

Marielda 07: The Valentine Affair Pt. 2

Transcribed by @robotchangeling

AUSTIN (as narrator): [*slight draw*] You ever wonder what causes a god to declare war? 'Cause you should be pondering that particular question by now. I know you've seen all type of war, bloody crusades and cold secular skirmishes both. We've all heard the generals talk about honor and greed, about justice and need. But behind all that, you ask me, is fear. Fear is why people go to war. But for as fallible as the gods are, and they are, they ain't mortals. There ain't much that should scare folks like Samoths and Samot, like Severia and Tristero. These are, these are powerful beings, not like you. They squabble over concepts the way families argue about bills. They live in palaces of gold and fire and wind, castles they built with their own hands and ingenuity. So you should be asking yourself, what makes a thing like that afraid? What makes a thing like me, afraid?

[Marielda theme continues]

AUSTIN: The door opens wide and there's an operating theater.

JACK: So I've successfully picked it.

AUSTIN: You've successfully picked it. You go inside, there is a clean steel table in the middle. You can look up and see that there's an observation room above, which is empty. Once you're both inside the room, Silas closes the door behind him, and swings his cane at your head. What do you do?

JACK: Um...um...[laughs] it's a little too much to ask to try and take the +1 dice for throwing my disguise off isn't it?

AUSTIN: Oh, it is a little bit. It is a little bit too much.

JACK: I think I'm probably gonna say,

JACK (as Hitchcock): Well, I was never really Hectares!

JACK: And draw my sword.

AUSTIN: Great. Christ. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: I mean I think you have to take...what's a good word for getting hit over the head with a club?

JACK: Bonked.

AUSTIN: Bonked, I think you gotta take bonked.

JACK: Dinged.

AUSTIN: Bonked is better. Or resist with—

JACK: No, I'm gonna take...I'm gonna take biffed. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Take biffed, take biffed right on the dome.

JACK: Am I also burned, still?

AUSTIN: Are you burned? Oh yeah, you're still burned.

JACK: I've got 'burned' on my...why was I burned?

SYLVIA: Didn't you...

AUSTIN: Because you fought...no no no no no, that was from...

SYLVIA: Oh yeah this was from the fontmen.

AUSTIN: The fontmen fight. Yeah, you're still burned from the fontmen fight.

JACK: I mean *I'm* not burned, but it's the same character sheet, so.

AUSTIN: Right, yeah, yep.

JACK: I'm gonna take biffed.

AUSTIN: Take biffed.

JACK: What does being biffed do, other than reduce my effect?

AUSTIN: It reduces your effect, so now you have two of those, which means that your great effects are only limited.

JACK: [laughs] Okay, great.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm. And since you don't, you're not trying to reduce it, the second he's biffed you on the head, he sprints for this other door, which is also locked, and you can hear him fiddling with the door. What do you do?

JACK: I'm gonna try and run to him and knock him out.

AUSTIN: With what? What's that look like?

JACK: Can I try and choke him out?

AUSTIN: Sure...that sounds like a skirmish to me. [DRE laughs distantly]

JACK: What do you expect me to do? I can't just go out there. Dre, all along I was the one being tricked!

DRE: Yep. [laughs]

JACK: Yeah, so I think I'm gonna try and choke out the priest.

ALI: Oh my god.

AUSTIN: Friends at the table!

JACK: He—what do you expect—okay.

AUSTIN: Fine, that's fine, that's fine, that's fine, I think that's a skirmish.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Oh, no, you know what I think it's a prowl.

ALI: How is that a prowl?

DRE: Oh, come on.

AUSTIN: Backstab, throat-cutting, blackjack, et cetera—

JACK: I'm not doing any of those.

AUSTIN: —it's an ambush with close violence. Yeah, but it's ambush with close violence, you're sneaking up behind him to choke him out.

JACK: That's not an ambush, he knows I'm there.

AUSTIN: Alright then give me a skirmish. [ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: It does say brawl and wrestle, that's a wrestle, I'll give you a wrestle.

JACK: Yeah, I'm definitely wrestling. Risky? Or no this is probably desperate, right?

AUSTIN: This is desperate, take an XP.

JACK: Standard—limited effect?

AUSTIN: Limited effect. I've made a new clock for him, there, you see it, Silas, it's a four-step clock.

JACK: Mmhmm.

AUSTIN: So that means you need to get four effects. [pauses] Oh, my friend.

SYLVIA: Whoa.

AUSTIN: Oh my friend. Hitchcock rolled a 2, Jack rolled a 2. He...you get your hands around him but you're still a bit woozy from the, getting biffed on the head.

JACK: Mmhmm.

AUSTIN: And he almost effortlessly slips his cane underneath your foot and slides it out of—like sweeps you down to the floor and gives you a kick in the ribs. Either resist or take 'broken ribs' as a level 2—

JACK: I'm gonna resist, please.

AUSTIN: Okay. Go ahead and give me a—what type of resist would that be? That would probably be whatever the—

JACK: A comfortable one, a friendly...

AUSTIN: Ah a nice, a comfortable resist. That would be a prowess. Or, no, or—yeah that would be a prowess, that's like a body thing. Alright, my friend.

JACK: I pressed it twice, and I got the same result.

AUSTIN: You did, you got a 2 both times. So you take 2 stress.

JACK: Oh my god, I'm traumatized.

AUSTIN: No I thought you reduced 1 before, didn't you drop down from 7 to 6?

JACK: But I got the extra stress die, I took the stress die to try and pick the—

AUSTIN: Oh, you did, you did.

JACK: I'm traumatized.

AUSTIN: You *are* traumatized. I'm trying to think if there's—

JACK: And in the game! [laughter]

AUSTIN: Alright let's talk about what happens when you max out stress.

SYLVIA: Oh, boy.

AUSTIN: I'm trying to decide if there's a devil's bargain I could offer you to roll another die here...I'll give you another die to roll here—and listen, that could still be bad, but. I'll give you another die here, and you need this roll to be high, if, last time it was revealing the Hitchcock siblings, in exchange for lowering your reputation with another faction, the faction that Silas belongs to and that you don't know.

JACK: That's like a group reputation thing, right?

AUSTIN: Oh, it sure is.

JACK: I feel this is cruel and unusual. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: I do my best.

JACK: Can we talk briefly about trauma?

AUSTIN: Sure, let's talk about trauma. So...or you could have just suffered that harm, you know? In fact let me just make sure that you can't just decide, I think once you decide you've kinda decided.

JACK: Taken my hand off the chess piece?

AUSTIN: Yeah, I think so. Yeah, once you decide to—

JACK: Yeah, fair's fair.

AUSTIN: [reading] *"Once you decide to resist a consequence and roll the dice you must suffer the stress indicated. You can't roll first and see how much stress you'll take and then decide not to resist."* That's good, that's the right way for that to work.

JACK: Yeah, that's great.

AUSTIN: Alright. Trauma. [reading] Action rolls, progress clock, stress and trauma. Okay. So. [reading] *"When a PC marks their final stress box, they suffer a level of trauma. When you take a trauma, circle one of your trauma conditions, like bloodthirsty, cold, reckless, unstable, etc. They're all described on this page. When you suffer trauma, you're taken out of action. You're left for dead or otherwise dropped out of the current conflict, only to come back later, shaken and drained. When you return you have 0 stress and your vice has been satisfied for the next downtime. Trauma conditions are permanent. When your character acquires the new personality quirk indicated by the condition, you can earn XP by using it to cause trouble. When you mark your fourth trauma condition, your character cannot continue as a daring scoundrel. You must retire them to a different life, or send them to prison to take the fall for the crew's wanted level."* [AUSTIN, JACK, and DRE chuckle]

AUSTIN: There are eight different trauma conditions and that's kind of it, you'll be out of the scene and I think out of most of the...

JACK: Yeah that's what I'm thinking, out of the heist is probably not ideal.

AUSTIN: I think maybe not out of the heist, but out of this first opening gambit. Especially because you're twins, I feel like that's a bit of a cheat here, but like.

JACK: Yeah, in that case, I think I'll take the trauma, I think I'll take the trauma.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Because I'm thinking about my stress as well, my overall stress.

AUSTIN: This will reset your stress.

JACK: I don't want to have to play the game on the brink of stress constantly

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah. So what's the trauma you're gonna take here? I'll go over them, there are a bunch of them. *Cold: which is you're not moved by emotional appeals or social bonds. Haunted: you're often lost in reverie, reliving past horrors, seeing things. Obsessed: you're enthralled by one thing, an activity, a person, an ideology. Paranoid: you imagine danger everywhere, you can't trust others. Reckless: you have little regard for your own safety or best interests. Soft: you lose your edge, you become sentimental, passive, or gentle. Unstable: your emotional state is volatile, you can instantly rage or fall into despair, act impulsively, or freeze*

up. And vicious: you seek out opportunities to inflict savage violence. You can play trauma conditions as much or as little as you like. They can totally transform your character's persona, or only have a small impact, totally up to you. If you do play them strongly, though, you allow a trauma condition to complicate your character's life, you can earn XP from it.

JACK: I think reckless would be the most obvious and uninteresting one—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

JACK: So I think I'm gonna go for soft.

AUSTIN: [chuckles slightly] Good. Oh, boy. Go ahead and mark it.

JACK: So this is Edmond Hitchcock, has gone soft.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: Wow that's red when I click that, it goes red.

AUSTIN: It is red, yep, and you have 3 trauma left. Take your stress down to 0.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: So what happens? What's this look like.

AUSTIN: So I think he like—

JACK: Oh, sorry, do I also lose my harm? Am I not burned or biffed anymore?

AUSTIN: No, you're still burned and biffed.

JACK: I was burned and biffed to softness. [laughter]

AUSTIN: Yeah, uh huh. Well I guess like, you tell me what it looks like, I think he starts kicking you, and at some point if you're soft now, what's that look like?

