

Drawing Maps 15: June 2020 - Sangfielle Characters #1: Chine

Transcriber: Ray B.

AUSTIN: Hey, Dre!

ANDREW: Hey, how's it going?

AUSTIN: It's going. I was just telling you before we started the recording that, that I don't have an intro for these, because you're the first one, your's is the, your's is the first one that we've done. So I guess, I guess what I'll say is like, welcome to Drawing Maps, I'm Austin Walker. Joining me today for this episode is Andrew Lee Swan.

ANDREW: Hey! Listen, if you're listening to this, you know where to find me on Twitter, I don't need to...

AUSTIN: This is, this is, this is real, this is for real ones only. So, I guess I should explain, generally though, what we're going to do on these kind of subsequent Drawing Maps episodes. For people who followed along with Drawing Maps before Partizan, you probably remember that we did a lot of deep dives on all the different factions, and then elements of building out the setting according to kind of what I needed for Beam Saber, and we kind of talk through both the process of, you know, brainstorming ideas for, for what parts of the setting look like, but then also just like, well, how do you make up a faction in the game Beam Saber, I think this is going to these conversations are going to be- One they're conversations that's different, but two there's also, they're also like a little more... Freeform, in general, because the goal isn't the same. In some ways, the process for the Partizan Drawing Maps prep was a lot more structured, because the process of converting something like the the default setting, the Izya setting from Beam Saber, or for that matter, the Doskvol setting of Blades in the Dark to something else is a lot more templated, right, because you just have a template for like the world, and it has this many squads, and these squads are connected to this sort of faction, or this sort of category or whatever, and you fill those out, you change those, and then you're pretty good, you know?

The... What we're doing here with Heart is a lot different, because there is a lot more work to be done, because of how ingrained the setting is into all of the text of Heart as it's written. You know, it's not just going into the kind of landmarks section of the book, and scraping through that and creating new stuff, though that is also going to be a thing that I have to do at a certain point, you know. Instead, it's going to be- It includes looking at every move from every class that's being played, and honestly, plus the ones that aren't, for a lot of background setting stuff that plays out mechanically, but also influences all the little bits of the world. And I think that'll make more sense as we get into it. And so what we decided to do was kind of do this kind of Q&A thing, talk through the character- This isn't like a character creation episode, really, though there

is some character creation stuff that will come up in terms of, you know, houses character gonna fit in, and blah, blah, blah. But the- In a bigger way, the thing that's important here is, is like, the things that your character would touch, or that would, that they'd be influenced by, let's share some of the collaboration and filling in the blanks on those and making those our own, you know, turning those into things that, that mean something for, for us. And so for instance, you know, Dre, you're going to be playing, I believe, the Cleaver as your class, right?

ANDREW: Right, mhm!

AUSTIN: And so, and so, one of the early questions I asked on this list of questions was like, are there a lot of Cleavers among your people, and we'll get to your people in a second, or are you fairly unique among them?

ANDREW: So, I am- When I started conceptualizing Cleavers, I started thinking along the lines, very much of like Witchers and Grey Wardens.

AUSTIN: Okay.

ANDREW: I think there is basically, I think there's like one Cleaver per region or city or area.

AUSTIN: Of the world? Not just of our little ringed-in place?

ANDREW: No, I think, I think like of our little ringed in place, right? So we've talked about like different Havens kind of being like the, the spot so there's probably like a Cleaver per Haven, or so.

AUSTIN: Okay, cool, cool, cool. That makes a lot of sense, and we can talk more about that in a second. But yeah, so that's like, just as an example, right, like the book doesn't say, "Oh, you know, there are Cleavers everywhere or it doesn't say there's one Cleaver in the whole world. So it's kind of up to us to help define. We should talk about your people a little bit here, because I remember the last thing that- The way you framed it to me was like, you want to be a shrew, a shrew person. What d- How did- You said something very evocative to me?

ANDREW: Oh, I don't remember...

AUSTIN: Want to- You said I want to be a shrew person. God, maybe I'm, maybe I'm just misremembering this but I really thought you said something about wanting to eat a bunch of little things or something like that-

ANDREW: Nope! [laughs]

AUSTIN: But I'm checking the chat now, maybe I was sick when, [laughs], when you said this to me, and I was like yeah, okay, yeah, you're gonna be a shrew person, you want to eat a bunch of little things. Yeah, you didn't say it at all. I'm looking.

ANDREW: Yeah, no. Do shrews do that? Is that a thing?

AUSTIN: I don't know. I kind of like imagined, with like their little mouths. I don't- I guess I don't really know anything about shrews.

ANDREW: I'm gonna look up a shrew diet. Hold on... Well, okay, they eat insects, earthworms, small slugs, some [???].

AUSTIN: They're like, like omnivores, right?

ANDREW: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, they're cool looking. Anyway! So you, you pitched me a shrew person, what's up with them? What's their vibe? What's their- Talk to me about shrews in, in this world, which doesn't have a name.

ANDREW: Yeah, no. Um, can I just be honest, Austin?

AUSTIN: Yeah, always.

ANDREW: There is another Discord I'm in and we've just been talking about Redwall a lot I don't know if you've read-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Redwall is good!

ANDREW: Okay!

AUSTIN: No, not since I was a child, but yeah, you know?

ANDREW: I was just like, you know what? Redwall shrews are pretty cool, I want to play a shrew person.

AUSTIN: What um, what, what's their deal in Redwall? What are shrews like in Redwall?

ANDREW: Um... So I was actually like, looking this up, on the Redwall Wiki, shout out to the Redwall Wiki. Um, shrews are most known as basically like nomadic guerrilla groups that like just travel all over.

AUSTIN: [quietly] Damn, okay!

ANDREW: And apparently... The original group of shrews that were in the original Redwall were basically based off of a union member longshoremen in Liverpool.

AUSTIN: That's amazing!

ANDREW: [laughing] Yeah!

AUSTIN: [impressed] What's good?

ANDREW: Yeah...

AUSTIN: That's so funny, that's incredible. So I guess, I guess, you know, my job is to tell you, you can't just be the shrews from Redwall.

ANDREW: Oh, yeah, I know.

AUSTIN: Because that's how we get sued. But, but- And also, I should say, right now, like, nothing we say, here is- I- Here's the thing I didn't do. This is the thing, I this is the, the spiel I normally give, I did not give and Dre, you've probably never heard one of these. But [clears throat] let me load this up... For people who have never listened to a Drawing Maps before, or seen it, what Drawing Maps is is real prep, it's actual prep, this is what prep looks like, we're not like putting this on for you. It covers a bunch of different shows and games over the course of different, you know, seasons and stuff. Today, we're focused on season seven, which doesn't have a name yet. It's discussion and hopefully insight. It's asset creation, we often come- I often use drawing maps to come up with or manage assets in the game, which is to say factions, NPCs, locations, adventures, species, cultures, whatever. What Drawing Maps isn't, is unchecked or unannounced spoilers: if we're gonna get into spoiler talk, I always flag it. It's not permanent or unchangeable: nothing anyone says during Drawing Maps is locked in place, nothing is the show until it's the show, which means we can throw out, you know, we can have a 40 minute conversation, throw it all out, doesn't count.

