

Sangfielle 27: The Perpetual Oratorio of Davia Pledge Pt. 5

Transcriber: robotchangeling

Austin: *Sangfielle* is a series that draws on elements of dark fantasy, horror, and gothic fiction. As such, a list of content warnings will always be made available in the episode description.

Austin: At this point, you, uh, just to be clear, you can't hear the screaming that was happening from the concert hall above.

Art: That's good.

Austin: Yeah. It's just a little more...you're a little more at ease. As you open the door, the thing that overpowers you is the same kind of cacophony of sounds that you heard, that Lyke heard before.

[Music begins: "Sangfielle" by Jack de Quidt]

Austin: Now, with the light of the lantern coming in through this door, you can also see the physicality of the thing before you. For acres in every direction around this little room that you're in, there are machines moving, pulleys raising up and down, strings being bowed with automation. It is a massive machine, but it's also, with the light now moving through this space, you start to see elements of this thing that are not just machine. One of the things that pulses is a human heart. There are panels with writing on them, and those panels, the canvas is skin stretched. This is a place where the organic remains of people have been interwoven with, again, acres of strange machinic being. And it calls you forward. It's doing something. It's not just playing music.

Austin (as Marcos): [weakly] Help me.

Art (as Duvall): What happened to you?

Austin (as Marcos): [pained] Pledge. She invited us.

Austin: You hear the sound of waves. And then you kind of like, there is the sound in the distance of like suction. It is beginning to swallow the sea. You stop hearing the sound of the waves leaving, and then you realize this is happening all around you. It's not just digging out space for itself. It's consuming what's around it. Lyke, you notice this too, and you remember what you read. You remember what you read? About what happens—

Keith: Oh, I remember.

Austin: With a god. What's a god do?

Keith: It's like a gas. It fills up whatever container it's in.

Austin: Yeah. It keeps growing, and it will grow for as much as there is to grow. And it's doing that now with Sapodilla.

Sylvia: We should get him down. We don't need to be, like, careful about it. [laughs softly]

Austin: You get what's happening here. It's actually very similar to a thing vampires used to do. All of the organic things that have been woven into it work to feed it but also each other.

[music ends]

Austin: Uh, you get the painting, Art. You can pick up the painting. The other half of the painting is here.

Keith: Oh. There we go, problem solved. [laughs]

Austin: Uh, I believe this is the figure in the rear, here. The kind of background figure is here in this one. And it's—

Keith: They like fit together or something?

Austin: I mean, the original painting has both of them together, and the whole thing was if you study the painting over a long enough time, you become either your interpretation of the front figure or the rear figure. It's a person sitting to be painted and then a person passing by in the distance. And in this moment, at least, I'm gonna say, Duvall, maybe your initial appreciation of looking at them side to side, what you gather from the situation you're in, perhaps, is that the person sitting is scowling, is vengeful, is caught in a wound of the past. Resents needing to sit for a portrait. There is a Davia Pledge, you know, angle here that you're seeing. And you can't help but see or think of the figure in the distance— who, again, sometimes is seen as a trickster, sometimes is seen as someone old, you know, on the last— someone has written, you know, in your book about this, it is someone in their old age on their final, you know, jaunt about the garden. But here there is something loose and free that maybe makes you think, oh, this is...this is Zizi Esterházy herself. Or, this is a younger version of Davia Pledge, you know, free of the constraints of trauma, free of the being driven by having lost what she lost. Though it's not necessarily clear to you, from here, how she lost what she lost, you can make an educated guess that, you know, she blames the people of this city for what she lost at the very least. [laughs softly]

Art: I have come to that conclusion. Before now, even.

Austin: [feigning surprise] Yeah, okay. Huh.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah?

Keith: I was picking up some hints.

Austin: You were picking up some hints that this was like a lesbian revenge plot?

Keith: Right. [Sylvia laughs]

Austin: Like, these lovers...

Keith: Well, it started when...it started when she started killing a bunch of people upstairs.

Austin: Right. That's probably—

Art: Uh huh. That is also when I started— well, actually, for me, it started when I was warned against not being killed.

Austin: Right. You were like, hey, you didn't— you didn't personally cause me any harm, so don't be here.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Right.

Art: Yeah.

Keith: Yeah.

Art: That was my first clue.

Austin: It's a good hint.

Art: My second clue was when all those people died.

Austin: Yeah, gotcha. Yeah.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Third clue, machine god.

Austin: Machine god. Yeah.

Art: Mm-hmm.

[recap ends]

Keith: Flesh god. Flesh machine god.

Austin: Right. Also, from here, you can hear the actual performance. There is a central like tube. Eh, let's say it's not a central tube. The whole thing about this is, again, it's very distributed. But there is one of these tubes that's running up into where the concert hall is. But also throughout the rest of the city. There are these tubes that are carrying the sound that this machine makes, and we should be clear, the reason— part of the reason the machine is so big is because miniaturization as a technology...I know it's a god, but it doesn't know how to miniaturize yet. One of the big advances in technological history was miniaturization. The idea that you could make a small thing that makes a big noise happen, like amplification for instance, was a technology that let you not have to make a lot of noise in order to make a lot of noise. And that doesn't really exist yet. Your...the way that you make a lot of noise is by making a lot of noise, and then some of it gets lost in the transportation through these tubes up into Sapodilla and into the concert hall. But here you can hear, at low volume, what is being played above, and it's beautiful. It's a beautiful composition. It's sweeping. It's kind of an orchestral, pastoral piece of beautiful days. You can sense the warmth of sunlight. Or, for you Virtue, [laughs] the ease of a nice breezy moonlit eve. [Sylvia laughs] It's beautiful, and you can hear it the way it was being played— still being played upstairs in the concert hall, as the kind of, you know, the haunting of a fire reoccurs. What if fire could be a ghost? as it calls forth— or as she calls it forth and sets ablaze the current leadership of this town and all the rich folks. You know. Unfortunately, let's be clear, lots of non-rich folks also live in Sapodilla, and all of the homes are being devoured by this thing bit by bit over the next however many, until you— unless you stop it here, I guess. Which—

Keith: Are we— this is the place where we would stop it?

Austin: If you're gonna try to do a thing, this would be a place to maybe do a thing.

Keith: Should I...should I roll to like, look around and figure things out? Or have you given us what we need to know and I missed it?

Austin: Rolling would help. It is...what I would say is a successful roll to look around and piece things together would give you mastery on an attempt to fix things. Or, "fix" is strong, but.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: But also, I think I've given you enough—

Keith: Oh, this is gonna be a dangerous roll, right?

Austin: This is a dangerous roll. Yes.

Keith: But is this a magnifying glass situation? [Sylvia laughs]

Austin: Um, depends on what you're doing with that magnifying glass. There are lots of things that you could try to...we could talk about how you get to what you want to get to here, you know?

Keith: I think...so this thing is sort of...this is a sort of, like, extremely busy, like maximalist looking thing, right?

Austin: Yeah. You know, I think I'm— again, I'm pulling on things like *Dark City* and *Brazil* and, you know, that style— fuck Terry Gilliam. [Art laughs] But that style of vast, you know, machinic. *The Matrix*, for instance. You know, again, *Metropolis*.

Keith: Um...so, I guess maybe what I would...the way I might use a magnifying glass here specifically would be to, like, find bits and try to follow where they lead and like trying to keep—

Austin: Ah...

Keith: —keeping a close eye on things, making sure that I'm not losing track of specific...

Austin: Yeah. I will tell you right now that there are just too many. Like, you don't need to roll for this. You try this for a moment. I'm not— this isn't— I'm not advancing a clock on you. You know, there's a negative outcome for you saying this out loud. But I'm telling you that like, it's just too big. There is no...you're not going to find the heart of this machine. There is not like, if I knew all I have to do is cut the red wire, do you know what I mean? It isn't that. You're dealing with a god that has come into fruition. And gods have weak points sometimes, so I'm not saying that it's not fair. You know, that's fair. People could probably call up, you know, sometime— you know, Achilles had a heel, right? So. But that is specifically in line with the way we've been talking about this machine and the way it grows and specifically in line with the way we talked about gods and how they will take up space. Though, I guess what you saw with Aterika'Kaal, like Aterika'Kaal was the opposite sort of god, right? Aterika'Kaal had a single, you know, had a heart in a way that was different than this.

[0:10:29]

Keith: And it also had a little god room.

Austin: I mean, it was in a little— yes. Correct. I mean, it wanted to not be in—

Keith: Right.

Austin: —either of its little god rooms. It had both a little god room in the kind of warded boxed-in shrine in Roseroot Hall and then also had the realm that this thing seems not to have. But, you know, I can think of a few ways that you could...if you asked me how to counter this, I

could come up with like three or four different things to think about what that might be. One of them is just like, fuck it, let it roll. But that's not a really good one. That one costs a lot of lives, and a lot of those lives didn't do shit. So. Again, just to— let's just lay it out. What do we know? What do we know, what do we think? What have we learned? Y'all got a— there's a god. You're in the middle of a god. You're at the center of a god.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Gods will grow and consume as much as they're given. At least, this is what...this is at least what one notable smart person about gods Sa'Ferna said.

Keith: A long time ago.

Austin: I believe that character's name was Sa'Ferna. Is that right? No, Ferna. Ferna the Cunning said. Uh, a long time ago, but within the last 400 years, let's say, right? So, it's a long time ago, but it's not like 3000 years.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You know, we're not talking about—

Keith: It's Sa'Ferna. Sa'Ferna was right.

Austin: Uh, the name of the book is *Sa'Ferna-ta-Fera*, but the actual person's name is Ferna the Cunning.

Keith: Oh. Okay. [Sylvia laughs]

Austin: You know in that book that Ferna said—or that transcript of interviews—Ferna said that a thing a god will do is grow and grow and grow, which is why you need to...you need to give them a delimited amount of space to grow into, which is why they...or it's why they're safer when they're in those realms, those sort of like other world, those weird zones that they're in sometimes. This one seems to be...seems to be here in the real world. Though also, you did visit a sort of weird zone space, the weird zone, as we talked about, Lyke. So, maybe it also has one of those, it's just not closed off. Um. What else do you know?

Keith: Do I know how to close off a weird space?

Austin: You..not off the top of your head.

Keith: Okay. Just invent a way.

Austin: But between your books, Virtue's books, maybe there's information to find.

Keith: Well, if...okay.

Austin: But there are also other things you could try to fuck around with. I don't know.

Keith: God, it would have been great if I had asked to borrow some of the god books. Earlier.

Austin: You're all still alive and next to each other.

Sylvia: You can.

Keith: Yeah, but...but now I would have to be like, "Hey, remember those books? Maybe there's something in there. Let's take a break from looking at the god to read." It's just too—

Sylvia: I mean, if you have an idea—

Austin: You are in—

Sylvia: I'm down to be like, let's take these books out and see if something corresponds to that idea.

Austin: Yeah, think about this. Keith, think about this in terms of like cosmic horror fiction.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: How many times do that the protagonists— I almost said antagonists. Also the antagonists.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Go like, "Uh...uh oh. Let me—"

Keith: The characters.

Austin: Yeah. "Let me start looking through this book at this moment to see if there's a thing I can do."

Keith: Right.

Austin: I think that's well within the realm of the sort of...

Keith: Yeah, that's true. That's like...

Austin: ...characters you are, you know? And you have that information. You have that stuff available to you.

Keith: Okay. So, I guess if there was a way to take the sort of dark, confusing, boundless void of sound that I was in and—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: —keep this in there...the person who made that space probably—and this god—maybe would have a book on it.

Austin: Potentially.

Keith: And I could open up the— crack open those books and take a look. I think maybe that's worth doing.

Austin: It's probably worth doing. Do you bring this up to Virtue?

Keith: I do.

Keith (as Lyke): Virtue, if I could please maybe take a look at some of those titles. I could do a little...do a little back of the book reading.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Yes, yes, of course. Just give them back when you're done.

Keith: All of them are—

Austin: Empty them out on this table. [chuckles]

Keith: Oh, yeah. Perfect, table.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: Table's great for reading. [Austin chuckles]

Art: Do you want like help going through the books? What...

Keith: Um, hey, if...yeah, readers are readers. You know what they say.

Austin: [simultaneously] That's what they say. [Keith laughs]

Art: Yeah.

Austin: They're always saying this. Readers are readers.

Art: Sick of hearing it, honestly.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Everyone is always saying “readers are readers” so much that when I hear it, I'm like, ugh, again with that? [Austin chuckles]

Art: Yeah. Get a new thing.

Austin: So yeah, this is, uh...this is discern, for sure. Right? And then religion or cursed or occult. I don't think technol— I think the thing— well, I'll still say whatever you want or whatever you want to do here, I think, will color what you end up looking at here, but

Keith: Well, I've got—

Austin: Religion, occult, somewhere in there.

Keith: I'm going to look at this as an occult thing, and I'm gonna roll for occult.

Austin: Okay. Religion occult—

Art: Wait, is me helping you look at stuff help?

Austin: It is.

Art: Or my own discern roll?

Austin: It's...well, you're helping. This is a single act.

Art: Okay.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I would say.

Keith: Probably...

Art: You let me know if I find something I might want to destroy in there.

Keith: Is, uh...this isn't dangerous, right? I'm not doing— I'm not taking an action against the machine.

Austin: This is safe.

Keith: It's safe.

Austin: In a real way, this is one of the safest places you could be, 'cause you're at like—

Keith: Right.

Austin: —the core of the machine, right? Again, not the core as in the sense that like if you unplugged something it would all stop, but the core as in the center of it where it's not thrashing around near you. It's the most stable part of the god.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: You know?

Keith: Yeah.

Art: Maybe like an exhaust we could jam.

Austin: [doubtful] Mmm. Mm-hmm.

Austin: Are you— is Virtue— are you helping? Or is this just a Duvall and Lyke thing?

Sylvia: Um...

Austin: I don't know if you have stuff to help with here, but...

Sylvia: Right. I'm kind of...

Austin: Discern.

Sylvia: I'm a little lost on what the action itself is, at the moment.

Austin: It's looking through the books for like an answer to what to do here.

Keith: Right. Yeah, I basically told you some keywords to look for.

Sylvia: It's not like a super specific thing we're looking for as of yet, though, right?

