

## Drawing Maps 17: August 2020 - Sangfielle Characters #3: Es

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**AUSTIN:** Hello, and welcome to another episode of Drawing Maps for the kind of world building and character creation-y stuff for season seven, which does not have a name yet. We've not done actual character creation or world building yet. [clears his throat] For people who don't know, Drawing Maps is a show I do around, especially around new seasons when there's a lot of prep to be done. That looks at that prep, that digs into kind of building out a setting, a world, etc. And then during a season looks at things like mission prep, or or or, you know, adventure prep or whatever. And everything in between. Joining me today is Janine Hawkins.

**JANINE:** Hi, I'm Janine. I'm @bleatingHeart on Twitter.

**AUSTIN:** Hi, Janine. Welcome.

**AUSTIN:** Hey.

**AUSTIN:** Today's agenda is Janine, you're the witch, you're playing the witch. And so I want to talk about the witch and about what your character concept is. And the ways in which those two things intersect with building the world and, kind of, what is up around those things, and how those things can influence or inform the rest of the world building. So I would say that you first pitched me, your general idea, which just like kind of predates the game even, a year ago? Maybe?

**JANINE:** It was, it was, I think it was before we even had a season seven inspiration, like sharing chat, because I remember, like really chomping at the bit for that chat to happen. Cause I was just like, there. I had a folder going, like I was ready. [Austin chuckles] I can actually, I can check this by looking at the dates on some of the files in this folder.

**AUSTIN:** I bet. Totally. That feels - Yeah, that feels like a thing that, you know, you'd be ahead of ahead of the curve on here for sure.

**JANINE:** January 29 2020, is one one of the files that I know is early.

**AUSTIN:** So two days from now, as of this recording, a year ago [JANINE laughs] that's wild. So the original pitch for me, or the thing, I guess, a way you framed it is - I'll just leave with you what would talk to me about the type of being you are even before we get to what a witch is.

**JANINE:** So for me, the big, the big thing was that, like I knew I wanted to do someone who is like really magic and really, really extra.

**AUSTIN:** Mhmm.

**JANINE:** You know, I confirm that because, you know, a lot of my characters I've played Haven't, you know, Haven't -- I guess Signet, kind of.

**AUSTIN:** Yeah, Signet is a little extra, uh huh?

**JANINE:** But that's a framework that's a little bit like - it's different. It's different, I wanted fantasy extra - and actually rode to Partizan and Teasel Moad really cemented like, I want to do a season of this, basically.

**JANINE:** Mmm yeah.

**JANINE:** But you know, not as - Teasel is a certain kind of character. And this is a different kind of character. So I think that was sort of how it started. And then from there, it was a lot of like, well, what are some interesting ways to approach magic use? What are some some, some things I'd like to explore or like, you know, what does it mean to be someone who embodies magic as as like, starkly as I would like to? And a thing that I came to, and this is also kind of in part of, partly because I tend to play a lot of humans? Usually because I feel like my character is extra in other ways where if I made them non human, it would feel like too much? like I feel too self indulgent somehow. So, for me -

**AUSTIN:** Signet was also a space elf, or something.

**JANINE:** Yeah, exactly. Right? Like it's - I always kind of want to just like pick one thing and like, you know, make that the point that's like really over the top. Here, I'm kind of going to be a little over the top and a bunch of different ways. But it was basically I want to be not a human. And I want to be really magical. And I also just want to be like, fun? Just like really, just like a lot. I just want to be a lot. And so I started experimenting with ideas of like, you know, we didn't have a system figured out so I started experimenting with ideas of like witchiness based on like materials? I was really into the idea of a lace which for a while.

**AUSTIN:** Ooh, that's fun.

**JANINE:** Um, I think it's fun? I don't know if it's, I don't know if it's the game we're playing. You know?

**AUSTIN:** Yeah - I'm writing it down. I'll find a way to use it.

**JANINE:** I mean - she's gonna wear lace. She's gonna [laughing] wear a lot of lace for sure. But I mean, I guess there's something you know, there's something to be said for, like weaving and things like that. But again, I don't know that that's what we're doing right now. But I wanted someone that was just like, creepy, but like, hot in a threatening way. And like, dangerous in an attractive way. You know, both sides of that. Yeah.

**AUSTIN:** Yeah. And so where you got to eventually was, is someone who is not tied to a specific body?

**JANINE:** Exactly. Well -

**AUSTIN:** Well, I mean actually is moment to moment,

**JANINE:** Is contractually tied to a specific body for the period under which the contract defines barring any changes in said contract.

**AUSTIN:** Right. So,

**JANINE:** It's a thing that we will do it but, you know, in a lot of the like, stuff that we - the ways we've we've talked about this, we framed it as like, we would recognize this as like, oh, a spiritual possession or, or a demonic possession or something. But it is very cooperative. It's not coercive, or it's not like, it's not like one personality has completely erased the other or supplanted the other.

**AUSTIN:** There's like a symbiotic relationship here? Between these two things?

**JANINE:** Between technically, yeah, technically, the character I'm playing is the is the spirit or the demon or the, if you want to be really harsh, I guess you could call them a parasite, like that kind of thing?

**AUSTIN:** Yeah.

**JANINE:** But they are, you know, in a Host body, and the Host is still around, they still have input. But the motivation is mainly like the psychological motivation behind it is this idea of like, someone who had the thought, like "I bet someone could have could do more with my life that I'm doing with my life."

**AUSTIN:** Is that the general perspective, we can just say the name of the thing is, is your calling them the Heritrix, which I really like. Is this, is the thing you just said the like, "someone else could do better with my life" - Is that a particular relationship that your Heritrix has with their current Host? Or is that a common? Is that a general universal thing among the Hosts of Heritrix? Or is it a common one? Or is it a specific one to your character?

**JANINE:** I think it's a common one, um, you know, we've we've sort of, we'll get to it because we've, you know, we've gone through, we got a list of questions and stuff that we've talked about. There are circumstances where I could imagine people who are in favor of these kinds of relationships with these kinds of beings, being like, well, this is a thing that you can do, kind of like the equivalent of going to college, almost? Like you have a short contract, you have a very short contract, but it's a very, like a very strong learning experience that will shape you into an adult, and you'll get some new skills and whatever. Like, I imagine, for some people, it's like that,

and for other people, it's just like, I'm really bored. I don't know what I'm doing. I'm really frustrated with my life, I just like, I need something to change. And then it's like, Well, hi, you know?

**AUSTIN:** Right, right.

**JANINE:** Or even someone who, who, you know, I kind of also like the idea of older people who are, who, you know, instead of retiring, basically? Like, instead of, instead of, instead of having the nice home, the nice little house that they've saved up their entire life for - I mean, it wouldn't be that nice in this situation, necessarily.

**AUSTIN:** No, but still -

**JANINE:** But, you know, people are still gonna want to have a little house that they just retire to or something, but instead of that, you know, having this like, sort of second - this like this, like, second adventurous period of their life or the you know, going out with a bang, like -

**AUSTIN:** It almost feels like, safer if you can't, they might not be able to afford a safe place to be right? And they're not ready to, you know, retreat all the way back to the furthest place away from the Heart or whatever.

**JANINE:** Yeah.

**AUSTIN:** And they have family here, they still want to see, you know, whatever it is.

**JANINE:** Yeah, and Heritrixes have skills. Like they are, they have skills and abilities are certainly a trade off. It's not always you know, I think an important thing for me here is to emphasize that they are as much an individual as the Hosts are. So they have their own agendas and stuff. The one that I want to play is very benevolent, but -

**AUSTIN:** But there are situations where it is about the Heritrix wanting, wanting the contract in their favor in some way?

**[Time Stamp 10:00]**

**JANINE:** Yeah, I mean, yeah, I don't think - I think it'd be pretty uncommon for it to be charitable. You know? Like, I think at the end of the day, these are beings that don't have bodies and would like to have a body, because it's a different way to experience the world and stuff. Like it's it gives you access to things that you can't necessarily access if you have absolutely zero physical incarnation, which is -

**AUSTIN:** Which is what your body, which is the way you experience the world when not tied to a Host?

**JANINE:** Yeah. I don't think they're even like a mode. They're not even a mode of light. It's just like, right? They are essentially nothing.

