laugh] Darcy, in the chat, suggested-

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: -Sunder leaves before Benjamin figures out her connection.

**Ali**: I- I really like that angle because I think that the... The- the part of that that's most interesting to me is like, thinking of Sunder as um… Benjamin's mentor for all that time.

**Austin**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Ali**: And, you know, for all of the crystals from Fantasmo that he listened to to like, learn the like, stuff that's Sunder wouldn't be willing to teach him... She was the one who was there and like, taught him the basics.

**Austin**: Totally. A hundred percent.

**Ali**: Yeah. Like, just how to even hold a wand really. [**Austin** laughs] I don't know that he holds a wand. Does he?

**Austin**: [laughs] No, I know what you mean. Yeah.

**Ali**: But like, yeah. No. She is- she- She's been there that entire time, and I fully believe in her as someone who is like, ‘I know that Benjamin is gonna be mad at me about this… But I’m

gonna do it anyway.' But I don't know that like… [sighs] In this late in her life, in the life that she's led, that she would want to stick around to be like, 'Yeah, it was me.' [sighs] Unless she is eventually found, which is also an option.

**Austin**: Oh, yeah. That's the question is like, do we never hear from Sunder again? Or is- are there search parties, and they find her?

**Keith**: God, that would be so fucking grim if Sunder leaves to run away from the consequences of her actions, and we don't reduce project dice cause we are all out looking for her...

**Austin**: And then, the next week Benjamin finds out what-

**Art**: No, it wouldn't because the dice wouldn't move.

**Austin**: Oh, you're right. It would be two weeks later, which is interesting.

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Jack**: Well, what if the reason that they don't go in part is that like, Benjamin is also out looking?

**Austin**: Right. Right, right, right. Totally.

**Ali**: Right. Yeah, yeah... Yeah, I don't- I don't know. I feel like I wouldn't want to get rid of her completely, but I do think that like, the panic that she would have...

**Austin**: The guilt? Is it- is it guilt? Or is it- or is it, 'I am in danger.'

**Ali**: I don't think she thinks that she is in danger. But she's also, like- Uklan Tell was her best friend.

**Austin**: Right.

**Ali**: So, I think that it's like- I think that she's guilty about it. And I think that the impulse that makes her leave is something like, 'I don't regret what I did, but I do know that I don't wanna... I know that the consequence is coming. And I know that I can avoid it.'

**Austin**: Right.

**Ali**: 'Because I could go somewhere else, and I- I- you know, I could be of value to another community. I can- I can do-' [overlapped]

**Austin**: Right. She's not even like, 'Oh, I don't have to go-' She's not even saying, 'I'm gonna go forever.' The card says-

**Ali**: Right.

**Austin**: -if you choose that, no one here said again. But, in her mind, she could be like, ‘I'm just gonna go- I'm gonna go lay low somewhere until this cools- [laughs lightly] cools down.’

**Ali**: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Keith**: Does she tell- does she tell people- does she tell like, someone to tell people, ‘Don't come looking’? Or is this the project dice one? Or is it- or is it neither?

**Austin**: No. It sounds like it's the project dice one.

**Keith**: Oh, okay.

**Austin**: Er, unless it's not, Ali.

**Ali**: Yeah, I think it is. I think that she... I think that she is trying to lay low, but she does get found.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Ali**: Um, and it's probably before she wanted that to happen.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Ali**:And... But I do think like, her leaving was not something… was not her strongest moment.

**Austin**: Right.

**[1:45:00]**

**Ali**: And there had been a lot of nights like that. Where it's either like, ‘I'm going to wake up tomorrow, and I'm going to get found out. Or I should just leave right now because I know this is coming.’ And one night, she follows the impulse. [lightly laughs] Right?

**Austin**: Yeah. Totally.

**Ali**: Yeah, I feel like that's- that's... For... for the… the weight of the betrayal that that is, I think that it is an honest... thing for her character to do.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Ali**: And I'm interested in seeing it, but I don't want to take her- I don't want to take that like... I don't want to take Benjamin's catharsis off of the table.

**Austin**: totally.

**Ali**: If that makes sense.

**Austin**: Yep. Definitely.

**Ali**: Like, as a record. Yeah.

**Austin**: I like that a lot.

**Ali**: Okay.

**Austin**: Cool.

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: So, no product dice reduce this week, which means we jump right into your… [**Ali** laughs] And we also only have one project left on the table right now. We can jump into your turn. What do you do?

**Ali**: Oh my god. Oh my god. Um… I had one idea, but I feel like I should start a project. And I don't know what we... What's up with us right now?

**Austin**: Uh, you- The only scarcity left is knowledge.

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: You have population, food and water at a mixed. You know, you have it, but not in abundance. And everything else is abundant. Oh, and flight. Flight is not abundant yet.

**Ali**: Right. Um… This is- [laughs] I feel like this is just a small project for like, the time that we're in right now. But I think that like, the most obvious thing is like, maybe an... expansion of that Farmer's Almanac.

**Austin**: Sure.

**Ali**: Now that we just like- we- we have that knowledge, but it's like, spread out. But to like, organize it again, I think would be really beneficial to the community, and like to...

**Austin**: Volume two. Yeah, I got you. A second printing.

**Ali**: Yeah. [laughs] The second printing, plus like the… the additions that we can give out to other... [laughs again]

**Austin**: Darcy, in the chat, says, ‘I knew Hella cared.’

**Ali**: Alright. Of course I care about you, Throndir. Um...

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Ali**: But yeah. I... Yeah.

**Austin**: I like that.

**Ali**: Hella is a very practical person, who is like, always looking at the thing in front of her and the thing that she's looking at it is a cool pumpkin.

**Austin**: True.

**Ali**: And she wants more of them. [**Darcy** laughs]

**Austin**: Alright. Use four, you think? Somewhere in there?

**Ali**: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

**Austin**: There we go. Second printing almanac.

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Alright.

**Keith**: How many cards are even left? We're really pushin' it.

**Austin**: Do you want to know?

**Art**: Eight.

**Keith**: Was that a guess?

**Art**: No, cause there's five in the discard, so it should be eight.

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: I'm gonna draw a card is what I'm gonna do. [**Darcy** laughs] I'll note all of this has been on video, too. Alright. It is the Ace of Winter. Either [reading] 'Now is the time to conserve energy and resources. A project fails, but gain an abundance.' Or, 'Now is time for hurried labor and final efforts. A project finishes, but gain scarcity.'

**Keith**: This is a great card. This is an awesome card.

**Art**: Oof. Oof.

**Keith**: I love this.

**Austin**: I think I know what it is. [**Art** groans] I think Benjamin finishes the investigation.

**Art**: I- Yeah, that- that- I could- I can already imagine the abundan- the- the scarcity that creates, too.

**Austin**: Uh huh. Well, what do you- what is- what's the one that you think it is? Cause I think it's like, ‘trust.’

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Art**: Trust is the exact word I had.

