

Spring in Hieron 34: The Variation of Natural Life

Transcriber: Terin

AUSTIN WALKER: It's been a few days since your return from fighting the Advocate in the Mark of the Erasure. Many of your friends have already left, traveling south towards what was once Marielda, then the City of First Light, now, Malle's Fist, where they aim to confront Fela Malle, the leader of the Ordenna Impetus, who has occupied that city. But here, in the Last University, things continue at peace. In some ways, I think that the very space of the University feels at ease, knowing that the Advocate has been dealt with. And in fact, I think maybe we come in on a party. Lem, you promised Emmanuel that you would bring back some meat. (chuckles)

JACK DE QUIDT: Mmm.

AUSTIN: What did you bring back, and what is he turning it into? For this big banquet?

JACK: It's, um, you know sometimes there are, you know, like, hog roasts? Where there's a whole hog roasted?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And there's like a whole hog roasting apparatus?

KEITH CARBERRY: On a spit.

JACK: On a spit and everything?

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: I think that it's this except because the dragon is both so impossibly big, and just impossible to bring home,

AUSTIN: (overlapping) (laughs) Uh huh.

JACK: And B: Once you take chunks of meat off it, they're not really recognizable as from a dragon anymore?

AUSTIN: (laughs) Right.

JACK: It's just a hog roast apparatus with an absolutely vast piece of meat on it. It looks like a fucking Doner kebab-

(Austin and Sylvia laugh)

JACK: -in terms of, it's just like... you would look at it, and it's not that you look at and get no information about it was - what it was - you get some valuable information, which is: whatever that thing was attached to, was GIGANTIC.

AUSTIN: Amazing. Great.

KEITH: Can I add some real life... roasting an animal on a spit experience?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: (overlapping) Oh hell yeah.

KEITH: So I was at a party where we roasted a whole lamb. And the thing about roasting a whole lamb is that you, I don't know if you can or not. We were not able to roast the whole thing at once, cause fire is really hot and a whole lamb is really big.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Mmm.

KEITH: So what happened was that like, we would take, we were eating the lamb layer by layer.

(Austin laughs)

KEITH: Because it would be done on the outside and not on the inside. And so we kept like, having to take the lamb off the fire, and ta- I could only imagine this would be exacerbated by it being a whole dragon.

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

JACK: Mm hmm. Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh. God. Well, that is happening right now. I actually think, I actually think that like, there's a degree to which Emmanuel doing this is Emmanuel not knowing how else to deal with this.

(Keith laughs)

JACK: Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: And so we just get a lot of Emmanuel being like:

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): This is fine. This is exactly what I had imagined, this is perfect. This is going to be great.

(Keith laughs)

JACK: He's just like, "I know how to cook beef."

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): I, yeah. This is not quite beef.

(Keith continues laughing)

JACK: This is just forty times the size.

AUSTIN: (laughs) (sighs) Welcome to Friends at the Ta-

JACK: (interrupting) But it smells great.

(Austin laughs)

JACK: Oh, sorry.

(Keith laughs)

AUSTIN: Nah, it's fine.

JACK: No no, please, go ahead.

AUSTIN: Perfect. It smells great.

JACK: That's all I had.

AUSTIN: There are sauces...

KEITH: (overlapping) There, what is it, what's the protein that it's closest to? What is dragon like?

AUSTIN: What is dragon like?? Alligator?

KEITH: Is it like...

SYLVIA CLARE: Probably?

AUSTIN: Right?

KEITH: I think it's like...

JACK: (overlapping) No, I mean...

SYLVIA: Hmm...

KEITH: I think it's like duck.

JACK: Fuckin... I'll eat the hell out of that.

[Jack de Quidt's "[Something](#)" begins playing]

AUSTIN: Like, it could be like duck, yeah. Uh huh.

KEITH: Dark meat... like almost, more beef-y...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah, it's definitely a dark meat. Yeah.

SYLVIA: I guess it's like, are dragons closer to birds, or lizards, is the question here?

JACK: Now this is a question!

SYLVIA: Yeah.

KEITH: Dragon really is a bird-lizard!

JACK: Or snakes.

KEITH: If you think about it!

AUSTIN: Wow. (laughs) I hadn't. I hadn't until now thought about it.

(Sylvia and Austin laugh)

["Something" finishes playing]

AUSTIN: Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical world building, smart characterization, and fun interaction between good friends! I'm your host, Austin Walker, we are continuing our game of Dungeon World by Sage LaTorra and Adam Kobel. Joining us today, Keith J. Carberry.

KEITH: Hi, my name is Keith J. Carberry, you can find me on Twitter @KeithJCarbbery, you can find the let's plays that I do at youtube.com/RunButton.

AUSTIN: Sylvia¹ Claire.

SYLVIA: Hey, I'm Sylvia, you can find me on Twitter @CaptainTrash, and you can listen to my show, Emojidrome, on your podcast app of choice.

AUSTIN: And Jack de Quidt.

JACK: Hi! I'm Jack, you can find me on Twitter @notquitereal, and buy any of the music featured on the show at <http://notquitereal.bandcamp.com>.

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

AUSTIN: So, everyone is, as I said, back, and there's this big feast, everyone's having some dragon meat. There is- I guess also we should note that the dragon, like, we... I think we specifically said like, claws or teeth came back to be made into stuff, right? And I th-

KEITH: Well there was a, there is a buria- another, a second burial at the site.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) There was a burial of the bu- the bulk of Samol's bones, but I also think that there was some sort of trophy that, that someone could forge into, like, Stornras Glasseye, who is a name we have not said in months and months, but he's been around, and I'm adding him to my list of NPCs right now. Stornras can totally, can totally like, turn that into something, right?

JACK: What do we want him to turn it into?

AUSTIN: I dunno?

JACK: Is this Ephrim's choice?

SYLVIA: (quietly) Oh god.

AUSTIN: Probably?

KEITH: (indignantly) Why? What??

SYLVIA: (laughs) Yeah. Well... I'm in charge, that's the why!

JACK: Oh I said "Is this Ephrim's choice?" not "Should this be Ephrim's choice?"

KEITH: (overlapping) What does that even mean? What are you talking about?

SYLVIA: Um... yeah, I don't know if it would, I feel like... I'd probably ask you guys, who helped me kill it, 'cause you guys get free dibs.

AUSTIN: (laughs) Ohh, who helped you- who helped *you* kill it?

SYLVIA: No, like, you know... all of you guys helped *me* kill it.

AUSTIN: Right, uh huh. (laughs)

SYLVIA: So I definitely get consultation there. But if not, it'd probably be something that's like, passed along to Corsica, and our like, military forces. Right?

AUSTIN: Right. I-

JACK: It's wild, it's like, you know when... when you get like, a sofa delivered or something? And the people come into the house and they're like "Where do you want, where do you want it?"

and they put it down? It's like, someone showed up with some huge pieces of dragon, and was like, "Yeah, what should we, uh... turn it into? What do you think?"

AUSTIN: (laughs) Good question. I, I don't know- so maybe actually, maybe the real truth here is this is what happens to the dragon tooth? Is it's like, on, it's in a storage room right now? Until people can decide what the fuck it is.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And what to do with it, right?

KEITH: How big is the tooth?

AUSTIN: It's gigantic, right?

JACK: It's like the size of Hadrian!

KEITH: Like one...

AUSTIN: It's like the size of Hadrian.

KEITH: That's so big.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Hadrian's big! Someone is like,

AUSTIN (as University citizen): We should turn it into a bunch of spears.

AUSTIN: And someone else is like, Uklan Tel is like,

AUSTIN (as Uklan Tel): We could, like, turn it into dust, and the dust would be able to power all sorts of-

JACK: (overlapping) And everyone's like, "No!"

AUSTIN: Ah yeah. (laughs)

KEITH: No, shut up!

AUSTIN: Shut up, you don't get to say anything right now!

KEITH: Someone, someone punches him.

AUSTIN: Jeez. (laughs) Sunder is, I think, probably also the person who is able to be like,

AUSTIN (as Sunder Havelton): Well, as like, a component, we can do a lot more with it than as SPEARS, you idiots.

AUSTIN: Stuff like that, you know? Did I also not roll for, for loot at the end of that thing?

KEITH: (overlapping) We-

AUSTIN: Because of emotion?

KEITH: We, no, well... that's true that we didn't do that. But I had been thinking it was weird because then, when we did the gold from Ordenna.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Right, right. Which is what Ordenn- which is what the other party's off, trying to grab currently. "Trying to grab" is probably the wrong... (laughs) the wrong word, but, you know. You know, just for fun, we should, I should roll this, right? Just to... just to-

JACK: Mm! So what are we doing here?

AUSTIN: This is Treasure? We don't do this that often. But, monsters-

JACK: Because we don't fuckin' get treasure.

AUSTIN: Nah- "Monsters, much like adventurers, collect shiny, useful things. When the players search the belongings of a monster, be they on their person or tucked away somewhere, describe them honestly. If the monster has accumulated some wealth, you can roll that randomly. Start with the monster's damage die, modified if the monster is..." and then a bunch of stuff. Let me just check to see what it was. This is like a fun, lighthearted, you know? Like, hey, what if it's okay that you killed this Apocalypse Dragon?

KEITH: Every once in a while, Dungeon World is a lot like Dungeons and Dragons.

AUSTIN: It IS a lot like Dungeons and Dragons, and we just don't do it that- like, I was looking at magic items today, for a little while, and I was like, "Damn, these are, these are just like, DnD magic items, but maybe a little bit better." So this is gonna be, actually, I shouldn't have done it this way. Wow. That's a 21, is what the number is here. That is just from... so, that is "Start with the monster's damage die, modified if the monster is a hoarder." Which, actually, I guess is... no, not a hoarder. It's an Apocalypse Dragon. It's the Advocate. The Advocate isn't hoarding shit. But it-

KEITH: OTHER dragons are hoarders, but not this one.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Other dragons, not, yeah, not this one. It IS, however... Divine, which means, it... you know, I'm- it's divine in the sense of it being connected to the Heat and the Dark. It is Magical, which means that this thing is going to be magical. It is Huge... I don't think Huge addresses this? Or changes this? No, okay. So... is it ancient and noteworthy?

JACK: Yes. If it,

KEITH: (overlapping) Yeah.

SYLVIA: (overlapping) Yeah?

JACK: if something has killed Red Jack, it's ancient and noteworthy.

AUSTIN: There you go. Good call. So I'll roll another roll, 1d4. (roll) And that's a 1. So that puts up to 22. It's the best of that, it's best of 2d12, plus 9, so that I rolled a 12, so that's 21, plus 1, is 22. It... (sighs) so here's the problem.

JACK: Mmm.

AUSTIN: I rolled a, th-

JACK: What have we discovered.

AUSTIN: This chart only goes to 18. (laughs)

SYLVIA: Yeah. (laughs)

JACK: And we've rolled...

AUSTIN: 22.

(Keith laughs)

JACK: So what would get if it was 18?

AUSTIN: "A Hoard, 1d10 times 1000 coins, and 1d10 times 10 gems, worth 2d6 times 100 each."

JACK: So there's just like, a shout from the kitchen, and Emmanuel's like,

JACK (as Emmanuel): Um???

(Sylvia laughs)

AUSTIN: Well no, this is stuff we would have found earlier, right?

JACK: Oh, this isn't something in the dragon, that it has previously eaten.

KEITH: (overlapping) (laughs) It's been eating gold?!

AUSTIN: No. That would be amazing. I rolled a 3, so that's 3000 coins.

JACK: (laughs) That's a low number.

SYLVIA: I, it- (laughs)

AUSTIN: Well... listen!

(Jack laughs)

KEITH: It's a lot of gold to get for such a low number.

