

Marielda 09: The Valentine Affair Pt. 4

AUSTIN (as the Narrator): [*slight draw*]

I gave them a gift. A little mansion, in the woods. In that particular place out in the vast between Samoth's City of Light and those rolling plains of celebration where the Boy-King Samot made his wandering home. [INTRO "Marielda" BEGINS PLAYING] A grand house, close to me. I'd hoped it could be a place where they could work out their differences, where they could consider the burden of their power and the strength of their bond. But if I can be truthful- I had a more selfish motive too. I wanted to leave them a memento, something to remind them of me when I'd gone.

And somewhere close enough that I could look back at them from time to time while I was leavin'. Your old friend here, well, I was never much of a jealous god, but call me sentimental and I will not correct you. And looking back now, all these damn years of life later, I suppose it's fair to say it all started there. All because I gave them *that* gift, *that* mansion, in *those* woods. Those woods, too close to where I lay dyin'.

[INTRO CONTINUES UNTIL 2:30]

AUSTIN: Ah, the remaining students, the teachers, everyone starts yelling and running out. And the thing that's--that's confusing is that like, as soon as they come out, they do hear shouting and yelling outside? So it like, corroborates your lie that there's fire? And then the second bit of this, of course, is that there *is* fire. Because now, the fighting on the ground floor has smashed into the--Memoriam College. And there is fighting in the hallway on the first floor, and you can feel the ground warm as fire spreads through the classrooms and the lobby.

JACK: Okay. Oh my god.

AUSTIN: Lance Noble Orchid, who is uh... the shitty kid whose gun Sige has--

DRE: [*cross*] Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Is with his replacement gun shooting at the Black Slacks in the university.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Where are Caroline and Hitchcock going? And we'll cut back.

JACK: We're trying to make for the library. Oh, wait a second--oh, no, so--I've got the book.

AUSTIN: You have the book!

JACK: And I know that I've got the book. But I also probably think that my friends would've gone to a library to get the book.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: Um... my priority at this point is trying to get them.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Because... I've just realized that one of my beliefs is like, 'always part a fool from his money'? And I really like the fact that I didn't steal from Samoths, which really reveals what Hitchcock kind of thinks of Samoths.

AUSTIN: Yeah. You did steal his candlestick though.

JACK: *Austin*. I've not stolen the candlestick. It's for the good of Marielda.

AUSTIN: Well... if you still have it when you leave this building, you've stolen it.

JACK: I've commandeered it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: The library.

AUSTIN: You're gonna head towards the library.

JACK: Oh, just before we cut, can I ask Caroline if she's heard of the Heat and the Dark?

AUSTIN: She looks at you... she says... she's Maelgwyn's Faithful, right? I need to check notes, one second. She says...

AUSTIN (as Caroline) : Do you mean the Dark and the Heat?

AUSTIN: And then... we cut.

(ALI LAUGHING)

AUSTIN: What's going on in the library these days?

(SYLVIA GROANING)

AUSTIN: Maelgwyn, Miss Salary... Miss Salary starts to wake up. That's what we cut to. We cut to her... she says, 'you mean the Dark and the Heat?' And then Miss Salary, like, muttering, 'the Dark and the Heat,' wakes up suddenly.

AUSTIN (as Miss Salary): The Dark and the... wh... ah... Oh my--oh my god! Oh my god! Why are they dead? Who killed them? Ohh...

(VARIOUS NOISES OF DISMAY)

ALI (as Castille): We didn't.

ALI: Wait, I dunno, though...

AUSTIN: Mmm... *mmm....* She's like, stumbling up to her feet, and like, with her back against the wall, um... god, she's not prepared for any of this.

ALI: She really isn't.

AUSTIN: She's the least prepared.

(ALI MAKES A SAD NOISE)

AUSTIN: She like, goes over to Master Latitude, the wolf boy, and like, pats at him the same way that he was pawing at her before.

SYLVIA: Awwwww.

AUSTIN: Meanwhile, this repeated sound coming from the crystal continues.

DRE: So what else is in the vault besides...

AUSTIN: There's like a ton of books, there are maps, there's that crystal, there's um... probably just like a lot of jewellery and money. Just like, expensive stuff is in here. There is... okay. There's a bunch. You can... Here's what I'm gonna do, is I'm gonna say if you make a study check you can ask me some like, big picture questions.

DRE: Oh, boy.

SYLVIA: Ooh. Okay.

AUSTIN: It's controlled... it's controlled and then you get... whatever effect you end up with, by default it's controlled limited, but if you can increase that somehow, then for each kind of like, dot that you get--for each success that you get, you get another question you can ask me. About the world at large. Or a thing you can tell me is in this vault. And remember, you can increase effect in a couple of ways. You can increase effect based on things that you have, in this case I would think about things like equipment that you have that would make locating interesting objects easier. Through supporting each other, through helping via setup rolls, or

through, I guess, just potency? Which would just be like, pushing yourself extra hard, you can increase the effect instead of increasing the rolls you're gonna have.

ALI: Does anything in the room change if I put on my spirit mask?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that crystal is obviously super powerful. And like--or not powerful, it's super magical. There's definitely magic happening there. Maelgwyn has, like a limited magical aura around him also--not limited. It's limited, it's not just magical, it's something else. I'm trying to think if you've seen something like him. He's not like looking at a ghost, it's more like looking at Samoths, when you saw Samoths.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Um... it's like that sort of holy glow. Which you can differentiate because you're a pro.

ALI: Right.

DRE: I think... I dunno. I don't think Sige--I don't have the skill in study but I also don't think it's in Sige's personality. I think he would just probably grab that crystal and then a handful of whatever jewelry looks the most expensive.

AUSTIN: Good. Yeah, take--take 3 coin worth of jewelry, worth of wealth. It takes up a slot. One slot for three coin. One equipment slot, basically. But as you move the crystal, it like--the projection expands. Because you've moved it away from being up against the wall. It's like a projector. It's like, projecting an image. But then as you pull it back even further, eventually it projects it into physical space and not just up against the wall. So like at first it's like a movie theatre, it's just like a projection on the screen, but as you pull back further it gains depth and like, becomes a projection in a space. And there are two figures, and again this is all like golden outlined. They look ghostly to those of you who don't know what ghosts really look like, or like haven't dealt with a lot of ghosts before. Um, so Castille totally knows these aren't real ghosts. And you recognize one of them as Samot and one of them as Samoths. I guess none of you have seen Samot before, but you've heard him described. His like...

ALI: His whole deal.

AUSTIN: His blonde hair, his pale skin, his like, shit-eating grin. And Samoths you know--In fact we even-- I finally figured out--

SYLVIA: (indistinguishable?)

AUSTIN: Yeah. I even know who plays Samoths now, finally. It's um, it is a guy named Sendhil Ramamurthy. He is an actor of Indian descent. He was the dude in Heroes all those years ago.

[ALI LAUGHS]

SYLVIA: Yeah, Mohinder from Heroes.

AUSTIN: Mohinder from Heroes. Now he's like, a little bit older and a little bit more distinguished, and that's the vision of Samoths. Like, beard, nice big curly hair, just graying a little bit. And it's the two of them and they're talking, but they're talking in a language that is not the common tongue. It again sounds a little bit more like the cobbin language, but not exactly--it's like a mix between the common tongue and the cobbin language. A study check would translate.

SYLVIA: Can...

AUSTIN: Anybody can--

SYLVIA: Okay. I would like to do that.

AUSTIN: Okay, go ahead.

SYLVIA: Risky standard, or?

AUSTIN: Controlled. Controlled, it's just a straight roll. There's no... (in response to SYLVIA's roll) Ooh, buddy.

DRE: Buddy.

AUSTIN: Um... no, that's fine.

SYLVIA: I forgot how to speak my native language.

AUSTIN: No you didn't, that's not how failure works. So... Aubrey rolled a one. And with a one, 'you're blocked or falter, press on by seizing a risky opportunity or withdraw to seek a different approach.' So you are... you're at a distance from this projection and you can't quite make it out. And so you take a step closer. And as you do, their like, physical forms fill in a little bit more. Before they were basically just golden outlines, but as you get closer you can see more detail. And if you get closer still, you might be able to actually listen in.

SYLVIA: If I do it will I take a stress or anything?

AUSTIN: Something might happen.

SYLVIA: Okay. But I won't immediately take a stress or anything.

AUSTIN: If you fail--

SYLVIA: If I fail, yeah.

AUSTIN: You've moved from controlled to risky, so yes. So now, you know, on controlled the worst thing that happens is that you go to a risky place. So now you're in a risky place.

SYLVIA: I think the more, most interesting thing is if I keep pressing on and try again. So risky standard? Right?

AUSTIN: There it is. Our favorite Counter/Weight NPC.

(SYLVIA BLOWS A RASPBERRY IN RESPONSE TO ROLL)

AUSTIN: That's another fail. 'Things go badly. You suffer harm, a complication occurs, you end up in a desperate position or you lose the opportunity for action.' Aubrey has gained a sort of weird golden hue. And Aubrey, you are inside of... *[MUSIC "Samothes" BEGINS PLAYING]* it's a room that's the same shape as this vault that you're in. It is all like, beautiful dark woods. There is a map on the wall. There is like a lot of really nice food laid out on the table. And Samot and Samoths are talking to each other, eating dinner together. Laughing, and smiling. And... Samot brings up, in a quiet moment, the thing that neither of them want to talk about. Which is the Heat and the Dark. And Samoths puts his fork and knife down and stands up and walks over and stares at that map, and says he doesn't want to talk about it, not tonight. And Samot stands up and walks over towards him and squeezes his shoulder and says,

AUSTIN (as Samot): I have to try. You know I have to try. It's worth a shot.

And Samoths turns and puts a hand to Samot's cheek. And shakes his head and says,

AUSTIN (as Samoths): You're a fool, and you're going to get us all killed. But if you care more about your ego than helping people, go ahead. I won't see you again.

AUSTIN: And then it repeats from the dining room scene again. And Aubrey, you're in this room with them.

SYLVIA: And there... it's just the repetition of the same scene over and over again?

[MUSIC CONTINUES UNTIL 12:23]

AUSTIN :Yeah. But you're just here now. Um, you--there are--so you're just in this house now, Aubrey. And so like, behind you, so there's the vault here, but the vault is now this dining room. And there's behind you like a living area, like all the rooms are just different rooms in this mansion. And you can hear children playing from behind you.

