

## [Marielda 01: The City of Light Pt. 1](#)

Transcribed by Claire @msbeakman (0:00:00 through 0:05:00) and Jen @wronghandle#1989 (0:05:00 through 2:06:12)

AUSTIN: [slight drawl] In the time of fraught paladins, and wavering wizards, of contemptible fighters and indignant druids, of wide-eyed rangers, and of bards, the people of the continent of Hieron recover and rebuild in the aftermath of a cataclysm.

[MUSIC: "[Marielda](#)" begins]

But after all, for every inside, there is an outside. No disaster was the first of its kind. Except, of course, for... well. And so, in the years before the event that would come to be called the Erasure, in a time of civil conflict, the people of Hieron faced calamity, and they sought to recover and rebuild.

For a long while, blessed Samoths led his somber campaign against the heretical armies of the boy-traitor Samot, clashing steel in the valleys and volleying arrows across the plainlands. In time, though, your wise lord, the God Alive, recognized that there had been a stalemate, and that you, his people, were suffering. And so he returned to you, to his home, to your city in the south, moving at fast pace to the dust of the traitor charioteers rolling like thunder behind him.

And as they pursued, Samoths climbed the mountain of fire from which he forged our first tools, with which he built the first bridge, and he reached inside that mountain and turned the ruddy summit just so, and because he is great, it bent to his will.

Viscous fire erupted, rushing down the peak, and into the riverways that separated the City of Light from the continent. He pulled up on the blaze like a reined mare and yanked the cities and its surroundings further away from Hieron. The ground itself shook without mercy. Ocean water filled the new gap in the land, and then the fire fled into that self-same sea, creating an inseparable blend of liquid heat.

Now, Samoths has returned to the mountain to work on some new holy device, and we have been left to rebuild this city as his faithful disciples. In the wake of this destruction, we are left with this, one quiet year, in the city we now call Marielda. Come winter, the frost shepherds will arrive, and we might not survive the encounter, but we don't know about that yet. What we know is, that right now in this moment, there is an opportunity to build something.

[MUSIC: "[Marielda](#)" ends]

Welcome to Friends at the Table, an actual play podcast focused on critical worldbuilding, smart characterization, and fun interactions between good friends. Welcome to our interlude game. This is the start of a new little mini campaign that we're going to play before returning fully to our Dungeon World campaign that we started two years ago.

This is the worldbuilding episode. But instead of just kind of sitting around and talking about what the world for this little mini campaign is, we decided to try something new, which is a game called “The Quiet Year,” which is by Avery \*Alder. It is a map drawing game and a map building game. So we’ll get to that in a second, but first, introductions. Joining me is Ar... Art Tebbel.

\*surname now changed

ART: Hey, hi, how are ya?

AUSTIN: Where can people find you on the internet, Art?

ART: They can find me on twitter at [@atebbel](#), and on Friends at the... Table....

AUSTIN: That’s this. That’s this, buddy.

ART: Oh shit! Well, you know, I’m around.

AUSTIN: Also joining me, Keith Carberry.

KEITH: Uh, hi, how are you!

AUSTIN: Hey! Today, how are you today?

KEITH: Yeah, how—yes, how are you—that’s where—sorry, that’s— what I meant is, How Are You Today is where you can find me on the internet, [hayt.me](#). You can also go to [youtube.com/runbutton](#), but How Are You Today is the podcast that I used to do, and then now I do it again! You should listen to it because it’s very funny.

AUSTIN : What about Twitter, where can they find you on Twitter?

KEITH: Who cares?

AUSTIN: Okay, good. Joining me again for the first time in a little over a year is—

KEITH: No, I care. I’m sorry. [@KeithJCarberry](#). I care a lot. Please follow me.

AUSTIN: Jesus Christ. Nick Scratch.

NICK: Hello.

AUSTIN: Hey Nick, where can people find you on the internet?

NICK: You can find me at [nickscrat.ch](#).

AUSTIN: And you've been streaming a lot lately again.

NICK: Ah, yes. You can also find the streams I do at [streamesteem.com](https://streamesteem.com), and archives at [/archives](#).

AUSTIN: Nice. And joining us for the first time— or, sort of. Your presence has been felt before in the maps of our game set in Hieron. And in that sense, it was important that you be here for this. Janine Hawkins joins us.

JANINE: Hi! People can find me at [@bleatingheart](#) on Twitter, and I also do some freelance writing around, you know, Polygon and GameSpot and GiantBomb and Paste.

AUSTIN: All over the place.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Well, thank you so much for joining us. We are going to play this game now. So I'm going to kind of walk us through what The Quiet Year is, and then we can start playing. We're using Roll20 again, so apologies, Ali, if you have to cut a lot of dead air while we get our bearings for this new thing we're trying in Roll20. Also, I should close the wiki page for [Roadhog from Overwatch](#). Okay.

[NICK and JANINE laugh quietly]

ART: I'm naming everything on this map Roadhog.

0:05:41

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: Oh my god, I never liked any of us. We're all the worst. I'm gonna fucking quit.

ART: Over here we've got the Gulf of Roadhog. We've got—

AUSTIN: I'm cancelling the show.

KEITH: Didn't we decide to do an Overwatch fan podcast? [AUSTIN groans]

ART: We've got the Roadhog Archipeleggio over here. [JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: [reading] This is our map. Before playing, we'll establish some of the landscape. As we play, we'll update the map to reflect new discoveries, conflicts, and opportunities. Parts of the map will be literal cartography and other parts will be symbolic. We'll try to avoid writing words

in, though common symbols are fine. Also, I don't want us to just write in like, "Oh, it's a farm." But sometimes we might have to write words in, because we are not using real paper. We are using Roll20 and our mouses, our mice, to draw.

KEITH: I think it's mouses.

AUSTIN: Mouses. Meeses.

KEITH: Yep.

AUSTIN: Throughout the game, we'll all be responsible for drawing on this map. It's fine to draw poorly or crudely, but all of us are going to draw. There are also, imagine, dice on this screen. Someone is writing Roadhog. I'm deleting you! [KEITH laughs] I'm deleting your human being. Throughout the game—

KEITH: By the way, Austin gained some powers between the break. He can delete people.

AUSTIN: I can delete whole people. That was—I've had that before, I've just been kind enough not to use that power. When our community starts a project we'll place a number on the map to note how many weeks it has left. Each week the number ticks down. When it reaches zero, the project is complete. Projects take from zero to—or sorry, one to six weeks.

And the one thing that I will say that I'm doing a little bit different is there will also just be some clocks that are counting down for other things that will be revealed as we play. [amused] That is another power that I have, as the GM of Friends at the Table.

KEITH: Since first using clocks, Austin's become very into the clock thing.

AUSTIN: The next game we're playing has so many clocks! It's the best.

KEITH: Yeah, yeah. Mm-hm!

AUSTIN: I can't even wait because it's all clocks. It's clocks on clocks on clocks.

JANINE: Is it a world of clocks?

AUSTIN: It's— welcome to a world of clocks. Welcome to Friends at the Clocks... great. At the bottom of the screen you can see [laughing] how many contempt points we all have. Contempt tokens represent any tension and frustration that might arise in the community. All right. So there are four decks in this game: one for Autumn, one for Winter, one for Spring, and one for Summer. Whenever there is a card drawn, we read what's on the card. There are two options on each card. You pick one of them, and then decide which one of those things to do. And those will help navigate and kind of direct the story of this settlement.

The one thing to note is there is one card in the Winter deck called The Frost Shepherds, and that will be the end of the game. I don't know where it is because the decks are all shuffled. It could be the first card we draw in the Winter, or it could be the 12th card we draw in the Winter. It's hard to know.

So [reading] each of us has two roles to play in this game. The first is that we represent the community at a bird's eye level, and we care about its fate. The second is to be dispassionate and to introduce dilemmas sort of like scientists conducting an experiment. This game asks us to move in and out of those two roles. And so we're not really necessarily embodying a specific character. We're not acting out scenes, it's not like Microscope. Instead we kind of want to represent what the feeling and vibe is in the community. That said, there are moments when it will be clear that when you speak, you're representing a person or a faction inside of the society. But that's not just your default position the whole way through. You're kind of moving between author and actor, back and forth.

We'll also have opportunities to introduce new issues for the community to deal with. This will often happen when we draw new cards or use the action Discover Something New. By dispassionately introducing dilemmas and then returning to our other role as representatives of the community, we can create a tension and make the community's success feel real. If there's an issue that we struggle with in real life, like whether violence is ever justified, introduce situations that call that into question.

All right. So. Before the game begins, we must establish some facts about the community and what its surroundings are like. We will begin with a brief discussion, taking two minutes at most — we'll probably go a little longer than that since there's five of us instead of four— and we'll just kind of sketch things out a little bit. Each one of us— whenever we introduce a detail— we each get to introduce one detail — add it to the map. I will say the map is a little bit already set up because it has the basic shape of Marielda, which again, we've previously called the City of First Light. Which is this little chunk of land that's separated by ocean.

So I think I'm going to start, which is I feel like... I think... the city— so this used to be a big city, right? And then there was an earthquake and stuff from when Samoths pulled the whole land mass further away and broke it from Hieron? So I think that the interior of the city has been really fucked up? But I think maybe there is still a nice, maybe broken in places, wall that splits the real city center, or the bulk of the city, from the outskirts of the rest. So I'll draw a line that represents that wall. I'm trying to decide where it should go. Any thoughts?

JANINE: Well, who's on each side of the wall and who put up the wall? What side of this are they gonna want to be on?

AUSTIN: So the wall is ancient, right? The wall is old. The wall is from when it used to be a big city. And outside there are farmers. And inside there was the burgeoning middle class of fantasy life, right?

JANINE: Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: [amused] The merchants who never really become land owners because fantasy history is weird. Does that seem accessible? Not accessible, reasonable as the big wall of the giant city?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: That seems good. I like that it covers some of the natural coastline, because you don't want the fish stink in your nice part of town.

AUSTIN: No, definitely not.

KEITH: Mm-hm. Mm-hm.

AUSTIN: This isn't a thing we can put down on the map, really? But I was thinking we could have the eastern part here smells worse. Oh, this is a thing I'm adding to the map but is not part of us— this is just a thing, which is there's that volcano that we've established in the broader fiction. That's an important thing. We should just make sure that that's here, right?

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So who has something else that they would like to add to this?

KEITH: Just a quick question about the way this goes. Are we just going to add stuff till we're done, and then start with the cards?

AUSTIN: No, we each get one thing.

KEITH: Oh, okay. Okay.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

NICK: I got something.

AUSTIN: Sure.

NICK: Are we going in an order, or—?

AUSTIN: Nah. We're just talking, just conversation.

NICK: I think there is a really super unruly forest down here?

AUSTIN: Ooh.

NICK: That is really dense with both plant and animal life.

AUSTIN: I like it a lot.

NICK: It's really small, but it's almost supernaturally dense with life.

AUSTIN: Cool.

JANINE: Like there's something in the soil in that area that just— plants fucking love it.

NICK: Yeah. Or some kind of ancient tree that's filling the whole thing, or — I don't know — some old magic or—

AUSTIN: We'll see. Maybe that will come up in play.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Cool, I like that a lot. Art, Keith, and Janine?

KEITH: Can I do... I would like to do the fuckin', just the biggest rock?

AUSTIN: [amused] Okay.

KEITH: It's the rock that everyone knows.

AUSTIN: Sure. How big is it?

KEITH: It's huge.

AUSTIN: Like a city block?

KEITH: If it wasn't literally just a rock, people would be like, "Oh, a mountain." But it's just a rock.

AUSTIN: Okay. And is that in the city or is that outside? Is it inside the walls or outside the walls?

KEITH: It's right outside the walls. Let me get the— I was on the wrong tool. Okay.

NICK: What's the difference between a really big rock and a mountain?

KEITH: [stammers] It's just a rock.

AUSTIN: Did it used to —

KEITH: It's craggy, and there's nothing really growing on it.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: But it's huge.

AUSTIN: So it's a boulder.

NICK: Oh, is it maybe not actually connected to the ground? Or doesn't— maybe it looks like— okay.

KEITH: Right. It doesn't slope up, and it's not a cliff or a hill. But it's a giant fucking boulder that just sits there.

NICK: Huh.

AUSTIN: Did it used to be there? Was it there before Samoths moved Marielda?

KEITH: I think maybe it was ... it was like a ... I don't know, maybe it's a piece of earth that crumbled— I guess that doesn't make any sense since it's a rock. Maybe it was under the ground, and now it's above the ground.

AUSTIN: Oh weird. That's cool. It was sitting there, and the earth dropped around it?

KEITH: Yeah, mhm.

AUSTIN: And, "Oh, there was always this weird boulder underground that's as big as a city block or two or three." Cool. Good.

JANINE: Umm—

ART: Sorry, I got lost.

AUSTIN: It's okay.



JANINE: I have something if you want a little more time.

AUSTIN: Sure.

JANINE: I was thinking that right along this... on the earth phallus—

AUSTIN: Mhm!

JANINE: I was thinking like right along here there'd be sort of a volcanic sand beach. So it's that really really black sand that's kind of weirdly warm to the touch?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that. That's really cool.

JANINE: I don't know that we know enough about these people to say, "Oh, and rich people go in here to relax," or something.

AUSTIN: Right. We'll get there.

JANINE: It's a feature that is either very nice or useless. Maybe.

AUSTIN: Which reminds of a thing I started to say before and then forgot, which is I kinda like the idea that the eastern part of this map is sweaty and gross and like...

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like damp and humid. One, 'cause volcano. And two, 'cause of now these black sands.

