

[Spring in Hieron 07: Structure and Purpose](#)

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AUSTIN: In the days that followed your reunion, there was a great deal of celebration. Though you have never called yourselves heroes, it is time and condition which names all things. And so, for those many in the Last University, who had despaired through winter, seeing you seven people returned to vague geographical proximity was as if watching a miracle.

In fact, as the days turn to weeks, it was less watched and more felt. The Last University, which stood for eons, yet crumbled daily, had become somehow more stable. Walk through it now. Recognize it in the weight of your step. Start at that collective ledger of sacrifice and time's indifference. The cemetery on the northern hill, which looks down beyond the gravestone walls and their afternoon patrols, and into the campus courtyards, where the old and the young and everyone in between shuffle and run and relax. Then step carefully down those hills southwest, toward the sound of Riverway washing past. There, you'll see the campfires which dot the outskirts, where some appeal for freedom beyond the wall, though not past the one made of the stars.

[Music starts - "The Last University"]

Where others bring structure and purpose to raw territory, turning over the pale brown and green below them until it turns from ground into soil, until the word "land" affixes "farm-" to its beginning. And turn, right there, east, traveling through those old gates of wood and metal and other things that only mages know the names of and see it blossom in front of you. The vision from the hill is nothing next to the feeling of dutiful work around you. They move with certainty, carrying boards and baskets, hammers and hazelnuts, lesson plans and lead, as they build new lives. But they do not only work. They race across the yard and read verses to each other out loud in laughing voices. And they play fools now because in the lightness and surety of your presence, play feels less forbidden.

Walk the circuit around the entire interior wall. Explore the towers with your eyes. The First Wing's many classrooms, some already resuscitated by the presence of young students. The central tower's laboratories. A glimpse of an arcanist putting off work to survey the campus ground from the window. Appreciate those things which were restored. The massive dormitory. The busy stables. The rebuilt storeroom. The marshal training grounds.

And soak in that which was built from recent necessity. An archivist trading house, quieter now, yet still active. A shed for preserving food en masse. A pathway to the underground menagerie and garden, and the sound of teenage laughter deep therein. And turn, finally, inward, to the meeting hall, east of the central tower. Breathe in the smell of stew and walk through that large chamber, part dining hall, part stage, part throne room.

Is that-- Is that right, Ephrim, is there... do you and Corsica have a throne room here?

SYLVIA: Uh...

[music ends]

SYLVIA: I don't-- see, the thing is I don't think that there-- As much as Ephrim probably wants a throne,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: (cont) I don't think they have the means for one right now.

AUSTIN: Fair, fair.

SYLVIA: Uh, so I think they just, like, have turned the meeting hall into sorta like, an audience chamber for...

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

SYLVIA: when they hold court?

AUSTIN: Cool. Alright. Alright, let's start talking about what people are building here. Um... I-- while we were gone, in our Discord chat I typed, "If you're having trouble thinking of one, consider: Where would your character hang out if this was a Bioware RPG?" (chuckling, JANINE laughs) So. I see two new things so far. I see "The Outhouse," (KEITH laughs) and the "Three Clock--" "The Three Clocked-Hour"? (cross) "Three O'Clock Tower".

ALI: (cross) Three *Oh* Clock tower.

AUSTIN: Three *Oh* clock.

ALI: The Three O'Clock Tower.

AUSTIN: Who wants to-- Yeah, what is the Three O'Clock Tower?

ALI: Uh... so I specifically drew this as like a... It's like a tower that has a base at the bottom of it?

AUSTIN: Mm.

ALI: So like, if you're... you know, doing the night shift instead of the day shift, and you have to have someplace to stop by to be like, "Oh we saw some weird stuff, so look out for this," or like, just as kind of a break room for people who are doing guard duty? Or like, supplying resources like, "We have extra coats, since you're gonna be outside all night," that sort of thing?

AUSTIN: Riight.

ALI: So.

AUSTIN: Cool!

ALI: You go to the Three O'Clock tower, and then (laughs)

AUSTIN: And is that where Hella, like... Is that Hella's favorite of the watchtowers?

ALI: (laughs) Well-- I-- think... the first thing that Aubade-- that Hella did when she went to Aubade was like, (cross) "I'm gonna start doing patrols,"

AUSTIN: (cross) Oh, right. Yes.

ALI: (laughing, cont) And then she walked into the University, and was like, "Okay, sure, I'll help with that.

AUSTIN: Cool.

ALI: But it's just kind of like-- It's also a place where like, you go to get your schedule, right? It's like a breakroom. (cross) For the people who are doing those things.

AUSTIN: (cross) Okay. Right. You do the walk around the entire circular wall, you know, you do your patrol, and then when you get to the Three O'Clock Tower, you always have to go downstairs and get like, a piece of bread.

ALI: (laughs) Right.

AUSTIN: Just like, a piece of bread with some butter on it, or you get a... (stammering) a little, like a banana. (cross) Or whatever. It's great.

ALI: (cross) Right, there's like, coffee, there's snacks, there's, you know. You can go do your lunch there, you can train there if you wanted to, like she might like, run classes there, we'll get to it. But like.

AUSTIN: Hell yeah. Cool. Um, The Outhouse has replaced Fero's campfire, it looks like?

KEITH: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: (cautious) What is the Outhouse, why did you name--

KEITH: Oh, is it not self-explanatory? (ALI giggles)

AUSTIN: There's a-- You've drawn a candle, and a pillow,

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: (cont) Which are not the two symbols I normally associate with outhouses.

KEITH: (wheezes) So it's a house-- that's outside of the walls (wheezing from JACK) of the castle,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: It's I guess if-- So I think this is slightly reductive, but it's kind of like a hotel?

AUSTIN: (considering) Okay.

KEITH: It is a place you can go when you're sick of being inside of the castle and it's totally free, the only thing you have to do is clean your own room and you have to schedule a time within the next few months where you replace the amount of food you ate while you were there. For however long you were there.

AUSTIN: Okay, so it's-- yeah. It is like a, like a hostel or something, basically. Do people...

ART: Hey do you know uh... that sometimes outhouse means something else?

(AUSTIN laughs)

KEITH: (deadpan) No.

AUSTIN: Okay!

KEITH: Since when, in Hieron. (cracking up) Since when?

JANINE: Also why do people keep pooping in the kitchen?

(laughter)

KEITH: (cackles) Um, and--

AUSTIN: (barely holding in laughter) They're returning the food that they ate!

(SYLVIA cackles)

KEITH: The-- (laughs)

(laughter and snorts)

JANINE: (laughing) Gross.

ALI: I hate y'all.

(even more laughter)

AUSTIN: It's a rule! I didn't make the rule!

(laughter dying down)

KEITH: The candle-- The candle is um, It's suppose-- it's, I--

AUSTIN: It keeps it smelling nice, yeah we get it!

KEITH: I-- Yeah (laughing) No, it's th--! It's 'cause it's supposed to be a relaxing vacation, the candle is a mediation candle.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Gotcha, gotcha. Cool, coolcoolcool. Uh... I see a place called "The Range".

DRE: Yeah, that's-- That's Thrandir's.

AUSTIN: Okay. Is that-- what is it?

DRE: I think it's just like an archery range. I remember, like, in one of the sessions where we had rolled a food bounty and I was talking about Thrandir helping Blue Jay like, learning how to shoot a bow.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: And I think, like-- that has continued? And then Blue Jay has also like-- got a bunch of other people to be like, "Awh no, bows are cool, you should come and learn how to shoot a bow!"

AUSTIN: (chuckling) Right.

DRE: And I-- Y'know, and also now that we have guards or whatever, I think Thrandir has taken it upon himself to like, actually train people on how to use a bow and arrow. And, I also think he's still trying to figure out how to shoot this new gun that he has.

AUSTIN: We didn't describe the new gun! Tell me about the new gun.