**AUSTIN:** Can they perceive and move? Or are they just void?

**JANINE:** Yes - they can perceive and move, but it's like, it's kind of like being in a room full of air and being like, well, this section of air is named this.

**AUSTIN:** There's very little sense - sensory, like, sense data is very limited. And not, it's not like invested with with feel? If that makes sense? Like gray in the way we talk about things being gray, or do you know what I mean? Because one of the things that's interesting to me is like if they are a bodyless, or you know, immaterial being who can still see things and like, Okay, do they have a place where they like to be because they can see things, even if they're not with a Host at that point? Because vision is still one sensory mechanism that still functions as if they had a body. Do you know what I mean?

**JANINE:** Yeah. I mean, I think it's, I think it's, I think they still perceive things, but it's perception in a different way. Like, I don't know -

**JANINE:** [overlapping] right? So even if there's -

**JANINE:** [overlapping] necessarily a great way to even explain it. Like if they can't, like push a rock, but they're probably aware that like, there's a rock and it's hard, is it shiny? Is it like, you know? They could probably still still have information about it, you know?

**AUSTIN:** So, to kind of start digging into the questions a little bit, because they kind of jumped from this pretty easily, which is like, how rare is a Heritrix? How are these are people all around this world that we have, both inside and outside of like, the kind of Heart zone aware of Heritrixes? Is, or are they primarily a thing here, you know, close to where the weirdness is?

**JANINE:** So I think there are like certain points where they're more common. I mean, I refer to them as like spawning points, which is gross. I don't really love that phrasing for it. But also, I can't think of anything better. And a metaphor that I used is like, you know, when a bunch of baby spiders are born, there's certain kinds of spiders where the baby spiders will like, make little sails out of the silk and then catch the wind and spread out. The more palatable version of that is dandelions, it's like a dandelion, the seeds getting blown, right? So I imagined there are certain points, and I don't, I don't even want to say it's like, oh, it's in the weird areas where the these are more common. I don't think that's true. I think it's just there are points in the world, full stop in the way that like, there are points in the world where there are a lot of Panthers.

**AUSTIN:** Right, right right.

**JANINE:** [laughing] Like, it's just that is just where they are. And I think what happens is that they, you know, maybe take on a Host or too near there, when they're like young, and then, you

know, their life is a process of scattering and going further and further away from that origin point. And like, maybe coming back? And maybe going to other important sites for them. But in general, like, you know, so the, how common they are probably depends on where you are. If you are from an area where they're quite common, or where you know, near one of those those points of origin? Then you probably know what they are, you probably have feelings about them positive or negative, like you've probably encountered them or, like at the absolute least heard about them,

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** And then the further you get away from that, the more you get into the things of like, Oh, well, those are demons.

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** That person is possessed by a demon, clearly.

**AUSTIN:** And so and so I think an important thing to note there then it's like, they're not so common as to feel like going into a fantasy town and seeing a dwarf. Or like, Oh, yeah, of course, there's a dwarf here and that dwarf is doing this are like a family of dwarves, or you know what I mean? They're less common among, in the world of Heart, right, where they're like, here are the four predominant cultures. They're the humans, the Gnolls, the Dark Elves and the High Elves. This would not be a fifth one of those, they're much rarer than that.

**JANINE:** No - This is a lot more like the way that, you know in a lot of In a lot of like Scandinavian countries, there's like a really strong belief in like elves? And people will tell you with a completely straight face like, yeah, we have an elf our yard, he lives by the rock, like -

**AUSTIN:** Right, right, right. Yeah.

**JANINE:** And you're and you're like, I don't know, are you fucking with me? Or? Like, it's hard to know? Because there are people who do take that very seriously. And to them, you know, they believe it, it's part of what they've grown up with knowing like, it's just part of their family lore, and like, that is, that is just a fact. And then if you don't live in that area, if you're not raised with that, it is just this kind of confusing thing of just like, okay, like, is this is this real? Like, you're not really sure. I think that's kind of what I want to encapsulate there. So it's like, behind the curtain, like, yes, this is the whole society.

**AUSTIN:** Yeah. Right. So that's the other half of that -

**JANINE:** This is a whole culture of people,

**AUSTIN:** Right, right - they have family units.

**JANINE:** But they're invisible, functionally, and when they appear, they appear as other cultures, as other people. So it's very easy to not see them.

**AUSTIN:** Right. So you say, they are a culture, they are people, they are they have like, there there are - and we get to this at some point through the witch stuff - but like there are towns, or, or temples or whatever they are, that are like, hey, a lot of Heritrixes are here? This is where Heritrixes like make their home. In some cases, not always.

**JANINE:** Yeah, there are places where Heritrix go. There are I think groups of Heritrixes is that have slightly different beliefs from you know, the larger group and like act accordingly. Again, this is a big part of like, a thing I come back to a lot is that I want to emphasize that there is definitely like a general trend of how, of how Heritrixes behave and what they believe and stuff? But also none of that is necessarily set in stone. Like there are absolutely Heritrixes who set up deceptive contracts and take advantage of people. There are absolutely here to you know, break in their belief-

**AUSTIN:** I appreciate that? I appreciate that place to play with. Right, yeah, but yeah, it's super important for me to have that, like, wiggle room to have the Heritrix who does the thing you prefer Heritrixes not to do. You know what I mean? Also, just before we move on here, you do note that pronouns that Heritrix is generally used they/them when when they are on attached, right?

**JANINE:** Yeah. So what I noted here, because there's a thing that I realized, like this is going to come up, especially because I'm using Heritrix? which is the, which is feminine. Yeah, it's a gendered version of heritor. And normally for - Normally, if you're doing something that doesn't have a gender, you would go with the male version with the you know? And call that the neutral one. And that's silly. And also Heritrix is a better word. But that's saying, like, if I'm going to say these are all Heritrixes the next question that follows as well. Are they all she/her? They all identify as feminine? And the answer to that, I don't think you know, I think the answer there is no, I've said like, again, in the case of individuals, like they're absolutely going people be people who prefer to pick feminine Hosts? And I could absolutely imagine them preferring she/her pronouns. I mean, maybe that's part of it. Yeah, maybe that's part of the thing where someone's like, "I have always wanted to to live my life as a different gender." But I just I don't know how to start. I don't know what to do. Like, sure. That is absolutely a contract that could happen.

**AUSTIN:** Very basic material question is, like: let's say I signed a contract with a Heritrix. Is there a tell to someone looking at me that now I have, I have a Heritrix in me? You know, I am I Heritrix at this point, my body and the Heritrix in it?

**JANINE:** I think it would depend, like the most obvious thing would be that the personality of that person is probably going to change at least to a degree or like, you know, even even simple things like-

**AUSTIN:** Fashion?

**JANINE:** -the way they- yeah, the way they dress the way they put their hair, the way they you know, do their makeup or, or like any number of things, how they take their tea, like little things like that could absolutely change. There are other things that like are going to depend on the arrangement, like if a Heritrix and a Host are like not in a healthy contract. Like if there's something bad going on there. The Host can withhold information that the Heritrix would need to operate in a way that you know, like they could, they could just choose to be like no, I'm not going to let you know what that person's name is. They're saying they're saying "hey, Sarah," and you're going to say "and you are?" because you don't know I'm not telling you like so probably it probably depends on stuff like that. Also like you know, Some things like practical skills could change, like Heritrixes have their own knowledge that they bring with them. And, you know, another thing I mentioned is that, like, I don't want to do anything that's like, "and then their eyes turn gold." But if a Heritrix has been with a Host, I think it would be neat to have some sort of change there? I consider like maybe a sort of rocky or scaly patch that forms along areas, like the lower back, or like maybe the wrists or something like,

**[Time Stamp 20:00]**

**AUSTIN:** Yeah,

**JANINE:** Something like that, where you could really, really tell an ancient contract basically, is the point there, right? like someone who has, because the witch has some, like, rules in terms of like aging, mortality and stuff that are kind of interesting.

**AUSTIN:** Yeah, definitely. Which also, I guess, we should note, I guess the witch is the way we're representing Heritrixes right. Yeah, more broadly. So like, there are there, of course, other magic users in the world. And we'll talk to other players who are playing some of them. But but the witch class in Heart is how we are like, mechanizing, what a Heritrix is, and so we can kind of gain some stuff from that.

