

Marielda 10: Four Conversations

Transcriber: Fesha (@oziads)

AUSTIN (AS NARRATOR): There's, frankly, a whole lot more to know about what The Six got up to that year, but, I'm gettin' tired, *[THEME MUSIC - "MARIELDA" - BEGINS]* weak. Maybe one day you'll hear more, whether from me or someone else. For now though, I'll tell you what you came here to learn. What? You think I didn't see it? I see his presence in your eyes, I see him all over you, I would recognize him *anywhere*. You didn't come here to investigate some tower. You came here to find your Lord. The Undying Fire. King-God of the Order of the Eternal Princes. Samoths Himself. But I am sorry to say, you will not find him here. All you will find, Hadrian, is the story of how he *died*.

[Theme continues to play until 2:11]

AUSTIN: Hey everyone, welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual-play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends. I am your host, Austin Walker, and today we are continuing our game of Blades in the Dark by John Harper. As always my goals are to convey the fictional world honestly, to bring Marielda to life, and to play to find out what happens. I am joined by Ali Acampora, where can people find you, Ali?

ALI: Um, hi! You can find me on Twitter @ali_west and you can find the show on Twitter @Friends_Table.

AUSTIN: Andrew Lee Swan.

DRE: Hey, you can find me on Twitter @Swandre3000.

AUSTIN: Sylvia¹ Clare.

SYLVIA: Hi, uh, you can find me on Twitter @captaintrash.

AUSTIN: And Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hey, you can find me on twitter @notquitereal, and you can find any music featured in the show at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

AUSTIN: I'm gonna go over character beliefs really quick. Aubrey, you believe that you should never permanently harm someone, that knowledge should be used to help others in society, and that Emberboro deserves to be its own proper parish or town with autonomy. Your instincts are

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

to know which Hitchcock is which, to always collect samples of strange, weird, magical things, and to always know where the exits are. Hitchcock, your beliefs are that Aubrey should be protected—good. Um—

JACK: Going well.

AUSTIN: Yep! That nowhere in the city is truly inaccessible and no one in the city will tell you where you can or cannot go, and that your kind of like, driving motivator is to find the map to that mansion that you've been looking for for quite some time. And then you have two instincts: Always have somebody on the inside and always part a fool from his money.

AUSTIN (CONT.): Castille you have three functions. To guard, to discover, and to acquire. And then kind of going along with that you have "Guard those who have guarded you," "Don't start fights but make sure you end them," "The mission is king," uh, and then, I think... is this an old one? Is the Sige one here an old one?

ALI: I think the Sige one is still relevant. Um, I switched it from "Sige's nature" to "Sige's beliefs"?

AUSTIN: Okay. It's not, it still says nature here, but—

ALI: Oh, okay. Um—

AUSTIN: That might be somewhere in your, somewhere else in notes somewhere.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: "Sige's beliefs cause his despair, he will not find peace outside of Marielda." Um... and speaking of Sige... your beliefs are "The pala-din were built to kill and in the end that is all they are good for, so I'll never trust one," "I will take any job or deed unless it harms a child," "This island ruins everything it touches I must escape before it ruins me too." And your instincts are "Strike first, strike hard," "Scrounge for extra loot on the job," and "Never trust a person in power." Keep those in mind as we move forward.

AUSTIN (CONT.): So I think where I wanna start off is... with Castille waiting for Maelgwyn to show up? I don't know if you remember that's kind of like, as Aubrey saw her vision of Maelgwyn killing Samoths we also had Castille waiting somewhere in the Chrysanthemum District for like, a weekly get-together with Maelgwyn. But it isn't Maelgwyn that shows up, it's kind of an older man who... I kind of imagine Castille just sitting with her hat at like, a café table basically? Or like, maybe it's not like a café... I imagine it's probably near the Hanging Gardens or even on the edges of the Hanging Gardens? Like, here on the map? Kind of near where The Six hang out in general. And—I'm gonna make sure we're on the right map, we are, okay. And,

you know, you see a figure approach and it's... it's a man who's like, very old but his skin is still really healthy?

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: You know, kind of tanned, white skin, a clean—like a, not clean... a well-groomed white beard, little glasses, kind of like... I imagine it's almost like long, wavy hair, like down to his like—not shoulder-length hair, but you know, longer than, it's not like a short-cut haircut. And he gestures to the seat across from you. And he says:

MAN (with a slight accent): Are you waiting for someone?

ALI AS CASTILLE: Um, yeah, yeah I am. But you can sit down, he's running late.

MAN: Do you mind if I join you for a while?

CASTILLE (taken aback): Uh—sure?

AUSTIN: He sits down. And like, leans forward to like, look at your face a little bit? And then he like, as if confirming, he nods to himself.

MAN: Ah, yes, yes. It's true, then? You are one of them? The, the, the pala-din?

CASTILLE: I... uh, it's complicated, but sure.

AUSTIN: He gives a big grin.

MAN: I've heard a lot about you and your friends. It's... hm. How are things going?

CASTILLE: Oh, with regards to...

MAN: Oh, everything. It sounds like you have a lot on your plate these days.

CASTILLE: [laughs unsurely] Um, I, I would say that, yeah. I—it's going fine, I would say.

MAN: Things used to be simpler, you know. In the old days, before the war, before... oh. When I was a young man there were... you knew where you stood...

ALI: [laughs] Castille kind of, like, laughs knowingly without meaning to?

AUSTIN (amused): Uh huh.

MAN: Were you... were you around then? In the old days? Or are you one of his, uh... new creations?

CASTILLE: [laughs] I am. Not in Marielda, but...

AUSTIN: He like, waves down a waiter and whispers a drink order into his ear.

MAN: Sorry, I uh, don't have many days left, so... I feel like I should... give myself the vices I have while I am still here. Perhaps you know what that's like.

CASTILLE: Yeah... yeah. I mean, treat yourself, right? [AUSTIN chuckles]

AUSTIN: The waiter comes back with a glass that's like, foam—not foaming, it's almost foggy it's so cold? And there's a little bit of liquid and the bottom of the glass, and then the waiter pours in two different liquids at the table and it like foams up for a second and then like, does like a little glass like, shake, or a glass, um—

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: What's the word I'm looking for... um, *mixer*, he like spins a glass mixer and it makes a little tinkly sound and then he like bows his head to the guy.

MAN: Hm. When I was young it was, it was, there was a pantheon. You know... even if, even if *your* god was not perhaps the most important you knew where they *stood*. You knew that Samotese [*he's using a different pronunciation here*] put the sun in the sky and that he gave us its fire. That he made us tools so that we could work. And that Samol, Samol... he gave us his body and his blood to be worked on... and Samotine protected us, our shield, and that Samonta, she blew the wind into our sails so that we may move and work.

[TIMESTAMP 10:05]

AUSTIN: And he grins.

MAN: And Samot. Well, I'm getting very old because I remember before Samot did anything, but... I remember how he taught us, how to work for ourselves and how to relax when the work is done. But I can't remember the last time this city relaxed. I've seen us dance, I've seen us celebrate the... religious ceremony, but relax? With the war on... I... I have not seen that in a while.

AUSTIN: He sighs and like, sips his drink.

CASTILLE: I suppose it is difficult to find time for yourself these days.

MAN: Mm. There's a lot to be said for... sacrifice for the greater good, for your city and your people. But I do wonder if a little selfishness would not have helped us.

CASTILLE: [laughs] Selfishness can be very, very valuable it's true.

MAN: Well if that's the case would you mind paying for an old man's drink?

CASTILLE: [laughs] Sure.

MAN: I'm Christopher by the way.

AUSTIN: And he reaches out a hand to you.

ALI: Castille reaches a gloved hand back and shakes his hand.

CASTILLE: It's, it's been a pleasure.

AUSTIN: And then from behind him another figure appears. And, it's Maelgwyn.

CASTILLE (happily): Oh!

AUSTIN: And Christopher says:

CHRISTOPHER: Ah! It seems I should be going.

AUSTIN: And he looks Maelgwyn in the eye with like a very familiar look. Um... almost like he's evaluating him?

ALI: So it's like tense almost?

AUSTIN: No, it's... it's like, if you ever met one of your like, parent's friends... Or like, if I met like a friend of my mom's or dad's or something now and they hadn't seen me since I was twelve?

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: That's the look that they would be giving me is that, that Christopher's giving Maelgwyn.

ALI: Okay, okay.

AUSTIN: And he like nods and steps aside. And Maelgwyn who is also wearing a hat, a wide-brimmed hat sits down across from you. And then, in The Six's HQ, Aubrey, you're being shook awake by a pair of long arms.

SYLVIA AS AUBREY: [being startled awake noises] Meh, eh, wh—

SYLVIA: That's Aubrey waking up.

AUSTIN AS PEG (in a slow, sibilant voice): Auuuubreey... Zaktrakkkkk told me you were shouuuuting... but he was too afraid to come wake you... are you okay?

AUSTIN: —asks Peg.

SYLVIA: Aubrey just, kinda stares off for a second.

PEG: You've seen something.

AUBREY: Eh, I think... it had to just be a bad dream. Don't...

PEG: Hmmm...

AUBREY: Don't worry about it.

PEG: I can smell it... You were working on something. What wasss it?

AUBREY: Peg, it's fine, you don't need to—you know, some things can be kept private.

AUSTIN: She like, slides her entire weird body up past you and around to your like, work station. Like Mr. Fantastic-style?

[DRE and ALI laughing]

PEG: I see lead... and, hmm, a bit of fire-water... and... what is it you were building?

AUBREY: I...

AUSTIN: She like, sniffs at the various tubes and tinctures.

AUBREY: I needed to see something. And I couldn't do it without making this.

PEG: This is veeeery dangerous sssstuff. You should've asked us for help.

AUBREY: [takes a breath] Yeah. Maybe I should've. But... I think I'd prefer to keep you guys out of this just in case...

AUSTIN: Uh, Zaktrak like, steps in with little steps towards you from outside.

AUSTIN AS ZAKTRAK (uncertain): Are you, are you okay? Are you okay? Aubrey... we were very worried, you were shouting things.

SYLVIA: Aubrey like... I think Zaktrak's a little shorter than Aubrey—

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, definitely.

SYLVIA: —so she rubs him on the head a little—

AUSTIN: Aww!

SYLVIA: Like tousles whatever hair he might have—I don't know if he has any—but that sorta motion, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yes.

AUBREY: Don't worry about it, seriously. Like I was tellin' Peg, it was just a bad dream.
Right?

SYLVIA: And she like, gives Peg a *look* which is like, "Do not worry the sweet little boy. We can talk about this later."

PEG: You were shouting the way that people know the truth shout.

AUSTIN: And Zaktrak goes [scared noise] "Uhhh!"

AUBREY: [sighs]

AUSTIN: And like, with a, a subtle motion, Peg closes the door and like wraps back around to where you and Zaktrak are.

PEG: We should talk.

[TIMESTAMP 14:57]

AUSTIN: Hey, uh, Sige. What're you up to in the city right now?

DRE: Um... I think he is wandering through... he parish looking for stalls where he can buy just, little, little trinkets to melt down.

AUSTIN: So is he in Chrysanthemum, or which parish is he in?

DRE: Oh, I'm sorry, um... [thinking noises]

AUSTIN: Like what sorta trinkets are you looking for, maybe that's a better question.

DRE: Yeah, what's, what's the elvish parish?

AUSTIN: Quince, Quince Parish.

DRE: Quince, there we go.

AUSTIN: They're like outside... that's the place that's sorta like Wild West-y, I described it last week as being like, kinda like Wild West meets the Japanese frontier meets kinda like small villages in feudal Japan? Like, lots of uh... drumming, lots of things hanging between wooden structures like clotheslines and little lanterns and stuff like that. Lots of children running around. It's also snowy out here? Like this is the one place in the city that's not super hot all the time so it's like a Wild West snow samurai town? It's pretty good. I kinda like Quince Parish a lot. I wish we had more time there.

