

## **Sangfielle 26: The Perpetual Oratorio of Davia Pledge Pt. 4**

Transcriber: Lucho

**Austin (as Davia):** Are the two of you looking to come to the show tomorrow night?

**Art (as Duvall):** Oh, yeah, we were certainly considering it.

**Austin (as Davia):** Hmm. **(blows)** I would say that the composition is really for those who know Sapodilla, people who. Who are one with the town. If you would like to see tomorrow's events from front row, I'd be happy to have you. But as productive as the two of you have been, I would consider listening from a distance. I have to take my leave, with with the Oratorio tomorrow. Final steps need to be taken.

**Sylvi (as Virtue):** Yes. Well, good luck with that. Perhaps we'll see you there. Alright, so the old bag definitely knows something.

**Art (as Duvall):** She is on to us.

**[Music begins: "Sangfielle" by Jack de Quidt]**

**Art (as Duvall):** Doesn't feel good to be kept in the dark about stuff like this.

**Keith (as Lyke):** Well, I had promised that I wouldn't take any of it. And I did.

**Art (as Duvall):** I remember, yeah.

**Keith (as Lyke):** I did. And maybe you won't believe me. I did genuinely mean that when I said it. But it was right in front of me, right there. Really, maybe literally begging me to take it. So I'm going to fix it up.

**Art (as Duvall):** What are you going to tell the others about this?

**Keith (as Lyke):** I have yet to do that.

**Art (as Duvall):** This is dangerous, you're being dangerous.

**Austin:** Tonight as the kind of dark pulse begins, as soon as you break on to the kind of foundation area, as soon as you kind of cross the threshold into where the house would be, You sense both at once and again, especially for you, Virtue, with your Hex Eye,

both worlds on top of each other. The modern, empty framework manor and also this kind of ghastly place of the past where you can hear people running down the hallways, you can hear people sitting down for meals, the sound of silverware against plates, people talking in parlor rooms distant, but there is as soon as you get up here and kind of like able to take account of the place, seeing both the modern version of it and the version of it there that night, there is a rumble. The ground below you begins to shake and shudder. And Duvall, it doesn't take you much time at all to find what you're looking for here. There's a painting on the wall. This is the painting of the Zahir except the person walking in the background is missing from it. So it's it's like half of the whole. You basically can find your way, then, to this latch that you can open up a sort of door in the ground, and you haven't opened it yet but you can all tell something dark and pulsing is coming from there. And for one moment you snap back to the reality of the moment. You can hear clearly people are screaming from the music hall to your east, but you can see the doors are being pushed on as if people want to escape there.

**[Music ends]**

**[recap ends]**

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

**Sylvia:** Hey, I'm Sylvi, you can follow me on twitter at [@sylvibullet](https://twitter.com/sylvibullet) and you can listen to my other show, Emojidrome, wherever you get your podcasts.

**Austin:** Art Martinez-Tebbel.

**Art:** Hey, you can find me on Twitter at [@atebbel](https://twitter.com/atebbel).

**Austin:** and Keith J Carberry.

**Keith:** Hi, you can find me on Twitter at [@Keithjcarberry](https://twitter.com/Keithjcarberry). And find the let's plays that I do at [@youtube.com/Runbutton](https://youtube.com/Runbutton).

**Austin:** Today we are continuing our game of Heart: The City Beneath by Grant Howitt and Christopher Taylor. How's it going, everybody? We, it's been a minute since we recorded. We left off. We actually left off for that last episode left off. So let's do a little recap and also maybe we should go around and see what everyone's beats and Fallout are just so that we just have. We know what the deal is. So correct me if I'm wrong. Y'all crashed with Lenore. You did some business around town. Like oh, you crashed with Lenore. Lyke disappeared. Virtue and Duvall, you went off to investigate that, separately? For some reason?

**Sylvia (as Virtue):** Yeah, I think I caught a like I got on the trail of something and

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia (as Virtue):** just went off on my own.

**Austin:** yes.

**Art:** Yeah. Didn't say what was happening, just walked away.

**Austin:** Yeah. She just left. And then got caught up in the fog of the strange mist that was spreading through town. Ah, similar to what Lyke was seeing inside of question mark, question mark, question mark. "??? Weird zone". The weird zone.

**Keith(as Lyke):** Yeah, I went into the weird zone.

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith(as Lyke):** And that's a new ability that I have, and not a mistake that I made. (Sylvi laughs)

**Austin:** That was not a mistake, right, you intended to go to the weird zone. Then. While Virtue, we didn't know this at the time, while Virtue was wandering around town, Duvall also went and found the home of Davia Pledge, found Pledge House and did a little walk around, checked it out and did a little casing of the joint and when he came back outside the estate grounds, found at a restaurant one Virtue and Davia Pledge having tea. I don't think Virtue was was drinking anything

**Sylvia(as Virtue):** I don't believe I had tea, yeah.

**Austin:** Yeah, you didn't, but Davia was, and y'all got a vague warning together about the situation. But also an invite, if you want to be there, you can be there but you know, maybe don't.

**Keith:** But don't be there.

**Austin:** And so y'all left, and when you got back, Lyke was back. Lyke, you picked through some stuff at Lenore's place. You were looking for books and stuff.

**Keith:** Yeah. I borrowed a book from the book li— from Lenore's in at home library.

**Austin:** Personal library, on top of the other books you've, you've borrowed from the night library, from the rotunda. The, and then the three of you that, that night? the next night. During the concert, went to go steal this painting, and presumably other goods that you found around the house. The thing that you did and this is part of what Duvall had found was that there were kind of like a past house and a present house on top of one another.

The present house was largely deconstructed, its, its materials used to recreate the concert hall that's part of the same estate across from the main house. And so there's just a framework house left. But there was a staircase you could take in the main house that would lead you into an upstairs hallway and a version of the house while it still lived, a kind of ghastly version of the house that included kind of images and ghosts, sort of pseudo ghosts of the domestic bliss that the house had while Davia and Zizi lived there together.

Zizi being Zizilliana Esterházy, who who died the night of the great Pledge House fire, 35 years past. While you were there looting the place, it seems as if things have gone bad over in the concert hall where dozens, no, hundreds of people? Of the, the the most wealthy and powerful members of the kind of [odd pronunciation] aristocracy or aristocracy, rather, or not even the aristocracy because it's more than just like, you know, people with noble titles. It's also just like very wealthy merchants, members of the Glim Macula, members of the town's council, et cetera, gathered for a nice relaxing evening of music. They are now screaming and yelling as it seems as if disaster has struck Pledge House once again. Other things. You found one of the paintings. I say one of because it seems as if the figures — there are supposed to be two figures in the painting, one in the foreground, one in the background, I think he found one that only has the foreground person? Question mark?

**Art:** I think that's right.

**Keith:** This is also my memory of it, is that it's the foreground person.

**Art:** I don't have it written down. Is that an equipment or a resource?

**Austin:** That's a resource. And it's like a D...

**Art:** Painting, front half.

**Austin:** Front half. Yeah, let's say. And you know, it's it's D6 occult/haven, it's certainly not renowned, because it's half of this painting, you know.

**Keith:** I guess this isn't super important but is it that the — it's not that the painting is ripped? Right?

**Austin:** Correct.

**Keith:** It's just like missing a layer. Like a Photoshop layer?

**Austin:** It is missing a Photoshop layer, or like, I'm — but it doesn't feel like that cuz y'all don't know what Photoshop is? You know.

**Keith:** Right, right. Yeah, it just feels like a different painting.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** Or a piece of the painting has been changed.

**Austin:** But it doesn't feel painted over. It doesn't feel — it feels as if it's one of two, it doesn't feel as if someone has like gone over and erased one of the figures, you know?

**Keith:** Sure. Okay.

**Austin:** I want to say even, even I may have gestured at it being feeling incomplete in ways, that like maybe pencilwork was there but final brushwork was not, or something like that. Other things. Let's go over beats and and fall out? Virtue? What are your beats?

**[10:00]**

**Sylvia:** Yeah, so my beats are currently both minor beats. Dissect something or interrogate someone that can shed light on your task, or allude to the events that led you to seek forbidden knowledge to achieve an impossible task. And my fallouts.

**Austin:** And your fallouts, mm.

**Sylvia:** These are also all minor, which is, you know what, an improvement from last time. So I've got fascination with minor religions, you become obsessed with a strange topic. You must try and learn more about it firsthand if possible. Whenever you attempt to learn more about your weird fascination roll with mastery and if you have the opportunity to learn about it and refuse, mark d4 stress to mind. I am in debt to Agdeline's crew.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** The sorta like toll keepers and stuff. I also have Hex Eye going on. The classic.