That's the bridge, you saw the bridge to the thing and didn't get to see the thing because that's- The thing is the thing. It's not an explicit tutorial: you know, this is not a guide to how to do it, it's a, it's a snapshot of us doing it, and, you know, teaching is a different thing. I take pedagogy pretty seriously and you can't just like look at the thing and be like, that's not what- I how I would teach it. But it is, it is, I hope, still useful or interesting, at the very least. It's not designed by Committee, which is to say, when we did- When I do these live, I don't necessarily take advice from the chat live to be like, oh, here's what you should do, it's just like not what this show's purpose is. And it's not complete, which means that what we end with here, even if we end up liking it might not make it into the show at all, or it might not be... It might not be finished. We might not- We might finish the episode with unfinished thoughts. We don't necessarily need to put a button on everything. So, for instance, when I say, "hey, you can't just be the Redwall shrews." We don't need to come up with the firm, the most firm answer in this moment to what that, that pushback means or what your response to that is. But I do want to put in your brain that like I'd like to get a little bit, a little bit more from that. You do say here, on the notes which I am looking at because I, I sent you these questions in advance, you wrote some notes down, is

that you do think that they're all over. They're, so they're not, in other words they're not their own unique faction in the larger world or like the, the, they don't make up some big civilization-

ANDREW: [crosstalk] No, yeah.

AUSTIN: Somewhere else on the map that we haven't seen yet.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: They're just like among people, the way that, the way that people are often. Yeah, gotcha, cool. Is there anything else that you have on, on the Shrew folks at this point that you wanted to bring up or should we should, we keep on moving through other stuff?

ANDREW: I think we can keep on moving. I, like I haven't thought a lot about it, but in my mind, it is just like... Like there probably are things that are within like their culture or whatever, but I think largely they are pretty like... homogeneous with like, wherever they are.

AUSTIN: Right, right, gotcha, gotcha. And you know, we should note that like Heart comes with, starts with four ancestries, the drow, the humans, the high elves and the gnolls, and those are kind of set up as being, here are four different cultures, they interact outside of the, the Heart, the area called the Heart in, in interesting ways and, and have their own different civilizations and all that. So that's kind of the world in which I'm asking that question for people who don't know.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I do like the idea of there being- Of that just like not being the way our world necessarily is set up, but we'll see. I'll talk to the other, you know, seven players- Or six players, I guess. 'Cause I'm, I'm the seventh one.

ANDREW: [laughs]

AUSTIN: And, and we'll see, maybe that doesn't hold right. Maybe somebody else says like, oh, no, the Whatever people are really, you know, off on their own shit. And we'll, and we'll see, we'll take that as it, as it comes. You know, there's not always a, a unified answer for everything. Anyway, we should keep on moving and talk about Cleaver stuff. What, what do, what do people think about Cleavers, and they're kind of unique relationship to the world? I guess, for people who don't know, and again, this is clearly, this is the first one of these we've done, Cleavers are... How would you pitch a Cleaver mechanically, Dre, since you're going to be playing one.

ANDREW: Oh... they're like a mix, like mechanically, they are a mix of like stereotypical warriors and rangers.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ANDREW: But like just turn kind of the gnarliness up to 11?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. Okay. Yeah, I think that's right. I think that that's-

ANDREW: And probably like some like, again, like stereotypical D&D, like, barbarian stuff thrown in there.

AUSTIN: Yeah, definitely. I mean, like, they're very, like, bloody, they're very much like, they, they take what they need from the world, they eat things, like eating things is literally one of their core moves, is that they, they devour different resources, and when they do that, they get bonuses. And, and I think one of the core things is, and I'll ask you, I'll ask you this later, but what I'm gesturing at here, when I say that Cleavers have a unique relationship to the weirdness of the world by which I mean, the weirdness of, to the, to the Heart, is that they are very positive on all the strange stuff, or maybe not positive, but more comfortable than other classes by default, or regular folks, around that stuff. And so I'm curious what you think, right, most people on average, think about the Cleavers' relationship to all that weirdness is, if that makes sense.

ANDREW: Um, I think it is... There's a, there's a unique emotional experience now that I'm a homeowner, which is when something goes wrong, and I immediately know it is like outside of my ken, like I cannot, I can't fix this. And there's like- when you call someone and they show up to fix it for you, it is like a mix of relief, but also, I really fucking wish I did not have to call you. And I think that's kind of how Cleavers are-

AUSTIN: [quietly] Okay.

ANDREW: Like, I don't, I don't think like it's, you know, a Cleaver rolls into town and like, everybody spits on them and shuns them or anything?

AUSTIN: Right.

ANDREW: But they're also not stoked because that means there's probably something going on nearby that you need a Cleaver for, or they're on their way to something.

AUSTIN: Right, right, like oh, shit, this means something's happening nearby. Like it's, it's, it's again, like the Witcher comparison here is like when Geralt rolls into town, part of the reason you're like, oh fuck, is because you know, people start shit with Witches. And part of the reason you go oh, fuck, this is your like, someone's a fucking werewolf here! I [makes a fake mad noise] I'm just trying to- Oh, I just have to do my work this week.

ANDREW: Right.

AUSTIN: It is, it is harvest week. I don't need a werewolf! I don't!

ANDREW: I don't need nekkers in somebody's basement or something [laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] Yes! Yes! I don't need that shit right now. Stay the fuck out of here! And it's, and you end up putting it on the we- Or on the, on Geralt a little bit because you're like, I can't I, can't blame the drowned, they're the drowned, you know, like...

ANDREW: [laughing] Right!

AUSTIN: Anyway, um... Is Cleaver a particular thing, like a title? Or is that just like, again, you know, like ranger could be a capital 'R' Ranger or a lowercase 'r' Ranger, you know what I mean? Or like Hunter, you know? So what is- Is Cleaver a... Proper noun?

ANDREW: It's a proper noun, and, yeah, so I think when people talk about Cleavers, they talk about them as capital C Cleaver.

AUSTIN: Okay, that's interesting. I, I'm going to earmark something here so that we can, we can open up a conversation with Ali, not right this moment, but in the future, because I think a lot of- We're going to have a lot of overlap between you and her character, because her character is also being positioned as a sort of like... Problem solver, with the Witcher as a touchstone, and I'm- There's a couple things that are interesting about it. One is, these could be two different schools, you would be coming from two different schools of thought.

ANDREW: [quietly] Yeah.