KEITH: Basalt sand?

AUSTIN: I think. Is that a different thing? Is there basalt sand?

JANINE: It could be pumice. I mean, I think anything can be sand if you grind it up.

AUSTIN: Oh. True. True.

JANINE: But yeah, I like that idea. And it wouldn't just be the fallout, the ash from the volcano. But there's a geothermal hotness of the ground that is kind of unpleasant no matter what else is going on.

0:16:05

AUSTIN: I should note, now that I mention it, that I said a thing in a real flavory way before, during the intro? The water has this weird mix of water and magical lava in it forever. And it glows. It glows a yellow light all night.

KEITH: I can see it.

AUSTIN: So if you're near the coast, it's just bright and glowing...and hot. And there are parts that occasionally burst into actual flame. And it makes getting here really hard if you're not on the coast.

KEITH: Wanna go for a swim? You guys wanna go for a swim?

AUSTIN: I bet you there are places— we'll get to this. Maybe there are places where that's okay. But. Art, what about you?

ART: I think— tell me if you think this is a resource.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: Because I don't want to get ahead of us here.

AUSTIN: Sure.

ART: But I think there are huge— this thing dumped a lot of fire into the water. And that fire is lava. And that lava is rocks and minerals, right? [AUSTIN: Yes.] I think there are big metallic icebergs almost in this bay over here.

AUSTIN: Oooh. Can we save that for a resource? Because it sounds really cool.

ART: Okay. All right.

AUSTIN: The thing that I would like to— the one thing I wish we had was anything to do with humans? [ART: Sure.] We don't have anything to do with where people live or...a city, outside of walls. Which can be useful, but. Maybe a little bit of that. And then I— but I do like that as a resource, and we can wrap back around to that in a second.

ART: Okay. I think I have my thing. [AUSTIN: Okay.] Over here by the tree are— this is the worst part of the city. This was the—

AUSTIN: Okay. The southwestern.

ART: This was the slums. This was not where the perpetual middle class lived, but the perpetual lower class. However, these buildings have held up the best through the struggles [AUSTIN: Cool.] because they're further away, because they're near a— I don't want to say— but you don't want to be near the tree, right?

AUSTIN: Right. But do people say things like, "it was the, you know, the trees held the ground together"?

ART: Sure.

AUSTIN: "The trees were the ones looking out for us."

ART: Over in Tree Town.

AUSTIN: Right. I like that.

KEITH: Maybe it's a little cooler away from the volcano that's magic?

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: They might have also built out of a material that was available there but not pretty. [KEITH: Mhm.] So people who could afford something that looked a little nicer might get it, but that might have turned out to be more brittle or something.

AUSTIN: Right.

KEITH: I like the idea that the shittiest part of the city just happens to be the greenest and the coolest. [AUSTIN: Mhm!] And like they just kinda fucked up and put the bad part of town where the nice part of town should have been.

AUSTIN: [laughing] They didn't know! Right, they didn't know that—

ART: No, the nice part of town was by the water.

AUSTIN: Right, right. That's the thing. Everyone thought the nice part of town was near the nice little river stream that used to be there, but now that's an ocean.

KEITH: Yeah, but now it's like—

AUSTIN: And it's a fire ocean! So.

KEITH: Right. And so it doesn't get cool at night.

AUSTIN: Right, right. You don't get that nice breeze off the ocean. You get like shitty *hot* wind.

JANINE: You have to get super heavy curtains to keep the fucking ash out if you want the windows open.

AUSTIN: Oh *god*. All right. So The Quiet Year says that the community itself should be 60 to 80 people. This is way more than that, and we just need to abstract things a little bit. So when we think about projects, in a traditional game of The Quiet Year something like, "Someone is planting a few tomato plants" is a totally good project. Or, "Oh, they want to fix the old water wheel, they want to put 12 people on that thing to fix the old water wheel." Totally fine in a traditional Quiet Year game. But we can think a little bit bigger because we're talking about a big piece of space here.

KEITH: Austin, the big piece of space was last season.

AUSTIN: Right, sorry. Big piece of space was the last game. All right. So [reading] now we'll each declare an important resource for the community, something we might have in either abundance or scarcity. Choosing a resource makes it important if it wasn't already. If you pick gasoline, it becomes something that your community wants and needs. As a group now, after we choose what those things are, then we decide which one is in abundance, and then the other ones get listed as scarcities.

So let's think of just things. Their examples are: clean drinking water, a source of energy, protection from predators, adequate shelter, food. But you can also think more abstractly than that. Think about things like knowledge or technology or security, things like that.

KEITH: I have a pretty good pitch.

AUSTIN: Mhm?

KEITH: I have what I think is a pretty good pitch. So I think that there's a lot of fish, but also—

AUSTIN: Remember, we're not yet picking—

KEITH: Oh, we're not picking?

AUSTIN: — we're not yet picking if it's abundant or scarce. We're just saying—

KEITH: Oh, no. I know. This is my— the fact that it could be either is built into this.

AUSTIN: Mm. Okay.

KEITH: But, because of the weird lava and the magic, there's problems with the fish? So there's gotta be a weird step in between where you catch the fish, and then keep them and watch them to make sure that they're good to eat.

AUSTIN: Sure. So I'm putting down fish, and then food in parentheses, to represent that that's one of our resources. All right. Who else has a resource that they're interested in.

ART: Magic!

AUSTIN: Mmm, good.

JANINE: The thing that I had in mind that was similar to Art's suggestion, I'd specifically been thinking obsidian in terms of tools and also just pendants and cosmetic items.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JANINE: Really good for tools. We can broaden that a little to metal and minerals or something like that.

AUSTIN: Like ore? Something like that, mineral...

JANINE: Obsidian had been the specific idea just because of the volcanic business.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I like that. Nick?

NICK: I'm really attracted to knowledge, but also I don't want to— that's sort of playing to type.

AUSTIN: Me too. I'm adding knowledge if you're not. So.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's kind of important for Samothres. And any story about Samothres. [NICK: All right.] So if you want knowledge you can have it. Otherwise I'll be adding it.

NICK: No, I'm gonna let you have knowledge. Sorry.

AUSTIN: Okay. No, that's fine.

NICK: I'm going to add wood. I know that's really specific.

AUSTIN: Ah. Sure. No, that's totally fair.

NICK: I really want conflict to arise with that big scary forest.

AUSTIN: Yeah!

JANINE: And I bet if it's that dense it regrows quickly, like kind of a bamboo situation.

AUSTIN: Well, the thing that's—

NICK: It could be also scarce.

JANINE: Yeah.

NICK: Because no one—

AUSTIN: Because it's dangerous.

NICK: Yeah, because no one wants to go in there.

AUSTIN: Right. So which of these is abundant? It sounds like obsidian is the one that's most easily abundant, but it also be a situation where it's—

JANINE: It could all be underwater. Like.

AUSTIN: Or just, how the fuck do you— you can't get out there. It's the bubbling ocean of fire! It's there, but we don't get it.

NICK: Yeah. I mean, you need diamond pickaxes to get obsidian and it takes forever, so.

AUSTIN: Yeah, duh. Of course.

NICK: So.

AUSTIN: So what do we think? Which of these is in abundance? It's— I'm gonna say it's not knowledge?

JANINE: I was also going to say that, 'cause they're isolated.

AUSTIN: They're isolated, and the thing about Samothēs, for people who don't remember from the first season, is that Samothēs is the god of tools and technology, but not the god of sharing those things. He's explicitly not the god of learning. [NICK: Right.] He's a very jealous god when it comes to knowledge and is very much like, "No no, don't worry about it. I'll build it for you, I'll take care of you." Like, "Don't worry about it, I'll make sure everything is good. You focus on...anything except knowing stuff."

NICK: I think the abundant thing is magic.

AUSTIN: Ooo, interesting.

NICK: Because of the— the reason it's called the City of Lights and all that stuff, the glowing river.

AUSTIN: So do you think that is—

KEITH: Which means there's someone there that can collect it and use it.

AUSTIN: Right.

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I like that.

KEITH: Because it wouldn't be a resource unless it can be processed.

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: I like that a lot because it also sets up things... Yeah. I like that a lot. That's all I'll say. The thing that— the other half of this that we didn't talk about is that this game is going to set the stage for a follow-up game called Blades in the Dark, in which the other players in Friends at the Table will be playing a crew of ragamuffins and scoundrels who get up to some heist nonsense. And there might be a little bit of a time jump between the end of this game and the beginning of that one. Or there might not. We'll see how it feels. But this is going to be the city that they're in. I'm very excited about that fact.

All right. Art, is there a name for that little area, do you think?

ART: Oh, yeah. There is. Do I know it? Not yet, but it's great. It's a fantastic name.

AUSTIN: Good name. All right. Good. We'll move on. If it comes to us, it comes to us. But for now, we don't quite know. Everyone think about it. All right. So.

[reading] The basic unit of play in The Quiet Year is the week. Each week is a turn taken by one player, with play proceeding clockwise around the table. Weeks should take an average of two to three minutes to complete. During each week, the following things happen. One, the active player draws a card, reads the relevant text aloud, and resolves it. They follow all the bold text. Two, project dice are reduced by one, and any finished projects are updated. Three, the active player chooses to take an action. And those actions are: discover something new, hold a

discussion, or start a project. And we can get into those as they happen. I don't want to just do a rules dump here.

I'm still stuck on this stupid name. I hate being that person.

ART: The Canopy?

AUSTIN: Canopy's not bad!

ART: Or like Canopy Town?

AUSTIN: Yeah... Yeah.

ART: C-Town?

AUSTIN: C-Town. No. Mmm.

ART: Not C-Town, forget I said C-Town. [JANINE laughs]

JANINE: I keep thinking some Rootswell or something, but that might be a little too contemporary. I don't know, there's something Fable-ish about that that's maybe not right.

0:26:13

AUSTIN: What about Canopy Row? And then it's also a little nod to John Steinbeck's Cannery Row? [KEITH laughs]

ART: You know, not a lot of other actual-play podcasts have Steinbeck references.

AUSTIN: No. Who else references Steinbeck? No one. I kinda like Canopy as a tree thing that has kind of a—

NICK: And that has the cover or accompaniment or whatever.

AUSTIN: Right. It's built into it.

KEITH: I'm good with Canopy Row.

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Let's type it, and then if we stick with it, we stick with it, but for now it's Canopy Row. Boom. All right.



ART: And then when it gets gentrified, it'll become Canapé... Row.

AUSTIN: Right, with the accent mark.

JANINE: That's what people call it. That's, you know.

AUSTIN: Right. Oh god. Mmm. All right. So I'm going to take the first turn, because that way I can talk through how this is going to go. All right.

So I have— I drew the three of hearts, the three of Spring. And I have two choices. I can either choose "Someone new arrives" or "Two of the community's younger members get into a fight. What provoked them?" Hmm. I'm going to start with the second one. I'm going to do that one instead of the top one. I'm going to do "Two of the community's younger members get into a fight. What provoked them?"

NICK: So wait. I want to make it clear that this is your turn, so we don't get input. Right?

AUSTIN: This is my turn. You get input on this, but it's not— at the end of the day, it will still be whoever's turn it is. [NICK: Okay.] So. And then you update the map to represent this. [NICK: Sure.] So I'll actually read the drawing card thing, [reading] most cards have two options separated by an "or" divider. Pick the option that you find the most interesting and fitting. Read the text aloud. The card might ask you a question, bring bad news, or create new opportunities. Many cards have specific rules attached to them, which are written in bold text. If you drew the card, it's up to you to make the decisions that the card requires. But elsewhere in the book and in conversation with Avery and on forum posts and stuff, it's clear that we can talk about what that thing is. But it is, at the end of the day, the person who drew the card's decision.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: [reading] If the card asks you a question, think about whether your answer could be represented on the map somehow. If it fits, update the map to reflect this new information. For example, if the card asks you about sleeping quarters for the community, you might end up drawing a row of tents near the edge of the forest.

So I think that two young people get into a fight over— let's think. I think that this is the first little bit of kind of class violence happening here? There is a young woman from Canopy Row who has— all the rest of her family, unfortunately, died in the creation of Marielda, she has— she winds up with this big house. And there's another young person from a nearby community who insists that like, oh, he's from a noble family, and there are eight of them, and they need a place to stay. And she's like, "No, this is mine. This house is mine." And she probably has a cool name. Any suggestions on her cool name? While I add her very big house of Canopy Row here?

JANINE: Tamsyn. I don't know. That's the first thing —

AUSTIN: Tamsyn?

JANINE: Tamsyn.

AUSTIN: Can you type it in the chat while I draw?

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: All right. I am going to— not delete this card, I'm just going to shrink it real tiny and put it at the bottom.

JANINE: Oh my god, it's tiny.

AUSTIN: It's very tiny.

KEITH: Oh, a little baby card.

AUSTIN: All right. I think she kills this guy. I think it comes to blows. And she finds an old fire poker and beats him to death. And it's the first time that anyone from Canopy Row has acted out against someone from the rich quarter? And in doing so, it kind of sets up this notion that like, "Oh, there isn't law right now." All of Samoth's men are off fighting right now. Not men, all the soldiers of Samoth are off on the continent still, fighting. And what little law is left is barely holding things together. And Samoth is off on his *fucking* volcano, not helping anybody right now. And like, "No one's going to stop me if I kill this brat!" And so she does it. Um. Cool. Thanks, Tamsyn.