SYLVIA: I'm gonna go... I'm gonna walk towards that sound. I'm gonna walk towards the children, 'cause if they're just repeating the same conversation over and over again, there's no more to learn here.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's correct. There are... out in the kind of like, you kind of wander out from the vault slash dining room, the special collection archives, kind of just like... living room area. And then there is, where there's the reading room inside of the library, that's like a little yard area. A little like, outside forest--not forest, but like--like a backyard, but instead of walls there are--there's the wall of the house, and then the other two walls are the woods. And there is... a little brown girl with curly hair, which the viewer would recognize as being the girl from the visions that Hitchcock kept seeing. And a little brown boy with short blond hair, playing... playing like, knights or something. Like, play-fighting and having a good time, and laughing. And there's nothing here to learn, or else I would have you roll something, but like...

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And it's just like this little area. There isn't a door out past that. It's just this like... or there's probably a door but it's locked.

SYLVIA: So it's just those two rooms?

AUSTIN: Thr--yeah, it's those two rooms and then the outside yard area. The living room again is like, really well decorated, it's beautiful. But there isn't like... I guess there's probably some books in there, and there's probably a fire in that room. Like, a fireplace, not just like a loose fire. And you're stuck here.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: At least, that's from what you can tell.

SYLVIA: Yeah. Um...

AUSTIN: Take a stress from this.

SYLVIA: (dismayed) Oh!

AUSTIN: Or I guess, you have to resist. Because it is... this is...

SYLVIA: Which...

AUSTIN: I think this is, again... either you take the damage... one second, I have to look at your sheet. I think this is a level two damage, which would be like, a less corny way of saying discombobulated. Like, confused? More than confused, though?

SYLVIA: Disoriented?

ALI: Dissociating?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

ALI: Okay. Does Aubrey look different to me at all? Is there any--

AUSTIN: No, Aubrey's gone. Aubrey got too close. And like, gained this weird aura and then vanished into the... in fact I think for a moment you see Aubrey, you see her in that exact same golden outline, and then it like unwinds itself. Like, it's literally a golden outline, there's nothing inside it, it's just the outline, and then from the top of it it like unspools itself back into the front. You know what I mean, kind of? Like, it retracts. As if you were hitting rewind on someone sketching that outline. So yeah, you need to resist, Aubrey. Or you can become dissociated.

SYLVIA: But uh, what do I roll to resist is my question.

AUSTIN: Oh, probably... so insight is deception or understanding, resolve is mental strain or willpower. So I guess the question is, what is Aubrey's response to this? Because if it's about thinking her way out of this, or thinking her way into understanding what's happening that's insight, or if it's just like grit that's resolve.

SYLVIA: I mean, the way Aubrey's always gone about things is trying to understand them.

AUSTIN: So yeah, insight.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Unless you wanna take that--you take five stress.

[SYLVIA BLOWS ANOTHER RASPBERRY]

ALI: Awwh!

SYLVIA: I rolled three ones!

AUSTIN: You rolled three ones.

SYLVIA: Okay well... my stress maxed out.

AUSTIN: Oh did it?

SYLVIA: I needed to roll perfect on that.

AUSTIN: It's time to talk some more about trauma.

JACK: Welcome to the club!

DRE: Welcome to the traumatized club.

JACK: We're soft here.

AUSTIN: Well, we don't know what Aubrey will end up being. 'When a PC marks their final stress box, they suffer a level of trauma. When you suffer trauma, circle one of your trauma conditions.' Which one are you circling here?

SYLVIA: I'm thinking 'haunted'.

AUSTIN: I think that's the one too. I love it so much.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I do too. Especially after hearing just the words 'the Heat and the Dark'. Like just that whole entire concept.

AUSTIN: Yeah, so you're trapped... I guess this is what we'll do. So it's the vision of the kids playing in the forest. And then they arrive at the same time, the Heat and the Dark. This is like, you know how deep in the woods, it gets--the canopy becomes so heavy that there's no light? Even though it's noon, it's hard to see? That sort of shadow begins to cast over this yard where the kids are playing, as if there is shade from overhead. Except there isn't. And you can still see the sun, but you can't see the sky anymore. And very quickly, you can see that the ground underneath you is dissolving, being replaced with the void of the Dark. And then... we'll come back to you at some other point. (to the rest of the party) Aubrey's gone, and you have this crystal. Aubrey like, walks in, and then Sige like--the crystal shuts off when Aubrey walks into it.

DRE: Shit.

ALI: Yikes!

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): We should go.

AUSTIN: Says Maelgwyn.

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): I'm getting a terrible feeling, and I--you should give me that crystal.

DRE (as Sige): Can you get our friend out of it?

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): Maybe.

DRE (as Sige): Until that's a yes, I'm gonna hold on to it.

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): You should give me that crystal. Do not fight me. I'm the only one here with any connection to it.

DRE (as Sige): Castille?

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): Listen. I'm willing to let bygones be bygones, Charter, but give me that crystal. Tell your man to give me that crystal and we can get out of here. And then I'll do everything in my power to get your friend back.

DRE (as Sige): The hell is Charter?

ALI (as Castille): Just give it to him, Sige. Let's get out of here.

DRE (as Sige): Fine.

ALI: (as Castille): The name isn't Charter.

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): Castille--whatever.

SYLVIA: From inside the crystal you hear, 'byeeeeeee!'

[DRE LAUGHS]

AUSTIN: (amused) Good. Alright, so you are all heading out of the library while...

DRE: What about Salary?

AUSTIN: Yeah, what about Salary? You just gonna leave her here?

ALI: Oh... honey... Um, I think Castille grabs her--

DRE: Did we ever get her name?

AUSTIN: Miss Salary. Yeah, I think so. Someone must've called her that.

ALI: Aubrey was the one talking to her, so neither of us know her.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh yeah. Fair.

ALI: But we know of her. We know that she was... with them. Um... Yeah I think Castille picks up her cat and puts it in her pocket, and then walks over to Miss Salary and like, puts her hands on her shoulders. *[AUSTIN makes a sad noise]*

ALI (as Castille): We're gonna go. You don't wanna be stuck down here.

AUSTIN (as Salary): This all... it's just a... it was just supposed to be a game. It's just...

AUSTIN: And she stands up and like, latches on to you in a hug.

ALI (as Castille): I know. It isn't anymore. Let's go.

DRE: As Salary's holding on to Castille, Sige goes over to her and says,

DRE (as Sige): Now that you know it's not a game, you'll need this.

DRE: And he gives her Calendar's knife.

AUSTIN: Mm.

DRE (as Sige): Let me know if you need help knowing how to use it.

AUSTIN: You feel a weight lift off your shoulders as you give that knife away, and she is instantly a little more serious. And she just nods.

ALI: Take it back?

AUSTIN: Nah, it's too late. Let's go!

DRE: It's her knife!

AUSTIN: Alright, um... Hitchcock, you make it to the library. You're at the top of the weird area where there's stairs but then it goes down into nothing, and I think for the sake of... I think there are two elevators coming up. One is very close and the other one is much further. The further one has your friends on it.

DRE: Yay!

AUSTIN: The closer one... has Carolyn Fair-Play on it. And she like, hops off of it and onto the stairs, and then catches you and Caroline with like, a look and tosses you your sword.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn): Won't be needing this anymore.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Did you just--what did you just do?

AUSTIN (as Carolyn): You should really be leaving, this is uh--phew. Things are going bad here.

AUSTIN: And you hear like, fighting, and explosions happening in the distance...

JACK (as Hitchcock): Uh, Caroline, should we stop her?

AUSTIN (as Caroline): I've never been able to stop her.

DRE: Can we uh, do we see or hear this?

AUSTIN: You're all on the elevator still like, coming up from the bottom floor.

DRE: Ok, got it.

JACK: Um, can I... wait a second, so she took the book.

AUSTIN: She took the other book.

JACK: Yeah, the book that the Yellow House were looking for.

AUSTIN: Right, she took... yes.

JACK: Okay, um... let me look at my character sheet really quick. I wanna try and sway her.

AUSTIN: Oh, interesting. Okay.

JACK: Into... I think probably giving me the book.

AUSTIN: Okay. That's... risky limited. Ehh, controlled limited. There's not like a cost here but like, good luck.

JACK: Okay, so... I'm trying to think of how I want to go about this. I think I'm probably just going to... y'know what, I think probably Hitchcock prior to trauma would've done a big speech, a big sort of carefully resolved speech about how the situation was fraught and y'know, certain things are better off in certain hands and et cetera et cetera. But I think probably post-trauma

this Hitchcock just says that the world is ending. And there's something about the way he says it. And I think depending on how the roll goes... It's definitely said in sort of a hollow voice. So this is a controlled position.

AUSTIN: Yeah, take one extra because her sister is with you, which throws her off a little bit. Look at that six! That's--you get the thing, you say, you say that the world is ending, and that's limited effect so you still need three more dots to sway her, but she says,

AUSTIN (as Carolyn): The world's ending every day, Hitchcock. It's probably why the people who are paying me for this book are paying me so well.

JACK: So she's not gonna give it to me?

AUSTIN: Not yet. You've made one dot of progress against her.

JACK: I've made one dot of progress? I have to do it again?

AUSTIN: You have limited effect here. You could try and sway again or you could try a new thing.

JACK: I'm gonna try and command her. I'm gonna say, 'the world is ending, give me the book.'

AUSTIN: That's uh... risky standard now. Because convincing her wasn't going well, but trying to strongarm her--

JACK: Extra dice for...

AUSTIN: Yeah, for having the support of her sister. But again, her sister--it's almost as if her sister's giving you... is contributing, is doing not the setup, but assisting.

JACK: 'Cause she's seen the void nun.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Okay, that's a five.

AUSTIN: She says,

AUSTIN (as Carolyn): I don't care that the world is ending, I just need to get paid and get the hell out of here. Now, if you're wise, you'll move and I can leave. If you don't, bad things will happen.

AUSTIN: She smiles.

JACK: She's given me back my sword!

AUSTIN: Yeah, well.

JACK: Um, I'm gonna try and sway again.

AUSTIN: Alright. You are in... what's your like, line of strategy here? It's going to be desperate if you do this.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: She's speaking as if she has something prepared that you don't know about.