**Ali**: Yeah, same.

**Austin**: It’s trust, right?

**Art**: I wish I could have written it down on a card [**Austin** laughs] like we were playing Password.

**Austin**: No, I think that this is like, he fi- he... Does he find Sunder?

**Art**: I pitched it in the chat-

**Austin**: Oh, I missed it.

**Art**: -that Benjamin finds her in like, a Godfather two moment. Like, ‘I know it was you, Fredo.’

**Austin**: [laughs] Right. Yeah.

**Art**: Moment with like, a search party around.

**Austin**: Right.

**Art**: Like, wrapping her in a blanket and taking her to safety-

**Jack**: It’s like-

**Art**: -and Benjamin’s like, ‘I know it was you.’

**Austin**: Right. Yeah.

**Jack**: It’s a rainstorm. The tree, the branches all moving. People slipping on branches.

**Art**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Keith**: I haven’t seen it.

**Austin**: She slips- she slips and-

**Janine**: [finishing **Austin**’s sentence] And he reaches out to like-

**Austin**: -and he reaches out to pick her up.

**Janine**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Yeah. Uh huh. Yeah, she's on her knee-

**Janine**: Take my hand.

**Austin**: Take my hand. And then, she knows immediately because she feels his hand and realizes like, ‘Oh, shit.’ And that's all he needs, right?

**Art**: We’re- we're sort of like, backtracking to the last card, but I love all of these images. Yeah.

**Austin**: They're great. I love- I don't care. It's fine because then, the investigation- Does this come from questioning? Or is this just like, that's the piece he needs to start putting together times and places of where people are? And like, reading her journal or whatever. See- You know what I mean? What is the- what is the actual investigation? Let's think. How does he-

**Art**: It's really depends on what- how we decide this magic really works. You know?

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Art**: Like, does- can this magic allow him to look into the past? Can he just like, once he knows enough of the details-

**Austin**: Right.

**Art**: -can he just like, literally see it?

**Austin**: Is it like the reverse of the Fantasmo projections? Where instead of it being like, ‘I am projecting the past forward-’ Or it's the same, in a sense, right? Like, he's able to craft a crystal that then produces, like detective-vision Batman shit. Where he’s like, ‘Ah, okay. Yeah. I filled in enough gaps, and I can tinker with a- with a vision until it clicks into place what the truth is.’

**Art**: Can I like give- Can I like, pitch something that might be a little too extra?

**Austin**: Always. It's a finale. Let's do it. An epilogue. Excuse me.

**Art**: But like, what if it actually... What if he's actually changing the past? Like, what if it's really that the reason Sunder left is because she remembered that?

**Austin**: Oh, shit.

**Art**: And Benjamin was standing in the corner.

**Austin**: So, wait. She remembered what? That-

**Art**: She- [stammers] She's like- she's like, going back over the meeting-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: Like, the details of the meeting, and this time, she remembers Benjamin projected in the room.

**Austin**: That like, he's there.

**Art**: Yeah. He like, reverse project- [stammers] Like, anyone else who like, thinks about it is like, 'Who was at that meeting? It was uh… and Benjamin was there. Oh shit!' [**Austin** and **Janine** laugh]

**Keith**: So- so, instead of projecting them to himself-

**Jack**: Yeah, that's wonderful.

**Keith**: -he projects himself to them. And they don't remember it until after he's done that. Cause he hadn't done it yet.

**Art**: Well, cause he did it, and he's he's doing it now into the past.

**Austin**: [simultaneously] Into the past.

**Keith**: It's like in Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure, when he-

**Jack**: That's amazing.

**Keith**: -when they time travel themselves the keys.

**Austin**: Right. Except- except- [laughs lightly] Yes.

**Jack**: I love this cause it's the- [**Austin** groans] This is the horror movie thing of seeing a face in a photograph, right?

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: Where it's like, 'Oh, that person was in the photograph all along.'

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: 'We've always been at The Overlook.'

**Austin**: God, and it's- Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**Art**: Yeah, I hate to do two Jack Nicholson references in the same episode, [**Austin** and Jack laugh] but Jack Nicholson in The Shining was also doing this kind of magic.

**Jack**: Yes.

**Austin**: God, yeah. Well, and then there's just- I just want close ups on eyes. Just Benjamin, arms crossed. And then a close-up on his face. And then a close-up on everyone else's face like, looking up from the ground just at the camera. Right? But we know that it is like, Benjamin making note. It's Benjamin knowing this is- this is who these people are. Or believing this is who these people are. ‘Okay. I see.’ Love it.

**Jack**: And then that awful, like cold moment of Sunder’s realization, right?

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: Like you were saying where she's just like, ‘Oh, yeah. I remember Benjamin was standing next to me- Oh! Benjamin was standing next to me.’

**Austin**: Yeah. [sighs] So, trust-

**Jack**: Very good.

**Austin**: -gets added as a scarcity.

**Keith**: How does the- how does this- For it to affect the community, how does it- how does- how does trust become the scarcity? How does this- how does Benjamin's feelings disseminate to everyone else?

**Austin**: Um, well, I think he- he shares, right? I think he immediately... How does he do it? That's a good question. I think...

**Art**: Does this help repair the relationship with Blue J?

**Austin**: Oh, instantly, right? It's like-

**Art**: The like- Yeah.

**Austin**: I think the thing that he's- I mean- So, I’m gonna start a project clock after I tick this almanac up one. Which is that, ‘We need to leave.’ And this time, I think Blue J and Red **Jack** are going to be part of this group that's leaving. And the statement that he makes is that you... He like, you know, calls together some various leaders of this- of the community, who are not the- the six of you. So, this is like Devar. This is Chatterchin. This is Stornas. This is like, people who have connections to the various groups who live here. This is members from the refugees from the north. This is, you know, all sorts of people. And he's like,

> **Austin** (as **Benjamin**): Look. You know how much I care about this place. This place has been my home for most of my life now. I've defended this place with my life. I have learned to work with people who I never would have encountered before. We've all made

each other's lives better. I am telling you you cannot trust the people who say they work in our interests. They deceive us.

**Austin**: I don't- I don't think he gets- Does he- does he make the specific claim? I think he does. I think he says it outright, which is like,

**Austin** (as **BENJAMIN**): The people who-

**Austin**: Cause he has to throw people under the bus here... I don't know that he does.

**Keith**: He should. I wasn't there. [**Ali** laughs lightly]

**Austin**: He has to be vague.

**Jack**: Does he go to name names and then doesn't?

**Austin**: I think he starts to. Yeah. I think that's what it is. He goes to name names, and then he doesn't. I think that's probably the most honest thing for who he is. And says like,

**Austin** (as **Benjamin**): We can no longer trust that the people...

**Austin**: And by which- by this, he clearly means the people who are not at this meeting-

**Austin** (as **Benjamin**): -who run this community do so with our interests in mind. They used Affective magic to deceive all of us about the danger of the god, Galenica. And the possibility- not the possibility- the fact that they had begun reconfiguration. That was a trick. A deception. They are... charlatans. They are... con artists. How much else have they lied to us about?