So step two [slight laugh] is that I get to decide whether to start a project, hold a discussion, or discover something new. I think I'm going to start a project. So start a project is the [reading] you choose a situation and declare what the community will do to resolve it. There is no consultation about this idea. The community simply begins work. Some example projects are: we're converting the mine shaft into cold food storage, or, we're killing the wolves, or, we're going to sacrifice a newborn on the night of the full moon to appease the windwalkers. [KEITH laughs in distance] As a group we quickly decide how many weeks the project would reasonably take to compete — uh, complete. *Complete*: minimum one, maximum six. Remember that you are a small community. It isn't easy or quick to build a house. Again, we've had this talk. A house isn't so bad, but bigger things than that will take a longer time. Be generous—

KEITH: A house isn't so bad, but we probably need more than *a* house.

AUSTIN: Exactly. That's exactly right. [reading] If a project would reasonably take longer than six weeks to complete, it'll need to be completed in stages. So I think the thing I want is, I want us to figure out how to get into the ocean. So I think I'm going to start a clock for boats, boats that can withstand...

JANINE: Not getting their shit eaten away by the water?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Or something. What do you— hmm.

JANINE: I bet that water eats through— okay, so boats. It's not just wood. They've got pitch in there to keep the water out from between the wood, and I bet that weirdass water eats right through that pitch.

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah. So let's— I think that's a six. I think it's as long as it could possibly take, because this is, "We don't have a lot of knowledge." Right? So maybe we actually have to fix the knowledge problem before we fix the boat problem.

KEITH: Wouldn't we already have the technology to get across the river with a boat?

AUSTIN: No, 'cause the fire is in there now. It's a—

KEITH: Oh, it wasn't always in there? That just happened?

AUSTIN: No. He just did that. Samoths just did that. And it's shitty, because he didn't ask anybody to do that. But also he's the only god that we all worship.

KEITH: Sorry, I didn't realize that he had just done it.

AUSTIN: Yeah, this is the first year after he's done this. This just happened three weeks ago. Everyone is recovering from it. Things have finally kind of quieted down, the bodies have been buried. The ones that have been found, anyway.

JANINE: Wouldn't learning how to deal with the water, wouldn't that help the knowledge problem? [AUSTIN: Ooh, sure.] Because in terms of their biggest knowledge gaps are, "Oh this is some weird water, we don't understand it" is kind of a big one at the top of that list.

AUSTIN: Right. Yes. Totally. So let's stick with boats then. Does that work for people?

KEITH: Yeah, I like boats.

AUSTIN: All right. Six weeks.

KEITH: Hi, I'm Keith, I like boats.

AUSTIN: I'm also going to lower this clock, 'cause the last thing you do in your turn is lower every project clock by one.

KEITH: What is that?

AUSTIN: And so whatever that mystery clock is, drop down to—

KEITH: I don't like it.

AUSTIN: — to nine.

KEITH: I don't like that it's at nine already. [JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: It's fine. And then we have to mark on the map where that project is taking place. Oh, actually, I'm gonna — I'm going to just do that.

KEITH: Real quick, how are we adding contempt points? What are we—?

AUSTIN: I think you can just go down there and change that number.

KEITH: We can't change the numbers, I don't think—

AUSTIN: Or how about this, you just say "Contempt" in the chat, and I'll increase your number by one.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Is it by one, or can you take more contempt?

KEITH: It's by one, I think.

ART: Yeah. I believe it's by one.

KEITH: It didn't say you couldn't take more, but it implied one.

AUSTIN: I should read this out loud too. [reading] If you ever feel like you weren't consulted or honored in the decision-making process, you can take a piece of contempt and place it in front of you. This is your outlet for expressing disagreement or tension. If someone starts a project you don't agree with, you don't get to voice your objections or speak out of turn. You are instead invited to take a piece of contempt. Contempt will generally remain in front of players until the end of the game. It will act as a reminder of past contentions. Its primary role is a social signifier. In addition, you can discard it back into the center of the table in one of two ways: by acting

selfishly or by diffusing tensions. If you ever want to act selfishly to the known detriment of the community, you can discard a contempt token to justify your behavior. If you decide whether — *you* decide whether your behavior requires justification. This will often trigger others taking contempt tokens in response. If someone else does something that you greatly support that would mend a relationship or rebuild trust, you can discard a contempt token to demonstrate how they have diffused past tensions. So yeah. Let's just say one at a time.

In the meanwhile, I'm going to add a project clock over here. That's nine. And then let's say boats— I think they're probably working on that— actually, they're working on that probably where the rich people are. And that's up here. And that's six. Okay. I'm going to write next to it what it is, too. Boats!

ART: Do we have a turn order?

AUSTIN: We're just going from left to right. So I think Janine is next, then Art, then Keith, then Nick.

KEITH: Okay. That's what I have too.

AUSTIN: So Janine, go ahead and draw out the top card of that next one.

JANINE: "There's a disquieting legend about this place. What is it?" Or "Alarming weather patterns destroy something. How and what?" [AUSTIN: Ooo.] Huh.

KEITH: We don't have anything yet.

JANINE: Yeah ...

AUSTIN: Mm! You can draw the destroyed thing.

JANINE: Can I make up a thing to destroy?

AUSTIN: Mhm! Sure.

NICK: Yeah, it's not that we— we just don't have anything defined. That's different than—

JANINE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right, that's exactly right. If you wanted to say that there was a nice church that everyone congregated at and now it's destroyed, [KEITH: Yeah. Right.] totally good.

JANINE: Yeah. It feels weird to me to say there's a disquieting legend about this place, because it feels like the disquieting legend is the thing that's happening. To some extent.

0:36:09

AUSTIN: Right. Though if you wanted to maybe—

JANINE: Make another one.

AUSTIN: Maybe in the forest?

[overlapping]

KEITH: Make another — make up another place?

JANINE: The forest, yeah. The forest is good.

AUSTIN: Or make up a new place.

JANINE: Shit. [AUSTIN chuckles]

AUSTIN: I like this game. This is a good game.

JANINE: Okay. [laughing] I've got a legend about the forest. [AUSTIN: Uh huh.] It kind of connects with the— do we still have a wood shortage?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: It doesn't fix that, it just kind of connects with why that is a thing. People like to talk about how a woodsman went into the forest, and he started cutting up some wood, like woodsmen do. And he found... you know how— this is a reference. You know how people come out of the Amigara Fault? At the end? [Noises of agreement] They're all stretched and kinda like living mummies. This is a weird— basically, he cut some wood up and found kind of a stretched-out weird mummy inside the wood of the tree.

AUSTIN: Euugh. Did they just--

JANINE: At the very center of it. The rest of the tree had formed around this person and stretched them out.

NICK: Yes.

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: Cool. Good. You should draw—

JANINE: So there's maybe some concern about the wood in the forest?

AUSTIN: You should draw a person down there or something so we remember that.

JANINE: [amused] Okay.

[overlapping]

ART: Or a stretched-out person.

AUSTIN: That's the fucking creepiest shit. Right.

NICK: I really love that we're getting some Junji Ito in here.

AUSTIN: Yup. Yup. Is— can you tell how old they are by how many rings they have? [NICK laughs]

ART: Yeah, but they're rings on their fingers. Just gold rings, it's so weird. It doesn't make any sense.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. Weird. Weird.

JANINE: I don't know if this is gonna— I don't like the drawing tool, so I'm having some trouble.

AUSTIN: Wait, this is big.

JANINE: I can make that part smaller. I just kind of needed the— that's not very scary.

AUSTIN: I see. Yeah. That's not— you made a smiling person inside that tree trunk, Janine. [NICK laughs]

JANINE: Well, we have to look at it for the rest of the game, so it's—it's so hard to draw.

ART: Maybe they all smile.

AUSTIN: Ah, if they're all smiling, that's so much worse! That's so much worse if you cut open a tree and find a smiling, stretched corpse.

JANINE: Well, this conveys the message. Certainly. That's... a weird tree person.

AUSTIN: Yes. Yes. All right. Art. [JANINE: Oh wait, do we—] Oh wait, that's not true. Janine still has to do— yeah, [JANINE: Yeah.] so Janine, now you have to decide to either hold a discussion, discover something new, or start a project. I should also— I actually think the project updates first, so let's update those projects.

[overlapping]

JANINE: Okay. And what's— discover something new, what does that mean?

KEITH: That's true, we should update first.

JANINE: Like we found caves? Or—?

AUSTIN: I'll read it. [reading] One of the action types is discover something new. Introduce a new situation. It might be a problem, an opportunity, or a bit of both. Draw that situation on the map. Drawings should be small and simple, smaller than an inch, finished within 30 seconds. Whenever things seem to be too controlled or easy, we can use this action to introduce new issues and dilemmas. When individual characters get introduced, we'll give them names and record those names on our index card. Here are some example situations: there's a dried-up well located at the edge of town, mangy wolves have been slinking around the woods, there's a broken-down water wheel a mile upstream, strange wailing noises come from the forest at night [JANINE laughs], a self-declared prophet arrives. So it's really just our way of being able to be like, "Let's introduce some extra complication."

JANINE: I'm actually I think going to go with working on projects?

AUSTIN: So are you introducing a project, then?

JANINE: Yeah, introducing a project. Sorry, I was looking at the handout thing. [AUSTIN: Yeah. That's cool.] Oh, actually I have a question first. Does the weird water go all the way around, or does it blend into the normal water sort of where the bottom part—?

AUSTIN: I think out to the south off the coast it blends away. [JANINE: Okay.] But no one goes south. [JANINE: Yeah.] There isn't anything— it gets deep, and the water gets dangerous. [JANINE: Mhm.] That's as far as people know, anyway.

JANINE: Okay. Ah, screw it. I'm gonna go with discover something new. I'm going to say that under the...weird volcanic beach [AUSTIN: Mhm.], I want them to discover that that sand is maybe 5 feet deep. [AUSTIN: Huh.] And underneath that it's just sheetrock. [AUSTIN: Huh, okay.] I mean, we could say that's obsidian, but I feel like that's too soon to deal with that resource stuff.

AUSTIN: No, that's too soon. Yeah, I think that's too much.

JANINE: But it's just sand-sand-sand and then just rock, which I don't think is generally how that works.

KEITH: But like shitty rock.

AUSTIN: Right.

JANINE: Yeah. Maybe like limestone or something. Actually, it could be the same kind of rock as that bigass rock.



AUSTIN: Yeah. Oh, that's cool.

KEITH: Oh yeah. There you go.

AUSTIN: I like that. No one knows what sort of rock that is. So that's good.

[overlapping]

JANINE: It's the grey kind.

AUSTIN: Give me just like a dash of that same— that same —

KEITH: Just regular rock.

AUSTIN: Grey rock.

KEITH: Normal grey rock.

AUSTIN: All right. Art.

ART: Hey, hi. So I start by drawing a card. "A young boy starts digging in the ground and discovers something unexpected. What is it?" Or "An old man confesses to past crimes and atrocities. What has he done?"

AUSTIN: This is the king of hearts.

ART: [sings] Playin' with the king of hearts. I think I have to go with "An old man confesses to past crimes and atrocities. What has he done?"

AUSTIN: Yeah. What is he, and what did he do?

KEITH: Crimes *and* atrocities!

JANINE: Atrocities that aren't crimes.

ART: He's a priest. He's—

AUSTIN: Of Samothres?

ART: Of Samothres. And what he did was he taught Samot.

AUSTIN: Oh, shit. Like forever ago.

ART: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like a hundred — like 80 years ago or something.

ART: But personally.

AUSTIN: Is he human? Is he human?

ART: The priest?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Yes. He's very old.

AUSTIN: Like too old?

ART: Like too old. [AUSTIN: Hm. Does he have a name?] And now that the war is really starting to drag on, he's starting to feel more and more responsible for what happened because of the things he said and the way he said them. [AUSTIN: Interesting] When he was telling that kid he could do anything when he grew up.

KEITH: Oooh.

AUSTIN: I took a contempt point.

KEITH: I saw.

NICK: Oh. I misunderstood, I thought you meant he taught Samot like, he taught his philosophies or something.

AUSTIN: [amused] No.

NICK: He literally taught. He was Samot's teacher.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ART: Yes.

AUSTIN: Which is a nice little—[KEITH: Some of em fuckin—] we haven't explicitly talked about Samot as being Alexander the Great-like, but I've always had that connection.

KEITH: Have we not talked about that?

AUSTIN: Have we? If we have, that'd be cool.

KEITH: I don't know, it sounds very familiar to me. [AUSTIN: Okay. Well.] Maybe I just also thought it.

AUSTIN: This Aristotle motherfucker right here, is all I'm saying. Does he have a name, Art?

KEITH: Art-istotle.

AUSTIN: Oh right. Art-istotle. Right. Good.

ART: Christopher.

AUSTIN: Christopher. So what's your— oh, projects go down. Boats are down to four, question mark is down to seven.

ART: There are cracks in the wall. Oh, this is my thing, I'm discovering something new. [AUSTIN: Okay.] What I am discovering is cracks in the wall down here.

AUSTIN: Oooh, okay. Down at the southern border of the city.

ART: Yeah. [AUSTIN: Cool.] Who knows why. No one knows what's happening.

AUSTIN: No one knows.

ART: That wall used to be fine. Now it's not fine.

AUSTIN: All right. Keith.

KEITH: Hello. "There's a large body of water on the map. Where is it? What does it look like?" Or "There's a giant man-made structure on the map. Where is it? Why is it abandoned?"

AUSTIN: OOh.

KEITH: I know what's up. I think that... so up there was it was a watchtower for the war. But it just— when things went down, it just fucking crumbled. So it was abandoned recently, and also there's kind of been no one to even use it for a while because everybody's been off fighting the war. So it's basically an abandoned, crumbled military outpost.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JANINE: Also, what do they need to keep watch for? Because they're all safe. Right?