**Austin:** Which makes...

**Sylvia:** Your vision swims as you start to perceive worlds other than your own layered on top of one another. Any action you take that requires accurate judging of distance becomes risky, but once per session you see something useful, ask the GM what it is. And finally I have conduit which is: your best efforts to keep the Unreal energies of the Heart at bay are futile, your body is a crucible for strangeness, you cannot use echo protection.

**Austin:** Love it. Duvall, beats and fallouts.

**Art:** My beats are acquire a renowned piece of equipment. We're so close.

**Austin:** Very close.

**Art:** And destroy evidence or rhetoric that proves your task to be impossible.

**Austin:** You've come near that a number of times now, where like you probably should have found —

**Art (Interrupt):** Yeah, we sure set the library on fire.

**Austin:** It wasn't on fire. It was just bad.

**Art:** Wasn't it? Well, we had to leave.

**Austin:** You left. Yeah, it was on fire with, if flames were people who wanted to kill you.

**Art:** Yeah, uh huh.

**Austin:** But that wasn't, they weren't actually flames. Anyway.

**Art:** But that's what fire is, a thing that wants to kill you.

**Austin (doubtful but amused):** Mm.

**Keith:** There was also a giant monster in there.

**Austin:** There was, that's true, you fled the giant monster which we'll get to in a second, Lyke... What are your, what are your fallouts, Duvall?

**Art:** Fascination: luck. You become obsessed with a strange topic, usually whatever cause the fallout. In this case, luck. You must try to learn more about it firsthand if possible, whenever you attempt to learn more about your weird fascination, roll with mastery. If you have the opportunity to learn about it and you refuse, mark D4 stress to mind. Ongoing. I'm just gonna write that out.

**Austin:** yeah. Mmhm. And then the other one.

**Art:** Take five: sacred geometry and majestic fire on five instead of six.

**Austin:** Yeah. Which is just fun. That's interesting. That's while — remember — that's while you're here.

**Art:** And it was stipulated that it's while we're here.

**Austin:** Correct. Yeah, so make a note of that, that once you leave this area that will resolve. You could also, you know, if you had a way of healing echo, you could do that. But like whatever. It's not a. It's fun, right? Lyke!

**Art:** Yeah, I'm having a great time.

**Austin:** Give me your beats.

**Keith:** Hello.

**Austin:** And then... Give me your... ahm give me your beats. And then give me your, the other thing.

**Keith:** Yeah, sure. Fallout is the other one. My minor beat is to rescue someone from peril. My major beat is to slay a beast that's at least five times your size.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** And my Fallout, just one, I have the ravening call still, which is the one where the you, you hear but are not attacked by, the uh [stammers] a ravening beast.

**Austin:** A ravening beast, which is the thing that showed up at the library.

**Keith:** Right, I temporarily had the worse one, ravening beast.

**Austin:** That is not the worst one.

**Keith:** Oh sorry. The worse one.

**Austin:** Yes. There you go. There is yet another one after that, believe it or not. So.

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** All right. Last I recall, you were all headed for the hatch, the sort of, there was a hatch in where the kitchen once was, I believe it was the kitchen, leading down into an under underground pulsing with strange energy and sound. The same pulse that Lyke you felt all around you when you disappeared and that Virtue you sensed via both the Residium and Hex Eye back in last session. So I think you're about to go down there. Is that true? Is there anything anyone wants to do before that happens?

**Keith:** Where, where exactly are we right now? We're still like just in the attic area of the...

**Austin:** So I believe last time we ended with y'all on your way down from the attic through the house to the sort of hatch that leads down into where that pulsing was coming from. I also recall that I said you don't have to roll to get there because Duvall had already found that, and knows the route there, but is there anything else that you want to do before you do that? Or you want to abandon that plan? Since there have



been weeks between now and then, and instead just like leave or do something else? I don't know.

**Sylvia:** So I'm like down to check this out. I do think it might be worth doing like a discern check or something on the painting to see if there's like any sort of like magic vibes directing us anywhere (laughs). I want to like, like, for example, if like there's some sort of like thing on this and it can also feel it coming from like the hatch or from somewhere else. I feel like that would be handy for us.

**Austin:** Yeah, totally give me a discern occult. Is anyone helping?

**Sylvia:** Occult? Okay, I only have discern for that. But that's fine.

**Austin:** Wait, you don't have occult?

**Art:** I have occult.

**Austin:** Damn, weird. I guess —

**Keith:** I can, if we want to swap I have discern occult and can be helped.

**Sylvia:** Okay, yeah, if you want, I can help you with that. Thanks to all my Fallout fun. I don't have any stress right now. So.

**Austin:** Love that.

**Sylvia:** Ten!

**Austin:** Look at that. Yeah, that's three, one, ten, four. Yeah,

**Keith:** That last die, definitely.

**Austin:** Yeah, I think that it is it is, you know, doing this closer read on it very specifically gives you that sense that there is a pair here that, that, that need to be brought together, effectively. And I think with a 10... One, you know that it is through that hatch, right? Like that, that that is, uh. You tell me, you've been moving through the residuum, is there some sort of like visual sense that there has been a — that these things have been split in, that this thing has been split in some way?

**Sylvia:** I've been thinking about it because like it's paint and stuff, that it could look kind of cool if there were like, acrylic paint stains hanging in the air and stuff sort of waiting along that way.

**Austin:** Yeah sure. Yeah, I like that a lot.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** So there's that. Um, the second thing is that I think you get a sense of why this, that the, the painting was effectively used for something. The power within it can be, you know, regained by placing these two things together. But the... you know, this is sort of, the atom was split here and there is power in splitting this painting in two and that painting, that painting being split in two was used to sort of... The emotional magical energy of that of that thing being split worked as almost like the starter of something else. Maybe there's like a sort of residue that that kind of reveals that there had been sort of a magical spark when this this artifact had been had been separated. And you know, I think that you'll be able to re-, with the right time and then the right kind of, you know, magical, you know, work you can rejoin these things and recreate this this thing. But there was the evidence that that split happened, still, and so that and that split is I think this is Lyke, this is really from you as a junk mage, you know that like you can sometimes, with something powerful enough, that sense of splitting it in two or breaking it down creates a sort of jumpstart that you can then use with another ritual to power other ritual. You know? it's sort of like when you do, you know, when you consume a thing for your shield?

**Keith:** Yeah.

**Austin:** it's sort of like that except instead of shielding something you can use it to kind of light a fire for instance, right? So yeah, so that's that's that's your little extra thing on getting this 10.

**Keith:** Great.

**Austin:** All right. What are you what are you doing?

**Keith:** I mean we want to go down this hatch because Duvall wants the other half of this painting right?

**(Art and Austin make agreeing noises)**

**Keith:** Okay, so I guess that I guess I have no reason to not go down the hatch.

**Art:** It's gonna be fine. Upstairs was fine, downstairs gonna be fine. It's it's um.

**Keith:** This floor but this floor is not fine. Right? This floor is bad.

**Austin:** Define bad.

**Art:** Well upstairs was bad too.

**Austin:** Yeah, I mean, all of this —

**Keith:** Dangerous I guess is what I mean.

**Austin:** Yeah, but again, I'm not making you roll to get to this hatch.

**Keith:** Right.

**Austin:** Because because I already said that out loud and that episode's out already, so I can't even like go back and be a jerk about it if I wanted to, which I wouldn't want to do anyway but. I mean, I could, I could say you know what I changed my mind actually it makes sense, dudududu. And you'd all be like yeah, okay, that makes sense. But I'm not doing that.

**Art:** You could change episodes that are already out and see if you can just like really start to high level gaslight people.

**Austin:** No, I'm not doing that. I'm not an evil person. Um.

**Art:** It's an experiment.

**Austin:** Oh. I don't work for Facebook.

**Keith:** What if we did a whole season where the plot was that Austin Walker, GM, was being evil GM.

**Austin:** Mm. Mm-hm.

**Art:** Oh, our our Grant Morrison season

**Austin:** Right, yeah. Uh-huh. (laughs) God. Are you going for the hatch or you doing something else?

**Art:** Yeah, let's go for the hatch.

**Austin:** All right.

**Art:** (chanting) Hatch hatch hatch.

**Austin:** Pulsing coming from the hatch. You reach down, you open it up, there is a ladder down. Take the ladder down, question mark. Adventure game prompt.

**Art:** Yeah, you can't you can't talk me out of this with a ladder and some pulsing.

**[20:01]**

**Keith:** I know about ladders. I can use a ladder. I'm good.

**Austin:** As you climb down the ladder you, you hit that thing of like, Boy we've been climbing down for quite some time. It feels like we should we should have hit the basement level at this point already.