JACK: That's you, Austin! That's you all the time.

AUSTIN: Oh, always.

[DRE LAUGHING]

JACK: I think Hitchcock is so frustrated, because I think he's so used to being able to communicate more accurately than this? So, I think he probably just starts crying tears of frustration and draws his sword, with the implication being like, 'Okay, fine. Let's try and do this.'

AUSTIN: I need you to resist something.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: This is going to be a prowess resist.

JACK: Okay. I'm gonna press the button.

AUSTIN: Hey! You took no stress. That's good. (JACK sighs in relief.) Because if you... here's what happens. Here's what would've happened. I should've set this up first. As you start to draw it, you hear a little click like a--not a click, like a match striking. Normally when you're done with a heist you take your sword out and you slowly like, check it to make sure your sheath hasn't been damaged, and if you'd done that, you'd notice there's a little--she's adapted your sword a little bit. She's added a little trick to it, a little alchemy of her own. But you didn't notice that when you just drew it from its sheath because you just drew it, you didn't inspect it first. But you do hear the match strike this time, just in time to--I dunno. How do you get this thing away before it blows a hole in your side?

JACK: I throw it into the library. Down the shaft.

AUSTIN: Okay! As everyone else is coming up the library elevator, it's just like (hums elevator music) and then a sword drops past you and then *explodes*. Below you, in the library, where all the paper is.

(DRE LAUGHING)

ALI: My god.

AUSTIN: And the fire starts.

ALI: I pat Salary's shoulder.

(AUSTIN MAKES SAD NOISES)

JACK: Ohh, god...

AUSTIN: You uh, as you do that she just tries to run past you through the door. What do you wanna do?

JACK: Can I try and trip her? Or like, I mean...

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can totally try and trip her. That sounds like a finesse to me.

JACK: I mean, yeah, I guess I'll try and trip her. I guess there's no way I can like, ask for help from Caroline, right?

AUSTIN: She's been giving you help by presence. Uh, I don't think she's gonna help you like, trip her sister.

JACK: Okay, this is finesse. I'm gonna take an extra dice of stress for this, please.

AUSTIN: Okay, sure. It takes two stress to get an extra die for this. And this is risky standard again. And that'll do it if you get it.

JACK: Finesse... risky standard... come on, come on, no whammies.

AUSTIN: Oh, buddy.

JACK: Oh no.

AUSTIN: That was a whammy.

JACK: Plenty of whammies.

AUSTIN: All of the whammies. Um, you go to trip her and she just like, slams her heel down on your foot and then like, spins around on it and does a little bow, and then like steps quickly backwards--you know how Enzo Amore does that back step that he does? That's like across the ring? She does that away from you while bowing.

JACK (as Hitchcock ?): Stop showing off, it's bad form!

AUSTIN: Take um, level one damage... um, what is it, what's the level of damage you would take here?

JACK: Crushed. In both senses of the word.

(DRE LAUGHS)

AUSTIN: (amused) Yeah. Crushed. And again, you could take that or you could try and resist.

JACK: Well, I'm still burned and biffed, Austin.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* Oh, friend.

JACK: So now I have one less dice. This is now level two damage. I think crushed is actually very good here, I'm happy--

[TIMESTAMP: 33:43]

AUSTIN: Or you could take--again, you can try to resist it.

JACK: Ah, actually I don't have much stress. I'll try and resist it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you're down to zero stress again, right?

JACK: Ah, no, I'm at two 'cause I just took the--

AUSTIN: Ah, right. Yes. Got it. Uh, so yeah, that would be--how do you resist it? Again, do you just like, slide out of the way? Do you just suck it up?

JACK: Um, I think it's... I think it's resolve, but I think the resolve is that Hitchcock tries to get a final word in, like a quip.

AUSTIN: (amused) Okay, good.

JACK: And I think that whether or not I succeed, I think it's bad. I don't think it works. Um, so I'm just gonna press this button. All day, low numbers. Oh great, that's the lowest number.

AUSTIN: Oh, great! You got zero stress. She slips past you, and you are unable to convince her to give you that book.

JACK: It was going so well until she tried to blow up my sword.

AUSTIN: That did... well she tried to blow *you* up with your sword, but sure. Yes. So she... you hear her close the library door and then a few seconds later you hear glass shatter. Um... as she gets... oh no, she can't break the glass, the glass is unbreakable.

JACK: Yes, she's trapped! Yes!

AUSTIN: You hear--well, that's actually really bad for her. Heh.

JACK: Okay no, she gets free!

AUSTIN: No, she doesn't. You hear... you hear the sound of like, a chair bouncing off of glass, and then you hear her yell and curse. And then you hear her scream. And then the door opens, and outside the door you can see out into Marielda, on fire. But the other sort of fire. The Heat fire. And there's Sabinia in the hallway between you and escape. Your friends are back, also. That's good.

JACK: I love it. Fantastic.

ALI: Hey!

JACK (as Hitchcock): How did it go?

SYLVIA: Or most of them...

AUSTIN: Right. Also, Aubrey isn't there.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Where's Aubrey?

AUSTIN: And there's that woman from the Yellow House.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Who's that woman?

ALI: (laughs) And like, some hot guy.

AUSTIN: Right, and Maelgwyn is here.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Is that Maelgwyn?

(EVERYONE LAUGHING)

AUSTIN: And you would absolutely know it's Maelgwyn. You like, worked with Maelgwyn in the war, when you were in the cavalry--

JACK: I've *worked* with him? Like, directly? Like, do I know this man?

AUSTIN: Ah--you probably--he gave you a rousing speech once.

JACK: Ah.

AUSTIN: And then like, vanished, and like you, just kind of disappeared one day.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Okay... let me bring you up to speed. I've got the book.

DRE (as Sige): Okay, let's go!

JACK (as Hitchcock): Uh, Rector Sabinia, uh, she's very bad. The world is ending, Caroline's twins, how 'bout that?

ALI (as Castille): Who?

JACK (as Hitchcock): Uh... Carolyn.

AUSTIN (as Caroline): No, I'm Caroline.

AUSTIN: She says.

ALI (as Castille): Oh, hi.

AUSTIN (as Caroline): Hi...

DRE (as Sige): Where's that book?

AUSTIN (as Caroline): I don't--that was my--!

AUSTIN: She holds her hands up as if to say look, I don't have the book.

JACK (as Hitchcock): That was the other one.

AUSTIN: The book is now on the ground out in the hallway, in front of Sabinia's feet. You don't see Carolyn anywhere.

JACK: What's Caroline doing?

AUSTIN: Caroline is now hiding in your group, just generally.

JACK: Is she--does she know that her sister's probably gone at this point?

AUSTIN: Um... a lot is happening. I don't think it's registered.

ALI: Um... can I ask real quick if Sabinia looks different to me? I still have the mask on.

JACK: *[cross]* Good question!

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah. There's nothing where her face is.

ALI: (indistinguishable, laughing) Oh boy. Cool. There's nothing there. Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's just... you go right through.

ALI: I go right--no, just.

AUSTIN: No, but your vision goes right through. It's just darkness in there.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Sige, I gotta say, man. I don't think you're gonna be able to fight that nun.

AUSTIN: The walls in this place are like, getting closer, but instead of the walls they are this other vision of Marielda. It's like, closing in on you.

JACK: Do we just go out the front?

AUSTIN: There is a nun between you and--

JACK: Or do we go up the stairs and try to go back the way we came?

AUSTIN: I mean, the nun is between you no matter what.

JACK: Oh, the nun is between us and the stairs.

AUSTIN: The nun is in the hallway, yes. Rector Sabinia.

JACK: The nun.

AUSTIN: Right.

ALI (as Castille): Um, Maelgwyn, any ideas?

AUSTIN: He... huh. He says... god, what's he want here? This is the problem with having like, very powerful characters... NPCs. I need to see where he's philosophically aligned with the Heat and the Dark and whether or not he lines up with her.

JACK: Oh no. Oh, this could get--

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: Oh, thank...

AUSTIN: He, like, steps forward and again, weird gauntleted left hand glows with power. Uh, and he says,

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): Stand back. You've fallen to it.

AUSTIN: And she like, backs away a little bit, enough for you all to get past her, but she isn't like, leaving. She's gonna like, stay... he hasn't dealt with her, he's just keeping her at distance. And like, not a far distance.

JACK: Do we just go for it?

DRE: You mean like, leaving? Like, running?

JACK: Yeah.

DRE: Yes.

AUSTIN: Who is leading this roll? This is lead a group. I think someone here needs to lead an action.

JACK: What skill is that?

AUSTIN: Depends on how you're getting out, again. If you're trying to sneak out it's prowl, if you're trying to run out quickly it's probably finesse? Maybe that's also still prowl. Yeah, I think it might just be prowl.

JACK: Who's got the best prowl?

ALI: We all have zero. We established that we all have zero.

DRE: Oh, yeah. We're the worst thieves.

AUSTIN: Good.

JACK: I could do a rousing speech.

AUSTIN: That's not gonna help you get out.

(DRE LAUGHS)

AUSTIN: Like, there are people fighting in the hallways, there's blood everywhere... you need to leave this--the building, the books are all on fire.

ALI: What do we do?

DRE: Oh god, what *do* we do?

AUSTIN: Oh, also does anyone stop and try and pick up that book?

JACK: I was just about to do that.

AUSTIN: Oh, you're gonna have to give me a roll.

JACK: Okay, what'd you want me to roll?

AUSTIN: It's gonna have to be desperate--

JACK: Can I do a rousing speech?

(DRE LAUGHS AGAIN)

AUSTIN: Mm, no. To get--no. Maybe if you weren't soft, y'know?

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: I think it's desperate finesse.

JACK: Oh, because this is like--yeah, picking up small things on the ground when everything's on fire is really hard.

AUSTIN: Especially where there's a void nun between you and it. It's still between Maelgwyn and her. He's still holding her back with this like, glow fist.

JACK: Does anybody wanna help me here?

AUSTIN: What's that look like? Um, there are ways.

ALI: Demonbane charm have any effect? Is she a demon?

AUSTIN: No.

ALI: Evil spirit?

AUSTIN: Um... no. No, the Heat and the Dark is so much more than an evil spirit. Or less, depending.

ALI: Oh boy.