DRE: All right. Well, there you go. We'll spend a little time here now.

AUSTIN: So... what're you—so you're looking for stuff to like... okay. You have a contact here don't you?

DRE: Yeah...

AUSTIN: Who is your... what's your contact name, let's actually do this right. I think it is... uh, Lilith R'ion.

DRE: There you go. My shady friend, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Who is uh, who sells like, quote unquote "Elven artifacts." Good.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: All right. So I think you head to like, her little stall, expecting to find her and like "Hey, what sorta shipment do you have, is there anything I can melt down to, to fix up my magic boat so that I can get the fuck outta here." But you run into a weaver of your own. Who like, catches your eye down an alleyway.

AUSTIN AS WEAVER (even creepier-sounding than Peg): Pssssssssstttt...
psssssssttt... Sssiiiige... Ss-Siiiige...

DRE AS SIGE: Are you, are you trying to be subtle? It's not—

WEAVER: This waaay...

AUSTIN: Her voice is like uh, I believe it was described in *The Quiet Year* as “air escaping a balloon.”

DRE (amused): Uh huh! Yep!

WEAVER: There's someone... who needs to meeeet youuuuuuu...

SIGE: I...

WEAVER: Thisss waaay...

SIGE: They—they can come here!

WEAVER: It's... he can't... he caaan't...

AUSTIN: And Hedy like, very cautiously moves a little closer down this alleyway towards you.

HEDY: They can't see me heeere... They don't like me anymore... But I said I would do a favor... for a frieeend...

SIGE (reluctantly): [sighs] Okay, I'm coming.

AUSTIN: She like, retracts back through the hall, or like, the alleyway.

DRE: [laughing distantly]

AUSTIN: She stretches *very* far. I think she probably stretches further than most of the weavers.

DRE: I'm thinking like, a Slinky when you like pull it apart as kids.

AUSTIN: Yes, totally.

DRE: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Um, and she like leads you up to a rooftop. From the rooftop you can actually probably see into the city and you can like, you can see the big, black hole that is where Memoriam was.

HEDY: Thank you for coming. Now... what I'm going to tell you might scare you, but... we need to go into the woods. Is that okaaaay?

SIGE: Why are we goin' into the woods?

HEDY: He liiives there...

SIGE: *Who?*

HEDY: The man... who I'm doing this favor for...

SIGE: Man's got no name, huh?

HEDY: I don't know it. He's very... influential. He said he could heeelp...

SIGE: With what?

HEDY: Getting you out of here.

AUSTIN: Hitchcock.

JACK: Hey.

AUSTIN: Where are you right now?

JACK: Um... I think one of the Hitchcocks is probably just in town, I think that, uh, Ethan is in town. Um...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Probably, I think Ethan is in town uh, paying a visit to a friend. And Edmund is teaching a class back at the school.

AUSTIN: Which friend is Ethan paying a visit to?

JACK: Um, ah... he's paying a visit to, ah... the son of a duke who has asked for private tuition. The duke's father has asked for private tuition. And the son doesn't want to be taught and Hitchcock doesn't want to teach him, um...

AUSTIN: So I'm, here's actually, I'm gonna hop in here. I think you're on the way there, and you're being led there by a friend of yours who has set this whole thing up for you.

JACK: [laughs] Okay.

AUSTIN AS HITCHCOCK'S FRIEND: Now I'm tellin' ya, this is gonna make us both *beaucoup bucks*.

JACK AS HITCHCOCK: How many is that? Can you give me a solid number?

[TIMESTAMP 20:00]

HITCHCOCK'S FRIEND: It's a little bit more than twelve and a little bit less than twenty.

DRE: [laughs distantly]

HITCHCOCK: Okay, so we're talking thirteen bucks.

HITCHCOCK'S FRIEND: Fifteen, but close enough.

HITCHCOCK: Right. Uh, okay.

HITCHCOCK'S FRIEND: It's an Orcish word, *beaucoup*. You know.

HITCHCOCK: [takes a breath] Well, no? Um—we make that at the school. We make double that at the school every day.

HITCHCOCK'S FRIEND: Right but, this is you *and* me making *beaucoup bucks*. That's the *difference*.

HITCHCOCK: We haven't worked together for fourteen years!

HITCHCOCK'S FRIEND: You've worked with me every—this is why they call me Snitch Nightly—

JACK: [laughs in disbelief]

SNITCH NIGHTLY: —you work with me every night whether ya know it or not!

JACK: [laughs again]

AUSTIN: And he puts an arm around you.

HITCHCOCK: Snitch. You can't keep using that. You can't keep *saying* that to people! Also, I—Snitch. You're not coming with me to the lesson, are you?

SNITCH: Yeah, you're, they know you're—I told them there's two of you, so—

JACK: [laughs]

SNITCH: They need to be, there have to be two of us!

AUSTIN: And then he like, he like brushes his hair a little bit and lets it like, kinda make it all sort of like yours but not at all? And he's like

SNITCH (as Hitchcock): Right, then! I do a duel!

HITCHCOCK (disbelieving): You told them that I'm twins? You told one of my clients...

SNITCH (overlapping): I just said there's two of you, I said there's two of you, that you're a pair, that you're like twins, I didn't say that you were twins, I said that "Oh, they're like twins!"

HITCHCOCK: [sighs, laughs] Okay, can you duel, Snitch?

SNITCH: Of—[scoffs] Can I duel! Why d'you think they call it duelin'?

HITCHCOCK: Right, well this is a dancing lesson, so, um... I don't know exact—

SNITCH: I can da—I, I invented dancin'!

HITCHCOCK (laughing, incredulous): No, you didn't!

SNITCH: You know, before me there wasn't much in the way of uh, good times in Marielda and then I, I figured out, y'know, first you have a one step, and then you have a *two step*. And that's why they call it dancin'.

HITCHCOCK: Explain that one to me?

SNITCH: I'm sorry, that's why they call it *duelin'* 'cause it's two steps. It's, it's a long history, it's—

HITCHCOCK (overlapping, humoring him): Oh, I see, right, yeah, it's a long history.

SNITCH: —that's lesson three.

HITCHCOCK: Mm-hm! Good—right. Why don't you just teach the class?

SNITCH: Because, you know, you have a little bit more of the, the high class thing, y'know? Like I *know* the people but they'll see you and they'll be all impressed—"Oh, it's a cavalryman!"

HITCHCOCK: And we're making what, fifteen bucks—

SNITCH: Beaucoup! Beaucoup—it could be anywhere from thirteen to twenty, I told them we'll see how it goes and then we'll figure it out in the, in the, in the middle bit!

HITCHCOCK: Okay, how far do we have to, why didn't you just meet me, why didn't I just agree to meet you there? 'Cause...

SNITCH (seriously): Because you're a very lonely man.

HITCHCOCK (flustered): Well, Snitch, I mean... you can't just, you can't just say things like that about people—

[AUSTIN laughs]

HITCHCOCK: —you know? My brother's been ill!

SNITCH: He'll be *fine*! Wait a second—you got a brother? I just made that whole twin thing up! Is that a thing?

HITCHCOCK: [takes a breath] No. No, not at all. Um... nope! Ah, just one of me, and I... hm, uh—[noises of discomfort] It's... probably just down here, right Snitch? It's probably just...

SNITCH (overlapping): Yeah, it's just down here!

HITCHCOCK: Just this way? [sounding increasingly downtrodden] Okay... good...

SNITCH: I don't remember the Duke's name, but we'll be fine. Just call 'im uh... just call 'im Mister Duke, he'll love it.

HITCHCOCK: Nope! Don't do that! Don't call him that.

AUSTIN: Sige. Hedy leads you across the rooftops of the parish and as you go that way you actually notice something weird, which is that the forest... You're not in Quince super often but you have a friend here, so you're here like now and then. And it's like the forest is thicker than it used to be. And maybe a little bit closer? It used to be that there was a big snowy field between the city and the forest, and now... it looks like the forest has like, grown across that field a little

bit closer. You were probably here when that forest was cut back in the old days, like fifteen years ago. And it's back to about the size it was back during that Quiet Year.

AUSTIN (CONT.): Hedy like, slinks down like a fire escape—there's probably not fire escapes—down a ladder that's hanging on the back of one of these, uh, these buildings in the southern half of Quince. Um, and when I say she goes down the ladder I just mean she stands at the top of it and then extends her body down the entire thing all at once, and then waits patiently for you to climb down with your big, burly body.

AUSTIN AS HEDY: He's thiiiiisss waaay...

AUSTIN: And she like, snakes towards the, the woods.

HEDY: I met himmm a looong time ago... when I went into the woods... he wasss... he was very sick... but he is getting stronngger, now.

DRE AS SIGE: You sound really close to this person for not knowing his name.

HEDY: Well...

AUSTIN: She says...

HEDY: He calls himself Sam. But I don't think it's his real name.

AUSTIN: And then you're in the woods. Among the trees, and there's like... there's like the noise of life in here. Like, you're a city boy and so you're used to like, people shouting and like, ox-carts going over cobblestone, and the sound of the factories in the distance, and you know... restaurants and stuff. Here it is like, birds chirping, and like, things moving and you can't place them and that's a little weird? And there is another sound: the strumming of a distant guitar.

[TIMESTAMP 25:50]

HEDY: This waaay... He loves music.

AUSTIN: She smiles. Her like, big, teathy smile. And then you see a man on a log wearing brown slacks and suspenders, uh, a white button-up shirt rolled up to the sleeves, dark skin—like, the shade of your skin, probably, Sige? Maybe even darker than that. Maybe even darker than that. Like, this dude is, this dude is *black*. And he has another hat—another hat, lots of hats today—another hat on, and it's like, kind of shielding his face right now?

AUSTIN (CONT.): And then he, he looks up, he actually has like a very... his build is kind of like, angular and... not thin in terms of like, weak? But he has a sort of... androgynous character

about him, in terms of his like, what you would think of as like his body structure. And... very beautiful blue eyes. He's sort of like, what if David Bowie was super black.

DRE: [giggles] Okay!

AUSTIN: And he's playing this guitar! And there's like, a couple of logs around him, and he kinda nods to one of them for you to sit down.

DRE: Yeah, I sit.

AUSTIN: And then he like, finishes the song as if it's a duty? And places it down. Maybe it's a banjo, I don't know, I don't know what it is, but he places it down. And he like gives you a look.

AUSTIN AS SAM: My god, you are the most mortal man I have ever seen! Sam, pleasure to meet you.

AUSTIN: And he reaches out a hand.

DRE AS SIGE: Sige.

SAM: I know, I know who you are.

DRE: And he shakes.

SAM: Ain't nothin' I don't know. *[It's evident from his voice that this is the narrator from the beginning of the episodes.]* Now, Sige, it strikes me that you are ready to leave Marielda behind. And I would appreciate that quite a bit. So I'm gonna help you. Sound fair?

SIGE: Little offended that you want me gone, but...

SAM: Well, you know, there are things... there are things at work that... would be better if you weren't present. Ah, it's not a character judgment, mind you. I think you are a swell man—a bit violent, though. A bit quick to... hit a man in the mouth, when a little push would do. But, it would be better for all of us if that violence was a little further away. Just, uh, one less variable in the mix, you know?

SIGE: So what is this gonna cost me?

SAM: Oh, well. A favor here or there. There's a group of people who... well, they think they're doin' me a favor. But they're not. They think I want this forest to grow bigger, but frankly I'm, I'm ready to see it recede. So spend some time. Look into 'em. Find out

who's doin' it and put a stop to it. You do that... You won't even need a boat. I'll make the land come for you.

SIGE: It's a deal.

SAM: Knew it would be. Like I said, ain't much I don't know.

AUSTIN: And he grins, and picks his guitar back up and starts playing again. And the trees spread to offer you a path out.