AUSTIN: And because being from a school of thought is such a, such a, you know, an important marker for the season, that could be really productive, because you could be coming at things with like an opposite relationship with the supernatural, right? Where maybe you're very comfortable with it, and very, like, you know, among it and and Ali's character is not. Or we could end up working out that maybe you're actually both from the same organization, which would undo some of the stuff we're saying about Cleaver being a proper noun, and blah, blah, blah.

ANDREW: [quietly] Right, yeah.

AUSTIN: But I want to at least put that on the table now, so that we know that that's a conversation we are going to have to have. Because otherwise what we're going to have as two characters who are both from similar backgrounds, without ever talking about how those backgrounds interact, do you know what I mean?

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So worth, worth thinking about already. What, how does a person, not your character necessarily, but how does anyone become a Cleaver?

ANDREW: Um, so the touchstone I put in here is like, the Dark Brotherhood quest in Skyrim.

AUSTIN: Oh, okay.

ANDREW: I do not think, like people aren't born and being like, I'm going to grow up to be a Cleaver, and I don't even think it's like something you even seek out. I think it is something where, like, you stumble on it-

AUSTIN: [quietly] Yeah.

ANDREW: And 99% of people are like, pff, okay, whatever. But there's a handful of people that are like, too curious or too stubborn or too whatever, and they just kind of keep pulling at that thread and pulling and pulling and pulling, and then by the time they figure out what they're pulling on, it's- They're, they're in too deep.

AUSTIN: Right.

ANDREW: And they're kind of stuck in it.

AUSTIN: The- You know, for people who don't know the Dark Brotherhood quests in, in Skyrim, or like Oblivion, trigger after you kill, you murder a person, basically. You know that, that tends to happen for the first time for a player, when you've like decided like, "oh I'll just, I'm gonna steal from this house, like no one really gets hurt if I go steal this big ruby from this house", and then someone's like, "my ruby!" And you're like, "oh, no, that motherfucker just saw me take that ruby, I gotta, I gotta drop him," and then you kill them by mistake, and then you go to sleep the next time, you know, or the next time you go to sleep, you get a dream that says the, you know, the Dark Mother, or whatever, is calling to you. And be like, "ah, I see, I've joined, I've been invited to join the Dark Brotherhood." And so in that way, what you're saying is that like... You don't, you, you do a thing that puts you on the path to being a Cleaver, and then you're on the path to being a Cleaver.

ANDREW: [quietly] Yeah.

AUSTIN: It's not like- You didn't go to school for this.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that makes sense... The... We've talked about how, for us, there won't be A Heart, there will be like, multiple, you know, level four Heart Zones or whatever, and, and, you know, whatever we end up calling that, that whole setup. But the, the... One of the through-lines is that as the Cleaver gets closer to those, or has a deeper connection to it, you become more of the sort of like, transformed, true version of yourself or whatever? And I'm just kind of curious about what you think about that and if there is, like a direction there for you, thematically that you're interested in, or anything like that.

ANDREW: Yeah. So there is a lot of stuff in the book, and I think like, I'll pop ahead to kind of start talking about another of the questions you brought up which is like...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, yeah, yeah, totally.

ANDREW: So every class has these like Zenith abilities, which is basically like, almost like this is, this is what your character does at the end.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ANDREW: Like this is the prologue of like, and what happened after is...

AUSTIN: Right.

ANDREW: And one of them is like-

AUSTIN: And those are like end of your character-

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Abilities, in other words. Like the, that is like, without, without exception, you do that and then within a session or two, you're done playing that character.

ANDREW: Yeah. And one of those abilities is basically where you turn into what the book calls angels, which in the book, and again, I know it says in here that we want to like take angels in a different direction but just for the context, like angels are like... Basically like big scary Slender Man murder monsters, right? Like that's kind of the vibe I got.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] Yeah, that's a, that's the vibe. Did you, did you take a look at the ones that are in... The book "Sanctum," which is about Havens? They're, they're a little bit, they're a little bit more... They can be a little more distinct there but, but saying that they're like, saying that they're like Slender Mans is not completely wrong, right.

ANDREW: [quietly] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Here's like, here's a description of one of them. The Blossom Angel is [reading] "inky-black and hard to look at, as though there's too much condensed into a singular space; quivering and lost, clawing apart a stone wall to escape an open space; lowering itself down a long shaft above a populated haven." A, another one is... The Logos Angel, and that said, [coughs] excuse me, and that says, [reading] "folded up inside a cupboard, entirely filling the space and waiting until you fall asleep; charging towards a marketplace to get enough people to notice it so it can become invisible and intangible; licking empty bookshelves to try and absorb the memories of the books."

ANDREW: Mhm! [in amused and weirded-out agreement]

AUSTIN: You know these are the sorts of things that-

ANDREW: [laughing] Just normal guy shit!

AUSTIN: [falsely nonchalant] Just normal, just normal guy shit! Just guys being dudes! [laughs]
Has, has eyes that change color every time you look away...

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Terrifying a pack of feral dogs into cowering obedience by their mere presence, you know? So, so yeah, it is, it is some, it is some horror movie, you know, cryptid, super cryptid...

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What's, what's the thing I'm thinking of? SCP! You know a *good* Creepypasta type stuff, so, sure! it's in that space.

ANDREW: Yeah. So I'm kind of thinking of the Cleavers as like, kind of being these unintentional agents of the Heart.

AUSTIN: [confirming] Okay.

ANDREW: And then the longer you're a Cleaver, kind of the more... The closer you get to that. And I think I had a note in here where it was like, "what is the Cleaver organization like?"

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ANDREW: And I was saying that, like, I think when you're, when you're young into a Cleaver, you're mostly solo, maybe you team up with another Cleaver, and you probably like travel with other groups of people who aren't Cleavers. But as Cleavers get older, they tend to like clump up with each other, and they tend to draw together.

AUSTIN: [crosstalk, quietly] Interesting!

ANDREW: And I think like that is because, in a way, they're getting called back to the Heart, and I think... My pitch for the angels is that a lot of them are basically like the merged souls and minds of like a bunch of old Cleavers who have like come together-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk, quietly, intrigued] Oh, that's fun!

ANDREW: And the Heart has recalled them.

AUSTIN: Literally- Like, like, this is the fun bit of like, 'yeah, yeah, they come closer together when they're older, they get closer and closer together when they're older!' Yeah, they do.

ANDREW: [laughing, quietly] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Until, until they become these kind of super beings, right? These, these- Or not super beings, but like, these angelic, you know, what you've, you've written down here is The Cleft, which is fun, I like that quite a bit as a, as a, as a like our version of that.

ANDREW: [very quietly] Yeah.

AUSTIN: Is that something that people... Know, happens or this just I don't think the world?

ANDREW: I don't think so, I don't think so. Because I think at that point, too, it's like, yeah, Cleavers die, especially when they're-

AUSTIN: [crosstalk, agreeing] Right, right.

ANDREW: You know? Like, yeah, it's- Even if you've got five Cleavers together, if they're all old enough, something's gonna get them.