Austin: Correct. Correct.

Sylvia: I might as well. I'm like, I feel like Virtue's like whole thing right now is okay, now that I know about this thing—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: —and a little bit about how it like uses its sort of pseudo vampirism.

Austin: Yes.

Sylvia: Now I want to fuck with it and see what happens. [laughs]

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. That makes sense. Alright.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: So then, so then, go ahead, discern. Uh, you know...no, you're good. You're good.

Keith: Okay. Are you sure?

Austin: Yeah. I didn't say it in time.

Sylvia: About to say that was risky? [laughs softly]

Austin: I was gonna say it was risky. I was gonna say it was risky.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Because you don't know what's in these books, you know?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I think— you know, a thing I think about a lot is in *Blade*, the movie *Blade*, how blade has a thing on his sword that you have to hit so that it doesn't destroy your hand. On the hilt. Do you know this?

Keith: What? No. That sounds cool.

Art: Yeah, he— yeah—

Austin: It's fucking sick.

Art: Blade has like a safety sword.

Austin: He has a safety sword. There's a thing you have to click on the sword to make sure you don't just fucking evaporate your hand into blood. And...

Keith: Does his sword evaporate people?

Austin: No, it's a mechanical, like, trap. It's a trapped sword.

Art: We don't know that it would evaporate someone who wasn't a vampire.

Keith: Oh, I understand. So, like—

Austin: I guess that's true. Well, no, it's a mechanical reaction, isn't it, Art?

Keith: Right.

Austin: It's like it goes like *pew!*

Art: Yeah, but the evaporation might be 'cause it's like silver or garlic or whatever the hell they do in those.

Austin: Oh, sure.

Keith: So—

Sylvia: It's just a garlic sword.

Austin: It's a garlic sword.

Keith: It's basically like if you had a gun that you didn't pick up the right way it shot you?

Austin: Yes, that's what it does.

Keith: Gotcha.

Austin: A hundred percent.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. And I think—

Art: But it's a sword, 'cause he's named Blade.

Keith: Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: But he's got a sword, 'cause he's named Blade.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I think that it's dangerous. I think that it's risky to dig through a pile of books from someone who is making a god, because books are dangerous because of how they can contain and execute spells. So, I don't know, but I don't want to take the success away from you that you just rolled, either.

Keith: No, 'cause I rolled on the not— on what you said earlier that this is one of the safest places that I could be.

Austin: I did. I did, yes, exactly. So I'm gonna let this roll.

Keith: And I will say, just to add to it, that if there was a magical smell trap— if there's a magical *spell* trap, I would have smelled it.

Austin: You would have smelled it. Yeah, you would have smelled it. So yeah, so okay, you're good. In fact, you do. How about this? We'll play it both ways.

Art: In a magical smell trap you would've spelled it.

Austin: You would've spelled it. You're able to smell it—

Keith: S-M-E-L-L.

Austin: —and then quickly, you're able to like, oh, wait, no, this book is trapped. Let me just do a quick, *bzzt*. Okay, we're good.

Sylvia: You know what they say. He who smelled it, spelled it.

Austin: [chuckles] That's what they say.

Keith: They say it so much. [Sylvia laughs]

Austin: Between the three of you, you're able to lay out a few options. Because you didn't get a ten, I'm not gonna rank what these options are, effectively.

Keith: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Or, in terms of— rank in terms of safety or whatever. And maybe you each get an appropriate...a person-appropriate potential solution. [Sylvia laughs] Lyke, you find a thing that says, hey, here's a ritual that you can use to establish this thing and bind it in place. The other realm, the sort of like god realm of this thing, and bind it so that it will be there. Doing it, doing that ritual spell is very hard. It is dangerous to do. It has been known to kill the person casting it. The act of trying to stop an already powerful god from growing further, like it says very clearly like, you should do this when it's young and not very powerful, because if you do it then, then that is a good time and place to...it's not strong enough to overwhelm you and push back.

[0:20:22]

Keith: Right.

Austin: It won't be seen as a—

Keith: This thing is already drinking in oceans, so.

Austin: Exactly, exactly. And swallowing a city, the biggest city in Sangfielle. So, that is— biggest city within the walls of Concentus. You know what I'm saying. So, you know it'll be hard. It'll be a dangerous roll. And it will be...but it would be a solution. So, that's one possible outcome. Two—and I think maybe...I think maybe this is the one that you find, Duvall—is that you see in some....in some book, you find an account of where, for years, this group talked about a war between gods. But the whole thing was kind of metaphorical, and what it really was was two gods feeding on each other to such a degree that they eventually reached a sort of equilibrium. And there's a place over to the west of here, over them the mountains in the western half of Sangfielle, where these two gods have kind of come to rest, so to speak. And it is like a place where you have these two opposing kind of environments at peace with each other in a strange way, where there is like a magma flow running directly into, you know, a kind of Arctic biome. And they've reached a strange equilibrium, and that is effectively two gods feeding on one another. And so the idea that comes to you, as someone who doesn't really care too much about having a pet god, is you could release Aterika'Kaal on this thing, and it would start to feed, and the two of them would effectively counter each other until they stalled out.

Art: Oh, that's fun.

Austin: Mm-hmm. And then third, Virtue, it's a play on what we just heard, which is you could start to siphon the power away into something or someone else. And at that point, in other words, you could kind of reverse the polarity of the...not to go *Star Trek* here. [Sylvia laughs] But the people who are hooked into this machine could begin to...it could become an engine for them, instead of it using them as a pass-through or as a sort of engine for— or as fuel. It could become a device that fuels beings attached to it. The people who are already attached to it would become incredibly powerful. You, for instance, could become incredibly powerful. And begin to siphon away its strength, at which point it would become small enough to deal with. It would begin to kind of fold in on itself, as all of the thing. And in fact, you know, it's not just the organic things that would get stronger around it, right? Like, the theorisation here—and it's a hundred percent you've found...you have found like a book of outlandish theories about gods here, right?—is basically that, like, we should stop...there's someone who's basically we need to stop worshipping gods and start, you know, drilling them, drilling for oil in them effectively. Like, we need to use them as power sources. We need to use them as a...in fact, this is very Alaway-esque, right? in that it's what Alaway was doing with the egg sac effectively, but at a much larger scale. The idea is that you have this machine that can make two from one. We should take the one for ourselves and let it keep making that two and then continue to do it. And

so like, you know, what if the ocean got bigger? You could pump the energy back into making ocean. You could pump the energy back into personhood and making you, you know, immortal again, for instance, Virtue.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: So those are the— those are three ideas that you could try to...

Keith: It could make all of the assholes that this thing's eaten extremely strong.

Austin: Yes. Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Yes, but it would also make *this* asshole extremely strong. So, thinking about it.

Keith: Well...

Austin: I mean this in no uncertain terms. Virtue, this would let you be a vampire again.

Sylvia: Yeah, no, that's very exciting. [chuckles]

Austin: Or like, better than a vampire. You tell me. You know?

Sylvia: I think better than a— like, this is like...this is beyond that.

Austin: In fact, maybe you could even do the thing here where like...I'm gonna just put it on the table, because it's important that it's on the table for you to consider.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: You could do the thing that you thought about earlier, which is like, those other people who do get more power from this are also like, kind of lined with your life essence in such a way that they'll continue to feed into you magically, indefinitely.

Sylvia: [intrigued] Oooh....

Austin: Like, if you wanted to become the Vampire Queen of Sapodilla and have like your little army of evil vampire lords underneath you, [Sylvia laughs] here's the moment. All you have to do is—

Sylvia: Hoo...

Austin: —convince Lyke and Duvall to do that or kill them.

Sylvia: Okay. Yeah, okay.

Austin: I'm just putting it out there. These are your options.

Sylvia: I'm, uh...I'm thinking. [laughs softly]

Austin: Uh huh.

Keith: Well, of the three bad options here, I guess I like the ritual best.

Austin: [laughs] You like them in the order, perhaps, that I said them?

Keith: Yes.

Austin: Ritual that confines it. Aterika'Kaal equalisation strategy. Virtue Mondegreen, Vampire Queen of Sapodilla. That's the order of operations, in your mind.

Keith: It's a...it is...it is a little bit of a toss up with the Aterika'Kaal thing and the vampire queen thing.

Austin: Okay, I see. I'm gonna tell you, Aterika'Kaal—

Art: I don't see the negatives for the vam— I mean. [Austin laughs] I don't, like...I don't have...Maybe I'm helplessly naive, but I don't think Vampire Queen of Sapodilla Virtue would hold me any ill will.

Sylvia: Thank you.

Keith: I'm just worried about the army of powerful jerks.

Sylvia: But you'd know the most powerful jerk of them all.

Austin: I should be clear, that would also have a roll. All of these have rolls involved.

Sylvia: Oh, for sure!

Keith: Right.

Austin: Just to be clear.

Keith: How would...how would Vampire Queen of Sapodilla be reflected on the character sheet?

Sylvia: I would— [chuckles] I feel like maybe he wouldn't be a player character at that point.

Austin: Yeah, I feel like that's retiring Virtue to get what she wants.

Sylvia: Oh, man.

Austin: And we would— we would— you know what it would— this would be like a zenith ability style thing, right?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Like where maybe we'd play out a session or two more with Virtue, before we decide to hand the character over and say, like...

Sylvia: Ooh.

Austin: You know? You get the...we get the reigning queen until it's time to hand the character over.

Sylvia: God. I...I'm very tempted. I really want to try this. [laughs] 'Cause I think if it goes bad, it also goes bad in really interesting ways.

Austin: Oh, yeah. I'm already looking at critical fallout over here.

Sylvia: Oh, yeah. No, for sure. I bet.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: I mean, of course, I'm not gonna tell you that should make that swing, you know?

Austin: [chuckles] I should be clear that I think this is a deeply selfish, adjacent to evil thing.

Sylvia: Oh, sure.

Austin: But we've talked about Virtue being a bad person a number of times and like, not like a cutesy bad person.

Sylvia: No, like, she thinks of what was happening at like Yellowfield as aspirational. Like...

Austin: [laughs] Right.

Sylvia: Like, that's something that like, I don't know if I was very clear about, but that was like inspiring to her after the fact.

Austin: You lived that life.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: You were in these streets.

Sylvia: Yeah. Like, she's done, like, effectively what this machine is doing to people herself to people before she lost...like, before she was slain.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Like...

Keith: It's a vampire machine.

Sylvia: There's no real moral quandary for her here.

Art: And I don't see a problem with someone like that thinking that I was instrumental in their...in their second rise. I think...I think there's good... [Sylvia laughs]

Austin: Unbelievable.

Sylvia: Let's go.

Art: But if it goes badly, I don't want— I don't want *you* to be mad.

Keith: Right.

Art: You know? I don't want you to be upset about...

Sylvia: Oh, no, I'll most definitely be dead, so don't worry about it, if it goes badly. [amused]

Art: No, no, *you*. You.

Sylvia: Oh, me personally? [Austin laughs]

Art: Yeah.

Sylvia: That's fine. I'm not gonna be— don't worry about it. This is all good.

Keith: We're all excited about the sowing right now. [Austin laughs loudly]

Art: Yeah.

Sylvia: I'm a fan of reaping as well, okay? [Keith laughs]

Austin: Ahh.

Sylvia: I've got a backup character. It's fine. [laughs]

Austin: I did not plan this. It just kind of fell into place.

Sylvia: Yeah. [excited] Ooh!

Austin: But I need to hear this in character, if we're gonna go down this route.

Sylvia: Yeah, well, I mean...

Austin: We need to have the— we can't just do it 'cause it's fun, we have to think about—

Sylvia: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: —how Duvall and Lyke would respond to— and how Virtue would frame it and et cetera.

[0:30:02]

Keith: Well...

Art: Oh, 'cause we didn't read the book.

Keith: Let's start—

Austin: Right, that's true. Virtue is the only one who read this particular thing, right?

Sylvia: I think that she says something like:

Sylvia (as Virtue): You know, judging from what I've checked out here, I think the safest thing, sort of to contain the malignant energies that have been created by this being, would be to sort of redirect them somewhere else into something that could, you know, possibly contain them or be a conduit for them. Possibly, you know.

Keith (as Lyke): Like a box? Like a magical containment box?

Sylvia (as Virtue): I was thinking more me.

Keith (as Lyke): You're thinking of what?

Sylvia (as Virtue): Me. Because we've already demonstrated that I'm, you know, death and me aren't really compatible. Seem to, you know, be doing fine without that. I just think our odds here, you know, are for the best. And then if something goes wrong or if,

you know, it's...if, uh, Pledge has a problem with it, then you've got someone who can handle things, you know?

Art (as Duvall): Is it safe?

Keith (as Lyke): It just seems like it would kill you.

Sylvia (as Virtue): [downplaying] Ah. I don't think many things can kill me.

Keith (as Lyke): Right, but...

Keith: Gestures at... [Austin laughs]

Sylvia (as Virtue): Well, what's life without a little risk, right, Lye?

Keith (as Lyke): Just life.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Mm.

Art (as Duvall): [uncertain] Mmm.

Sylvia (as Virtue): That's a very...limited way of looking at things. I think we could do it. I think we should—

Keith (as Lyke): I think it would be best for everyone if we took...if we were to redirect the magic anywhere, put it in a magical containment box and not a human.

Art (as Duvall): What happens to the box?

Sylvia: [chuckles] I want to say Virtue looks angry when she gets called a human. [laughs]

Keith (as Lyke): Well, person.

Sylvia: Still a little annoyed, but you know. Um.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Yeah, I don't... [sighs] The worry there is if we try and contain it like that, that energy will probably still be bleeding into all the people connected to it. And, I mean, I don't know about you, but I am not a hundred percent sure I'd like someone I don't know having all of that. You know? Better to— better the devil you know than the devil you don't.

Sylvia: Which I'm sure is a saying with so much more baggage in Sangfuelle.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah.

Art (as Duvall): Yeah, I don't see what we— what good is the box?

Keith (as Lyke): [slowly] We put the magic in the box.

Art (as Duvall): Uh huh. I'm with you this far.

Keith (as Lyke): And then the trouble is gone. I mean, it is also dangerous. But then it's not, you know, flying around inside someone.