AUSTIN (CONT.): Maelgwyn sits across from you, finally. And he looks like, determined in a way you haven't seen in a while. I mean, you've only known him for like a week or two, but he's been kind of like, confused most of the time? Or like, kind of distracted? Which has been useful because so have you ever since figuring out that you're secretly this weird ghost of an elf... magician.

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: But today he has a certain, like, there's a certain focus in his eyes?

AUSTIN AS MAELGWYN: You know that man, Castille?

ALI AS CASTILLE: Um, no, he, he just sat down while I was waiting.

MAELGWYN: Old men just sit down and start... yapping at you often, in Marielda, these days?

CASTILLE: Uh, yeah, I... yeah, I'm a woman so, it happens a lot.

AUSTIN: He smirks. [laughs quietly]

MAELGWYN: I, you know, it's, it's, uh—you have a very good facial structure.

ALI: [giggles]

MAELGWYN: Very chiseled. Chiseled look.

ALI: She— [laughs] She like, kind of softly punches her own chin and is like:

CASTILLE: Yeah, I built it myself.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Aw, that's really good!

MAELGWYN: [sighs] So the thing is.

AUSTIN: And he leans in conspiratorially.

MAELGWYN: I need to go for a while. There's something big. I think I know how to stop it.

CASTILLE: Like, stop *it*?

MAELGWYN: Mm-hm. *It*. I need to... I need to gather some materials and [takes a breath] go to the mainland for a little while. I've chartered a little... a little boat to get me off. But I'll be back. Sooner than later, I hope.

[TIMESTAMP 30:00]

CASTILLE: [exhales] Everyone thinks that they can stop it. What makes you so sure that you've figured it out?

MAELGWYN: I... I mean I—frankly I haven't, but...

AUSTIN: And you can hear his father's voice in him.

MAELGWYN: I've gotta try.

AUSTIN: And he like, knocks on the table and like, puts his other hand down and like pushes himself up.

MAELGWYN: [takes a breath] Just... be careful and make sure everything's... I—[laughs] I don't know. There's nothing you can do, really, I guess. In retrospect, but. Be safe? Be safe. When I get back it would be great if we could get another drink.

CASTILLE: Okay. I promise. I'll be here.

MAELGWYN: Alright. It'll be, uh, it'll be... just... look for me on Sundays, okay?

CASTILLE: Yeah.

MAELGWYN: Okay.

CASTILLE: Good luck.

AUSTIN: And he gives you like a little thumbs-up with his gauntleted hand.

ALI: [laughs fondly]

AUSTIN: And then like, sort of awkwardly walks away? Because he knows that like, he doesn't like being watched, he only just became like a person again after fifteen years? And so he's actually very... it's very strange for him to be around people. And then he's gone. And then a day goes by, and then another.

AUSTIN (CONT.): And Aubrey, at night, you keep having that dream. The dream of Maelgwyn killing Samoths. And that happens for months. And so I wanna talk about what you're doing in this new downtime. We're going to like run a downtime session here as if it's another, as if we just finished a heist. Because we are going into the final heist, but I wanna leave a little bit of a gap here, I think that The Six operate in this year of Marielda, and if we ever wanna come back we can. So I wanna make sure there's a little bit of a gap.

AUSTIN (CONT.): But I wanna think about what long-term projects you're working on during that year. And maybe start working towards them. Aubrey, you can't shake the feeling that the thing you saw is going to come to pass. And the dream gets... a little longer every time by a second or two. Are you also still trying to use that serum to go back to that, to the vision of the mansion?

SYLVIA: I think once Aubrey starts having the visions naturally she stops.

AUSTIN: So, what I will say is the visions at night are always of the assassination.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But when you use the stuff, you can, if you focus just right you can just back to that mansion—

SYLVIA (overlapping): Okay, I think she—

AUSTIN: —and see the breakup between Samot and Samoths.

SYLVIA: Okay, I think what she does is that for a little while, like once every week or so.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: 'Cause she knows the risks of overdoing it with dream essence.

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: She goes in and is like... I think she's slowly transcribing what they're saying?

AUSTIN: Totally. Okay, that's really good. So, actually, you wanna start a long-term project and this'll be your first downtime action?

SYLVIA: Sure.

AUSTIN: That sounds like study to me. Um... yeah. I'm gonna say this is a complicated clock, Aubrey? So yeah, let's add a new clock, lets add a six, a six-thing clock. Which is like [typing] "Transcribe the mansion scene." There we go. Okay.

SYLVIA: You said study for that?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so... Or... I think so, like I imagine that you're doing it in this very studious way, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... like in a... you're not just trying to like, memorize stuff. Like, if you're transcribing, I almost imagine you setting it up so that you have a hand, like a hand on a pen as you go into the dream.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And you wake up with just like, a page scrawled with notes, and have to make sense of it? Or something?

SYLVIA: Okay, I really like that, yeah. Like, she is like... sets herself up at her desk before it starts and then wakes up with notes that half make no sense whatsoever.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Of course. Do you let Aubrey and Za—or, sorry, do you let Zaktrak and Peg help you?

SYLVIA: Um... I think... yeah. Because Peg was very aggressive about wanting to know what was going on, so I think Aubrey let them know...

AUSTIN: Yes. Okay.

SYLVIA: ...like, what she was seeing, and probably scared the *shit* out of poor Zaktrak.

AUSTIN: [makes sad noise] Aw. Yeah. That's—that's *accurate*.

SYLVIA: She tried to get it so that it was just her and Peg talking about it but Peg was very insistent that Zaktrak be there too.

AUSTIN: Totally. So I think this is... um, it's just a straight-up roll. 'Cause it's a long-term project, it's not like a risky-standard style thing. But... I think that you can get a bonus for having them help.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN (mumbling about Roll20): Um... should be right in here somewhere...

SYLVIA: Uh... "Add +1d to the roll if you get help from a friend or contact."

[TIMESTAMP 34:41]

AUSTIN: There you go. So yeah, that's, yeah. Add another d. That works. [pause as Sylvia rolls] Look at that five! Five's alright. Um, when you get a four or five you add two to that clock. And so I'm gonna give you a little bit with each advance you make here. So the basics of it are still, you know, you still understand that Samot and Samoths are kind of talking about the Heat and the Dark, or the Dark and the Heat, and again you kind of notice... I think maybe this time you notice the difference between how they're talking about it? Samot always talks about the Heat and *then* the Dark? And Samoths always talks about the Heat and the Dark together. Which we kinda talked about through, I think Castille last week? Or maybe it was through Hitchcock. But that's the kind of, the ideological divide there? So that's like the big thing that you, that Aubrey learns. Is that divide. At least at this first little step towards complete transcription. What do you wanna do with your second downtime action?

SYLVIA: Can I just do that again?

AUSTIN: Totally. If you spend a coin, remember, you'll get another bonus here. I think it raises it a level? Like it raises it one success level. So, it would go from whatever you roll to the next high level above it.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I'll spend one coin.

AUSTIN: Alright. Sounds good. I imagine it's like, you get better stuff. Like you go and get better materials or something.

SYLVIA: Yeah, and she's like, making it easier for her to write within, um... her like, trance? She like, set up this system to keep her in place.

AUSTIN: Oh that's even better. That's really good.

SYLVIA: I'm gonna say I'm getting the help from them again?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. [Sylvia rolls] Oh, boy!

SYLVIA: Hell yeah.

AUSTIN: That's a six, and that means it goes up to a crit. Which means you get to increase it by... a bunch.

SYLVIA: Five.

AUSTIN: Is it by *five*, is it?

SYLVIA: Yeah. Yeah, it is.

AUSTIN: Oh, Jesus.

SYLVIA: It's not a rule reference, too, here (?), by the way.

AUSTIN: Thank you so much. Yeah, so that completes it. Let's... What's the image of Aubrey waking up with like, complete clarity in her eyes?

SYLVIA: ...I think she like, immediately scrambles over to, like... First thing she does is she makes like, a copy of what they said?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

SYLVIA: And she puts that, like, on the center planning table where everyone is.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: And, like, makes sure it's in a place where everyone will see it? Like everyone in the group will see it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: And then she just immediately goes to like, digging through their like, library of books and stuff that they have, looking for *anything* about... She's looking for two things: she's looking for any information on where Samot could be, and she's looking for any information on the Heat and the Dark.

AUSTIN: Okay. So... the thing that happens with the final time that you go in with the dream powder—the dream dust? The dream smoke?

SYLVIA: Dream *essence*.

AUSTIN: Dream essence, there it is. Is that everything first of all feels more material? Like, it might just be that you've made the right exact mix this time. And you've clamped yourself down long enough for it really to take effect. Like maybe it actually starts off a little wishy-washy with that weird golden auras before? But eventually it just becomes firm under you. You can feel the gravity of the space. So that's one.

AUSTIN (CONT.): Two, you realize that like, everything that you've been hearing previously had been going through some sort of weird, supernatural like, translation? So you were missing nuances of the conversation.

AUSTIN (CONT.): Three, you can hear that they're now speaking in that old tongue. Which like, some of the books you've seen have been written in. *And you understand it.* And that's where you're able to put together some more details here. And the first thing that you notice is that when they talk about the Heat and the Dark coming to kill... everything, the way they talk about "everything," or the way they talk about "death" is not in this general abstract sense? There's like, there's like a proper noun element to what the Heat and the Dark is going to kill. And it takes you a while. And then you realize that they're talking about Samol. Who is... another god. Who you would know is like, a god that's rarely personified because he's just talked about as being like... "Oh, he's like, Earth. He's like, it's just Earth? Earth is here." And like, it doesn't interfere with anything? And then the second thing that you put together is that they're talking to him like... he's a sick parent. Like... it's a terminal illness. Like I don't know if Zaktrak has parents. But the way that they're worrying is the way that Zaktrak may be—sorry, not Zaktrak, *Christ*. I keep, why am I—the way *Aubrey* would think about her parents being sick. And just kind of like, scrambling for any solution.

AUSTIN (CONT.): The third thing that happens is that night when you go to bed, instead of having the Maelgwyn dream, you have the Samot-Samoths dream. Except Samoths isn't there. And Samot is. And he's at the, the kind of like... table with the feast, and he sees you across the table and he says

AUSTIN AS SAMOT: Oh. Is it time already?

AUSTIN: And like, looks at you for an answer.

SYLVIA AS AUBREY: Yes.

SAMOT: Huh. Things are moving, then.

AUBREY: Possibly too fast. But yes, they are.

SAMOT: Who is it? Is it the Yellow House? Maelgwyn?

AUBREY: It's Maelgwyn.

AUSTIN: He nods. And like, runs a hand through his blond hair.

SAMOT: [sighs] He was here, recently. Looking for guidance. And he went to the mages, too. The tower mages. [sighs again] We all think we can stop this thing. But... I'm worried that in pursuing that we're letting some other pots boil over.

AUSTIN: And he like, gestures to the food as if to say "Please, eat."

SYLVIA: Aubrey like, sits at the table and cautious—like, she takes like, a little bit of food, but she's like super trembly right now.

AUSTIN: Aw, it's super good! What'd you take?

SYLVIA: Um... I think there was like, a bowl of apples on the table.

AUSTIN: Oh, it totally is apples and this is important, because the city actually used to get apples all the time? And that stopped happening recently? Like, apples and some really good wine and coffee used to come from somewhere, and at some point it just stopped—the shipments stopped coming? And at first everyone was like "Oh, the war is just getting really bad," and then people realized "Oh, I'm actually not even sure where we used to get those apples from." And so it's probably been a little while since Aubrey's had a really good apple.

SYLVIA: I actually don't know if she's ever had one.

AUSTIN: Ooh, okay.

SYLVIA: I think this is like the first time she's ever had—'cause like, *Emberboro* doesn't get these.

AUSTIN: No, totally.

SYLVIA: Even when they had them. So she like, she just sees this fruit and she takes it and it's something she's never had before.

AUSTIN: Mm. That's good. That's really good.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright. Um, he... nods his head and says

SAMOT: [sighs] You've worked very hard to get here. I'm very impressed.

