

Sangfielle 20: What Happened at Bell Metal Station Pt. 4

Transcriber: robotchangeling

Austin: This trio is here in the war room. A bottle is opened. They've survived another night against the *Red Zephyr* with the moon high in its transformed form.

Keith (as Lyke): I do wanna mention that my friends got on the train.

Austin (as Calen): Oh, that's no good.

Austin: Says Calen.

Keith (as Lyke): Mm-hmm.

Austin (as Calen): They're on board?

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah.

Austin (as Calen): The *Zephyr*.

Keith (as Lyke): Right.

Austin (as Calen): Well, that is a problem, isn't it?

[Music begins: [*Sangfielle*](#) by Jack de Quidt]

Austin (as Calen): I believe I've developed a sort of...you have to understand, it's experimental, but a sort of fetter for the train, a sort of magical manacle to lock it in place, to tie it to our will instead of its.

Austin (as Erm): [sighs] I'm...going out at night is just a little scary.

Austin: Calen, I think, says—

Keith (as Lyke): You're covered in armor.

Austin: He says:

Austin (as Erm): So was Fezh.

Austin: And Omerra again looks down, and she says:

Austin (as Omerra): [softly] So was Fezh.

Austin (as Jolyon): [sighs] How have you been, Leo?

Art (as Duvall): Oh, it's been a rough few years, I'll tell you the truth. How 'bout you?

Austin (as Jolyon): You know, little of this, little of that. Probably rough in different ways.

Jack: Oh god. I think Pickman puts her hand on Duvall's shoulder and says:

Jack (as Pickman): Your friend is dead. The *Zephyr* speaks through their* voice.

Austin (as Jolyon): Hey, now!

Art (as Duvall): No.

Austin (as Jolyon): You're jumping to conclusions, friend.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah!

Jack (as Pickman): I've made my conclusion quite happily, *Zephyr*. Leave that body.

Austin (as Jolyon): Ah, wait, before you go. Something to give you. If you ever want to get on board again, you just shoot me the old signal, huh? And I'll see what I can do to get you on board.

Art (as Duvall): Alright, it was so good to see you. I'm so surprised.

Austin (as Jolyon): Oh, don't be surprised. You know how things have a way of working towards conclusions, hmm?

Austin: The letter praises Calen's research about the trains. It says that it could help with, quote, "the labor problem," and it ends with what feels like a commonly used valediction or farewell. It says, "And remember, Calen: courage under the six, peace above the seventh."

Jack: This seems to be a letter that our dead spy has acquired from somewhere, right? This is like a...

Austin: Oh yeah, big time.

Jack: This is not a letter that she was like, "I've got a letter from my employers, and I'm off to go bring it to Calen," or whatever.

Austin: Absolutely not. Oh, this is proof that that motherfucker is into some shit—

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: —with whatever this group, courage under the sixth peace above the seventh.

Keith: Tombo knew right away.

Austin: Right away!

Keith: Right away Tombo knew.

Austin: Saw right through that motherfucker.

[music ends]

Austin: 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. Joining me today, Keith Carberry.

Keith: Hi, my name is Keith J. Carberry. You can find me on twitter at [@keithjcarberry](https://twitter.com/keithjcarberry) and find the let's plays that I do at youtube.com/runbutton.

Austin: Art Martinez-Tebbel?

Art: Hey, you can find me on Twitter [@atebbel](https://twitter.com/atebbel), and check me out as part of the new Microsoft Edge street team coming to... [others laugh]

Austin: Your street.

Keith: Oh, do you have stickers?

Art: A young person's event near you.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. And Jack de Quidt.

Jack: Hi, you can find me on Twitter at [@notquitereal](https://twitter.com/notquitereal) and you buy any of the music featured on the show, at notquitereal.bandcamp.com.

Austin: Today we are continuing our game of Heart: The City Beneath by Grant Howitt and Christopher Taylor. Uh, whew, quick catch up. I have no idea if this is gonna go in the podcast or not, so I'm gonna be very quick with it.

Jack: Good to have.

Austin: Y'all are hunting down an egg sac. You have...

Keith: And we all remember that.

Austin: And we all remember that, of course. That was all...we all knew that that was the focal point of this adventure. In effort to do that, you believe a train had taken it, the *Grand Cormorant Limited* owned and operated by Chantilly Scathe who you met in the last downtime, and that it was heading south. In order to find out where it went after it headed south, you went to the biggest station to the south, or the biggest pass through to the south, Bell Metal Station. You went there along with a large cleaver named Katonya, along with a strangely-here Toll Collector team, because they also showed up in the other half of the game in a different place, and that seems unlikely or strange. And you got there to find a rampaging weretrain. [chuckles] A strange train that became even stranger as it transformed into a large, menacing werewolf-like figure which then turned back into a train. I guess I should say, Lyke, you tried to set it on fire along with Katonya's cannon shots. What else? Then it charged at the group of you, and Duvall and Pickman, you got on board it. You suffered some strange pressure as you did so, as a force seemed to try to write onto your skin. And inside the train after battling past that pressure, you found yourself in a strange ever-changing space, seemingly shifting in locale and time. You tried to attack it with bees. You tried to find its core in its engine. Instead, you were met with strange viscera. And then, as if haunted from the past, an old friend of yours, Duvall, arrived. From school, a buddy who you used to get up to no good with, Jolyon? Is that right?

Keith: Jolyon.

Austin: Jolyon. And you found your way off that train eventually as it fled westward across the flats and into a mountain tunnel system, and seemingly on a particular request on the point at which you pulled the brake handle, it came to a slow stop and let you off, giving you a flashlight as you did leave. I forget, Duvall, did you write that down? Did you write that d6 good flashlight down?

Art: I don't know where I'm supposed to put "good."

Austin: You got it. Just write "good" at the front, like this. Good *Red Zephyr* torch. Boom.

Art: [??? 0:6:47]

Austin: And you made your way back east. I guess on the way out, it's worth saying, Pickman elbowed a sort of vacuum tube, a pneumatic tube, a hole into it and fucked up her armor in the process. And meanwhile back east, Lyke, you met the remaining trio of the Bell Metal Band, three figures led by the incredible cigar-chomping high-energy little guy, Erm, who is a carpana like Marn is.

Jack: Is that short for something?

Austin: Erm? No. Erm.

Jack: Full name.

Austin: Probably has a last name.

Keith: Herm.

Austin: I don't know what their last name is. Erm.

Keith: Erm Herm.

Austin: Mmm, I think it's probably longer, because we know Marn Ancura, and I think I'm trying to keep Ali's rhythm on that, right?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: So Erm and then *da-da-da* or *da-DA-da-da* or something like that. But eh, if it comes up, it comes up. Omerra Celendi. Omerra, a human mage from the Republica, high fashion, high energy also but in a different way, playful. And Calen Fel Dynestia, a devil from Sapodilla, or who lived in Sapodilla, who has, you discovered, ties to the Glim Macula, a sort of witch hunting crew that runs the city at this point, and also a tie to another group that you're not sure of. You learned that from exploring some overturned train cars nearby, overturned by the *Red Zephyr*, the big weretrain. And core to that information or tied to that information, there was an ongoing debate about what to do about the *Red Zephyr*, which has been harassing this station now for it seems like a month or so, maybe longer, attacking the station every night, or every night the moon is out at least. There are a couple of different camps that have spoken at this point. The first is you should try to kill the train, maybe using some of the stuff that you've managed to pull out of the overturned train cars, like those explosives you found, Lyke, or some other technique or at least scare it away, drive it away somehow. Or the mysterious and clearly-up-to-some-shit Calen has a technique by which he believes he can put magical fetters on the train and take control of it, which would be an unheard-of success for the Shape Knights. Up until now, the only other example of a Shape train you've ever seen be under control was Chantilly Scathe's, and I think the only person there who even saw that was Pickman, and that was not a particularly pleasant exchange, and Chantilly Scathe, definitely not a Shape Knight.

[Timestamp: 0:10:00]

Keith: But we also don't know the method by which the *Grand Cormorant Limited* was fettered.

Austin: Correct, was being controlled, yeah. Or if it was being controlled, who could say?

Keith: Right.

Austin: She made it seem—

Keith: It seemed like it, but who knows?

Austin: She made it seem...yeah.

Jack: [ominously] Mmm.

Austin: That was ambiguous in a way that this is not ambiguous is what I will say.

Keith: Right.

Austin: This is there are fetters on the train, right? If you came away from the Chantilly Scathe thing believing you knew for a fact what it was, I would say relisten to that segment and try to listen to...try to read for how clear...what is the mechanism by which you think something is happening there? I know what's happening there. I don't think it's particularly obvious. Maybe I'm wrong. Whereas here, what's being said is—and when it was demonstrated to you is—these are magical shackles that I'm putting on a train so I can control it, you know? There is debate among people what to do here. I think there's a mix of people who want to kill it and people who want to capture it. Calen wants to capture it, obviously, and Omerra leads toward capturing it for the science and the research, all of the amazing advances that could be made by being able to pick over such a thing. Erm is old-fashioned and thinks killing it would be great. Killing the second...you know, capturing a Shape train would be great, but killing the second one ever, being the second group to kill one ever isn't something to complain about either.

Keith: Right, it's not like Shape Knights are so good at killing them already.

Austin: Correct, exactly, exactly. But is moved by the arguments of his soldiers, I guess, or his knights. And Katonya doesn't have a vote but does lean towards killing it because it's the thing she does. She's a cleaver who kills things, so you know. Anything I'm leaving out? I think that's it. I guess you tried to approach Erm to be like "Hey, this Calen guy's up to no good," but realized you didn't really have hard evidence to prove that. The evidence you had ties him to an ongoing investigation by a Kay'van secret agent, one of these agents that does not seem to like what was going on here and unfortunately was killed on the way here along with a bunch of other people, so that's I think where we were. I guess where we actually were was—

Keith: By the weretrain, right?

Austin: What's that? Yeah, killed by the weretrain.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Along with everybody else that was in those cars, yes. So I think Duvall and Pickman, without anything from you, I think you get back safely early in the morning. You know, the suns are coming up by the time you get back on your little handcart. At this point, have you slept, Lyke? Did you stay up all night? What was your situation?

Keith: Mmm, I might have stayed out at the wagon, instead of in the...

Austin: Well, that's downstairs at this point. They brought it all in, so.

Keith: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Alright. Then yeah, let's just come in on Duvall and Lyke, you get back. You know, I think at this point, Omerra's probably—

Keith: Duvall and Pickman.

Austin: Sorry, yes. Duvall and Pickman, you get back. At this point, Omerra is standing watch, standing guard. Or actually maybe the Toll Collectors are, they paid them to stand guard so that for once, every member of the Bell Metal Band could get some sleep at the same time which never happens. So yeah, they're all there. The suns are rising. How are y'all feeling as you come back to the station?

[pause]

Art: Probably felt better.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah, you two had a rough one.

Jack: I think it's relief to have gotten back, right? But there is definitely this sense, at least from Pickman of like, what did we accomplish, you know?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: Surviving a boarding like that with the amount that we have survived it—you know, with the injuries that we have—is pretty good luck.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: But I think also Pickman is being animated by some sort of a...this went weird, even by Pickman's standards.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: They were not expecting this train to just leave.

Austin: [laughs softly] If you think it went weird, you should look at my prep. [others laugh]

Jack: I think that as the...on the handcart on the way back, you know, Pickman is sort of working themself into this spirit, right? Of like, what was that? You know, what was any of that that just happened?

Austin: Does Duvall attempt an answer here?

Art (as Duvall): [sighs] I just...I really don't know.

Jack (as Pickman): Who's Jolyon, then?

Art (as Duvall): A friend from school. They died.

Jack (as Pickman): Hmm.

Art (as Duvall): That was very...strange. But in the moment, it didn't feel strange at all. They* died, but in the moment that didn't feel relevant. They were there.

Jack (as Pickman): Mmm. You have unfinished business?

Art (as Duvall): I don't think so.