DRE: So it's like a weird mix between a break shotgun and like, a Winchester? So, like-- (cross) a break shot--

AUSTIN: (cross) A break shotgun is the kind-- Go ahead. You describe.

DRE: Yeah, it's the kind where you like, you crack open, and you can like, put shells into it?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: And-- since it has the crystal in it, I think the Winchester is... Like, it's got like a lever, so it's a pump action rifle. So I think you break it open to put slugs in? And then,

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: (cont) where the lever comes in is, we talked about like, "Okay, how does Trickshot work?" Because-- some of the other Golden Lance gun people have had weird guns. So...

AUSTIN: Yeah. They've-- We've-- The Golden Lance people has everything from just like-- "This is a beam katana," to "This is a, like a sniper rifle that shoots a beam of las-- like a laser beam that just incinerates someone." I remember a lot of the different Golden Lance people had variations, like small arms, one-- like just, y'know, pistol sized ones, to shotguns and everything in between.

DRE: Yeah. So Throndir's is definitely more of a rifle style, but when he... When he pumps the handle, it activates the crystal, which I think allows the bullets to be reshaped?

AUSTIN: Mm.

DRE: (cont) So we talked about how his gun has the ability to shoot like, non-lethal rounds? So instead of like, a traditional bullet, it sends out something that's broader and flatter. (cross) That can do...

AUSTIN: Gotcha. (cross) Like a kinetic force or something.

DRE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

DRE: So its... yeah.

AUSTIN: So it's like-- one of those like, kinetic shotguns from Minority Report, or something.

DRE: (chuckling) sure.

AUSTIN: But instead of like-- They reloaded them by twirling them, which was dope? This is still just like, you're a fuckin', you're a-- You've got The Look. You got-- Do you have a hat on? You don't wear a hat, right?

DRE: (sighs) I thought long and hard about this. (cross) I don't think Throndir has a hat.

AUSTIN: (cross) There's that really good art that's just-- Did I send you that art? That good Throndir art from someone

DRE: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: (cont) who ha-- doesn't even know that you're the Gunslinger yet?

DRE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Oh, that one doesn't have a hat! That one doesn't have a hat.

DRE: I think Thrandir still has like, his ranger hood.

AUSTIN: Okay. That's cool. I'm down for it. Awesome. So you teach people how to shoot bows and arrows there-- I think Blue J, at this point, has totally become-- like, your protégé to some degree here? Maybe not like, going out hunting with you, or whatever but-- (backtracks) Eh, probably going out hunting-- But not like, going out on adventures.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But very much like, looking to you for advice, and has definitely asked you questions about-- about life in a broader sense, y'know. Definitely like-- You're not Uncle Thrandir, but like, you're Blue J's favorite teacher. You know?

DRE: Mm-hm. Blue J keeps me up on what their weird lingo for all the weed stuff is.

AUSTIN: Yes, totally, totally. Perfect. (laughing) And you're like, "Don't-- Hey. Hey. Don't-- smoke too much." (DRE giggles) (cross) "Don't waste all your allowance."

DRE: (cross) I mean, listen, a little bit's cool, right.

AUSTIN: Yeah. (chuckles)

DRE: Uncle Thrandir's not a square, but, you know. (AUSTIN laughs) Gotta keep that shit in, in check.

AUSTIN: Not gonna narc you out, but. (DRE wheezes) Definitely. Um... Hadrian?

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: You seem to have drawn a house shape?

ART: And I misspelled the name on it, but I misspelled "house" first, so it's really an upgrade. I dunno how to fix this.

AUSTIN: You wrote (cross) "Hadian's

DRE: (cross) "Hadian's"

AUSTIN: (cont) house" (laughs, background laughter)

ART: Look,

AUSTIN: I have a quick question. Um... who, who is "Hadian"? (chuckles)

ART: Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't know I was in the gaming group of people (cross)

KEITH: (cross) Hadian's--

ART: (cont) who never make typos.

(AUSTIN and JACK chuckle, DRE giggles)

AUSTIN: I've lowered it, I've put it here, there you go. (cross) "Hadrian's house."

ART: (cross) I've fixed it, it's fixed.

AUSTIN: Okay. Um...

ART: I figure Hadrian's spending a lot of time at home. He's (cross) been on the road a lot.

AUSTIN: (cross) What's, what's the home like? 'Cause like, a lot of people here are living in like, converted studies, or converted... There are a number of places that are like-- There's dormitories down here in the southeast, right. But what does Hadrian's house look like? (cross) Can you build a house?

ART: (cross) I mean I think it's pretty small, because the-- I think Hadrian like, hastily built a house, probably with like, some help? Like,

AUSTIN: Right, so like, the next-- We get shots from like, the weeks that follow, of Hadrian going out into the woods and bringing in trees and like-- (cross) building a house?

ART: (cross) Yeah, building like a little log cabin.

AUSTIN: Sick.

ART: Yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

ART: It's probably like, three rooms? Probably not that great.

AUSTIN: (considering) Okay, let's (cross)

KEITH: (cross) Hey, it's better than the dormitories that everyone else has to sleep in.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I'm (cross) gonna make 'em smaller...

ART: (cross) Yeah, it's better than sleeping in a poop room, which is (laughter) what I hear what's going on outside the wall (laughter)

AUSTIN: Ooh... I made it tinier, because... otherwise (cross) we woul--

ART: (cross) Yeah, I just needed to square it with the grid to make the shape work.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I getcha. There ya go. "Hadrian's house". Boom. Um... Lem, I'm guessing that's you who drew, a little purple--

JACK: No, that's-- that's not me,

AUSTIN: That's not?

JACK: I'm just--

JANINE: That's me.

AUSTIN: Oooh.

JACK: I'm just excited to see what is there.

AUSTIN: That is the-- oh, oh, that's-- that's good,

JANINE: yeah, position it

AUSTIN: (cont) d'you want to describe what you've drawn here?

JANINE: Um, I made a gaming-slash-rec-hall. And it's like a weird crescent shape with flat ends, and I wanna explain why I made this.

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JANINE: 'Cause I actually had some ideas of things before you mentioned the "where would you hang out in a Bioware RPG" ... thing?

AUSTIN: Sure. That's fair. (cross) You're allowed to not do that.

JANINE: (cross) And all my-- None of my ideas were places that Adaire would be. And als-- they all seemed kinda pointless, 'cause they all kind of... they were applied in other places? Like I would say a

brewery would be part of a preservation shed, to be honest, 'cause brewing stuff is how you-- 'cause you can preserve, that's why that happened, historic-- Anyway. Um.

AUSTIN: (entertained) Uh-huh.

JANINE: (laughs) So. I was like, "Well, would Adaire like, hangout in a poker hall or something," 'cause like, no, probably not. But. She would definitely hide out in a weird gap between buildings where there's not really good visibility... of anyone else outside.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JANINE: So I wanted something that kinda like, hugged another building and created some weird gaps, where you could get up to some trouble. But also it's a cool useful building because everyone needs to have some fun.

AUSTIN: Right. You gotta have room for gamers. Right?

JANINE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Gamers rise up. So. Cool, I like that, I like that. We still need, what. We still need Lem, we still need, uh... (cross) Is that it?

SYLVIA: (cross) I think I have something

AUSTIN: Oh, Ephim.

JACK: I'm drawing now, I'm gonna draw now.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Um... Let's see. I want to do-- I wanna do the other thing that like... I wanna, I wanna attach something to the Archive trading house on the other side.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: But I think it's kind of like, erm... yeah, actually, you know what, Janine, I think I might just steal your idea, (JANINE laughs) and have like this great-- oh! There we go.

JANINE: Well you just made a PS1.

AUSTIN: Yeah. (cross) You're making a PS1. I love it.

JANINE: (cross) You've made a PlayStation.

ALI: (cross) Oohhh... a gaming hall.

AUSTIN: It IS a gaming hall.

DRE: My turn? My turn on playstation?