AUSTIN: Then there's 20 gems, and the gems are worth... (roll)

(Jack laughs)

AUSTIN: Well that's not how that works, huh. I guess it's... 1400 gold? 700- no, no, it's more than that. It's 700, (laughs) 700 times 20, is 14,000. So, a total of...

KEITH: So you have...

AUSTIN: 17,000...

JACK: (laughs) (incredulously) How much are the Ordennans offering?

AUSTIN: 100,000. (laughs)

JACK: Oh, okay, okay. So it's still...

AUSTIN: Yeah, no, they're still...

JACK: It's not worth get- calling everybody back.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah. Uh huh. Mm hmm.

(Sylvia laughs)

AUSTIN: So this is just like, stuff that you find, presumably around the fallen, Samot's fallen tower, right? And are able to also bring back? The... and I think that's probably still... the bulk of it, right? Actually, here's what I wanna give you. I'm gonna give you a, a move right now. I'm gonna give you, everyone take... there's a game we, we used to play around these parts. You might remember it. It's called "The Sprawl"?

(Jack laughs)

AUSTIN: And The Sprawl had this notion of - I was trying to see if I had The Sprawl on my computer still, and I don't, because I've changed computers so many times - of Preparation? Or, or, not Preparation, but, what was it called? What was the... like, Gear? +Gear? That you could use to get a +1 on a roll, and to give yourself something fictionally. So the three of you, you should take +Gear, and that's stuff that you've recovered... you recovered from the tower. On the...

KEITH: What do we, what do we roll, for it?

AUSTIN: Nothing, it's going to give you a plus... it's like a +1 forward, but it's a fictional +1 forward that's tied to...

JACK: Because we're minted.

AUSTIN: Some cool item that you found, and brought back here. Do you know what I mean?

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So that's like, hey, I wanna climb this thing, oh cool, I found these coo- this cool grappling hook from Samot's fallen tower. So you don't have to decide what it is yet. You just need to take +1 Gear, and today, if you need something cool, you can fuckin' cash in on that.

JACK: This is "I love it when a plan comes together", but for looting a dragon.

AUSTIN: Yes, exactly. Exactly. Exactly that.

KEITH: I mean, I have a great idea about, I'm, I might use this today.

AUSTIN: Save it.

KEITH: I might not. I might use it today.

AUSTIN: You should s- oh no, when I say "Save it", I mean save it for later this adventure.

KEITH: Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: This is, this is kinda it.

KEITH: Yeah, yeahyeahyeahyeahyeah. Yeah. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool. Alright. So, I guess this, this... party kinda goes off without a hitch. I suspect there's enough dragon meat that, here's the other thing that I think is maybe interesting. This dragon meat is gonna serve people for a while, and Emmanuel is trying to figure out a way to like... keep it... it's probably going to turn into like, a stew? That's just like, going?

KEITH: Could be some rillettes? We could make rillettes.

AUSTIN: For a while, right. Yes. Yeah, totally. There's gonna be, like... people are going to be eating dragon for... a month, you know what I mean?

KEITH: People are going to be SICK, of- (laughs)

AUSTIN: Of dragon, absolutely. But like, hey, there's a lot of people here who need food. So... so, figuring out how to stretch it. Is anything, anyone have any, any interesting conversations or get up to anything during this party? Or, or, do you want to move on? Do people have other stuff they want to get to today?

-- 15:00 --

AUSTIN: Or tonight, or tomorrow, depending on the time of day.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I can't think of anything to do at the party, personally.

AUSTIN: No big speeches about your, your great victory?

SYLVIA: Eeehhhh... no, that's what mural's gonna be for.

AUSTIN: (scoff) (laugh) Of course. Great. Good.

JACK: Are there speeches, though? Do, do, do, like, when you get a town

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: who has not had a lot of success,

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: all together to celebrate something? Like, someone from, from one of the houses next to the square stands up and gives a short speech about how something's gonna get better in that direction.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yes. Well, and I think what we get is the Red Jack, speech about what happened, that is... mostly accurate? But, where he has like, definitely made- he's definitely telling a version of the story that gives everybody equal share of the story, until Hadrian, when he gives Hadrian like, the big finale still. But like, you know. Ephrim, your spell fizzled. It didn't fizzle in the story. He tells a version of this story where, you fire this arrow and it slams into the side of the Advocate. And the Advocate knows what nobility truly looks like, or whatever. You know?

SYLVIA: Sounds right to me.

JACK: All the orcs come out of the tower

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Right. Yes, and they like go back...

JACK: and then go back in with no ontological problems whatsoever.

(Austin and Keith laugh)

AUSTIN: None, no pol- it, exactly. You didn't open any doors in such a way that now we have to deal- exactly.

AUSTIN (as Red Jack): And then the... you know, the, the Archivist Lem King -

AUSTIN: Exactl- all of that shit. So, for, for you two specifically, that's a different version of the story.

JACK: This rules, yeah.

AUSTIN: Fero, he tells you, he tells the version, he just says what happened with you, exactly right. But he does like, linger on the beauty and power of, of your jeweled serpent form, so. It's not like he is, it's not like he's underselling what you did, either.

KEITH: Can I turn on, can I turn into the dragon while he's telling this story?

AUSTIN: Do you wanna make that roll?

KEITH: Yeah I'll make that roll.

AUSTIN: Make that roll. This is the centipede serpent specifically, right?

SYLVIA: (laughs) Yeah, which dragon?

KEITH: Yeah, yeahyeahyeahyeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh. (laughs)

KEITH: Where's my... I have, I have so many moves at this point.

AUSTIN: I know, I know...

KEITH: It's hard to find the earlier ones. Ok, that's...

AUSTIN: Yeah...

KEITH: Shape, (roll) there we go.

AUSTIN: That's a 10! Alright, yeah, you totally do it! And like, you're able to do it in such a way that's like, actually, do you do like a, do you do a full-sized version

KEITH: (overlapping) Can I do it...?

AUSTIN: of it outside? Or do you do like a, room-sized version of it?

KEITH: Are, are we, are we, oh, are we not outside?

AUSTIN: I imagine...

KEITH: I just assumed that the party's outside.

JACK: I think we're in the big hall, right?

AUSTIN: (overlapping) I guess it could be outside, it's, I imagine you were in the big hall...

JACK: Or like, I think it's spilling, right?

AUSTIN: But maybe it's spilling. It's a warm, it's like a warm, late spring, (laughs) night, you know? I think, yeah, it could be spilling outside, and people like "Ooh! Ahhh!", you know?

KEITH: Yeah.

JACK: "Eat it! Eat it!"

(Austin and Keith laugh)

AUSTIN: I think, "No, not that one! Not that one. That, we ate, we're eating the other one." (laugh) Great. And it goes off, I think. It's, it's another night where people break out the guitars and start to sing, and like, everything kind of feels at peace. I think we get a shot of Samot looking on from a balcony up in the tower. We get a shot of... you know, I think, I think there's a sense of unity, felt here? We get, like, the gnolls and Chatterchin like, hanging out with, with, like, Devar, and the remaining members of the Archives that are still hanging out here? We get like, lots of interaction between different social groups happening? *Everyone* is happy the Advocate is dead, you know what I mean? The old Ordenna Dissent members are here, and are like... you know... they, are happy that we're gonna get paid off this, from old Ordenna, you know? I think maybe there's, Stornras Glasseye gets up, and even kinda says some shit to that effect? Of like,

AUSTIN (as Stornras Glasseye): AND, we are gonna

AUSTIN: you know,

AUSTIN (as Stornras Glasseye): This is gonna pay, put a huge dent in the Ordennan war chest! And we're gonna use that money to fuck em over!

AUSTIN: (laughs) And all of Ord- of, of Stornas's-

KEITH (as partygoer): YEEAHHHH!

AUSTIN: Yeah, exactly that. (laughs) Exactly that, yeah.

AUSTIN (as partygoer): HELL YEAH!

AUSTIN: So, it's, it's just a... a good party atmosphere tonight. And... then it is the next day. What do y'all getting up to now that we have moved on to a world without the Advocate? Ephrim and Fero, I know you both had some, some, some plans.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I think the first thing I wanted to do was... ask Corsica if she could send out some scouts to help find s- like, signs of where Samot went?

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, yeah. I think she says, like,

AUSTIN (as Corsica Neue): I starte- I sent those out, I sent those out when we couldn't find him that day.

AUSTIN: I think she says,

AUSTIN (as Corsica Neue): Guards locally have said they've seen him around, though. I don't think he left, I think he's just making himself scarce.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Okay. So he's here somewhere...

KEITH (as Fero): Sorry, who?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Samot.

KEITH (as Fero): Oh yeah, he was at his balcony at the, during the party.

AUSTIN: Right, you could see that as a dragon. So, you were like, flying up in the sky and could totally see that he was just in his balcony. In that moment, for sure.

SYLVIA: (sigh) I need to track this slippery god down!

AUSTIN (as Corsica Neue): We did, though, see and confirm that Severia left, went north, back to the fallen moon. At least, that's... the direction her horses went. Beyond that... other reports, it seems like there is a... a convoy coming from the east. The Stars, sending more representatives.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Alright, thank you. Let me know when those are getting close.

AUSTIN (as Corsica Neue): I will. And, again, congratulations on the Advocate. I never made you for a warrior, but... quite an achievement.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (overlapping) What can I say? You've, you've had an effect on me, Corsica.

SYLVIA: Winning smile, is... yeah, ehh.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) (laughs) Uh huh. This fuckin' guy. (sigh) Great. Anyone else getting up to stuff this morning?

KEITH: I... have a new move.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah? What's that move?

KEITH: I have the move, "The Druid's Sleep."

AUSTIN: Mm.

KEITH: And we talked about this, Austin.

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: The Druid's Sleep isn't a move I can roll, but it does allow me to take a new location as... like a new region to attune myself to.

AUSTIN: A new land, yes.

KEITH: In the same way- a new land, the same way that I am attuned to the farmland, to the mountain, I am now attuned to the Spring.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Well, so, it specifically says "The effect occurs only once", well, you learn it, right? So it's not like you only have one opportunity to talk to it, to be clear. But,

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: "The GM will tell you how long it will take, and what cost you must pay. From then on, you are considered to be born both of the soil and both lands.

KEITH: Okay. So what's my cost?

AUSTIN: So, the, the like, how long has it take, will it take, you've actually already spent that. You've already done that. That has been this season. That has been

KEITH: (overlapping) Yeah.

AUSTIN: every time you've been, like, trying to interact with it. But,

KEITH: Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: there is a greater, there is still a cost. And this is, that you actually need to talk to someone else, who knows the language already? And, from, like... what does it look like as you're trying to study, study this, or learn the language in this particular moment? Are you out in the woods? Are you talking to the big tree? What is, what is...

KEITH: So if my goal, if my goal is to tame, or... calm the Spring, I think that that means that what I have to study is, sometimes, the most relaxed plants, but also the most dangerous ones.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: I think it's both.

AUSTIN: So you're like, out in the...

KEITH: (overlapping) And seeing what's different between those, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. So I think it's while you're there... you, you... I think you can just catch the name, like, in there? I'm trying to think of like, a good, a good, like, analogy here. Do you know how... you know how, like, Eng- or not English, human languages have very distant roots?

KEITH: Mmm.

AUSTIN: That are shared, even among like, like proto-languages, you know what I mean?

KEITH: Yeah, yeahyeahyeah.

AUSTIN: Like, ancient languages that have scattered across the world in such a way, that two words can exist in languages that have very little else in common, but have an original similar root. And I think you, you trace some of that back, and the language...

KEITH: Cognates, right?

AUSTIN: Yes, yeah yeah yeah.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And... you're able to note some of that, you're like, able to sense some similarities from these different plants, that, that go back to language that feels like... that has almost a religious bent to it? You know like, if you trace back the, the, when they refer to something being good, you can't like, quite, fill, build out that whole sentence, but you actually recognize that their version of good sounds a lot like the sort of word that a member of the Church of Samoths would use for the word good? Or like, like, archaic Church of Samoths-type stuff? So, I think that you are able to put together that like, the piece of this that you need still is to speak to Alyosha. And I don't, do you know that Ephrim speaks to Alyosha? Ephrim, do people know that you have that direct connection?