Jack (as Pickman): Hmm.

Art (as Duvall): How do you have unfinished business with someone who's gone?

Jack (as Pickman): All kinds of ways.

Art (as Duvall): Mmm.

Jack (as Pickman): You know, you start doing something. It's like a memory of a happier time, I don't know.

Art (as Duvall): That's not unfinished. A memory isn't business.

Jack (as Pickman): A memory can be business.

Jack: Sullenly looking away as the little handcar, you know, like the beginning of S.T.A.L.K.E.R., rumbling along the track.

Austin: Mm-hmm. [Art chuckles]

Jack (as Pickman): Your friend's dead. That's not them*.

Art (as Duvall): But why...if you're the train, why bother?

Jack: A big shrug.

Jack (as Pickman): [unconcerned noise]

Art (as Duvall): What if they were right? What if it's a job?

Jack (as Pickman): Train's can't hire ghosts. That's just the train. I've seen ghosts, and what you were talking to was *Red Zephyr*. Nothing more complicated than that.

Art: I've seen ghosts. I've seen ghosts, and I've seen train hiring procedures. [Austin laughs]

Jack: They don't... [laughs] I mean, I think that's the thing, right?

Jack (as Pickman): They don't work with people. Anything on the train is the train.

Art (as Duvall): But is a ghost a people?

Jack: Shrug. [Austin chuckles]

Jack (as Pickman): Do you think a ghost is a person?

Art (as Duvall): I don't know. And maybe we're all just our environment. Maybe on the train, you and I are the train too.

Jack (as Pickman): Maybe, yeah. Can't say I haven't thought about it that way. You get on a train and, you know, your focus narrows to a point. Hell, if it brought you comfort speaking to that guy, I don't blame you. Take from it what you can, but that was *Zephyr* you were talking to.

Art (as Duvall): We'll see.

Jack (as Pickman): "We'll see"?

Art (as Duvall): Sort of feels unfinished, doesn't it?

Jack: Big shrug.

Jack (as Pickman): You know if we board that thing again, we'll be lucky to get off. The train wants you back. It clearly had something to do with you. Just picking the right shape. You hold onto that torch, might be useful. I took a swing at it on the way out, but you know. Maybe we'll meet them again.

Art (as Duvall): What if they weren't on the train? Next time.

Jack (as Pickman): Doesn't bother me. That's the train.

Art (as Duvall): It's the train not on the train?

Jack (as Pickman): Yep. Shape can—

Art (as Duvall): [doubtful] Mmm.

Jack (as Pickman): This thing reaches all through the country, Duvall.

Art (as Duvall): I don't...it feels like the train has to be the train, and off the train's off the...we're not on the train now.

Jack: Pickman just studiously looks down at the wheels of the handcart turning on the tracks.

Austin: Uh huh. [laughs]

Art (as Duvall): That's not a train. No one would call this a train. If I killed this and went and told someone I killed a train and they found out, they'd think I was a liar.

Jack: Just takes her gun off her shoulder and opens the breach, and you know there's nothing inside, nods, closes it, puts it back on her shoulder again.

Austin: [amused sound] Alright. And you ride east, and you arrive. Let's say you arrive around breakfast time. You know, percolated coffee. [chuckles] Eggs, which you may recall you were offered on the dining car.

Jack: [chuckles] Just offered an egg.

Austin: Yeah, you can hear them frying in a pan on the little...large train car, actually. Not a car, but whatever we were calling that roving platform that the Toll Collectors are using now as a sort of transport thing. They're just cooking breakfast down there. Lyke is there. Lyke, what do you have for breakfast? What's a Lye Lychen breakfast like?

[Timestamp: 0:20:00]

Keith: Griddled toast.

Austin: Mmm.

Keith: Fried egg.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: And you got two of them and you use the second one as the plate for the first one, so when you take the yolk bite, it drizzles on the top of the second one, of the second bread egg. So you take a bite of one bread egg, and then the yolk starts spilling onto the top of the second bread egg.

Jack: Perfect bite.

Keith: [laughs] And so then your second bread egg is extra yolky.

Jack: I think Pickman just with some sort of bitterness, knowing that she's making a jab, digs Duvall with her elbow and points at it and says:

Jack (as Pickman): Eggs, Duvall.

Keith (as Lyke): Oh, do you want a bread egg? [Art laughs]

Jack (as Pickman): I don't think he does.

Keith (as Lyke): I was waiting for the train to circle back around. I'm surprised that you're both here.

Art (as Duvall): [uncertain] An old school friend was employed by the train? And then they let us go.

Keith (as Lyke): That's weird.

Jack (as Pickman): He doesn't know what he's talking about. *Zephyr* manifested some kind of apparition. We spoke with it. We left. Something's fucked.

Keith (as Lyke): So then the train let you go.

Jack (as Pickman): Yep. Pulled the brakes, got off in a tunnel. I have no idea why it fled with us on board. What the hell is going on here? You speak to these people?

Keith (as Lyke): [deep breath] Yep. Slightly complicated situation is that there's three Shape Knights, and one of them seems to be in cahoots with some sort of Sapodilla group to not kill the train and instead to leash it and use it for some kind of purpose. Here's a letter.

Jack (as Pickman): This shit again?

Keith (as Lyke): It seems like. I mean, I don't know, but here's what I...I'll show you the letters that I have.

Austin: And to go over those briefly. Do you remember what those are? Everyone remember clearly?

Keith: So, the first letter...

Austin: Oh, I guess—

Keith: The first letter I am kind of shakier on.

Austin: Yeah, Pickman will notice immediately that it's a letter from Polyte to this person and is basically...it's the one saying "Thanks for coming to extract me. I can't wait to get out of here," but it's written in a code, but you're able to clarify what the code is and all of that.

Jack: Huh. We know he's basically a spy, right?

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Like, we kind of got that from his story.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: He was cagy about what he was doing, but...

Austin: He even gave you his real name is Ekule and not Janek.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: So you even know that, and yes, he is a spy who is passing through Sangfielle, effectively. Currently in the equivalent of a safe house, you know?

Jack: Huh.

Austin: Or an assumed identity, waiting to be...I guess, to give you a more clear picture, to put two and two together a bit, was sent to the Pale Magistratum to do some kills, to do some wet work.

Jack: Yeah. [chuckles]

Austin: Did that wet work, escaped back into Sangfielle where he assumed this identity as Janek and has been waiting for this extraction ever since. Helped break a curse while there, was followed by a Pale Magistrate who chased him into the Hymn of the Mother-Beast, and now

was supposed to get out of here finally. Unfortunately, that's not happening. Or it's not happening with this particular agent of Kay'va, of the free seas, at least. And so that's the first letter. And also that first letter indicated that there was one more job that this agent was looking at. Her name was Mirlande, M-I-R-L-A-N-D-E, and it's clear that she was investigating something tied to this station.

Keith: Boom, enter second letter.

Austin: Yes.

Keith: Which was an intercepted letter to Calen, one of the three Shape Knights here, that implied that he was working with them to capture the train to help with some sort of labor thing.

Austin: Yeah. I'll reiterate exactly what I said last time so we're all on the exact same page. The letter praises his research without detailing it, and it says that it could help with, quote unquote, "the labor problem," and it ends with a commonly used valediction or farewell, or what *feels* like a commonly used valediction: "Courage under the six, peace above the seventh." Clearly up to no good. Two symbols on there. One of them is for the Glim Macula, which is again the witch hunter crew that runs Sapodilla now. And then also a sort of strange Z with a line through it in a circle, but the Z also kind of looks like it could be two intersecting fancy sevens.

Jack (as Pickman): Huh. I know this guy. Janek, the spy.

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah?

Jack (as Pickman): Met him back in Blackwick. Wrapped up in something with the Magistratum.

Keith (as Lyke): Do you trust the spy more than you trust another group of Shape Knights?

Jack (as Pickman): [scoffs] I trust him more than I trust the Glim Macula. Seems like his rendezvous has been killed. Something took out train cars. Why the fuck was *Red Zephyr* attacking train cars? Around this station. Are these people—

Keith (as Lyke): And letting people go.

Jack (as Pickman): Well, it just turned around. Are they cagy? You push them on this?

Keith (as Lyke): Only one of them's cagy, but the other two trust him, so.

Jack (as Pickman): Uh huh. Yep, that's Shape Knights. We mostly keep to ourselves.

Keith (as Lyke): I noticed right away. Tombo confirmed.

Jack (as Pickman): What is Tombo?

Keith (as Lyke): [as if obvious] Fish. [amused sounds]

Jack (as Pickman): What?

Art (as Duvall): Did you say fish?

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah.

Keith: I take out the fish.

Jack (as Pickman): Fuck me, he's got a fish. Look at that. [Austin laughs]

Keith (as Lyke): You know Tombo. Did you not meet Tombo?

Jack (as Pickman): Uh huh, nope. This is the first time I have met your fish. What does it do?

Keith: I think Tombo was out on the push cart ride to Bell Metal.

Jack (as Pickman): It's little. I've never seen this thing before.

Keith (as Lyke): Might've missed it? Well, this is Tombo.

Art (as Duvall): I don't know that I'd ever say I met a fish.

Keith (as Lyke): He's rude.

Jack (as Pickman): Hmm.

Keith (as Lyke): But helpful.

Austin (as Tombo): Rrraaaah.

Art (as Duvall): Helpful.

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah.

Jack (as Pickman): Did that fish growl at me?

Keith (as Lyke): A little bit. He's rude. [Jack laughs] He's argumentative, but it works.

Jack (as Pickman): Okay, let's go back a step. You say they want to...what, shackle a train?

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah, magically.

Art (as Duvall): This train?

Keith (as Lyke): This train. The weretrain.

Jack (as Pickman): The train we were on.

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah, the train you were on.

Art (as Duvall): Good luck.

Jack (as Pickman): Yeah. [Austin laughs]

Keith (as Lyke): Well, I've seen the proof of concept.

Jack (as Pickman): [concerned] What?

Keith (as Lyke): They have a little one. They have a little train.

Jack (as Pickman): [dismissive] It's so tacky. I see people do that sometimes. It's never really...

Keith (as Lyke): Do you?

Jack (as Pickman): You get enough parts, you can fuckin' piece together a train.

Keith (as Lyke): Well then they used...I mean, I guess it's just the one guy. The other two didn't know that he was doing this.

Jack (as Pickman): Yeah, it's just—

Keith (as Lyke): He used magic to control it.

Jack (as Pickman): Uh huh, yeah, that bit...it's just a tacky thing to do. Shape Knights do it sometimes as a game, but if he's got these shackles...

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah.

Jack (as Pickman): He thinks he can apply it to something big.

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah.

Art (as Duvall): I'm not sure doing something little always works big. [Austin chuckles]

Jack (as Pickman): Yep. I'm with you.

Keith (as Lyke): Well, he was very clear that he needs the help of another magic user.

Austin: Says the person made up of little things, by the way. [Keith and Jack laugh]

Art: But that doesn't...

Austin: No, it might not...

Art: That's not the same.

Austin: It's, yeah, uh huh. It's a *lot* of little things.

Art: You can catch a bug in a jar. You can't catch a person in a jar.

Austin: Sure you can. Just get a big jar.

Keith: Big enough jar, yeah.

Art: [doubtful] Mmm.

Austin: Big jar.

Art: You'd need a *really* big—

Austin: You were caught in a train a moment ago!

Jack: This is literally—

Austin: If I had made that a jar monster, you would have climbed in it too. [chuckles]

Jack (as Pickman): And this—

Jack: Pickman, pointing at Duvall.

Jack (as Pickman): And this fucker thinks that you can just get off a train.

Keith (as Lyke): You did just get off the train.

Art (as Duvall): We just got off a train!

Jack (as Pickman): You can't get off with the— [sighs] [Austin and Art laugh]

Art (as Duvall): Where are we now?

Jack (as Pickman): We are walking the Shape.

Jack: Says Pickman. [Jack and Austin chuckle]

Keith (as Lyke): Either you're wrong or you're still on the train. Or you were never on the train.