**Keith:** The Mario 64 Hallway of ladders.

**Austin:** Right. And as you keep going down, you also hit the point where like the natural light from above from the moon and the weird ghost kitchen. Not like our real ghost kitchens. That's a phrase that exists now, fuck, that's annoying. (Art laughs). The ghastly kitchen above, that light is gone.

**Art:** Ooh, that's better.

**Austin:** Yeah, and below, you don't see you haven't yet hit the point of like. It's like you're in the tunnel, you know, and you don't see the light yet. And that pulsing, that like throbbing, remember I had compared to like the music in Thumper, that is continuing to happen here. And your, your hand, your your handholds going through this place are getting a little — here is the roll. The role is here, the roll is climbing in the dark. In this this dangerous pulsing occult ladder down, which which is also very scary. I'm gonna need from from all three of you some sort of, some sort of, or if one person wants to take the lead here in like, in like a I'm going to anchor the group and we're going to tie

ropes on each other you know what I mean? That sort of thing. But otherwise it's a it's a everybody for themselves. They all have to roll. Y'all have to roll a Delve roll.

**Keith:** I'm pretty good on delve.

**Austin:** Yeah, do y'all have —

**Art:** I'm also pretty good on delve.

**Austin:** I think this is Delve haven because you're in the city —

**Art:** Fuck —

**Austin:** and then occult or religion.

**Sylvi:** Oh, or religion?

**Austin:** Or religion. It's become increasingly clear.

**Sylvi:** Oh hell yeah.

**Keith:** Okay, so we all are good at this.

**Austin:** Sure. So do you want to roll individually?

**Sylvia:** I'm down to do that. Yeah.

**Art:** Well, wait, wait, wait, let's let's do a brief...

**Austin:** Now we're talking.

**Art:** Isn't it, don't we have like a better chance of succeeding if we if one person rolls a double help than three people trying to individually hit it with three dice?

**Austin:** But —

**Art:** You can say no, you're not right about this math, but.

**Austin:** I don't know how the math works on that sense. But what I will say is the failure on the you're all do it together would lead you all to take stress. Whereas if only one of you fails, maybe only one of you takes stress.

**Art:** All right!

**Austin:** But.

**Art:** If we all have three dice I guess it's pretty it's pretty safe.

**Austin:** Yeah, this is also not risky.

**Art:** Someone else say something.

**Keith:** I'm thinking, because it's true — it is a it is it's tough to suss out the best one to do.

**Austin:** What do you think your characters would do?

**Sylvia:** I mean, I think Virtue would probably think she's fine on her own here. like that. I feel like that tracks

**Keith:** Yeah, I guess I guess, Lyke is probably in the same boat.

**Art:** Alright, we've done all our delves together, but. I'm fine.

**Keith:** Is that true? That's probably true, actually.

**Art:** Yeah, I think we've we've assisted on all of the delves, but I mean,

**Keith:** Because I had I had really bad domain tags for a really long time. And now I have good ones. So yeah, actually, what's happened every other time is that Duvall has led a Delve role, I think.

**Art:** I think that's correct. Yeah.

**Keith:** So I would I would let that happen.

**Austin:** So what's that look like? Do you use some rope to tie yourself to Duvall?

**Keith:** Yeah, yeah, I've got rope or whatever I've got, you know. I have plenty of stuff.

**Austin:** Yeah. That's what your supplies are for.

**Art:** Yeah, yeah.

**Austin:** Okay. And Virtue you still gonna do it yourself? Do you see these two nerds doing this and you go like, Yeah, fine.

**Sylvia (laughing):** When you put it like that, yeah. I kind of have to. I really want to do it like that now.

**Austin:** All right. So then then Duvall take —

**Art:** So that's plus two, it's plus two, it's plus to.

**Austin:** Plus two, delve occult. Yeah, uh-huh. Roll well. Hey, look at that!

**Art:** Hey!

**Austin:** Great roll, great roll, that's another great roll.

**Sylvia:** Alright, let's see how this goes for me. Oh, hey! Also pretty good!

**Austin:** Wow. Also a ten. Oh, wait. So, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait,

**Art:** Oh. I thought I thought it was one roll. So that ten is the last die.

**Austin:** I also did. We'll cut that ten off so it becomes a nine for you, Art, and that's still fine. You rolled 9, 9, 1, 4, 10. And that last 10, let's say. It doesn't. If you get rid of the 4 or the 10 you still would have been fine, you know?

**Art:** Right.

**Austin:** And then and then Sylvii, you got a 10 there, so you're fine too. All right.

**Art:** I thought Virtue was pro nerds, I thought we were...

**Austin:** I also read that as being pro-nerds.

**Keith:** So so Sylvi, what you were saying was that you saw us doing this, thought actually I do want to do it like the nerds are doing it, but I'm still going to do it on my own. Because I already said that I would.

**Sylvi:** Yeah. No, no, no, no, no, sorry. I meant that, like, I don't think she's doing what you guys are doing. I think she's just...

**Keith:** Okay.

**Sylvi:** Like, yeah, I don't know. Vampires — I feel like vampires I was gonna say vampires hang upside down. And once again, I'm getting vampires and bats mixed up.

**Austin:** That's a bat that's a bat.

**Sylvia:** Yeah. You know, you know how my brain is. Anyway.

**Keith:** There's definitely some vampires that hang upside down like bats, because vampires can sometimes turn into bats.

**Austin:** Yeah, I think if you did a survey of all vampires, you would find some of them hang upside down. Right?

**Sylvia:** I hope so.

**Austin:** I would, I would imagine. Um, all right.

**Art:** Fun project.

**Austin:** Yeah, yeah, someone should do that. Um, the thing that actually happens is that you. The reason that I'm going to say that, or the way that this works out is Virtue despite not being — you are climbing down after them because in some ways, it would make no sense for you to be... like, if they both fell they'd fall on you — whatever. The point is, you're you're above them but you get down first.

**Sylvia:** Oh!

**Austin:** Which doesn't make any sense because you don't remember passing them. It's almost as if you get to you're climbing down and then like oh, you feel. you like look up you know what I mean? You're like how much further do I have then you feel you reach down to feel that there is the ground underneath you? And you're like oh, I guess the



ground is here, and then you look up and above you is them still climbing down? Which makes no sense and they're like —

**Keith:** Clearly we're on three separate ladders separated by the same magic that separated the paintings.

**Austin:** Oh, maybe! Who could say. Around you you feel at ease. The the dark has like kind of fades away like the mist did the fog did when you when you arrived at at Pledge House, and around you you see the thumping has also gone or the thumping now comes from behind a sort of iron door. And here where you are now you see a room, you're in a room that has a few standout features. One is a small bed in the corner with a little lamp. Two is a little library of books next to a large work desk. Those books are probably worth something, you know this immediately. Three is underneath the sound are in concert with the sound of thumping coming from this other room, there is the sound of water and half of this room is made up of a sort of running underground, you know, stream that has been kind of. It runs alongside basically one of the walls and you realise that this is kind of a converted deep cave space like maybe there was an underground spring here or something. It's very close to the ocean. In fact I think maybe even if you were to take a cup of this water you would you would be able to tell that like it's a little, um. What is the what's it called when water has a little bit of fresh water and a little seawater or like it's mixed there's a word for that.

**Keith:** Brackish.

**Austin:** Brackish, thank you that it's slightly brackish water, that this is spring water running into the sea and you're very close to the sea based on based on that, not that you would go over there and test that but if you had. And so it's like you're basically standing on like a carved stone floor but in that like it it's like the the sort of formal... The haven domain gives way to the wild domain in the corner you know on one side of this this room basically. It comes through a hard stop almost like you could imagine there being a little boat almost like like tied to a tied to a stand here so that it would be like docked you know on this stream. It's that it's that deep of a stream that you could run a little canoe down it, down a tunnel that runs kind of both directions. And so you're there first which is kind of part of part of what you've gotten here with this 10. I don't know if you want to like peek around here, if you want to get into that next room first, if you want to if there's anything you want to do here.

**Sylvia:** I kind of wanna look through the books?

**Austin:** Yeah, okay. For sure. You — the books have a — I mean, give me give me if you're if you want to look through the books that's a discern.

**Sylvia:** Okay!

**Austin:** A discern and then it's it's it's either occult or religion or technology down here.

**Sylvia:** Okay cool. I will stick with religion then. Eight.

**Austin:** That is an eight, take no stress, okay. This is I mean it's a resource called Davia or called the you know the Pledge personal library. It's a it is a D12 uh collection of books that have like a great deal of important knowledge. They are occult religion and technology. You could, if you were feeling very generous, split this into effectively three distinct smaller collections of books about occult things, religious things and technological things. Obviously, there'd be a little bit of overlap there. But that's just what what it, you know, that that's kind of the broad collection here? For you specifically, I think the things that pop out, okay, you know how you know how in movies sometimes, you know, a detective will go into someone's room and be like, Oh, my God, these are all the books you would need to build a... to build a bomb. Right? This is the equivalent of like going into someone's room and finding the collection of books you would need to build a god.