AUSTIN: He has sort of violet eyes.

SYLVIA: Aubrey just sort of like, she puts the apple down on her plate and both her like, fists are kinda clenched 'cause she's so full of like, that nervous energy you get? That like, it feels like every muscle in her body is tensing. But she's like:

AUBREY: Please let me help you.

AUSTIN: He laughs.

SAMOT: [laughs] Oh... of course. Of course. There's... something I need to ask you to do.

AUBREY: Anything.

SAMOT: Don't be so...

AUSTIN: He's looking for the word.

SAMOT: [sighs] Don't be so quick... to commit yourself.

AUBREY (insistently): We need to stop this!

SAMOT: I know that more than most. Believe me. I've seen it. And I know what it will do. But there are... terrible things... that need to be done. You don't strike me as a killer, little cobbler.

SYLVIA: She just sorta like, looks away.

AUSTIN: He reaches out and like, touches Aubrey's jaw. And like, slides it over to make eye contact again. It is not like a... it is not an erotic or sensual touch, it is like, a very commanding touch.

SAMOT: Listen. I need you to commit violence. And I need to know that you will do it. Or that someone with you will.

AUBREY: I think I know people who can help.

SAMOT: Alright. I'll see you tomorrow. And we'll begin planning.

AUSTIN: Who is next with their downtime?

[ALI, DRE, & SYLVIA laughing slightly hysterically]

JACK: Are they all gonna go as well as that?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Probably.

[Ali and Dre laugh again]

ALI: Sylvia, can I ask super quick if Aubrey has talked to the others about... doing any of this stuff at all?

AUSTIN (overlapping): Good question!

SYLVIA: Um... well she's—like I said, she left the thing on the table, so she wants, she's telling everybody about what's going on?

AUSTIN: That literally just happened, though. So that's like—

SYLVIA (overlapping): Okay, true.

ALI (overlapping): Okay.

SYLVIA: Until then, until then no. She hasn't said anything to anybody.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Good.

[TIMESTAMP 45:00]

SYLVIA: Like, she has been visibly shaken since the last job... um... and something's been very off about her, but no one's been able to get it out of her like, what is going on.

AUSTIN: Or like, where she went when she disappeared in the library.

SYLVIA: Like she just, she's just been avoiding questions left and right.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um... let me give a little more—because Aubrey's situation was pretty clear what was gonna happen, I kinda just wanted to jump into that, but let me give a little background on what's like, happened in Marielda in the last like, ten or so months. So you can think about what your long-term projects will have been over that time? Or whatever else you wanna be doing with your downtime.

AUSTIN (CONT.): So... the war to the north has gotten way worse. Samot is pushing closer and closer to Marielda, and has built a sort of like... multi-national alliance, like, coalition against Samoths. Based on the promise that something terrible is coming and only Samot can stop it. The coalition is like elves and dwarves and goblins and halflings and even orcs? Who... you know, most people in Marielda think of orcs as savages and criminals and killers and like, mindless. So like, when they talk about Samot's coalition it's done with this like, deep derision and like, "Oh those uncivilized brutes, all of them."

AUSTIN (CONT.): The city itself is like, more empty of able-bodied adults than it has ever been? Because Samoths has been recruiting more and more people into the army. And he's even begun using the pala-din in the army, which means that the pala-din in the city are even weaker—or, sorry, are weaker now than they have been before.

AUSTIN (CONT.): And because of that, and because of some of the other events that The Six have been up to over the last year, the kind of power structure has changed a little bit. In the north, basically all of Violet Parish and kind of like, the northwestern parts of Chrysanthemum and Quince are largely, uh, under, not the control, but under the protection...? Let's say? Of the Red Rank Irregulars and Claret Holiday. They are... mercenaries, they're the ones who helped you fight the Fontmen and win that war, um, and they generally protect those who can afford it, but do make um... some, some, uh... kind of, what's the word I'm looking for... *pro bono* cases of protecting the meek who they deem worthy. And by protection really what that means is like, they keep the Church of Samoths and the pala-din away so that people can do whatever the fuck they want. And, I think probably, she's trying to make, Claret Holiday's been trying to make inroads through Quince so she can get into Orchid Parish?

AUSTIN (CONT.): And eventually she makes it clear who she is to, to everyone? And stops going by Claret Holiday and retakes her old name, Tamsin, as a way of, kind of like making a *casus belli*, kind of saying "Listen, Orchid Parish would not have fucking lasted with me back during the bad, the bad times? It's time to give it to me again." Um... she also is still kind of... someone who is very private, and who being around her is... uh, a very... tiring experience. She kind of just, drains whoever she's near. It's weird.

AUSTIN (CONT.): In the south in Emberboro as well as in Iris and much of Helianthus, the Black Slacks have grown in power and number as the pala-din have thinned out. There's also a new loose affiliation between the Black Slacks, the—Hedy's uh, weaver union, and the cobbin-run Black Sand Alchemical. And so, kind of all of the Iris Parish, all of Emberboro, and much of Helianthus kind of has gone into Black Slack control. They are... very, uh... aggressive about wanting to change the things are in Marielda? But they often run up against serious problems which is like, you can't just... with a city that can reconfigure itself any damage that you do overnight in protest is fixed by the morning.

AUSTIN (CONT.): Though, with Samoths gone more because he has been going to the front lines, reconfiguration has gotten increasingly erratic and strange. There are bits of the city that

normally would get reconfigured constantly and now it barely happens, and other places that were sort of like the University, you know, rare to be reconfigured, a lot of the richer areas in Chrysanthemum for instance, used to be left alone because rich folk lived there and didn't like it when their commutes to work changed? And now they'll just wake up and open their front door and it's just a brick wall? And they have to like, go out of a window to get to work that day. So, things are just very strange in general there.

AUSTIN (CONT.): In central-west Helianthus—or sorry, I guess that's central... just like, dead center on the map it's where the little white house is, and like, the taller tan church—the Hospitaliers have gotten increasingly erratic also. They used to be a lot more... you know, they used to be like, a gang? But like a gang of doctors. Right? Like, they used to be people who, who were trying to have political and and, and kind of territorial power in the city? But also like helped people when they were hurt. And now they are just kind of like... hurting people. And trying to grab onto anything. People remember a time when they were better and that they worshipped some sort of weird, distant god, but no one can quite remember the name of that god. It's very strange.

AUSTIN (CONT.): In Quince, the forest has continued to grow since Sige was there. And now I would say this whole like, southern half of Quince is in the woods. And the trees have started to move into the parish as well. We'll resolve whether or not Sige can affect that in any way in a second, but, for now the Gardeners, which are who the people are who claim that they're, who've taken claim of this kind of strange sabotage, a group of elves and weavers, they, uh... they've been taking responsibility for what's happening there.

AUSTIN (CONT.): And over the course of the year, Maelgwyn's Faithful grow more and more powerful throughout the city. Rumors have been persisting that their absent idol has returned. People like, "Oh, I saw him at the Gardens, I swear it was him," or like, "You know, I saw a masked figure in the alleyway and he saved me with his steel hand." He's like... the rumors that Maelgwyn is back and is like, wearing this steel mask and a steel crown and is... has kind of given the Maelgwyn's Faithful this new rhetorical power because while Samoths is gone, Maelgwyn seems to be back.

AUSTIN (CONT.): Another major player right now in the world, kind of like especially in Orchid Parish, is the new Lance Noble Orchid. Because the old one was left to fucking die, thanks Sige! And it's Rebecca, who was part of the Fontmen before. Escaped with her life from that war, and has stepped into that role of Lance Noble Orchid. Um, and because Samoths is gone more and more, the Golden Lance has been getting more and more authority? Because people are looking for some official government group to help out.

AUSTIN (CONT.): I imagine The Six have done a bunch of difference heists, which, again, at some point in the deep future maybe we'll come back to as little one-shots or something. But I will quickly say that Miss Salary and Caroline have kind of joined up as a loosely affiliated cohort? Of bandits? Who are like, fearsome and people whisper about being caught by, I don't

know what their name is, I bet they have a really cool name. I imagine that they dress really nicely and have a really cool name and rob people and they're the best.

AUSTIN (CONT.): I think the last thing that's worth noting is that in the south, in the ocean, people have begun to swear that they've seen a figure in the sea, a creature that people have sworn for fifteen years was just a myth. A weird, like, giant water-lizard.

AUSTIN (CONT.): So who else, who else has downtime stuff to do?

ALI: Um... I left the last game with um, some harm? Can we just assume that was gone, or should I...?

AUSTIN: Um... yeah, let's assume everyone is healed...? It's been months and months and months and that's enough downtime to just naturally heal, and I don't want us to spend our downtime turns on just like, "Oh I healed a level one harm." Now if you have like a level three harm, don't just erase that, we'll have to talk about that.

ALI: Okay. I have an idea and I wanna swing it by you...? I kinda wanna indulge in my vice because... I... narratively I hope that she overindulges?

AUSTIN: Oh, interesting. Okay.

ALI: Is that okay?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

ALI: [laughs] Okay. Um, okay, cool.

AUSTIN: What is your—so your vice, again, was that you kind of shut off and become a proper pala-din for a while.

[TIMESTAMP 55:00]

ALI: Right. Yeah. Exactly. Basically the reason she, it relieves her stress is because having to confront the fact that she's two different people has been really stressful? So like, being able to be a pala-din and like, not having to consider herself for a couple hours—

AUSTIN (overlapping): Right, right.

ALI: —feels pretty good.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I bet. I bet.

ALI: So I think that she's been doing it more often than usual throughout these, these... these months. [sighs] Okay, let's go. I have two stress right now.

AUSTIN: So you're almost definitely going to overindulge. [you can hear him smiling]

ALI: Yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: We'll see.

ALI: If I don't then, you know, she's a, she's a much more balanced person than I thought she was gonna be.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: [laughs]

JACK (in response to Ali's roll): Nice!

AUSTIN: Yep, you cleared three stress! That's enough to overindulge.

ALI: [laughs]

SYLVIA: [laughing] Jesus.

AUSTIN (reading from the rules): "You make a bad call because of your vice. In acquiring it, or because of its influence, what did you do? Attract trouble, big talk, lost, or tapped?"

ALI: What's the difference between lost and tapped?

AUSTIN: Lost means you don't get to play this character until the future, you have to play someone new.

ALI (overlapping): Okay, yeah, that's probably not... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Tapped is interesting because, so tapped is "Your current purveyor cuts you off, find a new source for your vice." Tapped would be like, the thing that I think of for tapped in this instance would be like... you try to like, do it one day, shut down and become a pala-din, and you can't. Like, you can't escape yourself anymore.

ALI: Oooh... I thought it would be like, they recognize me and tell me to shoo, but that's even better.

AUSTIN: No, fuck that.

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because like, whatever, worse comes to worse and you can just go to a new zone and like, “Oh now I’m doing it here,” or whatever—

ALI (overlapping): Right. [laughs]

AUSTIN: —right, like you would lock yourself into a room and just turn on that mode to get away. But you can’t do that now. Like, you can’t get away from... Okay, here’s what actually happens. You... One day while walking around, you are patrolling near the dark hole where Memoriam College was? One, you notice that it’s getting bigger, and like, swallowing more of the university campus—because remember, it was just Memoriam College, it wasn’t all of the university.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: Um, and two, you notice that you notice that. Which is bad. Because normally, you don’t notice things as a pala-din. You just go to sleep, basically, and wake up. And there you are. Back where you were at. And three, you realize that you’re Charter noticing this, and you were very much not in control of your body. And the body is doing the pala-din thing, and you can’t stop it. It’s like you’ve been strapped in. And it’s *torture*. Because it’s like, a twelve hour shift where you just walk—are stuck in this body, walking around the Dark, and it’s like, *pulling* at your consciousness. Like, you have to focus to not be swallowed in. Your kind of ghost form, basically, you have to focus to not be yanked out of the pala-din and into the Dark. And like, it’s not a thing you even wanna fuck with. It like— [laughs]

ALI: Right, yeah...