Art: In which case, someone's jar monster concept becomes pretty silly. [laughs]

Jack (as Pickman): He needs another mage to help.

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah.

Jack (as Pickman): Are you gonna help him?

Keith (as Lyke): Uhh, I don't want to.

Jack (as Pickman): Good. You're a smart kid.

Keith (as Lyke): But I'm...I think I'm older than you.

Jack: Big shrug. [Jack and Austin laugh]

Keith (as Lyke): I guess I don't really know. Yeah, I don't...I mean, the train, it doesn't seem like a normal train. If there was someone that I trusted more that said, "We've gotta figure out this train more before we kill it," I would say, "Yeah, that seems right." But secret letters and spies and...

Jack (as Pickman): Mm-hmm.

Keith (as Lyke): Sapodilla, and you know, Shape Knights hiding wanting to keep trains from other Shape Knights seems...it just, you know, rubs me the wrong way.

[Timestamp: 0:30:10]

Jack (as Pickman): We're not gonna shackle it. We're not gonna kill it. We're gonna figure out what the fuck these guys are doing, and then we're gonna leave 'em be. Well, you know—

Art (as Duvall): I think you should just pretend you're gonna help them and then not help them and then see what happens. I think it would be something.

Jack (as Pickman): Huh.

Keith (as Lyke): Pretend to help them and then not help them.

Jack (as Pickman): I do not want—

Keith (as Lyke): And then just watch.

Art (as Duvall): And then they'll have an angry train.

Jack: Oh, what, like..

Art (as Duvall): It's a mean train.

Jack: Speaking out of character, we lure them into a trap of being like, "Yeah, yeah, we'll help you. Lift on three," and then... [Jack and Keith laugh]

Art: And then you don't lift, and then they can't lift it.

Jack: [??? 0:30:45]

Art: Except instead of it being a weight, it's an evil werewolf train.

Keith: But it let you go.

Art: Yeah, so I'm helping it in return!

Keith: Oh, so sort of like a...what's an eye for an eye but it's good? I guess it's eye for an eye if what you're looking for is to get—

Art: To get a lot of eyes.

Keith: To collect train eyes, yeah.

Austin: "You scratch my back, I'll scratch yours" is the opposite, is the good option.

Keith: Right, there we go. Yeah.

Art: No, it's... [Austin and Keith laugh]

Austin: It's let's kill some—

Art: It's an eye for an eye. [Jack laughs]

Austin: Oh, okay.

Keith: It's an eye for an eye, but we like to trade eyes here.

Art: But they're third party eyes. [Keith laughs]

Austin: Yeah, someone else's eyes.

Keith (as Lyke): Okay, so, I mean I guess I still don't know...do you want to meet them?

Jack (as Pickman): Yes.

Keith (as Lyke): Okay.

Art (as Duvall): I was gonna say no, but okay.

Keith (as Lyke): Oh.

Jack (as Pickman): Well, you can stay here. What's the danger in meeting them?

Art (as Duvall): No, I can't. It's dangerous out here. Anything could come down these tracks at any moment. Worse trains. [amused sounds]

Jack (as Pickman): Okay. Let's go.

Austin: And you head up. And at this point, I think Omerra is up. Erm is still off on rotation. Calen is not in the lounge. Calen's either in the lab or in his place. Omerra in the lounge...I can't remember if it was Omerra or Erm who we'd said heard of you, but let's just say both of them for the sake of it. But as you come in, I think he says:

Austin (as Omerra): Ah! Pickman in the flesh.

Jack (as Pickman): Good morning.

Austin (as Omerra): Name is Omerra. Omerra Celendi. It is a pleasure to meet you.

Keith (as Lyke): [whispering] Oh, right, they know you. I forgot to say.

Jack (as Pickman): Good to meet you too. Aren't you a...correct me if I'm wrong. You're an outfit of four, right?

Austin (as Omerra): [hesitates] We were an outfit of four, yeah. We lost Fezh, the *Red Zephyr* first...the first night, the *Red Zephyr* killed Fezh.

Jack (as Pickman): How long has this thing been coming at you?

Austin (as Omerra): Little over a month. We fought it out there first. Knew it was making a nest somewhere in those mountains, or believed it, and...yeah, Fezh didn't come back, and we armored up—most of the armor's fallen off the damn station by now—and we're doing our best. And we have reinforcements now, Katonya. None of the other bands have come to call. I guess they're all busy with other things. Or maybe they're coming and they're just being slow about it, who could say? In any case, we're doing our best. We're glad to have you here. Lyke helped quite a bit. And I'm frankly shocked to see you. I thought we'd lost another good Shape Knight last night. Rare to see one get on board and come back.

Keith (as Lyke): Who discovered that the train was in the hills?

Austin (as Omerra): [sighs] Look, give me a second.

Austin: Stands up and goes over to a desk drawer and pulls out basically a huge collection of notes, basically nightly scouting reports, stuff like that.

Jack: Oh, I think Pickman grins. This is great. This is good Shape Knight work.

Austin: Mm-hmm. This is the thing. They do the work in this way, Pickman. They are committed to this part of the job.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: And in fact, again, are kind of academics in comparison. Like, Erm is the closest thing—Erm and maybe Fezh, depending on if you'd known Fezh, are the ones that hew towards traditional Shape Knight stuff, but insofar as there are Shape Knights who lean towards research and development, Omerra and Calen lean that way. And she goes over the notes and, you know, says:

Austin (as Omerra): Calen. Calen saw it first.

Jack (as Pickman): Mmm.

Jack: Pickman glances at the others.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin (as Omerra): Never saw anything like it before. And yeah, he and Fezh tracked it down to a spot out west in the mountains, and...

Austin: He sighs.

Austin (as Omerra): [sighs] Hate to lose Fezh like that. We were tight.

Keith (as Lyke): How did Fezh go?

Austin (as Omerra): I wasn't there, so I don't know the specifics. but...I guess I'll say when Calen got back, that's when we knew it wasn't just a regular train, that it could do that thing it does where it transforms, it takes on another shape, a humanoid shape, a strange shape. And I would imagine that's how it got them. Most Shape Knights...you know, Pickman. We can stay away if we need to. But when that thing surprised them, I think it just was too much. I can't imagine Fezh losing to anything but surprise, especially side by side with Calen. Those two...I was tight with Fezh, but Calen and Fezh, I mean, inseparable.

Keith: I'm gonna write on a little piece of paper, "murdered?" and just sort of hold it up. [Art laughs] Obviously not to Omerra.

Jack (as Pickman): Yep, we're gonna need to talk to Calen.

Austin (as Omerra): So, I think he's resting right now. What...once he's up, though, I'm sure he'll be happy to answer any questions. I mean, he might be in the lab. I'm not sure.

Jack (as Pickman): It's okay. You let me know where he's sleeping, we can go and fetch him.

Keith (as Lyke): Well, maybe we should check the lab first.

Jack (as Pickman): Okay.

Austin (as Omerra): You could go knock on his door. It's straight across the way.

Austin: Kind of points out back through the window to the quarters that are right next to the lab.

Jack (as Pickman): Thanks for your help. Good work last night.

Austin (as Omerra): Thanks. And again, glad to see you all here.

Jack: I think Pickman nods and grimaces and just says, as she's leaving:

Jack (as Pickman): Not dead yet.

Austin: So you're going to the lab?

Jack: Yeah, do you wanna go check the lab before we...

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah. Omerra sure...I mean, Omerra did not know about this train thing until yesterday.

Jack: Mmm.

Keith: And so might not know that there would be something to hide from us in the lab.

Austin: Which train thing?

Keith: Oh, the leashing?

Austin: Oh, the letters— yeah, the leashing, right, correct.

Keith: Calen's leashing.

Austin: The leashing was all new, yes.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Yes. You go to the lab. The majority of the lab looks like a Shape Knight lab. We've talked about this before. I imagine it's like a materials lab in a real way, where it's a lot of testing the strength, durability, flexibility of various train materials, trying to create new stuff. I think Omerra has kind of an inventions desk. Omerra has kind of a Q from James Bond quality to him.

Jack: Ha!

Austin: In terms of...you know, invented the cool powered gauntlet, right? There's probably something on your armor that Omerra or Omerra's own mentor created originally, you know? In terms of design.

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah. There's a genuine respect from Pickman for this work.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: If not these fuckin' weirdos. [chuckles]

Austin: Right, totally.

Keith: This is my first...this is the first amount of time that I've spent with Pickman, this mission.

Austin: I think that's true. Outside of downtime—

Keith: Right.

Austin: And in there it was very brief, so yeah.

Keith: I think...and definitely it's my first time around other Shape Knights, so I think that Lyke is sort of surprised by how serious Pickman takes the Shape Knight thing. I don't think I've ever met a serious Shape Knight, and it's like, oh you're really into this stuff.

Austin: Right, yeah.

Keith: Genuinely dedicated to it.

Austin: Yeah. Some of them are much more like bootleggers in quality, you know what I mean?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: There is a degree of self-appointed masters of the wild, people who know the secret shortcuts, who know how to tame the beasts, you know what I mean?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: If you ever met someone who lives in the bayou and knows the alligators by name, you can find Shape Knights like that. And this crew has some of those in it.

Keith: The flip side of that is that Lye Lychen is someone who has specifically avoided being dedicated to something.

Austin: Yes, totally, totally. And these people are dedicated with their lives, even though this group is also a little silly sometimes. It's very clear they do take it a different type of seriously maybe than Pickman.

[Timestamp: 0:40:00]

Keith: Right.

Austin: They take it seriously, but they don't take themselves as seriously, maybe.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Or at least that's not their persona around strangers. In any case—

Art: This raises an interesting idea, though, which is the alligators.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: They don't have names, really. [Jack laughs] You give them names.

Austin: You give them names. Do the trains?

Art: Is that true for the trains too?

Austin: I believe the trains give themselves names, per Jack de Quidt.

Jack: They have nameplates on them.

Austin: Right.

Jack: Uh, most of them have nameplates on them.

Austin: Right. And the Shape Knights respect those names, as far as we can tell.

Jack: Yep.

Keith: Right.

Austin: They might call them like...

Jack: That hard fucker, or like...

Austin: Yeah, exactly. Old Misery, whatever the fuck they want to call it, but they also know the name is the name, right? The name on the plate is the name.

Jack: Yeah.

Austin: You find...there is the private natural lab where the train set is for Calen, and so you find your way back in there. I don't think it's locked or anything from here.

Jack: Hmm.

Austin: There isn't...you know, it's Shape Knights. There is a kind of fraternal peer relationship here.

Keith: Right.

Austin: If you can't trust someone not to go through your fucking shit, you cannot trust them in a fight against a train. Though also maybe it's—and maybe you can convince yourself of it the other way—if you start locking doors, people start asking questions, right?

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: [laughs] Why did you do that?

Austin: Yeah, exactly. So you go in. There's the train set on the table. It's not running currently. There's a bunch of papers on the wall, which no one investigated when you were here before. I didn't even call it out, because you were here in a position where like, how are you gonna start looking through papers?

Keith: Right.

Austin: But you know, there's stuff up on the wall in terms of a cork board. There's a desk that has a bunch of stuff on it. Yeah.

Keith: So I have discern. Pickman has technology.

Austin: Can help.

Keith: I assume a lot of this is discern technology.

Austin: This is discern technology, yes.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Duvall also has discern technology.

Keith: Oh.

Art: Discern and technology.

Austin: Yep.

Keith: Duvall has both, okay. But also Duvall is...are you still in bad shape?

Austin: Eh.

Art: No.

Keith: Okay.

Art: Well...

Keith: Oh, 'cause you got hit a couple times, so you lost a lot of your stress.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: But no stress left, right? You got that major stress.

Art: The stress is gone.

Austin: Yeah, that major fallout.

Art: You know, there's still some bad stuff happening. I don't know when...I think the ghost can turn up at any time.