**Austin**: I think there are people who are like, 'We should throw a coup.' There are people who are like, 'We should take over this place.' There are people who are like, 'We should just go to the Buoy.'

**Jack**: Yeah. Grey Duke would escort them.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: Like, Grey Duke's men would escort.

**Austin**: Yeah. Is anyone from this- Is any- Are any of you at this meeting? Fero, you said you would be.

**Keith**: Uh-

**Austin**: I think he'd happily invite anyone who was not in that room. Including like, Hadrian, Rosana, Blue- you know, Blue J-Benjamin- Er, Blue J, Red Jack.

**Art**: Uh huh.

**Keith**: I would go. I would go to the meeting.

**Austin**: And actually, I don't think he would say, ‘We have to go.’ I think- I think, actually, he's gonna hold a discussion. That's actually the thing he should do. That is the thing that this is. It's not a project yet. I don't think he's- He's Hadrian son, but- but- And he's Rosana’s son, and they're- they're doers. But he is not like, ‘And that's why I should be king,’ you know? And so, he holds a discussion. And I would love everyone to respond to this, even people who are not playing characters who are not there. Feel free to speak as a member of this community. What he says is,

> **Austin** (as **Benjamin**): There are people who- There- there are people who lead this community towards ruin because they deceive us. What should we do about that?

**Austin**: Fero.

> **Keith** (as **Fero**): There has never been a time where I have... liked… uh-

**Art**: Ha! [**Keith** and **Janine** laugh]

**Darcy**: Anyone.

**Keith**: End of sentence.

**Austin**: [amused] Okay.

**Keith**: Uh, no.

> **Keith** (as **Fero**): This has always been a community where the people in charge were only so because they claimed to already be.

**Austin**: Mm. **Janine**, who are you speaking for? Is this Rix and Rowe? Is this somebody else?

**Janine**: My first thought was- I'm- I'm torn between Rix and Rowe or a representative from the sapkin.

**Austin**: Yeah. Yeah, either of those are good.

**Janine**: Because I don't like- Because I feel like, the sapkin should be represented at things like this.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Janine**: At this point.

**Austin**: Agreed.

**Janine**: Because they are... But also, I really like Rix and Rowe. [laughs]

**Keith**: And they have a-

**Austin**: Uh huh.

**Keith**: They also have a unique perspective of being like, totally of the new Spring, and a reconfiguration would not include them.

**Austin**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Janine**: Um, you know, I also wonder if Benjamin would- would invite Rix and Rowe.

**Austin**: Knowing their proximity. Yeah.

**Janine**: Knowing they've helped in all of Adaire's projects.

**Austin**: Yeah. True.

**Janine**: All of Adaire's like, school things. You know, they hang out with Adaire and Hella. They-

**Austin**: Yeah. Fair.

**Janine**: It's one of those things like-

**Austin**: Yeah, let's go with-

**Janine**: 'This is a thing you do, if you want Adaire to hear about what you're talking about.'

**Austin**: Let's go with- let's go with the sapkin, then.

**Janine**: Yeah. I think it would- I think the most obvious choice would be the oldest of the sapkin. Who is like, fully crystallized and has the benefit of the most experience with- You know, it was probably- probably the first- they were probably the first sapkin who came to the university and- and did all that stuff. And I think they say,

> **Janine** (as **Sapkin**): This community is what it is because of every... every person who is a part of it and… that is for good and for ill. How... how societies are. If there is disagreement, then there is disagreement. And.... if there is agreement, then it's- it may be temporary. It's- There can't be purity in a- in a group like this. There's purity in the sapkin when there were five of us sitting on the shore of the sap pool. But... we become different. We see different things. We experience and learn different things. And there will always be divergence. And... I- I don't know...

**[2:00:00]**

**Janine**: This is- I think this is a thing that they struggle with as much as I'm struggling with. Where it's they- they recognize there's divergence. but they don't have a lot of examples of like, what you do about the divergence.

**Austin**: yeah.

**Janine**: They just sort of vaguely feel like... you should do something that's honest to the fact that it's going to happen, and it's gonna happen with people that you liked once.

**Austin**: Throndir.

> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): I'm really disappointed that something like this would happen. And that it would be done without- I mean basically in secret. And I don't blame anyone who feels that they... need to leave. That they can't trust these people again. But I'm not ready... to just leave or to give up all hope in... these people. I would like to give them the chance to like, own up to this and explain and... change.

**Austin**: Um, Sylvia, who are you- who are you voicing here?

**Sylvia**: I think maybe I'll just be voicing someone who's like- I don't think it's just a farmer. I think it's someone who might work with like, the nü-metal or something. Like, they do something that is specific-

**Austin**: Sure.

**Sylvia**: -to the new Spring. And their- their stance is,

> **Sylvia** (as CITIZEN): Look. I'm not gonna pretend to understand any of this magic stuff you guys are talking about. [**Austin** laughs quietly] All I know is I've got a bed here. I've got food here. And I've got a bug that helps me make all this metal. [**Keith** laughs] I don't need anything else. [**Jack** laughs]

**Austin**: Damn. You know what? That's it. No one else gets to speak. [**Ali** laughs] No. Hadrian.

> **Art** as (**Hadrian**): [sighs] I don't... I don't know. I'm... I'm crushed by this. I thought... I thought we were building something real here. And I don't... I don't know that it's true anymore. I don't… [sighs] I just don't know.

**Austin**: Lem.

> **Jack** (as **Lem**): Okay, this is bad to learn. But we mustn't let it get in the way of the fact that what Galenica did to Velas Under the Tree was... was really bad. And I- I want to make sure that we don't let this kind of lie... which is bad.. [**Austin** breathes a laugh] get-

> get us away from the fact that what Galenica plans to do or- or, you know, is considering is, if anything, worse.

**Austin**: **Ali**, who are you- who are you speaking as?

**Ali**: Um… I think that I'm speaking as one of the... Ordennan pala-din.

**Austin**: Good call.. Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

> **Ali** (as **Ordenna Pala-din**): I know what it's like to... not have trust in the leadership. And when I didn't… the things that the people above me did were unimaginable. They were happy to put a wool over our eyes and force us to... do whatever it is that they- they needed. And... when I consider the actions that you speak of... I think that there is still care in here that I didn't see in Ordenna. But I don't think the... Manipulation is manipulation. So, I don't think that you're overreacting.

**Austin**: Benjamin, who I think... His eyes didn't leave his father's face.

[Jack de Quidt's "Consequences" begins playing]

**Austin (continuing):** Once he heard how... defeated he sounded, ends by saying, [quietly] God.

> **Austin** (as **Benjamin**): There has to be consequence... There has to be justice... They have to be held accountable... for acting against us. For acting unilaterally. [music/drums intensify] There are six of them… Their names are: Hella Varal. Lord Ephrim. Sunder Havelton. Adaire DuCarte. Victoria Solomon... And Corsica Neue... They are not sovereigns. They are citizens, too.