AUSTIN: You don’t even, like, it’s not—you’re smart enough to know that the second you let go even a little bit you’ll be yanked away and then... that’s it. The Dark doesn’t fuck around. And... then when you wake up, you can’t go back into that mode again. The next time you try, maybe it’s a week or two later, you can’t. So I hope you don’t wanna clear any vice ever again! [ALI laughs] Or clear any stress, rather.

ALI: Eh, it’s fine. This is the last one!

AUSTIN (overlapping): Alright, so what’s the second thing you wanna do? So in other words, if you ever need to do this again—until you figure out a way to clear stress a different way, you can’t clear stress.

ALI: [laughs] Cool! Eh, it’s fine.

AUSTIN: Or unless you fix this somehow. But, y'know.

ALI: Right. Um... eh, it's the last, it's the last heist—

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

ALI: We'll figure it out. Um... what do I want my second thing to be... um...

AUSTIN: So go over them again, it's "Vice," "Recover," "Long-term project," "Acquire asset," "Train," "Gather info," or "Reduce heat."

ALI: Um... I think it's probably reduce heat?

AUSTIN: Okay. That's a good idea because I'm gonna do an entanglement roll at the end of this thing. Before we go back in.

ALI: Right, yeah, I feel like just in the time... like, we're growing as an organization but like, because Castille is also Charter now she's like, "Listen, we gotta be better at this." [laughs]

AUSTIN (amused): Yeah, totally.

ALI: "We gotta like, smooth out some of these wrinkles as we get bigger."

AUSTIN: Totally. Alright, roll 2d6 'cause your tier is two. And it's like a steady two, or a strong two, I don't remember what...

ALI: Okay, yeah. [rolls] And that's a nine!

AUSTIN: Five. So you take the highest.

ALI: Okay, right, right.

AUSTIN: So you reduce the heat by two. That's not bad. That goes down from two heat to one heat. Nice one. Or, I'm sorry, from three heat to one heat. The other thing is that, I guess y'all gain more coin because you have those vice dens... alright. Cool. So that's Castille. That wasn't so bad. That wasn't so bad at all. [ALI and DRE laugh] Except for the whole like, being stuck in your body with sleep paralysis that time.

[TIMESTAMP 1:00:05]

ALI: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Um... good. And it being the opposite of what you would like to be, which is like—now you can never forget. I think probably that's the other thing, is like, no, you're *Charter* right now.

ALI: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: You're Charter, there is no—you're Charter Castille, you're not just Castille anymore.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: With all that knowledge.

ALI (nervously): Hmm.

AUSTIN: Hitchcock.

JACK: I think I'm gonna try and do a long-term project.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Um, to try and... uh, continue to ascertain the location of the second half of the map.

AUSTIN: So I think that might be... something else. I think that might be... uh—

JACK (overlapping): Oh, try and acquire asset or acquire info?

AUSTIN: —acquire asset. Yeah. So do you have half the map, is that true? Or does somebody else have half the map, I forget.

JACK: Um, so... weren't we given, weren't we given half the map as children?

AUSTIN: I thought that's what we said...

JACK (overlapping): I'm trying to remember how we set that up.

AUSTIN: I can't remember. I think you were. I think you've got half the map.

JACK (overlapping): We've got—I think we've got half a map. Um...

AUSTIN: Yeah. Or maybe—hmm.

JACK: Do we recognize anything, any landmarks on the half of map we've got? Or is it just like, "Oh, okay, this is a map."

AUSTIN: It's a map of Hieron. So like—

JACK: Oh. [laughs] It's a very, very large map.

AUSTIN: Uh, or it's a map of the southern half of Hieron. I guess.

JACK. Okay. Okay.

AUSTIN: Is the way to think about it. It's... trying to think of how to, one sec, let me open up the actual map of Hieron really quick. So... I imagine that it is like, a little bit—do you see where like, the trees in the middle, they have like a, there's a little divot in them on the southern side? There's kind of like, it goes up and almost, there's almost a "U"?

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: It is the left-most "U." Or the left-most divot into the trees on the southern side.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: But it's the eastern side of that map. And you can see that there's a line going northwest from there. And it starts at a little mansion—

JACK (overlapping): Hmmm.

AUSTIN: —it starts at like, a little house on the map.

JACK: Okay. Okay. Right.

AUSTIN: Maybe it isn't acquire. Because "Acquire an asset" is like, a thing you can use in the next mission.

JACK (overlapping): Yeah, that's what I was, yeah.

AUSTIN: So maybe it is a long-term project. Um...

JACK: I feel it's... yeah, I feel it's probably a long-term project.

AUSTIN: Okay. How do you—what's that look like? What does looking for someone with a map, or looking for a map look like?

JACK: So what is the time period here? It's...

AUSTIN: It's like a year.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's a lot of time. We can do big things here.

JACK: So I think what happens is that the Hitchcock twins stage a series of robberies.

AUSTIN: [laughs quietly]

JACK: A very large series of robberies across Marielda.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Striking seemingly, uh... Or, no actually, no, that's not right at all. No, they're not robberies, the Hitchcocks just make sure that them or their students are attending parties held by antiquarian booksellers, and antique dealers, and eccentric countesses who keep collections, cabinets and curiosities, and you know it's strange at those parties, things sometimes go missing. But you know the—

AUSTIN (overlapping, amused): Oh, weird!

JACK: —the Hitchcocks keep... keep going out for these parties. And I think probably it weirds out The Six as well, because I doubt they say what they're doing, I think they're just like "I'm off for another party tonight in" [laughs] "this bookseller's house."

AUSTIN: [laughs] Like, everyone thinks Hitchcock is like, not just soft, but like, is a little too focused on socializing and a little unfocused on doing the job right?

JACK: Right, absolutely. But at the end of every one... So I think this probably also means that a few students are beginning to get, almost initiated into what the dancing school really is?

AUSTIN: Sure. Are you using Miss Salary and Caroline on these?

JACK: You bet. Oh, absolutely. But I think that contrary to the opinion Hitchcock is leaning too hard into socializing, at the end of every single one the brothers meet and compare notes and say "Okay, right, so this person has never heard of this place, which must mean that they've never been there," or whatever.

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: And they begin to sort of triangulate... where this thing could conceivably be.

AUSTIN: Okay. I think this is a less-intensive thing than trying to enter the spirit realm or whatever the fuck Aubrey was doing? So I'm making it a four clock thing?

JACK (laughing): Okay.

AUSTIN: You're just locating the map, you're not getting the map, you're just locating it, right?

JACK: Yeah, oh, yeah, totally, and I mean, also—

AUSTIN (overlapping): That's a diff—yeah, okay.

JACK: —We're just going to a cross between, we're going to sometimes some really, extremely good, and sometimes some really, extremely bad parties.

AUSTIN: Yes. [laughs] Alright, that sounds like a roll. That sounds like a...

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: What sorta roll is this? What do you think? I think—

JACK: Um...

AUSTIN: Cons... Either consort or sw—I think it's... Consort is "Consort with connections from your heritage, background, friends, or rivals to gain access to resources, information, people, or places." It's either that or it's... I think it's that. I think that like, if we're being honest...

JACK: Yeah, I think it's probably that. Okay, I have a... I have a one in consort. Can I take stress dice on this one?

AUSTIN: Yeah. It's two stress to get a +1, and then remember you can also spend coin to get a higher tier of a resort.

JACK: Actually, you know what, I am... I'm narratively invested in any outcome for this roll. I'm just gonna roll for it, I think.

AUSTIN: Okay. Okay.

JACK: Um... but I will spend coin. I'll spend coin to make the number go up.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Um... so... this is consort... Okay, here we go.

AUSTIN: Come on, dice. Ooh, that's a three—

JACK (overlapping): Okay!

AUSTIN: But that's okay because it goes up to a four 'cause you spent coin... it goes up to like, a level, so that means that you get two things. So you're narrowing it down, um...

JACK: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: So you know that it's not in the hands of any of the bookdealers. You know that it is not in the hands of any of the mapmakers or the mapsellers. You think it's in the hands of a private collector.

JACK: Oh no.

AUSTIN: But you're not quite sure who. Probably an academic? Or... an academic or a scholar, you know, a clergyman, not a business owner... someone who is... in the business of knowing things. Not someone who is in the business of doing business.

JACK: Okay. Hm... Oh, I've just had a very good-bad idea.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh?

JACK: Can I try and do gather info again?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

JACK: For my second move?

AUSTIN: Yep, definitely.

JACK: I wanna try and... uh... What's happening between us and the Fontmen?

AUSTIN: The Fontmen are done.

JACK: They just don't exist anymore?

AUSTIN: Fuckin', the Red Rank Irregulars like, and The Six, like—the Fontmen are now, you know, they might exist as an office somewhere? And they censor the things that come through the office?

JACK: [laughs] Oh...

AUSTIN: But their days of kicking down doors are over.

JACK: Oh, no...

AUSTIN: There is a, there is like an Orth Godlove equivalent of the Fontmen now.

JACK: [laughs] Just stamping papers, marked and censored, "What are you censoring there?" "Oh, just the business figures."

AUSTIN: [laughs] Exactly. Uh, you know, what they're actually probably censoring now is like, the terrible figures from the front. How many died.

JACK (overlapping): Oh, god, that's absolutely what they're censoring, yeah.

AUSTIN: Um, what cities were lost. How close Samot and his forces are getting.

JACK: [takes a breath] Okay, so, I mean, so other than us. Who is kind of the, the central faction for knowledge?

AUSTIN: I mean you're kind of, you're still kind of small? But for knowledge... like, Yellow House is shut down, the Fontmen are shut down... Y'all are doin' good when it comes to like, knowing stuff.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh, probably the tea witches? The Tea Leaf Set? They know some stuff?

JACK: Hey! Maybe I should pay a visit to some tea witches!

ALI: [laughs quietly]

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JACK: Okay, I'm gonna pay a visit to the tea witches.

AUSTIN: Okay. To further this thing?

JACK: Yeah! Yeah.

AUSTIN: I'll let you sway here. Because you're going to a specific thing to kind of zero in, you're not just going from party to party. So go ahead and roll sway.

JACK: Okay. Um...

AUSTIN: And again, you can use, you can use money as always. To grease the wheels.

JACK: Ah, I'm, my sway is okay, he says, famous last words.

AUSTIN: Okay. Mm-hm!

JACK: [gasps]

AUSTIN: Rolled a six.

JACK: That's a six!

AUSTIN: Alright, so like, let me take you the Tea Leaf Set. A picture of them. Um... hm. So I think you meet them in, they have like a little, I think they have like a little row of houses in Chrysanthemum Parish? That are across the street from a tea shop? And the... though the tea shop is like, where you would think you would meet them, you actually just meet them in the backyard of one of their homes, which is where they have their parties.

JACK: Hm.

AUSTIN: Like you actually show up, you and Snitch show up, you don't have to take Snitch with you if you don't want to, but he definitely thinks this is the place you should go. You know,

AUSTIN AS SNITCH: They know everything about everything, especially if it's about tea.

JACK: [laughs]

SNITCH: Or magic. Like, those are their two areas of expertise. Exper-*teas*? Eh?

JACK: Snitch is definitely like, "Go and see the tea witches!" And Hitchcock is like "That's a, no—actually, actually, no, you're right. That's a really good idea."

AUSTIN: [laughs] So, you meet a tea leaf witch, you meet a lady of some social reputé and standing at her door. And she says:

AUSTIN AS TEA WITCH: Come in, come in! It's so nice to meet you.

AUSTIN (amused): And she like, starts to close the door on Snitch Nightly.

JACK: Is he not coming too?

AUSTIN: He certainly is! And he puts his foot in the door to make sure he is!

SNITCH: Thank you! It's a very nice house that you have, I'm glad to be in it!

AUSTIN: He says.