**[30:37]**

**Sylvia:** Okay. We found the necromancer's cookbook.

**Austin:** Yeah exactly. Yeah. The the texts here, some of which use languages that you haven't seen since you were last undead, range from books about how to extend life, books about the hypothesis of, you know, man made gods. There's a lot that is just like there's a whole text that is just like what do we mean, when we say god? You know, what's, what is that thing? That book's premise, by the way, is that a god is anything... That there's a scale. Anything that can can can make, can take x and make x plus one is, in some ways magical. Or make, you know, make make... The things that are most magical are things that can take zero and add one to them, right? If you have nothing, and create something from nothing, you are you're at the top of that chart, basically. Most most things that we call gods can have one and make two. They have some sort of input that then they create into output. And that can be, that input can be blood, but it could also be sadness, or it could also be land, it could also be the sunlight.

**Lyke:** It could be lies.

**Austin:** It could be lies. Sure. Uh huh. (laughs) It can be lots of things. It could be money, you know, and the output doesn't have to be the input. In fact, one of the things that this book kind of gets at is that like, if you're inside of one kind of category of thing, if you need to intake lies, and then all you can output is lies, then you're probably not as strong as something that can intake lies and output gold, or truth, or buildings, you know. But like this is this is a scale on which you can start thinking about. And there's just like, this is, you know, lots of books about like, what. None of you none of you are technologists, but lots of books here on interesting technology, technology derived from dissecting the. There's like one of the things that makes it such an important or valuable set of valuable set of books. One of the things here is like a copy of one of the first manuscripts written about studying the first shape train that was killed, which is just like a text filled with important information about about using the technology of the heartland in strange and powerful ways, and lots of theorisation there. So like, yeah, this is a this is a big deal collection of stuff, for sure.

**Sylvi:** Fuck yeah.

**Austin:** And it's as you were like, slipping those books into your personal satchels or whatever that Duvall and Lyke make it down. Surprised, perhaps, to see that Virtue is already down here?

**Keith (as Lyke):** Oh, we've taken, visited another library, huh?

**Sylvia (as Virtue):** I mean, I'm an academic, what do you expect?

**Keith (as Lyke):** Same.

**Keith:** And I grab a book.

**Austin:** no you don't.

**Keith:** No? Oh, they're all gone already?

**Austin:** Virtue has the books. Yeah. Virtue got the books. You could ask her for a book.

**Keith:** Wow. All the books. Damn.

**Austin:** You can say hey, is there anything there about stuff I care about and have that conversation. Duvall, there is certainly evidence or rhetoric that proves your task to be impossible in that collection of books.

**Art:** Yeah, what are we going to do, sit here and read them all right now?

**Austin:** Yeah, do it later. I'm just saying.

**Art:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Likewise, Lyke, the, what, do you — oh no, you already did yours, you got your—

**Keith:** That's where it comes from, by the way. That's why that is that word.

**Austin:** Wait, say that again, you cut off.

**Keith:** Lykewise.

**Austin:** Oh, lykewise. Yeah, uh-huh.

**Sylvi:** Oh, my God.

**Austin:** Great. Boo... All right.

**Keith:** So, sorry, likewise, what though?

**Austin:** I was gonna say that you had some there's something in there for you.

**Keith:** Oh, gotcha, gotcha.

**Austin:** I mean, the answer is just there was more God stuff that you're interested in more broadly, you know, in there for SURE for sure.

**Keith:** Hey, I respect the you know, first come first serve.

**Austin:** Okay. (laughs) Um, so yeah, you're in this little again, lamp lit little bed. Lots of things on the lots of little mechanical bits on the workbench. But no painting as far as you can see, not in this room.

**Art:** Hmm. But there's, there's more rooms.

**Austin:** There's the door. There is a door leading somewhere. Yeah. That's where the pulse-pounding thumps are coming from. At this point you just to be clear, you can't hear the screaming that was happening from the concert hall above at this point.

**Art:** That's good.

**Austin:** Yeah, just it's just, it's just a little more, you're a little more at ease. And likewise, Lyke. (amused) I can't believe you've done this.

**(Keith laughs loudly)**

**Austin:** I will say that you sense some of the darkness and the kind of that that that realm of, of vibration and sound from behind that door, it's familiar to you in a very clear way.

**Keith:** Oh can I tell any — can I tell more specific than that it's familiar?

**Austin:** It's the place you were. You know?

**Keith:** Oh, okay. It's the weird the weird zone.

**Keith (as Lyke)** Hey, I I made up this new zone. I think it's here.

**Sylvi (as Virtue):** What?

**Keith (as Lyke):** This is the weird zone. This is where I was... when I was gone. I came to the — here, to the weird zone.

**Sylvia:** Shr narrows her eyes while looking at him.

**Austin:** Art, say that out loud, please.

**Art:** Does a character know they have beats?

**Austin:** They can if they want to.

**Art:** Does Duvall know that he's looking to destroy a piece of evidence. Or is it —

**Austin:** Um, if you think that's interesting, yes.

**Art:** — confronted by a piece of evidence. Duvall would destroy it, and that would progress it in a story perspective.

**Austin:** It is up to you how you want to read those. I think sometimes it's it's us as directors and co writers being like, Oh, it'd be sick if blank.

**Art:** Sure.

**Austin:** Other times it is you saying Oh, it would be sick if Duvall thinks it would be sick if blank. You know. So however motivated — in many ways, this is the Duvall question, isn't it? Is Duvall internally motivated or externally motivated? How deterministic is Duvall? Etc.

**Art:** Wonderful. Okay. I'll keep that in my pocket when it comes to, to asking to borrow books time.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Keith:** I feel like, on my list of beats here. I don't think that Lyke wants to is like like, Oh, you know what I've got to do this week? Save someone from peril.

**Austin:** Right.

**Keith:** But I do think that Lyke wanted to charm someone with tales of my exploits.

**Austin:** Exactly. Yes.

**Art:** Hmm. Anyway.

**Austin:** You going through that door, what are you doing?

**Art:** Yeah, let's, let's let's let's see about th — let's see about the door.

**Austin:** Who's opening it?

**Keith:** I'll open it. I know about d — I know about the weird.

**Austin:** You know what? Yeah, this actually helps a lot because someone else has —

**Art:** I'll open it, I'm good with doors.

**Austin:** Well, if anyone besides someone who'd been there before, had opened it, they would have to immediately make an endure cursed check to, like, face this, this head on by themselves. But, you know, I'm gonna say, you were already in here, Lyke, and while you didn't see what you're seeing now, you felt it. And in some ways, that makes it a little more, a little more manageable. As you open the door. The thing that overpowers you is

**[Music begins: “The Perpetual Oratorio” by Jack de Quidt]**

**Austin** (continues): the same kind of cacophony of sounds that you heard, that Lyke heard before, except now you can kind of sense what they are. And they're like, the inverse of something being made elsewhere, they're the inverse of sounds being played elsewhere.

**Austin:** Above, for the last however many hours, this mechanical orchestra had been playing the latest and greatest of Davia Pledge's compositions. And down here, the sort of anti-music was being played, the inverse of that, which has a beauty of its own. And it is insofar as a tempo can have opposite, insofar as a tone can have opposite, insofar — or maybe opposite is wrong maybe it's maybe it's like the the smoke coming from the coal fire. Or it's the coal inside of the engine that's burning, you don't know, necessarily, but but that's the wave of that hits you and is overwhelming. And before, all you could do is hear and feel that on you, Lyke. Now with the light of the the lantern coming in through this door which kind of casts across what is here, you can also see the physicality of the thing before you. For acres in you know every direction around this little room that you're in,

**[music pauses]**

**Austin:** there are machines moving, pulleys raising up and down,

**[40:00]**

**[music resumes]**

**Austin:** strings being bowed with automation, there are pipes with wind moving through them, it is a massive machine, it is it is a computer, it is an analog computer, it is an analog synthesizer. It is making music from metal. And that's already kind of strange and weird to see something this big at this scale. You know, this is this is Metropolis,

you know, this is that style of Cursed large machine god. But it's also with the light now moving through the space, you start to see elements of this thing that are not just machine. For a moment it eludes you, but you realise that the hair on one of the automated bows is not just horsehair, but is in fact the hair of a human being. One of the things that pulses is a human heart, attached you know to the center of some tubes.

**[Music pauses and resumes]**

**Austin:** There are panels with writing on them, and those panels, the canvas is skin stretched. This is a place where the organic remains of people have been interwoven with, again, acres of strange machinic being. And it calls you forward.