[music finishes]

**Austin**: That is my turn. Keith, do you wanna draw card?

**Keith**: Sure. Let's do it. No... I'm just feelin' good about it.

[simultaneously]

**Austin**: No whammies. No whammies. No whammies.

**Janine**: What if it's the king? What if it's the king? What if it's the king?

**Keith**: Op, sorry. I had to draw it- [**Sylvia** groans] My keyboard is broken. I have to draw it from my laptop.

**Austin**: Oh-

**Keith**: [further away] One second.

**Austin**: Oh my god.

**Darcy**: [groans] Oh, god.

[crosstalking]

**Ali**: Just drag it.

**Art**: We can draw it for you.

**Janine**: Literally any one of us could draw it for you.

**Austin**: I can drag it. I'll drag it. Do you want me to drag- [**Keith** far away mumbles] Keith?

**Keith**: [far away] I already got it.

**Darcy**: Nope, he got it.

[crosstalking]

**Austin**: It's in his-

**Janine**: He pulled it into his hand.

**Ali**: Oh-

**Keith**: Game is over. [everyone shouts]

**Darcy**: Hey!

**Austin**: Holy shit!

**Keith**: Game's over. [someone claps; more shouting]

**Janine**: Wow.

**Keith**: I saw it as it was leaving my hand. I was like. 'Oh, no.' Before I put it, I alr- I was trying not to react. [**Ali** exhales] Game's over. [reading] 'Frost Shepherds arrive. The game is over.' [**Janine** laughs]

**Sylvia**: [quietly] Oh my-

**Art**: What does this even mean?!

**Austin**: Okay, we have to sit with this?

**Janine**: Was that the-

**Art**: Well, good luck, Austin.

**Janine**: Was that our fuckin' group name? The Frost Shepards?

**Austin**: [laughs] The Frost Shepherds arrive. [**Austin** groans; **Keith** laughs]

**Sylvia**: I thought it was Benjamin's group's name.

**Ali**: God.

**Austin**: That- Yeah, right?

**Janine**: Yeah. They get a name, for sure.

**Austin**: I'm gonna read from- [laughs lightly] Oh, yeah. I have to read from the book here. Just so we're clear-

**Art**: Oh, fuck.

**Austin**: [reading] 'During play, it's best to leave the Frost Shepherds an elusive mystery, perhaps hinting at what they might be, but never directly answering.

[Jack de Quidt's "Frost" begins playing]

**Austin (continues):** The game ends abruptly when the King of Spades is drawn. The card is read aloud, and the game immediately concludes. Once the game is over, it is fine to talk about what the Frost Shepherds might have been, what their arrival might have meant for the community, or any other situations that were faced throughout the year. But the game is over. The limits placed on communication and discussion are suddenly lifted.'

[music plays to finish]

**Austin**: Adaire DuCarte, it has been one week since the Frost Shepard arrived. Where do we find you? What are you doing?

**Janine**: So, one thing that Adaire knows super well is she knows how to tell when a town is onto her. [**Austin** breathes a laugh] And she knows how to disappear when that happens. And it's a thing she's done several times before. It's a thing that she has always been... ready to do. It's a thing she's always had in her back pocket in case things go real bad... And I think it's also one of the last lessons that she has for Rix and Rowe. In terms of how to… survive, and how to be in control of your fate. So, I think, you know, she picks her new name, and she makes some- some loose plans for how to change things up. And then, I think with that stuff lined up, she goes to Hella. And she asks- You know, she tells Hella like- I don't know if, at this point, Benjamin has like, really.... I'm not- I'm not sure what the timeline on that stuff is. I kind of imagine this happening like, slightly before hard moves have been made in that respect.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Janine**: And I imagine her going to Hella and saying like,

> **Janine** (as **Adaire**): Look. They know what we did. They know this plan that we enacted. They don't seem to particularly care that it was for their own good.

**Janine**: Adaire is, of course, gonna be very righteous about that... still.

> **Janine** (as **Adaire**): They... I don't know what they're going to do. I don't really want to stick around to find out. I don't want to leave you though... Rix and Rowe are gonna come with me and Barbelo. So... You know, if you do want to stay, like, I'll have people. So, I don't want- I don't want that to, you know… But also, I don't think you should stay.

**Ali**: Yeah, I don't think that we get the particulars of this argument, but I think that we have Hella kind of reacting... like, just shocked and poorly to it, initially. And then- [lightly laughs] the image of the four of them leaving the town.

**Austin**: Wait, the four of them being…?

**Ali**: Rix, Rowe, Hella, Adaire.

**Austin**: And Barbelo.

**Janine**: Five.

**Ali**: And Barbelo. Oh my god. I'm sorry. [**Ali** and **Janine** laugh] Sorry to our family.

**Austin**: Um, here's a question.

**Janine**: I can't believe you'd forget one of your children like that. [**Austin** laughs]

**Ali**: God.

**Austin**: Does- does the community keep the Adaire signs up?

**Janine**: I mean the Adaire signs just have initials. They can say what those initial stand for. [**Austin** laughs] Those could be anything. Those could stand for anything. [Austin exhales]

**Austin**: And so, a week after the Frost Shepard arrived, the world continues. There has been no reconfiguration yet. Fero Feritas, it has been two weeks since the Frost Shepard arrived. Where do we find you? What are you doing?

**Keith**: God, I'm... Fero left.

**Austin**: Fero left.

**Keith**: Fero left.

**Austin**: This was like, right after the meeting? Or like, within that two weeks?

**Keith**: Within that two weeks.

**Austin**: Wow.

**Keith**: Maybe- maybe... Okay. Here's- here's what I had in my head. We can- we can decide. Now that- now that you said it, I was like, 'Oh, yeah. I guess I could have left earlier.' But I was going to have been annoyed that Adaire left before me. [**Austin** breathes a laugh] But yeah, I guess I- Cause my- my thing was to- I was gonna go and try and find... the- the- my little mountain cave.

**Austin**: Like from forever ago. From your life.

**Keith**: From my life. My- Yeah, my home.

**Austin**: So, is this just shots of you as like, a cool- as a panther or something? Like, flying through...

**Keith**: Yeah.

**Austin**: -the rhizome? Flying through the world and looking to see if maybe somewhere that cave exists still.

**Keith**: I... I want to- I want to find- I want to have found it.

**Austin**: Okay. Where do you find it? What's it like where it is?

**Keith**: I think it's... it's just like a mountain. It's like, um -You ever see a- like a tree that has grown around a rock in a way where it looks like the rock is growing out of the tree?

**Austin**: Yeah, totally.

**Keith**: It's like that.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Keith**: And I don't- It's- I don't know if it's up or if it's down, but it's far away, and it's darker, probably. Um, and it was, you know, a ways away.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Keith**: But it's also- You know, Fero is magic.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Keith**: And the power of his magic partially comes from that mountain.

