

All Year Round, There Is Work To Do 03

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Recap

[“[The Farmers' Almanac](#)” by Jack de Quidt begins playing]

Jack: “Look, man. I don't think you should go on this. [Ali laughs] This is— there's bad stuff up in the Marchmont Mountains. Look, I'm gonna give you something.” Gives me, like, a gold doubloon or something with an ancient king's face on, you know? A king long dead.

Ali (as **Carly**): We have some terms, lady.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Mm-hmm.

Jack (as **Odd Job Boy**): All right, lady, we have some terms.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Of course. Yeah. [Ali laughs] I read the brochure. I know how this works.

Ali (as **Carly**): [whispering] She read the brochure.

Jack (as **OJB**): [hushed] Shit. We're dealing with a real tough customer here.

Ali (as **Carly**): [hushed] I'm telling you.

Janine (as **Rosegold**): You're doing...cactuses?

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, yes, yes, yes. For the alchemists.

Janine (as **Rosegold**): For the alchemists.

Ali: How's winter treating you down in Nievelmarch? At night, I've been sitting on the edge of my little platform and watching the lights twinkle down in the village below.

Jack: I was in the snowglobe, and it was not good. Luckily, I'd filled the woodshed and have that little entrance to it from my kitchen. Kept the fire warm.

Janine: Subterranean irrigation systems. Subterranean irrigation system maintenance. Crystal growth in enclosed environments. Crystal growth underwater. Crystal growth in water vessels.

Ali: Can you believe I've been a farmer for a whole year? It seems like just yesterday I was packing up my desk and hugging you and the girls goodbye.

Jack: A metal plaque bolted into the ground beside the path with some old script engraved above it. There's a little slot in the plaque the size of a coin. The script says, "For good luck." Only one coin left in my pocket, but I dropped it in. Tiny sound of metal against metal. Figured I could use it.

Janine: It was four long tons of crystal down the drain at least, literally down the pipes. I watched it go. I tried to sieve out what I could, but it was powder. It was dust.

Ali: You may be surprised to find a letter at your doorstep and not a modest little bit of

this season's plump cactuses, which I'm sure you're anxiously awaiting.

Jack: This time last year, I thought I was going to leave the farm altogether. It was so hard. It's not got any easier, but this is the place for me. The red daisies are growing really nicely.

Janine: Square brackets. A sketch of three very large rabbits standing around a single hexagonal pillar of crystal. Close brackets.

[song ends]

Introduction

Ali: Hello, and welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I, today, am your host, Alicia Acampora. You can reluctantly find me over at Twitter at @ali_west. [Janine sighs] I also do another podcast called A More Civilized Age. And I'm joined today by Janine Hawkins.

Janine: Hi. I'm Janine Hawkins. You can find me on [mocking voice] x.com! [Ali laughs] at [@bleatingheart](#).

Jack: Whoa!

Ali: [laughs] Whoa.

Janine: Also [Cohost](#). [pleasant birdlike voice] "Cohost!" is how Cohost sounds.

Ali: Yeah, okay.

Janine: That's also bleatingheart.

Jack: Are these like Pokémon?

Janine: Yeah. "Cohost! Cohost! Co!"

Ali: Sure, okay.

Janine: “X.” [Jack laughs]

Ali: I get it. Yeah, uh huh. [Janine and Ali laugh]

Janine: I'm working on usurping Keit's— Keith's power. Keit? Keith's power. [Ali and Janine laugh] I've been doing Witching Hour streams on our [Twitch](#) channel, so you should check those out. The archives are on my [YouTube](#) once they time out on Twitch, but you can watch them on Twitch for the moment. That's it.

Ali: And Jack de Quidt.

Jack: I'm Jack. You can find me on Cohost at [@jdg](#), and you can buy any of the music featured on the show at [notquitereal.bandcamp.com](#), if Bandcamp still exists at the time of this episode's release. [Janine sighs, Ali laughs sadly]

Janine: It'll still exist, it just will be...

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: Sickly, probably.

Jack: Yeah. It fucking sucks.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah, uh huh. Uh huh. Yep, another day of announcements of layoffs.

Jack: Yep. Don't play around with people's livelihoods.

Ali: Please don't.

Janine: Maybe don't acquire a company unless you intend to long-term support it? I don't know.

Jack: Maybe don't sell your company to Epic, Ethan Diamond. [Ali and Janine laugh quietly]

Ali: Uh huh. Yeah. You know, all decisions... [laughs] I thought there would be a segue there. There's not.

Setup [0:04:48]

Ali: Hi. Today, we are continuing our game of *Grandpa's Farm*, designed by Possible Worlds Games and illustrated by Evlyn Moreau. We are about to transition into our second to our third year, but before we do that, it is time to have a festival. This is the end of our fall season. We are having a... [laughs] We are having a ritual cave dance.

Janine: Uh huh.

Ali: Exclusive for artisans and trade workers and such. So, normal stuff. [laughs] Do we want to go over our characters real quick before we jump into things, or...?

Jack: Yeah. Should we go top to bottom?

Ali: Anybody have anything else they want to add? [laughs quietly]

Jack: [sighs] I don't think so. I feel pretty good.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: I've been feeling better and better about the farm.

Ali: Yeah. Oh, I'm sure— yeah, uh huh. Yeah, your “farm.” [Jack laughs] Anything can be a farm. I think that's the great thing about farms.

Jack: Look. You know, step one of a farm really is a hole in the ground, [Ali laughs] and Ern has just sort of decided that no further steps are necessary, it seems.

Ali: Uh huh. Okay. Perfect. I'm gonna start, because I am on the top level, and if you don't know what that means, it's because my character has a farm in the sky. She is a cloud farmer. Her name is Sable Butter. She picks out big chunks of dense cloud with a

big machine-slash-plane sort of situation and then plants seeds for supple cactuses to grow. She was a former writer at a design magazine who is using her mentor's old abandoned equipment to take up the farming life, and she's had kind of an average time? [laughs] Compared to the other two. Some ups and downs, some relationships with some mechanics. But let's go down deeper and see how y'all are doing.

Jack: I am playing Ernan Langerhank. He has he/him pronouns. He moved to the town of Nievelmarch from the city in an attempt to reckon with a curse that caused plants to sort of blossom at all times around him, at which point the farm sort of stopped. The curse stopped. I think, as Janine put it a couple of episodes back, you can't loophole a curse. The curse was like, "All right, buddy. [Ali and Janine laugh] How do you like them apples? By which I mean no apples."

Ali: Oh.

Jack: And Ernan, at least in theory, should be doing so general ground farming, farming pretty close to the way we understand it on Earth. Fruits, vegetables, flowers, and alchemy ingredients for the witches. Instead, he has had basically season after season of unending social, agricultural, and infrastructural failure, but things are starting to look up as a rapidly growing, possibly demonic hole has started to appear in his farm.

Janine: And I am playing— oh god, I lost the window. Hang on. I have to put these in order. I'm playing Velvet Lunde, she/her. She is the underground farmer. She is sort of on kind of like a job placement kind of— not really a placement. I forget what the word is for, like, "hey, we'll give you this if you go work here for five years," or whatever. I guess that is kind of a placement.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: She's supposed to be growing crystals. Mixed successes there. She, for a long time, was not successfully doing that and ended up just finding a bunch of fossils that she was using to keep herself afloat. And then crystals did eventually happen but not in the place that she might have wanted them to, and that I believe is the current concern of, like, uh oh, the infrastructure, it's all bad.

Ali: Perfect. Yeah. [laughs] Ups and downs, as we said. But yeah, let's jump right into things. So, I'm again in this place of, like, how much do I recap for people in our third episode here. But, you know, this is a card drawing game about, you know, seeing how good your season is based on how many cards you can get, and here in our festival, we can start turning the odds in our favor, which I think we sort of need. [laughs] Let's maybe go over what our momentum for the year is, so we can see kind of what we have to play with here. Again, what we learned from last time is that each of us get a momentum scene for the points of momentum that we get. So, for instance, last year, I had four momentum across different categories, and I could use two of them for two separate scenes, regardless if I pass/failed, and then the third one I could spend for momentum, but it had to be with another player character, so we had to build our own relationships on that third one. We couldn't keep getting boosts elsewhere.

Jack: So, I have done the math to figure out the momentum that I have, and I have three total momentum.

Ali: Mm.

Jack: My social progress— oh, no, no. No.

Ali: Wait, why?

Jack: Wait, no, yes. Right, yes, because the seasons all count up. Don't worry, I was reading my graph wrong. [Ali laughs quietly] I have 10 social progress, which accounts for one momentum. I have six financial progress, which accounts for 0.6, which is rounded up to one momentum point. I have absolutely zero agricultural progress, no plants. And I have five infrastructural progress, which rounds up to one momentum. So, my momentum total is three.

Ali: That's some crazy numbers right here, man.

Jack: Yeah, you had a season.

Ali: [laughs] I did not even realize that I was doing okay, as okay as I was. Yeah, the process of the math here, quote, unquote, is that we are, yeah, adding up our totals for

the season and then dividing them by 10 to get a clean number. So, that's two...

Jack: And these momentums also have suits governed by sort of the momentum points that you are spending.

Ali: Uh huh.

Jack: You know, social momentum has a social momentum suit.

Ali: Yeah. So, with my math complete, I had...I have one social momentum. I have two financial momentum. I have one agricultural momentum and three in infrastructural momentum. This is— I'm doing good.

Janine: Wait, sorry, I don't— how do momentum? [laughs quietly]

Ali: So, you add up each of the seasons and then divide them by 10.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: And then you round up or down, depending on what that is. So, it looks like you have five and then two and then five and then two?

Janine: Okay. I was looking at everyone else's numbers, and I was like, "My numbers don't make sense."

Ali: [laughs] No, you just— you got good progress.

Jack: Just really good.

Janine: I guess I did really well.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: I was like, "Surely I'm missing something. I'm supposed to divide by three and then... [Ali and Jack laugh] minus 10."

Ali: I think when I think of the last episode is it doesn't feel like you did well, because

you kept having to write about not the thing—

Janine: Yes, that's true. [Ali laughs] I kept having to write about the thing I was doing the worst at, basically. [sighs]

Ali: So.

Janine: You're right. That's exactly what it is.

Ali: Velvet was not recognizing her successes.

Janine: Because, on paper, I had the best season.

Ali: Like, by far.

Janine: On paper— yeah. [Ali laughs] I maybe had the best season any of us have ever had.

Ali: Uh huh. That is certainly true. [laughs] God. Oh, gaming.

Janine: Oh, gaming.

Ali: Oh, gaming. Sorry, I'm just very quickly trying to get a challenge deck for us, because part of the rules here in festivals— actually, while I do this, does somebody want to read the rules? I realize that I have not been delegating [laughs] rules reading, and...

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: I can start.

Ali: Sure.

Jack: [reading] "It costs one momentum to pursue a new positive development for yourself at this festival. As with letter developments determined by an ace or face at the

end of a season, a momentum development should, one, have a significant impact on your life and, two, reflect some sort of change. The momentum development you try for should also reflect the suit of the momentum you'll be spending. Asking for a loan, for example, might require you to spend financial momentum, while proposing marriage would require social.

“To spend momentum, first describe the positive development you're pursuing and from whom. For example, convincing the local blacksmith to help you with a large infrastructure project. Then, imagine, write out, or roleplay a scene with other players where that development is attainable. During your scene, make a business proposal, ask someone for a favor, or make a wager where if they lose they agree to help you. When you reach that yes/no or win/lose moment in your scene, determine the scene's outcome by performing one of the following. You and a second player should each shuffle your decks with aces and faces and deal a card from the top. Compare the suits and values of the dealt cards to see who wins.” And then there is the card rankings from high to low. It's essentially high value cards of the momentum suit all the way down and then high value cards off suit all the way down.

“If you win, roleplay the scene's resolution and remove an ace or face of the same suit as your development from your deck. Without that ace or face in your deck, future seasons will go on longer before a card tells you to stop dealing. If you lose, it costs an additional point of momentum of the same suit to try again. Deal cards off the top of each deck and compare these new values. You only need to win once to remove a card from your deck, not a majority of attempts made. You may try as many times as you have momentum for, but don't shuffle cards back into either deck until you're finished making any attempts. Ties count as losses.”

Ali: Okay. There we go.

Janine: Have we been keeping track of how many face and stuff cards we've removed from our own decks?

Ali: I can sort of track that for you via Roll20's internal deck system, which is actually

what I was fiddling with.

Janine: Okay. Okay.

Ali: So, what I can say is that right now both me and Ern have one card removed from our decks, a total of 51, and then you have two.

Janine: Okay.

Ali: Or you have 49.

Janine: So I have— right.

Ali: So. Actually, that's three removed.

Janine: Yeah, it's three.

Ali: You had a really good festival last year too, didn't you?

Janine: Yeah, I remembered having a bunch removed [Ali laughs] and being very aggressive about that.

Ali: So yeah, so yeah. But yeah, so, I think the way that we were doing it sort of tactfully, I guess you could say, is we were removing, like, the jacks of whatever suit that we got first, because we didn't want, like, to take away an ace card, because aces are good in a different way, but you have to take the faces first or whatever, you know what I mean?

Janine: Yeah, yeah.

Ali: So, I think that's where we're at. I'm not sure exactly from which decks we removed stuff from, but that's something we'll— that's a bridge we'll cross when we get there.

Festival [0:18:10]

Ali: But yeah, festival. Cave festival. Cave dance. [laughs]

Jack: Love a cave dance. And also a kind of potluck, right? There's a dinner here too?

Ali: Yeah, I would— I would hope so. You get all these people here in their Sunday best. I don't know that Sunday best is a thing here in Nievelmarch, [laughs] but in their festive best. The last festival we did, we sort of set up our booths and stuff, and I don't think that that's necessary here, but we can sort of, like, draw out what we think this party is like. So, when we each walk into this space, what do we all first head to? [laughs] Very open-ended question.

Janine: Hmm. Uh...

Jack: That's a great question. I think Ern immediately becomes lost. These caves are, like...it's not like *The Descent* down here, but there is— [Ali and Janine laugh] it's like a network of caves, and I think Ern rapidly finds himself— you know, in trying to find a place to put his coat, finds himself in the mushroom storage area or whatever.

Ali: Oh.

Jack: And kind of has to be, like, led gently back to the main room or maybe doesn't. Maybe Ern, for the time being, is somewhere down in the depths of one of these caves next to someone who is putting labels on wine bottles or something. [Ali laughs]

Janine: I wonder— are these connected to Velvet's farm? Like, what's Velvet's route here look like?

Jack: This is such a good question.

Ali: Oh, yeah. I mean, that— yeah, that's a yes or no question for you, I think, because I think they— like, we drove a little bit out here, right? So...

Jack: At the end of the last episode, yeah.

Ali: So it could be, like, either they're connected but it's a couple miles away, or...

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: It's just a different system.

Janine: I wonder if it was a thing where, like, she could have gone through, but it was, like, faster to go with everyone else.

Ali: [laughs] Yeah. Yeah, I— the largeness of what a cave is did not occur to me that it would give this, like, almost house party vibe? Because, you know, I think of the traditional, like, cave, it's a big open mouth in a mountain, and then there's, like, you know, a diner hall in there or whatever. [laughs] You know, like, a church basement, this big open area. But the thought of, like, there actually being these little separate rooms where different groups and different activities are set up and the, like, idea that you could have these, like, moments when you're in the middle of, like, 20 people or you have these moments where you're passing through different hallways and it's just [Jack: Yeah.] like two or three.

Jack: Yeah, and I'm sure there is...

Ali: Or [inaudible].

Jack: Yeah. [quiet laughter] I'm sure there is, like, a central dining room, and you know, maybe there's, like, light pouring out of it that illuminates some of the other, you know, passages, but the other passages are lit with little candles in niches on the wall. The vibe that I'm definitely feeling is, like, when you walk into a *Hitman* level and immediately get lost in, like, the tiniest little closet, hole closet, [Ali laughs] down a corridor. But yes, there's still, like, a big dance floor or a big, like, table elsewhere. Yeah, I think that that church basement vibe is really good but sort of, like, fractured off in the periphery into these other little spaces.

Janine: I'm trying to think of where Velvet would be, because, to be honest, I think the last place she wants to be is in another cave?

Ali: Aw. [laughs]

Janine: I think, like, for her, the highlight of these festivals tends to be, like, getting to do stuff aboveground.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: So it's like, oh, the cave festival. [Ali laughs quietly] I wonder if it's, like, part of her job to be here or something. Like, I don't know if she'd come otherwise.

Ali: Oh, that's so funny if this is, like, an NDGAG... [laughs] I forget your name, but if it's, like, a sponsored event or if they, like, you're...

Janine: Yeah, I do— I wonder if it's like, well, they expect you to sort of make an appearance, because like, well, if the cave people don't come to the cave festival, [Ali: Right.] what are we doing? [Ali laughs] Like, that's a bad showing.

Jack: Are there other cave people here?

Ali: Ooh.

Janine: Probably, right? Like, if I'm here.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: Oh my god.

Ali: [laughs quietly] Do you think that all of you are, like...not all of you, but other cavers would be, like, sort of circled right at the entrance of the cave like people smoking outside of a party? [Ali and Jack laugh]

Janine: I think there are cave farmer cliques.

Jack: Yes!

Ali: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Janine: I think there are cave farmer cliques, and I think the snootiest cave farm people are the mushroom people, the people who do mushrooms. Not who do mushrooms. [Ali and Janine laugh] The people who raise mushrooms. I think they, like, have a lot of pride and sort of tend to— are, like, in a little clump somewhere together, and they're, like, maybe— I bet they're, like, really eager to be in a cave, to be like, "I'm really

comfortable here.” Oh, you know, like when someone’s, like, gone to a country once and then, like, you go there with them—

Jack: [laughing] Yes.

Janine: And they’re like, “Oh, I know all the local places.”

Ali: Uh huh.

Janine: You’ve been here once, five years ago. You don’t. [Ali laughs] You don’t know all the local places. But it’s like that kind of thing, of like, “Oh, you’re cold? Well, I guess you should have worn an underlayer, as we all do when we are in the…”

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: Uh huh.

Jack: Actually, I think that, like, Ern is led back up to the surface by a woman in, like, a purple— like a dark purple, almost like port wine colored wool cape. She’s dressed very smartly. She’s very pale. And she says, “All right, there you go,” and sort of, like, lets Ern back into the party and then makes eye contact with you and says:

(as **caver**): [haughty voice] Oh.

