

PARTIZAN 35: The Witch in the Glass Pt. 1

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[Music begins: [CENTERPOINT. STAINEDGLASS. BREAKNECK.](#) by Jack de Quidt.]

AUSTIN: Clementine, when Perennial breathes life back into your body, what is it that you see?

JACK: I think the sky. And... and a skein of birds, somewhere up in the sky [**Austin:** Mm.], heading in some direction. And as I tilt my head backwards, I can see, like, a scrubby beach, leading up to a treeline.

Austin (intercut, as GUR SEVRAQ): I keep asking her how she arrived here, and she keeps wondering if it's because I doubt her. She does not understand that it is because I doubt *myself*.

AUSTIN: Do you follow that beach towards the trees?

JACK: I think I get up and, um... realize pretty quickly that my arm is broken. And so—holding my arm against me—I sort of make it— I scramble up the— It's like a wet sand dune—like a low, wet sand dune—up towards the treeline.

Austin (intercut, as GUR SEVRAQ): There are times here where I feel as myself. When I counsel, when I look out on the beauty of this island, and sense the touch of the Prophet on it. But sometimes hours pass, and I lose myself—and time, too.

AUSTIN: I think you see something that maybe gives you a bit of hope. You see a structure in front of you. It's a sort of pale yellow building, um, with a parapet, kind of blue-ish, with a lot of windows and... sort of a cramped, circular balcony running alongside each of its rising floors. And... and I think you get hope for a moment. "There could be people here." Um...

JACK: [decisively] Oh, definitely. Do I have any idea where I am?

AUSTIN: I don't think you've ever been here before—but you recognize that the style of architecture is Kesh, though.

(intercut, as GUR SEVRAQ): I do not even know if this new existence of mine is reprieve or punishment. Am I being told to continue my work, or that I was foolish to pursue it to begin with? Perennial, why won't you speak to *me*?

JACK: So like, up through the trees [**Austin:** Yeah.], you know, pine needles on my face, um, out through the treeline, up towards this pale blue [**Austin:** Mm-hm], like, mid-sized mansion.

AUSTIN: Well...

(intercut, as GUR SEVRAQ): What I do know is that you are now present on Partizan in a way that you had never been in my life, and that you have brought us together in the shadow of our enemies—and it is so like you, Perennial, to counter shade with shade, as we sit here in the dark, *under your tower*.

[Music fades out.]

AUSTIN: There's a moment where... It's as if your eyes play a trick on you, because it *is* a mid-sized mansion, but then you think it's much bigger than it is, because you pick up in the... kind of... against the sky, a second one of these, kind of, rising, uh... the rooves of this mansion. There's another one like, just beside it and to the back a little bit, and you think "Oh wow, this is a much bigger place than I imagined," and then you kinda get a little bit further, and you see a third one, and then a fourth. And you kind of climb out of the kind of... lower area of these woods, and you see in front of you, um... a *community* of castles, a sort of, just... endless run of these châteaux. Um, there must be *hundreds* of them, Clem—each one identical to the last.

JACK: [chuckling] Facing in the same direction...

AUSTIN: *All* facing in the same direction. It's as if they've been copied and pasted, um, *inelegantly*. You know, not copied, pasted, adjusted to give you a little bit of variation—like, they're just like, "here is one château, here is another one, here is another one." A castle next to a castle next to a castle, in, you know, inelegant rows. Um... and as far as you can tell, no one is in the streets between them. No one is doing any work on any of the balconies. There is not the smell of food, or the sound of music. None of those things, those intangibles, um, that make a place *feel* lived-in.

JACK: I think I call out, and... and my voice is... hoarse, and cracked [**Austin:** (thoughtful) Mm.], from lack of use, and my throat is very sore. Um, and I think I just call out, like,

(as CLEMENTINE): Is there anybody there? I've... I've been hurt.

AUSTIN: Your voice echoes, um, through the community, um... again, calling it a community is actually the wrong word. Your voice echoes through the empty buildings in front of you, against the hills that surround this place. Against the concrete of some unfinished and unpainted structures. The only sound you hear back is the sound of birds in the sky, seagulls cawing down at you. Laughing, as they are wont to do. You're on your own here. Can you tell me a little bit about what the next week or two looks like? In fact, I have a way to help you with that. Can you do me a favor [**Jack:** Mm.], and can you draw five cards?

JACK: From a fifty-two card deck?

AUSTIN: Plus two cards for the Jokers, yeah.

JACK: Okay. [pausing to draw] Okay, I have five cards.

AUSTIN: Okay, don't show me those cards. Unless one of them is the Joker, in which case show me one of those cards.

JACK: [laughing] Then we... then we have to talk.

AUSTIN: [amused] Then we have to have a talk. [pausing] I need you to discard each card, um, that is not a Diamond. And for each one that you discard, tell me something about what Clem is up to as she tries to make sense of [chuckling] her place in this deserted... uh, town. Which, I'll give you the name of. This is The Community on Chorus Island. You see it on a sign, eventually.

JACK: [chuckling, pausing] Okay. So I am going to... Aces high?

AUSTIN: Aces are high, yeah. And, you know, I would say based on what you've drawn, um, color... what you're doing with your daily life at this point—um, "your daily life" as if it's standardized, but you know what I mean—um... **[Jack: Mm!]** With the higher things suggesting a degree of success or a degree of... competence. Um, *control*, maybe is a better word.

JACK: Okay, so I think that first things first, uh, I'm gonna spend this Ten of Spades. Um, and taking Spades to be, you know, like, of or relating to effort, or graft, or manual labor **[Austin: Sure.]**, I am going to say that, uh... Clementine spends... uh, best part of a week, maybe five days, trying and failing to do something about her arm.

AUSTIN: [sympathetically] Whew.

JACK: I think that, uh, it doesn't go well at first, she has never had to make a sling. She has never had to consider how to set a bone. Or even how to hold posture of a broken limb. Um, and, so I think that she spends a lot of time trying to work out how to even *begin* to deal with that—but born out of a lot of necessity, and a lot of physical pain, I think that she, after a few days, has managed to get her arm set, and held in place such that... you know, while it might not get better, it's not gonna get any worse.

AUSTIN: [expectantly] Okay. What next? [pausing, chuckling] Also, funny to think that you're far away from Doctor Schuyler here.

JACK: Yes, Doc— [laughing] Doctor Schuy— poor Doctor Schuyler, who is right now probably... uh... I don't know, it's hard for me to say what Doctor Schuyler is doing.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: Tending to people aboard...

AUSTIN: Probably. Who *knows* at this point. Who knows.

JACK: I don't know how long it's been...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um... next, uh, I'm going to, um... with a Two of Spades [**Austin** chuckling quietly]... do something that is a lot more familiar to Clementine, uh, *and* is something that Clementine would always consider to be work, which is do something about what I'm wearing.

AUSTIN: [laughing]

JACK: Um... my clothes are *ruined*. I think I'm still wearing... I— no, I *can't* still be wearing what I wore when I was arrested, right? I must have— I must be wearing a different outfit. But I think...

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely, it's been... it's... even based on when we last saw you...

JACK (overlapping): It was days since, you know...

AUSTIN (overlapping): It was days and days, yeah.

JACK: Yeah. Um... but it's heavy, and it's waterlogged, and it's torn.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Uh, there is like an actual *crab* in one of my pockets, [**Austin** chuckling] like Clementine goes into one of her pockets and there is something *alive* in there.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: But I think that, you know, she... she, um... cuts the pleats out, or, um... transforms what was a traditional Clementine piece of gear into something that is more workable, or more comfortable. But because this is a Two, I don't know if she commits as hard to it as she would... as she would...

AUSTIN: No. Where do you find— what do you find? [pausing] Like, how do you—

JACK: Well, I think first you have to get rid of the extraneous bits, right? [**Austin:** I see, yes.] You have to get rid of the shoulder piece, [chuckling] you have to get rid of the, um... extra stuff in the skirt, something has to be done to her heels.

AUSTIN (overlapping): So at this point it's more about... right, it's more about turning what you *have* into something a little bit more ap— not appropriate, but like, a little more, um, uh... you know, um, *workable* [chuckling, uncertain], given the circumstances.

JACK: Mm-hm. Mm-hm. I'm gonna spend an Ace of Hearts.

AUSTIN: [excited] Ooh.

JACK: And—

AUSTIN: Hearts here meaning something like courage, or emotional fortitude, um... something that kind of suggests, um, a— not just a desire, but a *will*... to *be*, to move forward.

JACK: Yeah, and I think I'm gonna... I think I'm gonna move into one of the houses.

AUSTIN: [thoughtful] Hm.

JACK: I think this is very, very frightening. I think that, um... Clementine is alone in a way that she hasn't been... uh, maybe ever? And I think that... that Chorus Island, the Community on Chorus Island, would be frightening at the best of times. There's nobody in sight, and rows upon rows of identical mansions. So I think even beginning to take the steps to get settled [**Austin:** Mm-hm.], or, or... What's *in* the houses? Are they furnished?

AUSTIN: You're— you spent the card, you tell me. It's an Ace, so... I mean, I can give you what I think an Ace means, but you still have authorial control over this, I think, to some degree. Um, I think that they're furnished. I think that each one has, you know... a pantry with identical food in it. With just like, the same, uh... you know, hundred cans of non-perishable foods, or meals, pre-prepared meals waiting to be warmed up. Um, the same closets, filled with the same outfits...

JACK (overlapping): Like, sixteen bottles of beer.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Or maybe there's *micro*-differences, you know? Um, I think you get...

JACK (overlapping): Yeah, I was wondering, if it's like...

AUSTIN (overlapping): I think you get...

JACK (overlapping): Set A house, set B house.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yes. Yes.

AUSTIN: I think there's a degree to which you wonder, "oh, did someone buy the Lemongrass Package, and someone here bought the, you know... Sail-Away Package, [chuckling] um... or whatever, which has slightly different variations in clothing, slightly different variations in food, um... Some of them have music that plays when you enter them for the first time, and that can be different, but not... it's not that there's a *world* of difference, it's only that there are, like you said, sets. I like that idea a lot.

JACK: Um, I'm gonna spend a Five of Clubs.

AUSTIN: Hm! Which is interesting.

JACK (overlapping): Which represents conflict, or violence.

AUSTIN: Yeah, direct confrontation.

JACK (overlapping): Or violent activity.

AUSTIN: And a way I've always thought of Clubs in this game, is that it is... um, you know, a fight can take on many forms. A fight can be swinging your fists, or swinging your sword, or saying the right insult, but what's important is that there is... that there is *another actor*, right? It's that you are doing your best to harm someone or something else, and that *something* is a someone. It has to be a someone, even if that someone is a bear [chuckling]. Um, you know, there is a sentence, or a... a self somewhere that you are harming.

JACK: [breathing in] Right.

AUSTIN: Which makes this difficult in some ways, I know. [pausing] But there's lots of things that could be.

JACK (overlapping): I can't destroy property?

AUSTIN: It can't just be property, it has to be a confrontation. Um... I mean, I think it's important to differentiate it from labor. And you can color it, I think, with Clubs, and say "I was angry" or something, but if you've worked, you know that you can work angry too [chuckling quietly]. Um...

JACK: Yeah, yeah-yeah.

AUSTIN: I think the important difference with Clubs is, "it looked back at me." Or "they looked back at me," [Jack chuckling] you know, "as I did it". And sometimes that can be very justified [chuckling], um...

[15 minutes]

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But I dunno, what— You know, this is an island, we said there were birds already, are there non-mortal— Are there robots on this island? Are there wild animals? We— Okay, we already said there were birds, so are there wolves? Are there bears? Are there other types of

creatures we've never seen on Partizan before? Um... Is there some sort of automated security system, or... something like that?

JACK: I think that, um... Clementine is sitting on a balcony, um... and she is drunk, she has found something in the pantry [**Austin:** (chuckling) Uh-huh.], and she is drunk, and she is crying, and she is throwing bottles at birds, [**Austin:** Love it.] who come down to, like, peck at, like, little seeds and worms that are— there's no grass on the lawns, the landscaping crews, if they were gonna come through, haven't come through yet.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Because you want to do that late enough that the lawns didn't perish, or the plants wouldn't die with nobody there to take care of them.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: So it's just torn-up concrete, and scrub, and little birds pecking at worms, and Clementine, uh... flinging beer bottles at them from the top of a... from the top of a... a balcony.

AUSTIN: Perfect. [amused] This I love. This I love... quite a great... quite a great deal. Um, you have one more card in your hand. What's up with that?

JACK: Mm! [chuckling]

AUSTIN (overlapping): [surprised] Oh, the *Jack* of Clubs.

JACK (overlapping): This is the *Jack* of Clubs.

JACK: Face cards high. Um...

AUSTIN: Face cards high. Or Aces high, but going through the face cards to get there.

JACK: Yeah. [long pause] I want just like... I want just like... the *depth* of fury and confusion.

AUSTIN: [doubtful/questioning] Hmmm...

JACK: I think it has been... it has now been a couple of weeks. There is nothing to... to... [breathing, long pause]

AUSTIN: You've found no way of communicating, for one.

JACK: Yeah, there is no way for me to communicate, as far as I can see.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: And nobody has come for me.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm!

JACK: And I don't know why I'm alive [laughing].

AUSTIN: Sure!

JACK: Um... so I think I want to kill... I think I want to kill something [**Austin** chuckling quietly] that doesn't deserve, or warrant it.

AUSTIN: Interesting.

JACK: Um... [pause] I was originally gonna burn a house down, um... just set something ablaze. But that is not looking back at me.

AUSTIN: No, it *has* to look back at you. I'd say that that was labor, or maybe even courage, uh... maybe even Hearts [**Jack** chuckling]. But it's certainly not, um... certainly not fighting, confrontation.

JACK: What's the most pitious— pitiful thing, the most pathetic act of violence, that is... [**Austin:** (quietly) God...] That is great enough to be a face card?

AUSTIN: [sighing thoughtfully] Again, we— I know I keep suggesting a robot, but there's something kind of great about, you meet a little helper robot that you just destroy.

JACK: Yeah, I think it's a... I think it's a robot that is just, um... [pausing] Oh, I know what it's doing! It's, uh... it's adjusting roof tiles.

AUSTIN: [understanding] Mmm!

JACK: Um... it, you know, it adjusts roof tiles on one house, to make sure that it's straight, and then it goes "Bzzz!" and buzzes over to [chuckling] the roof next to it, and adjusts all the roof tiles to make ensure that it's straight [**Austin:** (chuckling) Right.] and then buzzes over to the next one, and it— like, it's clearly been doing this for fuckin' forever.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Because of course, once it gets to the end of all of that, it has to, uh, probably get back to the beginning again to make sure that the wind or loose branches or birds haven't, um... And so I wonder if it's just, it's night time, it's windy. I *don't* think it's raining, I think it's just hot, dry, or... not hot, I think it's *warm*, dry, miserable, night. And it's Clementine slipping on the roof tiles,

holding a piece of rebar [**Austin** laughing], and just, just *laying into* this robot that is trying to fix the roof tiles under her feet.

AUSTIN: [mock annoyance] God, so mean!

JACK: Yeah, and just cry– just sobbing...

AUSTIN: Um, and it's like... [mimicking a robot beeping in distress]... and tries to skitter away, and then... and then is broken.

JACK: Adjust a roof tile...

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh. Yeah. Um...

JACK: No Diamonds.

AUSTIN: No Diamonds, which is interesting, because it means that there is still yet another rule in *The Tower*, a game about building religion for two weary pilgrims, that has not seen the light of day on a recording yet [chuckling].

JACK: [chuckling]

AUSTIN: Ah! One day... one day.

[Break.]

AUSTIN: And I guess now, uh, twenty minutes into our first recording is as good a time as any to say outright, yes, we are playing a game called *The Tower*, which Jack and I started designing like six years ago, and we've worked on on and off over those years. It is about a Pilgrim and their deity, a Divine, a term we used even though we started this game before we ever came up with this universe. Um... and the Pilgrim goes on a number of pilgrimages, a number of journeys, to recover relics. It uses two fifty-two card– sorry, two fifty-*four* card decks. Both Jokers in both decks are important. And it has a sort of resolution mechanic, sort of like *Uno*, that will become clear as we continue. Um, I promise, it– focus on the storytelling, it should all make sense.

Just to head off some questions at the pass, there will not be any sort of playtesting document made available, because what we have *is* messy as hell, unfortunately. Um, not really in public consumption quality. And, uh, my suspicion is, as we just already said, there are some rules that just won't show up in play, and so it's not really a thing that you can just backwards, uh... you know, what's that called? Reverse engineer. You can't really reverse engineer it from a single session. Um, so, please, I would say be patient. It's something we'd love to find the time to finish up, um... but we hope you enjoy it. Um... so!

JACK: Right!

AUSTIN: Um... now that you've done that...

JACK (overlapping): I actually met our...

AUSTIN: Let's pull them up a little, because I don't wanna lose any. Let's just put them in a little corner there.

JACK: Oh, true, true, true.

AUSTIN: On my screen they were like, fading away from where you could touch them.

JACK: [laughing]

AUSTIN: So now, uh... I will need you to... um... draw the top card of the *other* deck, and place it face down, without you looking at it. Can you do that— do you know how to do that in Roll20, or should I do it?

JACK: I just click the face down card and put it...

AUSTIN: You, you... you have to— it has to like, pop out of your... out of the deck a little bit [Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.] and click and drag it, right on, yeah.

JACK: Like this.

AUSTIN: You've gotten it. Um... So, I need you to describe where and how you find this thing you've drawn. This relic.

JACK: I think I've moved house.

AUSTIN: Hm.

JACK: I think I've trashed one house, and I have moved. I have eventually made one space so unlivable for myself that I have gone down the street to the neighbor's. And I've made my bedroom upstairs, and... I am looking out of the bedroom window, and I notice something strange about the house next door to me.

AUSTIN: Hm.

JACK: Um, which is that it has been... *completely and utterly* overran [Austin: (expectantly) Mm-hm!] by a kind of pale, purple plant. Pale, purple-y-gray plant. [Austin: Mm-hm.] And when I say "completely", I mean the door, the porch, the mailbox, the balcony, the tiny antenna on the

tower that will presumably be one day hooked up to, uh, communications—even local communications.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um... [pausing] *Utterly* covered. Like spider web. But the thing that really gives me pause is that whatever used to be the building beneath has broken away and come to nothing.

AUSTIN (overlapping): [exhaling] Not even a frame? *Nothing*.

JACK (overlapping): So I am essentially...

JACK: *Nothing*. I am essentially looking clean through the ghost of an identical house to the one that I am standing in right now, that seems to be made out of this pale, purple plant.

AUSTIN: It's, um, the plant that you're describing, I think, is Russian sage. If you wanna Google that, people listening.

JACK: Clementine does not know what Russian sage is, and has never seen it in her life.

AUSTIN: Sure. I have a different perspective, and so that helps me. I'm going to flip this card over. [dramatically] It is the Queen of *Spades*. A face card.

JACK: [laughing excitedly]

AUSTIN: A pretty powerful relic. [breathing deeply] Clementine Kesh, *okay*. Fuckin' in it now. Um... so you go through this... um... this... uhh... what would you— again, you said “ghost of it”, but like, it's almost as if the sage has grown almost into like, a vi— even though sage is not a *vine*, it's grown into like, a vine-like *skeleton* on the first floor of this house.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: And that continues inside, you realize. The sage has taken the place of furniture, of, uh, you know... uh, what do you call— Why am I blanking on this word? Like, ref— the refrigerator, and the stove. *Appliances*, is the word I was looking for. And, most importantly, the *stairs*. Um, and you go to climb these stairs made of this plant, and you get... four steps up, before they give away, and [chuckling] you fall through them, down into a basement you didn't even know was there. And you slam your head on a trunk, um... and you [chuckling] realize that you've hit the back of your head on something. And, uh... it is this trunk. And you turn around, and you open up this trunk.

And inside that trunk, you find... um, sort of like, a pair of exo-suit arms? Like, like... the way they were described the first time they came up was to reference *Fullmetal Alchemist*, the

anime, and they were described to being similar to *automail*, which is just like, plate mail that's like, sort of robotic, is maybe the way to think about it, in *Fullmetal Alchemist*. [Jack: Hm!]

In *Fullmetal Alchemist*, it is a prosthetic, it is like actively a prosthetic. These are not a full prosthetic in the sense that... I mean, I guess— there are things like this that exist like this in this world, we know that Jesset City *has* a prosthetic. But this is something that enhances the user's, um, strength, the sort of thing that our military is currently investing in, for instance. Um, and something that Clem could use in a prosthetic sense for, uh... her broken arm. But they're in this— they're this very interesting, almost faded gold color, and it says like, there's s— there's like a... an *etching* in the side of it that says "Vessel's Gold". Which, you don't know what the fuck that means.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: But...

JACK: I don't know that / know what that means.