**Austin**: Yeah, totally. It's that mountain. It's Galenica, who is still around. It's the Spring now cause you can speak to it.

**Keith**: And Rosemerrow.

**Austin**: And Rosemerrow, right. So...

**Keith**: And-

**Austin**: You find your cave, yeah.

**Keith**: And you know the feeling... when you get home after like. a trip?

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Keith**: And you feel both very at home and comfortable, but also like you're in a different place? [**Austin** exhales] Like- like it feel- Like, you're like, 'Ah, I'm home,' but it also kind of feels like it's a hotel room.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Keith**: Because you're not used to being at home anymore.

**Austin**: And like, maybe- So, the thing I do when I- when I go away for a trip is leave my room in better shape. I had an ex who insisted that I always clean my room before a trip. And so, I internalized that. And what that means is when I get home, my room is cleaner than when I live there. Do you know what I mean?

**Keith**: Yeah.

**Austin**: So it... it literally feels like that to me.

**Keith**: Yeah.

**Austin**: It's like, 'This isn't quite right. There's not enough laundry on the floor.'

**Keith**: Um, yeah. It-

**Austin**: 'This isn't- this isn't lived in.'

**Keith**: It's that- it's that exact feeling, and it's like uh… And it's also empty. And it's-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Keith**: I don't know when the last time Fero was like, really alone was. But the thing that I really want is for it to also be just a relief. [**Austin** and **Keith** breath light laughs] Like, I- I don't- I don't

want... Like, who knows? Three, ten years? Maybe Fero is like, ‘It's time to go and to do something.’

**Austin**: Right.

**Keith**: Maybe it's in a year, but like, right now, I- This is what I wanted. And... I just am glad that it's fin- It's- I'm just glad that I don't have to decide if today is the day that I leave anymore. Because I did it.

**[2:15:00]**

**Austin**: Yeah. And so, two weeks after the Frost Shepard arrived, the world continues. There has been no reconfiguration yet. Throndir, it has been one month since the Frost Shepard arrived. Where do we find you? What are you doing?

**Darcy**: I think partially that depends on... with a Adaire and Hella leaving, did Benjamin also leave?

**Austin**: Benjamin stayed.

**Darcy**: Okay. Which probably means that Blue J stayed.

**Austin**: Which means Red Jack stayed.

**Darcy**: Which means Throndir stayed. [**Austin** breaths a laugh] And I think it depends… if there is any of that contingent that, you know, was involved with this that also stayed, then I think... Throndir is committed to doing what he said. You know? Holding them accountable. But... not making them feel like there's no chance at coming back from what happened.

**Austin**: What's that look like materially? Like, is Throndir acting as a mediator? Is Throndir like- I mean this in- this includes your technical boss, right?

**Darcy**: [overlapped] Ephrim?

**Austin**: In Victoria Solomon.

**Darcy**: Oh, yeah.

**Austin**: And in Ephrim. Yeah, both.

**Darcy**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Right?

**Darcy**: Yeah, I guess how many of them also stayed?

**Sylvia**: I'm still there.

**Darcy**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Yeah. I think this is... I don't think there's an overnight coup. Again, we don't- I don't want to zoom in too close here, but there is a real spread of distrust. And… there is- Adaire was right to get out of town. Adaire is not Ephrim. You know? There are protections that... you have when you don't have to leave the tower. So, what does holding people accountable look like for Throndir?

**Darcy**: I think it's dissolving the Golden Lance.

**Austin**: Is it dissolving it, or is it specifically with regard to Victoria and Gloria?

**Darcy**: No, I think it's- I think it's dissolving it.

**Austin**: Wow. So, those treat- the old treaties... The old treaties that they are always able to use-

**Darcy**: What do they even mean anymore?

**Austin**: What do they even mean anymore? Do you destroy them? Do you lock them away? Do you- do you do nothing because what do they even mean?

**Darcy**: I can't destroy them. There's a library I'm building here. Come on. [**Austin** laughs]

**Austin**: Oh, I can't believe Throndir turned into a librarian. I love it so much. No more Golden Lance... You take their weapons from them? Their badges?

**Darcy**: I don't know about the weapons part, actually.

**Austin**: Mm. Okay.

**Darcy**: While I was- Well, I was walking my dog, while we were...

**Austin**: Kodiak, yeah. Uh huh.

**Darcy**: -while we were- No, my real life dog- while we were doing this break, and like, I- [laughing] like, I had this thought in my head of like, 'Man, what if Throndir-' Like, you know, what if we do a scene where it's like, you know, it is the day after, and everyone's arguing and figuring out what to do.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Darcy**: And like, Throndir just poses the question to Hadrian of-

> **Darcy** (as **Throndir**): Hadrian, what here is evil? [**Austin** laughs]

**Darcy**: Then like, the honest answer is, ‘Probably no one’?

**Austin**: Right.

**Darcy**: Maybe... maybe Corsica, but that even feels like a stretch.

**Austin**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Darcy**: And so... Okay, yeah. So, it's dissolving the Golden Lance.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Darcy**: It's maintaining the library.

**Austin**: It's raising- er it's being part of this family with Benjamin, Blue J, Red Jack. Hadrian's extended family, also.

**Darcy**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Presumably.

**Darcy**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Is there- Do you put any... protections in place for the new type of magic and access to it?

**Darcy**: I don't think Throndir does any of that.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Darcy**: I mean that seems- that seems like Benjamin's thing.

**Austin**: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Fair… God.

**Darcy**: As long as Ephrim is here, Throndir... spends time with Ephrim. Like, I don't... That ten years was a lot.

**Austin**: Yeah, that's real. Okay. Accountability, but not... but not that old style of Golden Lance justice.

**Darcy**: Yeah it's not- Yeah. It's not the justice of... Was it Lake or Solomon that just vaporized the priest in Fall?

**Austin**: May as well be either of them. They've both done that shit.

**Darcy**: Right.

**Austin**: Right?

**Darcy**: Yeah.

**Austin**: That's the message for them.

**Darcy**: And a big part of that, too, is that, you know, if the ‘What here is evil?’ that priest was evil.

**Austin**: Oh, that priest was evil.

**Darcy**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Do you fold in the... the survival guide that Callowkeen and Maria Velasina were making into the almanac? Do they come back one day and are like, ‘Hey, we found this place again. [**Darcy** laughs] We have material for the next- for the next volume of the Golden Lance Survival Guide.’ But what it really is is the Throndir Almanac now.

**Darcy**: Yep. Uh huh.

**Austin**: Love it. And so, a month after the arrival of the Frost Shepherd, the world continues. There has been no reconfiguration yet. Lem King, it has been two months since the Frost Shepherd arrived. Where do we find you? What are you doing?