And I think that’s what she says. She holds out this, like, bone-white hand and says:

(as **caver**): Ulna Parran, mushroomer. I’ve heard a lot about you.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Oh.

Janine: Uh... [laughs quietly] I just had to tone adjust, because I think maybe the crystal people are their own little clique.

(as **Velvet**): I don’t know that I can say the same. What farm are you on?

Jack (as **Ulna**): Oh, Nievelmarch Mushrooms Incorporated. N.M.I. we call ourselves. We’ve got a little conglomerate going.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Oh, Nimi, right.

Jack (as **Ulna**): Well, I— hmm.

Jack: Like a little brittle smile.

(as **Ulna**): I hear you've been having some trouble. Is that the case?

Janine (as **Velvet**): Things are coming around now. I'm not, uh...you know, it's been a journey, but I'm feeling pretty confident these days.

Jack (as **Ulna**): Yes, well, it's hard to get started, isn't it, for some people?

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, you know, when you pick a challenging crop, it comes with challenges. When you pick an easier crop, it's an easier go. It's really all about the...you know, there's a choice to it, and the rewards, I think, usually follow the quality of that choice.

Jack (as **Ulna**): I couldn't agree more. I really do think that you crystal farmers are so lucky, the moisture, the crystals almost form themselves. But down here in N.M.I., well, there's all that complex inter—

Janine (as **Velvet**): Nimi, yeah.

Jack (as **Ulna**): Well, we don't really— there's all this complex interbreeding going on. In fact, you really must take some time to come by later. I'd love to show you some of the mushrooms that me and the girls have managed to put together this year. Well, goodbye! [Janine laughs]

Janine (as **Velvet**): Ta ta! [Ali and Jack laugh]

Janine: Wave in the air.

Ali: Wow. Momentum potential there, perhaps.

Janine: [laughs, skeptical] Maybe.

Ali: From someone who sucks, yeah. [laughs]

Jack: Well, now, hold on. What makes you think she sucks? She's just someone who's very proud of her evil mushroom farm. [all laugh]

Ali: "Crystals grow themselves." Do you know what Velvet's been under?

Jack: Yeah, the ground, struggling. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Ali: Okay, I think for Sable, what she does first when she comes to the cave is follow the sound of music, because she went to a dance, and I think she... [laughs] She, you know, pushing past the crowd and coming into this, like, bigger sort of probably central cave area where the actual band is set up and the dance is supposed to happen. I think she, like, imagines herself in this sort of, like... I guess she doesn't know what movies are, but she imagines herself in this sort of, like, [laughs] Claire Danes in *Romeo + Juliet* or like, you know, coming down the stairs in a regency thing of, like, I'm—

Janine: Oh, it's *Ever After*. It's *Ever After*, and she shows up with the wings. [Ali laughs] Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ali: You know, I—

Janine: Jack, have you seen *Ever After*?

Jack: I haven't seen *Ever After*. I don't know what you're talking about.

Janine: Hang on. I have to... [typing]

Ali: I also haven't seen *Ever After*, but I know the conceit.

Janine: What? Oh my god!

Ali: [laughs] I feel like that would—

Janine: Do you, though? Because there's a couple layers of conceit.

Ali: Okay. Well, then, we'll watch *Ever After* at some point. [laughs] We'll have a movie

night.

Jack: Oh, I like Drew Barrymore and Anjelica Huston.

Janine: It's a very—

Jack: They were both in it.

Janine: It's good. Anyway. [laughs] Main character moment.

Ali: Uh huh, yeah, yeah. I think that she walks into this room expecting, like, "I'm gonna come in here, and I'm gonna make eye contact with somebody, and this is gonna be...this is gonna be tonight's first romantic moment," or...not romantic, but Romantic in the platonic sense, I guess. But it's just a party, you know? [laughs]

Janine: Yeah. [Jack laughs sympathetically]

Ali: There's no...there's no immediate connection or, you know. That is a moment for herself more than anything else, and she kind of shuffles over to the big table where punch is laid out. [laughs] And here we are at the festival. Gosh. Last time, we did a cute thing of, like, going around and being like, "Name one booth that's here," and I wonder what we can do that for a dance.

Janine: Like, events? Like, party games?

Ali: Oh, sure.

Janine: Or icebreakers? [Janine and Ali laugh] Is this an icebreakers type event, or is this a party games type event?

Ali: Is it an icebreakers...? [Jack sighs] I think it's maybe a party game type of event.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And that's what works for, like, the sectioning. Like, it'd be really funny if there was, like, just as much, like, a really loud boisterous, like, arrows room? Is that you call when you—? What do you call that when you throw the thing at the board with the...? [laughs]

quietly]

Jack: Darts?

Janine: Darts?

Ali: Darts. A dartboard.

Jack: Arrows? [Ali laughs]

Janine: Arrow board? I thought you were talking about ax throwing. Like...

Ali: [laughs] There's an archery section in this cave, and everyone's—

Janine: You know when you throw an arrow at the board?

Ali: Everyone's drunk, and they're laughing, and they're having a good time, and then, like, just the whisps of their voices are carried down the cave hallway into a room where a bunch of people are quietly playing chess or like... [laughs]

Jack: Yeah. Yeah.

Janine: That gave me a great idea for a game, if this is what we want to do.

Ali: [laughs] Sure. Yeah, please.

Janine: Okay. My game that I am inventing for this festival.

Ali: Please.

Janine: There is— this cave, one of the reasons this is the host cave is because it has a lot of big, large sort of compartments that connect with little corridors, so it's really good for hosting events. It's just like a series of natural ballrooms, but there is one that's bigger than the others, and in that one, everyone goes to play a game called Hallyhoo, [Jack laughs] where they have to yell "hallyhoo," as loud as they can and see how long it echoes for, and then whoever has the longest echo is the winner.

Ali: [laughs] Okay, yeah.

Jack: Sick.

Ali: Big room, small event, interestingly enough, because you really can't, like— people have to go one at a time, and then everybody has to stay quiet.

Janine: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Ali: [laughs] Love it.

Janine: But that's the fun.

Jack: And do people, like, do the rules properly? Do they actually stay quiet to listen, or is there a bit of...you know, is this rowdy?

Janine: I think there's probably someone, like, at the far end who's doing, like, some actual counting and measuring.

Ali: Oh, yeah.

Janine: So, they're a little bit more isolated from the murmur. Or maybe there's, like, a—

Ali: 'Cause you gotta murmur. [laughs]

Janine: Maybe there's, like, a little tuning fork kind of thing that, like, reverberates, and they time how long the tuning fork thingy does its thing.

Ali: Mm.

Janine: It's like a magical tuning fork, not a real one.

Ali: Perfect, yeah.

Janine: And everyone, like, chatters excitedly, like, "Oh, is it still going? Oh my god, the fork's still going! When's it gonna stop? Aah! [Ali laughs] You hallyhooed so good!" [Ali

laughs]

Jack: That famous cry at a Hallyhoo event, “You hallyhooed so good the fork’s still going.” [Janine laughs]

Ali: Ah, this festival has the spirit of dudes rocking to me. [Janine and Ali laugh]

Jack: Oh my god.

Janine: Yeah, bro, sick hallyhoo. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Jack: Clint hallyhoes so good. [Janine laughs quietly] My event is...do you remember last time, Ali, you came up with, like, apple bobbing except it was for live fish?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: That was one of the worst things I’d ever heard. [Ali and Jack laugh quietly]

Janine: Yeah, that was nasty.

Ali: How—? I mean, that’s not that— bears do it all the time. [Jack laughs]

Janine: Then eat them. Then they eat them, Ali. [Ali laughs] They eat the fish.

Jack: Okay, my event is...um, an elaborate dance that is part of the sort of the dance celebrations. There’s a live band. There’s, like, a dance caller. And this dance is one that involves people pairing up and then separating, you know, over the course of the dance, but in their separations, over the course of the dance, they move further and further away from each other and out into darker and further sort of pools of shadow in the caves, only to be drawn back together again by the music, only to part again for the next time even further out into the dark. And the dance goes on until none of the dancers come back, not in the sense that they’ve been eaten by something in the dark—although that may have happened thousands of years ago—but that the dancers have invariably, you know, peeled away and gone into a room with the mushroom people and are now talking to the mushroom ladies or, you know, have gone and hung out with the apple fish bobbing or are going to go play Tallyhoo or whatever. It’s a long

dance about going into and coming back out of shadow again.

Ali: Wow.

Janine: I love that.

Ali: I think my event is, like, one of the more sort of quiet observation rooms where...I mean... [laughs] I'm gonna describe this before I say that, because that sounds hospital-y. When I say it out loud. No, I think it's like a...there's, like, light projected onto one of the cave walls, and there's, like, little rows of string that are set up in, like, a little smaller section, and what people can do is sort of come and hit those strings or sort of wiggle them to make, like, shapes appear on the wall, but because there's, like, some sort of magic element to this, it's like, it's not just the reflection of the, like, vibration of the strings. It's like, there's, like, actual little figures of things that are on that wall that sort of...

Jack: Huh.

Ali: Like, move and dance or [laughs] walk around? It's like...

Jack: That's sick.

Ali: Yeah, you can go in there and look at the little performance or you can go flick one of the guitar strings, and people are like, "Oh, cool," but it's, like, genuinely sort of dark and quiet in there.

Jack: I kind of want to go to this event. [Ali laughs] This kind of sounds great.

Ali: Yeah, this rules. [Janine laughs] I understand why they don't let other people in here. [laughs]

Jack: This— it's not quite the same vibe as that time that I went to the chowder fest at the aquarium.

Ali: Wow.

Jack: But it had a similar vibe in that, like, the aquarium is this big space full of, like, individual chambers of various sizes with different little events happening in these different chambers.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: I feel like a party that has lots of rooms of different size and different function is just the bee's knees. It's my favorite kind of event. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Ali: I do have a question, the more we talk about this, is like, how many people do you think are here?

Jack: This is a good question. I was also wondering about this, because, on the one hand, it is just for, like, farmers and for people adjacent to farmers. I have to imagine that, like, lumberjacks are here or, like, shepherds are here or whatever.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: So, in theory—

Ali: We know alchemists are here.

Jack: We do know the alchemists are here.

Ali: Right.

Jack: And butchers are here, but...so, that wouldn't seem like a lot, but I have to imagine that Nievelmarch is pretty agrarian. I think that, like, you know, people need to eat. I'm sure that most families in Nievelmarch have someone who works in and around farms and the process of farming, right?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: You know, maybe not your dad, but maybe your cousin is like, oh yeah, my cousin has a load of geese. [Ali laughs]

Janine: And we have also, like, most of our Nievelmarch games focus around, like,

craftspeople. Like, that's a...

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: It's a big facet of the world that we've shown, so it feels like it's a very industrious town in that way.

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: So it's probably a lot of people, right?

Jack: Yeah. Definitely. And I think it has that kind of, like, that Hallmark movie thing as well, of like, in the way that we keep focusing on craftspeople and industrious people, of course there would be a party that was just all craftspeople and industrious people and would just be bumping.

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: All the time, like the Hallmark movie about ice sculptors where everyone is constantly talking about ice sculpture. [Janine and Ali laugh] It's the hot new thing.

Ali: Perfect. Does anyone have a momentum idea jumping out at them?

Janine: What are the rules for spending momentum, again? Like, what's— is there, like, a limit?

Ali: Yeah. So—

Janine: Okay.

Ali: [laughs] It's weird, because you have so much momentum.

Janine: That's why I'm like, surely I cannot...surely.

Ali: [reading] "To spend momentum, first describe the positive development you're pursuing and from whom. Up to two cards can be removed from your deck through community members during a festival. Any unspent momentum is wiped between years.

A third card can be removed from your deck if you spend momentum making an ask of another player's farmer attending the festival." So yeah, you can only take three cards out, so you are gonna end up just wasting a lot of this. What I don't know is that, like, if you fail four of these at once, [laughs] right? Unless you— maybe you can spend the momentum by continuing to do card pulls?

Janine: Yeah, because it's not— it's not saying you only get to attempt it three times, right?

Ali: Right, yeah.

Janine: They're saying, like, you only get to do it three times.

Ali: Yeah. [reading] "If you lose, it costs an additional point of momentum of the same suit to try again. Deal cards off the deck to compare these new values. You may only need to win once to remove a card from your deck, not the majority of attempts made. You may try as many times as you have momentum for, but don't shuffle the cards back into your deck until you're finished making attempts. Ties count as losses." Okay, yeah. So, you could— if you wanted to talk to that mushroom farmer to get social progress and you keep drawing— if you draw, like, three fails, if you get a win on that fourth one, you will have won, and you can spend all five of those points, I think, to do it that way. Yeah. But I don't know that, like, if you failed with her, that it's worth it to be like, "Okay, I'm gonna start a different social scene and do another couple of draws with somebody else." I think you just, like, continue on that one until you win.

Janine: Yeah, it's rerolls. It's do-over hour.

Ali: Yeah, yeah. Okay, cool.

Janine: Okay.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack's Momentum [0:40:45]

Jack: I—

Ali: I— yeah, oh, go ahead, please.

Jack: I think I have an idea for one, but if you wanted to go first, that's totally okay.

Ali: No, I was about to say that I don't have any ideas, so I would love for you... [laughs]

Jack: I would like to talk to a witch, because I can't grow anything on my farm, and I'm looking for some advice.

Janine: Can I play the witch?

Jack: Janine, always. [Janine chuckles] Do we just get to talking? Or like, do you think I have sought you out? Or rather, what is the witch doing here? Why have you come to this party?

Janine: Because the witch is a tradesperson.

Jack: Okay. What's your trade? Curses? [laughs quietly]

Janine: Curses and hexes and also, like, blessings and little, like, charms. Charms are, like, a big part of witch business. You cannot forget the charms.

Jack: Hmm.

Janine: Lots of things.

Jack: Are we seated next to each other at dinner? [laughs quietly]

Janine: I think the witch seats herself next to you at dinner.

Jack: Whoa! Wow.

Ali: [quietly] Wow.

Janine: She can smell a curse a mile off.

Jack (as **Ern**): Uh, could you— could you pass those scalloped potatoes?

Janine (as **witch**): Are you sure you want to be eating fruits of the earth, in your condition?

Jack (as **Ern**): Uh, I think you might have mistaken me for someone else. I'm sorry. I'm feeling fine.

Janine (as **witch**): Are you?

Jack (as **Ern**): Shit, am I?

Janine (as **witch**): You don't seem to be feeling fine to me.

Jack (as **Ern**): Fuck.

Jack: Complete spiral.

Ali: [quietly] I love this lady. [laughs]

Jack (as **Ern**): Who— who are you?

Janine (as **witch**): I'm—

Jack (as **Ern**): Wait, should I not be eating fruits of the earth?

Janine (as **witch**): I think it would aggravate your condition somewhat. Could be a matter of opinion. Not everyone would agree with me necessarily.

Janine: I'm trying to think of a facecast for this lady, and I'm coming up empty.

Ali: [laughs] Are you gonna— are you gonna continue your tradition of being like, “Here’s this evil woman. She isn't evil this time.”

Jack: “But she’s not evil.” [Jack and Ali laugh]

Janine: God, what does this lady look like? I think, in my head, I'm casting her as, like, Sandra Oh, for some reason?

Jack: Okay.

Janine: Just, like, a very...what's the word for the—? Very flat kind of implacable expression, just very nonchalant, and there's a sort of mundanity to her. Like, she's not a big powerful sorceress, but she's also not like a cottagecore crone kind of thing. She's, like, just a lady.

Jack (as **Ern**): Wow. I don't know what to say. I'm Ern.

Janine (as **witch**): I'm...

Janine: Uh...oh, I need a good witch name suddenly.

(as **witch**): I'm Margrit. M-A-R-G-R-I-T, not the other way. I hate it when people spell it the other way.

Jack (as **Ern**): Okay. I won't have the potatoes. I mean, I don't mean to be rude, but it's all kind of fruits of the earth, isn't it?

Janine (as **Margrit**): Well, there's a difference between a fruit of the earth and a fruit of the earth.

Jack (as **Ern**): Is there?

Janine (as **Margrit**): Potatoes, very literally a fruit *of* the earth. It grows beneath it. The part that you consume primarily is enrobed in the earth for its entire life.

Jack (as **Ern**): Is it? I've never grown potatoes. I've tried, but...do they grow—yeah.

Janine (as **Margrit**): Well, if you tried to grow them, and you didn't know that, then that might be why they didn't work.

Jack (as **Ern**): Well, I put them in the ground. I put the little— the little ones in the

ground. They just rotted. Nothing came up. And of course, that's when the ground is soft enough to, you know, work with. Usually, it's all claggy and...

Janine (as **Margrit**): Mm.

Jack (as **Ern**): It's not good.

Janine (as **Margrit**): Well, that's not your fault.

Jack (as **Ern**): It's not?

Janine (as **Margrit**): That's just what's in you.

Jack (as **Ern**): Wh— uh, sorry?

Janine (as **Margrit**): That's just what's in you.

Jack (as **Ern**): Okay, so... [sighs] I was cursed for a long time, but the curse has sort of...sort of passed, and I suppose I should be happy about that, but I don't really see how that's, you know, particularly relevant. It's kind of bitterly ironic, I suppose, but...

Janine (as **Margrit**): Oh, you're still cursed, sweetheart. [Ali laughs quietly]

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah?

Janine (as **Margrit**): Yes. Curses like that don't just get bored of you and leave.

Jack (as **Ern**): Well, how am I...is it just now nothing grows?

Janine (as **Margrit**): It's a curse that endeavors to be inconvenient to you, and if you change your life in such a way that it would become convenient, it's going to change to spite you. This is just the way of such a curse. It's nothing you're doing wrong.

Jack (as **Ern**): Is there any way I can make it go away?

Janine (as **Margrit**): Well, of course. No curse is permanent. They're just increasing levels of difficult to deal with. Yours is a sticky one, from the smell of it.