(light laughter)

JACK: Mine is like (laughs)

AUSTIN: Corsica says (laughing) it's my turn on playstation

(DRE laughs)

JACK: I like it because-- you know that great image of the pikachu who has been made differently to all the other pikachus?

AUSTIN: (laughing) You know?

(JANINE laughing)

DRE: (overlapping) What?

JACK: (overlapping) On the-- On the shelf?

KEITH: Yeah, yeahyeahyeah.

ALI: Oh, yeah.

JACK: The one that looks like, if six of them were made by a machine and then I made the other one? (laughter and 'mm's) I like that my crescent thing looks like that to Janine's.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Yours is more of half-moon than a crescent.

JACK: Yeah, so this is a-- How do I... Text is... here. So this is a... (typing sounds) "Lending Library". And this is like, distinct from a library?

AUSTIN: Right.

JACK: In the sense that I think a lot of university libraries or libraries that we might know in our-- (referring to Roll20) It's-- insistent on snapping, is that

AUSTIN: I-- Hold down Alt. (chuckle) While you're dragging.

JACK: Okay there we go. Um... This is a library that you can take things from.

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: You can-- If you are... This is from books that we have found in the University? And also books we've traded for, from elsewhere. If you are planning a sort of a crop rotation, and you need to go home and read about something, you can get it, or if there's like a fiction series that you've been trying to read for a long time, you can take it out of the lending library. And I think more broadly, as well, it-- It contains things other than books.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: Like, it might contain like, children's toys. So there's a pool of children's toys

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: (cont) there, so you could be like, "Oh, I'm gonna grab, like a,--" I dunno, what do people play with in Hieron? (cross) Like a hoop?

KEITH: (cross) Hobbyhorses.

JACK: A hobbyhorse.

JANINE: It's one of those strings with the disc in the middle, and there's an image on each side of the disc, and you spin it?

JACK: Oh, yeah, you spin it, and it looks 3-D. (cross) And then there's--

KEITH: (cross) Oh, a ball and a cup.

JACK: A ball in a cup!

AUSTIN: A ball in a cup.

JACK: A-- One of those little toy guns with a cork in that's attached to it with a string, and you like, pump up the pressure and the cork comes shooting out.

KEITH: Is there any-- any vaguely magic toys? Like "Oh, this toy works by magic."

JACK: This place is connected to an Archive trading house, so I think there's definitely 100% some toys that's just like, "(mouth click) Yeah, this is just a, a feather that will hang in the air for as long as-- y'know, if you just hold this feather in the air and let go, it'll just stay there-- forever?"

AUSTIN: Mm.

KEITH: How 'bout a bouncy ball that's also one of those popper-- like, the snappy pop things that you throw at the ground, but instead it just always is popping.

JACK: Yeah. (cross) 100%.

AUSTIN: (cross) Fero's new ability, uh.. (laughs)

JACK: (laughing) To create magical toys!

AUSTIN: Yeah, what's the-- what's the youtuber who does all the good toy reviews? I said good, I don't mean good.

(ALI snorts)

SYLVIA: Like funny?

JANINE: He's good!

AUSTIN: (unconvinced) Is he good?

JANINE: The old man?

(pause)

AUSTIN: I th-- (cross) nonononono, not the old man.

KEITH: (cross) Nooo, you're talking about the Disney-- the Disney guy. AwesomerKids? (cross) Is that who you're thinking of?

JANINE: (cross) No, I'm not talking about the-- No, I'm not talking about Mike Mozart. or whoever.

AUSTIN: (low) toy review... That's who I'm talking about. I was talking about Mike Mozart.

JANINE: Oh. I was talking about

JACK: Mozart??

JANINE: (cont) the old man who's like, who shows you something whimsical, and he's like, "Huh! How 'bout that!" (cross) And then he moves on.

AUSTIN: (cross) Yeah. (laughs) That is not Fero.

(JACK laughs)

KEITH: (cross) Oh-- yeah, I know who you're talking about, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that guy's alright. (cross) Anyway.

JACK: (cross) And this also acts as Lem's office? And I think it is strategically placed next to the Archive trading house, 'cause Lem'll occasionally just take items from the trading house, and be like, "They're Library items now."

AUSTIN: (laughs) Great. Just slide those in. You don't worry about the Pattern at this point. I mean I guess you learn this, at like-- somewhere in these next couple weeks, is the Archives aren't what they used to be. The Archives used to be a place to the north, and that is where they were headquartered, and there were huge, huge, you know, warehouses filled with stuff, and y'know, some of those warehouses are definitely still there. Some of them are just completely gone. (cross) Completely gone.

JACK: (shocked) Oh my god.

AUSTIN: You know, between the Heat and Dark, the starstuff, the flood that you did, there was a lot of damage and it's been a long time. And then the overgrowth from the spring. And then on top of that, the orcs who came here, under Morbash's lead, they, um, well... They... left. And they all kind of went their separate way, to some degree? I suspect some of them are going back to where the Archives were to try to rebuild and set up-- set things back up? But-- I kind of like the image of like, the Archivists are in the wind a little bit, now. They all have their own... personal Archives? They all have their own, like-- They still communicate, they still... you know, want to repair the Pattern, they still have all the Pattern magic stuff, in terms of what they believe in? But they as people are kind of like, roving Archivists now. Much less centrally commanded, there is not like, that sort of, centralization of command structure, at this point.

KEITH: Which is tough, because part of what makes being an Archivist effective is having all of the stuff all under one roof.

JACK: Right. So--

AUSTIN: Totally. As a reminder, a lot of this stuff was just breaking anyway, there was an update in Winter, an episode description, where Morbash basically says in a letter, like, "Hey, a bunch of stuff I did isn't working anymore. Like, I've been using this one pattern where I give someone a plant and I can track them (JACK laughs) because I know they have that plant, for twenty years and that isn't working anymore?"

JACK: Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: And so like, some of that was already broken.

JACK: I think that the-- you know, and we don't need a scene here, but I wanna stress just so that we say it on the podcast, that this is like-- colossally, psychologically upsetting for Lem. The realization that this is the case. There is, there is-- you know. The kind of core belief that was trained in was the idea that if you could one day get everything, you'd-- be able to remake the world.

AUSTIN: Yeah. If only you could have everything, that's all, that's all you needed.

JACK: Right, exactly. We just need everything! Or a bit of everything. And so I think just the loss of the warehouses specifically, just this idea of like-- Perhaps he finds it easier to be like, (casually) "Okay, fine, the Archives are gone." But the fact that we are just losing... objects,

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: (cont) is just really... It's almost heretical.

AUSTIN: Yeah. There's something else I have to ask you about in a second, but we'll get there. Ephrim.

SYLVIA: Right. So. I've got... I have kind of an idea here, but I don't know if it fits because-- gods have kind of... taken a back seat here, but I was thinking of attaching just sort of like, a little temple or building next to the cemetery for people to go to.

AUSTIN: That's good.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Is it-- is it a particular denomination?

SYLVIA: No, I don't think so. I think it's more-- beca-- I don't think you can do that, with the...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: (cont) the groups we have here anyway? I think it is more just like.. If people wanna have a funeral or something, there's a building here, but also this is where we keep, like, gardening supplies, to help keep the cemetery nice.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally.

SYLVIA: Like-- It's both function and kind of a symbolic thing. So I'll add that now.

AUSTIN: Totally. I like that a lot. Um... So I've added a couple of other small things here. I've added a, a craft and market square, which is like, a bunch of little crafting huts? And then like, a little market square? And then I'm also adding a boathouse, over here to the west,

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: (cont) Near the... near the river? Where like, your boat is, and I think some other boats are? I'll note that it is-- (chuckling) Actually, you know what, here's what I'll do. The boathouse is actually just inside of, or like, partially inside of the shield and partially outside of the shield? It's like, right up against, the edge here? So-- if things go bad, you could theoretically pull that boat all the way inside. But it breaches the shield.