AUSTIN: Right, right. And hey, it turns out like... Is it a lot of like walking into a place where you find like, the blood and, and weapons and stuff of five Cleavers, and it's, it's empty.

ANDREW: Yeah!

AUSTIN: And you're like, 'well, what the fuck happened here?' And then like, you see a creature and you like run away from it, and it's like, oh, that creature is the five Cleavers, but it's also what killed the five Cleavers at a certain point, right. I like this, that's, that's fun.

ANDREW: I kind of think of Cleavers as like, you know, one of the reads that people have in Star Wars is that like, Anakin being the chosen one bringing balance to the Force, part of that is, is that he had to destroy like the Jedi Temple and all of that.

AUSTIN: Right, right, yeah.

ANDREW: And I think the Cleavers, at the end of the day are a force for the Heart to kind of like balanced things?

AUSTIN: They're an immune system. Right?

ANDREW: Yeah, right, absolutely, that is a great way of thinking about it!

AUSTIN: Totally, I like that, I like that all. Is that, is there an element of this that is... Is part of the question of being a Cleaver whether or not you're in control? Or whether or not you're- Like, do Cleavers think of themselves, then, as being agents of the system that they're inside of? Or do they think of themselves as being... Free-willing monster hunters? Do you know what I mean? 'Cause I think-

ANDREW: Definitely the latter.

AUSTIN: Okay, okay, so there is no, so this is not like a- They haven't [emphasised] given up their freewill or something like that, right?

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or in their minds at least. Cool. I don't want to fill in too many blanks here, right? Because I don't want to say like, in this moment, well, obviously you're basically been infected by the equivalent of.... What are they, what are they called? The fuckin' parasite bugs that make you do things? You know what I mean?

ANDREW: [laughing] Talking about toxoplasmosis?

AUSTIN: Toxoplasmosis! You already know what the fuck it is, welcome to Friends at the Table, motherfucker! So like, I don't want to say like, okay, well that's obviously what you are, right? Because it's not- That's not where we're going every time. [laughs] But I want to leave space like that, because that, for me that anxiety is a little bit more of what's interesting.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Especially 'cause, again, one of the big themes this season is... In a world of overwhelming possibility and overwhelming, like, meaning, where there- It doesn't seem like there is a hierarchical meaning to point to, to, to align yourself to or against, how do you align yourself and what do you insist on is true? And so for them to insist on, despite being agents of the Heart, insist on their own freedom in doing the things the Heart seems to want, that is, that, that's interesting to me, that's productive, you know? Especially because it can b- It's an interesting thing because destr- killing Heart creatures, or whatever, right? It should not- Does not seem like it's a thing the Heart would want or that the system would want, but of course, it is at the same time, because that's how systems work. Right? So that's kind of fun. I like that a lot. [clears throat] There is one that we, we skipped to above, skipped above, which was, which is just about generally, the Cleaver being connected in a positive way to Heart things, and I'm curious if... Given what we just said, is there, is there an element of that relation- What is that relationship like, among the group, kind of collectively? If you see a weird creature, is that just a target? Is that like the way a hunter, you know, a hunter in, in our kind of the best possible stereotypical version of the hunter who loves ecosystems and understands themselves as part of it? You know, that's that vibe, or like, Oh, yes, this is part of the ecosystem of the Heart? Are they... Is there a religious element to it? Is there a... Or does that not, does that not happen at

the Cleaver level, does that only happen at another level that the Cleaver then kind of maps on top of?

ANDREW: I'm not sure, I would imagine-

AUSTIN: We also haven't defined a lot of like what the Heart is for us, to be clear, but you can...

ANDREW: Yeah, for sure. And I think that, again, like that probably differs from Cleaver to Cleaver, like... I know, like me, as a person finds more interest in playing a character that is closer to that, like, good hunter, which is like, you know, sometimes in order to maintain an ecosystem, you have to kill something.

AUSTIN: But you don't know if that's a your character thing...

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Or if that's a Cleaver thing.

ANDREW: Exactly.

AUSTIN: Right, right. I'd say let's leave it open then for now, because that seems safer for, for giving us a lot of space. You know what I mean?

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: What I, what I guess seems like a little more written in bold, is that you do understand that there is power in the strange and that it isn't... If I had to say like, here's the thing Cleavers believe, it's that you can't simply get rid of the Heartblooded things, do you know what I mean?

ANDREW: [quietly] Yeah, exactly.

AUSTIN: Or that, that is not a, that is not the most useful solution, sometimes, right? Burning it in a fire isn't, isn't getting the most out of it. Now, maybe that means you... One person who wants to, like protect a certain part of the world, and someone else wants to like devour it, and those are both Cleavers, but both of them just have that different relationship with, with the strangeness that tells them like 'no, no, no, there's there's Here here this is, this is, this is good weirdness, we can, we can harvest this,' you know, 'we can do something with this, we can get stew going on this.'

ANDREW: Yeah, I think, I think, I think I see Cleavers as being kind of... A person who finds utility and the things that people want to avoid, whether out of fear or ignorance or whatever.

AUSTIN: Yeah, that makes sense. Totally. Can we talk a little about some moves here, I think...

ANDREW: Sure.

AUSTIN: Unless there is... Actually, let's, let's hit this one before we, before we go into moves, which is: Of the playbooks, this is probably the one that's the most, like, openly violent, and they're all, they're all kind of violent. You know, I guess, I guess some of the other, some of the other playbooks have some really gruesome attacks and things like that, but in terms of just raw, like, the image of what this class is, as the text conjures it, this is like, like you said, kind of does touch on some, like D&D barbarian type stuff. And is... Fundamentally, I think, mechanically positive on you being an, you know, the, the kind of like arbiter of violence in the party, if that makes sense? The person who can best, you know, judge the way the axe should fall. And I'm curious how you're interested in wielding that, that authority, in a sense, you know, not literal, like, you know, factional authority or legal authority, but in that way of like, hey, you're playing a class that is like good at killing things and that will make killing look good. How are you interested in thinking about that this season? And I bring- You know I think this is interesting for you, especially because of the way we've talked about Even and we've talked about Valence as being characters who have a unique relationship with violence. Even, even, you know, Figure in Bismuth. So I'm curious coming into this, how you think we should think about the way Cleavers do violence, but also just kind of if you're interested in any sort of depictions or questions, for your character more specifically, around violence, or if that's not really top of mind, or just where you're at with it. Yeah... And, again, we don't need to have a final answer today. You know what I mean, this can be asleep on it.

ANDREW: Yeah, I definitely... I, you know, I want to play this as a character as like, whenever they pull out their weapon, it's an 'Oh, shit' moment. It's not like they just go around using violence to solve everything.

AUSTIN: [quietly] Yeah.

ANDREW: But, like you said, when it's time for the axe to drop, the axe is going to drop very, very hard. You know, I would compare it, I would contrast it to like Sige was a character I played that was just like violence was the answer for almost everything.