**JANINE:** But also, you know, as I guess another thing I noted in the questions of like, not all Heritrixes are going to present in the same way in terms of

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** You know, if you, if your Host is a famous swordsman or something,

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** You're gonna probably still take advantage of those skills. But you will also like, have some weird shit that may be doing -

**AUSTIN:** That you can add to that. Yeah, totally. I mean, you know, it's not, it is not too hard in this system for you to decide "I want to take the kill, move and then go get a sword." You know



what I mean? That's not, that's not how, you know, the game just isn't built to where that would be like a problem. You know? We kind of already touched on this, but like, and maybe we don't even need to linger here. But you know, one of the questions I asked was, what sort of responses do people have to encountering beings like you? And I think basically what you said moments ago, which was, "it depends on how much they know about us" makes a lot of sense. And like, the range being from like, being a culture that is actually right up next to Heritrixes that has like, completely, kind of internalized writing contracts, building contracts, moving - maybe even having multiple Heritrixes in your life. Like, that's just a common thing. To the far end to being like, "oh, my god, there's some sort of demon in her" you know, [JANINE laughs] is that whole range is makes sense to me. If there's anything else there that I'm forgetting, but like,

**JANINE:** I mean, the example I gave and this is maybe this is maybe good for illustrating like, people who are, who are used to Heritrixes as a mundane thing I gave an example of like, if your butcher one day their personality completely changes. And you had a really good rapport with your butcher. And now they're just like, functionally a different person, even though they like, they still know you, you kind of don't know them anymore, right?

**AUSTIN:** They still say hi, right?

**JANINE:** They still know your order. But it's like, they're, you know, just like, they're both the same person, and a completely different person. And that could be incredibly frustrating.

**AUSTIN:** Or good! Maybe you had a shitty mean butcher.

**JANINE:** Or good! Like, maybe you hated that butcher. And now that the butcher is cool as hell. Who knows? It could go either way.

**AUSTIN:** How does someone go about being possessed? We've talked about these contracts a lot, but like, what is the process of- what is the process from either angle, either the individual, the Host, or the Heritrix, getting into contact and then building a contract and all that?

**JANINE:** I think it is probably pretty difficult for a Host to actively pursue and invite a Heritrix unless they are somewhere where they're very, like concentrated?

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** Because then it's just I think it's just an issue of the odds of one seeing you are much higher. In general, I think, I think the case is that a Heritrix, who doesn't have a Host will kind of just float around unmoored, kind of hanging out, hanging around population centers and things like that, trying to find people who meet criteria for like something they'd like to be, or do, or see, or you know? Things like that, where they can then watch that person and see like, does this person seem like there's something that they want that I could provide?

**AUSTIN:** Sure.

**JANINE:** And if there is then I'm not really sure of the mechanics of this? Because my you know, my first blush reaction is like, in the dark, they look in a mirror and it's the reflection is weird or something?

**AUSTIN:** Sure.

**JANINE:** But that's pretty trite. But also - Yeah

**AUSTIN:** [overlapping] But that could be one way it happens? Maybe there is not a universal. Like, I'm sure there are books out there that say "the way you do it is this," but that's one way it's happened. And that doesn't have to be the one true way, you know?

**JANINE:** It would just have to be like, some sort of situation where they can, you know, have isolated attention, like, like have, there'd have to be like a bit of privacy, I think? It would also have to be, I do think low light is important, because I like the idea of playing with like the way your mind fills things in and is always searching for faces in nothingness and things like that?

**AUSTIN:** Right, right.

**JANINE:** I think that stuff would would help. But in general, I think it's a lot of just like being in the right place at the right time.

**AUSTIN:** Mhmm. We've already talked about this, too, but, but it sounds like in terms of agency, that there is a degree to which there's flexibility, depending on the pairing between Hosts and Heritrix, the age and competence of each member and the like the, you know, the kind of qualities of the contract even, as to how much agency the person in the original inhabitant, how the original body retains that agency?

**JANINE:** Yeah, like -

**AUSTIN:** But by and large, these are cooperative relationships?

**JANINE:** Yeah, it's, I think, I think a good way to think about it is that once a contract is made in the in the sort of, like, idealized situation, and the situation that I want to represent, with my character in particular, it's basically like you switch drivers. Like the the Host personality is in the passenger seat, the Heritrix is in the driver's seat, they kind of are making the big calls. But you know, the, the Host can still like, be the one who's working the GPS, or fucking with the radio, or like, you know, there's, they're still, they're still there to have those conversations, and to be a party to it, and to advise and things like that. In that ideal situation, but also the Heritrix is the one who is actually making the calls and who's actually being like, "Well, look, you wanted your life to be like x. And I think the way to do that is to do this. You have entrusted me with this responsibility." So, you know, they kind of are, are in charge? But it's not, you know, completely a complete, it's not a complete domination. In that situation.

**AUSTIN:** Totally. You know, I think, I think that specific framing, and discussion really does bring us to this, like, you know, underlying all this, my question is like, Okay, what are we exploring here? What are our touchstones? What are the big ideas? Because I think you lay out what we just talked about, and it does start to sound we talk about driver's seat, stuff like that, it does, to some degree start to sound like a conversation about Plurality or Dissociative Identity Disorder. And and, you know, I just think that's something we should at least touch on here with a note that we are scheduled to do a consultation with, with a plural person in the near future, to kind of get some additional perspective. And I'm curious if that's, if that's an intentional touchstone or like how to talk about this stuff, in a way that is sensitive to the fact that one read will be that but also more generally, like, thematically speaking, what is it that excites you about this premise? How do you get to this premise, because we know that like, ideas don't just come from nothing? Like there's some sort of something that's interesting about this premise. I'm curious about hearing that from your perspective, so that we can frame it in that in that way as best we can.

**JANINE:** Yeah, I mean, especially this is the thing I do, right? Like all of my main season characters are me asking myself a question about something I'm doing or something I think about myself or like, you know, Adaire or comes from me not being sure I know how to maintain friendships, like me just being like, "Do I just do I just see these as transactional? Like, what does it mean, to care about a person versus just wanting them to be there for you?" You know, Signet was the sort of the other side of that, which is just like, "okay, you care about people. What are the limits of caring? Like how far can you extend caring? When does caring come at the expense of yourself?" Like, what does it mean to care maybe too much or to just not - you know, like, what's, what's the other limit of it? A lot of complicated Signet feelings.

**[Time Stamp 30:00]**

**JANINE:** Thisbe was a lot of like, you know, "what does it mean to tie your value up in how much you do? And like how successful you are at what you do? And, you know, if you are fine tuned in your lifestyle and your skills to do this one thing, what does that mean for you as an individual?" Like, how can you How can you reconcile a thing that does legitimately make you feel good with the fact that it's maybe not healthy, or maybe doesn't actually help you as much as it helps other people? And you know, things like that. So for me, this character is a lot of just like, you know, I, I think my life really turned around a few years ago, when I started just forcing myself to pretend I was confident about things? There were like, some big, some big, big things that I did. That scared the shit out of me to the point of just being like, crying and freaking out, but just kind of doing it, just kind of doing it because the idea of not doing it was scarier than the idea of doing it. And just often having to put on this completely false front of someone who, who not only is totally fine doing these things, but has always been totally fine and has no doubts whatsoever. Don't worry about it like this, I you know, that idea of like, just being a different person, and then things feel like they're kind of working out better? And you're like, what if I was always this person, but then you still kind of don't feel like that person. You still feel like it's fake. And like, it takes extra energy to like, do it. And there's a lot of really complicated feelings around that. And the feeling of like, "I bet someone else could have done better with the things I

have" is a real feeling that I've had and have often. So for me, it's wanting to explore that of just like, well, what if? What if someone else has, you know, like, where does that go?

**AUSTIN:** Right, and you're interested in playing out that from the perspective of the older, more competent Heritrix? and not the - you're not playing both of these characters? As far as I know. Or are you?

**JANINE:** [overlapping] No, I think

**AUSTIN:** [overlapping] Do you want to be able to voice the Host also?

**JANINE:** I think, sometimes it will come up, but I think I imagine it will come up in the same way that sometimes Belgard came up early on, in Twilight Mirage. Where like, I think there are occasions where that voice is gonna be relevant. But for the most part, this is about just like, this is about confidence and, like transformation. And also just kind of that feeling of like, "who is in charge," like that feeling of- It's hard to put a pin on it, because it is just like this idea that I Haven't worked through yet.