Other thing I added is another wing to the tower, which, again, I didn't build that. This has been there. We just haven't had it on the actual.. map. And that is the Third Wing, which is one of the wings of the school. Do not ask what happened to the Second Wing, no one will tell you.

Anything else important here? (mouth clicks) I'm trying to think of other important things. I mean, there's obviously more, we could always add more, we can always say, "Oh yeah, and also there's this thing here?" You know? I think over time, we'll start to see things outside the walls fill in? In fact, maybe we already do. Maybe like, south of the farm-- or maybe even... what we get is Fero, in the weeks and months around when you turn your little camp into the Outhouse,

KEITH: Mm.

AUSTIN: We get a... Another little row of like... Like, there's the market inside of the campus, which is like, for people here, but I think maybe we get... let me try to get my shapes, here we go. We get, y'know, a couple of small buildings here that are like, shops for visitors, and for people who are passing by, you know?

KEITH: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: Shops, and maybe like, some food stands? Y'know, food trucks?

KEITH: I would even like to see some permanent residence outside of the walls.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Bit by bit, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah. (low) Food... shopping... and some homes.

KEITH: Real quick, I do wanna, y'know, I don't know how important it is. Outhouse: separate rooms, not-- Austin, you said like a hostel (cross) earlier,

AUSTIN: (cross) Okay. Yeah, that's an important distinction.

KEITH: (cont) but it is separate rooms. Private rooms. Small rooms, very small, but you know, not a dormitory. You can go, like-- That's part of the, like, "Oh, wow, it would be really great to spend a week in a place with walls."

AUSTIN: Right, sure.

KEITH: (cont) "Like, that are mine."

AUSTIN: Cool. Jack, I have a question. We know Emmanuel is here.

JACK: Yeah. So...

AUSTIN: What's up with Emmanuel? It's been-- seven years.

(pause)

JACK: Yeah. I think-- that-- Emmanuel isn't there on the... when we arrived, right?

AUSTIN: I suspect that he's asleep, yeah.

JACK: And he isn't woken.

AUSTIN: It didn't sound like anyone woke him.

JACK: Right. I think that... on the, kind of the next day?

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

JACK: Um... Lem sort of goes to seek him out.

AUSTIN: Sure. Where do you find him?

JACK: What's he doing here?

AUSTIN: 't's a good question. I think he... I think he spent his first couple of years being like, "I know, I'll just keep doing the thing I do. I'll keep being a nice chef," and did some work in the meeting hall, you know, was-- like, worked in the kitchen, the kind of mess hall. But over time, I think that started to feel less and less useful in a sense? Or not less and less useful,

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: (cont) less and less fulfilling. There's a big difference between being a baker and being the mess hall cook. Especially when you look into the pot and see there isn't enough food for everyone in line. And so... I think he is working the farm. Or had been working the farm for the last few years. Out to the west. Just outside the brick walls, or the stone walls of the University. (inhales) I think-- when you go to find him, he's left already? (chuckling) 'Cause he is also looking for you. (JACK laughs) Like once news travels

that you've all arrived, you know-- he's going around, and I think everyone else in the party at some point runs into him, and he's like,

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): It's so good to see you! (stutters) Uh-- Where is Lem?

JACK: Right.

AUSTIN: And, that happens. Where do you finally run into him?

JACK: I think that, er... I think I have heard that he is working at the farm? So when he gets back to the farm, Lem is just sort of waiting for him,

AUSTIN: Right. (exhales) I need to decide, like, what his life has been like. Because-- his hasn't frozen for seven years. You know.

JACK: No. No, absolutely not. I mean, seven years is a (cross) long time.

AUSTIN: (cross) It's a long time. So I think, like-- when he sees you, he's very excited. And he runs to you to give you a big hug immediately. And to like-- He squeezes your hand, and he says, like-- He just holds you for a few seconds. And he's like,

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (softly, emphatically) Lem! Lem. Lem. You're okay.

JACK (as Lem): More or less.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): Where have you been.

JACK (as Lem): (exhales) I've been in a sword.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): You've been in a sword-- what? Wh... What?

JACK (as Lem): In Hella's sword? In Hella's sword. I went down, (AUSTIN huffs fondly) down to see Samol, and-- fell into, (cross) water,

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (cross) Lem. (stammering, huffs fondly) Why do you spend time with these people?

JACK (as Lem): You know... That's a-- There's good in them. There's good in them! (cross) They did well in the sword!

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (cross) There's good in... There's good in a lot of people. (sighs) You hadn't gone chasing after them, we could've-- Rosemerrow, we could've... You'd've been here all this time, you would've been safe.

JACK (as Lem): What happened to your shop? What happened to Rosemerrow?

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (exhaling) Oh, no. (speaking) You don't know.

JACK (as Lem): No.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (snaps) Swallowed. Nearly all of it. (inhales) My shop, gone. I lost people. We moved here. (exhales) Balion... I don't think you knew her, but-- Good leader. Died a few years ago. And now... (hums) Now I'm here. On the farm. It's been a long time, Lem.

JACK (as Lem): (sighs) Yeah. It has.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (scoffs)

AUSTIN: He like, lets go of your hand. And he says, like,

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): I'm so glad you're back.

JACK (as Lem): Yeah, me too.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): Are you-- going to leave again?

JACK (as Lem): (emphatically) No. No, not for a bit. I don't know what I'm going to do. But I know that whatever it is, I'm-- I can't make that promise. I (stuttering, sighs) I'm gonna go out, I'm gonna go out if I need to go out, in the same way that your scouts go out? But I'm gonna try and come back. (pause, AUSTIN sighs) And I know I said that last time. And I fell into-- a pool of water at the bottom of the world. (cross) And then a nice sword.

(KEITH cackles)

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (cross) I don't care where you-- You broke my heart, Lem. I saw you again, I didn't think I'd ever see you again, I saw you again. We spent time together and then you were gone again. And that was it. And... you know, it's been years. I've spent time with other people, I've had my heart broken by others. And now you show up again, and... (inhales) My heart beats for you, but... If you go again, if you die, I-- I don't want to have known you four times. Once in Nacre, once in Rosemerrow, once here, and then again in your funeral.

JACK (as Lem): Yeah. I--. I--

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): And once on a pirate ship. Apologies. Five times.

JACK (as Lem): That kinda counts.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): It's sort of like Nacre.

JACK (as Lem): I'm an adventurer. (AUSTIN sighs, then scoffs) I-- I-- And I don't say that to be like, "Oh good. So that's that."

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): Why are you an adventurer, you're a bookish orc, who carries around-- what is even in those pouches?

JACK (as Lem): (indignantly) Things!

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): You play the fiddle. (cross) You play it well.

JACK (as Lem): (cross) Many great men have played the fiddle.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (now fondly) But most of them weren't adventurers, they were fiddlers.

JACK (as Lem): I can name ten. (cross) I read the books.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (cross) Go ahead. Name ten.

JACK (as Lem): Well there was Rampart. Rampart Hex.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): Of course Rampart Hex. Of course everyone knows Rampart Hex.

JACK (as Lem): There was Michelangelo Johnson.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (chuckling) I don't know that one. (JACK laughs) Already you have me beat. (cross) I had one, I had Rampart Hex.

JACK (as Lem): (cross) He was a boxer. Look, I'm not gonna name-- I'm not gonna name ten!

KEITH: Well there was Rampart and Rampart Hex. Those were two different ones?

(ALI laughs)

AUSTIN: (chuckling) Two different-- okay.

JACK: Yeah, he-- (sighs) There was the spell, and then there were two of him, (cross) but then they had to share the fable.

KEITH: (cross) (laughing) There was Rampart, and then the cursed Rampart, Rampart Hex. (cackles)

AUSTIN: Right, of course. (KEITH keeps cackling, JACK laughs) Oh, god.