Art (as Duvall): I mean, are you just gonna stick it in your backpack and have it fall out at inconvenient moments?

Keith (as Lyke): No, it's a...I guess it's...I don't have the box. I guess it's probably a theoretical box. It's a...uh...an ethereal box?

Sylvia (as Virtue): See, now you're the one with the unconvincing plan. [sighs] I just, it feels like a waste to me.

Keith (as Lyke): It's not.

Sylvia (as Virtue): [sighs]

Art (as Duvall): [disagreeing] Mmm...

Keith (as Lyke): What?

Art (as Duvall): But then like, so it's just like, there? Aren't we just waiting for someone else to come open the box?

Keith (as Lyke): No, we could just go.

Art (as Duvall): [softly] What?

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah, we don't have to wait,

Art (as Duvall): No, but like, then someone's just gonna find— this is just gonna happen again.

Keith (as Lyke): No. It's a harder to open box than that. It's not a cardboard box. It's a...it's a...it's a metaphorical box.

Art: This is tricky, because I think Lyke has an objectively better plan.

Austin: Mm-hmm. [Sylvia laughs]

Keith: Right.

Austin: But you're playing characters who have worldviews and instincts and desires.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Right?

Art: Not...yeah, I'm basically telling Virtue not to do...

Sylvia: [chuckles] Her life's goal?

Art: Yeah. And a thing that Duvall did.

Austin: Right. Duvall did this already.

Keith: By mistake, though?

Austin: Sure, but—

Art: Eh.

Austin: —but is on the other side of it now, in so many ways. And also not exactly this, 'cause Duvall did not end up king of the sleeping city.

Art: Not yet.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Maybe there's a...is there a, um...I'm loathe to introduce aspects of the conversation. Oh! Ah, I do have a character in this scene, which is the voice speaking to Virtue, of Darling.

Sylvia: [interested] Mm-hmm.

Austin: Can you describe what Darling looks like again? Because I keep forgetting what your image for her is.

Sylvia: I...we've been kind of vague. I've been kind of vague about it just because I've liked the sort of like glimpses of her thing, but I'm picturing her as sort of like a upper middle aged woman, kind of like...like human, clearly.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Sort of got like... [sighs] I don't know if weathered is the right word, but you can tell like she's been through a lot of like combat and shit.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: And like, I don't know. I don't want to just say femme Geralt here, but that's kind of what I'm getting towards, I guess.

Austin: Yeah, no, I get femme Geralt. I can get that energy. I can...yeah. If I can...can I describe the— there is a specific person in my mind who I don't know who she is.

Sylvia: Okay.

Keith: Mmm.

Austin: But she is like, in my mind, Darling has been— and this is, you can say no to this.

Sylvia: Sure.

Austin: Middle aged Black woman with facial scars from like Geralt style, fighting monsters—

Sylvia: Sure. Yeah.

Austin: With cornrows, but then very, like, upper crust. Like, you know when Geralt wears fancy clothes, fancy witch hunting clothes?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: It's that vibe.

Sylvia: That's perfect.

Austin: She...we don't see her in the frame of this shot. What we— or, what we see is like an arm on your shoulder, and then like, her mouth down, right, whispering in your ear. But it's a close shot on your face—

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: —so we don't actually see her eyes. We don't see the expression she's making, because we can't read her, because you can't necessarily read her. But she just says to you:

Austin (as Darling): Ask what he wants. You'll be in a position to give all sorts of things.

Sylvia: And the he in this situation she's referring to—

Austin: Lyke.

Sylvia: Lyke.

Austin: Who seems to be pushing back against this.

Sylvia: [softly] Yeah.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Alright. This...Lye. I...I don't think it's doing anybody good for the two of us to just sort of sit here arguing while the situation keeps going. So, I'm just going to say it outright. What do you need from me to get you to go along with this? What are you looking for?

Keith: I...out of character, I am trying to figure out a real answer to this question.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Keith: And I don't know if I have one. I don't know what Virtue has that Lyke wants.

Austin: What— wait, wait, wait. What could Virtue, Queen of Sapodilla, give Lyke?

Keith: Does Lyke understand that that's what's on the table?

Austin: I guess not necessarily, right?

Sylvia: Oh, yeah.

Keith: Right.

Sylvia: I guess she should imply that more.

Keith: I could, because Virtue's being kind of...

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Was being kind of, uh...

Austin: This is true.

Keith: You know, is kind of veiling that still.

Sylvia: Yeah, I can say that outright.

Austin: Well, we could also...we could also go tragically quiet, where like, Lyke could be like, "Well, what if I get these books?" [Austin and Keith laugh] Which is terrible, in a way that's, just we shouldn't do it. But...

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: It's funny, you know?

Keith: It is funny.

Sylvia: I also have some wine, if you want that.

Austin: [laughs] Right, exactly.

Sylvia: Um...yeah.

Austin: But also, if we're interested in going down this route, then we absolutely could do the thing where Virtue spells it out a little bit more clearly, right?

Sylvia: Yeah, I am fine with her being like:

Sylvia (as Virtue): It always pays off to have a powerful friend. And I feel like after this is done, I'd be able to get pretty much anything you'd need.

Keith (as Lyke): God, that's so sinister.

Austin: You're—

Art (as Duvall): No, it's just how things are.

Keith (as Lyke): You're s— hold on. Okay. Duvall.

Art (as Duvall): Mm-hmm.

Keith (as Lyke): She says, "Hey, you should put so much power into me that I can *fulfill your wishes*."

Art (as Duvall): I mean, I'm not looking for like—

Keith (as Lyke): That's sinister.

Art (as Duvall): You know, I'm not looking for like magic wishes. I'm looking for a port in the storm. I'm looking for...I'm looking for for a friend in high places. I'm not looking for, you know, a...

Keith (as Lyke): But what...what...what gives...

Art (as Duvall): A goblet that never runs out of...

Keith (as Lyke): What would give her the high place?

Art (as Duvall): This, here! The same thing that gives Pledge House its high place. We're just moving...we're just moving things around the board.

Keith (as Lyke): I...it just doesn't...I just don't...I just don't...there's nothing. I don't want anything.

Art (as Duvall): You have an evil god in your backpack!

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah, to not have it have power in the world in an evil kind of way.

Art (as Duvall): [doubtful] Mmm.

Keith (as Lyke): It's almost the exact opposite endeavor.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Is it?

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Because it seems like you're—

Art (as Duvall): I think it's to give *you* power.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Yeah.

Keith (as Lyke): No, it's to—

Sylvia (as Virtue): It just sounds like you'd like— you like having a god under your thumb.

Keith (as Lyke): No, it's in my bag! I want to— [Austin and Sylvia laugh] No, it's not. It's the exact opposite. It's the...the...it's like, uh...I'm not taking anything from this, from Aterika'Kaal. I'm trying to give it—

Sylvia (as Virtue): Just holding it hostage.

Keith (as Lyke): I'm trying to give it— no, I'm trying to give it— you want— everybody— not you. I mean, Duvall wanted to kill it! I'm trying to give it a little nice little house. Where it can be good.

[0:40:00]

Art (as Duvall): Yeah, and I'm trying to move this power around where it'll be good! Virtue is our friend and coworker.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Thank you, Duvall.

Keith: There's...I don't...I don't think...I think this is a...this is not a plan that makes practical sense.

Art: Would friend and associate have been better? It's fine.

Sylvia: It's fine. [someone sighs]

Art: Hey, what happens if this doesn't work?

Austin: Is that in character or out of character?

Art: I don't know. [laughs softly] I'm really curious and a little scared.

Austin: You'll find out, I think. I think I have an idea.

Sylvia: I mean, in character I think Virtue's like,

Sylvia (as Virtue): You'd need to get out of there pretty quick.

Austin: Yeah. I have a pretty good idea of...

Art (as Duvall): I *can* turn my body into bugs. [Austin chuckles]

Sylvia (as Virtue): There you go.

Keith (as Lyke): I can't.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Yeah, but you can like open a door to like, fuckin', Becker's place or whatever.

Keith (as Lyke): Yeah, but it has to come back out right here in an hour.

Austin: No, you could stay there. [laughs]

Keith: Right, I could stay there. Yeah, I could stay there.

Art: And you could like walk home, right? [Sylvia laughs] You could take the long way around. It's a place in the world, right?

Keith: Right, it's probably— well, not always!

Sylvia: The bugs could come with you, so Duvall'll be there, keep you company. You know.

Art: We'll see in what way everything turns into nothing. [Sylvia laughs softly] Anyway, the way things—

Keith: Okay.

Art: Out of character. On this show, when we've made big choices like this, the dice usually come up just fine.

Sylvia: Oh, Art, don't say that!

Keith: Also out of character, I want there...I want there to be a way that I can be convinced that this is gonna happen.

Austin: Right.

Keith: Genuinely.

Sylvia: I'm trying.

Keith: I literally do not know how that's possible.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: Like, I don't—

Austin: Do you—

Keith: I do not see a path to where Lyke goes, "Yeah, yeah. Instead of solving the problem, we'll just create a new vampire god."

Austin: Can we zero in on what that— is that because Lyke has a morality in your mind that fundamentally distrusts authority writ large, or power being in a single person's hands, et cetera?

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Despite being a powerful mage?

Keith: I think it's part— I think it's...I think there's like 20 percent that maybe?

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: I think there's a big chunk of that this seems like extremely dangerous and extremely backfireable.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: And I...I think that there's like, um...like, why would you want this? I don't...I don't want this for me. And that...that seems, it seems off.

Austin: Can you...you should ask this in character. And I only say that...I don't only say that because Virtue has “Allude to the events that led you to seek forbidden knowledge to achieve an impossible task” as a beat, but also because I think it would be an interesting way to frame that.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: The other thing I'll raise here that's interesting, which again, I am not like...I don't need this to happen. The world in which you convince Duvall to spin on this is also, I think, interesting. What's interesting is that we're having this character moment. That's what's interesting to me. But I do also think it's possible that we can play Lyke making a mistake here. What's it look like if Lyke— and, again, one, you should ask Virtue why she wants this.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Now that it's come into your mind, like, oh, this is about giving Virtue more power. But two is what's an interesting moment here, if you're interested in Lyke being convinced, where Lyke gets convinced, and then three hours from now, goes, “Oh my god. What the fuck did I do?” Do you know what I mean?

Keith: Yeah. Okay.

Austin: If that's interesting for you to play, do you know what I mean? At the end of the day, what I'm interested in is people playing stuff that's interesting to them, but.

Keith: Cards on the table, I can see how much power is here.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: The idea that someone would go, “Yeah, let me just drink that up.”

Austin: Right.

Keith: That means that then you would be this.

Sylvia: I mean...

Keith: That's just immediately not a trustworthy thing. I don't— I'm struggling to find a way around it.

Sylvia: I do have an answer for the like “why does she want this?” if we want to do that?

Austin: Yeah, let's do that conversation.

Sylvia: That might help.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Or if Lyke is interested in going down that path.

Keith: It's why...why do you want this? And how could that be good or useful for me?

Sylvia (as Virtue): Okay, well, addressing the first part.

Sylvia: I think what Virtue does here is like, just sort of like lowers her collar a bit, so the like stitches, like the decapitation scar is like visible, and is like:

Sylvia (as Virtue): I've already died before. And by that I mean, I am still in the process of dying and being dead. Because of that, I know that at pretty much any time, I'm going to be sort of...

Sylvia: I almost said spirited away, and I was like, that's a movie. [chuckles]

Austin: It still works, though. That's—

Sylvia: I know, yeah.

Austin: They stole that.

Sylvia: Sure.

Sylvia (as Virtue): At any time, I could be spirited away to the Residuum or worse. I am not tethered to this plane the way the rest of you are. And this seems like my only chance at recovering some semblance of actual life. I don't know if there's something in it there for you, but I imagine that you can at least understand the reasoning behind that. Or at least I'd hope.

Keith (as Lyke): But it's too—

Sylvia (as Virtue): When all said and done—

Keith (as Lyke): It's too much.

Sylvia (as Virtue): What? Well, if it's too much, then...and I can't handle it, then a corpse has been taken care of.

Keith (as Lyke): I'm not concerned as much about it being too much for you. I'm concerned about it being too much for the world.

Sylvia (as Virtue): [scoffs] I think that...your solution does seem to me like you're just kicking a can down the road. And if we end up all...if we end up having to do that, fine. But it just sort of seems like you're taking a problem that could be dealt with now, a sort of unchecked, not— as far as we can tell, non-sentient being absorbing slowly the life force of this planet— of this world, or dispersing it, because this wouldn't just go to me. This would go— there's people in that that this would also resurrect and bring back, theoretically. There's lives to be saved here, if that's really what is motivating you. But as far as I can tell, we're at a point where this is mostly just being driven by stubbornness.

Austin (as Darling): What does he want, the *Macula* to rule over whatever's left?

Sylvia (as Virtue): What, do you want the *Macula* to rule over whatever's left? [Art laughs]

Keith (as Lyke): A lot of the *Macula* just got eaten by this thing up there. It would bring them back.

Sylvia (as Virtue): [scoffs] Like four of them did. [laughs softly]

Keith (as Lyke): I don't know. I don't know how—

Sylvia: Oh, you mean this thing. Okay, sorry. I thought you meant the Ravening Beast, sorry. I got mixed up. [Austin laughs]

Keith: No, no, no, no.

Austin: God, the Ravening Beast. Thinking about the Ravening Beast.

Sylvia: Yeah, I don't know. Like, I'm making all my arguments here, but I'm starting to run out.

Keith: Yeah. I don't know.

Keith (as Lyke): Duvall, what do you think?

Austin: An impasse is interesting. Yeah, go ahead, Duvall.

Art (as Duvall): I think we should do it.

Keith (as Lyke): Why do you think that?

Art (as Duvall): Because I trust our friend Virtue.

Austin: God, I love this. This is literally the thing that happened to you, Lyke, at Bell Metal. It's literally the thing. This is Erm saying "I trust my friend Calen."

Art (as Duvall): And if you don't want to do that, I found a solution that maybe is better.

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

Art (as Duvall): Why?

Keith (as Lyke): I'm busy with Aterika'Kaal.