JACK: I could just do it, it would just be nice to have a little help from my friends.

ALI: Actually, what--Dre shot her.

AUSTIN: That's a good question. Have you ever fought nothing?

(ALI AND DRE LAUGH)

AUSTIN: If Dre shot at her--if Dre took a stress and shot at her it would give Hitchcock a plus one.

DRE: Yeah... uh. Oh boy, I could but then I'm gonna be at eight out of nine.

AUSTIN: Yeah. But at that point, you know...

DRE: Yeah, but if we get out, that's the end.

AUSTIN: (definitely scheming) Yeah, definitely have nothing to worry about after this.

DRE: Yeah, it's fine! (laughing)

ALI: Awh, we're both at seven. Neither of us are really in the place to--

JACK: I mean, I could just take more stress.

AUSTIN: I mean, totally. You could just take two more stress to get another...

DRE: Yeah, screw it. I'll shoot her.

AUSTIN: Okay. To do a setup or just to shoot her?

DRE: I guess to do a setup.

AUSTIN: Okay, yeah, are you trying to shoot her--are you trying to hurt her or are you just trying to set up, give covering fire so to speak? For Hitchcock.

DRE: Yeah. Um, I guess both but I guess moreso just covering fire.

AUSTIN: Go ahead and give me a roll.

DRE: Risky, desperate...

AUSTIN: Yeah, risky standard. Look at that! Look at that six! Goddamn six. Yeah, totally. So do you wanna improve his position or give him plus one--I guess improve his position. Because there's not an effect here. He's just gonna get the book or he doesn't. You start shooting and it pushes her back further away from the book.

JACK: Okay. Here we go. (shocked) Oh!

AUSTIN: Oh, buddy.

JACK: What does this look like? This is like a colossal goof.

AUSTIN: You... I think Sige shoots to back her up, you run forward and pick up the book, and... do you still have the candlestick?

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: As you touch the book, the candlestick comes to life in your hands. And it like, it wraps around your arm and pins you to the ground. It like, staples you into the ground.

JACK: Oh, no.

AUSTIN: Not like, through your body--you know what I mean. It just like, shackles you.

JACK: That's still really bad.

AUSTIN: Yeah. She's getting closer. You're now in a desperate position.

(JACK LAUGHS HELPLESSLY)

AUSTIN: You failed. You didn't just almost fail. You are both in a desperate position and are also just stuck here. So that's not great.

JACK: Great.

AUSTIN: Maelgwyn yells, he says,

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): Toss me the book!

JACK: Can I move my arms?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you just--just the one arm is shackled. You're like a mirror of how he was shackled before instead on the ground instead of the wall.

JACK: I'm gonna toss him the book based on his earlier treatment of the void nun.

AUSTIN: Right. Yes. He grabs the book and like, opens it with--he's holding her back with one hand and is trying to open the book and flip through with his other hand, and is looking for something.

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): You should shoot her again!

AUSTIN: He yells.

DRE: Uh... yeah okay, sure.

AUSTIN: She is getting closer to Hitchcock.

ALI: Can I try to help him up?

AUSTIN: Totally. That's probably a wreck, or...

ALI: Yeah, can I destroy...

AUSTIN: Yeah, give me a wreck.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Oh, no, don't destr--

ALI (as Castille): Hitchcock, I'm sorry!

JACK (as Hitchcock): This is penance! This is penance!

(AUSTIN LAUGHS)

ALI: Risky, desperate?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, this is risky. Risky standard.

DRE: What are you wrecking?

AUSTIN: The candlestick.

JACK: My fucking candlestick that I didn't steal from Samothres!

AUSTIN: (skeptical) Mm. You've stolen it and brought it alive.

DRE: Oh boy. (in response to Ali's roll)

ALI: Oh my god!

AUSTIN: You rolled a two.

JACK: For the good of Marielda...

(DRE LAUGHS)

ALI: We're all gonna die here.

SYLVIA: We're changing our name to the Two, not just because we keep rolling them, but because that's how many of us are gonna be left alive after this.

(EVERYONE LAUGHS)

JACK: It's gonna be the dogs.

(MORE LAUGHTER)

AUSTIN: You're helping him up--(amused) Good. Great. You're helping him up and you then see yourself helping him up, because your consciousness is being pulled from your body by Sabinia. And like, you can see the statue form trying to help Hitchcock up from your ghostly elf body, and then it like, freezes in place 'cause you're not in it anymore. She's yanked you from your body. Hitchcock, Castille goes to help you up and then freezes as a statue and just--now also there's a statue on you holding you down.

JACK: So it just got worse for me?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: Oh great.

ALI: Boy howdy.

DRE: I have an idea, and it's a really mean idea.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh? Good sentence so far.

DRE: I wanna command Salary to help us by telling her to attack the nun with her knife.

AUSTIN: (weakly) Uh-huh... go for it. Gimme the command roll.

ALI: Just ask her...

AUSTIN: No, no, command's right. She's not gonna just do it. Yeah. How's your command.

DRE: It's two, actually.

AUSTIN: Okay, that's good. You've run a bunch of operations and stuff before.

DRE: Sh--!

AUSTIN: Six!

DRE: Six.

AUSTIN: She does it. She-- What do you say?

ALI: Oh my god, you got a two and a six. I'm sorry, I just--

SYLVIA: Holy fuck.

AUSTIN: Give me a... give me a... tell me what this looks like from your commanding.

DRE: I think Sige is just blasting with his gun and he looks at Salary and says,

DRE (as Sige): If you don't do something, we are all going to *die*.

AUSTIN: And she's like,

AUSTIN (as Salary): Uh--uh--

AUSTIN: And then looks down at the knife and like, clenches it close, and as you're shooting, in between your blasts she like, hustles across the room and just like, jumps off of the statue body of Castille, through the ghost, and drives the blade into Sabinia's chest. Um, and the blade like, takes on the same character that the walls have, of being from that plane of the heat and the dark. And like, as she drives it into Sabinia, Sabinia opens up into like, a portal into that place. And the blade clanks down to the ground, and you see the door from behind Sabinia, that goes into this little closet, the vestry here, that door gets swallowed up into the portal where she stood. And you all feel a pull from where she once stood. It's now like a vortex drawing you in. Castille, you're able to get back to your body.

ALI: Okay, cool.

AUSTIN: And Maelgwyn finds the right page and like, says a few words in the old tongue, and then the candlestick comes back alive and like, does a little salute to him and then goes stiff and clanks to the ground like a candlestick.

(JACK SIGHS IN RELIEF)

ALI: Does the old tongue hit my ear like it's familiar at all?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, you've done a lot of work in the old tongue before.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: What do you wanna know about the old tongue?

(ALI LAUGHS)

AUSTIN: When you're in your ghost form, you have like, so much more knowledge available to you. Like, you do know that your name is Charter. Your name is Charter Castille.

ALI: Okay. (laughing) I don't know if right now is when I wanna have this conversation, but that's good to know.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: So we're leaving?

AUSTIN: You would hope so.

DRE: *[cross]* I would hope so!

AUSTIN: The fire is coming up the library. Everything is being pulled into this fuckin' black hole.

ALI: Yeah, so let's go? Hi? Everyone?

AUSTIN: You open that other door and there are the black slacks engaged in a fight with the pala-din. And Lance Noble Orchid is like, firing shots down the hallway at them. You see him kill like, four people like it's nothing.

JACK: I just, I want it on record that I've left the candlestick behind.

AUSTIN: (amused) Okay, thank you. Take one karma point or whatever. Whatever other systems have.

(DRE AND JACK LAUGH)

AUSTIN: Fuckin', you get a light side point. Like--

DRE: A point of inspiration.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Again, the way out is a prowl check where someone has to be the leader.

JACK: Aw, fuck, are we still on this?

AUSTIN: No one tried it. You stopped to pick up the book. But hey, you have the book. Maelgwyn has the book. Maelgwyn has the book of life.

ALI: He has all of our stuff. (gasps)

AUSTIN: Ah, you figured it out? You figured out where the book is from?

ALI: (laughing) Fuck you! Okay. God.

AUSTIN: Long-time listeners--uh-huh.

(SEVERAL PEOPLE GOING 'OHHHH' IN REALIZATION)

AUSTIN: (over ruckus) There's a book in the--the first-- the first arc of Friends at the Table.

ALI: It could've been this very night, two years ago.

AUSTIN: It--it could've been.

SYLVIA: What?

AUSTIN: There's a book in the first season of Friends at the Table--

JACK: *[cross]* The book in the tower!

SYLVIA: OH! Shit, I hope we meet the dwarf!

AUSTIN: No, no, he's the--he's not even close to being alive yet. Oh wait no, he is. He's alive somewhere. He's probably... someone.... hm... yeah. This book has to get to that tower.

SYLVIA: It turns out he was the one who brought the Heat and the Dark all along and Art was right.

AUSTIN: *[cross]* That's right.

JACK: Oh my god. Wait a second.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

JACK: So what's the other book?

AUSTIN: The other book is the book that you had to get for Clarett.

JACK: Right, but is that--

AUSTIN: Unrelated book.

JACK: Okay. Right.

ALI: Two books.

AUSTIN: Two books, both about life in a way. Different sorts of books. Hers is about like, not being undead anymore.

JACK. Well I guess this is reassuring 'cause it means we're definitely gonna leave Memoriam. Or at least the book is.

AUSTIN: The book is. Maelgwyn has the book.

JACK: We should make a prowler roll, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, someone should make a prowler roll. Or tell me another way of getting out. Maybe you can deliver a speech that calms everybody down. I dunno. I'm not gonna tell you you can't, but that would definitely be desperate limited.

JACK: Wait a second. How much... how many... how much stress is flashbacks?

AUSTIN: Two.

JACK: Even really big ones?

AUSTIN: No, no, sorry, it's not two. Two's for the very big ones. It's one--It's zero for a normal action for which you had a very easy opportunity, it's one for a complex action or an unlikely opportunity and it's two plus for an elaborate opportunity. What's your flashback?

JACK: Um...

AUSTIN: I feel like there's a loose... there's something up in the air that's a huge benefit to you that you haven't cashed in yet.

JACK: Let me just look at the map.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: Could you tell me something about these trees on the right-hand side?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: Wh--how f--so what is the actual-- if I were to stand at the vestry and look out of that window, what would I see?