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ANDREW: You know, you would punch before you even tried to understand if there was a better answer than punching.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ANDREW: And I think, like the Cleaver is very capable of violence and solving things through violence, but I kind of go back to what we were just talking about, where they're also connected to the Heart in a way that nobody else is, and I think that means that they also understand that at times, violence is not the right answer. And maybe in a way, ironically, they would be the one

person in a spot where everyone else would be like, 'No, we need to kill this thing,' and the Cleaver would be like, 'no, no we don't!'

AUSTIN: Right, right. Totally. Or, or occasionally, maybe the opposite position, right?

ANDREW: Oh 100%, yeah.

AUSTIN: The person who understands you can't bring the Xenomorph back to Earth, right? This is not the thing that you're, that you're you're gonna turn to know your [??? 0:31:19]

ANDREW: [crosstalk] Yeah, no, your friend got bit by a zombie, we have to do this thing right now.

AUSTIN: Right, right. You- Stop studying this shit! You're the person in Bloodborne, being like, "stop it! You don't need more eyes. You have enough eyes, actually! [laughs] I've seen things that get more eyes. It goes bad. Trust me!" Cool. I like that, I like that a lot. Alright, so let's talk about a couple of specific moves. This is one that I know the answer to already but the answer to you already but I'll just say, you have a move called Desperate Measures which says, [reading] "you've eaten people sometimes to survive, other times to prosper. Gain the Desolate domain, you can consume the flesh of something or someone that you've recently killed and gain a skill associated with them for the remainder of the situation." And I've just written "What are we doing about this?"

ANDREW: [laughs]

AUSTIN: You know, cannibalism does show up in in dark fantasy stuff and horror, obviously, pretty commonly, and I think a lot about Divinity Original Sin where all of the elves can eat anything, the anytime the elves eat the flesh of something that was alive, they get like a snapshot of that person's death, basically, and that's like a way to solve puzzles and stuff in that game. And that's just like, [jokingly, semi-judgemental] that's just part of how the elves work, baby! And I, you know, I was pretty sure I knew what the answer was going to be on this one. Which, you can tell me, because I was just like, hey, what I would do, is this gonna come up, and your answer was?

ANDREW: Nah, probably not.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ANDREW: And it, if it does, I think it will come much later, when I also have a much better handle over this character and the tone of the game, and I would take it because I feel like it fits in well with what we're doing.

AUSTIN: Totally

ANDREW: But until I have that, and even probably when I have that, I don't really have much interest in taking that move.

AUSTIN: It's worth saying, it- The flavor text says you've eaten people, but that's not true for the, for the mechanical text right?

ANDREW: Oh, for sure.

AUSTIN: The mechanical text- I guess this is the thing is like, the mechanical text, I guess it does-hmm. This is the fucking, this is the fucking thing about games, isn't it? It's like, what here is mechanics and what here is not mechanics, because... [quieter] I'm gonna check it in the books, I want to see where the, where the italics are. Because, you know, as... You read, "you've eaten people sometimes survive other times to prosper," and that's in italics, which to me marks it as flavor, but then the next line is "gain the desolate domain," and to me, it's a why I gained the desolate domain, which, which if you don't know, the way domains work in this game, is like, they're almost like a category of the world that you, if you have the domain, it means that you're familiar with it and can, can kind of rely on it as a... For certain roles. And so the desolate domain is wastelands and abandoned towns, right? It's like miserable places. And so I guess what I would say is if you ended up wanting to take that move for- In order to get to desolate domain, and then also just the bit of like, consuming the flesh of something and gaining a skill associated with it is something you could do with wolf meat or something, you know what I mean?

ANDREW: Yeah, for sure.

AUSTIN: If you wanted to get the hunt skill or something, you know, that's, that's the sort of thing you could theoretically do, and we could come up with another reason for it, but we would have to figure out what that is and, and, and, you know, take, take some care here.

ANDREW: And I would say too, even just mechanically like, that's a core ability already, is that, as the Cleaver you eat a resource, and then you gain the domain associated with it.

AUSTIN: Well, so that's- The thing there is that's a resource and resources are different than just...

ANDREW: [crosstalk] That's true, than just yeah you found the thing.

AUSTIN: Killed some- Yeah, you can consume the flesh of something or someone that you've killed recently. Or, this is the thing that's so good about resources, [excited] you can eat anything and do this dude!

ANDREW: [laughing] Yeah!

AUSTIN: It's not just... That's the thing. So the Cleaver has a move that is... Which one is that? Is that? Is that Heart's- Or no, that's Red Feast, right?

ANDREW: Red Feast, yeah.

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh, there's no limit to what you can eat, but tough or noxious materials might require a check, basically, but yeah, when you eat a resource, you gain any domains associated with that resource. And like, listen! You know, the, the Hound starts with the... Hound's a bad one 'cause that one's actually liquor.... You know, the, the Junkmage starts with a vial of cursed ink, that's an occult resource, you can just drink that! You just drink that and get the occult, and get the occult skill, you know, that just happens, you know? So that's like, that's- Or the, or the occult domain. You can eat whenever you need, it doesn't have to be flesh! So you're right that it already, you already kind of have that for resource tier things, at least, you know?

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And that, in some ways, it's a nice way for us to get around, needing that move to, to work where like, if I really, if I was in a situation where as a GM, I felt like you needed a certain skill, I can be like, 'Oh, yeah, and also there's a d4, you know, flesh resource on that monster you killed, you could eat that,' you know what I mean?

ANDREW: [quietly] Right.

AUSTIN: So... Or, or whatever, here's some fur, chew on this fur.

ANDREW: [laughs]

AUSTIN: Yeah, you cut off a few tendrils? You know?

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: There's a real Monster Hunter through line with the Cleaver too, you know?

ANDREW: Yeah, for sure, I never thought about it like that, but that's 100% true.

AUSTIN: A lot of carving here and a lot of like, and the like tracking and a lot of like, you know, even the versions you're talking about, like the best version of Monster Hunter around which you have... The hunters have a specific relationship with the environment, it's not just the kind of Monster Hunter World go west and conquer shit, you know. Anyway! Um, let's see, some other, some other move stuff here. The, the, there's a move another Zenith move called Weald and Woe. We- Weal- I never know how to pronounce that word. Is there a word? Is there a... How is...

ANDREW: I guess I always thought of it as a 'weld,' but I-

AUSTIN: 'Weld,' isn't it? It's 'weld.' Is it not 'weld?'

ANDREW: I'm gonna Google it, hold on. No, it looks like it's weald!

AUSTIN: Is it?

ANDREW: Yeah, it's weald. W-E-E-L-D is that pronunciation I see. So.