JACK: Oh, god, I think—

AUSTIN: What's this man who has been kind of like, devil-may-care attitude, going soft and losing that edge look like? As a priest kicks him on the floor of an operating theater?

JACK: I think Hitchcock just breaks down.

AUSTIN: Like in tears?

JACK: Yeah, I think, yeah, I don't think he's necessarily trying to fend him off anymore.

AUSTIN: Okay. He kicks you a bunch but thankfully you're able to like, your hands are up so you don't take any permanent damage, but once he sees that you're cowering he reaches down and takes your lockpick from you and picks the lock. And then tosses it back at your face. And then steps inside that room and that's the last time you see him. Let's make him disappear real quick, layer, GM layer, here we go.

ALI: That dude sucks.

AUSTIN: That dude sucks!

JACK: Yeah go fuck him up, somebody.

AUSTIN: So dinner's coming to a conclusion, in the reception hall, and everyone is leaving. What are you doing?

ALI: Oh, okay, that was easy.

AUSTIN: For you! [laughter]

JACK: [softly] Help!

ALI: Aww. We don't know you're there, we can't—

AUSTIN: Nope.

ALI: —do that.

SYLVIA: Where are they leaving to?

ALI: Yeah.

SYLVIA: The dormitories?

AUSTIN: Yeah, they're moving to the dorms.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: There are two student dorms and one invigilator dorm, one dorm for the teachers.

ALI: Well—which way are the Yellow House people going?

AUSTIN: There are two to each door.

ALI: Okay. I guess we should group up?

DRE: Yeah...

ALI: Probably?

AUSTIN: So where are you going?

ALI: Like if everyone turns a corner and we stay back and then...go downstairs?

DRE: Don't we need to be going upstairs?

AUSTIN: That's up to y'all, what are you doing? [ALI laughs slightly]

AUSTIN: You tell me!

SYLVIA: I mean, do we know where the thing we're looking for is? I don't remember if we were told.

DRE: I feel like we should—

AUSTIN: I should restate what the thing you're looking for is.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: It is a tome, it is a volume, that is called *Mortal Liminality: On the Space Between Life and Death* by Bolster Valentine. It was written during the quiet year, and that's all you know about it.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: And then of course, again, what you were told by Claret Holiday was: and also whatever else you want to take, you can take. Because remember one of the other mysteries of this place is like, why doesn't it get reconfigured when everything else in the city does.

ALI: Mmm.

SYLVIA: So, I think from a just like character standpoint, I think Aubrey would want to go downstairs because the top floor, just from the outside you can see is the smallest floor.

AUSTIN: Yes.

SYLVIA: And we probably want to go see what's on the larger area before we go there.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

DRE: Yeah, and I guess in character even though we as players can see this map, do our characters, we don't know where we're going.

AUSTIN: No, your characters have no idea. Only the one who's knocked the fuck out does.
[muffled laughter]

AUSTIN: Or maybe not even knocked out, like just in tears on the operating theater floor.

DRE: Need some of that train orange juice.

ALI: He's gonna think about the rough week that he's had.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

SYLVIA: Okay so, are we good for going downstairs, then?

DRE: Yeah, let's go downstairs.

AUSTIN: Alright. Where are you going downstairs? Just move yourselves on the map. Alright, so you come downstairs and you're in a hallway. There are, on this floor—so on the second floor the hallway is lined with icons, kind of religious depictions of Samoths and some other religious figures. On this floor it's all teachers and former teachers of the university. That one really good drawing of a cobbin that, Cody Simpson, is that his name? Did, you know what I'm talking about?

SYLVIA: The professor cobbin?

AUSTIN: Yeah, the professor cobbin. Stuff like that is here. No cobbins in the photos, or in these images, but stuff in that style. People who don't know what we're talking about, definitely go to our twitter, friends_table, and look for that image 'cause it's so good.

SYLVIA: Or, Cody AJ Simpson, I believe it was.

AUSTIN: Yeah, is that his full twitter name?

SYLVIA: Yes.

AUSTIN: Cool. @CodyAJSimpson.

SYLVIA: Okay, so, we can see out this window and that's the back of the building, right?

AUSTIN: Correct, that is the back of the building.

DRE: Are there any—

SYLVIA: I'm just gonna say, our character's probably know that this is the exit, just tell me if i'm being too—

AUSTIN: Yeah yeah that's fine, you have your—in fact you can hear from down here that there are more protesters, people are shouting and yelling.

SYLVIA: There's nobody in the hallway?

AUSTIN: No one in the hallway.

SYLVIA: Okay.

DRE: Are there any signs or anything in the hallway?

AUSTIN: Uh, no. Easy to get lost here.

SYLVIA: Well I'm just gonna check the first door. [ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: You just start poking around, I mean that's...

ALI: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Is this door locked here? The one I've found?

AUSTIN: No, that door's open.

SYLVIA: Yeah then I'll just go through.

AUSTIN: Alright. It's another hallway, you see a C written on the door to your north, or above the door to your north, and then above the door to your south, in this hallway, you see written in script: The Winsley Cartwright Living Library.

DRE: Sounds like a good place to look for a tome.

SYLVIA: [crosstalk] Well we are looking for a book. [DRE and ALI laugh]

AUSTIN: Totally.

SYLVIA: Let's go

DRE: Is that door locked?

AUSTIN: That door's locked, yeah.

SYLVIA: Okay. Well. I got this.

AUSTIN: And when you touch the handle, it's cold.

SYLVIA: Oh. Okay. Can I pick the lock?

AUSTIN: You can try.

SYLVIA: Okay, I have fine tinkering tools.

AUSTIN: Awesome, that will increase your effect by 1, to great effect, from limited to great.

SYLVIA: Controlled? Or risky?

AUSTIN: [typing sounds] Controlled. You have clear control of this scene.

SYLVIA: And you said great effect?

AUSTIN: Great effect, yeah. [pause] And that's a 5, that's not a bad roll at all. So you, great effect is 3 marks on...So what I'm gonna do is I'm gonna reduce the effect 'cause you only got a 5. You get into this library, you open it up, and there are some shelves and stuff along the outskirts of this room, like on the sides, and then there are stairs down but they are like, there's almost a pit in the center of this room, you can see again that there's light down there but it's a very dim light and so you can kind of see and hear movement down there, but you can't quite make out what's going on, and you don't see the edges of those—it looks like the stairs just stop in the darkness. What do you do? But again there are books in this room.

DRE: Is there a card catalogue or an index anywhere in here?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

SYLVIA: Oh by the way, Aubrey looks like a kid in a candy shop right now. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Of course.

SYLVIA: Like, her tail is wagging.

AUSTIN: Totally. Yeah there is totally a card catalogue.

SYLVIA: And his name, the author we're looking for is Bolster Valentine, right?

AUSTIN: Yes, correct.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: You want to give me a study, is that what it sounds like you want to do?

DRE: Yes, and I'm gonna go like,

DRE (as sige): Hey, Aubrey, come here and help me with this.

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): It would be my pleasure!

DRE: 'Cause I have 0 study.

SYLVIA: Don't worry, I got 2. Is this also controlled?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: Standard I'm assuming?

AUSTIN: Doesn't even matter for this one, this is gonna be a flat success/fail. A 6! Look at that, double 6, reduce stress.

DRE: You're just so calm in this library.

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): I love libraries! [laughter]

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. You find that that tome is in the level 10 special collection archive, it's not allowed to be brought out of the library, you can only study it inside of the special collection reading room. So it says like, request for access or something like that. There are a few other books by Valentine too, but most of them are, like, unfinished manuscripts about various magical things.

ALI: Can I put on my spirit mask and head downstairs?

AUSTIN: Totally! You can totally do that. When you put on the mask, you see as soon as you do it, you can see that there is a great deal of magical energy coming from the pit down below. It's similar to the energy that happens during reconfiguration in that like it's a pulsating and driving energy, like it's moving up and down and it seems like it's sliding things around or something. And you see that there is a glow, a kind of orange glow at the bottom of the stairs, either staircase.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: So you walk down them?

ALI: Yeah.

AUSTIN: They creak under your weight. And when you reach the bottom one, nothing happens.

ALI: There's no floor there?

AUSTIN: It's nothing, yeah there's a final step and it kind of moves out to a platform, and then you step on that platform and nothing happens.

ALI: Hmm.

AUSTIN: Sige and Aubrey?

DRE: What is the fanciest looking book that's on this main level?

AUSTIN: [sighs] That's a good question.

DRE: I'm looking for like gaudy gold script.

AUSTIN: There's, the gaudiest thing is definitely a book that is like a first edition bible of Samothres basically. Actually not a first edition, a thing that is very much meant to look really gaudy and fancy and expensive.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: That came later, you know what I mean? And then you realize like most of the stuff on this first level is about the school, or about Marielda...It's like that room in a local town museum that's about the town, you know what I mean? Like, oh, there were coal miners here, like that's interesting but it's not, this ain't the juice. Like this is the stuff that most—you could know this stuff just by living in this town and being aware of its history—

DRE: Right.

AUSTIN: You don't need to be a specialist to know the stuff that's in this library.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Or this part of the library.

SYLVIA: So it said the book we're looking for is on level 10, right?

AUSTIN: Yeah, yep.

SYLVIA: Is there anything indicating what level we're on, here?

AUSTIN: No.

SYLVIA: Okay. Cool.

DRE: Yeah I mean I guess we could follow Castille down...

SYLVIA: I think?

DRE: Actually here's what I do. I grab, like, just a random book, probably not that Samoth's bible 'cause I don't even think Sige is that, like, couth.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

DRE: Or uncouth. I always get those mixed up. Anyway. I grab a random small book, I go down to where Castille is, and I just pitch it into the maw to see if I—

AUSTIN: As soon as you step on the tile, on the platform, it lights up with a white light around its edges, and starts to descend.