SYLVIA: I... don't think I've mentioned it to anyone yet, no.

AUSTIN: Okay. So, I think, the thing that I would love to see here is kind of two, two routes crossing, two roads crossing in the street so to speak, where... (sigh) the plants guide you to the tree, Fero.

KEITH: Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: Because like, for whatever reason, it's, it's almost as if, it's almost as if each plant you talk to is another derivative sub-language, or like... dialect of this larger language?

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: And the tree is the closest, you like, literally follow it back, plant by plant- and also, you're kind of learning something else here, and this is part of figuring out the language, which

is... it's hard to tell where one plants ends and another begins. This is not "There are foxes, and there are wolves." This might be "There are teeth, and there are fingernails."

KEITH: Catdog.

AUSTIN: Right. Catdog.

(Keith laughs)

AUSTIN: But the whole, but the whole thing, right.

KEITH: The Spring, the whole Spring is Catdog.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) The whole Spring might be Catdog. (laugh) And so, Ephrim, I know you were also thinking about doing some Alyosha st- related Spring stuff this,

SYLVIA: Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: this episode. And I would love to have the two of you, like, bump into each other, in the, in the, in the farm? I should note, also, this tree is bigger again? The tree has gotten very big. It's already, it's already as big as the tower, at this point?

KEITH: Why is it getting bigger?? Do we know?

AUSTIN: No, I mean, it wants to grow.

KEITH: Is it, but it's, why is it so much better than everything else around it? At growing?

AUSTIN: Well I mean, the point I was just kinda making is, it IS everything else around it.

KEITH: Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: Right? Like, it is not- again, that's like saying why is my head bigger than my fingernail?

KEITH: Ri- okay, but why, like, but why would I have one massive foot?

AUSTIN: So there isn't one. If you take a look at the Hieron map, you'll see there's three, actually.

KEITH: Three massive feet.

AUSTIN: Three massive feet. Why do you have two, why do you have two big feet, and only one tongue? I dunno! You people, man.

KEITH: Walkin' around!

AUSTIN: Yeah! So... you know. So yeah, I think the two of you bump into each other at the Farm. I'll move us over here.

KEITH: Literally? Like, conking heads?

AUSTIN: Yeah, you literally, like, two baseball outfielders

(Keith and Sylvia laugh)

AUSTIN: running for the same flyball.

KEITH (as Fero): Oof!

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): You ever watch where you're going?

KEITH (as Fero): You know. No?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yeah, I, I did know that.

KEITH (as Fero): Um... what are you doin'?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Er... I was... coming to inspect the tree. What are you doing?

KEITH (as Fero): I was coming to inspect the tree. I'm doing, I'm doing some animal stuff.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Oh. Yeah? But,

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): with the frogs back, that didn't, the frog things that didn't really work out?

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, the fro- yeah, this is phase two.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Okay.

KEITH (as Fero): I was talking to all the different Springs, and they... I was, I was talking to all the different plants and trying to see how come some of them were very angry and dangerous, and some over them weren't, and how come some of them are big, and how come some of them are small? And I don't really know, but I do know that they all sort of sound the same? Similar, not the same.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Okay. So you're... so they... I mean, I guess that makes sense. They're all coming from the same place, right?

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah.

KEITH: Austin, what was it that, that, that, that tipped me off that I should see Alyosha about this?

AUSTIN: That, you don't know it's Alyosha.

KEITH: (overlapping) Do I know that, do I know at this point?

AUSTIN: You don't know Alyosha. But you do- or I guess that's a question, like, does the world know Alyosha's down there? Ephrim, have you shared that information?

(Sylvia sighs)

AUSTIN: Have you been like, "Hey, here's where the Spring is coming from", ever? Or has that been a private knowledge for you?

SYLVIA: I think that, again, that's been a private knowledge, because one: like... I think originally it was the fear of being like, "Oh hey, there is something... THERE from where I killed Samoths".

AUSTIN: Right. Right right right.

SYLVIA: And like, I don't necessarily advertise that I did that?

AUSTIN: Yeah. So...

SYLVIA: For the first while. And then eventually just became

KEITH: Fuckin'... state secrets.

SYLVIA: like, I should play this close to the chest. (responding to Keith) Yeah, exactly.

AUSTIN: (laughs) Um, the thing specifically, that I, that I kind of, I'm pointing at is like, you know, in the early language of Samoths, Samoths' church, and some of the terminology they use, things like, talking about warmth as being a synonym for good, you know? Or Sun, or something like that, you know what I mean?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: The ways in which the word that the, the plants have, or the feeling that the plants have that is around, you know, creation, or like, change? That it's always framed around like, ingenuity, it's always framed around cleverness. Those like, those words that get used in the Church have like, echoed into the plants.

KEITH: Okay, got it. Yeah.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) And so like, it's a familiar- so in this way, that's a, that's a line into Ephrim, because you know Ephrim is close to that church, or had been, anyway.

KEITH: Okay.

KEITH (as Fero): Ephrim, here's a question.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yeah?

KEITH (as Fero): Do you think plants can be religious? These plants, I think maybe are religious.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): You, you know, I was raised to believe that everyone can be religious, with the right convincing.

KEITH (as Fero): Even a plant? Even this big tree?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (sigh) You know, it might be easier if I just... show you something really quick?

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, sure.

SYLVIA: Can I... so now, out of character, Austin,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Can I try and use the Lore of the Forge move,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: that lets me speak to Alyosha, while like,

AUSTIN: Absolutely.

SYLVIA: there with Fero?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: In a way so he'll come with?

AUSTIN: That is exactly what I was hoping you would try, yes.

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SYLVIA: Hell yeah.

AUSTIN: How's that work?

SYLVIA: I think it's a lot of, it's like, (laughs) the very awkward moment of Ephrim just like... putting his hand on Fero's shoulder even though neither of them really want that.

AUSTIN: (laughs) Uh huh.

SYLVIA: And then, like, doing the like, stare into the tree and being transported there.

AUSTIN: Mm hmm. Give me the roll.

SYLVIA: Do I roll for that?

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

SYLVIA: I don't think I roll for that?

AUSTIN: Don't you? (clears throat)

SYLVIA: I might. I could be very wrong.

AUSTIN: This is Lore of the Forge, right?

SYLVIA: Right. Yeah. Lore of the Forge.

AUSTIN: This is a roll.

SYLVIA: I'm... yeah.

AUSTIN: Fero, you could help with this. If you want.

KEITH: (brightly) I don't know what's happening!

AUSTIN: Alright, well then, no you can't.

KEITH: No I can't!

AUSTIN: Give me a 2d6+Wisdom.

(roll)

AUSTIN: That's a 9.

SYLVIA: I, yeah. So...

AUSTIN: So that is "The GM will give you an impression. If you already know what there is to know, the GM will tell you this." So, I'm gonna say that this, that this still gives you the, this gives you the ability to like, see into the forge, and speak with Alyosha? But you have, like kind of non-physical presence there?

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So it's almost as if you find part of the big tree in the middle of the farm, that has like a, a crevice in it? I mean, it's so big that, it has... okay, you know how like your skin has, has... pores? And has like, lines on it? You know. From our scale, it's just, I'm looking at my hand right now, right? I'm looking at like, all the lines on my palm. And from my scale, like, yeah, there's a crevice there, but it's not, it's still just a hand. But if I was like, a tiny bacteria, it would be a gulf, you know what I mean?

SYLVIA: Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: This is a situation where like, the tree has gotten so big that the impressions in the bark are, you could walk through them in some places. And so like, you're able to like, go deeper towards the core of the bark of the tree, and you go down this one path, you're led down this one path, maybe the daisy leads you, and then you find like, a knot? That has been, that opens up. That there's like a knot in the, in the bark that opens up. And you can see into the forge. And you can see Alyosha there, hair...

KEITH: Sorry, is this, is this are, are we, do I feel like I'm physically moving? Or is this...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) I mean you're, at this point you've physically moved towards the interior of this tree, yes.

KEITH: Okay, okay.

AUSTIN: Then, when the door opens, it starts to feel super fucking weird. (laugh) And you're able to walk through that knot, but like, no amount of walking will get you closer at a certain point, do you know what I mean? Like, you... because you only got a 9, you cannot like, physically interact with Alyosha here. But there is... it is as if you've been transported to the forge. And the forge, for you, Fero, like, this is the first time you've seen this, but you've probably heard of the description of Samoth's forge before? And... the, like, the way it's working is that, he is like, hammering away, at this point, on like, the last remains of Maelgwyn's blood, mixed with the Heat and the Dark, to create this new... like, blossoming Springstuff.

KEITH: Mmm.

AUSTIN: And... he like, looks up at the both of you, and says...

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): Ephrim. What is it you wish to know? And why have you brought... young Fero?

KEITH (as Fero): (shocked) Wh- this was in the tree?! The whole time?!

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Not... would you, should, do you wanna explain, Alyosha? Or should I? Or, he's not actually, we're not actually in the tree. It's...

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): We are... we are communicating, but...

KEITH (as Fero): (overlapping) Wait-

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): The passage between us is... not simply physical.

KEITH (as Fero): Are you MAKING these plants?

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): (sigh) Ephrim...

KEITH (as Fero): And you KNEW he was making those plants, and you knew I have been trying to figure out what's up with these plants? You didn't tell me?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): What did I just do? This is me telling you!

KEITH (as Fero): It's been months! It's been months! It's been years!

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Thi- (sigh) This is pretty recent, still.

KEITH (as Fero): Oka... ah... (trails off, frustrated)

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): He isn't lying to you.

KEITH (as Fero): (sighs) Alright. Yeah, what's happening?

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): (sigh) The Spring...

KEITH (as Fero): I mean, about the plants. Let's-

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): But, what would you like to know?

KEITH (as Fero): The, the pl- I mean, you're... the plants are really angry. And I'm trying to make them less angry. Or I'm trying to figure it out, at least.

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): It is not that they're angry.

KEITH (as Fero): No, you're right.

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): That is good to know. I was worried, perhaps, that something had changed.

KEITH (as Fero): But they're definitely like, killing people.

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): Yes. And... that is unfortunate. But there must be something. This is the best I can do. I have... (sigh) I dreamt of the Verdant. Something... bright. Alive. Joyous. Comforting, and... collaborative? With what already was. But I was not given the tools to build that. I was given the tools for this Spring. And my options were to do nothing, and see the Heat and the Dark consume us all, or to do this. And... unlike your lord Ephrim, I was not swayed by my desire for prestige or legend. I don't need to... be

talked of as some hero. I'm doing what is necessary. And hopefully, I will be lost to history.

KEITH (as Fero): How long did it take you to decide that, these mean plants were necessary?

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): Some years. I experimented, at first, after... after the man I thought was my Lord was killed. And I found their form terrifying. But I found it robust. The only thing I've ever seen stand against the Heat and the Dark, that did not obliterate us as well. Not instantly.

KEITH (as Fero): Okay.

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): (overlapping) The only thing with the variation of natural life. The Stars stand against the Heat and the Dark, but... they are nothing like us.

KEITH: Now, here's, here's, this is out of character, I'm, like... 90% sure that Fero knows that Ephrim killed fake Samoths? I'm pretty sure I know that.

AUSTIN: Ephrim?

SYLVIA: I feel like Fero could know that at this point.

KEITH: I think that I brought it up back when everyone came back from Aubade?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Oh, yeah.

KEITH: I'm pre- I'm pretty sure

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yes, you definitely did say that.

KEITH: that I, did that, if I... yeah.