Austin: [laughs] Yeah, that makes it sound...that makes it sound noble! [Keith chuckles]

Art (as Duvall): Power for you, scraps for everyone else. That's what I hear.

Keith (as Lyke): It's not power for me! It's not really even power for Aterika'Kaal that much. It's just—

Sylvia (as Virtue): [scoffs] The man with a god in this bag can't see how that's power for him.

Keith: I take it out.

Keith (as Lyke): Look at it!

Austin: Oh, it wants— it's...you take it out, and it is like clawing trying to get out of the jar. It wants to connect to this thing *so bad*. It's so hungry.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Are you kidding me?

Keith: And it's— that's bad that it wants that.

Austin: And you're denying it? You're denying it this?

Keith: Yes.

Austin: You're hurting it right now.

Keith: Look, I saved it.

Austin: It's mewling at you. It wants to connect to oratorio *right now*.

Keith: But it's a little thing in a little jar.

Austin: It's growing! The presence, its presence here is making it grow.

Keith (as Lyke): Alright, we gotta put— I gotta— I'll put it back in the bag. But I hope that I have illustrated the difference between these two things. [Austin laughs]

Art (as Duvall): What?

Sylvia (as Virtue): Ah, yes. The god in his backpack is growing stronger, as far as I can tell. He has demonstrated it exceedingly well. Good job.

Keith (as Lyke): I'm— okay. Not allowing this to happen. We're not doing it.

Keith: I— this is— the refusal to see the difference between the gigantic monster god and the little plant has now made— Lyke is now like mad about this. Like:

[0:50:00]

Keith (as Lyke): This is absurd that you want this. It's absurd, Duvall, that you're going— that you're just like, that you think this is somehow a good deal for us? It doesn't make any— it just doesn't make any sense.

Art (as Duvall): I mean, my second choice is we should destroy them both.

Sylvia: Yeah, I'm just not...at this point, like out of spite, if we're not doing mine, we're doing the one where we make Aterika'Kaal eat it.

Sylvia (as Virtue): I still think there's a complete lack of vision here.

Keith (as Lyke): We draw a magic circle. We do a ritual. It's done. It's dangerous, but it's done. Status quo, boom.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Ugh.

Keith (as Lyke): Nobody gets the power of a giant massive god.

Art (as Duvall): And you don't have to give up the power of your giant massive god.

Keith (as Lyke): It's not giant massive! It's in a little thing!

Art (as Duvall): It's getting bigger all the time!

Keith (as Lyke): It's getting bigger, 'cause we're spending so much time not sealing this thing away.

Art (as Duvall): Well, just find another thing. The world is full of things. You can't say that you get to experiment with these things and no one else does. It's not wisdom, it's selfish.

Keith (as Lyke): It's a...it is...it is fundamentally different.

Art (as Duvall): Why?

Keith (as Lyke): The size. The size thing.

Sylvia (as Virtue): [sound of disagreement]

Keith (as Lyke): It's tiny. It almost got killed by accident yesterday.

Art (as Duvall): But size is relative and changing.

Keith (as Lyke): Right, the relative size between these two things is a puddle and an ocean.

Art (as Duvall): But you're trying to cultivate an ocean.

Keith (as Lyke): No, I'm trying to put the puddle in a puddle box. I'm trying to do with Aterika'Kaal the same thing that I want to do to this thing! It's just that this one is destroying the world. The other one is so small that it can be in my backpack for a little bit while I figure it out.

Art (as Duvall): But that's just waiting for someone else to come along and figure this out.

Keith (as Lyke): Us. We came along. We have to figure it out.

Art (as Duvall): But someone— if we put it in a box, someone else will come along and put it in their backpack.

Keith (as Lyke): I don't know why you think that, by the way. That's not— I mean...

Sylvia (as Virtue): I mean, the thing worth pointing out here, I think, is that we don't know if Davia Pledge would be, like, versed enough with magic to undo that, but I'm willing to assume that she is. Like, she helped create this thing and like has orchestrated this whole—mm, no pun intended—has orchestrated this whole like situation.

Austin: Ah, that's a better name for this. The Orchestration of Davia Pledge is actually better.

Sylvia: [laughs] I was gonna say The Weird Zone should have been the name of the arc, but you know.

Austin: Ah, yeah, mm-hmm. You're right.

Sylvia (as Virtue): But yeah, I just...it feels like both...it feels like short sighted in a lot of ways.

Sylvia: That's Virtue saying that. She knows that she's like, totally being [laughs softly] like two-faced about this.

Sylvia (as Virtue): But also, there's...I don't understand why you're so committed to this like state of inertia with everything. You're trying to keep everything under glass, in your backpack, et cetera.

Keith (as Lyke): Because when it's not in glass, it eats the world. And you are not glass.

Sylvia (as Virtue): And I'm not gonna eat the world either.

Keith (as Lyke): I don't know. I don't know what happens to a person when you shove a giant god machine monster into them.

Austin: Actually, deep in your, the back of your mind, you hear it call. You have a pretty good idea of what happens. It's in you. It wants to eat you, and also it wants to be you. The Ravening Beast. You have a pretty good, close, emotional feeling of what that desire is like. It's kind of, you know, always there in some ways. Braying in the distance. And I'm...I'm...this is...this is me showing a barrel of a gun. You don't have to— don't roll— eh, you know? Take...Lyke, I think it

is. Let me know if you think this is fair. Take two mind stress from everything that is happening right now. From your friends telling you that they want to turn one of them into a weird, powerful conduit for this god.

Keith: Do I have to roll fallout on that?

Austin: I think so. I think— I was gonna say no, but let's roll it. Yeah, twelve. You're fine.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: But what that is is the Ravening Call emerging from the patch of shadows in your mind. It is...it is calling out to you in this moment. And then maybe it's calling out to you in a different way, which is like, "Just let me at them. We'd end this right now." There are many ways in which you are also a glass jar.

Keith: Or not a glass jar.

Austin: Right.

Keith: Wait.

Austin: Well, this is the question. You know, a glass jar is a glass jar until it's shattered.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Right? Which is also the core of the argument about Aterika'Kaal in so many ways, right? Is...I think that this is a fair summation of these things. Let me see if I'm— let me see if I'm representing the Duvall and Lyke positions correctly, here. For Lyke—

Keith: The Duvall and...

Austin: No, no, no. The opposite positions, here.

Keith: Oh, okay. Gotcha. Okay.

Austin: For Lyke, Aterika'Kaal was once an ocean, was once a monstrous huge thing.

Keith: Right.

Austin: But now is manageable and could maintain being manageable.

Keith: Right.

Austin: And that's desirable.

Keith: Yes.

Austin: Even though it seems like a being that wants to continue to grow and consume to return to the type of being it was before, that it is better to let it live in the safety of a bounded box, a bounded space, than to kill it outright.

Keith: Right.

Austin: And that those bounded— that you can trust that those bounded spaces will be safe—

Keith: Yes.

Austin: Because you've done the work to make them safe. And that that is a risk worth taking. If it is a risk, it's a risk worth taking. For Duvall, the answers are either kill the thing because you cannot trust the glass to hold. The glass may as well not exist, because eventually someone is going to lift the glass, or the lift the lid on the glass jar, or is going to— the glass is gonna fall and break, and it's going to harm people. Or to redirect that energy into something you can trust, that is maybe still a risk but is a more trustworthy risk, which is your friend Virtue. That power cannot be...for Lyke, power can be contained and directed. For Duvall, it either has to be snuffed out or given to a person you trust, put in the hands of something that you trust. It can't just be itself. I think that that's a summary of the positions. I think those are fair pos—

Art: Yeah, with a little bit of—

Austin: Yeah.

Art: —you know, the distrust inherent in that Lyke did this in secret.

Austin: Right, also this is all— right. If— that Lyke explicitly hid this for so long undercuts a lot of the argument— a lot of the position that he's holding and introduces distrust that this is actually what he believes. And in fact, maybe he wants power also.

Keith (as Lyke): Well, I think that we can tell that, now that it's being used against me, why I would have kept it secret. [Austin laughs]

Sylvia: Oh my god. [chuckles]

Art (as Duvall): That's kinda circular.

Keith (as Lyke): If I thought you'd be cool about it, I would have told you. But you're— but I was obviously right.

Sylvia: I will say, a sort of like fail-safe has occurred to me, if part of the worry is like that things would...I mean, I guess, Lyke's worry is more that things would go right for me. [Austin chuckles] But you still have Aterika'Kaal that could theoretically, like, eat the power after the fact that this is done or like...

Austin: That's true.

Sylvia: Like, you can do that afterwards if it turns out like, uh oh, made the wrong decision.

Austin: Right. There is a sort of weird—

Keith: Okay.

Austin: —order of operations in terms of...in terms of how this could go, also, which is very funny to think about.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: In any case, we should figure out a way of resolving this in a way that, as co-storytellers, we're interested in. Whether that ends up coming down to dice and rolls, whether that is a character walking away or a character drawing a weapon. Like, whatever that is, we should get to what that resolution is, 'cause I think we've done a good job of illustrating the positions.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Also, I didn't enunciate Virtue's position in this, because I'm pretty sure Virtue's position in this is: [Sylvia laughs softly] this is a way for me to immediately become more powerful—

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: —at a rate and speed that I didn't know was available until a moment ago, right? Okay.

Sylvia: This is literally everything I've been hoping for. [laughs softly]

Austin: Right, right.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: So yeah, do we think that this is a thing where it comes to blows? Is this a thing where the force of Lyke's argument dissuades Virtue and Duvall? Is this a situation where...

Keith: Doesn't seem like that's the case.

Sylvia: I, yeah.

Austin: That doesn't seem like it's in character for Virtue, especially. Duvall, maybe, but not...but, eh, hard to say. Y'all certainly aren't voting on it. It doesn't feel like that's the vibe.

Keith: No. I would— I do not—

Austin: 'Cause Lyke is vetoing.

Keith: As the losing party—

Austin: Yeah. Uh huh.

Keith: —I do not support the vote. [Austin and Sylvia laugh]

Sylvia: Uh, boy.

Austin: So, what do we...what are we interested in here?

Keith: Uh, I had been considering being like, "Fuck it, I'm out." Um. But this, the stakes are so high that I don't think I could even safely do that, let alone like sort of justify it.

[1:00:10]

Austin: You like find your—

Art: I mean, that's the fun thing, is you're the only person who can unilaterally do one of these solutions.

Keith: Sort of.

Austin: But that's the Aterika'Kaal one, that...

Art: Right.

Austin: He doesn't want to do.

Art: Right. But that's the way you can...you can end it without anyone else.

Keith: Right. Yeah. But I've been...I've been working on that since like the first session of gameplay, so I don't want to just be like, "Okay, and so now we're just using it as a doorstep."

Austin: I mean, to be clear, just to be clear, it wouldn't be a doorstep. It would be a very— it would become...it would also become massive. But it wouldn't be...it wouldn't grow indefinitely, you know?

Keith: Right. They would be each other's box.

Austin: It would effectively take half of the size of what it is now. Exactly. Yeah.

Keith: But I don't—

Austin: In my mind, we would get a strange blended god of machine and plant life that just takes up this entire harbor and is just like constantly...this would become a tier four tile.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: In the way that the heart is in a game of *Heart: The City Beneath*, you know?

Keith: Right. So, it would sort of be...it wouldn't be a win, it would be...it wouldn't be like we fixed it, it would just be like we have contained a massive amount of damage to a tile.

Austin: That is correct. Yeah. So, so I get your doorstep analogy. Your doorstep analogy isn't incorrect—

Keith: Right.

Austin: But the door is as big as the city.

Keith: Right, it's a giant door. It's a—

Austin: The door is the size of Dallas or whatever. Dallas is huge.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: That's not a good example. But you know what I'm saying. [chuckles] Also, just to— we have...just so people know who are listening. We have, out of character in our chat, done...Sylvi made a check in. Keith checked it. Like, we're all good. We're not— there's no like—

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: No one's fists are clenched here, I believe. But if anyone wants to take five minutes to like, get water or chill before we make big decisions here, I'm fine with that. I would be...I would support that fully.

[pause]

Austin: After some deep breaths, how we are we f— what are we thinking? Not deep breaths. No one was heated, so I don't think that was actually...I don't want to misrepresent the vibe.

(??? 1:02:14) [funny exaggerated voice] Ooh, I'm so mad. [Austin and Sylvia laugh]

Sylvia: I did think of like a [chuckles] bargain I could make that I don't think would get got, anyone would go for, but might help, I don't know, at least spur some conversation. Which was:

Sylvia (as Virtue): If we don't do this and you want to keep it in the— put another thing in a box, you give one of us Aterika'Kaal. [laughs softly] Um, preferably me, obviously.

Keith (as Lyke): Give it...give it to you? Like, what do you mean give it to you?

Sylvia (as Virtue): We keep it in our backpack, and it's ours now, and we do with it what we want.

Keith (as Lyke): No, absolutely not.

Sylvia: Yeah. See? Like, I'm like...there's, you know.

Keith: Out of character, I think that the solution to this level— level, Jesus Christ. [Austin laughs]

Sylvia: Aaah.

Keith: The solution to this session.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Will give me the move that I need to—

Austin: Right.

Keith: —close out the Aterika'Kaal thing for me.

Sylvia: Okay.

Austin: Which is the thing that gives you Stone Chorus, right?

Keith: Right, exactly. The Stone Chorus minor.

Austin: That lets you make Stone Chorus a specific place. You would start visiting Aterika'Kaal's realm.

Keith: Right. Yeah.

Austin: Instead of...yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: Like, so, full disclosure, the thing that we've been working towards is that—

Sylvia: Okay.

Keith: —is that Aterika'Kaal will be the new Stone Chorus place where we go to, like, all get healed and stuff.

Austin: Mm-hmm. I'm sure people are gonna love it.

Keith: Yeah. People are gonna love it. I mean, but it's gonna heal everybody! So, yeah, people are gonna love it.

Art: Wait, we don't get cool new gods anymore?

Austin: You're turning people against this now. [Sylvia laughs softly]

Keith: We can do— I can do both. I don't think it lets me not do that.

Austin: I don't think that's true. I think you lock it in.

Keith: I don't think so.