JACK (as Lem): Look, I can lend you some-- I'm thinking of opening a library. (cross) Okay, here's what I can tell--

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): That's, oh--! That's what you should do, you should open a library, just. Open a library. I'll work on the farm, you work on the library. We'll get dinner sometimes, we take it slow.

JACK (as Lem): Emmanuel, I'm going to open a library, but-- I'm also gonna go out behind the walls. And I'm-- (stuttering) I have to, I can't just-- I can't just run a library, Emmanuel. And-- if you only want me to run a library, I don't know what else to tell you. It has to be the library and something else. I carry a sword for a reason.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (sighs) And the library and me is not a good enough counter-offer. (pause) (cross) There is only so much time in a week.

JACK (as Lem): (cross) Okay, what about the lib--

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (inhales) I understand. I still bake bread even though I'm not a baker. I-- I understand.

JACK (as Lem): Do we have to make this decision now?

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): No.

JACK (as Lem): Good.

AUSTIN: (scoff) He like, leans in and rests his head on your head, on your forehead.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): It has been very hard, Lem.

JACK (as Lem): Yeah. It sounds-- It's-- It sounds like it. (AUSTIN sighs) Is the food here good?

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (laughs softly) No, it's terrible. But I'll get you something. Take a seat.

AUSTIN: And yeah, the food is not that good. (laughs)

JACK: Did it used to be, when-- like, is Emmanuel a good enough (cross) cook, but when

AUSTIN: (cross) Yeah, Emmanuel's a great cook!

JACK: (cont) he was cooking, it was like, "Yeah, the food is good."

AUSTIN: But like, Nacre had all sorts of spices and shit, and even Rosemerrow. Rosemerrow's a trade hub, right? It might get better here, but like. There's not a lot of food to go around, and... You know what, I think what it probably is, is it's overspiced in a sense here. There's not great quality stuff?

JACK: Right, it's like Blitz.. it's like Blitz cooking, right? Where it's like,

AUSTIN: Mm-hm. Yeah.

JACK: (cont) Weren't we talking about this in Vancouver, where it's like, "Oh you're just gonna add a bunch of a thing to a dish to make it like something. Even if that thing is like.." I dunno. Yeah.

AUSTIN: I imagine Emmanuel's like a very nuanced cooker. "Cooker," Jesus christ. (laughter)

JACK: Emmanuel, piece of kitchen hardware, is a very-- (AUSTIN and ALI laugh)

AUSTIN: God, yeah, the Emmanuel La Salle 2000. (sophisticated voice) A Nuanced Cooker. (JACK laughs) Yeah. So yeah, I think we fade there. Any other important sequences here before we wrap? (inhale) I mean, we have a lot to go through, here. Still. And I have like, one last thing to put on the table, basically? About what the next little arcs look like? But I wanna make sure there's nothing that's like, we need all of these people here together right now.

JANINE: I have that letter for Samol at some point, but.

AUSTIN: Yeah. He's not here quite yet. (chuckle)

JANINE: Okay.

KEITH: I want, I want to make a-- I want to try and do a creature.

AUSTIN: Alright. (sighs) Tell me-- Gimme that roll for "Origin of a Species". (cross) Just click it.

KEITH: (cross) Okay. Do I have to describe the thing first? Or do I just roll?

AUSTIN: No, I'll let you do the roll. That way, if you're like, "I'm sitting on a really good one," and I don't wanna fuckin' blow-- (cross) I don't wanna waste a thing?

KEITH: (cross) Oh that's great. Yeah. (AUSTIN inhales, exhales sharply) Just click it. 3. Cool. Yup.

AUSTIN: Wow, that's bad. Alright, tell me the one that didn't work at all.

JACK: Wow. Actually-- can we just really quickly, I wanna say the sentence, "You reach a dead end with this type of creature,"

AUSTIN: Uh-huh.

JACK: (cont) which is amazing. 'Cause it's just like, (sing-song) "I'm trying to make a dog! And I don't know--"

(laughter)

AUSTIN: (laughing) "I can't do it! I cannot do a dog!" So what was the creature you were (cross) trying to make and failed to make, here?

KEITH: (cross) Oh, okay, I guess, um...

AUSTIN: And why did you fail it? What happened with the fail here?

KEITH: Okay. I know.

AUSTIN: (gleeful) 'Cause now I need you to come up with some bullshit (cross) that you don't want to exist.

KEITH: (cross) That I don't-- Okay, so here's what I don't want to exist. It was a herd-- I was trying to make a herd animal? Something easily domesticable, and it was for picking fruit off of high fruit-bearing trees? So it was like... It looked sort of like, what's-- Mules are small donkeys? What's the smaller kind?

AUSTIN: Donkeys are smaller? (cross) No,

ART: (cross) Donkeys are smaller 'cause mules are half-horse.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: Right, yeah. So-- So it's sort of like a pack animal, like a donkey, but with like, an extendable neck? That could reach up and pick--

AUSTIN: Great.

(someone sighs)

KEITH: (cont) and bring it back down? And-- there was

AUSTIN: So sad we don't have these in the world now.

JACK: Is it like a concertina neck?

KEITH: A what?

JACK: (overlapping) Like a concertina? Like, is it like a folded...

KEITH: (overlapping) I don't know wh-- Oh, like an accordion, yeayeayea.

JACK: Yeah. Or is it more like a telephone cable?

KEITH: I was thinking it was more like Mr. Fantastic.

AUSTIN: What? Wait, oh. Okay.

JACK: Mm.

AUSTIN: Just stretch-- just stretchy neck.

KEITH: Yeah, and I think there was two-- two prob-- I rolled so bad there was two problems.The..

AUSTIN: You rolled a 3. Yeah.

(JACK laughs)

KEITH: Yeah. I mean I rolled, yeah, 2 and a 1. So the first problem was that I kept not being able to give it enough skin. 'Cause I didn't want the skin to bunch up, like a concertina,

AUSTIN: (resigned) yeah.

KEITH: (cont) so I couldn't figure out how to get the skin to work. And then...

AUSTIN: Right, yeah, we don't need to zoom in on (cross) how that exactly happened.

KEITH: (cross) Right, and then when I made the skin thin enough, (background wheezing) it-- would tear, and um... (cross) Yeah. (laughs)

AUSTIN: Yeah, I get it. (cross) I said we don't need to zoom in. That's not good.

ART: Zoom out, Keith, (cross) zoom out.

KEITH: (cross) It didn't work! It didn't work, it just didn't work, and there's no detail.

AUSTIN: (cross) Zoom out!

ART: The minus button, the minus button.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's miserable, you have to like-- yeah, it's bad. But, you didn't erase something from existence. (chuckling)

KEITH: No, I just erased possibility.

JACK: What was the other thing that you screwed up?

KEITH: That was it, that was the only thing that I screwed up.

JACK: I thought you said you screwed up two things.

KEITH: No no, I--

AUSTIN: Well it was not enough skin,

KEITH: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: (cont) and skin that's too thin.

KEITH: So, there wasn't enough skin,

JACK: Oh, I see.

KEITH: And when I tried to make the skin thinner so it stretched better it sorta just kinda-- (cross) yeah exactly.

JANINE: (cross) I'm good.

(chuckling)

ART: Jack, hey pal, can we have a talk about letting things go away when they're done?

JACK: And then--

AUSTIN: Jack was just like, "Uh, wait, you didn't assign the homework. Can you (JACK cackles) You forgot to tell us what homework to do?"

KEITH: Hey, listen, (cross) we'll save bad news for tomorrow.

AUSTIN: (cross) Save bad news for tomorrow. (laughter)

JACK: Oh, god.

AUSTIN: Put it on a mug, honestly.

JACK: We should just bleep that whole segment, but not in the sense in that it's a small bleep for a cut? Just a lengthy, forty-second bleep.

ART: Just a tone, just like a, (JACK laughs)

AUSTIN: (makes a high-pitched tone)

SYLVIA: Keep the reactions in, though.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh-huh.