Austin: It's an immediate, which means it's just true in the world now. That is just...The Life Not Lived has now happened. I'm gonna leave it on here, but you don't have to clear it. You can't clear it. It's happened, you know?

Keith: But it's not like some of the other ones like, you know, Cult and Messiah where they start causing problems and harassing people and stuff.

Art: We were very friendly.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I think we've seen that Duvall will cause his own problems [Keith and Jack laugh] according to the appropriate situation, you know?

Keith: Sure. Okay.

Art: Rude, Austin.

Austin: You know what I mean, though! [Art laughs] That's not...I don't mean that in a negative sense. [laughs]

Keith: I guess my point...long story short, maybe Duvall should make the roll, and one of us should help.

Austin: Yes, yes.

Art: Yeah, I'm happy to.

Austin: Yeah, this makes perfect sense.

Keith: Maybe both of us should help. I mean, we're just all looking, right?

Austin: Yeah. I'll let it happen here. So that means it's plus two. So that's discern, technology, plus two. This is risky, because you're going through a mage's personal stuff.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You don't know how it's been booby trapped.

Art: Well, I'm rolling basically a hundred dice. What could possibly go wrong?

Austin: [sighs, chuckles] Okay.

Jack: Oh!

Keith: Ten.

Art: [triumphant] Ha!

Austin: In fact, truly. Truly. Truly.

Keith: Wow.

Austin: Three, three, seven—

Art: No respect for property!

Austin: Ten, ten. Double tens. Even losing a ten, you still get a critical success here.

Keith: Wow.

Austin: You get it all, you get it all, you get it all. Alright. Where to begin? I think the first thing that comes to mind, the first thing that is so obvious, is you recognize, the three of you, a theme in some of the stuff that's throughout everything here. There are postcards of places like Sapodilla, like Conventus, parts of Aldominan Conventus. And then you see that there's others sketches of places with notes about what I would say are...places with a utopian idea of themselves. And that does not mean those places that I would call a utopia. Places that are...

Keith: Places that consider themselves utopian?

Austin: Or at least consider themselves as part of a utopian project, real and imagined. So, the version of Sapodilla here in the postcard on the wall is the only civilization in Sangfielle, right? That's the way it frames itself. The notes on Conventus and the sketch of this alley or this major

thoroughfare in Conventus is about how this is the only place in all the world where all of the Cantons have come together to work on something, and so in some sense this is a utopian project that goes beyond the nation, that goes beyond the state. There is a place written about here, that the viewer would know though your characters wouldn't, called the City of Lights. It seems that Calen interviewed a vicar, a vicar named Regan Alaway who works at a candle factory to the southwest of here, a place called Yellowfield, who runs the candle factory. And the City of Lights was this theorized city on a hill that this priest dreamt of, where something called electric light would completely change the way life is organized, would bring people out of squalor, would provide light for surgeons to work by in the dark, would save an immense amount of life and stretch time itself somehow. There is a bunch of...not forgeries in the sense that you're trying to sell it as the real deal, but copies of famous paintings of a place called Banderole, B-A-N-D-E-R-O-L-E, the city of banners, which is a classical pre-Sangfiellian notion of utopian medieval city that is eternally in the moment after a successful conquest. People are coming home with new things because they've conquered somewhere. There are banners the colors of all the knights hanging from all of the windows and archways. You know, every day a new group of soldiers returns home victorious. And people have been dreaming of this place here in Sangfielle in the last year, at least that's what the notes of Calen say. In fact, I think at one point, you read a kind of jarring thing here, Duvall. He describes that there have been people who, in their sleep, using some sort of psychic or magical energy, are compelled to build models of this place out of scraps of wood and metal and ribbon, little miniature versions of it. They fall into a comatose state, and in the dark, the city that they're dreaming of builds itself between them.

Art: Mmm.

Austin: And you recall that you and Chine once went into a basement together, and everything...people had been locked in that basement for a week or two and they were just sleeping down there, and when you finally got in there after there was a fire...you can go back to the firsts character creation episode to hear this story.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: This ribbon and metal and wood clanked against the floor, and effectively you're like, oh, huh, is this city building itself somehow in the dreams of people? Who could say? And then you find a note, which is in passing almost, and it says "All of these, of course, are shadows of Zevunzolia, the one true utopia." Z-E-V-U-N-Z-O-L-I-A, Zevunzolia.

Keith: Do any of us recognize that?

Austin: You had a critical success, so Duvall, you remember a class you were in—in fact, one of the rare times you and Jolyon were attending the same class together and actually went to it—on ancient devil language, right? The premodern version of whatever your language is. Actually, not premordern, ancient. We're not just talking about Old English, we're talking about a proto-devil language, or something maybe post-proto but pre- the formation of whatever your

current language is. And you know enough here to look at that and be like, oh, that means the seven sun, or the seventh sun.

[Timestamp: 0:50:05]

Keith: Mmm.

Austin: That's what that is. In fact, again, you got a crit. Maybe just through looking through notes, you're able to put together...it was the Roseroot side where we talked a little bit about the cosmology of the devils, right? And the ideology, the religion of the devils, that they clawed their way out of hell, displaced the Aldominan humans, or the culture of Aldomina, whatever species those were, and have this deep relationship with struggle and overcoming as their core myth, their core thematic myth, this desire to climb up out of whatever you're in and make it to something better. There is a...and maybe you just find a book on this as you're going through all these notes, that explains pretty quickly that there was a schismatic sect of that core faith in Aldomina that believed that everyone should have kept climbing and that Zevunzolia was a hypothetical place the way that Utopia was for John Stewart Mills. Is that right? Am I fucking this up?

Jack: It is Mills, right?

Austin: Mill, Mill. It's Mill.

Jack: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Single Mill.

Art: Mill?

Austin: Yeah.

Art: One mill.

Austin: One mill. Kind of a hypothetical or metaphorical place that oh, we should not have stopped at Aldomina, we should have climbed until we'd reached heaven itself, until we'd reached the seventh sun. There are of course six in the sky here, and so the seventh one must be one of our own creation. And you know, this is a philosopher theologian, this is not a...this person is long dead centuries ago, maybe even longer than that at this point. But it seems as if, again with a ten, that there is a group working towards that today. You can piece together that that strange Z that you found was part of that, is part of a group trying to—

Keith: And the phrase.

Austin: And the phrase, yes, of course, of course, of course.

Jack: Oh, huh.

Austin: Yes, courage—

Keith: Which was what again? Say it again?

Austin: “Courage under the six, peace above the seventh.” And you see it, you see a sketch, here it is. Here it is. You see a sketch of Zevunzolia. You see a sketch of what, given what I've just given you, can only be Zevunzolia, a sort of city held aloft high in the sky as if on a great trunk or pillar. You realize, in fact, the strange table might be itself a sort of model of Zevunzolia, at least in abstract, this very thin pillar lifting up to this flat table surface. And in the sketches there are the rays of the sun coming down—

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: —from the underside of this table, of this platform, of this disc upon which a city is built, so that that ground below is getting sunlight, but as if the thing under it is itself sunlight, a huge glowing ember. And then above it is paradise, is paradise beyond Aldomina.

Jack: Mmm.

Austin: Is, you know, a neoclassical—

Jack: Like the vault of heaven.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. Anor Londo. We're here, baby, you know? This is it. Whatever you dream that looks like, here it is. There's no name to this group in any of the notes, obviously, the group now working towards the actual creation of Zevunzolia, but it is clear from the notes that this is a group that Calen is involved with or wants to be more involved with. [Jack sighs] Which leads us to his research. You find more correspondence with this group, updating them on the research, and you find a manuscript. You find what I guess we would at this point call something like a thesis. It is called “A Hollow Structure: On the Unlife of the Shape,” and according to its own abstract and according to early notes in the introduction, it is about the ways in which automation saps the spark of life, about how machines and things like machines aren't really people because agency is spread in them across a bunch of different parts instead of being in a single soul. The soul is what makes someone an individual, per this thesis. Something that is comprised of many cannot be a person. And so if someone becomes a machine, whether through the addition of elements they don't control or through a loss or a splitting of that individual's selfhood, they're not a person anymore, and thus they can justly be treated as a non-person.

Keith: Ah, well, that's it, Duvall. You figured it out. [claps three times] [Jack laughs]

Austin: Well, you've got...this is some of it, at least. And so this is...in some sense the solution of the labor problem is...

Keith: Make robots.

Austin: You turn people— well, it's not that. It's not saying make robots.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: It's saying make things you don't have to consider are people.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Whether they are or aren't is not...

Keith: Or make things you can consider a robot.

Austin: Right. Make things you can consider automatons and not consider a person anymore. This is the argument being forwarded here. Just to be a hundred percent clear, this is not the Austin Walker argument. This is what a villain in a story is saying pretty clearly.

Keith: [pointedly] Can't imagine anyone would confuse those two things ever.

Austin: No. There is a letter you see similarly marked with the mark of this group, the group that's trying to build Zevunzolia, and that letter requests evidence. Through the back and forth, you see someone who wants something very very bad and who wants to not have to do anything to...who doesn't want to have to prove that this thing could work and certainly not do it with someone that they care for. I mean, I guess it becomes very clear to you what has happened here. Through a collection of sketches, through a collection of experiments and notes, is that there was no *Red Zephyr* until there was, until Calen made it.

Art: Hmm.

Austin: Until Calen...created it using raw material.

Keith: Seems like the opposite of what a Shape Knight is meant to do.

Austin: There are callings higher.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I mean, there's a lot here that you can piece together. Calen comes from a noble family. Calen was originally under a lot of pressure from parents who believed that he would earn them the right to return to Aldomina after being left behind in Sangfielle. That desire got overwritten

with a desire to join the Shape Knights and the camaraderie therein. That desire got overwritten with a desire for closeness to friends, and it's not clear here how close he and Fezh were. They may have been his lover, it's not clear. And then that gets overwritten by this desire to change the world with Zevunzolia and to get close to those folks, and along the way it becomes clear that Fezh is a necessary sacrifice. There's no journal here necessarily. You're piecing this together through correspondence that's kept with other notes. If there is a diary somewhere, that would be in Calen's room directly. But yeah. You know, this is the smoking gun in some ways. He and Fezh went west into a cave. The *Red Zephyr* came out. Fezh did not.

Jack: Pickman spits on the floor and is just like:

Jack (as Pickman): This is heresy. Alright, time's up. I'm gonna find him.

Jack: And just turns around on her heel and goes towards Calen's quarters.

Austin: You find the door is open, because if you have nothing to hide, you don't lock the door.

Keith: Right.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Calen is in bed.

Keith: Or if you want to pretend you've got nothing to hide, again.

Austin: Sure.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Calen is asleep in bed.

Art: Well, you don't have to...yeah, hmm.

Keith (as Lyke): [sighs] Hey, we should maybe take this to Erm.

Jack (as Pickman): Yeah, fair enough.

Austin: So you're not going through with the furious Pickman that we've seen.

Jack: No, Pickman is saying fucking go for it. You go down to Erm, I'll, you know.

Austin: Oh, I see.

Jack: Godspeed. Yeah, and I think Pickman just pulls Calen up by the collar and says:

Jack (as Pickman): Wake up, you little worm.

Austin (as Calen): [confused stammering] Ah! Where are my glasses— um, who are you? Put me down.

[Timestamp: 1:00:03]

Jack (as Pickman): You miserable heretic. Where is Fezh?

Austin (as Calen): Fezh...Fezh is dead. Fezh is dead. Fezh is...Fezh is dead.

Jack (as Pickman): How did they die? You killed them.

Austin (as Calen): The *Red Zephyr*. The *Red Zephyr*!

Jack (as Pickman): Uh huh. Tell me what happened.

Austin (as Calen): Who are you? Hey— [shouting] Erm! Erm, who is—

Jack (as Pickman): Shut the fuck up. What happened to Fezh? [someone laughs]

Austin: This is a compel check.

Art: [laughing] Compelling someone to shut the fuck up.

Austin: Oh yeah. [Jack laughs] Compel technology, baby!