**Jack**: I am up to my knees in a stream that Emmanuel and I have discovered running on one of the branches nearby. And I have my hands in the water, and I'm picking up a variety of different stones [**Austin** breathes a laugh] and looking at them and categorizing them. And Emmanuel is sitting on the bank, drinking some- something out of a bottle and just sort of like, nodding and admiring the- the rocks. Um, I have been... paralyzingly... terribly anxious. I have woken up every morning... convinced that it's going to happen today. Um, and I have gone to do work in the library. [stammers] Rather than staying in bed all day, I've gone to, you know, do some work in the library and talk to Benjamin and gone to check in with Galenica. Taken the gondola down to Alcyon and- and met with Galenica in the cramped bar. And, you know, every day asked in... in tones oscillating between anger and fear, whether or not it's going to be today. And unremittingly and without fail, Galenica has given some cool non-answer every time.

**Austin**: Right.

**Jack**: With seemingly no recognition that I've continued to ask the question. And so, I've, you know, gone and had picnics in the evening. [**Austin** and **Jack** each breathe a small laugh] By the stream. And stayed up late and then woken up the next morning feeling anxious again. But... there are... periods of cool water... between those anxieties where... whatever is eating Lem is not doing so so horribly that it's eating him up completely.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Jack**: And in those moments, Lem is- is genuinely and without reservation doing what he does best, which is reading and looking at things at the bottom of a river and annoying people [**Austin** breathes another small laugh] and... never quite deciding on what it is that he ought to be doing in that moment.

**Austin**: Does he ever get another violin? Does he ever play?

**Jack**: Yes. Absolutely. I think that that's probably... something that helps with the fear that the world is going to change again… or so dramatically. But I don't think it's going to happen yet. Lem getting a violin.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Jack**: I think when we see him in the river, no- no violin.

**Austin**: No violin.

**Jack**: But I think one is-

**Keith**: The humidity would break it.

**Jack**: The humidity would just.. It would be a terrible- But, you know, I have no doubt whatsoever that he will find another one.

**Austin**: One day.

**Jack**: And he will play it really well. And he will ruin some small corner of New Hieron with it, in some capacity.

**Austin**: And so two months after the Frost Shepherd arrived, the World continues. There has been no reconfiguration yet. Lord Ephrim, it has been six months since the Frost Shepherd arrived. Where do we find you? What are you doing?

**Sylvia**: So... I think where we find Ephrim is... So... you said earlier that it is...uh, it's easier when you're able to just stay in the tower, [**Austin** laughs lightly] and you have those privileges. And we are joining Ephrim on the day that stops.

**Austin**: Mm.

**Sylvia**: Because he... Word got out about who was involved with the fake configuration.

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Sylvia**: And when... when nobody trusts you, you can't be their leader.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: This... isn't one of those things where he's gone kicking and screaming about it either. It's kind of been like, a slow build of... trying to not... let it get to him. And then like, month three is when he kind of realized there was no fixing this. And at this point, he's kind of put all his preparations in place... to step down. And... he is definitely framing this like it's his choice. [**Austin** laughs lightly] And he is not leaving the university is kind of the thing that he's made clearest. Because as far as he sees it, another day- every day that this place is still in- exists in this form is a day where he's been proven right. And that's his way of justifying the fact that he like, is like, 'No, this is my home, as well. I'm staying here, and if anyone- if there are consequences for what I've done, I am not Samot or Samothes, and I am not someone who thinks I'm above that. I'll wait here for it.' And so, he kind of spent- It's similar to that uncertainty Lem has, where Lem's not sure if reconfiguration is gonna happen the next day-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: But Ephrim's is more he's not sure if he's going to wake up with a like, angry mob outside of this like, little cottage he's built for himself.

**Austin**: How does he plan to fill his time, no longer Lord Ephrim?

**Sylvia**: He's started a garden, which... part of that is to fill the time. And then, part of that is to feel connected to when he used his magic, or what was closest to magic to him.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Sylvia**: When he helps- when he shapes his garden without using any tools aside from the power inside of him.

**Austin**: [lightly laughs] Right. Throndir, do you help in that garden?

**Darcy**: Yeah.

**Austin**: And we get a shot of that. The two of you gardening together. And so, six months after the Frost Shepherd arrived, the world continues. There has been no reconfiguration yet. Hella Varal, it has been a year since the Frost Shepherd arrived. Where do we find you? What are you doing?

**Ali**: I think Adaire was right that- [laughs]

**Austin**: Mhm.

**Ali**: -if Hella and Adaire left and found a new place where like, Hella's reputation by now probably precedes her, and like Adaire doesn't have one yet, they've probably been able to settle down.

**Austin**: Like, a good reputation, specifically, you mean.

**Ali**: [laughing] Yes.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Ali**: Yes, yes, yes.

**Austin**: Like, Hella who... tell it- that helps people understand what death is and moving on and... Adularia Hella more than Understanding Hella.

**Ali**: Yes. Yes, yes, yes.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Ali**: Um, and yeah. I think that we see her approaching this place and it's like... I don't know. It's probably like, a modest house like, carved into- carved into a side of a tree.

**Austin**: Oh, cool.

**Ali**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Right. Yeah. Cause there's big trees. Yeah, duh.

**Ali**: There are big trees, yeah.

**Austin**: Okay.

**Ali**: You know, and I think that she goes in, and it looks lived in. You know?

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Ali**: There's like, scratches on the countertops, and there's, you know, four pairs of shoes by the door. I think Adaire's there, and she greets her when she comes in. I was gonna say like, Adaire's busy making dinner, but she's probably doing something cooler than that. [laughs]

**Austin**: Probably.

**Ali**: So like, Hella like, walks over and kisses Adaire on the cheek, and then, you know, moves on to her room and gets washed up. But I think we like, immediately see her sit at this desk... which is like, covered in papers and envelopes and stuff. And like-

**Austin**: Mm.

**Ali**: -you can see things that like- You can see that this is something that she does kind of often, and that there are other envelopes on the desk that are like, addressed to other PCs. Like, Throndir or Ephrim or…

**Austin**: Right.

**Ali**: -like, Fero if he'll even- [laughs]

**Austin**: So, we got- We- So, we're getting a Aubade Hella, the letter writer.

**Ali**: Yes. Yeah.

**Austin**: Still that person.

**Ali**: Well, yeah. She wants to keep in touch. [laughs]

**Austin**: Yeah. Does she- Is she working anything right now or-?

**Ali**: Yeah. I think she's writing to Hadrian.

**Austin**: Do you know what it says?

**Ali**: I do.

**Austin**: Oh, okay. [**Ali** laughs]

**Ali**: [exhales deeply] Okay. Um, [**Ali** reads the letter aloud]

> Hadrian,
>
> I hope this letter makes it to you as quickly as I'm writing it. Thoughts have been churning in my head during a long walk home, and I wanted to put them to paper before they were lost.