[overlapping]

KEITH: Right, they're all safe.

AUSTIN: Totally safe.

JANINE: They all got— they got cut off from the dangerous mainland and they're all cosy. It's great.

AUSTIN: All right. So then what is your— so then things go down. Projects.

KEITH: I'm going to discover something new.

AUSTIN: Okay. What are you going to discover?

KEITH: I'm going to discover that there's a man that no one knows that's been camping out in the rubble of the tower.

AUSTIN: Oh, interesting.

KEITH: He was just here. And then, now he can't get back.

AUSTIN: So he's just a man on the outside of the wall.

KEITH: He's just a man on the outside of the wall.

AUSTIN: Also, Art, real quick, 'cause— one, Keith, draw that somehow. Maybe just draw a little stick figure man or draw a little hut or something. Keith — or Art, is there a way that you can show Christopher on this map? What did they do to him, if anything? Or is he just regretful?

ART: I think he's taking sanctuary in a holy building. Which is probably not in Canopy Row.

AUSTIN: No. You want to draw that somewhere else? Yeah, that's a good guy. You made a good guy, Keith.

KEITH: Thank you. He's not turning the color that he's supposed to turn. Still yellow.

AUSTIN: I got you. You want that? Is that what you want?

KEITH: Sure, yeah.

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: I'll give him yellow pants.

JANINE: Is he wearing yellow pants? [group laughter]

KEITH: That's how they noticed him.

AUSTIN: Wait a second, there's a guy with yellow pants! And he's just a mystery man? He hasn't— no one's talked to him yet?

KEITH: I don't know if anyone is going beyond the wall yet, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah. That's fine. They just saw movement out there with his golden pants. I'm going to add him to the list.

KEITH: So yeah, no one knows why he's there. We do, 'cause I said.

0:46:13

AUSTIN: Nick? Oooh. Huh.

NICK: Okay. So my card is, "A charismatic young girl convinces many to help her with an elaborate scheme. What is it? Who joins her endeavors?" and then in bold, "Start a project to reflect." Or "A charismatic young girl tries to tempt many into sinful or dangerous activity. Why does she do it? How does the community respond?" So I want to solve this knowledge problem.

AUSTIN: Okay.

NICK: So that bold stuff, that's the second part of my turn then too? Right?

AUSTIN: No. No, you then also get— I'll double check, but I think that that's—

NICK: Oh, I get a free project?

AUSTIN: Yeah, if you wanted to— yeah, this is a free project. Absolutely.

NICK: Interesting. Okay.

AUSTIN: Yes. So there's stuff like that all throughout this game.

NICK: Okay. So I convince—or this girl convinces some of the other people in Canopy Row—

AUSTIN: Is it Tamsyn?

NICK: [sighs] No, I don't think it is Tamsyn.

AUSTIN: Okay. Different character.

NICK: Different character, but someone from Canopy Row does— gets a group of people together and convinces them that we need to go into the forest [AUSTIN: Huh. Okay.] for supplies. We need to figure out what's up with the forest. These are old legends, old stories. We can't believe these silly stories any more. We need that stuff.

AUSTIN: Okay. So she wants to investigate the forest?

NICK: Yes.

AUSTIN: How long do you think that takes?

NICK: I'm gonna say it takes four weeks.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. There we go. And this week doesn't count for it, is an important thing.

NICK: Right. Right. Okay. Yeah, she just convinced everyone, so next week they're starting out. It's going to take them a week to get there. They'll spend two weeks in the forest and then a week to get back.

AUSTIN: Okay. Hey, Keith, when did you take a contempt token?

KEITH: Just now.

AUSTIN: Okay. Just wanted to make sure.

NICK: So then as the second part of my turn, I'm actually going to start another project. And that other project is, we're going to go into the city proper and look for any surviving libraries.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool.

NICK: And that's going to take a full six weeks, I think.

AUSTIN: So how about this, then? [stammers] If you're going to look for— what if we split it up into two things, because six weeks should be— that feels big. That would be, "We found a library and got everything out of it." But I kind of like the idea of looking for a library as a smaller project. And then later we get to determine what the library is.

NICK: Oh, right. Okay, that's true. And there would either be old maps or someone that knows where a library was, probably? Right?

AUSTIN: Sure. Probably? Huh.

NICK: Or at least someone heard. Someone vaguely remembers from when they were a kid, some older elder in the community or something.

AUSTIN: What's interesting is we've talked about Samoths being a guy who controls knowledge, so I'm curious what will be in that library.

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: We'll get there. [NICK: Interesting. Okay.] So I put a little two there. And now we're back around to me. Queen of Spring. Huh. "What's the most beautiful thing in this area?" or "What's the most hideous thing in this area?" So I can tell you what's hideous. They come up out of the grey that was underneath the obsidian— er, not the obsidian, the black beaches. The rich people are probably not super fond of this, but these strange lizard dogs [JANINE laughs] show up.

JANINE: Eeww.

KEITH: Dozards.

AUSTIN: They're kobolds. And without any— no one talks to them. But they immediately start building something on the beach. And when people talk about what they've seen, it's just like, "I think it's a building? But that's not the way buildings look." It's craggy. And they're building it out of that grey stone that was under the black beach, in strange shapes, weird polygonal outcroppings that don't seem to hang in any sense of reality. Some people think it's magic. And they're hideous. They're hideous, their architecture is hideous, regardless of if you're a human or an elf or a dwarf. Whatever you are, them and what they're building is just the most hideous thing you've ever seen.

JANINE: I mean, if you're a kobold, you probably like it.

AUSTIN: If you're a kobold, you probably think it looks dope!

KEITH: "Look at this dope thing I built!" "Eugh, we all hate that and you!"

AUSTIN: [laughs] Volcano project's down to four. I am going to hold a discussion. I'll read to you about holding discussions.

KEITH: Hello.

AUSTIN: [reading] You can choose to open with a question or a declaration. Starting with you and going clockwise, everyone gets to weigh in once, sharing a single argument comprised of one to two sentences. If you opened with a question, you get to weigh in last. If you opened with

a declaration, that's it for you. So if you go like, "Hey, here's a question," then you get to answer last. If instead you say, "Here's a thing I believe," then you don't get to come back around.

[reading] A discussion never results in a summation or a decision process. Everyone weighs in, and then it's over. This is how conversations work in communities, they are untidy and inconclusive affairs. Each discussion should be tied to a situation on the map. When a discussion ends, mark the situation it is attached to with a small dot. Some example conversations include, "Should we retaliate against the bikers?" or, if leading with a declaration, "We should abstain from retaliation or violence"; "Could we use the school bus as a sleeping area for the village children?" It's important that we stay concise. If any of us feel like we have more to say on a topic, we can always hold another discussion about it at a later point.

So, I'm going to start with me. And I think it's— I think this is from one of the rich people kind of in between the boats area and the sands. And they are very clear: we should kill the kobolds. Or whatever they're actually called. We should kill the fucking rock lizards.

So let's go in the turn order, so Janine, Art, Keith, Nick.

JANINE: Do I have to say who I'm representing or just kind of go with it?

AUSTIN: No, you don't have to. You can if you want to, but you don't have to.

JANINE: I'm probably speaking for some just very pragmatic kind of asshole person. But, maybe we should let the kobold finish their thing and then kill them, because maybe their thing would be useful to us, and it's work we wouldn't have to do. Even if it's kind of ugly, maybe we put some drapes over it. I don't know.

AUSTIN: Art?

ART: Yes. The kobolds must be expelled for the safety of the community. There's a war out there. It's not the time for experiments.

KEITH: We have to figure out what they're doing here f — we can't just kill them— maybe they're buddies!

AUSTIN: Nick?

NICK: Yeah. We...could try asking them what they're doing before we kill them?

AUSTIN: Okay. Janine, your turn.

JANINE: "Are there children in the community? If there are, what is their role in the community?" or "How are the eldest members of the community? What special needs do they have?"



AUSTIN: That's tough.

JANINE: Yeah. I think the children question is one that we haven't really addressed. We've seen some young people sort of learning to cause trouble, but we haven't seen any children. Presuming that some of them were protected when the whole split thing happened, and. Or have— how long has it been again?

AUSTIN: Three weeks.

JANINE: Okay. So there haven't been any produced in that time, probably. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Ahh, a couple. One or two.

JANINE: Maybe a few. Yeah.

KEITH: Wait, has it not been five weeks?

AUSTIN: Oh, right, no. It's been— you're totally right. It's now been seven weeks.

JANINE: Oh, yeah.

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: 'Cause we started the game —

JANINE: Well, still.

KEITH: Did we forget to move the four down? Both of them?

AUSTIN: We did. We did forget to move the four. I got it. Thank you. And the library, what happened—

KEITH: Should be at two, right? Two or one.

AUSTIN: Library and boats will go down to zero this turn. Right?

KEITH: Okay. Great. Yeah.

JANINE: I think— so there are children in the community, because even in war there are usually some children that survive. It's just not great for them. I imagine they're very localized, though. They have some sort of— localized might not be the word. But there's some sort of schooling system in place that is very much like, "We have all the kids in one place so we know where they all are. We can keep an eye on them, we can keep them safe. We can make sure they're

not wandering out to fucking play with kobolds or whatever.” So that’s sort of my thought is that that’s where they fit in is there’s some sort of compound or place where the children just are.

AUSTIN: Okay. All of them?

JANINE: Probably most of them. I can imagine like — I don’t know if it would be a situation where only the children of well-to-do families would be protected in that way, or if the children of well-to-do families would be exempt because their families could care for them “properly,” you know, quote-unquote.

AUSTIN: I could go either way with that.

JANINE: Yeah.

0:55:58

AUSTIN: Do you want to add that somewhere to the map? Or do you think it’s—

JANINE: Okay. Actually, I think I know what it is. It’s a thing that started before the split, maybe, where the children of the wealthy families were kept there to be safe. But now that their god has made them safe — like, “Everything’s okay, probably” — the wealthier families can maybe get their kids out of it, but the other families— they’re there for their own good.

AUSTIN: Right. And they don’t have people to petition to get them out.

JANINE: Yeah. Can probably be near the church, really.

AUSTIN: Yeah! I like that. We’ve already established Christopher as being a teacher.

JANINE: Mhm.

AUSTIN: You want to add a wing to the church that’s like the education thing?

JANINE: Oh yeah. That’s better.

KEITH: You don’t think flight is beyond what they can do?

AUSTIN: What?

KEITH: Wing.

AUSTIN: Oh god. Christ.

KEITH: Bye. I'm leaving. Bye. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Bye. And we've reduced our projects, and Janine— or I guess that's not true. It goes back to the original people. I'll read what happens when a project gets finished. [reading] When a project gets completed, it's assumed that it went successful and is beneficial to the community. In some cases, it might make sense to have an investigative project end with a hope dispelled. Even in these cases, the completion of a project should always feel like a step forward, not backward. This doesn't always mean the whole community is happy with the results, though. Nick, you get to describe what happens to the library, and I get to describe what happens with the boats.

NICK: Well, I'm going to say they found the library. It wasn't quite where people remembered it was, but it was close. However, most of the books in there are burned or destroyed or illegible.

AUSTIN: Huh. Oh, I wonder if that's just straight up a thing, is like, "Who knows how to read here? Who knows how to read the stuff books are written in?" Not tavern signs, but the stuff that Samoths writes in, and his class of people.

NICK: That's true. Yeah.

KEITH: Christopher and whatever magic users, maybe?

AUSTIN: Right.

NICK: I was going to say the third thing was—or the ones that they have found, I'm going to say they found maybe 10 to 15 intact books. Books intact enough to actually read, but they're written in mostly some kind of a magic scholarly language.

AUSTIN: Cool. I like that a lot.

NICK: We didn't find any manuals on "How to Survive When Your God Is at War" or anything.

AUSTIN: No, they didn't just find that?

NICK: No.

AUSTIN: So that didn't affect our knowledge problem? You don't think? Or I guess now we have the library. So maybe there can be a new project on your next turn that's like, "Hey, let's try to find something else that's valuable here."

NICK: Right. Yeah, it didn't immediately solve it, but.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Um. We have a boat. It's not — it's one, it's one boat. The people in the rich quarter have it. They compiled all of their— not all of their, but they melted down a bunch of their magical shit that they had. We talked about having this abundance of magic, and I think it was largely in... necklaces that glamour you and make you look extra pretty. And the family heirloom sword that is able to give you a little upper hand in a duel or has this deep history with your bloodline and so it has some spirit in it—

KEITH: Self-cleaning dinnerware.

AUSTIN: — self-cleaning dinnerware, exactly. A book that reads itself to you. And so the rich folks got together and said, "The magic we have is useful, but what would be more useful is to have access to the mainland. To have access to being able to leave. To have access to the big icebergs of obsidian and ore. And if we can have that, then we get to stay in control." And so they melted it down and sealed a boat with it so that it could move through the waters. It doesn't— it can't go out there forever. It doesn't get to stay out there. They have to pull it in every night from the sea. But there it is.

All right. So still Janine, your turn.

JANINE: Does that fix the obsidian scarcity?

AUSTIN: I don't think so. I think it lets us now do that if they want. It's a second thing. But you could start another project now that's: leave. All the rich people leave or something.

[overlapping]

KEITH: [laughs] It'd probably be better for the community as a whole.

JANINE: But I mean, the mainland is still— don't they think it's more dangerous still?

AUSTIN: I don't— we could have that discussion. Maybe. I don't know. Some of them certainly do. Some of them probably don't.