AUSTIN: You probably don't. A long time ago—the fable goes—a group called Horizon tried to stop the worst excesses of the Divine Principality, by helping a Divine named Perennial gain control of what lies in the middle of the galaxy. One of the people who helped her then was a mercenary, who... um, you know, the other people around them were, uh, you know... witches, and had special control over the magic that was still alive at the time [chuckling]. They were people who were sort of like clerics or paladins, people who had special, direct connections to the Divines that they worshipped. Vessel's Gold was just... a mercenary. Um... and one of the things that they had were these arms, which you can affix to yourself to increase your strength, to give yourself an arm that temporarily works as long as these are on and powered. Um, this— these are the Arms of Vessel's Gold.

And as you lift them up, the strangest thing happens, which is... It's as if the outer shell, or I guess the *inner* shell of the Russian sage all around you all starts to, like, vibrate quickly, like, as if it's shaking, as if there's an earthquake, but it's only that inner shell of it, the rest of the structure seems stable. And after a second, it's as if it begins to bow inwards. Not bowing *at you* so much as almost greeting you, almost like a...

(as **PERENNIAL**): Oh yes. Hello. I'm your Divine. My name...

AUSTIN: ...which enters your ears in this moment, through the wind passing through the leaves...

(as **PERENNIAL**): ...is Perennial. Tell me how you observe and integrate my Relic into your life.

JACK: I think I... I put the arms on, um... [breathing] I think that... I'll take anything that I can get. I think what is happening to me is very strange. And, um... I think I'm going to drag my bed—with, *with* my new arms, I think I'm going to drag my bed in through the front door of the house made of Russian sage and down the broken steps into the basement, and push it into the corner, and kind of set myself up there.

[30 minutes]

AUSTIN: [chuckling] [inquisitively] Do you feel comfortable here?

JACK: [decisively] Absolutely not.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: But you do this despite that?

JACK: Yes. Yes.

AUSTIN: Hm.

JACK: This is ve— um... [pausing] Better to have proximity to the thing that I don't understand and am frightened of, than try and live my life in the house next to it.

AUSTIN: This is not a very Clementine Kesh decision, this is interesting. Though actually, I guess Clem did just spend the last half year or whatever of her life onboard Icebreaker Prime, surrounded by people who hated her, so it's not like this part of the tactic hasn't happened before, in retrospect.

JACK: [chuckling] The Clementine tactic of keep— wh— “Are they friends? Are they enemies?”

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: “What is a friend?”

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: “Can I keep it close?”

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh... which, you know, *definitely* something she probably learned from her mother, right?

JACK: Mm-hm.

Austin (as PERENNIAL): *Tell* me. You know my name, you know my house, you know my gift to you. What do you think the first law of your new faith should be?

JACK: Uh, what do I know about Perennial? I know that she is a Divine who sits in the center of the galaxy, and...

AUSTIN: That's what they *say*, anyway.

JACK: And... that... every so often, everything stops working because of... her. I also know that Apparatus Aperitif... onboard Icebreaker Prime was a representative of a faith that worshipped Perennial. These are things Clementine knows.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Um...

AUSTIN: Did she ever study at all what that belief looked like on that ship? Or— Encounter, probably not study, but *encounter*.

JACK: I think she got *some* sense of it, but I think she got a sense of this idea that, um... things are always in flux, um... there is, uh... the universe is in motion, [**Austin:** Mm-hm] in part because of Perennial. But I think beyond that, I think the idea— I think the kind of core Perennial beliefs of moving in a cycle, [**Austin:** Mm.] are things Clementine did not particularly grasp—or if she was told, has forgotten [**Austin:** (chuckling along) Sure.], ignored. “I’m not interested in your dogma.”

Um... But I think that... with a broken arm that has been fixed, in a series of identical mansions—with the exception of *one* that has begun to speak to her with the voice of what claims to be a Divine—I think the first law I’m gonna write is [speaking while typing] “There is a reason why I am alive.”

AUSTIN: Hmm. God! That’s a big one.

JACK: It *is* a big one, isn’t it? It’s got— I feel like if the most selfish woman on the moon falls—is stabbed, falls from the top of Fort Icebreaker, hits something on the way down and then loses consciousness for who knows how long... [**Austin:** Right. Right.] And then is woken to golden arms, and a house made of flowers...

AUSTIN (overlapping): [chuckling] Well, is woken to... is woken to throwing beer bottles at birds and...

JACK (overlapping): Is woken to... beer bottles at birds and murdering a robot.

AUSTIN: [chuckling] But finds eventually... yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Well, the thing I thought about it is [**Jack:** There's a reason...], it's such a Clementine Kesh version of a better belief, which is "there is a reason why we're all alive."

JACK: [laughs] "Why we're all alive..."

AUSTIN: "Why people live," right? Um, and— But also— But *also*, as someone who has dealt with depression his whole life, um... there's something really moving about being able to shout that into the world, that there is a reason why I'm alive [**Jack:** Yeah!]*—*even if it's not... even if I don't know that it's *philosophically* true, it can be subjectively true, and this is— We're about to do an *Evangelion* podcast now, but like...

JACK (overlapping): There are worse places to start.

AUSTIN: Yes, there are worse places to start than a... a... deep-seated belief in one's own... like value [chuckles]. Even if it's... The thing that's tough is—Clementine Kesh, has she really ever doubted that there is a [laughing] reason why she is alive?

JACK: Like, there is a— If there was a twist we were gunning for with Clem's character, I think "she has low self-esteem" is not it.

AUSTIN: No. Right. Yeah. But this is—

JACK: Clementine is someone who believes very strongly in her own capabilities.

AUSTIN: I think which— All of which is to say, I think this is "Austin thinks this is a good first law," I'm not speaking as Perennial here. Perennial will have other opinions as we continue to play this game.

Um, so... *Now*, I need you to draw up a new hand of five cards, because now it is time for you to *Tithe* to Perennial—to tell Perennial, "Hey... yeah, [chuckles] yeah, I'm here with you." And the way that you do that is that you discard cards of value equal or greater to the total numbers shown on Relic cards you wish to keep active—which is important, because with the Queen of Spades—Vessel's— the Arms of Vessel's Gold—you have quite a powerful Relic [chuckles], um... and we'll get to what that means once it's time to put it to use. But for now, what that means is...

JACK (overlapping): Yeah. It's worth saying that face Relics have capabilities that number Relics do not.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. They simply do not. One of the things that I think was different—or one of the things that maybe didn't come up in our first game of *The Tower*... our first *recorded* game of *The Tower*, we've played *The Tower* many times. Um, so, you have to get to the number, what—uh, eleven, twelve, you have to get to the number twelve here. Or play a Queen or higher in your Tithing.

JACK: Mm. Mm-hm. And as before, the cards that I Tithe— The suit value of the—and probably to some extent the number value—of the cards that I Tithe, speaks to the narrative of the narrative of the means by which I'm doing it.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: So, for example, I am going to play a Six of Clubs.

AUSTIN: Hmm.

JACK: Which, as before—and I'm going to say this in the early stages of this game each time this comes up—a Six of Clubs is a card about conflict, [**Austin:** Mm-hm.], or violence against an entity that can look back at you. Um... because it's Clubs, [**Austin:** It's Clubs!] and a club is for hitting things.

AUSTIN (overlapping): And a club is a weapon.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: [chuckles]

JACK: Um... [long pause] I think Clementine... [long pause] brings... three... meals... from the fridge in the other house. [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] There's no fridge in the Sage House, I assume.

AUSTIN (overlapping): In Perennial's house, yeah. Sage House, let's call it Sage House. I love Sage House.

JACK (overlapping): Or— Or— Or if there is, it's made of sage, right?

AUSTIN: Right, yeah. Yeah, you open the pantry and inside is just...

JACK (overlapping): Oh, you can see right through it, right?

AUSTIN: Right, yeah, you don't even have to open it.

JACK: It's like a wireframe, um...

AUSTIN: That's exactly what it's like, it's like being in a wireframe house. The second t— The top floor is a completed floor, though, correct?

JACK: No, no, there's no house in this house.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Oh, the— *All* the way through. I thought you'd said— The way I'd read what you'd said was that the *ground* floor was sage, and then the top floor was building, being held up by the sage.

JACK: That is cool, um... I like the idea of the visual of an *entire house* made of sage.

AUSTIN (overlapping): [chuckling] But, I may have misunderstood. Yeah.

JACK (overlapping): Like, birds...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Well, I'll work the other thing in at some point, trust.

JACK: Oh, yeah, sure, no, absolutely.

AUSTIN (overlapping): This one, it's the whole Sage House.

JACK (overlapping): If there's one thing we know about Perennial, it's like... [**Austin:** Yeah.] she likes to act on things sometimes.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Mm-hm.

JACK: Um... But I think in addition to that, Clementine, out of some sense of, um... [uncertain] p— propriety, or... or faith, or, uh.. *confused devotion*, brings Perennial some dead birds [**Austin:** Ooh.], or, um... like, there is a jellyfish that has washed up...

AUSTIN: Like a *cat*.

JACK: Yeah, like a cat, but like a cat who doesn't really know what... Like, the bizarre motions of faith with something you can tell is bigger than you [**Austin:** Mmm, mm-hm.], but you don't know what it is or what it wants.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: So, Clementine sitting in the basement of the f House. Um, I think the basement is just in earth, at that point. I think there is a sage roof above her that is the floor of the thing above.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: You know, Clementine just eating beans out of a can, with like, two dead birds, a possum, like, a... a little string of seashells, um... just on the floor in front of her. And I'm also gonna play a Six of Diamonds, which is a card that we haven't seen before.

AUSTIN: Correct.

JACK (overlapping): Do you wanna talk about what Diamonds do?

AUSTIN (overlapping): Diamonds are interesting.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Diamonds are interesting, because they're a little bit different at the very start of the game, or... they're a little bit different depending on what stage of the game you're at, maybe. In the Pilgrim's hand—which is where it's important to talk about now—Diamonds represent a kind of, um, broad selection of characteristics and things in the Pilgrim's back pocket, so to speak, um... material or otherwise. They are tools that you own, skills that you've developed, professional associations that you belong to, things that you can rely on that go beyond just your courage, your passion, your heart. Um, so that includes things like intellect, but I don't want intellect to feel binary with strength or something like that, like, the four suits are not "strength, emotion..."

JACK: Right. This is not an i-value.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly, because there's overlap between all of these things, you know, it takes a lot of physical effort to do violence, uh, to do physical violence, in the same way that it takes a lot of emotional *courage* to stand up for yourself, or, you know, et cetera. So there's overlap between these categories in some ways, they're not binary, they're not exclusive. But, the— And inside of the set of sk— of Diamonds includes not just like, raw IQ or whatever bullshit. It's also, you know, "Oh, I know h— I'm a plumber," is a Diamond [chuckling], you know [**Jack:** Yeah. Mm-hm], I have a specific skill set from a profession, or I have a specific skill set around a hobby. That's Diamonds. You know, if you know calligraphy, that'd be Diamonds. So...

JACK: But I think I— I think instead it's something that Clementine knows, which is that, um... Sitting in the basement, she reaches out a hand and touches one of the... the sage that has fallen down the earth walls, and says,

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): Okay. [takes a breath] Right. My name is Clementine Kesh. I am the daughter of Crysanth Kesh, scion of House Kesh, from Cruciat. Recently, I led an organization named Millenium Break, in a misguided rebellion, and... and I was cast out... for a difference in opinion. I say this—I don't know if you can hear me, or if you're listening to me—but I say this by means of a greeting, so that...

JACK: And just gestures at the dead animals.

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): ...so that with these things combined...

JACK: Gestures at the arm.

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): ...we can begin to come to some sort of an understanding.

AUSTIN: [incredulous] Clementine Kesh is negotiating with a god... [Austin and Jack chuckle]
[sighing] All right, um... You know... The arms continue to work that week. I think that there is...
[pausing] Within the next couple of days, at some point you walk your way into another house
as you're exploring and going through things, and there's a single screen on, in... on like, a kind
of terminal, and you just over to it because, hopefully, you'll be able to do something [chuckling].
But you can't get it to change what it says on the screen. Um, and all it says on the screen is
"Your name is Clementine." *Period*. Doesn't say period, there was a period.

JACK: [chuckling] There is a period.

AUSTIN: There is no *Kesh*, though. Um...

JACK: [exhaling] Huff!

AUSTIN: So now, go ahead and draw back up to your maximum hand size. Draw two more
cards... [**Jack:** Which is five.] Which is five, correct. And then, I need you to narrate for me.
Choose a direction to set off on, on your very first Pilgrimage, your very first journey. And look,
I've put together a map here.

JACK: [impressed] Whoa! Austin did not tell me that he was gonna do this.

AUSTIN (overlapping): [mumbling] I did not tell you I was gonna do this, I did this very quietly.

AUSTIN: This is the general, um... the general shape of Chorus Island. The *Community* at
Chorus Island [**Jack:** It-] is in the south-east, where there is a little bit of like, a jut inwards,
inland, kind of at the south-east of the island.

JACK: The island is sort of, almost spade-like [**Austin:** Yeah.], almost like shape of a spade,
with the top handle curling up to the left instead of standing straight up [**Austin:** Yeah.]. Just
giving listeners, um... a sort of bird-like...

AUSTIN: And I'm gonna say that the Community is like, this subsection. Can you see that?

JACK: Mm. Mm-hm. And there is kind of- There is... I am... not allowed to-

AUSTIN (overlapping): And you don't need to leave the Community, to be clear, yeah.

JACK: Oh, yeah-yeah-yeah.

AUSTIN: But yes, continue with what you were saying.

JACK: I'm not allowed to be particularly specific about the instructions that I'm giving you here, right?

AUSTIN: [chuckling] No.

JACK: [searching for words] Not just that like, I'm sort of s— It's suggested that I'm not allowed, I'm— By the rules, I can't say things like "I would like to go down to the docks [**Austin:** Right.] and, uh..." you know. Um... at this early stage of the game, when the relationship between me and the Divine is as it is, I am allowed to give...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Mm-hm. "The Divine" meaning both Perennial, but also me, the player of the Divine, [**Jack:** Oh, yeah-yeah-yeah. Yeah.] which is a role in the game *The Tower*—which is, by the way, a game by Jack de Quidt and Austin Walker.

JACK: [chuckling] That's us! And is pre-*Friends at the Table*. [chuckling]

AUSTIN: Yes, we realized while doing prep for this that we'd been working on this game since before *Friends at the Table* existed, which is fun.

JACK: Um... But yeah, um... So I think I am going to... Head north. Head up this way, towards the periphery of the Community.

[45 minutes]

AUSTIN: Sure. Sounds good. I'm gonna move us back over to the cards, because at this point we don't need to look at the map. And it is now my turn to narrate a little bit of something. I am going to draw four cards from my own deck. [pausing to draw] Four cards... to me, Austin! [pausing] Boom. I'm gonna look at them.

JACK: [chuckling quietly]

AUSTIN: At this point, it is time for me to name the Pilgrimage you're going on. And I will say that this is the Pilgrimage of Perseverance.

JACK: Hmm!

AUSTIN: And now I'm going to take the top card of my deck, and I'm going to draw it, and place it—I'm on the wrong... I'm on the wrong, uh, map layer, but that's okay. [amused] I'm gonna move this to the right map layer. I'm gonna move— Take this card and place it. And this card I've just placed on the map, uh... or on the table, is the Relic that you will receive if you complete this Pilgrimage, the Pilgrimage of Endurance. [pausing] Nope, not Endurance, Perseverance—Perse... yep, uh, Perseverance.

JACK (overlapping): This is face down, neither of us can see it.

AUSTIN: I can't see it, I've no idea what this card is. Theoretically, if Clem succeeds at reaching it, I will have to determine what it is when we flip it over, um... [chuckling] which should be fun. But before that happens, you have to go through a series of Trials, uh... and those Trials are determined based on the cards that I have in my hand. The— Each of the Trials is, uh... kind of... a difficult obstacle that the Pilgrim has to overcome on their journey towards the Relic, and I can give a little bit of guidance in terms of what's drawn the... the Pilgrim—in this case Clem—on this journey, but it's up to the Pilgrim to determine how they face these challenges and how they overcome them.

They way that they do that will be judged, both immediately and in the long term, according to what skills they put forward, or what parts of themselves they put forward, in an attempt to confront and overcome these difficulties. This is why each— In the same way that each card that Jack has played so far has kind of an emotional, or a kind of characteristic, uh... an emotional characteristic, or an otherwise kind of identity characteristic—so too do these Trials, and so for instance, this first one...

Clem, while peeking through one of these houses, you find something you haven't seen elsewhere: a map. It is clearly a map for some sort of tour guide. It— Maybe what you found here is the model home that the, uh, [**Jack:** Hm!] whoever first was supposed to [**Jack:** Oh, bingo!], you know, be here, is the person who's like "Oh yeah, and this is a map of the area." It's, uh... does not necessarily give you a lot of clear detail—um, or really, it's not just a *map*, it's a *hiking trail* map. It's a map of a specific trail, let's say, and it's a trail to the north, and there's a— The destination is a spot called Lookout Point.

And you realize, if you go there, you'll get a better understanding of where you are, because you'll be able to see all around you. And who knows, maybe you'll go far enough that you'll be able to see Cruciat, [chuckling] you know. You'll be able to see a place you know, [**Jack:** Mm! Or other people.] or people— Right, exactly, smoke on the horizon, all that fun stuff. And as you go north, walking past dozens and dozens of these repeated châteaux, you realize something is in front of you, and it is the gate to this community. And when you reach it, you find that it is *locked*. [**Jack:** Hmm.] Two of Diamonds if your first test, your first Trial.

To overcome this, you have a couple of options. You have five cards in your hand. You can play, uh, any card— You can play a lot of different things here, to be clear. In this case, if you play a Two of Diamonds, then you will succeed with your intellect... um, or with your skills, as we talked about before with Diamonds.

On the puz— Or on the Trial side of things, Diamonds represent puzzles, tests of ingenuity, tests of quick thinking—in this case, a locked gate. A very simple one [chuckling] in the world of tabletop roleplaying games. A test of—

JACK (overlapping): Tests of, like, “Can you make the... the rings go in the correct size on the three poles.”

AUSTIN: [laughing] Right. I mean, this is literally the fir— this is like 0451, right? This is [chuckling] [**Jack:** Yeah, uh-huh.], this is the classic immersive sim first puzzle, um, and... and it is a kind of gilded gate at the edge of this community, between two large brick walls that run to either side of the kind of valley, the... of— where there’s these like, hills, that kind of box this area in. And, um... and yeah, so you can play any Diamond equal to or greater than the Two of Diamonds. And *you* know—the *player* knows—that that means that you’ll earn a currency called Dogma points, because you’ll be addressing a Trial in the way that it has been put to you by the Divine. The Divine has said, “I’m testing your Diamonds, show me that you can beat it with Diamons.”

It’s not the only option, though. You can also beat it with any other card of equal or higher value, and if you do *that*, then it is, um... uh, you have reinterpreted what I have asked of you, in a sense. You’ve sort of done, you know, depending on whether or not you believe— Whether or— Depending on what you think, either exegesis, or the other one that I always forget the name of, uh... eisegesis. You’ve put your own bias into it a little bit, *or* you’ve found another meaning in the text, so to speak. “Ah, this is not actually a Trial of puzzles and intellect, this is *actually* a Trial of strength and effort, let me bend these bars or something,” right?

JACK: Mm.

AUSTIN: And that would be if you played a different card, other than— Or a different suit other than Diamonds. You could *also*—and this is where the Relics start to come into hand—you could— Actually, let’s not talk about the Relics, let’s talk about Disappointment first. Um... you could—

JACK: Love to talk about disappointment.

AUSTIN: In this case it’s *literally* impossible, but let’s say this was the Three of Diamonds instead of the Two of Diamonds. You could play the Two of Diamonds—you could play a lower suited card. It’s still an attempt to live up to what the Trial has asked you, you’re still saying “Ah yes, this is a puzzle, I have to think like a puzzle solver, because that’s what the Divine has asked of me,” but you don’t act with the grace and dignity of a Divine, you in fact act in a way that is ugly and human and, uh, profane, [chuckling] right? *Profane* is a good name for this, also, just tossing that around in my brain earlier.

JACK: Jack: Mm!

AUSTIN: And at that point, instead of earning a Dogma token, or an Interpretation token, which is the second tokens that we talked about— I didn’t say the word Token before, but that’s when you play a different suit—higher, equal or higher, that’s Interpretation, you get an Interpretation token. If you play same suit but *lower*, *I*, the Divine, get a Disappointment token, because

[chuckling] you have disappointed me—you've acted in a profane way, "You're just a mortal, I have to remember this, I can't expect so much from you".