(Sylvia laughs)

KEITH: So if I, if I didn't actually know, I at least said it, in character.

AUSTIN: (laughs) Uh huh.

KEITH: (laughs) So that's, fine.

AUSTIN: So we're stuck with it.

KEITH: Okay, alright. I just wanted to make sure that like, Fero, I want to know like, what... what to, what to not know about here.

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: Actually, I want to roll, I want to roll Discern Realities.

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: I want to figure out, if I, if Fero can, can... get any sense of what is happening

AUSTIN: Sure. Give me...

KEITH: (overlapping) in here, or why the plants are coming out the way they are.

AUSTIN: Yeah, go ahead.

KEITH: Alright.

JACK: Rolling Discern Realities against a god is such a power move.

AUSTIN: Uh, eh, Alyosha's not a god. Super important to understand this.

JACK: He's like a, he's like a...

AUSTIN: He's a human being.

KEITH: (overlapping) He's a priest?

AUSTIN: He is a priest. With a good hammer. And some god's blood.

JACK: Is he going to die eventually?

AUSTIN: Absolutely.

JACK: (overlapping) Just, just like humans will?

KEITH: He's-

AUSTIN: Yes.

JACK: He's gonna hit like, 75 or whatever and that'll be the end of Alyosha?

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Ah, it'll, it'll probably be sooner than that.

JACK: Okay- (laughs)

AUSTIN: All he has been doing for a decade is, this.

JACK: Is working at, is working on a forge.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

(roll)

AUSTIN: You got an 8, so you get one of the following questions. Uh... "What happened here recently? What is about to happen? What should be- what should I be on the lookout for? What here is useful or valuable to me? Who's really in control here? What here is not what it appears to be?"

KEITH: Damn...

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

KEITH: Ssssoo...

AUSTIN: And you take +1 forward when acting on that info.

KEITH: Okay. So, just to talk through this real quick, the ones that I would really like to know, "Who's really in control here?" That could be interesting. I think that "What here is not what it appears to be?" might be crucial. And then "What should I be on the lookout for?" is a great backup. I only get one of those, so Sylvia, unless you have any thoughts, or unless you're also on rolling this, I think I'm gonna ask "What here is not what it appears to be?"

SYLVIA: Yeah, go for it.

KEITH: Okay. What here is not what it appears to be?

AUSTIN: (sigh) I need- I actually then need you to tell me what everything appears to be here. Because then I can, do you know what I mean?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I, I wanna give yo- I'm happy to give you stuff here, I just need to know...

KEITH: Alright. What it appears,

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

KEITH: is that... Alyosha... is a zealot. (laugh)

AUSTIN: Sure.

KEITH: Who... in the face of the Heat and the Dark, decided that literally anything is better, and is... genuinely tr- genuinely tried to make something good, and instead got these plants, which are not bad, but are definitely dangerous to everything that isn't the plants.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Okay, so, I think the only thing here that I would be like, "it's not what it appears to be" is that, is... (sigh) Alyosha wasn't a zealot, but was deeply, deeply faithful. Alyosha, and I think there's a sadness as he does this, that, that is like, clear on his face? And in the way he talks about this stuff?

KEITH: Yeah. I should be clear, I think there's a slight difference of, of like, for zealots, when you know for a fact that your god exists?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Right.

KEITH: It's like a slightly different sort of thing.

AUSTIN: Yes. And you're right to say, I just wanted to separate him from like, the zealots of the, of the Cult of the Dark Son, who, because they knew their god existed, were like, "And also he says we should destroy the world, fuck em' up, fam!" Whereas, when he learned that that's what his god said, he was like "You're bad, actually." Do you know what I mean?

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: There's a big distinction there. But I think that, like, you have the gist of it here. There is no... (sigh) the, I guess what I'll speak to is a little bit what Jack suggested. Where Jack was, was saying, which is like, the thing that, you could see his image and think, like "Oh, he has taken Maelgwyn's place as a new Samoths. He is, he is wielding the power of a god. He sees himself as a god." None of that is true. It is basically the thing you just said. He is a sad man who has seen the Heat and the Dark, who understands that the Heat and the Dark was urged on by the same church he belonged to. The same church that he did work for his whole life. He...

KEITH: Thinking he was following one god, but instead it was a different one.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) But inst- instead it was a different one. And, is, doing the onl- he is, he f- he was faced with a choice, right? He was left down here, and he was faced with a choice, which was try to do something, or not. He was faced with like, the Samot/Samoths choice. Do we, like, give up and kind of like, live out the rest of our days as best as we can, and let the world end? Or, you know, do we have to try? And, you know, maybe because-

KEITH: That's why I asked if he, how long it took him to decide, to...

AUSTIN: Yeah, and it was, you know. He picked up that hammer and started fuckin' around basically as soon as he could. Because of, it was urgent? But... this is not a situation where he like, stumbled- this is the decision he made. This was not like, "Uh oh. I- there's a domino effect here!" You know what I mean?

KEITH: Mmm, right.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) There's like a,

JACK: (overlapping) Ohh.

AUSTIN: "I thought I was making <blank>, but instead-" This is what he decided to make. This is what he COULD make.

JACK: (overlapping) Can... if we need to roll for this, this is not me like, asking a question that we need to roll for.

AUSTIN: Mm hm.

JACK: Can he put the hammer down?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Totally.

JACK: He could just stop.

AUSTIN: Yep.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) But it's, and this point, whatever. It's not... at this point... it's a matter of time.

KEITH: He's been doing it so long.

JACK: Right, I just, I wasn't sure whether or not it was like a situation where now, there was a sort of symbiotic relationship,

AUSTIN: (overlapping) No...

JACK: between him and the forge.

AUSTIN: No, he, he... he, there is a symbiotic relationship. But that symbiotic relationship is not, like... this is also how he makes food to eat now, you know what I mean?

JACK: Right, right, right, yeah.

KEITH: (overlapping) Yeah.

AUSTIN: But it's not a... but it's not a situation where he's like "If only I could be freed from this prison.", do you know what I mean?

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: He's doing something he thinks is-

JACK: (overlapping) It's me and devoting hundreds of hours to learning to play the piano. I'm like, "I could stop at any point

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yes.

JACK: "but it's also what I have to keep doing to get paid."

AUSTIN: Yes. But also, it's not even about, it's, it's what if you playing the piano was like, the way, the one way the world kept spinning in your mind?

JACK: Oh Jesus! (laugh)

AUSTIN: You know?

(Keith laughs)

AUSTIN: Uh huh?

JACK: We're lost. (laughs)

AUSTIN: Yeah, we're fucked. That's it. (laughs) You play well. So yeah, I think it is largely what you, what it appears to be. Like, there is no... I'm not sitting on some last minute Alyosha like, trick. The, the tragedy of Alyosha is the tragedy of Alyosha. And is, is su- he is, he is someone who has had the faith, it's a different sort of faith, to say "Better to do something than nothing at all. Better that there is something that exists, even if it is something that will make us struggle that much harder, even if it is something that will like, actively harm us. And make us have to completely change how we're alive, than to give into the Nothing. Better to struggle than to die." And that is how he has answered this, like, crisis of faith.

KEITH: This is so perfect for me.

AUSTIN: Uh huh? (laughs)

KEITH: I, I had a very goofy idea forever ago. I, I wanna give, Ephrim had some stuff to do before I continued with my thing, if Ephrim wants to do... his stuff.

AUSTIN: Yeah, Ephrim, how are, how, I'm curious, specifically, how you responded by that little jab that Alyosha gave you?

(Sylvia sighs)

AUSTIN: About, about, like, wanting to be a legend? Versus doing the right thing.

SYLVIA: Yeah...

KEITH: How's that mural coming?

SYLVIA: It's going great, actually. No... I think Ephrim's whole thing is like, what's, like... I can do both. Just because you're afraid of the spotlight doesn't mean I am.

(Austin laughs)

SYLVIA: And I'm trying to think of a good way to word that. (pause) I don't know if Ephrim actually says anything. I think he just sort of grimaces

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

-- 45:00 --

SYLVIA: And is like... and rationalizing it in his head as "Why are you listening to a man who's decided to hide away and be forgotten?"

AUSTIN: Mmm.

SYLVIA: "When he's calling you out for your shit?"

(Austin laughs)

SYLVIA: But no, it clearly got to him. (laugh)

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: I actually, the thing is, through this conversation, we've kind of... figured out what - not figured out, but like, illuminated the, some things I was thinking of doing, in a way that... makes it so I don't think I need to... talk that much with Alyosha now?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Just being there for the Fero conversation, and also just getting a grasp on... his motivations and stuff?

AUSTIN: Mm hmm. He still has some stuff to say that might help push

SYLVIA: (overlapping) Absolutely.

AUSTIN: in some directions, but we'll see. Fero, you said you had a silly thing.

KEITH: Well, it's, it's silly as a by-product.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: It's, it is, it is, at its core a serious idea that I have. It involves fulfilling my cost for,

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah.

KEITH: the Druid's Sleep. And I don't really feel like I've gotten there exactly.

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

KEITH: Like I don't...

AUSTIN: Which is learning...

KEITH: I guess I want to know from Alyosha, like, what... is... missing from...

AUSTIN: From the Spring.

KEITH: From the Spring- like what, what is the difference between his dream of the Spring and the reality of the Spring.

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): The story which I had heard, which I believed to be apocryphal, was that Samoths would give his life to replace the void, the Nothing, with... with the Breath and Love of Ingenuity Alive. With the... something that not only would persist, not only would eradicate the Heat and the Dark, but would do so driven out of compassion and empathy, and love. There is no love in this forge. There is only power. And there is only utility. There is only usefulness. And those things have served the Spring well. But... this is the difference between the Spring and the Verdant.

KEITH (as Fero): Do you-

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): (overlapping) On the other hand, this is still something that has found its way into the Heat and the Dark, that it touches. It is not simply opposed to the Heat and the Dark, it feeds off of it. It converts it, like a regular plant with air and water and sunlight. It is not that it eradicates them, it is that those things become the fern. The tree. The blueberry bush. And so too with the Spring. The Heat and the Dark becomes the Spring. And the well of that thing in you, Ephrim, whether you confront it or not, it changes, too. Perhaps if you were more concerned with building than burning, you would have felt that.

(Sylvia laughs)

SYLVIA: Damn.

JACK: Damn, Alyosha's just like-

(Austin and Keith laugh)

JACK: Alyosha's on it today. Alyosha's like, "Let me season some of my-

(Austin laughs)

JACK: "let me season some of my teachings, by dragging Ephrim."

SYLVIA: Yeah, I'm like, in shock right now. I can't even c- think of a comeback.

AUSTIN: Ohh.

JACK: Is he working as he's talking?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah. There are, there is, you know. "Whoosh, clink." Again and again, still, through this.

JACK: And stuff bursting up out of the anvil?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah.

JACK: (overlapping) Just swirling above him?

AUSTIN: The, just like, yeah. Totally. Like, sometimes it's just like, tendrils of vines, but sometimes it's just seeds?

JACK: Mm.

AUSTIN: It's just like, a spray of seeds? Like, almost like, ocean spray? You know what I mean? Like, ppssshhhhh. And then...

KEITH: Does...

AUSTIN: They like, flutter, flutter upwards, because, again, just to remind people, this is the lowest point that there is in Hieron. This is the bottom of... of, the continent, of the building.

JACK: This is the place we talk about when we say "Pinned at the bottom"?

AUSTIN: "Pinned at the bottom" is here, yes. This is, this one little part of the room, this is, or, of, of room, of like, the forge, is directly below it is the Heat and the Dark. And above it is Adularia, is, is like, where Adelaide's kingdom is. And so, literally, sometimes he's hitting the forge and seeds are going up, that then will sprout into the Spring in Adularia. And then work its way up through every other, you know, layer. Every other strata or lamina, or sometimes goes around Adularia to a higher level. But you know, it's as if grass and, you know, flora is being planted from the bottom up. What if in the core of the earth, someone was like, seeding the world? What if Johnny Appleseed was at the center of the earth with a hammer? You know-

KEITH (as Fero): Aly- Alyosha, do you have any control over what is coming out? Like, is it a seed sometimes cause you wanted it to be a seed?