ALI: Mm-hm. Takin' notes, got it.

KEITH: I think it should be sort of like when you-- like on TV, in a TV movie when they say "motherfucker" and they have to bleep "motherfucker"? It's not one long bleep. They bleep out "mother" and "fucker" separately so it's two short ones? (cross) So it'd be forty seconds worth of short bleeps.

AUSTIN?: (cross) Bleep bloop boop beep bleep

ART: Oh, I think you should record like, (cross) that whole time,

ALI: (cross) I'm not doing any of this.

(JACK laughs)

ART: (cont) of sound-alike words? (KEITH cackles) Like "melon-farmer," like they use for like--

KEITH: (cackles) "This is what happens when you find a stranger in the Alps." That's my favorite one of those from The Big Lebowski.

JACK: 't's a very good one.

AUSTIN: God. Oh, right. Yeah. Uh-huh. Yeah. Good. (laughs) Okay. Any other events here? Any other scenes we need?

ALI: Um... I-- Well-- It was just reminded, we didn't do the bad news scene. And I don't know (cross) if we feel like we have to.

AUSTIN: (cross) We didn't do the bad news scene. We should do the bad news scene.

ART: Alright. I was willing to just push all of that, but yeah, I'll do the bad news scene.

ALI: (giggles) There's a lot of news!

AUSTIN: There is a lot of news.

ART: There's a lot of news. (ALI sighs) I don't even...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: I don't even know the news I'm walking into.

AUSTIN: Well-- aren't you the deliverer of bad news?

ART: But then there's some counter-bad-news.

ALI: Yeah. There's all sorts of bad news.

KEITH: You know-- Dre was the deliverer (cross) of bad news.

AUSTIN: (cross) There's multiple bad news deliverers. So, we just probably get everyone in a meeting hall, right?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: In like,

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: A war room?

ART: Sure. I mean, some-- half of us know what I'm gonna say, and won't find interesting at all. And Adaire might be rude about it.

(laughter)

AUSTIN: Which is why it's important that she's there.

(more laughter)

KEITH: Oh, right, I didn't-- I wasn't even thinking of that as bad news.

JACK (laughs) "I have some bad news. God doesn't exist anymore."

(AUSTIN laughs)

KEITH: God existed?

JANINE: Right?

ALI: Yeah, we met him.

SYLVIA: (incredulous) You met his dad!

JACK: No, that-- I was-- I was not (cross) delivering the bad news there. (laughs)

KEITH: (cross) Yeah, well, I met his dad, that's different.

ART (as Hadrian): Um, okay. Thanks everyone for coming, I thought it was just gonna be me and Ephrim, but, y'know. It's good to see- good to see y'all here.

AUSTIN: Red Jack is here, Corsica is here, Uklan Tel is here.

ART: Oh, okay. Well, then I wasn't quite as rude.

(SYLVIA laughs, then coughs)

ART (as Hadrian): As we were preparing to leave Aubade, the town in the sword, in case anyone didn't know-- that,

AUSTIN: "Aubade," writes down Uklan Tel, and Red Jack is like,

AUSTIN (as Red Jack): I told you that years ago.

ART: Red Jack's drinking out of his Aubade coffee mug (laughter) that he got in the gift shop on his way out.

AUSTIN (in Red Jack's voice): This is what Samoths gave me when I left.

ART: Always warm, (cross) the coffee in *this* mug.

AUSTIN (in Red Jack's voice): (cross) A t-shirt that says "I'm with Samoths."

ART: Ha!

ALI (as Hella): You should throw that out.

(AUSTIN makes a displeased noise)

DRE: Oof.

ART (as Hadrian): And the reason you should throw that out, (someone snorts) is... (KEITH cackles) Is, as we were leaving, Samoths and, um...

ART: what was the, what's the name of the star again?

DRE: Chapter?

AUSTIN: Chapter.

ART: Chapter!

ART (as Hadrian): (haltingly) were planning on sealing up Aubade, ending Samoth's influence on the world, and leaving us (cross) out here.

KEITH (as Fero): I thought Ephrim killed Samoth's.

ART (as Hadrian): (overlapping) I'm sorry, *what?*

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Do you say that, Fero? (excited gasp/laugh)

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Fero--!

KEITH: (grinning) Yeah.

(ALI wheezes)

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Thank you, Fero.

KEITH (as Fero): What? Was that-- (cross) What did I do?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (cross) That was-- I was gonna get to that one.

KEITH (as Fero) Oh. Sorry.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Anyway, Hadrian, you were saying?

ART (as Hadrian): That was it, I was, (cross) that was, uh

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (cross) Oh okay.

ART (as Hadrian): (cont) That was it. I know I like-- My intonation was strange at the end, like I was gonna say something, but I-- I'm just nervous, this is a big piece of information for everyone.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): It's okay, public speaking makes everybody nervous. It happens. (chuckles) Yeah-- I'll be honest, I don't-- I don't know how much of an effect that's really had on us. Uh-- because we've kind of been living without him for a while.

ALI (as Hella): That's what he said. He said that to my face, and he sucks, so we're better off.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Now-- I've got a question.

ALI (as Hella): Mm-hm?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Just on the list of things he mentioned. Where was his son, in all of-- mentions of that, in all of this?

ART (as Hadrian): Oh, I-- He could only access things near the sword. He didn't know.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Cool.

ART (as Hadrian): We're all just finding this out right now. And I'm the only one bothering to react to this news.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yeah, okay.

KEITH (as Fero): (indifferent) Sorry, bothering to what?

ART (as Hadrian?): Hella's like, "Fuck him anyway, I hope his son dies again."

(laughter)

AUSTIN: Jesus! (laughter) I mean, his son had died a long time ago, (cross) makes sense.

ALI (as Hella): (cross) I didn't know he had a kid.

ART (as Hadrian): Yes you did!

AUSTIN: You did know he had a kid. (laughter) (cross) You know the Marielda story.

ART (as Hadrian): Samol told us!

ALI (as Hella): Oooh, right. It's been a long time, it's been four years.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yeah. Four.

ART: (laughing) "I forgot when I found out that God was dead and replaced by his son." It's like, who remembers the score of last week's baseball game?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Good news about the new god, you don't need to adjust to it. (sighs) No, yeah, there was a conflict between... who I thought was Samoths and myself. And, uh...

ART (as Hadrian): Oh yeah? What was that about?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): It was... 'bout a lot of bad stuff, basically. A lot-- Mostly, it seems like he was behind a lot of the stuff with the Heat and the Dark--

SYLVIA: This is all Ephrim saying this, I don't actually believe this out of character, but this is how you justify killing a god to yourself.

AUSTIN: I mean-- he was-- You're not wrong.

SYLVIA: Like I'm not wrong, (cross) but also, it's like

AUSTIN: (cross) Like he's not behind it, but he was--

SYLVIA: A simplification.

AUSTIN: Yes. I wanna be clear that like, Corsica Neue, Uklan Tel, Sunder Havelton is there. (ALI wheezes) Like, their faces are just like, "What is going on?!" Because those are the characters in this world who give a fuck about this stuff in a big way? And are just like, "Wh-- H-- How did we not know about all of this?" (laughing)

ART: They didn't even know about the-- the other part? They didn't know about Ephrim's part?

AUSTIN: Ephrim, have you been like, talking about this?

SYLVIA: No! I think like, Throndir and Fero are like the only ones who knew (chuckling)

ART: Oh, Fero's great at keeping secrets.

SYLVIA: (passive-aggressively) Yeah. Apparently. (AUSTIN chuckles) No, yeah. I...

KEITH: Was I not supposed to say right now?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I had the sword that Samoths intended to be used on him as opposed to the sword that Hel-- is that the same one? Hella?

ALI (as Hella): (overlapping) This is my sword, yes.

ART (as Hadrian): (overlapping) It's super complicated.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Okay.