JANINE: Okay, maybe that's the thing to do then, is I'm going to hold a discussion. I'm going to ask, "Do you think we're safer here than we are on the mainland?"

AUSTIN: Art?

ART: Of course we are. We're under the protection of our benevolent god here.

KEITH: There's no reason to think that going where the war is is a safer choice than sleeping in our own beds.

AUSTIN: Nick?

NICK: I think we should stay together as a community and band together instead of splitting people up. So if we decide to leave, we all need to leave.

AUSTIN: This is our home, and I'd rather die here than die on the mainland.

JANINE: I'm inclined to agree. I think that when it's time for us to rejoin, or whatever, then that'll maybe happen. But we're probably okay for now. We can kill some kobolds, we'll be fine.

AUSTIN: [laughing] I like this brief image of Marielda. Despite their differences, everyone's like, "No, this is our home." And it is still Spring, so who knows where we go from here.

KEITH: I put one of my contempt pieces back because we all agree.

AUSTIN: Yeah. You know what? Me too. That was a good feeling. I'm going to put mine back too.

JANINE: Yeah. That's fair.

KEITH: I've still got one. I had two.

AUSTIN: That's fair. Art, your turn.

ART: "What important and basic tools does the community lack?" or "Why are you storing your food?" Why is this a— oh, "Where are you storing your food?" That's a much... [AUSTIN laughs] "Why are you storing your food?" "Because that's what you do!"

NICK: Why are you storing that? Just eat it!

ART: Yeah, just eat it right out of the field, ya idiot!

NICK: Just eat it right now!

KEITH: Look at that weird man-squirrel.

ART: Go out to the field and eat all the corn. "Where are you storing your food? Why is this a risky place to store things?" Okay, you know what?

AUSTIN: What?

ART: You know where we're storing our food?

AUSTIN: [guardedly] Where?

ART: It's outside the wall. It's next to the forest.

JANINE: Oh god!

NICK: Why would you put food there?

ART: Because in the old days, what the real risk in Canopy Row was, was people breaking into the storehouse.

AUSTIN: Ohh.

ART: So they put it outside the wall, and there's a little gate here. It's a very well-defined guarded gate.

AUSTIN: It is or it was?

ART: It was.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: But there still is a skeleton crew. [AUSTIN: Wait! Question! Query!] And just because we're back in Heiron, I want to really stress that I mean there's fewer people [AUSTIN: [laughs] And more skeletons?], but people with muscles and flesh.

AUSTIN: [laughing] Okay.

NICK: So they're just weird misshapen meat bags?

AUSTIN: Weird.

NICK: They have skeletons still, right? They have skeletons in addition to muscles?

ART: Yeah. They're also skeleton.

AUSTIN: I see.

ART: But that's not— they're not defined by their skeletonness. [NICK laughs]

AUSTIN: Got it.

KEITH: So they are skeletons, but then also have musculature and skin?

JANINE: And a wife who is not that good at painting?

AUSTIN: [tries to muffle his giggles] All right.

KEITH: Careful, Art, don't kill the guards at the storehouse.

AUSTIN: [laughs] Ah, for new listeners, Art killed a very nice skeleton man [JANINE giggles] in the first episode of Friends at the Table.

ART: Oh my god.

KEITH: And no one ever forgot.

JANINE: He wasn't *very* nice.

ART: He hit me.

AUSTIN: He was a nice painter.

KEITH: He would have been very nice if Art didn't turn him into dust. Literally dust. [JANINE giggles]

AUSTIN: He opened the door to his house, and there were seven people in there, and they all had weapons. And he was like, "Agh, give me a broomstick!"

ART: Yeah, well. He hit the wrong one. [AUSTIN and NICK giggle] I hear you can hit Lem all day.

AUSTIN: Oh boy. Art, what are you doing after this? What's next? I updated the projects, we're down to three on the mystery thing and two on the expedition to the woods.

ART: Hmm. I would like to hold a discussion.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Lot of discussions. Not a lot of projects.

JANINE: We're only in Spring.

ART: I don't have a good idea for a project. I'll level with you.

AUSTIN: We'll get there.

ART: Maybe soon, not right now.

KEITH: All right. Let's do it. Let's discuss.

ART: Should we go into the forest for wood?

AUSTIN: We already have this expedition.

ART: Yeah. Hmm.

AUSTIN: Maybe you could phrase that a different way, though, about the people who do that?

JANINE: Should we let those people come back? Because they're going into that spooky forest. Maybe they're going to come back with some fucking spooky shit.

ART: Yeah, are we risking the integrity of our community by allowing people to go into that scary fucking place and then just come back and live with us?

1:05:42

AUSTIN: So Keith is next up as a responder.

KEITH: There's evidence that there's something wrong with the forest. There's no evidence that it ruins the people that go into it. That's silly.

AUSTIN: Nick?

NICK: Is there evidence that there's something wrong with the forest? We just have legends and stories.

AUSTIN: Do we— oh, right. Is that just a legend about the—no one ever—?

NICK: Yeah.

JANINE: Oh yeah, it's just a legend.

AUSTIN: Right. Right. Yeah. Right.

NICK: No one's been in there in generations. We have no idea that the forest is actually dangerous. It does seem strange somehow, but there are many strange things in this world that are benign or even beneficial.



AUSTIN: Huh. I think that there should be a simple divide that serves our community best. Those who leave the wall, go into the woods, or into the water, or to the rock. And those who stay safely inside, rebuilding our culture and civilization. And once things are stable again, they can come back in. But for now, it just makes sense that those who risk themselves — doing an honorable service — stay outside the wall.

JANINE: I think that even if they come back empty handed, the fact that they were brave enough to go into the spooky-ass forest and do shit there makes them a good resource, because we got a lot of other— we've got some other kind of weird things that maybe we want to send some people who aren't too big into self-preservation to check out. So maybe let them back, but put them to work again.

ART: My great-great-grandfather turned into one of those tree mummies, you can't fool me! [AUSTIN laughs] They can stay out there. [JANINE and NICK laugh]

AUSTIN: Good. Good. Was that a specific person, Art? Or was that just a person?

ART: I mean, that's a specific person.

AUSTIN: Okay. But like, we don't know their name?

ART: Right. But he's got that— he's that guy.

AUSTIN: Okay. Good. [NICK chuckles] God. All right. Art— er, no. Keith, Keith is up. Keith has three contempt tokens, Nick has two. [KEITH: Hello.] They both took one in that last scene. [JANINE chuckles] At least one? Keith took two.

KEITH: I took two, at two different points.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Good.

KEITH: I took— we were not saying, right? That's not our thing?

AUSTIN: Maybe we just say, "Contempt" when we take a contempt token.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: Okay. So you took two. You took one when I was talking.

KEITH: I took one when Art decided that we should just talk about stuff instead of doing something. And then I then I took one when you were talking.

ART: Wait, is that—?

AUSTIN: Hmm.

JANINE: I kind of like that idea.

NICK: I want to make it clear that I took one when Austin was talking also.

AUSTIN: Yes. It was clear. [laughs] For me, anyway.

KEITH: "What group has the highest status in the community? What must people do to gain inclusion in this group?" or [stammers] "Are there distinct family units in the community? If so, what family structures are common?" I'm going to go with the first one. The group that has the highest status are the people that live by the beach. So you've got the rest of the city. The rest of the city is basically operating as if there's no law or anything in place that's telling them what to do? But the eastern part of the city, they still have a real estate broker. The thing that you have to do, you have to buy a house there.

AUSTIN: Good. Like that a lot. Yes. And how you get that house can be up to you. Right? Maybe you do a favor for somebody. Maybe you— something like that. You know?

KEITH: Right. At this point, it's up to the broker. The broker, I think, is maybe past money. But he's still the guy you gotta go through. That they always have.

AUSTIN: Is it one person or is it a set of people? Is it a group of brokers?

KEITH: I think it's a family business.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. Chh chh chh. Was that the— that was your first part of your turn. So what's next?

KEITH: [sighs] Right now— I mean, we've only got two projects going on anyway. So I'm going to start a new project, which is I'm going to start diplomacy with the kobolds. The cobbins. What are they called?

AUSTIN: How long do you think— cobbins isn't bad. I like that. The rock boys, the rock ... goblins.

KEITH: They're cobbling — they're cobblin' goblins.

AUSTIN: Right. How many weeks do you think that will take?

KEITH: Three weeks.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that sounds right. Cool. I'm gonna take a contempt point.

ART: Can someone get rid of the line I accidentally drew over the cards trying to take contempt?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I got you.

JANINE: I also took a contempt point.

AUSTIN: Okay. Wow, we all— okay. [JANINE laughs] All right. You also see I have that mark next to them to indicate that we've talked about them. I should actually add some more of those marks because we've had talks about what else? The forest? And... something else. What else did we have a talk about?

KEITH: The boat.

AUSTIN: Did we ever talk about that— oh yeah, we did. We talked about whether or not to leave. All right, cool. Marked. All right. It is Nick's turn. Jack of Spring.

NICK: Oooh. "You see a good omen. What is it?" or "You see a bad omen. What is it?" Is this like— I guess it's probably up to me to decipher this. But it means that this is something that the people are oracle-style interpreting as an omen? Or is it a more literal, actual omen?

AUSTIN: I think go whichever way you want to go with.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: But I think keep in mind *the people*. Totally.

NICK: Okay. I'm going to say it's a good omen. And the omen is a powerful jet of fire shoots straight up out of the volcano. [AUSTIN: Awesome.] It doesn't do any damage. It's just— and people interpret that and take that as a show of Samoth's power.

JANINE: Like waving. "Sup?"

NICK: Yeah. He's up to some shit in there, and it's going awesome.

AUSTIN: [snorts] Yup.

JANINE: A big flaming thumbs up. [giggles]

NICK: [laughs] Yeah. Giant flaming thumbs up.

AUSTIN: Good. Step two: your thing completed. Your expedition to the woods.

NICK: Oh, right.

AUSTIN: And hey, Samoth's project dropped down to one. Good timing. [JANINE: Oh boy.] All right, so.

NICK: So here's what happens with the expedition. They come back a person short. But every single person in the expedition says it was a totally normal forest, there's nothing wrong with it. And every time someone asks them where the other person went, they all answer, "What are you talking about? It was just us. It was just us five here. It wasn't—"

AUSTIN: [loud sigh] Who's missing? Was the girl who said we should go do there still? Is she still there?

NICK: No. She's the one that's missing.

AUSTIN: Aah. Good. Great. The woods takes its, I guess. So does that solve our wood problem? Or?

NICK: Well. I mean, I don't know. It's—

AUSTIN: I guess, here's a question.

NICK: They do come back with some samples, but not enough to build a house with or something.

AUSTIN: No. So how about this. Here's a question.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Is the outcome that now we know what the cost is. And we live with the cost because what happens is, we're able to get resources. Or do we not do it because it's too costly?

NICK: No. I think we decide that that's the cost. We need the resources. We need literal resources to literally rebuild this city.

AUSTIN: Right. I like that a lot, and here's a thing I— here's my suggestion. We don't have to go with this, but I kind of like not even talking about it. No one says, "Oh, okay. I guess for every five we send, we'll lose one. Or for every group that goes out there, we'll lose one." It's just everyone knows that when you're assigned to go to the woods, there's a real chance you won't come back. And one of the group that goes out will not come back. At least.

NICK: So wait. Is the implication here that the other people are lying?

AUSTIN: I don't know.

NICK: Do they really not know? Do they really not remember this other person that went with them?

AUSTIN: You tell me.

NICK: 'Cause that was my thought originally.

AUSTIN: Was that they really don't know or that they're lying?

NICK: That they actually don't know. [AUSTIN: Yeah, I definitely went with that.] That they literally don't remember this other person. But, actually, I think it might be more interesting if she disappeared, and they know that she disappeared — they don't know how. They don't know what happened to her. They don't actually know her fate.

AUSTIN: So why would they—

NICK: But they don't want to stir up the town, and they know we need this forest.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. So then there's kind of a collective decision to lie about the cost.

NICK: Yes.

AUSTIN: That's just the agreed-upon thing. The unspoken agreement is if someone gets lost in the woods, we pretend that they never existed?

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And like, "Sorry if it was your son or daughter, but who? You only had one kid." All right. I'm going to remove the word negative. I don't think it's an abundance, but I do think it's not a lack anymore.

NICK: Right. Woah.

AUSTIN: And we could just erase the word "wood" from here, but I kind of want to keep it on just so we remember that have wood. We have wood, which means we can start building new stuff. All right. And then what's your final thing, Nick?

NICK: Final thing is I want to get as many—anyone—I'm trying to find someone that can read anything out of these books.

AUSTIN: Okay. So that's a new project?

NICK: Yes.

AUSTIN: Okay. How long do you think that takes?

NICK: Well, it's a big city. And most people are in Canopy Row, right? But there are people spread out around.

AUSTIN: Yeah, or like — I think there are people all through. I think Canopy Row is the densest, probably?

NICK: Right. I think it's going to take four weeks.

1:15:50

AUSTIN: Okay. So a full month, which means it could be a different season by the time we're done.

NICK: Right. That's totally fine.

AUSTIN: Give it four there. Seven of Spring. "Where does everyone sleep? Who is unhappy with this arrangement and why?" "What natural predators roam this area? Are you safe?" Hmm. Definitely has to be a natural predators thing.

JANINE: There's that crack in the lower wall.

AUSTIN: There sure is. All right. I think they— it's almost the end of Spring. And so this hasn't happened yet. And it takes people completely by surprise because things have felt a little stable. But it comes crashing through that wall and tears it open even more than it was before. And it's a giant— what are the dinosaurs, the ocean dinosaurs? The big big big big big ones.