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): (sigh) I used to... tell sermons to people, Fero. I used to lead... discussions, and-

KEITH (as Fero): (interrupting) Sorry, did you not hear my question?

(Keith laughs)

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): It... I'm responding.

KEITH (as Fero): Okay. Sorry.

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): Some days would have an assigned reading. An assigned excerpt from the holy texts. And then, I would... take what was assigned, and... make it fit the needs of the congregation. When I spoke, for instance, in part of Rosemerrow, where I knew local communities were struggling against the corrupt officials, I would show them how a story of Samoths was about light and truth, and how bringing the truth of a situation into the public could... render the corrupt ineffective. But when I was in Velus, I could take the same story, and use it to, to talk about the strength of community, or of responding to... the unthinkable, with... faith and... care. I work with what I have. I... (sigh) could not build a sun from this. I could not build a sea. I have favorite plants, favorite parts of this thing we've built. But... there is no catalogue of things, that I'm ignoring. I've used all the colors on the palette, as best I can.

(pause)

SYLVIA: Does Fero have anything else to ask, or is this where I should bring up the part where we have a letter for him? Because didn't we get that?

(Austin laughs)

AUSTIN: You did have a letter for him.

KEITH: I think I'm good.

SYLVIA: Alright. I guess I'll just-

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Do you also have the staff? What'd you do with the staff? Does Benjamin have the staff? Does Sunder have the staff?

SYLVIA: I, I think... Sunder had it?

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Okay.

KEITH: (overlapping) I- wait, Arrel's staff?

SYLVIA: (overlapping) No-

AUSTIN: You, yeah, Arrel's staff. You have the staff.

KEITH: I, have the book.

AUSTIN: You have the Book of Life. Well...

KEITH: I forgot, I thought that I had the staff for a second.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah.

KEITH: (overlapping) But I didn't. Book.

AUSTIN: You HAD the book. I don't think you took the book to the Advocate. I think Sunder took the book, to keep it safe while y'all were there.

KEITH: Sunder specifically-

AUSTIN: Or she'd take, the...

KEITH: (overlapping) said don't give it to me.

AUSTIN: Did she? Okay.

KEITH: Yeah, she was like, "It's not even safe with me."

AUSTIN: Okay, cool.

KEITH: So I had let Benjamin look through it.

AUSTIN: THAT'S what it was, that's what I'm thinking of. I knew that

KEITH: (overlapping) But-

AUSTIN: Benjamin had access to it at some point,

KEITH: (overlapping) Yeah, I still have the book.

AUSTIN: because he learned some shit there. Okay, cool. So then the staff is somewhere else?

SYLVIA: Yeah, it wouldn't be here. It wouldn't be here right now.

KEITH: (overlapping) Someone took the staff.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) The point is, you have this letter.

SYLVIA: Can I give it to him if we're not physically there? Or do I have to read this letter to him?

AUSTIN: God... (sigh)

KEITH: Do... do we, like... trust Arrel enough to, like...

AUSTIN: Right, that's the other half of that, right?

KEITH: I, like, I, like, why are, we fucking killed that guy?

AUSTIN: Yep.

KEITH: Because we didn't trust him, and thought he was super dangerous? Do we let him just give a letter to the guy that's down here building the Spring? That could say or have anything in there? Even a spell?

JACK: It's like, you know, regardless of what its contents are, this is going to be Arrel's last move?

AUSTIN: Right. Do you know the...

JACK: And...

AUSTIN: Red Son Superman letter thing? Have you ever-

JACK: No.

AUSTIN: seen that? Can I spoil- I'm going to spoil a comic book real quick.

JACK: (laugh) Okay, okay.

AUSTIN: It's, it's...

KEITH: Is Red S- does the fact that it's "Red Sun" mean that Superman doesn't have powers or something?

AUSTIN: No, it means that he's a communist.

KEITH: Oh- (laughs)

AUSTIN: It's "S-O-N"

JACK: (overlapping) Oh, hell yeah!

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's the comic... from, it's the comic from... god I forget who actually- Mark Millar wrote it, and it's like, what if Superman landed in Ukraine instead of landing in Kansas? And... the, one of the big, like, finale moments, is that... Lex Luthor... (sigh) Superman, Superman says pretty early on in that book like, you know, "I can't-", once he has his mind set on like, beating Lex Luthor, who is like, an American in this story?

KEITH: Is Lex Luthor not always American?

AUSTIN: Well, in this story, Superman is, is explicitly Russian, right? Or is, is specific-

KEITH: (overlapping) Right, but Lex Luthor still is Lex Luthor.

AUSTIN: Yes.

KEITH: Got it.

AUSTIN: And... I'm trying to find the exact, like, section, but it's basically like, he can't, he knows he couldn't talk to Lex, because if he talks to Lex, he will... lose. Lex will like, say stuff that convinces him he's wrong, right? And... in the end...

KEITH: That's the power of capitalism.

AUSTIN: It is- (sigh) it's a weird book.

(Jack and Keith laugh)

AUSTIN: There's like, some stuff in it that's good, and there's some stuff that's like... you know. I'm trying to find the actual thing. (pause) Oh! Okay. So... (laugh) The whole premise of that book is that like, Superman is like, it's v- one of those Superman stories, that is like... Superman thinks he can take the whole world on his back, right? Superman can like, save everybody? And... at this moment of crisis, Lex Luthor has something that's in a... in an envelope. And, Superman uses his x-ray vision to look inside, to like, see what it says? Because he thinks it's going to be like, a secret code, or some shit? And instead, it says "Why don't you put the whole world in a bottle, Superman?" Which you may recall from Bluff City is, when I talked about this, there's this whole arc with Superman where he, he, one of the great failures of Superman is that he was unable to save the Bottled City of Kandor, this like, last city from Krypton? And so, it's just this like, deep cut of... Lex Luthor being like, "You're a fucking control freak" (laugh) "and you would do to Earth what Brainiac did to your home planet, if you were allowed to." And like, that is what ends up defeating Superman in this story, is this letter that Lex Luthor has. And so like, yeah, who the fuck knows what Arrel has in this letter. Who knows if, it could be something that... could...

JACK: Like, good or bad, it's still going to be a calculated play by Arrel.

AUSTIN: Yes, yes, exactly. So...

JACK: You know, the dude who turned that kid into a, a... a phylactery?

AUSTIN: Uh huh, yeah. A phylactery. Yup.

SYLVIA: (sigh) Yeah, I just... I dunno. If Fero wants to stop me, Fero can stop me from leaving it there. But like... I dunno, there's just this part of me that's very driven to do this, and I think Ephrim has this, too? It maybe is like, a closure thing

AUSTIN: Mm hm.

SYLVIA: to put this whole Arrel thing in the past? Maybe it's just, like... arrogance that, if he's gone, he can't do anything?

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

SYLVIA: But... Ephrim's just kind of feeling drawn to... leaving this here. (pause) But, if, if Fero wants to stop me, I'm not going to- he CAN.

AUSTIN: Is it just a matter of words?

SYLVIA: Yeah, it, it literally would just be a matter of words. It wouldn't be like, a conflict or anything. It would

AUSTIN: (overlapping) So it's like, you pull out-

SYLVIA: just be like, when I go to pull the letter out, he just stops me from doing it, you know?

KEITH: (sigh) Yeah. I'm gonna, I'm gonna be like

KEITH (as Fero): What? Like... why?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (sigh) What harm- (sigh) Fine. Have it- whatever.

SYLVIA: And Ephrim, he doesn't

AUSTIN: (overlapping) I mean...

SYLVIA: like, he starts to... contest it? And then, just, like, slides it-

AUSTIN: (overlapping) I mean, at that point, the thing is like, at that point Alyosha's going to be like...

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): What do you have there?

KEITH: It wa- it-

SYLVIA: And then, instead of pulling the letter out of my pocket, I pull out the middle finger. (beat) No, I don't.

(Austin and Keith laugh)

SYLVIA: (sigh) Yeah.

KEITH: I mean, Alyosha picked a fight, so...

(Sylvia laughs)

KEITH: Is... Alyosha's asking?

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

KEITH: I guess I... I guess I say.

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, it's a letter from Arrel, who's dead.

AUSTIN: (sigh) And he like, stops hammering, and puts the hammer down.

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): I see. (sigh)

JACK: He would know, right? By now, wouldn't he?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Alyosha would have know that Arrel-

AUSTIN: How?

KEITH: He's been busy.

JACK: (overlapping) Does the connection work both ways?

AUSTIN: What connection?

JACK: Ah, back down through the Spring?

AUSTIN: No, he doesn't- he's not, he knows what happens, like, in the sense of...

-- 1:00:00 --

JACK: But there's not like, a line from his hammer to the surface?

AUSTIN: If there is, it's not omnipotence. Or omniscience. Like...

JACK: Right. Sure.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Only Samol, Samol was the ONLY person who had that ability, and even he had to like, really like, focus on it? You know? He had to be like, "Alright, what- ahhhhhhh, okay, this is what's happening over there." No, he has no idea.

KEITH: Is it, is it, it's like, when you've got a like, a bug

AUSTIN: Yeah, that was

KEITH: (overlapping) crawling, an ant on your foot, or something?

AUSTIN: That is, yeah, that was the analogy we used at the start of Spring, was like-

KEITH: Oh yeah. Probably would have remembered that.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) You have to like, think about that. You have to be like, "Wait a second, is there- okay. Uhp, oh yeah, I see it. I see it, there's a bug on my foot." (laughs) But yeah, no, he doesn't know.

(Keith sighs, then laughs)

KEITH: T- We're all just little bugs crawling around on Samol's body. (laughs)

AUSTIN: Yeah, so, I think... he... puts the hammer down, and is like...

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): I see. (sigh) He also meant well. At least, once.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I'll take your word for it.

SYLVIA: (sigh) I, I think Fero has control of the envelope now. So...

KEITH: (overlapping) Yeah, I pu- I just like, put it in my bag.

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): (sigh) I would see it. I would see the envelope.

KEITH (as Fero): You would? I mean, but you get why I don't want to, right?

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): Of course. (pause) No one-

KEITH (as Fero): Why do you want to? What do you want from this? What does Arrel have to say to you?

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): Anything. Anything he wants. And if it kills me, then...

KEITH (as Fero): It's not YOU I'm worried about.

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): (sigh) Then leave it, for me. The Spring has taken hold. I've hammered, and I will continue to, to urge it. But... (sigh) if he has left me words, that strike me dead, or has concealed a... an attack, in letters... look around. A better fate than... hammering until I die.

KEITH: Ugh. I'm going to roll Discern Realities again. I'm very skeptical... the thing that I'm- that Fero, is worried about, that, that this letter will have repercussions for OTHER people,

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

KEITH: not just Alyosha.

AUSTIN: Go ahead.

(pause)

KEITH: Discern... Realities...

AUSTIN: So, wisdom again.

(roll)

AUSTIN: And that's a 7. So you get one question.

KEITH: (sigh) Who's really in control here?

AUSTIN: Alyosha. I guess?

KEITH: Alyosha?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

KEITH: Okay. (pause) Alright, yeah. I leave it.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): You cannot hand it to me. But Ephrim, read it to me.

AUSTIN: And, Ephrim, if Fero gives you the letter back to read...

(Sylvia laughs)

AUSTIN: It is this. It is, it is the episode description from episode 29, of Winter in Hieron.