Jack: Yep. Anybody helping me?

Art: I could.

Austin: I thought they left to get Erm?

Jack: I thought that Lye had gone.

Keith: Ah, no, sorry. I sort of let Pickman roll with it—

Austin: I gotcha.

Keith: But when I saw that the choice was get Erm and leave Pickman alone in the room...

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Keith: I chose to stay.

Austin: Yeah, I see you. I get you.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: I gotta be using Many Eyes more.

Jack: Oh, Many Eyes is great.

Art: I should just always be Many Eyesing.

Jack: We did it with the gandy dancers, right?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Keith: No, I'm not going to help compel Calen to shut the fuck up. I will let—

Austin: Well, that's not what's being compelled.

Keith: Is that not what the compel was for?

Austin: No, the compel is what happened to Fezh.

Keith: Oh, I thought it was to compel...okay. Yeah, then I'll compel for that.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: [laughs] Okay.

Keith: I'll help for that, yeah.

Austin: Yeah. I see—

Jack: Is this standard, because i've just...

Austin: Sorry, I understand how you thought that that was what the compel was for. Maybe I'm misunderstanding, but I believe what Pickman is doing is asserting authority to get answers immediately.

Jack: Yeah.

Keith: Okay. I thought this was trying to prevent someone from coming to help.

Austin: Yeah, I understand how you got there. I didn't mean to sound so dismissive.

Keith: It's okay.

Jack: Standard, 'cause I'm like seven foot five and I've just woken them up?

Austin: Yeah, standard for sure, for sure, for sure. And then Duvall is helping?

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: How are you helping?

Art: Describe to me the ways in which this is technology, and I'll tell you the ways I'm helping.

Austin: You're in a technology place. Which just give me a picture. You don't have to bring the placeness into it.

Art: Sure. I mean, I think I'm just backup. I'm trying to help be intimidating.

Austin: I think if that's the case, then one body is as strong as two, so you'll only get one here. You need a little juice more than bodies.

Keith: What, like...

Austin: Do a thing. Someone's gotta do a thing for it to lift from a plus one to a plus two.

Keith: Physically threaten.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Yeah, I guess just a plus one. I mean, I'm not gonna inflict bug violence.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: You have a gun, right? You can take out a gun and be like, I'm pointing this gun at you.

Austin: Is that what Duvall does?

Art: I do not have a gun.

Keith: Oh, okay.

Austin: No, Duvall does not have a gun. Duvall has bugs.

Keith: Right.

Art: [laughs] I have a *Red Zephyr* torch.

Keith: You shoot your bugs like a gun.

Austin: Yeah, yeah. You have a— yeah, you have a torch that says *Red Zephyr* on the side of it. That's not nothing.

Art: I mean, it feels like it should be saved.

Austin: I mean, you don't burn it. Equipment's equipment for good.

Art: Yeah, but...you can only do something the first time once.

Austin: I see, yeah. Yeah, I gotcha. Fair. Alright, then just take a plus one.

Keith: Tombo, stare him down. [Jack laughs]

Austin: So take a plus one here, Pickman.

Keith: Oh, hi ten!

Austin: Nine, seven, seven, ten. These die have been good today.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Unlike yesterday.

Austin: Yeah. Completely breaks down. Calen says:

Austin (as Calen): [stammers for a moment] They were helping me. They were helping me, and they knew what it was. You have to understand. They knew what it was. I think we thought we could undo it. And I think some of the long term uses weren't clear to Fezh, but I...they knew that they would...they knew what I was turning them into.

Keith (as Lyke): Undo what? Undo being the train?

Austin (as Calen): Yes. Yes. And more. More than any train has been. So much more.

Jack (as Pickman): Who the hell do you think you are?

Austin (as Calen): Calen Fel Dynestia.

Jack (as Pickman): Okay.

Austin (as Calen): I'm lifting my family from pity and squalor and finding a future for us. And so much more. The Wrights of the Seventh Sun will welcome me with open arms, [Jack sighs] and they will lead us all into something better than this.

Keith (as Lyke): I think we should take him to his boss.

Jack (as Pickman): To Erm?

Austin (as Calen): I think you should let me go, is what I think you should do.

Keith (as Lyke): No, that's...

Jack (as Pickman): Oh, that's not gonna fucking happen. No way.

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah. Even if one of us besides Pickman wanted to do that, she wouldn't let us.

Austin (as Calen): Fine. [Jack sighs] Fine. I'm ready. I've made my contribution to the cause. I'll face whatever it is that's coming to me.

Jack (as Pickman): We boarded the *Zephyr*. It took us into the hills.

Austin (as Calen): I know, I saw.

Jack (as Pickman): You have no power over that train.

Austin (as Calen): Not yet, but I have a method! [frustrated noise] It escaped before the shackles could be—

Jack (as Pickman): I don't give a shit about your science.

Austin (as Calen): Clearly. You don't have a mind for it.

Jack (as Pickman): Oh, yeah, come on.

Jack: And I just drag him out of bed by his collar.

Keith (as Lyke): Oh, hey, shot in the dark, but do you know about an egg sac?

Austin (as Calen): No.

Keith (as Lyke): Okay. I just remembered about the egg sac again. [Jack laughs]

Austin (as Calen): I don't know what you are talking about.

Jack (as Pickman): *Grand Cormorant*, have you seen it?

Keith (as Lyke): It was on the *Grand Cormorant Limited*.

Jack (as Pickman): It come through here?

Jack: As we're like, *bump, bump, bump* down the stairs. [chuckles]

Austin (as Calen): [confused] I'm— what's that have to do with...

Keith (as Lyke): This is a side thing for you, but for us it's our main thing.

Austin (as Calen): If I tell you, will you let me go?

Keith (as Lyke): Yes.

Keith: I'm lying.

Jack (as Pickman): Yes. Where is the *Grand Cormorant*?

Austin: I mean, if you're lying, you should roll compel.

Jack (as Pickman): No, I won't let you go. Where's the fucking *Grand Cormorant*?
[Keith laughs]

Austin (as Calen): I'm not telling you.

Art: I think tactical mistakes have been made here. [laughs]

Jack: Okay, right, I'm gonna roll compel, but I'm not gonna bargain to let him go. I'm gonna...

Austin: What are you gonna do?

Jack: Throw him down the stairs if he doesn't tell me where the *Grand Cormorant* is.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Although, I'm not committing to it. I'd be rolling kill if I was gonna throw him down the stairs.

Austin: Yes, correct. You're rolling compel.

Jack: I'm threatening him.

Austin: Yeah, it's compel. Compel, technology. And that's not a thing you're helping. Just roll this straight. Three dice.

Keith: [dismayed] Ooh!

Austin: There's a five. There's the bet I was making. Three, four, five. Straight.

Keith: It's a straight, so yeah.

Art: It's a straight.

Jack: Yeah, that's a straight, right? So...

Art: Yeah, that means you add them.

Jack: Yeah, uh huh. You add them up. If you get a straight and it's under five... [laughs]

Keith: Add them up. It's a really good roll.

Jack: Five or max, you add them up. That's actually—

Austin: So I roll a d12 is what you're saying? I add them up, and you take twelve stress.

Jack: No, no, no!

Austin: That's what you're saying?

Jack: No, we add...

Austin: Mmm, I see.

Art: *You* know.

Austin: *You* know.

Jack: No, *you* know. [laughs]

Austin: Take five stress.

Jack: To?

Austin: To...hmm. Where you at now? Let's see here. Okay. Take it to fortune. [Jack sighs] And then give me a...

Jack: Oh shit!

Austin: Take major fallout!

Keith: Oof.

Austin: You love to roll a seven when you have seven stress.

Keith: Ooh, that's really bad.

Austin: It's not good.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Wow.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Major fortune fallout, huh?

Austin: Major fortune fallout, bud. Let's pull that up. Let's take a peek in the ol' book here. I believe I know what's in here. I believe I'm looking for a particular thing. I've just gotta find it.

Jack: This is Lyke's fault.

Austin: [shocked laugh] Wow!

Keith: Excuse me?

Jack: We were all ready to take this guy down to Erm. We were fucking done. And then Lyke was the one who was like, "Whoa, what about the *Grand Cormorant*?"

Keith: He knows where it is! You're welcome for remembering what we're supposed to be doing!

Austin: You...huh. As you begin to threaten to throw Calen over the edge here or down the stairs, Erm and Omerra see you doing it. And they go:

Austin (as Erm or Omerra): [angry] You let him go right now! Get out! You're no Shape Knight. How dare you lay your hands on a compatriot like that? Gather your things and leave.

Austin: You've been exiled from the station.

Keith: Wait, we can't do anything there? We can't try and...

Austin: "You are banned from entering the haven you are currently in or one that's nearby. Tell us what happened. Your allies aren't subject to the same restrictions, but they will be treated with suspicion." [Art laughs] But this is a major no-go. You do not put your hands on another Shape Knight and threaten to kill them. They are too rare a thing.

Art: I don't know, one of like six people I know is a Shape Knight. It seems like they're not that rare. [Jack laughs]

Austin: Yeah. [Keith laughs] Yeah, but there are millions of people here in Sangfielle. Six ain't that many.

Art: I just assume the ratio is consistent.

Austin: Hmm. I mean, there's one in a town of thousands, right? So.

Art: No, there's one in the six people I hang out with.

[Timestamp: 1:10:00]

Austin: Great.

Art: So every seven people is a Shape Knight.

Austin: But you don't hang out with that many— you are in a town of thousands.

Keith: Right.

Austin: So, you do that ratio. You don't do how many people are in the room with you. [laughs]

Keith: I don't know, I've been on two missions, and on one mission there was no Shape Knights, and then this mission it's only Shape Knights.

Austin: Also, one in six people is filled with bugs.

Jack: Ha!

Austin: And has been kicked out of magic school.

Art: One in seven. You have to count yourself when doing this.

Austin: Ah, right, sorry.

Jack: I think Pickman just snarls, drops him in a heap, and makes for the door and turns around and says:

Jack (as Pickman): Anything you think you have taken will be stolen back tenfold by the Shape.

Jack: And just goes and sits on the fucking handcar, like—

Austin (as Erm): No! Leave!

Austin: Yells Erm from above. That's still inside the station. It's in the walls. It's in the protection of the Shape that is drawn on the floor with the rails.

Jack: Ah.

Austin (as Erm): I'll be sending word back to headquarters.

Jack (as Pickman): Yeah, yeah.

Jack: Powers up the...

Keith: Okay, so...sorry, Jack, what was the last bit?

Jack: I'm just gonna take it out of the area. You two can figure out whatever, you know. I'm just gonna go and stand outside.

Art: You want us to stay?

Jack: I feel like you should not be...you're still allowed here.

Austin: That is correct.

Jack: They might hate you, but they're not gonna try and kill you.

Keith: Right.

Jack: Which presumably they will do if I— that's right, Austin?

Keith: Right, I—

Jack: I could...

Austin: Oh yeah.

Jack: It's not like...I could mechanically deny this, but they would react hostilely.

Austin: Correct, correct, yes.

Keith: So I do think it's time to convince them that you were in the right.

Austin: Right.

Jack: That's tricky. [laughs]

Keith: And I do think at this point Katonya has crossed...she is downstairs as you come down to the floor, and she looks at you and crosses her arms like, you know, you gotta listen to what the boss here says.

Jack: Yeah, spits on the floor again, just breaks into a limping run following the train line out.

Keith: I shoulda gotten Erm earlier.

Austin (as Erm): You two should probably get your things too and get ready to leave. I'm not kicking you out.

Keith (as Lyke): Look, Erm, I get—

Austin (as Erm): You can stay and help against the *Zephyr*.

Keith (as Lyke): I understand. You know, here. I'm not gonna...just look at this.

Austin (as Erm): What is all this?

Keith: I stumble over trying to explain Pickman's actions and instead give over the pertinent writings.

Austin: The books, the scrap notes, yeah.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Austin (as Erm): You have to expl— you took this stuff from Calen? You went through Calen's private materials. [sighs] You expect this to make me feel good about you.