JANINE: Ple— plesia— ? No, that's— those are in the water only.

AUSTIN: Yes.

JANINE: Can they—

AUSTIN: I mean, it's those.

JANINE: It's like Pliosaur or plesiosaur? Something like that?

KEITH: Plesiosaur sounds right. Yeah, plesiosaur.

AUSTIN: Yes. It's like a plesiosaur.

KEITH: It's a water long-neck.

AUSTIN: Right. Exactly. But then, as it gets onto the ground, the fins start picking up the sand. And it forms around its fins until it's claws and feet and legs. And then as it steps through the broken wall, the stones attach in the same way. And suddenly it's this big hulking mix of mortar and dirt and rock and flesh. And it tears through the entire southeastern part of this map and devours 100 people overnight.

KEITH: Unnatural predator, more like.

AUSTIN: There's screaming and shouting. And thankfully, it doesn't reach the school where the kids are, but it gets close. And it doesn't turn away from, as far as you can tell, any good heart, it's just full by now. But who knows, next time?

So, good news. The project completes. And from the top of the mountain, there's another eruption. And this time something does come out. It's not just an eruption that doesn't get away from the volcano? Lava spews from the volcano up into the sky and then slams down throughout the entire city. And when it cracks open— so it lands, and eventually you realize it's not just lava. There's rock in there, too. And when it breaks open — you can go to it and hit it and it opens — and inside is fish.

JANINE: Ew.

AUSTIN: And from the northern side, you can see that the rock, that giant rock, has also been hit. And there's a crack that runs down it? And water comes out of it: at a very slow rate, just a trickle, but it never stops. This happens once a week from now on.

NICK: Cool!

AUSTIN: It's very weird. I don't think anyone is happy with it, but fish is really good. So I'm going to remove the fish absence.

NICK: And these are not three-eyed lava fish?

AUSTIN: No. They're fresh, living fish. When the rocks open, they flop around.

JANINE: So like fish geodes.

AUSTIN: They're like fish geodes. [NICK laughs and JANINE giggles]

KEITH: So are the rocks destroying things?

AUSTIN: Yep! That's also happening!

KEITH: God, Samoths is such a fucking asshole.

AUSTIN: I'll tell you this. It lands real nice in the Gold District. Less good in Canopy Row.

KEITH: What a freaking...

JANINE: I'm just imagining someone coming home and their chimney's been blown off. And there's just a bunch of rocks and fish [AUSTIN: Yup!] just like stuck to the side of their house.

AUSTIN: That is totally right! [NICK chuckles]

ART: Ironically destroying their ability to cook those fish. [AUSTIN and JANINE laugh]

AUSTIN: Yep. Perfect. All right. Then... I'm trying to think of a project here. The rich folks are going to take that boat and try to do the thing, which is go get those obsidian rock and start trying to figure out if they're mineable. So I think this is like the trip into the woods. This just an investigative project. It's going to take two turns. They're just going to go out to the rocks and see if there's something to be done with them. All right. Oh, I'm also starting a new project for Samoths. [JANINE: Oh boy.] So. Put another ten on the board.

Who's next? It is Janine.

JANINE: "An old piece of machinery is discovered, broken but perhaps repairable. What is it? What would it be useful for?" or "An old piece of machinery is discovered, cursed and dangerous? How does the community destroy it?"

AUSTIN: Huh. That's interesting.

JANINE: Am I allowed to connect this to a thing that has happened, like that purple friend?

AUSTIN: Totally.

JANINE: Okay. And I think this makes sense also because it just happened. The purple friend just happened.

AUSTIN: It totally did.

JANINE: So maybe they would find this in among the wreckage and horribleness that it caused.



NICK: [voice-over voice] For people listening at home, the purple friend is the dinosaur. [JANINE giggles]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Thank you.

JANINE: So I'm not really sure what this would look like. But it's sort of— in my head it's— you know in Skyrim, sometimes there's just those weird dwemer orbs that are like, "There's a bunch of moving parts here, but I'mma also just put it on my bookcase." And they just kind of spin around. I'm sure this has a purpose. It's probably something like that, but maybe encased in glass. And people find it after the big dinosaur friend comes in. [AUSTIN: Oh, weird!] And it's making a very— when you get real close to it, if you hold it up to your head, you can kind of hear this really low-pitched whine, a humming whine kind of thing. So the assumption would be, "We don't know what the hell this thing is. It's making a weird humming sound. We found it after the weird dinosaur just blew through the southern end of town. Maybe this called it."

AUSTIN: Okay. Cute.

JANINE: Maybe this is some sort of thing— maybe that monster was— someone used to control it with this or something. Maybe it was a weapon, or—

AUSTIN: So you're destroying it?

JANINE: Yes, for sure. Because we don't want the dinosaur to come back, even though that's not necessarily related.

AUSTIN: Mhm. I gotcha. Good.

JANINE: I think they're going to throw it into the weird water, the weird yellow water that corrodes stuff.

AUSTIN: Okay. So they throw this weird orb into the— okay. You want to just draw that in the water somewhere? That'd be good.

JANINE: Yes.

AUSTIN: And then what are you doing for your action?

JANINE: Oooh. I want to fix the gap in the wall with maybe some rubble, sort of a stop-gap thing.

AUSTIN: I mean, we have wood now. Maybe you could use wood.

JANINE: That's true. Yeah. Wood would be good.

KEITH: Should we put wood that close to the fire?

AUSTIN: That fire— let's say that fire has—

[overlapping]

JANINE: Is a metaphorical fire? [laughs]

AUSTIN: — died down a little bit.

KEITH: Okay.

AUSTIN: I'll make it a little— oh boy. I cut it in half. That's not— [KEITH and JANINE laugh]

KEITH: There we go! Yeah. It's a broken fire, so it's not burning anything anymore.

AUSTIN: Yes. [giggles] Right. Right.

JANINE: So yeah. I think the thing that we want to do is try and board up that gap in the wall to maybe also keep the monster from coming in again.

AUSTIN: How many weeks?

JANINE: [draws in breath] How big is the gap?

AUSTIN: Big enough for a big dinosaur. [JANINE laughs]

JANINE: And if it wasn't before, it is now. Three?

AUSTIN: I can agree to that. All right. Art?

KEITH: Wait, the kobold thing is finished.

AUSTIN: After this turn. I just dropped it from two to one.

KEITH: It should have already been—

JANINE: I think it— wasn't it two on your turn, and then?

KEITH: Yeah. It was already one.

AUSTIN: Okay. Gotcha. All right, well, kobold thing finished. Keith?

KEITH: Hello.

AUSTIN: How's that go? Was that yours? Talk to kobolds?

KEITH: Yeah. So it's a little bit good and a little bit bad. They're definitely willing to be buddies with us. But they also definitely are mad that we maybe were gonna kill them. They found that out. And they also feel like we owe them some of the food because they're building— they keep insisting that they're building houses and that we can use the houses. They're not big enough for anybody but them, but because they're building—

JANINE: Are the fish rocks not falling on them?

AUSTIN: They're not. They're within the Golden Zone.

JANINE: Aren't they also in the Golden Zone?

AUSTIN: That's what I'm saying. They're in the Golden Zone, which means— for whatever reason, the rocks aren't hitting people there — aren't ruining stuff — including the kobolds.

KEITH: Right.

JANINE: Oh, okay.

KEITH: But they're not getting any of the fish because we just keep taking it all. It's going to us.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay. So they want to trade?

1:25:34

KEITH: Yeah. They're like, "Well listen, if we're going to be friends, you got to give us some of your fish. We're building houses! C'mon. Tit for tat."

AUSTIN: Do they have the same language as us? Or is this all through sign?

KEITH: Ah, no. I think it's mostly through sign. I bet...

AUSTIN: Could we use some magic to translate?

KEITH: Yeah, that's what I was thinking. Or I bet there's one person who can talk to them. Whoever does al— there's an alchemist. He can do. He can talk to them kind of. Kind of.

AUSTIN: What's his name?

KEITH: His name is Winsley Cartwright.

AUSTIN: Yep. Good old Winsley. [JANINE chuckles] Right now I just wanna go over our characters again. We have Tamsyn, who killed that rich brat and showed that, y'know, law has been broken. There was the girl who was sent to investigate the forest. She's gone. I guess I'll leave her on the thing. I'll put her in parentheses because who knows? If we could come up with a name for her, that would be great. There's Christopher, who was the teacher of Samot.

NICK: She doesn't have a name anymore.

AUSTIN: Right. Yeah. Sure. Right. Totally. There's Mr. Golden Pants, who lives north of the town, near the watchtower. We gotta come back to him. He was—

KEITH: Yeah. We gotta come back to that guy.

AUSTIN: Winsley Cartwright, alchemist and kobold...

KEITH: Communicator?

AUSTIN: Not kobold diplomat, human-kobold diplomat.

[overlapping]

KEITH: Right. Human diplomat to the kobolds.

ART: I don't want to make this a big thing.

But I put this in the chat, and I kind of want to say it out loud. But this kind of suggests that kobolds are fantastic alchemists, because that's why the alchemist would know the kobold language.

KEITH: Not kobolds, what are they? What did I call them? Cobbins.

AUSTIN: You called them cobbins.

NICK: Maybe that's a slur.

KEITH: I bet it's— people know what a kobold is and like, these things look like kobolds, like, "Hey, kobolds!"

"We're not kobolds! Fuck off!"

NICK: Yeah, right. [JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: "We're cobbins! Get it right!"

KEITH: "We're cobbins. It's totally different." And it is!

AUSTIN: I wonder what the people from Canopy Row think about the cobbins, because they're in the Gold Zone and it's not like they're building homes for them. But their homes are pretty good. Right?

KEITH: Right, I bet... [laughing] Yeah, they have nicer homes. That was great. I love that.

AUSTIN: All right. And your turn, Art. Still Art's turn, or it is— ?

ART: "There's another community somewhere on the map. Where are they? What sets them apart from you?" Oh, that could be fun.

AUSTIN: That's fun.

ART: "What belief or practice helps to unify your community?" That's less fun. I mean, it's fun, but.

AUSTIN: It's fine, but.

KEITH: I mean, there's that gold-pants guy. [ART laughs]

AUSTIN: There is that gold — yeah. Is he from something else? Is he—

JANINE: He might have other people.

AUSTIN: Right.

NICK: He's a community of one. Or it could just be a community on the other bank, like on the main continent, that are close. And what separates us is a fucking river. Literally.

AUSTIN: Of fire.

ART: Yeah. [laughs]

AUSTIN: What do you think, Art?

NICK: Sorry. I don't know why the f-word was warranted there.

AUSTIN: That's — listen, we're Explicit on iTunes.

NICK: Okay.

ART: Yeah. Fuck, shit, titties, it's Friends at the Table. [NICK laughs]

AUSTIN: That's it. Those are all the curses. [KEITH howls with laughter].

KEITH: Have you guys ever heard of George Carlin?

AUSTIN: Oh my god. [KEITH cackles] Art, talk to me about this community.

ART: Yeah. I think it is, it's on the west bay? West of the bay? West bank? It's not the West Bank. We're not calling it that.

AUSTIN: No. That's a different thing.

KEITH: [now completely serious] Not West B— yeah. That's a different thing.

AUSTIN: [laughs] West Bay. So what separates them from us?

ART: I mean before this all happened, they were a different community that was like trading partners. They weren't—

AUSTIN: They weren't of Samothres?

ART: They weren't of Samothres. They were other, and for a long time that was not *super* cool but okay.

AUSTIN: Are they human?

ART: No. I think these are elves.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ART: I think they have a very different internal mythology about the forest. And before they were physically separated from it, they had a lot of dealings there, along with being very active trade partners. They have access to resources on the west of this map that don't exist over here. I think they're a little— they're not doing great with the idea that they no longer get to trade with anyone.

AUSTIN: Do they miss the forest?

ART: They absolutely miss the forest. They desperately miss the forest.

AUSTIN: Okay. Interesting. Let me update the numbers. The rock is done, I'll come back around to that in a second. The library is at one. The new Samothres project is at eight. And the new wall to cover that crack so the dinosaur can't get in is two. The rich people get to the rocks and see that it is the obsidian and that they could totally use it if only they had the right tools. And maybe if they had a boat that could stay out for longer? So I think that their next thing has to be that they have to right the right tools in order to—

NICK: Oh what, their fucking fancy magic boat isn't good enough?

AUSTIN: It takes a while. I think maybe that's the actual thing is that, yeah, you could totally get the obsidian from here. It will take you days and days and days to get any reasonable amount. So yeah, I think maybe that's all it is. It's like, "We only have the one boat. We can only send a team out there once a day... or for the length of a day, because then the boat will blow up in this ocean." Unless they leave people out there!

JANINE: Yeah, I was thinking it depends on a lot on what the obsidian— if it's a big obsidian spike in the water, you can't leave a person there exactly. But if it's an island or a little—

AUSTIN: No, but I bet you there are — yeah. Let me make a few more of these, actually.

JANINE: If they could gouge out a ledge, even, over the course of a few days or something.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I kinda like that. Yeah, I think there's a bunch of these little things. And some of them are big spikes, and some of them are more like—

JANINE: Buttes?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: Or butts? I don't know how to say it.

AUSTIN: I think butts is right. No, buttes is right. Buttes is right.

JANINE: [giggling] You don't want to talk about obsidian butts in the— ?

AUSTIN: No. No obsidian butts.

NICK: Those butts sure are a beaut.

AUSTIN: Great. Good, good! And so. Yeah. Some of them are big spikes that you could never send a person to live on for a week. But other ones do, and you could send somebody out there. It's dangerous.