ART (as Hadrian): (snorts) It's not that complicated.

(ALI snorts)

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (considering) It's not that complicated. Uh...

ART (as Hadrian): It's a little complicated!

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): And... in the moment, fulfilling that, I guess prophecy, was what I decided to do. And then he-- turned my hand into this.

SYLVIA: And then I show off my cool (cross) missing hand again.

AUSTIN: (sighs) Oh my god. Yeah, can you describe that for people who don't know about your hand?

SYLVIA: Yeah. So the way I've been picturing it is that it's... like-- So the way we described it when it first disappeared was that it was like that Vantablack, like it's just gone?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: I've been picturing-- (cross) it

KEITH: (cross) Cannot say that legally.

SYLVIA: that-- B-- banta-black.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) You're supposed to rhyme it again

KEITH: (overlapping, indistinct 46:04)

ART: Melonfarmer.

AUSTIN: Mel-- yeah. (laughs) Uh-huh.

(KEITH cackles)

SYLVIA: But I've been picturing it now as having a sort of, iridescent, like dark purple to it? (cross) 'Cause we definitely--

AUSTIN: (cross) So the thing is-- that's what it used to be. It used to be the dark purple.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It has lost the purple. Like-- (cross) you do--

SYLVIA: (cross) Can I f-- yeah.

AUSTIN: (cont) It doesn't look like fire at all anymore.

SYLVIA: (gasps) Man. Okay. So, I just got like-- My hand got norted is what you're saying.

(ALI laughs)

AUSTIN: Yeah, your hand got norted.

SYLVIA: Okay. Um... Then yeah, I do-- like it's... Like, originally it was just up to forearm, and I think it's definitely spread, and I, it's got like-- It looks like a shadow, kind of,

AUSTIN: Mm-hm.

SYLVIA: (cont) going up his arm, basically. And it-- (inhales) Always kinda looks like it might be moving a little? It's very-- uncomfortable to look at. There's a reason why he wears so many capes.

ALI: Uh...

SYLVIA: Also they look good.

ALI (as Hella): (cautiously) Are you good?

ART (as Hadrian): Tried gloves?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (indignantly) I have gloves. (cross) I'm fine.

AUSTIN: (cross) It sounds like there's not enough forearm at this point for a glove.

ART: Oh, it's substantial.

KEITH: You could get elbow gloves.

SYLVIA: It is substantial. (inhales, then laughs) Sorry, this is j-- This is kind of the-- where Ephrim's like, "Oh right, you guys have been gone for 8 years, (ALI wheezes) this has become a very casual thing for me."

AUSTIN: Right.

SYLVIA: Um... Yeah.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): It's just-- you get used to it. It doesn't really affect what I have to do around here that much.

ALI (as Hella): Sh-- Should we be like...

AUSTIN: Uklan Tel like, yeah, leans forward.

AUSTIN (as Uklan Tel): Surely we can-- do something about this.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (sighs) Y'know, I've thought that a lot. And... I've tried, what-- I've tried-- (sighs) I've tried looking for solutions on my own over the past few years, and I... Sure, there might be, but I think it's probably tied to the thing eating our world. And if that's the case, I'd rather stop that before tending to this, you know?

AUSTIN (as Uklan Tel): Of course, but... You only need ask, I'll look into it, I'll-- There's a number of experiments I can begin at once.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Mm. Just make sure you-- Nothing destructive, okay, with the experiments?

AUSTIN (as Uklan Tel): Of course.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Please? We're still--

AUSTIN (as Uklan Tel): Of course!

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (cont) in a lot of construction going on here still.

ALI (as Hella): You don't want me to cut it off and see if it gets into the sword?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): You know, (background snickering) I still do kind of have some feeling there? (cross) So maybe--

ALI (as Hella): (cross) Roger that.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Maybe we'll wait.

ALI (as Hella): (giggling) Okay.

AUSTIN: It's your left... arm?

SYLVIA: Right arm.

AUSTIN: Right arm.

SYLVIA: Yeah, that was the whole thing, it was like Ephrim-- We mentioned this, I think in the Long Winter game,

AUSTIN: Mm.

SYLVIA: (cont) That Ephrim had to sort of like, learn how to use his left hand,

AUSTIN: Right, right

SYLVIA: (cont) as his primary hand now.

AUSTIN: Cool.

SYLVIA: Yep. (sighs and blows into mic)

ART: Well that was...

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Any other news?

AUSTIN: asks Corsica.

SYLVIA: Ah...

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Anyone feel like sharing?

ART (as Hadrian): Now that was a lot of what happened in the sword...

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Sounds fun.

ART (as Hadrian): I'm doing it wrong, then.

ALI (as Hella): Um. (clears throat) I mean. (sighs)

KEITH (as Fero): Was there more news?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (simultaneously) I can tell you--

ART (as Hadrian): (simultaneously) You tell me.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I can tell you who's died since you've been gone. If you really wanna do that.

ALI (as Hella): (inhales) Would love to know. Honestly. Just to kinda-- know where we're at.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Um. Morbash, I guess would be the big one. (cross) Uh,

JACK (as Lem): (cross) How did he die?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): He.. was sick. And, he just kept working, when we were-- Thrandir and I were away. And-- he just couldn't-- couldn't keep up.

ART (as Hadrian): Oh, that's brutal.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): It-- yeah, it... I can show you guys where his grave is, if any of you

JACK (as Lem): Yeah.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): want to pay respects. I know Lem... You knew him. Bailon Whythe, I don't know if you knew them*, they've* also passed away. [Bailon uses she/her] The halflings are still here, though. They were sort of... following them*. Uh... Jerod Shiraz.

SYLVIA: Did they-- Austin, did they die or did they leave? I can't remember--

AUSTIN: She died, (cross) she died.

SYLVIA: (cross) She died, yeah.

AUSTIN: She died, she was killed by...

KEITH: (cross) She got died with plants, right.

AUSTIN: (cross) the plants broke through, and-- were revealed to be like, growing through all the Ordennan shit? All the Ordennan steel, like every-- just like, was-- It had been causing lots of additional sickness?

SYLVIA: Oh, right. That probably--

AUSTIN: And then she-- yeah. Uh-huh, no--

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (cross) Should probably mention the Ordennan sickness as well, that Ordennan steel's been causing. Some sort of disease that's been spreading. We do have ways to treat it, uh... There's a peat moss that sort of helps with it, but uh-- It's been hard to manage.

ART (as Hadrian): You say plants are evil now?

(AUSTIN chuckles lightly)

ALI (as Hella): Yea--

KEITH (as Fero): There's a kind of plant that's evil. You'll literally know it when you see it.

ALI (as Hella): So Throndir-- last night, when I was like, "Hey, how are plants-- been bad?" You weren't like, "Hey, the leader of your people died from a plant?" You didn't bring that up?

DRE (as Throndir): (sighs) There was--. There was a lot of stuff to get you caught up on.

ALI (as Hella): (inhales deeply) Fuck.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): There was a serious loss.

AUSTIN: says Corsica.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): Jerod wasn't a great military commander, but she had the hearts of her people, and she was of great knowledge when it came to history and even magic. She died saving her people and us. It is not a loss I will forget.

ALI (as Hella): Um, the steel. Y'all-- you aren't using that anymore?

AUSTIN: (sighs) I think Red Jack probably fields it, and is like,

AUSTIN (as Red Jack): No... The-- The Ordennans, they suffered from their proximity to that metal. I don't mean that in a metaphorical sense. Rashes, colds, infections. Deep disease. We believe it's because of the steel's... closeness to the Heat and the Dark itself.

ALI (as Hella): (cross) Yeah, I get that.

AUSTIN (as Red Jack): (cross) Those flames cannot breach the shield, but... when they are condensed, or when it is condensed, into a piece of armor that's already in here? It doesn't need to.

ALI (as Hella): Yeah, I would've told you to throw it all out. But--

AUSTIN (as Red Jack): We have.