**AUSTIN:** Well, there's definitely, again, this is, this is it doesn't have to be complete, right? We don't need to zero and 100% I think I have a pretty good idea. I do think that we should be, we need to be really careful on the Dissociative Identity Thing.

**JANINE:** Yeah. I think also, if we were, you know, if we were a different game, like if this was a different group of people, a thing I would be worried about is like, I don't want people calling this character crazy or anything like that.

**AUSTIN:** Right, right, right.

**JANINE:** That's not a thing that we do.

**AUSTIN:** No, no totally.

**JANINE:** So it's a thing that I Haven't made explicit in terms of like, in terms of x cards, or, you know, topics I want to steer clear of, because it's not a thing I'm worried about coming up. But I think I think in a lot of games, or a lot of different groups, that could be a concern with a character like this, and I very much don't want her to feel that way.

**AUSTIN:** Sure. Is there. Do you want there to be the space for people who do think that this is like an unholy relationship? Or should the folks that we are hitting on screen be knowledgeable enough to know what this is? You know what I mean? Like because there are ways in which one one space that like, I don't know, if I should step into is that like, this is an illicit relationship. I don't care that you sign a contract, you're a spirit, who's inhabiting a body that isn't yours, you manipulated this person to get in there and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And like, is that a space

that we that you are interested in? In terms of antagonists? You know, what I mean? Like those are, those are questions for me because I need to know what the space is. I'm sketching out.

**JANINE:** Yeah - I think you're, you know, there's definitely a risk there because, like, especially historically and you know, considering that the setting is kind of playing on some historical stuff, like -

**AUSTIN:** Totally, totally.

**JANINE:** There's definitely association and association between, you know, religious people saying, oh, that person has a demon in them. And then people who are just in any way slightly, you know, neurodivergent, or, you know, different.

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** So that's the thing that I think, is worth being extremely careful about? If not avoiding altogether, but at the same time, like, we have the benefit of -

**AUSTIN:** You already said, there are places where there are people who just straight up don't understand this. So we know that that's part of the, the the quilt at the very least, of experiences, even if we don't spotlight it.

**JANINE:** But also, you know, we're not dealing because of like, the nature of how this game is set up. We're not seeing this character at the start of that contract. We're not seeing the people in this character's life noticing a change or anything like that, like the people that this character encounters? A lot of them probably would never know, like, this is this could just be this person to them, you know?

**AUSTIN:** Right. Sure.

**JANINE:** Which I think gives us some room. Yeah.

**AUSTIN:** Moving on a little bit, you know, one of the one of the things we already talked about is that, in fact, we can probably skip this question entirely. Because this is the one that's that's just like, hey, witches are Heritrixes for us. And this is the bit where you're saying like, hey, if someone is great with a two handed hammer, then they'll probably continue to use that muscle memory, and stuff. So we can kind of move past that to this next thing, which we've talked about a little bit. But in Heart, there is a place in the book called Hallow. Which quote is a ramshackle town built within a burned out cathedral, which is like the witch HQ. And I'm curious what the like kind of headquarters or the biggest community maybe? Is, the best way to talk about it? Of Heritrixes is for us, since we're not just going to lift Hallow directly.

**JANINE:** Yeah, um, so I've described this as like, kind of ancient Greek or Roman ruins, that are covered in black oil. And it's black oil that has this sort of sense of cooperation where, like, if

you're doing everything okay, you're not gonna have the troubles that you would have if you were walking through a place covered in black oil.

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** But if you are, you know, if something is amiss, like if someone doesn't want you there, or you're, you know, doing something bad, whatever that could mean, then would become a problem. In effect, like, from a distance, it would look sort of, like classical ruins, but like obsidian, like, very dark and glossy and geometric. And I don't think that this is their point of origin, it's also worth saying, like, I think I really do prefer the idea of them just like, being from a bunch of random places. And this being a place that people can, that they come to, especially when they have a Host. That they, you know, it's sort of a trip that people make, at varying levels of like, you know, I, again, they're individuals, for some of them, it's really important to come there as often as possible or live there, even. For others, it's probably just like a thing you want to do once with each Host, because it's kind of a community thing? I think there should be a thing there that lets Hosts communicate without using the Heritrix as a, as a go between, like, as a-

**AUSTIN:** Oh, interesting.

**JANINE:** - a liaison, like, I would like it to be a thing where you could have two, you know, people you know, sitting in a room or whatever, and the Host can just have a conversation that the Heritrixes are not, you know, they don't have to like voice every syllable. Like that.

**AUSTIN:** Sorry, you're saying the Hosts are having conversations? Or the Heritrixes are having a -

**JANINE:** The Hosts. That's Yeah, that's I feel like a really important feature of this place for me is the idea that it is a sort of post-natal community? Like it's not a hometown, it's specifically like, people have Hosts at this point. They've lived their lives a little bit like they're coming here. And they're finding a new community. They're finding a sort of broader community.

**AUSTIN:** Okay.

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** And I don't think that the Hosts should be excluded from that? Like, I think it should be ideally a supportive place for them as well because they're also like, they are also isolated in the world like they are also rare people who are sharing their bodies like this. So it's important to me that there be something there for that, you know, acknowledges them and gives them that sense of community as well.

**[Time Stamp 40:00]**

**AUSTIN:** Is that a moment where the Heritrixes like, not bonded anymore? Or are they just kind of in like a rest mode? Like, what's the - while while Hosts are talking among themselves, so to speak?

**JANINE:** I think it's maybe not even like physical talking. It's just it is just like the Hosts are able to communicate in a way that is beyond you know, the the physical sort of state of things.

**AUSTIN:** Mhmm. That makes sense. You said, So, this is like a once in a lifetime, not once in a lifetime, once in a Host's contract thing for most for most Heritrixes then?

**JANINE:** I think it depends like it. It depends.

**AUSTIN:** You said, at least once

**JANINE:** Yeah, like, if it's on your way somewhere else, and you're probably gonna stop in?

**AUSTIN:** Sure, why not.

**JANINE:** You know, for some people, you know, it's like, it's like Disney, right? Like, some people go there multiple times a year, some people go there once in their life, like, it just depends on a lot of different factors like proximity, and access, and interest. And, you know, all of those things.

**AUSTIN:** Totally. One of the things that shows up, both actually, like, all the way through a lot of the moves, but it also kind of pops up here and there, in some landmark descriptions and stuff, is this idea that, at least in some cases, being a witch, in our case, being a Heritrix, but being a witch in the book, is tied to bloodline. I think the old blood moves specifically says like, "oh, you're from an old line of witches, or something like that. And so one of the things I asked you was, is this, like, a - can you inherit a Heritrix? Are you born with it? Is it in your blood, blah, blah, blah, blah? And I mean, your answer is pretty much like we're not like that. Right?

**JANINE:** Yeah, I think, I think it's an interesting thing to explore in terms of like, in the same way there would be there would be people around those points of origin, who know, you know, most people would would know, about Heritrix, Heritrix would pass down stories, there would probably be families who consider like, who consider having a contract with a Heritrix at a certain age to be desirable, because it, you know, gives you access to knowledge or, or is character building or, you know, I can imagine, like, prominent families who who make it a point to try and like - in the same way that prominent families want to get their kids accepted to a prestigious school would like, try to court a Heritrix to for their, you know, for their kid at a certain age to, to cement that. And, like in the sort of, by extension, maybe there are some families that have a Heritrix that's like, just bound to that family like not bound, but who just prefers to stay with their family, and just kind of goes for, you know -

**AUSTIN:** Could you do that sort of contract? I could I could I could I write a contract with a Heritrix that said, and you'll stay with me for 10 generations?

**JANINE:** No. Well, I mean -

**AUSTIN:** What if they agreed to it? Would they be beholden by that?

**JANINE:** If they - an individual could agree to whatever the fuck they want.

**AUSTIN:** Yeah, but I mean, is there I guess, I've been reading these contracts as being magical and self enforced. Do you know what I mean? Is that not the case? Are they, is the contract a representation of agreed upon rules? And not - Is there no element of that contract that is actually binding?