Austin: I'm pretty sure you do, but...this doesn't actually matter, 'cause I get why you want the move. And also, we do whatever we want. But it does— it is written such. But anyway. I mean, things could go bad, and you could lose access to it. But anyway. That has been what you're building to, in the same way that Virtue has been building towards trying to claim some sort of vampirism again.

Keith: Yeah. Right. Yeah. Which is why I'm trying not to be a spoilsport.

Austin: I mean, the thing that's ironic is going along with this plan will rescue people from peril. You will get your minor beat, and you can take that move. And it would get you “Slay a beast that's at least five times your size.” You'd get both of those beats.

Keith: Yeah, no, I—

Austin: And this is a great illustration of why you don't...those beats are not the whole of the story of what you believe, you know?

Keith: Right. I could have saved that guy earlier and gotten that.

Austin: Yeah, absolutely. Totally.

Keith: I would already have it—

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Keith: —but I didn't think that I should save that guy.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: It was too dangerous to stay there. I don't know.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: You know, I decided in the moment to not save him on purpose.

Austin: Don't worry, Virtue tried anyway.

Keith: Right.

Sylvia: [insincere] Yeah. Very hard. We almost had him out of there. But it just...you know. We were too late.

Austin: It just didn't come together.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Uh huh. [Sylvia laughs]

Keith: Um. So, okay, I don't want to...I don't want to ruin...I'm...

Austin: Well, it's not about ruining it. It's about finding an interesting thing that allows you to remain Lye Lychen.

Keith: Right.

Austin: But feel like you're playing Lye Lychen.

Keith: Yes.

Austin: Do you think Lye Lychen, at this point, is like, I'm going to stop you from doing this using force of power? Using physical force, using magical force.

Keith: I'm close. I'm...like...yeah, I think that there's...I think Lyke knows about this sort of thing. Has been— I mean, has been reading about gods for—

Austin: Oh yeah.

Keith: —several episodes now.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Knows about like, power, like magic power, like actual power power, and wanting it and having it. And this seems like a...I think that— I don't think that...in the conversation that we've been having trying to convince Lyke, I think it has done the opposite and made it harder for me to see a path forward.

Austin: Yeah, which I think is— which is important, because I think that that is playing a character correct— like, to who they are. You know, I don't think that we should paper over. That's an important and—

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: —meaningful difference between you and these other people. Lyke doesn't have to go forward with it. We can move into figuring out how we would like to do any sort of, if there is a PvP, if there is, you know, inter-party conflict, what that looks like. But I would want to make sure every player is interested in going down that— or not just every player. Every player's interested in going down that road, and then also, narratively, the characters are all ready to commit to that. I think— I suspect Virtue is.

Sylvia: Yeah. I just feel like it would have been a bad look to start, uh, the violence myself.

Keith: Lyke doesn't have to attack someone, because you can't do this without me.

Austin: That's not necessarily true.

Keith: Okay.

Sylvia: I was gonna say, is that true?

Austin: We don't know that that's true.

Keith: I...

Austin: You're assuming that.

Keith: I think Lyke thinks it's true, at least.

Austin: Yeah. I'm not sure that that's true.

Keith: Okay. But I think— I still think Lyke thinks it's true.

Austin: Right.

Art: I'm not interested in doing violence.

Austin: Duvall and Art.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Okay. If it came down to it, does Duvall just stand back as these two people start doing shit? Or, more importantly, sorry.

Art: I don't know. We'll see what that looks like and what happens.

Austin: More importantly, Art, are you not interested in this narrative beat being resolved by violence?

Art: No, I might be, but...but Duvall doesn't feel like hurting Lyke over this.

Keith: Right. And—

Austin: Right, right, right.

Keith: But if Virtue does feel like hurting me over this, doesn't that help my argument?

Austin: But Virtue just said that she— uh, Sylvi just said she would not strike first.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: Oh. Oh, okay. Sorry. I misheard. I thought you said—

Austin: She explicitly said that she wouldn't.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Keith: I thought I heard that you said that you would.

Austin: No.

Keith: So, sorry, my mistake.

Sylvia: No. Like, it's...she would welcome it if things went that way—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Because it would be easier than talking someone into things, but...

Keith: Right.

Sylvia: She's not going to actively do that, when someone here is still on her side.

Austin: Right.

Keith: Well, I'll say that because I may be wrong about this, I'll say it as Lyke out loud. I'll say:

Keith (as Lyke): It doesn't matter if you want to do this or not. You can't do it without me, and I'm not doing it.

Sylvia (as Virtue): I'd be willing to put that to the test. I don't know that we don't need you— that we need you to do it. [sighs] And I feel like this is my best shot for something like this.

Keith: I'm just gonna ignore that and start drawing my ritual, with my toe, just sort of doing...

Austin: Uh huh.

Keith: Doing circles and shapes on the ground.

Austin: Uh, you can't. This is not a thing you can just half-ass. You cannot do it with your toe. Like, this...

Keith: Okay, I'll do it with a stick and (??? 1:09:02)

Austin: You're trying to contain a massive god. You have to, like, attend to this. This is a long ex— in the same way that for Virtue, Virtue is to go start trying to like figure out how to plug herself into a machine god safely. Both of you—

Keith: I'll say that I wasn't being flippant by saying I was doing my toe, that's just how I imagined that I would do it.

Austin: Okay. Okay. But in other words, like, there isn't a way to do either of these things in a quiet and unseen way. That is, to do it right.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Like, we're talking about doing the thing that comes at the end of a book, you know what I mean? [chuckles]

Keith: Yeah. Right. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: And this is not a small feat, no matter which of the things we do. None of these— none of the three options that each of you found is a small feat. The Aterika'Kaal one is the easiest, but could still break bad, you know?

Keith: Yeah. What I was meaning to convey was that I'm just starting my thing.

Austin: Yes. Okay.

Keith: And everyone can see.

Austin: Yep.

Sylvia: I mean, if that's the case, I might go just start *my* thing. I mean...

[1:10:00]

Austin: This'll be a fun one to see how it interacts. Duvall, what are you doing as your two friends go off to start doing their own things?

Art: I mean, this...I mean, if I wish— I wish that— are we still in a delve? Is this still during a delve?

Austin: No, you completed the delve. You have your thing back.

Art: Mmm. But I can't...

Austin: A new situation.

Art: I can't let the bees steer my body for me.

Austin: Why?

Art: Because that has to be during a delve.

Austin: I see. Yeah, no, we're done the delve, unfortunate.

Keith: But— oh, so you were gonna let the bees decide what to do? [laughs]

Art: Yeah. Uh huh.

Austin: I mean, you could still let the bees decide.

Art: Right. I just can't...mechanically...

Austin: Mechanically, yeah, exactly.

Keith: Yeah, yeah. You would have to choose to listen to them.

Art: Be rested by it, I guess.

Austin: Right. The bees want to do the Virtue thing and also interject— inject themselves into that also, obviously.

Art: Right.

Austin: Right?

Art: That's not exciting.

Austin: But that's what they want.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Like, there's a difference— you know...if you want to make it more exciting for you in that way, there are ways in which this could be a new Sleeping City. Right? It's fine to have your friend be the queen of Sapodilla, the Vampire Queen of Sapodilla. But what if Sapodilla...what if she was the vampire queen of like, the coolest city in Sangfielle? [laughs] What if she was at a place where like everything worked right? And, you know, the bees were there, or the bugs were there to help make sure that like, the thing that the Macula did couldn't be done again, because instead, the bugs would be the officiators over things. Whether or not Virtue would agree to that, that's not...they wouldn't ask permission. They would just, as you start working on things, start to seed the machine, you know? Get themselves involved. So that's what they would do, for sure. New hive.

Art: Sure, and I don't mind sprinkling some bug around.

Austin: [chuckles] You, I don't know what— or not you, the non remaining— the part of Duvall that does not defer to the bugs.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I don't know. That's a question that...I mean, you could also tell me what the bugs actually want is different than what I just said, and I would allow you to do that. But I can't tell you what the non-bug part of Duvall wants. I don't think I have insight there that you don't.

Art: No, yeah, that sounds fair.

Austin: Maybe these are the two images you see in the Zahir: bug Duvall and the part of Duvall that is not bug. It sounds like we got two rolls?

Sylvia: [uncertain] Yeah.

Austin: Yeah?

Sylvia: I mean, I'm happy to roll.

Austin: I think both of you should roll, and we should see what happens.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Because the successes could tell the story here, you know?

Keith: Yeah.

Sylvia: Um.

Keith: God damnit.

Austin: Duvall, you're helping.

Art: I don't know that I want to mechanically help Virtue.

Austin: If you want the bee thing to happen— if you want the bug thing to happen, that requires you to mechanically help.

Sylvia: Can I just like, get ahead— like Duvall, if you want to help like fictionally, cool. I am planning on using Unorthodox Methods here.

Austin: Ah, okay.

Sylvia: Which, once per session, before you roll the dice, you can just state that it's a six and you take stress.

Austin: Well, that's smart, then.

Sylvia: Yeah. I just remembered that I had it, when we were on break.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: And I was like, oh yeah.

Art: Yeah. Well, I have no stress—

Sylvia: Same.

Art: —so this is the best time I have for helping on that.

Austin: Alright, it's rolls. I guess, then, Lyke, let's talk about your roll.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I guess, let's do this— let's do the stress. We should do the stress on Virtue, since you said you're just gonna take the six, right?

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: One second.

Keith: What's that stress die look like?

Austin: Bad.

Sylvia: Yeah, I've no idea. I'm very curious.

Austin: It's bad. You're going to take— or, I mean, maybe I roll well.

Sylvia: I have zero right now. There's a chance.

Austin: This is true. This is true. Uh, one second.

Sylvia: Ugh.

Austin: I'm just trying to see, 'cause it's...what it is is the highest it goes.

Sylvia: I know. I'm like shaky right now. [laughs]

Keith: It's six, seven are success and with stress, and it's eight and nine...

Austin: Eight and nine are success without stress, and ten is a crit. You might both end up succeeding here, which is very fascinating to me. Fun. Alright, let me see something.

Keith: Sorry if I seal you away in a fracture.

Austin: Well, we'll see.

Sylvia: That's super interesting, so, you know.

Austin: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Alright, here we go. Yeah, it's gonna be D12, so. Virtue, take four. Um...what is this stress? This is...it's probably echo stress, if we're being honest.

Sylvia: Okay.

Austin: Though—

Sylvia: I still don't have protection for that, so.

Austin: Yeah, absolutely not. So yeah, go ahead and take—

Sylvia: Oh wait, no, I do.

Austin: 'Cause it resol— cause it went away. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sylvia: 'Cause I resolved— 'cause it got turned into the meat sight thing.

Austin: So, what? You have one, so take three, and then roll your fallout test. No fallout.

Sylvia: Hehehe. I rolled a twelve.

Austin: You did roll a twelve. Uh, Lye. This is—

Art: Wait, wait. You have to assign me stress. I helped on the roll.

Austin: Oh, you did help. No, I thought you said you didn't help on the roll. You did.

Art: No, I did help.

Austin: You did.

Art: Once I learned it was the six thing.

Austin: I see. I see, I see, I see, I see. You want the bugs in place, so...

Keith: Oh, right.

Art: I guess Virtue could...I guess I can't...I can't...uh...

Austin: Mmm. You could int— I guess—

Art: I can't make you let me help. We didn't really establish that.

Sylvia: I'm fine with you helping on that. Like, if you—

Art: Alright.

Austin: Yeah. This is fun.

Sylvia: Like, I think the bug thing is interesting enough that I'm like, whatever. Its cool.

Austin: Take—

Art: This is also echo?

Austin: Let's say it is. Let's say it is. Two echo. Give me that roll. It'd be very funny if you got fallout on this, with very— with only two.

Sylvia: Happened to me earlier.

Austin: It's possible.

Art: Happened to— I feel like I...I'd have to check the tapes, but...

Sylvia: Literally. [laughs softly]

Art: Ha!

Austin: He got it. He got it. He got minor.

Sylvia: Exact same roll I got earlier.

Keith: Oh my god.

Austin: That's unbelievable. Uh, while I figure out what that is, let's talk about Lyke. What are you rolling? You're rolling...uh...

Keith: It would be...

Austin: Mend, probably? Mend...

Keith: And occult.

Austin: Occult or religion? Yeah.

Art: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Yeah. I'm gonna...

Austin: And this is dangerous.

Keith: I'm gonna use my Aterika'Kaal ritual knife, which is good.

Austin: I imagine.

Keith: I'm doing a ritual.

Austin: Yeah. Mm-hmm. What are you doing with it? So it brings it down from dangerous to risky.

Keith: Yeah. Um...we already talked about maybe not using my toe to draw this out, being more precise. Maybe I use the knife. Very precise.

Austin: Yeah, you're using the knife. Yeah, very precise.

Keith: To draw it out.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Maybe there's some sort of blood magic here.

Austin: Could be.

Keith: Uh...

Austin: I could imagine that being a key thing here. Sure.

Keith: I'm...

Austin: Your engine starter, your— again, we talked about the painting being split being a similar thing. Things being opened produce a sort of magical jolt.

Keith: Yeah. Um...and I'm toying with the idea of asking the question, what would it take for that to not be my blood and maybe be Aterika'Kaals blood, because we know that Aterika'Kaal as a god might have—

Austin: I think—

Keith: —some sort of counterbalancing power here.

Austin: [stammers, amused] You're asking what it would take, as in...

Keith: Would this—

Austin: As in what?

Keith: Would this— I don't mind if it's dangerous for me—

Austin: It would be—

Keith: —but I don't want it to be dangerous for Aterika'Kaal.

Austin: It would...Keith, it would be dangerous for Aterika'Kaal. And for you. It would be dangerous because it might lead to...it would absolutely open the door to the thing where Aterika'Kaal just overwhelms you.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: And to end— and begins to devour this god back.

Keith: Well, this is why I was...

Austin: You're asking.

Keith: Trepidatious.

Austin: Yes. Yes.

Keith: So, I'm not gonna do that.

Austin: I think that would— okay. Yeah.

Keith: I'm gonna do it just to me, then.