AUSTIN: There's no window. So now, you can see Marielda on fire. Because all of this is now the heat and the dark.

JACK: Are those trees close together?

AUSTIN: I mean, you can't see them at all. Or you can, but they--you don't wanna walk into that through this window. That window--well, maybe you do. Maybe you want to go into that version of Marielda.

JACK: God. Okay, so--what about the back? What about where Orchid is on the map right now?

AUSTIN: Um, yeah, that's outside. But remember, those windows don't break. That is what Carolyn thought--they would break, and then she didn't.

JACK: She got killed by the...

AUSTIN: Then she got devoured by the void nun. Who is dead now.

ALI: Oh, she is.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah, she got--that knife. Listen. Yellow House knows how to fuckin' deal with what they know how to deal.

ALI: I wish we could've talked to one of them...

AUSTIN: You can! You have one!

ALI: Yeah...

AUSTIN: She's alive, she killed the void nun!

ALI: Yeah, we saved her life!

AUSTIN: (skeptical) Mm...

JACK: See, as much as I'd like to bring Ethan in, I genuinely can't think of a situation in which Ethan Hitchcock could get like, this number of people out of a building that's under siege. When you can't break through any doors or windows, I can't disguise the people as anything...

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: All the stuff Hitchcock's good at is not very good at extracting large groups of armed people.

AUSTIN: Maybe there's a way though. You come up with a wild enough idea, you let me know.

JACK: Okay.

DRE: Hold on. So the windows are unbreakable.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: What's like, the inside of the building made out of though?

AUSTIN: Stone.

JACK: So just the windows are unbreakable?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Oh.

AUSTIN: No one's tried to break through the wall 'cause that's--walls are made of walls!

ALI: But I'm made of like, stone...

AUSTIN: Yeah! You could try to break through a wall.

DRE: Maybe before we started, our chemical expert mixed up some explosives to give to one of the Hitchcock brothers.

AUSTIN: Yes. This is what I like to hear.

JACK: Okay, so I think... I think what happens is that it's not--I think that what happens is a result of actions in the past, but it's almost more like a--this is a cut that would've happened earlier in the thing, which is Hitchcock waking up in the dancing school and it's like--he's slept in. 'Cause he was recovering, right, he said he was recovering?

AUSTIN: Yes. From the previous mission where things went really bad.

JACK: And he's just--he's just really like, gets up and gets dressed, and looks out of the window. And as he looks out of the window he just sees an explosion in the direction of Memoriam College. And so he goes down to the front entrance and he puts several things inside the--a large cart that he's got with him, and he hooks up the horses that he steals from the pub next door. (DRE laughs) And the horses are just like 'okay, I guess we're going on a-- fine, right, I guess we're...' And he rides through the increasingly crowded streets to Memoriam College. As he gets closer you know, bottles are starting to fly, and stones, and he notices the pala-din are marching alongside next to him. And then I think that he probably parks the cart here and blows it up.

AUSTIN: Okay! Give me--I think take two stress.

JACK: It does sound very stressful.

AUSTIN: All of this sounds very stressful. I think you also need to give me a roll.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Aubrey, what do you normally roll to blow stuff up? That's wreck, that's a wreck--

SYLVIA: *[cross]* Uh, wreck.

JACK: Oh, I don't have any--

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a shame, isn't it?

JACK: How is it hard to blow something up?

AUSTIN: 'Cause you don't wanna blow up also!

JACK: Okay yeah, fair point.

(DRE LAUGHING)

AUSTIN: God. One second, I'm gonna read from the alchemy...

ALI: Shouldn't we--shouldn't we be taking Aubrey's wreck score here?

AUSTIN: No, 'cause... Aubrey's not the one who's doing the wreck. Aubrey made the alchemy stuff.

JACK: Unless...

SYLVIA: Is there a way I could assist?

AUSTIN: No, I'm gonna give him--

JACK: Well--What it could be is that Aubrey just told Hitchcock, 'just bring the cart.'

AUSTIN: Yeah, but you're still the person who has to hit the--you have to hit the trigger, it's you. Um, the thing--it just means that you're gonna get a bonus 'cause Aubrey's--you're gonna get a plus one to the roll. Aubrey's like assisting you from having made it and the stuff is made of good stuff.

SYLVIA: I'm very good at bombs.

JACK: Okay, so I'm gonna take two stress... oh my god, I'm up to nine stress.

AUSTIN: And then you're gonna take another stress--actually I'll give you one stress for the flashback.

JACK: Okay so, this is now five plus two, for the extra dice.

AUSTIN: Yep. So you're gonna take three stress total, and then you're gonna roll four wreck.

JACK: With the extra. This is risky--no, this is controlled? Hitchcock's...

AUSTIN: This is controlled. Ehh, mm, this is controlled. I'll give you controlled. And then there is going to be a side effect, because this is part of the new alchemy system. So you'll have to do a resist after this. (in response to Jack's roll) There you go, there's a five. The explosion happens, and it's loud. It tosses Lance Noble Orchid forward into the mess. Um, into like the fighting. And you all hear this explosion, and the horses whinnying and all that, from the back. Hitchcock, give me a--a resolve check.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: No, sorry, this is a prowess. To resist the chemical burn. Or you could take 'chemical burns.'

JACK: (dismayed) No, no, no, no.

AUSTIN: (laughing) It's only a level one. I guess you already have a bunch though, so. (in response to Jack's roll) Okay, so you take one stress. That's not so bad.

JACK: That's fine. I'm up to eight now.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's all! You've only already been traumatized once in this heist. For what it's worth I kind of combined two heists into one, so, y'know. You almost get traumatized twice, that's okay. Um...

(SYLVIA laugh)

SYLVIA: You're hitting the quota.

AUSTIN: You're able to sneak out the back, but not before Lance Noble Orchid sees you. And I'm gonna increase your heat by an additional at the end of this heist.

JACK: Well, that's (indistinguishable) gonna be big. Big number.

AUSTIN: What's up?

[TIMESTAMP: 1:00:29]

DRE: What would I need to do to take his gun again?

AUSTIN: Holy shit. Not too much, 'cause he's just like down on the ground, coughing from being exploded from behind. And you don't mind being seen, right?

DRE: He's already seen us!

AUSTIN: Right, that's what I'm saying. It's not like you're--it's not like you're sneaking up.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Give me a... what is this? This is a... I think you just... take it?

ALI: Are we allowed to still roll cool?

(AUSTIN AND DRE LAUGH)

AUSTIN: I think this is a fortune roll. I think this is just--is it in a place where you can pick it up safely.

DRE: Okay... how do I do that?

AUSTIN: Right? It's just a--it's just--it's luck. So it's, I get to decide what the... how many dice you roll. I think it's you get to roll three dice, and get a success and you get it. And that's how fortune rolls work.

JACK: Oh my god. Good luck.

AUSTIN: There's a six!

SYLVIA: Fuck yes!

(DRE LAUGHING)

JACK: He's collecting them now.

AUSTIN: What do you say as you pick it up? As this brat looks up at you?

DRE (as Sige): I told you the first time you didn't deserve one of these.

AUSTIN (as L.N. Orchid): Wehh... ehh...

(ALI MAKES A PITYING NOISE)

AUSTIN: And he starts *crying*.

(SYLVIA LAUGHS)

DRE: I just wanna gun-butt that fool.

AUSTIN: Yeah, and knock him out. Okay, good. I don't know that he's gonna make it out of this. I think you just killed this kid. We'll see. He's not Batman.

DRE: [cross] As a wise man one said, ante up.

AUSTIN: Great. Great. Jack that fool. Alright. You get out. You've made it out, you've made it out of the heist. You've made it out of the Valentine Affair.

JACK: And what an affair it was.

AUSTIN: What do you do? Do you just ride away on horses into the night? As the university burns?

ALI: What's happening to the rest of the city?

AUSTIN: Oh, the city's fine.

ALI: Oh.

JACK: Wait, really?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: The city's fine?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Most of the city's fine. Everything's just localized to here.

JACK: What about all of the burning?

AUSTIN: Well like this building is burning, and there's rioting through the university. The vision of the Heat and the Dark was a vision through the observatory and through Sabinia.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Now like, the fire is contained. There is a hole in the ground there now. A deep hole like where the mage tower was during the quiet year or the one that's still out in the sea. But the

rest of the university just reconfigures like always around it. But it doesn't get close. There's like a no-go zone. There's like a zone in which you're not allowed to get closer.

JACK: Oh, that's much better news than I thought it was going to be.

AUSTIN: Yeah, the Heat and the Dark is not here yet.

JACK: Oh thank god.

AUSTIN: But it's coming.

JACK: Well, we can burn that bridge when we come to it

(ALI LAUGHS)

JACK: Let's... let's... the horses? Maybe? How many of us are there? And can Castille ride a horse?

DRE: There's a cart, wasn't there.

AUSTIN: There was a cart--

JACK: Oh, we blew that up.

AUSTIN: You didn't unload-- you can have a second cart.

ALI: Yeah, there's probably a cart somewhere--

AUSTIN: No. But you can have... I'm giving... let this gift be--you had two carts. Or you unloaded the cart.

JACK: (laughs) Like cycling two bicycles at once?

ALI: Sorry, I was assuming we were like, stealing horses from the university.

AUSTIN: No, you've got horses. You brought them.

JACK: Except Castille, who can't ride.

ALI: I'm in the cart.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Okay so i guess we're going--heading back through the city.

AUSTIN: Alright. Let's talk about... can we take 5 minutes then do some wrap up? So, let's start with advancement. Alright, let's go over exp. Let's start with Hitchcock 'cause he's top of my list. Um, every time you roll a desperate action, the end of each session for each item below, mark one exp in ur playbook or an attribute. So you get to pick. Or 2 exp if that item occurred multiple times. Deception or influence?

JACK: Umm... did I lie to anybody?

AUSTIN: Or influence.

ALI: You started by lying.

AUSTIN: Did he?

ALI: Yeah.

DRE: He told the good fairplay sister that we were definitely here to take the test, that all of us were here to take the test.

AUSTIN: Mm, that's not really a challenge.

JACK: No.

ALI: No, when he lied about being the the the teacher... when this whole thing started.

AUSTIN: Oh, did we not do exp last time?

ALI: No...