DRE: Oh!

DRE (as Sige): Aubrey we gotta go!

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Yeah!

SYLVIA: Aubrey like runs down the stairs when she hears that.

AUSTIN: I won't make you roll for it, it's just good and cute.

SYLVIA: She trips.

AUSTIN: Alright. Slide y'all over a page. Okay.

ALI: Oh it's a living library.

AUSTIN: It's a living library. So you step on this tile floor, and drops you, or it lowers you to...I didn't mean to do that, I didn't mean to shrink you, one sec. Here, you're all in this bottom right quadrant of this hall, or this right hand quadrant. So as you go down, you realize you are...you are like looking down from this platform and you're basically like going through these stacks row after row after row of books, but the stacks, the shelves go for floor after floor after floor. And it's just a single shelf unit that goes down like ten stories. And this middle walkway, this like middle hallway that goes left to right on the screen here is made up of these tiles that are independently moving up and down and up and down, and then letting people on and off at these different floors. But you reach the first floor and it stops, and then there's nothing, and then you're just waiting. What do you do?

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Oh, my god.

AUSTIN: Aubrey, there are so many books.

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): There's so many books!

AUSTIN: There's so many books.

DRE (as Sige): So do you wanna try and hop on one of the ones that's moving down?

SYLVIA: Aubrey just nods, like really excitedly, at the suggestion of looking at more of these books.

AUSTIN: So another tile stops next to you. So each of them, what I'm imagining is, there are all of these four-tile slots, right, like here's one, here's another one. Each floor is like one floor unit that you can stand on, you know what I mean? And the next few to your left are totally there and rideable, but they just are standing still when you step onto them. So again I'm guessing you're walking from one of these tiles to the next, right?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

ALI: Are the shelves labeled at all?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally, but there are a lot of them. There are one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, there are fourteen, fifteen, sixteen, seventeen, and then ten floors of them. There's a lot.

ALI: Jesus christ. Okay, so very many.

AUSTIN: Yeah. And it's like everything, it's everything you would—as knowledge thieves and salespeople, this is, you know, not the holy grail but like, goddamn close. [ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: Does Aubrey see a section that points toward being alchemy-related at all?

AUSTIN: Not on this floor, no.

SYLVIA: Okay. Let me know if she does, okay?

AUSTIN: Okay. [DRE laughs] I will.

ALI: I was gonna try to see if there's anything on reconfiguration?

AUSTIN: Not on this floor. Not on the first floor.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: So the ones to your north and south are still...everything on this first floor is still like the floor above it, very traditional stuff that most people in the city wouldn't know but if you were part of one of the major factions you would have access to. So it's things like the most recent prehistory of the city, it's like some deeper studies of the heroic deeds of Samoths, nothing new or forbidden or anything like that on this floor.

ALI: Okay. But we can continue on.

AUSTIN: Nothing's happening. You're just on these things. You're just kind of on these different platforms, but they're not moving. You can see the ones down at the far end are moving up and down now and then, and it's loud, it sounds like reconfiguration is happening, that's the sound it feels like. And you can see that there are...again it's dark here, so it's kind of hard to make it out, but one of the ones close enough to you moves, and you can see that there are like, big metal gears and a piston that is powering these things. And with your spirit goggles on you can see that that is magically powered, Castille.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: It looks a lot, or it feels a lot like what reconfiguration looks like. So what are you doing?

DRE: Sige kinda like kicks it with his toe and says,

DRE (as Sige): Level 10! [SYLVIA laughs]

AUSTIN: Nothing happens.

DRE: Damn.

AUSTIN: How loud is he?

DRE: He's not like, screaming, but. Conversational.

AUSTIN: Yeah, okay. Nothing happens. [more laughter]

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DRE: And each of these levels is like, a story?

AUSTIN: Yeah, it's a story. It's like the shelves have ladders, you know what I'm talking about? They have ladders you could totally climb, that's how tall each floor is.

DRE: Are the ladders like interconnected between the floors?

AUSTIN: No, no, 'cause it's a floor. It's like a floor and then a ladder from that floor to the ceiling, which is the bottom of the next floor.

DRE: Gotcha. But we can look down, like there's empty space around us, we can look down and see the next floor below us.

AUSTIN: Yep, there is definitely another floor below you, it's, you know, twenty or thirty feet below you. And you can hear, like, scribbling and the occasional book page being turned. You hear conversation coming from down a floor or two.

AUSTIN (as unseen NPC): Oh yes it does seem like a good class this year. A cobbin! I know, I know. I know. There's bound to be a first.

SYLVIA: So what we're standing on is a moving tile like any of the other ones, right?

AUSTIN: Yep

SYLVIA: Is there...is this a purely magical thing, or is there a mechanism at all...

AUSTIN: There is a mechanism that's being powered by magic.

SYLVIA: Okay...

AUSTIN: Like you can see...it's interconnected gears, a big piston in the middle, and like an extended steel rod, basically. Very big, heavy stuff. Like you wouldn't want to get caught in there. That would be bad and dangerous.

SYLVIA: Okay. I'm trying to think if there's any way to mess with that to get it moving the way we want to, but if it's powered by magic that might be tough.

ALI: Yeah, I'm the one you can like visualize the magic, can I do a survey?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Totally.

ALI: Okay...oh.

SYLVIA: Woof.

AUSTIN: I didn't see.

ALI: I rolled a 2.

AUSTIN: Oh boy, you rolled a 2.

ALI: I rolled a 2!

AUSTIN: Good. Good good good...christ, I swear I'm trying, I—

ALI: You're really trying!

AUSTIN: I'm really trying.

ALI: You're trying so hard!

DRE: You're giving us just enough rope, Austin.

AUSTIN: How are you...paint me a picture, tell me what you're doing to survey here, with your mask on.

ALI: I think that she's kind of walking across each tile while looking closely at like, whatever those gears are—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

ALI: —to see if there's like a reaction at all?

AUSTIN: Mmm okay. So here's what happens, is...you see on the far side, you see two kind of spiritual signatures showing up, two like auras, and you see Miss Salary and Mr. Calendar show up from the other stairwell—

DRE: Oh boy

AUSTIN: And Miss Salary gives you a wave from across the hall, and then they start going further down.

DRE: Aww...

AUSTIN: In front of you. But, on the plus side, your looking around totally does create a...does gain attention, and a figure appears in front of you, and at first you think you're the only one who can see it, because it's a ghost! Aubrey and Sige, take a stress, 'cause there's a ghost in front of you! It's a man, it's a kind of a masculine figure, kind of a see-through purple, who has a very like frilly shirt with a very fancy short coat on, but doesn't have from his legs down, it's just a little whirl, a little ghost whirl. And he...it takes you a second 'cause he looks familiar to you, and then you realize that he actually looks really familiar to kind of one of your main contacts, Ailen, Ailen Cartwright? [ALI gasps] And then you realize like, [ALI gasps louder] oh, this is the Winsley Cartwright. [ALI gasps even louder] And he gives you a little bow, and he goes,

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): Winsley Cartwright, at your service. [ALI giggles] Now, I know you are very, very excited to be joining this wonderful school. However. I have to tell you, you students are not authorized to come to my library. Now, I'll just lift you back up...

AUSTIN: And the platform starts to raise with all four of you on it.

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): And you can go back to your dormitories, and after the tests, you'll be allowed to...peruse to your...all of your needs.

JACK: I like this guy! I wanted to meet this guy! [DRE laughs]

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): [nervously] That, that's a...that's a floating man, boy—

AUSTIN: He like, swirls back around to you, Aubrey—

ALI: Hey, hey, hey Austin? Hey, Austin?

AUSTIN: Uh huh?

ALI: Can I, um—

DRE: Oh god.

AUSTIN: Oh my fucking god! [laughter]

ALI: Can I attune my ghost field to a nearby spirit to force them to do what I want to do?

DRE: Aw, jeez.

AUSTIN: You're so bad. [more laughter]

ALI: Oh my god!

JACK: Oh, this went so well last time.

SYLVIA: I love it. I love it.

DRE: Mmhmm!

AUSTIN: Holy shit.

JACK: Poor Winsley!

ALI: You were—!

SYLVIA: We are scoundrels, Jack!

DRE: Yes.

ALI: Yeah!

AUSTIN: [sighs] Yeah, you can give me...give me an attune.

ALI: You set up a puzzle where a ghost is.

AUSTIN: Give me an attune.

ALI: I am going to, once I scroll down.

AUSTIN: This is risky.

JACK: Oh, yeah?

AUSTIN: This is risky standard.

ALI: [laughing] Okay.

AUSTIN: What's this look like?

ALI: [laughs] God, how do we—

AUSTIN: 'Cause have Sige and Aubrey looked at you doing this before?

ALI: Who saw me do it last time, just Hitchcock?

AUSTIN: Just Hitchcock. And also that was different 'cause you pulled a ghost in from the ghost realm, this is a ghost who is like talking to you?

ALI: Fuck...okay so last time it was her like, holding up a charm that like—

AUSTIN: Yes.

ALI: —magnetically pulled a ghost from the realm...

AUSTIN: From like another realm into this one, yeah.

ALI: [laughing] But this dude is just hanging out.

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Alright I wanna set this up, one second.

ALI: Well, mmm...no, 'cause that would be...I was gonna say I could do like a command instead and threaten to compel him?

AUSTIN: Ooh.

ALI: But then if I failed that I would just...compel him? So I don't know?

AUSTIN: I mean that's still, that's still a viable series of actions, though.

ALI: Okay. Okay. We know his daughter really well.

AUSTIN: You wanna command and not do something else? 'Cause yeah, that's...you totally do know his daughter. If you...you can leverage that fact—

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: —in order to get a greater effect.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: That will lift you...but not if you command, not to command him, to sway him.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Unless you're threatening her? Unless you're like, I know your daughter.