**[Stop talking and music continues]**

**Austin:** The power here is immense. It's doing something. It's not just playing music. Somewhere in here is a painting that you're looking for.

**[Music ends]**

**Art:** Cool, great.

**Keith:** When you said it calls us forward, was that sort of an emotional feeling? Or are we literally being asked to move.

**Austin:** It is an emotional feeling. It is a it is a gravity. The way the earth calls the moon.

**Keith:** Sure.

**Austin:** You know, emotional, the way the earth calls the moon? Which is to say it's it is it is something that needs to be resisted. If you would like to not walk in here at this point.

**Sylvia:** Okay.

**Austin:** Or if you would like to leave, for instance. What do y'all do?

**Sylvia:** Well, like. I'd want to go in but still resist its influence. Is that a possibility? Or like.

**Austin:** The resistance roll will come when you try to leave.



**Sylvia:** Okay, cool.

**Austin:** There's no walking around here and not being in its influence. That is the sort of thing that you're dealing with. Does that make sense?

**Sylvia:** Cuz I don't wanna get up close to the — yeah, that makes sense, I just want to make sure.

**Keith:** So it's not a resistance to not be influenced. It's a resistance to leave the influence.

**Austin:** Correct. Exactly.

**Keith:** Got it.

**Austin:** Yes. To to walk in is to — at this point, you could you could roll to step away and then you'd be stepped away, but there's no entering it without needing to then still roll to step away later. Do you know what I mean?

**Keith:** Right.

**Austin:** And the thing that it wants is just presence like it's not ask — at this point, at least. It's not saying like, spare some blood to enter, you know what I mean? It's not asking you for a thing quite yet. It's just pulling you inward.

**Art:** Alright, let's go inward. I got a painting to find.

**Austin:** Um it's just it's so big. It's so big. It is it is as big as Sapodilla down here. Or, you know, again, it's it's maybe not as big it's not as big as Sapodilla in here but it's it's bigger than the estate. It's as big as maybe most of the sunflower district. And in fact, I mean how are you how are you now lighting this place? Because it does not have lights of its own. Does anyone have like a.

**Art:** Well, I guess I have to use my good Red Zephyr torch.

**Austin:** There we fucking go. The red light flicks on from the, from the Red Zephyr torch. Uh, and, and you can see like, as you walk in, it's like you're walking down hallways of these kind of tall. They're they're they're tall like, like, um, server banks or, or uh huge shelves, you know, think about like the, the shelves at the end of Raiders of

the Lost Ark, right? Like that style of huge warehouse shelving, except they are dark, uh, you know, black metal. Um, uh, with, with tubes and wires and, uh, bellowing sounds from, uh, from exhaust vents. Um, there's a strange, there are strange smells down here, uh, as the metal churns, as the engine roars. Um, and with, uh, you know, under the Red Zephyr light, you can see, um, in the distance that there is at the very far end of one of the directions you face, you can see that there is a sort of a. Uh, oh, a cave wall that is being churned away. That is being kind of drilled down by part of this thing's machine. This thing is growing. It is it is always building new — in fact it is it is like pushing away at the wall with with these kind of clawed tendrils and as it makes space for itself, from the ground, new huge kind of shelving units, new new engines emerge from the ground, building themselves almost the way that you've rebuilt yourself with your bees, right. At at at but at a microscopic level. We're in like Dark City type shit here you know. In fact like if you think about the way Dark City's underbelly shit looks, that that could be a good Touchstone here. The mechanisms of all that stuff are happening here. Give me a give me some sort of discern, discern or Delve to explore this place Duvall.

**Art:** Alright, I have both of those. What would you say the, where what would you...

**Austin:** Oh, this is this is this is. It's kind of broad in an interesting way. It's cursed or it's religion. Or it's technology.

**Art:** I have cursed. And technology would... That would be weirder, I think.

**Austin:** Is anyone helping?

**Sylvia:** I'll help, I can help.

**Austin:** This is this is risky.

**Keith:** Oooh.

**Sylvia:** Only one person can help, right?

**Austin:** Depends on what you're doing.

**Sylvia:** Okay.

**Keith:** Do you wanna borrow my magnifying glass?

**Austin:** This is not a magnifying glass situation.

**Sylvia:** Right. The action here is discern right? Just want to make sure that I can help with this.

**Austin:** Discern or Delve I would say.

**Sylvia:** Okay, cool. Yeah. I'd be down to help because I'm like, I feel like Virtue has like, got like a notebook out and is like writing everything down that she can about this thing that she notices.

**Austin:** Sure. Drawing a little map as if you're playing Etrian Odyssey.

**Sylvia:** You, actually, yeah. And you know what? I've been playing a lot of it lately. So it's really well done.

**Austin(Laughter):** Oh, perfect! Good! Okay! Alright, so take that bonus, Duvall. Make sure you click risky. Ah, that's a 5.

**Art:** That's a 10.

**Austin:** It's a 10 because of the way it works!

**Sylvia:** Oh my god.

**Austin(Excited):** It's a five that becomes a 10! Incredible.

**Keith:** Wow.

**Austin:** Incredible. What, read me that move again. It's sacred geometry and majestic right?

**Art:** It's majestic. It's once per situation when you roll to resolve an action and you roll a six, count that die as if it's a roll of 10. And the take five thing knocked down to a five.

**Austin:** Alright, so then we're gonna count that as a 10. It's not a risky roll, in fact, because of the Red Zephyr torch. So I don't have to get rid of the six or the 10 because of the way those moves like interact, because you have this good Red Zephyr. And you give me your Delve damage.

**Art:** Um, okay.

**Austin:** Which I think is a D six because the torch is a D six.

**Art:** Because the 10 doesn't become an 8?

**Austin:** How does that work? Does it say yes, yes. When you roll — because of sacred geometry. Right? Or no? Is that? Yes, when you roll,

**Art:** No, when you roll a crit on a Delve, it doesn't increase the effect of the.

**Austin:** It goes up by, yes, it goes up by one. Yeah. So go ahead and give me a d8.

**Art:** I'm gonna do it again. I'm gonna roll. I'm gonna roll a five on this,

**Austin:** Do it, please do it again. Oh!

**Art and Austin in unison:** It's a six!

**Austin:** Incredible. If that six had been a five, (Austin Laughs) you would then get to roll again. Or if the take five wasn't happening. That's very funny. Um, alright, I'm gonna take note of that. So you're able to guide your the crew to, you know, through various hallways here. I think a big thing here is that besides taking notes, you're also, uh, Virtue, you're also able to continue to track the kind of acrylic paint or the paint residue through the Residuum, your view of the Residuum which is always on right now because of Hex Eye.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And you are able to find or you're able to track it and you're not able to find the painting yet but what you do come across is a full body. A full body that has been fully integrated into sort of a recessed compartment inside of one of these huge wall sized engines. This person you know, I'm not going to zoom in on detail here but they have been integrated in a sort of, you know, kind of bio-technical way, right, a techno-organic blending of machine and person in a way where it's hard to see... You know, on first blush, it's hard to see how deeply that that collection or that connection has been done. This person is wearing a a nice kind of suit with a sort of dress cape on, like a little half cape. A very shiny pair of shoes. And a cummerbund. They look like they were like dressing up for a night out, for a fancy night out. He has a he has on a he has a very... I

guess at this point that mustache would have probably grown, I don't think the machine is trimming his mustache. So his his what was once a finely groomed face is now covered in an ungainly beard. And I will say also that the suit feels a little big on his body as if to suggest that he has shrunk in size, that he is gaunt. And he looks up at the three of you and says

**Austin (as stranger):** (weakly) Help me.

**[50:54]**

**Sylvia:** I like the image of Virtue just kind of trying to like sketch where the like mechanical stuff starts and the b, like organic stuff begins and not really paying attention to what he's saying. I don't know what the other two are doing. But.

**Art (as Duvall):** What happened to you?

**Austin (as stranger):** Uh... Mm... Pledge, she invited us for a show.

**Art (as Duvall):** Tonight?

**Austin (as stranger):** What, when,

**Austin:** You don't think it was tonight. This person has clearly been part of this machine for m...

**Art (as Duvall):** Well, what if this is a t — what if there's a time paradox?

**Austin (as stranger):** No, too long ago, I can't... I have no idea how long it's been.

**Art:** Um, I have no idea how to help this person. I'd love to but I have no ideas.

**Sylvia:** Like we could start by like trying to see if there's any conceivable way of getting them out of this thing without killing them. Uhm.

**Austin:** That would be a discern technology. For sure. Maybe discern cursed, either or because it's again it has to do with this, with with the oratorio, with the Machine God.