(Sylvia sighs, and clears throat)

AUSTIN: You like, un- you like, open the seal? And pull it out

SYLVIA: (overlapping) Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: It's just on like, fine paper?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): I write this with no knowledge of where you are, or if you are. Yet, still, I write.

And as I write, my words are overtaken by memories. Your finger pointing at verse in some ancient text—I have forgotten the book's name in favor of remembering your eyes, bright. Your voluminous generosity, as you led me into inquiry I dared not pursue. Your voice, angry, confused, and honest in the face of terror. And then, for the last time, your stark figure silhouetted against early moonlight on that hill south of Rosemerrow.

Has the paladin protected you, I wonder? Could I have offered my own protection instead of simply suggesting I hide you away like I did the others? I thought I was presenting you a gift, but in retrospect, I fear I was too vague: Perhaps you believed that I felt you were important in general—like the others I saved—instead of important to me.

I'm moving now, Pupil. I'm retrieving the book and with it, I will build us a home. All of us. I'm moving now because I must. Because I will not let your memory be still stone in my mind, but will treat you instead as a river in my heart, a path to follow towards a bright, distant sea.

Perhaps I will lose myself on the way. Or, perhaps, I will find you.

Your Tutor, Always.

AUSTIN: And... I think, his hand moves back to the hammer. And he, like, picks it back up, and... holds it for a moment. And he just says:

AUSTIN (as Alyosha): Thank you. It is... good to know.

AUSTIN: Whoosh, clink. And he is back to work.

SYLVIA: I think... even if it like, ends up disappearing, or showing up, like, back outside, when we leave,

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: I am going to leave the letter on the ground here.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I think, as it hits the ground-

SYLVIA: (overlapping) It's like, why would I bring that back?

AUSTIN: The ground, like... blossoms into, into... almost, like, a bed for it? You know? Grass and, little weeds and flowers pop up, and it just holds it there. As you two, I guess, step away. Lem. What are you up to this morning, that's not going into big trees?

JACK: I, am having breakfast.

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

JACK: Which is, I think, maybe, more dragon? (laugh)

AUSTIN: Yeah, of course. Yeah. Definitely. Breakfast dragon.

KEITH: Dragon and eggs.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Delicious.

JACK: Dragon and eggs? Yeah.

AUSTIN: Forget about it.

JACK: And I think that I have just... I have just called over someone in the Meeting Hall who I recognize to be one the guards

AUSTIN: Mm hm.

JACK: who like, you know, stands at the bottom of one of the fields, near the, Starwall, with a, like a big lantern on a stick.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And I've just been, like, anxiously checking in to make sure that the departing... group? Who left for Marielda, like, were seen leaving okay? And, you know, passed through the...

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Through the walls and everything.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think that you get that... they're like, "Yep, they, they-" Or so they actually used the boat. They took Hella's boat down. And so... scouts say that-

JACK: So it'd be like, the river, the river, river scouts.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. The rive- so the river scouts basically have reported back that they've not only left, successfully, but they'r- at this point, they have made it into Marielda proper. They were like, they were basically welcomed with... open arms? The Ordennans are effectively celebrating the death of the Advocate as a win for Ordenna. And so... their strategy is very much like... to, co-opt that success?

JACK: Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: And, so... not a parade in the streets.

JACK: (overlapping) Bastards.

AUSTIN: But, yeah. Uh huh. So yeah, they've arrived. They're, they, they're in the middle- in fact, at this point, they are... at this point, in this moment that we are in currently, they are going to... y- I think the scouts are able to say:

AUSTIN (as scout): Today, they're supposed to meet with Fela Malle, and, and... get all that money. (laugh)

(Jack sighs)

AUSTIN: So... we'll see how that goes.

JACK: Lem, like, turns back to Emmanuel.

JACK (as Lem): Marielda, huh?

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): The City of First Light.

JACK (as Lem): You've never been, right?

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): No, no no no.

AUSTIN: The guard-

JACK (as Lem): (overlapping) That was, that was... way before your time.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): Qui- quite a bit.

AUSTIN: The guard says:

AUSTIN (as scout): There is something else, though. The Stars should be any... any moment...

JACK (as Lem): I heard about the convoy from Corsica, I think. Do we know how many there- how many are coming?

AUSTIN (as scout): It, it seemed like a few dozen.

JACK (as Lem): Okay. What's the mood among the guard?

AUSTIN (as scout): Nervous. They're... big, star people.

JACK (as Lem): Mm hmm. Mm hmm. What are they... what are they bringing with them, or is it just them?

AUSTIN (as scout): It's just them.

JACK (as Lem): Okay.

AUSTIN: And... I mean, like... as the guard says that, you hear a commotion from outside.

JACK (as Lem): (sigh) Okay. Emmanuel, I'm going to go see what this is about, I think.

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): (sigh)

JACK (as Lem): Do you want to come with? Or...

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): Wait, this... this feels bad.

JACK (as Lem): What are you worried about?

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): This feels bad. Lem... we... (sigh) Be safe. I- I'm going to stay here, with the people in the Meeting Hall.

JACK (as Lem): Okay. I'll be right back. I'm, I'm just, I'm just going out into the...

AUSTIN: He, like... leans over and kisses you on the cheek. And then, like... stands up. And is just like:

AUSTIN (as Emmanuel): Does anyone want more dragon?

(Austin and Jack laugh quietly)

AUSTIN: And heads back to the kitchen. But he's like, shook.

JACK: Well, and I think that we get, you know, we get like, the smile on Lem's face? Hearing about more dragon being offered, and then it just, like, vanishes instantly, as Lem steps towards the, the door, and is like, you know, reaching for the, the... the knife in his scabbard.

AUSTIN: Yeah...

JACK: Or just like, making- touching it,

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Touching it, yeah.

JACK: making sure that it's there. Like... Lem is, Lem is... also not feeling this.

AUSTIN: I, so at this point, Ephrim and Fero, you're like, back out from the tree, and a guard runs over to you, Ephrim, and is like:

AUSTIN (as guard): They got here way faster than we thought.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): They're- the Stars? They're here??

AUSTIN (as guard): They're here. Uh, (sigh) twenty minutes, mayb- maybe less?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (quietly) Jesus. (out loud) Okay. I guess, I guess we gotta go meet them.

KEITH (as Fero): (sigh) I had plans...

AUSTIN (as guard): What are yo- I'm just getting Fero. Um, so if you wanna, do your plans, I guess, Fero... that's fine.

KEITH (as Fero): No, no. I'm just complaining. I'll go.

AUSTIN (as guard): Alright.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (sigh) I'm glad some things never change.

(Austin laughs)

JACK: And I think, like, Lem rides up behind the guard?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Like, mounted on a horse, to see Fero and Ephrim.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK (as Lem): Did you hear?

KEITH (as Fero): Yep.

JACK (as Lem): Okay.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Just, just now, yeah.

JACK (as Lem): Okay, I'll meet you out there.

AUSTIN: So you're heading towards the eastern gate, presumably?

JACK: Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: Okay. God, so... you get to the eastern gate. You climb the, the, do you climb the wall? Do you wait outside?

JACK: I, I, like, the, the horse clattering out through the gate, and then just like, being pulled to a stop. And like, to the stone, stone arch.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah.

JACK: Next to the gate.

AUSTIN: I actually think there's a, wha- who's, who would, which of your retinue would you've sent to, like, the tower? Ephrim?

SYLVIA: To, like, this...

AUSTIN: The 3 o' clock tower.

SYLVIA: (overlapping) Like as a scout?

AUSTIN: Yeah, as a scou- like, who, who would be the person who's like, reporting from the highest point they can see out from?

SYLVIA: I'd say probably... Highwater?

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Maybe Summit?

AUSTIN: So let's, that Highwater calls down to you, as the three of you approach. And she's like:

AUSTIN (as Highwater): You, you have to see this! Get up here!

SYLVIA: Alright, yeah. I'm climbing up.

AUSTIN: Fero, do you climb up? Do you, do you bird up? What do you do?

(Keith sighs)

AUSTIN: Just some stairs.

KEITH: I'm, I'll climb for the novelty of it.

(Austin and Sylvia laugh)

AUSTIN: So you climb up to the top of this tall tower, which is like, this is, people remember the 3 o' clock tower is the eastern-most tower on the watch, on like, the wall? It's, it's Hella's favorite tower. It's where people, it's like, where the guards like, take lunch and stuff? And fr-

KEITH: It is great to get some perspective on stairs. This is awful.

(Austin and Jack laugh)

KEITH: I'm, I'm real- with, I... I will, next time I fly, or swing, or climb up on something, I will do it with renewed vigor.

AUSTIN: Great. So, you see out onto, in, from here to the east, you can see the, it's about twenty, twenty-five of these Stars getting closer and closer. And they're just like, they're that bright, white, hard to look at light that does not actually put out any glow, but is just, like, itself illuminated. And the thing is... their pathway here is also illuminated in that way. There's kind of, like

JACK: (overlapping) Oh.

AUSTIN: the ground, has been turned to Starstuff as they approach.

KEITH: I heard 11, there's like, more than double that.

AUSTIN: A couple dozen.

JACK (as Lem): How are you going to play this, Ephrim?

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): (sigh) I mean, if they're changing everything they touch into that, we can't very well let them... in, right away.

AUSTIN: As they walk, they sort of stutter? And... are closing distance more quickly than... even the most recent estimate. So it was twenty minutes, now it's fifteen. Like, they like, it's as if there's a problem with the VHS tape, you know what I mean?

JACK (as Lem): I'm going down there.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Yeah, we should... we need to.

KEITH (as Fero): (overlapping) Yep.

SYLVIA: So I thin- I guess the plan is to meet them before they get here?

JACK: Yeah, just like

KEITH: (overlapping) Yeah.

JACK: ride out and like, intercept them? (laugh)

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Before we do, can we... I'm going to... hmm. Hhhmmmm.

AUSTIN: Mm hm?

JACK: I was going to be like, do we want to warn the community?

AUSTIN: Uh, the warnings are being spread.

JACK: Okay, okay.

AUSTIN: Everyone is...

JACK: Like, folks, folks not only know that they're coming, but that they're bringing something weird with them.

AUSTIN: Yeah, the word is, guards are trying to like, get, at this point guards are trying to move the refugees from the eastern side of this, space?

JACK: Mmm. Right.

AUSTIN: (overlapping) In from their, like, tents and houses?

JACK: (overlapping) Yeah, like, all around here, to like... come in.

AUSTIN: Inside the walls. And then, it's like, people are... (sigh) Emmanuel is kind of like, trying to bring people into the Meeting Hall. Someone was sent to w- go to send, to wake up Red Jack. Corsica is already like, getting some troops together, just in case.

JACK: Riding up and down the wall.

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah yeah, exactly. Exactly that.

JACK: Lots of people looking through telescopes and things.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we definitely get like, Sunder Havelton looking, looking through a telescope out at them. And then, I think we get a brief moment where we look, and we see, Samot seemingly standing in the sky, looking down.

(Jack laughs)

AUSTIN: And from that perspective? You, the viewer, you, the audience, can see not only the way that the Stars have like, are kind of like, have this trail of Starstuff behind them, but you can see that there are other like, other sets of Stars going to other places in Hieron right now? At similar speed? Similarly leaving behind that trail? And also you can just see from that perspective, the ways in which the cracks and canyons of the eastern steppe have been filled in with Starstuff. It's as if the Grand Canyon was like, someone had poured in the Stars. And filled it in.

KEITH: Remi- remind me what happens when- if like, I went and just, touched some Starstuff?

AUSTIN: You would probably die.

-- 1:15:00 --

KEITH: Just if I, like, a finger?

AUSTIN: Humans, it's like... ahh, the finger would, would, bad stuff would happen to the finger. I would roll damage.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: In the past, when you fucked around with this stuff, it would have been the case that your finger may, would, may have changed into some other form? Your finger

KEITH: Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: may have turned into a mailbox?