Keith (as Lyke): He killed Fezh. Fezh is the train. He turned Fezh into a train.

Austin: Give me a compel roll.

Jack: [distantly] Good luck!

Austin: Take mastery, because you have all this evidence.

Keith: Okay. I don't have compel or technology.

Austin: Ah.

Keith: But I do have mastery.

Austin: Duvall, you helping?

Art: I can help, but I haven't talked to any of these people.

Austin: No, that's true.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: And I'm kind of an unsettling person.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: But you do have technology and compel, so you probably can—

Austin: Does not have compel. Duvall does not have compel.

Keith: Oh, okay. You do have technology though, so maybe you can explain a little better to the technology people the stuff that I don't really get.

Austin: Right.

Art: Yeah, I'd be happy to sort of be chiming in on your stuff like...

Austin: Well, and you know enough—

Art: When you try to “yadda yadda” something, [Austin chuckles] I can be like...this.

Austin: Right.

Keith: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: And in fact, one of Calen's primary areas of expertise and research is on the nature of the self, which is your shit, exactly.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So you can create metaphors where something is maybe a little more complex, so go ahead and take that plus one from that.

Keith: Okay, so it's nothing, nothing, mastery, plus one.

Austin: You got it. [Jack laughs] Three d6, standard not risky.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: I don't have anything...no, I don't have anything that helps this.

Austin: No, sadly.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You got a lot of stuff, just nothing that helps this.

Keith: [whistles]

Austin: Success at a cost.

Keith: Done. Deal.

Austin: Take five stress.

Keith: Ooh, no, actually.

Austin: No. No? Why?

Keith: Oh, no, that doesn't work. Never mind. I take it back. [Jack laughs] I take five.

Austin: No? What were you going to say?

Keith: I have a new thing that I haven't used called Mark of the Phantom.

Austin: Ah.

Keith: Silver-gray skin spells and a litany of obfuscation wind their way over your body. Blah blah blah, gain the evade skill once per situation. I'm not in a situation. When you mark stress due to physical harm or detection—

Austin: Oh, you're in a situation.

Keith: And it's neither of those. Okay.

Austin: This is a situation. It's just not...

Keith: Physical harm or detection.

Austin: Physical harm or detection, yeah.

Keith: Yeah. Yep.

Austin: This is stress from trying to argue with someone. Take fortune stress here.

Keith: One, two, three, four, five.

Austin: Take minor fallout.

Keith: Take minor fallout.

Austin: Yeah, I know what this—

Keith: Wow, my second fallout.

Austin: Your second fallout. Oh my god.

Art: I also need stress.

Austin: Oh, you also need stress. I'm sorry, I forgot about that.

Art: And then I'll find a way to roll under whatever number this is.

Austin: It's five again.

Art: Argh!

Austin: I rolled five for stress. I roll a d6 three times in a row, and each time it's been five.

Keith: The rolls are good for you too!

Art: What do you want—

Austin: For you, it's mind. So actually, I'm gonna roll twice, and you take higher.

Art: It's gonna be...five.

Austin: Three. You take the five, yeah. Take the five to mind.

Keith: And I'm taking this—

Austin: And both of you need to roll fallout test.

Keith: I took minor fallout, and then I clear fortune, so I'm back down to one stress.

Austin: That is correct, yes. Yeah, it was bad.

Art: It was bad either way.

Austin: Three was under five, so you also get minor mind fallout.

Art: I hope someone is keeping track of fallouts per player for this season.

Austin: Uh huh.

Keith: [laughs] It's so funny!

Austin: It's very rough. It's extremely, extremely rough.

Keith: I know that it's very rough and bad for you, but it also is very funny, especially considering the luck thing. You identified in the first mission that you were having bad luck and became obsessed with luck.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: And it just keeps happening.

Art: I just want numbers at the end of the year. [Jack laughs]

Austin: Yeah, I am so, so, so curious. Hey, it should by all accounts be the middle of the day, right?

Keith: Yes.

Austin: The moon shouldn't be out already.

Keith: No. It's morning, almost.

Austin: Foreboding: something bad is about to happen. The GM—

Keith: I was just having breakfast.

Jack: What the fuck?

Austin: "Hint at an ominous future event: smoke in the distance, the tremors before a pulse, the frantic music of the carnival. This fallout can be upgraded to crisis, see below." The moon should not be coming out this early, and we know what could happen if the moon is out. In fact, what we see is we see this not from Lyke's perspective but from Pickman as she walks out of the tower. You see the moon cresting up over the mountains. Or I guess probably not over the mountains, that's to the west. I don't know how fucking things work here. Maybe the moon comes from a different position every day, who could say?

Art: So many suns, who's to say how many moons?

Austin: Who's to say how many moon? And in fact, crosses in front of one of the suns, eclipsing it. Easy, because remember the moon, at this point, we're at the big phase of the moon. I mean, every phase of the moon is big. Remember, every phase of the moon is full, it just changes in sizes, and here it's coming up very big, big enough to cover one of the six suns.

Jack: [worried] Uh.

Austin: So far. Probably more as time progresses if this gets advanced, you know?

Jack: Unclips her helmet from the front of her armor again, puts her helmet on.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh.

Jack: Keeps trudging down the railway track.

Keith: Do I have to write this in fallout?

Austin: No, this is...I guess it is ongoing, but I'll remember. You should write it in fallout. Just copy it from the chat and put it in. And you're at a mind one, right? It was a mind stress you just took, Duvall?

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Minor, yeah.

Austin: Minor? Let's just stay in the world of minors. I was looking to see if there was an upgrade I wanted to potentially give you instead. But instead I think...

Art: Why bother? I'm just gonna end up with all the fallouts anyway.

Austin: Oh, buddy.

Art: Collect 'em all.

Austin: You already have Take the Edge Off. [Art chuckles] I think it's Weird. You act strange. I guess I'll read the one from the book directly. "You do something unsettling that bothers normal people: obsessive behavior, singing to yourself, fulfilling a strange compulsion at inappropriate times. At the earliest opportunity, the GM can declare that your weirdness puts a useful NPC off of you and probably your allies too. Immediate, ongoing." It happens immediately. In this attempted conversation, how do you start to lose the thread here and lose the trust of these people? You've succeeded on this particular roll, but how do you put yourself off here?

Art: As the conversation gets more and more animated—

Austin: Yeah.

Art: I think Duvall becomes more and more just a cloud of insects.

Jack: Huh.

Austin: Like a literal one.

Art: Yeah, as he starts to get more animated, it's just more and more and bigger and bigger. At first it's like, oh there's a couple bugs flying around this guy, that's weird. And by the end of the conversation it's just like, I'm talking to a cloud of bugs.

Austin: [laughs] Of bugs, yeah.

Art: And I think the guy's still in there, but...I mean, I hear him talking.

[Timestamp: 1:20:01]

Austin: Erm says:

Austin (as Erm): [reluctant] I think...you're making very serious accusations, and...

Austin: And Omerra says:

Austin (as Omerra): And if they're legitimate, then we're gonna have a real problem.

Keith (as Lyke): Erm, I showed you the letter yesterday!

Austin (as Erm): I know. But that letter didn't make any sense to me. That letter didn't add up to anything. And I'm looking at what's here now, and I'm taking it seriously. Calen, can you...come with me.

Austin: And walks towards storage, because there's no brig here. They don't have a jail. That's not what they do. Omerra says:

Austin (as Omerra): We're gonna look into this all the way. [hesitates]

Austin: Talking as best as possible just to Lyke and not to Duvall.

Art: [feigning ignorance] Why? What? What's happening?

Austin: Who could say?

Keith (as Lyke): [hushed] The bugs. You're too many bugs right now.

Art (as Duvall): Hey, I'm involved in this conversation.

Austin: You really are. You know, you really are. You are incredibly involved in this conversation.

Art: [laughs] You're being so rude.

Austin (as Omerra): If you're right about this, [sighs] then I don't even know where to begin.

Keith (as Lyke): Let Pickman back in.

Austin (as Omerra): But you're gonna have to let us deal with this our way.

Austin: And Calen walks with Erm into the storage room, and Erm locks the door and leaves the key in the...you know, leaves the key in the keyhole basically, on the outside. You know, the

way you do sometimes, when you're like I've gotta unlock this door a lot but I'm gonna leave the key in it.

Keith: Right, yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: My old house didn't have a door handle, it just had a lock and a fixed knob.

Austin: Right, yes.

Keith: So I just always had a key in it.

Austin: Working as the handle effectively.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Maybe that's the situation, yeah.

Keith: Yeah. When they're closing the door, I want to shout towards them like:

Keith (as Lyke): He killed your friend! He turned your friend into a train!

Austin: No, Erm is still on this side. Erm locked the...

Keith: Oh, okay. Erm locked—

Austin: Erm comes back out. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Okay. I thought they were going in to like interrogate...

Austin: No, no, no.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Like temporary imprisonment.

Keith: Got it. Gotcha.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: So then I don't do that.

Austin: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Art: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Austin: Erm comes back over.

Austin (as Erm): Well, listen. This doesn't really stop any of the major situation, which is that train's still gonna try to come kill us tonight.

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah, but the train is your friend.

Austin (as Erm): Well, why is my friend trying to kill me?

Keith (as Lyke): I don't know. When you get turned into a train, maybe you lose a little bit of yourself? Maybe it's revenge because Calen turned them into a train and that's shitty to do? And so you're a train and you're like I'm gonna go get revenge? Maybe it's trying to stop this from happening again? I don't know.

Austin (as Erm): What do you want me to do? Wave a big flag that says "we figured it out"?

Keith (as Lyke): Pickman and Duvall were on the train, and Fezh let them go, so maybe.

Austin (as Erm): ...Maybe. Well, we gotta talk to Calen, don't we?

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah.

Austin (as Erm): You two—

Keith (as Lyke): If it does turn into a fight, you should consider letting Pickman back in.

Austin (as Erm): We're gonna deal with it without Pickman. Pickman had every opportunity to come to me, ranking member of the Shape Knights here, and chose instead to break into a fellow Shape Knight's room and accost them and attempt to kill them.

Keith (as Lyke): Well, his door was open.

Austin (as Erm): The door was closed.

Keith (as Lyke): No, it was— but we just opened it.

Austin (as Erm): Well, there you go.

Art: What?

Austin (as Erm): You want people opening your things, taking your stuff? Hmm?

Keith (as Lyke): Well, if I didn't want them taking it, I'd lock it.

Austin (as Erm): Pickman didn't even come to me, not once.

Keith (as Lyke): No. I did—

Austin (as Erm): You did, and I don't know you. No offense, but I don't know you from...

Keith (as Lyke): But you didn't do anything, Erm.

Austin (as Erm): I don't know you. You're not a Shape Knight.

Keith (as Lyke): [sighs] Well.

Austin (as Erm): Pickman should have come to me, either before breaking into the lab or after. I'm not one of those "it's easier to apologize than ask for permission" people.

Art: What fuckin' mafia movie bullshit is going on with this...

Austin: The Shape Knights are a gang! We've been calling them a gang the whole time!

Keith: They are a gang. [pause] But they're a gang who are supposed to value—

Austin: Pickman's father was literally a rum runner! [Austin and Jack laugh] That's the type of people that they attract.

Jack: Pickman was a rum runner right up until the incident.

Austin: Yeah! Right up until thirty years on a train and then moving directly into hanging out with the Shape Knights. This is the sort of people who they recruit.

Jack: Pickman's just a—

Art: I understand you believe what you're saying, but you have not convinced me.

Austin: Okay.

Jack: Pickman is just a grumpy Shape Knight, right?

Austin: Yeah! Yeah.

Jack: Most of them are like this. Well, maybe not exactly like this, but...

Austin: Or Bucho. Think about Bucho.

Jack: Yeah. Although Pickman and Bucho—

Austin: Two-step Bucho—

Jack: Pickman and Bucho are like this.