Jack: Ern just, like, wrinkles his face up. Ern keeps going to take a bite of food and, like, putting his fork down. [laughs quietly] I think, yeah, I'm going to ask Margrit to come and...hmm. I was gonna be like, "Come and take a look at the farm and help," or...yeah, I think I'm gonna ask Margrit for, like, a charm or something, like something to try and forestall it or— I think Ern is a— maybe was an optimist once and might be like, "I want it to go completely," but I think, in this moment, is both a little overwhelmed by Margrit and also really, really hungry, and so is just like, [all laugh quietly] "Can I have a charm, please? Please help me."

Janine (as **Margrit**): All right. Tell me where your farm is.

Janine: Actually— well— no, yeah, we should— I was gonna say, should we do, like, the pull to see if does the charm—?

Ali: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Janine: Or should we do the pull to see if the charm works?

Ali: Oh, I...

Jack: Oh, god.

Ali: What was the progress you were...?

Jack: I am going to spend...well, the thing— here's the thing. I can't spend any agricultural momentum.

Ali: [laughs] No.

Jack: Because I don't even have agricultural momentum. [Ali laughs] So instead, what I am going to spend is I think the thing closest to that, probably, which is infrastructural progress. You know, the problem that I'm having on the farm is infrastructural as much as it is agricultural.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: A curse is a kind of infrastructure.

Ali: Uh huh, yeah.

Janine: To me.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Ali: Absolutely. I think that we should maybe pull to see if she agrees, because next season's results are gonna kind of speak to the efficiency, right? [laughs]

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah. Yeah. And I love the idea that— oh, god. Although, we could say she does agree...yeah, next season's results are gonna speak to the efficiency. We will determine whether or not it works next season, if she agrees. Okay, so, how do I do this? I draw a card from a deck. Which deck would you like me to draw this from, Ali?

Ali: Um, you are gonna draw this from your own deck, and the gray deck is what Janine is gonna draw from as the challenge.

Jack: Okay. I am drawing a card, as Ern raises a forkful of purple sprouting broccoli [Jack and Ali laugh quietly] to his mouth. I drew it. I don't know where it's gone. What? Why?

Janine: It's in your hand.

Jack: Where is my hand?

Ali: Oh, yeah. [laughs] I've stolen this card from you.

Janine: Oh, fuck.

Ali: Oh, sorry.

Jack: Oh no! Okay. I drew an eight of spades, which is an off suit. It's not even a very high off suit.

Janine: That's an eight of clubs.

Jack: Oh, no, I drew an eight of clubs. That's on suit.

Janine: Which is the correct suit.

Ali: Oh, then you...

Janine: Which means you beat this ace of spades.

Ali: Win. Yeah!

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: And therefore beats Janine's ace of spades. Oh, amazing.

Janine: Thank god. Oh my god. [Ali laughs] I was stressed about that one.

Ali: Oh, we needed a win. Oh, we needed a win. [laughs] Okay, perfect. So, I am gonna go into the pink deck now, which is Ern's deck, and pull out a jack of spades. And she agrees.

Jack: Great.

Janine: Yeah. She says:

(as **Margrit**): Well, this kind of curse is difficult work, but you seem like a nice...like a nice fellow, and I would like to help you. I'll do what I can.

Jack: What does she give me?

Janine: Um...I think she gives you...uh, well, I don't think she gives it to you here, but I think it's a thing that, like, will arrive at your farm the next day. I think that it is... [laughs quietly] I think that it's one of those miniature donkeys, [Jack laughs] and it has, like, a

floral wreath around its neck, like dried flowers, and...yeah, it's, like, a little bit older looking. Like, it's not a young small donkey, but yeah. It's that.

Jack: Amazing. Amazing. Wait, it's a real donkey, or it's a model donkey?

Janine: What? [Ali laughs]

Jack: I'm confused. I spaced out.

Janine: Real donkeys are mortal donkeys.

Jack: No. [laughs] Model! Model donkey.

Janine: Oh, no, it's a real— it's a real small donkey.

Jack: Okay, cool. [Ali laughs] Okay. When you said “small,” I think my brain went— and I was still thinking charm in, frankly, the boring sense. So when I heard you say “small donkey,” I thought of, like, a little wooden carved donkey with a wreath, and I was only when you said, “but it's a kind of small sort of donkey,” that I was like, “Ah, this is probably one of those mortal donkeys everyone talks about.” [Ali laughs] But it's good. He's arriving tomorrow.

Ali: How small are we talking?

Janine: I have a picture. I have a picture. I have a picture. I have a picture.

Ali: Okay. Thank you. [laughs]

Janine: This one might be a baby, but it's okay. It still gives you an idea.

Ali: Aw!

Jack: Aw!

Ali: Yeah, that's, like, the size of a dog and not even a very large dog.

Jack: That's just a little guy.

Janine: It's a little guy.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: Beautiful.

Janine: I think this one might be an adult.

Jack: [laughs in delight] That one has—

Ali: Donkeys aren't that big.

Jack: Donkeys are—

Janine: These are miniature donkeys. Real donkeys are bigger.

Ali: Okay. [laughs] Okay, okay, okay. Like, because this baby one is, like, almost cat sized. I'm trying—

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: Uh, well...I mean, I guess. Like, a big cat.

Ali: I'm trying to think of, like, the dog breed that would fit here.

Janine: Okay, hang on, here's— I have a size comparison between [**Ali:** Please.] a Poitou donkey and a miniature donkey.

Ali: Okay. [laughs] Oh, perfect. And to scale with... [**Janine:** Yeah.] with a gal. Okay.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: So this—

Janine: It's like a big dog.

Ali: Yeah. But the miniature donkey, like, its back only barely comes up to her hip.

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah. Lovely.

Ali: Beautiful.

Janine: Ooh. Okay, just one last picture.

Ali: Please.

Janine: Because I think this is— [Ali snorts] I think this is the most accurate to scale.

Ali: [laughs quietly] Okay.

Jack: Ohoho!

Ali: Okay.

Jack: Look at them!

Janine: For people looking for this reference, the thing is called “Skagit Valley’s JF Ranch Has Miniature Donkeys Galore,” skagittalk.com. [Ali and Janine laugh] I’m assuming that’s a place.

Ali: Thanks, Skagit Talk. But yeah, the donkey that Ern receives is, like, small enough to fit in, like, maybe not like a tote bag but a weekend bag. [Janine and Ali laugh] At least, you know? Can be handed at dinner table. Or this is delivered to you later, right?

Jack: This is delivered to me later.

Janine: Yeah, yeah.

Jack: To the farm on the next day. God, imagine if the witch just was like, “And I have it here,” and she, like, pushed her chair back and there was a donkey there. [all laugh]

Janine: Oh my god.

Ali: I mean, that seems like it could have been possible.

Jack: I’m not gonna babysit a donkey for this whole party. I’ve got tallyhooing to do or

whatever it's called. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Hallyhooing.

Jack: Hallyhooing.

Ali: Hallyhooing. Okay, yeah. All right, perfect. That's our first momentum scene and a successful one at that.

Jack: Whoo!

Ali: I'm looking forward to the improved adventures of Ern.

Janine: What if this donkey turns it all around?

Ali: Wow. What if this donkey turns it all around?

Jack: [laughs] Me every day on craigslist.com in the Live Animals section. [all laugh]

Ali's Momentum [0:55:08]

Ali: Oh boy. Okay. All right, who are we talking to at this party? I have, like— I have, like, a pretty even spread of momentum, but I don't have the, like, highs and lows like Janine has, [laughs] so I feel like it's kind of hard to figure out where I should focus, but I kind of— you know, my infrastructure is...I have infrastructure relationships already.

Janine: Mm, true, you do.

Jack: Right, the Ronstein Co.?

Ali: Uh huh. Oh, maybe I can...hmm. Maybe I can try to make financial progress with, like, a glassmaker or, like, a carpenter or something, like, trying to purchase— make a deal for, like, cheaper shipping materials? [laughs]

Janine: Mm.

Ali: Is what springs to mind. Yeah, I think I want to do that. I want to find the person who

makes me the bottles that I either collect, like, the cloud humidity in or that the alchemists end up using with my cactuses to sort of, like— I kind of— [laughs] My last letter of last season was me talking to the alchemists and being like, “I know that I owe you one, because I have not grown shit this year,” so I think maybe trying to make this, like, “Oh, you know, if you cut us a deal, we can all— you know, rising tides raise all ships.” [laughs] So, who wants to be an illustrious glassblower?

Jack: I'll be a glassblower.

Ali: Okay. All right, hi. Where would I find you? How would I identify you?

Janine: Lack of eyebrows?

Ali: [laughing] Lack of eyebrows. [Jack laughs] Oh, it would be— I'm the type of person who would do this, which is why I feel like this is easy to think of, but like, maybe Sable's getting, like, a jug of cider or whatever and then, like, commenting on the shape of the glass, and then Jack, whoever you are, is like, “Oh, blah blah blah blah blah,” [laughs] and then she...

Jack: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah. I think they say:

(as **glassblower**): Wow, what a compliment! Wow, thank you! Thanks! Gosh! I didn't— you're clearly someone who has a real discerning eye, as far as glass is concerned and glassblowing!

Ali (as **Sable**): My goodness, I didn't know— were you the designer of this, uh, container?

Jack (as **glassblower**): Conceptualizer, producer, designer, blower, cooler, healer, shipper, packer, seller. The works. Top to bottom, A to B. When you're thinking about glass, you think of me.

Ali (as **Sable**): A one and done shop. You know, those are rare these days.

Jack (as **glassblower**): That's what they say. And, you know, that was the way

my grandfather did it. That was the way my father did it. That's the way I've trained my son to do it, and that's the way he's gonna train his son to do it.

Ali (as **Sable**): Wow. That's, you know, we love—I love, sorry—a Nievelmarch tradition. My name is Miss Butter. It's a pleasure to meet you.

Jack (as **glassblower**): Miss Butter! It's so nice to meet you!

Jack: Pumping your hand up and down enthusiastically. [Ali and Janine laugh]

(as **glassblower**): My name is...

Ooh, I need a glassblowing weirdo's name. [Ali laughs quietly]

g/ My name's Slake. Elliot Slake. S-L-A-K-E, like the crawling creature but with an L instead of an N!

Ali (as **Sable**): What an introduction. You must have practiced that.

Jack (as **Slake**): Well, here and there. Plenty of time when I'm— well, no, see, the thing is, usually I don't have much time on my hands, because I am too busy painting the labels, stoking the ovens for the glass, blowing the glass, packing it carefully into the straw. But when I have time to think, I will rotate a little idea—a little witticism, if you will—around my head.

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, yes. Well, it's very important to keep your mind busy in the type of work we do. You know, I depend on you a little bit. I should thank you for your service, as it were.

Jack (as **Slake**): Is that so? How do you depend upon me? [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Sable**): Well, I'm what you know as a cloud farmer. You might not know. I, uh, I tend to alchemy cactuses—

Jack (as **Slake**): Whoa!

Ali (as **Sable**): And the brews made and bottled down the line are, you

know...our jobs go hand in hand.

Jack (as **Slake**): You're telling me that the brews that you make and bottle from alchemy cactuses are made from the bottles that I design, conceptualize, and blow?

Ali (as **Sable**): Well, you know, I don't know that we...I don't work with the alchemists closely, so I... [laughs softly] I don't know if we work together, dear, but I am fascinated, and, you know, the quality of the bottle does affect the quality of the, um, containts, I always say.

Jack (as **Slake**): That's what I always say too! [Ali laughs] I really think we're like like-minded spirits here. I'm so glad that I ran into you. Sorry, give me a second. [shouting distantly] Lallyhoo! [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **echo**): Whoo! Whoo! Whoo! [Jack and Ali laugh]

Jack (as **Slake**): Oh, isn't it fun to just let out a yelp sometimes! [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Sable**): Yes. Yes. I do appreciate that we still make the time for yallyhoops even in times like these.

Jack (as **Slake**): Even in times like these. You know—

Jack: No, you need to be the one to make the business proposal. I was getting too— [Ali and Jack laugh] I was getting to carried away.

Ali: The trouble of an enthusiastic NPC. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Jack: I know. Just be like, "Well, what if we just go into business together!" [Ali laughs] Sometimes you yallyhoo so hard you write up a full four page business proposal. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Ali (as **Sable**): [clears throat] You know, I wonder if you carry a card or anything? The quality of this glass is fantastic, and I do some bottling myself, because so much rain—well, not rain, but water—coalesces up above, and I've been on the

look for another supplier.

Jack (as **Slake**): Ah! Boy, do I have a card on me. [Ali laughs quietly]

Jack: He takes out of his little waistcoat pocket just, like, a really neat little business card. It's just, you know, got his name, his address, a little picture of the bottle on the back. It's very understated and pleasant. And hands it over.

Janine: Is it made of glass?

Jack: Oh my god. [Ali gasps]

Janine: Is it an etched glass business card?

Jack (as **Slake**): Now, you've gotta be careful with this. [Janine laughs] Look, you've gotta be careful, because this is made of glass, but— and I'll give you a little tip.

Jack: He taps his nose, gives a little wink.

(as **Slake**): Not too careful. I make strong glass, always have. You can tuck it into a pocket and not worry about a single shard. But it is made of glass, so please do be careful. [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh my goodness, this is beautiful.

Ali: And I think she, like, holds it up and taps on it.

(as **Sable**): I know I'm getting ahead of myself, but I must ask. Um, I...

Ali: Ounces exist in— oh, I don't know why I stopped there. [laughs] We don't have to make up a new [**Jack**: Ounces?] unit of measurement on the fly, so I can just say whatever I want. [Jack laughs]

Janine: I used “long tons” before, if that's helpful. [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Sable**): I wonder, does your catalog have room for a six ounce vase?

Vessel? A vase is open at the top. A six ounce vessel.

Jack: Let's roll the dice.

Ali: Please. I have three cards to spend here. You're gonna be taking from the challenge deck, and I'm gonna be taking from my blue deck and not your pink deck.

Jack: Okay.

Ali: I've shuffled all the decks again.

Jack: Now, what card are you...this is a social? What are you spending?

Ali: This is infrastructural. I think?

Jack: Infrastructural.

Ali: No, this is financial. Sorry, sorry, sorry. So, I am looking for a— ooh, uh oh.

Janine: [laughs] Wait, hang on, hang on, hang on, hang on.

Ali: What?

Janine: I need to— there's a— okay. No, I have to...copy image. Just, I think this might be valuable in terms of what our measurements are here. [laughs]

Ali: Oh. [all laugh]

Jack: Janine, can you describe what you've just shared?

Janine: This is from, I think, like, a restaurant supply store. It's meant for, like, ice cream or something.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: And it has the different, like, ounce measurements, and six ounces is, like, the smallest— it's, like, the— oh, I found one that's smaller. I found, like, a four ounce cup.

Ali: Okay, sure.

Janine: For, like, ice cream, and that's, like, a sample cup, kind of.

Ali: Yeah. [laughs] For scale here, the can of seltzer that I have in my hand is a 12 ounce can.

Janine: Okay. [laughs] Yeah. So. [Ali laughs] A tiny little vial. Listen, for alchemical ingredients, I'm not saying it's wrong. I just wanted to make sure that was what you were asking for.

Ali: [laughs] I'll take it. I think, you know, half of a can of water that drips down from condensation on an airplane is, I think, fair?

Jack: Yeah. Yeah.

Ali: Not that that's, like, what you're getting in a year.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: But that's sort of what, you know, if you were gonna divide into containers, you're not getting a ton of...

Janine: That's probably, like, the amount that is used in a single potion or something.

Ali: Yeah, uh huh. And I'm in bad luck here, because you drew a queen of diamonds.

Jack: Of diamonds.

Ali: Which is the suit—

Jack: Very on suit, yeah.

Ali: That I want, right. So I have to get a king of diamonds in this next pull for me to win.

Janine: Or an ace, right?

Ali: Or an ace. And that is a queen of spades. Womp womp.

Janine: Ugh.

Jack: You can spend again, right? Oh, no, you can't, because you don't have the momentum for it?

Ali: I can't. I can't, not in this suit.

Janine: Uh oh.

Ali: I loved this guy! Aw. [laughs]

Jack: Oh god. Uh, god. I think what he says is:

(as **Slake**): Yes, yes, of course, of course! Absolutely, absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. Are you already working with some, uh, some other clients that I might know? I tend to, uh...you know, maybe we could draw up some kind of shared arrangement.

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, um, perhaps. I've been quite, uh, independent so far, you see. I've been working with the Alchemist's Guild directly, so—

Jack (as **Slake**): And the— any connection with the von Ronsteins, by any chance?

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, yes. Yes, a very reliable mechanic for me.

Jack (as **Slake**): Oh, well, no, that won't do. That won't do. That won't do at all. That simply— that simply won't do at all. You know, whenever I think of von Ronstein, I think about shoddy workmanship. I think about a lack of care. I think about a lack of attention, [Ali laughs quietly] and I am called to mind that time their reverse articulated pickup went completely backwards through my glass cart outside, reducing it to smithereens! I'm simply— I'm sure this simply will not work! Unless you are prepared, you are prepared today, Sable Butter, to disavow all future contact with the Ronsteins in favor of excellent glass. [Ali laughs quietly]

Ali (as **Sable**): Um...um...

Jack (as **Slake**): Will you disavow them?! [Ali and Janine laugh]

Ali (as **Sable**): I...I apologize, sir, but that is not something I'm willing to do.

Jack (as **Slake**): You will not disavow them?!

Ali (as **Sable**): No. No, the Ronsteins have treated me quite nicely. In fact, one of their mechanics laid a cold towel on my head when they found me on... [laughs]

Jack (as **Slake**): [aghast] Cold towel? Then give me back my business card and goodnight! [Ali laughs]

Janine: The tuning fork official walks up behind this person [Jack and Ali laugh] and says:

(as **official**): Well, you can't say disavow. You would have won if you hadn't said disavow, if you'd said tallyhoo— hallyhoo.

Jack (as **Slake**): I don't give a hoot! [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **echo**): Hoot...hoot...hoot... [Jack and Ali laugh]

Ali: Okay, well, that is a waste of my momentum for the season.

Jack: Ah, but we did meet a new weirdo.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Oh, did we. [laughs]

Janine: Love a weirdo.

Ali: Love a weirdo. What's better than this?

Janine: Okay.