AUSTIN: Okay, well, there we go. Well, I guess it's Weald and Woe... In that it says, I guess I won't read the whole thing, but it, but it does suggest, basically, that you have this relationship with this thing called the Forest, which is one of the Heavens in Heart. And we're not going to have the seven Heavens, or eight Heavens or whatever that Heart does, but one of them is the forest, and I'm curious if you have a thought about anything like that for the Cleavers. Is that, is that a physical place, if that exists at all? Or is that- Or are we kind of just committing straight away to the Cleft as being the sort of like de facto end game for for Cleavers?

ANDREW: Yeah, I, I think there is an interesting possibility there of it being like... If a, if for some reason, a Cleaver manages to like not pick up a Cleft, what happens to them? And that may be the Forest or whatever its analog is, is like, where does that go?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] In the culture.

ANDREW: What happens to them?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ANDREW: But yeah, I don't, I haven't really thought about what that would look like, per se, or specifically.

AUSTIN: I'm now trying to think about what that would be in our immune system analog, and it just doesn't work because that's not what happens to like, the immune system, you know, the immune system doesn't get to, like, graduate and leave the blood to go somewhere else, you know... [laughs]

ANDREW: Yeah. I do think like, you know, if we, if we think of the Cleavers as like, the immune system of the Heart, you know, maybe when a Cleaver dies, at an old age, of like weirdly natural causes, there's a, there is a... Oh, what is the word I'm looking for? Um, like, there's just a huge, like, cluster of Heart energy, where they die.

AUSTIN: Right, okay.

ANDREW: And so what does that do to a place, you know, because in this move, it talks about how like, you die, basically, and like, the forest like explodes into this place where you are and it-

To the point where it becomes a new landmark, and so what happens when like this bundled up, like concentrated Heart energy is tied to a specific place.

AUSTIN: Right, but which hasn't found enough other Heart energy to like, do that snap together become a Cleft?

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Right? It's like, it's like charged up and it's not... Like it hasn't found the other side of the magnet, you know, and so that's interesting. That's fun. Yeah, we can play with that. That's, that's something to play with, for sure... That's also interesting because then, then what we end up having with the, with the Cleaver is like this interesting polarization of community versus individual, which already is tied up with lots of kind of mythmaking around hunters, right? Because the hunters at once often framed as being like, your stereotypical lone wolf, out alone in the wilderness, self sufficient, etc. but also is someone who can bring food home for, for a community, can take care of people, can hunt, you know, we talk about things that kind of, 'go out and stop the monstrous beast from hurting people,' version of the hunter, right? That's the Witcher version of it, right? And so like, that's, that's- And I think Grey Wardens do the same thing, right? It's like, oh, you're being, you've been pulled away from society, but also, it's in order to protect society. That kind of to and fro is really good, and so I think having those two as the kind of ends of each spectrum of what's, what's the end of a Cleavers life, lived well, looked like? And it's like, oh, either becomes a monstrous creature, because they joined together with five other Cleavers nearby or whatever, or becomes a strange forest of weirdness, because they were alone until they died, you know? Is a good, there's a good, there's a good combination there, and the, here's the thing I like the most about it is, the one where five, five things become one is one end there, and then one thing becomes a kind of space that contains many is the other, which is like a great... That's all caught up in the like, inescapability of the other side of it. You know what I mean?

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Where like, you dont get to- Yeah, yeah, yeah, you thought you were going to live until you were- Just by yourself until you fucking died? No, when you die you get to become multiple things, you get to become a space infested with the Heart. And, and those of you who thought you could just stick it out with your buds until you were old and gray? No, you're going to become a strange flesh creature, and a single strange flesh creature. That sort of, the Heart works the way it works, right? Love it. Another one here is that you are the only class to have the Cursed domain, I believe.

ANDREW: Yes.

AUSTIN: Someone else might have a Cursed resource or something like that, but you are the only one who has the domain Cursed, which, again, gives you a die when, when- In Cursed places, basically, when dealing with things, quote [reading], "Actively harmful locations, places

touched by the Heart," and so I wanted to talk with you a little bit about what that means, not with the Cleaver but just more generally, what are Cursed places like here, in your mind? I have some ideas but I'm curious about yours too.

ANDREW: [sighs]

AUSTIN: Because we have a lot of touchstones here, obviously.

ANDREW: Yeah. I guess for me, I think this is one of the things I'm still trying to wrap my head around the most is like our setting and what it looks like, and so I think this is a place where I'm still... kinda struggling, honestly, to come up with a good answer.

AUSTIN: Totally. Well, so, for me, one of the things I would, I would point towards... You know, I've sort of said from the jump that one of the ways in which I want to take, or touch familiar themes, or familiar... [sounding unsure] set dressing, is with a very familiar pitch in terms of the way we do uncanny stuff here. You know, in our list of touchstones I think the things that people are going to jump out- The things that people are going to jump out to are things like Bloodborne and Hellboy and... I don't know, maybe it didn't make it into this document, but in *my* Season 7 document, not the group one, you know like Voorhees is actually a big one here, and so like... Places where the world works different is sort of the short, the short version of what I imagine cursed places look like. They are the places where it is as clear as possible that physics isn't locked in this world, that things aren't pinned down or locked down, things aren't true permanently. They're the places where- You know, physics not being locked down is the easiest one, did you ever see, have you seen the Animatrix ever?

ANDREW: Oh god, yeah, like when it first came out, so it's been a while.

AUSTIN: [smiling] Yeah, right. So there was, there was one story, one of the stories in that thing that was called... God, you know, now I suddenly don't even remember the name of it, but it's like all these kids go to a house and the like, the house is like... theoretically haunted, but really what it is is like, you know, you throw a glass bottle and it bounces back up into the air and reassembles itself. Or again, thinking about the, the stories of Voorhees, right? Like the library that has every book ever written in it, right, including ones that haven't been written yet, right? To me, that's a cursed space for us, because it is the insistence of a... That the physics that exist outside in the world, that the things that are predictable outside don't work here the right way, and you know, again, we've touched on moments of this, we've seen stretches of this. You know, Blough City obviously touches on some of this, Bluff in general, stuff in Twilight Mirage, if you think about some of the ways the Axioms showed up, that style of weirdness, of like... The Iconoclasts in general, also in Twilight Mirage, right, that style of like, "Okay, this is just fucked up, this is just kind of creepy to me, because it is something mundane turned just a little bit to insist that what should be working isn't working," those are going to be the sorts of places that I'm playing, I think, in, in quote-unquote "Cursed" domains, so less... Lovecraftian, capital-M Madness, except for the bit in most cosmic horror that is fundamentally about the recognition that things don't work the way you were taught they work, right? Have I told the, the way I was

taught what cosmic horror was about when I was in college and had never really read any of it before?

ANDREW: No.