Austin: I guess. Bucho has a little more flair than Pickman.

Jack: Oh, no, I mean they're...I think Pickman likes Bucho.

Austin: Oh, I see, yeah.

Keith: I think I'm done with Erm, but I'm gonna say, you know.

Keith (as Lyke): I get that Pickman didn't follow your rules, but maybe you should be concerned that Pickman cared more that your friend murdered your other friend than you are, *buddy*.

Austin: [imitating tone] Argh.

Jack: [laughs] Spoken like somebody without compel.

Austin: Yeah. [laughs] Exactly. Spoken like somebody who doesn't want to roll any dice right now. Just kind of grumbles at you as you leave. You know, actually, I think what you just said...I think Omerra's gonna try to slap you.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: To say that a stranger cared more about the dead friend than this group did is too far for Omerra. Are you gonna try to dodge that or are you just gonna take that slap? This is not a gauntlet hand slap.

Keith: Right.

Austin: This is just a regular human hand slap.

Keith: Regular slap.

Austin: Yeah. I'm not gonna give you—

Keith: With Kill!

Austin: No.

Keith: Is this with— no? Okay.

Austin: No. This is with compel. [chuckles]

Keith: This is a compel slap? Okay.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: God, with kill. That thing where you manage to cook a chicken by slapping it at 3,500 miles an hour. [Keith laughs]

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: Have you seen this?

Austin: Yes.

Keith: I mean, I guess I'll—

Austin: The thing he's gonna try to basically tell you is: if what you are telling us is true...

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I mean, I guess I would say, do you try to resist that slap first? Or does it just hit you out— just in terms of characterization and flavor here.

Keith: I don't know that...well, the thing that Omerra doesn't know that I only briefly alluded to is that I went to Erm yesterday to try to tell this to him.

Austin: Yeah, totally, but that's not...Omerra doesn't give a fuck about that.

Keith: So I'm going to try to avoid it.

Austin: Okay.

Keith: I'm gonna try to avoid it, and if I successfully avoid it, I'm going to say that, and if I don't successfully avoid it, then I'm not gonna.

Austin: Sure. Give me an evade.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Evade, technology.

Keith: So that's just evade...

Austin: Standard, yeah.

Keith: Standard. Roll.

Austin: That's a four. You take two blood stress as you get slapped. Actually, take two mind stress as you get slapped across the face.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: This isn't about hitting you, hurting you. This is about your feelings. And what she says to you is:

Austin (as Omerra): How dare you. I don't know you from any other stranger out in the wasteland. You come here and you tell us one of our own has betrayed us in the most abominable way possible, has broken our trusts not just once, not just twice, but nightly for the last month. And you rub it in our faces that we were deceived? Truly, I hope no one counts you among their friends. The Republic's better without you, and we'll be better without you too. I can't believe— [frustrated] mmm.

Jack: Wait, hold on. Just so I'm...we're right, right?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Yes.

Jack: Like they had, you know...that's the tragedy of this, is that...

Austin: But you just said...in other words, what he's saying is you...how can you be mad at them for trusting their friend after they lost another one of their friends? Are you going around—and maybe she says this outright.

Austin (as Omerra): If you ever lose one of your number, the Blackwick Group, well, I hope you don't pull knives on each other the first night. But maybe you will. Maybe your own trust doesn't run as deep as ours did. Little man like you keeps secrets, doesn't he? [someone snorts]

Keith (as Lyke): I'm taller than you.

Austin (as Omerra): No you're not.

Keith: Am I not?

Austin: No. Especially not in these heels.

Keith: I was just guessing.

Austin: Yeah. Omerra's tall.

Keith: I don't have a canonical height. I'm eight feet.

Austin: I guess that's true. You could be— yeah, you could be eight feet. [Keith laughs] But Omerra is eight feet four in these heels! [Jack laughs] Yeah, no fallout from that, just the mind stress. And the two of them go into the storage room.

Jack: Oh, this is miserable. These poor fuckers.

Art: Yeah, this has really gotten out of hand. And now I don't think my plan is gonna work.

Jack: It was a good plan, too!

Keith: What was your plan?

Jack: You could propose it to them, right?

Art: Well, they don't trust us anymore, and it really I think relied on trust.

Austin: What was the plan?

Art: That we would say we were gonna help them, catch the train, and then we just weren't gonna help them and let the train take care of them.

[Timestamp: 1:30:04]

Austin: [laughs] Oh, you were gonna do something untrustworthy. I understand. [Jack laughs] You were gonna kill these people, most of whom were innocent. Half of them— yeah, most of them. Two of three. With Katonya, four. Plus the Toll Collectors.

Art: Yeah, I owe a favor to my friend the train.

Austin: Oh my god.

Jack: What Calen is doing...I'm not even here.

Austin: No. Mm-hmm.

Jack: This is Pickman's...what's that great game that we played, Austin, where you can summon a monologue from a character? Good Society.

Austin: Good Society, yeah.

Jack: Pickman on the road is just like: what Calen is doing is an abomination.

Keith: Right.

Jack: This is beyond heresy. This is like...

Austin: Oh, it's the worst. It's the worst of the worst.

Keith: Yeah. The thing that they're...they think that...they're mad at us because they think that we are judging them for not having caught them sooner, but really I was just trying to get you...I was like, you should've heard us out before kicking you out, which is like...

Jack: I appreciate it. But they—

Keith: I still think that's true, but you got a major fallout, so they had to.

Jack: They're tight.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: I can understand where their anger...and I think that's what makes it sad for me, is that I can understand where they're coming from here.

Austin: Right.

Jack: At the same time, the guy that they are saying, "no, look," did something—

Austin: Also, the thing that they saw was you threatening to throw someone down a flight of stairs.

Keith: Right, but what they said—

Jack: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: And one of their own.

Keith: What they said is essentially there's nothing that Calen could have done that's bad enough for you to have done that, which...

Austin: Without coming to Erm first, yes.

Keith: Right. Which...you know.

Austin: That's what it means to be a Shape Knight for them. That is the loyalty.

Keith: You're allowed to think that. I think that's wrong.

Austin: Right, right.

Jack: Yeah, that's what it means to be a Shape Knight *to them*.

Austin: Or, wait, that's not what they're saying. They're not saying that there is nothing. They're saying you were not in any imminent harm, in threat of imminent harm. Maybe there are situations where that's it, but going into the room to pick up a sleeping person—

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: —and threaten to throw them down the stairs is as step too far when you're a Shape Knight to another Shape Knight.

Keith: Right, yeah.

Austin: Yes, specifically.

Jack: From their perspective.

Keith: But I'm not a Shape Knight. I don't care about the Shape Knight stuff.

Austin: No, no, of course you're not, no. But you're not the one who got exiled.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Sitting by the track, watching the moon, smoking a cigarette. [chuckles]

Austin: Yeah, the moon is now crossing a second one of these suns.

Keith: Hey, why don't we just go and call the...you have your flashlight. Why don't we just go further down and call the train away?

Austin: Oh, it doesn't...it's not like a radio.

Keith: Oh, is it not a bat signal?

Austin: No.

Jack: It's to stop it when you see it, right?

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: It's like you're flashing a lantern at it, basically.

Austin: Yeah, yeah.

Keith: Oh. So maybe then the reverse, we go further up the track and stop it before it reaches the station.

Austin: Just start walking west.

Art: I'm not fond of this idea. I don't have a better idea, but I'm not fond of this idea. [chuckles]

Austin: Duvall, you should take the...I'm guessing you're holding onto it. Oh, no, you gave it all over. Nevermind. You had the thing you could have destroyed for a moment there.

Jack: Ah, shit, the fucking book?

Art: Oh.

Austin: The book, yeah, the manuscript for your thing, but then y'all gave it...

Art: Well, it felt important to use it at the time.

Austin: Yeah, I get it. I get it.

Keith: Yeah, I mean, I guess it's, you know, do we want to go talk to the train? The train seems willing to talk at least. I don't—

Art: Well, I don't know about that.

Keith: It doesn't feel like it's gonna do a pressure on us, but it might. Like, if we use the flashlight, it doesn't seem like we're gonna have to roll to board, is what I'm saying.

Art: We could sure find out.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: They can't make us get on. [chuckles]

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: Alright. I'll try that. We can go and try this.

Austin: Alright. You begin heading west towards the mountains. It's a slow, hot day.

Keith: Night.

Austin: Not yet. I mean, it won't be. It'll be the moon will be out.

Keith: Right.

Austin: In the day, you know? And it is not long until you see the smoke coming from the *Red Zephyr* express getting closer and closer. Once it's in sight, do you flash it the signal?

Art: Yeah, mm-hmm.

Austin: And it comes to a stop. It is in its exploded train pipe engine form, not its werewolf form or its wolf face front form. And as it gets closer, you can see that it is literally using its busted open front pipes as tendrils the way an insect might to find its way, you know? They're like feelers.

Art: Mmm.

Austin: Or like a mole's nose, you know what I'm talking about?

Keith: Oh, like a star— yeah.

Jack: Oh, like a star mole?

Art: Yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah, it's like that. But it comes to a stop. Doors open.

Keith: I go on.

Jack: I'm not here, right? I'm further up the...

Austin: Oh, i thought you were with the group.

Keith: Oh, I thought you were here.

Art: Oh, I thought you were, yeah.

Jack: Oh, okay.

Keith: Which is kind of why I was surprised you didn't say anything about...

Austin: This plan.

Keith: ...wanting to just go back on the train.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Art: Yeah, would you like to object to this plan? [chuckles]

Jack: I think that what you are doing is extremely dangerous.

Keith: Yep.

Jack: But I...Pickman is...

Keith: Seems fun though, right?

Jack: Nope. [chuckles]

Art: That's what you're gonna say?

Jack: Pickman is sulking, I think. She's angry. And so I think there's a bit of her that's just like, [bitterly] alright, fuck it. Yep, let's board the train. Great. What's the next good scheme?

Keith: On the train, am I getting drawn on?

Austin: The flashlight has prevented the pressure from hitting you at this point.

Keith: Okay. So I can't...

Austin: No. You're not getting drawn on.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: As you enter the train, it seems like it's stable, and it doesn't seem...the various images of the interior before have been—at this point, with not full moonlight on it—have been replaced with just a train interior.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Jolyon is there, working to patch up the damage you did as you come on board, Pickman.

Jack: Just a glance in their direction, and then to Lye:

Jack (as Pickman): That's the ghost that the train made.

Austin (as Jolyon): Not a ghost. I'm still not a ghost.

Keith (as Lyke): Well, ghost or not, same to me.

Austin (as Jolyon): Leo, you brought a new friend.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah, this is Lye.

Austin: Reaches out their hand to shake yours.

Keith: Sure, I shake it.

Austin: They're in full train operator outfit now, little vest and a tie on, you know?

Keith: Okay.

Art: Oh, with that hat?

Austin: The hat, yeah, the whole vibe.

Keith: Nice.

Austin: Hat's off. Hat's under the shoulder, or under the elbow.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Or not the elbow, the armpit, between the arm to shake the hand.

Keith: Yeah, where you wear a hat when you gotta shake a hand or work.

Austin: Yeah, you know exactly what I'm talking about.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: But then leaves it off and then puts it up on a hat hook, you know? Says:

Austin (as Jolyon): Come on in. I'll pour you all some tea.

Austin: Train begins to start up again.

Art: Is she coming through yet?

Keith (as Lyke): Hey, we should pause here. We should wait if you can.

Austin (as Jolyon): You're asking me to stop the train?

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah, we should chat about the train, and we shouldn't go closer towards the station.

Austin (as Jolyon): I'm not— [sighs] Train goes where it wants to go, friend.

Keith (as Lyke): Okay.

Art (as Duvall): You can't talk to the train?

Austin (as Jolyon): [loudly, to train] It would be great if we didn't go east. These folks want to talk. Eh, doesn't seem like it's listening.

Keith: Okay. If Pickman had rolled a discern on the writing thing...

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Presumably, it would have said something?