**Sylvia:** I can do discern but I don't have the either of those domains. So if anyone else is

**Austin:** I thought you had cursed, you don't have cursed? Oh, do you not have —

**Sylvia:** Oh, do I have c — I think — oh no, I do have cursed. Sorry. I got cursed and occult mixed up.

**Austin:** Pretty sure.

**Sylvia:** That has been like.

**Art:** Yeah, I have both of those. I can help you.

**Sylvia:** Okay, cool.

**Austin:** All right. Ah, go ahead. This is this is again risky.

**Sylvia:** And... Duvall you're helping me?.

**Art:** Mm-hm.

**Sylvia:** Okay, cool. So that's an extra one.

**Austin:** Yep. So what are you rolling?

**Art (as Duvall):** I'm actually helping you with technology, but it doesn't matter.

**Sylvia:** Uh, discern and cursed and I got a six.

**Austin:** Oooh, okay.

**Sylvia:** Success at a cost.

**Austin:** Unfortunate.

**Sylvia:** I did almost use my skill that let me declare it a six. So I'm glad I didn't.

**Austin:** So yeah, it worked out. It worked out. Okay, one second, you both are going to get some stress here. Virtue take two to echo.

**Sylvia:** Okay. And my protection's not working a bit right now.

**Austin:** Duvall, take seven to echo.

**Art:** Oh my god!

**Austin:** What are you doing to help? Duvall, we didn't really get in there. Do you just do you just lean in close, do you...

**Art:** I was helping with technology.

**Austin:** Oh, right.

**Art:** I was like looking around for like because what I can do is I can like synthesize parts and I was like well what do I need here?

**Austin:** Totally.

**Sylvia:** You also have the light so I imagine you're getting pretty in there.

**Austin:** Yeah, that makes sense. Give me give me your your fallout checks so I know what the success at a cost actually does for you.

**Sylvia( Surprised):** Fucking hell!

**Austin:** Wow.

**Sylvia:** How'd I roll a two?!

**Art:** No, that's not right. My total's nine, that's Fallout.

**Austin:** Is your total nine? Oh, your total is nine. Why did it —

**Art:** I didn't do the click off, cause...

**Austin:** Oh, you didn't click away. Alright, so you both — wait is that major fault then Duvall? That's major fallout then.

**Sylvia:** So upset.

**Art:** I don't know. I could roll it over and over till I get another eight.

**Austin (laughter):** I'm pretty sure the way that I'm, you know, I'm 100% sure that the way that the way that works is that over six, if you if you if you roll over six and under your total stress, you've gotten major fallout, I believe. Yes, seven plus. That's major

**Art:** Well, I'm clearing all my fallouts then.

**Austin:** There you go - no, you're clearing out all your stresses.

**Art:** Stresses, yeah.

**Austin:** You're keeping your fallouts. Alright, um.

**Keith:** I'm not a superstitious person but I do believe that the that other Art' s luck fallout that that that he's keeping has cursed any group that is playing with Art. And Art.

**Austin:** Also Art. Well also, but you've also just only ever.

**Keith:** Mostly Art, but also everyone else.

**Austin:** But also. Yeah.

**Art:** Everyone's cursed, how can you even tell?

**Austin:** That's true, it's true.

**Sylvia:** They say that in the Incredibles, right?

**Keith (laughing):** I think they said some people are, are clearly less cursed than others.

**Austin:** Let's let's do this the easiest, let's start with wins. You figure out that this person could be theoretically removed from this from this machine. This roll does not do that, that's a different actually doing it is a different thing. But if you figured out the basic methodology here. The thing is that they would need some they would need someone to also just like care for them pretty much immediately. Lyke for instance, I think you could spider web up some wounds here. But he would need he would need some care as you unplug him from these various — after you do the kind of weird surgery to take him off of here. I'm also giving you, this is not your fallout. I'll talk about your fallout in a second, Virtue. There is, there's something. There's something kind of cool about how he didn't die.



**Sylvia (enthusiastic):** Yeah! That's.

**Austin:** I think if I were to dissect or interrogate him, you would you would get some light shed on your task.

**Sylvia:** Interesting. You know, Austin, we might be on the same page about this thing here.

**Austin:** Okay. I'm just letting you know that that's a true thing, yeah.

**Sylvia:** I really appreciate it, yeah.

**Austin:** That is an available thing here. It's fucked up. Because he has been hurt very, very badly. But it seems as if he would have lived indefinitely tied to this — part of what you understand him to understand here is that like, there aren't feeding tubes attached in the traditional se — he isn't like, I mean, not that you know what a feeding tube is because it hasn't been invented yet. Right? But like, there is something happening here to extend life in a way that is interesting to you, someone who wants to extend her own life indefinitely. So there's, there's your that's your your — and you have that that ability now to to try to take him down and take care of him if that's the thing you want to do. However, you're also going to get the I'm gonna I'm gonna if you're good with it, I am going to take your conduit and upgrade it slash combine it with another minor basically. Not with hex eye.

**Sylvia:** Sure.

**Austin:** With this new — you got a minor here, right? And instead of just giving you another minor, I'm gonna suggest you tell me if this fits with what I just said to you. Meat: everyone is just meat to you. Dull, worthless, soulless. Anytime you enter a situation where you must talk to a mundane NPC for an extended period of time, the GM can call for an endure roll. On a failure, take D six stress.

**Sylvia:** I love this.

**Austin:** If you're intimate with a mundane NPC, take D 10 stress on a failure. Does that work for you?

**Sylvia:** Yeah, I love that. Yeah, I love it.

**Austin:** So yeah, go ahead and replace conduit with this thing where, in this moment, you kind of see what the machine sees, if that makes sense. Here I've pasted it in the chat for you.

**Sylvia:** Thank you.

**Austin:** Oh my god Duvall.

**Keith:** That's a very very vampire fallout.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** Really fucking is.

**Sylvia:** And this is echo?

**Austin:** That is echo fallout, correct. I, what am I doing with you Duvall?

**Art:** Here we are, continuing my effort to get every fallout in the book.

**(Keith laughs)**

**Austin:** It's truly happening. Okay. Duvall, as you're doing this, holding that light up, you're looking around, you're like hmm what's going on here, etc. Um. You hear the sound of waves, and when you turn to look down one direction here, down the its kind of long hallways, you see that the kind of clawed tendrils I mentioned that the edge of this being that you're standing on has, that it's dug its way into the sea. And at first you're like oh my god, is it gonna fucking flood? What's going — and then you kind of like, there is the sound in the distance of like, suction. It is swallowing, it is beginning to swallow the sea. In fact, I think a thing happens where, you know how how waves work, and there's like

**(Sound of waves with his mouth)**

There's only the sound of the wave coming in.

**Art:** Mm.

**Austin:** You stop hearing the sound of the waves leaving. And then you realize this is happening all around you. It's not just digging out space for itself. It's consuming what's

around it. Lyke you notice this too and you remember what you read. You remember what you read?

**Keith:** Oh, I remember.

**Austin:** About what happens with a god? What's a god do?

**Keith:** It's like a gas, it fills up whatever container it's in.

**[60:00]**

**Austin:** Yeah, it keeps growing and and it will grow for as much as there is to grow. And it's doing that now with Sapodilla. From the other end, you hear a rumble. And you just see like, you know, it hits it strikes a cave system, and it strikes it in such a way that it causes a building from above to just crumble in, to fall in. In fact, let's say that it is the thing that falls in, in the distance, into this into this massive kind of cave structure, is the the Parasol, that that restaurant just crumbles in. And before it can even, you know, we see from kind of a raised view looking down on this labyrinthine God, the material that falls down, it crushes part of the machine, but just as soon as it does, new tendrils come up and begin to like drag bits of rubble away and broken tables. Thankfully, it was empty in this moment, because the people here are, you know — it probably wasn't empty. But just a handful of people instead of being packed with people, and and are dragged away into vents, into into holes, are stretched up and held in place, to be integrated into the body of this thing. You've taken the major Fallout vanished: the next landmark you reach isn't there. You find something else instead. Presumably the landmark is somewhere, assuming it hasn't been entirely swallowed up by the heart. Immediate . It's happening now. You don't have to write this down. Because van—

**Art:** Oh, great.

**Austin:** This is not vanished. This is vanishing. This is Sapodilla is being devoured in this moment.

**Art:** Take that, other group!

**Austin (kinda excited):** Yeah, I, we'll. Yeah. Uh huh. Hopefully they're done what they're doing. The funny thing is, I know where they are, and they're at the opposite side of Sapodilla. They're at the like, exit gate of Sapod — I imagine I know where they are, maybe I don't know where they are. But the adventure, where Chine is being held, is like a facility out that direction, basically. So it'll be a little while — I mean, at the rate this

thing is going won't be that long, it'll be you know, sunrise or sooner, but it'll be — they have they have some time. You guys took a few days, you know, to get here, so y'all y'all y'all gave them a little bit of runway before you destroyed Sapodilla. Maybe they're home by now. Maybe they caught a train out! Who could say? We'll find out. Um, anyway, what are you doing?