Austin: Okay. Sure. Uh, what I would— here's— hmm, what would I say? I would say...no, yeah, I don't think there's...I'm sure there's some sort of fun way that we could juggle the

dangerousness, where it's like, if you do it with Aterika'Kaal's blood it's less— the whole ritual becomes easier, but you da-da-da-da-da. Do you know what I mean? It's like...

Keith: Right.

Austin: But to get the blood would be dangerous in the first place, so I think it probably ends up cancelling itself out.

Keith: Okay. And, uh...I don't really have...

Austin: There's nothing you want to burn for Sacrifice?

Keith: No. The only occult thing I have left is this ritual knife.

Austin: Could be time to use it. You know, you put it at the center of the thing you've drawn, the ritual...like, what is this? Is this a bunch of like, shapes in the ground? It's not really dirt here, by the way. It's like metal. So you're like scratching into metal.

Keith: Yeah, I...

Austin: Which also makes sense with the knife again.

Keith: Right. So, um...I think actually— so, there's...I think that there's like a boundary, right? I scratched in a boundary. And I think I've...I think I've written out like in literal, clear language, like actual words, what it is I want to do. Like, I've just spelled out, scratched into the metal, "I want to contain the power of this god inside of a fracture to keep it from devouring Sangfielle."

Austin: Okay. And then you added your blood to it. And presumably, there is something, some element of magical direction. That sounds like a, again, let's call this mend and then occult, dangerous. Are you gonna sacrifice the knife or you're gonna keep the knife?

Keith: Uh...I mean, all it will do is save me from taking up to six stress.

Austin: This is true.

Keith: Right? So, no.

Austin: Yeah, that's true. Yeah.

Keith: Like, it's already giving me that dangerous to risky.

Austin: Correct. Yes. So, so, yeah. So, we're at risky. You're rolling three dice right now? You're rolling mend and occult? Plus one? So, that's scary.

Keith: Rough roll.

Austin: It all comes down to this.

Keith: Six.

Austin: Succeed at a—

Keith: Two sixes.

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. This is this...wait. No, Keith.

[1:20:03]

Keith: Yeah, that's—

Austin: You didn't make it risky.

Keith: Oh.

Austin: It's dangerous. That six goes away.

Keith: I didn't make it risky?

Austin: That's three, five. That's difficulty: standard.

Keith: Shit.

Austin: Uh huh. [typing] Take three.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: That's not so bad. Take three blood, as tendrils appear to try to like scratch at you and scrape at you to stop you from doing the thing you're doing. No fallout. That's not bad. You know, it knocks the knife away from you. You're hurrying to get this done before Virtue can do what she is trying to do. Virtue, what's this look like on your side?

Sylvia: Um. [sighs] I'm wondering, like, if she'd have to, like enter the machine or something? Like, to do this.

Austin: Yeah. I think so. Yeah.

Sylvia: I think that like has to be part of it.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: 'Cause I think—

Austin: Do you like go into the middle of the original...

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: The first bit of the machine, basically?

Sylvia: Yeah, and I think like, it's...I'm trying to figure out like if she needs to, like, connect herself to it. (??? 1:21:05)

Austin: I think so. Yeah.

Sylvia: Would make sense, right? Like, she specifically also like, when she like, dissected that guy, [laughs softly] like, figured out how that worked.

Austin: That is the reason you're able to do this, by the way.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: To go back to Lyke saying, "I think I'm the only one who can do this." It was you studying the specifics and doing that— doing that by yourself, learning the mechanism of how to connect yourself to this thing is the thing that you needed to learn how to do to get that power, right?

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: That's what I said at the time. So, that is the...

Art: And the help looks like, uh...looks like a fun bug cocoon helping. A fun little like...

Austin: I guess. So yeah, do you like cocoon her in there?

Sylvia: Oh!

Art: Like, shield.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Art: Yeah.

Sylvia: Like that's like helping like...

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Stitch her in and shit.

Austin: Yeah. Uh huh.

Sylvia: Trying to be vague. [laughs softly]

Austin: Yeah. Yeah, we don't need to...we don't need to zoom in in that way.

Art: Nope. Whatever you at home think is fine.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Pretty cool, right?

Austin: I've actually decided...by the way, can you move your, that, uh...actually, you can leave it in echo. I'm just gonna give you, Duvall...I'll give you the option. Do you want this to be in mind or echo? Because I'm gonna give you mind fallout here, Duvall. I guess it doesn't matter—

Art: Mmm.

Austin: —'cause I'm giving you the fallout, so it's clearing anyway, so it doesn't matter where it is.

Art: Right. In a normal circumstance, I can't...I only have very specific ways I can clear mind stress, so it would...

Austin: Right. Right. So, it would be better, but it doesn't matter, 'cause it's clearing immediately. 'Cause remember, you got...you got, uh...

Art: Right.

Austin: So all session, you've been— and not just this session, but in the past too, you've talked about like, I don't do magic. I'm not a magic person. I'm giving you the the fallout
Collateral Magic: “Your panicked mind breaks for a second and re-forms in an arcane pattern. Down here, the old magics of blood and bone work better than they do on the surface. You immediately cast Etheric Scourge on a nearby ally but mark no stress for doing so. This fallout can be upgraded—see if Etheric Resonance below. Immediate.” And Etheric Scourge says: “Mark D6 stress to cast this spell. A nearby target takes D6 stress as raw magic boils out of you and into them, burning their hair and skin.”

Art: So, just like a fun thing to think about as we approach the next few seconds.

Austin: Yeah.

Art: Do you think Sacred Geometry applies? If it's a six?

Austin: If it's a six. No, 'cause we're still in the five zone. Right?

Art: Oh, but would it apply if it's a five?

Austin: Oh, if you roll a five on damage? Yes.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: Absolutely.

Art: Okay. 'Cause I don't know if it's...I don't know how...I don't know any of this shit works.
[laughs softly]

Austin: No, it's...uh, me either.

Art: Yeah.

Austin: But I think that this is about like, this travels back to you. Like, your bugs start to go into this thing, and then one of them comes back to you carrying a bit of the energy from this machine. And it just like zaps through you, and now you have this spell, Etheric Scourge. Do you want to flip a die— do you want to flip a coin? To just figure out who you hit? Where do you...where do you...do you naturally push it towards Lyke? Do you naturally push it towards...towards Virtue?

Art: I'll flip a coin, yeah.

Keith: I'll say that you did specifically go over to where Virtue is.

Austin: Yeah, but it's magic. It's a magic blast. Right?

Keith: Yeah, I guess that's true.

Austin: You're also not that far away from each other. I didn't— I rolled it without saying who's who. Who's who, here? One is who?

Art: Um, Lyke is one.

Austin: Okay.

Art: Virtue is two.

Austin: Virtue's two. Lyke. [dismayed/amused breath] That's a six.

Art: I just want to point out that it was equally likely to be one or two the second time, that the first—

Austin: Yeah.

Art: The first had no effect on the...

Sylvia: Uh huh.

Austin: Yeah, that's how probabilities work. We know this. Right?

Keith: Uh, no. I'm still upset about it.

Austin: Oh, okay. That's also how probabilities work, unfortunately. [laughs]

Sylvia: Hey, at least he didn't roll a six— or, a five. [chuckles]

Austin: It's true.

Sylvia: Coulda...you know.

Austin: This is blood. Take six blood, Lyke.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: As, it seems to me, as if Duvall has blasted you— or seems to you as if a magical bolt has slammed into your blood. [Sylvia laughs softly] Stress. Wait, that's not...

Art: Wait, you can't see the whole...

Austin: What?

Keith: That's weird.

Art: Wait, how is it versus five?

Austin: It can't be versus five.

Art: Didn't you just take—

Keith: Oh, I had to just click away. I didn't click away. Okay. Let me—

Austin: Is it...yeah. Well, wait, wait, wait. Is it—

Keith: So, do I just lose it? What does that mean?

Austin: Uh, you need—

Art: You keep the seven.

Austin: You keep the seven, and it needed to be under...ten? is where you're at now?

Keith: I'm at ten, yeah.

Austin: Or needed to be over ten. So yeah, you take major blood fallout here. Right?

Keith: Fuck.

Austin: I think this is probably...uh...I think that is...oh. This is fun. This is fun and bad. And this— Keith, how much— how mad do you want Lyke to leave this scene? Like, how furious do you want Lyke...because there are versions of this where I'm like, you're just tired, or you get pa— like that— alright, the one— I'll just lift the ones that— I'll say the things that I'm thinking of here.

Keith: Wait, before you tell me. I don't want to know yet. Without knowing how bad my fallout is about to be, I'll tell you the things that I have been thinking of wanting to do.

Austin: Yes.

Keith: I considered again—and dismissed again—just fucking off.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Keith: And so, I'm left now with: ignoring it and just trying to do my roll again, and fuck it, and if I get hit again I get hit again. Attacking Duvall.

Austin: Uh huh.

Keith: Or using Sanctum of the Stone Chorus specifically to go and heal.

Austin: To just bounce.

Keith: Or using Mark of the Weaver on myself.

Austin: Okay, so the thing that I want to give you is Critical Injury: “You take a hit somewhere vital. The GM picks a skill you have access to, and you no longer have access to that skill. For example, a hit to your sword arm could remove kill, an eye injury could remove discern, ripped tendons in your fingers could remove mend.” I'm guessing you know what I'm giving you.

Keith: Uh, you're gonna...you're gonna do the, um...whichever one wasn't mend.

Austin: The— no, I was gonna do the mend one.

Keith: Oh, I thought it was any of the other ones.

Austin: No, it's the one...it's the...it's the bolt of energy from this bad fallout. Like, catches you while you're doing this ritual and zaps your fingers, and you feel the spiderweb ink shut off. I mean, it doesn't literally. You still have that ability, but you just don't have the mend skill, as your hands shake from the magic that's been passed through them.

Keith: Okay. Well, I need to fix that, obviously.

Austin: That's important to fix.

Keith: So, I think that my...I guess I'll check with Art. Art, my immediate impulse is to assume that you've done this on purpose and either attack you now or run away and attack you next time I see you.

Art: I think it's a bonkers assumption, that if Duvall could shoot energy blasts, you would have seen it by now.

Keith: I don't know. It looked like you did this, right? That's what it looks like. I mean—

Austin: Mmm, uh...

Keith: Austin, you said that from my perspective, it looks like Duvall just attacked me, is what you said.

Austin: [hesitates] A magical bolt went from Duvall to you.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Yes. Duvall was not like making an evil hand emotion at you.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: You know?

Keith: Well, then... [Sylvia laughs softly]

Austin: So, I think that you would be right to be like, "Duvall, what the fuck?!" but I don't know that—

Keith: Okay.

Austin: —Lyke would be like...you know, a moment ago Lyke thought "I'm the only one who could do magic," you know? So.

Keith: Yeah. Well, at least the only one that can do this kind of magic.

Austin: But you might still be mad. But I do think— I do think that being angry or confrontational is not out of the realm of possibility. You know what I mean?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: I'm not taking that away from...it's up to you to tell me what Lyke thinks.

Keith: I was really...I was really not thinking that I was going to use Sanctum of the Stone Chorus, but I guess that I am. I'm just gonna do— just do it.

Austin: You're just like, "Fuck this, I'm out"?

Keith: Right. I had to go fix my hand.

Austin: Right. What's that look like? And let's get that roll.

Keith: Um. What does it look like? Uh...maybe I...you know.

Austin: Also, wait, wait, wait, wait, wait. Can you go fix your hand there? Before you go do all this.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Is blood a thing you can heal at these places? It's echo, supplies, or fortune. Right? So, I don't want you to roll this this spell—

Keith: Oh, yeah, it's not.

Austin: —take more stress...

Keith: And then I can't go and mend there.

Austin: Exactly.

Keith: 'Cause I don't have it.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Um...

Austin: At any point—I'm just gonna say this—you could call the Ravening Beast if you'd like to. It's there. If it feels like I'm putting pressure on Lye Lychen, that— don't— that's the Ravening Beast, deep inside.

Keith: Well, you can't combine a major and a minor fallout for a major fallout, 'cause that's...

Austin: You can't. That's correct. You cannot do that.

Keith: So, I...

Austin: But I'm just telling you.

Keith: So, I would be voluntarily giving myself...

Austin: Yes. Yeah.

Keith: The Ravening Beast.

Austin: Uh huh. I just wanted to characterize the ways in which I'm pushing on Lye Lychen currently.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Which is that it's this thing that's fucking— Lye Lychen is such a jolly character, and the Ravening Beast is still somewhere in there and pushing towards that—

[1:30:02]

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Is daring you. Is daring you to be this other you. You know what I mean?

Keith: Right.

Austin: You know the Bugs Bunny, uh, JPEG?

Keith: Uh, no. Wait, well, maybe. I don't know.

Austin: [laughs] About, you know, being turned back into the old you?

Keith: No?

Austin: What?

Keith: Yeah, I don't think I know that.

Art: Oh, what?

Austin: [shocked] What?

Keith: I don't like the internet. So I don't look at it a lot.

Austin: Lord forgive me? That one? You don't know "Lord forgive me, but it's time to go back to the old me"?

Art: Yeah, "Lord forgive me, I'm about to go back to the old me"?

Keith: Oh!

Austin: Okay.

Keith: Yeah, yeah. Okay. I have seen that. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Austin: Yeah. You know. That's the Ravening Beast. [laughs]

Keith: Yeah. Oh, I will say, though, that the middle one between—

Austin: Not that the old you is...

Keith: So, there's the Ravening Call, and then there's the Ravening Beast, and then there's the third one.

Austin: Right. Yeah.

Keith: That's the one that you're suggesting.

Austin: Eh, I...yeah. I mean, the Ravening Beast is...

Keith: That one specifically is about how—

Austin: It'll fight you. Right.

Keith: It only gives a shit about killing you.

Austin: That's correct, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Um, what I would put on the table for an exit for Lye Lychen is that it comes up, does some damage, and then flees with you on its back. Or you slowly melding into it, who could say? I want to raise the Ravening Beast stakes, you know what I mean?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: That there's a world in which the fury deep inside of you boils over here, such that the winter realm that we saw before...which, it didn't come from you, but the Ravening Beast was patrolling that realm, from a potential ruined future Sapodilla, which at the time seemed so impossible to imagine. [laughs] But increasingly, you start to wonder what potential future could be here for Sapodilla. But I wanted to— I want to introduce that, only because it's a...I like seeing...it has been...Lyke is so clearly getting frustrated, and the Ravening Beast and Ravening Call and The Ravening are the ways in which we characterize that mechanically. So. But that's not a thing you have to do, I just...I want that there in the same way I want Darling whispering in the ear of of Virtue, in the same way that the bugs whisper in the ear of Duvall.