**[2:30:00]**

> Before they were dulled in my mind and couldn't be of any use. I walked far today. Deep in the woods and around the curve of the branch they grow from, there's a clearing where plant life suddenly shifts. Where grass has found a home along these incredible fruit trees. They grow tall and thin enough to make for perfect firewood, and they're always bearing fruit. So, I'd set out for both.
>
> But I discovered something else on my way there. A pile of dead wet wood that didn't belong. I was immediately annoyed by the sight. The branches that had broken its fall and the rot that it would cause if I left it there were all I could think of as I worked with haste and with frustration. Distracted by the second job of cleaning I now had before I could return home. It wasn't until I approached it, that I saw it for what it really was. On the line where wet wood met dry, small holes were carved into the tree by the dozens. In different sizes and different shapes. A community of creatures, some strange bugs that I doubt have even been named, worked along the edges separating the wet wood into thin string. Some delivering those strings deeper down. For what use I didn't know and didn't need to.

I froze at the sight of it. Of all of this life. And every emotion that I have ever felt, which is way way too many, pulled into my stomach like bile. I felt so cold suddenly. And I wasn't sure if it was from that memory in Old Man's Chin or that in these moments when it feels like my blood is replaced by shame, that the warmth is taken from me, too. I was taken back to that time in an instant. This disgusting thing. This community that loved it. And me, who knew nothing and could do nothing but harm. You know I'm not ashamed to admit that the sight of these bugs brought tears to my eyes, but I'm sure I looked like a jackass, and I'd earned it. I left it as it was, and I rushed home to this paper. To you.

In the time that it took me to finally sit down, I'm still unable to separate emotion from thought enough to twist how I feel into something usable. Into some gift worth preaching. When I tried to help the Weaver King those years ago, did I fail because I had no respect for it? Is it that selfishness was so seeped into my mind that I couldn't bring my hand to steady those buckets of water, couldn't make my legs walk farther because I didn't care? And what does it even mean now? What does it even matter that I know the King's name and voice, but I'm still as quick as ever to treat pieces of it like a stranger? Like something worthless.

I still get caught in the trap of trying to weigh every moment in my life, in trying to separate the good from the bad, trying to make one pile bigger than the other. Life and action are never that easy. And I'm not some coin spinning in the air waiting to fall to good or bad. When I remember these moments, and I feel the shame, and I try to think of all of the times in my life that I felt so sure, so right, so confident about something, it feels like a part of me that I need to crush. To bury deep down in me that I can't guide me anymore. But this feeling saved me more than once. And it saved you. And it saved everything I've held dear. The shame saves me, too. I can't grow, and I can't live, and I can't change without knowing when I'm wrong.

As I was thinking, Adelaide said- And listen, I know we said no literal word of god stuff, but she said, 'If you know what you're doing, regret isn't a leak in the ship. It's a rudder.' [sighs] I'm sorry to only bring you this rambling. To give you the job of spinning it into something grand. But you were always better at it than me. I hope if the rain we just had made its way to you, it'll pass. It'll do the same that it did here. And those trees around our little church will blossom as bright and beautiful as your voice carrying our lessons.

I've included some of the fruit from my trip alongside this letter. They make incredible jam, but you should try them sliced with a little bit of salt. Trust me.

Love, Hella.

**Austin**: And so one year after the Frost Shepherd arrived, the World continues. There has been no reconfiguration yet. Hadrian, it has been ten years since the Frost Shepherd arrived. Where do we find you? What are you doing?

[Jack de Quidt's "Each and Every One of Us" begins playing]

**Austin (continues):** Hadrian, it has been ten years since the Frost Shepherd arrived. What are you doing?

**Art**: We find Hadrian in the church standing at the pulpit finishing up a sermon... telling people that they need to be able to find the divine within themselves. That they must... they must exude life from within. They must... protect their communities. They must be their own spark of knowledge and ingenuity. These things are alive in each and every one of us... You know, it ends however it ends. It's been a long time since I've- [**Austin** exhales a laugh] been to- in a temple. Uh, you know, it's 'Thanks for-' It's not, 'Thanks for coming.' It's usually like, a final prayer. It's the final prayer, not a writing.

**Austin**: It's not, 'Thanks for coming'? It's not- that's not-

**Art**: It's, 'Thanks for coming in. Hey~ tip your waitress.' [**Austin** laughs] 'Oh, it's-'

**Austin**: [laughs more] I can't.

**Art**: Uh.

**Austin**: But is that- is that…? Real question. Is that how Hadrian's tenor is? Is Hadrian like friendly Rabbi? Or is it Hadrian like- Is there remove? What is Hadrian's model as a- as a sermon giver?

**Art**: Uh, Hadrian is as- is as friendly as he can be. Hadrian has tried so hard over these years to- to make an accessible faith and to be an accessible person, but there's… You know, time has been cruel to Hadrian. He's aged very quickly. Like a- like an old football player or a boxer.

**Austin**: [solemn] Yeah.

**Art**: He's just- he's run down, and it makes it harder to interact with people. You know, he- he goes to the end of the stage, and- and Rosana has to help him down the stairs.

[music finishes]

**Austin**: Did I ever tell you about the time I met Muhammad Ali in an airport?

**Art**: No.

**Austin**: He was riding on a cart. He was like, in one of the things, and it just fucked me up. I was a kid. I was a child, and like my dad- My dad was like, a big boxing fan, and so, I'd seen all the fights by then. And I didn't know. I didn't know what it cost. Do you know what I mean? Um, physically.

**Art**: Yeah.

**Austin**: And to not- And to see him dance in the ring, and then to see him not be able to- And this isn't a judgment. I want to be clear. Like, this is- There is a physical cost to that, and I don't

think he was a- You know, at the time, I was a child. I didn't understand... You know, I didn't have the full understanding of bodies the way I do now, but to see the physicality and the cost of that on his body wrecked me as a little boy. But I guess was important, also.

**Art**: I saw Ali in like, 2012 or 2013. Maybe early 2013.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: And he was- he- he like, did like a- He was supposed to like, a speech, and he like, couldn't do his speech. So, instead, he just like, appeared on stage. And like, you didn't even see him get up and offstage. They managed to like, magician that.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: They like, threw to him, and he was already onstage. And he basically just like, waved. And then I got to see him- Like, I got to quote 'meet him. 'And he had like, sunglasses on, and he was sitting down. And they just took my picture with him and that like-

**Austin**: That was it.

**Art**: He couldn't do anything.

**Austin**: This is reminding me. Like, there is one distinction between your Ali and mine, which is my dad called out to him, and he was like, 'Champ!' And Ali raised his fists.

**Art**: That's amazing. I would have given anything for that.

**Austin**: And it was like the- Yeah. It was incredible. So. Anyway, Hadrian.

**Art**: Yeah. Yeah.

**Austin**: Definitely a prize fighter. Definitely... a prize fighter who's gone through a lot, right?

**Art**: Yeah. A lot in common. Hadrian's taken a lot of hits, and he doesn't have the will of the divine keeping him standing up anymore, right?