AUSTIN: It's like a real simple, real simple one. My friend Anthony was running Call of Cthulhu and I hadn't read any Lovecraft yet and I was like, "I'm a little nervous about this, I've never played in this setting before, I've never read any Lovecraft, you know I'm 18 or whatever," and he goes, "Austin, it's super simple. You know that scene in Apollo 13 where all the scientists get together and they go, 'okay we gotta figure out how to make this square peg fit into this round hole,' and everyone goes 'oh yeah, that's real tough,' right?" And I'm like, "Yeah, I sort of remember that scene," and he says, "Cosmic horror is when you realize that the square peg always fit in the round hole and that's the most terrifying thing in the world because it undoes all of everything else you believed in already, because you thought that there's no way you could fit the square peg in the round hole." And so that ends up being the, like, the ways in which I think I'll play cursed a little bit, is that sort of de-anchoring from the familiar in the way that's upsetting but not necessarily... This is not our gore space, this is not our- You know, there might be monsters here but the monsters will be rooted in that, that sort of like... You know, the uncanny, the uncanny weirdness of expectations being overturned.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So that's a direction to start thinking in and looking into in terms of ideas about what your relationship is to unpredictability, to the knowledge that what worked yesterday might not work today, et cetera, because that's the space that Cleavers feel comfortable in-

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: If that makes sense.

ANDREW: No, that does, definitely.

AUSTIN: [quietly] Cool... So, likewise, you are one of the more Wild-adjacent classes. You don't have Wilderness as a starting domain but you do have a Wild resource to start and I think like your first minor ability you can take- I mean you can take any minor abilities, but the first one listed gives you the Wild domain, so I'm curious a little bit about how you see wilderness and, and animals, like... What are they generally and what are they here, inside of the Heart, inside of the ring, you know?

ANDREW: Yeah, I definitely think a lot in terms of, like, cave and deep sea creatures, where it's just like-

AUSTIN: Ooo, yeah.

ANDREW: In those places where there is like no light like our logic of what things look like and how things work gets just completely thrown out the window... So I do think like, in terms of being connected to this Wild domain, you know, I actually, I kind of typed out a couple of answers here and then deleted them because I didn't really like any of them, but one of the things I remember typing was this idea of like... There can be a vegetable that is completely fine to eat one season, and then the next it's almost poisonous.

AUSTIN: Right... [agreeing]

ANDREW: Because things are just, things just change quickly, not like day to day, but, again, like season to season...

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] No, that makes perfect sense, yeah.

ANDREW: And that the Cleaver is someone that can kind of just like innately understand those things, and maybe even see those things coming.

AUSTIN: Right! Oh, and this is the thing, is like, you're not connected, you're not- The word innate there is important because it's about your connection to those things and, and the kind of magical connection you have to those things, not because you read enough books to remember when they turn bad, right?

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I'm not saying the books are no good down here, but that's the thing, is that at the end of the day the, the- It's like you can trust your sense of what direction is north better than you can trust the compass because everything is magnetized down here, if that makes- Is that a metaphor that makes sense? [laughs]

ANDREW: Yeah, totally!

AUSTIN: But you fuckin' know what way north is, you know when the carrot has turned and you, and you cant eat that carrot anymore, you know?

ANDREW: [laughing] Yes.

AUSTIN: It might look good, but it's not, trust me!

ANDREW: And then conversely there's probably some things that look nasty and Cleavers are like, "Oh, no, that's great!" I definitely also was thinking also about that horrible video where... I can't remember what it is that people are eating but it's like the weird plant, to where when you like bust it open like cotton looking stuff blows out of it.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's a, um, a cattail, right?

ANDREW: Yes, yes.

AUSTIN: Totally, absolutely.

ANDREW: I feel like we've had those videos posted in our Discord.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I feel like Janine's posted, has posted those, yeah, pretty sure [laughing]. Yes, definitely, I like that, this is, this is good. Things like that, in general, that sort of like exterior-interior surprise is good, that style of just like, you're gonna get way more out of this or way less than you think! Just an, an unexpected outcome.

Alright, so like, moving off of moves and stuff like that, there is one place in the book that is a Cleaver-y place, and again I'm going to have to go through all of these and pick and choose what I want to edit and change and make ours and, and throw out altogether, which is probably going to be a lot of stuff, but one of this is, is a place called Avulse, which is Cursed and Wild, it describes a- It says, [reading] "Cleavers often eschew company. Many live as lone hunters or wayfinders, and few can tolerate each other's company for long. Avulse, however, is a community of Cleavers centred around a twisted lump of muscle and gore who once went by the name of Barrellous Scrom: a Cleaver who killed a Butcher and melded with the thing's god-wall. Since then, he has fed other Hearts-touched hunters with his flesh, and they have grown strong and territorial. He howls prophecies and orders..." blah, blah, blah, this is like a very like, particular model of what does a hunter or a Cleaver community potentially look like.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And in this image of it, it's like hierarchical around this very successful Cleaver who was turned into a monster, basically, both formally and informally, and I'm curious about how that stacks to what you think Cleaver spaces look like, how that stacks up, if that makes sense?

ANDREW: Yeah... And I think that like, there probably is a place where a, a gathering of like kind of older Cleavers has gotten big enough that there might be a... Like the equivalent of a guildhall or something like that. I don't think it is like a- 'Cause when I read the description of the Avulse it very much sounded like this is a place where it's like, almost like Cleavers take a pilgrimage to, or something.

AUSTIN: [quiet] Yeah, yeah.

ANDREW: And I don't think that's necessarily the case?

AUSTIN: [crosstalk] That's not the sort of thing that exists.

ANDREW: Yeah. Or if it does I think it is probably... It's probably an explicit place, right? It probably has something to do with being an older Cleaver and being drawn to somewhere closer and closer to the Heart.

AUSTIN: [quiet] Yeah... I'm curious if there's like a... I'm starting to think about like, what's, what's the example of something that's like a pilgrimage but- Not negative necessarily but not necessarily religious, not that style of transcendent, 'I can't wait to get there,' and I wonder if there's a version of, of a pilgrimage for a Cleaver that is about releasing some of the Heart's energy back into it, or like cleansing or bathing, you know what I mean?

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Like that style of like, "How do I keep this shit in check and keep my toxins down," so to speak.

ANDREW: Sure

AUSTIN: Before I get all Hearted up- Like, I'm curious if that's an interesting take on this that we could, that we could play with, is there's like, you know once every ten years, you have to go check in here and like, you know, whatever, bathe in this pool or, or stand in these smokes and steams or whatever, or, you know, have a heat bath and sweat it all the fuck out of you, you know?

ANDREW: Yeah, no I think that's cool.

AUSTIN: Or a fast or something. That could be a fun, that could be a fun play on that, because then it's not a- And then not playing it, again, for like a religious- This is not a holy, sacrosanct thing, this is a personal wellness, keep your head on straight, reassert that you are the Cleaver and you are not the Heart, you know?

ANDREW: Yeah, yeah.