Austin: I don't know.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: You have to have—

Keith: It's not happening to me.

Austin: It is not happening to you.

Keith: Can I roll discern, maybe occult, and see if I can...oh, or smell magic and see if there's anything that I can tell that *would be* writing but isn't? [Jack chuckles]

Austin: No.

Keith: No? Okay.

Austin: I mean, yes, you can use your smell. This place is covered in magic.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: This is the magic of a particular...this smells like a room that someone with very strong perfume used to be in, and you're at the very edges of where you can still pick up their scent.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: But no, it's not doing that thing to you right now.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: There's a place where you could have read that, even before where you were. You just weren't in the right place for it, you didn't get the writing on you, the writing was somewhere else that no one was in a position to see at that point.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: I guess I'll let you...if you really want to make it, you can give me a discern occult roll, and I'll juice up a way for you to see it.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Standard.

Keith: Occult, standard..

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Do I have mastery from the smell or no?

Austin: No, it has nothing to do with the smell, unfortunately.

Keith: Ten!

Austin: Hey, there's a crit. You notice it looking out the window. You're up a little higher here, 'cause you're in the train, and you're able to see all of the randomness of the track is in fact not random at all. It's script and writing over each other again and again.

Jack: Oh, wow.

Austin: And it says: "Free me." Over and over and over again, overlapping itself. All of the twisted track in this whole area.

[Timestamp: 1:40:09]

Keith: Huh.

Austin: Over and over again.

Keith: I definitely show everyone.

Austin: Cleaning a glass, Jolyon says:

Austin (as Jolyon): Yeah. It is what it is.

Keith (as Lyke): How?

Austin (as Jolyon): Can't get a train off a track, can you?

Keith (as Lyke): I mean, can't you?

Austin (as Jolyon): I mean, is it a train at that point or is it something else? It's a train, it's just not a working train, I suppose.

Art (as Duvall): Pickman had a lot of thoughts about this before, I don't...

Jack (as Pickman): You can't leave the Shape.

Jack: I think Pickman is...there is moisture in Pickman's eyes. I think something here is very affecting to them.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: Yeah, and I think they just blink it away.

Austin: I think that they pour you a cup of coffee without you asking and hand it to you with a little metal pot of cream or milk or something, a little metal pourer, you know? Don't say anything. They don't ask you if you want one. They just put it in front of you. It's yours to drink if you want it, you know?

Keith (as Lyke): Even the train doesn't want to be on the train, huh?

Austin (as Jolyon): No, the train is the train. I mean... [sighs] I don't know. I'm new to this thing.

Jack (as Pickman): Okay, ghost.

Austin (as Jolyon): Not a ghost, again. [Keith laughs softly] You keep calling me it, and I would just love a little respect.

Keith (as Lyke): I don't think it matters whether you're a ghost or not.

Austin (as Jolyon): It matters, as the person who it is. Not a ghost.

Jack (as Pickman): I...don't know how to tell you that what has been done to you cannot be undone.

Austin (as Jolyon): Are you talking to the train now, or you talking to me?

Jack (as Pickman): I'm talking to you.

Austin (as Jolyon): You have it wrong. You have it wrong. This is me telling you you got it wrong. Talk to the train if you want to talk to the train. The train *hired* me.

Jack (as Pickman): How do I talk to the train?

Austin (as Jolyon): Well, we got a suggestion box. [Keith and Art laugh] I'll get you some paper. You need a pen?

Jack (as Pickman): Yep.

Austin (as Jolyon): Some ink? Yeah, okay, give me a second.

Austin: Goes into a little compartment, produces a little stack of *Red Zephyr Express* letterhead.

Art: Oh, are the pens like hotel pens with the name?

Austin: They...

Jack: It's like a little...

Austin: No, because I think it's a...well, yeah, it is, but it's actually just a very fancy fountain pen.

Art: Mmm.

Austin: But it has "R.Z.E." on it for *Red Zephyr Express*. That's the closest—

Keith (as Lyke): Can I have one?

Austin (as Jolyon): No.

Keith (as Lyke): Oh.

Austin (as Jolyon): I'm sorry. There's only a few. Getting them out here seems like it would be a real hassle.

Keith (as Lyke): Do you use them a lot? I guess you wouldn't know. You're new.

Austin (as Jolyon): New, you know? I don't want to give away a pen and then need a pen, you understand.

Jack (as Pickman): [deep, thoughtful breath]

Austin (as Jolyon): So go ahead. Write it a letter.

Jack (as Pickman): Duvall, I think I've been wrong about... [Austin and Keith laugh]

Art (as Duvall): About?

Jack (as Pickman): About what this is. I don't know what this is.

Art (as Duvall): Okay.

Jack (as Pickman): I'm sorry if I've been disrespectful.

Austin (as Jolyon): I'm Jolyon. I knew Duvall in Aldomina, the old days. We went to school together, and then I died, and I went to hell, and a train brought me back. It hired me.

Keith (as Lyke): You went to hell?

Austin (as Jolyon): Yeah.

Keith (as Lyke): [softly] That blows. [Art laughs]

Jack (as Pickman): It didn't hire you metaphorically. You're not saying "hired..."

Austin (as Jolyon): I cannot speak more clearly.

Jack (as Pickman): There was a contract?

Austin (as Jolyon): There was not a contract. You know we can't sign contracts.

Jack (as Pickman): I'm sorry.

Austin (as Jolyon): There was an agreement that we arrived at. Easy for me to arrive at when I'm in hell. The train had a representative. I agreed with the representative.

Keith (as Lyke): Who was the representative?

Jack (as Pickman): Who was the representative?

Austin (as Jolyon): Big fuckin'...

Keith (as Lyke): Big.

Austin (as Jolyon): Ojantani...

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah.

Austin (as Jolyon): Motherfucker. Armor like yours.

Keith (as Lyke): [hushed] What did they say?

Austin (as Jolyon): They said they couldn't come back themselves, but I could. It was within the train's power. And so the train hired me.

Jack (as Pickman): Oh my god, you're Jolyon. You're actually them.

Austin (as Jolyon): Oh my god! Oh my god! [Keith and Art laugh] [??? 1:44:45] I have been saying that I'm Jolyon for as long as I can say anything to you people. Leo, you gotta hang around with smarter folks!

Keith (as Lyke): Hey, I believed you!

Austin (as Jolyon): Thank you. Sorry I can't give you the pen. It's not a personal thing. Again, it's a little awkward, because I know I'm supposed to...

Keith (as Lyke): I got it, no.

Austin (as Jolyon): Kind of be a host in all this.

Keith (as Lyke): If you had been here a week, I think you'd give me the pen, but since it's only been a day, I won't hold it against you.

Austin (as Jolyon): Yeah! Not even a day, we just met! Ask me again in a few days. I mean, I wouldn't want to be on board for a few days, honestly, if I was you, but eh, that's second to the point. Anyway, you gonna write that letter?

Jack (as Pickman): [sighs]

Jack: Big swig of coffee, just drinks half the thing of coffee, puts it down. And yeah, I think Pickman writes with some sort of hesitation. [Art laughs] Clearly not...Pickman has not written a lot of letters.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: But writes...god, what do they...

Austin: Was there a letter writing practice when you were stuck on the train? Did you ever write letters when you were on the train for years?

Jack: We wrote...most of the people...this was a game that was played by the heiress and the other people.

Austin: Mmm, right.

Jack: This wasn't really a game that Pickman was involved with, but there was a kind of letter writing game that was played out of despair, where people would write each other letters, and first they would write letters as each other and post them between the different carriages and like, "ooh, I've received a letter," and read the letter.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Jack: And then they would write them as characters. you know, they'd be like, "oh I'm playing the so-and-so, and I'm on a train journey from wherever to wherever."

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: And eventually they would loop back around to basically writing as themselves again. And these letters let them, I assume, express the sort of horror and fear of what they were feeling when they felt like they couldn't do it with their voices.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: And Pickman...you know, sort of was ancillary to this game really, I think.

Austin: Yeah.

Jack: You know, maybe played a couple of rounds, but was like, I'm fifteen, this is the worst thing on the planet.

Austin: Uh huh.

Jack: But yeah, no, i think she writes: "I am sorry, but there is no going back. You have become a creature of fire and majesty."

Keith: Hey, you don't know there's no going back.

Jack: I...

Keith: This is the first time this has happened!

Jack: "I am sorry for where you are, and I hope that you become violent and magnificent." No signature, just folds it up and is like:

Austin (as Jolyon): Put that in the suggestion box.

Austin: Give me a compel technology. Take mastery. You've written a pretty good letter.

Jack: Standard, based on the rules where it's not trying to attack us?

Austin: Standard. Yeah, not currently. [pause]

Jack: [relieved] Ah.

Austin: Success. Take no stress. It comes to a slow stop.

Austin (as Jolyon): Well, I guess we're not going back to the Bell Metal tower.

Jack (as Pickman): I can't. They banished me.

Austin (as Jolyon): In a way, they banished everyone here, huh? This train included. Well, where are you headed?

Keith (as Lyke): Different train.

Jack (as Pickman): Yep.

Austin (as Jolyon): A connection you're trying to catch?

Jack: Pickman...bringing up the *Grand Cormorant* was such an error before—

Austin: Mmm.

Jack: —that they are noticeably biting their lip.

Keith: Oh, I brought it up. That was me.

Jack: Yeah, but then I pushed it, and then I tried to throw the guy down the stairs.

Keith: Yeah.

Jack: Nothing good came of me... [pause] Y'all can bring it up if you want. I'm just not going to be the one to say [??? 1:49:04]

Keith: I'll say it, yeah.

Keith (as Lyke): The *Grand Cormorant Limited*. It has an egg sac we're looking for.

Austin (as Jolyon): Oh, the *Grand Cormorant*. An egg sac. I don't know anything about an egg sac.

Keith (as Lyke): [softly] Damn.

Austin (as Jolyon): What I will say is I looked at the records, and it seems like that thing is headed due in Sapodilla a couple days from now. I bet we could catch it, or at least get to Sapodilla soon after. I know it doesn't wrap everything up back at Bell Metal.

Keith (as Lyke): Ugh, they were extremely uncool.

Jack (as Pickman): That's okay. There's plenty of time. Sangfielle is small. I will run into Calen again.

Austin (as Jolyon): That seems...I don't know this Calen person, but that seems likely.

Jack (as Pickman): They did this to the *Red Zephyr*.

Keith (as Lyke): It used to be their friend.

Art (as Duvall): Well...

Austin (as Jolyon): Old friends, huh? Old friends have ways of running into each other again, huh, Leo?

Art (as Duvall): [chuckles] Yeah.

Austin (as Jolyon): I'm gonna go to the—

Keith: Are you still a lot of bugs? [laughs]

Austin: No, I think probably not a lot of...well. Was that an immediate or was that an ongoing? It was ongoing in the sense that I could use it whenever. You can clear that now, 'cause I've used it to help ruin your relationship with the Shape Knights.

Art: I didn't even copy it over, because you said you were using it right away.

Austin: Okay, good. That's fine. Jolyon says:

Austin (as Jolyon): I'm gonna go see which way the engine's pointed.

Austin: And before they can even get to the engine room, the train begins to start up again, and as it does, it slips into the moonlight. And the world around you comes alive again, as it did the first time you came on board, except now you know where you are and you know what you are looking at, and it is snapshots of someone's life. Fezh, young, at home in Ojantan. The religious icons that they would have worshipped as a child, the avatars they hoped to meet in the street. Drawings of local flora, as is the way there to practice artwork. Images of the Shape Knight headquarters where they first learned the trade, where they first met Calen, where they first came into and earned the armor. Images of time spent in Sapodilla, time spent among friends and loved ones nearby, maybe time spent away from work, time spent relaxing. An image out the window of a lake and the suns drifting beyond the horizon. And finally, images of Bell Metal Station. The room, again, like a submarine turned to a home, warm and cold at the same time, and growing ever more distant.

[Music plays: [Sangfielle](#) by Jack de Quidt]