You can *also* cash in your Relic. Relics do something very special here. Relics give you a boost—a *passive* boost to everything you do. As a Spade, that means that the Queen of Spades just gives you straight up a +1 to all of your Spade cards. As you get more Relics, that number will go up. Um... The fact that it's a face card, and specifically the Queen of Spades, *also* means that there is some additional benefit [chuckling], um... In this case, it means that the Queen, as a passive ability—once per... per Pilgrimage, you can... replace the current Trial card with the top one from my deck.

JACK: I can basically say to Austin, "Give me another one."

AUSTIN: Yeah, "This one's no good, like, give me— just switch this one out with another one."

JACK: I don't get to pick what it is. It might be worse.

AUSTIN (overlapping): You don't. It might be worse [**Jack:** But—], it totally might be worse. *Then*, you can— There's— That's the passive ability, in the sense that it doesn't cost you anything to do that. There's an *active* ability—

JACK: Do it as many times as I want.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Per... once per Pilgrimage.

AUSTIN: Once per Pilgrimage, but every Pilgrimage you can do this. You can *spend* the Queen, turning her face down, to do one of two things: Because she's the Queen, you can a *second* time—you can replace a Trial a second time at the cost of that Relic—*or* you can spend it as if it's a card in your hand. So, uh, and that's true for all Relics—*all* Relics can be spent as if they're an extra card in your hand. They passively give you a bonus, or you can actively turn them upside-down, keeping that— There's that— You've had it before, it's a floor in your Tower still, but in this specific case, um... you would be basically saying like, "Oh, I'm playing the Queen as if I have the Queen in my hand." *Now*, Jack, I do not advise that [chuckling] you blow the Queen of Spades on the easiest Trial in the game.

JACK: [laughing] Like, an unbelievably easy gate.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yes. Like, I think, literally the Two of Diamonds with the Diamond rule at it is now—which we haven't talked about, we don't need to get into—I think it's technically the easiest card in the game to defeat.

JACK: *Excellent.* I also want to acknowledge that like, there's a lot of different things that cards can do.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: If you are listening to this and thinking "I'm *not* going to be able to remember all of that"—the game is paced in such a way that... that this stuff will come up naturally, again and again in play, and you're gonna get a lot of opportunities to see this happen. Um, so don't worry about going back and re-listening to that, just to make sure you have it all.

AUSTIN: And there's only four Trials per Pilgrimage, for the most part. Anyway, for example...

JACK: [chuckling] Yeah. Yeah. So faced with this Two of Diamonds, a nice puzzle that Perennial has set for me—the basic puzzle of "How do I open a gate?"—I am going to overcome it with the Three of Spades.

AUSTIN: Hmm.

JACK: A Three of Effort.

AUSTIN: Interesting.

JACK: [exhaling] Clementine is not particularly tall. The gate is fairly tall, but I don't think it's like, startlingly tall, right?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: It's— It's just like a gate that you might see at the entrance to a park or something, with walls on either side stretching out as far as Clementine can see. Is the lock like, a padlock, do you think?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so, I think it's like a— It's a pretty sturdy padlock. There's probably also, over to the side, a keypad that's not powered on, you know.

JACK: Yes. Yeah, so I think we see Clementine, um, just shoulder-charge the gate, and wince as it crunches her arm—and the gate just shakes and doesn't do anything.

AUSTIN: [chuckling]

JACK: Uh, and then, you know, sort of *wildly* overestimating the power of the Arms, tries to strike the padlock, in the same way that they've almost certainly seen characters wearing similar armor in movies do—or maybe even seen soldiers in, uh— Kesh soldiers, [Austin: Yeah.] or... You know, people with, like, combat-built, specific... skilled units wielding stuff like this being

able to punch a lock off, and it just stings Clementine's hand [**Austin:** Yeah.] and it doesn't do anything at all.

And so she, uh... experimentally kicks away some of the dirt under the gate with her foot—and noticing that the dirt is looser than she thought, bends down and digs the scrubbiest, *worst* ditch [**Austin** chuckling.] underneath the one bit of the gate. And then bending the bottom bar of the gate *just* a little—with immense effort from the Arms of Vessel's Gold—squeezes herself clean under the gate, and onto the other side.

AUSTIN: Um... Awesome. As you continue, you realize—within, I'd say, twenty, thirty minutes—that maybe you underestimated the scale of this journey.

JACK: [laughing]

AUSTIN: You know, maybe— I'm sure you brought supplies, but, you know, when you were looking at the guidance from the, uh... whatever you found in the model home, and the kind of host guide—all of those estimates and distances were based on like, having not only good supplies, but good equipment, knowing the journey, the paths being in good condition and not being overgrown, um, there being other people around to help give boosts, or take rests, or provide sustenance [chuckling], you know? You're doing it alone, and it gets difficult.

You come to a particular bit of the... of the journey, where the path leads to a bridge, and the bridge is out. There are ways across that will require either climbing down and around, or climbing up and over to the side, where the cliff kind of connects at the edge at the end of a canyon, um, but it's— You tell me how you get there, but it's difficult. This is the Ten of Spades; the Ten of Effort.

JACK: I think I'm going to play the King of Clubs.

AUSTIN: [excitedly] Oooh!

JACK: Oh, I'm sorry, no, not Clubs—Hearts, [chuckling] the opposite of Clubs.

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Okay.

JACK: The King of Hearts. Um... which is, uh... meeting a challenge with bravery, or courage, or, um... [pausing]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Like, active communication?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think specifically, courage is the way we've always talked about Hearts, you know. Um, they're Trials of courage at least, they're scary to pass through, and so when you're

bringing Hearts to bear, it should feel like a degree of, like, willpower and, um, a kind of living testament of your insistence that you *can* do something.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Maybe it can also be— It can also be a display of passion in your faith, for sure, also.

JACK: And because this is a high ranking one, there is a profundity to it, right?

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yeah, yes.

JACK: There is an intensity to this. So I think that the bridge isn't actually out, [**Austin:** Mmm!] insofar as, I think that, um... [pausing] You know, a bridge is just a space linked by an object, and I think there is one spar of metal that remains, like a *parody* of a bridge.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: I don't know whether or not the bridge— Did you say that the bridge was destroyed, or the bridge hadn't been built?

AUSTIN: I said that it had, it had... been broken, is what I think I'd said, or [**Jack:** It'd crumbled into the...] [drowned out] crumbled like it had been... Yeah. Totally.

JACK: Yeah. And so I think in a mocking parody of a bridge—

AUSTIN (overlapping): But though, actually, there's— I don't hate the idea of, it had not been completed yet, and what you were looking at was a guide for a trail that had never been walked, [**Jack:** Ohh, yeah, yeah.] which is also quite good.

[1 hour]

JACK: That's good to know, carry— [chuckling] carry that forward.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JACK: Um... Yeah, so I think it is a grotesque parody of a bridge. You know, there is the nice on-ramp to the bridge, there is the change in texture on the floor, [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] and then running along the left side of where the bridge would be, there is a single... spar, a balustrade, like, the first thing that was laid to cross the gap. And I reckon that this is about as wide as your palm.

AUSTIN: [quietly, chuckling] Jeez...

JACK: Um... and I think Clementine screws up her courage, and—one foot in front of the other—begins to cross the bridge, and makes it four steps before she falls, and grabs onto the thing, and hoists herself—you know, hangs upside down, ungainly—hoists herself up and crosses the rest of the bridge, like, on all fours, [**Austin:** Mm-hm, mm-hm.] like, clinging to this spar—but makes it across.

AUSTIN: So, when you get across, you collect yourself. The sun is starting to go down a little bit. Or, not the sun, but the planet [chuckling] that's reflecting the sun's light. Um, but that means you know that you're in like, the long sunset now. And you hear, in the woods between you and your next destination, a sort of cackling. Um, it's like a... It's like a hyena's laugh, but filtered through a mechanical voice box.

JACK: Oh, Jesus.

AUSTIN: And, um... You... You're walking forward, and eventually you see something that you didn't think *could* exist, or *should* exist, um—shouldn't exist *anymore*. Maybe on certain parts of— places on Partizan it does, in fact I made brief—*brief*—mention of these back in the Prophet's Path mission. Um... It's not that there were creatures— It's—

JACK (overlapping): Oh, Jesus, I have this, like... a bell is ringing.

AUSTIN: [chuckling] It's not that there weren't ever— It's not that there was *no* life on Partizan before Logos Kantel came here. There were the sort of creatures that were sturdy enough to live on a world where, if there was an atmosphere at all, it was toxic. Um...

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: And those have been basically made extinct except for the parts of Partizan where there is no atmosphere anymore. And so, funny thing—the atmosphere gets thinner here.

JACK: [sighing]

AUSTIN: Um... It's as if this place was not touched— was not touched by God [chuckling], was not touched by nature, um... You're able to breathe, but it's a little harder. And, moving through the woods is a pack of these beasts. These are low, bulbous-looking, alien hyena creatures that have been grafted with additional mechanical parts. Specifically, they have, um... uh, like a, almost like an exo— They almost also have like an exoskeleton situation, um, that's sterling silver. And it's as if they've been... It's as *if* they've been experimented on, such that they can live in this middle environment that's half converted Partizan, half untouched Partizan—half pre-miracle Partizan.

Um, and in fact, I think you can— You... maybe not in this moment— May— I'll just give you— I'll give you the reason why you can see this. One of them—while you're watching this pack through the trees—one of them leaps on you from behind [**Jack** laughing in surprise.] and

pins you to the ground for a moment, and you can see a circle with “PNV” on it. The Pact of Necessary Venture. Their *brand* is in the side of the mech— the cybernetic parts of this thing.

JACK: Wow!

AUSTIN: And, you’re able to get away from it for a second, but they are *on you*, Clementine. [dramatically] *This...* is the *Ace of Clubs*.

JACK: [laughing] Whoa-ho-ho-ho-ho! [long pause] I don’t care for this.

AUSTIN: No!

JACK: *Shit*, the Pact has *engineers*. [chuckling] Who— Who are their scientists?

AUSTIN: Um, they’re a very, very wealthy [laughing] organization with hands in every Stel.

JACK: Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Columnar... got involved.

AUSTIN (overlapping): It’s also the first time you’ve seen... Why were they here? You know?

JACK: Yeah. Uh-huh. Clem presumably also has no fucking idea that the Pact can wield this kind of power [**Austin:** Sure, sure.] before this point, right?

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes.

JACK: Like, we know they’re powerful, we know Clementine is kind of afraid of them following their conversations with Cas’alear...

AUSTIN: With Cas’alear, yeah... yeah. But—

JACK: But yeah, absolutely no idea that they would send—

AUSTIN (overlapping): Right, but doesn’t really have the Valence, Gur Sevraq style relationship with them.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: [quietly] No.

JACK: No way. Um... [pausing]

AUSTIN: What do you do?

JACK: Oh boy... [pausing] Okay. [chuckling] I see your Ace of Clubs, Austin.

AUSTIN: [expectantly] Uh-huh.

JACK: Uh, and I, uh... give you... [**Austin:** (impressed) Hoo!] the Ace of Diamonds.

AUSTIN: [laughing]

JACK: [chuckling] Austin just messaged me “Remember your Queen ability”—which is very good to remember both as a listener and as a player—where I can...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yeah. But you’re like “fuck that”.

JACK: Well, I’m like— Yeah, it’s very interesting to me, for Clem—who likes to believe that she is quick-thinking—to actually [**Austin:** In this instance...] pull out some kind of... [**Austin:** Yeah...] some kind of quick-thinkingness. Um... what is this? This is...

AUSTIN: So again, it was Ace of Clubs, and you’ve now played the Ace of Diamonds.

JACK: Yeah, which, again, we’re very broadly calling “Intellect”.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Or “Skill” or whatever, yeah.

JACK: I think that I try and gain ground, and pull back, through... through a scramble that costs me a gash on my face [**Austin:** Mm-hm.], or, um... you know, uh— Oh! Um, like, two of the fastenings of one of the Arms come loose. So the Arm begins to, like, hang off Clem’s arm as she beats tracks back towards where the air is, um... [pausing] Towards where the air is breathable [**Austin:** Right.] for C— More breathable for Clementine, and not breathable for them. And I think it is... it is an *absurd* image, it— when the moment comes. You know, you see those things where it’s like “this hotel has built one side on the Canadian border and one side on the American border.”

AUSTIN: Haha! Yeah.

JACK: And you’re just like, “this looks like a fake space that I am looking at”. And I think that it’s— It almost looks like there is a splitscreen, you know.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: Clementine is standing in a clearing, or in a treeline, and with absolutely *nothing* between her and the beasts, um... Like, there is nothing protecting her from the beasts, but the beasts are not able to take a step forward without beginning to suffer the effects. And... and they are not prepared to. And then I think, *painstakingly*, Clementine moves in a direction, like, down the line of the atmosphere.

AUSTIN: [breathing out sharply]

JACK: And sometimes she gets it wrong, and the beast takes a leap, and she jumps backwards.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: And it's like she's testing out this invisible boundary, until it eventually comes to a point where she can begin to move in the direction of the hiking trail, without, um... without entering an area that the beasts can get to her in. And the beasts just snap and bay as she walks alongside them.

AUSTIN: Love it. And you leave them behind, but make a mark on the map... where they were.

JACK: "Do not..." Yeah, it's, um... What's the great thing called in *Outer Wilds*? The rock that you're not allowed to go near?

AUSTIN: God, yeah... I forget, what is that?

JACK: And you can't see— It's like, *Ghost Rock* or something.

AUSTIN: Ghost Rock, yeah, uh-huh. I'm just gonna add a little red here, maybe. You know? Like, *pwooh* [miming a threatening noise].

JACK: You're gonna put red in where the death is?

AUSTIN: I guess it's— I guess it's like, what I'm doing is like... Um, where do I want it... Let's go like this, where it's like, open-ended a little bit... Actually—

JACK: Yeah, because Clementine has not walked the— has not plumbed the depth of the other area.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Right, the whole of it, exactly, exactly. So you don't know how far it is, necessarily [laughing], but you—

JACK: And, she hasn't made a— a mark of it.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: So she's gonna have to, if she goes back, do this bizarre walk again.

AUSTIN: Exactly. Um... So, you've made it past them, you're back on the trail. The... It is nearly nighttime by the time you reach your destination, Lookout Point, and... you look out. And you place yourself, or at least you... you're able to *just* barely figure out what is around you, as the

light begins to dim. To... the north, there is the sea. The edge of the island to the north, um, kind of reaches up to the left, almost like a finger, or like you said, the handle of a spade. And, uh— But, all around that is the sea. To the west, there is... the sea.

JACK: Mm!

AUSTIN: And then, a landmass further that way. Beyond the sea to the north are Kesh— is Kesh territory.

JACK (overlapping): *Distant* landmarks.

AUSTIN: You believe you're somewhere near the Estatelands, but you don't see Cruciat, so that means you're probably past that big landmass east of Cruciat. To the *east*, there is... or actually [slurred/inaudible] to the *south*, there is the Prophet's Sea, the, like, *huge*— just, can see it from here from the top...

JACK *Vast*.

AUSTIN: This *vast* and distant... um, you know, *maybe* if you strain your eyes... like, I don't think you can, I don't think you can see from here, necessarily, Nideo territory. To the *east* you can see Nideo territory... *and* you can see that separating you from it, on what is an island or an isthmus, is [dramatically] a gigantic concrete wall.

JACK: Hm.

AUSTIN: For all intents and purposes, you are *stuck* here. Seeing this sight is terrifying, because not only do you see sea and the wall, you see *nothing else*. Clementine Kesh, as far as you can tell, you are *alone* here, on Chorus Island. It fills your heart with terror. This is the King of Hearts, matching a card you played earlier this Pilgrimage.

JACK: [chuckling] Uh, how big a wall are we talking?

AUSTIN: Oh, Jack, it's *gigantic*. It's hu— It's, you know... It's as if someone had built, um... Do you know, like, uh... like, an arena, like Madison Square Garden, or like, a *huge*, like... the New York Public Library, but twice as tall—just concrete, just across... It's as if there's a bridge from the mainland here, and at the end there's just this wall that's like "No." [chuckling] "You cannot cross."

JACK: God. Is it... bigger than the gate?

AUSTIN: Oh. Yea— Jack.

[Both laughing.]

AUSTIN: Much, much bigger than gate, we're talking—

JACK (overlapping): The gate that is eight feet tall.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we're talking about like, ten stories tall. You know?

JACK: Yeah. [pausing] Mm. [long pause] You know, Clementine has always had two great tactics that have served her well her entire life.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Belittlement...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: ...and denial.

AUSTIN: [chuckling]

JACK: And so I think she just sits down and looks at the ground, I think in that way that like, "I can't look in *any* direction. I have brought myself to the Lookout Point, what is here is incoherent and appalling to me, so I am going to sit down and look at the floor, look at my hands." You know, "I'm going to pay very close attention to my *cuff*."

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: I am invoking the Queen of Spades [**Austin:** Yes...] for this Pilgrimage, and replacing the Six of H— or the *King* of Hearts.

AUSTIN: The King of Hearts. I will now draw the top card of my deck, put it in place, and flip it over. [pausing] Ready?

JACK: Mm-hm!

AUSTIN: It's the King of Effort!

JACK: [laughing]

AUSTIN: You—

JACK: No it's not, Austin! It's not the King of Effort!

AUSTIN: Oh, it's the King of *Combat*, holy shit! You're right, it's Clubs.

[Both chuckling.]

AUSTIN: They found you.

JACK: What a great lesson for Clementine to learn.

AUSTIN: [incredulously] God... Um, yeah, the moment of being... The moment of being, um... You know, uh... uh, quiet and alone is broken [chuckling] as you realize [ominously] the air up here sure is a little thin.

JACK: [laughing] I thought it was the altitude, it's not the altitude.

AUSTIN: It's not the altitude. When it— Which, again, is another element of whatever the Pact is capable of that you had no idea about, right? The fact that they could make part of Partizan less like...

JACK: I was *literally* just thinking this.

AUSTIN: Less like the way... They can *undo* the Miracle. Um...

JACK: Yeah, are they capable of deploying this in grenades [**Austin:** Yeah!] and then sending these creatures onto the battlefield, like...

AUSTIN: Totally! Or like... I... Gur Sevraq has said, or *did* say, you know—before, to Valence a number of times...

JACK: Rest in peace.

AUSTIN: Yeah. A number of times... Um, "I don't believe the Pact won't figure out how to kill God."

JACK: Mm!

AUSTIN: And here they are, having undone the True Divine's miracles. [pausing] So...

JACK: They attack with less ferocity... than before, but not much less.

AUSTIN (overlapping): A *little* bit. Yeah, it's a King instead of an Ace.

JACK: Uh-huh...

AUSTIN: You still have options here.

JACK: Jesus...

AUSTIN: You have two cards in your hand.

JACK (overlapping): Oh, no, I do, yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: You can spend the Queen again, you can spend the Queen in either way—you could spend it as the Queen, because with the Queen but with the *Spade* bonus it would get boosted up to a King, which is interesting.

JACK: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Or, I don't know what else is in your hand, and you can also do the thing we didn't mention, [**Jack:** Mm.] which is... You can admit that you can't fucking do it, and turn to Perennial for assistance.

JACK: [laughing] [ironically] How's that gone, historically, for people on Partizan, Austin?

AUSTIN: [chuckling along] You know, I don't know, it's... up and down.

JACK: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Depends on where you're at in the cycle.

JACK: I truly love to ask the wind for help.

AUSTIN: Of *course* the wind can help you... fight... cyber-dogs...

JACK: [laughing] "Can the wind help me?" Yeah...

AUSTIN: Of course thind can be Perennial.

JACK: Um... No, this is a fight, this is a stand-up fight, and it is a *bad* one.

AUSTIN: Mmm... huh...

JACK: This... I'm gonna play the Seven of Clubs [**Austin:** Okay.], so that is the same suit, which enables me to play it—but it is a lower value, which means I'm going to incur disappointment from my god. I think the word you used, Austin, was "graceless".

AUSTIN: "Graceless," yeah.

JACK: Um... This is just... Clementine does not—did not wake up on the beach with a traditional weapon, and has not, um... found one, in any of the model home. We saw her wielding a piece of rebar before, but I think that's heavy to carry in long distances...

[1 hour 15 minutes]

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: I imagine she's just got a— like, a stick. She's got like a thick cudgel, um, that you just pick up from the floo— You know when you pick up a stick sometimes and you're like "Exactly how much mass is this gonna have?"

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yeah. "Whoa! How dense is this?"

JACK (overlapping): "Is, like... am I just gonna hit this against a thing..."

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yeah. "Is it gonna snap in half, or..."

JACK (overlapping): Yeah, "Is it gonna just crumble..."

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly.

JACK: Um... And I think the answer is that like, it's useful if you're just trying to fight like, *a dog*, rather than like, a mutated, like, hyena— I think she manages to like, hit one back and it bites through the stick, and she like, picks up a rock from the floor and tries to crumble it, like—at the top of this promontory, just this awful scrabbling fight in the mud.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm...

JACK: And, and... I think maybe manages to— So I *overcome* this with combat?