Jack: I go to the cave every year, and I meet four weirdos. [all laugh]

Janine's Momentum [1:09:20]

Janine: I think Velvet is gonna take this opportunity to talk to the crees— creestall growers clique. [laughs quietly] The crystal growers clique. And even though she's not— I don't think Velvet is, like, cliquey in that way? I do think that she is sort of...under different circumstances, she would probably see herself as a socialite. So she can kind of, like move— she's comfortable moving it. And she'd like— I think is looking for tips, for hacks, for crystal hacks.

Jack: Hmm.

Ali: Mm.

Janine: From the other growers, to see, like, if they've discovered any, like, fun little tricks or something or, you know? If someone wants to be a crystal— actually, we should probably— what if we had two crystal—? What if we had, like, a little...made it feel like a circle.

Ali: Oh, sure. Yeah.

Jack: Oh my god, yeah.

Ali: Uh huh.

Janine: And Velvet just, like, just sort of elbows her way in, holding a drink. [Ali laughs]

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): Well, hello.

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): Well, the— ooh. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Jack: No, no. You go, you go, you go, you go, you go. I was the glass weirdo.

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): [sighs] Well, you know how the market is trending towards crystalline figures, and I just don't know that the stores understand that the...the pace these things grow at.

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): I couldn't agree more, dear brother. [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): [sighs]

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): Makes me sick. The markets, they just really aren't prepared to put the kind of attention and care to a small crystalline figure of a mermaid on a cliff that we are.

Janine (as **Velvet**): It does— yeah, it takes a long time to get the large ones, mm-hmm.

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): Hmm?

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): Right, and then we grow these big crystals, and what do they do? They break them apart. What's the point?

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): What's the point? At that point, you might as well get a large crystalline statue of a mermaid on a cliff.

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): I get it. Crystals are beautiful. Ugh.

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): Ugh.

Janine (as **Velvet**): So you're...are you struggling to get crystals that size on your farm?

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): [sighs] Well, it's just the matter of investment, you know?

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): Of investment.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Mm, mm-hmm.

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): It takes six months to grow a [laughing] 62 ounce crystal.

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): On our farm, we measure crystals by... [Jack and Ali

laugh quietly]

Janine: By volume.

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): By volume.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Uh huh.

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): And, you know, if they wanted smaller crystals, I could have— I could send them six one-ounce crystals every month.

Ali: I don't know what I'm saying anymore. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): You're doing good, dear brother. He just— he gets into his own head about this. It's a very hard time for us.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Is it?

Jack (as **crystal grower 2**): I don't think I caught your name.

Janine (as **Velvet**): I'm Velvet Lunde. I'm...

Janine: Oh, god, did I name the plot that she was on? I feel like I named the plot she was on.

Ali: I think it's in one of the earlier letters, yeah.

Janine: Yeah. Uh...I don't know. I don't know what it is. Oh, it's B38. Source B38. [Ali laughs quietly]

(as **Velvet**): I'm on farm B38.

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): [understanding] B38.

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): Oh boy. Under the...

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): Oh.

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): That's under a real farm, right?

Janine (as **Velvet**): This is a real farm.

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): No, but, you know.

Janine (as **Velvet**): What we do is real farms.

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): No, but you know, all the minerals get pulled up above, and it's just...ugh.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, that hasn't been too much of an issue with that farm, unfortunately for them.

Jack (as **crystal grower 1**): [sighs] I've heard about that farm above B38. It's a bad business. I'm glad to hear it hasn't been going as badly for you as it could have been. I'm Miranda Fel.

Ali (as **crystal grower 2**): And I'm, uh...Joe John.

Jack (as **Miranda**): We have different surnames, because—

Ali (as **Joe**): Joe John Fel, sorry. [laughs]

Jack (as **Miranda**): We have different surnames.

Janine: I can't believe there's a JoJo here.

Jack (as **Miranda**): But it's always a pleasure to meet another crystal grower, although, you know, I wish you could have seen us at better times.

Janine (as **Velvet**): So it's a recent downturn for you. I've been experiencing the opposite. I've had a recent upturn. I would love to...if we could pool our knowledge and maybe find some equilibrium for both of us.

Ali (as **Joe**): A recent upturn, huh?

Janine (as **Velvet**): Mm-hmm.

Jack (as **Miranda**): [suspicious] A recent upturn, huh?

Ali (as **Joe**): I haven't heard a lot of, uh, crystals coming out of B39 recently.

Jack (as **Miranda**): And B37, of course, had that bad business.

Ali (as **Joe**): I heard all you have is glitter.

Jack (as **Miranda**): I heard all you have is dust. [Janine laughs quietly]

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, that was true a year ago, but as I've said, things have turned around.

Ali (as **Joe**): So you're offering information, then?

Jack (as **Miranda**): Are you offering tips? [Ali laughs quietly]

Janine (as **Velvet**): I think what would be beneficial is if we could compare notes. I could go to your plot. You could come to mine.

Jack (as **Miranda**): Oof.

Janine (as **Velvet**): We could perhaps see what's changed recently that could affect things and try and even out the commerce or even out the results that we're getting.

Jack (as **Miranda**): Well, we have very...

Janine (as **Velvet**): It's not a competition here. This is a mutually beneficial arrangement.

Ali: Do we want to pull cards?

Janine: I want to pull cards. [Ali laughs] I'm pulling from my deck?

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Yep.

Janine: Okay.

Jack: Ali, do you want to pull one from the challenge deck?

Ali: Yeah. I'll grab— yeah. And this is social momentum for you, so we're looking for hearts.

Janine: Oh, this was gonna be spade. This was gonna be spade.

Ali: Oh, so that's finan—

Janine: Agricultural.

Ali: Agricultural, okay, okay.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Okay.

Janine: I got an eight of diamonds.

Ali: That is a four of clubs. You win. You just win.

Janine: Okay. Sick.

Ali: Agricultural, right? So it's both of them are out of suit, and you have the higher number.

Janine: Yeah. All right.

Ali: Wahoo. Let's do it.

Janine: You're really into wahoo lately.

Ali: [laughing] I know. I don't know why I'm...I'm in my Mario area, I think. I don't know. I don't know why I'm being...

Jack: [laughs] I'm in my Mario area. Oh, right, Luigi for—

Janine: Part of a room that's just Mario decor.

Ali: [laughs] Meant to say "era."

Jack: Mm.

Ali: [laughs] I, uh...

Janine: What were their names, again? Melissa and Joe John?¹

Jack: Miranda.

Janine: Oh, Miranda.

Jack: And Joe John Fell. Or maybe it was Melinda Fel. I think it was Melinda Fell, F-E-L, like a fel wind.

Janine: Ah.

Ali: And John Joe Fel.

Janine: John— oh, John Joe. [typing]

Ali: John Joe. [laughs] Anyway, I thought of a shitty answer to you, because I was playing a shitty person, but now you won, so I have to be nice. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Jack (as **Melinda**): Hmm.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack (as **Melinda**): What do you think, brother?

Ali (as **John**): [suspicious] You say you had an uptick, huh?

Jack (as **Melinda**): [suspicious] Ah, things have been getting better, have they?

¹ Names are changed here and upcoming dialogue reflects this.

[Janine laughs quietly]

Janine (as **Velvet**): I don't know why you keep saying it like it's so sinister. [Ali laughs quietly]

Ali (as **John**): Do we seem sinister? I'm sorry. We, uh...people say that about us.

Janine (as **Velvet**): I have a sinister uncle on my dad's side, so I get it. Sometimes it just happens, but yeah, it's fine.

Jack (as **Melinda**): We were born under a dark star.

Ali (as **John**): Mm, hmm, mm-hmm.

Jack (as **Melinda**): My brother and I.

Ali (as **John**): [sinisterly] Come through whenever you'd like.

Jack (as **Melinda**): [sinisterly] You're always welcome.

Janine: *Crimson Peak*-ass motherfuckers. [all laugh]

Jack: Oh yes, our plot name. [laughs quietly]

(as **Melinda**): Yes, due to the quality of the rubies that we produce, we are known as the Blood Quarter. [Janine laughs]

Ali (as **John**): Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. [sinisterly] And we'd love to show you our troubles. [Jack and Ali laugh]

Janine (as **Velvet**): [thrown off] Okay. That's very evocative. Um... [Ali and Jack laugh] I'll arrange a visit.

Jack: You ever get halfway through a scene and go, "Oh, vampires!" [Ali and Janine laugh]

Janine: Yeah, you know what? You know who'd be great at farming in caves?

Vampires. That's a great lifestyle for them.

Ali: You know what? Uh huh.

Jack: Oh, vampires! I see! [Ali and Janine laugh]

Ali: Wonderful. A successful scene. Great. Love this. Oh, I should take your thingy out. That was a...agricultural.

Janine: Yes.

Ali: I'm going to the gold deck. I'm looking at your spades. I'm taking out a spade of...jack of spades. Deleted. Cool. Okay, and then recall. Who's up next?

Jack's Momentum [1:18:02]

Jack: I'm trying to think of what a social scene for Ern would be.

Ali: Oh, yeah.

Jack: He made friends with—

Janine: Ern's gotta make some more friends, yeah.

Jack: Yeah, he made friends with Melissa Miles last time.

Ali: Oh, right. At the end of this, we also have to decide our friend friends.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Oh! I have an idea. [laughs quietly] Who wants to— oh, you should both be— this should be the two of you. [Ali laughs] Okay. I'm just gonna throw— I'm just gonna go into it. You'll be fine. [Ali laughs quietly] I'm gonna try and spend a social momentum. Ern comes up to the two of you and says:

(as **Ern**): I'm so sorry. Did I overhear— are you part of a book group?

Ali (as **book person**): Oh, yes. Yes, we're meeting again, um, just tomorrow

night.

Jack (as **Ern**): Oh, wow! I didn't know that there was a book group, here in Nievelmarch.

Ali (as **book person**): [laughs quietly] You thought we had an entire city without one book club?

Jack (as **Ern**): Well, I mean— [laughs awkwardly] okay, um...well, when you... [Ali laughs] When you put I like that, I suppose that does seem [**Janine**: Damn.] like a bit of a misapprehension. I just, I've been working on the farm, and I haven't really had a chance to sort of get to know the social life, but I've always been a big reader, and, you know, it's great to hear. Do you have many members?

Janine: Wait, sorry, who are we playing as?

Jack: Book club people.

Ali: Just some folks, yeah. [laughs]

Janine: Oh, okay. I thought— because you walked up— okay. I thought it was— I thought this was Sable and Velvet, and I was like, “Are we in a book club?”

Ali: No, I'm just playing some other jerk.

Janine: “Did I forget that much?”

Ali: No, yeah.

Janine: Okay. All right. [Ali laughs quietly]

Ali (as **book person**): Um, well, our little group...

Ali: Squinting at Janine's character.

(as **book person**): Has about a dozen, I'd say. But if you're looking for

opportunities, have you been to the bakery with the big train in it?

Jack: The Glacier Express? The Glacier...

Ali: The Glacier Expre...? The Glacier...

(as **book person**): Have you been to the Glacier, dear?

Jack: The Glacier. Ern's life in Nievelmarch could not be further removed from the experience of the Glacier. [Ali laughs quietly] So he says:

(as **Ern**): No.

Ali (as **book person**): [sighs] You haven't been to Nievelmarch, if you haven't been to the Glacier.

Jack (as **Ern**): Wha—

Janine (as **other book person**): You must go. You must go.

Janine: I want to say I'm playing, like, a late middle-aged man with, like, a tiny pair of, like, pince-nez spectacles. [Jack laughs] Completely bald. Has, like, a Colonel Sanders tie, like one of those, like, big— it's like a thin bow. [Ali laughs] This is the vibe I'm doing.

Janine (as **book man**): You must go. You must go. I will pay for your trip myself, just if only to have someone to talk to about the blondies.

Ali (as **book person**): [entranced] Oh, the blondies this year.

Janine (as **book man**): The blondies. [Ali laughs]

Jack (as **Ern**): Well, uh...I don't really— it's very kind of you, but I'm not really one for hiking.

Ali (as **book person**): [laughs]

Janine (as **book man**): Hiking?

Ali (as **book person**): Oh, you're a funny one, aren't you? The Glacier is a bakery, my dear.

Janine (as **book man**): Ohoho! It's a joke, aha! [Ali laughs]

Jack: It was not a joke from Ern.

Ali: [laughs] No.

Jack: Ern doesn't know what is happening. [laughs]

Ali: I think I'm playing sort of a nondescript woman in her early 50s who you look at and are either like, she's a librarian or the CEO, the mean girlboss CEO of a movie. [all laugh] She cuts completely down that edge.

Ali (as **book woman**): Well, I mention it because there's...there's a board there where you can find events and such, and I believe, in the wintertime, they'll start doing storytime hours to line up with the market days, but you really must go. Oh, the fall menu is only for about a week, I'd say, before it changes over with the season.

Janine: [laughs quietly] I'm sorry, have we locked Ernan out of joining this book club by being like, "Oh, you could go to storytime."

Ali: No, no, no, no! [laughs] I think we were leaning into, like, being like, "Oh, you have to enjoy the city. What's wrong with you?"

Janine: [laughs quietly] Okay.

Ali: [laughs] But maybe we have. Maybe we have. How do we get there? Because—okay. Is this where we do the pull? Because I was about to be like, "Oh, come with us. We're gonna go..."

Jack: Yeah, this is great.

Ali: Right.

Jack: Because if this fails...

Ali: "Come tomorrow, and then we'll go to the bakery after," would be the yes.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: And then no would be like, "[laughs mockingly] Have a good time there, loser."

[Janine and Jack laugh]

Janine: Oh my god.

Ali: And then Ern just—

Jack: Actually, I won't pay for you to go.

Ali: Ern just sitting alone in the Glacier Express like, "Yeah, this is fine, I guess."

[laughs]

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: [sadly] Mm-hmm.

Jack: I spent too much money for a pumpkin drink. [Ali laughs] Okay.

Ali: And down the street, there's a mall. I hate the mall. [Jack and Ali laugh] Okay. Draw your card.

Jack: Okay. I'm gonna draw my card. I'm looking for social. Oh! I've drawn a 10 of hearts. [Ali gasps] That's fairly high for hearts.

Ali: Oh.

Janine: Ooh.

Ali: Okay, yeah, let's see. I'm drawing here. You win!

Janine: Nice.

Ali: That's a clean win. I drew a six of spades.

Janine (as **book man**): Here, here, I have a copy of the book that we've been talking about this month. It's called, uh, *The Dog of the Crossroads*.

Jack (as **Ern**): You're not going to believe this. *The Dog of the Crossroads* was my favorite book [Ali gasps] when I was 15 years old.

Janine (as **book man**): Oh my goodness.

Jack (as **Ern**): I used to dress up as the Dog of the Crossroads on character day. [all laugh]

Janine (as **book man**): Well, that is quite a coincidence, isn't it?

Ali (as **book woman**): Oh my goodness. You would make such a splash if you came and joined us tomorrow. You must. Please.

Jack (as **Ern**): What chapter are you on?

Janine: I thought you were gonna say you'd make such a splash if you came in costume. [all laugh]

Jack (as **Ern**): What chapter are you on? Have the murders started yet?

Janine (as **book man**): Oh, yes. We're about two murders in.

Ali (as **book woman**): Mm, mm-hmm. Yes.

Jack (as **Ern**): Ohoho! Only a fifth of the way there! [Ali and Janine laugh]

Ali (as **book woman**): Oh, dear, Ern, was it? Tell me, are you free tomorrow evening? Because we can go to our little session, and then a smaller group of us dissipates and usually ends up at the Glacier to top off the conversation.

Jack: The camera suddenly cuts to a title card saying, "Ern, last week, Wednesday evening," and he's just sitting at his kitchen table. [all laugh]

Janine: Aw.

Ali: The sun is going down.

Jack: [laughs] It's getting gloomy. He's like:

Jack (as **Ern**): Yes, yes, I'd love to. That would be lovely. That would be lovely.
And, you know, as the bishop says in Chapter 2: can't get any worse than this!

Ali (as **book woman**): [laughs]

Janine (as **book man**): [laughs] How wrong he was.

Jack (as **Ern**): [laughs] And how wrong he was!

Ali: Oh, Ern. Okay! [laughs]

Jack: Amazing! I've made some friends. We love *The Dog of the Crossroads*.

Janine: We didn't say their— what are their names?

Ali: [laughs] We did not say what their names are. Oh, oh. Sorry. I hid your deck instead of [laughs] doing what I should have done with it. That's a great question. I don't know, but they do need names. You're right.

Janine: They do. I'm gonna— I'm really quick just looking up a— I want, like, a cool random— I want some wild shit. I want that wild shit. [Ali laughs]

Jack: The Nievelmarch book club.

Janine: Siegbert Planque.

Jack: Yep!

Ali: Wow.

Janine: Planque is spelled P-L-A-N-Q-U-E. [Ali laughs]

Jack: What's your character's name?

Ali: Mine is going to be Audrey Ruth.

Jack: Amazing. Siegbert Planque and Audrey Ruth, from the book club.

Ali: [laughs] And I've deleted the jack of hearts from your deck, so.

Jack: That's wonderful. Ah, great! A W for Ern.

Ali: [laughs] That's— yeah, you've succeeded at both of your...at your things today.

Jack: Yeah. I got a donkey and some book friends.

Ali: [laughs] Oh no, what are you gonna do tomorrow— well, I guess you're gonna get the donkey in the morning, donkey's gonna go to sleep, and then you're gonna go out and party.

Jack: Yeah, absolutely. It's, you know.

Janine: It's not a high maintenance donkey. I don't think the witch would do that to you.
[Ali laughs] You know, you won that roll. I'm not gonna take that from you.

Ali: Uh huh. Yes. Yes, yes, yes. Why do I have PALISADE sheets open? Okay. Perfect. Okay, so, we have...I have one more— I have two more scenes, technically, and Velvet, you also have two more scenes?

Janine: Yes.

Ali: And then, Ern, you have one more, but it has to be with one of us.

Ali's Momentum [1:27:32]

Ali: Okay. I want to go for infrastructural progress here, but I really have to think about what that's gonna be. Um...what is infrastructural about the work that I do that isn't mechanic?

Janine: Shipping logistics?

Ali: Right. Yeah, that's sort of what I pursued last time with the mean glass guy. [laughs]
Maybe it's a thing of...is there cave fog? Is there cave mist?

Jack: Whoa.

Ali: I was like— [laughs] For some reason my head is like...

Janine: There could be, like, a hot spring or something, where there's, like, steam.