AUSTIN: Which is fun. I like that as a potential idea. Okay, a couple more things! This is not, this is again, completely now we're off the book, and I think we've already kind of mostly hit this, which is, [reading] "Why are you committed to helping the haven as part of this party and why is the haven more or less happy to have you?" I think we hit that latter part pretty clearly.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: But so I guess maybe a re-, a restatement of the statement on the original question, then, the first question, is, you know, what would tie a Cleaver to a haven instead of being the sort of wanderer, bounce from place to place, you know, kind of catch as catch can type, type vibe?

ANDREW: Yeah. [sigh] Um... I think if there is a place where it's like it just feels like there's still things that need to be done, like, I have not fixed the problem.

AUSTIN: Right.

ANDREW: Things are still, there's still a misbalance here, I don't know...

AUSTIN: Okay, that's interesting, I think maybe that sense of misbalance could work. I want to be careful about getting us into a position where it feels forced to stay, so we should be very- We should work towards some real solution here, and this'll get easier as we get closer to playing because we'll have filled in more blanks. We'll know what this haven is, we'll have drawn that haven together and, and thought through what it is and talked through who's there and everything else, and so that will help quite a bit, [laughs] because then you can imagine why. I just wanted to raise it so we could start thinking about it, if that makes sense.

ANDREW: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Um... Do you have thoughts on a calling yet? One of the four callings- Or not four, there's more than that, [quiet] five.

ANDREW: Yeah, I think either Adventure or Heartsong, and I think maybe Heartsong in particular now that we've kind of talked more about connecting the Cleavers to the Heart specifically.

AUSTIN: Yeah, in that way, yeah. Yeah, that makes sense, Heartsong is the one that's like, listen, you feel it in you, when you sleep the Heart's there, it's beating, et cetera. So, cool, that makes sense. And then, and then finally, and I think we've hit these pretty much, but if you have any other thoughts here on the ways in which the Cleaver could hit on these core themes of contradiction and uncertainty/certainty and community, I'm definitely curious if you have any more thoughts there, but I do think we've touched on all that.

ANDREW: Yeah! I, I definitely like, and I think that is the kind of place that we hit where it's like, the Cleaver is a person who is often the, the contrasting voice in a group of people, whether that is for or against violence, I think is a, is a really clarifying thing for me to have as like a way to play and think of this character.

AUSTIN: Cool, yeah, I think that makes a lot of sense to me. I'm excited to see how that all comes together, obviously.

ANDREW: Yeah!

AUSTIN: Let me know if you have any other questions- And I guess right now, if you have any other thoughts or questions or things you wanted to bounce off of me, please let me know, or if

there's anything else in the book that stood out where you're like, hey can we address this, can we talk about this, I'd also love to- You know, I'm here for that now or in the future, so...

ANDREW: Yeah, I guess the only thing, that's very minor, is just that like, you know, looking at like equipment and stuff like that, you know, how much flavour do we have to like... You know, 'cause I'm looking at like one of the Cleaver weapons you can pick is a literal cleaver, and I kind of like the idea of having a heavier melee weapon, but...

AUSTIN: Hundred percent, hundred percent.

ANDREW: Cool.

AUSTIN: But it doesn't have to be a cleaver if you don't want it to be? Yeah, totally, a hundred percent. If you want it to be a big greatsword- What it is is [reading], "Kill d8, Brutal, Tiring," that's what it is, right? And so if you can tell me something else that is Kill d8, Brutal, Tiring, a hundred percent flexible.

ANDREW: Gotcha.

AUSTIN: If you don't want your resource- Your resource has to be d6 Wild, it doesn't have to be a [reading] "Freshly-harvested heart that still occasionally twitches," right?

ANDREW: [laughing] Yeah!

AUSTIN: It can be that, if that's a thing you want to keep! I think that's generic enough for us to play with without it feeling lifted from the setting of the, of the book. You know, there's enough touchstones that play with that sort of thing that I don't feel too bad about that. Also, god, I need to look up- Okay, here we go, I was like it's time for me to look up what Brutal and Tiring do, 'cause they come up a lot in this book. Tiring is, [reading] "When you fail an action using this equipment, the size of the stress dice is decreased by one for the remainder of the situation," so I think that means the size of, of the stress dice it uses, like the damage you cause with it, is decreased, that's interesting.

ANDREW: Okay.

AUSTIN: And then Brutal- Because that's the only thing that makes sense to me, because other- You wouldn't want your... It would be great if the stress that you received was decreased by one die size for the remainder of the situation, that would be good, that would not be tiring, and I think stress dice attached to equipment is the stress it does to a Delve or, or to a creature, an enemy or whatever.

ANDREW: Okay.

AUSTIN: And then Brutal is, [reading] "When you roll for stress against an adversary when using this item, roll two dice and pick the highest. Multiple instances of this tag stack: if you managed to get it three times, you'd roll four dice and pick the highest when calculating stress." That's wild, so Brutal's great! Brutal's incredible!

ANDREW: I guess the only other thing here, just to kind of let you know where I'm at, and just looking at the moves I definitely think I will probably start with the major ability Chimeric Strain, which is basically like a shapeshifting, werewolf style stuff.

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's pretty- It's very open for interpretation too, right?

ANDREW: Yeah, absolutely.

AUSTIN: You, you take some stress to Echo and then you get dope melee... That's a good, here's a good example, right? You gain the Brutal and Wyrd tags, and so that would be... So if you transformed and then also were still using a Kill d8, Brutal, Tiring weapon that would be double Brutal, you'd be rolling 3d8 taking highest for damage, which is wild. So, so I like that as a first, as a first move.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: I keep forgetting how many, how many things do you start with again?

ANDREW: I think it's one major and two minor?

AUSTIN: I think that's right. It's somewhere in here in a way that I always can't find when I need it, you know what I mean?

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Just, books...

ANDREW: I remember kinda having the same thing, where it's like- Oh, here it is, one major and three minor, it's on page 11.

AUSTIN: Page 11, that's early, no wonder I missed it.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Oh, I see, yeah, one major and three minor, cool, yeah! So just let me know what you think there. Obviously we haven't made- We will make characters in the future, you know, and that'll be a different thing for the main feed and not for drawing maps but, but yeah, that's, that's where we'll tackle that, but I'm down, I think it's a good idea, we can, we can talk about- I mean I guess one thing to then say is, is you know transformation, obviously, is a very thematically rich

thing in fiction and so it's probably worth starting to think about what does this transformation mean for, for you and your character.

ANDREW: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Because transformation can mean, you know, is this transformation becoming more like the thing you really are inside? Is it about sidestepping into a different type of thing? Is it something you control? You know what I mean, like there's all sorts of ways to talk about bodies that transform, so spend some time thinking about how you want to explore that. I mean, don't think that there's only one way to do that, you know what I mean? I think there's, there's potent stuff in a lot of different directions there, so long as we, we're thoughtful about what we want to play with, and so, and so yeah! I'm excited to hear about that and to get there!