**JANINE:** I don't think so. I think it is like because I think it's important that a contract be renegotiable is the other thing. To me, that's a big part of, that's a big part of playing this as a thing that can be consensual and positive. Is that things change, like your circumstances might change. And maybe you need to renegotiate that contract. And like, if you know, there, again, some Heritrixes are going to not be great about that. But so are some lawyers. So are some employers. like, there are situations

**AUSTIN:** Right, but the lawyer isn't in my body in that way. Where like, is there a Is there a kill switch? Is there a way out? That is - because based on reading some of the answers you've given in which there is that space for the like coercive Heritrix who likes being in the body of a king or whatever, you know, whatever the fuck it is, right? Is there no, because it seems like the Heritrix is fundamentally, mechanically speaking as the people who are who are taking Hosts taking possession, have more leverage in any sort of negotiation, in the sense that they're the ones who have to leave once they're in?

**JANINE:** Yeah.

**AUSTIN:** There's no way to just push them out, as far as we've talked about, right?

**JANINE:** So I imagine like, there have to be ways to separate a Host and a Heritrix.

**AUSTIN:** Sure.

**JANINE:** And I think-

**AUSTIN:** Probably all the best Witch Hunters know it.

**JANINE:** Yes. And I think part of what makes the, that sort of the the witch city place, makes sense to me is if, you know, part of that, like bringing your Host there at least once is like you're registering the terms of that contract. Like, you're making it known that you're with this person,



because that comes with accountability in terms of your, how your community sees you. If you, if you have this relationship with this person, and you fuck it up, like you do something that's not okay. There are people who have who have an awareness of what's going on. It's not just all happening in obscurity, and you know, so there is room there for other Heritrixes to like, maybe there are a group of Heritrixes who, who, yeah, who are sort of like advocates who step in and get involved if shits going bad?

**AUSTIN:** Sure.

**JANINE:** Likewise, I'm sure there are humans who, who, who, you know, want to step in and get involved if stuff is going bad. This is also why it's important to have that space where the Host can talk without the Heritrix mediating.

**AUSTIN:** Right? Well, that's like kind of how I that's part of how I got there, was thinking about like, Oh, well, where is the line between? Where's the where the ways in which the Host has agency still? That is not, that is not like agency, that's always been given to them? Do you know what I mean? Where it's not about like, "Oh, yes, the Heritrix has decided to give you this today."

**JANINE:** Yeah.

**AUSTIN:** But yeah, all that makes sense to me. You have this other note here, which I love, which is like, I guess we touched on this a little bit. But like, the idea that, I guess we already talked about it a little bit, the idea that like you would build a relationship over generations with a Heritrix, that would then want to stay with a family could be a particularly strong boon for that family, you could have the like, you know, the the family that has maintained political power in town for generation after generation, a big part of that is the, not institutional knowledge, but generational knowledge, that's added to by having a Heritrix that moves from generation to generation or whatever, right. The next one is very mechanical, but also very aesthetic, which is that a lot of the moves in this book, speaking of bloodlines, are about blood and harming people with blood or using blood in your own spells. And I very much was like, I know that blood is a point of, of a sensitive, sensitive subject, for some listeners, it's not like a super good subject for me? I'm okay talking about it. But I'm not like, I'm not like, impervious to blood talk. So one of things I wanted to talk about or talk about was like, how do we how do we keep those moves, where, you know, we're keeping the important like, mechanical part of them, which tends to be like, you do D6 whatever, you know, without it being you do D6 whatever, by using blood in a gross way. And you have a really good idea for this that I absolutely love.

**JANINE:** So I - the thing that I want to do is basically instead of blood I want to you know, one of the things that I'm really doing with this with the witch class in general, and a lot of the background stuff is playing with the idea of like, physicality or the material and the immaterial, and like material things becoming immaterial and immaterial things becoming material. So a thing I think is really interesting, especially given the relationship of, of, you know, the relationship and the abilities of like, what a Heritrix is, what a Heritrix does, is if a lot of these abilities that reference blood, if we sort of turn them to reference this sort of materialization of

the concept of like a consciousness. So if we turn the con- if we turn the idea of consciousness into physical viscera in the way that blood is. So my sort of reference for this is molten glass? But it's not hot. It's just that that like thick and heavy and stretchy, and there's like a fluid-like quality but it's also it's also like hard, right? Like it also hardens really quickly. It pulls into strange shapes, but also retain Like ridges and shit, like it's a very bizarre thing. So it should be something you know, replacing something like blood, it still needs to be unpleasant. It still needs to have that like, weird, sort of bodily element. But I think something like this isn't as gory it's, it should be a pretty good substitute.

**AUSTIN:** One of those things where it's like you're getting away from not only from particular organs and and, you know, parts of the body and stuff but like, you could just be pulling- your move that's about it's about -

**[Time Stamp 50:00]**

**JANINE:** pulling it out of the face holes -

**AUSTIN:** Right and so it's like well, we don't have to pull this for the face hole even if we don't need to you know -

**JANINE:** Right, you could just extract like a like a Sailor Moon villain extracting something from someone kinda.

**AUSTIN:** And they can be in pain while it happens, because it is a D6 kill or whatever.

**JANINE:** I mean also, that's that's sort of like the benefit of using something like consciousness where like, if you were extracting someone's consciousness, there is an effect. There is like a tangible effect and extracting consciousness in a way we're like extracting their - I don't know like -

**AUSTIN:** [overlapping] Whatever Yeah, gross stuff - right, right -

**JANINE:** - spirit or something like there are a lot of things where it's it's harder to bridge the gap between what we are doing aesthetically and what the actual power is

**AUSTIN:** Mechanically, yeah.

**JANINE:** Yeah, yeah, so I think consciousness hits a good like, you don't want to lose all of that. That would be bad.

**AUSTIN:** To move on to other moves, you know, there's obviously a list of minor abilities major abilities, everybody gets three minors one major to start with. But also everyone starts with at least one core ability and you have two and one of them is very, like it immediately starts talking about some stuff in terms of what you can do bodily and I wanted to get in front of it and talk

about like, well, what is this for you given what we know your situation is. There's a move called true form that says "your skin skitters with barely contained force, the Heartsblood within you is wanting is waiting to remake you as a flickering hungry zoetrope horror. Whenever you suffer major Fallout, or sorry, whenever you want to, or when you suffer major Fallout," which in Heart is like, it's sort of like getting a lot of stress and then failing a check basically, basically, "you enter your True Form. Describe it, when in your true forming role with mastery on hunt and kill checks, but all other checks become risky. At the end of your current situation, you revert to your humanoid form." And so, I have so many questions about this, but like, I guess to start with, is this a thing that is true about all, this is true about all Heritrixes that they can do this move? Right?

**JANINE:** They can do this move, but what this move looks like is different

**AUSTIN:** Is what's different. Yeah, okay, sure.

**JANINE:** This, this kind of again, comes into this idea that, that I think is important of like, the making the immaterial material or making like a lot of things about perception and consciousness and whatever into things that are like observable or, you know, so I think this move should be different depending on the Heritrix in question and how they relate to being in a body specifically. Because true form is, you know, the, the Heritrix like, doesn't have a physical like, there is nothing there, right? Like you can't it's not a gas cloud, it's not a beam of light or whatever. So it doesn't really and I specifically don't want true form to be like "and this is what a Heritrix looks like" because I don't want them to look like anything. So to me, it should be how this Heritrix relates to being in a body and like what the truth of that relationship is, you know,

**AUSTIN:** Can you give me some examples so I can have a palette to play with?

**JANINE:** Yeah, so I think -

**AUSTIN:** Especially given, the thing that this does is give you a bonus it gives you a bonus die on hunt and kill, but it means risky in the system means that I get to take away your highest roll to die with when it when something is risky. So everything else you do is that much harder for you to do when your true form. So given that, like what is the sport is the possibility space. I mean, I can I can throw things on the wall, but I don't know that it's one of those things was like this is such a well defined concept on your end that I don't want to step on toes when I'm like, "and this Heritrix you know, rogue Heritrix's fingernails grow sharp and long into blades." You know what I mean? Like, is that a thing? Or is that corny? Is that not right for what you think I Heritrix does when they true form?

**JANINE:** I think - so I think the thing is like, God, there was like, there's like a game that did something really similar to this, and I can't fucking remember what it was. But there's, there's like a degree to which to me true form is like, the most bizarre Persona demons? Or like, you know, it can't just be like "the fingernails grow."