Keith: This is a...this is a long shot.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: But can I do something wild and dangerous with the endless ember?

Austin: Oh boy. What do you want to do?

Keith: I want to win. I want to beat Virtue [Austin exhales in amusement] at doing what— this my way.

Austin: So, Virtue succeeded. So, I cannot take Virtue's success away.

Keith: Right.

Austin: We can negotiate ways to limit the success with Sylvi, the player.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: If there's...if she's interested in that, and if you're interested in...

Sylvia: Yeah, I'm down for options.

Keith: Yeah, I guess I really didn't want to...didn't mean that I want to take away that success, but I guess what I meant is I want to try again to also succeed.

Austin: Mm-hmm. So, what do you want to do with this thing? What's this look like? What's the vision of the counter-success look like?

Keith: I could use it to power a stronger version of a s— of that ritual.

Austin: Of that spell, right. Which, if it succeeds, what are the stakes? Let's be clear about stakes before we roll dice.

Keith: I don't know.

Austin: Because—

Keith: I don't know what it looks like for two successes here.

Austin: For both people succeeding. I think there's worlds in which we—

Keith: Maybe it's pointless. Maybe it's not even...

Austin: Wait, wait, wait. No, 'cause I think there's a lot of— there's a lot of options available to us. There is Virtue regains immortality but does not become all-powerful. The machine, you know, stops before it has fully given her, you know, as much power that she would be the Vampire Queen of Sapodilla. There's a version of it that she does become that, but then she and Sapodilla are trapped inside of one of these realms. There is a version of it where you...she gets everything she wants, but then you destroy the machine so that there is a cap after that, or that it feeds on— it begins to feed on that thing so that, you know, maybe she and the entire vampire court that she's making are slowly being killed by this radiation, this magical, you know, entropy, entropic power of the...whatever the name of that thing, the endless ember.

Keith: Endless ember, yeah.

Austin: You know? Maybe it induces a particular weakness. Like, the world is our oyster in terms of what does a last minute last ditch attempt to disturb this that's exciting for both players, you know? I'm obviously open to thoughts, if Sylvi, you have options or thoughts, or Keith. Or Art, for that matter, as a collaborator.

Keith: The thing I'm trying to balance is that I think Lyke sees Virtue's success as a threat. Like, as an actual danger.

Austin: Right.

Keith: Maybe not on the same level as the danger here, but close.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Keith: Also, I'm seriously injured.

Austin: You are seriously injured.

Keith: And so, I'm trying to even figure out if I do just like give up and my first instinct to just leave was the right one, because I'm like, I better...I don't even want...I better get out of here and fix myself before I get caught up in some other shit.

Austin: Right. Duvall, how do you react to the magical bolt that you blasted Lyke with by mistake?

Art: Oh, I'm gonna be mortified and apologetic, but I think we have to— I think I'm waiting for...

Austin: You're waiting for a go on Lyke's side.

Art: Yeah. I don't know— I don't understand that any time has passed, that we're still in the moment.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Art: So. I mean, apologetic and I have no idea what happened. Like...

Keith: Right.

Art: Duvall doesn't fully comprehend the event. Unless you're telling me Duvall does fully comprehend the event, in which case I'll modify...

Austin: Uh, I think you know enough to be like, uhh some weird machine god magic was like— used me as a conduit to zap Lyke, you know?

Art: Yeah.

Austin: I think that's probably about—

Art: That's not very much.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: Ugh, this is so tough. I really don't know what I want out of this. Like, that's part of what makes it tricky. I don't know like what I think is the best thing to do

Austin: In terms of just like, what Lyke wants or what is interesting for you?

Keith: Me, me, me. Yeah, me.

Austin: Like, do you...let's talk about what our options are and see what we can land on. Like, there's a version of this where Lyke gets away and is upset about the state of affairs and has new direction. Right now, what, Lyke is adventure? Maybe Lyke changes calling. That's on the table, right? You're driven by a particular goal now. You...Lyke forcefully demands an outcome and— or pushes for the outcome, puts his life on the line to stop this from happening, potentially succeeds? Maybe at great— at further cost. Dies a hero, lives— or gets away with some scars, right? Having stopped this from happening, by which we might mean the death of— or the...the death or the harm of Virtue in some sort of conflict. What else is available to us? Lyke kind of gives into this, and it's a great sin and guilt on his conscience, for the near future at least, potential longer. Finds himself, for the first time in his life, resigned to accept that his reach is greater than his grasp, that this has slipped away from him. And then he becomes something—he continues to develop down that path.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: But like, still embedded with the party—

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: —in a way that's not— you know what I— I don't know. It's up to— I think that the world is our oyster here in so many ways, but this is a— I think that it would do...it would do disservice to the moment to pretend that what Lyke should do is just kind of be like, "Yeah, I'm good with this now. I'm happy. [laughs] I'm happy and good."

Keith: Yeah. Yeah.

Austin: This should feel like a sea change for who Lye Lychen is.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: In some direction, if that makes sense.

Keith: Alright. So, the thing that's at odds here is selfishly wanting to do the Aterika'Kaal thing, which is, I believe, Keith, out of character, is fundamentally different than wanting to put this giant god inside of you.

Sylvia: Oh, it is.

Keith: But is still...my desire to do this, to keep Aterika'Kaal, has prevented me from solving this the easiest, cleanest way.

Austin: Right. Right.

Keith: Versus not thinking that Virtue's version of this risk is like safe enough to be allowed to happen.

Austin: In that Lyke, like, just as just as Lyke has a long term goal—

Keith: Right.

Austin: —that is risky to himself, Virtue has a long term goal that is risky for herself. And she's pursuing that in this moment, in this— in a way that's a larger scale thing than what Lyke is, because what we're talking about with Virtue is potentially the end of the character via success.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Via her becoming too powerful to be a PC eventually. Whereas with Lyke, we're talking about successfully wrapping this arc with Aterika'Kaal. Or not wrapping it, but moving it to a new phase, right?

Keith: Wrapping Aterika'Kaal.

Austin: It's not wrapping. Like, I should be clear to you that the idea that like, “Oh, I put it in this box, and now that's the end of the Aterika'Kaal story—”

Keith: Right.

Austin: —was never on the table, right? Like...

Keith: That's the wrapper though. That's the wrap.

Austin: It is literally a wrapper, yeah. It literally would be putting it in a sort of wrap.

Keith: Right.

Austin: But it would never have been “And that means Aterika'Kaal is safe forever,” right?

Keith: Right. Sure.

Austin: Because that defangs a lot of what was said about Aterika'Kaal to begin with. But the—

[1:40:00]

Keith: Well, and my initial goal was not just to contain, but to...affect.

Austin: Raise it to be a good one this time. Right, right, right. Yeah, you have a long term goal of like, let's see if we can re-socialize Aterika'Kaal into being a less antagonistic force.

Keith: Right.

Austin: And maybe bring it back to being...

Keith: The thing that turned Aterika'Kaal bad, wind back the clock on that.

Austin: Right. Right. Correct. That is what...that is what the hope had been.

Keith: Right.

Austin: That here we have the more ambivalent version of it, where it's a hungry creature and a powerful— something with great power, but that it has not at this point made a sort of...the terrible—

Keith: Right.

Austin: —decisions that it made previously.

Keith: The tension here is that the thing that my desire is is fine for me to desire, and your desire is wrong for me to let happen.

Austin: “Me” being—

Keith: I actually don't remember what my eventual point was gonna be, 'cause we spent a long time in there.

Austin: Sorry.

Keith: It's okay.

Austin: Uh huh.

Keith: No, it's okay.

Austin: I was trying to make sense of it.

Keith: I guess what I'm saying is that...the...I don't know. There's like a...there's like a risk-taking Lyke and a risk-averse Lyke here in the same thing.

Austin: Yes.

Keith: Like, I want to do the riskier thing to keep the thing that I want, but also to prevent the thing that someone else wants. Or at least to, you know...

Austin: But is that— are you saying that as justification for an action you're about to take? Or are you saying that to like talk about the—

Keith: No, I guess I'm just working through it.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Okay. I gotcha.

Keith: And what...I guess what I would do to choose one or the other, to like side with the part of Lyke that..that is interested in the magical risk?

Austin: Puts it all— right. Right.

Keith: Like, is that— that is the— like, versus the part of me that would like, take on an extreme amount of further risk to prevent this thing.

Austin: Right.

Keith: I guess what I'm saying is, would I, in the moment, not even...not consider using the endless ember because of how dangerous it is?

Austin: Or would you rush to because it's at—

Keith: Or would I go to it because— right.

Austin: It's— right. Right.

Keith: That's—

Austin: It's at hand.

Keith: Right. So it's like—

Austin: Uh huh.

Keith: Would I go like, why would I use the endless ember to do this thing? It's so dangerous. It's dangerous in a similar way that this other thing is dangerous, even.

Austin: Right, right.

Keith: And so, I guess what I'm saying is...

Austin: I think it is less— I think you know that it is less dangerous than Oratorio the machine god. It is more dangerous than, you know, what you just did with the ritual knife where only you were at threat. And it is less dangerous than using Aterika'Kaal. Right?

Keith: Okay.

Austin: So, it's...it's not a living god that wants to devour everything. It's just an incredibly powerful force that could do a lot of harm if it exploded right now or whatever, you know?

Keith: Yeah. Then...then yeah, I think I would do— I think I would do it. If I *can* do it. Again, we just read the thing.

Austin: Right. Well, let's talk about what that looks like. In your mind, is that a big explosion? Is that using it as a power source to try to...try to make this...to give you mastery on your roll to try this again?

Keith: I was considering it as a power source—

Austin: Which also—

Keith: But if there's a...

Austin: Okay.

Keith: If there's an explosion angle.

Austin: Well, the thing that I'm thinking about is you don't have mend anymore. So, doing this spell again is gonna be harder for you.

Keith: Right.

Austin: Because you won't be able to roll mend. You'll have to roll just the domain and whatever else you have. Like, I can imagine as a power source, it gives you mastery, right? So it's like you're drawing on this thing, because you don't have the ability in you anymore to just siphon your own spider ink, you know what I mean?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: Like, you're not using your internal power at this point. So, I can imagine you giving it mastery, that could be a way. But it is volatile, and it is...

Keith: Harmful.

Austin: Harmful. But also, there's something nice about that, because in some ways you're lighting a fuse, and if it goes bad, it would end the scene, [chuckles] you know?

Keith: It sure would!

Austin: It would end the scene in a big way. And, and would let us kind of take the...all that tension in the spring would burst, and we'd come back after some break and see what happened. You know what I mean?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: None of the previous successes would be denied, but the situation would shift because of your failure, 'cause it would be that big of a failure. Do you know what I mean?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: But it would almost be a release if it goes bad. And if it goes right, then we'd figure out what that looks like. And I think the stakes of that look like some sort of mitigation of the success? I don't know. Virtue, or, you know, Sylvi, talking to you the player.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: What are you interested in if there's a success from Lyke here?

Sylvia: Uh...I guess it's one of those things where it's like, I'm down to have there being some sort of like real drawback to what Virtue's gone through, caused by this.

Austin: Right. Right.

Sylvia: Like, I am absolutely cool with there being some like, shit got fucked up while she was in the machine type situation.

Austin: Right.

Sylvia: Or like, if we want to like contain her or part of her power here.

Austin: Right.

Sylvia: Stuff like that. Like, I'm open to honestly a lot of different stuff here.

Austin: Right. Let's— I'm gonna— my suggestion is: we do the roll. We see how that roll goes. If it's a success, that we break and think about what the coolest version of that success looks like, where there is success for Lyke in containing and this previous success from Virtue is withhe— is continued but mitigated in some really fascinating arc-ending way, you know, still. So that it doesn't feel like it's all led to like a flat puff of air. Do you know what I mean? Does that make sense? Or do we want more specific stakes before Keith rolls?

Sylvia: I'm down with that. That plan sounds good to me.

Austin: Keith? Art?

Keith: Yes. Yeah.

Art: Yeah. I mean, yeah.

Austin: Alright. [exhales] Mend, religion.

Art: Wait, didn't we just take mend away?

Keith: Not mend.

Austin: He doesn't have mend, but that's the roll. The roll will be— do you know what I mean?

Art: Okay.

Austin: You're not using mend, 'cause you don't have it. So, religion. Mastery because you're using this thing. You do— it is dangerous. Because you're not using the ritual— or, you still have the ritual knife, right?

Keith: Yeah, I do.

Austin: No, you used it. Didn't you— oh, no, you ended up not using it.

Keith: I end—

Austin: So you still have it.

Keith: Yeah, I still have it.

Austin: God. So, are you like going to town on the endless ember? And like fusing it into the knife? Do you know what I mean? Like, raw liquid power oozing into this knife as you write, you rewrite the same words. You drag the knife into the same words you already sketched in once.

Keith: Or like a...

Austin: It's burning away the metal.

Keith: I was thinking of this as like a rock. Is it...is there a liquid component to it?

Austin: I think once you start stabbing at it, you're getting a gooey—

Keith: Okay. Gross.

Austin: —raw energy.

Keith: Like—

Austin: It's bad. Yeah.

Keith: Like a...I mean, like lava.

Austin: Yeah, but I think not as, um...something feels unnatural about it. Something feels like...or, it doesn't feel like, oh yeah, this is a thing from a...like you said, it's solid, and it should remain solid, but it's coming out...stickier than that, somehow.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Um. Anyway, so what is this gonna be?

Keith: Then yeah, re— you know, redoing the circle in...in goop.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: In light goop.

Austin: Yeah.

Keith: In radioactive sludge.

Austin: Bright white radioactive sludge. Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Uh huh. Um. Religion, mastery, risky. This is a hard roll.

Keith: This is the worst. I hate this. I really thought...I don't know why I thought this, but I really...I guess what I mean by I thought, I *meant* for this to be the season that I wasn't at odds with the party. I just was like, yeah, I'm just here to do what we're doing.