Ali: Ohh.

Janine: Like a steam vent kind of thing?

Ali: Like a steam vent kind of thing. Yeah, I was thinking of somebody who would help with, like, pest control? Or maybe temperature control? But I don't know. [laughs]

Janine: I imagine it would get cold up in the air, and maybe, like, a pipeline of, like, geothermal heating stuff would be a thing?

Ali: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Janine: Like a pipe going up into the sky, I guess? [laughs quietly]

Ali: Uh huh. Yeah, I wonder if I see someone who's essentially putting, like, dry ice into, like, what partygoers are using as sort of, like, a bath? [laughs]

Jack: What?

Janine: You know, just a party bath.

Ali: Yeah. [laughs] Party hot tubs are a thing.

Janine: That's true, yeah.

Ali: You know.

Janine: We did party hot tub relatively recently.

Ali: We literally did that, yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: You just sit down and kind of put your feet in and talk about Washington D.C. for a little while. [laughs]

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: Lovely.

Janine: Normal.

Ali: So, so yeah. Maybe Sable has sort of wandered over to this thing and takes her heels off and kind of places them on the edge to kind of get off of her feet, but then she's sort of watching the work that this person is doing, and once she notices they sort of don't seem caught up in the activity anymore, she approaches like:

(as **Sable**): I'm sorry to approach you to discuss work at this sort of thing, but I feel like that's what we all tend to do.

Jack (as **worker**): [sighs] Yep. Same old, same old, these events. You know, Arnold gets all the people together. Supposed to be a relaxing time, but you know how it always ends up.

Ali (as **Sable**): Right. Right, well have our interests. Might I ask: what are you doing? That seems like such fascinating work.

Jack (as **worker**): Well, it's, you know. You gotta keep the balance right.

Ali (as **Sable**): The balance, you say.

Jack (as **worker**): Well, the mineral balance, the heat balance, the, uh, you know. Of course, water is its own form of life.

Ali (as **Sable**): [laughs quietly] Oh, yes, yes. I'm a cloud farmer, you see, so I'm quite familiar with the, uh...the, uh...fertility of water. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Ugh.

Ali: I was really looking for something that wasn't fertility!

Jack: She wrinkles her brow. [Ali laughs]

Jack (as **worker**): Eh, well, I don't know that I meant alive in quite that sense, but I catch your drift.

Ali (as **Sable**): Mm, mm-hmm.

Jack (as **worker**): A cloud farmer, eh?

Ali (as **Sable**): Yes, yes. I, uh...well, I assemble a big patch of the cloud, and things grow within it, but it's quite difficult work, because you're sort of dependant on the weather.

Jack (as **worker**): Mm, mm. It's true. It's true. Not here in the cave though, huh?

Ali (as **Sable**): Yeah. I wonder if something like that might work for me, you know, that the winters might not be so rough on the sprouts.

Jack (as **worker**): Yeah, well, I'm sure there's something you could do there. You know, there are certain combinations of salts, obviously certain combinations of minerals. There's certain wind and air charms that can be put in place. I don't mean to, uh, you know, come down to where you work and knock the tools out of your hand, but I could certainly offer some suggestions.

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, please, yeah. I actually wanted to ask. Are those tablets supplied to you, or do you mix them yourself?

Jack (as **worker**): Oh, I make 'em myself. You know, my family always used to work in chalk. We were a chalk family.

Ali (as **Sable**): [fascinated] Oh, chalk.

Jack (as **worker**): Yeah.

Ali (as **Sable**): You know, I— I'm sorry, go on.

Jack (as **worker**): Oh, my great grandfather held the biggest chalk mine in Nievelmarch until he was, uh...he was driven out, and it's remained in my family. Uh, you know.

Ali (as **Sable**): Yes, yes, I was about to say, I believe I remember reading a, um...a bit of a biography about someone from your family at the time of that change.

Jack (as **worker**): Yes, it was a terrible shame, but you know, good things come from dark times.

Ali (as **Sable**): Yes, yes indeed, and good things come from chance encounters. [Ali laughs] From chance encounters.

Jack (as **worker**): They sure do.

Ali (as **Sable**): I wonder if you wouldn't be willing to lend your services. I'm sorry, you seem very busy. You're working here at this party, but I...

Jack (as **worker**): Yeah, of course. Of course. Absolutely.

Jack: Let's pull a card.

Ali: Yes. [laughs] I love how many people just lie to Sable first when you play them, and then...

Janine: Ah.

Ali: So, I'm searching for infrastructural progress here, which is a clubs. I have pulled a nine of clubs, which is my suit, so I'll win if you get a different suit, which you did! I won!

Jack (as **worker**): Just one thing.

Ali (as **Sable**): Yes.

Jack (as **worker**): I happened to see you earlier, talking to [distastefully] Elliot Slake, that glass salesman. You're not spending any time with him, are you?

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, what a brute. No, no.

Jack (as **worker**): Oh, I'm so glad to hear it. Had you taken on a contract with him, I'm afraid that I couldn't have...you know, after what his family did to my grandfather's family back in the day, I couldn't really conscion it, you know? But given that, I'd be more than happy to come and help you out.

Ali (as **Sable**): I— yes. Well, I, yeah. His work is beautiful, but the personality is unkept.

Jack: The personality is unkept?! [Ali laughs] God damn!

Janine: You've gotta keep your personality if you're gonna be a guy who makes stuff. You just, you do. [Ali laughs]

Jack: You simply got to. Jesus christ, Elliot Slake. Blasted. [Janine laughs]

Ali: I just say things during this game.

Jack: Oh, yeah, no. It's... [Ali laughs]

Janine: No one was complaining.

Jack: That's how— that's trying to stay on the bicycle. Yeah.

Ali: [laughs] Okay. I am deleting a...something. I'm not pulling a card. I am recalling this card. I am shuffling my deck, and then I'm going into a different Roll20 screen to edit the blue deck to delete a jack of clubs. Of clubs! Of clubs. Of clubs. Okay. Hi. [laughs] We're playing *Grandpa's Farm*. Oh, but I think it's actually a queen of clubs, because I got that infrastructural thing from last time with the Vonsteins, so I'm deleting a queen of clubs.

Goodbye to the face card. Okay, cool.

Jack: Great.

Janine's Momentum [1:35:54]

Ali: Does that leave...Velvet?

Janine: Yeah. I think I want a social scene. I think this is, like, a dancing scene. I think this is, like, a...

Ali: Yeah!

Jack: Whoo! [Ali laughs]

Janine: I think this is, like, there's another big dance where everyone's doing the stuff where you spin around, and everyone's holding their arms up, and everyone, like, runs around. There's a lot of, like, partner switching and stuff. And I think Velvet just really jumps into this, and I think, uh...hmm. I think, at the end, there's like a big scramble where everyone has to, like, find a person, and it's tradition to, like, go have a drink with that person and chat a little bit as sort of, like, a...it's very much like a mix and mingle, like, trying to...it's a game that exists to, like, try and set people up a bit, I think.

Ali: Mm-hmm. Who's the lucky pal?

Janine: I think it's the mushroom lady. [Ali gasps, Jack laughs in delight] It's like a— because I imagine the end is, like, sort of a musical chairs thing, of like, you just have to grab who you can grab.

Ali: Uh huh.

Janine: [laughs] If you don't want to end up like— because probably an uneven number of people or something? I don't know.

Ali: Right. And it would be rude to, like, be face to face with this lady and then try to, like, scramble away, and...

Janine: Yeah, you just, like...

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: I imagine both of them just, like, spinning around, ready to grab someone, and then it's just like, "Ah, fuck." [Ali laughs]

Jack: Ah, god. Do you want to pick up at that moment, or do you want to pick up as we're at the bar having a drink?

Janine: I think we should pick up at the bar, probably.

Jack (as **Ulna**): [awkwardly] So, uh...you been doing anything interesting?

Janine (as **Velvet**): Um, well, you know, I don't know how much you'd heard about what's going on at my farm, but I've had a—

Jack (as **Ulna**): [darkly] Oh, I've heard.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Brisk trade in fossils, for a while. It's been interesting.

Jack (as **Ulna**): A brisk trade in fossils. People are interested in old bones.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Yeah, surprisingly quite a few people.

Jack (as **Ulna**): Huh. How interesting.

Janine (as **Velvet**): There's a lot of novelty to them, you know? Sometimes you—there's variety too. Sometimes it's a big shell. Sometimes it's just a gigantic tooth. Sometimes it's a jawbone bigger than your arm. It's an interesting field.

Jack (as **Ulna**): Well, I don't know how comfortable I would be knowing that I was selling to necromancers.

Janine (as **Velvet**): [laughs quietly] I don't know that I'm selling to necromancers.

Jack (as **Ulna**): At least in my line of work, it's, you know, only poisoners every so

often, but necromancers, really?

Janine (as **Velvet**): Oh, it's not— I don't think it's necromancers. If it was necromancers, there would be a lot of giant monsters walking around, and I don't think that's the case. Well, there's the ones that are naturally in the area, but beyond that, [laughs quietly] I don't think it's happening. Some people just...well, just because someone has an interest in bones doesn't make them a necromancer.

Jack (as **Ulna**): Well...well...well, I don't...I don't know. You know, I'm not the one who's saying these things. I'm just repeating what I've heard others say. You know.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, to say that someone who's interested in bones is a necromancer is like saying someone who's interested in mushrooms is a poisoner. There are a lot of [crosstalk] mushrooms that aren't poisonous. There are a lot of bones that are—

Jack (as **Ulna**): [crosstalk] And what's wrong with a bit of poisoning? [Janine laughs]

Janine (as **Velvet**): Many— uh— hmm.

Janine: This feels like the moment that we draw cards, to be honest. [Jack and Ali laugh]

Jack: Holy shit.

Ali: Wow.

Janine: How Velvet responds to “what's wrong with poisoning?”.

Jack: Holy shit. [Ali laughs] Okay.

Janine: Oh. Jack's deck got moved to the bottom somehow.

Ali: Oh.

Janine: I think I'm gold, right? I'm the gold deck?

Jack: Yeah, you're gold.

Ali: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: Ooh! I've drawn a very high off-suit card.

Janine: Eeh...I drew a low off-suit card in the same suit. I'm gonna draw again.

Ali: You can draw up to five times, yeah.

Janine: I do, I do. That's also not good. A king of spades. I guess that— does that win?
I guess that wins.

Jack: Uh...

Ali: Um, yeah, because they're—

Janine: They're both off suit, but...

Ali: They're both off suit, yeah. Higher card wins. [Jack laughs quietly]

Janine: I think Velvet laughs and says, like:

(as **Velvet**): That's very funny. I...

Janine: Like, plays it off like a joke. Like,

Janine (as **Velvet**): [laughing slightly] "What's wrong with poison," that's a good one. [awkwardly] Haha.

Jack (as **Ulna**): [awkwardly] Haha ha. [Janine laughs]

Ali: [laughs] Love to have a normal time.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, then what's wrong with necromancers?

Jack (as **Ulna**): [scandalized] What's wrong with necromancers?

Janine (as **Velvet**): I would go to dinner with a necromancer before I'd go to dinner with a poisoner, and I think you would too.

Jack (as **Ulna**): Well, maybe you don't know something about me, which is that over the last 35 years, by feeding myself very small poisonous mushrooms, I'm actually unpoisonable, so I would go to dinner with a poisoner, if I thought they'd be interesting. [Janine laughs quietly] Put that in your pipe and smoke it, crystal farmer. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Janine (as **Velvet**): What if they used a non-mushroom-based poison?

Jack (as **Ulna**): You can't kill me with poison! It's simply not possible. The poisons found in mushrooms are found everywhere else in all kinds of poison in the world, and I'd know.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, now it just sounds like you're daring me.

Jack (as **Ulna**): To poison me?

Janine (as **Velvet**): [laughs quietly] Yes.

Jack (as **Ulna**): Give it a try. You can't. [Ali laughs]

Janine (as **Velvet**): All right. Let's make a dinner appointment—

Janine: A dinner appointment? [Ali laughs]

(as **Velvet**): We'll go out for dinner, and I'll see if I can poison you.

Ali: This is insane rizz. [laughs]

Jack (as **Ulna**): Oho! I've heard that offer many times before, and I've never died once! Not even got a little bit sick. I'm unpoisonable.

Janine (as **Velvet**): We'll see. We'll see, won't we?

Jack (as **Ulna**): Here. Take my card.

Janine: Is it made of mushroom?

Jack: It's in the shape of a mushroom. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Janine (as **Velvet**): This is cute.

Ali: Okay. I am going to the gold deck, and I am removing a something of hearts.

Janine: The business card's not poisoned, right?

Jack: No. As far as I know, no. [Janine laughs] Wouldn't you like to know?

Janine: What was her name, again?

Jack: This woman's name is Ulna, like the bone. Ulna Parran, P-A-R-R-A-N.

Ali: I think you got a successful social scene with Ern, last time around? So you might not have anymore heart faces.

Jack: Oh, damn. All the heart faces gone? What happens in that case?

Ali: Well, I'm not seeing a jack, and I'm not seeing a queen, but Roll20 is weird about the orders on this stuff. Yeah, I only see a king and an ace of hearts.

Janine: Oh, it might just be that I've done two social scenes and had that taken out.

Ali: Yeah. How would you have gotten two, though?

Janine: I mean, we've had two festivals.

Ali: Oh, right.

Janine: The other one might have been, like, making the social connection with the guy, the rich guy or something?

Ali: Oh, maybe, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. I just, we had one festival before this, so I wondered how you would get...like, if I fucked up somewhere along the line. But I'm gonna take this king out, and that's gaming.

Janine: That's gaming.

Ali: That's gaming. So, the only face heart card that you have left is an ace, so.

Janine: All right.

Jack: Oh, damn. Extremely sociable. Like, you described her earlier as a socialite, which is, you know, this is reflected in the way that she is kind of sailing through these social challenges.

Janine: She would definitely *like* to be a socialite.

Jack: And, you know, sometimes you become a socialite by inviting the woman around and trying to poison her.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Yeah, you played that. I gotta...I gotta follow Velvet around. [Jack and Ali laugh]

Sable and Ern [1:44:46]

Ali: But yeah, I think that I also have a pretty straightforward social scene. Ern, you also just have your one with us, right?

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: Okay. Because I was gonna try to make social progress with Ern.

Jack: Oh, nice.

Ali: Yeah. And I feel like this can be another dance setup, because we're late in the evening, and I think that this is like, the, like, sort of partner switch, and then Ern and Sable are suddenly dancing with each other, and it's later in the evening, and Sable's a

little tipsy, and she goes:

(as **Sable**): Oh, Ern!

Jack (as **Ern**): Sable!

Ali (as **Sable**): [laughs quietly] Hi.

Jack (as **Ern**): Hi! How's the party been?

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, it's been wonderful. We're still meeting at the entrance at the top of the hour, yes?

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah, although I was thinking, I don't know, if we can find Velvet, we could maybe see if we could stay for another half hour or something.

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, you don't say? [laughs]

Jack (as **Ern**): No, I'm having a good time. I joined a book club.

Ali (as **Sable**): A book club! Ern!

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah. A lady gave me a donkey.

Ali (as **Sable**): [taken aback] Wonderful. [Janine laughs] I actually— [laughs lightly] I had a favor to ask you.

Jack (as **Ern**): Oh.

Ali (as **Sable**): Yes, yes. You know, I've...

Ali: [laughs] And they're like...they're in a dance. She's doing this awkward thing where they're, like, doing the thing where they're both holding their arm to one side, and like, Ern is suddenly behind her for some reason, and then going forward again. [Jack laughs]

(as **Sable**): Yes, I've been getting the magazines from my old office each time I

go down to the town, but it's been terribly out of the way for me, and I was wondering if I couldn't perhaps have them delivered to you and then pick them up? [Janine laughs quietly]

Jack (as **Ern**): Oh.

Ali (as **Sable**): You're basically just downstairs.

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah, yeah. I mean, yeah, totally. [Ali laughs] Just go right ahead, basically.

Janine: This social scene being “Can I use you as a forwarding address?” [Ali laughs]

Jack (as **Ern**): I, uh...you know, some of the— I try and put some of the mail in the hole, just to sort of, like, you know, one for me, one for it.

Ali (as **Sable**): [uncomfortable] Oh. Uh huh.

Jack (as **Ern**): But, you know, if you're okay with, you know, just one of the magazines occasionally— I'll try and keep it to my stuff. You know, I don't want to get you involved in something that you don't necessarily want to be involved with. [Ali laughs] You know, I'm happy to— I'm happy to.

Ali: Let's draw these cards. [laughs]

Jack: Ah, fuck, I lied to you again!

Ali: [laughs] I just drew a king of spades, which is a very high off-suit, which might win this for me, so long as you don't draw anything of— [gasps] Oh no! [laughs] I think ties lose? I lose a tie?

Jack: What happens to ties?

Ali: Oh, let me double check. I'm pretty—

Janine: Ties do lose. Ties lose.

Ali: Yeah, ties lose. Aw.

Jack (as **Ern**): I don't have a mailbox.

Jack: Says Ern. [Ali laughs]

(as **Ern**): I just remembered that my mailbox, I don't have one.

Janine: I don't know that you even need to go that far.

Ali: Yeah, I—

Janine: Because I think if you say, like, [**Ali:** Yeah.] “Hey, you can send me your mail, but sometimes I'm gonna throw your magazine in a hole.” [Jack laughs]

Ali: Right, I was—

Janine: You would be like, “Oh, okay.”

Ali: Yeah, I was drawing that card for Sable's response. [laughs]

Jack: Yeah. Great.

Ali: Which is...

(as **Sable**): Oh. Oh, yes. I think, um, you know, it's quite, uh...it's quite valuable work, and maybe your hole would, um, feel better informed. You know, I'll have to look at my, um...my subscription documents and get things adjusted, but...thank you! Thank you, Ern.

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah, you let me know.

Ali (as **Sable**): Yes. Yes, I'm glad you're enjoying yourself tonight. The donkey, you said...

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah!

Ali (as **Sable**): Staying above—

Jack (as **Ern**): A witch gave it to me.

Ali (as **Sable**): Right. Those don't go in holes, you know.

Jack (as **Ern**): Hmm? [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Sable**): The donkey. You know, it'll have to be brushed and cared for and fed and...I'm being rude. You seem quite nurturing.