ALI: No, no.

AUSTIN: And that's a whole different thing that I don't think Castille is up for.

ALI: Right, no, we're pals with her and it's fine.

AUSTIN: Yeah.

ALI: But I feel like there's something, there's like...I think that she plays with the chain, right?

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

ALI: There's a little bit of a like, hi hey, this could go bad for you, sort of thing

AUSTIN: Yeah, yeah.

ALI: But right now she's being super nice about it.

ALI: So I guess that's a sway for now?

AUSTIN: Yeah, give it a sway.

ALI: Okay. And this is still risky?

AUSTIN: Oh, it's super risky.

ALI: [laughing] Okay.

AUSTIN: It's not desperate, but it's risky.

ALI: Okay. Risky standard?

AUSTIN: Yep.

ALI: Sure.

AUSTIN: Oh, risky great, risky great.

ALI: Oh, okay.

AUSTIN: Oh that's okay, it doesn't need to be, it's fine.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Alright. [reading] "*You do it, but there's a consequence. You suffer harm, a complication occurs, you have reduced effect, or you end up in a desperate position.*" It's reduced to standard effect but it's still enough, like he doesn't totally...so what do you say to him?

ALI: So I think what she really says is like,

ALI (as Castille): We're not students here, your daughter sent us to find something!

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): My...daughter? Is...what is it—what is it you need?

AUSTIN: He becomes, for a moment, more palpable. The platform under you gains weight and like, buoys itself, kind of like bounces for a second, and then he returns to a more insubstantial form.

ALI (as Castille): Aubrey, do you have that card, do you wanna show him what we need? I think it's level 10?

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): [nervously] Y—yes!

SYLVIA: And she like, holds it up as high as she can, and then puts it over, like holds her arm out straight and tries to give it to him.

AUSTIN: He like, telekinetically slides it out of your hand and into the sky, and he looks at it and he goes,

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Ah!

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): I'm afraid I can't let you leave with this one, but I can show it to you at least. If it's for Ailen. Is she well?

ALI (as Castille): Yeah she's...she's great, we know her well.

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): What's she doing?

ALI: [quietly] What is she doing? [laughs] Besides...what's the nicest version to describe the things that she does?

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Helping people.

ALI: Yeah.

ALI (as Castille): She's really important to the city, we run a business, and, you know, she helps us get in touch with clients, and is really supportive!

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): Oh...well, I'm...I'm glad she's...Marielda is...it's a special place, and I'm glad that she's helping. Come with me, come with me.

AUSTIN: And he starts floating out across from tile to tile, and they all raise up to bring him closer, or to like form a pathway for him to walk down, and then towards the middle of the rows, he gets to one and it starts lowering down past floor, past floor, past floor. And then you get to like floor 8 or 9, and you see Miss Salary and Mr. Calendar poking around the different stacks. And they catch sight of you, and kind of give you a little grumble as you go past them and get to the bottom floor. He says,

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): Right this way, right this way.

AUSTIN: And starts leading you down to the bottom of the map here. I should make the rest of this visible. Map layer. So there's a series on the southern end of this, you kind of walk past. At this point, these books are like, Aubrey, there's definitely a whole row of books about alchemy, that it takes you a second to even know that it's alchemy, because it's like talking about shit that you don't even understand. Like I guess the equivalent would be you're an alchemist working in the middle ages, and this is talking about like, fission and fusion, you know?

SYLVIA: Oh, can I just like grab the closest one, or is it too far?

AUSTIN: No yeah, you can totally grab a book about secrets of alchemy.

SYLVIA: Yes!

AUSTIN: It's called, like, Chemical Procedures and Unholy Transposition. So to the southern side of this map, there are two big conference rooms or kind of like group study halls. There is a bunch of reading rooms and studio spaces? He leads you down into this hallway, again I forgot

to draw a door here but whatever, and into the special collection room, like the reception. He takes you to this main room and says,

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): Now wait just a second.

AUSTIN: He like dips down through the floor and pops out behind a desk. And he has a little hat on, he has his like receptionist outfit on now, which is like, less maitre'd, and more like flight attendant. [laughter]

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): Now, which volume was it again that you were looking for?

ALI (as Castille): Oh, was it the...it was the whole thing, right guys?

AUSTIN: But like, the...I guess he just, he means what book.

ALI: Oh, okay.

SYLVIA: God, what was the title of the book, again? It was long.

AUSTIN: It was long.

SYLVIA: It was like, liminal mortality...

AUSTIN: Aubrey probably remembers it, yeah. Liminal Mortality, and...Liminal Mortality: On the Space Between Life and Death, by Bolster Valentine. When you say it, he says, like,

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): Valentine? Huh.

AUSTIN: And he gives you a slow look, Castille.

ALI: Hmm?

AUSTIN: Remember that you have Valentine with you, just keep that in—

ALI: Uh huh, yeah!

AUSTIN: —keep that in mind. Okay. [laughter]

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): Now if you come right this way, you can see the book, of course, but I'll have to observe you while you read it, and once you're done I'll have to take it back.

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Um, Mr. Cartwright? I have a quick question.

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): Of course.

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): I was given something earlier that I couldn't quite make heads or tail of, like I can understand a little bit of it...

SYLVIA: And she pulls the card that she got from Miss Salary out—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

SYLVIA: —and like, points at the script on it.

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Would you happen to know how to read this, at all?

AUSTIN: So he takes the card and looks at it, and like, squints a little bit, and he goes,

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): The Yellow House...

AUSTIN: And he like, runs a finger along the script and starts to say it, which is,

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): Play in the dark...

AUSTIN: And then from behind you, Mr. Calendar, who you haven't heard speak yet, finishes the sentence.

AUSTIN (as Mr. Calendar): Lest the heat catch you standing still.

AUSTIN: And Miss Salary and Mr. Calendar are here. Mr. Calendar is the one none of you were sitting next to. Mid thirties, pale skin. Short, kind of dirty-blond hair. Very thin features from top to bottom. Long hands, a very thin face, and he has a scar running from his neck to his ear up across his cheek. He has on a burgundy seersucker suit with a black shirt underneath. And he's holding a knife that glows with a strange energy. And he says,

AUSTIN (as Mr. Calendar): Step aside, father, the Heat and the Dark are coming. And we will need that volume if we hope to survive.

AUSTIN: What do you do?

ALI: Oh, they were...they were bad ones. When you [laughs] when you were telling us about the factions you were like, who knows what their deal is. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Uh huh. Winsley is...he like does the little ghost dip into the ground and pops back up behind the three of you, and is again squinting at Mr. Calendar. And he says,

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): Winston?

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Wait, you know this guy?

AUSTIN (as Winsley Cartwright): He's my son.

ALI: Yikes.

SYLVIA: Awkward! [laughter]

DRE: Yeah, okay. Sige draws his knife.

AUSTIN: Good.

SYLVIA: Oh boy.

DRE: And says,

DRE (as Sige): That is a really nice knife. Are you sure you want to test it against mine?

AUSTIN: He like...his fingers start playing with it. He's like flipping it between his fingers, and it's a little hypnotizing. You can't take your eyes off of it. What do you do?

DRE: I'll feel really bad if I stab this guy in front of his ghost dad. [ALI laughs]

SYLVIA: But then he can be a ghost with his dad!

DRE: That's true! So I'm really just doing them a favor. [laughs]

JACK: No, I don't think that's how it works! I don't think that's... [DRE laughs, ALI groans]

SYLVIA: That's totally how it works!

JACK: No, stop him, that's not how it works!

SYLVIA: Mmm...I'm pretty sure it's how it works.

AUSTIN: What are your beliefs and instincts, again?

DRE: Oh. "Strike first, strike hard"!

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, there it is.

JACK: Oh, that doesn't mention dads! [laughter]

AUSTIN: It doesn't, no dad talk in here.

DRE: "Never trust a person in power".

AUSTIN: You do have a thing that says "I will take any job or do any deed unless it harms a child", but I don't think this is what you mean?

DRE: He's not a child, he's someone's child...

SYLVIA: I mean, everybody's somebody's child.

AUSTIN: That's true.

ALI: Except for me, probably.

AUSTIN: Probably.

SYLVIA: I mean you're like Samoth's kid, technically... [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: [laughing] I don't think that's true. So you're charging the boy?

DRE: Unless you all have a better idea, I'm gonna rush him.

AUSTIN: Yeah, if you don't do something to break eye contact, you will, something...he's trying to hypnotize you with this knife.

DRE: Yeah, yeah.

ALI: Go for it.

DRE: Okay!

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Give me a skirmish.

DRE: Yes. I'm going to...

AUSTIN: And describe it for me.

DRE: I'm going to take a stress to take an extra die on this too.

AUSTIN: Totally. Yes. Pushing yourself, yeah.

DRE: Yeah. And I think it—

AUSTIN: It's actually 2 stress to push yourself.

DRE: Oh, is it?

AUSTIN: Yeah, to get that extra die.

DRE: Yeah I think it is for a split second like Sige does kind of fall for it—

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

DRE: But like snaps out of it, and it just...it makes him mad.

AUSTIN: Okay.

DRE: Is this risky, controlled, desperate?

AUSTIN: Risky.

DRE: Yeah. I assume because of my debilitation it would be limited but I do have the...I forgot the name of the skill, but the skill that adds potency to my attacks.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you have that...Brutal, brutal is you gain potency versus physical targets. You also have "not to be trifled with" which means you're equal in scale to a small gang. But these people are a tier higher than you so that is canceled out.

DRE: Okay. So standard on effect?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

DRE: That's a crit.

AUSTIN: That is a crit, look at that.

ALI: That's like your third one?

AUSTIN: That boy crit. That boy crits all the time.