All right. So now it is still Art's turn. What are you doing, Art?

ART: I want to start a project. I think there's going to be an attempt to communicate with Samoths through prayer and to obtain divine guidance.

AUSTIN: From who? Who is the one who's doing the praying?

ART: Controversially, it's—

AUSTIN: Which faction?

ART: — it's being run through the church. And Christopher is doing it, ostensibly as an act of penance.

AUSTIN: Okay. I think this takes a while, but it's up to you.

ART: How about five weeks?

AUSTIN: I like it.

NICK: Gosh, that's a lotta "Our Fathers."

AUSTIN: It sure is. All right. So. That is the Spring. Summertime! Whose turn is it?

KEITH: My turn!

AUSTIN: Mhm. Oooh! Oooh.

KEITH: "Introduce a mystery at the edge of the map" or "An unattended situation becomes problematic and scary. What is it? How does it go awry?"

JANINE: That's a good card.

AUSTIN: Mhm!

KEITH: Those are— that's good.

AUSTIN: I'm going to leave that up.

JANINE: We have so much of both of those.

NICK: [laughing] Yeah.



AUSTIN: We really do.

KEITH: Yeah. God, I feel like— I have a thing that's a little bit of both. [AUSTIN: Uh huh.] Remember Yellow Pants Man?

AUSTIN: Yeah. Mr. Gold Pants.

KEITH: There's more of them.

AUSTIN: Oh boy. [JANINE laughs] How many more?

KEITH: At least three more.

AUSTIN: Okay. They're all near the watchtower?

KEITH: They're all near the watchtower.

NICK: [slightly alarmed] Do they all have gold pants?

KEITH: No. But they all have very nice pants.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay.

NICK: [giggling] Okay.

AUSTIN: I'm going to update this from Mr. Golden Pants to Misters Good Pants. [JANINE and NICK laugh]

KEITH: All right. And then what do we do, we move all these down one? All the stuff?

AUSTIN: Yeah! Move all these down. Library time, Nick.

NICK: Oooh.

AUSTIN: Tell me about whether you found someone who can read the stuff in the library and what they read. And what happened.

NICK: We did find someone. And it was...Willy. Whats his name? From the church.

AUSTIN: Christopher?

NICK: Oh yeah.

AUSTIN: Or Winsley? Winsley Cartwright is the alchemist.

NICK: Oh, he's the alchemist. Okay, right. We've already got stuff piled up on church man. So yeah, let's say it's Winsley. He can read some of the books. They're not— he can't read them all verbatim, and it takes him awhile. But he can get the gist of it.

1:35:23

AUSTIN: Okay. What sort of books is he reading?

NICK: They seem to be history or stories? [AUSTIN: Huh.] They seem to be narratives of some kind. He doesn't know if they're historical or if they're fictional.

AUSTIN: Is there— is it almost fable-y in that like, "Oh, there's a lesson to this story"? But instead of the lesson being "be kind to your neighbor," it's "this is how you build a fire"? Or is it just the moral-y style of fable?

NICK: Yeah. I'm going to say they're definitely fables. But they're... they're not practical fables, they're not fables about "this is how you build a fire." They are fables about the both dangers and benefits of magic, mostly. And maybe someone that could read it fluently could actually potentially gain some actual knowledge, practical knowledge, out of it? But he can't. He's not up to that task.

AUSTIN: Does this change any of the day-to-day life in the city in a way that you could draw on the map? Is there a school there now, where people are now— what they do for their day is go and try to work through this together? Because so far we don't have any actual magician-y people. We don't have any wizards or mages or sorcerers. All we have is the rich people who had some magic *stuff*.

NICK: Right.

KEITH: I like the idea that in Samoth's absence we're kind of not doing Samoth's stuff anymore, like not-learning.

AUSTIN: So people are now, because Samoth's been gone, are letting themselves— [stammers] have decided it's okay to learn things.

[overlapping]

NICK: Yeah.

KEITH: Right.

AUSTIN: Okay.

NICK: Yeah. I think like a sort of—in the actual library where the books came from, a sort of school starts organically taking shape.

AUSTIN: Cool. Keith, what are you doing?

KEITH: [sings] I am going to ... [normal voice] I'm going to— that's a good question, Austin.

AUSTIN: It's an all right question.

KEITH: I'm going to start a project. And the thing the project is, we've got to figure out what those pants men are doing outside the city walls.

AUSTIN: Okay. That doesn't seem like a long project.

KEITH: No, that sounds like one week to me.

AUSTIN: Okay. So by this time next week, we'll know what's up with those men, or at least we'll have some idea.

KEITH: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I can get with that. Nick, it's your turn. That's a good school, by the way. It's big!

NICK: Yeah, it is big. It probably shouldn't be that big.

AUSTIN: I kinda like that, though. I kinda like — no no no, I kinda like that. What if it starts as— it's a library, so it has a bunch of books. And it's a sort of thing where that library was sealed away for some time under Samoth's direct rule, and now the books have been— not only is the library open, people are taking it into nearby buildings, and it ends up being— this is the place where people go to read and experiment and try stuff, is this little campus around this library.

KEITH: I like the idea that they don't even realize that what they're doing isn't cool with their dude.

AUSTIN: Right, 'cause like —

KEITH: When he comes back and they're like, "Look what we found! We did this, and we figured out how to read!" And he's just furious.

AUSTIN: We'll get there. Yup. Nick, it's your turn.

NICK: All right. I drew the two of Summer. The two of diamonds — “Someone new arrives. Who? Why are they in distress?” or “Someone leaves the community. Who? What are they looking for?” I’m going to say someone leaves the community. Someone...is upset about the— someone who lost someone very dear to them to the forest can’t deal with it anymore. And they decide to go live in the forest.

AUSTIN: That’s cool.

NICK: To either maybe find a trace of the person that they cared about or otherwise just be near to where they were. But in any case—

AUSTIN: Yeah. What if that’s a thing that happens more than once?

NICK: Yeah!

JANINE: I like that a lot for Reasons.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Every now and then, someone just leaves. In the weeks after their—someone special to them goes away, they go away too. This bag of stuff on their back, walk out into the woods.

NICK: And it can be for different reasons, too. Maybe they’re looking for them. Maybe they just can’t deal with the stifling of never talking about their loved one ever again. Pretending that they never—

AUSTIN: People saying that they literally don’t exist?

NICK: Right.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Janine, your wall finishes. How’s that go?

JANINE: Well, it would go better if the fish rocks weren’t flying at the wall as they try to rebuild it, [AUSTIN: [laughs] That probably would help!] which I imagine makes things very difficult. They’ve probably got a few boards across it. But it’s not— if that dinosaur comes back, it’s gonna slow it down but it’s not gonna stop it. It’s one of those things where it’s like, “Oh, we need three weeks for this,” but it turns out we needed six weeks for this. And maybe even then that wouldn’t have been good enough because of these damn fish rocks. So it doesn’t go as well as planned, but there’s still kind of something to show for it.

KEITH: Yeah. It’ll keep wolves and stuff out.

JANINE: Sea wolves.

AUSTIN: How about this? How about this one big— there's still a little crack there, but—

JANINE: I was going to put some boards over it.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a good idea, yeah. Let's do that instead. What's up with the pants people, Keith? [NICK and JANINE chuckle]

KEITH: They are deserters. [AUSTIN: Mmm.] They're people that were, for various reasons, either just exiled or just had to run away from a town nearby, or maybe one of them is from an army that was passing through.

AUSTIN: Are they from Samoth's army, or are they from Samot's army? Or a third-party altogether?

KEITH: One is from Samot's army. One of them is from a third party. Two of them are from a nearby village.

AUSTIN: Interesting. So it's a mix of people. It's a mix of just—

KEITH: Yeah. All of a sudden there's this river. Right? Like, "Here's where we can send these people." Or "Here's where we can run away to." And they just kind of found each other.

NICK: And they all just—

AUSTIN: Did they cross the river somehow that no one else knows?

KEITH: Yeah. They got sent on just regular boats, and they just had to fucking pray that their boats didn't disintegrate.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: And they did, they disintegrated. Not everybody that's there—

AUSTIN: Now they're stuck here.

KEITH: Yeah. Now they're stuck here. Not everybody that's there are people that tried to get there. Or sorry, other way around. Not everybody that tried to get there got there.

AUSTIN: Gotcha. Okay. And Nick, what are you doing?

NICK: All right, how about— of the sort of loose assemblage of hobbyist students, I guess? I don't know how else to put it.

AUSTIN: Yeah. That sounds right to me.

NICK: Someone steps forward and starts to actually organize it into a more functional school...with classes. And so people can more easily share what they're learning from these books.

AUSTIN: That sounds good. Is it like there had been this more informal reading group situation? And now this is the person who's like, "Yeah, if you want to read about rocks, I'll put it on the wall. We all read about rocks on Wednesdays at noon. And then at one, you can go meet up with these people who do this thing." And just like, the great organizer, the person who figured out that that's the way you are able to organize learning.

NICK: Yeah. Because before, it was a bunch of people doing independent study mostly. And this guy was like—

KEITH: Is there a show-and-tell component to it?

NICK: Yeah! This—

[overlapping]

KEITH: "We found this out from this book."

AUSTIN: I like that.

NICK: This guy's like, "We need to share this, so why don't we—"

AUSTIN: I love this— ugh. God. I love this, this is good.

NICK: Yeah. "Why don't we get up. This will be your time, Steve, to share what you learned about rocks. This will be your time, Janice, to share what you learned about cobbins from this book." Etc.

AUSTIN: Right. All right, cool. How many weeks do you think that will take to really get working?

NICK: To really get working? I think it's gonna take at least three weeks.

AUSTIN: That sounds right to me. The first week it's a mess. The second week it starts to come together. The third week it's just, "Yeah, yeah, of course. I gotta meet up and see what Janice says about cobbins."

KEITH: At some point along the line, they figure out, "Oh yeah, a lot of us still need someone to teach us how to do the reading."

NICK: Right. Yeah.

AUSTIN: Mhm. All right. My turn. Ace of Summer. Either “A contingent within the community demand to be heard. Who are they? What are they asking for?” or “A contingent within the community have acted on their frustrations. What have they damaged, and why have they damaged it? Is it permanent?”

Tamsyn leads a group of people into the...Golden District in the middle of the night, and they sink the boat. [NICK: Oooh.] It's actually not that hard to tear it apart, because, you know, the thing was built to be protected from this magical fire, but not from hatchets, not from axes. You go in, and you break it apart, and you shove it into the water with a few holes in it. And they sink it.

On the plus side, we can still get fish from Samoths every week as it falls from the heavens. But this means that getting that obsidian is going to be very tough.

1:46:30

JANINE: Did they have people left out there while the boat was sank? Are there people on one of those little obsidian butts?

AUSTIN: Oh, yes! Absolutely did. Absolutely did! There are still people who just are stuck on the rocks with a week of food left, *maybe*? That's fun. That's a good thing you did, Tamsyn.

NICK: I have to make it clear that I'm removing a contempt, but then I'm adding another one right away.

AUSTIN: Okay, sure. That's fair. And then my action is finding something new. So I think that there's a sort of ad hoc City Guard. That people just like, “Okay, I'm going to walk the walls of the city to make sure nothing's happening.” And at some point, in the middle of the day, they find a body. It's one of the students from the new university, the new library.

NICK: Oh no!

KEITH: New-niversity.

AUSTIN: The new-niversity, right. Dead body, right in the northwest of the — just outside the walls, kind of equidistant between the big weird water-rock-crack, and the forest and the elves. Kind of right in between all that different stuff. I'll draw little X eyes.

KEITH: Was it foul play?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, definitely. They've been cut many times and stabbed.

JANINE: Cut *and* stabbed.

AUSTIN: Cut and stabbed. And their belongings have been strewn all over the place, including a satchel with papers that have been thrown everywhere. And there's a leather book cover that something has been torn out of.

That is the end of my turn. Janine?

JANINE: Okay. "Someone tries to take control of the community by force. Do they succeed? Why do they do this?" or "A headstrong community member decides to put one of their ideas in motion. Start a foolish project."

NICK: Aw man.

JANINE: Would that mean— so "Start a foolish project," does that count as my after thing? Or is—okay

AUSTIN: No. You still get another action. Yeah.

JANINE: All right. Okay. I think the kobolds— or the cobbins?

AUSTIN: Yep.

JANINE: I think they've been sort of keeping an eye on this whole school situation. [AUSTIN: Mmm.] And they're kind of like, "Sorry, it's taken them how long to organize their shit? And people are just looking at books and figuring them— what?!" So I think they want to try and take that over like in a — they think they're being benevolent. [KEITH begins to cackle] Like, "Hey, we can help you out here. You seem to be having a hard time with this book thing." The question is, do they succeed?

AUSTIN: We'll see in a few turns. How many turns is that going to take?

KEITH: Is this—?

JANINE: Well that was — that's not a foolish project. That was—

ART: No no no. That's the first one.

JANINE: They're trying to take over. Right?

AUSTIN: Oh oh oh. My bad. My bad. Yes. That is a question.



JANINE: I mean, it could also— it could be either.

AUSTIN: That could be either. But no no no. My bad.

JANINE: But it seems like a thing they would try and do at once, not over the span of time by quietly inserting themselves into the organizational structure of this school.

AUSTIN: I really want them to succeed. Really bad.

JANINE: I also really want them to succeed, because I want all the— I want these academics to have kobold professors and TAs. [ART laughs] I just want that structure.