DRE: I don't think we did.

JACK: Oh god wow, yeah. Definitely.

ALI: Yeah, this is exp for the entire...

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. I couldn't remember if we did it already last time.

ALI: We did not.

AUSTIN: Okay. Then yes, take exp for that for sure.

JACK: Okay. I'm gonna put that into, uh...

AUSTIN: In fact, you may have done that multiple times, so take 2 exp for that.

JACK: One... two.

AUSTIN: Um, you expressed your drives, heritage, beliefs, or background.

JACK: Um, I think so.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'd take one for that. You struggled with issues from your vice or trauma during the session.

JACK: I'm gonna say that I probably also did that.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh. Take another one from that.

JACK: Okay, what happens when my playbook advancement hits max?

AUSTIN: A new move!

JACK: I get to pick a new...

AUSTIN: You get to pick a new move. Yep.

JACK: I'll do that in between recordings.

AUSTIN: Sounds good. Uh, next up is... Aubrey. Actually Aubrey was first, my bad.

SYLVIA: Ehh.

AUSTIN: Whenever you rolled desperate... whenever you address a tough challenge with technical skill or chaos.

SYLVIA: The smoke bomb thing, would that count?

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's chaos for sure. And technical skill is when you blew up the thing too.

DRE: Yeah, you blew up the door.

SYLVIA: Oh, I melted the...

AUSTIN: Yeah you got in the vault. Yeah, take 2 for that.

SYLVIA: Okay. And then uh...

AUSTIN: Expressed beliefs, drives, heritage, or background. I don't remember what your beliefs are.

SYLVIA: My beliefs are never permanently harm someone, knowledge should be used to help others, Emberboro deserves to be a proper parish.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I'd give you 'never permanently harm someone'. There were all sorts of times when you could've hurt somebody--that would've helped, if you just hurt them. So nice. So then... vice or traumas. You've got vice, I didn't give you one for getting it yet.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or trauma rather, you got a trauma.

SYLVIA: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: All right, Castille.

ALI: Hi.

AUSTIN: Hey!

ALI: Hi!

AUSTIN: Let's talk about your life.

ALI: (laughing) My whole situation.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Um...

AUSTIN: Uh, hull. You fulfilled your functions despite, a desperate thing. What are your functions again.

ALI: Um, guard, discover, acquire.

AUSTIN: Did you guard discover and/or acquire yourself?

ALI: (laughing) I feel like some stuff...

AUSTIN: I feel like I learned stuff but I'm not sure if you discovered--I guess you discovered stuff.

ALI: I discovered Maelgwyn.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. Yes. I'll give you that. Take one for that.

ALI: I tried to help Hitchcock.

AUSTIN: When?

ALI: When I tried to get him off the floor.

AUSTIN: Oh. Yeah. That's totally guard. Take one for that. Uh, you suppressed or ignored your former human drives, heritage, or beliefs. That's new. You changed that.

ALI: Oh, oh wow.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's really good. You suppressed or ignored your former human beliefs, drives, heritage, or background. That's really good.

ALI: God. Oh, I have to figure out what those are, I guess.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Well, you have those. You have written what those are... I guess you don't actually have written down what they used to be.

ALI: Right, yeah. I guess there's like, two personalities... (distressed noise)

AUSTIN: Lots of duplicity in this season. Lots of twos.

ALI: (laughing) I don't think I ended any fights.

AUSTIN: No.

ALI: I punched that guy.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, you punched that guy. I guess it didn't end that fight, though.

ALI: Yeah, but I tried to end it. Maelgwyn kinda finished it for me.

AUSTIN: Maelgwyn finished it.

ALI: That counts?

AUSTIN: (skeptical noises) Mm... no.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Did you end.. did you hurt anybody else? Did you finish a fight in the last season? Or the last recording?

ALI: In the last recording, we...

AUSTIN: Did you kill anybody? No. Sige killed a bunch of people.

ALI: No, I...

AUSTIN: He killed that boy... Oh you did, you ended the fight with Cartwright. Who is now just like, stuck half in that bottle, staring into the distance as this fucking university burns. Cool.

ALI: Oh my god, I didn't bring him with me.

AUSTIN: No, you didn't. You left him behind.

ALI: Nooooo... Things were so complicated and I forgot...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: Aw... okay...

AUSTIN: Yeah, it happens.

ALI: Now I have to go talk to his daughter... okay, I guess I'll just take the... the three exp there, we're good.

AUSTIN: Yep, we're good. And then Sige.

DRE: Mm.

AUSTIN: Everyone's favorite meanboy. Um, addressed a challenge with threats or violence.
(laughing)

DRE: Yep. I'm just gonna... take two.

AUSTIN: Take two. You know, just take two.

(DRE LAUGHING)

AUSTIN: Uh... you expressed your beliefs, drives, heritage or background? Go over those again?

DRE: Uh, yeah.

AUSTIN: Pala-din were built to kill, eh. Mm. Uh, I think you did... your instincts ever get you into trouble.

DRE: Um, I mean, I went after Calendar instead of trying to talk.

AUSTIN: Sure. Yeah, I'll give you one for that.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Uh... but that's it I think. So take three altogether.

DRE: That's fine. That's enough to level.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And then the crew.

SYLVIA: It's gonna be so much.

DRE: Oh god. (laughing)

AUSTIN: Ooh-- first again, we start with... we start with exp for the crew. 'Cause I'm lovin' the crew. Yeah, I'm lovin' the crew.

DRE: Woooo...

JACK: God, I'm so worried about heat... I'm so worried about heat.

AUSTIN: That's fair. Well, you've a friend. Wh-- which heat are you worried about?

JACK: Oh, just every single one of them, Austin.

AUSTIN: All the types of heats. Okay. Um, alright. Execute a successful product acquisition, big sale, or territory control operation. Yeah, I'll give you one for that. You got some product. Um, contend with challenges above your current station. Yes. Bolster your crew's reputation, develop a new one. Hm.

JACK: Oh, well...

AUSTIN: Yes. So there's one. Uh express the goals, drives, inner conflict, or essential nature of the crew. I think that's four all the way through, that's an advancement. Nice work, crew.

ALI: We've done it...

AUSTIN: You did a crew. Which means you get uh, an advancement. So everybody take another coin, because you've advanced crew. Who took all that... Sige has three coin. Uh, because you stole the three coin from the vault. In fact, take one for that. 'Cause that's one of your things, isn't it? One of your instincts.

DRE: Oh, yeah.

AUSTIN: It is to scrounge for extra loot on the job. Yeah. Nice work. Take another exp. Um, we'll talk about how the crew advances in a second, but how quickly do you head to Clarett?

JACK: Clarett can probably wait until tomorrow, right?

AUSTIN: Oh, probably. Marielda is a city of prying eyes and informants, both living and ghostly. Anything you might do-- anything you do might be witnessed, and there's always evidence left behind. To reflect this, your crew acquires heat as they commit crimes. After a score, conflict with an opponent, your crew takes heat according to the nature of the operation. Alright, you tell me which this is: smooth and quiet, low exposure--

JACK: Yes! Yes! That one. We're all smooth and...

(LAUGHTER)

AUSTIN: (overlapping, amused) Yes. Contained-- Contained, uh, standard exposure. Loud and chaotic, high exposure, or wild, devastating exposure.

(DRE LAUGHING)

JACK: I really don't want to say wild, but I think it probably is, right?

ALI: I would love for it to be contained.

JACK: There was a riot in the university...

(ALI LAUGHING)

AUSTIN: I think it's at least four heat? It might be six? Six is for wild. But I'm gonna say it's at least loud and chaotic. Add plus one heat for a high-profile, well-connected target, add one heat if the situation happened on hostile turf, add plus one heat if you're at war with another faction--

SYLVIA: Oh, *jesus*.

AUSTIN: Add plus two heat if killing was involved.

SYLVIA: Oh, *jesus!*

AUSTIN: When your heat reaches level nine, you gain a wanted level and clear your heat. Any excess heat rolls over, so if your heat was seven and you took four, you reset with two heat marked. Alright, so I actually do need to figure this out. I'm gonna say chaotic, so four, and plus two is six, for killing. Uh, then plus one for being at war, seven. Which means you're left at three heat and one wanted level.

JACK: Holy shit. This was a heist in the same way that Just Cause 2 is a game about heists.

(SEVERAL PEOPLE LAUGHING)

AUSTIN: Uh, the higher your wanted level, the more serious the response when law enforcement takes action against you. Also, the combined level of heat and your wanted level affects the severity of the entanglements your crew faces after a score. Um, *incarcera*-- just so you know, the only way to reduce... reduce wanted level is to get someone else arrested. Or to let one of yourselves get arrested.

JACK: *Caro-line!* No, that would be very cruel.

AUSTIN: Aw, that would be so mean!

JACK: No, I don't-- I said that and regretted it immediately.

AUSTIN: Good. It's time for downtime. And coin. Let's see. Payoff and entanglements. Here we go. After a score, the PCs take stock of their payoff from the operation and deal with any outstanding entanglements the crew is involved in. A score yields one rep per tier of the target... um, what tier is this target? I think pretty fuckin' high. Yeah, I'm gonna say this was a four tier target. Um, the coin blah blah blah... so I think it's, you get four rep just from the target alone. And then... everyone take another four coin.

JACK: Can we put stuff into the stash at this point?

AUSTIN: Uh, totally. When you mark your last trauma--no, that's a different thing.

(ALI LAUGHS)

AUSTIN: More than four coin is an impractical amount. You must spend the excess or put it in your stash.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: And then there's another four that can go into the lair, I'm gonna max that out.

SYLVIA: So do we have to hold four or can we put...

AUSTIN: You can put more into the stash, but it means you don't have it on hand. Remember, you can spend coin for bonuses, a lot, anytime.

SYLVIA: Okay.

DRE: Oh, yeah. Forgot about that.

AUSTIN: It's the thing we always forget about. Alright. You're scoundrels and the crew didn't just spring into existence overnight. You have a complex history of favors, commitments, debts and promises that got you where you are today. To reflect this, after every score you roll dice to reflect which entanglement comes calling. Entanglement might be a rival crew looking to throw their weight around and demand some coin, an investigator of the city watch making a case against them, or even the attention of a vengeful ghost. See page 37.

(JACK LAUGHS)

AUSTIN: Entanglements. Roll heat plus your wanted level, so...