DRE: That's my second one on this session, I critted once before.

SYLVIA: And you rolled two 6s in that roll, too.

AUSTIN: Yeah. I'm gonna need another yellow house...oop, that's not the one I wanted, I want this. So that one is now trying to beat you here, this one is their health. So now that's great effect, instead of limited, or standard. So that is of a solid three clock ticks. What do you do? Tell me what you do to him, with that knife.

DRE: I think what I'm trying to do is...I'm trying to basically cut his knife arm. So I'm trying to cut the—

AUSTIN: Gotcha.

DRE: —cut the wrist or the forearm of the hand that's holding the knife.

AUSTIN: So you like do a dash at him and there's a quick knife-off, a quick like...you both slash at each other, and he holds his hand up with the magical knife, and you don't see it at first because he's wearing a burgundy suit, but then you see that it's wet. And then his fingers just open and he drops the blade as blood comes running down his arm.

DRE: Oh hell yeah, can I pick that up?

AUSTIN: One second.

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: Because, the second you do that, you're going to need to make a resistance—

DRE: Okay.

AUSTIN: —the second you hurt him. Insight resistance.

DRE: Oh, that's bad.

AUSTIN: Oh, sorry, it's resolve, not insight.

DRE: Okay, that's a little better.

AUSTIN: Yeah, give me a resolve, as the...or, I guess you could...you don't have to do this here. Here's what would happen. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Winsley Cartwright again bounces down into the ground and then up, moving through your body, attempting to possess you.

DRE: Oh, god.

AUSTIN: So you could let that happen, or you could try to resist it with resolve. Regardless, take a stress from this ghost trying to possess you.

DRE: Sure, attempted possession, yeah. Were you going to say something, Ali, before I make this roll?

ALI: Yeah, I didn't know if I could do like an assist to try to stop that?

AUSTIN: Totally, you could totally interfere here.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: What do you do?

ALI: I would love to interfere and try to suck Winsley up into one of my bottles?

AUSTIN: Yeah, give me an attune.

ALI: Okay. What's the stuff here?

AUSTIN: Risky and standard.

ALI: Okay.

DRE: Nice

ALI: That is a six.

AUSTIN: That is a six. So you begin to pull him into one of your ghost bottles, but he doesn't quite...he's like caught in the suction of it, and doesn't...so he's pulled away from Sige, but he doesn't come into the bottle quite yet. Miss Salary reaches into...or she just rips a pouch out from her belt and just like, tosses it in your general direction, and all around your feet are now caltrops, spread throughout the special collection archive. Everyone who moves is going to have to...you're going to either be at a reduced effect, because you have to be careful, or you're going to take damage, you're going to get a level 1 damage if you try to move at a regular effect. Aubrey, what are you doing?

SYLVIA: So, I think I'm gonna try doing my patented maneuver that worked out so well for me on the train. I'm gonna try to throw some choking dust at Miss Salary, and I'm gonna take...hunt, I'm assuming? Since it's a ranged thing?

AUSTIN: Yeah.

SYLVIA: And I'm gonna take a stress on that, so I have—

AUSTIN: Two stress.

SYLVIA: Two stress.

AUSTIN: Two stress, that's one of those things I've been messing up—

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: —is, to push yourself is two stress, not one.

SYLVIA: Okay, well, so I'm gonna take two stress then, to make that have a die. What position is this?

AUSTIN: Risky.

SYLVIA: Standard effect?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

SYLVIA: I got a 5.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: Actually worked.

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally worked. That totally worked. So this is the choking dust, right?

SYLVIA: Yes, so it causes like...it's not enough to kill, but it causes a severe like, choking reaction.

AUSTIN: So it hits the floor there, and it starts to go into her lungs. But before you can finish...before she gets caught up in the fit, she's like fiddling around with her own pouch, and quickly grabs a vial and drinks something, and then is totally fine. But you have distracted her for a moment. So reduced effect, on that.

SYLVIA: Cool.

AUSTIN: I think she's probably still like, an occasional cough, but she isn't in a coughing fit.

SYLVIA: It's not like debilitating or anything—

AUSTIN: Right, exactly.

SYLVIA: —it's just sort of distracting now, okay.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm. Winsley has now moved back around to Mr. Calendar and Miss Salary's side, and he runs a ghostly hand alongside the arm of Mr. Calendar, and you can see the blood move into Winsley's ghostly arm—

DRE: Euhh...

AUSTIN: —and it like tints his hand red. But Calendar's arm kind of heals up. Good to have a ghost dad.

ALI: Uh huh. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Let's hop really quickly back over to our old pal Hitchcock.

SYLVIA: How hard are you crying?

JACK: [weakly] Very.

ALI: Aww.

AUSTIN: Let's say it's been probably, what, ten, twenty minutes?

JACK: Oh, man.

AUSTIN: Of tears?

JACK: Yeah, probably. I think I probably stopped crying after a while, and then just sort of lay there on the floor.

AUSTIN: I feel like you're...so, you're laying there, and then you see a familiar face looking down at you, and it's Carolyn Fairplay. [DRE laughs sympathetically]

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Maestro, are you okay?

JACK (as Hitchcock): Not really.

AUSTIN: She offers you a hand.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Thank you.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): What happened? What are you doing in the operating theater?

JACK (as Hitchcock): I got beaten up by a priest. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Maestro...take a seat, take a seat.

AUSTIN: She leads you over to the benches over to the side of this.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Wait, what are you doing in an operating theater?

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): I heard a noise, I heard a fuss. Just take a seat.

JACK (as Hitchcock): That was me being beaten up by the...

JACK: And then I sit down.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Did you know the priest?

JACK (as Hitchcock): ...For about...ten to fifteen minutes.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): [sighs] Maestro Hitchcock, you're the one who told me: never trust a priest you don't know. You said that was the first rule of dancing. [light laughter]

JACK (as Hitchcock): I said that?

AUSTIN: She doesn't know, right?

JACK: No.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Yes, of course.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Look, there's something I've got to tell you.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Yes?

AUSTIN: She blushes.

JACK (as Hitchcock): We're trying to steal from the university.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Oh... [muffled laughter]

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): But...what are you trying to steal?

JACK (as Hitchcock): [tired] I shouldn't be telling you this. I've made so many mistakes. Right from the beginning. Look, do you want me to give you a new rule? Don't try and rob a building by entering through a window, a large...don't...ah, we've screwed it all up.

AUSTIN: She sighs.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): I have to say you've been very...you were beaten up by a priest!

JACK (as Hitchcock): Yeah!

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Is this your first...heist?

JACK (as Hitchcock): [laughs] No, no.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Do you normally get beaten up by a priest, is that where the rule comes from?

JACK (as Hitchcock): I mean, sometimes, it happens more than you'd think!

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): So what is it you're trying to steal?

JACK (as Hitchcock): We're trying to steal a book.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Have you checked the library, why are you in the operating theater?

JACK (as Hitchcock): [laughs] I don't know! I...I...the priest said that he...but it was a trick, and I was the one being tricked...

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): We should get you back to the dormitory and get ready for the test.

JACK (as Hitchcock): I'm not taking the test!

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Well, if you're going to...that seems like a better cover than getting beaten up by a priest, is all I'm saying. [DRE laughs]

JACK (as Hitchcock): Look, no, the monster's at the gates, it's all got wild, why am I taking a test? Caroline, I've already—

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Carolyn, please.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Carolyn, I've already biffed it, tremendously.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): This is...you should go rest, the test lasts for a week, there'll be plenty of time for you to steal a book.

JACK (as Hitchcock): I have to be here for a week?

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): I'm just...you have a week.

JACK (as Hitchcock): [sighs]

AUSTIN: She gives your shoulder a little squeeze.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Will you go and find my friends?

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): [sighs] Where are they?

JACK (as Hitchcock): Does this place have a library?

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): [laughs slightly] That's where all the books are, silly.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Look. They'll probably have worked it out there, don't try and get yourself into any trouble.

JACK: And then I'm gonna give her my sword.

AUSTIN: Ooh. She takes it with...we've mentioned this before, that she's a better duelist than a dancer. So she takes it immediately like it's no big deal and like, sheaths it and attaches it to a belt.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Oh, wait a second.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Yes?

JACK: What was the dormitory with the man in?

AUSTIN: Say that again? Oh, the invigilator dorm, it's the middle one here

JACK (as Hitchcock): I've heard that the beds in the invigilator dorm are probably for the best.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): Of course, of course, come with me.

JACK: Okay.

AUSTIN: And she leads you up the stairs and into one of the dorms. To that dorm, the one with the other professors in it, most of whom are asleep at this point. There is not a free bed. [JACK laughs]

JACK (as Hitchcock): It looks like it's full, Caroline.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): [whispers] It is, it's full.

JACK (as Hitchcock): [whispers] Where should I go?

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): [whispers] I don't know, you're the thief.

JACK (as Hitchcock): I'm not...

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): [whispers] What about the chapel? Go to the chapel, there's lots of pews there, maybe you could hide in the chapel.

JACK (as Hitchcock): [whispers] It's gonna be so cold.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): [whispers] Stay right here.

JACK (as Hitchcock): [sighs]

AUSTIN: And she disappears into one of the side dorms and comes back with a blanket and like wraps you in it.

AUSTIN (as Carolyn Fairplay): [whispers] Just go to the chapel.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Okay, okay.

[TIMESTAMP: 01:00:25]

JACK: So I'm gonna aim for the chapel.

AUSTIN: You go in the chapel. The chapel is filled with pews, like looking south at this...there's an altar in front of a giant stained glass window, which is the front of the building, which we've mentioned before. And there are two side rooms, one on the east side, one on the west side. The one on the east side is a little bit bigger, and it's, you know how churches and chapels do. It's clearly where like, the stuff that you need to do a service is in that side room. The other one is like a little booth and you're not sure what's in there.