JACK AS HITCHCOCK: This is Snitch Nightly, he likes complimenting people's houses.

DRE: [laughs distantly]

AUSTIN: He takes a bow and like, takes off his hat. And then like, runs his hand through his hair and makes it very like, he thinks he's making it smooth and straight but it's not like, oiled, so he's not, he's just running his hand through his own hair, it's a bad look.

[TIMESTAMP 1:10:05]

SNITCH: Oh, we know. I know—

AUSTIN: Uh, what's her name... her name is, uh Corral—

SNITCH: —Corral. I know Corral *real* well.

AUSTIN: And she's like

CORAL: It's Coral, actually.

HITCHCOCK: Thanks, Snitch.

CORAL: Come this way.

AUSTIN: And she leads you to a backyard and there are chairs around a table, and a, uh a collection of various leaves and little tiny like, porcelain cups, and a, uh... what do you call it, a kettle of hot water and a couple of cups. There's actually two different kettles with two different liquids in them.

SNITCH: I don't like tea, I'm just gonna stand.

AUSTIN: And he like, crosses his arms in front of the chair.

SNITCH: I guess I could sit and just not drink the tea, actually. So I'm gonna, I'm gonna sit.

AUSTIN: And he sits.

HITCHCOCK (quietly): Okay.

SNITCH: "Sit Nightly" they call me.

HITCHCOCK (quietly): Okay, thanks. Okay.

SNITCH: I sit every night. For a little while—I read a book, or the newspaper—

HITCHCOCK (quietly overlapping intermittently): Yeah. Yep. Mm-hm.

SNITCH: —couple things, I've read a lot. I'm a big reader.

HITCHCOCK: He's a big reader.

CORAL: So what is it you need, Hitchcock?

HITCHCOCK: So this is gonna sound like, such a... such a, an abstract request. But I'm looking for a map. And I've heard that the map is, is in the hands of a private collector somewhere in the city. And you know, we've got our methods for finding these things, but it's much harder to, to have access to the sort of knowledge that's kept in these private collections.

CORAL: Mm. What's the map look like?

HITCHCOCK: Well, it's a map of Hieron, but it's only—actually, I've got half of it here.

CORAL: Oh, well that will help quite a bit. Do you mind if I...

AUSTIN: And she reaches for a knife.

HITCHCOCK: Uh... y—what are you gonna do to the map?

CORAL: I just need... I just need a corner.

HITCHCOCK: Uh, su—could you take the one without that cool border, please?

CORAL: Of course.

AUSTIN: And like, you hold it out, and she just grabs the edge and like, slowly moves the knife through it, very smoothly, it's a very sharp knife. And then she puts it into a mortar and pestle thing, and like crushes it up until it is, kind of just like, a bunch of messy paper flakes?

HITCHCOCK: Sorry, I've gotta stop you right here for a second. Are you gonna drink my map?

CORAL (as if it's obvious): No. *You're* going to drink your map. Wh—

SNITCH: Yeah, c'mon! They make tea, you drink the tea, and then you see the thing. Like that's why I brought ya here—

HITCHCOCK: Okay. O-okay.

AUSTIN: And he like, nods to her like "C'mon, he's kinda a newbie, I guess."

HITCHCOCK: You want me to drink this?

CORAL: Not yet, I need to...

AUSTIN: She like, pours some water into it and then adds some additional leaves there.

HITCHCOCK: Okay.

AUSTIN: And then she hands you the cup.

JACK: What's the cup like?

AUSTIN: It is a like, red lacquer.

JACK: Ooh.

AUSTIN: It doesn't have any like, special engravings or any sort of markings at all. It's kind of a deep red lacquer. The tea smells like soot. It's not a pleasant smell. And it's *very* hot.

HITCHCOCK: Wait do I just, I just drink it?

AUSTIN: She nods and sips her own tea.

HITCHCOCK: Okay.

JACK: I drink the tea.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Snitch Nightly reaches out and drinks some tea also, despite what he said before.

JACK: [laughs]

SNITCH: It's good, it's pretty good!

JACK: Okay. What does this tea taste like?

AUSTIN: Like... the last day of summer. Like, it's still a little too hot, but you can, you can smell the leaves turning. And you can smell someone somewhere burning a last summer fire. And you see the woods in front of you, and that little mansion. The one that you saw in the dreams back in Sabinia's, on Sabinia's couch. And you are there. You're there. You're in this place right now. What do you do?

JACK: Can I enter the mansion?

AUSTIN: Totally.

JACK: Oh wait, can I, actually I should—I wanna knock on the door of the mansion.

AUSTIN: Sure. You knock on the door of the mansion and you wait for a moment and you can hear someone like, skipping and singing. Like, not singing, humming, or like, "La la la!" like that sort of like, just kind of singing a song but with no lyrics. No actual words. And a little girl opens the door. A little brown girl opens the door.

JACK: Hm.

AUSTIN: And looks up at you.

AUSTIN AS THE GIRL: Can I help you?

HITCHCOCK: Uh, hey! Is this your house?

THE GIRL: No.

AUSTIN: She shakes her head.

HITCHCOCK: What are you doing here?

THE GIRL: I'm visiting! I'm playing, I have a friend here.

HITCHCOCK: Oh!

THE GIRL: You wanna play?

HITCHCOCK: Yeah! I do!

THE GIRL: Come with me.

AUSTIN: And she like, turns and starts skipping back. And it's the house, it's the house that Aubrey has been in, obviously, and that was being kind of represented with the crystal back in the library.

JACK: The house I saw in the vision in Memoriam.

AUSTIN (overlapping): Also that house. Yeah.

JACK: So is this my *mother*?

AUSTIN: This is your mother. As a little girl.

JACK: Do I know that?

AUSTIN: I don't know. I think Hitchcock probably—I've told you the story of how Joel and I, my friend Joel and I went to Australia?

JACK: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: Together when we were like thirteen, and then like, we didn't know each other for twenty six years, or sorry, sixteen years or something, and then like, found out that we, that like, we knew each other on the Internet when we were like, twenty five and didn't realize that we had gone to Australia together. And we met and had this moment of like, "Wait, are you? Did we? Go to—? That'd be cool, that'd be cool, but it can't be true!" And then it was true? This is, that's that feeling. It's the feeling of like "That can't, this can't be your mother as a little girl! That's not how this works!"

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: But it is. It definitely is. And she skips past the dining room that we have seen Samot and Samoths um, having that fight in. And you can see Samoths staring at the map on the wall. And outside—

JACK (overlapping): And I absolutely recognize him.

AUSTIN: Oh, yeah. And outside in that little garden area you can hear the little girl playing with a young Maelgwyn.

JACK: So she's just run ahead of me, she's just run off ahead.

AUSTIN: Yes. Oh, yeah, she's havin' fun.

JACK: Okay, and I recognize that the map is in the room, right? Where—

AUSTIN: You see Samothēs looking at the map. It's the whole map is there right now.

JACK: Oh. Wow. Um... okay, I'm gonna tap on the door to the room.

AUSTIN: It's an open door.

JACK: Yeah, I'm, yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh, you're gonna like, get his attention. He turns and looks at you.

HITCHCOCK: Hey.

AUSTIN AS SAMOTHEΣ: [sighs] Thanks for not taking the candlestick. Come in.

HITCHCOCK: You know, I thought it might come to something like this. You know why I'm here, right?

SAMOTHEΣ: Not exactly, it's been very busy, there's a lot to keep up with, I—[takes a breath, sighs] But I have time. What do you need? Was a strange prayer.

HITCHCOCK: [exhales] I was very busy, there was so much to keep up with. The building was on fire...

AUSTIN: [laughs quietly]

HITCHCOCK: Um... Why are you looking at that map?

SAMOTHEΣ: Don't—[exhales] It's not your concern.

HITCHCOCK: Well, it's—I have half of it. I have half of it in, uh...

JACK: And I go to look for it in my pocket, but it's not there, because it's on the table in the tea leaf witch's house.

HITCHCOCK: I have half of this. And I've spent my whole life looking for the other half and... now I'm here, and I'm not gonna let that opportunity pass me by.

SAMOTHES: What is it you hope to find? What do you think this map is?

HITCHCOCK: Well, it's... it's gotta be something... it's gonna be something valuable, isn't it?

SAMOTHES: Where'd you hear that?

HITCHCOCK: Well that's what's at the end of treasure maps.

SAMOTHES: This map doesn't lead to, to treasure, Hitchcock. This map is a, this map is a timeline. This map is a roadmap to death. Which...

HITCHCOCK: O-okay, that's not really what I was, that's not the answer I was hoping for.

SAMOTHES: Come look.

HITCHCOCK: Okay.

AUSTIN: And he shows you, kind of a map of Hieron. Of which you can tell the kind of southern half is the version that you have a part of. And there are five places where there are like...

JACK: [laughs knowingly]

AUSTIN: Strange burn marks?

JACK: Hmm.

AUSTIN: And there is a line from this mansion into the woods, which, if you go back to the Hieron map leads to the little red mark on the western half of Hieron. South of Rosemerrow. And each of where these red marks are is where there is a burn mark. And the thing is, like it's not a burn mark like "Oh, it burnt here," it's *burning*. Actively. And like, is slowly spreading from there.

HITCHCOCK: Do I need to go there? Is that, is that where I need to be?

SAMOTHES: What's there is coming to us. If you're so desperate, just wait. Have some more tea, and go out for a nice drink, and live a good life. And die at peace.

HITCHCOCK: This can't be it.

SAMOTHES: Why not? Why should there be something instead of nothing?

AUSTIN: And he sits down with a sigh and like, rests his head on his hand.

JACK: I think I just leave, right? I think at that point I just walk out of the room. [laughs quietly]

SAMOTHES: Hitchcock.

HITCHCOCK: Yes?

SAMOTHES: Why are you alone?

HITCHCOCK: What?

AUSTIN: And I think that's when you come back. Awake.

JACK: [laughs]

SNITCH (rambling): So the first time I had tea, it was a disaster, that's the thing, that's why I don't have tea anymore! Because, you know, I thought it was the thing where you put all the leaves in the water, you put 'em all in there, and then you just like, spin it up. And then you just drink it all, and then I swallowed the—I *swallowed* them, and that was a, it was very bad. It was very bad! But now I see this is a, you're like pros at this! This is a whole—not like “prose” like the opposite of poetry, like *professionals*, you know, like me, like I'm a professional at what I do, you're a professional at what you do, and I can respect that!

AUSTIN: The tea witch is not pleased with Snitch Nightly.

[TIMESTAMP 1:20:01]

HITCHCOCK: Snitch?

SNITCH: How'd it go?

HITCHCOCK: I found the other half of the map.

SNITCH: Oh yeah? When you were, uh, when you were, uh, all knocked out—it's been a little while—you kept saying a name. Do you remember that?

HITCHCOCK: No.

SNITCH: It was uh... what was it, it was like Simon, or somethin' like... Simian? Si—

AUSTIN: And the tea witch says

CORAL: *Silas*. You were saying “Silas” over and over.

HITCHCOCK: Oh no. I know that man.

SNITCH: Sounds like a good guy! Silas, I could work with a Silas.

HITCHCOCK: Wh—[laughs helplessly] That's one way of describing him. He has, does he have it?

JACK: I'm asking the witch.

HITCHCOCK: Does he have the... the half?

AUSTIN: She like, looks at you to, like, to size you up again and kind of feel out if you were right when you said his name before. And she nods.

CORAL: Yes.

HITCHCOCK: Right. Okay. Thank you, how much do I owe you?

AUSTIN (amused): She looks at you in the eye and says:

CORAL: Promise me that you will never bring this man to my house again, and this one is free.

HITCHCOCK: You know, I think that's a promise I can, I can safely make. Thank you.

SNITCH: Come on! We had a good time!

HITCHCOCK: Nope, we're going now, Snitch. Snitch, we're going now.

SNITCH: Oh, alright. You wanna go somewhere we can get some snacks?