ALI (as Hella): You're ahead of me. That's great. Um. What are the, what are the plans? What are you guys like... Where do we go from here?

AUSTIN: So I think we should abstract there,

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: like I think this is like... So. I mean, one, I think that's a good moment for the arrival of the Golden Lance. Victoria Solomon and Gloria Lake show up. They knock on the door, they're shown in. Highwater shows them in. Highwater is a little cobbin assassin? (chuckles lightly) And she, uh, she ushers

them in, and nods to Ephrim, and like, sneaks back away. And Victoria Solomon comes over and is like, uh...

AUSTIN (as Victoria Solomon): You know. Funny you should ask that. (sighing) I don't know... necessarily how best to feed people, I don't know how best to make sure there's enough medicine to go around, but... no one knows the state of Hieron better than we do. We spent the last decade looking around, exploring the furthest reaches we could get to. Learning from rumors and deciding which rumors were true and-- or which ones had a grain of truth and which ones were outright fabrications. The way I see it, while many of your efforts should be spent here, making sure that this place--whatever you call it-- is stable and secure, some of you have things to attend to. There are people out there who... (sighs) believe it or not, have made some small inroads, against... the coming summer.

AUSTIN: And-- she kind of like, goes to this big map that's at the center of the table and puts down some like... giant metal chess pieces, basically? With the-- with like-- They're just like a golden-- Think they're knights, they're like golden knights holding the big lances. Suits of armor holding the big lances. And puts one on the Isles of Flight to the north, the Isles Alcyon, A-L-C-Y-O-N, to the far east, and (clears throat) right to the east, the Shredded Steppe. And she says,

AUSTIN (as Victoria): We have discovered a number of potential opportunities, people to learn from. People who have found some way of surviving even in these conditions. Far to the east, at a place that should be the most devastated by ages of the Heat and the Dark tearing through Hieron, there is Alcyon. A collection of islands which reportedly is as stable and secure as anything here. Maybe more so. They do not suffer under the consequences of the Heat and the Dark. They do not... There are no, there is none of the star stuff nearby. There are only people living their lives. And if reports are true... some of those people are made of stone.

Further to the west, the Shredded Steppe. This is the area which, for a thousand years or more has been cut to ribbons by the Heat and the Dark and then stitched back together by the Grand Tour over and over and over again. Ephrim, I know you know this place well. I know that you have spent time there. Those people, with the Grand Tour gone, were assumed lost, but... It was recently when we needed to move through the steppe instead of up around its edges that we saw something surprising. Where previously land had kind of blown around in the Nothingness, now it had been cemented shut. Its gaps filled with... a tether of star stuff, like a glue or a, a fastener. Stabilizing the entire region-- It's still a chaotic mess of strange hills and impossible geometry, but... it is normalized. And we have heard rumor of the construction of some sort of cathedral or building, it's not clear, but-- there are people out there. Your people, Ephrim. I suspect.

And the Isles of Flight, well, um.

AUSTIN: And then Gloria Lake, Dr. Gloria Lake pipes up, and is like,

AUSTIN (as Gloria Lake) The birds went to the moon? They're-- I think they're on the moon. They figured out how to get to the moons. Um. And that's-- That could be something. I guess.

KEITH: Mm, that-- murmur. Murmurs, everyone is-- (cross) "Mm, that's something!

(ALL giggles)

AUSTIN: (cross) The moon! the moon

JACK: (cross) Birds went to the moons! Oh!

AUSTIN: (mumbling indistinctly)

(laughter)

AUSTIN (as Gloria): (sighs) The bird people...

KEITH (as Fero): Was it the wings? Is that what helped them (cross) get there?

AUSTIN (as Gloria): That's what I thought, but I.. (laughs) I think that might be involved to some degree? I suspect having an entire culture built around flying places probably gets you-- gets your head out of the sand and into the clouds-- I don't know where I'm going with this one.

KEITH (as Fero): Probably a whole different god up there. That's maybe not dying.

AUSTIN (as Victoria): I think it's more complicated than that. I can give you some background information but... They have-- They have specific beliefs about who built those moons. They believe Severia and Galenica were involved. And... Perhaps that's what's driven them to reach there. But if they could flee this land, I-- We aren't sure. I wanna be clear.

There is other news worth considering as well. We believe that Ordenna has retreated largely to its continental base in Nacre, but its military has not. While the civilians continue to operate and re-arm and repair and perform the necessary duties of keeping supplies coming in from their island and from bases throughout the west, the bulk of their army is on the move. As you know, there was a conflict to the northwest of here, not a few years ago. In that time, Fela Malle, the leader of the Ordennan Impetus Military has run it as a sort of roving band of brigands, a gigantic army that will swoop in and take what it will. There is some movement to the northwest, Baron's Gate Treeton. There is a chance they could head this way. Something to be mindful of. To the southwest, the dwarven encampment of Kanton has... It seems that the Creed of Samoths has grown in strength there in recent years. Which is confusing, given what we know.

And to the south. There is the City of First Light. As you know, some merchants have been coming through here since then. Or, in the last... in the last few months, from the City of First Light. And... We have reason to believe that the leader of that city, the King Samot, has interest

in visiting. If that's something you'd be interested in, we can send word. And he will arrive in a matter of weeks. It could prove to be a useful relationship to build and maintain. We understand that the city is safe and filled with people living happy lives, also out of sight. We've never been able to secure passage there. So. I would say take the meeting.

That's the bulk of what's happening outside these walls. Any questions?

DRE: Um... Do the Golden Lance know about Arrell?

AUSTIN: Yes. Um...

AUSTIN (as Victoria): Arrell has done much of what we have here. He's turned Velas into his own private community. There is a.. There are a number of people he's recruited to help investigate the Heat and the Dark, potentially save, potentially fight it back. And... I guess most troubling of all is there are people at this point in that city lining up to be... To be brought into his bubbles. Many of them think it's preferable to be living here. And he offers that transportation at a cost.

ALI (as Hella): "At a cost"?

AUSTIN (as Victoria): Money, resources, the fealty of your loved ones, whatever he needs to further investigate the Heat and the Dark. It's worth noting, he was a big part of what drove Ordenna away from Velas, and the time after. He's very powerful. And that's... not something I say lightly. We can decide what to do tomorrow, but I just wanted to make sure all of our options were on the table.

ALI (as Hella): Um. One last question, are y'all... like, in touch with any of the stars?

AUSTIN: (sighs) Gloria says, um...

AUSTIN (as Gloria): We attempted communications a few times. We never made any progress. They aren't what I would call friendly. At least not to us.

ALI (as Hella): Yeah. That adds up.

AUSTIN: Are there any other questions here? Red Jack, I think is like,

AUSTIN (as Red Jack): Where do we start?

JACK (as Lem): (sighs) I don't even know what resources we can-- we can deploy.

AUSTIN (as Corsica): I don't think you need big resources.

AUSTIN: says uh, I guess Corsica is probably the one who has this thought, which is like,

AUSTIN (as Corsica): I'm not moving the army across the Shredded Steppe to some islands. A few of you should go and see if something is valuable there. A small scouting party. People who can survive the wild but not people who... Not a huge group. It's too risky. I'm not gonna tell you where to go, but. That's on you. And Ephrim, if you'd have him,

AUSTIN: says Corsica,

AUSTIN (as Corsica): I'd be fine to meet this Samot. I've heard so many things.

ART (as Hadrian): I need to see Samot. Send word to Samot.

AUSTIN: Corsica raises her eyebrows from behind her wrapped face.

(Music starts - "Something")

And then looks back at Ephrim for the go ahead.

SYLVIA: Ephrim's also raising his eyebrows.

(ALI giggles)

AUSTIN: Yeah?

SYLVIA: But then also is like,

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yeah, we should meet with Samot. Give him word.

AUSTIN: Gloria like, immediately removes a little notepad and starts writing out what the answer should be.