(SYLVIA LAUGHS SARDONICALLY)

AUSTIN: Um, who wants to do that?

ALI: I would love to.

AUSTIN: Oh, would you? So you're just rolling one d6. Three. Reprisals. An enemy faction makes a move against you or a friend, contact, or vice purveyor. Pay them one rep and one coin per tier of your enemy as an apology, allow them to mess with--with you or yours, or fight back and show who's boss. Here's what I'm gonna do. I think like, while you're licking your wounds, the Fontmen come calling again. Except, this time Clarett Holiday and the Red Rank Irregulars have your back. And I think it's like, a course of weeks that this war plays out. And it is bloody and bad. But with Clarett's support, you win that war. And knock them down a peg. And climb one yourself. Raising you up from a tier one to tier two again. Or I guess, it instantly raises you

up from tier one to tier two because it brings your tier back up, because it had been dropped from being in a war, um, and then you gain the rep from it. So either you can be a firm tier two instead of a weak tier two, or a firm- a weak tier three. It's up to you. We can figure that out later. Alright, downtime. Also, I think I'm gonna give you... Miss Salary as another cohort.

ALI: Thank you!

DRE: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Um, I like the image of you continuing to like-- recruit.

ALI: What's the deal with um, Maelgwyn?

AUSTIN: Good question. What do you like, with... no, you don't.

ALI: No, I was gonna ask if we like, get his number. (laughs)

AUSTIN: Oh, it's like that?

(ALI LAUGHS)

ALI: I feel like I definitely wanna stay in contact with him, he has Aubrey.

DRE: Yeah...

SYLVIA: Help! Free me!

ALI: He has Aubrey, and like, knows who I am.

AUSTIN: He does know who you are. You definitely can like, stay in contact with him.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Um, Aubrey? One morning, you wake up in Quince parish. In a room that at first you think is the same room that you saw Samot and Samoths arguing in. And then you kind of life, get your bearings, and it's just a little, um, like a, not hotel. Just a little like, inn. And... there's a note from Maelgwyn there that tells you how to get in touch with him if you ever need him. And I think the way you do that is like, by showing up at the rock at Violet parish at a certain time of the week.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Like, 'meet me at- I'm always here at noon on thursdays', basically.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: Alright, downtime. Two downtime actions. Uh, I should... Clarett is also just like, you're on good terms with Clarett now. Like, this has... you've paid each other off. Everything worked out well, I'm gonna increase your relationship with them another step. Who wants to do downtime first?

DRE: I know what I'm gonna do, and I think it's gonna be pretty simple. I'm gonna just recover all tier one harm, get rid of this singed effect on me.

AUSTIN: Nice.

DRE: There's no roll for that, it's only a level one.

AUSTIN: Yep. Totally.

DRE: Okay. And then I'm gonna just indulge my vice. Which is... roll your lowest, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you roll your lowest of the three. Yeah. Attributes.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: And... you reduce it by six!

DRE: Okay. Perfect.

AUSTIN: I hope you didn't overindulge.

DRE: No, I didn't. I was at seven. Remember, this was how we got into this whole mess, was he was at five and I rolled six.

ALI: (overlapping) Yep.

(DRE LAUGHING)

AUSTIN: (amused) I totally remember. I totally remember. Uh yeah, so what's that look like? You're just working on your boat? You have all this extra money now, so...

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Do you just uh, I'm assuming you don't spend any of it. You could have if you wanted to. Do you just, uh... is it just you working on this boat more?

DRE: Yeah, I need to figure out more of what that looks like.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Let's think about it and like, open on that image next game.

DRE: Yeah. Okay.

AUSTIN: Next session. Um, alright. Uh, who's up?

ALI: Oh, is it--Dre just has the one action?

DRE: I did two.

AUSTIN: He did two. He was healing and then--

ALI: Oh. Oh god, healing. God.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: I'm not harmed... very much, though. So...

AUSTIN: Are you not?

ALI: I just have...

AUSTIN: Oh, you're smashed.

ALI: Smashed, that's it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you can spend one of your actions to recover that if you want.

ALI: Um, I was gonna... indulge my vice and try to gather information from Maelgwyn?

AUSTIN: Sure. That's a good idea.

ALI: Let's be a little... less stressed first.

AUSTIN: Sounds good.

ALI: Just hit this... indulge vice button.

AUSTIN: You're at seven. Yeah, just the indulge vice button. There you go.

ALI: Okay. So I reduce it by...

AUSTIN: Reduce by five. Yeah, so like, that image is you walking around the streets as a pala-din doing pala-din shit. Which is like, extra dissociative now that you've been another person?

ALI: Yeah... god. Um. But like, I think the reason why this like, especially now relieves her stress is because like, at this point she really only knows that she had two lives, and like, that's it? And then... really only knows that she made a bunch of enemies. Um, so like, instead of having to consider that or... or having to like, confront that, she gets to be this third thing that's like, uncomplicated and that isn't really of herself.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Yeah. Um, but I think in doing that, and... I guess, starting to feel more relaxed, she's able to go talk to Maelgwyn.

AUSTIN: Okay. I think that's a... (indistinct) on a gather information, you get plus one effect. Take plus one d. So yeah, I think there is a roll for that. There is a pretty basic--it's one of your basic verbs is... how you do this. I think consort.

ALI: Consort?

AUSTIN: Yeah, consort is... consort with your connections from your heritage, background, friends or rivals to gain access to resources, information, people or places. You get plus one d because you're doing it during downtime.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: And again you can spend coin, you can push yourself and get two stress...

ALI: Um, yeah, I'll spend a coin. Let's say we go out to lunch.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's exactly it. You go out to lunch. That's exactly right.

ALI: I purchase food and I can't eat any of it and it's... nice. (laughs)

AUSTIN: Yeah, so go ahead. Give me... give me consort with a plus 2d.

ALI: Okay. That's still a three.

AUSTIN: That's still a three. Oh, that's... mm. That's still... you didn't do it. Um, I think I can give you another dice if you do a devil's bargain. Let's see. Um... let's think of a devil's bargain for

you and let you roll one more. I think... huh. Hm. And you'll still have to roll, that's the thing here. Um, I'll give you this one more die to roll to gain information from Maelgwyn, but the result is going to be that you remember the worst thing that you did as the previous form that you were. Um, and know exactly how bad you were. That will be the first memory that you have of being Charter.

(ALI LAUGHS)

AUSTIN: And you still have to roll, so.

ALI: Oh, yeah. Yeah. Sure. Yeah.

AUSTIN: So give me one d6.

ALI: That's a s--!

AUSTIN: There's the six! Alright. You ask-- what do you ask Maelgwyn?

ALI: Oh, I think that depends on the memory that I have.

AUSTIN: Oh, you don't get the memory yet.

ALI: (laughing) Okay...

AUSTIN: The memory comes like, as a response to stimulus.

ALI: Okay. Yeah. Right. God. Jesus... Um, I think I just ask him how he knew me and how Bolster knew me and like, why he was so upset.

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): You don't remember any of it?

ALI (as Castille): No.

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): You don't remember the tower? You don't remember... you don't remember why you were sent?

ALI (as Castille): No, I... I... I mean I know there used to be a tower here, but I...

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): You... you came here with Bolster. You were sent by Samot.

ALI (as Castille): I- I was sent by *who*?

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): The two of you were sent from the university with a proposition. He figured out a way, he thought he did, to stop... and you were supposed to come to show that it would work. And I was sent to ferret you out.

ALI (as Castille): (incredulous laugh)

AUSTIN: And then you remember that Maelgwyn was getting a little too close, and that the only way to keep him away was to give him something. Was to give the pala-din something to make them think they were still in control. And so you sent a slip of paper to the church of Samoths that told them where Bolster would be one night. So that you could continue your work in peace. And that is the first thing you remember about being Charter Castille.

ALI: Yikes...

AUSTIN: When there was that wizard duel out in the streets between Yellow House and the mage tower, things went bad, and they were going to kill you. And so you separated your consciousness from your body and found a little workshop where the pala-din were being built and crafted one into a form you were pleased with. But in your rush, you lost yourself.

ALI: Yikes.

AUSTIN: How's she feel about this? And like, any other questions about her, what she was here to do? 'Cause you got it now. You know exactly who you were.

ALI: Yeah... right.

AUSTIN: And here's a question now: is there a dissociation there? Do you remember being-- like, are you Charter, or are you Castille?

ALI: I-- eh. I think it's tough 'cause like, her personality as Castille is super different.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: And like her beliefs as Castille are super different, so I feel like there's definitely still a separation there. Like, it's not like she remembers and then she's like 'oh, yeah, oh right, yeah. I was a mage, yeah.'

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: So, I don't feel like all of that... it's like being told you were adopted, right? And like, your family is still your family.

AUSTIN: Right, yes.

ALI: This other person who's saying that they're your mom is like, not...

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: Your mom, right? Like, ugh.

AUSTIN: But also, I mean, like, the thing is that now you do also remember being raised by that other parent.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You remember like, 80 years-- like, you remember before the war now. Because you're an elf, and elves are all...

ALI: (weakly) Right... God... um, what else do I wanna ask him?

ALI (as Castille): Why were you down there?

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): I have to figure that out myself.

ALI (as Castille): Mm.

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): Last thing I remember... I was serving in the army, and we were preparing for Samot's arrival, and... I got a lead. I got a lead about what was happening. With the whole war, I guess. I don't... it's foggy, y'know?

ALI (as Castille): Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Maelgwyn): And I went to investigate, and I don't really... I remember thinking, I remember thinking we were wrong. And that's... about it. I thought... I thought maybe... I don't know.

AUSTIN: He sighs and like, sips his coffee. There's coffee. He's drinking dark coffee. But it's iced coffee, dark iced coffee. It's definitely-- it's cold brew. You brew it out on the west where it's snowy, and then you bring it in to Chrysanthemum as quickly as possible.

(ALI LAUGHS)

ALI: I'm trying to think if there's anything else I want to know, but I don't think that there is.