AUSTIN: You do. Yes.

JACK: Yeah. Uh, but...

AUSTIN (overlapping): But it's Disappointment. I take a Disappointment token here because you played a Seven to a King.

JACK (overlapping): ...gracelessly, and poorly. You know, I think that... I think that I definitely do damage to the...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: ...to the creatures, but I think also, the fall—the tumbling from the promontory—does damage to the creatures as well [**Austin:** Yeah.] as they fall, such that when we are at the bottom and we are all beaten up, they limp off to lick— Do these creatures limp off to lick their wounds?

AUSTIN: [decisively] Yeah. Absolutely.

JACK: Yeah? They have that... they have that drive?

AUSTIN (overlapping): Totally. A hundred percent. Yes. Yes.

JACK: Yeah. Um... It's a— It is a graceless defeat.

AUSTIN: Love it. Um, and so you scare them away—fight them away, I'll give you "fight them away." And you have thus completed the Pilgrimage of Perseverance.

JACK: Hm.

AUSTIN: Let us see what this is. [pausing to draw a card] [amused] Hm! Okay.

JACK: [amused] Hm!

AUSTIN: Interesting. Interesting, there's a theme appearing here. This is the Seven of Spades. Um, and I think that it is something... something sort of small, but also maybe... maybe useful. Um, it is... You know, you've scared them away, you go— you take a sit down on like, a bench that had been installed here as part of whatever this walk was supposed to be, and there on the bench next to you is a, um... a map-maker's kit.

JACK: Whoa!

AUSTIN: It is... uh, maybe it's like, in a little box. It's under— Let's say it's under the bench, right, in one of those *Fire*— You know *Firewatch* has those like, supply boxes?

JACK: [chuckling] Yes. What a great box.

AUSTIN: So yeah, maybe it's in one of those, and you like... you knock the fucking lock off with that stick, and inside is, you know, a bottle of... [chuckling] or a *can* of water, and— like an emer— a couple— some emergency supplies, and then a, um, a mapmaker's kit, which is like... a *very* basic outline of what this area is, a compass, you know, a... both types of compass actually [Jack: Mm.]—a compass for navigation and a compass for drawing circles and such, and... and that. And also like a, you know, the sort of markers, and a basic guide book to this—which you might think, [Jack: Whoa!] "that's not a big Relic," but it's a huge Relic in another way, right?

JACK: Yeah. Absolutely. This is... And I fell down a hill to get this!

AUSTIN: This was the Seven of Spades— Yeah, exactly. Yeah.

JACK: [inhaling] Okay.

AUSTIN: [typing] Map-maker kit. So...

JACK: Map-maker tier backers...

AUSTIN: [laughing]

JACK: Clementine has become a map-maker!

AUSTIN: Yes. I'm gonna move my cards up here, uh, you should do the same with yours, to the bottom, because it's important to reme— keep these decks, or keep these cards, on the table but separate. Um... You have this now. Tell me what you do with it, as you add it to your Tower—your Tower to Perennial.

JACK: I think montage of the way back, [**Austin:** Yeah, definitely.] and Clementine, um...

AUSTIN (overlapping): In the dark, now.

JACK: Yeah, yeah, you know when you go on a hike and it gets later quicker than you think it does [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] and you suddenly find that you're walking in the dark, um... Yeah, like, shots of the... the weird red zone causing problems on the way back as well...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: But I think also, like, Clementine drawing the route that she takes on the map, and making it back, going under the gate, making it back to the Sage House. I think there is— I think it's a windy night, and the Sage House is moving [**Austin:** Yeah.] with the wind. But I think that before... Hmm. I think that she tucks the mapmaker's kit [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] down in the basement with the, um— Ooh! Is— are the... are the offerings there? The animals and stuff.

AUSTIN: [gravely] They're gone.

JACK: [pausing] Huh.

AUSTIN: You gave two types of offering, right—you gave food and you gave animals, right?

JACK: Oh, the food was for me, the animals was for...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Oh, the food was for you. Well, the trash is still down there, you haven't done something with the trash yet. It's still there. But the animals are gone.

JACK: Like, four shells, a couple of dead rodents...

AUSTIN: Yeah, gone.

JACK: Yeah. Huh. [breathing in] And then she goes back down to the water, trudges back down to the water, and... writes on a piece of paper.

AUSTIN: Not on the map-maker kit? Or just on the...

JACK: Uh, uh, no— I think she tears something off the map-maker kit. I think she's appropriating something.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Okay, well— Really quick, when you— Now that you're back, when you look at the map, you see the *finest, tiniest* line that has tracked your steps back.

JACK: [curiously] Huh!

AUSTIN: It's not even enough to read. You would have— *You* would have to sketch over it, like, you'd have to— It's almost like a guiding line, like for tracing something, you know? Um...

JACK: Wow.

AUSTIN: But, on a quick peek, you couldn't— It's not thick enough that you could read the map from it. Um, but it's there, which is strange.

JACK: [thoughtfully] Huh. Okay, I think in that case I'm not going to— I'm not going to adulterate the map.

AUSTIN: [laughing]

JACK: I was gonna tear something off it and make a message in a bottle, um...

AUSTIN: [understandingly] Mm.

JACK: But I think I am now afraid that if I tear the map, I will break whatever is doing this to the map. Trace over the line, fold the map up, tuck it away.

AUSTIN: All right, so now, you also have to tell me... how does... having this map change the area, affect the area around you? How does this added little bit of Perennial's presence affect the Community of Chorus Island? The Community *at* Chorus Island?

JACK: [pausing] I think I get a much better— I think I am *able* to get a much better sense of the town, of the Community. And I think that I begin to make, um... like, exploratory missions. I don't think I go beyond the gate.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: But I think that I... go all the way down a street, and check all the houses in a street, and come back and make a mark on the map, and... I think probably since no one's here, Clementine isn't worried about people overhearing her [**Austin:** Uh-huh.] thanking the map when she gets back. Um... But yeah, just slowly begins to make a working map of the immediate— of Clementine's neighborhood around the Sage House.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

JACK: Is there— Are there street names?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally! Um... I don't have great ones off the top of my head.

JACK: No. All my street names are deep sea fish.

AUSTIN: I think these— [chuckling] I think these are probably the names of Elects of the past [**Jack:** Ohhh, yeah.], so, which means they're plant names. So, have fun with that, you know?

JACK: Mm, mm-hm.

AUSTIN (overlapping): [typing] Random plant name...

JACK (overlapping): Listeners...

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yeah. [reading] Tansy. Cherry. Red river maple. Crowfoot. You know.

JACK: Yeah, it's— It's these kinds of very corny, just like, "Red River Maple Street."

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Ribwort.

JACK: Great. Rib—

AUSTIN: [enunciating] "*Rib—wort* Street."

JACK: Ribwort.

AUSTIN: Milkweed.

JACK: "Where do you live, darling?" "We're moving into Ribwort Street."

AUSTIN: [laughing]

JACK: "Excellent!"

AUSTIN: “We’re moving down to Lily Leek.” “Do you mean Lily Lake?” “Absolutely not!”
[chuckling quietly]

JACK: “No-no-no, only the best properties and names for us.”

AUSTIN: “*Leek*. Lily *Leek*.”

JACK: “We’re awful Kesh nobility!”

AUSTIN: [laughing] Mm... I’ll note these are Elects from across all five. Of the Stels.

JACK (overlapping): Oh, huh. Okay. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is interest— Which again, a note towards the Pact of Necessary Venture being comprised of all five Stels.

JACK: “Yeah, we’re the Pact of Necessary Venture. We do two things: we have tolerance for other people’s Elects, and we have murder dogs.”

AUSTIN: [chuckling] “We got murder dogs.” Uh-huh. All right, now it is my job, or my turn, Jack, to judge you. Oh, that’s not true! There’s one more thing you have to do before I judge you [Jack: Mm!], which is: Based on your experience with me, your experience with these trials, your experience with the cyber-dogs, your experience with the new Relic—what the new Relic *is* and what it *does*—you have to write a new law of your faith.

JACK: And as a reminder, Clementine decided to open strong with law 1: “There is a reason why I am alive.”

AUSTIN: Yes. I think it’s very funny [Jack: Something—] that you got two Effort, *working* Relics back to back that Clementine Kesh—who has never practiced a day in her life [Jack: No.]—has gotten two Relics that are like “do work.” [chuckling]

JACK: “You need to work.” Um... [long pause]

AUSTIN: But that’s not my— That was not a suggestion for a law, to be clear.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, ‘cause I’m not allowed to give you any of those.

JACK: Something we’ve found when we’ve played this game, like, on and off recordings in the past is that it’s quite easy to get in your own head about these laws.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: But, especially— I mean, maybe because we come off the system of like, beliefs and bonds from the games where it's like... playing in a long form sense, you are trying to make very particular choices about how you might be playing two weeks from now or whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah-yeah-yeah.

JACK: In a sense, these have much less immediate demands made of you as a player, um...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: [long pause] I have one, but it's really dark, and I don't know that I want to do that.

AUSTIN: Hm.

JACK: [pausing] Could we workshop it? You're not allowed to *help* me...

AUSTIN: You could tell me what it is and you can read my... I mean, this is the thing is, I can't—I can't— The— Perennial *cannot*... The whole thing here is the Pilgrim is interpreting what's happening.

JACK: Mm, mm-hm.

AUSTIN: So I, as Perennial, certainly cannot do that.

JACK: [chuckling] Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: I can do my best to compartmentalize here. Um...

JACK: And like, a big inspiration here for us are... are rules that rules that designers like Avery Alder use [Austin: Mm-hm.] in *The Quiet Year*, where Avery makes very specific prescriptive requirements on how you play—you know, like, "This is when you can talk and this is when you can't talk."

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: This is a very collaborative game, but not necessarily at a moment like this. So like, the thing that I keep thinking is like, "The ultimate alternative to effort is death."

AUSTIN: [discomposed] Whoof. I like that. I don't— It's— *Austin* likes that, but...

JACK (overlapping): Um... It's very dar— Yeah, I like it— It's very dark. Um...

AUSTIN: Do you think Clem actually gets there? Or, I guess the thing is, Clem doesn't need to get there.

JACK (overlapping): I like "The alternative to effort is X."

AUSTIN: Clem has to get to "This is what Perennial is telling me." Clem doesn't have to *believe* it. Necessarily. Though I will judge you in a moment as to whether or not you're living up to your own laws.

JACK: [laughing] Yes, that's a good game in that regard.

AUSTIN: Um, uh... But you don't need to, you can say "This is what the Divine is asking of me." Um, or demanding. [pausing] It *is* dark, and it's... and it's... [pausing, exhaling] Is it "suffering"? No— Because the thing here is— The thing I *don't* want to stumble into is "And as such, all you have to do to be happy is work hard," you know? [chuckling]

JACK: Yeah, absolutely. Right. Right.

AUSTIN (overlapping): But *we* know that's not true, as [breaking into laughter] people who have lived with depression. It *doesn't* work like that.

JACK: Mm. *No*, absolutely not.

AUSTIN: Um... But the—

JACK: And I wanna make sure that I'm...

AUSTIN: [sighing] Yeah.

JACK: These laws are very catchy, as we have learned when we made *Animal Out of Context* [Austin: Mm-hm.], and I wanna make sure that I don't set ourselves an unpleasant precedent by making a law that is so monumentally dark that, um...

AUSTIN: It's nevertheless adopted because it's catchy.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Adopted more broadly the way that, there's a law in [Jack: Um...] *Animal Out of Context* that is "Remember, you've beaten your worst days," which is—*literally*—[breaking into laughter] Um...

JACK (overlapping): The current...

AUSTIN: It's not *literally* "The opposite of effort is death," but it is, "Don't worry about death, keep up the effort," which is the current ideological state of, uh, both of our countries!

JACK: Uh... uh-huh!

AUSTIN: [quietly] Yeah.

JACK: Yeah, and it's working great for both of them.

AUSTIN: Miserable. Miserable world.

JACK: This is sarcasm.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It's a disaster. Um... [pausing] Well, so like, Clementine has no idea why she is alive, but she knows there is a reason. She... [pausing] She *died*, to all intents and purposes.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: She has no idea where she is, she has *immediately* been faced with great demands on her effort.

AUSTIN: What if it's like "The opposite of effort is *absence*," or, "...is..." You know what I mean, because then it's not—

JACK: Or "The alternative to effort is absence."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. Because you're so far from everything, too. And absence— Death is an absence, but so is, um... so is you not being... near anyone. You know what I mean?
[chuckling]

JACK: I mean, we could just go— we could just go for the classic and go for "The alternative to effort is pain."

AUSTIN: It is, but again, I think that gets us into a territory where it feels like... I don't wanna say anything— Again, Clem can believe that that is what Perennial is saying.

JACK: [chuckling] Right, yes.

AUSTIN: What I don't want is a t-shirt that says "The opposite of effort is pain."

JACK (overlapping): No! This is— This is the problem. Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: And then people who find some strength in that are at the same time... **[Jack: Yes.]** suggest— There is a subtext to that law that says “And that means if you’re in pain, you’re just not putting enough effort in,” which is bullshit.

JACK: Yes. Yeah-yeah-yeah, absolutely. Yes. Can the—

AUSTIN (overlapping): Can *Clem* believe that? That that is what Perennial is saying? Maybe. Uh, but I don’t— **[Jack: Right.]** Again, it’s not me, I can’t come up with this.

[1 hour 30 minutes]

JACK (overlapping): No. No-no-no.

AUSTIN: In fact, in a moment, I’m going to give you a point—or take a point—based on whether or not Perennial agrees with this.

JACK (overlapping): So for example, you— If you wanted to cheat, this would be a great way you could do it, but according to the rules of *The Tower*, you’re not allowed to cheat, only I am.

AUSTIN: That is— That is true in a very specific way. But yes, in a moment I’m going to judge you on whether or not you make a law in your image, in our collective image, or in my image, basically. [long pause] Which means we *should* be able to write things down that we, the players, don’t agree with—but that Clementine Kesh might. You know? Or might— Again, there’s this double layer. We don’t even need it to be something *Clem* believes, it needs to be something *Clem* believes that Perennial believes, or is demanding, you know?

JACK: Okay! How about this: [typing] “If it is not effort, it is absence.”

AUSTIN: Mmm, okay. I like this. Austin likes this. Perennial, we’ll see. [long pause] Um... All right.

JACK: You want to talk about how you’re going to judge me?

AUSTIN: Yes! After gaining each Relic, I get to, uh— You get to make a law, which you’ve done, and then I will basically just like... reflect on everything you’ve done up until this point—in this Trial, not the whole game, just this Trial—and I will, specifically, be judging whether you lived up to the laws you set for yourself, whether you found loopholes in those laws or you broke them. I will determine if, generally, I’m impressed, or shocked, or disappointed in your actions. I will be thinking about whether or not you’ve honored my Relics or if you’ve wanted their power for your own, or if you distanced yourself from them, or disavowed them, or, you know, separated yourself from them. Um... And then I’ll be judging you on the law, like I said before—whether or not it was made in your image, my image, or our collective image.

Um, and based on all that, I will be giving you points, or I will be giving *myself* points of Dogma, Interpretation, and Disappointment. What I'm going to be doing here, Jack, is giving *you* three Dogma points and one Interpretation point.

JACK: Hm!

AUSTIN: You don't get to know which I gave you, unfortunately.

JACK: No. Or how that was metered out.

AUSTIN: Exactly. Or rather, you get to know the overall, but you don't get to know what the—what each one came from, if that makes more sense, actually.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Yes. Uh... So, let's see here. So that's, what? That was, what did I say, three Dogma—boom—and now Interpretation, which means you're at three Dogma, four Interpretation, and I have one Disappointment token, which came from...

JACK: 'Cause I fought some dogs badly.

AUSTIN: You fought those dogs bad. But you fought them at least, so hey. Um... Also at this point, your bonuses go up. That Seven of Spades means you get a +2 to all Spades cards now, because you have the Seven of Spades and the Queen of Spades. Really a Spades build, this game.

JACK: Weird for Clementine!

AUSTIN: So fucking good, I love it so much. You have no starting Diamond cards, so I'll delete that, um... and then, uh... uh... we have the Relics, okay! And the laws. All right, so, you've g— We've gone through the first trial. That's pretty good. We now wrap back around to the first step here. Not the very first step—not the— not w— in our boo— our rules, we call it the Epiphany—but we wrap back around to the Tithe. It is time for you to draw up to your full hand size— Oh, wait! Is this true? Is it— Do I do another— Oh, I did my Judgment. I did my Judgment, right?

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: You've tracked the points, duh-duh-duh-duh-duh, and... and yeah. Okay. So, go ahead and draw up to five cards, so you draw four cards.

JACK: Gonna draw four cards.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Um... And then you have to tithe in order to keep these Relics active. Again, *expensive* when you have a Queen.

JACK: *Really* expensive.

AUSTIN: We should say: We don't know that this game works. [chuckling] You know...

JACK: But also, we make it up, so [**Austin:** Yes. Yes. Yes.] we can... we can... If this thing breaks, we can poke it until it starts moving again.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah, exactly.

JACK: Um... [pausing] As a recap, my Relics are the Queen of Spades—Vessel's Gold's Arms—which is enabling Clem to use her broken arm, which I don't think is healing. I don't know that it's a good idea to put an exoskeleton arm on a broken arm and just get it working again.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Uh-huh, and be like, "it works right now". Yeah.

JACK: Uh-huh. And the Seven of, um, Spades, which is a map-maker's kit with a map that leaves a little spider web trail where I go. [**Austin:** Yeah.] Like a spooky version of the thing in *Breath of the Wild*.

AUSTIN: Yeah! In fact— Ooh, Jack, it's not a little line! It's— It's Russian sage. Right?

JACK: [gasping]

AUSTIN: It takes you a while to see, then you look closer, and it's Russian sage. It's this long, singular, like, vine-like version of Russian sage.

JACK: Is it drawn Russian sage, or is there like, a three-dimensional texture to the...

AUSTIN: Ooh, I like that it's a texture, I like that you could touch it. Yeah.

JACK: Yeah, we're on some *Annihilation* shit now.

AUSTIN: [drawn out] Yeah, babyyy!

JACK: Astronaut shooting another astronaut: "We've always been on some *Annihilation* shit."

AUSTIN: [laughing] Oh, god...

JACK: [chuckling] Right, so the total value that I am looking to spend here, Austin, is twelve plus seven, [**Austin:** Nineteen.] which is... nineteen.

AUSTIN: Yeah. [pausing] But you have to spend twelve, and then you have to spend seven.

JACK: [pausing] Oh, fuck, do I?

AUSTIN (overlapping): Right? Isn't that true? Is that not true?

JACK: Yeah, I think you're right. Yeah, I think I have to beat the one card and then beat the other card.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yeah. Because... beat the other... yeah. I guess I don't *mind* if you do it... all at once.

JACK: This is game design, folks.

AUSTIN: I *guess* I don't mind if you do it all at once. [**Jack:** Why?] If you're able to do it all at once, right?

JACK: Wh—

AUSTIN: 'Cause then...

JACK: Are you just worried that we'll break the game if I [chuckling] try and do it the other way?

AUSTIN: I am worried that [**Jack:** This is—] you'll break the game if you— But, but, but maybe we should do it and see if it breaks. I guess I— Here's— Here's why— Here's how I'd *actually* play it: It depends on the Divine, doesn't it? [pausing] Would some Divines [breaking into laughter] be stingier than others?

JACK: [chuckling]

AUSTIN: Would some Divines *require* you to Tithe per Relic.

JACK: Would say [condescendingly] “No, no, no, do it this way.”

AUSTIN: Yeah, to give the exam— To explain what the situation here is for people who maybe can't picture it because they're not looking at this table with these cards in front of them: The Queen is worth twelve points, which means you have to play either a Queen, a King, or an Ace to keep the Queen active—or a combination of cards that totals twelve or higher. Then there's the Seven of Spades. That means you *could* get to nineteen by playing an Ace, for instance—which is fourteen—and then a five. But if you have to pay for them each individually, if you play the Ace on the Queen, you then have to play a Seven still on the Seven—because you're not pooling your totals, you're... you're kind of setting them up as distinct, um, kind of transactions if that makes sense. Um...

You know, the... the... non-game designer part of me says “You should just try it and see what happens and I'll tell you what happens and we'll see what— how Perennial thinks...” but

that's rude. Um... [chuckling] So I think it's, uh— I... You know, this is what makes it a game that's not finished yet, is not knowing the hard and fast answer to this. I think in Perennial's case, I think pooling works.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's all one fucking day, in the words of Janis Joplin.

JACK: Um, okay. I'm going to spend a Jack of Hearts.

AUSTIN: [expectantly] Which represents...

JACK: Uh... so, a Jack is an eleven.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: And Hearts represent Courage.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Clem is going to remove the right Arm of Vessel's Gold [**Austin:** Mm.] and tend to the broken arm.