JACK: Can I say a prayer?

AUSTIN: Sure.

JACK: I think I'm just gonna pray to Samoths...

AUSTIN: Okay.

JACK: And I guess, like, apologize. For the train, firstly.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

JACK: Like firstly for the train. And then secondly, just for like, probably just the events of this evening. I probably shouldn't have biffed that priest.

AUSTIN: Are you kneeling like at the altar, where are you at?

JACK: Yeah, in the blanket, wrapped in the blanket.

JACK (as Hitchcock): I shouldn't have biffed the priest. I tried to biff him. It was self...I don't know if 'it's self-defense' counts. But the train as well. And also I'm probably gonna...I hope Caroline, or Carolyn, you know the one. I hope she ends up okay, I hope my friends don't kill her. [laughter]

AUSTIN: You notice, here's a thing that you notice, is while you're saying this prayer, you see that there is on the altar, a golden...almost like a candlestick but at the top it turns into a kind of circle, and it's the symbol of Samoths, and you immediately understand that it is the most valuable thing you've seen in a year.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Okay and now I'm thinking that I might try and steal your candlestick, and that's sinful. That's a sin. And I mean you'd definitely begrudge me that, because I think...look, it's been a long day, but I don't think that that's an excuse to try...we already robbed you once, like immediately. I'm gonna, I'm probably gonna...I'm gonna sleep in this room here, please, and if you could find it in yourself...look, think of it as a trade. If you can find it in yourself to make it so that I'm not [deep breath] killed in

my sleep, in exchange for me not stealing the thing, and then we can just. We're square, okay? Just temporarily, please, it's been such a rough night. Uh, amen. Hitchcock.
Signed, Hitchcock.

JACK: And then I think I'm gonna try to go into the little cubby room.

AUSTIN: You open that door, and you hear footsteps going up that stairwell, there's like a circular spiral stairwell going up, and you hear someone retreating up those stairs, as if you'd almost caught them listening in on you.

JACK: [laughs] Oh, no. Okay. I think I...what's in the cubby hole?

AUSTIN: It's a stairwell going up.

JACK: Oh, then I'm gonna close the door really quietly behind me and limp up the stairs.

AUSTIN: There is, you find, a kind of master bedroom up on the top floor.

JACK: Oh, nice!

AUSTIN: And Sabinia is sitting at a desk looking busy, but was definitely just eavesdropping on your prayer to Samothēs.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Were you eavesdropping on me?

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): [sighs] Child, what are you doing?

JACK (as Hitchcock): You just heard, the whole...I mean, you're up to speed, really. [ALI laughs]

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): I haven't been behind speed since...ever. Take a seat.

AUSTIN: And she like points at...there's a couch. It's an old kind of a dark red with kind of embroidery and like a slightly more...what's the word I'm looking for...so it's kind of a dark red, and then it has magenta embroidery on its fringes, and then also just has a pattern of flowers and stuff on the couch's texture itself. There's a word that I'm looking for for what you do with couches, and I can't remember it. And then there's like dark wood on the fronts of the arms and on the legs and stuff like that. She kind of gestures for you to sit there.

JACK (as Hitchcock): You got a real nice couch.

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): It came with the building. So why are you trying to rob us?

JACK (as Hitchcock): ...You heard that bit too.

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): Yeah, yeah. Also you climbed in through the balcony, so.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Mmm. Isn't it the case that you shouldn't listen in to people's prayers, really? Really?

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): That doesn't count for me, I'm a rector, I'm supposed to listen to the prayers. That's why I was chosen.

JACK (as Hitchcock): I don't think it works like that, I don't...It's not like confession. I mean it is like confession, but...

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): It's exactly like confession. Samoths is very busy. And frankly it's all I can give him, to listen to prayers now and then.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Look, I didn't steal the candle.

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): Praise him for that.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Great. So, about the robbery. Uh, this is one of those questions where if I give you the answer, it's very bad news, right?

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): Probably. You know those people who come here to try to enter this academy, they give everything up. They leave their families, and their jobs, they leave Marielda behind, on the chance that they could be the blessed few who learn the real thing of the world. Who learn what's really at stake. They give it all up, and there's no going back. And you came here to steal a candlestick.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Well...I'd heard great stuff about it.

AUSTIN: She stands up from the desk and puts a pen down.

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): Would you like to see, what it is we prepare for here?

JACK (as Hitchcock): Okay.

AUSTIN: And she steps towards the single door on the north end of her long bedroom. She kind of has like a...her bedroom is like a train car bedroom, is that what they call that? That's not what they call that. What do they call them? Yeah, train car apartments. Or railroad apartments, which are just like really long and thin, so it's just like a narrow hallway that is filled with stuff. So that's the southern half of this big top floor, and there's a single door at the northern half.

[piano music begins]

AUSTIN: And she opens it up and steps inside with you. And there are windows, here, which is strange, because from the outside there were no windows on the sides or the back of this room, of this floor. And outside the windows you see Marielda, and it is burning. And like not burning from fire, not like someone lit it, like burning at the edges the way paper does, to where there's nothing left when it's done. Where the whole thing is consumed and then there's nothing there, there's just void.

JACK (as Hitchcock): What is this? Is this...

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): This is the Heat. And the Dark. And it's coming for us. And he saw it, and he reached out his hand, his holy hand, to protect us, for as long as he could, and to make our lives good. But that man who taught me, Christopher, he taught another boy. And he convinced that boy that there was always a way, goddamned optimist. There was always a way to hold it off, to hold off the bad things. And so, our holy father, committed to protecting us for as long as he could, to making our lives easy until this comes for us, he cast that boy out, and that boy didn't take kindly to it. And so now I sit here and watch, watch for this world to come into passing. And we study in our own way to see if there is anything to be done, but...there isn't.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Why are you showing this to me?

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): Because I need you to understand why you can never leave this place. [pause] Now go rest.

JACK (as Hitchcock): Okay.

AUSTIN (as Sabinia): It's a very comfortable couch.

JACK (as Hitchcock): It is, it's great, it's...yeah.

[music fades out softly]

[TIMESTAMP: 01:09:46]

AUSTIN: Meanwhile, in the ghost library. Hey Sige, what are you doing?

DRE: I wanna pick that magic knife off the ground.

AUSTIN: Totally! You pick up that magic knife off the ground. There is a...a feeling of dread enters you when you pick it up, but you don't take any stress from it or anything like that. It's a

sort of like...for a moment, you realize that it doesn't matter if you die in this fight, because what's death? Like, everybody dies. And it kind of like, pushes you onward to do violence.

DRE: Yeah, that sounds about right.

AUSTIN: Yeah. [ALI laughs]

DRE: I wanna stab Calendar with his own knife.

AUSTIN: Alright, give me a skirmish. Take great effect.

DRE: Is this risky...?

AUSTIN: It's risky. Risky great effect.

DRE: 6.

AUSTIN: Look at that. Goddamn. That boy knows how to fight, Sige knows how to fight.

SYLVIA: Jesus.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you...great effect, right? Yeah. So I think you plunge that dagger into his chest, and he like drops to a knee and then reaches up at you, and then over to Winsley, and he's like...he looks at you in the eye and he says,

AUSTIN (as Mr. Calendar): The Dark and the Heat are coming, and you can't stop it.
Only we can.

AUSTIN: And then he like looks up past you, to his father who's appeared behind you, who's being sucked into the bottle. And he just says,

AUSTIN (as Mr. Calendar): Dad...

AUSTIN: And he falls. Salary uses this moment of silence to try to run past you towards one of the shelves to try to find that book. And she's like going through all of those, she's like flipping through all of the books and looking for it. Castille and Aubrey, what are you up to?

ALI: Yeah, can I try...ah fuck it, I'll take a limited effect and try to tackle her?

AUSTIN: Yeah, sure. That's skirmish, that's wrestling. And risky, again.

ALI: I'll just see how this goes, it's fine.

AUSTIN: Uh huh!

ALI: Risky standard, you said? Oh risky limited.

AUSTIN: Risky limited, yes, sorry. Unless you're taking the damage.

ALI: I'll just take the damage.

AUSTIN: Okay. That will reduce you going forward, because your feet...oh! They don't affect you, risky standard. Because you have weird marble feet, you're not a person.

ALI: Yeah. Okay.

AUSTIN: You're a person, but you're not a person with skin, and flesh.

ALI: Okay, yeah, thank you.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm. [laughter]

ALI: Risky standard! And that's a 4.

AUSTIN: Alright, that's alright. Oh you rolled 2d6 'cause you don't have skirmish? Yeah okay, you rolled a 4 and a 6 but that 6 is discarded 'cause you take the lower, you don't have it.

ALI: Oh, man.

AUSTIN: So it goes, so it goes.

ALI: Oh well. I have 5 stress anyway, I can't risk it.

AUSTIN: Yeah you tackle her to the ground and are able to pin her down, easily.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: Winsley on the other hand, is losing it. He's like prodding at his son on the floor, and more of the blood is going into his ghostly form, but his son is dead.

ALI: Oh damn.

AUSTIN: The room starts to shake, and the books start falling off of the shelves. You can hear that the pistons start shaking up and down rapidly. And you can hear books throughout the entire library falling.

SYLVIA: Are there any visible pistons nearby?

AUSTIN: No, 'cause you're in the side room, you're in this room.

SYLVIA: Okay. Then I guess I'm just gonna try and like, help rummage through the books.

AUSTIN: Okay. You're looking through, you're looking through, you don't see the book anywhere, and then you find—I'm not gonna make you roll for this—you find a slip of paper that says Mortal Liminality...what's the...god, I swear, I'm losing all of my words this season, because I'm so tired from work all the time now. What do you call it when you take a book out of the library? Borrowed, is that...?

ALI: Borrowed, yeah.