**Austin**: Mhm. Mhm.

**Art**: But yeah. Rosana helps him off stage, and then he greets... some parishioners. You know, 'Hey. How are you doing? How are you? You know, any- any NPCs that we didn't get to in the finale could be here. [**Austin** laughs] They're here.

**Austin**: Frond shaking your hand.

**Art**: Yeah.

**Austin**: Wings folded back. Every- just everybody.

**Art**: Yeah. Anyone we didn't get to. Anyone you're wondering- If they could conceivably be here, they're here. We didn't leave anyone out.

**Austin**: I appreciate this as the GM. I really- [amused] You're doing a lot of heavy work for me right now. [**Art** laughs lightly]

[Jack de Quidt's "A Reminder" begins playing]

**Art**: Yeah. And you know, Hadrian passes- You know, it's- There a little sections for- for all the- all the gods of all the faiths that we've come across- have like, little like- like, almost little wall altars. And Hadrian passes them and- and and pays respect to all of the ones that he's- I imagine he's really one wall, and there's another wall. So, he only does this side because-

**Austin**: Right. Right

**Art**: -I don't want this scene to stretch forever in anyone's head.

**Austin**: [laughs lightly] Right.

**Art**: And... But the ones I want to specifically have him go by are the- are, you know, Samothes and Samot next to each other.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: And he spends a moment with those. And then a couple down is Adelaide, and... that one often gets him choked up. I think you see Hadrian fight back tears today. He... he feels no ill will towards... towards any- towards Adelaide or- or anyone. But- but he... he misses his friend.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: And this is- You know, the- the pearl mosaic of Adelaide is a reminder of the- of the friend who's not here anymore.

**Austin**: We saw Hella sending letters. Are those consolation... at all?

**Art**: Yeah... and no. You know, right?

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: It's… it helps a lot. And then sometimes it's like, well... I mean I'm sure for every one that he reads a hundred times there- there's a- there's one that he... just never opens, right? That's just like- He can't deal with that moment, and so-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: -it gets lost. [music finishes] And he- Because of this- this level, these small instances of devotion, it takes him longer to leave than anyone else. And he gets to the back, and Rosana is

there with Benjamin and Blue J and... You know, Benjamin is ten- ten years older. Benjamin's what? Almost thirty now?

**Austin**: Almost thirty, yeah.

**Art**: And like, that's a big ten year- I mean I know it's not like a big ten years, like a ten year old and a twenty year old are basically unrecognizable.

**Austin**: [lightly laughs] Yeah.

**Art**: But like, I mean-

**Austin**: It's still a big ten years.

**Art**: And eighteen year old and a twenty-eight year old don't look the same, you know?

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: And... and Benjamin and Blue J are like- are written in their bodies in the ways that they've been adventurers.

**Austin**: Mm.

**Art**: You know? There are- there are little scar- little bits of scar tissue.

**Austin**: Yeah yeah.

**Art**: You know, I want to say like, Benjamin has like, a grey streak in his hair because-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: -that's a cool thing that I think happens to wizards, you know?

**Austin**: That is a cool thing that happens to wizards. [laughs] Absolutely.

**Art**: Especially a wizard that might have the nickname the Frost Shepherd, you know?

**Austin**: Yeah, absolutely. God.

**Art**: Yeah. Let's just- That's- that any- [stammers] He wears a lot of blue. Let's just- let's just-

**Austin**: Well, yeah. I've been imagining- He's blue in my Dragon's Dogma save. So, you know.

**Art**: There you go. Um- [laughs] And he- they visit for- for a second. You know, in the way that adult children will, will visit with their parents in those kind of settings. And like, you know, it's a... it's a quick, but a meaningful exchange, you know. 'It's good to see you today for services. I

have- I'm glad you're home.' 'Yeah, it's great to be back. But we're- we're going off again soon.' You know-

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: -I don't know who their- They must have more adventuring friends, at this point, but like,

[**Jack** de Quidt's "Home" begins playing]

**Art (continues):** 'We're having a meeting, and we'll think we'll be gone in a couple of days.'

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: You know? 'Great. I hope- I hope you come by the house for dinner.' I'm sure we go- you know, I'm sure we- I'm sure they will.

**Austin**: Right.

**Art**: It's one of those, you know? But they- they have that lingering moment that means a lot as you get older. And yeah, it's just- Everyone's just getting older... Hadrian more than most but.

**Austin**: And that's it. Just a goodbye in church.

**Art**: And hugs between family. Rosana, Hadrian, Benjamin.

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: Blue J, their- their in-law. I guess they never- We never did that.

**Austin**: We never saw the wedding, but...

**Art**: But yeah, I mean..

**Austin**: Yeah.

**Art**: Even if it's- You know, common law is the same.

**Austin**: I think what- I think once you've adventured together for seven years, it's common law that you're married.

**Art**: Yeah, I mean I guess-

**Austin**: [amused] Which really complicates this whole party. [**Austin** and **Art** laugh] Well, that's why we did- that's why we did a time- That's why there's a time difference in Aubade cause otherwise, you'd all be married. That's the way it- that's the way it works.

**Art**: Right. Yeah.

**Austin**: Is... is there more for Hadrian than this? Or.. uh, maybe a better question, does Hadrian want more or is this fulfilling? In this moment. Is this... is this what a good life looks like?

**Art**: I think this is- Honestly, there- there are definitely times in Hadrian's life where this is more than he could have ever dreamed of. [waves lap] I think there's still nights where he wakes with a start. Thinking that he's on the ground in the woods. You know, with three more days to walk. And it's peaceful... To have a home... To be at home. And, you know, we're at- we're at eleven years since Hadrian's picked up a sword. And that... that really feels good.

[music ends as waves continue to lap and crash]

**[2:45:00]**

**Austin**: We should go to time.is. [**Sylvia** exhales] We do like, fifteen?

**Janine**: Yeah.

**Darcy**: Sure.

**Austin**: Alright.

[one synchronized clap]

**Darcy**: [quietly] I missed it.

**Austin**: Aw! I was so upset cause it was such a good clap. [laughing]

**Keith**: Oh, that was a good clap.

**Jack**: It was an amazing clap.

**Austin**: [laughing and wailing] It was such a good- Ahhh!

**Janine**: That felt really good.

**Darcy**: I was havin' to refresh, and it like, popped up over it.

**Austin**: [groaning] Oh, buddy.

**Darcy**: That's alright.

**Keith**: I mean it's very- it's very Friends of the Table to end Season- end Hieron with the best clap ever, and one person missed it. [**Austin** and **Janine** laugh] So.

**Austin**: It's appropriate. Let's do a more. Forty?

**Sylvia**: Sure.

[Three clap groupings heard in quick succession]

**Austin**: Still a good clap.

**Keith**: That one was junk. Nah, it was junk.

**Austin**: It was fine. [**Jack** laughs]