AUSTIN: [breathing in sharply] Ooh, okay.

JACK: I don't wanna get into detail here... Um, but it's like, *not* goo— It's like *really not good*... in there.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Do you find something that lets— that helps you with this process? Or is this just...

JACK: I think it's triage.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: I think it's... I think it's... And this is why it's such a high rank of Courage.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Of like... to triage, and to do what you can given the, like— I'm gonna raid a first aid kit in number 4, and then I'm gonna raid a first aid kit in number 5, there's no first aid kit in number 6 because it's made of sage...

AUSTIN: Right... right...

JACK: First aid kit in number 7...

AUSTIN: There's a gui— an emergency surgery guide in model house number 3—or in like, the [Jack: Yeah-yeah-yeah.] floor— Like, the community does have an infirmary, maybe, or something, or has a libr— Like, does have some— Somewhere you find a book that teaches you how to do something emergency... some sort of [Jack: Yeah.] emergency stabilization, something here, triage.

JACK: And then, the arm back on...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Strapped up. Ready to go.

AUSTIN: Miserable pain. Just terrible.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Also, note here, the suits don't matter during Tithing. You're allowed to do whatever you want to Tithe, the Tithing is—in a game design sense—is really just a way for me to get cards out of the... out of Jack's hands.

JACK: When you say "suits don't matter," you mean, um... uh, they don't...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Y— Um, you don't— I'm not judging you based on...

JACK: You're not judging me. They matter in the sense of that they have a thematic, or a mechanical, resonance.

AUSTIN: Right, there's a color, you still color what you're doing, which is why you talked about the courage and difficulty of what you just did—but you don't— you didn't need to play a Spade card to tithe to the Spade Relic.

JACK: Mm, mm-hm. Mm-hm. Clem, you know, still throwing bottles at birds.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Hard mode. Yeah.

JACK: So I have played eleven, and I need to play nineteen.

AUSTIN: Correct. So you need another eight points.

JACK: Okay. This is the Six of Spades—the Six of Effort.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: [pausing] I'm gonna sweep out the basement.

AUSTIN: Huh.

JACK: I'm gonna move all the trash out.

(as **CLEMENTINE**, internally): I'm doing this for me. It is uncomfortable, I d– I don't know why you're suggesting that I'm doing it for another reason, or for somebody else. I just like to be comfortable in this time, and for me right now, that is a clean basement."

JACK: Or, clean... You know when people who don't clean a lot clean [**Austin:** Yeah.] and they go "It's clean!" [**Austin:** "It's clean now!"], and you go "It is *not* clean." [**Austin:** Yeah, uh-huh.] Um... but I think it's that. Um...

AUSTIN: Still need three points. Right? Or two points.

JACK: Two points.

AUSTIN: Two points, two points.

JACK: Weakest card in the game [**Austin** laughing.], the Two of Diamonds.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: Clementine... is trapping... cats. [pausing] Or, or, what is the pettiest animal? Cats is like– feral cats that live here is good.

AUSTIN: Feral cats work, yeah. Mm-hm.

JACK: Clementine has built a trap, um, in a house across the street. It is on the upstairs ba– I don't know what the trap is, it captures and kills cats. It is on the opposite balcony of Clementine's... well, Clementine lives in the basement, but during the day [**Austin:** Yeah, yeah.] will go up to the balcony, and sit on the balcony, and drink [**Austin** chuckling], or look at the map, and collect cats from the other balcony, that she lays out in the basement, um... because they keep disappearing.

AUSTIN: They keep disappearing.

JACK: And now I have Tithed. And I have two cards in my hand, so that's fine!

AUSTIN: That's fine!

JACK: That worked okay, yeah.

AUSTIN: Or you're gonna— And you're gonna draw three cards now.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Draw back up to five.

[Short music sting.]

[Interlude #1 — Start]

AUSTIN: It has been one month since the red light fell on Oxbridge. Where are you when Thisbe finds you, Sovereign Immunity?

ART: I imagine doing research in the archives.

AUSTIN: All right, that makes sense. Um... Thisbe, how do you want to broach this?

JANINE: Um... First I wanna confirm that this is a thing that Thisbe could have found, like, in a book, basically.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: That Sovereign Immunity was there.

AUSTIN: I think s— I think...

JANINE: That is part of that story.

AUSTIN: I think, you know, if... If you knew what to look for—and you now one hundred percent know what to look for—yes. You could put this together.

JANINE: Okay. Um...

ART: Book, or a newspaper, or something...

AUSTIN: Right. Right, right, right.

JANINE: [chuckling] Just picturing Thisbe hunched over one of those library microfiche machines.

AUSTIN: A hundred percent, that's exactly it, 'cause it's not— It wouldn't be on the Palace, right, it would have to be [**Janine:** Yeah.] academic texts, or local reporting that got buried, you know what I mean? Like, it's— But you could find it at this point especially.

ART: Ok— Okay, but like, microfiche: cool. But Thisbe looking over the top of like, a broadsheet newspaper [chuckling]—like, peering over...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: With some half glasses.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Yeah, little reading glasses.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I love it. Perfect.

JANINE: [laughing] I think— So I think Thisbe, uh... I think Thisbe would straight up just walk up and be like,

(as **THISBE**): Have you been to Collier?

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): [laughing] "Have I *been* to Collier?" Yeah, I've been to— [chuckling] think I have.

JANINE: [chuckling] Um, Thisbe doesn't understand why it's funny. [laughing]

ART: Oh, sure. [chuckling] Um, yeah, it's like that look of, like,

(as **SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY, internally**): That was— That was pretty funny, this isn't landing— Oooh, yeah.

ART: Um... [chuckling]

Janine (as THISBE): So yes.

ART: That's internal, that's not out loud.

Janine (as THISBE): That's a yes?

AUSTIN: [chuckling]

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): Yes. Yeah, it's a yes. That's where... That's where it all happened for me. Why?

Janine (as THISBE): I want to know more about it.

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): Um... You know, it's uh, it's kinda out of the way, it was, uh... It was a weird... a weird place for me to be, honestly, but it was a nice... It was a nice place, I mean, I... I went to— I went to *war* there, it's hard to really... give you... give you anything specific. I don't even remember why they brought the Princept there, it must've been some... functionary duty, right? I don't know.

Janine (as THISBE): It's difficult to find anything about it.

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): Yeah, I imagine that's the case. They really don't want people to know about that. I think... I think I remember where it is. Um...

AUSTIN: In fact— Yeah, go ahead.

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): Like, here, let me pull up a...

JANINE: Hang on, wait, do I know where it is? I think I know, right, I got shown.

AUSTIN (overlapping): You *do* know where it is, yeah. Thisbe does.

ART: Oh, all right, so, you can stop me at any time.

JANINE: [laughing] I like the idea of—

ART: He starts pulling up a map...

AUSTIN: [chuckling]

[1 hour 45 minutes]

JANINE: Yeah, I like the idea of Sovereign Immunity trying to flip through a map, and then Thisbe just holding up her hand, like,

(as THISBE): No... this... here.

AUSTIN: [laughing]

Janine (as THISBE): It's this @ symbol [chuckling out of character] on my hand.

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Yeah, on your little MS DOS, like, *Dwarf Fortress* map.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. But I mean—

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): Yeah, that's... that's it.

JANINE: [quietly] It's an @ symbol, right?

AUSTIN (overlapping): Well, and this is the thing that then, in a sense, validates some of the stuff that you've been finding, Art—uh, Sovereign Immunity—in the archives that you've been researching, is... You know, I actually think... One of the things I know you've been researching in the time since what happened at Oxbridge happened, is... just like, information that the Principality has been burying, um... and so let me just give you this thing, which is: That data that Thisbe just showed you lines up with a list of other locations, um, that now you know are planets that are off the grid so to speak—that have been taken off the grid by the Principality as punishment, um... if that makes sense.

ART: Do you mean like... do you mean like, the map would not have a planet there?

AUSTIN: Yes.

ART: Or do you mean that like the— It would just be like, unlabelled.

AUSTIN: It would be— There wouldn't be a planet there. What we've seen is that this one— When we first— When Thisbe first learned about this we called this "Anomaly Theta 27," because it's like a gravity well. Um... But what it means *materially* is like, you know how—and I think we've talked about this, I've used this as an example before—you know how, like, um... there are towns that were kind of big crossroad towns for decades, and then highways were built? And they skipped those towns over.

ART: Yeah, I've seen the movie *Cars*.

AUSTIN: Okay, I haven't, so... sure.

ART: [laughing]

AUSTIN: I bet we've done this *exact* exchange before. Um...

JANINE: Oh, we have.

AUSTIN: Yeah, almost certainly. I— But it's like *that*, right? It's like, the highways don't go there anymore, and so [Art: Yeah.] they've been removed...

JANINE: All the *Flintstones* theme parks die.

AUSTIN: Sure. Yes.

JANINE: All the roadside attractions and, **[Austin: Right. (laughing)]** and weird houses with slanted floors go out of business.

AUSTIN: Right. And the Principality sees this as a great punishment, because you've been removed from the galaxy for all intents and purposes, right? Like, you don't even get the fuel that you need to get off world anymore, so you've been effectively sheared away from—pruned away from—the Principality.

Um, but you've been finding these things and wondering if that's what they are, 'cause if they *are*, those are places, theoretically, where like, you could start building a culture outside of the Principality.

ART: Yeah, absolutely, that's what seemed to be... the best place to start.

AUSTIN: Yeah. There—

ART: Um... These places have literally been like, *unplaced*.

AUSTIN: Right, exactly.

ART (overlapping): If they were gonna start—

AUSTIN (overlapping): And theoretically there are still the Portcullis Gates there, right? It's just that they're shut down. So you could even get there through the traditional system, you just couldn't... *they* just couldn't leave, because of the way it works.

ART: Yeah, so I think that that's like, an important thing to communicate here, right? It's like...

(as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): O...kay, yeah, that means that all of these places... are still out there. You know, Collier, um... Palisade...

[All laughing.]

ART: Thaydac...

AUSTIN: Seabiscuit...

JANINE: Surfaceman... Driller... Miner...

AUSTIN: [amused] Uh-huh.

JANINE: Sour... Sourdough? What? [quietly] What is Sourdough...

AUSTIN: Sourdough.

ART: Everglade...

AUSTIN: [chuckling]

ART: Everglade, um... Big Cypress.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Colonial Williamsburg. [chuckling] *All* of them!

ART: [chuckling along] I'm looking at "*Things To Do In Collier County, Florida*".

AUSTIN: [amused] I see, good.

JANINE: Six Flags...

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Great.

ART: Marco Island, the planet. [chuckling]

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Weird name, but...

ART: Jacob Collier Tiny Desk Concert.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Right.

JANINE: [chuckling] Cold Stone.

AUSTIN (overlapping): [chuckling] They got a Cold Stone in space?!

JANINE (overlapping): I'd rather— [drowned out]

ART (overlapping): County—

AUSTIN: [exhaling] Phoo, I gotta get to— I gotta get to space!

JANINE: They got a lot of cold stones in space, let me tell ya.

AUSTIN: *Damn!*

ART: "It's the coldest stone you've ever seen!"

[Austin and Janine laughing.]

ART: Absolute Zero Stone.

AUSTIN: [laughing]

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): These places are all... are all hotbeds for Millennium Break. For anyone offering another way.

JANINE: I think Thisbe has... has like, uh, one of those just kind of like, slow blinking moments. Um... 'cause I don't fully know that that means much to her.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Uh, like it means *something*, but it– what it means is like, a data point. Um... I think what she replies with is...

(as THISBE): I came from Collier.

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): Oh my good– *When?*

Janine (as THISBE): Some years ago. I was dug out of the ground there, and I worked there, and then I changed hands. And ended up here.

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): [pained] Ohh... I'm s... I'm so sorry.

Janine (as THISBE): I would like to go back.

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): Yeah. Um... I would too. Maybe someday.

Janine (as THISBE): Did you like it there?

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): Yeah, until I didn't.

Janine (as THISBE): [chuckling out of character] That is how it works.

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): [wistfully] Sometimes. [pausing] I hope we both get to go back, sometime.

AUSTIN: Are we ending the scene here? Is this the wrap, or are you gonna pivot to something else, Art?

ART: I don't have anything else.

AUSTIN: All right, then we're good.

JANINE: Yeah, I wonder— I wonder if the thing that actually happens here is like, a fade-out of Thisbe just asking a lot of very, very specific questions about, like,

(as THISBE): Do you remember what kind of trees they had? I think it was this kind, where I was from it was this kind of tree,

JANINE: And then, like, I think— I think she, like, probably focused on plants, too. It's probably a lot of like,

(as THISBE): The part of Collier that I saw had these things. Is that consistent with what you saw?

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Right.

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): I mean, I'm not an arborist, but I think there were maple trees, 'cause in the... in the fall...

JANINE: Thisbe also... Thisbe also does not know—still does not know, I think—I think— So, Thisbe, we've confirmed Thisbe's like, researched Sovereign Immunity's past enough to know that he had some involvement with Collier. I don't think she knows he was at no point a farmer. Like, a real farmer.

AUSTIN: Right, especially 'cause they— **[Art: Sure.]** they call him the Farmer.

ART: The Farmer.

JANINE: Yeah, I think she still thinks like...

AUSTIN (overlapping): "So which crops did you farm?"

Janine (as THISBE, internally): Okay, well he didn't farm here, but he must have farmed somewhere, [chuckling out of character] **[Austin chuckling]** so probably I can talk to him about the plants I saw and he'll get it.

Art (as SOVEREIGN IMMUNITY): Yeah, you know, the— the wheat was— seemed to come in pretty well, it's... **[Austin chuckling]** you know... um... The corn was always up to your eye before it started sprouting—or blossoming, whatever corn does. **[Janine chuckling]** Making corn?

JANINE: Making baby corns, uh-huh.

ART: Making baby corns.

[Short music sting.]

[Interlude #1 — End]

JACK: And now the structure of the game kind of repeats.

AUSTIN: Correct.

JACK: We're building on what we've done, but basically, you've seen—mechanically—the core system in play.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: There are several ways the game can end, including some weird ones that we won't get into, but fundamentally, the game ends after six Pilgrimages, right?

AUSTIN: Correct. Uh, five. Five Pilgrimages, six Relics. You start with a Relic before a Pilgrimage.

JACK: Ooh! Six Relics, five Pilgrimages, yeah.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Six Relics, yup. Yeah.

JACK: That's great.

AUSTIN: That's the plan, anyway. We'll see how it goes.

JACK: [quietly] Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: And some of these Pilgrimages can be really quick. That first one I think we went really in-depth, because it was, you know, important to show off all that stuff, but now that you know all the card mechanics, we'll see how quick these go. All right, so, we should then move to the next Trial— The next Pilgrima— Excuse me, Pilgrimage, not Trial. [breathing in] Um...

JACK: Trials are *in* Pilgrimages.

AUSTIN: Exactly. Pilgrimages are the bigger things. Um, you've drawn back up to five cards, right?

JACK: I have.

AUSTIN: / will now draw a, uh... Actually no, you will now embark. You will now choose a direction to set off in again. I'll bring the map back up for you.

JACK: And I still don't get a lot of...

AUSTIN: No. As of the next, um, journey, you will be able—the next Pilgrimage—you will be able to have a little bit more say in where you go. Just a little bit, though, not much. I'm also gonna draw that thin— actually, I don't have to make it thin, 'cause you've probably sketched over it now, um...

JACK: Mm.

AUSTIN: A th— The thin— Oh, actually, this should be you coming *back*, right? Not going. Uh... on the map [**Jack:** Yes.], here is the journey you took back. Boom, okay. [pausing] So yes, you can— you can pick a direction to go. You could say west, you could— you *could* say “I go to the beach...” Or maybe not the beach, I— I, um... you know, “I walk to the sh...” you know... [searching for words] I think it's close enough that you just saying “I go to the shore, I start at the shore,” is probably fine, but what you couldn't say is like, “I go to a little lighthouse on the beach to the south-west,” you know?

JACK: Right, yes. Um... Why do we do this?

AUSTIN: Why do we do this rule?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, because the Pilgrim begins with very little control over where— over their agency, so to speak.

JACK (overlapping): Where they are being led.

AUSTIN: Where they are being led by the Divine. But by the end of the game, that relationship has switched and the Divine has a little bit more control over what's happening at the Tower, and the Pilgrim has a little bit more control over where they go in the world. That's the kind of switch of authority.

JACK: Uh, I would like to go east.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Taking my little map with me.

AUSTIN: Which you *know* is the direction of the sea, and also the isthmus— the— where the bridge that connects you to the mainland, but also where the, um... the wall is, eventually m— You don't have to— At this point, that's— It's okay for you to say east, *knowing* that that is one of the potential places the journey can take you.

JACK: Oh yeah, I don't have to pretend that I don't know where we're going.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Correct, you don't have to pretend, exactly. And you're taking your map with you, you're wearing the Arms of Vessel's Gold, presumably... also.

JACK: Yes, I am also wearing— I have settled into an outfit now.

AUSTIN: Ooh, okay. Tell me your outfit.

JACK: Um, it is a... uh, a white shirt, [**Austin:** Hmm.] like a work shirt, I suppose, in like, a... faded, heavy white. Um, I wonder if it was like, the top bit of a... of a janitorial [**Austin:** Yeah.] thing that Clementine found. Um, and then, just *black* trousers, slim black trousers, or a black skirt, depending on what Clementine is doing.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Cat catching, drinking: skirt. Adventuring: trousers.

AUSTIN: Love it. So... um, you said you wanted to go east, right?

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Um, to go east, you do still need to go out the main gate. Right?

JACK: That bit's easy, I go under it, I figured that out—

AUSTIN (interrupting): Ah, wait! Can I pause for you— pause for a second? Uh, cause it might be easy, but there's also maybe a little bit more... 'Cause uh, there's a complication, Jack.

JACK: There's more flavor involved with the gate?

AUSTIN: There's a little— [laughing] It'd be very funny if I was like, "The Ten of Diamonds, it's *really locked* now, and now you really have to figure out how to... how to do it." But that's—

JACK: [laughing] "There's a *man* in front with a *riddle!*"

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Well, there is something out front, which is—remember the little pin pad, that I talked about?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, you know, you slip under the gate, the pin pad on the outside of it and the inside of it, um... I guess, let's go with the outside, I think it's a better image if you, in your new outfit, slid out under this gate, and you begin to head out east and then you hear [mimicing the noise

of the pin pad] “Beep-beep-beep-beep-beep. Mmm-beep-beep-beep-beep-beep.” And a panel above the keypad *slides open*. It’s as if the brick isn’t brick at all. It’s metal projecting brick. Or, it’s material projecting brick. And behind it is a screen, and on the screen is Gallica, Elect of Present, and she says,

(as GALLICA): Clementine Kesh.

AUSTIN: Jack, I have just drawn a card. That card is the Joker.

JACK: Shit. Whooa!

AUSTIN: In... *The Tower*, the Joker is *very* special.

JACK: There are *four* of them in the game.

AUSTIN: Two in each deck. And each represents the Adversary—a [chuckling] complicated term, here in this game, because Perennial’s *nom de plume*—or— or I guess *nom de guerre*, depending on perspective—is The Adversary, often.

JACK: Right, forget that.

AUSTIN: Forget that.

JACK: For now.

AUSTIN: For now. For now there is this other thing called the Adversary. The Joker is a face card, in effect—there’s a face on it—and it’s very special. It does something *very, very, very* powerful. Um, it goes to the side of your Tower as a sort of wing onto the side of it, and once per turn—at any point, so long as the Joker is out—you can choose to bypass *all* remaining trials, and recover the Relic instantly. *I*, the Divine, will instantly get four Disappointment points, one theoretically for— not just for each Reli— it doesn’t even actually matter, ‘cause you could do this the final challenge, I would still get— [**Jack:** *Very* disappointed.] I would still get four Disappointment points for this, because—*very* disappointed—because you’re turning to someone who is not me, your Divine. You’re turning, in this case, to the Adversary, who is Gallica, Divine— or Elect of the Divine Present, who came up during the Millennium Break *Kingdom* series, and who is a member—one of the founding members—of the Pact of Necessary Venture, and who speaks to you now. She says,

(as GALLICA): Clementine Kesh. What a surprise to see *you* here.

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): [hesitant] Can you hear me?

Austin (as GALLICA): Of *course* I can hear you, darling. Come closer. You look *very* beat up, have you not been attended to?

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): You can see me?

Austin (as GALLICA): [short sigh] Clementine, the Pact makes it its *premier* purpose to see as much as possible—especially on our territory. I thought you and Millennium Break had rejected our offer. We were ready to *give you* Chorus Island, and you turned us away.

[2 hours]

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): I... I... Well, I stand by that decision. I... I've been in an accident. I've been here for— for, um... I don't know how long I've been here for. There's something here with me. Um, I need... I need to, I need to send for help. I need to get off the island. Can you help me?