HITCHCOCK: Well, you're—I'm going to my house, and you're going to your house.

SNITCH: Yeah, but what's mine is yours and what's yours is mine, so I'll see you there with a sandwich!

JACK: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Alright. Good! Good.

JACK: Great!

AUSTIN: Sige!

DRE: Mmm! Um, I think I'm gonna try and gather info on the Gardeners?

AUSTIN: Sure.

DRE: Is that what you called that faction?

AUSTIN: Yeah, the faction is called the Gardeners. Go ahead and give me a gather information roll. The way that works again is "You spend time to gather information away from danger, the action roll results indicate the quality—either poor, standard, or fine, or exceptional if you crit." How are you doing it?

DRE: Um...

AUSTIN: Like, are you asking people, are you digging through books, are you...

DRE: I have this image of Sige just like, sitting up in like, a fuckin' like, tree blind in the forest and just like...

AUSTIN: [laughs] Okay!

DRE: Just looking. Um...

AUSTIN (unsure): That's probably *survey*...? Probably?

DRE: Would hunt be if I was like, tracking someone?

AUSTIN: Uh, yeah, totally! Hunt, um, here we go, hunt: "Hunt a target, gather information about its location and movements, attack with precision shooting from a distance."

DRE: Um... and I wanna say that before he does this maybe he goes and, like, hunts down Hedy and is like "Look, you got me into this mess, I'm bringin' you with me, let's go."

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yeah, I'll give you the bonus. She does not wanna go. There is... a clear division between the weavers who live in the city and the ones who live in Quince and in the woods. Despite having been from the woods and having a relationship, like kind of a friendship with, with Sam, there is a... distance between her faction, which wants to live in the city and like, make things better for the weavers there, and those who think the woods are the place to be.

DRE: Um... does bringing her with me give me an extra...

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'll give you an extra die.

DRE: Um... [rolls] Five!

AUSTIN: It's a five! Five's not bad. Five is, in fact, a, uh... it's a standard amount of information. So—[sighs] What you learn about the Gardeners is that they are a cult devoted to Samol, who you get is the guy who was calling himself Sam, in the woods. And they are committed to bringing him... back into strength and power? They believe that there was a time before people were around, like, a more pure time? A more natural time? And that the factories and that the expansion and the war are all hurting Hieron and are—like, they don't use the phrase "Heat and Dark" but they very much are talking about something very similar. And so they have a very, like... environmentalist position on this, basically? They're like eco-terrorists, more or less?

AUSTIN (CONT.): And they are, I think maybe you learn where they meet, which is in this old, dilapidated shack out in the southern end of the woods. Which is where the leaders meet once every couple of weeks. And at this point the trees are like, up through Quince and are again, like, poking into Orchid Parish and into Helianthus through the, like, just powering through the wall. Almost punching through the wall.

DRE: Um...

AUSTIN: Second action.

DRE: Yeah, do any of these downtime actions like, do a direct action against them or something?

AUSTIN: A long-term project would be that, I think. Because it would be like, you know, it wouldn't be like "I'm gonna go kick down the door and kill them all," but it would be like, "I've done this series of attacks," basically.

DRE: Yeah. And I think, um, I might spend a coin to also take an extra action with this one?

AUSTIN: Oh, sure, yeah, you can totally do that. Yeah.

DRE: 'Cause I have another project in mind.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: So yeah, I guess I'll do some kinda long-term project at working against them. Um.. trying to think, what's the most blunt, Sige thing to do. I think he just starts setting forest fires.

AUSTIN: Jesus Christ. Okay! Good! Uh, that's a wreck, probably.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Hedy won't help you do that.

DRE: Yeah. No. I bet I ask Zaktrak what's the best thing to start a fire with, though.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I'll give you +1 from him. For sure. Um, and he goes over, he basically gives you a much less effective version of the fire oil that Aubrey designed?

DRE: [rolls] Eugh!

AUSTIN: Only a three, that's no good!

DRE: That's two ones and a three!

AUSTIN: Yeah. So I think that you manage to set like, a fire here or there? But, you know, it's one of those things where you know you've burnt out a piece of the forest, but the next day you go back and it's grown back. Uh, not all the way, but it's already recovering. Like, you've barely dented them here. So I'm gonna advance that clock once, you still need three more advancements to make that actually come together. You're gonna spend a coin to do a third action?

DRE: Y...es. Um, so this is another, I guess this a long—I don't know if this is a long-term project or acquire asset. What I wanna do is I wanna tinker with the two guns I have.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: And what I wanna do with the one that I've just from Lance Noble Orchid that's in like, good condition?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm?

DRE: I basically want to like, somehow fuse one of those Fontmen canes—

AUSTIN (overlapping): Oh shit.

DRE: —that I took from them, to basically make it into like a bayonet situation?

AUSTIN (into it): Yeah.

DRE: And then the one I have that is kind of already been like, cut down, like the one that he basically used against the ghost?

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

DRE: I wanna modify it so it's small enough that I can give it to Aubrey.

AUSTIN: Aw!

SYLVIA: Aw!

AUSTIN: That's really good!

SYLVIA: Um... can I help with this if this is another project?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally, in fact—yeah, I think so. I think that makes lots of sense. Um... so yeah, take a +1 from Aubrey helping, and then it'll be another long-term project, for sure. Again, I'll make it a fairly short one. Uh, so that's "tinker." Unless, again, you could also... hm. You could do "command." Do you have command?

DRE: Yeah, I do.

AUSTIN: 'Cause you could, you could basically oversee this, and command is how you use cohorts.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: So you could be commanding Zaktrak and Peg and Aubrey to work on this, basically.

DRE: Yeah;

AUSTIN: So go ahead and give me that. [Dre rolls] Five! That's better. So you're halfway there.

DRE: Let's see. I could, I could spend gold to increase the effect, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, which would make it a six, which would still be off by one, I think. Right?

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: 'Cause it'd give you three.

DRE: [sighs] I'm tryin' to think... let me offer you this kind of...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm! Gimme somethin'.

DRE: Not, not in the rulebook bargain.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh!

DRE: Um, I'm imagining a scene where like, Zaktrak and Peg are like, trying to basically like, get the cane to just stick to the gun, and they're just like, nothing is working, like, we need this specific type of metal...

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

DRE: And Sige kind of like, thinks to himself for a minute and then, like, pulls out a map of the city and says "Alright, if you take, if you go through this, and you go through this way, and you go over to the very edge of Emberboro, there's gonna be a weird shack, take this key, and then take whatever you need."

AUSTIN: Oh shit.

DRE: And that's the shack where the boat is.

AUSTIN: So you're gonna lose, you're gonna make it so that you lose the boat.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or like, whatever work you've done on this boat.

DRE: Yep.

AUSTIN: I'll give you that, but only if you take a reduced effect, a harm, from this. That is like... [sighs] resigned.

DRE: Yeah. That makes sense. I'll take that.

AUSTIN: Like, yeah. You know that you're not gettin' outta here by a boat, anyway. And that can be distracting, so yeah. I'll give you that. I like that a lot, actually.

DRE: Okay. I'll take that coin outta my stash.

AUSTIN: Sounds good. And then, Aubrey, take that gun.

SYLVIA: Got a gun!

AUSTIN: Nice! Um...

DRE: What does Aubrey say when Sige gives her a gun?

SYLVIA: I think she just sorta like, thanks him and like, just kinda sees it as him looking out for her? Like "Here, defend yourself."

AUSTIN: Yeah. And you gave her the sawed-off one, right, the kinda closer-range shotgun-y one?

DRE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool. Awesome.

[TIMESTAMP 1:30:01]

AUSTIN: Everyone did their downtime stuff, right?

DRE: Mm-hm!

JACK: Yep.

AUSTIN: I'm trying to decide if I even want to run an entanglement here or not. 'Cause entanglements are fun, but also take time... I'm gonna do it. Let's do it. Let's see how it [laughs] turns out. Because it'll add a little color.

JACK: Last time we did a war, so.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's fine, that was good! Alright, so you add your wanted level, and your heat, in this case it is two total, that's not so bad. Um, and you run, and you roll those. So roll 2d6.

JACK: I'll do it.

AUSTIN: Someone. Yeah?

JACK: [rolls] Six!

AUSTIN: Oh, you rolled a six.

JACK: That will be the last time I shall roll a six tonight.

AUSTIN: Huh! So... [laughs] Oh sorry, no, you rolled a three, you don't add them, you just take the highest—

JACK: Oh, oh, yeah, rolled a three.

AUSTIN: That's a shame. Okay.

DRE: [laughing hard]

AUSTIN: Six is nice, six is a whole good thing!

JACK: We could say it's a six.

AUSTIN (amused): No, we can't. Alright, rivals. "A neutral faction throws their weight around. They threaten you, a friend, or contact, or one of your vice purveyors. Forfeit one rep or one coin per tier of the rival, or stand up to them and lose one status with them." So some relationship goes bad. Probably. Unless you pay them off. Let me take a look at who this could be. This could be the Hospitaliers, who everyone now has a -1 with. This could be the Golden Lance. Can't be the Fontmen 'cause the Fontmen are like, gone. It could be the Bureau of Reconfiguration. It could be the Office of Lost Materials. It could be Marielda Obsidian and Ore. Can't be the Yellow House because of how you murdered them. Um...

DRE: So only the one.

AUSTIN: I think it's probably... I feel like it's the Golden Lance. I feel like that's who's the most interesting here. I think Rebecca... who Castille, you've run into once before. Castille and Hitchcock.

ALI: Yeah. Hitchcock cut her hand off.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Good! Great! Um... where do you run into her? You could—she could also just meet you wherever. Like, she is looking for you. Where does she find you, maybe that's a better way of phrasing this.

ALI: Okay. Um... hm.

AUSTIN: And it can be you and Hitchcock, it can be you and Aubrey, it can be you and Sige. But I think... Or maybe it has to be you and Hitchcock. You were the two that she faced before, so yeah. I think it's you and Hitchcock.

ALI (overlapping): Right.

AUSTIN: And maybe it's all of you. Where are all four of you? Because she has issues with everyone here. Where are you at? As a group? You having a nice lunch?

SYLVIA: I would like to suggest brunch.

AUSTIN: Okay. [ALI & DRE laugh] A nice brunch. Okay.

ALI: Yeah.

JACK (overlapping): Yeah, let's brunch.

ALI: Maybe we're having a like, monthly, we have like a, monthly sort of business meeting.

AUSTIN (smiling): Good.

ALI: We don't like being holed up in the basement, you know, every time we talk about things. So we treat ourselves to a nice brunch.

DRE: [giggles in the background]

AUSTIN: What're you having to eat?

ALI: I don't eat. So... [laughs]

AUSTIN: Oh... [laughs] Buddy... [ALI & DRE laugh]

SYLVIA: Pancakes.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that adds up.

SYLVIA: Yep. She did—Aubrey did ask if they had any apples, they didn't.

AUSTIN: They did not. They *used* to have apples, from Nacre, which they don't remember the name of Nacre, but... like "I always used to get them in all the time, they were great! But uh, these days, y'know, the war." Shrug!

SYLVIA: She's very disappointed.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Um... do you think we have oranges?

AUSTIN: I think oranges are local. It's warm enough.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: Okay. I think Castille [laughs] is just peeling an orange and then like, separating it very cleanly into different wedges.

AUSTIN: [laughs] That's the fuckin' best.

ALI: [laughs]

JACK: Um, I think Hitchcock has just ordered eggs.

AUSTIN: How are they done?

JACK: It doesn't matter.

AUSTIN (sadly): Oh, Hitchcock... soft-boiled, then. Like Hitchcock.

JACK: I guess, yeah. Soft-boiled—

DRE: [laughs] Aw!

ALI: God...

JACK: Or just, um. Scrambled.

AUSTIN: [laughs in pity] We're just listing different types of damage Hitchcock has taken!