KEITH: Mm hm.

AUSTIN: But it is not compatible with this pattern of life.

KEITH: Not a useful place for a mailbox. At that point, just hand me the mail.

AUSTIN: Just please hand me the mail, and I hope the mail isn't made of Starstuff also. So yeah. You ride out to see them, as word spreads. And I think as you approach them, they kind of pan out, and take rank? Where it's just like, twenty-four of them? And, one of them steps forward to be the person speaking. And, this, is... Index. And Index says:

AUSTIN (as Index): We are here for our Lord. Please stand aside.

SYLVIA (as Ephrim): Well we'll happily retrieve him for you, but I'm afraid we can't give you entrance to our settlement right now.

AUSTIN (as Index): Our Lord needs us. Has called for us. We go to him.

JACK (as Lem): We can fetch him.

KEITH (as Fero): Yeah, stay here.

AUSTIN: They begin walking forward.

SYLVIA: Ahh...

JACK: Is this like a-

KEITH (as Fero): (overlapping) Don't, no, like, for real, don't.

AUSTIN: They're walking towards you.

JACK: (overlapping) Is this like a, we draw weapons, situation?

SYLVIA: (whispering) I think it might be.

JACK: It's not like, a, "We're going to charge the Stars", but...

KEITH: (slowly) We, we will all die, if we fight twenty-four Stars.

JACK: But maybe a statement of intent that we even are going to tr- ahh, these are the Stars. The St- see, the Stars... (laugh) who is that Star in Aubade, Austin?

AUSTIN: Cha-

JACK: Is that Obelus?

AUSTIN: That was Obelus.

JACK: With the, was that...

AUSTIN: Yeah, it was Obelus.

KEITH: It was Chapter.

AUSTIN: Was that Chapter? Is it- hmmm.

KEITH: That was Chapter.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Obelus was the one in, in... the one who crashed in Rosemerrow.

AUSTIN: Right, correct, correct, correct.

JACK: Chapter is the one in Aubade. See? I think if we drew weapons on Chapter... it would be a case of just like, okay. I, hmm. I'm, I'm, I'm willing to, to follow Ephrim's lead here, but I think I'm more on team "draw weapons" than just sort of back slowly towards the-

(Jack and Austin laugh)

SYLVIA: Yeah... I... I think I'm on that team, too, if I'm being honest. Like... I might need to like, signal... (sigh) I wonder if, is there a signal I could give to show like, "Hey, get more guards ready?"

AUSTIN: Sure. Absolutely.

SYLVIA: (overlapping) I know Corsica's already doing that.

JACK: Before we, before we do, I have, I might be able to use a bard move to be like, I don't know if bard moves work on Stars?

AUSTIN: We'll see. What's the move?

JACK: But, you know. We have, we have Charming and Open, which is speaking frankly, and kind of allows us to... you know, learn more about a thing's intention.

AUSTIN: Sure. That seems like a thing you should try.

JACK: Yeah. We also have Parly, or, uh, Parley.

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

JACK: Which, uh, which...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) You do not have, anyth- well, I was, you tell me if you have something that they want.

JACK: We, we absolutely have something that they want!

KEITH: We, well, yeah, it's Sa- it's Samot, right?

AUSTIN: Mm hm.

JACK: I feel like that is leverage. I mean, it's a question, I think, of the, of the inflection that we want this moment to have?

AUSTIN: (overlapping) I mean the question is, for, sorry, for me the question is: Do you have him? Where is he? Do you have him t-

JACK: Does it have to be legitimate leverage?

KEITH: (overlapping) I-

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yes, you have to have legiti- yes

JACK: (overlapping) Or can we be bluffing with the levera- it *has* to be legitimate leverage.

AUSTIN: It has to be leverage. Because, because a 7-9 includes you needing to give them concrete assurance.

JACK: Oh, sure, at which point the move would break, if.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

JACK: If we didn't. Hmm. So I'm willing to try Charming and Open.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I've been looking over my moves for something, and the closest I've got might be Moth to the Flame? But I'm not entirely sure how I'd be able to implement that right now? So if you've got an idea, go for it.

JACK: Kay.

KEITH: We, we, wh- we, maybe woul, would also roll another Discern Realities. But I think

JACK: (overlapping) Actually-

KEITH: Charming and Open is a good first.

JACK: The nice thing about Charming and Open is that I don't have to roll for it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you could just th- say some stuff.

KEITH: (overlapping) Yeah, you just do it.

AUSTIN: So what do you say? What, how do you speak frankly with the Stars?

JACK: Um... firstly I think that this is Charming and Open with my hand on my-

(Austin laughs)

JACK: On the hilt of my knife?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Just like, (laugh)

JACK (as Lem): We are a thriving community. But we are afraid. And nothing that is happening is making us any less afraid.

JACK: I think I'm, I'm basically just, I feel like the Stars probably know that not-Stars are afraid of them.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: And I'm just, like... being very frank about the fact that we are... closing ranks out of, fear? Rather than out of any attempt to like, underhanded-play the Stars?

AUSTIN: Sure. What is the question that you want to ask from this list?

JACK (as Lem): How can I get you to stay away from the Last University?

AUSTIN (as Index): You can kill us. There is no other way.

AUSTIN: And they take a step forward.

JACK: Do they answer a ques- ask me a question? Or do they just straight-up not care about what this orc thinks?

AUSTIN (as Index): Whom do you serve?

JACK (as Lem): I serve this community, and the land in which it sits.

AUSTIN: They take a step forward. They are nearing you now. They are-

JACK: Mm.

AUSTIN: They have moved from near to close. Fero, you've rolled Discern Realities, it looks like? Or is that an old Discern Realities?

KEITH: That was new. That was-

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: That was a new one.

(Jack laughs)

AUSTIN: Go ahe- (sigh) You got a 9, by the way. You gotta...

KEITH: Let's, um... alright, so, they're they're offering violence.

AUSTIN: Oh yeah.

KEITH: They're stepping close to us. I think we're all trying to avoid violence? We do not want to get into this fight. What should I be on the lookout for?

AUSTIN: If they're, if they're able to move this quickly, and also are this strange, you have no assurance that there's only this twenty. Twenty-four.

KEITH: So I should be on the lookout for more of them.

AUSTIN: Or also, that they might just walk around you? There's only three of you. You know?

KEITH: Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Also, real quick, while we're in this heated moment, can we talk about alignments and bonds? Because we didn't do that up top.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Fero, do you want to start? What do- what is your alignment, and what are your bonds?

KEITH: Sure, I, I have slightly reworded mine, from the last time that I said it out loud

AUSTIN: Sure, yeah.

KEITH: to make it a little more Fero-y. I might continue to re-word it-

AUSTIN: I mean...

KEITH: but to keep to the same general theme. But right now, my alignment is Good: I am trying to carve out a space for myself in the new world. Take XP when you help others carve their own.

AUSTIN: Cool, and then, bonds for Ephrim and Lem?

KEITH: Um... "Lord" Ephrim

(Austin laughs)

KEITH: thinks helping means being in charge.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

KEITH: And that Lem King is as clueless now as he was when I last saw him.

AUSTIN: Great. Lem, how about you?

JACK: So Lem has been Neutral.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: But... he woke up hungover, next to his boyfriend, from a party that they threw

(Austin laughs)

JACK: after helping kill a world-ending beast?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And, and... you know, there were birds outside. One of them ate another bird, because this is the Spr- the new Spring?

(Austin laughs)

JACK: And I think Lem... thought... (laugh) "What can I continue to do, to ensure that I can keep having this?"

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: Or rather that's something that Lem has always been thinking. Lem has, Lem has not, not been thinking "What can I continue to do to make my life comfortable?"

(Austin laughs)

JACK: I just think that he has come to several answers in the past?

AUSTIN: And those answers have always been "Get out of the way of trouble"? Or like, "ask to see the manager"? (laugh)

(Keith laughs)

JACK: Mm hmm.

AUSTIN: Or, like...

JACK: Mm hm.

AUSTIN: "How- okay. We don't need to- okay. We can just talk through this. We can- we can find a compromise."

JACK: Or alternatively, go in with such a disproportionate amount of force.

AUSTIN: Right, right, right. As th-

JACK: That it has even more jarring consequences.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

JACK: And so, I think, so, my, my bond before we killed a dragon, was Neutral: Avoid conflict or defuse a tense situation.

AUSTIN: Mmm.

JACK: But, while Lem may personally have stood on the sidelines of the dragon, what we gained, and what we undeniably gained, was not done by avoiding conflict or defusing a tense situation. So I think I would like to change my alignment,

AUSTIN: Mmmmm.

JACK: Just finding the wording here... from Neutral... to Good, with the bond, oh sorry, with the alignment: De-escalation may have got me this far, but it will get me no further. Given an opportunity for action, I will take it.

AUSTIN: I like that. And then your bonds.

JACK: (sigh) Fero is a part of what we have made, whether he likes it or not. I will not let him turn away.

AUSTIN: And... Ephrim.

JACK: (overlapping) And... I have a... yeah, I have a bond with Ephrim, and it's like, you know, Lem standing in front of the University as the Stars take a step forward, and my bond with Ephrim is "I draw strength from the fact that Ephrim has built something."

AUSTIN: Mmm. Ephrim, your alignment and your bonds?

SYLVIA: My alignment is Neutral: Increase the prestige of yourself or your stronghold. And, my bond with Fero is "Fero's talents shouldn't be ignored. I should at least *try* to get along with him." And I don't have one for Lem. I was really struggling before this session to come up with one, because I realized, like, two days ago that... we haven't really done anything outside of

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah, yeah.

JACK: (overlapping) Mmm.

SYLVIA: downtime together since Winter?

AUSTIN: True, so, we're here now.

SYLVIA: (overlapping) Yeah.

AUSTIN: So we'll see if one develops, maybe. Alright.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So, in this moment, what do you do? I'm gonna, just to be clear, twenty-four is the number I'm going with. It is two dozen stars.

KEITH: We... have to find Samot before they get closer.

JACK: Mmm. We might be able to hold them back... (laughs) I'm looking at the 7-9 consequences of "Wolf in White Van", Austin...

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

JACK: And that doesn't seem as bad in this situation as it could be in others, right?

AUSTIN: Sure. The, the thing of like, it bouncing and hitting other people, right?

JACK: Yo-

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Or is it not?

JACK: No, you draw their attention and-

AUSTIN: Oh, and ire. Yeah yeah yeah, true.

JACK: So I think we just get like, bow in Lem's right hand, violin in Lem's left hand.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: I don't think we've ever said whether or not Lem is left or right handed

AUSTIN: We haven't, no.

JACK: With the violin? But, I guess, I guess, (laughs)

AUSTIN: In *this* moment...

JACK: I guess right-handed/left-handed. And just like, takes up a stance, but doesn't put bow to string.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: I think there's a bit of Lem that is like, "They might just step past me. And if they do that, then we can... you know."

AUSTIN: Yeah. I mean, they're gonna-

JACK: "Reconsider."

AUSTIN: They step closer and closer to you. Like, they're going to walk... I mean, this is, this is the question, is like... so... none of them move to hurt you. But also, they are turning the floor b- or the ground behind them into starstuff. Which we know you cannot safely stand on. So if they walk past you, they will... they will hurt you.

JACK: Hmm.

AUSTIN: Just want to make sure that's super clear, so that like, even if

JACK: (overlapping) Yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: they're not drawing a weapon...

JACK: Yeah yeah yeah, their motion is to attack.

AUSTIN: Yes. Their prescen- right.

JACK: Okay. Okay, I'm going to roll, I'm going to roll Wolf in White Van, targeting one of the Stars towards the back of the...

AUSTIN: The line, basical- or no,

JACK: (overlapping) Towards the back of the, the...

AUSTIN: They're, they are, they, at this point, they're not, at this point they are spread out, right? There's twenty four-

KEITH: Can I get a recap on what that move does?