AUSTIN: But borrowed is wrong, there's a more official word than borrowed.

SYLVIA: Yanked.

AUSTIN: That's not official—

SYLVIA: You yanked it out of the shelf.

AUSTIN: That's less official!

JACK: Withdrawal?

AUSTIN: Yeah, withdrawn, thank you—

SYLVIA: I liked mine more.

AUSTIN: By order of Rector.

SYLVIA: And Sabinia's the rector, right?

AUSTIN: Sabinia's the rector, yeah. Or, it doesn't say 'by order of', it just says withdrawn and then like, it just says Rector Sabinia as like a signature as if to okay that that happened. Because normally you can't withdraw that book.

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Okay, we gotta go, it's not here!

SYLVIA: I am gonna tuck the slip in my pocket.

AUSTIN: That's good. [ALI laughs]

DRE: I'm gonna grab a couple of expensive-looking books.

AUSTIN: You grab a couple of things, and then the vault catches your eye. There's another door on the far side of this room, and inside there is where the good stuff is held. And this stuff is pretty good, but that's the real stuff. And as you eye that door, Winsley like turns to you and tries to lift you up off the ground using his ghostly telekinesis.

DRE: That's bad.

AUSTIN: That is bad! He's like going to choke you with his...he's doing what Bolster did last episode, kind of lifting you up...no he isn't, he's not that sort of guy. What would he do? Oh, I know what he'd do, [chuckles] I know what happens. He like looks at you, and you begin to feel your skin burn.

DRE: Oh, nice. That's fine.

AUSTIN: And then you look at him again, and you can see that his skin is all boily and gross, and that whatever his facade was before was...not an act, but an active thing he had to do, and you can see where the ghostly swirl was at his legs before has been replaced by, like...he was burned to death by lava, I don't know if you remember that from the quiet year. And all of the signs of that have returned.

DRE: Oof.

AUSTIN: It's not good.

DRE: No, it's bad!

AUSTIN: So, either resist, or he's going to burn your...he's going to do to you what was done to him, but through magic.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: And I think you can resist that with a—

DRE: Prowess? Or resolve?

AUSTIN: Probably resolve. Or do something. Or someone else can do something. But like, that's his action. I think actually he just has the initiative, 'cause he's a really angry ghost.

DRE: Yeah.

AUSTIN: So yeah give me a resolve or take 'burned' as a level 2 damage thing.

DRE: 3.

AUSTIN: Take 3 stress.

DRE: Better than being in lava.

AUSTIN: Where are you at? Yeah you're alright, you're at 4 stress, that's not so bad. So yeah, what's it look like to slip out of a ghost's burn spell?

DRE: [laughs] I wonder if Sige just lashes out with the magic knife.

AUSTIN: Yeah that makes sense. And he has to like retract from doing the spell basically, like it doesn't hurt him but it does push him away, basically. You can like feel the heat on you, too, as you do it, like the heat lines, from the heat. At this point, you hear people shouting from the library proper, but it's distant. Castille and Aubrey, what are you up to? Salary is like, knocked out on the ground. You tackled her hard. Don't worry about her at this point.

ALI: Right, I'm a statue lady who dropped on her.

AUSTIN: Yep.

ALI: Since Winston is being actively—

AUSTIN: Er, Winsley?

ALI: Winsley, is being—

SYLVIA: Yeah, Winston is being actively dead. [ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: Mmhmm, yep.

DRE: I warned him, I told him!

AUSTIN: You did.

ALI: I did not realize that you killed that guy, that's crazy...

AUSTIN: Stabbed him in the heart with his own fuckin' knife.

ALI: That's wild. Anyway can I try to compel him now that he is being actively in—

AUSTIN: Oh, totally, you can totally try to compel him.

ALI: Okay, I gotta do that.

AUSTIN: Also, take a bonus die because you have him partially in the spirit jar.

ALI: Okay. But that's still gonna be risky, standard?

AUSTIN: Risky standard but a +1 from having that kind of upper hand on him.

ALI: That is a 6 and two 2s, oh my god.

AUSTIN: Nice work on that 6, though.

SYLVIA: Jesus.

AUSTIN: So what do you...what's the compelling look like?

ALI: I think it's the same as before, but it has to be a stronger action.

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

ALI: Every time I picture it in my head, I imagine her like holding it up like she's about to do a magical girl sequence [laughs].

AUSTIN: Totally, like why not. Chase your bliss.

ALI: Right, exactly. Yeah I think it's something like that, but I don't think that she's ever...she's never directed it at someone before, right?

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

ALI: Maybe she has to let a little bit of him out of the jar while holding it up?

AUSTIN: Yeah, that's cool, I like that image.

ALI: Okay. But I think that she...the command is for him to make the library go back to normal?

AUSTIN: Oh, okay, cool. Yeah, he does it. You have him enthralled at this point.

ALI: Right.

AUSTIN: And he like lifts one...he moves the hand that he was trying to burn Sige with back, and then lifts the other hand up, and kind of does like a flip of his hand, and then everything kind of slowly calms down, but it is slow, again. It actually is like a train coming to a halt, so it's kind of like you can hear the gears slowly calm themselves down. And then he just stands there, in his like, burned ghost form, filled with blood. [ALI laughs quietly]

AUSTIN: You're the good guys.

DRE: Yeah!

DRE (as Sige): Aubrey, let's get in that vault.

ALI: Yeah.

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Uh, wha—yeah, okay!

SYLVIA: I have a thing for this!

AUSTIN: You do!

ALI (as Castille): Aubrey, do you want me to carry you over to the door so you don't get hurt?

AUSTIN: Everyone can just walk now, because there's not...you're not like having combat.

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): But yes! [ALI and AUSTIN laugh]

AUSTIN: If we really want this visual, here's what I'm gonna do. In order to open this vault, you have to be lifted up on someone's shoulders. [laughter]

DRE: I mean we've already done that before, leaving the bar. We've practiced this maneuver.

AUSTIN: Yes, it's true

SYLVIA: So, instead of just tinkering with this, I'm gonna wreck this dang thing.

ALI: Ooh.

AUSTIN: Oh, shit

SYLVIA: So I have fine wrecker tools.

AUSTIN: You do.

SYLVIA: But, I also have the fire oil that I made prior to this.

AUSTIN: Yes, you do.

SYLVIA: Which we've established burns through things.

AUSTIN: It does!

SYLVIA: So, I'd like to use that, would that give me bonus dice, or just do it, or what?

AUSTIN: I think it gives you a bonus to effect—

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: —that lifts you from standard to great, because you have a superior tool.

SYLVIA: Okay. So, is this controlled, or...?

AUSTIN: Yeah, controlled great. And that's a 4. *"You do it but there's a consequence. It takes extra time, you have reduced effect, you suffer lesser harm, or you end up in a risky position."* So, you are applying the—

SYLVIA: Oh, really quick, I forgot to point out the saboteur perk I have, just in case.

AUSTIN: Yeah, go for it.

SYLVIA: When I wreck, the work is much quieter than it should be—

AUSTIN: Sure.

SYLVIA: —and the damage is hidden from casual inspection. I don't think that last part applies—

AUSTIN: That second part is not going to apply, yeah, this time, this is gonna be—

SYLVIA: But, you know.

AUSTIN: What I'll give you is it'll be the sort of thing where it's not traceable to you?

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: People won't know like how you did this. It won't be like, oh, she used this oil that she made, like duh it's the Six, it's Aubrey from the Six. [laughter]

AUSTIN: Uh huh. See?

SYLVIA: Yep. Yep! Good shit.

AUSTIN: I fuckin hate our show.

SYLVIA: You love it.

DRE: [simultaneously] You don't.

AUSTIN: You're right, I don't.

SYLVIA: I do it for the city, 'cause you know the city loves me. [DRE laughs loudly]

AUSTIN: I swear to christ, if you fuckin'...you keep messing around you're gonna make someone around me catch a body like that.

DRE: Don't do it, please don't do it.

SYLVIA: [indistinct] I'm on my worst behavior.

AUSTIN: Alright, no more Drake jokes. So while you're applying the liquid—is it a liquid?

SYLVIA: It's an oil, yeah, it starts as a liquid and then it burns really fast when it makes contact with the air.

AUSTIN: So you're doing the application, and there's something about the air down here that isn't the same sort of...it's not like oxygenated, that's the wrong word...

SYLVIA: I think that's—

AUSTIN: Is that the right word? Something like that. In the same way, so it takes a bit slower, which is a neat effect, like I almost imagine Aubrey being like 'ooh, fascinating'. [laughter]

AUSTIN: But, you hear the door to the special collection room open, and the woman who was with the Yellow House walk in. Or you hear her speaking quietly to the boy who was with them. So this is Mrs. Manufactory and Master Latitude. She's saying, like,

AUSTIN (as Mrs. Manufactory): It's taking them a long time.

AUSTIN: And Master Latitude is saying,

AUSTIN (as Master Latitude): Oh, oh don't worry about it, sometimes a game takes a little longer than you'd like.

SYLVIA: Can I...so we all hear this?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally.

SYLVIA: Okay, I'm gonna like, spin a little on Castille's shoulders, and be like

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Sige, you need to grab her.

SYLVIA: And point to Miss Salary 'cause she's just unconscious, right?

AUSTIN: Yes.

DRE (as Sige): Sure.

SYLVIA: So like just, grab her so we have like some leverage.

DRE (as Sige): Yeah, no, I got her.

ALI: [quietly] Jesus christ.

DRE: I'll pick her up.

AUSTIN: Alright. They walk in, and immediately Mrs. Manufactory draws a blade out of her cane, and Master Latitude just like leans his boyish frame up against the wall and starts clapping.