**AUSTIN:** So it's like a complete - it really is a major shift then.

**JANINE:** It's like - they should be like biblical angels, you know?

**AUSTIN:** Sure, that's a space. That's a space we're already playing with somewhere else to some degree here.

**JANINE:** Okay.

**AUSTIN:** So I don't want to triple - like, it's, it's tough because like, angels are in this game. Right? And that doesn't mean we don't have to. Because I mean, not on that once.

**JANINE:** I don't mean like, they should be biblical angels. But I mean, like, they shouldn't just be like a person with one big modifier.

**AUSTIN:** Right. Right.

**JANINE:** Should I give the example I have?

**JANINE:** Yes, please. Give me four like,

**JANINE:** I think, you know, the, the one that I have for my main character is that her true form is like if your body instead of having two eyes that are like balls in your head, if those - if your eye lids were basically like slits that revealed an inner core that your eye that like made up your eyes, like if your whole body -

**AUSTIN:** Yeah, I played Bloodborne I get it.

**JANINE:** Like if your whole body was an eye, with your skin and stuff over it, and you took all that stuff off, you would have probably like -

**AUSTIN:** [overlapping] You'd have one big eye?

**JANINE:** You'd have like a pink person shaped kind of wet thing with two dots and stuff? Like it'd be -

**AUSTIN:** So this is actually yeah, this also then leans like cosmic horror monster, where to look at it is to, like, be overwhelmed.

**JANINE:** Yeah. And this is, you know, this, my character is, I don't wanna say superficial but kind of superficial. Like, for her a big part of being in a body of like, having a Host is being seen. Is being seen and like experienced as I as like a character, as you know, like, you know, she like that's the shit that she is there for.

**AUSTIN:** And so there's this now this extension to underscoring visibility and, and in this, in this case, kind of reflecting it? Inverting it in an interesting way, right? You're just a big fucking eye under there.

**JANINE:** Yeah. Because I mean, that's her relationship with with bodies is, "look at me." So here's this body, what does this body ultimately boil down to for me? It's like -

**AUSTIN:** [overlapping] It's interesting. It's interesting that you've chosen the perceptive organ and not, you're not a perfect column on a pedestal. You know what I mean? You're not, you Haven't turned yourself into an artwork because of yourself into

**JANINE:** [overlapping] Because it's still about being a body. Right? It's still should be

**AUSTIN:** [overlapping] No, yeah, totally, totally, you know, in that sense, not just psychoanalyze this character. But I think that it's fascinating that for someone whose things they say is they want to be observed, but what they turn into is, is something that observes is an interesting and I just think that this characters therapists would have a field day with it.

**JANINE:** I think it's an acknowledgement, right, that it's not really her body. It's not really you know, it's to me that's that's how it feels where it's like, it's not just your relationship to the Host you're in but, to bodies in general.

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** It's a little bit broader than that, because it I don't think it should ever be like inanimate objects or things like that. It should just be like, what does it mean to be in a body?

**AUSTIN:** So it should mean organic so it's like, this is not a you've become a crumbling, like castle being or something, right? It remains that thing of like, some part of the body or some bodily thing? Presumably this could be - someone could definitely become a big weird worm creature.

**JANINE:** Yeah - I mean, I think I think it has to be a living thing. Like that's for me. That's right -

**AUSTIN:** [overlapping] instead of crumbling castle, it should be like a corpse or something like a mummy or something along that vein, because it's it is very much about like, being in a body and they -

**JANINE:** [overlapping] A human thing -

**AUSTIN:** And can they gain and lose amounts of - oh yes, they can because you just became a big eye. So it could totally be like, a big creature that's one that's, you know, walking around on countless hands. Instead of having legs. Not like a spider but -

**JANINE:** Yeah, although I should be clear like, I should be clear she's not becoming a big eye. She's becoming a person made of eye. Made of one eye.

**AUSTIN:** Okay that's a big eye.

**[Time Stamp 1:00:00]**

**JANINE:** Like a person-shaped silhouette but made of eye.

**AUSTIN:** That's still a big eye.

**JANINE:** Yeah, but she's not like changing size necessarily.

**AUSTIN:** How is this helping her get mastery over hunt and kill checks?

**JANINE:** If that thing was coming after you? How would you feel?

**AUSTIN:** I'd feel bad, but that doesn't mean that you're getting mastery on kill checks.

**JANINE:** I think you would.

**AUSTIN:** I could just poke you and you'll go "ow."

**JANINE:** I don't think that - you're still magic.

**AUSTIN:** What's the thing you do? What's the thing you do to hunt or kill? I mean, hunt makes sense, because you're tracking things that makes perfect sense to me. How are you killing as a big eye?

**JANINE:** [overlapping] I mean, if you want the light if you want them like ability thing, I think it's I think the fact that you have turned this body into an eye implies that you were doing some magic shit, like your power is your power levels are increasing, Goku.

**AUSTIN:** Okay but you roll to kill. What does it look like? Are you swinging a sword still? Or are you? Is there like?

**JANINE:** No.

**AUSTIN:** [overlapping] When my big hand monster - hands are easy, but you know what I'm saying.

**JANINE:** [overlapping] I think like, as much as the form is bound to being of a body. I think there is still that degree of like, this is almost a halfway point between the bodied and the unbodied part of of what's going on with this person. So it's like, I could imagine them maybe they walk but

they don't have to? Like maybe they sure it's it's it is kind of just like overflowing power that kind of fucks up what people are seeing of you and and a lot of that's it's kind of -

**AUSTIN:** Doing like energy shit, then when you're like touching people or whatever. People are just like, fainting from the power and presence or whatever. I guess it's the thing, right? It doesn't actually give you a weapon, unlike that other move that you have. You're just better at it. Yeah. So -

**JANINE:** Exactly. That's the other thing is like, there is another move that is about form changing. And the creation of this move is very much informed by leaving some room for what that should be.

**AUSTIN:** Right? That's the final see visibility, right? Yeah, which we'll see. If you take one day, we're going to get one of those. So, you know, I'm okay, so let's move on a little bit, at least. You've got a move called divinity that you could take that says "you were inducted into a coven, who believed that witches are blessed by the gods, you recognize a second Heartbeat, unknowable and sacred inside of you." You Haven't taken that move yet? Obviously, no one has character sheets or anything yet. We Haven't done any of that stuff. But I'm curious what if that sect does exist, what they're like? And more importantly, I think more broadly, like, what is your relationship? Or what are Heritrixes relationships to the various gods of our world, which which do exist, you know, in some way. We can talk about that if you're curious, or if you want, if you need more information, or whatever, but like, the long and short is there's a whole bunch of them, there's more of them than there are than there ever were in something like Hieron, you know, it's almost more like the way we think about something. Like it's not exactly like the Divine Principality or something like that, where there's a billion Divines, and they're all like state Divines. Because obviously this is a world where some people don't believe in the other person's God or think that the other person's God is a demon or a devil or a betrayer or a liar, deceiver, you know? Or where people just don't care about what other people believe because they're off believing in this god of, of ash, you know, and I'm over here believing in the Frog God of wealth, and so that's kind of all I have time to deal with right now. Sorry, to your Crow God, you know?

**JANINE:** So I think Heritrixes you know, a lot of it, I think, again, individuals maybe there is an individual who's really jazzed about the Frog God of Wealth. But by and large, I think what they believe is more in a concept. I think they believe in the concept of you know, this the I've called it here the "Drone of Life," but it's like a persistent, the sort of persistence of life. The droning. Like I got this idea from like reading an essay about hurdy-gurdies. Because in sort of ancient music, there was this reverence for the idea of a droning thing and you get it with a hurdy gurdy, but you also get it like in ancient like flutes, you get those like Greek, I think it was Greek? The two, there'd be like two flutes? It's like a two pronged flute, and the one side would be making a droning sound and the other side is the kind that you're playing a little more. And there were there were these people - They were there were like, I forget who it was, but there was a there was someone who wrote about how, like, the thing that made music sublime was the droning part of it, and that when the drone stopped, that was the offense- that was like offensive.