Austin (as GALLICA): We can come get you immediately.

AUSTIN: [pausing] And this is real. At any point in the game, the Pilgrim could turn their back on the faith and leave. [pausing] The Adversary would love it if you did, in fact. [reading] “The Pilgrim can choose to walk away from their faith at any time, but they cede some narrative power to the Divine, given the height of the Tower. At under three floors, the Pilgrim gets to narrate their break, and the surrounding areas’ break, from the Divine entirely.” This is the moment for Clementine Kesh. Um...

JACK: Yeah, this is incredible.

AUSTIN (overlapping): So, I should—

JACK (overlapping): This coming this early is great.

AUSTIN: I should sketch this for you a little bit. There is a world here where—and I think we have to sketch it really broadly—um... [pausing] We are at the path diverged in the woods, [clearing throat] and it's not to say that there are— that you can never walk back to this br— this point—the Adversary is in this game four times, after all.

JACK: [chuckling]

AUSTIN: And in fact, even without the Adversary on the table you could turn your back on Perennial and leave.

JACK: Yeah, you can leave at any point.

AUSTIN: Um, which— Again, after this Pilgrimage, it will start to get a little muddier, because the Divine will have a little bit more say in what turning your back on the world—or on the— on your

faith—looks like, and how the world does or does not still reflect Perennial's image, but in this moment... Jack, I think you could turn over Clementine Kesh to me. The Pact sees value in Clementine Kesh. And... she could turn her back on Perennial, she could do what Gur Sevraq said back during one of the many confrontations there, uh, you know... was the kind of most craven version of Clem, the most selfish version, uh... but even more—th— what the craven and *successful* version of Clem looks like; deeply selfish, self-centered, only seeing a vision of the world that is below her. You know, living up to the worst elements—and also, would be choosing to be— to join the force that is opposed to her mother, uh, the kind of rival group to the Curtain. Um, I think that's a very interesting direction we could go in. Um...

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Present... Present— The ability of Present is to go anywhere in the Divine Principality, anywhere in the galaxy, in basically an instant—much, much, much faster than anything else can move in the entire galaxy.

JACK: Have we seen her do it? Or...

AUSTIN (overlapping): We've seen her arr— We saw her arrive— We've seen her do it—

JACK (overlapping): Did she arrive under, like, a normal way? I'm trying to remember if...

AUSTIN (overlapping): She arrived in— She arrived as if from *nowhere*, and froze the sea, and kneeled on it—or, she being Gallica, Present being the Divine—just did that. But we didn't see where she was before that happened. So, I mean, you know, that is the type of ally that she would be for you. That is the type of Adversary she could be, you know, to Perennial. It's a big question. Um... but I think that's an interesting possibility. I think we've opened the door here. Um, and we can— we can, you know, spice it up a little bit in the sense that in the distance, you see the path you were walking is... is, um... on both sides, lined with Russian sage. Perennial beckons. And, it does not mean getting rid of the Joker in this moment. You don't have to close the door on it, necessarily, but, again, as the game continues... Yeah.

JACK (overlapping): No. I'm just trying to fi— Yeah.

AUSTIN: And we can sleep on it, if you need.

JACK: No, I think— I think I know what to do. I think it's a case of, like— I think Gallica, on the screen that she's looking at it on, sees Clementine close her eyes... and... I think she hears Clementine say, aloud,

(as CLEMENTINE): Are you there?

JACK: ...and then open her eyes again.

AUSTIN: The, um... You're— *You* see something that—presumably, if where Gallica's looking is your face—Gallica cannot see, which is: Over the wall, back inside the Community, there is now another floor on top of the Tower, on top of your house of Russian sage. The sage has grown another floor. If ever there was a clearer symbol of who you were dealing with and whether her presence is felt, here it is. It's— And it's so striking, because it means it's the tallest building in the Community.

JACK: Oh yeah, all these identical buildings. 'Cause—

AUSTIN (overlapping): *Identical* buildings. And here is one made of Russian sage. And maybe it's even grown out. It's like, it's grown out as if the pillar has widened, so it's *distinct*, you know? Um, it's almost like a pillar going up to a tabletop, that's a little wider than everything else—almost like the base of a tower now.

JACK: I think Clementine looks at Gallica, and kind of, like, nods very politely, and kind of unsurely, um, and says,

(as **CLEMENTINE**): Thank you. I'll keep your offer in mind. Um... I assume I know where to reach you. Can you do something about the dogs?

Austin (as GALLICA): Ah, you *haven't* seen... [short sigh] Of course, listen. Let me give you... Let me give you a phrase, to hold tight to your chest—and anytime you need anything, you simply say it aloud. Does that sound good?

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): Yes, yes, thank you. That sounds... That sounds very good.

Austin (as GALLICA): Then let's get that phrase for you. That phrase is: "Provincial. Jump. Academy. Executrix."

AUSTIN: This is a code phrase, of some sort.

JACK: Like, a curt nod.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: Um... Like, a— Like, a wince. And then, you know, from Gallica's screen again, like, framed down the path of red sage, like, the... the back of Clementine walking away down... down the path of Russian sage. I have a get-out-of-jail-free card.

AUSTIN: Which will mean, this is what you'll use if you want to call on the Joker. Um, there is— There is— The way this works now, just for rules clarity, the Joker will stand beside your Tower for as long as you want. You can get rid of the Joker by spending it actively—you can say "I'm gonna spend this card," and I'll flip it over, and you will gain, in that moment, one Dogma point. It's as if it's no benefit— I mean, that's not nothing, it's not *nothing*, right?

JACK: It's not a big number, though.

AUSTIN (overlapping): It's *not* a— It's not gonna— I mean, maybe it will give you—

JACK (overlapping): It's not four Disappointment.

AUSTIN: Yeah, but you've also got three Dogma, so if you got one more Dogma, it would be what would push you up to... to, uh— Actually, I'm wrong, that's not what it does at all. It removes one Disappointment from the Divine's pile, it does not give you a Dogma. It *removes* a Disappointment, but you only have one Disappointment, like... one now, [**Jack** laughing] so it's not a huge change.

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: Um, and I'll note, those special cards— those special points, um, kind of do good things, do *big* things at 5 and for Dog— or, for Disappointment, at 10. So we're pretty far away from any big point expenditures happening at this point. Um... the other thing to note about the Adversary is—and the Joker—if a second one plays, or shows up, while the first one is still in play, still face up, then that ability, or uh— something special happens, which is you get a Relic, as if the Joker's ability had been used. Um, you take— I take those four Disappointment points, uh, you get a free Relic. Um, this could happen theoretically, based on... based on this *exact* scenario [breaking into laughter]. This is in fact the only scenario in which it's possible.

JACK: [chuckling]

AUSTIN: Let's say Jack used the Queen's power. A Joker could show up as I replace one card—one Trial card—with a new one, and that would trigger the Joker's ability, basically, you would get a Relic instantly. I would gain four Disappointment points on you, and that disappointment would be reflecting the fact that you had not *shunned* the Adversary, um, actively. You'd kept the Adversary in your life, you kept your heart open to the possibility that one day you might need the Pact of Necessary Venture. Um, uh, and so, that is the current situation. Also, you could theoretically have a Joker in your hand right now, hiding it from me. That's p— That's a possibility. It's up to the Pilgrim to disclose that, and be honest with their Divine. So, um... so we'll see. We'll see how this goes.

In any case, um... you walk away at that point. Gallica wishes you well, and you continue on your journey, which— which, I now have to deal myself a fourth card because I have to replace the one that was in my hand, that *was* the Joker, um, I now have it. You were going east, right?

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Um... This is the Pilgrimage of... um... This is the Pilgrimage of Contentment. [pausing] As you head east, with the light of a new day in front of you, and with the voice of Gallica in your head—contested only by your own voice and your growing faith in Perennial—I *assume* your growing faith in Perennial—you again take what seems to be a long walk down a highway. And, this is a highway that—on the sides of the highway are these vehicles. They're sort of like, uh, like... um, tricycle cars? They're automated vehicles that have been parked, it seems, next to charging stations. None of them are active, and it doesn't *seem* like this first one is necessarily—Actually, what I'll say is, there's a charging station, and many of the cars seem to be dilapidated to the point that they can't be used, but this one—there's one that's in good condition, but it's a little far away from one of these charging stations. And so your first Trial here is a Five of Effort. Uh... oop, I took my card back instead of flipping it, my bad.

JACK: [chuckling]

AUSTIN: As... Flip card... As this car needs—this kind of tricycle car—needs to be pushed towards a place where it could be recharged. Five of Effort.

JACK: I am going to play... a Five of Diamonds.

AUSTIN: Ooh!

JACK: Oh, I just drew a line! [chuckling]

AUSTIN: I got it, don't worry. I'll fix. Boom. Make sure you're on like, the arrow...

JACK (overlapping): Make sure I'm on the right thing.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

JACK: Yeah. Um... [pausing] Down in the weeds by the side of the road is a fallen, uh... charging... point. Charging station. And Clementine optimistically pushes it upright, th... there is something so bizarre about what they are doing given their conversation with Gallica. Um... for the briefest of moments, they were able to see into a room that was well furnished, with someone who, you know, [chuckling] had good hair and makeup, who was sitting comfortably in a chair [**Austin:** Mm-hm.], um... and I think that it has destabilized Clementine, who is now standing in a ditch trying to lift a charging station upright.

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Uh-huh.

JACK: Um... to the point where, like, she... she took a real leap of faith to explicitly ask whether or not this th— You know, it could've just been... Partizan is weird, the Sage House could just be a sage house, stranger things have happened, um... It could've been a complete freak accident that meant that she survived the fall and the attack, um... the map could just be her eyes playing tricks on her, she could've just been very lucky finding the thing. But in the moment that

she called out to see if... if something was there—if Perennial was there—the house grew. Uh, and that was very unsettling. Um... but not necessarily in an unpleasant way.

And so I think it is with some confidence that Clementine goes, “well, I’ve got the charging station upright, so it will work now,” and it *absolutely* doesn’t, [**Austin:** Yeah.] so she has to open the back of the charging station and like, pull out weeds from the inside, and loop it around something else, and drag it back—and none of it is complicated engineering, which Clem doesn’t know how to do, but it *is* all just the, like— the fiddly thinking of like, [**Austin:** Yeah.] “Oh, how is point A connected to point B.” Um... and rather than dragging a car to the charging station, ends up dragging a cable to the car.

AUSTIN: So—it charges, and you’re able to get in it, and go on your way. Does Clementine know how to drive?

JACK: [declining] Mm-mm.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Sorry, I was taking a sip.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK (overlapping): No.

AUSTIN (overlapping): No.

JACK: Absolutely not. Has been driven all her life.

AUSTIN: [in a mocking, complaining tone] Ugh, her arms get tired, she gets like— [resuming regular tone] There’s some— She is kind of getting lost, even though there’s only limited highway stuff here, where she’s turning off to go off of little side roads and explore the areas there. She isn’t quite sure where she’s going. And then she hits a point where it’s like, the road starts to give away, and it’s just difficult to— It becomes one of those things of like, needing to go off the road to continue on your journey, and this is actually a lot of work. Um, you know, one of those— It’s like *Mudtires*, or *Spintires*, or whatever the other game name is that’s similar to that. You know?

JACK: [dramatically] *SnowRunners*.

AUSTIN: *SnowRunner*, *MudRunner*, all those things. This is the Eight of Spades, as you continue to have kind of some difficulty in managing to, uh... to just traverse, even with this vehicle. This vehicle is meant for *this highway*, and you need to do stuff on it that is not. I realize now I’ve created *Death Stranding* [laughing], unintentionally.

JACK: [laughing] It's— Yeah, we're in... we're in...

AUSTIN (overlapping): We're *infected* with Kojima brain, it's *unbelievable*. I haven't even started playing it again yet, it's out of PC as of, like, today.

JACK: This my favorite version of *Death Stranding*, which is, um... uh, neo-paganist sci-fi *Death Stranding*.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Yes.

JACK: Um... I do suppose they eat those cool grub things, which is kind of...

[2:15:00]

AUSTIN (overlapping): They do. They do.

JACK: Um, hmm... [long pause] Ugh... It's t— [chuckling] It's tough. [pausing] Because, you know, to— For the listener, there is a degree of tactical play that I am thinking here, so for example, I have...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yes. You have cards in your hand that I don't know about.

JACK: Uh— I think I *can* say what they are, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: It won't change how you—

AUSTIN: In fact, in doing that, there's a degree to— I mean, it could change what I do, certainly. If I'd known— Think about that last one, [Jack: Oh yeah, you could—] where I was sitting on the King of Hearts, so when you played the King of Hearts I went "heh heh heh heh heh," 'cause I have a King of Hearts in my hand.

JACK: "Haha, I'm gonna get 'em."

AUSTIN: So there's a degree to— There is something there, right? Um, but *you're* within your rights to play open handed. A hundred percent.

JACK: I think we've played the game open handed when we were playtesting it and stuff.

AUSTIN (overlapping): When we were testing it, for sure, and I think there's a degree to which... [Jack: Yeah.] I think playing open handed is an act of play—or is an in-character thing [Jack: Oh, *absolutely*.] to some degree in which you're showing your hand to the Divine, you know?

JACK: Yeah. Um... For example: I have a Queen of Diamonds in my hand, [**Austin:** Mmm.] which I could handily use to beat this challenge.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: And could probably narrativize that fairly easily.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: But I'd be using a Queen to beat an Eight.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: I *do* have a Ten of Clubs.

AUSTIN: You do.

JACK: Which is a *combat* challenge.

AUSTIN: That's true.

JACK: Or a combat solution. Which is much... is tactically much more, um... pleasant—it makes much more sense to play a Ten on an Eight—but is narratively [chuckling] much more difficult.

AUSTIN: It is. You *do* also have your two Relics. You have the Seven of Spades, which is an Efforts card, and the Queen of Spades, and together they give you a +2 on Spades challenges—on Effort challenges—which means that Seven is really a Nine.

JACK: Yes.

AUSTIN: If you wanted to *use* the map—if you wanted to *spend* the map, which means you would lose it—something would happen— You'd have to narrativize how it loses that ability it had, or something, um, but... or you lose it or something, you've spent it that way. But, uh, you could do that, that's on the table. And also it means that if you happen to have a Seven of Spades of your own in your hand, it would be a Nine of Spades—or a Six of Spades in your hand, it would actually be an Eight, which would equal it.

JACK: Yeah. I could of course also spend the Queen [**Austin:** Yes.] on this Pilgrimage, and... and trash the Trial, but, um... I think I am, I think I'm going to expend the... Relic.

AUSTIN (simultaneously): The Relic.

JACK: I'm going to expend the Seven, which is gonna become a Nine. You get the passive bonus on the Relic as you spend it, [Austin: Correct.] so at that point, it is flipped over [Austin: Mm-hm.], um, and... it is *used* to pass the trial.

AUSTIN: What's that look like?

JACK: Um... I think it's pathfinding. I think it's a case of— I think it's, um... It's aggressive pathfinding, that— that comes unstuck. Ultimately is successful, I think that it is, you know... "Okay, let's brute force that path." [Austin: Hmm.] It's very *SnowRunners* or *Spintires* [Austin: Okay.] in that way, right, where it's like, "I'm gonna try that path. That doesn't work. I'm gonna try this path. That doesn't work. I'm gonna try this path. That doesn't work. I've made ten feet here," and the map is becoming— [Austin: Ohh, I love it.] or, this area of the map is becoming an increasingly implausible scrawl of... of, um, of Russian sage. And then— and then it *flowers*, the knot of sage in the middle of the map becomes so tightly, you know, wound [Austin: Mm-hm.] that, um, Clementine just looks down at her map and the center of the map is blossoming. Uh... and, is just *furious*, [Austin: Uh-huh.] you know, um... crumples the map up, screams at the map, throws it away, looks up to find that she's on the path that she can, you know, use to get herself back onto the— [Austin: Mm-hm] back onto the road, so—I've expended the sage map.

AUSTIN: And you get a point of Dogma for that. I realize now, Jack, you could've also played... used your Interpretation ability here, which we did not mention because you got your fifth point of Interpretation in the first Trial, and I should have raised that to you.

JACK (overlapping): Mm. Oh, I got my fifth point!

AUSTIN: I love what you just did, so I don't necessarily want you to undo it, [Jack: No.] but you can spend five Interpretation points to play any one already discarded card on the current challenge.

JACK (overlapping): Just hunt through my discard pile...

AUSTIN: You have to describe some past experience, uh, or knowledge to the card played, and then that card is removed from the game. [reading] "Fictionally, this represents your history and understanding of the world and yourself—independent of your relationship with the Divine—however, which card played is still judged according to the above rules. Some Pilgrims may be able to draw on their past to impress their Divine, while others may disappoint or surprise."

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: So, you could've done that if you wanted to, but you've chosen not to.

JACK (overlapping): No, I think of it the same way that we talked about...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Even though... we could retcon it, but...

JACK: No, the way we talked about playing open handed [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] as being a style of narrative play—I think Clementine, like, bull-headedly attempting to drive a car badly [**Austin:** Yeah. Yeah.] to the point that her map flowers and she destroys it in anger... [**Austin:** Yeah.] is consistent...

AUSTIN: Um... So—you manage to make your way to the end of the highway. You come to the wall that separates you from the outside world. Um, the wall is *massive* in front of you, it is— it is like a *dam*, almost, like a— That’s how big it is. And what it’s holding back is the River of Freedom on its other end. And you look up at it, and you see—and sometimes you’ll find a building like this in the real world—*just hard concrete*, right?

JACK: Mm.

AUSTIN: And then, a window.

JACK: Hm!

AUSTIN: *One* window, off-center, eight floors up, and there’s a light on inside. And you rush to the nearest door—there are a number of them down here—and you go inside, and Jack...

JACK: Oh, it’s open!

AUSTIN: It’s open. But it is... a *labyrinth*.

JACK: [laughing quietly]

AUSTIN: There are no s— There’s no signage, there’s no explanation of how to get anywhere. It’s a mess. This is the King of Diamonds.

JACK: [pausing] This is the *Silent Hill* Historical Society [**Austin:** Yeah.] where you’re just like, [**Austin:** “Go down?”] “I don’t even know that this is... does this make sense?!”

AUSTIN: Yeah, a hundred percent that. [**Jack:** Um—] And inside, it is— This is— It looks like you’re inside of an engine room, right, there’s pipes everywhere, there’s valves that you can turn, but there are also side rooms that are like, here’s a conference room. Here is a room with a bunch of— Uh, here is a locked door, here is a room with a bunch of maps of the area up on the walls, here’s a *classroom*—it’s *nonsense*, it is, like, it’s a *hundred percent Silent Hill nonsense zone*.

JACK: “Silent Hill Nonsense Zone” was the name of the Unity scene for the level as they built it.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yes, you should’ve seen it in graybox.

JACK: Yeah. [laughing] Can we go over turning to the Divine real quick?

AUSTIN: Yes, we absolutely can.

JACK (overlapping): So, turning to the Divine is what we—

AUSTIN (overlapping): So, all of the other options that we talked about— Go ahead.

JACK: Oh, I was gonna say, that's failing, and then I [chuckling] was gonna let you— Like, it's what you do when you can't go, [**Austin:** Yes.] or if you choose not to.

AUSTIN: If you choose not to. [reading] "If the Pilgrim cannot do *any* of these things, they have to turn to the Divine. Narrate how you turn to the Divine to request aid. The Divine narrates how they provide a solution for the Trial for the Pilgrim, but draws one random card from the Pilgrim's hand. The Divine sets this card aside, and may re-introduce it as an additional Trial to this Pilgrimage or any other in the future." Then, I take one Disappointment. So I could say, "Hey, hold out your hand," and then I would steal a card from your hand, basically, and it would go into *my* hand, and then I could play it as a Trial *against* you in this Trial or a future Trial.

JACK: As a bonus Trial.

AUSTIN (overlapping): As a bonus Trial, yeah. Which is difficult, because as it is, you only ever draw five cards, which means you only ever have a hand of five plus whatever Relics you have to solve the Trial. By adding a fifth— [chuckling] a fifth Trial, to a... Pilgrimage, that means you really gotta... you really gotta dig deep here. Speaking of digging deep, again, you do have Exegesis, or Foresight, or whatever we're calling this... this Interpret— five— spend five Interpretation points [**Jack:** Ohh. Yeah.] to look through your discarded... uh... any discarded card, um, to see if you could beat this. [pausing] Which is a pain, because of [amused] how these cards are.

JACK: [chuckling]

AUSTIN: Also, I've turned this card by mistake, which is not fun...

JACK: Yeah, that one's just... just... diagonal...

AUSTIN (overlapping): [quietly] There we go, I fixed it.

JACK: Yeah, I'm gonna expend, and we're gonna have a brief little hell experience.

AUSTIN (overlapping): We're gonna dig?