AUSTIN: I guess, here's the thing that I'll give you that actually might make... like, you know more than he does at this point in some ways. Like, not about him, not about where he went, but

what you do know is that there are three schools of thought. About the Heat and the Dark. There is what Samoths believes, which is that the Heat and the Dark arrive together, and that there really isn't much to do about it except sit back and make sure that life is good until it comes. There is what Samot believes and what you believed also, when you were Charter, which is that the Heat arrives first, and then the Dark. And so, if you can keep the heat at bay, you have a chance. Because the Dark can't come without the Heat first. The Heat has to devour the kind of physical material for the Dark to arrive. And so if you can keep things cool, well. And then there's this third thought, which is what the Yellow House believes. Which is that the Dark arrives first. And then the Heat. But that people have a light to them, their own light, that we emanate an energy that is anathema to the Dark. And so as long as we move and play and dance and celebrate, the Dark can never come in full. And so the Heat will never arrive to devour us. And like, that is kind of the heart of the conflict. Is this like, weird academic marginalia about like, grammar about which comes first. Because it's a big question, right? Because if you can figure out which it is, you might be able to do something to stop it. And that's what Charter knows, and Maelgwyn doesn't quite have a handle on it. But you do know that he ended up being vaguely aligned with Yellow House back during the Quiet Year.

ALI: Okay. Um, okay.

AUSTIN: Oh, do you know... fuck. Yeah. You know what I think he's maybe forgotten. Which is that he's their son.

ALI: Wait, what?

AUSTIN: He's Samot and Samoths's son.

ALI: Oh. (sadder) Oh... *Oh*...

AUSTIN: I don't know that he has a grasp on that now.

(ALI MAKING SAD NOISES)

JACK: Did he ever know?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah. He like, served his father loyally. And then served his other father loyally. And doesn't really remember either.

ALI: Man, what is this show... what are we doing here?

AUSTIN: I don't know. It's sad!

ALI: Shucks...

AUSTIN: Alright. Who's next? Aubrey or Hitchcock? And then we'll wrap.

JACK: I'll go.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: So I'm gonna do the classic combo of indulging in my vice and healing my harm.

AUSTIN: Sure!

JACK: I have a level 2 harm, so that means I have to roll, right?

AUSTIN: You do have to roll.

JACK: How does that work?

AUSTIN: Good question. Um... gettin' there... vice, downtime, healing. There we go. Um... you might ask the leech to tinker with you. What's your heart--what's the bad one?

JACK: Uh, crushed.

AUSTIN: Oh boy. Is that more emotional or physical?

JACK: Well, my foot's crushed. And...

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: They kind of compound each other, right? 'Cause you could be feeling really shitty about yourself, and then you get out of bed and your foot hurts.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. I'm gonna say... I think this is a thing that Miss Salary can do. Um, which is perform healing. I think there's in fact, one of the cohorts is straight up just that. I think that's what she is. 'If cohorts suffer--' No, I think that's if they suffer harm. She didn't, that's good. That's a good thing. For once. Uh, here we go. Yeah. I'm gonna say that you can just heal that level 2 because it's not like a--it's not untrained. She isn't just someone who doesn't know what the fuck she's doing.

JACK: So I think what happens is--

AUSTIN: She is unreliable though. Which means that she is not always available due to other obligations, stupefaction from their vices, et cetera. Sometimes... she has a religious belief, which is that she has to play in the dark. And she's carried that forward. There are nights where she just vanishes and you don't know why.

JACK: Maybe we shouldn't have hired her!

AUSTIN: Eh, well.

JACK: Um, so I think that what that is, is that she performs ministrations and then Edmund Hitchcock, who was the one who went soft and who was the one who had all this harm, just... retires to his room and closes the door. And just doesn't come out. Like, just at all.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And I think at first--and so this is Ethan indulging in vice. So I think at first, Ethan's just like... (cheerfully) "Eh, you know, he'll be fine. This happens a lot. He'll be fine. He'll be fine."

AUSTIN: Hm.

JACK: And then Ethan's like... "Aw, man, I hope he'll get up--I hope he gets up tomorrow." And then Ethan's like, "Today's the day. He's getting up today. He's gonna get up today. He's gonna come out of the room."

JACK: And then he gets more and more desperate, and he starts, y'know, making wagers with some of the other people in the organization-- 'today's the day he's gonna come out!' So that's...

AUSTIN: (laughs sadly) He's betting on... yeah, that's really good.

JACK: Almost to try and force him to come out, I guess. And he's obviously losing money, and...

AUSTIN: Just constantly. In fact, do you spend one to get an extra--

JACK: Yeah, absolutely. Oh, and I think that what that is, is that he spends a coin within earshot of the door.

AUSTIN: (sad) Ohh...

JACK: And he's like... (strained) "I'll put down a coin! Today's the day! We'll see him, don't you know?"

JACK: Um... of course, it doesn't work.

AUSTIN: Give me the roll. You clear one stress. Good.

ALI: (laughing) God!

JACK: One stress.

AUSTIN: Un-believable. Unbelievable.

JACK: So I don't think he comes out. I don't think... I don't think Edmund leaves the room at this point.

AUSTIN: Well, one second, actually--it looks like you should have two down. Oh, sorry- you increase the result level by one for each coin. Not the...

JACK: Oh.

AUSTIN: So... you actually get two.

JACK: Okay. That's not so bad. That's a little better.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Um, alright. Aubrey.

SYLVIA: Hello.

[TIMESTAMP: 1:34:21]

AUSTIN: How you doin'?

SYLVIA: Uh... I think Aubrey's been, like, exceptionally quiet since she's come back.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

SYLVIA: Like, she's like responding to people when they talk to her, but she's not starting conversations about like, what she's working on like she used to.

AUSTIN: (sadder) Mm-hm.

SYLVIA: Um, and I think... most of the stuff she's focusing on now is she's started making something new.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And, um, I think my first downtime thing is a long-term project.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: A new alchemical solution.

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVIA: Uh, dream essence is what it's called.

AUSTIN: Ooh, okay. What's that do?

SYLVIA: 'A distillation of vivid, lucid dream, perfectly recreated for the user. A swirling, iridescent vapor.'

AUSTIN: Nice.

SYLVIA: And what she's trying to do is recreate the place she was trapped.

AUSTIN: Okay. I love this. What's the other thing you wanna do? Can we wrap back around to this in a second? 'Cause this seems a good way to leave...

SYLVIA: Sure. Um, the thing is I'm not sure what the other thing I wanna do is.

AUSTIN: Are you still hurt?

SYLVIA: 'Cause I don't have stress and I don't have harm right now.

AUSTIN: Okay, well--

SYLVIA: Cause I got so stressed out... that it reset... and then...

AUSTIN: You could do a train--train is just plus one exp, you could gather info, you could do a reduce heat.

SYLVIA: You know what, I will take... I think I'll train.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Is there any sort of um, stat for that?

AUSTIN: No, you just get a plus one wherever you want it. So I'm gonna give you the dream powder. The dream... whatever. Dream powder?

SYLVIA: Eh, dream essence is what it's called.

AUSTIN: Dream essence.

SYLVIA: Almost looking like mercury. Like, um...

AUSTIN: Yeah!

SYLVIA: Like that silver, metallic-y liquid.

AUSTIN: Okay. How long does it--I'm gonna go through these questions so we have them. How is it delivered?

SYLVIA: Um, I think it's just any sort of ingestion into your bloodstream.

AUSTIN: Okay. But it has to be into the blood.

SYLVIA: So you either need to drink it or inject it.

AUSTIN: Okay. So you can't just... yeah. Got it. Cool. How long does it last?

SYLVIA: I'm thinking a couple hours?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Like... it basically puts you in this trance for an hour or two depending on how much you take.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Um, I'm gonna say that it is... uh, it is harmful to consume, it gives you a level one harm that's like, dazed afterwards.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: But you can build it out of pretty common materials. Common for Marielda, not common for the world. Like, chips of obsidian and some other stuff. How long does it take to create--again, we're not gonna get into dosage creation.

SYLVIA: Uh-huh.

AUSTIN: Um... ah, what rare, strange or adverse aspect of this formula has kept it in obscurity and out of common usage? Um, so that's me asking you. Why don't other people use this?

SYLVIA: I think that people... there's a risk of dependency on it. For why people use it, 'cause a lot of people would use it to create memories of loved ones who have passed and stuff like that.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Sure. Sure.

SYLVIA: In this case it's a little different. But like, the risk is still there for um, you sort of lose--prolonged usage makes you lose grasp of reality because you start to think that that is also real.

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: But it's not. If you use it too much, in extreme cases...

AUSTIN: So we are deep into the Inception--the realm of Inception here.

SYLVIA: A little bit, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, uh, alright. So the first time you finish it and use it, you're trying to recreate that exact dream, right?

SYLVIA: Yes.

AUSTIN: Alright. So you're there, in... where are you doing this? Just in HQ?

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think it's just in her room, where she does it.

AUSTIN: Okay. So she injects it into herself and wakes up in the... in the living room. Um, of that little kind of, two-room plus the backyard area that she was in. Hear the children outside, she can hear those two and then she can... she can hear Samoths and Samot speaking in the old tongue in the dining area. Um, what do you do?

SYLVIA: I think what she does is... basically makes a beeline to where Samoths and Samot are.

AUSTIN: Okay. When you step into the room, like the second you step into it, you're in a different dining room. Of a similar shape. Um, it is colder in terms of the decor, but it's warmer. There is a sort of ambient heat in this room. Everything is... stone, cut stone instead of wood. Um, there's a similar...

SYLVIA: Is it similar to the heat that... Aubrey wouldn't know this, but just for my mental thing, is it similar to the Heat that Hitchcock felt in his dream?

AUSTIN: No. This is different. This is like-- the air is humid, it's like, much more like a hot summer day.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Ah, and... Samoths... sits at the end of the table. Um, by himself. Head in hands. And then someone walks past you. And you recognize it as Maelgwyn. I think I kinda like the image that while you're doing this, we get Castille waiting for Maelgwyn at the stone--where maybe you've been meeting for like, weekly coffee because you both have weird memory situation--and he doesn't show up this week.

[OUTRO "Marielda" BEGINS PLAYING]

AUSTIN: And Samoths looks up at him and his face changes from confusion to recognition, and he stands up and reaches his arms out for an embrace. And Maelgwyn closes the distance and drives a dagger into his father's heart. And the volcano shudders. Next week on Friends at the Table, the funeral of Samoths.

[OUTRO CONTINUES UNTIL 1:41:46, END]