**AUSTIN:** Right?

**JANINE:** So I really liked this idea. And I thought this would be a really good kind of underpinning for the belief system of these beings that kind of don't have mortality in the same way that most people do. And move from body to body and have on their own like this sort of bodiless, in-between existence. So this idea that they worship the continuous drone that is life and life yeah, so I think for this for, this coven, what's interesting to me is if they take that sort of to the next level, where they believe that it is their responsibility in particular, or they have like a particular aptitude for maintaining that drone.

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** And I think there's a way there's, that's less interesting to me where you could turn this to like, the these are the ones who who trick people into contracts, and then never let them die and blah, blah, blah. I think it's more interesting to me if they're if they are more like healer, medic minded people who are like -

**AUSTIN:** Yeah, yeah.

**JANINE:** Who take the fact that they have this really long life, and they take on Hosts who could benefit from that, or, you know, who, who just help like, or they help people who just need medical help, like, they could just be really good doctors who run a traveling clinic and study medicine in different places and things like that.

**AUSTIN:** Totally. I mean, one of the throughlines for me for for religion and kind of intellectualism, and and like, you know, ideology in this world is... You know, the big pitch for me on season seven, to some degree is, hey, we realize that there is such a multifaceted range of truths that there is no essence there is no single true thing. And so that can be overwhelming because it means what do you anchor yourself to? What do you what do you how do you make sense of the world when it seems like everything is true? Kind of living under post modernism means the recognition that like, you know, what it means to be any given identity of thing is not actually grounded in something, you know, what is a chair when people are making weird art project chairs that don't sit on anything, you know? And, and yet, we need chairs. And yet, you know, I want a chair in my house, I'm sitting in a chair. And so what you end up with is a bunch of different groups and religions and schools and and political groups that have different perspectives on what they either prioritize or what they believe is truly the Heart of it all. That wasn't a pun, I didn't mean -

**JANINE:** Too bad, it was! You can't say it wasn't because it was.

[**AUSTIN** and **JANINE** laugh]



**AUSTIN:** It wasn't intentional one. And, you know, so for instance, and I think an interesting opposition to the group that you've just described is, there's a group here that is like, I Haven't worked out, like, what their, what their deity is, necessarily? But the thing that they see as being true is that things break down over time, that entropy exists. And so these are like the Ash priests, right, who believed like, hey, what is the one true thing about the world, it's that shit dies. And so they end up being like, we talked to Jack about this, and we've kind of been brainstorming, they're like, very much like, There Will Be Blood priests? They're like, oil prospectors who are out there, like, I'm going to dig up the fucking old dead past and make it work for me. Dig up the past and burn it until there's nothing left of it except the ashes. And then see if you can use the ashes too. Because if the one truth is that things died and like we should be on the right side of things dying and figuring out a way to make that work for us. And also the process of moving things along down that path is holy. And so the idea of there then being these Heritrixes that very, very strongly that no no the one true thing, yes, things do die, but the one true thing is it turns out things keep living. Despite all of the weird unpredictability of the world, despite the fact that like there are places where up is down and left is right and hot as cold, even there, things seem to live. Is a good is a fun counterbalance to that to that other school of thought. Right? So and that's whether I'm sure that there's debate even inside of that group, those are people who just prioritize the fact that life is exists and like hey, this is what we should focus on. And then people who believe like no, this is the primary mover. This is the first thing that matters is that life, life is life and is here and everything else - whether whether you know you want to worship the Frog God of Wealth or not, let me tell you that Frog God of Wealth is alive which means life is primary, which is interesting. So I like that a lot. I think that's a good, I think that's a really good. And like, good through line to the rest of the way that Heritrixes work. Let's see. Is Exsanguinate the really gross one?

**[Time Stamp 1:10:00]**

**JANINE:** I think so, yeah.

**AUSTIN:** Yeah. Okay, so we can skip that question. Let's see. Okay, the last one on moves here. There are a couple of classes that start with the occult domain, which, quote unquote, is hidden knowledge and black magic. But I'm still interested in your perspective on what occult means in our setting more broadly. And, and then a little bit of like, how you might want to identify one type of occultism separate from maybe what Keith or Art would bring to the table with their classes that also have occult as the as their starting domains, if that makes sense? Which is that you can even be broader than just the Heritrix here. You can talk about, like, the type of, again, hidden knowledge and black magic stuff you're interested in seeing throughout the season, etc. So

**JANINE:** Yeah, my answer here's, like, super vague, because it's, this is the kind of question I find really hard to define at this stage of things.

**AUSTIN:** Yeah.

**JANINE:** But, you know, I think occult for me tends to mean like, you know, forbidden knowledge, like things, things that are outside of the realm of what the average person is comfortable with. Or at least, you know, it doesn't necessarily need to be a matter of approval or disapproval. Like, there are a lot of things that I approve of, but also don't want to do? You know, like, I approve of skydiving, I will never do it.

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** So you know, things that have a degree of danger to them, or, you know, or, you know, inaccessibility even like, I think, for me, a big part of what I think would be worth defining vis-à-vis Heritrixes, is the kind of occultism that is like, just straight up fucking lost? Like things that are just things that people just cannot get to no matter how much they might want them. Because a thing that makes incredible sense to me is like, if I was a person with no body, and I could just fuckin float around, I would look for all kinds of shit, while I'm bodyless, I would know, noclip my way through whatever the fuck I could, and then go get a body that seemed capable of maybe getting it. Once I knew, like, more or less what it is, where it was like, things like that.

**AUSTIN:** I mean, you would be you would be hired as spies all the time, if we were playing a game in a world where like, politics mattered, right? But like I guess, here's another question, if I'm a Heritrix, is part of my goal to find someone whose lifestyle matches my aesthetic tastes? Whatever that is, which is broader than like, the finer things in life, because I'm assuming Heritrixes relate to taste in a different way, given their default position is so different than us. But like, is it to find someone who I'm a good fit with so that in my experience, while I'm possessing them, I'm living in a life that feels comfortable to me or feels interesting to me?

**JANINE:** I think only the older Heritrixes would know what they actually want in that specific way. Right? Like the younger ones, they have to kind of figure that stuff out. And I think that's also probably why like younger ones would make much shorter contracts, like they wouldn't, they wouldn't kind -

**AUSTIN:** [overlapping] Right, kind of of hopping in -

**JANINE:** - it off too much at once. Whereas older ones might be the ones who make those longer contracts that extend a person's mortality in a in a bigger way and do all of that stuff.

**AUSTIN:** What's the, what's the motivation for an average Heritrix to take a Host? And how do they identify? Besides, let's say someone who's done it more than once, not a baby Heritrix who's like, you know, you've done your first like five short term contracts, you have a pretty good idea of what you like, are you then just kind of like, Hey, I really like this town. I'd love to be a person and I'd love to have a body in this town. Let me find someone here?

**JANINE:** Um, I mean, I think I think it's a thing of like experience and curiosity, right? Like, if the thing you are is just this sort of unmoored invisible being who can just fly around and do whatever, that's probably quite boring. So I think the way that I, that I sort of understand the

Heritrixes myself is, is a lot of just like wanting to see and experience things and wanting to, you know, just wanting to, in the same way that the people they're dealing with sometimes want a different life, like wanting to just experience stuff as well.

**AUSTIN:** Which, which I think actually speaks to the next question, which is about callings. The way that Heart is set up every character starts with a calling, which is kind of like the big picture thing they're working on. Those are adventure, enlightenment, forced, as in like imprisoned and forced into going on adventure, Heartsong, which is like being drawn by the the kind of call of the Heart. And then and then penitent you know, someone who was trying to to work off a sin of some sort or crime. And I was curious, curious if there is kind of one of those that you get a lot of, as from from Heritrixes and then and then also, obviously, your own, which one you you're looking at?

**JANINE:** I think any of them could be the case, like, I could totally imagine someone who's like, I really fucked up in my life. And I don't know how to make it right, because I'm kind of a coward. And I need someone to, I need someone to like, make me do this. Basically. That's, I don't think-

**AUSTIN:** That's interesting, because then it's like a shared calling, because it's not the the Heritrix doesn't have that calling then. The Heritrix - or the Heritrix takes on that calling for them.