**Keith:** Well, I don't want to be devoured by a machine god.

**Austin:** Mm.

**Keith:** So. I mean.

**Austin:** So you're gonna leave this this person here?

**Keith:** Right. I don't I do not want to become the formerly mustachioed sad guy.

**Austin:** Yeah. Uh huh.

**Keith:** So I don't know what that if it means like, "Yeah, I mean, let's run away." Because eventually, right if you're gonna if you're a god, a machine god that's eating all of Sapodilla, you're also then going to be eating what's around it? And then what's around that? And then what's around that?

**Austin:** Yeah! Uh huh! That's true, isn't it?

**Keith:** So I guess the only permanent solution is to stop it. But I don't know what that means.

**Austin:** You're the three people in the entire world who happen to be here in this moment.

**Art:** So do you think stopping this is like a mend?

**Austin:** (loud laugh) I don't think that this is the place — I know. I mean, I have ideas on how you could theoretically stop it. This, this little mini destination is not the place.

**Art:** Mend cursed?

**Austin:** Mend cursed, just one successful mend cursed role and you're good. No, I think that there are ways and there are ways. I think you have I think you have the parts to

get towards a potential way. But what, we'll see. I don't know. I will tell you, this is not enough of the, this is not the heart of the machine, so to speak, you know,

**Keith:** Right. We can't see from here who the first machine bit was?

**Austin:** Or even if there was a first machine bit in that way. Um, but yes, you can't see the the the thing that first kicked this thing off, let's say.

**Keith:** All right, I mean, I guess let's go there, right?

**Austin:** So so peace to this guy?

**Keith:** Yeah, sorry, guy.

**Austin:** Virtue?

**Sylvia:** Ah. We could, so.

**Austin: (knowingly)** Mm! Mm-hm.

**Sylvia:** We should get him down.

**Austin:** Ah.

**Sylvia:** But you... We don't need to be like careful about it.

**Austin:** Oh my god.

**Sylvia:** I mean, listen, if we were going to, I'm going to just like put my cards on the table. If we were going to try and get him out of there alive, I was going to ask if I could sabotage it. So.

**Austin:** Right. Mmhm. Are you going to kind of sneakily try to quote unquote "get him down" but in a way that lets you figure out

**Sylvia:** Make sure he's dead?

**Austin:** Right? But I mean, in a way that gets you the information you're looking for basically,

**Sylvia:** yeah, like I what I think that she's she's most curious about here is like, why is... Is there something going, like? Like, is there some sort of magic going into this guy through the mechanisms here? Or like what is in —

**Austin:** That you could also tap into in some way, basically.

**Sylvia:** Yeah. Like, what is being like, like there's something has to have like, either be like, infused or there's something going on with this is keeping him alive as like, its own — the god is keeping this guy alive as its own food source or something.

**Austin:** Right.

**Sylvia:** Is kind of her working hypotheses right now.

**Austin:** Yep. Um, yeah, give me a roll here. I think that this is discern or kill. And cursed. This is not risky. Mm! It's still risky. You know what, it should be dangerous, but I'm gonna say it's just risky because you don't care if he lives.

**Sylvia:** Okay

**Austin:** The part that's dangerous is that you've already started tampering with a god. This is d — you know what I mean? So I do think it's risky.

**Sylvia:** And then cursed domain?

**Austin:** Cursed or technology. Yeah.

**Sylvia:** I'm trying to think — so I've got this good knife. I don't know if it being uh good counts as a tag or not. Or if that would help me cut them down.

**Austin:** Good would reduce it. Yeah. Good is a tag.

**Sylvia:** Okay. Cool, yeah.

**Austin:** Good things. Get let you — that's that's how we before we got rid of that risky. So yeah, it's limited use, it has one use left.

**Sylvia:** I'm fine using it for this.

**Austin:** So I kind of like using it here as like quickly cutting through the tendrils in a way that let you see kind of magically figure out what's going on here. So yeah, go ahead and give me your your roll

**Sylvia:** So that drops it down to a standard then?

**Austin:** It's standard. Yeah.

**Sylvia:** Okay, cool. So that's a 10.

**Austin:** That is a 10, motherfucker. Yeah, you get it. You get what's happening here. It's actually very similar to a thing vampires used to do. Which is, you pass around — you remember, Lenore used to be like a thrall.

**Sylvia:** Yeah.

**Austin:** And thralls, thralls serve a lot of purposes. Sometimes they're just like, servants, sometimes they are living feedbags for vampires. And, you know, part of what a vampire will do is have a bunch of them so that some of them can kind of heal up between between uses effectively. This this, there's kind of two things happening. One is, this is you confirming that this is a God, according to the the kind of, you know, the theory of what you read earlier, the idea of like, a powerful thing can take one and make two, a less powerful thing can make you take 100 and make 101. This is much closer to the one to two, then the 100 to 101, you know?

**Sylvia:** Okay.

**Austin:** And what it's kind of doing is, all of the organic things that have been woven into it, work to feed it, but also each other. The same life force has been moving between a bunch — and maybe you just figure this out, as a as a vampire you can sense different types of lifeforce, or again, with your Hex Eye Residuum sight stuff, you're able to be like, okay, there are other souls in this soul, at this point. You're able to see that, like, the the network of people who are here, are all feeding into each other to keep each other alive. And it's like, it's sort of like... This is very stupid. You know, in Office Space, they have the virus that is like the little worm that takes the change, like the percentage of a percentage of a... Of each exchange.

**Keith:** Yeah yeah, the fractions of a cent. Each transaction.

**Austin:** The fractions of a cent, yeah, of each transaction go into an account that they keep. That's sort of what's happening here, where it's sort of like the the same energy has been has been passed around a lot of times, and people will generate more energy for themselves as long as they have enough energy. And so the machine for a long time was feeding on like fractions of a fraction of the energy, enough to keep the people alive, but enough to slowly start building up more and more strength. And maybe this is the point where for you D— or sorry for you, Virtue, on a 10, you realize that this is like a decades long process, because the amount that you would get from this would take forever to snowball. But but like this thing used to be the size of, you know, a single, you know, bed with a with an IV next to it, you know. This was this was nothing. And now it is now now it has so much momentum. Now it's this huge, massive growing thing that has snowballed down downhill in such a huge way that it's hard to even see... You know, removing removing him from this will not stop us at this point, you know, it has now learned how to take energy from other things, like the sea, for instance. It does not need the life spark that it did once. You know? And it seems like it's also moving at just such a faster rate than what it was before. It's like the difference between like, in some ways, and I'm using lots of weird tech technological analogies here. But like, this dude was important when this thing worked on 56k modems, right, when this thing had like a small band of energy moving through it. Now that it's able to like take the energy of the sea, it's it's a much more powerful being that has a kind of a broader network of inputs that it can take from — again, going back to that analogy, we said before, if like, if you're the sort of god that can only accept lies, then then that makes you kind of limited, and it seems as if this is the sort of god that can take more than just lifeblood as energy at this point. It seems like it's just taking stuff. And that's very broad. So. The thing here that you've kind of learned is that the power of like the networked self, that like if you can put yourself — if you can gain your life from a bunch of different people at once. That is something that would almost be a distributed life source, you know? It's one thing to have — in some ways, this is like the Alloway thing again. Right? Uh, but you're seeing here that it could be that it can be done in this way that eventually snowballs and moves you towards a different mode where maybe you start with blood, but maybe it doesn't only have to be blood and you get the kind of like redundancy network thing.

**[1:10:59]**

You get the kind of like the early internet version of of being a vampire, where if you can set up a network like this, you know, of sources giving you that power, it will be very hard to ever kill you again, truly. Um, anyway, that guy dies. Uh, you don't know who he is. Um, (laughs) uh, I will tell you for the sake of telling you, uh, that, that, uh, this dude was a piece of shit.



Um, this dude, uh, is, was Marcos Soto, uh, who was a, uh, a member of, of, uh, the Glim Macula a decade ago.

**Sylvia:** So I didn't do anything wrong.

**Austin:** I mean.

**[Everyone laughs]**

**Austin:** You know. Like he said, he got invited here and there had been rumors for years that she would invite a handful of people per year to hear her play. Uh, and this is you, you, you kind of come to understand maybe what happened to them.

**Sylvia:** Mm-hm. Okay. I think (laughs) Virtue, like with this now deceased man, still blood on her — blood still on her, is immediately like writing all of this down. Just a ton of notes about like life networks and shit. Um extremely excited looking, too. Like she's very stoked about this. Does not at all grasp what's going on with everyone else.