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah. Yeah. Well, I'm gonna...it's good. It's a charm.

Ali (as **Sable**): Uh huh. Yes. Yes, well, I'll see you in about an hour past, then.

Jack (as **Ern**): Okay, sounds good. Have a good night!

Ali (as **Sable**): Yes.

Janine: Bye, Ern. Don't sacrifice the donkey!

Ali: [laughs] And we have a failed social scene, so.

Jack: Augh.

Ali: I do not...I've completely fallen on my face with both of you, two years running. Now it's up for you guys to determine how you're gonna...

Ern and Velvet [1:50:02]

Jack: Hmm. So, I have a financial...financial progress. [laughs eagerly] I need to ask one of you for a loan.

Ali: The numbers are clear here. Don't look at me. Well, I— well...

Janine: I was actually going to— I had been like, “Oh, I would like a scene where Velvet, like, can invest in Ern or something,” but I was like, “I don't know how to initiate— I don't know how to do that, because that seems like an Ern thing.” So that's actually perfect.

Jack: Where do I find you?

Janine: Um...I think, at this point, Velvet is...hmm. I think Velvet is in the chamber next to the Hallyhoo chamber, and I think she's, like, maybe playing some sort of variation on shuffleboard.

Jack: Wow.

(as **Ern**): Velvet, have you got a moment?

Janine (as **Velvet**): Oh, yeah, I suck at this, so, sure.

Jack (as **Ern**): [hesitates] I'm not gonna beat around the bush. I think that my luck is turning.

Janine (as **Velvet**): I hope so.

Jack (as **Ern**): Because I've had a pretty— I've had a pretty bad few years, and— but, you know, I got given a donkey by a witch. I've joined a book club.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Those both sound like fun things.

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah, and I really want to, like, turn this energy into, like...like, success, you know?

Janine (as **Velvet**): Mm-hmm.

Jack (as **Ern**): So, I was wondering...I was wondering if you'd be able to lend me some money. You know, the last couple of years, I've bought seeds, and I've put them in the ground. Nothing's come from it, and I'm gonna be honest, my savings are just...in the hole. And so, I need some money to buy some seeds, and I think, I *think*, I think this is the year. And, you know, I'll pay you back whether or not I manage to grow anything. You don't need to worry about that. I'll make it happen. But, you know, you seem to be doing okay, and I know things went really well with the fossils, and then you had those—

Janine (as **Velvet**): Mm-hmm.

Jack (as **Ern**): Those crystals from an unusual source. So I thought maybe I could just turn to you.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, the first thing I would say is that you shouldn't be putting your savings in the hole.

Jack (as **Ern**): They have to go in there. [Ali laughs]

Janine (as **Velvet**): Oh. Okay. Well, that doesn't inspire a lot of confidence.

Janine: We've gotta draw cards, for this answer.

Jack: Ern's been having a really, really great time at this party.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Jack: But as soon as he talks about the demonic hole in the backyard, people just clam right up. [Ali laughs quietly] Okay. Ooh, I've drawn a king of diamonds, but oh no. [Ali gasps]

Janine: But, no, but you get it, because this is a money thing, right?

Jack: Oh, this is financial! Yeah!

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: I'm so used to it being a social thing. I—

Janine: So you're on suit.

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: Well, congratulations.

Ali: A win for Ern. Whoa!

Janine (as **Velvet**): Okay, Ern. I...you know? [Ali laughs quietly] I was in the same situation, right? The stuff was going real bad and real weird for me, and then it did turn around, and like, I would love to pay that forward.

Janine: The movie *Pay It Forward* exists in Nievelmarch, apparently. [all laugh]

(as **Velvet**): Listen, if you promise not to put any of my investment in the hole, [Ern sighs] then I'll lend you some money to help you kind of get a foothold.

Ali: Do you promise to disavow the hole? [laughs]

Janine: You don't have to disavow the hole. You just can't put any of my money in it.

Ali: No, I know. [laughs]

Janine: Very different.

Jack: This is hard. Ern is starting to get afraid about what happens if you don't put stuff in the hole.

Ali: Aw.

Jack: But I think he is so desperate for the farm to go good that he says:

(as **Ern**): Yeah. I'll make it work. None of your money goes in the hole. None of *your* money goes in the hole, but maybe I invest some, you know? Maybe I...don't you worry about it. None of your money's going in the hole. Thank you, Velvet.

Janine: All right.

Jack (as **Ern**): And I'm gonna— you know, I'm gonna grow— I can't really grow stuff— the witch doesn't want me growing anything of, like, “fruit of the earth” or something, so I think it's gonna be, like, beans and peas and stuff like that. Brussels sprouts, stuff like that. But that's what I'm gonna try.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Cool. I hope it works out for you.

Jack (as **Ern**): Okay, well. I think it's probably time to go.

Jack: Oh, wait, no, is it? Or is there more scenes?

Ali: Um, that was your social...

Jack: That was my last, but I don't want to be like...

Ali: Yeah. I think Velvet has one more that can be with one of us.

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: Okay. Cool, but I need to have a diamond taken out of my deck.

Ali: I just did that, yeah.

Jack: Nice. Thank you.

Ali: I do have to recall these cards, though.

Velvet and Sable [1:55:45]

Janine: I think I want to try for an infrastructural thing with Sable.

Ali: Sure.

Janine: I think, you know...I think that Velvet's kind of mulling over some of...you know, some of the things she's heard, and, like, she's been kind of thinking about ways to maybe help stuff along, and she starts wondering, like, well, I wonder if...you know, she had all those crystals growing in those pipes. I wonder if she had a source of water that wasn't as heavily mineralized, she could kind of control things a little bit better. So, I think, sort of towards the end of the night, as they're sort of, like, grouping up and waiting for Ern and stuff, Velvet kind of just turns to Sable and is like:

(as **Velvet**): How hard do you think it would be to, like, get just, like, a little pipeline or just a little trickle of condensation from up in the clouds down to the caves? Would that be hard, or...?

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, like a direct pipeline from bottom to top? Or like, regular deliveries?

Janine (as **Velvet**): Kind of like a— well, I mean, it would be both, right? It's like a regular delivery, but it'd be kind of like a gutter.

Ali (as **Sable**): A gutter. Hmm. You know, that isn't my, um, area of expertise, but I could get you in touch with the Vonsteins. My cloud lifter has very intricate pipeworks that they've been able to help me with.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Hmm, okay.

Ali: That was pretty straightforward. [laughs]

Janine: Yeah. Interesting, interesting.

Ali: Uh huh. I did not let that scene play hard to get there, but I guess we can draw cards—

Janine: I mean, I wonder—

Ali: Yeah, go on.

Janine: I wonder if this is, like, is the card for the outcome of, like, do they actually take that call? Or is there, like, “We don't do underground stuff”?

Ali: Yeah. Yeah, let's draw and see if that would even be a good relationship...

Janine: Four of diamonds.

Ali: And this is— you want a— you want clubs.

Janine: Clubs, yeah.

Ali: I drew a ten of hearts, but you have another pull.

Janine: I do. Nine of clubs!

Ali: [gasps] Wait.

Jack: Whoa!

Ali: Oh, so you win, yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: [laughs] Perfect. Perfect, perfect.

Janine: Yeah, sick.

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, yes. You know, I don't believe that Robbie and his fellows are here tonight. Their work is much more mechanical, but they...I believe I have an appointment with them—oh, let me see—the following Tuesday, if you wanted to perhaps meet me at Ern's or even come to see the clouds, if you would indulge such.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Sure. That sounds great.

Ali (as **Sable**): Good. Great! I'll come pick you up. At that little cave entrance, right?

Janine (as **Velvet**): Yeah. Yeah.

Ali (as **Sable**): Yes. [laughs] Yes. Oh, I'm sorry. No, yeah, I didn't know if there would be a place more convenient for you. And then I'll take you up, and I'll prepare some tea and some refreshments and such, and Robbie will be there, and he's very— he's very kind, you know, and I'm sure he'd— if they can't help you, would at least be able to discuss some of the architectural details that might point you in a better direction.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, that sounds fantastic.

Ali (as **Sable**): [sighs] Oh, I'm glad we got this chance to talk. [quietly] I...I've been terribly worried about Ern. [Jack and Janine laugh quietly]

Janine (as **Velvet**): You know, I think things might be turning around for Ern. I'm choosing to be optimistic.

Ali (as **Sable**): Yes, yes, and that's a choice that we can all make.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Also, I just gave him a bunch of money, so I would like [Sable gasps] to think that that will help.

Ali (as **Sable**): It certainly couldn't hurt. That's so kind of you. [Ali laughs]

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, you know, the fossil money is difficult to pay taxes on anyways, compared to the crystal money, so it's— it's probably— it's better this way.

Ali (as **Sable**): [laughs] Oh, I understand, dear.

Ali: Cool. Great. That is a successful cave ritual dance. I'm sure the old gods are very proud. [Ali and Janine laugh quietly]

Jack: That was a cave-ass cave festival. I really do feel like if listeners went into this expecting a cave festival, they've not come out disappointed.

Ali: Yeah, uh huh, uh huh, uh huh.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: And a fun party.

Jack: I'd go to this party.

Ali: I would go to this party in a second. Cool. Okay, so we...like I said, this is our last...sort of our last task before we go from fall to winter, but we do have one more thing to do before we set off, which is decide our friends for the year, and again, this friend card is sort of a resource that you spend in the upcoming year to negate one of your face cards, so long as you can describe in your letter how they helped you. So, this is a character who's gonna show up later, hopefully, who can help you on your farm.

Janine: I'm absolutely going with Ulna.

Ali: Ulna is the...

Jack: A woman who you'll maybe try to kill.

Ali: The mushroom farm.

Janine: The mushroom farmer I said that I would poison at dinner. [Ali laughs]

Jack: I want to go with Siegbert Planque and Audrey Ruth, the book club weirdos.

Ali: They're gonna help you out around the farm?

Jack: Yeah, because I'm gonna be enriched spiritually. [Ali and Janine laugh] They're gonna bring me a copy of *The Dog of the Crossroads 2*. [Ali and Jack laugh] Subtitle: He's Back.

Ali: I have to think, because I really got some duds this time along, so I don't know that I can... [laughs] I have the bath salts lady. [laughs] I don't know that that's someone to bring forward, but I might as well. Jack, did you have a name for her? I don't recall.

Jack: No, but let's call her...Grace Gneiss, but "nice" is spelt like Gneiss, G-N-E-I-S-S, the stone.

Ali: Okay! G-I-E-N-S-S.

Jack: Uh, G-N-E-I-S-S.

Ali: Right.

Jack: Gneiss.

Ali: E-I-S-S. Gneiss. Okay. Grace Gneiss. Love that. Okay, perfect.

Winter [2:03:03]

Ali: With the fall festival behind us and with our friends picked, we are now ready to

continue the next season. I think we know these rules by now, in an intimate and crushing way, [**Jack:** Ha!] but what we are going to do...

Janine: Whoa. Okay.

Ali: [laughs] Ern's had it tough. You know, these— when I think of the rules for this game, I feel...

Janine: But Ern had a very good festival.

Ali: This is true. But yeah, I regard the rules of this game with a bit of, uh, scorn these days, I would say.

Janine: Whoa. [Ali laughs quietly]

Jack: On behalf of your friend Ern.

Ali: On behalf of my good friend Ern, yes. But yeah, so we are gonna draw cards until we see a face card, [to self] and then I did the wrong thing...

Jack: A face or an ace, right?

Ali: A face or an ace, yeah. I guess an ace is not a face, it's a...

Jack: And I'm drawing from pink.

Ali: You are drawing from pink, and I am bringing your ace to where it should go.

Janine: Oh, fuck.

Ali: Oh, did you already grab yours?

Janine: Yeah, I grabbed mine, and it's also just an ace.

Ali: Oh, that was your first card?

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Oh, then just keep it there.

Janine: Wait. This is— why did we all—? What?

Ali: So, we—

Janine: Okay, sorry. I did something out of turn, I guess.

Ali: [laughs] Yeah. I was just taking one of the aces out of each of our decks, because we can use that...what's happening? We can use that to phone a friend, basically, to negate one of our face cards.

Janine: Right. Okay.

Ali: Did you just naturally get an ace from taking your—

Janine: Yeah. Yes.

Ali: Okay. Well, then, you are fine, because we're gonna pretend that that didn't happen and you did that on purpose.

Janine: Fantastic.

Ali: [laughs] I'm gonna reshuffle your deck, just for rules, and, you know, superstition, and we're all gonna start drawing our cards for real this time.

Jack: Oh, wait, should we have two aces out, because we have two friends now?

Ali: I'm gonna double check the rules, but I think it's just one per season.

Jack: You can spend a pulled ace to negate one ace or face per season.

Ali: Okay, so yeah, then it's just one per season. I have a zero social. Oh, I have— aw. Aw. [laughs]

Jack: Yes?

Ali: [sadly] I had to write about my zero social progress.

Jack: Oh no!

Ali: That's fine.

Jack: I wouldn't know what that's like. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Mm.

Ali: Yeah, you're going to the book club now.

Jack: Oh, should we say what we got?

Ali: Sure. Yeah. I got... [laughs] I got a ten and a three in agricultural, which leads to a 13, a.k.a. minor progress in agricultural. I got a six and a two of clubs, which is an eight, a.k.a. minor progress in infrastructural. And then I got a seven and an eight of diamonds, which is a 15 average financial progress. And then my face card was a jack of hearts, leaving me with zero social progress.

Jack: Great. I got a three of diamonds, so that is barely any financial progress, and I got an eight of hearts, which is minor social progress, and then I drew an ace of diamonds, which means that my letter is gonna be focused on financial progress.

Janine: I drew an eight, a two, and a three of diamonds, bringing me up to 13. A three, a nine, and a five of spades, which brings me up to 17 there. A seven of hearts flat out, and then a five of clubs and then a king of clubs, which leaves me at 15, and that's— wait, do I— hang on, actually, no. The faces don't count. That's five. It's five. Fuck. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Ali: Wow. You thought you were gonna just sneak on over there.

Janine: Oh no!

Jack: Sneak in. And what season is this? This is, um...

Ali: This is winter of year three.

Jack: Cool.

Ali: All right. So, we are done with our winter letters. We're gonna go as we do: sky, earth, ground. Underground. And I am gonna start. I am writing about my zero social progress for this season, and my letter reads:

Dear Kitten,

It's been two years now, and I haven't adjusted to how lonely the winters are. Below me, Nievelmarch shimmers like it's a constellation in the night sky and feels as distant as the stars. No parties, no soirees, no poetry readings, no caroling, no nog fest, no Glacier treats. I make my deliveries so early in the morning that the streets are still empty and most shops boarded up, and I feel like an intruder in my own home. Another winter, all the same. I put up decorations around the cloud lifter and made little mittens for all of the mammals, then programmed them all to get into a circle and exchange them with each other. It was sweet, but I still feel a little sad.

I couldn't stand it being alone all the time, and the snow hadn't come in yet, so I took out my plane and tried to fly to the mountains. I got as close as I could before the dark clouds knocked me away, but close as I was, I thought I saw a break in the clouds and a patch of dark green spruces decorated in gold and blue yarn right on the haunted peaks. Do you still find a new broach to wear every winter?

Love,

Sable

Jack: Aw, Sable!

Janine: Aw.

Jack: Sable's having a hard winter. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Winters are hard.

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: Winters are hard.

Jack: Dear sister,

It's been snowing a lot. Every week on Sunday, I go down to this tiny cafe called the Glacier Express. There's a toy train on a little track that goes round and round. If you ring a bell, it'll pull right up to your plate, deliver you a strudel. It's a bit much, but it's harmless, and people here love it. [Janine and Ali laugh]

Janine: Oh, Ern.

Jack:

I'm a new member at the book club they host here. We've been reading—and you're not going to believe this—*The Dog at the Crossroads*. Remember my costume that year? [Ali and Janine laugh] Alexei, Before the Incident, and then, at midnight, I ran outside and changed and reintroduced myself as “Alexei, After the Incident.” [Janine laughs] Everybody is very nice, and it's always a good opportunity to read the book again.

People have started leaving thing for me at the farm, in a bucket next to the stable in which I keep the donkey Margrit gave me. Don't know how I feel about it. I'd say I don't need people's charity, but looking at the last few years, maybe I do. Besides, most of it has to go in the hole, so it's not like I'm really the one benefiting from it, [Ali laughs quietly] but I did take 30 francs and used it to buy coffee for the book gang. All my best, and like the book says: fear not the sun, but keep a watch eye on the odious moon.

Ern

Janine: I love how much you've taken the idea of *The Dog at the Crossroads* and

fleshed it out. It's beautiful. [Jack and Ali laugh] I feel like I've read it already, you know?

Jack: Ah.

Janine: I feel like I studied it in school.

Jack: All the twists and turns. As does everybody. Everybody should.

Ali: Mm-hmm. [Janine laughs]

Jack: *The Dog at the Crossroads*?

Ali: Yeah, classic.

Jack: Seminal.

Janine: God, I would watch...I would watch a PBS Masterpiece *Dog at the Crossroads* adaptation. [Jack and Ali laugh] Okay.

To Mortgage Bros. Duct Works and Pipery:

List of damages:

Jack: Oh no.

Janine:

- Approximately 60 feet of lead pipe
- Seven pipe joints: four lead, three copper
- Three copper irrigation junctions
- Approximately one long ton of blue-green gypsum
- One rabbit hutch, large [Jack laughs quietly]

I would ask that you send compensation for the damage your workers caused to my property within a fortnight of receiving this letter, or I will be forced to pursue the matter via Agricultural Council tribunal. [Jack chuckles, Ali gasps]

Regards,

V. Lunde

Ali: Whoa!

Jack: Oh my god.

Janine: I'm really fighting this infrastructure.

Jack: Yeah. Having a bad time.

Janine: It's just going bad. It's just going bad.

Jack: One of the rabbit hutches damaged.

Janine: The rabbit hutch.

Ali: Wow.

Janine: They probably, like, dropped a thing on the hutch. The rabbits are fine. The rabbits are fine.

Jack: Okay, good. Sharing a hutch? [Ali laughs quietly]

Janine: Yeah. They're in the house. I mean, they're usually in the house, but like...

Jack: Oh.

Janine: You know, you give them a hutch sometimes.

Jack: Your house is underground too, right?