KEITH: I also like the idea of the kobolds really wanting to help out, and they keep on starting projects that just suck. [ART and JANINE laugh] It's really funny!

AUSTIN: They're trying really hard.

KEITH: They're trying really hard. Like, "We built a food storage thing." "This has holes all over it! There's flies everywhere. It's in the sun!"

AUSTIN: But it's fine for them. It's fine for them [KEITH giggles off mic] 'cause they don't mind if their food has flies on it. Flies are delicious.

JANINE: I mean, we've established, though, that they're good alchemists. Right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, we did establish that.

KEITH: They are good alchemists.

[overlapping]

KEITH: They're smart. They're smart, they just— they'll eat rancid meat, is all.

JANINE: This is kind of their wheelhouse.

JANINE: Except for some of the— some of the cultural stuff maybe not, but the magicky stuff they would actually be competent at.

AUSTIN: Yeah. But they take it— so let's be clear: they take it by force.

JANINE: Yes. Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: So do people get killed in this process?

JANINE: I mean, okay, the academics, are these mostly well-to-do?

AUSTIN: Yes, this is all people from the Golden Zone, I think.

JANINE: I think that there are some that—

AUSTIN: And maybe some recent people who have managed to buy a house in the zone and get access.

JANINE: Yeah. There are certainly going to be an undercurrent of people— when we had those discussions about “Should we let the kobolds — what do we do about this?” there was some division there about “let’s see what happens” or “let’s just kill them all because they’re ugly and their stuff is ugly.” So there’s probably going to be — a group of many students and students’ families are not going to want them inserting themselves in their education situation, not going to think that’s going to help. So I think they maybe killed a few people.

KEITH: Did they kill— wait. Were the people that they killed, were they people that were like, “Fuck off, get out of here, kobolds, I’m going to fight you”? Or was it people— did they just walk in, stab a guy, and go, “This is it, we’re fucking here now, this is our thing”? [JANINE laughs]

AUSTIN: I mean, I think it’s important— go ahead.

JANINE: They probably came in like, “Look, you guys are doing this all wrong. [stammers] How about you take a seat, and we’re going to walk you through this.” And someone was like, “Fuck you, you’re some sort of dog lizard! I’m not going to learn about books from you!” And they maybe stabbed that person.

AUSTIN: And they— did they— okay.

KEITH: Sure. Yeah. I’m into that.

AUSTIN: But no one like— it wasn’t just self defense.

KEITH: Yeah, it was more than self defense.

AUSTIN: It was more than self defense.

JANINE: It was self defense with gusto.

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: Okay. Let’s see if that—

KEITH: Yeah, yeah yeah yeah.

AUSTIN: Let’s see if that holds up in fucking court.

ART: Yeah, I don't think telling someone to fuck off counts as mortal danger. [JANINE chuckles]

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Hey, this is some fantasy— people get killed all the time in fantasy shit.

AUSTIN: Yup. That's true.

JANINE: It's true. Does that—

KEITH: It's almost not even illegal to kill someone.

AUSTIN: So what's the thing you do?

JANINE: I was going to say that ties in really nicely with the thing I want to do. It's going to be a discovery.

AUSTIN: Oh boy.

JANINE: Remember the first girl who wanted to go into the forest?

AUSTIN: [cautiously] Uh huh?

JANINE: And then she kind of vanished?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

JANINE: So they're making that— they're harvesting wood from that. We're using that wood on stuff. Someone finds her in the wood.

AUSTIN: [laughing] No!

JANINE: And she's still alive?

AUSTIN: Ohhhh nooo!

JANINE: Yeah. Because she's not— she's in that tree, and they get the wood off, and she's all distorted — but she's still alive. So they bring her back.

AUSTIN: Eugh. No!

KEITH: [singing in undertone] Tree was made for meee...

JANINE: People are going into the forest— people are going into the forest because they're losing people. And so she's come back. [NICK laughs nervously]

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: Eeeugh.

ART: [alarmed] Oh, don't let her stay.

AUSTIN: [unenthusiastically] Okay. That's cool. And good. This is definitely not the worst thing I've heard.

KEITH: Oh wait, what's her name? Ah wait, this one didn't have a name. I forgot.

AUSTIN: Yeah, we need a name for her still.

JANINE: Oh yeah. Hedy Braum.

AUSTIN: That's good. Type that in. Eeeugh. [JANINE giggles] Art, it's your turn?

ART: All right.

AUSTIN: Also, Janine, draw that somehow?

JANINE: I'm drawing. I'm going to do it.

AUSTIN: [dispiritedly] Okay.

ART: "Summer is a time for production and tending to the earth. Start a project related to food production." "Summer is a time for conquest and the gathering of might. Start a project related to military readiness and conquest."

AUSTIN: Hmm.

ART: So I think it's time to start a project related to food production. [AUSTIN: Okay!] And I think what they're going to do in Canopy Row, because they're sick of those fish meteors destroying their houses, is they're going to set up a kind of net to catch them.

AUSTIN: Oooh! [NICK chuckles] Cool! They're going to build a canopy above them.

ART: Yeah. The Canopy Canopy.

AUSTIN: Got it.

JANINE: Remember how we wanted a name for that place that had two meanings?

NICK: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JANINE: There you go.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Got it.

NICK: It really— I really love that food production involves building a giant net so we can catch these fish rocks. [laughs]

AUSTIN: Mhm. Fish rocks. How long's this going to take, Art?

1:55:39

ART: I think this is a big project! I think — yeah, there's a lot— you need a lot of rope. You need a lot of know-how.

KEITH: Is there a tarp seller in the town?

AUSTIN: No. God damn it.

KEITH: Can we get a tarp, or is that too expensive?

AUSTIN: Tarps are very expensive. Four weeks? Five weeks? Six weeks?

ART: I think it's a solid four.

AUSTIN: Okay. Give it a month. I typed 47, that's too many. [JANINE laughs] Okay. I'm going to reduce these numbers down. We're going to have some more conversation.

KEITH: Gonna have a few! Yeah.

AUSTIN: Nick? Was it Nick or was it Keith who set up the school?

NICK: I set up the school.

KEITH: No, the library was Janine, because it was the kobolds. Right?

AUSTIN: No no no. That clock was already going.

JANINE: That didn't have a timer.

KEITH: Oh. That was Nick then.

AUSTIN: The clock was... Yeah, okay, Nick. How do things— how does class under the kobolds fare?

NICK: Well, uh.

AUSTIN: Kobold campus.

KEITH: I hope it's so good!

NICK: [laughs] People are— I mean, after some initial scariness of, you know—

JANINE: And murders.

NICK: And murders.

AUSTIN: Murders.

JANINE: Some people got killed. [laughs]

NICK: Yeah. People realize there is something to be learned from the kobolds. The cobbins. [laughs]

KEITH: They hate kobolds. It's a totally different thing.

NICK: There's going to be a period of adjustment while they still— it's going to take them a little while longer, and I think I'm just going to have to manifest this on my turn. But they decide to keep going with the school under the new kobold leadership.

AUSTIN: So does this solve the knowledge problem? Do people start learning how to do stuff?

NICK: No, not yet, because first they have to learn how to work with the cobbins.

AUSTIN: Okay.

NICK: But it will.

AUSTIN: Cool. Art, does Samoth's answer Christopher's prayer? Or how?

ART: Notably, not— this has been an intense five weeks of prayer and guidance. And there've been people there in varying amounts. Right? Some people came once or twice. Some people...said they were there a lot and weren't. But some people were there every day. And at the end of the five weeks, everyone who was there every day suddenly had a knowledge of all language.

AUSTIN: Awesome. Do they share that knowledge?

ART: I mean, it's hard to teach. They gain it as if through divine insight. It's not easy to teach.

AUSTIN: Right. Right. Yeah.

ART: But yeah. They're— I mean, some of them are nicer than others. But I think they're generally willing to use their knowledge.

AUSTIN: Okay. Cool. Does *that* solve the knowledge problem? Or not yet?

ART: I also think not yet, but I think we're really getting there.

AUSTIN: Okay. We are getting there. All right.

ART: And I would like to discover something new.

AUSTIN: Sure!

ART: I would like a tower, representing the magic university that we know in our time, to appear. Not in the immediate vicinity of this new magic university.

AUSTIN: Sure. So it's still in the walls?

ART: I think it's on the other side of the wall from that, just on the other side. I'll draw it in a second.

AUSTIN: Okay.

KEITH: Wait. So you're saying that a mirror school appears?

ART: No. It looks different.

KEITH: Okay.

ART: But it's—

AUSTIN: It's the Last University that Fantasma used to teach at.

KEITH: Oh, that. Oh. Sorry. Yeah.

ART: And not a whole university. They like a — a tower shows up, and there are some wizards in there.

AUSTIN: And in the middle of the day, one day, there's a new shadow on the ground, and you follow it up, and there is a new tower. [NICK: Oh man.] Okay. I like that a lot. Keith?

KEITH: Hello.

AUSTIN: It's your turn. Ooo!

KEITH: [surprised] "A project finishes early! What lead to its early completion?" or "The weather is nice, and people can feel the potential all around them. Start a new project." I think that a project finishes early.

AUSTIN: Okay. Which one?

KEITH: I think that the net finishes early, because I think that Hedy and her monster arms [JANINE and NICK giggle] are really good at making the net.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's terrifying.

KEITH: Reeeeeeally good at it.

AUSTIN: [groans] Ohhh, damn it.

JANINE: And she can weave her arms in with the rope?

KEITH: Yeah. Exactly. Like vines.

AUSTIN: [still groaning] Oh, I hate you.

JANINE: Like arm knitting, but— [NICK chuckles]

KEITH: Yes!

[there is a pause, then AUSTIN sighs heavily]

JANINE: I love it! It's beautiful!



AUSTIN: I hate it. Does this give us an abundance of food?

KEITH: It does. Yeah.

AUSTIN: [dispiritedly] Okay. Good. That's good. I'm glad Hedy's been productive. [JANINE laughs] Long-arm Hedy.

JANINE: She's recovering. It's good.

AUSTIN: Is she the only one who's come out still from the woods? Or is there now just a class of long-arms who do manual labor?

JANINE: I kind of like the idea that once people started going into the forest, people that were previously missing just started emerging at a similar rate.

AUSTIN: Eeugh.

JANINE: Because it's not the forest takes— the forest takes its toll, but also, it's open to trades. [AUSTIN moans in distress as NICK laughs]

KEITH: I think— yeah. "We only need ten or twelve at any given time."

JANINE: Yeah! Yeah.

AUSTIN: I hate it. I hate it so much. Gee— where's my contempt meter?! [JANINE giggles while KEITH cackles]

JANINE: Aren't you glad I joined this game? It's so good.

AUSTIN: It's going up. Uh huh. It's good.

KEITH: I'll take one anyway. I'm taking a contempt token.

NICK: Austin just can't see the forest for the people in the trees. [giggles]

AUSTIN: Fucking— god damn it.

KEITH: Um. So.

AUSTIN: The People in the Trees is the sequel to The People in the Stairs, I'll say. [NICK laughs]

JANINE: It's waaay more disturbing.

AUSTIN: *Somehow.*

NICK: Does Hedy get caught in the net as she's making it herself? Is she a permanent part of the net now?

AUSTIN: [moans] Oh, it's too much.

JANINE: She can probably just slither.

KEITH: No no no. She can— in a really disgusting way, can unravel herself from...

AUSTIN: I do like the image of a child looking up and seeing her laying on the net looking down and then slithering through the net away. [everyone laughs] But grinning ear to ear still, huge toothy smile.

KEITH: [creeped out] Oh my god. I hate it.

NICK: So we got Amigara Fault, and now we have a little Uzumaki in there too.

AUSTIN: Yup! Let's just get it all. Let's just do it all.

KEITH: So I had something that I something that I wanted to do for a few turns now. But I feel like it's in conflict with Art's thing now. So I'm not sure.

AUSTIN: Well, what is it?

KEITH: Well, I wanted the rocks from Samothres with the fish that were not destroying anything in the Golden Sector? I would like for it to start hitting stuff in the Golden Sector.

AUSTIN: That's not a project a community can do.

KEITH: No no. That's a discover something new.

AUSTIN: I see what you're saying. Okay.

KEITH: Yeah. Specifically the library.

AUSTIN: Totally! That's acceptable.

KEITH: Yeah, that's what I... Yeah, so discover something new: the rocks are now— houses are not safe in the Golden Sector, and they're more frequently hitting the library than anything else.

AUSTIN: Mmm. Okay. Do you want to draw that?

KEITH: Yeah, sure.

AUSTIN: And while you draw that, it is your turn, Nick. Queen of Summer. [evil laugh]

NICK: Whoa. Whoa! There's no ch—

JANINE: Uh oh.

NICK: This is the first one without a choice.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

NICK: Oh, wait a second.

AUSTIN: Time for me to tell you what this project is, huh?

NICK: I guess so. I mean, does that c—

[overlapping]

AUSTIN: You want to read what the card says?

NICK: I guess that counts as a project.

It says just right away in bold, "A project finishes early. Which one and why?"

[MUSIC: "[Marielda](#)" begins]

AUSTIN: You can tell me why after I tell you what the project is.

NICK: Okay.

AUSTIN: It's a really pretty, beautiful day, around 3 or 4 PM, so the sun has kind of started to move away from that high position at noon where everything's as hot as balls, and things kind of at the very least are a little bit cooler. And then they walk up out of the sea onto the beach, their marble feet picking up sand as they pass through the city streets. [NICK gasps loudly]

The pala-din are here. [NICK: Oh!] And they're not listening to anything anyone says.

[MUSIC: "[Marielda](#)" ends]

2:06:12