SYLVIA: God, fuck this kid. [ALI laughs]

AUSTIN (as Master Latitude): [claps slowly a couple times] Very fast, very speedy, very good. I'm impressed. We didn't think much of you, we probably should have prepared a little more. That's fair, that's fair.

AUSTIN: And Mrs. Manufactory just kind of shoots him a glance and like shakes her head, and then she sees Winston, Mr. Calendar dead on the floor.

AUSTIN (as Mrs. Manufactory): [sighs] You three are messing with something you do not understand. Let my girl go, and let Winsley go too. It is for the best of Marielda.

AUSTIN: And she steps forward, like kicking some of the caltrops out of her way.

DRE: I put Calendar's knife to Salary's throat.

AUSTIN (as Mrs. Manufactory): I see. You'll kill her? That's the sort of man you are?

DRE (as Sige): That's up to you.

AUSTIN (as Mrs. Manufactory): No, it's not. You have a knife to a girl's throat. It's up to you.

AUSTIN: And she takes another step forward.

SYLVIA: Oh, boy.

AUSTIN: You're still on Castille's shoulders.

SYLVIA: Yeah, how's the vault-burning going?

AUSTIN: It opens and falls inward with a clank.

SYLVIA: Okay. Hmm...

AUSTIN (as Mrs. Manufactory): Give us the book, and we leave. Take whatever you want from the vault.

SYLVIA: Okay. I wanna do...[laughs] oh, this is such a stupid thing.

AUSTIN: I love it, let's go, let's do it, jump right in.

SYLVIA: Okay. I'm gonna hop down.

AUSTIN: Uh huh.

SYLVIA: And, just sort of...'cause I have the book in my bag, right? And make it like kinda clear that I have...

AUSTIN: Which book do you have in your bag?

SYLVIA: Remember, I have that alchemy book, remember?

AUSTIN: Oh yeah, you totally do, yeah.

SYLVIA: So I wanna just like, pull it out and keep it concealed, while I walk over?

AUSTIN: So you hop down off of Castille's shoulders.

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Okay.

SYLVIA: And then also, I wanna throw choking dust in her face when I get close enough.

AUSTIN: Okay. Give me a...that's a prow, 'cause this is definitely an ambush.

SYLVIA: Okay. How much stress do I have...oh god this is gonna be such a stupid thing to do, but I'm gonna take 2 stress.

AUSTIN: Okay, where are you at on stress?

SYLVIA: I'm at 8 now.

AUSTIN: Oh, lord.

SYLVIA: Risky, controlled, or desperate?

AUSTIN: Risky.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Mmm...desperate. [laughter]

AUSTIN: Desperate. She is absolutely a tier above you. [sound of failure]

AUSTIN: Oh, buddy, you done goofed.

SYLVIA: Yeah I did.

AUSTIN: You got a 2.

SYLVIA: So that means I take another stress, right?

AUSTIN: No, no, no.

SYLVIA: No? Okay.

AUSTIN: Give me a second.

DRE: No, Austin gets to do worse things now.

AUSTIN: Yeah, I get to make a move, basically.

SYLVIA: I tried.

DRE: You did.

AUSTIN: You did try, you did try. "*1-3: It's the worst outcome. You suffer severe harm, a serious complication occurs, you lose this opportunity for action.*" So where are you...where is the coughing dust?

SYLVIA: It's on my like, bandelier.

AUSTIN: Okay, so you're walking up and then reaching to grab for it? And then throwing it?

SYLVIA: Yeah.

AUSTIN: Alright, take...take a level 2 harm.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: That is 'pierced', because she stabs her sword cane through your hand, pinning it through your chest, as you reach for your bandelier—

SYLVIA: Aaah.

AUSTIN: And that dust like explodes in your face, you don't have to write down coughing, but you're in that dust also.

ALI:

AUSTIN: Actually, actually, it's severe harm, which should be level 3 harm, but instead you're pierced at level 2 and you're coughing at level 1.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Now, of course you could resist. Your stress is not great. I think this is a prowess resist.

SYLVIA: So with resist...

AUSTIN: You roll your dice, and whatever your highest number is, you take 6 minus that much stress. So if you roll a 6, you take 0 stress.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: But, you could also fuck up here and get trauma.

SYLVIA: Fuck it.

AUSTIN: You're doing it?

SYLVIA: Fuck.

DRE: Nice!

AUSTIN: Look at that. Sylvia¹... they rolled a 6.

SYLVIA: Mmm.

DRE: Clutch.

AUSTIN: Super clutch.

SYLVIA: I thought I rolled a 0 at first, and then for the next—

ALI: Yeah, I was...

AUSTIN: Yeah this is super, this is so good...

SYLVIA: Like, I almost shit myself, and then...

AUSTIN: It's so good... So yeah, take 0. So what's that look like? So that doesn't happen, so that means you don't take the damage, either, so get rid of 'pierced' and 'coughing'. So, you walk up and go to throw, and then what does she do? What's Aubrey do, before—

SYLVIA: I think...

AUSTIN: —before she gets stabbed?

SYLVIA: Oh, she blocks it with the book!

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

AUSTIN: Yes!

DRE: Yes!

AUSTIN: So you like pull out the other...okay.

SYLVIA: She's really upset about that, she loved that...

AUSTIN: It's a good book!

SYLVIA: She was really excited about that book.

AUSTIN: That's so good! Alright, Mrs...I almost said Calendar, but that's a different person. Mrs. Manufactory is like, very impressed by this, raises her eyes, and then snaps her fingers, and then Latitude just tries to jump on you like a dog. What do you do?

SYLVIA: Can I try to just roll out of the way?

AUSTIN: Yeah, totally. Give me a...that sounds like a prowl.

SYLVIA: Okay.

AUSTIN: Standard...again, this isn't affecting clocks...

SYLVIA: Risky?

AUSTIN: Risky, definitely risky, but standard effect.

SYLVIA: Okay. Risky standard?

AUSTIN: Yep...oof. Alright, so Master Latitude has now tackled Aubrey to the ground, and in a flash has opened his mouth to reveal fangs, and very quickly is taking on very wolfish qualities, and is snapping at Aubrey's neck.

SYLVIA (as Aubrey): Help! [quiet laughter]

[TIMESTAMP: 01:31:50]

DRE: Ali, you want this, or...?

ALI: I think Castille...

DRE: You do have a ghost.

ALI: Oh my god...oh my god?

AUSTIN: You have two ghosts.

DRE: That can light people on fire.

AUSTIN: You have two ghosts.

ALI: I have two ghosts. Oh my god. [laughs] I was gonna pull out a knife, and somebody wants me to fight with a ghost. Oh my god. [DRE laughs]

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

ALI: I mean, okay, so, regardless of what I'm threatening with, I think she holds the charm up, and kind of looks at Winsley?

AUSTIN: Mmhmm.

ALI: And then looks to Mrs...

AUSTIN: Manufactory.

ALI: Manufactory, and is like,

ALI (as Castille): This is getting out of hand, and we have just as much of a right to understand what's going on as you do.

AUSTIN: So this is a command?

ALI: I think so. [starting to laugh] I also don't have any command so I don't know why I keep doing this, but it's fine.

DRE: Oh boy.

AUSTIN: Me either! Me either.

ALI: [laughing] It's fine.

AUSTIN: Go ahead and give me the 2d6 minus...this is desperate, also.

ALI: Okay, cool.

AUSTIN: Like, she is not easily commanded.

ALI: I could hurt her with a ghost, that's not threatening?

AUSTIN: No... [ALI laughs]

AUSTIN: She out here trying to fight the Dark and the Heat, like...

ALI: Oh, yeah, okay. I don't know what that is.

AUSTIN: Yeah, you don't, that's fair.

ALI: So that's desperate...

AUSTIN: Standard.

ALI: Okay.

AUSTIN: If you pull it off, like, you do have a ghost, that is threatening. But like, scaring her in general is really tough.

ALI: No, okay, yeah I understand.

AUSTIN: Yeah. Oh, buddy...you rolled a 1. Nice work.

SYLVIA: At least you get experience, for the desperate.

AUSTIN: Yes, mark that experience. So you're holding out the charm, basically, the spirit charm, right? To threaten her?

ALI: [defeatedly] Yeah, I guess.

AUSTIN: You tell me what you were doing, let me get a picture.

ALI: No, I was, I just don't want you to take it away from me. [laughs]

DRE: Awww.

AUSTIN: Oh, that's not...Ali, it's so sweet that you think *that's* what I'm going to do. [laughter]

SYLVIA: Yeah, aww.

AUSTIN: She...again just like steps towards you with that same directness that she stepped towards Sige before, and then in like a second cuts inside your outfit to release the belt that's holding the other bottles, and they smash on the ground, and out comes Bolster. And now Bolster, all of his power is released, and it takes him a moment to try to get his bearings. The vault door has opened up, and inside you can see just like, piles and piles of ancient tomes, many of which have symbols on them that you don't recognize, that are clearly in the old tongue. Mr. Calendar is bleeding out on the floor. There is the ghost of Winsley here, I have to add him to the map also, and he's just standing in the corner. Sige, you're still holding Miss Salary?

DRE: I guess so!

AUSTIN: Sige is holding Miss Salary in the corner with a knife to her throat. Master Latitude is a wolfman, and is holding poor Aubrey on the ground, trying to snap her neck with his wolf teeth. Bolster Valentine, the ghost lord, has shown up, and is trying to get a handle on who is in this room, and he moves his eyes from Sige [marielda theme begins] to Salary, to Latitude, to Aubrey, to Winsley, where he like locks eyes for a moment, and is like, 'oh, that's another ghost, weird'. [DRE laughs] To Mrs. Manufactory, and then to you, Castille. And this time it's not...you get the anger, this time, he gives you just like the dirtiest look, and he says,

AUSTIN (as Bolster Valentine): You let them kill me, Castille.

[clarinet part begins, theme plays to the end]