Janine: Yes.

Jack: Yeah. Mm. What's the difference between a house and a room in the cave?

Janine: Um, wallpaper. [Ali laughs]

Jack: Peeling wallpaper.

Janine: Yeah. Pretty much, pretty much.

Spring [2:12:08]

Jack: Okay. Should we draw again?

Ali: Yes.

Jack: It's time for spring.

Ali: It's time for spring. Wait. Yes. [laughs] Uh huh. Yes, it's time for spring. I was like, "How is that four seasons?" but yeah, then you have summer in the middle there.

Janine: Uh huh.

Jack: Okay. Right. I've immediately drawn a king of hearts, and I'm gonna use my ace to negate it. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Yeah. Yep, yep, yep.

Jack: How do I do this?

Ali: Um, just put the ace over the king, I guess, and then continue to draw.

Jack: Okay.

Ali: And then, when I recall your cards next time, I will not return your ace. Oh my god.

Janine: I'm gonna do the same thing. I drew a king of spades here as my third card, and I'm just gonna ace this. I'm gonna ace this one.

Ali: Yeah, I drew an ace as my fourth card, and I...

Jack: Oh, fuck. I drew an ace as my second card. [Ali laughs, pained] So, I drew a king first.

Janine: Oh fuck. Okay.

Jack: And then—

Janine: Wow.

Jack: [laughs] Oh no, Janine.

Ali: This is spring! What is happening?

Janine: Weird. This is weird.

Ali: Well, this isn't happening to all of us, I'm gonna be honest. I'm doing fine. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Janine: You're very lonely.

Ali: [laughs] I am. Well, I have a little bit of social so far, but we're gonna see how this keeps going. And going. And...

Janine: Oh my god.

Ali: Hey. Aw. Is it really that...? Okay. Thank you, Roll20. I love you, Roll20. [Jack laughs] Okay, there we go.

Jack: Oh, there we go.

Ali: Okay. All right. Well, I have drawn four...seven...nine cards.

Janine: You're just bragging now.

Ali: [laughs] And I'm gonna add them up, yeah.

Jack: I've drawn one card. I'm gonna add it up now. Nine. [Ali laughs quietly] That's it. It's a nine infrastructural progress, which is minor progress, and I drew an ace of diamonds. Again, that's financial progress, so I'm gonna write about that.

Janine: I drew an eight of diamonds, a two of diamonds, king of spades, which I ached over, a nine of diamonds, and then a jack of clubs, so I have to write about the one suit I

didn't— well, instead of writing the one— I got everything in one suit and then nothing in every other suit, and I have to write about nothing. Does the person we use have to be the person from the most recent thing? Probably, right?

Ali: Wait, how do you mean?

Janine: Like, would I— do I have the choice of using Ulna or my patron, or do I have to use Ulna?

Ali: Oh, that's a good question. I guess we could house rules it. If you want to use your patron, I don't...if you have, like, a better idea for that, I wouldn't say, so long as you're keeping Ulna in the mix, you know?

Janine: Yeah, yeah.

Ali: Yeah. I feel like maybe the game would say otherwise, but I'm not gonna check, [Ali and Janine laugh] because I feel like it's fine, and, you know. Don't forget Ulna is my advice there. Anyway, I didn't say what I got. So, I got an 11 social progress that is minor. A 16 financial progress that is average. An average 13 agricultural progress and a barely any infrastructural progress, which is a five. And then my final card was an ace of diamonds, so I'm writing about my, like, I did pretty good financially this season. I did average.

Jack: Yeah, not too bad.

Ali: Yeah. What kind of minerals do plants like?

Janine: Phosphorus? [Ali laughs] No.

Ali: You know, some...

Janine: Uh...this is a Jack question.

Jack: I don't know.

Ali: Wow.

Jack: I don't know, because generally, I get...I use Fish, Blood & Bone, and I don't know whether or not—

Janine: What?

Jack: Which is the fertilizer. [Ali laughs] You don't know about Fish, Blood & Bone? Y'all don't know about Fish, Blood & Bone?

Ali: I sure don't.

Jack: Fish, Blood & Bone is a fertilizer. [laughs quietly] Can you guess what it's made of?

Ali: You know, I think that—

Janine: Ugh.

Ali: Is it fish bones as well, or is it a different sort of bone?

Jack: See, I've always wondered. I have to imagine that it is. That makes the most sense. But as a kid, I thought it was Fish, comma, Blood, comma, and Bone.

Ali: Oh, sure. Uh huh.

Jack: The three...

Janine: Oh, right, like that book series.

Jack: Yeah. [laughs quietly] Yeah, yeah, yeah, exactly. But I believe—

Janine: Nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium, calcium, magnesium?

Jack: Well, Fish, Blood & Bone is apparently especially high in phosphorus, so.

Ali: Oh.

Janine: Hmm. Hmm.

Jack: I think it's probably fishes' blood and bones.

Janine: I think it's fish blood but just bones in general. That's my guess.

Jack: Just mystery bones.

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: Because fish bones is...there's not much of that stuff.

Janine: Fish bones is not much.

Jack: Sorry, fish.

Ali: We finished our spring letters, spring year three, and I'm gonna start.

Dear Grace,

Enclosed is your compensation for coming up to visit my cloud farm this past week. I thank you muchly for your time. I'm so glad you were able to come on such a warm and sunny day where you can see the earth coming green from miles around us. And thank you so much for the bags of tea that you brought. I will do my best not to confuse them with the clouds' brews. The scent, of course, will be my first clue. The vials of cloud samples are labeled with the date and temperature of their extraction for my next treatment. I've noticed that the fish blood supplements have made the sprouts much more **[Jack: Whoo!]** hardier when they first come up. I'm looking forward to see how these brawny cacti grow. Perhaps if these supplements pay off like you say they will, **[Jack laughs quietly]** I can start offering 32 ounce bottles?

Thank you,

Miss Butter

Ali: ...is my name. Not Sable.

Jack: Hell yeah. **[Ali laughs]** Brawny cacti.

Janine: I love the idea...I love the idea that the cacti that grow in the sky, what they need to thrive is fish blood. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Jack: It's a real evolutionary cul-de-sac. [laughter]

Ali: Well, I— so, the thing about growing, like, hydroponic houseplants and stuff like that is that you need to put fertilizer in there way more often, because there's no soil to get it from.

Janine: Right.

Ali: And if this is her third year in, and she's just now speaking to, like, a fertilologist? That's not a word, but we're gonna pretend like it is. [Jack laughs] A fertilizerer?

Janine: Biochemist?

Ali: A biochemist?

Janine: I don't know.

Ali: Then, yeah, I think that she's...yeah, you know, you gotta treat...it's just clouds up there, you know? You gotta treat it with stuff to make the plants hardy.

Janine: It's just clouds up there.

Jack: I do feel like, between getting in a little aeroplane and flying off and seeing, like, a little tiny Christmas zone [Ali laughs quietly] and then growing cacti in the clouds, you are, like, creating a Super Mario level from first principals. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Ali: Uh huh. I'm just up here.

Jack: Dear sister,

Well, spring came around again, and the meltwater came rushing down the mountain. It must have been a heavy snowfall this year, because there was a lot. It took down the little dry stone wall I put up on the northern edge of the property and carved a trench down the horse track. Crystal clear water. In the city, you

could bottle it, make a pretty penny. It was freezing cold.

Anyway, things got really interesting once the water reached the hole. [Ali laughs quietly] It was a proper river at that point, and it went right over the lip in a waterfall, and then the hole started to fill, and the edges of it started getting sort of fuzzy, like there's something in your eye, like a smudge. Slow bubbles started coming up through the water, waterfall still pouring in. "Help it," I thought, "It's drowning! Stop the water!" So I started tearing things down. Pulled down the shed. Pulled up the wood from the useless little raised beds where nothing grows.

Janine: Oh my god. Ooh.

Jack:

Grabbed the stone from the fallen wall. Even pulled up those stones from the path I repaired. So I built a big dam, but all the water had to go somewhere. It stopped going into the hole, and then it backed up around the dam, and then it started pouring sideways up into my empty kitchen garden, rising up under the windowsill, right into my little kitchen. Ruined. Carpet ruined. Hutch ruined. Mud stains all over my walls. How am I going to pay for these repairs? This morning, the water had passed down into the valley, and all the water in the hole had gone.

All my love,

Ern

Janine: Good lord.

Ali: Oh my god, this guy. [laugh quietly]

Janine: Hmm.

Jack: Sometimes the demon hole starts drowning, and you have to accidentally destroy

your barren farm to protect it.

Janine: Mm-hmm.

Ali: Yeah, excuse me, that's your nine infrastructural progress?

Jack: Uh, the hole's fine!

Ali: [laughs] Okay. Yeah. Velvet?

Janine: Also, you built a dam, and that's— a dam is infrastructure.

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: [sighs]

Miss Parran,

I'll be candid with you and pray that you won't hold it against me. In happier times, I would jab and joust with you about it, but in all sincerity, I ask that you treat me kindly now. Everything is falling apart. I thought once I found the crystals in the pipes, I could seed them out into the caves, but the entire irrigation system is as good as destroyed. I can't seem to get it operational, and every tradesperson I've invited here says nothing short of replacing it will work. Some of them have made the problems even worse with all of their misguided exploratory prodding. I just don't know what to do, and you know the GAGers. This is all on my shoulders until my term's up.

I appreciate the mushroom basket you sent last week. They were perfect for stew, and it is of course stewing season. There's nothing quite like a big hearty bowl to keep one's spirits up underground. If nothing else, I guess I'm grateful that the fossil business is still able to keep me in turnips and carrots for the foreseeable future.

Come by soon. I've been reading about arsenic-based compounds.

Velvet Lunde

[Jack and Ali laugh]

Jack: Aw, sometimes you have to reach out and ask for help from the woman you're also trying to poison. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Ali: Oh, I love them.

Jack: It's good that you have fossils to fall back on.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: Yeah, yeah. That's, like, the only thing Velvet's consistently been okay at, is like, eh, there's always some income. There's always a bit of money.

Ali: Yeah. I didn't realize that you got zero in everything except for dollars.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: And that keeps happening to you.

Janine: Not even the first time that's happened, yeah.

Ali: Yeah.

Summer [2:22:40]

Ali: Oh. Well, summer is here. The days are getting warmer. The sun is high up in the sky, and I immediately draw a jack and cannot do anything about it. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Janine: Haha! I need to, like, wait for Jack to finish. [Ali laughs] It's so dramatic. I just need to...

Jack: It's going pretty well for me right now.

Janine: Knock on wood.

Jack: Knock on wood! Whoa! Ah, fuck.

Janine: Ah.

Jack: Okay, well, you know. You win some, you lose some.

Janine: Hmm. It's an interesting spread, but...

Jack: You win some, you lose lots.

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: Oh.

Jack: Oh no. Oh no!

Janine: Yet again! Look! Look! Do you see? [Ali laughs]

Jack: Okay. So, Ali drew...uh, what did you draw?

Ali: I drew a jack of hearts, which means my letter is gonna be about my zero social progress, as well as my zero financial progress, my zero agricultural progress, and my zero infrastructural progress.

Janine: Hmm.

Jack: Fucking yikes. [Ali laughs] Bad! I drew 14 financial progress, which is average progress. I drew eight infrastructural progress, which is minor progress. And then I drew 10 social progress, which is minor progress.

Janine: Eight of diamonds, baby! [Ali laughs]

Jack: Eight of diamonds.

Janine: Ace of hearts. Eight of diamonds, ace of hearts. Lonely, pocket money. I don't even know. I don't even know.

Ali: Okay. So, summer has come and gone. I'm writing about my zero social progress, and my letter reads... [clears throat]

Dear Charlene,

Darling friend, I know that we've been hammering out these plans for weeks now, and it's my deepest regret that I cannot welcome you and the girls to my cloud farm this weekend. I've fallen terribly heatsick and lack the energy to host, much less have anything green and tidy to show off. I miss you desperately. **[Jack:** Aw!] Perhaps in the fall, we can figure something out, or I can get the office exhibitors' passes to the next festival? You won't be stuck writing about stews, I promise.

All my love,

Sable

Jack: Sable! [Ali laughs]

Janine: Aw.

Jack: Is heatsick, do you think, like getting heatstroke, or is it a worse fantasy version of that?

Ali: Oh, I've been...I've been just assuming it's like heatstroke, but I wonder, like, I know that one of the things that I said she had to prepare for this was, like, eating soup that was, like, had a spell on it so she could breathe up there.

Jack: Oh, yeah.

Ali: And I wonder if that gets really tough, because like, if you're sick, and you can't eat, and then you can't breathe, and then...

Janine: Ugh.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: That's scary. [Ali laughs]

Jack: Bad.

Ali: I wonder how that works.

Jack: In *Dwarf Fortress*, the video game *Dwarf Fortress*...

Ali: Uh huh.

Jack: Dwarves will only drink alcohol, unless they get sick, when they will only drink water. [Ali laughs quietly] And this is usually not a problem, because you make all your sort of alcohol production stuff inside the fortress.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: But if you have a siege, and dwarves start getting, like, sick or injured, you suddenly realize that, like, all the water is out there on the other side of the siege, and all you've got inside is beer. [Ali laughs quietly]

Janine: Oh no.

Jack: And I have played so many *Dwarf Fortress* saves that have just been, like, completely undone, because I forgot the fact that you should drink water when you're unwell. [Ali laughs] What a stupid game.

Dear sister,

It's high summer, and we have run out of books to read in the Crossroads Quartet. The book group is devastated, but perhaps it's for the best, because Siegbert needed to go on holiday on the other side of the mountains, and we couldn't read any without him.

Other than the red flowers blossoming beautifully as always around the hole, not a single thing has grown in my farm all year. [Ali laughs quietly] In previous years, I would have felt devastated, but having talked to Margrit, I know it's just the

curse. I'd hoped the donkey would help, but apparently not in that way. It's true what they say. You cannot outwit a curse. Not a seed, not a shoot, not a blossom. Barren, dark earth that turns paler in the hot sun. It stays cool near the hole, that big expanse of shadowed darkness, so I'll drag a chair out there in the evening and sit by it and learn my lines. [Ali laughs quietly]

Learn my lines, sister! The book club is putting on a play! [Janine laughs] Can you guess what we're adapting? Here's a clue: I already have two of the costumes. [Ali and Janine laugh] And you'll never guess what: we've been preselling tickets. Can you believe it? The little local theater is letting people pay for a play they haven't seen yet, but it pays for the schnapps, pays for the groceries, pays for the lease.

Your brother, the actor,

Ern

[Janine and Ali laugh]

Ali: Ern...

Janine: That's so cute.

Jack: Sometimes farming's not the way— maybe, you know, maybe you're not cut out for farming.

Ali: Uh huh.

Janine: Yeah, you take what comes your way sometimes. It's all you can do.

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: A note card tied with a ribbon to a bouquet of freshly delivered flowers. The bouquet is a mix of wild roses, cornflowers, and yellow pansies.

Ulna,

Sorry about the arsenic. Glad you're feeling better.

Velvet

Jack: [laughs] Oh no!

Ali: [laughs] I love this. I'm obsessed with this letter, because I'm just imagining the florist on the other end of the call. [all laugh] Hey...

Jack: Some, like, twee Nievelmarch florist. [Ali laughs]

Ali: “Um, yeah, what would you like the notecard to say? Cool. Thanks, yep.” [Jack laughs]

Janine: “How are you— arseni— like, A-R-S... [Ali laughs] Okay. Yeah, like arsenic, okay.”

Jack: “Yeah, like the poison.” [Ali laughs]

Janine: “No, I'm sure— I'm sure it's fine. Yeah.” [Jack and Ali laugh]

Jack: Great.

Autumn [2:29:04]

Ali: [sighs] And just that easily, it's fall again. What's happening?

Jack: Ah, the year turns.

Ali: The days are getting colder. The skies are getting darker. There's a crispness in the air.

Jack: Lovely.

Ali: And we are drawing our cards. Well. Wow. [laughs quietly] This is my worst year, I think.

Janine: Yeah, you're having a rough one.

Ali: Yeah.

Janine: You're having a bit of a rough one.

Ali: I— yeah. This is...

Jack: Oh my god. Wait. Wait, wait, wait. We can spend aces once a season, not once a year.

Ali: Oh.

Jack: "You can spend a pulled ace to negate one ace or face per season. Spent aces are shuffled back into your deck for the next season."

Janine: So that means we should have two aces.

Ali: No! Okay.

Janine: But then they get shuffled back in. Interesting.

Ali: Okay. So, do you want me to— I'll just pull out— okay. I'm gonna pull out my— I'm gonna pull out an ace to negate this queen.

Jack: Okay, this is good, because we've already spent...

Ali: We've all already spent one.

Jack: We've all spent our first one, yeah. So this isn't...

Janine: And this is also the first season where it would have mattered. Or the first year, sorry, where it would have mattered.

Ali: Right, that we would have had two, yeah.

Jack: Yeah.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Okay, thanks...

Jack: But we only have one each now, yeah. Cool.

Ali: Well, I'm sorry for everybody's abysmal spring and summers. [Ali and Jack laugh]

Jack: Hey, look, I've developed a new vocation.

Janine: That's true. That's true. We're rooting for you, Ern.

Jack: Thank you!

Ali: Oh, we are all rooting for Ern, let me tell you.

Jack: Oh my god. [laughs] Oh my god! [Ali gasps]

Janine: I was gonna jokingly say: What if, as soon as Ern is like, "I'm gonna become an actor," the farm pops off? [Ali and Jack laugh]

Jack: Ah. You know what?

Janine: Here we are.

Jack: I'm in a real— ah, let's see. I'm gonna spend this ace. I want this momentum. I want a real weird fall.

Ali: [laughs] You are well within your right.

Jack: Ah!

Janine: Ah.

Jack: Okay, [claps] well. Fair enough. Okay.

Ali: The hole says...

Jack: The hole says otherwise.

Ali: The hole says...

Jack: This is a pretty good year for all of us.

Ali: I mean, I'm going to be making— I'm going to be spending that financial momentum, let me tell you.

Janine: I'm also spending my ace to get past this queen that I just pulled. [Jack laughs]
I think the pipes are fixed, y'all. I think the pipes are fixed.

Jack: Whoo!

Ali: Oh my god. Are you still pulling?

Janine: Yes. Yes, I am.