ALI: [laughs]

JACK: [laughs] Beaten.

AUSTIN: Sige—what're you—[laughs at Jack's comment] Oh...

DRE: [laughs] Ah...

JACK: Actually, thinking about it, there's no way of cooking an egg that doesn't sound extremely bad for the egg.

AUSTIN: [laughing] It's true!

SYLVIA: Especially "deviled."

[EVERYONE laughs]

SYLVIA: Please, let's not be deviled.

AUSTIN: Yeah, well...

JACK (overlapping): Samot's coming.

AUSTIN: ...Sige?

DRE: I'm gonna have a nice frittata. With a lotta mushrooms.

AUSTIN: Ooh, Sige is good! Uh, so you're all eating and you hear the, the... sound of an old Fontmen cane on the ground. Along with like, the *whooshing* of the Golden Lance like, longcoats? And Rebecca shows up, now Lance, uh... Lance Noble Orchid. [sighs] And she like, nods at you all.

AUSTIN AS REBECCA: What're you up to? What're you up to next? I hear about you every day. I hear that you've hit this museum, or you've robbed that library, or you've—I heard you've stolen from *children*. What's next? Hm?

SYLVIA AS AUBREY: They were actually very short men... not children...

DRE: [laughs] It's an important distinction.

SYLVIA: It's an important distinction.

REBECCA: Oh, right, you have *morals*, I forgot, you're *ethical* criminals.

AUBREY: We're just having a *lovely* brunch.

AUSTIN: She like, grabs a chair and sits down.

REBECCA: I see that. [sighs] Hm.

AUBREY: You weren't invited.

REBECCA: I have authority, I sit wherever I want.

CASTILLE: Do you want a piece of my orange?

REBECCA: That would be lovely.

CASTILLE: Mm.

ALI: [giggles]

AUSTIN: And she takes it. And eats it.

DRE: Does she—is she the one that lost her hand?

AUSTIN: Yes.

DRE: Does she have another hand?

AUSTIN: Yes. It is not the same color as her other hand.

DRE: Okay.

SYLVIA: Wait, but is this an artificial hand, or is it—

AUSTIN: No. It is a new hand.

SYLVIA: Okay.

ALI: And she shows that, like she doesn't wear a glove—

AUSTIN: Oh, yes, she is like—

ALI: She wants people to know, okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah. She's all, her face is all scarred up and stuff, too.

ALI (whispering): God...

AUSTIN: She's like, thrown herself into this job. Pretty severely.

ALI (quietly): Nice...

JACK: The other Hitchcock cut her hand off, so this Hitchcock has no idea why everybody keeps looking at her, and then back at him.

AUSTIN: [laughs hard]

DRE: [laughs]

REBECCA: You've been well, I hope. *Captain*.

HITCHCOCK: Uh, yes! Thank you.

REBECCA: You don't have the fire in your eyes you used to, you know. Too much dancing, I think.

HITCHCOCK: [exhales] Do, do you want some of my eggs?

REBECCA: I've never liked eggs. Never in my life.

HITCHCOCK: Mm, well, okay. Have we met?

AUSTIN: She just like, *glares* at you. Ali, you've already asked one if you can date her. This is the second time—

ALI: [cackles] Okay, good.

JACK: It's like Beetlejuice, if she asks a third time, she can.

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: That's how it works. Traditionally. [exhales]

SYLVIA: I mean, that's just how dating in general works, you just ask the person three times—

ALI: [laughing harder]

AUSTIN: You ask three times, the third time's, that's where we get the saying—

ALI [overlapping]: That's not true, don't—

SYLVIA: It works!

AUSTIN: Yeah. Uh... that's not true. Don't live your life that way. Ali's right.

ALI: Don't do that.

AUSTIN: Don't do it. If someone says no, just fuckin'—it's cool, it's chill.

JACK: Don't cut their hand off!

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Also don't do that.

ALI: Offer them oranges, though.

AUSTIN: Definitely do that.

REBECCA: I just need you to know. Wherever you are, I'll be there. Not in a good way, like—I see where you are. That's what I'm saying.

AUSTIN: And she like, glowers at you all.

CASTILLE: You sure you don't wanna be there in the good way?

DRE: [cackles distantly]

AUSTIN: She like, squints at you? [laughs]

ALI: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Andrew in the chat says "SHOOT YOUR SHOT!"

[EVERYONE laughing]

REBECCA: Certain. You're like a, you're like a weird statue. Not... no.

AUSTIN: She says.

[EVERYONE laughing quieter now]

SYLVIA (whispering): Two more times! Just two more times!

AUSTIN (laughing): No! That's already twice, she's already tried twice! The orange was shot one!

SYLVIA: Okay... one more time!

[ALI and DRE laugh]

HITCHCOCK: Wait, so did you just come to our brunch to threaten us?

REBECCA: Yes! Yes, you're criminals! And I'm showing you that I know where you are—

HITCHCOCK: Oh, okay.

REBECCA: And then I can like [claps hands] if I wanted to right now. I can do that, now.

HITCHCOCK: Wh... why aren't you?

REBECCA: Because... you're just having brunch. That's not really... heroic.

[laughter]

REBECCA: And if you change your mind, if you like, stop being criminals, and just start teaching people to dance! Like a normal person! Instead of robbing people! Then there's no problem! And then I get to go, like, hurt other people. Who are bad.

ALI: [laughs] I just wanna say, when she says "That's not heroic" Castille has like a belly laugh.

AUSTIN: [laughs]

REBECCA: Listen, my old beat was knowledge and information. And that's—you saw to it that I couldn't do that anymore. Now I just wanna make people safe, I wanna make sure you're not hurting anybody, but every time you go out [laughs] even if it's just to like, steal a painting, someone ends up dead! And always, I hear it "Oh, it wasn't our fault," "We didn't mean to kill that person," "It wasn't me who put the knife in their back," "It wasn't me who pulled the trigger," "It wasn't me who collapsed the chandelier on their head." I hear it all the time. Wherever you go, bad things happen.

DRE: I think, while she's been talking, Sige has just been like, eating his frittata dutifully.

ALI: [laughs]

DRE: And he's done, and he puts down the fork, and he says

SIGE: What happened to the last Lance Noble? I claim that. That wasn't an accident.

[TIMESTAMP 1:40:09]

REBECCA: So you're, you're admitting it. You're admitting that you murdered a city official to me, a different city official.

SIGE: Just hold onto your gun, Lance Noble Orchid.

REBECCA: Alright. Alright, we're coming. We're coming for you—you've *given* me what I needed. So. So you know, watch your back.

HITCHCOCK (overlapping): I, I—can I retract what he said? He didn't mean that.

REBECCA: No. No. No, he meant it. I saw it in his eyes, he admitted it to me, that he *killed* a Lance Noble. That's nearly the highest crime—the only thing above that, in Marielda, is, uh, *attempting* to hurt our Lord, Samoths.

ALI (laughing): Castille laughs again.

SYLVIA: When she says that though, Aubrey like, tenses the fuck up.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

REBECCA: I'm watching you. We all are. I gave you this chance—remember? This. I *gave you this chance*. No one else would've.

AUSTIN: And she like, grabs her cane with her new hand and pushes herself up with it. And sparks it for a second? Like in a real bully, shitty way of just like “Eh?” She like, you know, almost as if she's gonna go at you? But she isn't. And she walks away. She doesn't have a gun, you notice. She just has her old cane.

[MUSIC - “THE KILLING OF THE KING-GOD SAMOTHES BY THE TRAITOR PRINCE MAELGWYN, OR THE MARIELDA SUITE” - BEGINS]

AUSTIN: That night, that Sunday night. I think a lot of different things happen. And, in your own way, you each hear what the next job is for The Six. Aubrey, it comes to you in a dream. It's Samot again, and over the last couple of months he's been explaining to you the way things are in great detail. About who he is, and how long he's been around, and how time is weird, in a way that you can't quite comprehend. And, about how, in order for Hieron to be saved, Samoths has to be killed.

AUSTIN (CONT.): I think you hear it, Castille, from Maelgwyn, who meets you for a drink late at night, with his mask and his crown off to the side. He's like, in superhero mode, basically? But is like, he's taken off his mask, and has like, settled down for a glass of vintage Nacre wine—which is *very* expensive, you don't know he got that. But he is definitely drinking it. And is drinking it in a very forceful way. In a way that's basically saying “I need, this is a drink I need before what we're about to do.”

AUSTIN (CONT.): You hear it, Sige, deep in the woods. Where Samol has called you back to him. Not pleased with how you've handled the Gardeners, [laughs] but offering you a new deal.

AUSTIN (CONT.): Hitchcock, you hear it in a dream, too. Except you hear it from Samoths himself. He looks you in the eye and he says

AUSTIN AS SAMOTHES: You're coming to kill me. You don't know it yet, but you and your friends are coming to kill me.

AUSTIN AS SAMOL: [*slight draw*] So, the thing is, Sige. That the... Samot has it in his head that Samoths has an artifact. Somethin' old. Somethin' that'll... spark a solution into being. And the only way to get to it is to get into his grave—only thing is, ain't no grave yet. 'Cause Samoths is still alive.

AUSTIN AS MAELGWYN: When I drive a dagger into my father's heart, this city'll come awake for him. There are protocols in place for when great... beings die. The city will reconfigure itself, instantly. Sensing his demise. And it will build a sepulchre for him. Massive. Noble. And somewhere in there, I am sure is the solution.

AUSTIN: And Samot asks you, Aubrey. If you know how gods are made.

SAMOL: Well, the thing is, Gods come from a sorta *divine impulse*. You see, when someone like me veers just so from their, uh, intended character, somethin' new springs into being. So for instance, when I saw the world that I'd made, and I saw it lonely. Well. Things sprung into being, and my sister Severeia filled the world with creatures. And when I saw them dumb and unable to care for themselves, well, there was Samoths to built them bridges and homes.

SAMOTHES: And so, Samot and Maelgwyn are convinced that if they can get into my mausoleum, if the divine blood in Maelgwyn can feel something new, seeing me there resting, something might spring into being. Something powerful enough to hold back the Heat and the Dark. I don't know what he thinks he'll see when he looks at me in a grave.

MAELGWYN: I'll feel regret.

AUSTIN: He says, Castille, and he takes your hand.

MAELGWYN: I've never felt regret in my life. I am confidence, breathing. But I think if I go forward, and I kill him, and I see him there, surrounded by his *adoring* subjects, by those he's protected, I'll feel regret. And whatever that thing is, that can hold back the Heat and the Dark. That's what the—that's what the mages told me, anyway. They were—they were sure.

CASTILLE: Regret is much more manageable than you would think.

SAMOL: It's funny you say that, because, in a sense, death exists because of regret. Y'see, I know what you're thinkin', Sige. If every god sprang from somethin' else, where did I come from? Well, one day, Nothing flinched. And there I was. And instantly, it regretted me. And so my good friend, Tristero, was born. Haven't seen him in a minute, though. Still, the point is that in moments like these, gods don't design what their offspring looks like. I mean, hell, just look at the cobbins. You think Samoths set out to

make little lizard men? Please. But, it's the *emotion* that becomes alive. It was the intuition and the perseverance of Samoths that made the cobbins. And in the same way, it was the, the fear that it had done somethin' wrong that made Nothing make Tristero. So whatever Maelgwyn thinks he'll see in that tomb, *boy*, he could not be more wrong. You can't let them do it.

MAELGWYN: Castille, you have to help me with this.

SAMOTHES: Hitchcock, they're going to come for me. And as time goes on, I wonder if they might be right.

SAMOT: Aubrey. Are you ready to do violence?

[pause, beat in the music]

AUBREY: Yes.

SAMOT: Good.

[TIMESTAMP 1:47:24]

*["THE KILLING OF THE KING-GOD SAMOTHES BY THE TRAITOR PRINCE MAELGWYN,
OR THE MARIELDA SUITE" PLAYS OUT TO THE END]*