**JANINE:** That's, that's the terms of the contract. Right? Like, that's the, this person wants to do this thing. I bet that would be interesting. Like, that'd be an experience. So sure, let's go for it. For my character, I've chosen adventure, which is, you know, this person, just, you know, like I've said, just wanted something different and didn't feel like they could accomplish it on their own. So the Heritrix that came to her is very much like, let's, you know, let's, let's show you what you're capable of, like, it's that energy of like, let's do something really, really amazing. And like scary and horrible, but also like, so beyond what you know, that it will like change who you are that kind of I described her as an Extravagant Haunted Life Coach, in this paragraph.

**AUSTIN:** Right. So then, so then more broadly, is there a world where let's say you, let's say you finish this contract? Would there be, would your next calling be based on who your next Host is? Or would you the character also have your own separate calling, separate from? I guess the thing there's like you like being this Extravagant Haunted Life Coach, that's the thing about you, not just about what this person needs, right?

**JANINE:** Yes, yeah.

**AUSTIN:** So then, like, you could have the adventure calling separate from what the contract or your Host needed?

**JANINE:** Yeah, I think that's one of those questions was hard to answer until it comes up because it's like,

**AUSTIN:** Totally, I mean, this is a great example of a contract gone bad, right? Well, you could have a Heritrix who has the Heartsong calling who that is just trying to find people to bring them in closer and closer.

**JANINE:** Someone is just like, I want to go on a great journey. And it's like, okay, I'll take you on a journey.

**AUSTIN:** Right, I'm gonna take this body as far as I can. And then I'll find a new one on the way I'll hop from body to body until whatever right? So I guess we didn't ask I didn't ask this. What happens in the Heritrix if their Host dies?

**JANINE:** I think that they find a new body.

**AUSTIN:** Okay, but they can't they won't die from that?

**JANINE:** No. I don't think there's isn't there a lot of stuff in this book, which is being kind of like um, difficult to kill? I want to say.

**AUSTIN:** I mean only in so far as that I think that's mostly flavor-wise and not mechanics?

**JANINE:** Yeah, I mean, I mean, flavor wise not not No, I mean, I mean, in terms of flavor, like yes. It kind of one of those things of like, you can't die of old age but you can die of a knife in the face?

**AUSTIN:** Right, right.

**JANINE:** The I think it's the I think it's a case of like you have to find another body you have to or just float around bodiless for a bit.

**AUSTIN:** For a while, right. Do Heritrixes die of old age at some point? I mean, I guess we know new ones are born. So,

**JANINE:** Yeah, I wonder I hadn't really thought about it.

**AUSTIN:** Or, on a long enough timeline. Are we headed to a world primarily of Heritrixes and contracts by sheer numbers?

**JANINE:** I mean, I bet there's a second stage of scattering, right? Which is like Stage One is you scatter from from your point of origin. And Stage Two is you just like scatter yourself. Like you just you just spread yourself out thin enough in right ether that you just sort of are everywhere and also nothing.

**[Time stamp 1:20:00]**

**AUSTIN:** And yeah, you're not even like a Heratrix anymore.

**JANINE:** You're just kind of like done and maybe that energy gets recycled into new Heratrix. And the cycle of life continues. But-

**AUSTIN:** Yeah, that makes sense. A question I asked here is, is that, like, in a world where Heritrixes exist, it's undeniable that there is there is immaterial life, whether that is like a soul or something else? I'm curious, generally not this is not just about in relation to Heritrixes, but because that's kind of part of what your character is, I'm curious, generally, in the setting what people think about souls and, and materiality and whether or not we are our bodies versus something else, you know, what I mean?

**JANINE:** So, I mean, I think the thing that gets proved here is that there is something other than body. And that's, that's concrete, but in the same way that a Heratrix can be called, like a spirit or demon or something, calling whatever is separate from the body a soul is probably a point of debate or like even a point of semantics. I put a thing here like half jokingly, like, maybe Heritrixes our souls and nothing else actually has a soul [laughing]. I don't really mean that seriously, but -

**AUSTIN:** But does someone believe that?

**JANINE:** Yeah, probably like, I bet there are, you know, I bet there are people who believe that there are souls and who believe in all kinds of things happening to those souls before and after death. And I bet there are also people who believe that you just rot. And who probably don't even believe that the consciousness can be separated from the body.

**AUSTIN:** Right at all, right?

**JANINE:** [overlapping] Until they get molten glass, and then they get it.

**AUSTIN:** [overlapping] Outside of Heratrix or demons - and like, Oh my god, fuck, I can see my consciousness. But hey, it looks sort of like molten glass, that's physical, that just means it's hiding in there somewhere. What is the what is the way this game, this season is gonna be structured, at least somewhat, I don't know, if it's gonna be both parties. Or if there's going to be one big party yet, we have not worked any of that out yet. But there will be a Haven that's like central to at least some of the play and a Haven is just like a safe place where, you know, a relatively safe place where people live their lives and go about their their kind of days. And I'm curious, what is it that ties your character to that Haven? And and why is the Haven kind of happy to have you. And I say that because I want - those are things that I don't want to be negotiable at the top of the season. Like, I want the relationship between player characters and the Haven to be stable. At least enough to have like, you should feel bad if something goes bad in the Haven, the Haven should be generally positive to have you, happy to have you there.

**JANINE:** Yeah. Um, so I think for my character, it's very much just like a devotion to people, and life. Like it is, you know, part of it is that the respect for the concept of the drone, like I said, which is just the idea of like life, life continues and life has value and its continuance. And I think she is also just like a little tiny bit narcissistic. So the fact that she has abilities, she's like, plucky and energetic, and enthusiastic and not easily frightened off of tasks that other people might not want to do, probably makes her valuable. And welcome, at least, at least among you know, certain groups. And that means that like, when people are grateful, or say nice things to her, she's happy and she likes them more. Like, I think there is a really sort of direct relationship there of just like, she likes being flattered. She likes gratitude. She likes interacting with people. She likes, you know, also her Host who is looking for kind of a more glorious, more exciting life would also be happy to be praised and would be happy to be recognized for skills that that she thinks are like, different and valuable, so it's on both ends. There is sort of an incentive to keep people in, you know, in this sort of base town, this, you know, in Haven happy and to look out for them.

**AUSTIN:** Yeah, all that makes perfect sense to me. The last thing here is something we've obviously hit throughout the conversation, but I've kind of identified like, three of the big themes are contradiction, certainty/uncertainty, and the community. And I'm curious if you have any other thoughts on the kind of role that Heritrixes generally or your character specifically can play in terms of exploring that space? And we've talked about that space before on the previous, you know, conversations that we've had, but still, yeah.

**JANINE:** Yeah, um, I think the big one is community for reasons that I've gone into several times here of just like, you know, Heritrixes being sort of initially, where, you know, when they're, when they first spawn in an area where there's probably a lot of them, and there's a slightly stronger community, and they get scattered, and kind of have to consciously make that effort to re-find community and to also offer community to their Hosts. And, and, you know, I think they have a good understanding of how important community can be, but also how fragile it can be and how much you have to sort of make a deliberate effort to maintain community. Which is again, why think she's, she's connected to Haven and sort of, has stakes in it. And in terms of like, certainty/ uncertainty, contradiction, like, she, you know, has another, like, there is someone else who has input in what she's doing.

**AUSTIN:** Right.

**JANINE:** And someone else whose opinion does matter, even if, even if that person is not a person who is doing things right now. Because, again, this character is a character who like, likes people and enters into contracts in good faith and like, if there is, if there is like a gap in understanding or or like a gap in terms of what was negotiated if, if she, if you know, if they think if they sort of disagree on what the terms were, or like what the specifics of were, she's the kind of person who's going to have that conversation, they're going to figure that out. Maybe that means ending the contract, maybe, you know, but you know, it's, that's, that's important to me. And that also means that there's going to be moments of, of kind of confusion for her. Because

there is like a, there is there's going to be that other that other voice. It's like, I trust you. I trust what you're doing. But also i'm not sure that this is what we're after. Like, I'm you know. Yeah.

**AUSTIN:** That makes sense. All right. Well, I think that wraps up everything that we have here. The Yeah, I don't think I have anything else here that won't be covered eventually, in a character creation actual episode, where we look at sheets and pick moves and and talk about other stuff. And, you know, obviously, there's lots of stuff here that's still blank space to play with. So that's exciting.

**JANINE:** Yeah.

**AUSTIN:** All right. I think that's going to do it. Thank you for listening. Everybody. Janine. Thank you for joining us.

**JANINE:** Anytime.