Ali: Whoa.

Janine: I think I've pulled every club in the thing? [all laugh]

Ali: Yeah, those pipes are fixed.

Janine: There we go.

Ali: Wow. Are you, once again, writing about the thing that you did worse in? No, I guess you were worse in agricultural, but it's close.

Jack: Okay, what did we draw?

Ali: Okay, so, I drew a bunch of stuff, [laughs] resulting in a three in social progress, a 22 which is above average progress in financial, a eight minor in agricultural, and a four which is barely any in infrastructural. And I am writing about— my final card was a king of spades, clubs? Clubs. Clovers, clubs. Which is infrastructural progress. I had gotten a queen that I negated with my Robbie von Jr. card.

Jack: I have drawn 15 social progress, which is average. I've drawn eight financial progress, which is minor. I've drawn 32 agricultural progress, which is significant progress. And I've drawn absolutely zero infrastructural progress, and I'm writing about infrastructure.

Janine: I am at 30 social progress, which is notable.

Jack: Whoa!

Ali: Whoa!

Janine: I'm at 20 financial progress, which is above average. I'm at 15 agricultural, which is average. And I'm at 46 infrastructure, which is amazing progress.

Ali: Whoa!

Janine: But I'm writing about my financial progress, which is my second worst.

Ali: [laughs] Sure. Oh boy. Okay. Yeah, let's get to these letters. Okay. So, we have finished our fall letters. Last season of our third year. My goodness.

Jack: Wow.

Ali: And I am going to write about my— I'm going to read about my four infrastructural progress [laughs quietly] for this season, which reads:

Dear Robbie,

Thank you once again for coming to the skies and cleaning up the mess I'd made of my summer. Unfortunately, as you may have not felt on the ground below yet, it seems as though a frigid winter is crawling closer to Nievelmarch. Here in the skies, a layer of ice more than an inch thick sits around the edge of my cloud farm, but I haven't even had my first fall gourd. My next scheduled maintenance isn't for three weeks, but I'm growing quite concerned with the added weight to my vessel and how the cloud might react to a change in elevation. Might I be able to arrange something sooner?

Thank you,

Miss Butter

Jack: I hadn't even thought that ice in the clouds would make the clouds get heavier.

Ali: [laughs] Yeah.

Jack: You've gotta be so careful.

Ali: That's all weight and density and...

Janine: Yeah. It's a balancing act up there.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: It's not really a thing that we have to worry about in farms on earth, is it?

Ali: Mm.

Jack: The farm goes down.

Janine: When the dirt gets heavy? No.

Ali: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah. [laughs quietly]

Ali: Well.

Janine: Well, I mean, you have to worry about erosion, right?

Jack: That's true, yeah.

Dear sister,

Midway through one of our rehearsals, a man came rushing down the aisle of the empty theater. "The farm!" he said, and usually when people say "farm," I know they're not talking about mine, so I said, "What farm?" and he said, "Yours."

[Janine and Ali laugh] I've never liked the way I can see my little plot of land up on the hill from the town. Usually, it's a little brown scar on the landscape, a darker blot in the middle of it, and I look at it with a kind of resentment. But there it was, and it was green: dark, rich green.

So we all went up there—the book club, me, and this guy who'd interrupted us [Janine laughs]—and once we'd cut through the vines and creepers holding the gate shut and brushed the branches away from my front door, we found ourselves properly inside my farm. Trees three or four times my height had sprouted everywhere. Lush bushes covered the ground, ripe with red berries the size of your fist. Apples hung heavy on boughs. The side yard was thick with birds who had swarmed to pick blackberries off the immense tangle of bushes, and the guy clapped his hands and shouted and scared them away. All the effort and power of three years futile planting coming to fruition at once in an afternoon, and we all stood there completely frozen.

What do you do when it all comes at once? Nobody was ready to buy. All the harvest labor was already assigned to the other farms. I hadn't planned for any of this. I took a little bundle down into the town and sold a bit, but already some of the fallen fruit is starting to rot, and there's so much of it. In the evening, we had a kind of shaky celebratory drink in the garden, a sort of confused, frightened celebration. On his way back to the gate, cutting through the branches with a machete, I heard the guy from the theater stumble on a root and fall, and I think he fell for a very long time.

All my love,

Ern

Janine: Oh my god. [Ali laughs]

Jack: RIP to that man, I guess. I don't know.

Janine: Got fucking Lovely Bonosed at the end of your thing there.

Ali: We will see what happens. [Jack laughs]

Janine: Ulna,

Thank the skies above for inexplicably rich people with inexplicably profound

obsessions. Van Vermillion apparently noticed the downturn of my fossil output and arrived unannounced with his little archeological coterie. Normally, I would have found this very intrusive and bothersome, as I'm sure you would understand, but in this case, I have to make an exception. They were all, of course, shocked at the state of things down here. I'd all but torn out the old pipes myself to try and salvage as much as I could, but it was exhausting work, and a lot of my fossil dig pits had to be repurposed for storage temporarily. Well, you remember, I'm sure; tarpaulins and the like.

Mercy of mercies, rather than throwing a fit, Van Vermillion took it upon himself to arrange the installation of a new system for me, just like that, like it was nothing to him. I knew the man had means, but I don't think I could ever comprehend the kind of ease and material comfort a person needs to have just to handwave an expense like that. It's almost maddening to think about. Best to not dwell on it, though. The important thing is that the water is circulating, the crystals are propagating, the fossil pits are clear. I finally caught a break.

Come visit as soon as you're able. We'll make some fondue together, so you'll know there's nothing in it, [**Jack:** Ha!] and talk about that book you sent over. There wasn't even a dog in it? It might be over my head.

Velvet

[Ali and Jack laugh]

Ali: Aw. [laughs] Wow.

Jack: God.

Ali: Another year.

Jack: That year was pretty successful, unless...well, how did you do? Yeah, you did all right, Ali.

Ali: Um, yeah, I feel like—

Jack: Not quite as well as...

Ali: I'm gonna be able to probably make some financial moves in the upcoming festival.

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: Maybe a little bit of agricultural moves. But I, you know, this is the trade Sable made in her life, right? She's not having a lot of social developments.

Jack: Up there in the sky.

Ali: Uh huh. [Janine laughs]

Festival Planning [2:39:26]

Ali: Yeah. Do we want to talk about our festival a little bit? We usually spend this time to do our sort of pre-festival night, but I know we're a little crunched for time right now. But I'd like to at least discuss what we're...

Jack: Yeah, where we're going. What season is this? This is going to be...

Ali: This is gonna be the end of our fall season, once again. We did, like, expositioners' festival out and about with all the booths. We did our little cave house party.

Jack: I mean, I'll just say it: *Dog at the Crossroads* play opening night.

Ali: Whoa!

Janine: Yes! Yes, yes, yes.

Ali: Whoa! Yes!

Janine: It's the event of the season, right? Like, that's all that matters.

Ali: And it might be one of those things where, like, they close down the street outside of the theater.

Jack: Oh my god.

Janine: Ooh.

Ali: And we, like, you know, people set up little booths and stuff.

Janine: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Pop-up shops.

Ali: It would be cute if—

Janine: Soy sauce sellers.

Ali: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Do you think it would be, like, us maintaining booths for our own things, or, like, would Sable be helping with the alchemists' booth? You know what I mean?

Jack: Oh, good question. It might be fun to— because we haven't really seen, like, Sable in context with the alchemists. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Yeah, that's true.

Ali: Yeah. I guess you could have a crystals booth pretty easily, but...I don't know if you'd also be—

Jack: But you could also be—

Ali: Associated with, yeah, a guild in that way.

Janine: Hmm. I don't know. I might need to think on that one.

Ali: Okay. Cool.

Janine: What the most fun thing to do there would be.

Ali: [laughs] Okay. Cool. I love that. A little street fair outside of the opening, the play opening.

Jack: We're gonna go see a play.

Janine: Yeah.

Ali: Obviously, Ern...

Jack: Oh my god.

Ali: [laughs] It's your big night.

Jack: It's my big night. They say that the author might be there. [gasps]

Ali: Oh.

Janine: Whoa.

Jack: I don't know if the author will be there. I guess we'll play to find out what happens.

Ali: How long has that book been in publication.

Jack: Hmm. [Ali laughs] Good question.

Janine: I mean, you know, Harper Lee only died relatively recently, right?

Ali: Sure.

Janine: In the grand scheme of things. And that book's been in schools forever.

Jack: That's true, yeah. Stephen King is still around, and you know, *Carrie* or whatever came out in the '70s.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Janine: [sarcastic] And schools love teaching *Carrie*.

Jack: [sarcastic] Schools— you know, that's a real— [Ali and Janine laugh] That's one of their faves.

Janine: Yeah.

Jack: It's *Of Mice and Men* and *Carrie*.

Janine: Yep. Everyone reads them.

Ali: How— ooh, Ern, are you with us the day before, or are you too busy? Do we have to figure out a different way to get into town? Or is it like, we all have to meet you at, like, 10 a.m. and then just, like, fuck around in the city for a little while, because...?

Jack: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Janine: Oh, that's fun. [Ali laughs]

Jack: Yeah. Absolutely. I've had to, like...my— I've had to, like, rent a cart or something, because I think my cart got destroyed by, like, a tree growing up through it, and there's really nowhere to park. Do you park a cart? Probably.

Ali: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Push it. So I've been renting one, and I've sort of got it ready outside, but yeah, I think you have to come very early in the morning. I'm very, you know, I'm very excited. [Janine laughs quietly]

Ali: I think Sable comes down with her little plane and her big cosmetics case again and steps right up to your front door and says:

(as **Sable**): Ern, the trees! [Jack laughs quietly]

Jack (as **Ern**): Yep. Yeah. Yeah, it's, uh...well, stuff grew, I suppose.

Ali (as **Sable**): I swear I woke up one day, and it just— I thought I couldn't find your farm. I thought I'd floated somewhere miles away.

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah. Yeah, it was a real surprise to me too, you know? It disrupted a rehearsal, but we managed to get everything back on track. [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, now, Ern, you have to tell me. Do you need anything for tonight? I have some extra concealer, and I have some extra buttons, and oh, I have some perfume as well.

Jack (as **Ern**): Oh my god.

Ali (as **Sable**): I thought it might be fun for your coat. [laughs quietly]

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah. Do you have character appropriate perfume?

Ali (as **Sable**): [gasps] Please, tell me everything about your role.

Jack: [laughs] There's, like, a shot of the sun visibly moving in the sky. [Ali laughs]
Yeah, and I think I take some perfume. I think I take some concealer. I think I sew a new button onto my coat for good luck.

Ali: Oh.

Jack: I'm visibly very nervous, but, you know.

Ali: Aw.

Janine: Aw.

Ali: Ern...

Jack: Oh, and also, like, birds keep coming and eating bits of my garden. Like, the bounty of useless stuff, stuff that I can't do anything about, in my farm is wild.

Ali: You haven't just shoveled that all into the hole yet?

Jack: What? [Ali laughs]

Janine: What hole? There's never been a hole.

Ali: Okay.

Janine: What are you talking about? [laughs]

Ali: All right. [Jack laughs] Oh—

Janine: Um—

Ali: Yeah, go.

Janine: I was gonna say, I think when Velvet appears it is in the form of shouting for help, because she is lost in maybe some corn or something. [Ali and Jack laugh] She wasn't expecting this and thought she could just kind of go based on vague muscle memory, but there was, like, stuff there.

Jack: Yeah, I think Ern says to Sable:

(as **Ern**): Oh, sorry, excuse me a minute.

Jack: And pulls, like, a stepladder from the wall and, like, goes outside, puts this little stepladder up and climbs up so that I can see where you are, sort of guides you carefully. I don't think you're in, uh, a danger region, as it were. I think that might be on the other side of the house. But you can be safely guided through the corn.

Janine: Good. Thank god.

Jack (as **Ern**): Well, I'm sorry—

Janine (as **Velvet**): What the hell happened out here? [Ali laughs quietly]

Jack (as **Ern**): I, you know, maybe something went wrong with the curse, and it all happened at once? I don't know. It's a bit of a... [sighs] It's a bit of a headache, if I'm being honest. Watch your footing. Yeah, if you just keep going down that way and then take a right at the bit where a tree has grown up through a cart wheel, you can find your way into the front garden.

Janine (as **Velvet**): You know, you don't think this has anything to do with...I, like, just replaced all my irrigation stuff down there. [Jack laughs] You don't think there's, like...?

Jack (as **Ern**): I don't—

Janine (as **Velvet**): No, that doesn't make sense, right?

Jack (as **Ern**): I don't—

Janine (as **Velvet**): It's too much for that.

Jack (as **Ern**): It's probably too— I don't think that that would— I mean, I had plenty of water last year. I had maybe too much water, but uh, you know... [Ali laughs quietly]

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, that would—

Jack (as **Ern**): [sighs] I don't know.

Janine (as **Velvet**): I mean, that might be the issue, right? Because, like, that's where I'm getting the water, is up here, so if it's not, like, draining out...

Jack (as **Ern**): I don't know. I don't really feel like I'm particularly qualified here. [Ali laughs quietly] We could ask some of the specialists that—

Janine (as **Velvet**): No, they're— they suck. They suck so much. Don't— they're just gonna mess up your stuff. You got a good thing going here.

Ali (as **Sable**): Who's messing up? Oh, hi, Velvet.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Hi, Sable. This is wild, right?

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, I can't believe it. Here, take some apples. He's lousy with them.

Jack (as **Ern**): I'm lousy with apples.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Well, I mean...it's pretty easy to have apples. I don't really... [Ali laughs quietly] I'll take some, but.

Jack (as **Ern**): "It's pretty easy to have apples." [Ali laughs] Get a load of this.

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, but she's right. Maybe you could sauce them or you could freeze them or you could...hmm, make them into fertilizer somehow.

Jack (as **Ern**): Everything I've tried, it's just...I can't really sell them to people, because they're like, "That's too many apples. We're already full up on apples." The Glacier Express has been making strudel, you know, not fast enough for the amount of apples that I need to give. I don't really have anywhere I could freeze them, although maybe when winter comes, if I've managed to find a place to store them, that'll be good. I, you know, here and there, I try and put some stuff that I know that I can't use into the hole, although it gets pretty dangerous moving around there, especially when the sun goes down. It's trickier to see the edge.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Hmm.

Jack (as **Ern**): It's a bit of a poison chalice. But...

Ali (as **Sable**): Have you considered a fence?

Jack (as **Ern**): Hmm?

Ali (as **Sable**): Well, like, a fence for the hole, so the donkey and if you [Ern sighs] get any hired hands. I might have a mammet or two I could spare for...

Jack (as **Ern**): I— it's a really kind offer. I tried that in the early days, and it just, immediately, the fence is no more. It sort of sees it as a challenge.

Ali (as **Sable**): It ate the fence?

Jack (as **Ern**): Every time.

Janine (as **Velvet**): Hmm.

Ali (as **Sable**): Did it get bigger, or did the fence fall?

Jack (as **Ern**): Oh, you haven't noticed?

Ali (as **Sable**): [laughs nervously] Oh, I suppose I haven't. Well, we should be off.

Jack (as **Ern**): I'm sorry that I have to take you into town so early. There's just so much work to do, you know?

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, no, it's a beautiful time of year to be in Nievelmarch.

Jack: What season is it? Autumn. Yes. [Ali laughs]

Ali (as **Sable**): Well, every season is a beautiful season to be in Nievelmarch, but the fall is quiet agreeable.

Jack: As the cart goes down the hill from the farm, there's almost this, like, sensation of, like, a weight or a press of plants and leaves lessening as we get further and further down the hill towards Nievelmarch. [Ali laughs quietly]

Janine: I think you owe Margrit a beer.

Ali: Wow.

Jack: Yeah, I think I owe Margrit a beer. It's that one donkey.

Janine: Mm-hmm. [Ali laughs]

Jack: Who I don't think has gone in the hole, but I think is just having a great time in the jungle. [Ali laughs]

Janine: Yeah. Donkey's eating like a king.

Jack: Yeah.

Ali: Oh my god, could you imagine?

Jack: [laughs quietly] I'm not gonna do it, because now that I've thought of it, it is too silly to do, but it would be really funny if the hole gets bigger and bigger and the donkey also gets commensurately bigger and bigger as forces of good and evil. [Ali and Janine laugh]

Janine: Ah.

Ali: By the way, unfortunately this Twitter account is now locked, so I can't bring people to it, but at the end of the last festival, when we had stopped recording, I sent you both a

picture of, [laughs] like, a little dog sitting in a lawn chair.

Jack: Yes. [Janine laughs quietly]

Ali: And I was like, “This is what I meant by the donkey being the size of a dog.”
[laughs]

Jack: Yeah. That was a beautiful little dog.

Ali: So.

Jack: I want to see if I can...did you embed it? I wonder if it's still— yes. Aw.

Ali: Yeah, the picture is still there, thankfully, but I can't link it out to anybody.

Jack: Beautiful.

Ali: But yeah, imagine a dog that would fit exactly in a lawn chair, no bigger, no wider.

Jack: That's the size.

Ali: Uh huh. And it's a donkey.

Jack: Beautiful.

Ali: But yeah, we'll see you next time with the grand— [laughs] the grand opening of *The Dog at the Crossroads*.

Janine: There's not even a dog in it. [Ali laughs] It's all people? Like, what? Like, hello?

Jack: Wow.

Ali: It's a metaphor.

Jack: Oh maybe— it's a metaphor. Maybe you're just not— maybe there is a dog in it, and you're just not thinking of it.

Ali: Oh my god, is this what we're talking about the entire way there? And like, Ern is

getting, like, increasingly a little bit frustrated about it. [all laugh]

Jack: Oh my god. Yeah.

Ali (as **Sable**): Oh, but I haven't read it yet, you too. [Jack laughs] I was waiting for tonight's show.

Jack (as **Ern**): You haven't read Dog of the— okay, it's gonna be a ride. [Ali laughs] God, what I would give to have not read Dog of the Crossroads, get to experience it for the first time.

Ali (as **Sable**): Well, that's gonna be me this evening.

Jack (as **Ern**): Yeah. I only hope we can do it justice.

Ali: [sighs] Okay. Until next time.

Jack: Until next time, everybody! [laughs quietly]

[[“The Farmers’ Almanac”](#) by Jack de Quidt plays]