(pause)

AUSTIN: It forces- yeah.

JACK: (overlapping) It says "When you unleash a crazed performance, a righteous lute solo, or mighty brass blast, maybe, choose a target who can hear you, and roll +Charisma. On a 10+, the target attacks their nearest ally in rage. On a 7-9, they attack their nearest ally, but you also draw their attention and ire."

AUSTIN: Give me the roll. 2d6+Charisma.

JACK: I have a +1 hold, forward?

AUSTIN: Sure, from... something?

JACK: I, I think from last time, it's just in my box here.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: It says... "1", so I...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Cool. That's not the gear from before, right?

(pause)

JACK: Oh I bet it is.

AUSTIN: Okay, well you, yeah,

JACK: Which I...

AUSTIN: Which is not probably this. Unless you have like, a, unless you found like a cool magic bow thing...

JACK: Oh, no, no, sorry, this is distinct from the gear that we picked up at the... at the...

AUSTIN: Okay, then yeah, then that's all, yeah.

JACK: Yeah.

KEITH: What's the effect, why does this move make them attack each other when it works?

AUSTIN: We'll talk about it if it succeeds.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

KEITH: Okay.

(roll)

AUSTIN: Well, yeah. I mean, this is the question. That's a 10, right?

KEITH: Wow.

AUSTIN: So, what's it look like on your side?

JACK: It is a... textureless, atonal scream.

AUSTIN: Mm.

JACK: From, from the top string on the violin.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: It is just, it is the, it is the noise of... it sounds like if you could reach behind the Stars

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: And pull that path of stardust up out of the ground behind them, like a worm?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JACK: That is the sound that it makes.

AUSTIN: So, I think the thing that happens here is you've kind of played a counter-pattern, in a sense? That... frazzles their perception of the world, and makes the th- the backs, or the like, the Star at one end here, or you tell me again. It's, it, they're lined up horizontally. They're lined up shoulder-to-shoulder, as they're walking forward.

JACK: Mm hm.

AUSTIN: So are, where, where in that line are you picking? Like, the end of one line?

JACK: I'm trying to pick someone in the middle

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: On the back line?

AUSTIN: There is no back line. They are shoulder to shoulder. There's twenty-four of them.

JACK: Oh I see. Okay, sorry. (laugh) You mean-

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: When you said shoulder-to-shoulder, I thought you meant, multiple lines.

AUSTIN: No.

JACK: Someone in the middle.

AUSTIN: Okay. Is it the one who spoke to you, or is it a different one? Is it Index?

JACK: It's a different one.

AUSTIN: Okay, so then... I'll say like, one of the, one of the middle ones, near Index, like, you, you played this line. Twenty-three of them move forward, this one, who's name is... because I have a big list...

-- 1:30:00 --

AUSTIN: Fleuron produces from their chest, a flaming sword, and stabs it into the back of Index, killing them. The other twenty-two continue to walk forward. And... are going to pass you. Actually, I think at this moment, the violence is actually done, their pace triples. And they go from like, a walk,

JACK: Shit.

AUSTIN: to a, to a, not a sprint, but like, a fast-paced charge.

JACK: What's Fleuron doing?

AUSTIN: Puts the sword away, and steps forward.

JACK: Keeps going fo- (laughs)

KEITH: Jesus Christ.

JACK: Okay, Lem just like, one foot into the stirrup, onto to the back of the horse just like, turning

AUSTIN: (laughs) Uh huh.

JACK: and riding back to towards the, towards the 3 o' clock tower.

AUSTIN: Ephrim and Fero?

KEITH: I make a shapeshifter roll.

AUSTIN: Okay. What do you turn into? What do you roll?

KEITH: I'm going to turn into... jeez, what's a bird? I want, I'm trying, I need to-

JACK: (overlapping) What IS a bird?

KEITH: Birds are my... what's the... I want- oh! I know! Aghh, I know exactly what I could turn into! And this is, this is maybe risky, but... I'm turning into a panther.

AUSTIN: Hell yeah. Gimme the roll.

(roll)

AUSTIN: That's a 9. Hold two.

KEITH: Great, so, I...

AUSTIN: (overlapping) So you, lift off as a panther, as a, one of these, giant black birds that can-

KEITH: Not quite.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: I lift off as many, many, many panthers.

AUSTIN: Right, you're in the multi-form.

KEITH: The, I'm in the multi-bird form. I'm, I think I've gotta find Samot.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: I think that's the play for me.

AUSTIN: Let's, let's, we're going to set that up, and we'll come back to it in a second. So like, you fly back quickly to... the Last University.

KEITH: Mm hmm. As a darting swarm of black birds.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Ephrim, what do you do? Oh, actually, as you take the sky, Fero,

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: you se- you can see now, all around, and you can see that the, some of those stars that were going to different places, have now turned inwards, so you have that like,

(Jack groans)

AUSTIN: that thing of like, "Oh, they were drawing a line away, diagonally" and now that diagonal line is coming towards. They're not going to get here at the same time as this first group, but

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: those are two other big groups, one from the north, one from the south.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Ephrim, are you also turning back to run? Or t-

SYLVIA: Yeah, but... I have a question, really quick, and we can cut it out if

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVIA: the answer's a no. You messaged me about a possible cool move.

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: I'm assuming I don't have that yet?

AUSTIN: I don't think you have it yet, we need to see that happen.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: We need to see you do the thing, of like, tapping into the Spring, instead of tapping into the Heat and the Dark. You know?

SYLVIA: Well... that's... (sigh) that might actually be something I, I guess the other question is, how... do we know how the starstuff reacts to the Spring?

AUSTIN: We know that they, they, they are not compatible.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: So there is like, a fight there. There is like, you can do damage with it.

SYLVIA: Alright. (sigh) Yeah I, I do think I wanna tap into that

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: now, if we could.

AUSTIN: What's this look and feel like?

SYLVIA: (sigh) I think it's instinctual at first, because it's like, or like, it starts off with Ephrim trying to... rekindle the fire, basically?

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

SYLVIA: At first. Like, that's his, panic response, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And then... (sigh) The way I like it is, he's going to do it, and then, like, the... you know the little daisy?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: That I got from Alyosha? That starts reacting in some way. Just to, and like, not in a way where it's moving or anything, but in a way where Ephrim can like, feel it

AUSTIN: Mm hmm.

SYLVIA: the same way he felt fire. And I think it would just be like, trying to follow that, and make that connection strong enough

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: that he can use it in that way.

AUSTIN: I will add it to your sheet real quick.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: Or actually, I will not, because it's not in the codex we have. So... it's 2d6+Wisdom. Let's roll it, and I'll read the move.

SYLVIA: Alright.

AUSTIN: You can just roll wis, you know.

SYLVIA: Yeah, I'm just try- I'm trying to think if I can, find a way to use my +Gear for this roll.
(laughs)

AUSTIN: Oh, hmmmmm.

SYLVIA: It's okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

(roll)

SYLVIA: I got a 4.

AUSTIN: Oh, holy shit!

SYLVIA: That's the worst roll I could have done for this!

AUSTIN: Oh, that's so good. Alright, so. The move is, "Watch the World Burn". "When you open a channel to the Burning Planes, and call Firestorm, tell the GM what you're sacrificing, and roll +Wis. The sky opens up and fire pours like a rain from it, within an area about equal to a small village. Everyone and everything in the area takes damage as appropriate. On a 10+, you can extinguish the storm with little effort. On a 7-9, the fires rage out of your control, spreading and gusting where they are carried by wind and weather.

JACK: Shit.

AUSTIN: "On a miss, something cruel, intelligent, and hungry comes with the storm." So...

(Sylvia groans)

AUSTIN: I think we're gonna, like, I think we have to like, take a cut here.

KEITH: Yo. Magic sucks.

AUSTIN: Magic SUCKS. So, to be clear, you were not, this is a thing you could have done to reach to the Heat and the Dark originally, but instead you reached for the Spring. You... find the Spring. I think you also find the Heat and the Dark in this moment? I think it's like...

KEITH: Well they're connected, right?

AUSTIN: Right, right, like, it sees the, you don't, you don't have it yet. You don't have the ability to just pull at one. And so you pull at them both. And... from below, all around the Last University, the tree grows bigger and bigger. The tree is now bigger than the main tower. And, like, overturns the wall near it, you know what I mean, like it's totally, it covers up the river, it blocks the river. It is huge. And then all around you, like, new plants sprout. And some of them try to do try to grab at like, the legs of the Stars, but they're also grabbing at your legs. There are, that, you hear the howling of new, of new animals? Or new plant animals? But from above, like, the sky cracks, and the Heat and the Dark begin to fall also.

And I think this is the moment where the 4 really pays off, which is: there is a point at which the Heat and the Dark are bombarding the starstuff shield around the Last University. And that point is hit by one of the largest branches of the giant tree that's been growing out of the Farm all season. And the shield breaks. It's gone. It flickers for a moment, and then shatters. And I almost, like, I think there is a cinematic cut here, right? Because, we're going to see, like... I don't want to deal with this as like, a, here are some damage rolls? Though, we can also come back around and do that. I will, you've introduced these things to the world. You've introduced these things to this, this sequence, and so. What I actually want to do is talk about what else we see, as the Heat and the Dark begin to fall from the heavens, as the Spring, you know, reaches the, the ground layer and, and, ah, here's the actual thing that happens. I think this is the big failure. The wall of starstuff falls, right? This is how the, the Heat and the Dark are able to breach in, is that it falters. And it's just like, hell of earth for abou- (laughs) for this moment.

And we see Sunder Havelton raising local shields to protect people. We see Red Jack being suited up by the oni children, and then like, tossing a bow to Blue J, and the two of them are getting ready to come out and try to help. We see, you know, we see like, Devar and Chatterchin ushering people, and Emmanuel ushering people deeper into one of the dormitory basements, where it's going to be a little bit safer, hopefully? We kind of just get these sh- we see Rosanna, like, with some people praying in the temple, and she is like, she is like hammering (laughs) stuff onto the doors to keep stuff locked out. And she turns, and is like,

AUSTIN (as Rosanna): Benjamin, we need-

AUSTIN: And Benjamin slides out of a side door.

-- 1:38:08 --

AUSTIN: And then we just get this long, running shot, like this, like, Children of Men shot, of Benjamin running past all of the fire, and like, jumping over the, the ground cover, the newly arrived ground cover? And like, sprinting towards his family's home. And, like, trying to open the door, and he doesn't have the key to the door, 'cause his mom has the key, and his dad has the other key, and he's supposed to have his own third key, and he's asked for it, but they've never given it to him. And then... they... you know, he like, like, looks around, and like, at this point the stars are like hitting the wall, and like, parts of the walls are shattering, and turning into starstuff, and then reforming into doors? And they just like, open it and walk in. And it's just a nightmare.

And then he breaks into his own home. He like, shatters a window and climbs in, and is... looking for something. And we just get this shot of like, a... of him in his bedroom, pulling something from out, from under his bed. And then a... a yellow glow, as he begins to cast some sort of spell.

Give me a second...

(pause)

And... just like that, standing in a room, next to Benjamin, is a projection. Of someone we haven't seen in a long time.

AUSTIN (as Benjamin): I hope this worked. Are you okay? Uh... I'm- I know we've talked already a lot, but... I'm Benjamin... I don't know how long this is going to work, can you help us?

["Something" begins playing]

NICK SCRATCH: Uh... Fantasma says...

NICK (as The Great Fantasma): I think so?

NICK: And then starts like...

(Austin laughs)

NICK: Touching himself? Like, his chest

AUSTIN: (overlapping) Yeah.

NICK: and stuff? And like, poking bits, and he's like,

NICK (as The Great Fantasma): I don't really feel any difference? But I'm willing to help.

["Something" finishes playing]