JACK (overlapping): Yeah, we're gonna dig.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Just slide ‘em down, I think it’s fine, just—boom, boom. Eh?

JACK: Aah! Interesting. Let’s—

AUSTIN (overlapping): That one’s there— Slide that one over to the side, maybe.

JACK (overlapping): Yeah. We just found an Ace of Diamonds.

AUSTIN (overlapping): And a King of Hearts.

JACK (overlapping): Found a King of Hearts.

AUSTIN: Uh, and I think that’s probably... Oh! An Ace of Hearts, also on the table. Okay, there you go. Those are— That’s what’s on the table, those are the ones that are higher— Oh! I guess we should look at Spades, right, because theoretically a Jack of Spades— No, it would have to be a Queen of Spades, right, to tie, now...

JACK: Yes. Because of the buff that the... that the Relic gives me.

AUSTIN (overlapping): ‘Cause you’ve spent... Right, and you already spent the, uh... the other one. The Seven, so... Okay. Yeah, you could retrieve the Ace of Hearts, the King of Hearts, or the Ace of Diamonds... from your discard.

JACK: I’m gonna retrieve the Ace of Hearts.

AUSTIN: Interesting. Choosing to go with the highest card, but off... off suit.

JACK: Yes. I want a big swing, I want a big— I’m gonna make a big ask of Perennial.

AUSTIN: Okay. What are you doing? Tell me what this looks like.

JACK: But— But I’m gonna do it without turning to you.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: I’m gonna do this on Clementine’s terms, right, rather than...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Uh-huh. This is interesting.

JACK: Actually, this is really interesting.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: This is a moment of... of... hmm... I think Clementine finds her way back to the entrance again, [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] by accident—like when you're in a maze and then you're suddenly like [**Austin** laughing] "Fuck, it's the *beginning* of the maze again." Um... and she turns, and puts her hand on the wall, like you do when you're in a maze, [**Austin:** Yeah.] and closes her eyes.

(**as CLEMENTINE**): It's Clementine.

JACK: Which is just an absurd opening. [chuckling]

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yeah, but "It's Clementine, period" means something.

JACK: Mm-hm.

(**as CLEMENTINE**): It's Clementine. [pausing] I know you're there. [slowly] I need you to show me what you want.

JACK: And then she just starts walking—with her eyes closed and her right hand on the wall.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um... So th— Two things happen. One is: behind your fingers, as you touch the wall, the kind of line—the sage line that was on the map—appears along the wall. That doesn't guide you, though. What guides you is the fog that settles in. The Perennial Wave has arrived, and it is like walking through *Silent Hill*—we're already here, let's keep going down this Konami road.

JACK: [laughing]

AUSTIN: Uh, the... the fo— But it's *finding the gap in the fog*, which— which hall— Actually, let's go the opposite way. It's, which hallway, as you get to a, you know, a T-junction, which one has *more* of Perennial's wave inside of it? It's like... dense, you're *breathing* it in, you can feel these, like, micro— nanomachines moving through your body. It's like, confusing, but it's guiding you closer and closer to something. You hear a, like, a buzzing. You hear the— Like, the energy is on, you know what I mean? You can tell that electricity is pumping. And eventually you see, cutting through the fog, light. And the light is pushing through not only the fog, you see, but rubble. There is... the ceiling has collapsed here. You're... Not just the ceiling above you, but the ceiling above that, the ceiling above that, the ceiling above *that*. The hallway you're in is filled with rubble, going up to—*out of* the top of this wall. It's as if something fell through here, or something, and cut a hole down through multiple floors of the structure of this huge, like, dam-like wall. And you can hear something on the other side of it. I think you hear someone say, through the muffled of— of the, uh... the rubble,

(**as an unknown voice, muffled**): Someone... is someone there? Is someone there? Help me! Help me! [growing more desperate] Help dig me... help me! Is someone there? Is someone there?

AUSTIN: This—

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): Hello?

AUSTIN: This is the Nine of Spades. [chuckling quietly] Wow, quick to play.

JACK: This is the Queen of Diamonds.

AUSTIN: You were one away from the King, huh.

JACK (overlapping): You said— [laughing] I know, I was so nearly there.

AUSTIN (overlapping): It's great, I love it. Good game, good game.

JACK: This is a useless card. Uh, or it would've been a Disappointment.

AUSTIN: Right, right.

JACK: Um... It would've been functional, but a Disappointment. Um... You know, you said that there are classrooms in here, [**Austin:** Yeah.] there are— there are janitorial closets [**Austin:** Yep.], there is, um... there's—

AUSTIN: Imagine a room, it's in here somehow.

JACK: Yeah-yeah-yeah. There's, um... like, a gymnasium.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: There's, um... uh... And I think, um... You know, uh... Buoyed by the sound of a voice nearby—and heartened by the fact that Perennial brought her here—um, Clementine digs around rooms and puts together some kind of, um... like, a lever that lets her lift a really heavy piece of rubble or something, [**Austin:** Yeah.] made out of something from a rowing machine and something from a, like, a badminton net, or...

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Right, you've— you've—

JACK: Just like the *worst* jury-rigged...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Listen, the Queen of Diamonds is nothing to play with, you know, that means you managed to build some really... some really functional things.

JACK: Yeah. Effective, if not elaborate.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And you get through the rubble. I'm going to now flip the Relic. It is the Seven of Hearts. A mid-level Courage card. Um, and... I think that's about right. Beyond the rubble is a small office. Literally, it had been caved in at some point. The door couldn't open because of all the... the, you know, wreckage in front of it all, the debris. And I think your eyes scan from left to right as you open the door, you push the door open, and there is— You know, on the left hand side, there is a little desk [chuckling] with what looks like an old computer terminal—even old by Partizan standards—there, that is like— has a blinking, uh... you know, monochrome screen on it. Um, there is a little, you know, bookcase. You're looking at almost like, a... like, a cell. Like a, like a... like a dorm room ce— you know, like a dorm room, you know?

[2 hours 30 minutes]

JACK: Hm.

AUSTIN: It's like, oh, there's a little bookshelf. Oh, there's like, a little chair. Just enough for a person to live in. And the window, looking out—this is the window looking out to where your car was before.

JACK: Huh.

AUSTIN: And on the right side, there's a little bed, almost like a cot. And, with about seven Courage in their heart, looking back at you, is Gur Sevraq—and Gur Sevraq cannot lose color in his face, because of his face being robotic, [chuckling] but...

JACK: Metal. Or ceramic.

AUSTIN: Or ceramic, or whatever, yeah. Um, but... it's as if the room loses color, maybe. There's enough a Wave here.

JACK: I think Clementine *definitely* loses color.

Austin (as GUR SEVRAQ): [strained laughter] She thinks she is very funny, doesn't she?

AUSTIN: And they look up into the sky, at the *joke* Perennial is playing on them.

(as GUR): [restrained laughter]

AUSTIN: And, you know, covers his face.

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): Are you hurt?

Austin (as GUR): [breathing] Are you?

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): Uh, I— I... I broke my arm, somehow. I got attacked by some kind of demon dog.

Austin (as GUR): Those dogs are *a menace*.

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): I— I found it on my map.

JACK: And Clementine just goes to pull her map out, and is like,

(as CLEMENTINE): It grew into a flower and I threw it into a ditch.

Austin (as GUR): The dogs are out this way as well, and... Where are you staying?

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): A found a... There's a city... There's a... Are you *real*? Are you... is this...

JACK: And like, talking to Perennial,

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): Is this *you*?

Austin (as GUR): I shouldn't have done what I did, Clem. I was very angry. But if Perennial has deigned to... [sighing]

Jack (as CLEMENTINE): Can you walk?

Austin (as GUR): [curtly] Yes.

AUSTIN: Um...

JACK: Is this a Simon Stålenhag monologue? Is it— It's Clementine and L— and—

AUSTIN (overlapping): [amused] You said Leap. That's all right.

JACK: For some reason I said Leap. It's Clementine and Gur at the bottom of the wall, and then, you know, in the back of the car. Gur's shape is bizarre, in the c—

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Is Gur— Gur doesn't have his robe anymore, presumably?

AUSTIN: N— I bet it's— No, I bet it's just completely gone, so you just the whole of...

JACK: Just a... a spider robot...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Like, the spider robot body, the humanoid spider robot body, yeah.

JACK: Um, and then just like, rain—like, *soft* rain, and Clementine sitting in the car while Gur Sevraq stands beside the charging pole [**Austin:** (chuckling) Yes.] that Clementine pulled out of the ditch [**Austin:** (laughing) Yeah.], and is just standing by the charging pole, and Clementine is like, looking around, looking around her. And when Gur Sevraq gets back in the car, I think Clementine says,

(**as CLEMENTINE**): I found something, in the city, and... I don't know what you're gonna think of it. I don't know what you're gonna say. I don't— Frankly I don't care what... you're going to say. But I just thought that I should prepare you in some... I don't know what I'm saying. Perennial is in the city.

Austin (as GUR): Perennial is everywhere. But... I'm eager to see what you mean.

JACK: Okay, let's take this Relic and add it to the Tower.

AUSTIN: Yes! Let's do that! This Relic, Gur Sevraq.

JACK (overlapping): Is this the first... Relic...

AUSTIN: Who's been an ally, or a person? Yeah.

JACK: Yeah, I don't think we've ever had a Relic as a person before.

AUSTIN: Certainly blessed by the Divine Perennial.

JACK: Uh-huh...! That is a relationship... [searching for words]

AUSTIN: And at risk still, you know? [chuckling]

JACK: Well, I was gonna say that Clementine's relationship with Perennial is baby steps compared to Gur's relationship with Perennial, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Gur went through this already once, as far as we know. Not this particular thing, but...

JACK: Was tried by Perennial.

AUSTIN: Yeah, and was sent on a mission by Perennial, in a real way. So, now you have your Relic. Um... this is interesting, because, uh... you now, one: this is your first Courage one, so you get a +1 on all Hearts stuff. You could spend it as normal—it being them, Gur Sevraq—which, we'll see what the fuck that means. Um... The second part of this is, now you have to interpret this, and add a law to your faith. Around this.

JACK: [pausing] Oh, you fucker! This is a really sneaky trick you've played here, Austin!

AUSTIN: [mocking a villainous laugh] [pausing] Actually, I guess first is— First is, you add it to the Tower...

JACK (overlapping): Yeah, I'd forgotten I had to write a...

AUSTIN: So we should talk about that, and *then* the law, probably, right?

JACK: Mm. Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: 'Cause that'll maybe give you a little bit more to work with. Uh... I also, because this is the third floor of the Tower—still the third floor even though you deactivated the map—I get to say— I get to add a little bit. I get to add a sentence after you describe how you've incorporated the Relic into your Tower, and how it affects the world.

JACK: I think it's three shots. I think it's three... single image shots. The first one is a screaming match, possibly a... possibly like, a fistfight.

AUSTIN: Hmm.

JACK: Uh... the second is Gur Sevraq and Clementine sitting on the balcony, overlooking the cat trap, [**Austin** chuckling] uh, drinking. And the third is the two of them standing in the ground floor of the Sage House, just like, looking at the walls of the Sage House.

AUSTIN: Mmm. Does he move in to the... to the Sage House? Or take up residence elsewhere?

JACK: I think he moves in, I don't think he lives in the basement, with Clementine. I think Clementine does not... *will* not allow that.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Um... [**Austin:** Um...] But I think supported by a sage floor, Gur Sevraq is upstairs somewhere.

AUSTIN: I, um, get to add a sentence now, to this, because of the Tower being at three floors. Um... and that sentence is: Russian sage begins growing down the internal, uh... pathways, the h— the internal roads on this neighborhood— in this neighborhood, headed towards the forest, the kind of coastal forest where you first washed up.

JACK: Hmm. Okay.

AUSTIN: [relieved] Whoof. A good one. Now, you get to write a law.

JACK: I think I'm going to look dead in your eyes of specificity here, Austin.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: After you gave me a person [**Austin:** Uh-huh.] as a Relic. Law three: [pausing] [slowly, while typing] "I am bound to Gur Sevraq" [**Austin** laughing] "with Russian sage."

AUSTIN: Oh, I love it. Okay. [long pause] Now it's time for me to judge you. Take two Dogma and two Interpretation. Which raises you to Dogma 6, Interpretation 4. Disappointment 1.

JACK: Yeah, uh, Clementine is very lucky in that her goddess is capricious, [**Austin:** Yes.] which fits well with Clementine not knowing what's happening, [**Austin:** Yeah.] and reacting violently to many things.

AUSTIN: Yeah, to pull back the curtain a *bit*—and maybe this is part of Clem's growing understanding of Perennial, especially now that she can talk with Gur Sevraq about—about her—um... Perennial is arbitrary, and... bored. She's everywhere at once—or can be, it seems—and so, what entertains her? Also, if, you know, the... the Cult of Perennial, the Metronomica, is correct, Perennial sees the world, or *sets* the world, or the world already is—the universe already is—on a cycle, which is to say things repeat—there is a sort of eternal recurrence at work—and so how might *anything* be exciting to a perspective that sees the cycle? You know. And maybe the answer is, it's exciting when the wheel spins in a big way. You know? When a millennium is broken, or when adversaries come into the same house together [chuckling]. Um...

JACK: Two people fall from the top of a... [**Austing:** Crash!] building... [**Austin:** Building.]

AUSTIN: A-ha! A little bit of a— A little spike of energy—um, maybe, *maybe*—who knows, right? Again, like you said, capricious. Like I said, arbitrary. What entertains her today might not tomorrow. It's hard to know. Especially this double bind of the necessity of change, the necessity of getting— becoming different, with also the fact that—if the eternal recurrence thing is correct—the impossibility of breaking from the cycle.

JACK (overlapping): Yes.

AUSTIN: Do we carry our own gravity with us? Is there a way to break the cycle of imperialism, of violence, of conquest—or is there only a way of... of changing it for a little while before it wraps back around? You know, this is— all of this is caught up in what the Metronomica, you know, worships and believes and, and... et cetera. It's all complicated, but all of those ideas should be in the air. [pausing] I've judged you.

JACK: Did she ever... Did she ever interact with Crystal Palace on screen?

AUSTIN: [thoughtfully] Not on screen.

JACK: I feel like...

AUSTIN: Yes. There is [**Jack:** There is—] absolutely thematic... [chuckling] The two of them should have a conversation.

JACK: I feel like Crystal Palace would fucking hate her.

AUSTIN: It's complicated... I'd say.

JACK: Yeah. Well, what a shame. What a shame about that plummet into the desert.

AUSTIN: Listen, Past lives—just not in one piece right now.

JACK: Mhm.

AUSTIN: Uh, you know.

JACK: That's tr— [chuckling] Yeah, that is very true.

AUSTIN: Past—the Divine Past—was a key mem— was a founding member of... the Pact of Necessary Venture.

JACK (overlapping): The fucking Pact.

AUSTIN: Yeah. So...

JACK: Uh-huh. You love to see it.

AUSTIN: You wonder why Crysanth wanted to get the pieces of Past so badly.

[Short music sting.]

[Interlude #2 — Start]

AUSTIN: It has been two months since the red light fell on Oxbridge. Broun, what have you been doing in this month?

ALI: Um, I think that I've been pretty busy. I think that right now, I have a meeting with, uh, Leap. [quietly] Keep up, Austin.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um... Where— Why are you meeting Leap, and where are you meeting... meeting him?

ALI: Oh, yeah, I mean, I guess I don't know where Leap hangs out. I assume that this is either Leap's, like, hangout spot, or some sort of Millennium Break... base.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Bar. Base. Bar base.

ALI (overlapping): Yeah. That— [drowned out]

KEITH (overlapping): I'm gonna say Leap has been having fun do— pretending to be a different kind of pirate than the actual kind of pirate that he already is.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

ALI: [quietly] Sure.

KEITH: And so, I'm either sailing the seas, or I have some sort of cave base.

AUSTIN: I love a cave base. Let's say it's a small island—one of the many small islands around the Isles of Logos that has been like, scrubbed from the maps—that you've taken over as a cave base. And, arriving there is Kal'mera Broun, and, um... Jesset City, looking for you for... some reason. Broun, how do you kick this off? Or what do you do when you find Leap's— Leap at his, uh... cave base.

ALI: [laughing] Well, I think I was requested to be here. I think that I brought Jesset City with me, um... And, yeah, I think it was initially like... [chuckling] maybe an e-mail being like,

(as **KAL'MERA BROUN, by email**): Hey, I kinda need you for something, do you have a free minute? I'll come through.

AUSTIN: Well, you're through now, so I'm handing you the scene.

ALI: Uh-huh, sure— [laughing] Um... Yeah, okay. Yeah, uh...

Keith (as EXETER LEAP): Every minute is a free minute at the cave base.

ALI: [chuckling]

(as **BROUN**): I love free things. How are you doing, Leap?

Keith (as LEAP): I'm good, you know, um... Just doin'... Do you remember when I took all those boats? I'm still doin' that.

Ali (as BROUN): Yeah, that was hilarious. Great. They're all still working?

Keith (as LEAP): Yeah, they're all still working. It's going great, taking...

Ali (as BROUN): No repairs needed? No nothing?

Keith (as LEAP): No. Are you offering to repair my boats?

Ali (as BROUN, overlapping): I am, yeah.

Keith (as LEAP): Um... I guess I have some minor repairs that you could do, if you were looking to do some minor repairs on my boats.

Ali (as BROUN): [chuckling out of character] Sure. I am a little... busy at the moment, I actually came here to ask you something.

Keith (as LEAP): Okay.

Ali (as BROUN): Um... S— [losing composure] So hi, hey. Um...

Keith (as LEAP): Hi.

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Jesset's eyes are bouncing between the two of you like there's a tennis match going on. Like,

(as JESSET CITY): Is this what passes for banter?

[Keith and Ali laughing.]

Ali (as BROUN): So, you know... I've been trying to get off of Partizan.

Keith (as LEAP): Yeah, y— Didn't you get a ship?

Ali (as BROUN): I do, yeah-yeah-yeah, but there's like... you know, more to it than that. Um... And...

Keith (as LEAP): Fuel.

Ali (as BROUN): [chuckling] Right.

Keith (as LEAP): Crew.

Austin (as JESSET, overlapping): [quietly] Fu— Yeah. Mm-hm.

Ali (as BROUN): Y– Yeah, yeah-yeah, the crew, and the fuel, and the access codes.

Keith (as LEAP): Access codes, right.

Austin (as JESSET): That's the big one.

Keith (as LEAP): That is a big one.

Austin (as JESSET): Uh, I think that they have the fuel and the crew basically covered, but...

Keith (as LEAP): Yeah. God, you'd have to be extremely lucky to know someone with access codes.

Austin (as JESSET): Lucky, and, um... uh, happy, and... b– blessed.

Keith (as LEAP, simultaneously): Blessed.

Austin (as JESSET): See?

Keith (as LEAP): Yeah.

Ali (as BROUN): And blessed, yeah.

Austin (as JESSET): And blessed.

AUSTIN: [chuckling]

KEITH: [laughing]

AUSTIN: We all got to “blessed”.

KEITH: Yeah.

ALI: [chuckling] Um...

Austin (as JESSET): Are we blessed, Leap?

Keith (as LEAP): Uh... Yeah, you guys are blessed.

ALI: [chuckling]

(as BROUN:) Wonderful.

[2 hours 45 minutes]

AUSTIN: I think Jesset does, like, a little fist pump, um, with... with like— Oh, I haven't talked about this, but Jesset has a new arm. Jesset got a cool arm, um, with— Once he moved up to like, commander status, that has the... Remember how Thisbe has like, a hand computer? Like a DOS prompt?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: He has one of those now, too, and he does like a little fist pump with it, and it makes like, an R2D2 chirp beep when he does it.

ALI: [quietly] Yesss.

AUSTIN: It's like having, like, a ringtone for when you celebrate.

ALI: [laughing quietly]

KEITH: Is it— Was this like, a... like "I bought myself a gift 'cause I got a raise"?

AUSTIN: A hundred p— Well, it's like that, plus it's like, this is not the arm he uses when he's piloting [**Keith:** Right.]—but it is— It's like, let me check my mail on it, let me pull up the schematics, let me read the details, and that's like, useful to have.

KEITH (overlapping): You get your work arm [**Austin:** Yes.] and your for-fun arm.

AUSTIN: It's kind of two different work arms. It's like, office work versus field work, you know?

KEITH: Yeah, okay. Very different kind of— Da— Very dangerous work and not so dangerous work, I guess is the...

AUSTIN (overlapping): Right, right. Like, there is— There is, like— You're in the field, you need to have like, an arm that can, like, you know, deal with grenades [chuckling] and piloting giant mechs, versus...

KEITH: Right. And sometimes you need a little computer that chirps.

AUSTIN: You need a little chirp computer, yeah. I will say, the chirp— getting the chirp upgrade was one hundred percent "buy yourself something [breaking into laughter] nice when you get a promotion."