**Austin:** Hey everybody else. What are you doing?

**Keith:** I mean, I guess not noticing that, right.

**Austin:** Yeah. I mean, the thing that seemed like it was on a, on a, on a 10, I'm going to say you don't, you don't notice that it was an attempt to learn information. You know? If that had been a lower success, I think that would've been fun, fun, fallout to give, but, uh, on the 10 it's hard to, it's hard to hit her with that. So yeah, you just see Virtue try really hard to save this person. And unfortunately it didn't happen.

**Art:** Well, Virtue looks like a piece of shit trying to save this other piece of shit. It's a real,

**(Austin laughs)**

**Sylvia:** I mean, no one knows that he's a piece of shit.

**Austin:** That's correct. Yeah. Anyway, what do you, uh, what do y'all do?

**Art:** Well, I got two things I'm looking for. A painting.

**Austin:** Yeah.

**Art:** And a way to stop this, uh, whole city from being eaten by a tech god. I want to stress that that is my order of priorities.

**Austin:** I love, I love this group of people. You all are really good heroes.

**Art:** People here seem to be bad. I don't want to hang out with them,

**Sylvia:** You want me to read my most recent fallout again? Just a bit?

**Keith:** Where on the page does it say I'm supposed to be a hero?

**Austin:** There we go. That's what I'm fucking talking about. Uh, Virtue, by the way, you can take that minor beat.

**Sylvia:** Oh, yeah, cool.

**Austin:** Very clearly. Um, uh, go ahead, uh, it sounds like you're giving me another, uh, delve here or discern.

**Art:** All right. I'll do delve this time. It's it's great. Anyone wanna help?

**Keith:** Not you.

**Sylvia:** Wait, what are you trying to do with this again?

**Austin:** Follow the follow the — continue to adventure into this place and try to find the painting slash and/or a way to stop this thing.

**Sylvia:** I feel like I should help just because I have the, um, I kind of have like a trail for it, with the hex eye thing again.

**Austin:** Sure. This is true.

**Art:** Is this risky or does the torch make...

**Austin:** This is dangerous. But the torch...

**Art:** Makes it... risky.

**Austin:** Brings it down to, I believe — mm, does good actually do that or is only,

**Keith:** I think good does do that.

**Austin:** I believe it does. Uh, I'm just gonna double-check. I would imagine it does, but I'm gonna double check it to be right. Uh, mend, equipment quality. Here we go. Uh, yes. Correct. It treats a risky action, a standard or a dangerous action as risky. So this is risky.

**Art:** With one help.

**Austin:** With one help, Virtue is not helping?

**Keith:** Two helps, two helps.

**Sylvia:** Yeah, no, I'm helping.

**Austin:** You're both helping, you're both helping.

**Keith:** I changed my mind about not helping Duvall because Duvall always gets me in trouble.

**Austin:** I see. Great. Unbelievable. Yeah. 6, 5, 8, 6, 4. Success at a cost.

**Keith:** Wait, five!

**Art:** That's a 10! It's a 10!

**Austin:** Oh it's a 10!

**Sylvia:** Because it's a five!

**Art:** Oh no, it's once per situation. Shit.

**Austin:** It's once per situation. Also,

**(Art yells in rage)**

**Austin:** Also we get rid of one six, so it's the second six. It's not a five.

**Art:** Wouldn't you say, reasonably, that once the entire world starts to collapse that we're in a new situation?

**Austin:** No, because you're in the same delve. So, what is happening here is the eight goes away and it becomes a six, that's correct ,Art?

**Art:** Cause, cause we're using some, some wacky rules about what's a new situation.

**Austin:** Delve is a, a single delve is a, you're still in the Delve. This is still that. Um.

**Keith:** But if we're re rolling Delve, doesn't that imply it's a new Delve?

**Austin:** No, a delve is — you remember how Art did damage to the Delve before? That's still the same delve. In fact, I need him to do that again, right now.

**Art:** [crosstalking] ....is gonna be kind to me on this one, I think.

**Austin:** Uh, all right, three. All right. Um, anyway, you've done three more stress to this delve a, which is enough to bring you to the other painting. Um, which is rolled up on a table. Um, uh, and, and again, you can kind of sense that there is this sort of singeing of where the two had been magically separated.

Um, the, the table is in front of a, uh, a sort of, much more simple version of the machinework you'd seen before, where, uh, elsewhere you had seen, um, high quality thread, um, metal lining, synthetics. Here, you see wood and actual horse hair. Um, you know, a leather. Basic materials. You're looking at something that looks almost like, um, a very early version of, um, a counting machine or a sort of, uh, the, the very earliest, you know, computers, the sort of, um, uh, Ada Lovelace and, um, Babbage, you know, uh, analytical machine style thing that almost looks almost more like, uh, or analytical engine. So it almost looks more like, um, a device you would use to do industrial weaving or something like that, you know, than than what we today would think of as a, as a computer, um, the metals that are there are, uh, have, have a deep patina on them. Um, and, uh, it moves with much less vociferous, uh, noise, you know, its, its clacks and clicks and light clanks versus the heavy clunks of the rest of the machine.

Um, uh, and you would think that maybe this is about the... What you would think of as, as the, the origin point of this thing. I think, you know, based on Virtue's last roll, or Virtue at least could tell you, destroying this will not stop anything, but if you're going to take a big swing, this is probably the place to do it in terms of weird magic ritual shit.

**Art:** Well, we have our weird magic ritual shit expert, right here.

**Austin:** Which one — all, all, it's the three of you.

**[Sylvia laughs]**

**Austin:** Really, in various formations.

**Art:** I don't consider myself an expert on weird magic rituals.

**Austin:** I only turn my body into beehive shit. I guess it's fair.

**Art:** Yeah. That's very biological.

**Keith:** Yeah, it's the bees that are the experts.

**Austin:** You're right. The bees are much more of the experts.

**Art:** We could talk to them if we want.

**Austin:** We've never done that before, have we?

**Art:** No.

**Austin:** Uh, what do y'all want to do? Uh, you got the painting, Art, you can pick up the painting. The other half of the painting is here.

**Keith:** Oh, there we go. Problem solved. (laughs)

**Austin:** Uh, I believe this is the, the figure in the rear here. The, the kind of background figure is, is, is here in this one.

**Keith:** Do they like fit together or something?

**Austin:** I mean, the original painting has both of them together. And the whole thing was if you study the painting over a long enough time, you become either the, the, your interpretation of the front figure or the, or the rear figure.

It's a person sitting to be, to be painted and then a person passing by in the distance. Um, and in this moment at least, I'm going to say, Duvall, maybe your initial appreciation

of looking at them side to side. Um, what you gather from the situation you're in perhaps is that the person sitting is scowling, is, um, vengeful, is caught in a wound of the past — uh, resents needing to, to sit for, for a portrait.

**[1:20:00]**

Um, there is a Davia Pledge, uh, you know, angle here that you're seeing. Um, and you can't help but see or think of the figure in the distance — who was, again, sometimes is seen as, uh, a trickster, sometimes is seen as someone old, you know, in, in, on the last — someone has written the, you know, in your book about this, uh, it, it is, uh, you know, someone in their, their old age, uh, on their final, final, you know, jaunty, uh, about the garden.

Um, but here there is something loose and free that maybe makes you think, oh, this is, um, this is Zizi Esterházy herself, or this is a younger version of Davia Pledge, you know, free of, of the, the constraints of, of trauma, free of being driven by having lost what she lost. Um, though, it's not necessarily clear to you from here, how she lost what she lost.

You can make an educated guess that, you know, she has, she blames the people of this city for what she lost, at the very least.

**Art:** I have come to that conclusion — before now, even!

**Austin:** Yeah, okay, huh.

**Keith:** Yeah. I was picking up some hints.

**Austin:** You were picking up some hints that this was like a lesbian revenge plot?

**[Sylvia laughs]**

**Keith:** Well it started when, it started when she started killing a bunch of people upstairs.

**Austin:** Right, uh, that's probably,

**Art:** Uh-huh, that is also when I started, well, actually for me, it started when I was warned against not being killed.

**Austin:** Right. You're like, hey, you didn't — you didn't personally cause me any harm, so don't be here.

**Keith:** Right. Yeah.

**Art:** Right. Yeah. That was, that was my first clue.

**Austin:** It's a good hint.

**Art:** My second clue was when all those people died.

**Austin:** Yeah. Gotcha. Yeah.

**Keith:** Third clue, machine god.

**Austin:** Machine god. Yeah.

**(MUSIC BEGINS UNTIL THE CHAPTER ENDS)**

**[1:22:00]**