Austin: Eh, you happened to be in the wrong party at the wrong time.

Art: [sympathetic] Oooh.

Austin: That's a failure.

Keith: [groans]

Sylvia: Oof.

Austin: Hey, three. That's not— I rolled D12. You took three. Ugh, god, but this is also...this is also where volatile and harmful are gonna come home to roost, right?

Keith: And what do those say? I chose not to read what they say.

Austin: Volatile is— [chuckles] Oh, okay. Uh, harmful says: "The resource has the capacity to harm those who carry it via black magic, illness, or strange energies." And volatile says: "The resource may explode if mistreated." So, you are gonna take three mind, Lyke.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: From this first— the first part of this failure. Which is the fact that you are just furious about this.

Keith: Yep.

Austin: Give me your...give me your fallout test to that. No fallout. Well, okay, but you rolled above it still.

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: You rolled a nine. Then, everyone around you is taking another whole set of D10. That's you. This is Art. Wow, what is happening? And this is Virtue.

Keith: Wow.

Austin: Oh my god!

Keith: Three twos.

Art: Wow.

Sylvia: It hasn't loaded yet for me, so. Oh, no, it did! Nevermind.

Austin: Two, two, two. I rolled...I rolled D10 three times. I got a two each time.

Sylvia: Sorry, where did you say that was going?

Austin: That's all blood.

Art: It's a one in a thousand.

Sylvia: Blood? Okay.

Austin: That's all blood damage for all of you. And you all need to do fallout separately.

Art: Blood stress.

Austin: Blood stress. Yes. Yes.

Sylvia: [softly] God.

Austin: Yep. Mm hmm. Minor fallout for Lyke. Minor fallout for Virtue. No fallout for Duvall.

Keith: Ah, that's a first.

[1:49:52]

Austin: Nice work, Duvall. Um, this thing is...is heating up. And is like, as you're doing it, the signs that it's working, Lyke, begin to...like, you think it's gonna work. You can feel, like, there are sparks jumping up out from your words. It feels as if the entire...you know the sense you get when you, with a pen, add parentheses to a sentence?

Keith: Yeah.

Austin: After you've written it? That's what it feels like in the room. It feels like you're adding parentheses to a room, to the entire god. And halfway down the second one, it's like the lead snapped on your pencil. And the thing goes from glowing somewhat to being the brightest thing you've ever seen. We've all been worried about the long moon. Well, we should have been worried about the fucking sun that Lyke was carrying around in his backpack. It explo—

Keith: You ever have a chemistry teacher that lights some magnesium paper on fire? Is it like that?

Austin: Yeah, uh huh. It's like that, except it stays lit.

Keith: Right, it stays lit.

Austin: It's like they lit it on fire, and then it just, still there, you know? The whole thing is there. And then the whole room is that. The whole— in fact, that's the thing, is like that light begins to spread through the machine. It's not enough to consume the whole thing. And unfortunately, I think with a hard failure, it's not enough to stop Virtue. Virtue is inside of the cocoon, the cocoon of light is surrounding you, Virtue. That's very painful for your eyes and your body as this happens, because, you know, that's...you're not a...you're a vampire. Light is bad for you. So, you don't like that very much. Let's figure out these fallouts. I think...Lyke, I think this is...let's be clear, sorry. The light surrounds you all, and there is an explosion. Boom! Everyone is thrown away from each other. The world continues to shake for a moment. The Oratorio is louder than ever. And then, it comes to a break. I think we have to jump here. Lyke, when you wake up...I guess I'll give you this. The minor fallout is going to be you've been pulled out of this scene by the Ravening Beast, which has pulled you by the collar like a pup, away from here, onto a beach, north of the city by a few miles. And it's licking your face and kind of like nudging you and barking.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: I don't know why it's a dog in my mind, or like a wolf.

Keith: Is it allowed to do— I was thinking— I was, the whole time I was thinking of some sort of werewolf thing.

Austin: Yeah, same.

Keith: A sort of wolf monster.

Austin: Yeah, yeah, yeah. When you wake up, it growls at you. And it's this very strange relationship in which you know it saved you, but now it's—

Keith: Right. 'Cause it wants to kill me. That's its whole thing.

Austin: Yeah. And I think it goes:

Austin (as Ravening Beast): Rrrrah!

Austin: And then it, like, looks at you and it barks. It goes:

Austin (as Ravening Beast): Rrah!

Austin: And then it walks into the sea. Okay.

Keith: Okay.

Austin: Sure. Um, Virtue and Duvall. I think Duvall, you probably get knocked away, and this is where it kicks in, right? The bugs drag you away, or walk you away, right? What's the...what's the best... [sighs] What rooftop do you wake up on? Let me think.

Art: I mean, [chuckles] I sort of...like, wherever the other group ends up—

Austin: Right.

Art: —at the end of their...

Austin: Yeah, right? Maybe it is like the outside— maybe it is like you wake up on one of the...the top, like the parapets of one of the ramparts or whatever, you know, the big...what do you call a rook? What is a rook in chess actually called?

Keith: A rook. Called a rook.

Art: Rook is right.

Austin: No, no, no, but I mean...

Art: Oh, you mean in like, life?

Austin: In real life, what is it that it resembles?

Keith: A parapet.

Austin: Oh, parapet was right. Okay, then yeah, then a parapet.

Keith: Oh, you said parapet. Yeah, okay.

Austin: A tower. That was the first thing I said. I just wasn't sure if it was right. Anyway, you wake up on top of one of those, as the sun begins to rise over Sapodilla. My guess is—

Art: I hope it's a short amount of time and not three days.

Austin: No, I think it's like that next— that morning. You know what I mean?

Art: Sure.

Austin: It's five hours later, right?

Art: It's hard to know when you sometimes don't have control of yourself.

Austin: When your bugs— when the bugs, yeah, uh huh. Um.

Art: Bugged in the bugs.

Austin: Yeah. Uh, they take care of you. You know, they care about you in that way, not just as...

Art: Yeah, and I just...I think I just handed them a pretty medium-sized win.

Austin: Yeah. And, Virtue.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: [thoughtful sound] What's this look like?

Sylvia: Oh, I've been thinking. Um. I want to incorporate, like, some of the Oratorio itself into this.

Austin: Sure.

Sylvia: So, I think there's like...I've been thinking about like Virtue's scars and stuff from when she was slain, and maybe I think that's where the sort of mechanical stuff has sort of like covered over.

Austin: Sure.

Sylvia: Like, it's like plated a little. There's a bit of like...

Austin: So, you're a Frankenstein now, too.

Sylvia: Yeah. There's a...I was thinking like, there's a bit of *Tetsuo: The Iron Man* going on here.

Austin: Let's fucking go.

Sylvia: 'Cause like, of course, it's me.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: But yeah, and I think that, like...I've had this picture in mind of Virtue as being like, literally like a walking corpse, like gray skin, like...looking like she is like decaying almost. And I think that now that like vibrance has returned back to her.

Austin: Mmm.

Sylvia: She is now even scarier than a... [chuckles] undead gray lady.

Austin: Uh huh.

Sylvia: She is now a living white woman.

Austin: Oh no!

Sylvia: Uh, the most terrifying thing.

Austin: Fuck!

Sylvia: [laughs] No, but, um, I think that like, that's the big thing, is that like, she has color in her face again.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: And like, there's like a vibrance there that wasn't around before this happened, and I think like... [thoughtful breath] I'm wondering if there is more like visible, like... 'cause I think Dar— I want to... I want Darling to still be a thing.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: And I'm wondering if that when she manifests it's more visible now. You know?

Austin: Oh, yeah. Right, right, right. That like, she is a ghastly apparition that people—

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: —can see now and not just a thing...

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Not just a voice speaking to you, not just a cohabitor.

Sylvia: Yeah. There's almost like an extension of her power.

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Like, going through Darling now. And I think like, in that process, like obviously, don't wanna... we don't need to get too into it, but I imagine that had an effect on how powerful Darling was as an apparition, right?

Austin: Sure. Yeah, yeah, definitely, definitely.

Sylvia: Maybe there's some like...some of the like webbing and stuff from the bugs is visible too—

Austin: Mm-hmm.

Sylvia: Because they were involved, like in sort of helping her like get stitched in. So like, along the like, metal stuff. Just trying to think of like a way to incorporate that too.

Austin: Oh, yeah, sure.

Sylvia: Just everything that got smushed in there.

Austin: Um, so, I think as you're like, coming out of that cocoon, and you know, this new, more substantial but still insubstantial Darling kind of moves around you in a ghost like orbit. And maybe you're like pulling some excess webbing away, you know.

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: I hadn't thought about like, you know, Virtue as like a vampire spider queen, but there's elements there that are sick, so.

Sylvia: Yeah. I mean, there's definitely an element of like coming out of a cocoon as well here, right?

Austin: Yes. Of course, obviously. Yeah. Also, also butterfly, moth, you know, et cetera.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: All sorts of stuff happening here. I think you hear the footsteps of someone. And I imagine, because of how bright that light was...and it's been a while now, but still, I feel like there might be a degree of being dazed. Also, just getting used to this form of your body again, is distinct.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: But by the time you're, you know, you kind of make sense of the figure in front of you, she has already neared pretty close. And it is Davia Pledge, who you met just a couple days before at the restaurant that has now [laughs] crashed down into the Oratorio below. [Sylvia laughs softly] And I think that you...you can see that she is tired. Or the camera can see, at least, that she is the sort of tired that...there's a sort of tired that exists, where you're not gonna get it all back. You know?

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: Like, you were at 100 yesterday, you're at 20 now, and you're only ever going to get back up to 80. And she was already at 80. You know, she was already at 70. She's an older woman. She's been through a lot.

Sylvia: Yeah.

Austin: This city has put her through a lot. And she's put herself through a lot tonight, though also, let's be clear, she put a lot of other people through worse.

Sylvia: [approving] Mm-hmm.

Austin: But she kind of lets her gaze move across this space as you kind of gather your senses, and I think there's a smile on her face, kind of a bemused one, not one that reads as approval necessarily, but one that is...maybe impressed? Her eyes kind of trace the wires and cords and the cables. You can see, or the camera can see, that her ears perk up at hearing the sound of the return wave back to the sea, as the kind of thing that you did to this machine god—or this pending machine god—has kind of put it back into an equilibrium. You've sapped its strength such, and made yourself the center of it such—

[2:00:03]

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: —that it is no longer pulling power directly from the ocean. And I think she finally speaks and says like:

Austin (as Davia): I see you found your own use for it.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Ah! Well, you know, something like this just required someone with a little more vision, you know?

Austin: [amused breath]

Sylvia: I think at this point Virtue is taking off, like...I mentioned that she wears the gloves all the time.

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: And is like, does this like:

Sylvia (as Virtue): [excited gasp]

Sylvia: Really excited gasp when the dirt is off her hands now.

Austin: [laughs softly] Yes. Um, she says:

Austin (as Davia): [sighs] I am curious. I've lived in this city. I've lived in Sangfielle my whole life. And I get the sense that, nevertheless, you have a wider view of it than I even had. What is it that compels you to want to live here? Why not do as I was going to and bring the whole place into the sea and let it bring you with it? Is life so good for you?

Sylvia (as Virtue): Well, why shouldn't it be? This is the thing with you mortals. You're always thinking about... [frustrated sigh] You get so hung up on your own destruction that you don't realize there's so much more that you could do. You just let this thing sit here sapping everything around the city without realizing how much more magnificent it could be if applied properly. So, it's not so much that I want to...that I love this place so much that I want to experience it forever. [amused sound] It's more that I think I can make it my own little playground. Don't you think?

Austin (as Davia): [amused breath, then pause] Zizi felt the same way, and it's why I was so compelled all those years ago by her. Maybe you'll understand that it was...it was the way they took her from me that made me want to devour everything here. I hope one day you meet someone who would do the same if they lost you.

Sylvia (as Virtue): [amused sound] I appreciate your optimism, Miss Pledge. And thank you again for the invite.

Austin (as Davia): [amused breath] I will be very curious to see what you make of the place.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Oh, we got big plans.

Austin (as Davia): [sighs] You haven't seen the painting, have you? One of your little friends, maybe?

Sylvia (as Virtue): Right. Um...the bug one, I think. [annoyed sigh] It's so hard to keep track of everyone, you know? It's nice that I don't have to pretend so much anymore. Um, yeah. If...free to do with them what you will, if you need to go track down your precious painting.

Austin (as Davia): Maybe it's time to let it go. Be well, dear, and be careful.

Sylvia (as Virtue): Thank you for your concern.

Austin: She like rests a hand on one of the original pieces of machinery here. You hear it groan underneath. You know, your perspective didn't emphasize this, because you saw the process at work. But the Oratorio was as much a god and as much a living being as Aterika'Kaal was, and here you've...you've kind of leashed it, right?

Sylvia: Mm-hmm.

Austin: Restrained it. And I think that there's a little sadness in this touch. She was not trying to recreate anything as, you know, human, as, you know, the person she lost. But there was something about the unrestrained power and the sort of exuberance, commitment to expression, [laughs softly] commitment to the thing it was at its true heart, that she loved about what she'd built with the Oratorio, and here you've killed it, you've sapped its perspective away.

Sylvia: Mmm.

Austin: And I think in this touch to it, she's making a small apology for letting it happen. And I think if there are no other words to say between the two of you, she departs, heading east towards the massive hole it's made out towards the sea, towards the beach, towards the sunrise

Sylvia: Yeah, I don't think I have anything to add there. I think maybe like while she's leaving, we might have like Virtue in the background very like unceremoniously pulling some of the sort of like webbing and stuff off of her.

Austin: [amused] Yeah.

Sylvia: In a like...like just a completely like juxtaposed with the tender way that—

Austin: Yeah.

Sylvia: —Davia is treating this thing, you know?

Austin: And then maybe the final shot that we see here is, you know, lights in the dark before the sun hits the deeper parts of the machine in this underground, the reflection of light or maybe the glow of like, kind of honey colored eyes of the people who are now your thralls, released from the machine but tied now to you. Queen Virtue of Sapodilla, once driven from this place, soon to rule over it.

[Music plays: “Sangfielle”]