ALI: [laughing]

AUSTIN: There's definitely a version of this that does *not* have *that*, um...

KEITH: “Now, for an extra *hundred...*”

AUSTIN: [laughing] Right, exactly.

[Ali and Keith laughing.]

AUSTIN: A hundred percent, yeah, absolutely. Anyway... um...

Ali (as BROUN): Leap, there’s one more thing. Uh...

Keith (as LEAP): Okay.

Ali (as BROUN): Having you been keeping up with the, like, Millennium Break Semaphore Forums and stuff? Have you been looking in?

Austin (as JESSET, overlapping): The Semaphorums.

Keith (as LEAP): Uh... Y— Like,

KEITH: Hold o— Out of character, does this— Are these like, brie— Is this like, a briefing?

ALI: [laughing]

KEITH: Is it like, I’m getting updates?

AUSTIN (overlapping): I think it’s like—

ALI (overlapping): I think so.

AUSTIN: Ali, it’s your— You built the forums. [chuckling]

ALI: Yeah, yeah-yeah, I think the thing that Broun’s asking is, like—Leap is still part of Millennium Break, [**Keith:** Yeah.] and like, “have you been checking in on, like, what the discussions have been?” This is leading up for Broun to be like, “I need you to publicly support me with this plan.” Um...

KEITH: Okay. Second question: Is this... Is this, like— Is it— I can’t rem— Is this written? Is it— Am I getting...

AUSTIN: It’s all... it’s all written...

KEITH: It’s all written...

AUSTIN: Oh, wait, sorry—what do you mean, “is this written?” Is— Are the forums written?

KEITH: Is it on— Am I getting, like, a print-out of words, or is this like a radio?

ALI: Oh, no, it’s like, a— It’s like, a web forum situation.

KEITH: Web f— Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah-yeah-yeah.

ALI: Yeah.

KEITH: Um... Okay. I just— I just wanted to know how much work it would be for Leap **[Ali laughing.]** to keep up on this, **[Austin: Yeah. Fair.]** because...

(as LEAP): I’ve defini... I definitely have been... seen some of it.

ALI: [laughing quietly]

AUSTIN: [chuckling] Or— Is it a thing where you’re like, subscribed to to certain threads, so to speak, or certain subforums, that you ignore the rest of it? The way that, like, you might have, like— “Yeah, I don’t check the *forum*, but I check in on the forum thread about my favorite game on, like, ResetEra or something,” which is a thing I do, **[Keith laughing]** because I’m [breaking into laughter] a fool, [muffled] hate myself. Or do you just not even— Or are you the person who follows the Twitter bot that has, like—”Here is the best thread of the day from this forum,” **[Ali laughing]** and you don’t even click through, you just see the thread titles.

KEITH (overlapping): Yeah, yeah, I have— I’m subscribed for urgent updates.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah, uh-huh. Perfect.

KEITH: Yeah. Um... And then... And then, yeah, you know, maybe I’ll po— It’s definite— Like, I think it’s probab— **[Austin chuckling quietly]** This is probably a g— Like a, maybe even a slight guilt thing of, like,

(as LEAP, possibly internally): Oh wow, I really should be reading more of these.

[Ali and Austin laughing.]

Austin (as JESSET): I’ll start sending you the ones that stick out. How’s that sound?

Keith (as LEAP): That would be r— That’s *super* helpful, actually.

AUSTIN: [amused] Cut to like, three weeks later, Jesset is just sending you the things that *annoy* him from the forums,

[Ali and Keith laughing.]

Austin (as JESSET): Can you believe this fucking poster, why won't the mods ban him?!

Keith (as LEAP): [uninterested] Uh, I don't... I... totally agree...

AUSTIN: [laughing] Anyway...

Ali (as BROUN): Um... Yeah, Leap, I just, um... Uh, this is a Millennium Break thing, you know.

Keith (as LEAP): Yeah.

Ali (as BROUN): So... If people are like, "oh, should Broun leave Partizan?" it would—

Keith (as LEAP): Are people telling you to leave? You've—

Ali (as BROUN): I mean, not directly. [laughing out of character]

Keith (as LEAP): Peop— Okay.

Ali (as BROUN): But...

Austin (as JESSET): I mean, I think part of the problem is, people are telling them to *leave* leave, *or* to stay. It's that middle ground of leaving as Millennium Break that we're running into problems with.

Keith (as LEAP): So y— So it's...

Austin (as JESSET): We just think—

Keith (as LEAP): It's quit and go, or don't quit and stay, but you wanna... not quit and go?

Austin (as JESSET): And bring some resources, and... [searching for words]

Ali (as BROUN): I mean... If Millennium Break is gonna mean anything, it's gonna have to get off of here.

Austin (as JESSET): Did you know... The thing that Gur and Valence wanted to build when Millennium Break started... will die here on Partizan. [pausing] We've done some small things, we've made some winds... but I just don't think... I don't think the Stels will let us live another year. But if we can get off world, and Captain Broun has a ship, I think...

Ali (as BROUN): Well, it's... a win-win.

Austin (as JESSET): Right.

Keith (as LEAP): You're not worried about... spreading things too thin?

Ali (as BROUN): Well, things are kinda spread, uh, so... that's not really on me.

Keith (as LEAP): Wouldn't that— Wouldn't that mean that we should *smush*, if things are already too spread?

Austin (as JESSET): Sometimes things are better when they spread—like seats. It—

Keith (as LEAP): Like jam.

Ali (as BROUN): Yeah.

Austin (as JESSET): Or— no-no-no, I'm saying— I'm saying *not* like jam.

Ali (as BROUN): [quietly] Oh.

Keith (as LEAP): Oh.

Austin (as JESSET): I'm saying we need to make more jam. We have a [breaking into laughter] jar of jam. And—

Ali (as BROUN): Oh, we need grapes, is what you're saying.

Austin (as JESSET): We need *vineyards*.

Ali (as BROUN): Ohh, yeah-yeah-yeah.

Austin (as JESSET): We're out of grapes.

Keith (as LEAP, overlapping): We're out of grapes...

Austin (as JESSET): Or we have a limited amount of grapes, and we want more grape jam.

Keith (as LEAP): We— We can't get... You know we can't make grapes from jam, it only goes one way.

Austin (as JESSET): No, but we can get *seeds*, which we have some of.

Keith (as LEAP): Okay.

Austin (as JESSET): And we don't have soil... here.

Keith (as LEAP): Okay, so we *have* seeds, we *have* jam, [**Austin (as Jesset):** We have *jam.*] but we *don't* have grapes or soil.

Austin (as JESSET): Correct.

Keith (as LEAP): [pausing] God, well that sounds like we messed up.

Austin (as JESSET): [chuckling] Well... That's honest.

Ali (as BROUN): Leap, is it a yes or a no?

Keith (as LEAP): What are you asking me?

Ali (as BROUN): Just—if people say “should Broun go to space?” just say “I'm Leap and I think it's a good idea.”

Austin (as JESSET): That's a vote. You get a vote. We all get votes on... things. You should really check the forums.

Keith (as LEAP): Okay, um... I think it's fine that you wanna go to space.

Ali (as BROUN): Great.

Keith (as LEAP): Great.

Ali (as BROUN): Do you wanna like... I mean, what are you doing?

Keith (as LEAP): You know, going from place to place... and... stealing... those things there.

Ali (as BROUN): [chuckling quietly] Great. Love it. Uh, big fan. Um...

Keith (as LEAP): Yeah.

Ali (as BROUN): Let me know if you wanna go to space, I guess?

Austin (as JESSET): There are things to steal in space.

Keith (as LEAP): Yeah, that's my— That was my whole first job.

Austin (as JESSET): [abashed] Right. Right. Right.

Ali (as BROUN): Yeah.

Keith (as LEAP): Um...

Austin (as JESSET): Just think about it.

Keith (as LEAP): I'll think about it. Interesting offer.

Austin (as JESSET): It's a nice ship.

Keith (as LEAP): I... space is... *great*.

Ali (as BROUN): Yeah?

Keith (as LEAP): Yeah, it's my favorite place... is space.

ALI: [laughing]

Austin (as JESSET): Space is the place.

Ali (as BROUN): Glad to hear a good review. Good seeing you, Leap.

Keith (as LEAP): Yeah, you too.

Austin (as JESSET): Send those codes over when you get a chance. Not to be too... results-oriented, but...

AUSTIN: [making a ringtone noise] Bee-deep bee-deep.

(as JESSET): Uh— um— I have to take this.

KEITH: [laughing]

Austin (as JESSET): A pleasure as always, uh...

Keith (as LEAP): Did you say “be-deep be-deep,” was that real?

ALI: [laughing]

Austin (as JESSET): No, it's a custom sou—

Keith (as LEAP, overlapping): Did you get a message, or are you just trying to go?

Austin (as JESSET): It's a— I— I'm like, holding my hand up to show you, now. I have one.

KEITH: [laughing]

Austin (as JESSET): Also, I have to— But I do have to go, also.

Keith (as LEAP): Okay.

Austin (as JESSET): A pleasure.

Keith (as LEAP): Oh, me too. Be-deep be-deep.

Austin (as JESSET): That's not... Fair. You know, what, fair.

KEITH: [laughing]

[Short music sting.]

[Interlude #2 — End]

AUSTIN: Let's Tithe, so draw back up two cards, so you have five. And then, um... Also, I'll remind you, at any point, you can dismiss the Joker, uh, as we continue to walk through the minefield of the Adversary. Um... The other— The other, uh... thing I was gonna say is— What was the other thing I was gonna say? This is how we know we should take a break. Um...

JACK: Mm. [chuckling]

AUSTIN: Um... duh-duh-duh-duh-duh... I don't remember what I was gonna say. Anyway, you could Tithe— You have to Tithe now, to what? Twelve from the Queen, and another seven again, so nineteen.

JACK: It's fucking nineteen again!

AUSTIN (overlapping): It's nineteen again.

JACK: Hummm...

AUSTIN: Or you could deactivate one of your Relics. [chuckling]

JACK: [chuckling] The arms that help me move, and the, uh... the Columnar *person* [**Austin:** Uh-huh.] in the upstairs bedroom.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Um... [breathing out] I'm so lucky that I can do it in a pool, because it's so much more interesting to do it this— for this particular way.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Okay. I'm gonna spend... mm... [chuckling] So a Queen is twelve...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Oh, yeah, I really like this. It's another montage. Okay, so—this is, um... this is a Two... of Clubs.

AUSTIN: [chuckling, laughing]

JACK: It's another fight. It's— It's Clem and Gur... I don't know, I think Clem definitely like, throws a bottle, or throws something explosive and noisy [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] and furious. I don't know whether or not Gur retaliates, um...

AUSTIN: I think only by calling her a baby, you know?

JACK (overlapping): It's like, a Two...

AUSTIN: Right?

JACK: R— [chuckling] Right, Gur is not playing by the same rules, where he has to... do the violence of a Two.

AUSTIN: No, well, I think calling someone a baby is the violence of a two, also—you know? Viol— Again, confrontation doesn't have to be physical.

JACK (overlapping): Yeah, I don't think Clementine is hitting him over the head with a... with a bottle, [**Austin:** Yeah.] but I think, you know, dropping or smashing or something.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And I think it is— It— The fight is about what the fight is about [**Austin:** Yeah.], which is “you fucking killed me,” [**Austin:** Right.]—*and*, it’s still some weird, fractured ghost of the fight on top of Icebreaker, right?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Of like...

AUSTIN: All those [**Jack:** You...] stabs movements, but not necessarily physical stabs anymore.

JACK: Oh, no, I mean the argument.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see. Right.

JACK: The... The... “You’re fucking useless,” “You have such a high opinion of yourself,” [**Austin:** Right.] Gur Sevraq saying “you’re an idiot.”

AUSTIN: Yeah, y—

JACK: “The world is not yours anymore.” Clementine flinging a bottle. But it’s— it’s like a brawl, it’s like an impotent, angry little fight, [**Austin:** Yeah.] rather than the violence on top of Icebreaker.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Um... Then I’m gonna play... a Four of... Diamonds.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: With Gur Sevraq, we extend the cat trap, such that we— Or, we begin to set stuff up in place that we can experiment with capturing... uh, a helldog—and the helldog immediately destroys the trap, [**Austin** laughing.] a Four is not enough to capture it. But like, the plan is like—oh, we are thinking of a way that we can lure... Can we trap the lack of atmosphere, can we... you know. Like, someone— one of them gets bitten, the dog destroys the trap, everybody flees back to their side of the atmosphere again and shouts at the... at the dog. The dog shouts at us. Uh, so I am now at six. [breathing in] Hum...

AUSTIN: Only, uh, thirteen more.

JACK: Mm-hm. Yeah.

AUSTIN: It is totally possible to not be able to keep all your Relics up, by the way. In past games we’ve hit that point. [exhaling] These are some low cards, these— This is kinda

interesting, 'cause it means you're discarding low cards, and you'll draw up... presumably higher cards, 'cause two of these are Twos. Sorry, I shouldn't— spoke as [drowned out].

JACK (overlapping): This is a— This is a Two of Diamond— Oh, um, what am I talking about? This is a Two of Hearts, which is Courage. Um...

AUSTIN: Tiny courage.

JACK: I think Clementine comes upstairs in the morning, uh, you know, same outfit. Like, uh, putting her hair up, and just makes *the most* meager, shapeless apology [**Austin** laughing] for the fight of the night before.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Uh, like, not of the fight. Just for, like,

(as **CLEMENTINE**): [meekly] Um, I'm... sorry I threw a bottle at you.

AUSTIN: Right. The very specific, one thing that you're willing to apologize for, *not* ceding any territory, any ground—not saying you were wrong about anything, *except* this one in— small thing.

JACK: Yeah, just like,

(as **CLEMENTINE**): I threw a bottle at you, and I'm... I'm... That must've been scary... *You* hurt *my* feelings when you called me a baby, but I'm sorry that I threw a bottle at you.

JACK: Um... And then I'm gonna play...

AUSTIN: They respond in kind, by the way. They're willing to do— They do the thing... You ever have a fight where you're like, "I gotta move on with my life, I can't keep having this fight."

JACK: [chuckling] Yeah.

AUSTIN: "Let's—"

JACK: This fight that Clementine and Gur have now had in a variety of different contexts.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yes. Yeah. Mm-hm. Yeah.

JACK: Yeah. What does Gur apologize for?

AUSTIN: Um... calling you a baby.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But... but says,

(**as GUR**): We have our differences, and I should keep my... *arguments* focused on those—and on the actions that I still find frankly reprehensible. But you are not a *baby*.

JACK: [laughing quietly]

(**as GUR**): If you were a *baby*, then I couldn't hold you to account. [searching for words]

JACK: Yeah, this is Gur's version of Clementine saying "It must've been scary when I threw a bottle at you," [**Austin:** (laughing) Yeah.] "you hurt my feelings, but I *am* sorry that I threw a bottle."

AUSTIN: [amused] Yeah, exactly.

(**as GUR**): But I shouldn't have called you a baby, because you're of course more morally reprehensible than a baby could ever be.

AUSTIN: Like, that st— [chuckling] Yeah, uh-huh.

JACK: Yeah. Y— [laughing] Um... So, I'm gonna play the Queen of Hearts.

AUSTIN: Ooh. Big one.

JACK: Bringing my total up to t— uh, twenty.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: Uhh... Yes.

AUSTIN: What is this?

JACK: Twelve from the Queen. Um, I think it's nighttime. There are no stars. Uh, the houses are... I— I heard this description in a book I'm reading—and it was such a fucking fantastic description that I'm just gonna borrow it—which is: on a starless night surrounded by unlit buildings, the buildings are just slabs of darkness in the shape of buildings.

[3 hours 0 minutes]

AUSTIN (overlapping): Yeah. Mmmm.

JACK: Just, *all* around us. Um, and, the Sage House—the sage opens, it blossoms, and it smells. I mean, the sage is always blossoming, but the— the buds are open, uh, and it smells beautiful. It smells herbal, and it glows with a very pale pink-ish, or purple-ish, white light. Um, and Clementine and Gur are just spellbound by this—I think, despite themselves, they... The building has come alive and is glowing around them. Um, and I think that Clementine speaks openly for the first time to Gur about how peculiar this religious experience is.

And I don't think she has the language to be able to talk about faith, [**Austin:** Right.] as someone only grew up in Asterism, and so I think it's a lot couched in, like... "This is a thing that frightens me, this is a thing that comforts me, this is a thing that I have done and don't understand, this is a thing that I think I understand." Um, and it's— It's just this kind of, like, outpouring [**Austin** chuckling] of... of spiritual confusion and wonderment [**Austin:** (quietly) Ah, yeah...] in the middle of this flowering house.

AUSTIN: Um, I think we get a little bit of a... of a... We get Gur in a mode that... that he's never been in with Clem. Which is... It's almost more the mode that we get with them with Valence, or theoretically with their own... their own church, their own... people. Um... he is... he wants to help guide you through this. And so I think... I think that there is a little bit of a talk about what faith is and faith does, um... both what it's done to help, and what it's done to hurt, um, you know.

I think he talks about the ways in which... the powerful have limited, and constructed a limited version of faith. I think that the specific thing that he's zeroing in on is, like, all of this messiness is true about faith. The fact that you feel like you can turn to something that isn't there, but at the same time you see all of these signs that suggest that someone is there for you. Um, but also there's an unpredictability, but also you feel a desire to not have to turn to it—all of that's true, that in the Principality the only way to believe is to believe their one way, and... that that has, frankly, been a... uh, one of the ways in which the people of the Principality are... kept in the positions that they're in, whether that is those born into noble status, or those born—like Gur was—into very little.

And, you know, b— mostly wants to encourage you to have those feelings. That those feelings are not... They're complicated, but that that is— that is how *people* feel, and if you haven't had them before, it's because you have been... so... *satiated* with life. Like, you haven't *had* to turn to faith before, [chuckling] you haven't had the long night where you go "Isn't the w— Why isn't the world just?" because to you the world has always seemed just.

JACK: [chuckling] Right.

AUSTIN: Um... And so, you haven't reached for— You haven't had the excuse to reach for that thing. And that's not to say that reaching for— The *problem* is, in the Principality, when you reach for that thing, what your reach is Imperium, what you reach is Courage [**Jack:** (chuckling) Mm-hm.], and— and, [reassuringly] "That's right. You're in your right place."

Um, and so I think that there is an honest back and forth here—[**Jack:** Yeah.] and maybe *the first* time that either of them have had that style of honest back and forth, [**Jack:** Yeah.] because it's the first time that Gur Sevraq has ever seen *anything* like the possibility that Clementine Kesh could learn something about the world, herself, other people... [chuckling]

JACK: Yeah. I think two—

AUSTIN (overlapping): Sorry, *Clementine*, period—no Kesh.

JACK: Yeah, Clementine. N— [chuckling] No Kesh.

AUSTIN: [laughing] God.

JACK (overlapping): [chuckling] Yeah, I think two things—

AUSTIN (overlapping): And I don't know that— I wanna be clear, I don't think this is an overnight change, but I think that it—

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: This should be symbolic of, of... something.

JACK: Yeah, I think two things happen. The first is that, um... I think Clementine spends a lot of time crying, [**Austin:** Mm-hm.] and goes through a variety of genres of crying—of Clementine crying. There is, uh, the confusion at what is happening. There is the, um, peculiarity of someone talking to her in this way—and of listening to... um... Of the vulnerability of being like, "I don't know how I'm feeling," and hearing someone say, "Okay. Let's... Let's talk about this."

AUSTIN (overlapping): "Let's talk through this a little bit." God, no one in your life has ever done that. *No one in your life* has ever said [**Jack:** I've been waited on—] "It's okay that you're confused, talk to me," yeah.

JACK: Yeah. I've been waited on, hand and foot, for my entire life, and I've had people listen to every single thing I've said, so long as I'm *not* saying "I don't know what's happening."

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: I think that, uh—and this speaks to you talking about the overn— it not being an overnight change—there is a *lot* of crying when Gur Sevraq starts talking about how religion has been used as a tool of empire, [**Austin:** Yeah.] because Clementine is frustrated that this topic is coming up *again*, um, and is frustrated that, you know, Gur is... is taking this moment of learning to talk about this topic again.

[Music begins: [CENTERPOINT. STAINEDGLASS. BREAKNECK.](#) by Jack de Quidt.]

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. “Here we go again. Here’s Gur Sevraq talking about how we’re the baddies.”

JACK: Yeah. Uh, and maybe... maybe that *particular*... that *particular* performative guilt of like, “Oh, yes, of course we’ve caused this problem,” um...

AUSTIN: [chuckling quietly]

JACK: And then the second thing that happens is that about halfway through, the flowers close and the lights go out, and Gur and Clementine look up, and are... are just sort of, like, “The flowers have closed and the lights have gone out; we’re gonna keep talking.”

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Uh, and they talk for another hour or so, in the dark of the Sage House.